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No. 5

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

VISIONS OF DIVINITY

The Illumination of Buddha

The Future Buddha turned his back to the trunk of the Bo-tree and faced the east. And making the mighty resolution, 'Let my skin, and sinews, and bones become dry, welcome! and let all the flesh and blood in my body dry up! but never from this seat will I stir, until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom', he sat himself down cross-legged in an unconquerable position.

At this point the god Mara, exclaiming, 'Prince Siddhartha is desirous of passing beyond my control, but I will never allow it!', went and announced the news to his army, and sounding the Mara war-cry, drew out for battle....

Mara, being thus unable with these nine storms of wind, rain, rocks, weapons, live coals, hot ashes, sand, mud, and darkness, to drive away the Future Buddha,...drew near the Future Buddha, and said—

'Siddhartha, arise from this seat! It does not belong to you, but to me.'

When the Great Being heard this, he said—

'Mara, you have not fulfilled the Ten perfections in any of their three grades; nor have you made the five great donations (treasure, child, wife, royal power, life); nor have you striven for knowledge, nor for the welfare of the world, nor for enlightenment. This seat does not belong to you, but to me.'....

When thus he had attained to omniscience, and was the centre of such unparalleled glory and homage, he breathed forth that solemn utterance which has never been omitted by any of The Buddhas:

'Through birth and rebirth's endless round,	This fabric thou shalt ne'er rebuild!
Seeking in vain, I hastened on,	Thy rafters all are broken now,
To find who framed this edifice.	And pointed roof demolished lies!
What misery!—birth incessantly!	This mind has demolition reached,
'O builder! I have discovered thee!	And seen the last of all desire!

[Translated from 'Introduction to the Jataka'
Buddhism in Translations, by H. C. Warren
(Harvard Oriental Series, 1922) vol. 3, pp. 76-83]

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on Buddha and His message.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA BY M., by Swami Mukhyananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Belur, is a well-documented article on the genesis, the shaping, and the final publication of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

NON-VIOLENCE AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA, by Dr. Jaladhi Kumar Sarkar, Ex-director, School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta,

discusses the implication of non-violence in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition.

BUDDHA AND VIVEKANANDA by Swami Nikhileswarananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur, is a study on the similarities between the two historic characters.

GANDHIAN ETHICS OF NON-VIOLENCE by Dr. Purushottama Bilimoria, of Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, is a scholarly and critical enquiry into the meaning and practical application of the concept of non-violence in the thoughts and activities of M. K. Gandhi.

BUDDHA AND HIS MESSAGE

(EDITORIAL)

It was the full-moon night of summer. Under the shade of the twin *Shal* trees of the huge forest of Kushinagara, loaded with untimely blossoms and heavenly fragrance, the Enlightened One lay dying. Only the other day he accepted the food-offering from the metal-worker Cunda, knowing full well that it would bring his end. But he blessed the giver and the meal, as they only hastened his blissful departure from this life. Like a lion, he lay on his right side clustered around by his dear monks. A few days back a young man Pukkusa offered him a golden robe. Tonight his skin outshone the robe, indicating, as Buddha said, that he would enter into Mahaparinirvana the same night. Soon the news spread to the capital of the Mallas nearby, and they all came weeping to see the final departure of the Blessed One, and cried, 'All too soon will the Blessed One pass into Nirvana ; all too

soon will the Happy One pass into Nirvana ; all too soon will the Light of the world vanish from sight.'¹

The cry of human suffering Siddhartha first heard in the maidens' song in the royal palace of Kapilavastu. And that brought him the sudden awareness of the evanescence of life and an intense desire to find a way out of the cycles of youth, disease, old age and death. On the last night of revelry in the royal palace, the final disillusionment came. The loathsome spectacle of human bodies who lay asleep right in front horrified him. 'To him that magnificent apartment, as splendid as the palace of Sakka, began to seem like a cemetery filled with

1. 'Maha-Parinibbana Sutta of Digha Nikaya', quoted in *Buddhism in Translations* by H. C. Warren, Harvard Oriental Series, (Harvard Oriental Press) Vol. 3, 1922, p. 102.

dead bodies impaled and left to rot, and the three modes of existence (eating, sleeping and sense-pleasure) appeared like houses all ablaze'. 'How oppressive and stifling is it all!', he said, and hungered for emancipation from this terrible bondage called life. Taking a last look at his new-born son and implanting a kiss on the feet of his wife Yasodhara, Siddhartha came out at the dead of night and mounted on his dear horse Kanthaka with the words, 'My dear Kanthaka, save me now this one night; and then, when thanks to you I become a Buddha, I will save the world of gods and men'.²

He kept his word. His dream was fulfilled. By unprecedented tapas Siddhartha became the Buddha, the illumined One, and brought to the dark, sensate world, the light and bliss of Nirvana, the cessation of all desires. On this thrice blessed night when he was ready to step from time into eternity, his beloved monks veered round their blessed Teacher. His irresistible words had one day inspired both princes and paupers to leave their hearth and home, and walk with the begging bowl and the ochre of a monk. They too came to attain 'Nirvana' which loomed large like a full-moon as the goal of fulfilment before their spiritual vision. They now waited for the Buddha's parting message. The Blessed One spoke to them to dedicate their lives, *bahujanahitaya bahujanasukhaya lokanukampaya, arthaya, hitaya, sukhaya devananussanam*, 'for the good of many, for the happiness of many, for showing compassion to the world, for realizing the spiritual purpose of life. For your own good and as well as the good and happiness of all men and gods.'³ Then all present heard Bhikshu Ananda weeping. For the last 26 years he was serving the

Buddha, with one-pointed devotion. To him Buddha gave utmost love, and even respect. To him the Buddha would repeat his sermons again, even after they were delivered. He became the 'moon in the heavens' on whom the light of the Buddha-sun had always shone. He called himself 'the shadow of the Buddha', and became the recorder of his gospel, the *suttadhar*, and *Dhammakosha*.⁴ The departing Buddha now spoke to this dearest disciple weeping for him, the great words which were his final message to humanity:

*attadipabiharatha attasarana
anannasarana, dhammadipa
dhammasarana anannasarana*

'O Ananda, be a lamp unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help. Hold fast to the truth of Dharma. Seek salvation alone through the truth of Dharma. Seek not help from anyone besides yourselves'.⁵

* * * * *

'Be a light unto yourselves!' This gospel the Buddha gave not only to Ananda, but to entire mankind. On this one truth he lived, moved, and had his historic spiritual struggle. When Ananda wanted some parting message for the first great Order of monks that Buddha was leaving behind, he spoke in the same tune, 'What does the Order expect from me? I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine...'

'The Tathagata (one who is sent from above for the enlightenment of mankind) does not think that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the Order is dependent upon him. Why then should the Tathagata leave instructions in any matter concerning the Order?'⁶

The Ultimate Truth he realized all by himself, with no teacher, no guide, no initia-

2. Ibid., pp. 60-62.

3. Dr. A. K. Biswas, *Buddha and Bodhisattwa* (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1987) 'Mahaparinirvana Sutta' p. 44.

4. Ibid., pp. 128-29.

5. Ibid., p. 44.

6. Ibid., p. 43.

tion, no baptizing or books. Standing in the very midst of the terrible orthodoxy of a caste-bound Hindu society, he came out like a lion, himself a self-chosen outcaste, a sannyasin, breaking asunder the terrible bindings and powers of the Brahmanical priestcraft and gave the highest religion to all. In the midst of the unquestionable authority of the Vedas, he denied the Vedas with the superhuman strength of his purity and moral force. Alone, all alone, he attained the Truth, and he wanted others to follow him. The 'great preacher of the Brotherhood of mankind' as Vivekananda called him, threw away the secret of this truth to all. 'Aryan or non-Aryan, caste or no caste, sect or no sect, everyone has the same right' to religion and to freedom. 'Come on all of you.' That was his slogan. A fable by the enemies of Buddha says that gods were frightened with his all-conquering purity and accused him, 'Whoever looks upon you becomes purified and is saved, and nobody is going to worship us.' And yet the Buddha never took resort to any god. 'Among all the prophets of mankind here was a man who never had any cobwebs in his brain and (who was) sane and strong', said Vivekananda. He stood on himself and even on his death-bed never stretched his hand for any support, god, books, or angels. Verily he was the 'sanest philosopher' and the 'sanest teacher', 'the tremendous giant' of whom Vivekananda said, 'We cannot approach that strength. The world never saw anything compared to that strength'.⁷

It is this strength of the Buddha which had converted two thirds of India and emerged as 'the first outburst of the tremendous world-conquering power of religion'. It is this strength and purity of Buddha which inspired some of his nuns and monks

like Utpalavarna, Patachara, Kashyapa, Maugallayana, and Sariputta reach the highest illumination of Nirvana, while Buddha himself was alive.

* * * * *

Wandering alone in search of Nirvana, Siddhartha joined the group of five ascetics Kaundinna, Bashpa, Badrika, Mahanama, and Asvajit. After nearly six years of rigorous asceticism in their company, Buddha felt himself almost dying. Sanity dawned. He now decided to steer the middle path—the *majjima pantha*. Taking bath in the river Niranjana, he ate the rice milk offered by Sujata, the daughter of a local general. Finally he sat on the eastern side under the Bo tree cross-legged with the firm resolve to attain Nirvana or dry his skin and bones on that very seat. After Mara's temptations and attacks were conquered by an unruffled and fearless Siddhartha, he finally attained Nirvana and entered Buddhahood fulfilling the dream of the previous Bodhisattvas. Then he burst forth with the solemn utterance:

This mind has demolition reached,
and seen the last of all desire!

The bliss of Nirvana now engulfed him. He sat cross-legged at the feet of the same 'Bo tree' for seven days together experiencing the bliss of emancipation. Then he rose from his seat and sat under another Ajapala tree experiencing again the bliss of Nirvana for seven days together. Then again the Buddha rose and sat for seven days under a Mucalinda-tree in the bliss of Nirvana, spoke out his heart in the fullness of the bliss,⁸ and finally decided to return to the same world burning with the fire of desires which he had left behind six years ago. He realized that he must deliver to them the message for which he was born—'Buddha is not an individual man. It is a state of realization. Siddhartha Gautama

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971) vol 2, p. 514, p. 528 and p. 530.

8. *Buddhism in Translations* (Harvard Oriental Series) op. cit., vol. 3, p. 83.

was the man who attained it. Anyone can do it. Buddhahood, Nirvana is for all. Come, all ye, enter into it.'

* * * * *

Now began the long period of forty-five years during which the Buddha scattered his message far and wide. Two merchants Tapussa and Bhallika met the effulgent one and seeing his moral splendour became the first disciples of the Buddhist Order.

The five brahmin colleagues with whom Siddhartha had one day began severe austerities, left him earlier and settled at Rishipattana or Saranath near Varanasi. Buddha first went near them. Seeing his radiant being, they realized that Siddhartha *had* attained Nirvana, and they became his disciples. To this first group of five disciples, the Buddha propounded his two-fold doctrine of Four Aryan Truths and the Eight-fold Path. The Aryan Truths are that there is sorrow, that there is a cause of suffering, that there is a cessation of suffering, that this cessation is attainable to one and all if only they steer the Eight-fold path of moral life, which are, right views, right aspirations, right speech, right behaviour, right livelihood, right efforts, right thoughts and right contemplation. This is the way to Nirvana which is also the highest bliss, perfect freedom, and Divine love to be achieved in human life. At Saranath, with this pure and simple ethical religion, Buddha set the wheel of religion (Dharmachakra) rolling. Religion of the Vedanta which got stifled by dry discussions, strange asceticism and selfish rituals, got a new life. As the first missionary religion its wheels moved thenceforward for 2,500 years far and wide covering two-thirds of the globe. He was 'the first man to give the complete set of morality'⁹ and 'set in motion the highest moral ideas any nation can have',¹⁰ Vivekananda

9. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1972) op. cit., vol. 7, p. 41.

10. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1971) op. cit., vol. 2, p. 143.

said. And that was enough to lead humanity out of bondage.

With this new face of religion, the enlightened one now began to move from kingdoms to commoners, preaching his message of Dhamma. And people came running, listened, and took refuge in the Dhamma.

The venerable ascetic Malunkya-putta, one day approached the Buddha, and asked why the Buddha had not elucidated metaphysical questions like whether the world is finite or infinite; if the soul is identical with body or not; if the saint exists after death or not. The Blessed One answered that if anyone thought that he would get answers to these metaphysical questions before leading a truly religious life, 'that person would die... before the Tathagata had ever elucidated this to him.'

The Buddha then compared men seeking knowledge in the midst of all the worldly bondage, to the person who was struck with a poisoned arrow, and who refused to be treated by the physician unless he knew which caste the shooter belonged to, or whether the bow-string was made of swallow-wort, a vulture or heron, or a peacock etc. Similarly the religious life, said the Buddha, does not depend on the dogmas of the body or soul, life after death, or the infinity of the world. Finally he said,

'And why, Malunkya-putta, have I not elucidated this? Because ... this profits not, nor has to do with fundamentals of religion, nor tends to absence of passion, supreme wisdom and Nirvana.... Malunkya-putta bear in mind.... What it is that I have elucidated.'¹¹

The infinite mystery of the universe was an open book to his all-knowing mind. And yet he knew that metaphysical discussions without religious life would just end in mere froth. Once he said that just as there

11. *Buddhism in Translations* (Harvard Oriental Series) op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 117-22.

were many more leaves in the trees than in his hands, similarly 'there is much more (truth) which I have learned and which I have not told you.'¹² 'Why should he be an atheist? He could not speak out about the ultimate illumination', Ramakrishna said of the Buddha, 'Meditating and becoming one with Pure Intelligence is Buddha'.¹³ He never said the Self does not exist. Neither did he say that God does not exist. He kept silent about them. There are many passages in the Pali canon that express themselves as if *Atta* (Atman) were a reality, not discussed, but taken for granted in the most natural way. The *Anatta* does not mean with Buddha, 'no soul' but 'what is not soul'. The other disciples of the Buddha interpreted his death-bed remark *nasti-kinchit* as 'nothing there'. They thought of their master's final attainment as 'nothingness', pure nihilism. But the Sariputta interpreted *Sunyavada* as 'nothing permanent in this phenomenal evanescent world'.¹⁴ The negative aspects of Buddhism, the nihilistic sunyavada etc. were only later interpretations imposed by Nagarjuna, Buddhaghosha and others, on the simple and direct teachings of the Buddha. The northern Buddhists of the Mahayana sect believe in Mukti, accept the various forms of Buddha, like Bodhisattva, Amitabha, Padma Sambhava, Avalokiteswara and even Taradevi. The Ceylonese Buddhists accept Nirvana as annihilation, as their final goal. This nihilistic despair of later Buddhism resulted in the most revolting orgies of Tantra,¹⁵ a horrible degeneration of the clear ethical religion of the Buddha, which India drove out. At a time when, in Vivekananda's metaphor, 20,000 blind priests

sought to lead 20,000,000 blind men to God, the Buddha appeared and said, 'stop quarrelling. Be perfect.'¹⁶ 'Buddha brought Vedanta to light, gave it to the people, and saved India'.¹⁷ said Vivekananda.

At Gayasirsha when one thousand Jatilas or Agnihotris, the fire-worshippers following Vedic rituals, surrendered to Buddha, he gave the celebrated fire sermon:

Everything O Jatilas, is burning on fire—the eyes, the senses, and the thoughts. They are burning with the fire of lust, ignorance, hatred and glamour. As long as the fire finds inflammable things upon which it can feed, so long it will burn, and there will be birth and death, decay, grief, lamentation, suffering, despair and sorrow. Understand the four noble truths, walk in the Eight-fold path of holiness, be delivered from selfishness and attain the blessed state of Nirvana.¹⁸

Sariputta and Mougallayan were wandering ascetics and friends. They promised each other that whoever would get the truth earlier, would reveal it to the other. After years of devoted spiritual practice at the feet of the Buddha, Sariputta attained Nirvana. His shining face drew the words from his friend, 'Your face is shining. Can it be that you have attained the immortal?' 'Yes, my friend, I have attained the immortal', was his reply. Mougallayan came and took refuge at the Buddha's feet. Sariputta was considered the *Agrasavaka*, the chief disciple of the Buddha, and the Blessed One never accepted any personal service from this great disciple.¹⁹

At Rajgir one thousand monks led by the venerable brahmin ascetic Kassapa took refuge at the feet of the Blessed One and his doctrine. At the Venuvana of Rajagriha (Rajgir) Buddha gave to these new converts his sermon on the annihilation of the tiny, egotistical self.

12. *Buddha and Bodhisattwa*, op. cit., p. 83.

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. Swami Nikhilananda (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre) p. 947.

14. *Buddha and Bodhisattwa*, op. cit., p. 128.

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1971) op. cit., vol. 2, p. 509.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 508.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

18. *Buddha and Bodhisattwa*, op. cit., p. 19.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

There is no actor behind our actions, no Lord behind our deeds. As the sun's power through a burning glass causes fire to appear so through the cognizance born of sense and object, the mind originates and with it, the ego, the thought of self, whom some Brahmin teachers call the Lord. Ye that are slaves of the self receive the good tidings that your cruel master exists not.

In all the rituals and sacrifice, the Buddha only discovered downright materialism and abject selfishness to appease the endless hunger of the ego and the little self of the worshipper. God was only a mockery. The Upanishadic concept of Self which can be realized only in utter selflessness and the extinction of the ego, was neither known to the seekers nor practised by teachers. At Sravasti the well-known fire-worshipping brahmin Aggi-Bharadwaja saw the radiant monk entering the city with a begging bowl. Enraged, he shouted out, 'Stop there. O ye fallen monk, the shaven-headed outcaste. Do not move further.' The Buddha replied, 'Are you aware how is a brahmin outcaste?' 'No', replied the puzzled brahmin. Standing there the Buddha gave his long discourse telling how selfishness, heartlessness, hatred, anger, jealousy, and envy degrade even the highest brahmin to the level of an outcaste; and then he finally said, 'It is not birth which makes of a man the fallen or the brahmin. It is action which makes a man fallen or a brahmin.' The brahmin got illumination and took refuge at the feet of the Buddha.²⁰

At Kapilavastu, the royal barber Upali, sought to enter the spiritual life. The blessed Lord accepted him and Upali later on became the chief recorder of his gospels. The Buddha gave without any reserve, without any thought of gain, any personal motivation whatsoever. He was, as Vivekananda said the 'ideal Karmayogin' who had learnt to work only for work's sake. He indeed

was 'a working jnani' who carried Karma-yoga to a level of 'perfect practice'. Out of such life-long work without the least tinge of personal motivations, comes the gigantic, world-conquering will-power of a Buddha, said Vivekananda.²¹

* * * * *

He glorified compassion to all beings as the way to liberation. 'As the light of the moon is sixteen times stronger than the light of all the stars, so love or compassion to others is sixteen times more efficacious in liberating the heart than all other religious accomplishments taken together.'

This was the Buddha. At the court of Bimbisara the Blessed One offered, under the impetus of 'cosmic love', as Vivekananda said, himself for sacrifice instead of the goat which was being led to the sacrificial altar. 'I, the Buddha, have attained Nirvana. If by sacrificing this little goat you expect to get merit, how much more will you get by sacrificing the Buddha?' he said to the king.

Ignoring the invitation of the Licchavi princess he accepted food from the hands of the courtesan Ambapali who rejected the offer of royal wealth in order to receive the Holy one. She got transfigured, donated her entire garden to the Buddhist Order, and after the Buddha's death entered the order as a nun. And when he lay dying, the ascetic Subhadda came running from afar and wanted to learn the doctrine from the Blessed One's own lips. The dying Buddha taught and accepted Subhadda as his last monastic disciple.²²

When the Buddha visited Kapilavastu, Mahaprajapati Gotami, the queen mother who brought the child Siddhartha up after his mother died seven days after the child birth, sought to enter the spiritual life as

²¹. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 55, p. 117 and p. 118.

²². *Buddhism in Translations* (Harvard Oriental Series) op. cit., vol. 3, p. 107.

²⁰. Bhikku Silabhadra, *Sutta Nipata* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Mahabodhi Society, 1348 B.S.) pp. 23-7.

nun. The Buddha refused. The Queen Mother then narrated with tears how she nurtured the Buddha as a child with all affection and sacrifice. Yet the Buddha remained unmoved. Finally Ananda reminded his master that it was the Buddha only who preached to everyone and everywhere that Nirvana is for all. The Buddha then opened the historic avenue, and Mahaprajapati Gotami, along with Yashodhara and others, entered the Order and became the first nun to lead the Order of nuns under the leadership of the Buddha.²³

Vishakha, the wealthy wife of a Sravasti merchant received the Buddha. She, too, prayed for entry into spiritual life, and got from the Blessed One the boon to serve the monks and nuns of the Order. She built the great monastery at Sravasti which thenceforward became the most important headquarter of the Lord, where he gave as many as 871 discourses, and narrated 416 Jataka stories. Vishakha later on emerged as *Sanghamata* and lavishly used her treasure for the nurturing of the new-founded Order of monks and nuns.²⁴

* * * * *

The infinite compassion for all beings in bondage, and the absence of any selfish motivation behind every action of the Buddha, was a consummation of all the sacrifices that Buddha had made as Bodhisattva (Buddha to be) in the last 547 births. The Jataka stories which describe the previous lives of the present Buddha, only confirm the Vedantic view that one has to pass through the entire gamut of human experiences before attaining perfection. The Jataka stories tell us that the Buddha was born as king 85 times, as courtier 24 times, brahmin 24 times, prince 24 times, landowner 23 times, merchant 13 times, scholar 22 times, religious teacher 26 times and an advanced soul, a rishi 83 times. He was

also born as low-caste man and even animals several times. In each birth the *pratyeka-Buddha* or the Buddha-to-be, faced the temptations and sufferings of life and proceeded to a higher evolution through sacrifice, austerities and good deeds.²⁵

At Kapilavastu when the Buddha heard of the austerities that his wife Yashodhara had undergone after his departure, he remembered and narrated stories of previous births in which, too, Yashodhara, was his deeply loving and loyal wife. (Chandra Kinnara Jataka). In another past life a courtesan Shyama was drawn to Bodhisattva who ultimately saved himself by fleeing from her.

As a monkey in a past life he made himself a bridge for his friends to cross in safety, an incident immortalized in the sculptures of Barhut Stupa. He had even given a hint that he was once born as a black saint of Kapilavastu who was, according to some tradition, the philosopher Kapila himself.

Finally, in the penultimate birth as prince Vishvatarā, he sacrificed everything including his wife and children, and himself. The last boon he asked in this last incarnation as Bodhisattva, was,
Ferry me safe over existence sea
Beyond the world of birth and gods
I will cross and I will be free.²⁶

When Siddhartha was born, the child said, according to Buddhist tradition, 'I am supreme in the world. This is my last birth'. The Mahayana Buddhists accept the Bodhisattva in a far deeper sense, where he emerges as Avalokiteswara, the God who looks at the same time at hundred different directions in order to respond to human suffering. And Bodhisattva even descends and reincarnates himself as *Abhisambuddha*

23. Ibid., p 441.

24. *Buddha and Bodhisattva*, op. cit., p. 27.

25. Ibid., p. 102.

26. Ibid., p. 134 and p. 85.

for the salvation of all mankind, a concept which is similar to the Hindu idea of Avatar.

* * * * *

Ostentatious Vedic rituals, miracle-mongering and severe asceticism became the hall-mark of spirituality when Buddha appeared on the Indian scene. Rituals and sacrifice he already banished from his new religion. Now he cautioned his monks never to indulge in miracle-mongering. He even took to task some errant monks who practised miracles. What he expected was Saddha (Sraddha) to the doctrine or the Dhamma.

The Ajivakas, or the wandering monks during the Buddha's time did not believe in the Vedas, but remained naked and practised strange austerities. Coming into contact with the moral splendour and the beauty of the Buddha and his message, eighty thousand disciples of Purana Kasyapa, a leading Ajivaka leader, left their teacher and was drawn to the Blessed One. Frustrated, Purana committed suicide in the river.

Yet Buddha's victory was not always easy. His own cousin brother Devadatta who became a monk in the Order, tried to split the Order under his own leadership and even kill Buddha twice. Finally Devadatta's followers, after listening to the words of Sariputta and Maugallayan, left Devadatta who then had a pitiable death. The Tirthikas, another rival religious group of Sravasti, who felt defeated with the coming of Buddha, employed a woman, Chinchha Manabika to spread a false story to defile the rising fame of Buddha. But the truth was soon discovered. His own monks once quarreled and the Buddha himself left for solitude. Soon the monks recovered their sense and restored harmony. Before his own eyes the kingdom of Kapilavastu fell apart due to royal rivalry. Most of the members of the royal family died or got murdered. The Calm One remained always unruffled. 'Death is inherent in all component things, but truth will remain for ever. Work out

your salvation with diligence', the Buddha said to his followers.

* * * * *

Nearly 2,500 years have passed after the Buddha attained enlightenment under the Bo tree. For nearly five hundred years Buddhism reigned in India and brought great flowering of culture, education, art, sculpture, even political expansion. After the first five hundred years of spirituality, and the next five hundred years of the rule of Dhamma or law, the religion of Buddha degenerated into hideous Tantras during the subsequent five hundred years. Then Buddhism, 'the rebel child of Hinduism,'²⁷ as Vivekananda said, was virtually banished from the shores of India. What remained got absorbed into the vast ocean of the Mother Church, Hinduism. The Hindu monk Siddhartha who had one day revolted against the Vedic priestcraft, was hailed in the same Hindu fold, as a saviour, one of the ten Avatars, or incarnations of Hindu mythology.

Even now in the quiet deer-park (Mrigadaba) of Saranath, the stupas of Nalanda, the shal forests of Kushinagara, one can feel the living presence of the Buddha. Time could not fade the gigantic spiritual power of the great One, 'the universal man perfect in love and unity'. Even now when one stands on the lofty cliffs of gridharakuta hill at Rajagriha overlooking the vast panorama stretching upto horizon, where Buddha had once lived and spoken, one hears the silent resonance of the great assurance delivered long ago, 'From me no danger to aught that lives'. Even now when one stands under the Bo tree, the words of the Enlightened One rings in the great active silence.

'In him who depends (on others), there is wavering. In him who is independent, there is no

²⁷. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) op. cit., vol. 3, p. 275.

wavering. Where there is no wavering, there is tranquillity. Where there is tranquillity, there is no passionate delight. Where there is no passionate delight, there is no coming and going (in rebirth). Where there is no coming and going (in rebirth), there is no falling from one state to another. Where there is no falling from one state to another

there is no "here," no "beyond", no "here-and-yonder". THAT IS THE END OF WOE.²⁸

^{28.} *Some Sayings of the Buddha* (According to the Pali Canon). F.L. Woodward, Oxford University Press. 1939. p. 330.

THE BIRTH OF THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA BY M.—I

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

1. Introduction

Shri Mahendra Nath Gupta, a householder-disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, hiding himself in the first letter of his name 'M.' in English, and 'Ma' with a prefix 'Shri' in Bengali, has become known all over the world as the illustrious recorder of the wonderful Lila (sportive Divine Intercourse on Earth) of Sri Ramakrishna with his devotees and spiritual seekers from about 26 February 1882, when he most probably first came into contact with the Great Master, till a few months before the Master's passing away on 16 August 1886. These records, noted down in his diary on the days of his visits to Sri Ramakrishna in brief mnemonic form in Bengali, were elaborated in due course into a graphic and lively narrative, recreating the original scenes.¹

1. M., recorded only the events of the days on which he was present and what he saw and heard himself. It is said that he had not elaborated and published the accounts of all the dates of his visit which he recorded in his diary. Moreover, he published the events of different dates selectively from his entire records, and not chronologically in any of the five volumes, and also the publication ends with the events of 24 April 1886, though Sri Ramakrishna entered Mahasamadhi on 16 August 1886. Fortunately, M. added a substantial last chapter 'After the passing Away', covering his visits in 1887 to the newly started monastery of the young disciples of Sri Ramakrishna at Baranagore, on 21 February,

At first some selected portions of the records were rendered into English by M. himself, directly from the original notes, and published in the *Brahmavadin*, Madras, in four issues from October 1897 to May 1898 with the caption 'Leaves from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna'. Later on, adding much more material to it, a volume was published by him through the *Brahmavadin* Office, Madras, in 1907, with the title *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. From early 1898 onwards, the narratives were published in original Bengali from Calcutta under the title *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, at first in instalments in various Bengali journals, and later in five volumes between 1902 and 1932.

This nectar-exuding work, immediately attained the rank of a scripture and was hailed by religious people and liberal-minded all over the world as a great boon to humanity. It was compared to the ancient devotional scripture, the great *Srimad Bhagavatam*, in which the illustrious sage

25 March, 8-9 April, and 7-10 May, with an introduction about the starting of the monastery. It sheds much light on the relationship between Sri Ramakrishna and Narendra and gives an insight into the early days of the monastery and the shaping of the future monks.

In the Appendices, M. included the accounts of a few days in 1881, before he came into contact with the Master in February 1882, and on one day in 1885 given by others.

Veda-Vyasa depicts the Lilas of Sri Krishna. The epithet of 'Modern Vyasa', who gave this new '*Sri Ramakrishna Bhagavatam*' to the world, was appropriately applied to M. It is interesting to note that the word 'Kathamrita' itself is taken from a verse in the ancient *Bhagavatam*, which was used by the Gopis intoxicated with divine love to describe the 'Ambrosial-Story' (Divine Words and Deeds) of Sri Krishna.

In recent times, there has been a natural curiosity among some scholars and devotees as to (1) when did M. begin to feel that his diary notes of Sri Ramakrishna's divine acts and conversations, made for his own personal use, will be of benefit to humanity as a whole? (2) What are the factors that finally induced M. to elaborate them into narratives and publish them? (3) Why did M. first publish his Bengali notes in English rendering in far away Madras? and (4) Which and where are the two pamphlets of the *Gospel* that he sent to Swami Vivekananda in 1897, which drew from him very apt and highly eulogistic comments, authenticating their contents, in a letter?

2. *The Recorder and his nature*

It was known to Sri Ramakrishna that M., who had the habit of keeping a diary from early boyhood, was keeping a record of the happenings in his presence, centering round himself (Sri Ramakrishna) and the devotees. And it seems he also knew the future role those notes will play in the life of humanity, for he provided opportunities to M. to be close at hand during conversations, and indirectly guided him to record the ideas correctly by asking M. often to repeat what he had said. It was, as it were, M. was divinely appointed to do that work. It is also said that Sri Ramakrishna forbade Rakhal and Tarak from noting down, saying, that there is a person who is assigned the work by the Divine Mother. However, Sri Ramakrishna had cautioned M. not to

make propaganda about him by writing in papers and journals as Keshab Chandra Sen was doing.

The first express reference to M.'s notes was made by the great dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh, the newly transformed ardent devotee of the Master who seems to have attached some sentimental value to it in his own way. M. has himself recorded that on 23 April 1886, a few months before the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, Girish accosted him at the Cossipore Garden-house (where Sri Ramakrishna was staying for treatment of his throat-cancer) and asked M. if he was writing down something about the Master. When M. asked him who said him about it, he replied 'I have heard about it'; and asked M. 'Will you please give it to me?' M., of course, refused and told him that he had written it only for his own use and not for others, and declared, 'You can have it only on my passing away'.²

As time passed after the departure of Sri Ramakrishna in August 1886, (M. the epithet 'M.' however, came into use much later in 1897 after the publication of the *Gospel*, and being a teacher, he was known as Master Mahashay in the Sri Ramakrishna circle) began to meditate more and more intensely and vividly on the events of Sri Ramakrishna's Lila, with his notes in front of him to recall the scenes, to feel his presence constantly. He felt elevated and peaceful thereby and began to feel inwardly, in due course, that his notes would be of

2. But Girish Ghosh had the satisfaction of reading the *Kathamrita* after publication. In a letter to M. dated 22 March 1905, he wrote to M.: 'If my humble opinion is of any value, it is not only that I fully endorse the words of the great Swami (Vivekananda, in his letter of 24 November 1897 quoted later), but add to it in a loud voice that the *Kathamrita* had become my very existence during my protracted illness of the last three years. ... The whole human race has become indebted to you to the end of days.'

great benefit to a wider circle of devotees and spiritual aspirants in India and the world as well.

It is well known, however, that M. was from the very beginning highly sensitive, retiring, and even somewhat timid. He had a feminine nature and bashful, as mentioned by the Master himself, which expressed itself in shyness and withdrawal. He would often hide his devotion, intuitive faculty for high sentiments, and absolute dedication and loyalty. With this amalgam of high qualities, Mahendra Nath was gradually transformed into M. under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna. But some of the untoward features like timidity, and tendency to withdrawal still lingered for sometime before they finally departed and M. would venture forth to publish the *Kathamrita*.

3. Contemporary writings on Sri Ramakrishna

Already writings on Sri Ramakrishna had appeared both in Bengali and English, and a few books also had been published in Bengali. Keshab Chandra Sen had been publishing some information about Sri Ramakrishna and his teachings in his journal *The Indian Mirror*, since 1875 when he came into contact with the Master. Later in his *Nava-Vidhan* (Bengali) he published his *Paramahamser Ukti* (Sayings of the Paramahansa) in Bengali in 1878. An enlarged edition of it was published in January 1887 with a short life appended.

In 1879 Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, an eminent follower of Keshab, had written a beautiful article on Sri Ramakrishna in English in the *Theistic Quarterly Review* dwelling on the Master's comprehensive Sadhana and wonderful catholicity.

Suresh Chandra Datta, a devotee, had published a collection of Sri Ramakrishna's sayings in Bengali, *Paramahansa Ramakrishner Ukti* in December 1884, and a second part of the same in 1886. In 1890,

combining parts one and two, and adding some more sayings, he published it under the title, *Paramahansa Srimad Ramakrishna Upadesh*. And again in 1894 he published another edition combining all the sayings so far collected, along with a short life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Ramachandra Datta, a householder disciple of the Master, had started a Bengali journal *Tattvamanjari* in July/August 1885 at Kankurgachi Yogodyan in which he used to publish information about Sri Ramakrishna. And certainly some articles had appeared on the great life and teachings of the Master in it and in other journals and papers when Sri Ramakrishna passed away in August 1886. He also published a life of Sri Ramakrishna in Bengali, *Sri Ramakrishnadeber Jivana-vrittanta* in July 1890.

And *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Punthi* in Bengali, in the traditional religious verse form, began to be written in 1887 by Akshaya Kumar Sen, another householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. An early edition in part was ready by 1895, a perusal of which earned great encomiums from Swami Vivekananda then in U.S.A. The *Punthi* was completed in 1901.

It is quite possible, as we shall shortly see, that M. may have helped others in the collection of the Master's teachings, directly or indirectly, at least from 1884, from his records, though remaining in the background, a characteristic which he maintained even in the *Kathamrita*.

But what was taking shape in M.'s mind as a result of his devoted and intimate association with Sri Ramakrishna for about four and a half years, and his poring over his notes and intense meditation on them, was something quite different. Probably it was not even known as yet to his own conscious mind. He was not sure how to present those spiritually profound events in the most effective manner. Ideas take time to grow and mature, and they pass through different stages before they bear fruit, just

as in the case of a plant. This was true in the case of Mahendra as well as Narendra, as events reveal.

M. had been gradually formulating his ideas. The seedling of the *Kathamrita*, in the form of his notes, had just begun to grow and put forth some tender colourful leaves by 1889. It had yet to wait some eight years and pass through several stages before it could take the shape of the present full-fledged *Kathamrita*. The outlines were just emerging—the Divinity of Sri Ramakrishna, his outpouring of joy and spiritual wisdom with frequent blissful *Samadhis* bringing the supreme Divine to the clear comprehension of all and within their easy reach, his love and consideration for the lowly and the lost, his upliftment and glorification of women as manifestations of Divine Shakti, his equal regard for all religious expressions and the upholding the unity of all religions, the catholicity, universality, all-inclusiveness, and harmony of his life and message, and finally his *Avatarhood* for the present age. M. felt a strong conviction, in common with Swami Vivekananda, about the great future of his notes.

But M. could not as yet gather up sufficient boldness to express his ideas fearlessly before all. His hesitant and sensitive nature stood in his way. He might have thought of the adverse reactions of the Brahmos who were in the lime light of the day; of the orthodox Hindus who would puh-phuh the holding up of a newfangled *Avatara*; of the reactions of the people in general and of the modern educated in particular. He was afraid that critics and some others may even say, as they actually did later, that M. was putting his own words in the mouth of the illiterate priest.³

3. Apart from the Christian Missionaries, there were some critics who doubted the very authenticity of M.'s record and wilfully cast aspersions on M. Saying: 'Alas, having stayed

It was still the late 1880s. The great life and message of Sri Ramakrishna, who had recently passed away, had yet to permeate to the other parts of India, and the world, and find appreciative echoes. Even the bold Vivekananda hesitated and took time and waited for the propitious moment to preach the personality of Sri Ramakrishna. Is it any wonder that the timid M. hesitated until he was enthused and reassured by the Holy Mother and Vivekananda, to come out boldly with the gospel of the Master before the world? Sri Ramakrishna was as yet an object of adoration and worship to only a few of his close devotees and disciples in and around Calcutta. The currents of religious thought and devotion flowed in the hoary traditional channels, and of Chaitanya, and Jesus Christ in Bengal. There were people who were opposed to Sri Ramakrishna even during his lifetime, and decried what they thought were his pretensions, and that his devotees were setting up an illiterate village priest as an Avatara.

4. *The first visible sprouts*

The first visible sprouts of M.'s groping efforts we come across at Antpur, the birthplace of Swami Premananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, about 40 miles to the northwest of Calcutta, where the Holy Mother had gone on 5 February 1889 with one or two women devotees and some devotees and young disciples of the Master, on her way to close-by Kamarpukur, to spend a quiet week. Among them were Narendra (Vivekananda), Sharat (Saradananda), Yogen (Yogananda), Baburam (Premananda), Vaikunta Nath Sanyal, and Master Mahashay (M.). Sri Ramakrishna's birthday was not very far off (Feb./March), and they all

with such a noble person (Sri Ramakrishna), at last this is the plight of Mahendra-babu. Without the least fear of sin, he has put his own words into the mouth of Sri Ramakrishna.'

wanted to spend some time in the contemplation of the Master's divine life and teachings and in spiritual Sadhana in that quiet little village in the midst of natural surroundings.

In that informal atmosphere, away from the din and madding crowds of Calcutta, in the midst of the group of intimate devotees and disciples of the Master, headed by the Holy Mother, with Sri Ramakrishna's birthday drawing near, a little courage seems to have crept up M.'s mind. And one day, probably on 7 February 1889, it looks M. read out to Narendra or showed some writing of his on the Master. In what form it was, whether it was based on his diary-notes, and whether it was in Bengali or English, it is very difficult to say, for the present. Kathamrita-form took shape some eight years later. But from Narendra's note in English to M. written at Antpur, dated 7 February 1889, it is clear that it was highly impressive and brought out clearly the message of the Master.

Antpur, 7 February 1889.

Thanks 100,000, Master! You have hit Ramakrishna (Ramakrishna) in the right point. Few alas, few understand him!

—Yours Narendra.

P.S. My heart leaps in joy—and it is a wonder that I do not go mad when I find anybody thoroughly launched into the midst of the doctrine which is to shower peace on earth hereafter.

According to Swami Prabhananda, M. read out a part of his elaborated notes from his Manuscript in its early form to the Holy Mother at Nilambar Babu's Gardenhouse at Belur on 11 July (*Ratha-jatra* day) in 1888, and again on 15 March 1890 at M.'s rented house at No. 2, Hemkar Lane, Calcutta, when she was staying there for a few days. We know that the Holy Mother wrote to him on 26 November 1895 in Bengali about the material with him saying, 'Those things, that is, the words of Thakur,

which he has instructed you to preserve for the purpose of propagation, those you do preserve carefully.'

It is in 1897 that we hear again about M.'s writings from the Holy Mother and Vivekananda, and by then the present form of the *Kathamrita* had taken shape. Of this a little later.

5. M.'s Probable Early Contributions

The next we hear of Mahendra Nath Gupta (M.) by name after Antpur, though spelt wrongly, is only in 1892. In that year one Satchidananda Gitaratna published a booklet of 20 plus 4 pages in Bengali on the sayings of *Sri Ramakrishna—Paramahansa-deber Ukti*, dedicated to one 'Shri la Shri-jukta Babu Nilamadhab Ghosh', a Zamindar of Khosnagar, Birbhum District (West Bengal). It contained some sayings of Sri Ramakrishna on spiritual matters. The author has acknowledged his debt in the booklet to 'Shri Mahindra Nath Gupta' for these sayings.⁴ As we have already mentioned, M. might have been giving out anonymously the Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna for publication to others, and he may have

4. The author, Satchidananda Gitaratna, to serve some pious purpose of his own, described his very first attempt, as the combined publication of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd parts of the Sayings. However, towards the end of the booklet he explains why he did so, though actually it was the first publication, there having been no earlier 1st and 2nd parts. Some writers without noticing this and the date of the publication, have opined that M. himself is the author of the booklet under that name (Satchidananda Gitaratna), and that he had read out the first and second part to the Holy Mother earlier, and that Vivekananda, after reading the first part of it, wrote his letter dated 7 February 1889 from Antpur eulogizing it. It is quite clear that this cannot be, since the booklet was published in 1892 for the first time and it is simply a collection of a small number of sayings, while there were larger collections of sayings already published by Suresh Chandra Datta and others.

helped even Suresh Chandra Datta in his collections of Sri Ramakrishna's Sayings, for Datta seems to indirectly acknowledge it in his Preface to the 1894 edition of his book by writing that 'only the teachings which were communicated to us and were proved to be genuine by those men who kept reverent company with Paramahamsadev have found place here.'

We have already seen that in English Sri Ramakrishna's Sayings had begun to appear in Keshab Chandra Sen's 'The Indian Mirror' after 1875. Pratap Chandra Mazumdar also wrote a beautiful article on Sri Ramakrishna in 1879. Prof. G.H. Tawney of the Presidency College, Calcutta, and a Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, had written a paper on Sri Ramakrishna dwelling on 'the character, genius, catholicity, and inspiring power of the great sage' in the 'Asiatic Quarterly Review' under the title 'A Modern Hindu Saint' in about 1892. M. had been a student of Prof. Tawney, probably in the 1870-s. By 1893-94, Swami Vivekananda's momentous triumph in the West was well known and Sri Ramakrishna's life and message began spreading in India and abroad.

When the *Brahmavadin* fortnightly was started in Madras by Vivekananda's disciples, with his guidance and encouragement, in September 1895, to promote the Ramakrishna Movement and propagate Indian thought, from its very first issue on 14 September 1895, the Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna began to appear in English translation regularly.⁵ It may be surmised with some

5. It is interesting to note that in the very first issue of *Brahmavadin* there is an advertisement from the Manager, *The Observer* The Mall, Cawnpore (Kanpur), N.W.F., which says:

'The Observer publishes Teachings and Sayings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva and the Movements of His Disciples, including those of Swami Vivekananda.'

certainty that M. was in close touch with Sri Ramakrishna's monastic disciples who were then living at the Math at Alambazar and with the other religious and intellectual circles. He was well aware of the starting of the *Brahmavadin* and the great and successful work of Swami Vivekananda in spreading the message of Vedanta and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in America and Europe. Naturally, he must have contributed the Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna to the *Brahmavadin* in English, himself remaining incognito, so that they could spread all over India and the West. Prof. Max-Muller now came in close touch with the *Brahmavadin* and occasionally wrote to it also. After getting some information about Sri Ramakrishna from Swami Vivekananda and others, the professor who was also acquainted with the writings of Keshab Chandra Sen and Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, wrote an article on Sri Ramakrishna entitled 'A Real Mahatman' which was published in England in the *Nineteenth Century* in August 1896. Another admirer of Swami Vivekananda, Prof. J. Estlin Carpenter also published an article in the *Inquirer* in England in August 1896 on the effect of the life and work of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in the West. M. was acquainted with all these things as they were publicized in India through the *Brahmavadin* and other media.

(To be concluded)

Another advertisement below is by S.C. Mitra, No. 2, Nayan Chandra Dutt's Lane, Calcutta, reading:

'Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva in Bengali. Re. 1/-, Cloth Re. 1/5 annas.

'Four Lectures of Swami Vivekananda (in the West—the four titles are mentioned)—One Anna each.'

NON VIOLENCE AND SRI RAMAKRISHNA

DR. JALADHI KUMAR SARKAR

Although violence and non-violence are very often taken as synonymous with 'himsa' and 'ahimsa', the dictionary meaning of the word 'violence' is not exactly the same as implied in the 'himsa' part of the word 'ahimsa'. In this short essay, non-violence will be taken as synonymous with 'ahimsa' and will mean non-injury, non-killing and himsa will mean feelings like anger, revengefulness, harshness etc., which are the outcome of suppressed or un-fulfilled desires of harming or causing injury to others.

The very word, non-violence, at once reminds one of the basic tenets of Buddhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Christianity and Gandhism. 'He (Buddha) had once offered himself up to stay the hunger of a tigress. Out of five hundred lives renounced for others, had been distilled the pity that had made him Buddha' says Swami Vivekananda.¹ He also said. 'In the teaching of Buddha, are no God and no soul—simply work. What for? Not for the self, for the self is a delusion.... Very few are there in this world that can rise to that height and work for work's sake'.² 'The Buddhist tenet 'Non-killing is Supreme Virtue', is very good, but in trying to enforce it upon all by legislation without paying any heed to the capacities of the people at large, Buddhism has brought ruin upon India. I have come across many a 'religious heron' (meaning hypocrite) in India, who fed ants with sugar, and at the same time would not hesitate to bring ruin on his own brother for the sake of 'filthy lucre'.³ To what a degenerated form the non-violence of the

Buddhism can be brought down, has been humorously described by Swamiji in connection with his visit to Ceylon. Once a thief broke into the house of a man of this non-killing type. When the boys of the house were giving the thief a sound beating, the master told them not to beat (as non-injury is the highest virtue) but advised them to put the thief in a bag and throw him into water.⁴ The Jains believe in non-injury to every one. Non-killing, and doing good to others are all the ethics and morality, and the rest (God, Priest, Worship etc) are all non-sense. Their non-killing forbade them to boil water or to bathe as that would kill low forms of invisible life present in water. However, a monk could drink water boiled by a householder, as, in that case, the sin of killing animals falls on the householder.⁵ Vaishnavism with which non-killing is generally associated, is not basically different from Hinduism. It has arisen out of decadent Buddhism, from which this religion took a few cardinal tenets of conduct, and made them their own.⁶ Christ was a sannyasin and his religion is essentially fit for sannyasins only.⁷ Gandhiji gave the age-old ethical principle a wealth of meaning so that Ahimsa for him was a potent means of collective struggle against social and economic injustice.⁸

Against the above background, Sri Ramakrishna's ideas on non-violence appear to us as based on pure reason. In answer to the question 'If a wicked man is about to do harm, or actually does so, should we keep quiet?' Sri Ramakrishna told the

1. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1966) p. 248.

2. Complete works of Swami Vivekananda, vol. VIII, Advaita Ashrama, 5, Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta-700014, 1977, p-99.

3. The Complete Works, vol. V, 1979, p. 401.

4. The Complete Works, vol. VII, 1979, pp. 336-337.

5. The Complete Works, vol. VIII, 1977, p. 523.

6. The Complete Works, vol. VI, 1976, p. 109.

7. The Complete Works, vol. VI, 1976, p. 109.

8. Encyclopedia Britannica, Encyclop. Brit, Incorp, Chicago, 1985, p. 200.

story of the snake, Brahmachari and the boys. Once a venomous snake was advised by a brahmachari not to bite others. The serpent obediently followed the monk's advice. In course of time when the cow-boys in the field found that the snake had ceased to bite, they began to play with the snake, rotate it round its tail, and even break its bones. The serpent now lay virtually dead. After some time, the brahmacharin came and enquired about his serpent-disciple. On hearing that the snake had followed his advice of non-violence literally, and got severely injured, he scolded the serpent, 'I asked you not to bite, but I did not forbid you to hiss'. Sri Ramakrishna further continued, 'you must hiss at the wicked people.... But never inject your venom into them. One must not injure others'.⁹ Almost similar advice was given to Mahendra Nath Gupta (Master or M.) when he told Sri Ramakrishna about a cat stretching out its paw to take the fish from M.'s plate and M. showing no resentment.¹⁰ The householder gets perplexed at these instances; what he should do if in his day-to-day family life, simple hissing or frightening does not prevent or rectify the harmful acts? Must he still remain non-violent? His perplexity further increases when he hears from Sri Ramakrishna the story of a man stealing ten rupees of a wealthy man, who after wringing the money out of the thief gives him a good beating and then hands him over to the police, eventually for jail. 'The wicked I' in that wealthy man says 'What! Does't the rogue know whom he had robbed?'¹¹ The householder ponders: has the wealthy man done any wrong by punishing the thief?

Any reader of the Gospel of Sri Rama-

krishna knows that some of his teachings were meant for the monks (as well as for the boys whom he was preparing for the life of renunciation), some for the householders, and the majority for both the groups. Swamiji has also said that the same set of moral rules cannot be preached to all—sadhus and householders.¹² In all the instances Sri Ramakrishna has cited in connection with non-violence of monks, the monk in question is an 'advaitavadin' or a non-dualist. How can a sadhu who feels oneness with the universe cause injury to others? The holy man of Sri Ramakrishna's story was beaten mercilessly by the landlord's men. On regaining consciousness after sips of milk, he told 'he who beat me is now giving me milk'.¹³ It is in this Advaita state of mind, a slap on the back of a boatman produced redness and swelling on the back of Sri Ramakrishna.¹⁴ It is with the same spirit of oneness that Swamiji suddenly put his hands on the shoulders of a quarrelling missionary (Mr. Kalkins) and said, 'Sir, we know very well that we two are the parts of the same whole'.¹⁵ Swamiji told the story of a man in the forest who even when being dragged by a tiger, went on repeating 'Shivoham' (I am Shiva) so long as the voice remained in him.¹⁶ Sri Ramakrishna specifically said 'A Sannyasin need not even hiss'.¹⁷ Non-resistance is for monks, insisted Swamiji.

But for the householder Sri Ramakrishna's teachings are different, 'The body does not endure without trace of lust, anger, and the like. You should try to reduce them to a

9. Swami Nikhilananda, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1969, p. 10.

10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 185.

11. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 103.

12. *The Complete Works*, vol. VI, 1976, p. 109.

13. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 136.

14. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1952, p. 266.

15. Swami Gambhirananda, *Yuganayak Vivekananda (Bengali)* vol. 3, Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Cal-3. 1376 (B.S.) p. 357.

16. *The Complete Works*, vol. II, 1976, p. 198.

17. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 186.

minimum.¹⁸ In the story of the thief stealing money of the wealthy man described above, Sri Ramakrishna certainly did not mean that the thief should be let off scot free, what he seems to have hinted is that the punishment should be just sufficient and even in that, revengefulness (with which the 'wicked I' is associated) should not be allowed to dominate. Sri Ramakrishna even scolded Yogen (Swami Yogananda) who failed to make angry protest when he heard ill of his Guru. But the same Master did not approve when he heard that Niranjana threatened to sink the boat carrying innocent helmsman and oarsmen,¹⁹ when somebody spoke ill of his Guru.

About the extent of non-violence to be pursued by the householders we get some hints from the study of the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, the embodiment of love. She did not hesitate even to physically punish Harish, when he, in his distracted state of mind, began to chase her.²⁰ On hearing that two pregnant women were made to walk for miles by the police, she burst into blazing fury, 'Were there no men to slap those fellows and release the girls?'²¹ She asked one of her devotees to kill the glowworms, just as Sri Ramakrishna once scolded Yogen for setting the cockroach free when the former's directive to kill it was not followed.²² Swamiji's directives in this respect are unambiguous and pointed. 'Resist not evil is a great thing—these are indeed grand principles; but the scriptures say "thou art a householder. If anyone smites thee on the cheek and thou do not return him an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, thou

wilt verily be a sinner.' Manu says 'When one has come to kill you, there is no sin in killing him, even though he be a Brahmin'.²³ 'Turn the other cheek also!'—impossible, impracticable. The Westerners know it.... 'Stand on your own rights' is the rule for the ordinary man'.²⁴ 'Them (the enemies) he must resist. That is the duty of the householder. He must not sit down in a corner and weep and talk non-sense about non-resistance.'²⁵

A comprehensive version of non-violence in eating is obtained from Swami Brahmananda. In answer to a question whether non-vegetarian diet involves sin of killing animals, he said 'No. They say Ahimsa (non-injury) is the greatest virtue, but when? Only after Samadhi, when the supreme knowledge has been attained, when God has been realized in all creatures. Before that no amount of talk can make it so. It comes when you realize that the same atman resides in you as well as in the little ant, and that no difference exists. Before that it is impossible. You may speak of Ahimsa, but truly speaking can you avoid Ahimsa? What food do you take? Potato?... is the potato lifeless? Is the paddy lifeless? Examine a drop of water under microscope and you will find millions of little lives; and you drink it! Again, to live is to take breath. Now, with every breath you kill millions of little creatures. Take the case of those who make much of this vegetable diet. What food do you prescribe? Milk or Ghee? Now how do you get milk? By depriving a poor creature, the tiny calf, of its legitimate food. That is an extremely cruel act. But that is no sin, in common parlance, all the sin is in the bit of fish or meat! Such a flimsy argument cannot stand. The old Hindus never

18. The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, p. 117.

19. Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master, p. 781-782.

20. The Gospel of the Holy Mother—Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna Math Road Madras-4, 1984, p. 77.

21. The Gospel of the Holy Mother, p. 376.

22. Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master, p. 781.

23. The Complete Works, vol. V, 1979, p. 448.

24. The Complete Works, vol. VI, 1978, p. 109.

25. The Complete Works, vol. I, 1977, p. 44.

had such ideas. It is later Vaishnavite interpretation.²⁶

The practical aspects of Ahimsa should be taken not from scriptures as such, but from the lives and actions of the realized ones. We find many such instances in the actions or sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji. Sri Ramakrishna had to face many hostile or unreasonable questions, but these never could generate anger in him. Devoid of egoism he did not even let Mathur Babu know about the kicking he got from the priest lest the latter gets punished.²⁷ The Holy Mother took the abuses cast on her as mere 'words' and nothing else.²⁸ Swamiji said 'If you project hatred and jealousy they will rebound on you with compound interest'.²⁹ He also said 'there was no way but love. If people sinned against us, we must love them

till it was impossible for them to resist it.'³⁰

From what we have seen so far, we are led to conclude that the tenets of non-violence are different for monks and householders. It appears that no acts of injury should create reaction in the minds of Sannyasins who take everything in the Advaita state of mind. The householders when confronted with acts of injury, should first of all 'hiss' or threaten; but in case of necessity or for the sake of self-preservation he should take recourse to right action for defence. But the extent of that right action should not go beyond what is just necessary, and revengefulness should not be allowed to dominate. He must not give too much emphasis on vegetarian or non-vegetarian diet, but try to fill his heart with love for all; such a mind, full of love, will give him the feeling of identity with all creatures and will guide him to discriminate between violence and right action, weakness and the sense of oneness (Advaita) with respect to all.

26. The Eternal Companion, The spiritual Teachings of Swami Brahmananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1981, p. 289.

27. Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master, p. 442.

28. Swami Gambhirananda, Sreema Saradadevi (Bengali) Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Cal-3, 1381 (B.S.), p. 387.

29. The Complete Works, vol. I, p. 262.

30. The Master as I Saw Him, p. 132.

BUDDHA AND VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI NIKHILESWARANANDA

The first thing that strikes anyone who sees the famous portrait of Swami Vivekananda in meditation, is its close resemblance to the sculptures of Buddha in meditation. In America, Japan and England people were struck by this likeness of Vivekananda to Buddha. The two immortal meditation-faces, are unique in the history of the world.

Before going to America, Swami Vivekananda chanced to meet his brother disciple Swami Turiyananda at Abu Road station.

On this meeting. Swami Turiyananda said later, 'I vividly remember some remarks made by Swamiji at that time....He said, "Haribhai, I am still unable to understand anything of your so called religion...but my heart has expanded very much and I have learnt to feel; Believe me, I feel intensely indeed!" His voice was choked with feelings; he could say no more.... Can you imagine what passed through my mind on hearing the Swami speak? "Are not these,"

I thought, "the very words and feelings of Buddha?"¹ Swami Turiyanandaji said further, 'and I remembered that a long time before, when he had gone to Bodh Gaya to meditate under the Bodhi tree, he had had a vision of the Lord Buddha, who entered into his body.... I could clearly see that the whole suffering of humanity had penetrated his palpitating heart'.²

Indeed when we compare the lives and teachings of these two great souls, we are led to think: 'Were not these two souls one and the same manifesting itself on earth with a time difference of twenty-four hundred years?'

Many incidents of the life of Swamiji go to prove that this resemblance is not a mere physical coincidence. Buddha was a born Kshatriya cast in that heroic mould and physically, mentally, and spiritually a giant, and so was Swamiji. Buddha used to go into meditation even in childhood and so did Swamiji. He even had a vision of Buddha after meditation in his childhood. Siddhartha was so compassionate from childhood that he saved the life of a bird after it was struck by the arrow of Devadatta; 'Beley', as was Swamiji called in childhood, had to be locked inside the house to check him from giving away the household articles to the beggars passing by. It was said of Buddha when he was born:

'Who shall deliver men from ignorance or rule the world, if he will design to rule'³

But all the efforts of his father to make him a king failed. Young Narendranath, the future Swami Vivekananda too used to

have two strikingly dissimilar visions of life before his mind as he would go to sleep every night. One was that of a highly successful worldly life, and the other that of a great sannyasin, and he saw himself capable of achieving either. Gradually the dichotomy of the vision got resolved and he made up his mind to adopt the monastic life. All the efforts of his father to get him married were in vain.

Swamiji was assailed by doubts regarding the coexistence of divine justice and mercy, and the presence of misery in the creation of a Blissful Providence, particularly after coming in contact with misery after the death of his father. Buddha had the same feeling when he saw sufferings of mankind in the form of disease, old age and death. In the words of 'Light of Asia', Siddhartha exclaimed:

'How can it be that Brahma would make a world and keep it miserable, since, if all powerful, he leaves it so, He is not good and if not powerful, He is not God? "Channa" lead home again! It is enough! Mine eyes have seen enough!⁴

It was the suffering of humanity and not a desire for personal salvation which throbbed in the heart of Buddha. This made him renounce all, and go for the quest of truth and not the desire for his personal salvation. To quote again that famous poem, 'Light of Asia'—

Because I love my realm, because my heart
Beats with each throb of all the hearts that ache
Known and unknown, these that are mine and these
which shall be mine, a thousand million more
Saved by this sacrifice I offer now.
Oh, summoning stars! Oh! Mournful earth!
For thee and mine I lay aside my youth,
My throne, my joys, my golden days, my nights.⁵

It was the same desire of helping mankind to realize their innate divinity, which led Swamiji to sacrifice his all, even at the

1. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) pp. 388.

2. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) pp. 34.

3. Sir Edwin Arnold, *Light of Asia* (Calcutta/Bombay: Jaico Publishing House, 1949) pp. 10.

4. Ibid., pp. 55.

5. Ibid., pp. 66.

cost of the suffering of his own mother and brothers, and renounce the world. In a letter to Sri Haridas Viharidas Desai, Dewan of Junagadh, dated 29 January 1894, he wrote:

So on the one hand my vision of the future of Indian religion and that of the whole world, my love for millions of beings sinking down and down for ages with nobody to help them, nay nobody with even a thought for them; on the other hand, making those who are nearest and dearest to me miserable. I chose the former.⁶

It was at Bodh Gaya under the Bo tree that Buddha sat down for meditation with a firm resolve to realize the truth:

Let my body dry up, as it were on this seat, let the flesh thereof and the bone sink into dissolution; without realizing that Enlightenment which is difficult to attain even in aeons, this body shall not rise from its seat.⁷ And the illumination came.

It was to Bodh Gaya that Naren's mind turned, and he proceeded for that place with his brother-disciples while Sri Ramakrishna was staying at Cossipore (beginning of April 1882). At that time, according to *Life of Swami Vivekananda* 'He had saturated himself with Buddhist lore. For the time being he was a Buddhist in spirit, the towering intellect of the Enlightened one, the eminent sanity of his views, his uncompromising demand for Truth, his burning renunciation, his compassionate heart, his sweet, deep, and unanimous personality, his sublime morality, and the manner in which he struck the balance between metaphysics and human character—all these had spread to the other disciples. They were all determined, like Buddha, to realize Truth even at the sacrifice of life itself.'⁷ They had inscribed in bold character upon

the walls of the meditation room the above firm resolve of Buddha. After reaching Bodh Gaya they repaired for meditation to the same stone seat under the sacred Bodhi Tree under which the Buddha had meditated and got illumination. The highest State of meditation, the 'Nirvikalpa Samadhi' came to Naren at Cossipore during this period. Incidentally, his last trip before passing away was also to Bodh Gaya on his thirty-ninth birthday. Again it was here while seeing a monastery that Holy Mother was inspired to pray for Her sannyasin children which gave birth to the Ramakrishna Order. In fact Bodh Gaya was the first and last major pilgrimage in Swamiji's life.

It was at Saranath, Benaras, that Buddha first turned the 'wheel of Dharma' after his illumination. It is again at Benaras that Swamiji first made his famous statement: 'I am going away, but I shall never come back until I can burst on society like a bomb and make it follow me like a dog.'⁸ And it was again at Benaras that he inspired the disciples to start the first hospital for serving the Living Shiva, men and women ailing, and dying of starvation and lack of treatment.

After illumination Buddha travelled far and wide over the country on foot spreading the message of Nirvana, the cessation of all desires, through right conduct. Swamiji too travelled all over the country as a parivrajaka, and even went further off to the West in order to spread the message of divinity of all souls and harmony of religions, all over the globe. He himself said, 'I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East'. Buddha founded the Sangha of Sannyasins with the ideal of *bahujana hitaya bahujana sukhaya* namely, 'for the good of many, for the happiness of many'. Swamiji founded the monastic order

6. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., pp. 524.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

8. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., pp. 20.

in the name of his master, with the ideal *Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha*, 'for one's own liberation as well as for the good of others'. To his disciples Swamiji would say, 'Buddha was not a man but a realization. Enter all ye into it! Here receive the key!'⁹ He asked Sister Nivedita, during her initiation, to worship Shiva and then to worship and offer flowers at the feet of Buddha. Nivedita wrote, 'Go thou', he said as if addressing in one person each separate soul that would ever come to him for guidance, 'and follow Him who was born and gave His life for others FIVE HUNDRED TIMES before He attained the vision of the Buddha.'¹⁰

Buddha made the whole of humanity, nay, even the animal kingdom his own. The courtesan Ambapali, the pariah from whom he accepted his last meal and even a barber received the blessings of Nirvana from him. He was ready to sacrifice even his own life to save the life of a goat of Rajgirh. Swamiji's heart too bled for the fallen and the downtrodden. The nautch girl and the cobbler of Khetri, and the poor Musalman fakir of Almora—all received his blessings and homage. From his bleeding heart came these poignant statements: 'Him I call a Mahatman whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a Duratman'.¹¹ 'May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship'.¹² 'So long as even a dog of my country remains without food, to feed and

take care of him is my religion', he said, 'and anything else is either non-religion or false religion'.¹³ Sister Nivedita heard her master saying: 'Of course, I would commit a crime and go to hell for ever, if by that I could really help a human being.' She further wrote: 'It was the same impulse that spoke also in his constant repetition to some few of us, as if it had a special bearing on the present age, of the tale of that Bodhisattva, who had held himself back from Nirvana till the last grain of dust in the universe should have gone in before him to salvation.'¹⁴

According to 'Vajradhvaja Sutra' the resolutions of a Bodhisattva (Buddha to be) are: '...it is surely better that I alone should be in pain than that all these beings should fall into the states of woe. There I must give myself away as a pawn through which the whole world is redeemed from the terrors of the hells, of animal, of the world of Yama and with this my own body I must experience, for the sake of all beings, the whole mass of all painful feelings. And on behalf of all beings, I give surety for all beings.... And why? There has arisen in me the will to win all knowledge, with all beings for its object, that is to say, for the purpose of setting free the entire world of beings.'¹⁵ Thus Buddha taught the gospel of universal compassion which according to Vedanta was based on the idea of the fundamental oneness of all beings. According to him, to renounce Nirvana for oneself, in love for others, is to find oneself in Nirvana, in its real meaning.

On a number of occasions, Swamiji expressed in the way of Buddha this idea of universal salvation. He told his disciple

9. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967) vol. 1, pp. 171.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 114.

11. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, pp. 175.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 399.

13. *His Eastern and Western Disciples, The Life of Swami Vivekananda* op. cit., pp. 644.

14. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 35.

15. *Buddhist Texts through the Ages*, Ed., Edward Conze (New York: Harper and Row Publishers 1954) pp. 132.

Sri Sarat Chakravarty, 'Granted that you attain personal liberation by means of the realization of the Advaita, but what matters it to the world? You must liberate the whole universe before you leave this body. Then only you will be established in the eternal truth.'¹⁶ He said again, 'Do you think, so long as one Jiva endures in bondage, you will have any liberation? So long as he is not liberated—it may take several life times—you will have to be born to help him, to make him realize the Brahman.'¹⁷ He expressed to Sri Girish Ghosh, 'Do you know Girish Babu, it occurs to me that even if a thousand births have to be taken in order to relieve the sorrows of the world, surely I will take them. If by my doing that, even a single soul may have a little bit of his grief relieved, why, I will do it!' Well, what avails it all to have only one's own liberation? All men should be taken along with oneself on that way.'¹⁸ This was the voice of Buddha.

Thus the life and message of Swami Vivekananda echoes, as it were, the message of the Buddha and lends a new credibility to the message delivered 2,500 years ago.

However, Swamiji himself would not let any one compare him with Buddha. He once said, 'Let us all own that we have passions still! Let none ever venture to compare another with Him.'¹⁹ When some asked him if he was a Buddhist, his veneration for Buddha expressed itself in the words: 'I am the servant of the servants of the servants of Buddha'.²⁰ 'Buddha! Buddha! Surely he was the greatest man

who ever lived'²¹ he would say. Again, 'Verily was He the only man in the world who was ever quite sane, the only sane man ever born!'²² The historic authenticity of Buddha was perhaps a reason for the high veneration of Swamiji for Him. But according to Sister Nivedita, '—it was not only the historic authenticity of the personality of Buddha that held him spell bound. Another factor at least as powerful was the spectacle of the constant tallying of his own Master's life lived before his eyes with this world-attested story of twenty five centuries before. In Buddha, he saw Ramakrishna Paramahansa; in Ramakrishna, he saw Buddha. In a flash this train of thought was revealed one day when he was describing the scene of the death of Buddha. He told how the blanket had been spread for him beneath the tree, and how the Blessed One had laid down, 'resting on his right side, like a lion', to die when suddenly there came to him one who ran for instruction. The disciples would have treated the man as an intruder, maintaining peace at any cost about their Master's death bed, but the Blessed One overheard, and saying "No, no! He who was sent is ever ready". He raised himself on his elbow, and taught. This happened four times, and then, and then only, Buddha held himself free to die...the immortal story went on to its end. But to one who listened, the most significant moment had been that in which the teller paused, at his own words, "raised himself on his elbow and taught"—and said, in brief parenthesis, 'I saw this, you know, in the case of Ramakrishna Paramahansa'. And there rose before the mind the story of one, who destined to learn from that Teacher, who had travelled a hundred miles, and arrived at Cossipore only when he lay dying.'²³

16. *Talks with Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) pp. 204.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 357.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 91.

19. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 174.

20. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* op. cit., pp. 566.

21. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 339.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 177.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 176.

Again we are reminded here of Swamiji's own compassionate heart—how he passed his last days, working himself unto death. Just a few days before his passing away, Swamiji was engaged in conversation with his disciple Sri Sarat Chakravarty when Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj rebuked him for tiring Swamiji with serious talks, although he was unwell. Swamiji then said to his Gurubhai, 'Who cares for your medical restrictions and all that stuff! They are my sons; if in giving them instructions my body wears out, who cares of a straw for that!'²⁴ Even on the day of his Mahasamadhi, 4 July 1902, he took a class in Sanskrit Grammar for brahmacharins for 3 hours, walked a long distance with Swami Premanandaji while discussing about founding of Vedic Schools etc.

Swamiji had indeed become one with Buddha and with Sri Ramakrishna, nay, with the whole universe. The following incident as told by Revered Swami Vijnananandaji Maharaj, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna goes to prove how Swamiji's compassionate heart like that of Buddha,

had become one with the whole universe so much so that each wave of suffering anywhere on earth resounded in his heart!

Swamiji had come out of his room at Belur Math walking up and down on the verandah at about one O' clock at night, when Vijnananandaji Maharaj saw him. He went to Swamiji and asked whether he was not getting sleep. Swamiji told him in reply, 'Well, Pesan, you see, I was sleeping soundly but suddenly I was shocked; I thought somebody gave me a jerk, as it were, and I woke up... there must have been some catastrophe somewhere resulting in human suffering and that woke me up'. Vijnananandaji Maharaj, hearing this laughed within himself thinking it rather unnatural to accept. But next morning he found in the newspaper that there was a volcanic eruption earthquake somewhere near Fiji and as a result there was great human suffering. Vijnananandaji Maharaj said he was surprised to find that a catastrophe of that kind which happened 5,000 miles away from Calcutta could disturb Swamiji's sleep. His nervous system seemed to be much more sensitive than a Seismograph! To those who knew him intimately he, indeed, appeared as Buddha reborn for modern times.

24. *His Eastern and Western Disciples, The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., pp. 738.

GANDHIAN ETHICS OF NON-VIOLENCE

DR. PURUSOTTAMA BILIMORIA

Gandhi, like most social realists and practical thinkers, cannot be understood outside of the context, circumstances, and realities of the day in which he 'discovered' this principle of human action, and which, to a large extent, moulded and gave shape to the idea in its narrower application. In fact, Gandhian view on non-violence cannot be adequately appraised without looking at two

other cardinal notions he linked non-violence to—namely, *satya*—truth, and *tapasya*—asceticism. The analysis will lead to the further claim that through this linkage Gandhi was able to turn a basically *negative* attitude—i.e. of not doing violence or causing direct harm to another—into a *positive* disposition and a framework for *action*, albeit a course of action that transcends the

grounds on which the initial confrontation takes place.

Gandhi has often been rebuked by traditionalists for having come heavily under the influence of colonial education and, especially, Christian moralism, with its idea of charity and 'turning' the other cheek, which he then transposed into a relative and particularized moral prescription, thus transforming it into an *universal* ethical principle. This is much like what Immanuel Kant, the 17th century German philosopher, might be said to have done to 'not lying' through his universalization principle. Namely, that if I tell lies everyone would lie and there would then be 'logical' chaos. It follows that I *ought* therefore *not* to lie.

Gandhian philosophy of non-violence is based on three cardinal concepts, that had long currency in Jaina, Buddhist and Hindu ethics, namely, *satya*, *ahimsa* and *tapasya*. *Satya* or truth here is not an epistemological notion, but an ethical idea or principle that has ramifications for the 'form of life' one adopts and lives by. As an ethical category, *satya* is, in traditional Hinduism, equivalent to *dharma*, the performance of duties common to all persons, as well as those pertaining to one's *varna* (caste) and *ashrama* (life-cycle). Basically, there are four castes and four *ashramas*. The 'Laws of Manu' (Hindu law books) state the common law as follows: Contentment, forgiveness, self-control, abstention from unrighteously appropriating anything, obedience to the rules of purification, coercion of organs; wisdom, knowledge of the Supreme Spirit, truthfulness and abstention from anger... form the tenfold law¹.

In a traditional society 'truth' meant living in accordance with norms and modes predominant in a caste-based structure, and that required adherence to one's order in the hierarchy in terms of social duties and obligations incumbent upon the individual. For

historical reasons, and because this was written in the law books, 'truth' *vis-a-vis* the caste-structure was absolutised—i.e. it was regarded to be inviolable.

In the course of the idealization of *satya*, truth became indistinguishable from the ontological or theological category which stands for that which exists, that which really IS, the essence of reality, or the really existent truth. We may note that in Sanskrit *satya* is derived from *Sat*, which means the existence IS. In the Upanishads (philosophical treatises of Hindus) this *Sat* was identified with Brahman, the absolute or highest principle of existence. Thus Brahman alone IS, all else, including the individual self, is derivative. So absolute and transcendent this principle is made to be in parts of the Upanishads, that truth would seem to be beyond any human conception, and indeed beyond personal being, human or divine. Whole of life would be seen as a quest for *satyasya stayam* or 'truth of truth'.² On the religious side, this truth would be identified with *nirvana* or liberation from temporal-cyclic existence, while on the ethical side it would be identified with a more pragmatic orientation, measured in proportion to its capacity to reduce, minimize or eradicate *duhkha* or suffering.

Gandhi begins by accepting the ontological concept of truth, which he more or less equated with God. As early as 1925 Gandhi had said 'God and Truth are convertible terms', and 'to me Truth is God and there is no way to find Truth except the way of non-violence'.³ Various he would also identify the nearest approach to truth as one of love. But this Truth (with capital T) that Gandhi had enthroned on the highest

1. *The Laws of Manu*. VI. 92.

2. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, II, iii. 6 and II.V.14 (*q.v.* trans. Swami Madhavananda, Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975; pp. 234 and 271).

3. Recanted in M. K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1966) pp. 382-83.

pedestal, was now no longer a theological conception but one that cut across all religions and their various gods, and contended with the truth of philosophers. In a key passage, Gandhi summarises 'his continuous and relentless search for truth which began 50 years ago':

If it is possible for the human tongue to give the fullest description of God, I have come to the conclusion that for myself God is Truth. But two years ago, I went a step further and said, Truth is God... 'And when you want to find Truth as God the only inevitable means is Love, that is, non-violence'⁴

In this passage we notice that love and non-violence are identified as being inseparably one. But if absolute truth is not in sight—as the end—what can one do? Surely, love and non-violence are not absolute truth according to this account. Gandhi's response was to relegate non-violence or love to the sphere of 'relative truth'. And so: 'As long as I have not realized this Absolute Truth so long must I stand by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must meanwhile be my beacon, my shield and buckler'.⁵ This allowed him to experiment, as he said, with truth, nay relative truths, in the course of his active involvement in the field of human interrelationship. Joan Bondurant explains, 'As Gandhi pursued his experiments with truth, the concept settled solidly into the sphere of ethical consideration. The emphasis increasingly centred upon the problem of means. The means became more and more specific, while the end—the individual realization of God, which is

Truth—increasingly indeterminate'.⁶ Non-violence becomes the operative principle in this ever-elusive quest for truth.

We must bear in mind that Gandhi was thinking through these ideas not in some intellectual vacuum, but very much in the context of his social and political involvements, first in South Africa, then in India. He desperately needed an instrumentation that could be developed against the adverse forces he was fighting. He found this strategem in the notion of *satyagraha* which he claimed to have originated by underwriting a more positive and active force to truth,—i.e. *truth as action*. But Gandhi also adopts a *social* criterion for judging truth in a given situation. That is to say, he relativises truth to meet the needs of the social animal: 'truth relates to and partakes of human needs'.⁷ For Gandhi, the individual is first and foremost a social being, and all her/his actions therefore must be related to social life and to the well-being of the community. From a negative expression of non-hurt, *ahimsa* as the means becomes a positive expression of service, of love for another, and the bringing out of truth in the human situation. *Satyagraha* and *ahimsa* thus get intertwined in this broader principle of social behaviour.⁸ *Satyagraha*, by the way, is coined from two Sanskrit terms, *satya* (as we have already considered), and *graha* which means 'grasping' or 'seizing' or 'holding firmly to'; thus *satyagraha* is a categorical attitude or 'force' by which one holds firmly to, grasps and preserves until truth is realized in the given situation. It thus has all the connotations of a *force*, but a force that for want of causing harm to another is qualified by non-violence and love, and for want of

4. *Young India*, 31.12. 31. pp. 427-428. *Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. VI, (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1968) p. 98. (This work traces a long series of Gandhi's pronouncements on Truth and God and Reality (*Sat*), which all get identified under one concept.)

5. *Young India*, 925 (Speeches); and *Autobiography*, 1966, (op. cit.) ('Introduction', p. 11).

6. Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence; The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965) p. 20.

7. Joan Bondurant *op. cit.*, p. 22. *Harijan* 7.1.39, p. 417, 28.1.39 p. 441.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

fulfilling merely the individual's desire and selfish end it is qualified by a social criterion.⁹ With Gandhi, *ahimsa* is no longer a moral precept that merely enjoins a negative attitude. In his words:¹⁰

Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of *ahimsa*. But it is its least expression. The principle of *ahimsa* is hurt by every evil thought by undue haste, by lying, by wishing ill to anybody.

He goes on:

I accept the interpretation of *Ahimsa* namely that it is not merely a negative state of harmless but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil doer to continue the wrong or tolerating it by passive acquiescence. On the contrary, love, the active state of *Ahimsa* requires you to resist the wrong-doer by dissociating yourself from him even though it may offend him or injure him physically.

It has been argued that in this identification of *ahimsa* and love, Gandhi shows a marked influence of the Christian notion of charity (with its counterpart in the Greek *agape* and the Pauline 'love'). Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who takes after a similar sort of non-violent struggle for Blacks in Africa, calls loud and clear 'Botha is my brother; I love him.'¹¹ Botha, of course, remains unmoved. These are indeed fine and noble sentiments, but what if this meekness is also a sign of weakness? What if turning the other cheek is another way of not confronting the situation for what it is?

No, Gandhi would reply, non-violence in its dynamic condition does not mean meek

submission to the will of the wrong-doer; rather, it means the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, he said, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire,¹² as, many think, he did himself. Gandhi was careful to distinguish his method of dynamic non-violence from that of passive resistance, which either suggests the lack of capacity to employ violence or tends to be a preliminary step to violence.¹³ Passive resistance, he stated in South Africa, is a weapon of the weak. And he identified passive resistance with cowardice, which is 'always demoralizing', while non-violent action is 'never demoralizing'.

'I do believe', he wrote, 'that when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence.'¹⁴ But of course, in human affairs, Gandhi would not accept that the range of choices was so limited.

The idea of suffering and undergoing hardship and so on, for the sake of interpersonal or social justice, is again something that Gandhi would be uniquely responsible for. Traditionally, such asceticism in the idea of *tapasya* was confined to the individual's quest for absolute truth through an inward and reflective turn, rather than an outward turn.¹⁵ Self-suffering is not for its own sake, but for the demonstration of sincerity, and flowing from the refusal to injure the opponent while at the same

12. *Young India*, 11.8.'20, p. 3, *Selected Works*, vol. VI, pp. 129-131, pp. 157-165; *Harijan*, 12.10.'35.

13. *Harijan* 2.4.'38, p. 65; *Young India* 31.10.'29, p. 356. *Young India*, 11.8.'20, 14.1.'20, p. 5.

14. *Young India*, 11.8.'20, p. 3. (*Selected Works*, vol. VI, p. 176). 'I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she would, in a cowardly manner, become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour.'

15. *Harijan*, 8.9.1940.

9. *Young India*, 14.1.'20, p. 5; 23.3.'21, p. 90; 8.10.'25. *Harijan*, 18.6.'38, p. 152; 25.3.'39, p. 64; or *Selected Works* vol. VI, pp. 171 ff.

10. *Selected Works*, vol. VI, pp. 153-154.

11. Telecast speech during Tutu's ordination, Johannesburg, Sept, 1986. cf Gandhi, *Selected Works*, vol. VI, p. 129.

time holding to the truth. Such, then, are the principles that infuse the concept *satyagraha*. When these principles are applied to specific political and social action, the tools of civil disobedience—non-cooperation, non-violent strike, non-violent freedom struggle, and constructive programs—are devised.¹⁶ Still the question remains, how un-Indian this concept looks from the original elements from which it has been reconstructed, and did Gandhi betray the traditional wisdom? Gandhi argued that he had not betrayed traditional wisdom by renouncing warfare in the civilizing world.

Gandhi defended himself by invoking the *Bhagavadgita* (Gita) which in his reading, decries the evils of warfare on the grounds of violence such an action involves. Ahimsa, he claimed, is as much part of the Gita's teachings as it is of the Upanishads and the yoga tradition.¹⁷ But scholars have disputed Gandhi's reading of the Gita on this score, and argue that the *Mahabharata*, of which the Gita is a part, extolls the necessity of violence on social and political levels. War is part of the warrior's duty, and in the Gita Krishna advised Arjuna to fight for the restoration of their rights against the Kaurava usurpers. (II. 31-33) Gandhi retorts that the warfare in the Gita discourse is an allegory for the constant warfare that goes on *inside* the individual between the forces of good and evil, and that the violence here is tantamount to ascetic self-suffering and renunciation of the individual's desires and passions.¹⁸ This

might be an easy way out, but the Gita and the Mahabharata are not the only Hindu scriptures that inculcate an attitude of war. In the *Ramayana*, the *Arthasastras* (350 B.C.) and right back to the Vedas, war and violence are accepted as being endemic to the human condition.¹⁹ Moreover, what does one do when war breaks out all around you: do you run away? Do you run into the battle-line and like the Kamakazi pilot have yourself killed before you have had the opportunity to stake your claims and rights? That would be too easy a victory for the opponent. In Gita's teaching of Karma-yoga one is taught not to renounce action but to cultivate skill-in-action and to renounce the rewards or fruit of action. Violence may well be justified, but what is important is the attitude, disposition, and the goal-orientation with which the action is carried out.

While the Gita speaks of war, however, there is an associated discussion of the distinctive *action* which removes the egotistical strain, that is, the selfish pursuit of war, so that a balance is provided between the activity of war and the overall nature of desirable activity, which is disinterested action. That is to say, the Gita underscores the type of action that protects one from selfishness and the undesirable destruction that this particular disposition is capable of when left to its own devices. But Gandhi remained unpersuaded. Yet, there is a contradiction in his own position in regard to

16. *Selected Works*, vol. VI, pp. 170-173; 180+185 *Young India* 23.3.'21, p. 90; 29.12.'21, p. 234; 8.1.'25, p. 14, and 27.2.'30, p. 69; *Harijan*, 14.12.'47, p. 468; also 7.1.'39, p. 417.

17. *Harijan*, 3.10.'36; 8.9.'40.

18. This debate is recounted by Gandhi himself in *Harijan*, 5.9.'36, 26.9.'36; 3.10.'36; 1.9.'40 where he gives his own definitive interpretation of the central teachings of the *Gita* to be that of *anasakti* or selfless action, which Gandhi suggests transcends *himsa* and *ahimsa*. Further:

'The Mahabharata depicts for all times the eternal struggle that goes on daily between the forces of good and evil in the human breast...' (*Harijan*, 5.9.'36).

19. Gandhi does not deny this statement but what he wants to do is 'to put a new but natural and logical interpretation in view of the evolution of Hinduism, which is best instanced in the *Gita*. On an evolutionary scale, then, Hinduism should have moved on to non-violence.' (*Ibid.*, 3.10.'36).

at least two or three wars that he was somehow implicated in.

First was his reluctant willingness to cooperate with the British against the Boers in South Africa in 1899, by organizing the Indian Ambulance Corps inspired by his loyalty to the British. His rationale was: 'India can achieve complete emancipation only through development within the British Empire. Therefore we must help the British.'²⁰ A similar situation arose when the so-called Zulu rebellion broke out in Natal in 1906. Though his sympathies were with the Zulus, Gandhi sided with the British, for Gandhi believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world. He considered it his duty to help the British.²¹ Did the brown-English gentleman find himself too meek in front of the mighty bull-dog? Was his loyalty so strong to the British that he would not raise his finger against oppressors, even when he took on the independence struggle for India to free itself from the Empire?²² Thirdly, in 1917 when the Allies began to suffer heavy assaults from German attacks, the British Viceroy in India called upon Indian leaders to organize recruiting of Indian soldiers. Gandhi went and supported the resolution on recruiting. Again, his excuse was 'whole-hearted cooperation with the British government.'²³ Where had *Ahimsa* retreated to?, asked his sceptical friends. Gandhi remained unperturbed.²⁴ Then when Hitler began to persecute the Jews by the millions,

Gandhi's answer was *ahimsa* and preparedness on the part of the Jews to go all the way to the guillotine. This would have meant nothing sort of condoning genocide! Gandhi failed to recognize a distinction between a rule-governed state-of-war and intended or potential genocide as Hitler was bent on carrying out. Gandhi's support for the British against Germany, however, remained unstinted.²⁵ But at a time when the British should have been fought on the home-front, India was sending its best men to support the British elsewhere. This caused quite a furore in the Indian Congress. Subhas Chandra Bose, a Bengali revolutionary and militant, broke off from the Indian National Congress to form his own army with the help of the Germans and Japanese to fight the British at home. Gandhi denounced this movement with vehemence.²⁶

Gandhi's refusal to resort to violence at home, it might be argued, only led to its out-break in other sectors of the community, for the situation was dangerously volatile, and violence its inevitable consequence.

More seriously, the element of self-sacrifice and non-violent agitation that Gandhi preached was not, in the eyes of many critics, without its own form of violence, albeit of a subtler kind. Erik Erikson, in his study of Gandhi, has noted Gandhi's own practice of *satyagraha* sometimes relied surreptitiously upon a form of psychological violence while overtly eschewing any kind of physical violence.²⁷ While a *satyagrahi*

²⁰. Confessions in *Young India*, 11.8.'20; 17.11.'21; 23.3.'22; *Young India*, 18.5.'21.

²¹. *Ibid*, especially *Young India*, 17.11.21.

²². Here Gandhi admits that he was wrong in thinking that he was part of the Empire, or that the Englishmen were unstintedly good. He puts his decision to serve in the war due to his own weakness. But he never did think that going away from the war would have served the purpose of *ahimsa* any better or any worthier. This is the paradox. *Harijan*, 17.10.'36.

²³. *Ibid*.,

²⁴. *Young India*, 5.11.'25—his response was

again the same: he was mistaken in helping not the war but the British.

²⁵. *Harijan*, 23.9.39. 30.9.39.

²⁶. *Harijan*, 22.9.'40. (Speech in Bombay, 18.9.'40).

²⁷. Eric Erikson, *Gandhi's Truth* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970). See also Max Charlesworth, 'The Concept of Violence', *Comprendre* vol. 42-48 (1981-83), *revue de politique de la Culture Societe Europeane de culture*, Jemise, pp. 31-36.

refused to inflict physical violence on the opponent, nevertheless, a kind of psychological warfare is invariably declared that has the potential of inflicting harm on both parties.

Now Gandhi, in his belief in the universality of human goodness and equality, was moved to renounce the caste system. But this did not happen with him overnight. In his early years Gandhi favoured the caste-system but not in its multifarious divisions and subdivisions. In 1920 he said: 'I consider the four divisions alone to be fundamental, natural, and essential,'²⁸ and he wrote 'prohibition against intermarriage and interdining is essential for the rapid evolution of the soul.'²⁹ But ten years later he reversed his stance: 'Restriction on intercaste dining and inter-caste marriage', he declared, 'is no part of Hindu religion. Today, these two prohibitions are weakening Hindu society.'³⁰ As to the untouchables he had not made any concessions. But by 1946, he had gone as far as to say that he would not sanction marriage of his *ashram* residents unless one of the parties is an untouchable.³¹ The untouchables were now *Harijans* in his coinage, which means 'Children of *Hari* or the Lord'. In present day secular India a number of places is reserved for the so-called scheduled caste and the underprivileged, in schools, territory institutes and the public sector. Merit is often not the consideration.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, which Gandhi was fond of referring to in his judgements, did

28. *Young India*, 8.12.'20. See also Pocket Gandhi verses, *My Varnashrama Dharma* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, (completed 1965), for collection and Gandhi's utterances on caste.

29. *Young India*, 6.10. '21.

30. *Young India*, 4.6.'31, 4.11.'32, and *Ashram Observances* pp. 81-90 *Harijan*, 30.11.'35, 13.2.'37. See also discussion on Louis Fischer *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World*, Signet Key Books, 1954, pp. 111-115.

31. *Harijan*, 7.7.'46; more strongly in *Hinduism Standard*, 4.1.'46.

not undermine caste duties, although it based these on qualities, even as it gave prominence to rights—the rights of the rightful heirs to their beset kingdom. In fact, the *Gita* formulated a fine equilibrium between duties and rights, which Gandhi could not comprehend or accept.³² But it must be to the credit of Gandhi for having re-introduced with a greater and more compelling force the locution of rights in the sphere of social action, rights that get written in the law books and are guaranteed by the nation's constitution.³³ And that is no mean achievement.

Again, non-violent technique was Gandhi's means of winning the rights, whether within the traditional, though by now modifying, caste-structure, or outside of it. For this right is a relative truth as the goal to be achieved in social interrelation. Non-violence, which in traditional account was interpreted in subordination to caste and stages of life, now crosses the caste-boundaries and in effect seeks to undermine the system itself.

All of the above goes to show, how fundamental non-violence as a technique had become for Gandhi; so fundamental that he considered non-violence to be 'the law of the human race' and intrinsic to the human condition. While moral life to some, such as Erich Fromm, is a rationalisation of the 'pleasure principle' in consonance to and from pressures of the 'reality principle', for Gandhi the 'moral instinct' is part of the evolutionary endowment of the human being along with 'reason, discrimination and free-will'. Violence stems from unchecked expression of anger, desire, ignorance and malice and other passions, all of which in Gandhi's psychology are capable of being

32. Gandhi interpreted *Gita's* retention of caste-system on the basis of qualities and corresponding duties only.

33. Later, he was careful to build in protective clauses of 'rights' for Harijans and women.

subdued, and subdued they must be if human being is to progress in its evolutionary thrust. Gandhi was not suggesting a Nietzschean superman with his will to be, but rather the human as he/she truly is, both as an individual reality and as a communal reality.

While Jainism and Buddhism gave greater weight to *ahimsa*, neither inculcated a positive attitude of service to others, regardless of race, sex or creed (with the exception of King Ashoka, 3rd century B.C. a Hindu ruler whose dynasty was engaged in ruthless wars, but the sight of the carnage led him to espouse non-violence he also became a Buddhist and helped spread Buddhism to distant lands: his was a truly and one of the world's first welfare states).

More significantly, Gandhian non-violence achieved for India its freedom or *svarajya* from the British with a minimum of bloodshed, although there were occasional outbreaks of violence, through disappointment or frustration or intense provocation. There was greater violence when the communal riots between Hindus and Muslims began. British diplomacy has partly to blame for this.

Although Gandhi had the deepest loyalty to the British and often would not violate the law of the government, his celebrated Salt March showed that he would follow his conscience over and against the law.

This fact of civil disobedience was to inspire Martin Luther King Jr. and his Black followers in America to mount a non-violent struggle for civil rights for the

Blacks. And what a success that has been. Similar tactics have been adopted in South Africa, ironically the country where Gandhi first conceived the idea of *satyagraha*.

Is there a way to avoid violent confrontation and warfare between nuclear powers, major or minor? Can there be any justification for an all-out nuclear warfare? One notable world-power at least as well as a number of authorities on conflict and management, claiming that while actual nuclear warfare could never be justified on either moral or utilitarian grounds, the *threat* of nuclear reprisal had been effective in maintaining peace with a major opposing nuclear power. Via the strategy of nuclear deterrence, and by maintaining the military balance, 'We protect the essential values of Western civilization—democratic government, personal liberty, religious freedom—and we preserve peace'. (Haig)³⁴

But how can one say that deterrence or threat of nuclear warfare is free from violence, perhaps of a lesser degree, than in an actual warfare? For one, the deterrence principle is based on the acceptance of the high probability of all-out retaliation and counter offensive in the event of a strike.

Perhaps, then, Gandhian non-violence as a positive virtue, and not a virtue by default, might serve as a healthy reminder of what is lacking in the world today, and what might be most under jeopardy—along with our lives—as we move closer to the 21st century.

34. Quoted in Max Charlesworth, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

So if you want to be victorious, you must be ready for a fight. The only way to win a crown for endurance is to take part in a struggle. You reject any chance of the crown if you refuse to endure; but if you want the crown, you must boldly engage in the struggle and face all that comes with patience.

—from *The Imitation of Christ*

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE BHAGAVAD GITA: BY P. NAGARAJA RAO. Published by the Author. 54 Rangachari Road, Mylapore, Madras 600 004. 1986. Pp. viii + 200. Rs. 20.

Here is yet another treatise on the Gita. The Gita is the most translated book in the world, second only to the Bible (this latter as Gandhiji said was due to world-wide empire of the British at that time. The Empire-builder was helped in his task of conquest of local populations, by the missionary, Bible in hand). The Gita has been translated into over 75 languages and there are some 2000 standard versions, apart from numberless Gitas, produced by Gurus of uncouth sects and Ashramas. Dara Shikoh, Abul Fazl, and Faizi brought out Persian translations. Warren Hastings commented on it in English, so did Annie Besant and a host of other foreigners; for it is said that in a very real sense, to understand Gita is to understand India, Indian religion, Indian philosophy and culture. Madhva-charya said the Gita is the honey of the flower of *Parijat* (a tree that fulfills all desires). The Gita is an incomparable jewel extracted from Mahabharata; consisting of 700 Shlokas. Before the coming of printing, interpolations (by vested interests) were almost the rule in our holy scriptures. Some critics have pin-pointed about 170 verses of the Gita as being spurious or after-additions. For instance, Chapter VIII, Verses 23-26, which purport to state that for six months (*Dakshinayana* or Southern Path of the sun), gates of salvation remain closed, a yogi who dies during that half year returneth to earth (compare Bishma Pitamaha's postponing death till the *Uttarayana* or Northern Path). Salvation is only for those who die in the other half year. This can't be Krishna's idea; a person's hereafter is decided according to his good or bad deeds, not according to the chance timing of his death.

Be it said to the credit of our author Nagaraja Rao, that even in this over-crowded, almost saturated or exhausted field of Gita interpretation, he has something fresh and original to offer, in part based on his own practice, that could move the reader to his depths. He is already the author of over a dozen works, mostly published by prestigious institutions. His sparkling gift of phrase-turning, together with almost an encyclopaedic knowledge of other works on the subject makes this book a Gita Study with a difference.

The Gita, according to the writer, is India's Sermon on the battle field. The Arjuna disease is common to us all. We seek to avoid our own Dharma (Duty), because it is difficult or unpleasant, and rationalise it as compassion or pacifism. Arjuna does not like his own Dharma as a Kshatriya (Warrior); he would rather practise the Duty of a Brahmana. Most of us don't do our own duty but sermonise on the duty of others. We must shake off our faint-heartedness and timidity, face facts and situations and not run away from them. "Thy business is with action only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive nor be thou to inaction attached". This is the Central Idea of the Gita. Karma Yoga is the medicine administered to Arjuna and through him to humanity. It is opposed to do nothingness. The Gita insists on unselfish performance of duty. It removes inactivity and indolence from Sannyasa. There is no freedom in fleeing away from action. There is freedom only in action. Phala-Tyaga is not Karma-Tyaga (renouncing fruit does not mean renouncing action itself). The Gita is a sermon for full-blooded action, not retiring to mountain tops or monasteries as a recluse. As Gandhiji said, "There cannot be happiness for any of us, until it is won for all of us." B.G. Tilak, who was the first among moderns to pronounce the Gita as the clarion call for desireless action, called it Energyism; earlier commentators had read Vedantism or Sankhya or Sannyasa etc in it. Tilak's aim was to arouse and awaken the spirit of activity in the nation, to fight for India's independence. We should give up ego, not activity. Ego-renunciation is not world-renunciation. The ignorant says, "If there is no fruit, I shall have none of the action." But as Gandhiji says, "As a matter of fact he who renounces (fruit) reaps a thousand fold. He who is ever brooding over results loses the nerve in the performance of the duty". A student who is always thinking of top position in the university is dissipating his effort for his studies and his concentration. But to reap a thousand-fold, this renunciation of fruit must be genuine; not a make-believe or pose to deceive God into granting us a thousand fold gain; God knows even the motives in our heart. We should immerse in the waters of Krishna-Arjuna *Sangam* (confluence). Vinoba wants us to become a willing flute in the hands of Krishna to play his Song Celestial. The Gita is the dialogue of God and

Man. About Avatar, says poet Tagore, "He comes, he comes, he comes, every moment, every age, every day, every night; he comes, comes, ever comes" (Gitanjali). It is egoism or pride that destroys us. The Promethean protest of a Ravana or Hiranya Kashipu is the acme of human egoism. We are more often defeated from within than overcome by outside forces. Man without God is no longer man. But laments the author, there is nothing modern man does not prefer to God-race for money, tiresome business, even an occupation utterly pernicious to health. Money and wordly success can't bring happiness, or peace of mind; only God's Name does. A devotee in difficulty looks heavenwards and says, "O God, you are there above to save me. Why should I worry?" Peace of mind can't be bought in a drug bottle or applied as cosmetics. Aldous Huxley says, "He who has shed his ego completely lives to work out the Lord's Purpose". Such is a man of God.

Rapid transport and instantaneous communication has linked the world into One; but this mechanical integration is no use; there can't be any world unity, except by the reign of love that would unite the hearts of all.

Ours is called the atomic age, the age of space, the age of science and technology; but it is also the age of anxiety, mental unrest and disease (see large crowds at innumerable hospitals and healers of all categories). Only the Gita Way can bring real happiness, which all desire. "The Gita contains more true psychology than the whole libraries of modern treatises", says a star psychiatrist.

All people are afraid of death; it is inevitable, yet each man does not associate it with himself. The Gita rids humanity of the fear of death by stating that soul does not die; it is like changing of dress or a 2-month baby changing into a 70-year old man; the baby is not dead, it is only transmigration.

What of determinism and free will? As Dr. Radhakrishnan says, the cards of the game of life are given to us—as a result of our previous Karmas. But we are free to play the game. A person with poor cards may win with genius & effort, while another holding aces loses due to foolishness and wasted opportunities.

The writer, more than once quotes the famous lines of T.S. Eliot; "Endless invention, endless experiment brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness. All our knowledge brings us nearer to ignorance. Where is life we have lost in living? Where is wisdom we have lost in know-

ledge? Where is knowledge, we have lost in information. And finally,

The cycle of heaven in twenty centuries
Brings us farther from God and nearer to dust.

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THE ACHARYA SHANKARA OF KALADY:
BY I.S. MADUGULA, Published by Motilal
Banarsidass, 41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar
Nagar, Delhi 110 007. 1986. Pp. 143. Rs. 80.

This is the inspiring life story of the great Shankaracharya (788-820 A.D.), who was born in south Kerala and after a short, but world-shaking life of 32 years, died in far north at Kedarnath, taking the whole of Bharat in his grand sweep. Shankara thus stressed the eternal unity of India based on spirituality, the unity of hearts and souls, amidst countless diversities. The heart of Bharat is undivided, a reflection of Advaita (not Two). The biography recorded is given by Shankara's chief disciple Padmapada, who first met Shankara at Kashi when he (Shankara) was 12, and stayed with him for two decades till the end.

The world counts Shankara among its topmost intellectuals and philosophers (if not the very top), while grateful Bharat remembers him as the great saviour of Hinduism, by driving out Buddhism from the land of its birth, with his weapon of Advaita Vedanta. It is one of the paradoxes of history that Buddhism that flourished in China, Japan, Thailand, Burma, Tibet & pockets of Africa was turned out of India. (At the last census, Buddhists constituted 0.72% of our population). Shankara established his Maths as Citadels for the defence of Hinduism; at Kedarnath in north, Sringeri in the south, Jagannath Puri in the east, and Dwarika in the west. These function to this day.

Shankara wrote his world-famous commentary on Vyasa's *Brahma-Sutra*, the supreme original source of Vedanta philosophy. He also wrote his commentaries on 11 Upanishads and on the Gita—all from Vedantist angle; for it is a tradition in India that every sage or founder reads his own ideology and philosophy, into the Vedas and other holy books (6 systems or Darshanas all claim to be derived from the Vedas).

Shankara's Guru was Govindapada, who was himself the disciple of Gaudapada who according to tradition was the son of Shukadeva Swami

(preceptor of Bhagawata), himself son of Vyasa, the Compiler of the 4 Vedas, and author of Brahma-Sutra, Puranas, etc.

Vidyadhiraja, a Keralite Brahmana, had a son Shiva Guru, who married Arya, but they had no child. They practised austere penances. In fine, Shiva told them in a dream: I grant you the boon. You can have either a son, who should be a world personality but short lived, or a long lived mediocre. The couple chose the former. Thus was Shankara born. His early teaching was: '*Matri devo Bhava*' (Worship your mother as a deity). He did. When his mother died, he was already the greatest Vedantist, and world-teacher. But to honour the mother's wish, he came to his village Kaladi and like a son performed her cremation, which no Sannyasi should do. For this aberration, 'no Sannyasi would come to this village and the local Brahmanas be ineligible to study Vedas'.

Even as a child, his fame spread far and wide. Kerala King Raj Shekhar (who was proud of village Kaladi in his kingdom) sent elephants to bring Shankara to his court. But he won't go. The king himself came and prostrated himself before this boy of God. The four mythological sages (Dadhichi, Gautam, Agastya and Upamanyu) appeared, and said that the boy was the incarnation of God Shiva himself.

He propounded the Advaita or the Non-dualistic Vedanta. God, world, Prakriti, individual soul, Universal Soul are all one. The world is Maya or false like a dream; Brahman is the only reality. The worldly pleasures, attractions like beauty, relationships, passions, wealth etc. are like droppings of a bird, of no consequence. Advaita is India's loftiest philosophy; even Nehru professed an admiration for it; (A go-getter modern won't take the world to be a dream. That would make all struggles, victories and endeavours pointless and purposeless, like gains or losses in a dream).

In fact, the whole narrative is interlaced with supernatural events, hard for the non-elect to believe; e.g. Shankara flew to his dying mother through the sky; one Nava-gupta, a Tantrik defeated in debate, practised his black magic on Shankara which made him sick. But his illness too was cured by a supernatural method; thrice he controlled Narmada river by putting its waters in his Kamandalu—once when the river was flooding his Guru's cave. Shiva with four Vedas appeared in the guise of a Chandala, with 4 dogs, to teach him that there is no Brahmana or Untouchable—all is Brahman.

Two other great men made history in Shankara's day. One was Kumaril Bhatt, the great proponent of Jaimini's Poorva-Mimamsa which is based on ritualism. While Vedanta is called Uttar-Mimamsa based on self-knowledge. The other; was Mandan Mishra, whose *Shastrartha* with Shankara lives in legend and folklore. Kumaril Bhatta was committing self-immolation on slow fire as repentance for some lapses. While dying, he told Shankara to go to Mahishmati, and conquer and convert to Vedantism his chief disciple Mandan Mishra. Now this Mandan had married Bharati, the female paragon of the greatest erudition and greatest beauty of her day Vyasa appointed Bharati as judge for the *Shastrartha*, so great was her impartiality. She gave two garlands to the two contestants; he whose flowers would stay fresh at the end would be the victor. The debate dragged on for 8 days. Shankara won. Her husband was declared defeated and became a Sannyasin, and a follower of Shankara.

But here was the rub. Bharati did not accept defeat. She would cross swords with Shankara, on the subject of love and sex, of which Shankara was ignorant. He got a moratorium of one month for the debate. King Amrook was dead; he had 100 wives, all drunk with youth and beauty. Shankara entered his dead body. His subjects made great rejoicings over the recovery of their 'dying' king. In his body, Shankara tasted all experiences of love with these 100 wives. (Shankara wrote his own Kama-Sutra, titled *Amrook* just in 3 days).

Shankara returned to his own 'dead' body; it was on the point of being taken and burnt by the ministers. He won the debate against Bharati. He was put on the throne of Omniscience.

The blurb says, "It's not a biography; it's not a history; it's not quite a fiction. It is all these. It's based in tradition."

We agree.

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MORAL EDUCATION: A PRACTICAL APPROACH: BY K. RAMA RAO Published by Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore 570 020. 1986. Pp. xv + 266. Rs. 30.

This book on *what, why, and how* of moral education is a product of author's practical experience as a teacher of a moral education course meant for B. Ed. students at the Rama-

krishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education in the city of Mysore.

Values being the essence of morality, moral education is nothing but value oriented learning. The purpose of moral education should be not to impart those values which are ephemeral, but to ensure only those which are absolute and universal. If the purpose of education is to bring about the fullest possible development of the human potential, then moral education is a positive aid to the fruition of that purpose because such education induces a man to realise his goal through living a virtuous life. Our ancestors prescribed four personal values—*dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (pleasure of life) and *moksha* (attainment of spiritual illumination or self-realization-for living a virtuous life). It is noteworthy that they were practical enough to recommend secular values (*artha* and *kama*) as well as spiritual values (*dharma* and *moksha*). Secular values were however to be subordinated to spiritual values because only that *desire* was considered to be right which was conducive to the good of the individual as well as that of the society. That the worldly man would go for *artha* and *kama* was only natural, but he was exhorted to pursue such *desires* with a sense of *dharma* (which in its broadest sense implies consideration for the welfare of all beings) so that he attains *moksha* and thereby becomes one with the "Supreme good, that is the Supreme Being, which is the Infinite or Brahman, or the Eternal Joy" (p. 21).

That secular values are riding roughshod over spiritual values is a painful fact all over the world today. The fact that men are only after *artha* and *kama* and are totally oblivious and disregarding of *dharma* and *moksha* is responsible for most of the evils of our present-day society. Hence the necessity and rationale for moral education which will ensure a scientific and moral approach to life cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, "Thoughtful people in all walks of life are greatly disturbed by a progressive erosion of values and the resultant pollution of public life. The fact that this crisis of values is as pervasive in schools, colleges and universities, amongst teachers as well as students as in other walks of life is seen as a highly dangerous development. It is, therefore, being urged that the process of education should be reoriented and young people should be made to realise that exploitation, insecurity and violence cannot be contained nor can an organized society be sustained without adhering to and enforcing some norms of social, political and economic behaviour. Learning from

past experience, it is expected that a coherent and an operationally variable value system would be inculcated through educational processes, based upon rationality and a scientific and moral approach to life". That is what the document on new educational policy—Challenge of Education—a Policy Perspective—has to say on the necessity for moral education and that represents neatly the stand as well of the author of the book under review. To quote him, "How can we expect good education, harmony or peace in any society without its members being moral? It is always the acts of immorality that have sown the seeds of unhappiness, hatred, jealousy, enmity etc., in any human society. The first and foremost requisite therefore for any society is that its members be moral" (p. 47).

If moral education is something essential for human life and for building a better human society, the next question that logically arises is: *how* is such education or teaching about values to be imparted? In a 64-page chapter entitled, "Some Instructional Strategies in Moral Education"—the longest and undoubtedly the most important of nine chapters of the book, the author suggests five broad approaches, namely, *the direct* (involving the formal teaching of moral education as a course), *the indirect* (involving the imparting of moral values through teaching of subjects such as civics, history, language and literature, science, and mathematics), *the incidental* (using an incident with moral implications for giving it the right moral precept), *the activity based* (involving the application aspect of morality and the most important, the one by personal example. The elaboration, elucidation and illustration of these approaches makes one thing clear that the author disagrees with those who hold that morality can only be caught and not taught. While this reviewer believes that values can be taught directly and also imbibed indirectly, he cannot but observe that the school cannot be a moral oasis. The gap between what the school teaches and what the society professes must be narrowed down by all means and there has to be a basic agreement between the school and the society about the norms that should regulate the conduct of its members in order that the value-oriented education can have the maximum significance for individual and society.

The author has done well in sounding a note of warning that moral education should never mean a sort of sectarian religious education or a sort of indoctrination. That will be very unfortunate in a multi-religious country like India. Spirituality, rather than religion in the

conventional sense of the term, should be the basis of ethical theory and rural conduct. One need not profess any religious dogma or be believing in god in order to be spiritual. Spirituality consists in looking within the mind, in conquering the six enemies of over-ambition (*kama*), anger (*krodha*), miserliness (*lobha*), selfish attachment (*moha*), over-confidence (*mada*) and jealousy (*matsarya*) that are within and on the basis of such discipline—which is the first principle of morality—realising the *oneness* of all beings. “To be spiritual”, as the author observes, “one has to grow in selfless love for others, selfless search after the Truth and selfless admiration of good work or beauty in any form” (p. 201). Sacrifice and service, as Swami Vivekananda was never tired of saying, constitute the application aspect of spirituality. *Atmanomokshartham jagaddhitayaca* is the traditionally accepted ideal for Indians. After all, man is not body alone hungering for possessions, out-success and luxury but also a spirit aspiring for the growth of the Universal in man. “Human life is on a con-

tinuum from animality to divinity. Man through education which must include moral and spiritual education is expected to shed the residue of animality to realize his humanity and then grow into divinity” (p. 234). The key to divinity is through selflessness. As the old Sanskrit adage says, ‘Not thro’ money, not thro’ work, not thro’ progeny but only thro’ self-sacrifice can man become immortal’.

The book is a work of wisdom. It is insightful and empirical at the same time. It contains within its two covers the rich practical observations of an experienced and dedicated teacher. The lesson plans, the note on teaching aids, the list of story books and the bibliography have added to the value of book. And its readability is an additional reason why it should find a place on the shelf of every library.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AT RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYALAYA, COIMBATORE

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, organized a three-day conference of Education Centres of the Ramakrishna Mission, from 30 October to 1 November 1987. Twenty-five Swamis and four Brahmacharins from the different centres of the Mission attended the Conference which was the concluding function of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.

In the inaugural session on 30 October morning, Swami Tanmayananda, Secretary of the Vidyalaya, welcomed the delegate Swamis and the other participants. Sri T.S. Avinashilingam, founder-president of the Vidyalaya, said how the Ramakrishna movement has passed through the stages of indifference and opposition, during the last 50 years, and how it has reached today the stage of national acceptance. He also gave a brief summary of the extensive work on education being conducted at the Coimbatore Vidyalaya.

Srimat Swami Hiranmayanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in his detailed speech on the genesis

and growth of Indian education said how Indian education began in brahmacharyashrama and culminated in self-realization. Today this ancient heritage of Indian education is rejuvenated through the Practical Vedanta of Swamiji, which saved India from Macaulay’s scheme of making India a nation of clerks, and stemmed the delinking of education from the masses.

Swami Somananda, Assistant Secretary of the Vidyalaya, proposed a vote of thanks.

The second session on ‘Value-oriented Education according to Swami Vivekananda’, began at 10.30 a.m. on 30 October. Chairperson Swami Prabhananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, spoke on the meaning of value in education, Swamiji’s concept of Vedantic education, and the historical and sociological factors of education. He also showed how Indian education—second largest educational system next to China—is on the brink of failure, due to the lack of the ancient and eternal values in the system. The speaker of the session Swami Jitatmananda of Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, said how the spiritual values set forth by Swami Vivekananda are being appreciated by today’s youth in many universities and colleges and other pioneering

educational institutions of India, especially after the declaration of Swami Vivekananda's birthday as the National Youth Day in India.

Swami Hiranmayanandaji in his comments pointed out that mere preaching of ideas will have no value unless it is backed by character and life. Swami Gautamananda secretary, R. K. Mission, Alang, pointed out the difficulties in conveying the higher values like purity, brahmacharya, and renunciation etc. to the students hailing from backward classes and the tribal groups.

The third session on '*Improving Staff Involvement in our Activities*' began at 3 p.m. Chairperson Umananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Purulia, said that better involvement of the teachers are required for ensuring better service to the students, faithfulness to the ideals of the Mission, and better academic performance for the ultimate good of the society. Speaker of the session, Swami Ramananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Rahara, said that the vast network of educational activities by the Mission all over India and their high standard of performance and upkeep, are primarily due to the deep and committed involvement of the members of the staff, both teaching and non-teaching. Swami Gautamananda raised the question of political freedom for the members of the staff. Swami Prabhananda pointed out that political ideology must not end in the politicization of the institution. Mr. S. Ramaswami, a staff-member of the Vidyalaya, advocated the need of value-oriented education for the teachers of the Mission. Mr. Kulandaivelu, Dean of the University at Coimbatore, said that this orientation programme must be of two types: firstly, philosophical orientation; secondly, day-to-day involvement of teachers in administration so as to make them feel that they are also essential part of the administration. Minimum comforts must be offered to our staff-members who could otherwise enjoy much more advantages elsewhere, he said. Swami Hiranmayanandaji said that in the south the staff-involvement is better than elsewhere. All privileges, must go. Love must combine the monks and the members of the staff. He concluded the session with the words of Alexander Duma: 'Let us wait and hope'.

The fourth session on *Problems Related to Education Centres* began at 9 a.m. on 31 October 1987. Chairperson Swami Mumukshananda, President, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, described the Coimbatore Vidyalaya as one of the biggest and finest education centres in India. He pointed out the need of getting Government grants without

sacrificing our freedom to implement Vivekananda's ideas in our education centres. He, however, pointed out that problems were sometimes created because of our failure to deal properly with the staff members or new situations. The speaker of the session, Swami Shivamayananda, Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Centenary College, Rahara, pointed out that problems, despite service rules, would always be there in a living organization; but they gain in seriousness when politically involved persons work against us. Monks must not lose credibility and must work hard to involve and inspire the guardians and the public in general with Swamiji's ideas through spiritual retreats, personal contacts, and meetings etc. Swami Ganananda, President, Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, said that in some states Government pays directly to teachers who feel, therefore, no moral obligation to offer better service. T.S. Avinashilingam said that so long Government grant is accepted, some sort of Government control is bound to remain. In case of agitation we should take, he said, a good stand and stick to it. Personal contacts and conversations also solve many problems. We must also learn to utilise people in which they are sound, and thus bring out the best in them, he said. Swami Hiranmayanandaji said our solution must be spiritual and we must seek means to preserve our culture.

The fifth session on *Educational activities among the downtrodden and rural masses* began at 11 a.m. on 31 October. Chairperson Swami Gautamananda spoke of the incidents in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Akhandananda, where their passion for downtrodden humanity was manifest. This tradition has inspired the Mission to start colossal programmes of Education for the neglected people of Arunachal Pradesh, he said. Swami Sureshananda, Correspondent, Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore said that today Mission's education centres cater more to the urban than the rural masses, although this service is also effective in inspiring the educated to feel for the masses. Mr. Rajaratnam, Principal, Arts and Science College, Coimbatore, said that while conducting N.S.S. programmes for the rural masses, the staff and students of the Vidyalaya feel no sense of superiority. Swami Jyotirupananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Ramharipur, said how very poor rural masses in this drought-prone area of West Bengal are getting better chance for higher education through the Mission's school. Non-formal education centres have degenerated today to centres of political indoctrination. We must

open some non-formal education centres to give life-giving ideas of Swamiji to the masses, he said. Swami Sarvajnanandaji of Nattarampalli, Ramakrishna Math, said that feeding and educating the untouchables through the Mission centres in the south, is eradicating untouchability in the region. Swami Chidananda, President, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore gave an idea of how the Ashrama at Bangalore has been working for the past three years among the rural poor, and bringing an awakening among Harijans and Girijans, and releasing bonded labourers through a school, community centre, training in agriculture, and conducting regular Bhajans, Harikatha and cultural programmes. Swami Muktirupananda, of the Mission's Vedanta College, Mysore, told the experience of some untouchables where the monks went to work. 'Can we touch you, Swami?' they asked in fear. 'You can embrace us also', was the answer. Volunteers of the youth wing of the Mission accompanied by swamis are going regularly to serve them. Mr. Keshavan, principal of the Polytechnic of the Coimbatore Vidyalaya, gave details of the extensive rural service programme conducted by the Coimbatore Vidyalaya.

Swami Prabhananda said that 77% dropouts in rural schools have brought new political groups. The Mission has decided to take up an extensive rural education programme during 1988, the 125th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Umananda spoke how 100 villages of Purulia have been covered under the Integrated Rural Development work of the Mission. Swami Hiranmayanandaji said that etymologically everyone is a Harijan (a man of god). But these Harijans, exploited for centuries, must be freed, and educated.

The sixth session on *Future Trends of Educational Policy of the Mission* began at 9 a.m. on 1 November. Chairperson Swami Tanmayananda said that while Shruti or the original Vedantic ideas which Swamiji asked us to preach and practise, will remain the same, we have to speak to modern man in modern terms, in the language of the new Smriti. Swami Pitambarananda of Ramakrishna Mission students' Home at Madras, said that the future trend of the Mission's educa-

tion depends on teachers of realization whose life will inspire millions. Swami Atmaghananda of Ramakrishna Mission Coimbatore said that easily readable literature on Ramakrishna-Vivekananda ideas must be printed for children, so that they would not be drawn to cheap literature. Study circles and spiritual retreats should also be regularly organized for students, he said. Swami Gabhirananda of Trichur Ramakrishna Ashrama, said that our motto must be 'Be and Make'. Swami Swaprabhananda advocated Sanskrit at all levels of education. Swami Prabhananda, said that Mission's educational pattern must gear itself up in order to face the challenge of 21st century.

In the Valedictory function held on 1 November at 11.30 a.m. Swami Gautamananda gave a brief report of the proceedings. Swami Shivamaynanda, Swami Jitatmananda, and Dr. Sundara Raja Rao made brief reviews of the sessions. While reviewing the proceedings of 3 days, five major ideas cropped up. 1. We have to practise and preach Swamiji's ideas everywhere. While preaching it is the preacher who, according to Swamiji, gets elevated and purified, if not the listener too. 2. More emphasis should now be given on education for rural and neglected masses. 3. Politicization of our institutions should never be tolerated, but staff-members should be given necessary facilities and responsibilities. 4. We have to speak to different levels of men in different languages, although the content remains the same, the 'Practical Vedanta' of Swamiji. 5. Orientation programmes for staff, students and guardians should be organized through spiritual retreats etc. Swami Tanmayananda and Sri T.S. Avinashilingam heartily thanked all the participants for their co-operation.

In his concluding speech Srimat Swami Hiranmayanandaji thanked the Vidyalaya authorities for making excellent arrangements for all the participants. He felt the Conference was a success. He ended with the lines of Lord Tennyson:

My good blade carves the casques ever
My tough lance thrusteth sure
My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure.

PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Self-reliance and Strength

1. Be self-reliant. Self-effort is absolutely necessary for success in the spiritual life. Follow some spiritual discipline for at least three years, and then, if you find you have made no tangible progress, you may come back and slap my face!

—*Swami Brahmananda*

2. ...The room may contain different kinds of food-stuffs, but one must cook them. He who cooks earlier gets his meal earlier too.... The more intensely a person practises spiritual disciplines, the more quickly he attains God. But even if he does not practise any spiritual discipline, he will attain him in the end—surely he will. Only he who spends his time idly, without practising prayer and meditation, will take a long time to attain Him.

—*Holy Mother.*

3. Every night before you go to sleep, think for a while how much time you have spent in doing good deeds and how much time you have wasted; how much time you have spent in meditation and how much you have wasted in idleness.... Onward, onward!

—*Swami Brahmananda*

4. One wishing to bathe in the sea waits and waits, with the idea that one would have a plunge when the waves would have subsided. Nonsense! Will that moment ever come? Instead of doing so, you buffet against the waves; have your

bath and come out. The sea remains always the same. So in this world, you must manage to call upon the Lord in the midst of these waves. It is a wild-goose chase to be on the lookout for opportunities. Now or never! Apply yourselves to it, and disadvantages will turn into advantages.

—*Swami Turiyananda*

5. The weaker a thing, the more it is restless; the stronger it is, the calmer and steadier it is. A little plant bends and quivers at the slightest breeze, but the Himalayas remain unmoved in the fiercest storms.... Constant restlessness of the mind shows its weakness, its flimsiness.

—*Swami Ramakrishnananda*

6. We must stand on our own legs; we must surely realize success which is our birth-right! If a slight degree of fear is allowed to come in, we shall be overpowered. God is the dispenser, and the conditions are God-sent. If we are not afraid of unfavourable conditions they will be overcome. If you can boldly meet them once, the next time you will meet them more easily, and the third time they will be nothing. To make hardship less severe is to face it with strength. That is man's life. Man wants to conquer and God has given the power for it.

—*Swami Trigunatitananda*

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest.'—Tait. Upa II.1.1

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INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS OF INDIA IN ENGLAND

Miss Margaret Noble, made the following speech on the late Ramakrishna Day:—I am here tonight to sound a note of no doubt, no fear, no weakness, no failure, and no hesitation whatever. I am here tonight to sound a note of infinite joy and victory.

The name of the Inaugural Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission is wrongly applied to this assembly. That mission held its true inaugural meeting, I think, one day long years ago, in the shadowy gardens up there at Dakshineswar, when the master sent his disciples forth to all the world, as the greatest teachers have always done, to preach the gospel to every creature. (Cheers). And perhaps some of you may consider that the inaugural meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission took place on that other day, not long ago, when his friends went to say Godspeed to a wandering Sanyasin, going friendless and ill-provided, to a rich and powerfull country in the West. This mission is, to the national life of India, a great symphony of many movements... I am not afraid of over-estimating or exaggerating the importance of this movement to Indian national life; it would be easier, I think, to make too little of it than too much. Great are these doings we are living through, and great is the Ramakrishna Mission, and I say that this Mission is bound to be a success after all. (Cheers.)...

We had yet to realize that the love of self, the love of friends and relations, the love of contry are nothing at all, if that love did not simply mean love of the world. That if it is a matter of the least consequence to us, whom we serve, then, our service is as nothing. But all society is reflexible society; as our friend Swami Vivekananda said, there is a great power of progress and expansion in it. In India it would be a great drawback, indeed, to introduce any such theory of national exhaustion, because in India flexibility and easy expansion are impossible. You have the ingenuity of 6,000 years of conservatism. But yours is the conservatism of a people who have through that long period been able to preserve the great spiritual treasures for the World, and it is for this that I have come to India to serve here with our burning passion for service... Before I sit down allow me to utter those three words which are in your own language—

“Sri Sri Ramakrishna Jayati.” (Cheers.)