



# Prabuddha Bharata

or

## Awakened India

VOL 93 AUGUST 1988



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# Prabuddha Bharata

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**AUGUST 1988**

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 93

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No. 8

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

## VISIONS OF DIVINITY

SRI KRISHNA

The Blessed Lord said,

See this day the entire universe with movable and immovable objects united here in this my body, O Gudakesha (Arjuna), and anything else that you like to see.

Sanjaya said,

If the effulgence of a thousand suns were to appear in the skies simultaneously, it might compare somewhat with the splendour of that great form.

Arjuna said,

I see You as one with no beginning, middle, or end, of infinite prowess, with infinite arms, with the sun and moon for Your eyes and the blazing fire in Your mouths, scorching this universe with Your radiance.

All those sons of Dhritarashtra along with hosts of kings, Bhishma, Drona, as also that charioteer's son (Karna) together with the principal warriors on our side, are entering in a rush into Your terrible jaws fearful

with teeth, some are seen sticking in the interstices of the teeth with their heads smashed.

The Blessed Lord said,

I am the terrible Time, the destroyer of people, and am here proceeding to destroy them; even without you, all these warriors in every division shall cease to be.

Therefore arise and attain fame, and conquering your enemies, enjoy a flourishing kingdom. By Me alone have these been killed already. O Savyasachin (Arjuna), you be merely an instrument.

Arjuna said,

You are the primeval God, the ancient Being, You are the supreme repository of this universe, You are the knower and the knowable, and the highest abode; O You of infinite form, by You is the universe pervaded.

(The Bhagavad Gita ch 11:  
7,12,19,26-27,32,33,38)

## ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on Sri Krishna, Eternal Being and Perfect Man.

THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA by Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, is the message Rev. Maharajji had kindly sent for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Vedanta Society, St. Louis, U.S.A.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN A MULTIFAITH SOCIETY by Swami Siddhinathananda of Ramakrishna Mission, Calicut, is based on a talk delivered by the author recently in an inter-religious forum.

IN ECHO OF INDIAN SPIRITUAL IDEAS IN ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETRY, Prof. Samarendra Krishna Bose, Lecturer in English, Vidyasagar College, Calcutta, attempts to show the resonance of Indian mystical

thoughts in the Romantic poems of Wordsworth and Shelley.

HINDUISM AND ITS SPIRIT OF UNIVERSALISM by Swami Tathagatananda of Vedanta Society, New York, is a thoughtful interpretation on the subject.

AMERICAN YOUTH TODAY is a short but illuminating article on the subject by Mr. Archibald Stark and Mrs. Nina Stark of BOSTON, U.S.A.

SUBHAS CHANDRA: THE BURNING PATRIOT, is by Swami Purnatmananda, Jt. Editor, UDBODHAN, Calcutta.

VIVEKANANDA: THE WANDERER PROPHET is an one-act play by Bodhisattwa, a monk of the Ramakrishna order. The play is based on an incident in Cranganore, Kerala, 1892, which happened during the wandering years of Swami Vivekananda's life.

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## SRI KRISHNA—ETERNAL BEING AND PERFECT MAN

(EDITORIAL)

At the court of Dhritarashtra when Sri Krishna burst out laughing at the stubbornness of Duryodhana, 'from his body emanated a blazing fire, issued myriads of gods, each of lightning effulgence. On his arms appeared the regents of the world and from his mouth issued the god of Fire.' When Krishna saved the Pandavas by creating a darkness at daytime during the war of Kurukshetra, Yudhisthira prayed to him, 'Thou art the Creator of all the worlds, thou art the Supreme Soul, and thou art Immutable!... Thou art the Supreme God, thou art the God of gods, and thou art Eternal...'<sup>1</sup> During the cosmic vision in the

battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna, awed with unspeakable reverence, saw in his so long beloved friend-guide-charioteer, the 'Purushah Puranah', the Eternal Being<sup>2</sup> who creates, destroys, interpenetrates, fulfils, illuminates, and finally transcends this universe. Yet Krishna is the most beloved personal god of India. He is 'an impersonal-Personal God', a combination of the finite and the infinite, of perfect man and cosmic being. *Krishnastu Bhagavan Svayam*—Krishna is God Himself. This is the belief of countless Indians through the ages. That is why his sermon is known as the Song-

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1. *The Mahabharata, Udyoga Parva, CXXXI, 4-6, Drona Parva CXLVI, 60.*

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2. Shankara interprets *Purana* as 'Chirantana' or eternal. Sridhara Swami similarly interprets 'Purana' as 'beginningless'.

Celestial, the Bhagavad Gita. Due to his gigantic presence, Mahabharata, a mythology, has become a part of history, and both *Itihasa* and *Purana* are respected as the fifth Veda. He is the soul-force behind the *Bhagavata*, the *Harivamsa*, the later *Puranas*, and other scriptures. His power reincarnated in the life of Sri Chaitanya who rediscovered the glory of Vrindavana after it was destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1018 A.D. Time has failed to efface the memory of the man who walked on this earth three thousand and five hundred years ago.

\* \* \*

Krishna represents all moods and emotions of humanity. He was the friend and saviour to the Gokula cowherds, lord of love to the Gopis, thunderbolt-like death to tyrants like Kamsa, Jarasandha, and Shishupala. He was the baby Gopala to mother Yasoda, beloved lord to Vidura and Sudama, and perfect husband to his many wives described in the Bhagavata. His superhuman intellect and power awed his enemies, and the Kauravas, and equally assured and protected the Pandavas who were steering along with him the path of Dharma. To Arjuna, to the Gopis, to Bhisma, to Yasoda, and to some of his chosen ones he manifested himself as the 'purushah puranah', the Eternal Being encased in a human form.

Krishna was dear to all. *Karshati Sarvan Yah sa Krishnah*, he who attracts all beings to himself is Krishna. And to each one who came to him, he revealed himself according to the need and capacity of the receiver. When mother Yasoda tried to bind the baby Krishna with rope, she failed; when she got totally exhausted, Krishna got himself bound by the rope of her love.

Many years later, when Nanda and Yasoda came to see their beloved son Krishna, he was choked with emotion and

embraced them with the deepest affection<sup>3</sup>. When the dearest among the gopis felt a little proud of being specially favoured by the Lord, he left her alone in the darkness of the night. Again when they cried in despair, he returned with joy. When a proud and haughty Duryodhana invited him for a royal dinner, he rejected the offer and accepted the meal of simple grains from the humble devotee Vidura. His overconfident wife Satyabhama failed to weigh Krishna with gold and gems, while the intelligent wife Rukmini put a basil leaf on the balance with the name of Krishna written on it. The holy name over-weighed the Lord Himself. His mother Devaki prayed to her son to bring back her six other dead sons. Krishna fulfilled the prayer of his mother.<sup>4</sup>

When he returned from Indraprastha to Dwaraka, he greeted his kinsfolk, elders, youngers, equals and dependents with low obeisance, spoken salutations, tender cares, embraces, handshake, smile, glance or by lifting his right hand.<sup>5</sup> During the *Rajasuya* sacrifice the prudent Yudhishthira failed to decide whom, of all the sages, to offer the highest respect. The pure-souled Sahadeva reminded him that Krishna was the greatest, as he was the ultimate source of all rituals and sacrifices.<sup>6</sup> Shishupala meditated on Krishna as his sworn enemy. When he died, his radiant self entered into the body of Krishna. 'Meditation is the way to be identified with God,' commented Shuka, the narrator of the Bhagavata<sup>7</sup>. Even the demoness Putana who tried to kill the baby Krishna by her poisonous milk, was purified by the divine touch. Her dead body, while burning, scattered perfumes of holy

3. *The Bhagavata* (10:82:34).

4. *Ibid.* (10:85:54):

5. Bhagavan Das, *Krishna* (A study in the Theory of Avatars) Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1929. p. 253.

6. *The Bhagavata* (10:74:26) p. 253.

7. *Ibid.* (10:74:46).

smell.<sup>8</sup> When Narada went to see how Krishna, a single person, was maintaining sixteen thousand households, he was surprised to find that the same Krishna was simultaneously playing different roles in different families.<sup>9</sup> The episode is symbolic. God fulfils the needs of His devotees in hundred different ways. The Eternal Being exists everywhere, and everywhen. The finite body of Krishna was only a playground of this Infinite power.

\* \* \* \* \*

The human Krishna is a complete, consummate man. He is a master in all the branches of knowledge. The Mahabharata (Sabhaparva, Ch. 54) says that in sixty four days and nights, Krishna and Balarama learnt all the Vedas with all their subsidiary branches. They mastered mathematics, the art of writing, music, medicine, all the sciences, the art of warfare, archery, elephant and horse-riding. The Bhagavata says that both, in reality the Ancient Creators and masters of all sciences and Arts, learnt everything within this same short period in the school of Acharya Sandipani.<sup>10</sup>

The enchanting beauty of Krishna's face and figure, has haunted poets, artists, musicians and devotees of all ages. The Bhagavata says that the Gopis, enchanted by Krishna, worshipped the Divine Mother Katyayani in order to get him as their husband. When Krishna entered Mathura, the entire cityfolk stood enraptured, oblivious of their duties, and looked spell-bound at him. Even the aged man of wisdom, the dying Bhishma, could not but glorify the physical beauty of Krishna who was quite old by that time.

'The heart's desire of the three worlds, waking, dreaming and sleeping, lovingly gazed on with tireless eyes by all beholders, the peculiar complexion, the splendid dress,

the curling locks of hair playing about the oval, lotus face, the loving graces of smile, and laugh, speech and gesture, and every movement that drove the youths and maidens mad.'<sup>11</sup>

The music of his flute was *sarvabhuta-manoharam*.<sup>12</sup> It stole the heart of all living beings. The flute's sound of *Kling*, the mystic sound-symbol, 'fulfilled all the desires of the listeners'.<sup>13</sup> It was the vibration of Nada-Brahman, the word as God, the primal logos that emanated from Krishna's flute, awakening the dormant divinity and an intense love for God, even in the rustic but pure-souled cowherd people of Vrindavana.

\* \* \* \* \*

The mission of his life was the establishment of *Dharma* or righteousness in a world of abject unrighteousness supported by priestly rituals and wrong knowledge. Society runs on three basic factors—*Jnana* (knowledge), *Ichha* (will), and *Kriya* (Action). When false knowledge (that mundane enjoyments are the final goal of life, and that there is nothing beyond sense life) dominates, wrong will prevails making men more greedy. Then follow wrong actions of ruthless exploitation, and wanton killing of the weaker by the stronger. The rule of *Dharma* came to an end when tyrants like Kamsa, Jarasandha, and the Kauravas, backed by selfish rituals, began to ignore truth, destroy the good, and breed more evil. To Arjuna Krishna first expounded the right knowledge of the infinite superiority of the Self over all sense enjoyments. He laughed at the 'flowery speeches (*Pushpita bacha*) of priestly rituals, and asked him to be established in the knowledge of the Self. Through the eighteen chapters of the Gita, he brought a harmony between Kshatriya duties and intellectual knowledge,

8. Ibid. (10:6:41).

9. Ibid. (10.69.13.-38).

10. Ibid. (10.45.35).

11. Bhagavan Das, *Krishna* p. 68.

12. *The Bhagavata* (10.20.3).

13. Ibid. (10.29.3).

and finally brought a harmony of all avenues to Godhead, like devotion, action, knowledge and Yoga. From this right knowledge followed right will and right action by the Pandavas, leading to the establishment of *Dharma*.

When Arjuna, a born fighter was terrified in war, Krishna asked and exhorted him to fight. But when Uddhava a devotee 'ever-devoted to Krishna' (*Krishnanubratah*) who 'felt pain from half-a second's separation from Krishna', felt terrified after hearing of the direst calamities impending on Dwaraka, and prayed to Krishna to bless him to leave the world along with him, Krishna asked him to renounce and take sannyasa. Uddhava wanted to remain a devotee only singing the glories of the Lord. He pleaded that he 'was but a fool passionately attached to the body.' Krishna held up before him the life of sannyasa as the highest way of life—*Dharmanam asmi sannyasa*, and said, 'Give up thy love for thy kinsmen and friends and renouncing everything, roam thou over the world, with evenness of vision, fixing thy mind wholly on Me.'<sup>14</sup> Krishna, then, glorified the life of the Avadhuta, the all-renouncing ascetic who moved free as air, radiated divinity like the sun, lived unattached like the wind, begged food like the bees, helped others like the hill, and purified everything that came before him like the ever flowing water, an ideal of the highest men, calm, silent, unknown, and ever-pure like Shuka himself, the narrator of the Bhagavata.

\* \* \* \*

To Arjuna, who represented humanity which fears reality and yet seeks God, Krishna gave the eternal message of the Self that brought, as Vivekananda said, 'the magic of transformation to the man demoralized in the current of the vibration of fear.' Fear and incertitude suddenly hypnotized the mighty 'scorcher of foes' at

the very beginning of the war. Krishna's words dehypnotized Arjuna and made him realize the presence of the Infinite God within himself whose visible manifestation was his own beloved charioteer, Krishna. He urged Arjuna to be a Yogi in order to fight the war. 'A Yogi is considered higher than a philosopher, a ritualist or an ascetic.'<sup>15</sup> Yoga means union. A Yogi is never disconnected from the source of Infinite knowledge-strength-life-bliss within. It is only a Yogi who has learnt to work incessantly, even fight and kill for the sake of truth, without being burdened, frightened, elated or attached. 'Yoga is the secret behind work in freedom,' he taught Arjuna. And the end of all work is neither success, nor glory, but the attainment of Yoga, the realization of the Atman, the divinity within each human being. There is nothing higher than man, says the Mahabharata (Sabhaparva ch: 305). 'God was able to realize Himself only through the human body', says the Bhagavata.<sup>16</sup>

Can a fighter become a Yogi? To the unspoken question of Arjuna, Krishna gave the celebrated reply in the Gita, 'He who has learnt to renounce the fruit of his prescribed actions is a real Yogi, a sannyasi, not one who has given up his worldly duties or daily rituals'.<sup>17</sup> But how to remember this philosophy and also work incessantly? 'Remember Me and fight,' Krishna directs Arjuna. This 'Me' soon emerged as the cosmic Self, the One God behind everything. Even if this 'following' proves too difficult, one can learn to think of his beloved personal God, love Him, praise His glories, salute Him everywhere. Man can love his beloved, even when he fails to philosophize.

Krishna taught humanity, through Arjuna, that this natural love, when directed to God, will ultimately bring man to God. Krishna

14. Ibid. (11.6.40-45 ; 11.6.48-49 ; 11.7.6.)

15. *The Gita* 4:46.

16. *The Bhagavata* (11.9.28).

17. *The Gita* 4:1.

realized that all his expositions of different Yogas, analyses of human nature, all the philosophizing on the Atman as the only reality, and even the cosmic vision granted to Arjuna, might not be enough to spiritualize the vision of an individual placed in the whirlpools of ignorance and worldliness. That is why he finally brings the message of complete self-surrender to God by the devotee, as the only anodyne to all crises and existential sufferings. 'Give up, then, all other considerations (of rituals, philosophy, etc.), take refuge in Me alone. I will save you from all sins,' Krishna tells Arjuna. 'The knowledge of the Atman is the highest aim of the Gita,' says Vivekananda.<sup>18</sup>

And the Gita ends with the great promise to devotees adoring God, 'Wherever a valiant fighter like Arjuna follows the message of Krishna, the lord of all Yogas, there must be prosperity, success, and manifestation of the divinity within.'

\* \* \* \* \*

The Vrindavana episode of Krishna has become a perennial source of devotion to God. In the semitic religions, it is mostly 'a religion of fear' in which God is an extra-cosmic ruler dispensing judgement on erring mortals who are eternally separate from the God in heaven. Krishna's play with the Gopis of Vrindavana has brought, for the first time, 'a religion of love', in which God and the devotees have been united into one. The Mahabharata speaks of the Gopis in one or two places only, in the prayer of Draupadi, and in the speech of Shishupala.<sup>19</sup> Radha, the chief among the Gopis, around whom an entirely new religion of love in Gaudiya Vaishnavism has been built up is mentioned neither in

the Bhagavata nor in the Mahabharata, although the Bhagavata speaks of one as the greatest among the Gopis.<sup>20</sup>

The name Radha, probably derived from *aradha* or worship and prayerfulness, symbolizes mankind's eternal and unquenchable thirst for God. 'Radha had attained *Mahabhava*. There was no desire behind the ecstatic love of the Gopis',<sup>21</sup> Shri Ramakrishna used to say. This *Mahabhava* or intense longing for God was manifested only in the lives of the incarnations of God like Shri Chaitanya or Shri Ramakrishna. Radha is an example of 'madness attained by meditating on God', Ramakrishna said.<sup>22</sup> He also said, 'Sacchidananda wanted to taste divine bliss. That is why It created Radhika...from the person of Sacchidananda Krishna.'<sup>23</sup> According to Vedanta, Radha and Krishna are but two waves in the ocean of Sacchidananda. But while Vedantins cry, 'Control the senses! suppress the senses,' the message of Shri Chaitanya, the creator of modern Vaishnavism is, 'Worship God through the senses'.<sup>24</sup> Buddha, who followed the path of Vedanta, made the mistake, as Vivekananda pointed out, that the whole world could live on the height of knowledge. 'Krishna was wiser, because he was more politic,' said Vivekananda.<sup>25</sup> He brought the idea that God could be worshipped and adored through all the human emotions and the activities of life. This is the theme of the Vrindavana episode. The Gopis of Vrindavana sacrificed everything, hearth, home and family, in order to be united with the Lord. Their all-sacrificing devotion has made the Gopis the ideal of all devotees.

20. *The Bhagavata* (10.29.36).

21. *The Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna*, by M. (Translated by Sw. Nikhilananda R.K. Math, Madras, 1985) p. 547.

22. *Ibid.* p. 220.

23. *Ibid.* p. 786.

24. *Complete Works*, 4:268.

25. *Ibid.* 4:271.

18. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda Advaita Ashrama*, (Mayavati Memorial Edn.) (Hereafter referred as *Complete Works*) 7:199.

19. *Ibid.* 3:260.



Shuka speaks in the Bhagavata, 'He who binds the lotus feet of the Lord with the rope of devotion, in his heart God dwells for ever, and he is known as Bhagavata Pradhana.'<sup>26</sup>

The Gopis' all-consuming love for Krishna has inspired spiritual giants and epoch-makers like Shri Chaitanya, Shri Ramakrishna, Mirabai, Andal & others. Intense love led to Yoga, union with God. When the Gopis felt themselves separated from Krishna, they saw 'his lotus face', but when they lost their own identity and individuality, buried in the thought of Krishna, 'they were all Krishnas'.<sup>27</sup>

While Arjuna was awed with the cosmic vision (the Vishwarupa-darshana) of Krishna, Yasoda loved Krishna as her own child. The Gopis knew fully well that Krishna, the eleven-year old flute-player in the Vrindavana groves, was *the* seer-God dwelling in the heart of all living beings, yet they preferred to worship him as their most beloved. 'If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of religion, the love of God is its end', Vivekananda said of this unique episode in the history of world religions.<sup>28</sup>

In the Brahma-Vaivarta Purana and other later compositions, this ever-pure, and all-sacrificing love for God, has been brought to mundane and even physical level. Yet Shuka, the ever-pure narrator of the Bhagavata, tells us that Krishna, the lord of the senses, had never lost control of himself. 'Only a Shiva could drink and digest the poison that arose after the churning of the ocean', Shuka speaks glorifying Krishna's episode with the Gopis.<sup>29</sup> Uddhava was overwhelmed after witnessing the devotion of the Gopis, even long after Krishna had left them, and admitted to them that they had indeed

developed that intense love for God which even sages could hardly attain.<sup>30</sup> Krishna himself confided to the blessed Gopis that he, the Lord of all, would not be able to sufficiently repay their love.<sup>31</sup>

He lived his own message—Yoga is the secret behind work in freedom, without any desire for its results. Totally involved and totally transcendent—that was Krishna. He had no axe to grind, and yet he worked everywhere, always, for the establishment of Dharma or righteousness. To Arjuna he said, 'Partha, no duty have I got in three worlds. Neither have I any obligation or duty anywhere, and yet I work, work, and work.'<sup>32</sup> From the very beginning to the end of his one hundred and twenty five years of life, no one saw him idle. Work for the good of others, and Krishna are synonymous. Even as a child he worked, struggled, and fought for saving the cowherd devotees of Gokula and Vraja (Vrindavana). He killed Putana, Bakasura, cow-demon and other destroyers of life, tamed the hundred-headed venomous serpent Kaliya, and saved the cowherds from the devastating flood by holding up the mount Govardhana as an umbrella. As a Young man in Mathura he came out like a thunderbolt, and killed unrighteous tyrants like Kamsa, Jarasandha, Shishupala and others. He mediated between kings and advised them to live on the ideals of Dharma. When all counselling failed, he came out in the role of the supreme leader behind the mightiest war ever fought on the soil of India. With seven Akshauhini regiments he stood leading and protecting the Pandavas against eleven such regiments of Duryodhana, led by gigantic warriors like Bhishma, Drona and Karna. It was a colossal war involving all the major kings and warriors, and putting into use all the accumulated

26. *The Bhagavata* (11.2.55).

27. *Complete Works* 3:241.

28. *Ibid* 3:488.

29. *The Bhagavata* (10.3.25. & 30).

30. *Ibid* (10.47.25).

31. *Ibid* (10.32.22).

32. *The Gita* 3:22.

arsenals and ammunitions of Indian Kings. Each Akshauhini regiment consisted of 21,870 chariots, 21, 870 elephants, 65,610 horsemen and 109, 350 infantry soldiers. For eighteen days the vast field of Kurukshetra roared with sky-rending war cries, until it turned into a vast cremation ground of countless carcasses of both men and animals. India got a palingenesis, a rebirth, through this historic blood-bath. The flag of Truth once again flew high. Krishna unified India under the righteous rule of the Pandavas, the beloved devotees of the Lord.

For his own kinsfolk he engaged, as the Bhagavata says, more than three crore teachers.<sup>33</sup> But they lost faith in Dharma, and began to humiliate sages who upheld truth. The curse of the sages finally came down upon them. On the western shore of India at Pravas, the drunken and deluded Yadavas fought amongst themselves and killed the last of the clan before his very eyes.<sup>34</sup> His beloved capital of Dwaraka which he himself had built after Jarasandha threatened to destroy Mathura, was finally inundated by the ocean leaving only his palace intact. He foresaw this doom. He knew it all. He neither shed tears, nor felt pain. He had done his job, fulfilled his mission. That was all. *Asanga hi ayam Purusha*—‘the Self, the Eternal Being, is

33. *The Bhagavata* (11.6.25).

34. *Ibid* (11.30.25).

ever unattached,’ says the Upanishad.<sup>35</sup> He was ‘the most wonderful sannyasin and the most wonderful householder in one,’ said Vivekananda.<sup>36</sup>

Once long ago, queen mother Kunti said to Krishna, ‘Man bound to their bodies, can never see the Eternal being in you, just as charmed spectators see not the real man but the actor only in the dress of the play.’<sup>37</sup> Krishna himself reminded Arjuna that deluded beings cannot know the true dimension (*param bhavam*) of the Eternal Being who is behind his own body, and who is the lord of all being.<sup>38</sup> That is why an avatara is a superman. His actions have superhuman dimensions. *Pashya me Yoga-maishvaram*—‘see the superhuman dimensions of my actions,’ Krishna told Arjuna. ‘The wind of irresistible might is his gait, and the destruction of creatures is his play,’ says the Bhagavata.<sup>39</sup>

There was no sense of tragedy in the grand finale. When the hunter shot the feet of Krishna with poisoned arrow, he died in profound rest and peace, thanking and fulfilling the blessed deliverer with divine grace. A later Purana wrote, ‘The lord of all, the protector of the universe, manifested Himself as Sri Krishna for the purpose of his Divine play.’<sup>40</sup>

35. *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* (4.3.15).

36. *Complete Works* 3:256.

37. *The Bhagavata* (1.8.19).

38. *The Gita* (9:11).

39. *The Bhagavata* (2.1.33).

40. *Matsya Purana* (47:1).

Veiled by the illusion born of the congress of the *Gunas*, I am not manifest to all. This deluded world knows me not—the Unborn, the Immutable.

—Bhagwan Sri Krishna in *Gita* 7:25

# THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA\*

I am glad to know that the Vedanta Society of St. Louis is observing its golden jubilee (50th anniversary), which is an important milestone in the Society's history. The Ramakrishna Order carries to the West the ancient spiritual tradition of Vedanta. The religion of Vedanta is not based on doctrine or dogma; it is based on direct experience or realization. The main tenets of Vedanta are the divinity of human beings, the unity of existence, the Oneness of Godhead, and the harmony of religions.

Vedanta is a universal religion. Unlike other major religions of the world, it is not confined to any Book, or Prophet, or Personal God. It deals with the eternal Truth which is unchanging, beyond space, time and causation.

Swami Vivekananda, the main disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, carried the message of Vedanta to the U.S.A. in 1893, and later his four brother disciples and other swamis of the Ramakrishna Order propagated this universal religion in the West.

Long before Swami Vivekananda went to the West, Sri Ramakrishna had a vision in Dakshineswar which he described to the Holy Mother, his wife: "Do you know what I was seeing in meditation when you came in? I felt I was in a far-off country where people were of fair complexion. They were different from us and spoke a language I could not understand. As I was wondering about the vision, the Divine Mother revealed to me that they too would follow my teachings. How sincere their devotion was!" It is an amazing phenomenon that Sri Ramakrishna's message

encircled the globe within seven years of his passing away, while it took hundreds of years to spread other religions after the death of their founders.

The message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world is: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

Nowadays there is so much religious intolerance in the world that people are killing each other in the name of God. Observing the religious fanaticism, a great thinker pointed out: "We have enough religion to hate one another but not enough to love one another." With a view to eradicating narrowness and bigotry, Sri Ramakrishna said: "It is not good to feel that one's own religion alone is true and all others are false. God is one only, and not two. Different people call on Him by different names: some as Allah, some as God, and others as Krishna, Shiva, and Brahman. It is like the water in a lake. The Hindus call it 'jal,' the Christians 'water,' and the Muslims 'pani.'" Swami Vivekananda reiterated Sri Ramakrishna's message of harmony at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago: "Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of

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\*Message sent by Srimat Swami Gambhiranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, for the Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Vedanta Society, St. Louis, U.S.A. in 1988.

resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and peace and not Dissension.'"

Sri Ramakrishna's life is the beacon light for the modern world. He was born in this age to uproot doubt and delusion from the minds of the people. To the sceptics and atheists, Sri Ramakrishna would say: "God really exists. You don't see the stars in the daytime, but that does not mean that the stars do not exist. There is butter in milk but can anyone see it

merely by looking at the milk? You cannot realize God by a mere wish. You must go through some mental disciplines." He declared again and again: "The goal of human life is to realize God."

I sincerely pray to the Lord that the eternal message of Vedanta which was revitalized by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in this present age will inspire and uplift the people of the East and the West. May the Master shower His blessings always and ever on you all.

## RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN A MULTIFAITH SOCIETY

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

India is the meeting ground of all the major world religions and hence the discussion is of topical interest to us of India. Yet, it is not an issue for Hinduism from the religious point of view, though it is a serious issue for the Hindus from the national and political points of view. Let me explain how it is not an issue, with a few incidents:

The late Shankaracharya Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati was once camping at a village in South India years ago. A European gentleman, Mr. A., had a long interview with the Swami. He started with a query if the Swami was prepared to take in converts. During the course of the conversation, the Swami convinced him that his birth as a Christian was divinely ordained and that for him the Christian way to God was the best suited. At the end the gentleman said, 'I cannot sufficiently thank you, Swamiji, for your kind words of advice. Please allow me to confess that when I came here I had no idea that I would be going away from you with a sincere desire to be a better Christian. Such is the desire which you have inculcated in me.

If your aim is to make a Christian a better Christian, a Hindu a better Hindu, and so on, your religion is certainly more catholic than I thought it was. In parting, may I have your gracious blessings?'

This is not an isolated incident. The Ramakrishna Mission has many centres abroad. They do not convert people to Hinduism. The local people come to them. They may be believing Christians or nominally so. But after some contact with our centres, they go back to Christ and come to the Mission also. Recently an old Christian gentleman, Titus by name, who is a regular reader of our magazine, the *Prabuddha Bharata*, wrote to me in a personal letter: 'I am happy that I am associating with Ramakrishna Math and Mission activities and I feel that I have found my mooring in my religious life. I am a Christian becoming a CATHOLIC as days go by solely due to the said association. I am happy or happier.'

Some years ago, at about five in the evening, an elderly Muslim gentleman came to the office veranda of the Mission's hospital centre at Trivandrum. He spread

towel, knelt down and started his namaz. Two young monks were walking up and down the veranda talking. The senior Swami saw the scene from inside the room. He came out and took the talking Swamis to task saying: 'That gentleman is saying his prayers and you are going on chattering. Can't you keep quiet?' The juniors skulked away feeling guilty.

A few months back when I went to our Trichur centre, an elderly gentleman, a stranger to me, came and fell flat before me. Getting up he said: 'I wanted to pay my respects to the Swami who made me a Muslim. I was a Mussalman, had been to the Gulf countries, and am now back. I happened to read your translation of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and that has made me a Muslim.'

An Ayurvedic Physician, a brother of mine, lends some of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature to his patients. A Catholic nun, a patient of his, once wrote to him: 'Please convey my salutations to your Swami brother who made me go nearer to Christ.'

This has been the approach of Hinduism to other faiths. In the long history of India, it was never a religious state. Even Aurangzeb, the most orthodox Mughal ruler, did not declare India an Islamic State. As for Ashoka, though he patronized Buddhism, his approach to other faiths was the most exemplary.

The Jews, the Parsees, the Christians, and the Muslims came to India. The only country in the world where the Jews have not been persecuted is India. Most of them have migrated to Israel when that State was established. For about two thousand years they remained worthy citizens of India. The earliest synagogue in India was a gift of the Hindu prince of Cochin. The Parsees, preserving their cultural identity, have merged themselves in Indian polity. The early Christians and Muslims were welcomed and given all

freedom of worship and trade. Many of the early churches and mosques were built by the native kings. All the Semitic religions started their contact with India through Kerala. The Jews have gone away to Israel and the other two are flourishing in Kerala. After the partition, India chose to remain a secular state and nobody raised any objection.

Persecution of other religions was unknown to India. Hinduism is not a religion but a commonwealth of faiths. Between the various faiths that constitute the commonwealth such as Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Shaktivism etc., there may be as much difference in their concepts of God, mode of worship, customs, etc., as between Hinduism and any of the Semitic religions. Yet they all live and flourish without conflict. How and why? The Vedic Rishi had a revelation: *Ekam sat, viprah bahudha vadanti*—'Truth is one, sages call it variously.' God is neither Hindu nor Muslim, no matter whether you call Him Vishnu, Christ or Allah. Water may be called *jal* or *pani* or *aqua*. The sun or the moon is not Hindu or Christian or Muslim. Why then quarrel over God? In fact, the only thing over which there need be no quarrel at all is God, for He is infinite. Each and every one of us can have enough of Him and to spare. And yet if we choose to fight in His name, well, He will have a good laugh over our foolishness. Perhaps that is also a part of His divine drama.

Buddhism, an Indian religion, was the first missionary religion. It spread over vast areas of Asia, mid-west and the Mediterranean countries. It did not provoke violent conflicts with the local religions. The Buddha exhorted his disciples: 'O ye Bhikkus, go ye forth, live the righteous life, for the welfare of all, for the good of all, and out of compassion for all.' They went forth, lived according to the faith and the people found it good and embraced it. In

spite of its monastic overtones it spread far and wide.

The approach of the Semitic religions is different. Each of them considers itself unique and insists that salvation can be had only through it. The Jews considering themselves as the chosen people of God kept their doors closed against the gentiles. Christianity and Islam went about converting people. They took upon themselves the mission of saving the souls of the pagans and the *kafirs*. They proselytize, and so each finds itself handicapped in countries where the other is well established. India's religious receptivity provide a hospitable ground for them both.

In this connection let me quote a few lines from an interview that Dr. Francis Clark of the Open University of England had with Metropolitan Paulo Mar Gregorios in October '86 and published in *Dialogue and Alliance*, New York, Vol. 1 No. 22. The Metropolitan said: 'But we need the other thing namely, a world community of cultures, which will provide a basis for the kind of world we have talked about, a world in which we can live with respect for each other, without trying to convert each other with aggressive one-way evangelism.' That is very difficult. Even at the meeting today, the Pope had to make that very speech about Jesus Christ, that salvation is only in Jesus Christ, that peace is only in Jesus Christ. That is not the kind of thing that was most appropriate. I think we could say it in a different way. It was especially painful to Muslims and to Jews. It was probably not as disturbing to Hindus and Buddhists, because for them these questions don't matter so much. But Jews and Muslims strongly object to this constant crusade for Jesus Christ. I myself believe in and have an absolute commitment to Jesus Christ which includes a concern for other religions. This kind of concern unfortunately is not present in what we hear

from many preachers.

There is a lot more which deserves quoting and is relevant to this meeting; but I resist the temptation for want of time. The Metropolitan has put the problem squarely and in the proper perspective. I need only add that we are hearing in him the voice of a genuine Indian Christian who is catholic enough to echo the voice of the Vedic Rishi.

Let me close my remarks with a few lines from a rock edict of Ashoka referred to earlier: 'The King Piyadasi, beloved of the Gods, honours all sects, both ascetics and householders; he propitiates them by alms and other gifts, but he attaches less importance to gifts and honours than to the endeavour to promote the essential moral virtues. It is true that the prevalence of essential virtues differs in different sects, but there is a common basis: that is, gentleness, moderation in language and morality. Thus, one should not exalt one's own sect and decry others, but tender them on every occasion the honour they deserve. Striving thus, one promotes the welfare of his own sect, while serving the others. Striving otherwise, one does not serve his own sect, while dis-serving others. And whosoever, from attachment to his own sect and with a view to promoting it, decries others, only deals rude blows to his own sect. Hence, concord alone is meritorious, so that all bear and love to bear the beliefs of each other. It is with this purpose that this edict has been inscribed; that all people, whatever their faith may be, should be encouraged to promote the essential moral doctrines in each, and mutual respect for all the other sects. It is with this object that the ministers of religion, the inspectors and other bodies of officers, should all work.'

There is no fence in heaven. Seek the kingdom of God and there we are all one. Unity in variety is India's message.

# ECHO OF INDIAN SPIRITUAL IDEAS IN ENGLISH ROMANTIC POETRY

PROF. SAMARENDRA KRISHNA BOSE

“East is East and West is West  
And never the twain shall meet”.

This prediction of Rudyard Kipling has been, however, disproved by fact. The twain have indeed met, time and again, in diverse fields of thought and action.

One of the epoch-making events in early 19th century England was the Industrial Revolution, which the invention of machinery brought in its wake. It effected a radical change in men's outlook on life. The new economic set up encouraged flow of population to the cities where large factories grew up. Villages were deserted. Men were divorced from nature and came slowly but steadily, to be influenced by the low and selfish motive of commercialism.

When such was the state of affairs in England of the early days of the 19th century, there was the advent of a school of poets who stood aloof from the general trend and turned their minds inward. In a world of rampant materialism they were inclined towards spiritualism. Because of the affinity of their mental make up, these poets formed a literary coterie that has been distinguished in English literature as the Romantic School.

The poet who expressed the deepest aspirations of English Romanticism was William Wordsworth (1770-1850). His denunciation of the growing commercialism of his generation and man's indifference towards nature have been most poignantly uttered in his poetry.

A famous sonnet of his, reads:

“The world is too much with us; late  
and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our  
powers

Little we see in Nature that is ours.”

(Lines: 1-3).

The expression “Nature that is ours”, is significant as it suggests the origin and source of the spiritual philosophy that underlies both English Romantic poetry of the early 19th Century and the ancient Indian Scriptures. In either case it was nature that proved to be the source of inspiration.

In the preceding age, the eighteenth century, poetry was regarded as a useful means of engraving on the mind the thought of the philosophers. This is clearly revealed in the preface to Pope's *Essay on Man*, But Wordsworth and Shelley, two of the major Romantic poets, saw in poetry itself the highest and the profoundest philosophy. The definitions of poetry by these two poets leave little room for doubt about that. Romanticism is indeed shot with metaphysics.

In Romantic poetry we find poetic expositions of pantheism and mysticism, the two most important doctrines of philosophy in general and the very basis of Indian philosophy in particular. And these two aspects of India's spiritual philosophy are best revealed in the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley.

Romanticism introduced a new attitude to nature. It was for the first time that nature was regarded as sentient and capable of reciprocating man's love and devotion for her. She was looked up on as a never-failing source of joy to man. This is revealed repeatedly in Wordsworth's poetry. In “Tintern Abbey”, one of the masterpieces of his nature-poetry, he exhorts his sister, Dorothy, to seek in nature the healing balm for all her sores and afflictions of mind.

"And this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From Joy to Joy." (Lines:123-26).

We have in English Romantic poetry, for the first time in Europe, a recognition of the personality of nature, and a perception of the independent existence of nature. Tagore opined in his *The Message of the Forest* that this new attitude to nature has found its way into Western literature from Eastern sources. He says that the English translation of Kalidasa's '*Shakuntala*' from the original Sanskrit by William Jones, was potent in this direction.

This new attitude endowed the Romantic poets with a supersensuous vision that penetrated the outward garb of phenomenal nature and made them realize the Reality behind Appearance. This is a sort of mysticism which claims that intuition can perceive immediately the ultimate nature and principles of Reality which baffle the intellect of man. This idea of intuitional perception has found beautiful poetic exposition in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*.

...that serene and blessed mood,  
in which the affections gently lead us on,—  
until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things (Lines: 41-49.)

This 'Serene and blessed mood' signifies undoubtedly the state of ecstatic trance, called *Samadhi* in India's spiritual terminology. It is attained by the practice of 'Yoga' which has been defined in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* as, 'Hindu system of philosophic meditation and asceticism designed to effect the reunion of the devotee's soul with the Universal Spirit.'

The *Rishis* (Sages or seers) of the

Upanishads also gained this mystic insight by a deep contemplation of nature. It penetrated the veil of phenomenal world of nature and reached at the core of Ultimate Reality whose outward manifestation the visible nature seemed to be. The outward diversity thus appeared only to be the external projection of the immanent Unity.

In order to hold communion with nature one must give oneself entirely up to the influence of nature. Like Wordsworth's Lucy, one 'shall lean one's ear/In many a secret place/to realise the silence and the calm/of mute insensate things.' In such condition alone can one, like Lucy, 'feel an overseeing power/To kindle and restrain'.

(*The Education of Nature*-Wordsworth)

We cannot but be struck by the close resemblance between the surrounding in which the ancient sages of India lived, moved and had their beings and that in which romantic poets like Wordsworth and Shelley passed a considerable period of their life-time.

The *Rishis* of the Vedic age lived a life of seclusion in their sylvan retreats in the lap of open and panoramic setting of nature which proved conducive to their life of contemplation. There they came to realize, by the help of their sixth sense, an indwelling soul in nature, and they established cordial relationship with it. This intimate communication between the soul of man and the soul of nature was the stepping-stone to the highest spiritual realization—that of the principle of non-dualism in Vedanta.

Wordsworth's formative period of life was spent amidst a natural environment that was akin to that of the solitary hermitage of the Indian sage. He was born at Cumberland on the edge of the Lake District and educated at the Grammar School of Hawkshead in the heart of that picturesque country. He passed the happy years of his boyhood and adolescence in daily



communion with nature. In his epic-like autobiographical poem *The Prelude* Wordsworth has given a faithful account of his early years of life. There he has revealed how he was profoundly impressed by the feeling that nature is instinct with life. While rowing or going nutting or skating, he would become mysteriously aware that the insensate world around him had become vitalized with life. This initial feeling later attained the perfection of a profound system of philosophy. This nature-philosophy is briefly but exquisitely revealed in his masterpiece of philosophical poetry, *Tintern Abbey*, which may be regarded as his spiritual autobiography, and a shorter, but better, version of *The Prelude*.

Wordsworth lived for long fifty years, far from the madding crowd, in the serene surroundings of Grasmere and Rydal Mount in the Lake District of England. This environment of nature proved to be the occasion of his highest spiritual realization—namely, pantheism—as it had been in the case of the ancient Vedic seers, too.

Shelley also passed the last phase of his short life in the peaceful, and at the same time beautiful setting of nature on the Bay of Pisa close to the sea, under the shelter of a steep hill. He had left England for good in 1818 and settled in Italy. Scenic beauty either about the Bay of Naples or among the Euganean Hills, north of Italy, harmonized entirely with the poet's the then mood of melancholy. He found palliative in nature for his bleeding heart, his 'Life of Care'. He utters in a spirit of profound resignation:

I sit upon the sands alone;  
The lightning of the moontide ocean  
Is flashing round me, and a tone  
Arises from its measured motion—  
How sweet! did any heart now share in my  
emotion!

\* \* \* \*

Yet now despair itself is mild  
Even as the winds and waters are;

I could lie down like a tired child,  
And weep away the life of Care.

(Stanzas written in *Dejection*  
near Naples Lines: 14-18, 28-31)

The lines illustrate reciprocity of feeling between man and nature that constitute the principal characteristic of English Romantic Poetry.

At the root of Indian spiritualism lies the doctrines of (a) the Immortality of Soul, (b) the Cycle of birth-death-re-birth and, (c) monism and pantheism. These, in the ultimate analysis, come to be realized as inseparably inter-related. They are only different facets of the same jewel. They are, therefore, reducible to the ultimate principle of monism to which they owe their origin.

The idea of the immortality of Soul and the cycle of birth—death and re-birth, are inculcated in many verses of the Gita which contains the essence of all the Upanishads. In shlokas (Verses) No. 23 and 24 of the 2nd. Chapter of the Gita, the Soul is described as indestructible. It cannot be pierced by weapon, burnt by fire, moistured by water or absorbed by air. It is Eternal and Absolute. It is immortal and so does not die and perish with the body. It only transmigrates from one body to another, and thus goes on being re-born until all the desires are spent out.

The doctrines of the *Immortality of Soul* and that of *Re-birth* have been convincingly set forth, among others, in the Second Chapter of the Gita.

This doctrine of the Immortality of Soul and ante-natal existence has found beautiful poetic rendering in Wordsworth's famous poem, *Immortality Ode*.

Our birth is but a sleep and forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forget-fulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home.

(Lines: 58-65).

In the poet's eye the relationship between the mortality of our body and the immortality of our Soul is like that of a master and a slave. Addressing 'a Six years' darling of a pigmy size', the poet observes:

Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the day, a Master O'er a Slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by;  
(Immortality Ode, Lines: 118-120).

Shelley's great elegy, *Adonais*, written on the death of Keats, contains lines to the same effect:

Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now,  
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,  
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow  
Through time and change, unquenchably the same.  
(Stanza 38)

And again:

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth  
not sleep—  
He hath awakened from the dream of  
life—"  
(Stanza 39)

The idea of Indian Spiritualism that our earthly existence is nothing but a temporary sojourn for the soul, is nicely revealed in the quoted passages.

Shankaracharya, the greatest exponent of non-dualism asserted: 'I will sum up in half a shloka (Verse) what has been expounded in millions of religious texts, namely, —'Only the Brahman (the Ultimate Reality)

is real and the phenomenal world is but an illusion; and all living creatures are none other than manifestations of that Brahman.'

The doctrine of non-dualism says that the visible world is nothing but outward manifestations of the invisible Universal Soul of Brahman which is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. The realization of the individual soul as only a constituent part of the Universal Soul or Brahman may be said to be the basic idea underlying the four Vedas and the Upanishads. This is evident from the 'Mahavakyas', the four great Dicta of the four Vedas.

This pivotal principle of Indian spiritualism has found poetic exposition in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*:

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.  
(Lines: 93-102).

No less marvellous are the lines in 'Adonais' in which Shelley, by means of beautiful imagery, dwells on the same idea:

The One remains, the many change and pass;  
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly.  
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,  
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,  
Until Death tramples it to fragments.  
[Stanza (52)]

# HINDUISM AND ITS SPIRIT OF UNIVERSALISM

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

## *Introduction*

A nation lives by the idealism that shapes its destiny. The soul of a race can be known by a sympathetic study of its heritage of visions and aspirations, its inner inclinations and its constant endeavors to achieve its noblest goals. Therefore, the soul of Hinduism has to be known through the idealism cherished in the collective Hindu consciousness. Will Durant, the celebrated American historian and philosopher articulated his profound respect in this way: "Let us remember... that India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-Government and democracy. Mother India is, in many ways, the mother of us all."

Hinduism in its present form is the product of hundreds of centuries of spiritual evolution. The Rig-Veda, which according to Max Muller "is the most ancient of our books," gives an idea of the Indo-Aryans. They were very advanced in the realm of mind and thought. They being highly spiritual, kept themselves busy in asking questions about the nature of this universe and the meaning and goal of human life. This philosophic enquiry into the spiritual dimension of human life, with the passing of time, became the most distinguishing characteristic of Hinduism. It is a living and growing civilization, incorporating into it new ideas and beliefs, new attitudes towards life and new standards of value in its long course of journey. It has all along given unmistakable proofs of self-adjustment. Under all sorts of circumstances it

has proved its freshness, dynamism, and vitality. The culture of a race is the progressive self-expression of the collective life. One must have a spiritual insight, intuitive faculty and a deeply penetrating intellectual sympathy to understand its exceptionally long unbroken life-history of more than 5,000 years.

India is a vast country having about 2,000 Miles from North to South and about 1,800 miles from East to West and covers an area of 1,261,587 sq. miles. Measured by the extent of its territory, India is the seventh largest country in the world. It has land frontiner 9,425 miles long and a coastline of 3,535 miles. As many as 179 languages and 545 dialects are spoken throughout India—although only 16 different languages are actually used in its literature. Along with this linguistic variety opens the unifying influence of Sanskrit, the mother of most of the Indian vernaculars. As has been well said by Monier Williams, "India... has only one sacred language (Sanskrit) and only one sacred literature accepted, revered by all adherents of Hinduism alike, however diverse the race, dialect, rank and creed."

India has also been the abode of the principal religions of the world, Hinduism—with its off-shoots—, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism.

## *Background of the Faith*

Religion is a constituent element of man and as such it is as old as life itself. The word "religio" covers a vast complex of different facts—various types of worship and adoration—ranging from primitive mind to advanced mind. Hinduism is older

than any other religion of the world. The dominant feature of Hinduism is her emphasis on the development of spiritual life, which finds fulfilment in seeking God within and without. Hence, Hinduism, as a religion, is both a way of understanding and a scheme for living. It is a way of life with a spiritual outlook. In it, conduct counts more than creed. All sects of Hinduism, whatever be the creed, emphasize the need of ethical life as an indispensable condition of spiritual realization. The goal of religion is the union with Divinity which is "the soul of truth, the delight of life and the bliss of mind, the fulness of peace and eternity."<sup>1</sup>

The essential concepts of Hinduism regarding God, nature, and soul have been traced to the days of the Rig-Veda, the earliest of the four Vedas, the basic Hindu scriptures. Throughout its long, almost unbroken history of over 5,000 years, we find Hinduism has produced saints, sages and mystics who authenticated, amplified and elucidated spiritual truth in every age including our modern period. Absolute faith based on verification with regard to the fundamentals and amazing flexibility in readjusting the externals, have been the life-style through which the Hindu faith has survived and flourished through the ages. That is why it is said to be "ever ageing but never old." Hinduism regards as its supreme authority the religious experience of the ancient Vedic sages. It has no single founder; the ancient seers acted as various channels for transmitting to humanity the spiritual truths they experienced. For this reason, Hinduism is also known as *Vaidika* (Vedic) Religion and *Sanatana Dharma* (Eternal Religion.) It indicates the truth that religion, as such, knows no age. It may be remembered that

the words Hindu and India were coined by foreigners.

The eternal impersonal principles experienced by different sages at different periods were collected together in the Vedanta, the end portion of the Vedas, also known as the Upanishads. Hinduism is rooted in Vedanta.

### *Philosophy of Hinduism*

To understand Hinduism one has to be intimate with its philosophy rooted in Vedanta. One of the fundamental convictions of the Hindu mind is that there is an all-pervading and all-transcending spirit which is the basic reality, the origin and substratum of everything animate and inanimate. This Reality projects, manifests, sustains, penetrates, observes, regulates, and ultimately absorbs within Itself the objective world. As waves have no existence apart from the ocean, so the objective world is rooted in God. Just as a clay pot has no existence apart from the clay, similarly manifoldness has no existence apart from God. God is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute. God in Hinduism has two aspects, impersonal and personal. In Vedantic tradition the impersonal God is addressed as That or It and the personal God as He as well as She.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886), a great illumined saint, inheriting the spiritual tradition of Vedanta, said: "When I think of the Supreme Being as inactive, neither creating, nor preserving, nor destroying, I call Him Brahman or Purusha, the super-personal God. When I think of Him as active, creating, preserving, and destroying, I call Him *Shakti* or *Maya* or *Prakriti*, the personal God. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference. The personal and the super-personal are the same being in the same way as milk and its whiteness, or the diamond and its luster,

1. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 1.6.

or the serpent and its undulation are one. It is impossible to conceive of the one without the other. The Divine Mother and Brahman are one." Says the Svetasvatara Upanished (4.3) "Thou art woman; thou art man, thou art the youth and also the maiden; thou art the old man tottering with a stick, being born thou standest facing all directions." Hinduism believes that though God is one, He has various manifestations in many gods and goddesses, any one of which may be adored as a form of the supreme God. We have, therefore, various forms through which God is worshipped. In fact, one is impelled to worship Him in whichever thing has glory, grace and vigour (*Bhagavad Gita*, 10.41). The Hindu adores the one God in the many gods. He finds one in all and all in one. A Hindu is a monist from philosophical standpoint, and from religious standpoint, a monotheist.

The special characteristic of Hinduism is its liberal attitude based on monism, a philosophical system explaining all reality in terms of one central unifying principle. Deeply convinced of the existence of the Supreme Reality, the Hindu mind allows the widest freedom in matters of faith and worship. "As many minds, so many faiths." Vedanta gives the simile that as milk is ever white in spite of the different hues of the cows, all the different paths earnestly accepted by spiritual seekers will lead to the same goal. Not merely are the different paths treated as of equal value, but the liberty to worship God in any form is granted. As the same sugar is made into various figures of birds and beasts, so one Mother Divine is worshipped in different countries and ages, in different forms and names. Though He may be worshipped variously, some love to call Him Father, others Mother, etc. yet it is one God that is being worshipped in all these various relations and modes. This echoes the ancient dictum of the Rigveda (1.164.46),

"Reality is one, sages call It by various names."

God can be partially described and approached in various ways. But Indian thought is conscious of the immensity, the inexhaustibility, and the enigmatic character of God. The Hindu mind, therefore, approaches the different conceptions and representations of God with a deep sense of humility. God is never exclusively and completely exhausted in any one manifestation. The special feature of Indian tradition is the spirit of accommodation. Due to this non-dogmatic attitude, the Hindu mind is reluctant to assign an unalterable or rigidly fixed form or name to God.

From this, it follows that Hinduism looks upon the various religions of the world as so many paths to one and the same infinite Reality. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, recited the following hymn at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."<sup>2</sup>

In the same Parliament he also declared: "The Christian is not to become a Hindu... But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. If the Parliament of Religions has shown any thing to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In

2. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*; 1.4 (Mayavati Memorial Edition). Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.

the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and peace and not Dissension.'"<sup>3</sup>

Hinduism is not so much a common creed but a common quest. It is not an organized religion, nor does it depend for its support on any particular creed. It accommodates within itself various expressions of basic truth. In the Gita, we see that anyone who follows with true devotion and sincerity any faith or worships any deity, ultimately finds refuge in God.

These ideals were not confined to religion in the narrow sense of the word. They found eloquent expression in political and State policy. The same spirit of tolerance and universal acceptance is recorded in Ashoka's inscription (Rock Edict, XII). "The king Priyadarshi honours all sects, monks and house-holders,...for he who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others wholly from attachment to his own, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own sect, in reality, by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own sect." "It is verily concord among religions that is right and proper, as persons of other ways of thinking may thereby hear the Dharma and serve its causes." In India religious intolerance has been very rare and Shivaji's conception of a Hindu empire was in no way identified with religious persecution. He enlisted in his army seven hundred (Muslim) Pathan deserters from Bijapur. At least three of his naval commanders were Muslims by faith, and he venerated the Muhammedan saint Sheikh Muhammad as he venerated the Hindu saints Tukaram and

Ramdas. He granted *inam* lands for "the illumination of, and food offerings to, the shrines of Muhammedan saints, and Muslim mosques were maintained by state allowance." Whenever a copy of the sacred Koran came into his hands, he treated it with respect, and gave it to some of his Mussalman followers. When the women of any Hindu or Muhammedan family were taken prisoners by his men, and they had no friend to protect them, he watched over them until their relations came with a suitable ransom to buy their liberty.

### *The Concept of Human Being*

The Indian mind is singularly dominated by one paramount conception: the divinity of life. The ancient discovery of the divine within the human had a tremendous impact on the future development of India's culture. Divinity, the essence of the individual, is distinguished from the psycho-physical complex which externally houses it but is not its real nature.

Direct experience of this truth is the high prerogative of every one. The human being is not the body, mind, ego, senses or intellect; these are only instruments through which he manifests and acts in the world. Divinity, his true nature, is immortal, pure, eternal and non-dual. He (man) is "a child of immortal Bliss."<sup>4</sup> The divine nature is also the true nature of animals, but they are incapable of thinking about it. It is only man with his unique physical and mental system, aided by the spiritual environment created by himself in the course of evolution, who can experience the truth. Man is specially equipped for this great adventure. Human life is a union of spirit and nature, a complex of freedom and bondage, purity and impurity, light and darkness. These two opposite elements, joined toge-

3. *Complete works*, 1.24.

4. *Svetasvatara Upanishad*, 2.5.

ther by the inscrutable power of God, produce the human body. Divinity is in essence self-conscious, self-illuminating, the knowing subject, the organizer of experience, and therefore the principle of order. The body is animated by the divine essence. Our ignorance of our real self compels us to identify ourselves with our bodies, and so we suffer. As we gradually awaken to our divine nature and its glory, we become restless pilgrims among God's creatures.

This attitude of having a spiritual experience through constant struggle, as distinct from belief or knowledge of the scriptures, has saved religion in India from the defect of snobbery. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan says, "The emphasis on the goal of spiritual life bound together worshippers of many types and saved Hindus from spiritual snobbery."

### *The Concept of Religion*

Religion is vital, progressive, and dynamic. It is a discipline which, when pursued earnestly, enables us to discover the spiritual dimension of our life. As Swami Vivekananda said, "Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man."<sup>5</sup> It is not a creed, dogma, or scholarship but the subjective experience which transforms our lives.

Every religion has two aspects, the ethnic or socio-political, and the spiritual or universal. We are born to ethnic religion and most of us die in it by hugging certain creeds or dogmas in the name of religion. When real thirst for genuine spiritual experience comes in our life, then only we enter into the higher phase of religion, the phase of pure spiritual adventure. Here religion means the entire scheme of self-improvement geared to the experience of

ultimate truth. Disciplines are observed with a view to developing integrity of character, harmony of life, joy in fellowship, and sincere longing for the vision of truth within and without. This higher religious impulse comes from within. When our life is truly awakened to this quest, moral consciousness quickens and we feel spiritual progress in our life. This is a verifiable truth. It culminates in that plenary experience which enriches life, broadens our views, and purifies our vision. We become universal. Our thoughts and actions are in tune with Divinity. Then we truly enjoy life and can radiate peace and joy. Says Vivekananda, "This is the real Science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ."<sup>6</sup>

The scientific temper of the human mind cannot remain satisfied with a superficial, and dogma-ridden ethnic religion. Swami Vivekananda, lamenting over this great loss of human resources due to our stagnation in ethnic religion, remarked, "My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.... Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt."<sup>7</sup> Again, Swami Vivekananda said, "My Master used to say that these names as Hindu, Christian, etc. stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must break them down first. They have lost all their good powers, and now stand only as baneful influences under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons."<sup>8</sup>

5. *Complete Works*; 4.358.

6. *Ibid*, 6.81.

7. *Ibid*, 5.489.

8. *Ibid*, 6.303.

This teaching of the Eternal religion of India has been expressed succinctly by Swami Vivekananda: "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."<sup>9</sup>

Spiritual life finds its fulfilment in this freedom. This alone will give us the cosmic vision which is the goal of religion.

#### *Cardinal Virtues in Hinduism*

Expansion of heart being the rhythm of spiritual life, Hinduism asks its followers to cultivate certain godly virtues. The science of religion calls for the spiritual development of life, and hence the necessity of cultivating truthfulness, spiritual austerity, simplicity, purity, self-control, non-violence, renunciation and service, is accepted as fundamental by the Indian mind.

#### *Ideals of Spirituality:*

##### *Renunciation and Service in Indian Culture*

In the Hindu view, philosophy and religion are not contradictory but complementary: religion is the practical side of philosophy. The supreme Reality is at once the Absolute of philosophy and the God of religion. The indivisible Divinity—source of all beatitude—is the Impersonal-personal God of Vedanta. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.II.11) proclaims this supreme truth in one of its famous verses: "Knowers of this supreme truth declare that it is one and the same non-dual pure Consciousness that is spoken of as Brahman or the Impersonal Absolute (by the philosophers), Paramatman

or the Supreme Self (by the mystics), and as Bhagavan, or the personal God (by the devotees)." Indian culture generally speaks of four human values—*Dharma* (morality or righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (legitimate enjoyment), and *Moksha* (liberation or spiritual freedom).

*Dharma* is considered a primary virtue in Indian culture. It sustains individual life as well as society. It is regarded as the highest social value on which is to be based the other two social values of wealth and legitimate pleasures as well as the spiritual value of ultimate freedom.

The *Katha Upanishad* emphasizes, "He who has not ceased from bad conduct, cannot obtain the vision of divinity by mere intelligence."<sup>10</sup>

Indian wisdom holds that all four, harmoniously cultivated, will lead us to achieving our highest end, or spiritual liberation. Wealth and pleasure are not intrinsic good. They are good only so far as they contribute to righteous living or the life of duty. Indian culture warns man against the easy and glamorous way of vice, and urges him to take to the steep and narrow road of virtue. The Indian mind takes due account of the misery and suffering which the world metes out to a bound soul. In fact, it is suffering and bondage that provoke the problems of philosophy and religion. Evils can be transcended only by gaining a foothold in spiritual culture through consistent spiritual practice.

This spiritual orientation of Hinduism is based on her philosophy which aspires after spiritual freedom. As Professor Radhakrishnan rightly observes, "In many other countries of the world, reflection on the nature of existence is a luxury of life. The serious moments are given to action, while the pursuit of philosophy comes up as a

9. Ibid. 1.25.

10. *Katha Upanishad*, 1.II.24.



parenthesis. In the West even in the heyday of its youth, as in the times of Plato and Aristotle, it leaned for support on some other study as politics or ethics...In India, philosophy stood on its own legs, and all other studies looked to it for inspiration and support."

### *Saints—the real teachers in Hinduism*

A galaxy of great men and women down the long checkered history of Indian culture stood for the highest aspirations of the Indian mind and this hallowed tradition helps the common people to be reminded of its supreme importance. The greatest men and women of India were messengers of the Spirit who taught, through their elevated lives, the fundamental unity of all in one all-pervading Divinity. Their universal attitude of love and harmony, peace and enlightenment, renunciation and service, deeply imprinted in the minds of the people, the dominance of spirit over matter.

Spirituality can never be gained without renunciation. Renunciation is a positive value, a discipline which is pursued for spiritual awakening. Mind is steeped in matter. Unless it is made pure and stable through exposure to spirit, it will not be fit for the higher values of life. Hence the renunciation of lower pleasures for the sake of lasting joy and fulfilment of higher values.

A devout Hindu wants to experience the presence of divinity in life, and is ready for consistent struggle to gain that end.

Hence the acid test of man's religious life are gradual withdrawal from mundane pursuits, cultivation of a new attitude of spiritual consciousness within and without, love for divine life, humane behaviour, unselfishness, critical discrimination, and inner detachment. This elevated life will demonstrate the spirit of self-sacrifice for the welfare of others, sincere love and genuine sympathy for suffering humanity irrespective of creed, colour or nationality.

In India, the saints and sages have been the true teachers. All schools of Indian philosophy have recognized the intuitive experiences of saints as the strongest proof of the spiritual nature of the ultimate Truth.

India has in no age been without saints of the highest order, and hence the ideal of human life, the ideal of true culture and civilization, has never been lowered in India. The light kindled by the Vedic seers has never been extinguished. The centre of her cultural life is held fast by the idealism of these saints, living examples of freedom from human weakness. It is from them that people learn to think of one God, one universe, one humanity, one life pervading the varieties of creation. Backed by their high idealism and living example, the common people gain strength to fight against untruth and injustice, against all kinds of evil in man's dealing with man. In this way, spiritual transmission and spiritual growth take very positive forms.

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## AMERICAN YOUTH TODAY

ARCHIBALD STARK AND NINA STARK

On a hot June evening in middle America, a regional high school was holding its outdoor graduation ceremony. Parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters, friends

and schoolmates filled the bleachers of the athletic field; fanning themselves, chatting, calling to straying children, the crowd prepared to celebrate a yearly rite of passage.

From a nearby Air Force base, from dirt farms in the outback, all were united by a ceremony that assured them that mysterious process called "education" had been completed. It was a process and opportunity that most took for granted but which had been anticipated and legislated for from the early days of a new nation by Founding Fathers aware of the dangers of universal suffrage in the hands of an uneducated electorate. Some of the graduates would go on to higher learning and training but most would precipitously enter the arena of life, more or less prepared to move on from child to adult.

As the sun declined and an evening breeze soothed the heated and restless crowd, the graduates solemnly filed to their seats in the field in front of the bleachers, their unaccustomed robes billowing in random breezes as they clutched mortarboards to their heads. The class valedictorian, a slender girl with dark eyes and a quiet demeanor, rose to her feet. Amid the restless stirring of the crowd and the wail of hot, tired infants, her clear sweet voice was barely heard. "We have been given a great opportunity", she said, "we have learned many things about our world. But as we face that world today, we find many confusions." Clearly and simply she described social ills and world tensions. Then she concluded, "But we don't have to be discouraged, we don't have to accept these things as they are. We can do better!" A polite smattering of applause saw her to her seat.

The class president rose to his feet. That he was popular, there was no doubt as laughter and shouts greeted him from the stands and among the graduates. His message was brief as he described the extra-curricular activities of the school year amid shouts of appreciative laughter. "Keep partying!", he concluded. A roar of approval and loud applause greeted him

and, with a broad grin of satisfaction, he threw his mortar-board in the air. A flurry of imitation sent other caps in the air and the crowd laughed and clapped.

Our two young speakers seemed to sum up the mood of America at the crossroads of destiny. One, the still small voice of unquenchable conscience and aspiration; the other, the exuberant voice of a boisterous, unexamined, and self-confident society. We, as Americans, are caught between "we can do better" and "keep partying". Although we may long for the former as touching our deepest hopes and feelings, we seem to adopt the latter, seeing no other way but to "live it up" because, as the beer ads tell us with blithe assurance, "you only come this way once."

But as every day, every week, every year passes it becomes increasingly clear that the "keep partying" mentality is bringing us to a restriction of the human soul on a personal level, to a society that is burdened with crime, drug abuse, violence, broken homes and widening poverty on a national level, and to a confrontation with other nations on a global scale with armaments that can destroy us all, partyers and aspirers alike. As human beings, after eons of evolution, we still cling to the "tooth and claw" habits of ancient struggles to survive and to evolve. It is neither necessary nor appropriate any longer. We don't need to "keep partying" in a desperate attempt to outwit and avoid a fact of life—death. We don't need to accept the physical ultimate to what we feel is the end of our sojourn in this life, a life which gives us a rare experience which we are unable to properly evaluate. It does have meaning, it does have value, it does have purpose and we must discover it in order to live well, even to survive.

Our young man of that graduation had obviously experienced no challenging alter-

natives for his life-force, for his youthful energies and capacities. On the other hand, the class valedictorian called out for something she knew deep in her soul to be important to her life and to the lives of others. Should we as Americans with a great heritage let her down? Shall we push her into compromises with life which limit and suppress her ideals and hopes because we ourselves have accepted limited goals and easy illusions which seem to get us through a life which we have been persuaded to see as motivated by pleasure and by profit? Shall we tell her she is "Out of tune"? Shall we write her off as a naive expression of what we could be, but are not? We owe to that child of the American heartland a reassurance that her intuition has not only value, it has our support and understanding.

Although Vivekananda, according to Marie Louise Burke, "often rebuked the American people for 'dollar worship', he was a great admirer of America's inventive genius, its spirit of enterprise, its gift of organization and, above all, its elevation of the common man. He who had the welfare of man in every respect—physical and mental, as well as spiritual—could never belittle material progress as such." But in the almost one hundred years since Vivekananda left his "gift" to America, that material progress has reached untenable proportions which the rest of the world cannot support. It is time for us as Americans to shake off the cloying and dulling shackles of the market-place ethic and the static piety that attends it, which is leading us down the slope of history and away from the greatness needed in a torn and bleeding world.

America has no other alternative but to become great or pass out of history. Our present ideals of opulence and benevolence must give way to self-control and global concern. We must realign our institutions

to serve man-making rather than money-making goals. We have been at the peak of prosperity, richer than any nation in the history of the world, and if we are not to slide down the other side into historical obscurity, we must become fully aware that the rest of the world cannot afford our standard of living and that exporting technology without an understanding of the true needs of others, or arming for ideological control to protect our business and "security" interests, are not answers to the world's needs. *We can do better.*

Growth has been the great condition of the American way of life throughout her short history but that growth has lost its guiding meaning and purpose and has become proliferation; more electronic gadgets, swimming pools, packaged food, diversionary entertainment, until we swim in a slough of unslaked hankerings and desires while most of the rest of the world cries out for the simple needs of life. Much national energy, many of the finest brains, are employed in creating new desires, new markets in the land. Is this our great society? A third grade class in New Jersey was asked what was the most important thing in life. "Money" was the answer, almost to a child.

America must develop an ultimate economics geared to one world. She must eventually develop a distribution sense based on human needs everywhere. She must extend the rights and opportunities she claims for herself to include all of mankind. No less than these goals will save or protect us. Production of more wealth is not our pressing need, but more equitable distribution. In the words of Gandhi, "there is enough in the world for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed." This does not require an immediate lowering of our standard of living (even if that were possible) or throwing over existing institutions or hurling accusations at

any particular group ; but it does mean production of wealth of another sort—spirituality. *America needs spiritual strength to digest her material STRENGTH.*

Let us begin to look deeply within ourselves and find that we are the creators of our own destiny. We need to turn our incredible energy and our concentration on money and technology inward, and produce a race of heroes. Let us become aware that it is not money-making but *man-making* that we need above all else. We are no longer an isolated nation in the world, thinking of ourselves as unique. Co-existence is a new adventure in the world, in civilization. Why shouldn't we

take joy and hope in this new challenge by educating our minds to this inevitable fact of life—that existence is co-existence ? America requires, more than anything else today, the sowing of great thoughts in her mind. There is a saying:

Sow a thought and you reap an act ;  
Sow an act and you reap a habit ;  
Sow a habit and you reap a character ;  
Sow a character and you reap a destiny.

Democracy is not the mandate of the people but of the spirit. If America can work out that implication in her national life, She will become invincible.

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## SUBHAS CHANDRA : THE BURNING PATRIOT

SWAMI PURNATMANANDA

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was a burning patriot. His life is the story of patriotism in flesh and bones. His only passion was the emancipation of the country. He said, 'Allow me to call you to the sacred duty of service to the country. Come one, come all wherever you happen to be. Hark, don't you hear the clarion call of our Mother ?... Blessed with freedom China, Japan, Turkey, and even Egypt have taken honoured positions in the committee of nations. Do you mean to keep on sleeping under a spell even now ? Awake, arise, it won't do to waste any more time. The sin committed by your forefathers in the eighteenth century in letting in foreign traders inside the country, must be atoned for by you in the present century. The newly awakened soul of India is crying aloud for emancipation. Let us all be bound by one tie of brotherhood and take the sacred vow of regaining India's freedom and restoring

all her past glory and magnificence.'<sup>1</sup>

To him work for the country was a *sadhana*, a spiritual practice, to which he called his countrymen to join: 'The sacrificial fire is alight. My young comrades, come forward ; one and all. Let us sacrifice ourselves at the altar of our Motherland.'<sup>2</sup> He observed that many had come to politics to use its platform for rising higher and higher in terms of power and position. This pained him very much. He wrote, 'In most of the workers of Bengal I have noticed a sort of worldly wisdom and a bargaining spirit slowly growing up. They have started saying, "Give me power—give me office at least give me a seat on the executive committee, otherwise I won't

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1. Subhas Chandra Bose. *The Mission of life* (Thacker, Spink & Co., Ltd. Calcutta, 1953), P. 8-9.

2. Ibid P. 18.

work." I feel like asking, from when did public service become a business deal, or a matter of contract? To me the ideal of service has always been—"Give and only give, and never ask for any return." (Quotation is from a famous poem by Swami Vivekananda)... It is a disgrace, it breaks my heart to think of it.<sup>3</sup>

The attitude of total sacrifice, dedication, and commitment is what is fundamentally needed to raise a nation and a country. Subhas Chandra himself was the very personification of this and his life's struggle shows us to what magnitude this dedication can reach. In one of his addresses he exhorted the Indians in the following words, 'We Indians have all the resources except one—I mean the power of unstinted self-sacrifice. We have yet to learn how one could be inspired in the life-long pursuit of an ideal in spite of all obstruction and danger. It is this tenacity of purpose which we lack completely.... We are not sincere in our love either for our motherland or for our fellow-countrymen; the result is that our domestic fight knows no end....'

Subhas Chandra was instinctively drawn to the great life of Swami Vivekananda. Of Swamiji he wrote, 'Had he been alive today, Swamiji would have been my Guru.' He was fond of Swamiji's lines:

Unending battle—

That verily is His sacred worship:

Constant defeat, let that not unnerve thee,  
Shattered be little self, hope, name and fame,  
Set up a pyre of them, and make thy heart,  
A burning ground,

And let Shyama dance there.

'Once you consecrate yourself to this "unending battle"' Subhas told others, 'you would achieve strength and power. It was through such storm and stress that all the free nations of the world came to attain

power. Let the young men of India march along this path in a body; we shall then recover our long-lost glory and all ancient wealth along with the priceless treasure that we call independence...'<sup>4</sup>

According to Subhas Chandra, despite 'endless diversity', India's culture presents a 'fundamental unity'. That is why Subhas Chandra was against the division of India and sounded a note of warning against partition in his speech broadcast from somewhere in Burma in 1944: 'We have resolved to create a united and free India. Therefore, we shall oppose all attempts to divide her and cut her up into bits.... We have realized that to divide our country will ruin it economically, culturally and politically... I ask the millions of Muslim young men in India: "Will you be a party to the vivisection of your motherland?"... Our divine motherland shall not be cut up.'<sup>5</sup>

This agony of Subhas Chandra can be traced to his clear view of Indian history delineated in his book entitled *The Indian Struggle*. There he writes: 'The ethnic diversity of India has never been a problem... for throughout her history she has been able to absorb different races and impose on them one common culture and tradition.... With the advent of Moham-medans, a new synthesis was gradually worked out. Though they did not accept the religion of the Hindus, they made India their home and shared in the common social life of the people—their joys and their sorrows. Through mutual co-operation, a new art and a new culture was evolved which was different from the old but which nevertheless was distinctly Indian.'<sup>6</sup> The

4. Ibid P. 187-88.

5. Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose. (Publications Division, Govt of India, 1962), P. 223-24.

6. Netaji: Collected Works (Netaji Research Bureau, Calcutta 1989.) V. 8 II, P. 3.

3. Ibid P. 62-63,

INA indeed was India with representatives from all her limbs and appendages. Appreciating this wonderful achievement Mahatma Gandhi wrote, 'The greatest lesson that we can draw from Netaji's life is the way in which he infused the spirit of unity amongst his men so that they could rise above all religious and provincial barriers and shed together their blood for the common cause.'<sup>7</sup> This awakening of nationalism became so pronounced and widespread that Jawaharlal Nehru who had deep misgivings about the INA had to admit: 'Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs and Mahrattas, politicians, and civil servants—among all of them the conception of nationalism has been growing stronger and today I think that the national idea has spread right through, not the least perhaps among some of those soldiers who have done such wonderful service in the war.'<sup>8</sup>

The life of Subhas Chandra is a story of valour, heroism, and adventure. The well-known incident of protest against Principal Oaten at the Presidency College, his spectacular resignation from the Indian Civil Service, his sudden disappearance from British captivity at Calcutta, his submarine voyage from Germany to Japan, his formation of the Indian National Army in Singapore, and his historic fight against the British in the jungles of Burma-Manipur have made him a legendary hero, at par with Shivaji and Rana Pratap. Finally the air-crash in Formosa, a fact still shrouded in mystery, has made him an adorable tragic hero who emerges immortal in defeat to every Indian youth. These were 'explosive' events, and they fired the imagination of the youth of India with a spirit of adventure, a revolutionary ardour, and a profound patriotic fervour. Netaji's historic

call to the soldiers of the INA to crush the British rule in India and the reports that the army was fighting with soul-stirring anthems on their lips ignoring all hazards and hardships, galvanized a frustrated nation out of its torpor and inertia. The historic call of '*Delhi chalo*'—Move onward to Delhi—had a vigorous romantic appeal to, and a magnetic effect on the youth of India. Still the call stirs patriotism as when Netaji pronounced those famous words to his soldiers in the battlefield: 'Blood is calling to blood. Arise! We have no time to lose. Take up your arms. There in front of you is the road our pioneers have built. We shall march along that road. We shall carve our way through the enemy's ranks, or, if God wills, we shall die a martyr's death. And in our last sleep we shall kiss the road which will bring our Army to Delhi. The road to Delhi is the road to Freedom. On to Delhi!'<sup>9</sup> His dream though short-lived, was fulfilled. With his dear soldiers, he did enter India, and hoisted the first national flag on the Indian soil in the farthest region of Indian territory. Subhas Chandra is the first Indian who celebrated the first dawn of independence on the soil of the holy land.

When Subhas Chandra decided to risk everything including his life to reach East Asia from Germany in response to the call of his countrymen under the leadership of Rash Behari Bose, he was warned by the German Government under Hitler that 'the chance of success of his plan is only five per cent'. Subhas Chandra, it is heard, replied boldly: 'Even if the chance had been one per cent, I must go.'<sup>10</sup> The rest is now a widely known fact of history. His perilous 90-day submarine voyage from Germany through enemy-infested waters

7. *Netaji: His life & works*, Ed by Shiva Lal (Agarwala & Co. Ltd. Agra) P. 111.

8. Quoted in *Netaji-the man*, Dilip Kumar Ray, (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay. 1969) P. 147.

9. Hugh Toye (Allied Publishers P. Ltd. Bombay. 1959) *The Springing Tiger*. P. 103.

10. *Chintanayak Vivekananda* Ed. Swami Lokeshwarananda (R.K. Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta 1977) P. 825.

round the British Isles, round Africa, across the Indian ocean, to Sumatra and Penang, and from there by air to Japan, and ultimately to Singapore, is a glorious and inspiring chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom.

The history of India's freedom struggle records how the call of the great leader drew hundreds and thousands to join him for active struggle. We remember his speech 'To Delhi, to Delhi' delivered in Singapore: 'Comrades! You have voluntarily accepted a mission that is the noblest that the human mind can conceive of. For the fulfilment of such a mission no sacrifice is too great, not even the sacrifice of one's life. You are today the custodians of India's national honour, and the embodiment of India's hopes and aspirations. So conduct yourself that your countrymen may bless you, and posterity may be proud of you... Today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honour, than to be the first soldier in the army of liberation...It does not matter who among us will live to see India free. It is enough that India shall be free and that we shall give our all to make her free. May God now bless our Army and grant us victory in the coming fight!'<sup>11</sup>

Subhas followed the way of his master Vivekananda, in his utmost respect to women. He used to say echoing Manu that the society where women were not honoured, all efforts were bound to come to nought. He believed that unless women were given due honour and positions no movement could be of any avail in the country. The condition of our mothers and sisters could not satisfy him. He said, 'Indeed, when India had not denied women their social position, She saw the advent of women-seers like Maitreyi and Gargi,

mathematicians and astronomers like Khana and Leelavati, women heroes like Ahalyabai and the Rani of Jhansi.'<sup>12</sup> In one of his addresses to the students he introduced this subject of improving the condition of women and tried to point out how much importance the other advanced nations like the British gave to this. There he also said: 'My dear comrades, you must be wondering why I introduce facts like these in a Conference of Students. Believe me, when I say that these words well up from the very depth of my aching heart. As a race, we have no hope for progress unless our womenfolk are mothers of brave sons, and that too will never be realised until at home and abroad we have improved the status of our future mothers.'<sup>13</sup> When in later years he formed the INA he tried to give to the entire nation a practical demonstration of what women could do even in the dreadful field of battle, if properly trained and guided. The soldiers of the Rani Jhansi Regiment of the INA proved that Netaji was never a utopian dreamer of dreams.

Subhas Chandra believed like Swami Vivekananda that India would emerge in future as a real path-finder to humanity at large. He believed that India's awakening is not for the benefit of India alone, but for the welfare of the entire world. India is destined to play a great role. She has to fulfil a great mission. Subhas Chandra said, 'Indian nation died more than once, But every time it had its resurrection, because there was justification for its existence. India has a message to give to the world. There is something in India's culture which mankind cannot do without, a culture which is essential for the fullest development of human civilization. Even in the fields of science, art, literature, trade and commerce, our nation has some-

11. Selected speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose. P. 184.

12. *The Mission of life*, P. 127-28.

13. *Ibid* P. 128.

thing to give to the world. That is why the sages of India kept the lights of learning burning through ages and ages of darkness. As their descendants how can we die before we have fulfilled that higher purpose of our race?'<sup>14</sup>

Subhas Chandra said: 'Only those among India's sons and daughters are really alive who have a firm faith in that mission of India. It would not be correct to say that all the three hundred and thirty million people of India are really alive. I can only say that the youths of India are truly alive in as much as they have that faith in the country's mission.'

'When I spent month after month in prison outside India, I would frequently ask myself, "What is that thing which instead of breaking down our spirit by continued imprisonment sustains and strengthens?" The answer that would inwardly suggest itself was this: India has a mission of her own, She has a glorious future, and we are heirs to that great legacy. The history of a new and free India will be our creation. It is the strength of this faith that enables us to endure all sufferings and to ignore the dreary present. All difficulties will melt away before that idealism of ours. The youth of India can defy death only because of this unflinching and unflinching faith in great idea.'<sup>15</sup>

14. Ibid P. 9.

15. Ibid P. 10-11.

Like Swami Vivekananda Subhas Chandra therefore told them that there is infinite power latent in them. To Subhas Chandra it was Swami Vivekananda who played the role of the Awakener of his soul. 'Swamiji knew', Sister Nivedita wrote, 'how to light a fire. Where others gave directions, he would show the thing itself.'<sup>16</sup> Subhas Chandra was fortunate in having realized the 'thing itself' through the message of Swami Vivekananda. He appealed to the Youth of the country to share with him some of his 'hopes, aspirations and dreams' for future India. He said, 'There is nothing else in my possession which I can offer you as gift. Will you not accept this of me? You are fresh and young, your hearts filled to the brim with new hopes. The nobler and higher ideals of life should be before you. The greater the ideals, the better they would awaken the powers that are dormant in you. Hence, dear students, arise, and awake.'<sup>17</sup> And India did respond to this heroic call by Subhas Chandra, 'one of the great heroes who heralded India's independence.'

More than forty years have passed after Subhas disappeared from the global scene. Many countries, especially Japan, remember the great Indian hero with respect. It is he who turned politics into a religion of sacrifice.

16. Sister Nivedita, *The master as I saw Him*, (Udbodhan, Calcutta, 1983), P. 82.

17. *The Mission of life*. P. 75.

Let your old age be childlike, and your childhood like old age ;  
that is, so that neither may your wisdom be with pride, nor  
your humility without wisdom.

— St Augustine



# VIVEKANANDA: THE WANDERER—PROPHET

(AN ONE ACT PLAY)

## BODHISATTWA

(Early morning, in front of a temple in Cranganore, Kerala, beginning of 1892. Two temple priests stand at the temple gate and chant some hymns and look askance on one side for the coming of the Cranganore princes. Beautiful Karnatic music is going on in Nadaswaram).

Ist. (young) Priest: Hey! Why this delay today of our princes of Cranganore. It is the tradition of this holy temple of Divine Mother that the princes of the Royal family must worship the Mother first. And then only others will be allowed.

2nd. (elder) Priest: (He looks towards the sky to ascertain the time of the day): Don't worry. They will be coming soon. Let us see that nobody else enters this holy temple now. Ah! who is that? (He suddenly looks to the other side of the stage, and sees Swamiji entering in his Parivrajaka style).

Look, look, here is a monk. Ah! He looks like Shiva.

Ist. Priest: Indeed he looks like Shiva! But let us wait for the princes. (Swamiji proceeds majestically to enter the temple. He moves with a deep, devotional mood.)

Ist. Priest: Forgive us Babaji, where are you going?

Swamiji: I have come a long distance all the way here to offer my prayers at the feet of the Divine Mother.

2nd. Priest: Babaji, please wait a little and do not enter the temple now. Our royal princes will come now. After their Visit only, you can enter the temple.

Ist. Priest: (whispering to the elder priest) Have you asked him which caste does he belong to? Let us not forget that

this temple is open to royal family and the Brahmins only.

2nd. Priest: Babaji, may we know what your caste is?

(Swamiji becomes introspective, and comes near the stage, lifts his head up, and talks as if he is talking to God).

Swamiji: (to the audience) I belong to no caste. No caste can bind me down. A monk is above caste. He has given up the least touch of the worldly aristocracy. No, I am *Chidananda Rupah, Shivoham, Shivoham.*

2nd. Priest: Babaji chants excellent Sanskrit Verses. It is clear that he is a brahmin of the highest class.

Ist. Priest: (to the other priest) Do not be so easily deluded by Sanskrit Chanting. (to Swamiji) Babaji, please let us know if you are born in a brahmin family, or not. Otherwise our princes will not allow you to enter the temple.

2nd. Priest: (to the first priest) And how can we allow him in unless the princes allow him?

Swamiji: (to the audience) Ah, my eternal, Sanatana Dharma, my most ancient religion of the Vedas! Where are you gone today? Ah, it pains my heart to see that the glory of our great Hinduism is obstructed today by "Don't touchism" and caste-distinction. My Divine Mother! I surrendered my life at your feet long, long ago, and today I cannot approach you! I know Mother, you are everywhere in this universe. Accept my salutation at your feet and bless me that I may raise millions

of my countrymen who are suffering due to ignorance of the true spirit of the Eternal Religion. They have accepted some local customs as the final authority, not the Upanishads or the Vedas.

(Swamiji goes to a stone under a tree and sits in meditation. Beautiful soft music goes on in the background. Enter the two princes and look with deep veneration at Swamiji from a distance. They stand awcd).

Ist. Prince: Brother, who is he? Truly, truly, he looks like Shiva. Don't you see?

2nd. Prince: He radiates divinity like a divine angel.

Ist. Prince: I feel like bowing down at his holy feet this holy morning.

2nd. Prince: But let us go to the temple first and offer our prayers to Divine Mother. Let us do it quick today, We must meet this holy man.

(They enter the temple and one of the priests leaves with them. The younger one remains. Music goes on.)

Ist. Priest: Strange! Our princes at last have fallen in love with this monk. But I know, I know full well, they too won't allow him to enter, unless they are sure that he is a brahmin. After all, our princes are learned, and our religion is great!

(In the meanwhile the princes come out of the temple and approach Swamiji in meditation).

Ist. Prince: My lord, may we know wherefrom your holiness has come to us this morning?

Swamiji: (Slowly opens his eyes and speaks) Friends, I have got no home. The sky is the only roof of the house of a monk. His country is the three universes. The devotees of the Lord everywhere are his friends.

*Bandhava Shiva Bhaktashcha Swadesha  
Bhuvanatravam.*

2nd. Prince: But Swamiji, may we know why are you sitting here instead of going inside the temple?

Swamiji: Unfortunate, very unfortunate indeed that your temple priests did not allow me to go inside the temple of Divine Mother.

Both the Princes: (shouting) Why Swamiji? What had happened? Why did not they allow you to go inside?

Swamiji: They told me that according to the custom of your royal family only princes and brahmins will be allowed in the temple. I told them that a monk is above all castes and that a knower of Brahman is the true Brahmin.

Ist. Prince: (little disturbed) But your holiness, our royal forefathers made this rule since many decades and we cannot change it overnight.

Swamiji: Dear princes, despite all your high education you are talking like babies. Religion is not petrified custom, but living truth. And one must have the courage to accept truth.

2nd. Prince: But Swamiji, you also know that in India only brahmins attain to the highest knowledge of Atman.

Swamiji: No. Never. Dear princes, *there* is the ignorance. Was Lord Krishna a born brahmin? Was Ramachandra a born brahmin? Was Lord Buddha a born brahmin? The great knowers of Brahman in the Upanishads such as king Janaka, were not brahmins. What do you mean? A man is a brahmin only when he is fully established in the knowledge of God, of Brahman, the One All-pervading Reality.

Ist. Prince: But Swamiji, our ancient scriptures always supported this view.

Swamiji: Never. Who told you so? Have you read the Upanishads? Have you read the Vedas thoroughly? Have you read even the Manu Samhita? Temple

doors of Hinduism are never closed for anyone. Today some local customs have taken the authority of the Vedas. Dear princes, you are so educated, so cultured and well-versed in scriptures. You must rise above these local customs. Hinduism has nothing to do with casteism. Casteism is a social distinction. Intellectuals and scholars live in groups and we call them Brahmins. Administrators live in their own groups and we call them Kshatriyas. The business community have their own guild. We call them Vaishyas. The working people have their own group. We call them Shudras. So each man belongs to one caste or the other according to his vocation, not by his birth alone. But there must be no special privilege for any class. Vedanta Philosophy stands against any kind of privilege to any caste, high or low.

2nd. Prince: But Swamiji, are the common masses able to appreciate the highest truths of Hinduism, the immortality of the soul and the infinite power of Brahman?

Swamiji: Each soul is potentially divine. A sweeper who sweeps the street well, is far better than an university professor speaking nonsense. Each is great in his own vocation, says Vedanta. Because we deprived our masses of the teachings of Vedanta religion, they may not be able to appreciate it today. But tomorrow when they listen to the message of the divinity of the soul, they will come up with as much knowledge as yourselves and save India and Hinduism.

(The princes keep quiet. Swamiji goes to deep meditation. The Princes look at each other. They go away from Swamiji and look at the audience and then talk).

1st. Prince: Every word he spoke is true. Every sentence is beyond doubt. We have realized our mistake. True Hinduism must respect the divinity in all men and women.

2nd. Prince: He indeed looks like Shankaracharya with that marvellous purity

and knowledge of Vedanta. May be, one day he will raise the real power and the honour of our degenerated Hinduism once again. But let us hurry to our father and tell him about the great knowledge of this monk so that tomorrow morning itself we can take him inside the temple with all honour and glory. This must be done.

1st. Prince: This must be done, and done in a royal way. There is certainly something royal about this great yogi.

(They look at Swamiji once again from a distance, and bow down in deep reverence and leave the stage. Swamiji slowly opens his eyes and comes up near the stage and speaks).

Swamiji: I know that these two beautiful princes have realized their mistake. I know that tomorrow morning they will come to receive me in the temple with real honour and dignity. But I am a monk. What is honour to me? I have been wandering for the last six years on the Indian soil to raise these dumb millions up. How cultured and how pure-souled these princes are! Only nobody told them the real meaning of Hinduism. What a greatness India will achieve when such young princes will come down to raise the masses up. The Raja of Ramnad, the Raja of Mysore, and the Raja of Khetri have already come up. More and more of India's youth will come up including princes and pundits. And I see that the eternal religion of the Hindus will see an unprecedented rise in history. My Madras followers told me of a parliament of religions to be held in Chicago within a few months. Maybe, I am destined to raise India's honour there. But no more. Let me leave this place before royal honour is poured on me, Let none fetter me down here. I have a long way to go, a great mission to fulfil.

(Swamiji looks with an emotional look at the Mother's temple. The priests stand awed and stupefied. Swamiji takes up his staff and then begins to walk slowly, with his eyes fixed towards the distant horizon. *Chidananda Rupah Shivoham Shivoham* is sung in the background in soft tune.)

taught simple Shiva worship to Miss Margaret E. Nobel and after going through the rites of 'Brahmacharya' (vow of celibacy) she received the name 'Nivedita' from him and henceforth she became Sister Nivedita. As Swamiji had taught her Shiva worship, she used to address him as 'Shiva Guru'. The second one was on the 29th March. In the very early hours of the morning by offering 'Viraja' oblations in the sacrificial fire, Ajoyhari Banerji and Surendra Nath Bose were conferred 'Sannyasa' (the fourth stage of life according to Hindu Religion) by Swami Vivekananda. They were given names Swarupananda and Sureshwarananda respectively. Both of them were his initiated disciples and endeared themselves to him by their untiring work in the literary field and relief operations respectively.

The actual construction work of the Math at the new site began in April of the same year. During this time, one day the Holy Mother was brought in a boat to the monastery at the Garden House. Swami Yogananda, Brahmachari Krishnalal and Golap-ma accompanied her. When the boat touched the landing steps a conch was blown in order to announce the auspicious event. On her alighting the monks washed the Mother's feet with utmost reverence and led her to the verandah of the shrine. After a while, with simple worship and food offering she put the Master to rest. She also rested for some time after food. At about four in the afternoon when she was planning to return to Calcutta, Brahmachari Krishnalal carried the earnest request of Swami Brahmananda, 'May the Mother condescend to tread the new land of the Math before she departs.'<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the Mother proceeded by the boat to the new site and on her arrival Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull, and Miss MacLeod, who were

then staying in a house close by there (Sonar Mali Bagan—later 'Leggett House') came out to greet the Mother and show her round. After she had seen all, she said with joy, 'At long last the boys have a place to lay their heads in—the Master has cast his benign look (on them) after such a long time.'<sup>14</sup>

We may recall here the Mother's feelings and her earnest prayer to the Master when she was on a visit to Bodh Gaya in 1890. The affluence of the monastery there (at Bodh Gaya) on the one hand, and on the other, the absence of any permanent residence, paucity of food and raiment, and the hard physical labour for running the monastery at Baranagore on the part of her world-renouncing sons, moved her very much. She said subsequently, 'Ah! for this, how I shed tears and prayed to the Master! And only then through his grace has come into existence today the Math.'<sup>15</sup> In a reminiscent mood she said one day, 'Ah! how well I was at Belur (Garden House)! What a peaceful place it is! Meditation came naturally. And that is why Naren (Vivekananda) wanted to have a piece of land there!'<sup>16</sup>

Swamiji liked this Garden House, and said, "See how the Ganges runs close by and what a nice building! This is the ideal kind of place for a Math."<sup>17</sup> Then came the autumnal worship of Kali, which fell on the 12th November 1898. The monks at the monastery had made preparations for the worship, and the Mother had been requested to grace the occasion. In the morning, after alighting from the boat at the monastery in the Garden House, she proceeded on foot to the new site of Belur Math under construction and after cleaning a spot with her own hands, worshipped the picture of the Master which she worshipped daily. At

<sup>13, 14, 15, 16:</sup> *Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 181, 182, 332, 264.

<sup>17, 18:</sup> *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, p. 110, 101.

which promotes "ethical sensibility and spiritual possibilities for the new generation," reflecting not only balance of power structures but also humanistic perspective.

The horrors of war and their devastating impact on the quality of human life are also explored brilliantly—with meticulous marshalling of data and several other confirmatory statements made by eminent scientists such as Einstein and C.P. Snow—by Swami Jitatmanandaji. He sees the roots of war in the world of amoral science and finds the antidote in the Vedantic realization of Oneness which emphasizes the fundamental, all pervading unity of existence. He finds in Swami Vivekananda the unique synthesis needed to bring peace: "In modern times it is Swami Vivekananda who successfully combined the modern scientific temper and mystic spirit of Vedanta" which is "the expression of the infinite unity of existence. This love which is based on the feeling of absolute oneness irrespective of creed, groupism or religion is the true love, only that can bring peace to our war-torn world today."

Apparently, the problems created by science are created by its misuse. As Swami Ananyanandaji says, "It is no fault of science if it is being abused by unscrupulous leaders of men and nations—it is mishandling of life." Hence the solution is inevitable: "Man must therefore begin to search within—it is the beginning of spiritual life." From this perspective, the articles by Swamis Prabuddhanandaji, Siddhinathanandaji and Mridanandaji explore and explain the realms of the three-fold peace: *ādhyātmik*, *ādhibhautik* and *ādhidaivik*. The relevant scriptural ideas are convincingly presented. Accent on inner growth as the key to enduring peace is emphasized again by Swamis Nityabodhanandaji, Vidyatmanandaji and Tripuranandaji. They underlie the need for the restoration of peace among individuals

in day-to-day life by transcending the barriers created by the feeling of multiplicity reflected in our dualistic body-mind and time-space-causation concepts. If we lose the cord of oneness binding the apparent multiplicity, we will miss the unity animating all apparent diversity. Victims of peacelessness, will become objects of tension and stress. In short, the key lies in implementing in life the implications of Sri Ramakrishna's imperative." A peaceful nature is a sign of knowledge." Obviously, leaders of all countries, in virtually all spheres must infuse the awareness of oneness among the peoples of the world.

Such are the thoughtful and enormously practical reflections expressed from varied perspectives that converge on the subject of peace in this valuable book. Its range of ideas and themes—The Philosophy of Peace, Peace in daily life, Peace and the Vision of youth, Tranquility and Tranquilizers, Anatomy of Peace and other themes—helps us to come to the yoga of infinite love and control of senses where all differences vanish. The many facets of 'Peace' have been explained to the readers in this valuable book. This book should be read by all who are concerned with these problems.

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SUFFERING: INDIAN PERSPECTIVES  
edited by Kapil N. Tiwari; published by  
Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1986, pp. 302,  
price Rs. 125/-.

Suffering in all forms has always fascinated the human mind—even when the exploring mind itself experienced the excruciating agony. But each culture developed its own parameters to explain, and modes to expiate, suffering. As Lloyd Geering in his 'Foreword' to this volume has put it,

“the problem of human suffering is universal to human mind.”

The present collection, very thoughtfully brought together and meticulously edited, reflects the Indian perspectives. The portmanteau word “Indian” hardly gives an idea of the range and significance of the essays. Besides general conceptual views, we have extensive analysis of the problem in religions such as Buddhism, Jainism as well as its exploration in the context of specific texts such as the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Puranas*. We have, similarly, very fascinating discussions of the theistic and the Advaitic views and finally, in addition to the scriptural and philosophical frames, the motif of suffering is assessed in terms of literary structures evident in the work of Tagore, Kabir and Gandhi as well as more synoptic studies of the problem in Indo-English fiction and the sociological perspectives.

The essays by Karl Potter and Bimal Krishna Matilal raise basic questions about Indian philosophy which seem to offer several correctives to popular notions. Potter sees the problem in the orthodox philosophical systems as one poised between existentialism and essentialism. He is sceptical about the propriety of translating *dukha* as suffering because “*sukha* or *dukha*, are produced by our actions and so deserved”. Thus “there is no undeserved *dukha*,” and therefore “for that reason ‘suffering’ is an unfortunate translation”. In short, in its analysis of the implications of suffering, Indian philosophy becomes *mokshasastra*, “the science of liberation”.

Bhakti can hardly be regarded as a polarity. It is rather, as Vijay C. Mishra suggests in his stimulating study of Kabir, “a mediatory principle” for which both ‘suffering and bliss’, kept in balance by ‘viraha’, are essential.

A similar perceptual acuity—hardly sur-

prising in a scholar of his eminence—marks Prof. Matilal’s essay on the universality of suffering. In fact he draws a sharp distinction—a very salutary one—between universal suffering as a fact and “the psychological attitude called universal pessimism” which is “a crippling mental depression which precludes rational and positive behaviour”. In effect, “whatever might have been the sociological reasons”, says Matilal, “the theme of universal suffering...became dominant, and persisted and permeated the entire spectrum of Indian philosophical thinking.”

Since this concept permeated Indian ethos it is appropriate that most of the writers hold that the several related concepts such as fate, *dharma* and *karma* should be regarded as indispensable constituents for the fuller understanding of suffering. For instance, Greg Bailey in his study of *The Mahabharata*—specially of the characters of Draupadi and Yudhishtira—says that this cannot “be studied in isolation of other themes.” In effect, it is “part of a total ensemble of speculation about fate, *dharma*, *karma*, human effort and *adharma*” etc.

*The Gita* aspect is taken up by Herman and discussed in what is certainly the most ambitious—as also the lengthiest—essay in the book. His identification of the essential problem of suffering as both philosophical and theological in structure raising areas of explanation and transcendence is clear and convincing. Setting out to discuss the issue in all its complexity, he draws analogies quite fascinating (though not always convincing) from Western medieval and Renaissance categories of humour and “the more modern somato-type-talk of W.H. Sheldon”. But the more interesting thing about this essay is its characteristically Indian rhetorical structure.

The rest of the essays—especially those on *The Ramayana* and Kabir and Gandhi—seem to me to offer fresh insights.

*Suffering: Indian Perspectives* is, in effect, an enduring contribution to a problem which has exercised the ingenuity of traditions almost from the dawn of reason. One is grateful to both the editor and the publishers, Motilal Banarsidass, for this richly rewarding book.

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**THE BLOOM OF INNER GLORY:**  
BY N. N. RAJAN. Published by Sri Ramana-  
nashramam, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu,  
606 603. (3rd revised and enlarged edition)  
1985. Pp. vi + 99. Rs. 6.

With less than hundred pages but containing the essence of the Vedanta teachings, the book is a good addition to the Vedanta literature of the present generation. An ardent devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Rajan, is never guided by any sort of prejudice. His catholicity and generosity is much pronounced in the philosophical discussions of this treatise.

In the nine chapters of this small volume, the author has placed before the readers an analysis of the human mind, the problems one faces at the time of its control and the ways to go beyond its clutches, that is, to transcend all ideas of relativity. He has profusely quoted shlokas and passages from the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramayana, Yoga Vasishtha, Ramana Gita etc. to make his view point clear.

The fourth chapter on 'Devotion' has been written in a lucid and poetical style, quoting as many as thirteen shlokas from the Bhagavad Gita. The author has emphasized the easiness and popularity of the path of devotion, and how it slowly leads an ordinary devotee step by step to the highest state of self-realization. The attainment of God is possible through His grace alone and all the spiritual practices are the means to obtain this grace. This idea has

been nicely put by the author in the following words: 'Ungrudging resignation to the will of God, without caring for joys and sorrows is absolute surrender. There is no better or surer method of reaching God for the struggling souls than surrender.' (p. 22).

In the sixth chapter the author has shown the importance of guru or spiritual guide. The author has aptly cited the example of Sri Ramchandra and Sri Krishna, the two God-incarnates worshipped by the whole of the country through ages, who like ordinary mortals, took the help of gurus to set the example before the humanity that the external help is a must for spiritual unfoldment.

The next chapter 'Key to Inner Glory' is the vital part of the book. The author has harmonized nicely the path of devotion and the path of knowledge. Two persons treading the above two paths are proceeding towards the same goal with the different attitudes; one proceeds with the idea 'I am That' and the other, the devotee bears the attitude 'I am Thine, O Lord.' Ultimately, the devotee also discovers that all ideas of I, mine etc., dissolve in the all-encompassing bliss which the traveller of the other path describes as Absolute Knowledge or Brahman. Sri Ramana has been quoted by the author to show that the *bhakta* and the *jnani* are going to the same place.

The volume will serve as a guidebook for the spiritual aspirants.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE EDUCATOR: BY  
V. SUKUMARAN NAIR. Published by Sterling.  
Publishers Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi 110 016.  
Pp. vii + 93. Rs. 60.

This book attempts to delineate the educational ideas of Swami Vivekananda, and how these could help in the social and cultural regeneration of India. It begins by describing the relevance of Swamiji in

modern times, the basic tenets of his thought, and the broader implications of his message.

Swamiji favoured an educational system which was philosophically evolved, psychologically devised, and socially rooted. The real aim of education was to make the individual aware of his inner potentialities, and to teach him a balanced philosophy of life. 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brains and runs riot there, undigested all your life,' he said, 'we must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas.'

V. Sukumaran Nair argues that Swamiji's theory of national reconstruction was the result of his philosophy of life and 'has flowed from it'. To him, the ultimate aim of education was self-realization. To achieve this, man must do work in a spirit of self-abnegation and renunciation. He held that character was more important than intellectual attainment and duties more important than rights.

Swami Vivekananda regarded education as a continuous process which ought to cover all aspects of life—physical, material, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual. To quote Swamiji: 'We must have the whole education of our country, spiritual or secular, in our own hands, and it must

be on national lines through national methods as far as practical.'

Swamiji was fully aware of the fact that the downtrodden sections of Indian society seldom got a chance to receive formal education in schools and colleges. But he pleaded: 'If a ploughman's boy cannot come to receive education why not meet him at the plough? Go along with him like a shadow. Book-learning will follow, let him hear your words.' And again: 'I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses; and that is one of the causes of our downfall.' He ridiculed the western-educated Indians who did not care for their own countrymen. 'And what are you doing now?...promenading the sea-shores with books in your hands, repeating undigested stray bits of European brainwork.... Is there not water enough in the sea to drown you, books, gowns, university diplomas and all?'

V. Sukumaran Nair has succeeded to a considerable extent, in highlighting Swami Vivekananda's contribution to the concept of education.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### VEDANTA SOCIETY OF NEW YORK

#### *Observance of the Ramakrishna Sesquicentennial Year and the Centennial Year of the Ramakrishna Order*

The Vedanta Society of New York celebrated the 150th birth anniversary year of Sri Ramakrishna and the centennial year of the Ramakrishna Order with a special service on Monday, 5 January 1987 at 8 p.m. in the Society chapel-cum-auditorium. Six guest swamis gave talks. Swami Asehananda, head of the Vedanta Society of Portland, a direct disciple of Holy Mother and the most senior swami in the United States, presided over the meeting. The celebra-

tion was enthusiastically attended by an overflow crowd. One Christian minister who was present said afterward that any Christian who attended the meeting should have come away a better Christian.

During the course of the year, two additional guest speakers gave talks on Sri Ramakrishna. On 9 May 1986 Swami Ranganathananda spoke on 'Sri Ramakrishna and Universal Religion'. On 8 June 1986, Rabbi Asher Block gave a talk on 'Sri Ramakrishna: An Interfaith View.' In addition, Swami Tathagatananda gave three special lectures on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, on 9 March 1986, on 4 January and 1 March 1987.



# PRACTICAL HINTS FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

## MEDITATION

The more you occupy the mind with holy thoughts, the greater will be your spiritual unfoldment. Just as a cow yields much milk when it is well-fed, so when the mind is fed spiritual food, it will yield greater tranquility. Spiritual food consists of meditation, prayer, contemplation, and japam.

—Swami Brahmananda

Unless you meditate, you cannot control the mind, and unless the mind is controlled, you cannot meditate. But if you think, "First let me control the mind and then I shall meditate," you will never succeed. You must steady your mind and meditate at the same time.

—Swami Brahmananda

To say that you will practise spiritual disciplines only after you have attained full conviction and knowledge of His Being is tantamount to saying, "I will enter the water only after I have learnt to swim." In that case you will never learn. It is only through japam and meditation that one removes all obstacles, attains purity of heart, and finally arrives at the full consciousness of God.

—Swami Saradananda

Q.: I cannot concentrate my mind well during meditation. My mind is fickle and unsteady.

A.: Don't worry! Restlessness is the nature of the mind, as it is of the eyes and ears. Practise regularly. The name of God is more powerful than the senses. Always think of the Master, who is looking after you. Don't be troubled about your lapses.

—Holy Mother

If the mind does not become steady when you sit for meditation, recite exalting prayers and cry to Him with a yearning heart. Keep a large picture of your Chosen Deity in front of you and, fixing your gaze thereon, pour forth your heart in prayer. In the beginning the mind is likely to be unsteady. Hence prayer, japam, and meditation with the gaze fixed upon the picture will be easy, as the mind will not have to endure much tension. Continuous practice in this manner for a length of time will steady the mind.

—Swami Brahmananda

A person should not leave his seat immediately after meditation, but should sit for a while thinking about the object of meditation. Then he may recite prayers and hymns along similar lines to intensify and stabilize the meditative mood and inner joy. Even after leaving his seat he should not talk with anyone, but should rather be contemplative and remain by himself for some time.

—Swami Shivananda

Arise! awake! and stop not till the goal is reached! Katha. Upa. I. iii, 14,

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Prabuddha Bharata comes to its readers this month in a new garb. On the demise of its gifted editor, it died a natural death. But now, like a new Phoenix, emerging from its own ashes, it returns to the world after but a brief suspension of activity. Its past Karma, gathered in the diffusion of the highest Vedantic thought, demanded its re-incarnation.

The management under which Prabuddha Bharata will henceforth appear, pretends to no higher ideal than was set up for its conduct in the first issue of the Journal (July 1896). It will strive to maintain the paper on the same lines as have been so admirably followed for the last two years, with only such additions and alterations as growing needs require.

While writing on this subject, it may not be out of place to mention that the present conductors have at their head the Swami Vivekananda, and that the pages of the Magazine will be enriched by regular contributions from his pen.

We have also deemed it necessary to replace the old motto by another, which appeared to us more fitting to the aim and nature of the work, Prabuddha Bharata has before it. The English rendering which we publish of it, is as the reader will observe, not literal. It is a free, running translation of the sense, couched in the vigorous words of the Swami Vivekananda for as many

readers will probably recollect, it is taken from one of his lectures.

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TO THE AWAKENED INDIA

Once more awake!

For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life  
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions  
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!  
No death for thee!

*Then start afresh*

From the land of thy birth, where vast  
cloud-belted  
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,  
For working wonders anew. The heavenly  
River tunes thy voice to her own immortal  
song;

Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

*And tell the world*

Awake, arise, dream no more!

This is the land of dreams, where Karma  
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our

thoughts,

Of flowers, sweet or noxious,—and none  
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which  
The softest breath of Truth drives back to  
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face  
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,  
Or, if you cannot, dream then truer dreams,  
Which are Eternal love and Service Free.

—Vivekananda