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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

Vol. 100

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No. 9

Divine Wisdom

TRUE WORSHIP

नातिप्रसीदति तथोपचितोपचारै-
राराधितः सुरगणैर्हृदि बद्धकामैः ।
यत्सर्वभूतदययासदलभ्ययैको
नानाजनेष्ववहितः सुहृदन्तरात्मा ॥

Thou, who are the friend of all beings and the indweller in everything, dost never feel so highly pleased with complicated ritualistic worship, be it performed even by the gods with a plethora of offerings, if the performer's mind is loaded with selfish desires, as Thou art pleased with universal benevolence (born of a sense of divine presence in everything), which unregenerate and unholy men without any devotion to Thee can never obtain.

पुंसामतो विविधकर्मभिरध्वराद्यै-
दनिन चोग्रतपसा व्रतचर्यया च ।
आराधनं भगवतस्तव सक्रियार्थो
धर्मोऽर्पितः कर्हिचिद्ध्ययते न यत्र ॥

Works of every kind, whether they be elaborate Vedic sacrifices, charitable gifts, mortification, or observance of spiritual disciplines, all become meaningful and worthwhile if they are offered as worship unto Thee. For, only offerings made unto Thee never perish.

शश्वत्स्वरूपमहसैव निपीतभेदमोहाय
बोधधिषणाय नमः परस्मै ।
विश्वोद्भवस्थितिलयेषु निमित्तलीला-
रासाय ते नम इदं चकृमेश्वराय ॥

Thou in the luminosity of whose Essence there is no place for the infatuation of separateness, Thou whose intelligence consists in total and undivided awareness, Thou who art the highest of all beings, Thou whose sport consists in creation, preservation and destruction of the universe—to Thee, the Lord of all, my salutation!

—From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*
(3.9.12–14)

Free From Fever

One of the significant but less noticed phrases in the *Gītā* is *vigata-jvarah* (3.30). It means, 'free from fever'. It is as though Arjuna was running a high temperature. Caught in an intense friction between opposing ideals and unable to resolve it, his whole being—body and mind—got heated up, developed a special kind of fever, as it were.

We too, often, almost daily, catch this kind of fever, though of a far lesser intensity. We suffer the pulls of conflicting options. Then, if we are unable to decide quickly, we become tense, feverish, confused, all tied up inside, and finally utterly exhausted. As society moves faster and ever faster to keep pace with the speed of computers, the avalanche of instant information and the demands to take rapid decisions on a bewildering array of endless questions, this fever has become an epidemic. Dailies show it, and studies and reports confirm it.

How to treat it? One thing we can be sure about is that there is no miracle available. TMs, guided meditations, psychiatric counselling, relaxation techniques, conflict-resolution sessions, etc. may help a few, for some time, and under certain situations. After all, these guides have not themselves totally mastered the problems. So, how can their help be infallible? Only a Sri Krishna can say, 'Behold, Arjuna, I am constantly engaged in work. Yet, I am unaffected by them!'

And what is Sri Krishna's advice to Arjuna? Let us consider the whole of the verse:

मयि सर्वाणि कर्माणि संन्यस्याध्यात्मचेतसा
निराशीर्निर्ममो भूत्वा युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः ॥

*Mayi sarvāṇi karmāṇi
sannyasya-adhyātma-cetasā;
Nirāśīr nirmamo bhūtvā
yuddhyasva vigata-jvarah.*

Free from fever, engage in battle by dedicating all actions to Me, with (your) mind founded on the Atman, and free from expectations and egoism.

The important phrase is '*adhyātma-cetasā*'—with the *cetas* (mind, thought) that is *adhyātma*, founded on the Atman, convinced about the truth of the Atman. On the strength of this attitude one should become *nirāśīh*, free from expectations. We should try to get rid of our tendency to speculate on the outcome of our actions. We hardly realize how much of our energy is lost by letting the mind dwell in a world of shadows, prejudices, anxieties, fears, and fantasies. Only when we begin forcing our thoughts to dwell on facts and on the work on hand, and to follow as practical and logical a course as possible that we recognize our weakness to speculate. Only then do we see that much of our mental agitation and inability to decide is a consequence of that infantile habit of unbridled imagination.

That is what Sri Krishna taught Arjuna: Prior to arriving on the battlefield, you had considered well all the pros and cons. Now, having come, restrain your mind from hypothetical questions. Do not allow it to disturb your judgement and resolve. Instead

of floating along with it, stand aside as the Atman, remind yourself you are the Atman. This will force the mind to calm down. Because, the thought, 'In reality, I am the Atman which is free from all wants', implies that events in the world are ultimately of no consequence to your spiritual being. So the mind loses the fuel for its flights. This calming of the mind is like the settling of dust after a shower. We immediately begin to see clearly.

So also become *nirmamah*, free from egotism. Strive to stop thinking, 'This entire war depends on me alone. I have no capable substitute.' No matter how humble a picture of ourselves we get when we look at the mirror of self-examination, the simple truth Sri Krishna unmask is that all are proud. Even the weakest of the weak and the poorest of the poor requires only an appropriate occasion to expose his or her egotism! Only a child and a sage are without pride. And hence is the former fever-less, with the knowledge that its parents are its absolute providers and protectors; and so is the latter, with a similar knowledge of God or the Atman.

This too is what Sri Krishna taught Arjuna: So long as you imagine you are the axis of this world, you will now and then get a spoke in your wheel. Your fever will persist. Know that you are just a part of a vast web of existence. You are simply incidental (*nimitta*), and not principal to any event. This was impressed up on Arjuna by the *viśvarūpa-darśana*, the vision of the Lord's universal form, effectively deflating his lurking pride.

However, the effect of these teachings does not take away enthusiasm, drive, etc. and make us recluses. Arjuna's fierce battles after receiving the *Gītā*-instruction belie such shallow arguments. In fact, in the verse quoted, the Lord clearly says, 'Dedicating all actions to Me, engage in battle.' And we know how well Arjuna fought in the war and how productive his later life was. To put into practice the teaching of this verse on the battlefield, Arjuna did not first set about practising Yoga to realize he was the Atman or that the Lord alone is the master of all events. Nor can we stretch our faith to believe he asked the Lord's permission each time before shooting his shafts! Nor does the post-*Gītā* war suggest that Arjuna then remained fixed in the awareness that the Lord Himself was working his arms and legs, body and mind, and bows and arrows! Nor, again, did Arjuna lose his sense of self-effort. But he went about his task with a *general understanding* that he is the Atman, the Lord alone is the true power in creation, and all creatures and events are under His direction. As a result what did happen was that his fever was cured.

So, if we also go about doing all that we must by virtue of our station in life—curbing our speculations, mellowing down our egotism, and remembering we are the Atman, we may be able to bring our temperature down. While we are on this medication, it may be a good exercise to feel our foreheads once in the morning and once at night, and as often as possible during the day. □

For everything there is an appropriate way of polishing; the heart's polishing is the remembrance of God.

—*Islam*, Hadith of Tirmidhi

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE PRINCIPLE OF SACRIFICE

From the words of Prajāpati also it follows that work should be undertaken by an eligible person. This He (the Lord) says in four verses:

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥

*Sahayajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā
purovāca prajāpatiḥ;
Anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa
vo'stviṣṭakāmadhuk. (3.10)*

Having created in the days of yore the beings who are associated with sacrifices, Prajāpati said: 'By this you multiply. Let this be your yielder of the coveted objects of desire.

Sṛṣṭvā, having created; purā, in the days of yore, in the beginning of a cycle of creation; prajāḥ, the beings, of the three castes; sahayajñāḥ, who are associated with sacrifices, those who exist together with the enjoined rites and duties, i.e., those who are eligible for rites and duties—since according to (the sūtra of Pāṇini) 'Vopasarjanasya' (6.3.82) there is an option (i.e., saha or sa can be used optionally), therefore the alternate form with sa is absent (i.e. saha-yajñāḥ has been used instead of sa-yajñāḥ)—; the Progenitor (pati) of creatures (prajā) uvāca, said;—what He said is being stated—'Anena, by this, through sacrifices, through the duties befitting your own castes; prasaviṣyadhvam, you multiply.' Prasava means growth. (So) the meaning is, be

greater and greater in number successively. How will growth come from this? Hence He says: *Eṣaḥ astu*, let this religious practice, called sacrifice, be; *vaḥ*, your; *iṣṭa-kāma-dhuk*, yielder (*dhuk*) of the coveted (*iṣṭa*) objects of desire (*kāma*), that which gives desired fruits that are to one's liking, i.e., yielder of enjoyments that are sought for.

Here although sacrifice is mentioned as suggestive of the necessary duties—for it will be stated that evil arises from their non-performance, and, besides, there is no scope at all for *kāmya-karmas* in this context, because these have been set aside by saying, 'Do not become the producer of the result of action' (2.47)—, all the same it is logical to say, 'Let this be your yielder of the coveted objects of desire', because the *nitya-karmas* too have secondary results. So also does Āpastamba write in his Smṛti:

To illustrate this point: Although a mango tree is grown for fruits, yet shade and fragrance follow as (secondary) results. Similarly, when righteous deeds are undertaken riches follow as a consequence. If they do not follow, it will mean no harm to righteousness.¹

Even if results be present, the distinction between the *kāmya(-karmas)* and the *nitya(-karmas)* follows from hankering or not hankering for their results. Even if an un-sought-for-result originates from the

1. Āpastamba-Dharma-Sūtra, 1.20.3.

nature of things, that makes no difference (i.e., a *nitya-karma* does not cease to be so). And this will be elaborately explained later on.

How does a sacrifice become an yielder of the coveted objects of desire?

He (the Lord) answers this:

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः ।
परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥

*Devān bhāvayatānena
te devā bhāvayantu vah;
Parasparam bhāvayantaḥ
śreyaḥ paramavāpsyatha. (3.11)*

'You nourish the gods with this. Let those gods nourish you. Nourishing one another, you shall attain supreme good.

You, the sacrificers, *bhāvayantaḥ*, nourish, with their shares of oblations, i.e., satisfy; *devān*, the gods, Indra and others; *anena*, with this, with sacrifices. Let *te devāḥ*, those gods, being satisfied by you; *bhāvayantu vah*, nourish you; may they make you prosperous by producing food through rainfall etc. Thus by nourishing one another, you and the gods will attain *param śreyaḥ*, the supreme good, the cherished objects; i.e., the gods will get satisfaction, and you will attain the highest good, called heaven.

From sacrifices are obtained not only the results in the other world but also in this world. This He says:

इष्टान्भोगान्हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।
तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥

*Iṣṭānbhogānhi vo devā
dāsyante yajñabhāvitāḥ;*

*Tairdattānapradāyaibhyo yo
bhunkte stena eva saḥ. (3.12)*

'The gods will give you the coveted enjoyable things, because they are pleased by sacrifice. He is certainly a thief who enjoys what have been given by them without offering (these) to them.

Devāḥ, the gods; *dāsyante*, will give, distribute; *vah*, to you; the coveted (*iṣṭān*), enjoyable things (*bhogān*), such as animals, food, gold, etc.; *hi*, because they are pleased (*bhāvitāḥ*) by sacrifices (*yajña*). Since the enjoyable things are given to you by them as a loan, therefore *saḥ yaḥ*, he who; *apradāya*, without offering (these); *ebhyaḥ*, to them, to the gods;—without pouring oblations to the gods in sacrifices—, *bhunkte*, enjoys, gratifies (his own) body and organs with; the enjoyable things *dattān*, given; *taiḥ*, by them, by the gods; is *stenaḥ eva*, certainly a thief, a stealer of the property of the gods, because of not repaying the debt incurred from the gods.

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।
भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥

*Yajñaśiṣṭāśinaḥ santo
mucyante sarvakilbiṣaiḥ;
Bhuñjate te tvaghaṁ pāpā
ye pacantyaṭmakāraṇāt. (3.13)*

The good people who partake of the remnants of sacrifices become freed from all sins. Those unholy ones who cook for themselves, they verily suffer from sin.

But those who partake (*aśinaḥ*) of the remnants (*śiṣṭa*), comparable to nectar, of the *Vaiśvadeva*-sacrifice etc. (*yajña*), they are *santaḥ*, good people, because they repay the debt to the gods by practising the injunctions of the Vedas. Therefore they *mucyante*, become freed from all (*sarva*) sins (*kilbiṣa*)—

those accruing from the non-performance of enjoined duties and those incurred earlier from the use of the five household accessories. The meaning is that they remain untouched by sins past and future.

After thus speaking in a positive way of the absence of past and future sins, He, in contrast, (now) states the fault: *Ye pāpāh*, those unholy ones, who have incurred sins on account of the five household accessories (such as a grinder, which are causes of killing insects) and through injuries inflicted inadvertently; who *pacanti*, cook; only *ātma-kāraṇāt*, for themselves, but not for the *Vaiśvadeva*-sacrifice etc.; *te*, they, those who do not perform the *Vaiśvadeva*-sacrifice etc.; *tu*, verily—the word *tu* being used for emphasis—; *bhuñjate*, suffer from; *agham*, sin only. Thus by saying, 'Those unholy ones ... verily suffer from sin', it is meant that, while sins incurred from the five household accessories indeed persist, they incur the other sin arising from the non-performance of the *nitya-karmas* such as the *Vaiśvadeva*-sacrifice. In accordance with this there is the *Smṛti*,

A pestle, a grinder, an oven, a water pot, and a broom are the five accessories in the home of a householder. On account of these he does not attain heaven,

and also,

One washes away with the help of the

five sacrifices² the sins committed through the five household accessories.

There is also the Śruti,

This food that is eaten is the common food of all eaters. He who adores (monopolizes) this food is never free from evil; for this is general food³

There is also a Vedic text,

That heedless man eats food in vain. Forsooth I declare that it is tantamount to his death. That man cannot satisfy even Aryama (the Sun) nor his (own) friend. One who eats alone becomes only a sinner⁴.

This (mention of sacrifices to the gods) is also suggestive of the five great sacrifices mentioned in the *Smṛti*, as also of the *nitya-karmas* mentioned in the Vedas. The purport of what Prajāpati has said (in 10–13) is that the *nitya-karmas* must be performed by one who is eligible for them.

(to be continued)

2. Five sacrifices: to the gods, manes, humans, creatures, and ṛṣis (sages).
3. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 1.5.2.
4. *Ṛg-Saṃhitā*, 10. 117.6; *Taittirīya-Bṛāhmaṇa*, 2.8.8.3.

Make chastity your furnace, patience your smithy,
The Master's word your anvil, and true knowledge your hammer.
Make awe of God your bellows, and with it kindle the fire of austerity.
And in the crucible of love, melt the nectar Divine.
Only in such a mint, can man be cast into the Word.

—*Sikhism*, *Adi Granth*, Japuji 38, M.1, p.8

Interview with Swami Vivekananda*

ON INDIAN WOMEN—THEIR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

It was early one Sunday morning, (writes our representative) in a beautiful Himalayan valley, that I was at last able to carry out the order of the Editor, and call on the Swami Vivekananda, to ascertain something of his views on the position and prospects of Indian Women.

'Let us go for a walk', said the Swami, when I had announced my errand, and we set out at once amongst some of the most lovely sceneries in the world.

By sunny and shady ways we went, through quiet villages, amongst playing children, and across the golden cornfields. Here the tall trees seemed to pierce the blue above, and there a group of peasant girls stooped, sickle in hand, to cut and carry off the plume-tipped stalks of maize-straw for the winter stores. Now the road led into an apple orchard, where great heaps of crimson fruit lay under the trees being picked and sorted, and again we were out in the pen, facing the snows that rose in august beauty above the white clouds against the sky.

At last my companion broke the silence. 'The Aryan and Semitic ideals of woman,' he said, 'have always been diametrically opposed. Amongst the Semites the presence of woman is considered dangerous to devotion, and she may not perform any religious function, even such as killing of a bird for food; according to the Aryan, a man cannot perform a religious action without a wife.'

'But Swamiji!' said I,—startled at an

assertion so sweeping and so unexpected—'Is Hinduism not an Aryan faith?'

'Modern Hinduism,' said the Swami quietly, 'is largely Pouranic, that is, post-Buddhistic in origin. Dayananda Saraswati pointed out that though a wife is absolutely necessary in the sacrifice of the domestic fire, which is a Vedic rite, she may not touch the Shalagram Shila, or the household-idol, because that dates from the later period of the Puranas.'

'And so you consider the inequality of woman amongst us as entirely due to the influence of Buddhism?'

'Where it exists, certainly,' said the Swami, 'but we should not allow the sudden influx of European criticism, and our consequent sense of contrast, to make us acquiesce too readily in this notion of the inequality of our women. Circumstances have forced upon us, for many centuries, the woman's need of protection. This, and not her inferiority, is the true reading of our customs.'

'Are you, then entirely satisfied with the position of woman amongst us, Swamiji?'

'By no means,' said the Swami, 'but our right of interference is limited entirely to giving education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can or ought to do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.'

'How do you account for the evil influence which you attribute to Buddhism?'

* Reprinted from *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. 3, no. 5 (Dec. 1898), p. 65.

'It only came with the decay of the faith,' said the Swami,—'Every movement triumphs by dint of some unusual characteristic, and when it falls, that point of pride becomes its chief element of weakness. The Lord Buddha—greatest of men—was a marvellous organizer, and carried the world by this means. But his religion was the religion of a monastic order. It had, therefore, the evil effect of making the very robe of the monk honoured. He also introduced for the first time the community-life of religious houses, and thereby necessarily made women inferior to men, since the great abbesses could take no important step without the advice of certain abbots. It ensured its immediate object, the solidarity of the faith, you see. Only its far-reaching effects are to be deplored.'

'But Sannyas is recognised in the Vedas!'

'Of course it is, but without making any distinction between men and women. Do you remember how Yajnavalkya was questioned at the Court of King Janaka? His principal examiner was Vachaknavi, the maiden orator—Brahmavadini, as the word of the day was. "Like two shining arrows in the hand of the skilled archer," she says, "are my questions." Her sex is not even commented upon.

'Again, could anything be more complete than the equality of boys and girls in our old forest universities? Read our Sanskrit dramas—read the story of Shakuntala, and see if Tennyson's "Princess" has anything to teach us!'

'You have a wonderful way of revealing the glories of our past, Swamiji!'

'Perhaps, because I have seen both sides of the world,' said the Swami gently, 'and I know that the race that produced Sita—even if it only dreamt of her—has a reverence for woman that is unmatched on the earth.

There is many a burden bound with legal tightness on the shoulders of Western women that is utterly unknown to ours. We have our wrongs and our exceptions certainly, but so have they. We must never forget that all over the globe the general effort is to express love and tenderness and uprightness, and that national customs are only the nearest vehicles of this expression. With regard to the domestic virtues I have no hesitation in saying that our Indian methods have in many ways the advantage over all others.'

'Then have our women any problems at all, Swamiji?'

'Of course, they have many and grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word "Education." The true education, however, is not yet conceived of amongst us.'

'And how would you define that?'

'I never define anything,' said the Swami smiling, 'still, it may be described as a development of faculty, not an accumulation of words, or as a training of individuals to will rightly and efficiently. So shall we bring to the need of India great fearless women—women worthy to continue the traditions of Sanghamitra, Lila, Ahalya Bai, and Mira Bai. Women fit to be mothers of heroes, because they are pure and selfless and strong, with the strength that comes of touching the feet of God.'

'So, you consider that there should be a religious element in education, Swamiji?'

'I look upon Religion as the innermost core of education,' said the Swami solemnly. 'Mind, I do not mean my own, or any one else's, opinion about Religion. I think the teacher should take the pupil's starting-point in this, as in other respects, and enable

her to develop along her own line of least resistance.'

'But surely the religious exaltation of Brahmacharya, by taking the highest place from the mother and wife, and giving it to those who evade those relations, is a direct blow dealt at Woman?'

'You should remember,' said the Swami, 'that if Religion exalts Brahmacharya for woman, it does exactly the same for man. Moreover, your question shows a certain confusion in your own mind. Hinduism indicates one duty, only one, for the human soul. It is to seek to realise the permanent amid the evanescent. No one presumes to point out any one way in which this may be done. Marriage or non-marriage, good or evil, learning or ignorance, any of these is justified, if it leads to the Goal. In this respect lies the great contrast between it and Buddhism, for the latter's outstanding direction is to realise the Impermanence of the Exter-

nal, which, broadly speaking, can only be done in one way. Do you recall the story of the young yogi in the *Mahabharata*, who prided himself on his psychic powers by burning the bodies of a crow and crane, by his intense will produced by anger? Do you remember the young saint went into the town, and found first a wife nursing her sick husband, and then the butcher Dharmavyadha, both of whom had obtained enlightenment in the path of common faithfulness and duty?'

'And so what would you say, Swamiji, to the woman of this country?'

'Why, to the women of this country,' said the Swami, 'I would say exactly what I say to the men. Believe in India, and in our Indian faith. Be strong and hopeful and unashamed, and remember that with something to take, Hindus have immeasurably more to give than any other people in the world.' □

From Our Readers

What Vedanta Means to Me

It means getting up in the morning, going into my spare bedroom that I use as my meditation room, seating myself in the lotus position before pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, and repeating, with the *mālā*-beads, the mantra that my guru gave me at my initiation.

It means retiring to my meditation room in the evening, at vesper time, reading for a while from one of the many books I have collected on Vedanta, and then performing my japa as in the morning. When I am finished, I drape the *mālā*-beads around my neck, close my eyes and relax, trying to think of nothing. Then, when I am finished and before leaving the room, I kneel, bend over before my little altar with the pictures on it and say, 'Lord, make my mind calm, help me find peace.' My meditation room is a peaceful room and when I leave I pray that that peace follows me.

That's what Vedanta means to me. It's not all that Vedanta means to me but it's a very important part of it.

1 September 1994

Stanley M. Nosek

I have been a member of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago for 20 years. I was initiated by Swami Bhashyananda in May 1979. I live in Berea, Ohio and am a retired Engineer searching for enlightenment in Vedanta. I have been a subscriber to *Prabuddha Bharata* for several years and enjoy every issue although I have to wait 4 or 5 months for it (by sea-mail). That's why I'm late.

Development Dilemmas and Inequities: The Gender Conflicts

MS. KIRAN RAMACHANDRAN NAIR

At the Fourth World Conference on Women being held in Beijing in September of this year, many different viewpoints on what is being called 'The Gender Crisis' will be heard.

As a prelude to the Conference, Ms. Kiran Ramachandran Nair has written the following article expressing her own strongly-held views on this subject.

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Introduction

Development signifies a broad-based, progressive movement synonymous with growth, modernization, industrialization, self-reliance, social change, culminating in national development. Going far beyond material advancement, the goal of development lies in constructively channelling the vast free-flowing human energy towards the highest realms of peace, love and harmony.

Development has been conceptualised variously by eminent social scientists. Prof. Cairncross opines:

Development is not just a matter of having plenty of money, nor is it a purely economic phenomenon. It embraces all aspects of social behaviour—the establishment of law and order, the relationships between family, literacy and scrupulousness in business dealings, familiarity with mechanical gadgets, and so on.¹

According to Everett M. Rogers, an eminent communication scientist:

Development is a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through gaining greater control over their environment.²

Gunnar Myrdal, the reputed economist, defined development as the upward movement of the entire social system. perspectives are many and views are divergent on development, calling for an indepth study. Development is thus a multi-dimensional evolution on the social, economic, political, cultural, ecological and human planes.

Despite the egalitarian humanist development manifesto, the economically developed affluent world and the under-developed poorer realms reveal that the politics of plenty and the politics of poverty

1. M.L. Jhingan, *Economics of Developments and Planning* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1975), p. 4.

2. Everett M. Rogers, *Communication and Development: Critical Perspectives* (London: Sage Publications, 1976), p. 33.

are universally coloured by an age-old discrimination against women, glaring at times, and subtle in most cases. Although discrimination against and exploitation of women are global phenomena, their consequences are more tragic in the third world. Poverty, ignorance, deprivation of the basic necessities of life, and the evergrowing pressures of transition from tradition to modernity—all combine to aggravate the inequities that women in the developing countries suffer to a point at which their existence is reduced to a continuous battle for survival.

The growing indications of short life expectancy, high maternal mortality, severe malnutrition and the widespread incidence of debilitating deficiencies and diseases among women in the developing countries are stark revelations of the ravages of this long standing battle. The analysis of gender

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distinctions has emerged as a serious area of study and debate. The fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995 will throw further light on the yawning gap between development and gender inequality.

The vehement challenges by feminist movements against gender inequality is to be seen as a struggle for the manifestation of a latent potential force into a dynamic state of influence which will be instrumental not for the welfare of women alone, but for total human development. 'Feminity, by definition, cannot and should not be a limiting

value but an expanding one—holistic, eclectic transpecific and encompassing of diverse stirrings.³

It would auger well to critically review the development paradigms at work and the underlying gender inequalities which threaten to tear asunder the fabric of society and develop into a full-blown gender war.

The Development Crises

Ever since the launching of the International Women's Year and the International Women's Decade by the United Nations nearly two decades ago, women across the globe have come together consciously for amelioration of their increasing state of decadence.

From the ultra-feminism of the sixties to the introspection on women's status in the seventies, to women in development in the eighties and to gender in the nineties has been a bumpy but short ride. From women's problems to women's issues finally to women's perspective there has been a whole reshaping of paradigms of human development.⁴

So say the official pages of the country paper on the status of women prepared by the Indian Government for the World Conference on Women to be held in Beijing in September 1995.

It is only recently that the 'Status of Women' has found its way into the Indian Population Policy documents (Eighth Five-year Plan, Government of India, volume 2, 1992). As Karen Mason points out, demog-

3. Rajni Kothari in Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women Ecology and Survival in India* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1988), p. xiii.

4. 'The Need for a Dialogue of Difference: Towards New Visions', *Deccan Herald*, 11 December 1994.

raphers have used many terms synonymously including 'status of women', 'female autonomy', 'patriarchy', 'sex stratification system', 'women's rights', and 'men's situational advantage'.⁵ All these concepts have an implicit reference to gender inequality.

The UN Decade for Women was rooted in the 'Trickle-Down' hypothetical assumption that the expansion and diffusion of the development process would lead to economic independence for women. The end of the decade clearly revealed the mistaken paths followed by development.

Insufficient and inadequate 'participation' in 'development' was not the cause for increasing women's under-development; it was rather their enforced but asymmetric participation in it, by which they bore the costs but were excluded from the benefits, that was responsible.⁶

Modernization has brought maldevelopment in its wake by setting in motion a process of gross exploitation, discrimination, violence, injustice and new forms of domination. The prime measure of economic growth, the Gross National Product, is an indicator of this maldevelopment. Jonathan Porritt, a leading ecologist, writes:

'Gross' National Product—for once a word is being used correctly. Even conventional economists admit that the heyday of GNP is over, for the simple reason that as a measure of progress, it's more or less useless. GNP measures the lot, all the goods and services produced in the

money economy. Many of these goods and services are not beneficial to people, but rather a measure of just how much is going wrong; increased spending on crime, on pollution, on the many human casualties of our society, increased spending because of waste or planned obsolescence, increased spending because of growing bureaucracies; it's all counted.⁷

Closely aligned to the fallacious GNP notion is the modern economic myth of globalization of the economy, liberalization, and creation of the open free market system. This economic agenda for progress and social transformation is the channel envisioned for women's empowerment.

The Trap of Industrialization

In the light of such an economic agenda there is evidence that the Western model of industrialization and modernization have had an adverse impact on women in traditional societies. The combination of Indian conditions and Western capitalism have laid a fertile ground for ruthless exploitation of women as cheap labour in Indian industry. Industrialization has further crystallized authoritarianism; women are forced to accept authority with deference and suffer in silence. The risks that industrial pollution pose to pregnant women, who are exposed to the health hazards of foetal damage and maternal morbidity, have not merited any consideration for the implementation of protective measures.

The Draft Plan of Action, for women in Asia and the Pacific areas, prepared for Beijing further reiterates:

The end of the cold war era has coincided with a near universal trend towards

5. Karen Oppenheim Mason, *The Status of Women: A Review of Its Relationships to Fertility and Mortality* (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1984).

6. Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive*, p. 2.

7. Jonathan Porritt, *Seeing Green* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984).

privatization, liberalization, and structural economic change. The women of this region as women elsewhere should equally participate in the process with men, both as agents and beneficiaries of such transformations.⁸

But in reality, women in developing countries have gained hardly any advantage in the newly initiated modernization of their economies. It is paradoxical that women have to bear new burdens and are subjugated to fresh inequalities and indignities as their economies seemingly develop.

Industrialization attracts mass migration of men to the cities, leaving women behind to bear the burden of agricultural and other

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activities ordinarily performed by men in addition to the tasks such as household work, rearing children, and supplementing the family income. Thus women stagnate in the traditional economic sector as men advance into the modern sector. Despite their phenomenal contribution to the traditional sector and home economies, women are said to be unproductive labourers and fail to be classed as gainfully employed!

This disparity is further strengthened as subsistence farming and traditional occupations in which women labour in large numbers lie outside the monetized economic sector and are excluded in census enumera-

tions. Therefore the need for grooming of the economic woman—the creation of an 'empowered' and 'productive' sector which has to be integrated into the mainstream of development.

Economic Consequences

The implications of exclusion of the arduous and wide-ranging contribution of women as unproductive are serious for women on the economic spectrum. At the personal level, this lowers the status of women in family and community life. At the national level there is a gross misrepresentation of income, investment and development projections. Since women are employed dominantly in the unorganized sector, they are not accorded protection and regulation of working conditions as laid down by labour laws. Women receive lower wages, and poverty and exploitation pursue them relentlessly due to their illiteracy, ignorance and other debilitating handicaps. Parallel to this, household industries such as weaving and oil-pressing are fast disappearing under the onslaught of modern factories. Women are once again the biggest victims in Third World countries as opportunities for employment outside agriculture are being increasingly cut-off and the nation's policy-makers turn a Nelson's eye on women.

Contrary to the traditionally incorrect concept of men being the breadwinners, between 25% to 33% of the households in the world are headed by women. These families are usually the poorest of the poor since women's work is treated as marginal and their access to employment is restricted. The current development model aims at empowering women and leading them to economic, social and cultural prosperity. The panacea to poverty comes in the form of poverty alleviation programmes which are mere placebos and do not mitigate the root symptomatic causes of poverty such as

8. 'The Need for a Dialogue of Difference: Towards New Visions', *Deccan Herald*, 11 December 1994.

illiteracy, ignorance, malnutrition and other factors such as unsafe environment and pollution hazards.

In Science, Environment and Politics

The development crisis spills over from the economic sphere to the scientific and environmental arena. Feminist scholarship is fast coming to recognize that the dominant science system is a masculine and patriarchal project which subjugates both nature and women. According to Keller:

Science has been produced by a particular sub-set of the human race, that is, almost entirely by white middle-class males. For the founding fathers of modern science, the reliance on the language of gender was explicit, they

constituent exploitation. According to Vandana Shiva,

In the reductionist paradigm, a forest is reduced to commercial wood, and wood is reduced to cellulose fibre for the pulp and paper industry. Forests, land and genetic resources are then manipulated to increase the production of pulpwood, and this distortion is legitimised scientifically as over-all productivity increase, even though it might decrease the output of water from the forest, or reduce the diversity of life forms that constitute the forest community.¹⁰

The violation of biodiversity and the consistent application of reductionist science has precipitated an ecological crisis. The

The drying up of India is undoubtedly a man-made disaster. Barring a few zones, the entire country is reeling under an acute water crisis due to extensive commercial exploitation of forests, over-exploitation of ground water for commercial agriculture, and inappropriate afforestation.

sought a philosophy that deserved to be called 'masculine', that could be distinguished from its ineffective predecessors by its 'Virile' powers, its capacity to bind Nature to man's service and make her his slave.⁹

Such a science was essentially demanded by the emerging industrial capitalism engaged in specialised commodity production with uniformity in production and the uni-functional use of natural resources. This reductionist scientific knowledge has debased complex ecosystems to a single constituent with a single function. It permits the manipulation of the ecosystem and maximization of the single-function, single-

reserved forests, social forestry and wasteland development projects have been mal-developmental and have directly impoverished women by destroying their access to food, water and fuel resources. The drying up of India is undoubtedly a man-made disaster. Barring a few zones, the entire country is reeling under an acute water crisis due to extensive commercial exploitation of forests, over-exploitation of ground water for commercial agriculture, and inappropriate afforestation.¹¹ The mass plantation of eucalyptus for 'greening' has destroyed nature's water conservation mechanism by depleting ground water and inhibiting the growth of other plants.

9. Evelyn F. Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 7.

10. Vandana Shiva, Op. cit., p. 24.

11. 'Alarming Fall in M.P. Water Resources', *Indian Express*, 23 June 1985.

Since women are the water-providers, the disappearance of water sources present consequential burdens and drudgery. Longer walks for procuring water and increasing time spent on it have direct effects on their health and opportunities for other fruitful activity. This picture is a reality in almost every state of India, but no effort is made to conserve or replenish water sources by the scientific community and the government. The burden is borne by women.

Political confrontation and wars in the form of ethnic and religious strife affect women in a greater measure as they are already a vulnerable lot. Economic development does not ensure security, dignity, freedom and equality to women unless such valued qualities are consciously enshrined in the development precept. The galvaniza-

Similarly, religious conflicts and a desire to establish separate religious identities have increasingly coloured gender politics among Hindus and Muslims.

tion of gender justice for women in all aspects is integral to the country's developmental quantum jump and a New World Human Order. The costs of development are heavy: marginalization, almost to a point of exclusion, of half the planet—women.

The Gender Inequality

The development crisis has engendered an intense debate on the consequences of the structural adjustment policies of 1991 on women. The ultimate effects of liberalization policies introduced in the 1980s and subsequent initiation of the adjustment program in 1991 remain far from clear. Certain features of the new economic policies are sure to affect women adversely. They include reductions in subsidies for health, education, water, electricity, and food

grains, and the removal of protective legislation.¹²

The vivisectionist world view reflected in the country report for Beijing—on poverty, environment, health, education, decision-making processes, constitutional and legal rights for women, social reorientation, gender sensitization and advocacy, the girl child, and violence against women, etc.—has a bearing on development that is fraught with pervasive gender inequality. At the end of the UN Decade for Women, a collective document by women activists, organizers and researchers states:

The almost uniform conclusion of the Decade's research is that with a few exceptions, women's relative access to economic resources, incomes and employment has worsened, their burden of work has increased, and their relative and even absolute health, nutritional and educational status has declined.¹³

After nearly a decade the tone of development remains unchanged. The country paper for Beijing, in a section on poverty and NEP (New Economic Policy), states:

It is an accepted fact that women at large and especially poor women have been a disadvantaged group... Economic insecurity, large family size and domestic violence, all combine to make the situation of women such that it requires special attention since extreme poverty by definition implies low absorptive

12. Jayati Ghosh, 'Gender Concerns on Macroeconomic Policy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1994, 24:WSZ-WS4.

13. Dawn., *Development Crisis and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives* (Bergen: Christian Michelsen Institute, 1985), p. 21.

capacity for development programmes.¹⁴

Five decades of unaltered predicament bear out the erroneous surmises of our development strategies. Gender inequality is affecting all spheres of life: family, community, work, values and public affairs.

It is difficult to examine gender inequality in India without taking into account the inequalities defined by class, caste and religion. A woman's social class location has a strong impact on her economic activities, access to agricultural land, employment opportunities, gender relations within the household, and household resource distribution. Similarly, religious conflicts and a desire to establish separate religious identities have increasingly coloured gender politics among Hindus and Muslims. Consequently, concerns about religious identity and legitimacy have taken precedence over gender related concerns among many Muslim women's organizations.¹⁵

Research studies have proven the association between gender inequality within the family and unfavourable demographic outcomes such as early marriage, discrimination against daughters in access to food and health care, poor nutritional status of women, and their inability to seek health care for themselves. This inequality stems from various antecedents such as economic power and division of labour, restrictions on women's autonomy, and marriage and kinship patterns.¹⁶

14. 'The Need for a Dialogue of Difference'.

15. Flavia Agnes, 'Women's Movement Within a Secular Framework: Redefining the Agenda', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 1994, 24:1123-56.

16. Sonalde Desai, *Gender Inequalities and Demographic Behaviour—India* (New York:

Specific vital discriminatory areas such as economic, social, health, legal, environmental, security, and dignity have been focussed on for clearly demonstrating the gender bias against women.

The Modernization Paradox

Modernization does not necessarily bring about freedom and equality in the personal life and status of women. Women's increased participation in income-earning activities, thereby reducing their economic dependence on men, was seen as crucial to reducing gender inequality. But this advantage is lost if women have no control over income earned. The incomes of most women are seen as family income, which is taken and controlled by their husbands or other male members in the family. For example, a study of 20 villages in Kerala and Tamil Nadu reports that, on an average, women contributed 98 per cent of their earnings towards family maintenance while men contributed only 78 per cent, keeping substantial amounts for personal use.¹⁷

Since women are bound to the traditional sectors due to lower skills, men gain priority in training for new and advanced skills needed in the modern sector. Even if women enter the modern sector they tend to be heavily concentrated in occupations that run parallel to traditional household tasks and are accorded a low status. Women are employed as nurses, nursery, primary and middle school teachers, social and welfare workers, clerks and secretaries. Women are rarely found in the higher echelons in the work place. Their visibility in offices of power, administration, research and advanced training is almost nil.

As with various other laws, the Equal

The Population Council, 1994), p. 8.

17. Joan P. Mencher, quoted by Sonalde Desai, p. 14.

Remuneration Act remains only on paper as women are consistently paid lower wages than men in the same occupation. Capability ranks second with a high degree of employment discrimination as women are believed to concentrate more on their families and are unable to handle tasks requiring decision making. Maternity leave is also seen as a big handicap for her in the employment market. Such are the benefits of our corporate culture!

Mrs. Helvi Sipila, Assistant Secretary-General for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations, stated in a report on the State of the World's Women:

Women and girls, who constitute one half of the world's population and one third of the official labour force, performed nearly two-thirds of the work hours, but according to some estimates received only one-tenth of the world's income and owned less than one-hundredth of world property.¹⁸

Leisure, too, is a rare pleasure in the lives of a large majority of women in India. Studies of women's time-use in the hills of Uttar Pradesh, where reserves are fast depleting, reveal that women spend nearly five hours per day collecting wood for household fuel.¹⁹ Significant declines in the availability of water and fuel said to be due to population pressure, but largely a consequence of faulty development strategies, have overburdened women who are responsible for fetching water and collecting

firewood. They have to spend precious time and energy in travelling long distances in search of both these vital necessities.

In Public Life

Family background and environment are significant influences which encourage women's participation in public life. In traditional societies such as India's women

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are barred by current social and cultural conditions from safely stepping out of the confines of the four walls of their homes. The entry to public life is through their fathers and husbands. The concept of public life is not limited to political participation but entails a gamut of community activities and development programmes which will broaden their outlook and give them a better exposure to current events. Women who are raised to be compliant, dependent martyrs find it hard to function as independent and assertive political leaders. As Verba, et al, point out:

Women are inhibited from taking part in political life.... The inhibition can be external or internal. Women may be externally restrained from taking part in political life by formal or informal rules barring them from channels of political access or from political organizations. Or they may be restrained by social norms against female political activity. Women, however, may accept the social norms against female participation. In such a case the inhibition derives from self-

18. Rami Chhabra and Alka Basu, 'Third World Women in Laeeq Futehally (ed.), *Women in the Third World* (Delhi: Jaico Publishing House, 1980), p. 22.

19. M. Swaminathan, 'Eight Hours a Day for Fuel Collection', *Manushi*, March-April, 1984.

restraint.²⁰

Political parties use women to give a boost to their party image and if elected give them insignificant portfolios, rarely portfolios that are powerful and prestigious. Pakistan and Bangladesh are classic cases of women-headed governments in the Third World which are plagued by very low political participation by women. Such women Heads of State initially derived, in a large measure, their political legitimacy from close association with prominent male political leaders. The high visibility of their occupying powerful positions very often hides the distress of the vast mass of submerged women who constitute their electorates. Democracy is thus a sham as woman is devalued economically, politically, socially and culturally.

Education

The Constitution of India upholds the basic right of equal opportunity for education, irrespective of sex. But the rates of female literacy and school enrollment and attendance are much lower than those for men. The high preference for sons in India has led parents to suppress their daughters' talents, and invest in the education of sons who are seen as a source of support in their old age. Girls who are married off require no formal education for household tasks and reproductive activity. Thus illiteracy renders them dependent, and vulnerable to even minor stresses as they are ill-equipped to face the challenges and contingencies of life.

Of late, there is a growing demand among educated men for educated brides which has been an incentive for parents to

educate their daughters. Even so, many women who are graduates or post-graduates are ill-treated, persecuted and driven to suicide or even murdered by their husbands and their in-laws for not meeting dowry demands. Women are often ignorant of their rights and even in cases where women are knowledgeable they are helpless to exercise their rights as autonomous individuals. Education has not motivated women to build their personal identity or to sharpen their awareness of their legal and political rights in order to gain economic independence and become decision makers.

Thus literacy does not necessarily bring about emancipation of women. As Patrica McGrath points out in *Worldwatch*, most obstacles to full equality in education exist in people's minds, in the form of prejudices, traditional beliefs and cultural stereotypes (particularly the roles presented to girls in early life), which discourage women from making full use of their intellectual talents. As a consequence, the percentage of women declines at each rung of the academic ladder.²¹

Lack of Legal Protection

Although the Indian Constitution grants equal rights and opportunities, India's legal system has failed to liberate women. Laws on divorce, maintenance, custody and inheritance have glaring loop-holes, due to which women remain helpless. The existence of personal laws further discriminates against women. The demand for a uniform civil code has been strongly opposed. It is rightly said,

In theory women are guaranteed the basic right to property. In practice, the progressive nature of the Constitution is

20. S. Verba, et. al. *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 254.

21. Patrica McGrath, *Worldwatch Paper-7. The Unfinished Assignment: Equal Education for Women*, July 1976.

offset by a parallel regime of personal law that limits women's inheritance, custody and maintenance rights. Inheritance laws are a striking example of gender inequality in the control and distribution of resources.²²

Both Hindu and Muslim personal laws fail to recognize matrimonial property. Once divorced, women forfeit their rights to the house and other property accumulated during marriage. In effect, their contributions to family maintenance and assets go unrecognized and unrewarded.

Marriage and Family Life

The International Year of the Family brings no relief to Indian women. Family life drains women of their physical and mental energy. Early marriages act as stumbling blocks in the development of women, since they are home-bound due to child bearing. The emphasis on women's reproductive role almost to the exclusion of all else has dealt a death-blow to women in the Third World for whom frequent pregnancies are a way of life. An early marriage is of course the first step by which her reproductive potential is released. For,

...a social system in which the security of a man's honour lies in the sexual virtue of his womenfolk is bound to engender within its very structure rules controlling the relationship between the sexes, and leads to the practice of early and parentally supervised marriage and the relative seclusion of adolescent girls before that event.²³

22. Lotika Sarkar, 'Law and the Status of Women in India', in United Nations, *Law and the Status of Women: An International Symposium* (New York: Columbia Human Rights Law Review, 1977).

23. N.H. Youssef, 'Women and Work in Developing Societies', *Population Monograph*

The Indian Family Planning program, renamed the Family Welfare Program, concentrates greatly on women as clients despite the fact women are not the decision makers in most families. Male sterilizations accounted for only 8 per cent of all sterilizations in 1989-90.²⁴ This disproportionate emphasis on female sterilization, despite reports of its severely debilitating effects, in conjunction with a lack of concern for women's health, reflects the gender inequality perpetuation by bureaucracy and society.

There are estimates which reveal that roughly five million abortions are performed annually in India, of which about 4.5 million are illegal.²⁵ As a result, abortion related mortality and morbidity continues to be high and at least 10 per cent of all maternal deaths result from abortion. Women are also vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and other related infections. These problems which pose serious risks to women are glossed over in the development plans with women becoming unwary victims of harmful family planning techniques.

Infertility is another prime cause for decline in personal worth and status, as abandonment by husbands due to infertility poses grave threats to the social and emotional well-being of women. Unfortunately,

Series No. 15 (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1974).

24. T.K. Sundari Ravindran, 'Women and the Politics of Population and Development in India', *Reproductive Health Matters*, 1993, 1:26-38.

25. M.E. Khan, et. al., 'Abortion Acceptors in India: Observations from a Prospective Study', in *Proceedings of the International Population Conference*, Montreal (Liege: International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, 1993).

the Family Welfare Program ignores infertility.

Unhelpful Media

Mass media are also guilty in perpetrating gender inequality. They constantly portray women as stereotyped submissive mothers, wives and sex objects. The dissemination of negative role models have reinforced male appetites and has led to commoditization of women. The cinema and advertizing are particularly guilty of this crime. Newspapers and magazines accord

No nation can achieve true development without women taking their rightful place beside their male counterparts.

greater priority to beauty contests and their winners than to women's more meaningful achievements! Besides, the portrayal of obscene pictures have serious negative consequences for the dignity of women. Such issues receive scant attention from our policy makers.

Conclusion

No nation can achieve true development without women taking their rightful place beside their male counterparts. To dismiss women as second-rate citizens on biological grounds is to deceive ourselves, as India has

excellent women in almost all walks of life. Indeed women have miles to go before they attain the equality which will give them the freedom to develop according to their innate capabilities. How long this process of gender justice will take, or how much more of a struggle it will entail, or how many changes it will produce at all levels of society is unknown. The future of this movement depends not only on women but also on men who must be gender-sensitized and in all broadmindedness realize the evil of these inequalities, and help to eradicate this deeply ingrained discrimination against women that has characterized human history.

Let us work towards the Gandhian dream of India in which women will enjoy the same rights as men. To quote Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer:

Inequality of gender is passé and the world belongs to women as equals...with each passing day gender crime is escalating and the human rights flag must fly half-mast in humiliation until total deliverance of womankind from this unkind turpitude is reached.²⁶

26. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, 'Seventh Convocation Address', Sri Padmavati Mahila University, Tirupati 27 July 1994.

Hear with your ears that which is the sovereign good;
With a clear mind look upon the two sides
Between which each man must choose for himself,
Watchful beforehand that the great test may be accomplished in our favour.
Now at the beginning the twin spirits have declared their nature,
The better and the evil,
In thought and word and deed. And between the two
The wise ones choose well, not so the foolish.

—Zoroastrianism, Avesta, Yasna 30.2-3

Indian Women

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

To contrast with the preceding anguish-laden article by Ms. Kiran Nair, we reproduce below a talk of Swamiji delivered on 17 December 1894 at Cambridge, Massachusetts. This was first published in M.L. Burke's Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries: His Prophetic Mission, vol. 2, appendix C.

In this portrayal of Hindu women Swamiji dwells on the beauty and nobility of their character and on the high regard in which they were held when Indian civilization was at its best. By comparison we are able to gauge the devastation wrought by 'development', and wonder—Is there not yet a way to combine the best of the past and the present?

To speak about the women of India, ladies and gentlemen, I feel that I am going to talk about my mothers and sisters in India to the women of another race, many of whom have been like mothers and sisters to me. But, though unfortunately within very recent times there have been only mouths to curse the women of our country, I have found out that there are some who bless them, too. I have found such noble souls in this nation as Mrs. Bull and Miss Farmer and Miss Willard, and that wonderful representative of the highest aristocracy of the world, whose life reminds me of that man of India, 600 years before the birth of Christ, who gave up his throne to mix with the people. Lady Henry Somerset has been a revelation to me. I become bold when I find such noble souls, who will not curse, whose mouth is full of blessing for me, my country, our men and women, and whose hands and hearts are ever ready to do service to humanity.

I first intend to take a glimpse into times past of Indian history and we will find something unique. All of you are aware, perhaps, that you Americans and we Hindoos and this lady from Iceland [a Mrs. Magnússon] are the descendants of one common ancestry known as Aryans. Above all we find

three ideas wherever the Aryans go: the village community, the right of women and a joyful religion. The first is the system of village communities—as we have just heard from Mrs. Bull concerning the North, each man was his own and owned the land. All these political institutions of the world we now see are the developments of those village systems; as the Aryans went over to different countries and settled, certain circumstances developed this institution, others that. The next idea of the Aryans was the freedom of women. It is in the Aryan literature that we find women in ancient times taking the same share as men, and in no other literature of the world. Going back to our Veda books, the oldest literature the world possesses and composed by your and my common ancestors (these were not written in India, perhaps on the coast of the Baltic, perhaps in Central Asia—we do not know); their oldest portion is composed of hymns and these hymns are to the gods whom the Aryans worshipped. I may be pardoned for using the word 'gods'—the literal translation is 'the Bright Ones'.

These hymns are dedicated to Fire, to the Sun, to Varuna and other deities. The titles run, 'such and such a sage composed this verse, dedicated to such and such a deity.'

After the fourth or fifth comes a peculiar hymn, for the sage is a woman, and it is dedicated to the one God who is at the background of all these gods. And all these previous hymns were spoken in the third person as if some one were addressing the deities, but this hymn takes a departure, God is speaking for himself; the pronoun used is I. 'I am the empress of the universe, the fulfiller of all prayers.'

This is the first glimpse of women's work in the Vedas. As we go on we find them taking a greater share, even officiating as priests. There is not one passage throughout the whole mass of literature of the Vedas which can be construed even indirectly as signifying that woman could never be a priest. On the other hand, there are many examples of women officiating as priests. Then we come to the last portion of these Vedas which is really the religion of India, the concentrated wisdom of which has not been surpassed even in this century. There, too, we find women preeminent; a large portion of these books are words which have proceeded from the mouths of women. It is there recorded with their names and teachings.

There is that beautiful story of the great sage Yajnavalkya, the one who visited the kingdom of the great king, Janaka, and there in that assembly of the learned people came to ask him questions. One man asked him, 'How am I to perform this sacrifice?' Another asked him, 'How am I to perform the other sacrifice?' And after he had answered them there arose a woman who said, 'These are childish questions. Now have a care; I take these two arrows, my two questions. Answer them if you can, and we will call you a sage. The first is: What is the soul? The second is: What is God?' Thus arose in India the great questions about the soul and God and these came from the mouth of a woman; the sage had to pass an

examination before her and he passed well.

Coming to the next stratum of literature, our epics, we find that education has not degenerated. Among especially the caste of princes this ideal was most wonderfully held up. We find this idea of marrying in the Vedas; the girls chose for themselves; so the boys. In the next stratum they are married by their parents, except in one caste. Even [here] I would ask you to look at another side. Whatever may be said of the Hindoos they are one of the most learned races the world ever produced. The Hindoo is the metaphysician; he applies everything to his intellect. Everything had to be settled by astrological calculation. The idea was that the stars governed the fate of every man and woman. Even today when a child is born a horoscope is cast. That determines the character of the child; one child is born of divine nature, another of human, others of lower character. The question was, if a child who was of a monster-character was united with a child of a god-character would they not have a tendency to degenerate each other.

The next question was, our laws did not allow marriage even within the same clans. One may not only not marry in his own family nor one of his cousins, but one must not marry in the clan of his father or even of his mother. A third difficulty is if there had been leprosy or phthisis or any such incurable disease within six generations of either bride or bridegroom there must not be a marriage. Now taking these three difficulties, the Brahmin says, 'If I leave it to the choice of the boy or girl to marry, the boy or girl will be fascinated with a beautiful face and then very likely all these circumstances will bring ruin to the family.' This is the primary idea that governs our marriage laws as you will find, and whether right or wrong, there is this philosophy at the background. Prevention is better than cure. That misery exists in this world is because we

give birth to misery and the whole question is how to prevent the birth of miserable children. How far the rights of a society should extend over the individual is an open question. But the Hindoos say that the choice of marriage should not be left in the hands of the boy or girl. I do not mean to say that this is the best thing to do, nor do I see that leaving it in their hands is at all a perfect solution! I have not found a solution yet in my own mind, nor do I see that any country has one.

We come next to another picture. I told you there was another peculiar form of marriage (it was generally among the royalty that it was the case) where the father of the girl invited different princes and noblemen and they had an assembly and the young lady, the daughter of the king, was borne on a sort of chair before each one of the princes in turn, and the herald would repeat, 'This is Prince so-and-so and these are his qualifications.' And the young girl would either wait or say, 'Move on.' And before the next prince the crier gives a description also and the girl says, 'Move on.' (All this had been arranged beforehand; she had the liking for somebody before.) Then at last she asks one of the servants to throw the garland over the head of the man, and it is thrown to show he is accepted. (The last of these marriages was the cause of the Mohammedan invasion of India.) These marriages were specially reserved for the prince caste.

The oldest Sanskrit poem in existence, the *Ramayana*, has embodied the loftiest Hindoo ideal of a woman in the character of Sita. We have not time to go through her life of infinite patience and goodness. We worship her as God incarnate, and she is named before her husband Rama. We say not Mr. and Mrs. but Mrs. and Mr. and so on with all the gods and goddesses, naming the woman first. There is another peculiar conception of the Hindoo. Those who have been

studying with me are aware that the central conception of Hindoo philosophy is of the absolute; that is the background of the universe. This absolute being of whom we can predicate nothing has its *powers* spoken of as *she*; that is, the real personal God in India is she. This Sakti of the Brahman is always in the feminine gender. Rama is considered the type of the absolute, and Sita that of power.

We have no time to go over all the life of Sita, but I will quote a passage from her life that is very much suited to the ladies of this country. The picture opens when she was in the forest with her husband, whither they were banished. There was a female sage whom they both went to see. Her fasts and devotions had emaciated her body. Sita approached this sage and bowed down before her. The sage placed her hand on the head of Sita and said, 'It is a great blessing to possess a beautiful body; you have it. It is a greater blessing to have a noble husband; you have it. It is the greatest blessing to be perfectly obedient to such a husband; you have that. You must be happy.' And Sita replies, 'Mother, I am glad that God has given me a beautiful body and that I have so devoted a husband, but as the third blessing, I do not know whether I obey him or he obeys me. One thing alone I remember, that when he took me by the hand before the sacrificial fire, whether it was a reflection of the fire or whether God himself made it appear to me, I found that I was his and he was mine, and since then I have found that I am the complement of his life and he of mine.' Portions of this poem have been translated into the English language. Sita is the ideal of woman in India, and the worshipped God-incarnate of all.

We come now to Manu the great law-giver. Now, in this book there is an elaborate description of how a child should be educated. We must remember it was compul-

sory with the Aryans that a child be educated whatever his caste be. After describing how a child should be educated Manu adds, 'Even so, in the same lines, the daughters are to be educated exactly as the boys.' I have heard often that there are other passages where women are condemned. I admit that in our sacred books there are many passages which condemn women as offering temptation; you can see that for yourselves, but there are passages that glorify women as the power of God; there are other passages which state that in the house where one drop of a woman's tear falls the gods are never pleased and the house goes to ruin. Drinking wine, killing a woman, and killing a Brahmin are the highest crimes in the Hindoo religion. I admit there are condemnatory sentences, but here I claim the superiority for these Hindoo books, for in the books of other races there is only the condemnation and no good word for a woman.

Next I will come to our old dramas. Whatever the books say, the dramas are the perfect representation of society as it then existed. In these, which were written from 400 years before Christ downward, we find even universities full of both boys and girls. We would not find Hindoo women as they have since become, cut off from the higher education; but they were everywhere pretty much the same as they are in this country—going out to the gardens and parks to take promenades. There is another point which I bring before you and where still the Hindoo woman is superior to all other women in the world—her rights. The right to possess property is as absolute in India for women as for men, and has been for thousands and thousands of years. If you have any lawyer friend and can take up commentaries on the Hindoo law you will find it all for yourselves. A girl may bring a million dollars to her husband, but every dollar of that is hers. Nobody has any right to touch one dollar of that. If the husband dies without issue the

whole property of the husband goes to her, even if his father or mother is living, and that has been the law from the past to the present time. That is something which the Hindoo woman has had beyond that of the women of other countries.

The older books or even newer books do not prohibit the Hindoo widows from being married; it is a mistake to think so. They give them their choice, and that is given to both men and women. The idea in our religion is that marriage is for the weak, and I don't see any reason to give up that idea today. They who find themselves complete, what is the use of their marrying? And those that marry, they are given one chance; when that chance is over both men and women are looked down upon if they marry again, but it is not that they are prohibited. It is nowhere said that a widow is not to marry. The widow and widower who do not marry are considered more spiritual. Men, of course, break through this law and go and marry, and women, they being of higher spiritual nature, keep to the law. Just as, for instance, our books say that eating meat is bad and sinful but you may still eat such and such a meat, mutton for instance. I have seen thousands of men who eat mutton, and never have seen a woman of higher caste in my life who eats meat of any kind. That shows their nature is to keep the law, keeping more towards religion. So do not judge too harshly of Hindoo men; you must try to look at it from my position, too, for I am a Hindoo man.

This non-marriage of widows gradually grew into a custom and whenever in India a custom becomes rigid it is almost impossible to break through it, just as in your country you will find how hard it is to break through a five-day custom of fashion. In the lower castes, except two, their widows remarry. There is a passage in our later law books that a woman shall not read the Vedas. So it is

prohibited to a weak Brahmin even; if a Brahmin boy is not strong-minded the law is applied to him also. But that does not show that education is prohibited to them, for the Vedas are not all that the Hindoos have. Every other book women can read, all the mass of Sanskrit literature, that whole ocean of literature, science, drama, poetry is all for them; they can go there and read that, except the scriptures. In later days the idea was, woman was not intended to be a priest; what is the use of her studying the Vedas? In that the Hindoos are not so far behind other nations. When women give up the world and join our order they are no longer considered either men or women; they have no sex, the whole question of high or low caste, man or woman, dies out entirely. Whatever I know of religion I learned from my master, and he learned of a woman.

Coming back to the Rajpoot woman I will try to bring to you a story from some of our old books during the Mohammedan conquest, how one of these women was the cause that led to the conquest of India. A Rajpoot prince of Delhi, a very ancient city, had a daughter. She had heard of the military fame of Prithi Rai [King of Chitore] and all his glory, and she was in love with him. Now her father wanted to hold a Rajasuya sacrifice, and he invited all the kings in the country, and in that sacrifice they all had to render menial service to him because he was superior over all; and with that sacrifice he declared there would be a choice of his daughter. But the daughter was already in love with Prithi Rai and he was very mighty and was not going to acknowledge loyalty to the king, her father, so he refused the invitation.

Then the king made a golden statue of Prithi Rai and put it near the door and said that was the duty he had given him to perform—that of a porter. The upshot of the whole affair was that Prithi Rai, like a true

knight, came and took the lady behind him on his horse and they both fled. When the news came to her father he gave chase with his army and there was a great battle and the majority of both armies were killed. And [thus the Rajpoots were so weakened that] the Mohammedan empire in India began.

When the Mohammedan empire was being established in Northern India the Queen of Chitore was famed for her beauty, and the report of her beauty reached the Sultan, and he wrote a letter for the Queen to be sent to his harem. The result was a terrible war between the King of Chitore and the Sultan. The Mohammedans invaded Chitore, and when the Rajpoots found they could not defend themselves any more, the men all took sword in hand and killed and were killed, and the women perished in the flames. After the men had all perished the conqueror entered the city: there in the street was rising a horrible flame. He saw circles of women going around it, led by the Queen herself. When he approached near and asked the Queen to cease from jumping into the flames, she said, 'This is how the Rajpoot woman treats you,' and threw herself into the fire. It is said that seventy-five thousand women perished in the flames that day to save their honour from the hands of the Mohammedans. Even today when we write a letter, after sealing it we write 74½ upon it, meaning if one dares to open this letter that sin of killing 74,500 women will be upon his head.

I will tell you the story of another beautiful Rajpoot girl. There is a peculiar custom in our country called 'protection.' Women can send small bracelets of silken thread to men, and if a girl sends one of these to a man that man becomes her brother. During the reign of the last of the Mogul Emperors, the cruel man who destroyed the most brilliant empire of India, he similarly heard of the beauty of a Rajpoot chieftain's daughter. Or-

ders were sent that she should be brought to the Mogul harem. Then a messenger came from the Emperor to her with his picture and showed it to her. In derision she stamped upon it with her feet and said, 'Thus the Rajpoot girl treats your Mogul Emperor.' As a result the imperial army was marched into Rajpootana. In despair the chieftain's daughter thought of a device; she took a number of these bracelets and sent them to the Rajpoot princes with a message, 'Come and help us,' and all the Rajpoots assembled and the imperial forces had to go back again.

I will tell you a peculiar proverb in Rajpootana. There is a caste in India called the shop-class, the traders. They are very intelligent, some of them, but the Hindoos think they are rather sharp. But it is a peculiar fact that the women of that caste are not so intelligent as the men. On the other hand the Rajpoot man is not half as intelligent as the Rajpoot woman. The common proverb in Rajpootana is, 'The intelligent woman begets the dull son, and the dull woman begets the sharp son.' The fact is, whenever any state or kingdom in Rajpootana has been managed by a woman it has been managed wonderfully well.

We come to another class of women. This mild Hindoo race produces fighting women from time to time. Some of you may have heard of the woman who, during the Mutiny of '57, fought against the English soldiers and held her own ground for two years, leading modern armies, managing batteries, and always charging at the head of her army. This Queen was a Brahmin girl. A man whom I know lost three of his sons in that war; when he talks of them he is calm, but when he talks of this woman his voice becomes animated. He used to say she was a god, she was not a human being. This old veteran thinks he never saw better generalship than she possessed. The story of Chand Sultana in older times is well known in

India. She was the Queen of Golconda, where the diamond mines were. For months she defended herself. At last a breach was made in the walls. When the imperial army was trying to rush in there she was in full armour, and she forced the troops to go back. In still later times perhaps you will be astonished to know that a great English general had once to face a Hindoo girl of sixteen.

Women in statesmanship, managing territories, governing countries, even making war, have proved themselves equal to men, if not superior. In India I have no doubt of that. Whenever they have had the opportunity they have proved they have as much ability as men, and with this advantage more, that they seldom degenerate; they keep to the moral standard which is innate in their nature, and thus as governors and rulers of their state they prove, at least in India, far superior to men. John Stuart Mill mentions this fact, and even at the present day we see women in India managing vast estates with great ability. There were two ladies where I was born who were the proprietors of large estates and patronesses of learning and art and who managed these estates with their own brains and looked to every detail of the business.

Each nation, beyond a general humanity, develops a certain peculiarity of character; so in religion, so in politics, so in the physical body, so in mental habitude, so in men and women, so in character. One nation develops one peculiarity of character, another takes another peculiarity. Within the last few years the world has begun to recognize this. The very peculiarity of Hindoo women, which they have developed and which is the idea of their life is the *mother*. If you enter a Hindoo's home you do not find the wife the same equal companion of the husband as you find her here. But when you find the mother, she is the very

pillar of the Hindoo home. The wife must wait to become the mother and then she will be everything. If one becomes a monk his father will have to salute him first because he has become a monk and therefore superior to him; but to his mother he will have, monk or no monk, to go down on his knees and prostrate himself before her and take a little cup of water before her feet, and she will dip her toe in it, and he will have to drink of it; a Hindoo son gladly does it a thousand times over again! Where the Vedas teach morality the first words are, 'Be the mother your God,' and that she is.

When we talk of woman in India our idea of woman is mother. The value of women consists in their being mothers of the human race. That is the idea of the Hindoo. I have seen my old master taking little girls by the hands, placing them in a chair and actually worshipping them, placing flowers at their feet and prostrating himself before these little children, because they represented the mother God. The mother is the God in our family. The idea is that the only real love that we see in the world, the most unselfish love, is in the mother; always suffering, always loving, and what love can represent the love of God more than the love which we see in the mother? Thus the mother is the type, the incarnation of God on earth to the Hindoo. 'That boy alone can understand God who has been first taught by his mother.' I have heard wild stories about the illiteracy of our women. Till I was a boy of ten I was taught by my mother. I saw my grandmother living and my greatgrandmother living, and I assure you that there never was in my line a female ancestor who could not read or write, or who had to put 'her mark' on a paper. If there was a woman who could not read or write my birth would have been impossible. These caste laws make it imperative.

So these are wild stories which I sometimes hear—that statement that in the mid-

dle ages reading and writing were taken away from Hindoo women. I refer you to Sir William Hunter's *History of the English People* where he found Indian women who could calculate a solar eclipse. I have been told that too much worship of the mother makes either the mother selfish or too much love of the children for the mother makes them selfish. But I do not believe in that. The love which my mother gave to me has made me what I am and I owe a debt to her that I can never repay.

Why the Hindoo mother should be worshipped? Our philosophers try to find a reason and they come to this definition: we call ourselves the Aryan race. What is an Aryan? He is a man whose birth is through religion. This is a peculiar subject, perhaps, in this country, but the idea is that a man must be born through religion, through prayers. If you take up our law books you will find chapters devoted to this, the prenatal influence of a mother on the child. I know that before I was born my mother would fast and pray and do hundreds of things which I could not do for five minutes even. She did that for two years. I believe whatever religious culture I have I owe to that. It was consciously that my mother brought me into the world to be what I am. Whatever little good impulse I have was given to me by my mother, and consciously, not unconsciously.

'A child materially born is not an Aryan; the child born in spirituality is an Aryan.' And for all this trouble and because she has to make herself so pure and holy in order to have pure children, that is the peculiar claim she has on the Hindoo child, and the rest is the same with all other nations. She is so unselfish; but the mother has to suffer most in our families. The mother has to eat last. I have been asked many times in your country why the husband does not sit with his wife to eat, if the idea is perhaps that the

husband thinks she is too low a being? This explanation is not [at] all right. You know a hog's hair is thought to be very unclean; a Hindoo cannot brush his teeth with these brushes made of it, so he uses the fibre of plants. Some traveller saw one of them brushing his teeth with that and wrote that 'a Hindoo gets up early in the morning and gets a plant and chews it and swallows it!'

Similarly they have seen the husband and wife not eating together, and have made their own explanation. There are so many explainers in this world, and so few observers; as if the world is dying for their explanations! That is why I sometimes think the invention of printing was not an unmixed blessing. The real fact is, just as in your country many things must not be done by ladies before men, so in our country the fact is it is very indecorous to munch and munch before men. If a lady is eating she may eat before her brothers, but if the husband comes in she stops immediately and the husband walks out quickly. We have no tables to sit at, and whenever a man is hungry he comes in and takes his meal and goes out. Do not believe that a Hindoo husband does not allow his wife to sit at table with him; he has no table at all. The first part of the food when it is ready belongs to the guests and the poor, the second to the lower animals, the third to the children, the fourth to the husband, and last comes the mother.

How many times I have seen my mother going to take her first meal when it was two o'clock—we took ours at ten and she at two, because she had so many things to attend to: someone knocks at the door and says 'Guest.' And there was no other food except what was for my mother and she would give it to him willingly and then wait for her own. That was her life and she liked it, and that is why we worship mothers as gods. I wish you would like less to be merely petted and patronized and more to be worshipped! A

member of the human race, the poor Hindoo does not understand that; but when you say, 'We are mothers and we command,' he bows down. This is the side then that the Hindoos have developed.

Going back to our theories; people in the West came about one hundred years ago to this point, that they must tolerate other religions. But we know now that toleration is not sufficient toward another religion, we must accept it. Thus it is not a question of subtraction, it is a question of addition. The truth is the result of all these different sides added together. Each of all these religions represents one side, the fullness being the addition of all these. And so in every science, it is addition that is the law. Now the Hindoo has developed this side; will this side be enough? Let the Hindoo woman who is the mother become the worthy wife also, but do not try to destroy the mother. And that is the best thing that you can do.

Thus you get a better view of the universe instead of going about all over the world and rushing into different nations, and criticizing them and saying, 'the horrid wretches, all fit to be barbecued for eternity!' If we take our stand on this position, that each nation under the Lord's will is developing one part of the human nature, no nation is a failure. So far they have done well, now they must do better! (Applause) Instead of calling the Hindoos 'heathens, wretches, slaves,' go to India and say, 'So far your work is wonderful, but that is not all; you have much more to do. God bless you that you have developed this side of woman as a mother, now help the other side, the wife of men.' And similarly I think (I tell it with the best spirit) that you had better add to your national character a little more of the mother side of the Hindoo nature! This was the first verse that I was taught in my life, the first day I went to school: 'He indeed is a learned man who looks upon all women as his

mother; who looks upon every man's property as so much dust, and looks upon every being as his own soul.'

There is the other idea of the woman working with the man. It is not that the Hindoos had not those ideals, but they could not develop them. It is alone in the Sanskrit language that we find four words meaning husband and wife together. It is only in our marriage that they promise, 'What has been my heart now may be thine.' And the husband promises the same thing. It is there that we see that the husband is made to look at the Pole Star, touching the hand of his wife and saying, 'As the Pole Star is fixed in the heavens so may I be fixed in my affection to thee,' and the wife does the same. Even a woman who is vile enough to go into the streets can sue her husband and have a maintenance. We find the germs of these ideas in all our books throughout our nation, but we were not able to develop that side of the character.

We must go away beyond sentiment when we want to judge, and we know it is not emotion alone that governs the world, but there is something behind emotion. Economic causes, surrounding circumstances and other considerations enter into the development of nations. (It is not in my present plan to go into the causes that develop woman as wife.) So in this world as each nation is placed under peculiar circumstances and is developing a type, the day is coming when all these different types will be mixed up, when that vile sort of patriotism which means 'rob everybody and give to me' will vanish. Then there will be no more one-sided development in the whole world, and each one of these will see that they had done right. Let us now go to work and mix the nations up together and let the new nation come.

Will you let me tell you my conviction;

nearly all the civilization that the world has today has come from that one peculiar race of mankind, the Aryans. Civilization has been of three types: the Roman, the Greek, the Hindoo. The Roman type is the type of organization, conquest, steadiness; but lacking in emotional nature, appreciation of beauty and the higher emotions. Its defect is cruelty. The Greek is essentially enthusiastic for the beautiful, but frivolous and has a tendency to become immoral. The Hindoo type is essentially metaphysical and religious, but lacking in all the elements of organization and work. The Roman type is now represented by the Anglo-Saxon, the Greek type more by the French than by any other nation, and the old Hindoos do not die! Each type has its advantage in this new land of promise; they have the Roman's organization, the power of the Greek's wonderful love for the beautiful, and the Hindoo's backbone of religion and love of God. Mix these up together and bring in the new civilization, and let me tell you this should be done by women.

There are some of our books which say the next incarnation (we believe in ten) and the last is to come in the form of a woman. We see resources in the world yet remaining, because all the forces that are in the world have not come into use. The hand was acting all this time while other parts of the body were remaining silent. Let the other parts of the body be awakened and perhaps in harmonious action all the misery will be cured. Perhaps, in this new land, with this new blood in your veins, you may bring in that new civilization, and perhaps through American women.

As to that ever blessed land which gave me this body, I look back with great veneration, and bless the merciful being who permitted me to take birth in that holiest spot on earth. When the whole world is trying to trace their ancestry from men distinguished

in arms or wealth, they alone are proud to trace their descent from *saints*.

That wonderful vessel which has been carrying for ages men and women across this ocean of life may have run small leaks here and there and of that too the Lord alone knows how much is owing to themselves and how much to those who look down with contempt upon the Hindoos. But if such leaks there be, I, the meanest of her children,

think it my duty to stop her from sinking even if I have to do it with my life. And if I find that all my struggles are in vain, still, as the Lord is my witness, I will tell them with my heartfelt benediction, 'my brethren, you have done well—nay, better than any other race could have done under the same circumstances; you have given me all that I have; grant me the privilege of being at your side to the last and let us all sink together.' □

From Our Readers

On the *Prabuddha Bharata*

I have been reading *Prabuddha Bharata* for the last two years. Being a student of Vedanta and the Bhagavad-Gita I find *Prabuddha Bharata* very useful in understanding Vedanta philosophy as well as the essence of Hindu religion. The study of *Prabuddha Bharata* has helped me to obtain largeness of mind and to acquire a wider and deeper vision of life which enables me to face the world with greater zeal and understanding. If one rightly understands Vedanta philosophy which is very well elucidated in the articles published in *Prabuddha Bharata*, then all conflicts between men and between religions disappear. The teachings of Vedanta are of immense value in the present day since they elevate one's level of thinking. It is not only understanding the Vedanta philosophy which is useful but it is acting on the teachings of Vedanta and *Bhagavad-Gita* which improves the quality of life. When we realize that the Self in all beings is the same, and is a fraction of God, we see all with an equal eye. We develop the quality of equal-mindedness. We realize that the Eternal is in all. The light of Brahman dwells in all bodies and is not affected by the differences in bodies in which it is embodied. Such views make us look upon our fellow beings with kindness and compassion. When we study Vedanta with an alert mind we move to a higher state of consciousness which brings peace and harmony within us. We get inspired to help others, to solve their problems, to serve the needy in whatever way we can.

For a country like India where the traditions, customs and beliefs of people differ from state to state and also within each state, the Vedantic outlook on life is most needed to bring about national integration. If we judge people by their physical and mental traits we shall not succeed in widening the circle of our friends. Unity in diversity is only possible when we perceive the oneness in all, which is taught by Vedanta. All diversities are related to one another like waves in one mass of water in an ocean.

Prabuddha Bharata has also been unfolding to its readers the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The write-ups published in the journal are most beneficial in helping us understand the gist of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. Though Swami Vivekananda earned name and fame for his address in the Parliament of Religions, he had great concern for his own country. He wanted to elevate the standard of the Indian masses for the regeneration of India.

The study of the *Prabuddha Bharata* has certainly brought peace within me and in my home, and has inspired me to serve in a spirit of dedication. The journal is doing well in awakening the consciousness of its readers. I wish the editors of *Prabuddha Bharata* success in their efforts to popularize Vedanta.

19 August 1994

Lt. Col. R.K. Langar, Jammu & Kashmir

Jain Acharya Sthulabhadra

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

Here was a young man who had fallen into the abysmal depths of sensuality and infatuation, but who raised himself to the dizzy heights of absolute self-control and conquest of lust. And yet such a patient and valiant warrior against the inner foes was vanquished by pride in an unguarded moment. Sthulabhadra's life conveys a profound message for all spiritual aspirants.

The author, residing at the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi, presents us with an inspiring biographical sketch of the famous Jaina monk.

Acharya Sthulabhadra shines as a bright star among the galaxy of Jain saints who has illumined Jainism by his matchless self-control, and unparalleled intellect. So highly is he honoured in the *Swetambara* sect that he is remembered in the *maṅgala-mantra* (benedictory chant) along with the Tirthankara Mahavira, his first disciple Gautama, and the Jain faith.¹

He was born in Pataliputra, the then capital of Magadha in the year 351 BC during the reign of King Nanda the IXth. He was the eldest son of Shakadala, the legendary Prime Minister of the Magadha Empire. He had seven sisters who became Jain nuns, and a younger brother, Shreyaka, who too later became a Prime Minister.

When Sthulabhadra was eighteen years old, he was sent by his father to the renowned state-courtesan Kosha for training in the amorous arts (*kāmakalā*). For he was being trained by Shakadala to be the future Prime Minister and, was therefore expected to be a master of all the branches

of the arts and the sciences. Kosha was not only a lady of exquisite beauty and grace, but she also held a distinguished position in the different fields of arts. So, one who had not undergone training under her was not considered learned. Hence Shakadala sent his promising son to her. But Kosha and Sthulabhadra fell in love with each other at first sight, and the latter did not return from her house for the next twelve years!

Shakadala did not repeat the mistake of sending Shreyaka also to Kosha and, instead, appointed him the personal bodyguard of the king. We need not go into the details, however interesting, of the rivalry between Shakadala and one Vararuchi and the course of events that followed leading to the premature and unnatural death of Shakadala. After his death Shreyaka was offered the post of Prime Minister, but he politely declined, stating that his elder brother was the rightful heir and should be summoned.

Sthulabhadra was completely oblivious of the world for all these twelve years. He was startled by the news of his father's death and by the summons of the king. Bidding goodbye to his sweetheart, and fearing further trouble, he hurried to the court. There he came to know in detail the circumstances that led to his father's death. He was asked

1. मंगलं भगवान्वीरो मंगलं गौतमप्रभुः ।

मंगलं स्थूलभद्राद्याः जैनधर्मोऽस्तु मंगलम् ॥

Quoted by Sadhvi Sanghmitra in *Jain Dharma ke prabhavak acharya*, (Jain Vishwa Bharati Prakashan, Ladanu, Rajasthan, 1979), p. 78.

to accept the Prime Minister's post, but he begged to be allowed to consider deeply the offer before accepting it. He retired into solitude.

The moment of his awakening and conversion had arrived. He discriminated thus:

A state official, however high his post, is after all a servant of the king. How can there be happiness for one who is subordinate to another? Even though one may be fully dedicated to the State, there is never any dearth of backbiters and faultfinders who are ever ready to create problems. My father died prematurely on account of his ministerial post. By accepting this office I will have to please the king as well as the public, which is very difficult. Besides, the burden of administrative work leaves no time for thinking about the Self.

This discrimination awakened the true spirit of renunciation in Sthulabhadra. He forthwith renounced the world, received the monastic vows from Acharya Sambhuta Vijaya and returned to the court in the garb of a monk. Everyone was amazed. He was persuaded by all, including the king and his brother, to reconsider his decision, but to no avail. The king, however, suspected that he was probably going to Kosha by thus deceiving all! But when he saw Sthulabhadra proceed in some other direction, he felt sorry for his suspicion.

Sthulabhadra became a monk at the age of thirty and lived the rigorous monastic life for sixty nine long years. He was humble, intelligent, hardworking and austere. Diligently cultivating virtues such as patience, forbearance, equanimity and forgiveness, he soon became the most trusted lieutenant of his guru.

Rainy season was drawing close. Now, according to the traditional custom, Jain monks too live at certain specific places during the four rainy months to avoid walking outside and so hurting crawling creatures which multiply and abound then. They seek permission from their guru to retire to some secluded place for this period to practise various types of austerities. One among Sthulabhadra and his brother disciples asked permission to remain in *kāyotsarga-dhyāna* (meditation with perfect control of and detachment from the body) near the den of a lion; another to live near the hole of a snake; and another to dwell on the central beam of a well! Sthulabhadra, however, made a very peculiar request: He begged permission to pass the four monsoon months in the pleasure-chamber (*chitra-shālā*) of the courtesan Kosha, where he had lived a different life for twelve years! All were granted permission.

Kosha, who was downcast ever since Sthulabhadra had left, was delighted to see him back. At first she thought that he had returned, not being able to bear the rigours of monastic life. The sage, however, made his intentions plain: he was going to stick to his vows. Still hopeful, Kosha tried to win him with arguments in favour of a life of enjoyment, and tried all means she knew to tempt him, but failed. She accepted defeat in face of his absolute self-control, serene inner poise born of deep meditation on the Self, and renunciation. Being defeated, she then converted and became a lay Jain devotee. The conversation between Kosha and Sthulabhadra is the ever-fresh subject matter of a number of poetic compositions both in Pali and Sanskrit by Jain scholar-monks, full of discrimination and renunciation; it is highly instructive and elevating.

It is said in praise of Sthulabhadra:

The affectionate courtesan was obedient;



the food consisted of six courses of tasty dishes; the dwelling place was beautiful, the body was handsome and young; the time was the rainy season. I pay homage to Sthulabhadra Muni, expert in instructing young ladies, who, in spite of all these, conquered with ease Kama, the god of love.²

There are thousands of self-controlled people living in high mountain caves and in the solitude of deep forests. But the son of Shakadala alone maintained perfect self-control while living in the vicinity of young maidens in exceedingly beautiful surroundings.³

At the end of four months the monks returned to the guru. He complimented the

monks became jealous and decided to equalize with Sthulabhadra by staying at Kosha's house during the next rainy season! So the remaining eight months flew by because of their eager expectation.

With the advent of the next rainy season, the monk who had lived near the den of a lion went straight to Kosha's house, against his guru's prohibition. Kosha immediately realized that the *muni* had come out of animosity towards Sthulabhadra, and decided to teach him a lesson. She entertained him till he was excited with passion and then she proposed that he should bring a precious *ratna-kambala* (a costly shawl embroidered with jewels) from the king of Nepal and present it to her. Only then would she satisfy his carnal desire.

Kosha wiped her feet with the costly ratna-kambala and threw it into the drain. When the monk protested at her throwing away such a precious shawl, Kosha retorted, 'Why, after having obtained this rare human birth, are you not throwing away the priceless charita-ratna (the jewel of character) for my body which is nothing but a bundle of filth, faeces, urine and other dirty substances?'

first three monks saying, 'Dukkharā', meaning that the vow they had fulfilled was indeed difficult. But when Sthulabhadra came, he went seven steps forward and greeted him saying, 'Atidukkharā', meaning 'most difficult'. Unfortunately, the three

The infatuated monk, abandoning all sense of shame, went to Nepal and brought the shawl with great difficulty. Kosha wiped her feet with the costly *ratna-kambala* and threw it into the drain. When the monk protested at her throwing away such a precious shawl, Kosha retorted, 'Why, after having obtained this rare human birth, are you not throwing away the priceless *charita-ratna* (the jewel of character) for my body which is nothing but a bundle of filth, faeces, urine and other dirty substances?' The *muni* at once realized his fault, shook off his infatuation, thanked Kosha and returned to his guru. He confessed his guilt, undertook penance for the transgression and began to practice severe austerities.

2. वेश्या रागवती सदा तदनुगा षड्भिरसैर्भोजनं
शुभ्रं धामं मनोहरवपुरहो नव्यो वयः संगमः ।
कालोऽयं जलदाविलस्तदपि यः कामं जिगायादरात्
तं वन्दे युवतीप्रबोधकुशलं श्रीस्थूलभद्रं मुनिम् ॥

Quoted by Muni Ratnaprabha Vijaya, in *Sramana Bhagavan Mahavir* (Sri Siddhanta Society, Ahmedabad, 1948), vol. 5, part I, p. 227.

3. कवयोऽपि गिरौ गुहायां विजने वनान्तरे
वासंश्रयन्तो वशिनः सहस्रशः ।
हर्मयेऽतिरमये युवतीजनान्तिके
वशी सः एकः शकरालनन्दनः ॥

Ibid.



Around that time a terrible famine lasting twelve years ravaged the whole of North India. It was a period of severe crisis for the whole monastic order (Sri Sangha) also. Besides the passing away of monks in large numbers for want of food, there was the additional danger of the extinction of the scriptural knowledge in the possession of individual monks, mainly in their memory and transmitted by verbal tradition. There were no written texts even till many centuries later. So a conference was held and all the scattered sacred lore was compiled. Thus eleven complete *āṅgas* could be collected, except the twelfth. Acharya Bhadrabahu was its only knower, but he

Bhadrabahu directed them to a nearby cave. Seeing them come, Sthulabhadra, simply to show off his occult powers, assumed the form of a lion. The sisters, frightened out of their wits and thinking that their brother had been killed by the beast, hurried back. However, when they reported the whole matter to Bhadrabahu, he, sensing the truth, sent them again to the cave. This time, of course, they saw their brother.

The practical joke might have amused and impressed the nuns, but it proved disastrous for Sthulabhadra. Acharya Bhadrabahu refused to teach him any further since he had misused the powers

When such a high-born, steady, determined, dispassionate crestjewel of monasticism could be so careless and fall a prey to the pride of learning, what should one expect of less competent aspirants of the future? To impart knowledge to incompetent pupils is to insult knowledge itself.

was then in Nepal, practising a special yogic meditation called *Mahā-prāṇa-dhyāna*. Word was sent to him, but he refused to come.

At this the Sri Sangha reminded him what the penalty was for disobeying the orders of the Sri Sangha. Acharya Bhadrabahu accepted that any one, even an Acharya, was liable to be excommunicated if he went against the commands of the Order, and he was no exception. He therefore agreed, as a compromise, to impart the knowledge of the twelfth *āṅga*, even while practising *Mahā-prāṇa-dhyāna*. Capable monks were sent to him, but because of his being preoccupied with his practices, the tuition proceeded so slowly that most of the monks left out of sheer desperation. Nevertheless, Sthulabhadra alone persisted in that snail-paced learning.

During this period, Sthulabhadra's seven sisters, who too had become nuns, came to meet their elder brother.

acquired by the study. Sthulabhadra immediately realized his mistake, repented and repeatedly begged to be pardoned, pledging never again to misuse the occult powers. But Bhadrabahu was adamant. The Sri Sangha intervened and requested him to teach the remaining portion. At this, he taught only the text, but not the meaning of the remaining four sections.

Justifying his stand Acharya Bhadrabahu said that he was unwilling to impart the precious knowledge not merely because Sthulabhadra had misused it, but also for a deeper reason. There wasn't a more competent student than Sthulabhadra, a conqueror of lust and the desire for power and position; he was extremely intelligent, possessed of exceptionally sharp memory and infinite patience—he, indeed, was a veritable ocean of virtues. When such a high-born, steady, determined, dispassionate crestjewel of monasticism could be so careless and fall a prey to the pride of

learning, what should one expect of less competent aspirants of the future? To impart knowledge to incompetent pupils is to insult knowledge itself. In any case, no purpose would be served even if the remaining knowledge was imparted. For, he foresaw that, with the passing away of Sthulabhadra, the generation of competent aspirants as well as *acharyas* would come to an end, and that the sacred knowledge also would be lost.

This interesting and instructive episode, among other things, highlights the relation between the Acharya and the monastic Order. Initially the Order threatened to excommunicate the Head, the Acharya himself, on his own verdict. He was thus forced to impart knowledge to Sthulabhadra for the welfare of the Sangha. However, on the later occasion he did not yield to the Sangha. This shows that the Sangha appoints Acharya for its own welfare, and in him the strength of the Sangha is centralized. Both the Sangha and Acharya act in unison.

Sthulabhadra was the head, the *Yuga Pradhāna* of the Jain community, for forty five years and died at the age of ninety nine years in the year 252 BC. He was the last of the *shruta-kevalin*, i.e. the knower of all the scriptures. It was during this period that Bhadrabahu with his followers migrated to South India, to escape the perils of the devastating twelve year long famine. The

Jain community thus got divided into two branches, the Digambara sect in the south, headed by Bhadrabahu, and the Svetambara sect in the north with Sthulabhadra as the leader.

Conclusion:

Every religious Order is invigorated and advanced by a succession of saints and sages. Jainism is no exception. However, the lives of its ancient saints are shrouded in mystery and very little factual details are available. Although a number of books have been written on Acharya Sthulabhadra, biographical material is scarce. Interestingly, the little information available, faithfully portrays the triumphs and failures of this extraordinary saint. Here was a young man, who had fallen into the abysmal depths of sensuality and infatuation, but who raised himself to the dizzy heights of absolute self-control and conquest of lust. And yet such a patient and valiant warrior against the inner foes was vanquished by pride in an unguarded moment. Does this life not convey a profound message for all spiritual aspirants?

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Why do you go to the forest in search of God?
 He lives in all and is yet ever distinct;
 He abides with you, too,
 As fragrance dwells in a flower,
 And reflection in a mirror;
 So does God dwell inside everything;
 Seek Him, therefore, in your heart.

—*Sikhism*, Adi Granth, Dhanasari, M.9, p. 684

Youth Forum

*Questions by youth discussed by Swami Pitambarananda,
Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Chandigarh*

Q. 1: Everyone says, 'You are very emotional and immature.' But what are the exact meanings of the words 'emotional' and 'immature', and how to overcome these bad qualities?

Answer: Let me first mention the meanings of 'emotion' and 'emotional' as given in various dictionaries.

EMOTION:

1. Strong mental or instinctive feeling such as love or fear. (Pocket Oxford)
2. Strong feeling of any kind; excitement or disturbance of the mind or the feelings. (Oxford Advanced)
3. Mental agitation, excited state of feeling as joy, fear, etc. (Collins)
4. Strong feeling, e.g. fear, wonder, love, sorrow, shame—often accompanied by a physical reaction, e.g. blushing or trembling. (Webster)

EMOTIONAL:

1. Liable to excessive emotion.
2. Having emotions that are easily excited
3. Given to emotion.
4. Ruled by emotion rather than by reason.

This is what the dictionaries tell. Now let me tell you what I have heard from the wise people: The human mind has three distinct functions— (a) thinking, (b) feeling, and (c) willing. If thinking does not proceed from an absolutely tranquil brain, it is vitiated by our likes and dislikes and a lot of subjective imagination. Similarly, if the feeling does not proceed from an absolutely tranquil heart, it biologically excites the person, and this biological part of feeling is called 'emotion'. In ordinary human beings like us,

all the feelings are emotions.

It is only when we attain sufficient tranquility that we are able to remain calm always, and then only emotions are gradually replaced by genuine feelings. Till then we have to apply two forces to avoid emotionalism. On the one hand, we have to practise calmness of mind and self-control, and on the other, we must always temper our emotions by 'reason' based on philosophical understanding of the true nature of things; and also by 'practical reason' based on the experience of the elders. As far as the word 'immature' is concerned, again I am giving the dictionary meanings along with the meanings of 'mature':

MATURE:

1. Fully developed, ripe, adult.
2. Fully grown or developed mentally or physically; having achieved one's own potential.
3. Ripe, completely developed, grown up.
4. Having reached a state of full natural development; when development is complete; having reached a state of maximum development.

IMMATURE:

1. Not mature.
2. Not sensible in behaviour or in controlling one's feelings.
3. Less mature than one would expect.
4. Not yet fully developed or grown.

From this it is clear that we cannot 'do' anything to become mature except to try to develop the faculties of thinking, feeling and willing (—will power is developed by self-

less work on one side and self-observation and self-control on the other—) and *wait* for the process to complete itself slowly and gradually.

Q. 2: I always hear that girls are emotional and boys are not. Why is it so?

Answer: About girls being more emotional than boys—well, it is a very general statement and not worth paying much attention to.

Q. 3: Over the last few days I was busy preparing for my half-yearly exams, held in the Bachelor of Education course. Yesterday, when the exam was to be conducted, the students went on a strike—simply on the plea that they did not want to take exams. They had put up a petition earlier that the exams should not be conducted, because once our principal had said that on the basis of the marks obtained in these exams we would be given marks in our practicals in our finals, to be held in April–May. Thus the students did not want to be graded now in these exams. Yesterday, when the bell rang for the exams to start, out of 180 students only 5 went in to take the exams. Somehow I could not gather sufficient strength to be the 6th student. Even though I was very well prepared, I somehow could not leave the majority of 175 students.

I do not know if I am behaving like a coward or if I should have taken the exam, thereby pleasing the teachers and betraying the people with whom I have to stay for another 6 months. It was not even the betrayal, but in fact I was so scared to stand against those 'goondas' of my class.

Answer: Once, when I was in college, the boys declared a strike. I did not resist on the first day. But next day they said that it would continue indefinitely. I did not pay heed to that and went to the college. Just near the college, two or three of them blocked my way and started pleading, arguing, threatening. I did not budge. Finally when they left, I entered the college. One more boy entered unnoticed. The two of us went up to the staff-room and reported ourselves to the

teacher concerned, who then came to the classroom and taught us.

The thing snowballed. 'Students' unity' was raised as an argument; we challenged the authority of the 'few' to take decisions and try to force it on all by the slogan of 'unity'. A General Meeting of all the students was called and it was seen that 70% were against the strike, and it had to be withdrawn.

I am not asking you to do what I did, but you should never join a strike unless you are yourself convinced of its propriety and absolute necessity. Where is the question of betraying the students? Did they consult you before taking the decision? Have you not betrayed the wishes of your parents who rightly expected you to appear for the examination legitimately announced by the principal? And have you not betrayed the principal and teachers who were not wrong in holding the examinations?

Considering all the things mentioned by you in your letter, I think you must appear in the remaining part of the examination. Not to do so would be cowardice before what you have termed the 'goonda' element of your class, and a betrayal of the teachers who have helped you all along to learn the subjects. It would also be a disappointment to your parents who have allowed you to join the B. Ed. course as per your wish, though they had other things in their minds. The students who are your companions for the next six months are not going to be of any help to you in your future life, while what the teachers have helped you to learn will be your asset throughout life. And your first duty is to them.

Please take the examination in all seriousness.

(Continued on page 800)

Practical Vedanta

TRUE DEVOTION EXPECTS NO RETURN

Arjuna's pride was growing in proportion to the increasing affection Sri Krishna gave him. He felt that he was the only true devotee of the Lord. The Lord, however, realized this failing of Arjuna's. So, wishing to enlighten his beloved disciple and friend, Sri Krishna took him out for a stroll.

After they had gone some distance, they saw a brahmin by the side of their path. While a sword dangled from his waist, he was plucking dry grass and eating it! Arjuna, taken aback, asked: 'You appear to be a pious non-violent soul! Not wanting to harm any life, you eat only dry grass. Why then do you also carry a sword?'

'I have been carrying this sword so I can severely punish four people if I happen to meet them', said the brahmin.

'And who, may I ask, Sir, are these four people you seek so desperately?' queried Arjuna.

The brahmin replied, 'First is that rogue Narada. He shows no consideration for my Lord's comfort and continually sings *bhajans* and *kirtans*. Thus my Lord is always kept awake!'

'Second is that obstinate Draupadi. She called out to Him when He was having His meal. He had to leave His meal half finished and rush to liberate her from Durvasa's curse. Not content with that she also made the Lord eat left-over food.'

'Third is that heartless Pahlada who made my Lord enter a cauldron of boiling oil. He also had the Lord crushed under an elephant's feet, and thereafter compelled Him to appear from inside a pillar.'

'And who is the fourth', asked Arjuna, his interest growing and curiosity mounting.

'Ah! The fourth is that rascal Arjuna. Look at his audacity: he made the Lord serve him in the role of a charioteer.'

Arjuna felt crushed. In that moment he saw the brahmin's devotion and love for the Lord, and all his pride faded away. 'I always thought I was your first and foremost devotee, my Lord. But today I find that this brahmin is a truer devotee.'

News & Reports

A RARE TREAT FOR DEVOTEES

The Sri Mudeeswara Temple, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, an architectural marvel, offers a rare treat to early morning devotees when sunlight cuts three golden paths through the tower of the *mandapam* (hall) to fall on the Shivalingam in the sanctum sanctorum, as if to offer prayers to Lord Shiva.

Temple officials say the early morning wonder occurs for ten minutes, when the sun's rays fall first at the centre of the lingam and then spreads all over.

The special engineering feat which creates this phenomenon are the windows of two towers—one constructed in the central hall of the sprawling Mariamman Temple tank about 350 feet away from the sanctum sanctorum, and the second about 80 feet away as the temple's main tower—through which the rays penetrate before falling on the Shivalingam.

The phenomenon, which occurs only 24 days in a year, will now take place in September for 12 days.

The temple's legend says that the *lingam* was worshipped by Airavatha, the white elephant-mount of Lord Indra. The story goes that once saint Durvasa gave a lotus, which he had brought from Goddess Lakshmi, to Indra who put it on the head of his elephant Airavatha. The elephant, ignorant about the sanctity of the flower, trampled it under its feet. An infuriated Durvasa cursed Airavatha to become an ordinary wild elephant and roam about in the earth's forests for one century. Indra, who, unaware of the curse was searching for his elephant, found it near Aalavoi (Madurai) worshipping Lord Mudeeswara. The elephant was relieved of the curse after 100 years of worship there.

Formerly the temple was called Airavatheswara Temple or Indreswara Temple, but the name changed after Srimudeeswara Naicker, brother of the famous Thirumalai Naicker, rebuilt the temple in the seventeenth century. The temple, which was recently

renovated, is designed in such a way that rays from all the nine planets are said to fall on the Shivalingam at different times of the year. Human beings, however, can see only the sun's rays falling on the Shivalingam for 12 days each in March and September.

A temple inscription says that the evil effects of the various planets do not affect a regular worshipper of the temple's deities Mudeeswara and Goddess Maragathavalli.

The temple also has rare sculptures, including those of the extinct animal yali, prehistoric elephants, an elephant and a cow locked in battle, and three peacocks dancing together atop another sturdy peacock....

Another engineering feat seen in the temple tower is that a large oil-lamp placed there at a particular point does not get blown out even by strong winds. In those days when electricity was still undiscovered, the oil lamp in the tower of the temple saved people from groping in darkness.

Stories abound about the exquisite sculptures carved on the pillars of the temple, 'But there is no one to narrate', laments a temple official. Perhaps, none interested to listen, too!

TISSUE CULTURE PROMISES MORE FOOD

Although gene-splicing is still at an experimental stage in India, an older biotechnology method known as tissue culture is widely used to mass-produce improved plant varieties. In this technique, a few cells of a superior mother plant—selected for qualities such as high yield, quick maturation and resistance to disease—are grown in a carefully chosen nutrient, usually a mix of salts, sugars, vitamins, hormones and other ingredients. The result: thousands of saplings, all possessing the valuable attributes of the mother plant.

The advantages of growing tissue-cultured sa-

plings are quickly apparent. Take, for instance, the experience of N. Sivanandan, a Mavelikara, Kerala, farmer who in July 1992 planted a banana sapling of the 'Grandnaine' variety produced in the laboratory of the Cochin-based A.V. Thomas & Co. Ltd. 'The bananas just grew and grew,' he says. 'Finally, when the tree was just 9½ months old (instead of the normal 15), I cropped the bunch. It weighed a whopping 51 kilos and had 201 delectable fruits.'

Both government and private laboratories are engaged in tissue culture. The leading government facilities include Bombay's Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Pune's National Chemical Laboratory and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in Delhi. Perhaps the most ambitious private group is the Madras-based Southern Petrochemical Industries Corporation Ltd. (SPIC). 'We hope to increase our laboratory's annual production capacity to 20 million by 1995,' says Joseph Thomas, SPIC's executive director. 'It will be the largest facility of its kind in Asia. Most of the plants cultured will be exported.'

Apart from developing better bananas, Indian researchers have used tissue culture to mass-produce superior varieties of other plants. These include several kinds of orchids, fruits such as papaya and strawberries, spices and condiments like cardamom and ginger, and vegetables like cauliflower, potato and asparagus. Other crops include sugarcane, oil palm, teak and tapioca.

Meanwhile, in 1992, an early step towards gene-splicing, one of great potential, was reported from New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University where Professor

Asis Datta and his group at the School of Life Sciences cloned a unique gene from the seeds of the amaranth plant. This gene can substantially boost food-protein levels. Efforts are now on to transfer it to cereals, including rice and wheat. 'If we succeed in this,' says Professor Datta, 'it could go a long way in tackling malnutrition.'

**VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL &
VIVEKANANDA KENDRA**

Vivekanandapuram, Kanyakumari 629 702,
Tamil Nadu

The annual meeting of General Body of Vivekananda Rock Memorial & Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, was held at its Registered Office at 3, Singarachari Street, Triplicane, Madras-600 005 on 20.5.1995 under the Chairmanship of Dr. M. Lakshmi Kumari, President, for election of new Office Bearers and other Members of the managing Committee. The newly elected Office Bearers are as follows and they will hold office for three years.

President:	Shri P. Parameswaran
Vice Presidents:	Prof. K.N. Vaswani Dr. H.R. Nagendra
General Secretary:	Shri A. Balakrishnan
Joint General Secretaries:	Kum. Rekha Davey Shri Praveen Dhabolkar
Treasurer:	Shri D. Bhanu Das



Tzu-chang asked about getting on with people. The Master said, "Be loyal and true to your every word, serious and careful in all you do, and you will get on well enough even though you find yourself among barbarians. But if you are disloyal and untrustworthy in your speech, frivolous and careless in your acts, even though you are among your own neighbours, how can you hope to get on well?"

—Confucianism, Analects, 15.5

From Our Readers

Dear Friend,

This is in response to the 'Letter from the Editor' in the April '94 issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. I want to give some suggestions for possible improvements in the journal.

I feel that your journal deals more with matters more philosophical than practical. Though its articles on Vedanta are good, some practical topics also need to be included.

1. For example, we study the *Gīta*, in which the earlier chapters deal mostly with *karma*. But we are told that *karma* should be done according to our scriptures. If we do not know completely what all *karmanas* are inculcated in our scriptures, how shall we practise them? You are kindly requested to enlighten us on this matter, especially those which may seem practical to you in these modern times.

2. Our Vedas are divided into two portions—*Karma-kāṇḍa* and *Jñāna-kāṇḍa*. We need to know about both these portions for attainment of Knowledge. This is what our scriptures say. So some articles may be added in your magazine dealing with *Karma-kāṇḍa*.

3. Food is also an important part of religion. Because, as is the food, so is our mind. You may also enlighten us on this aspect of religion.

4. You may also enlighten us on *japa* and spiritual concentration. I had read an article on *japa* in your magazine published a few years ago. I think it has been helpful to me.

5. You from your side may add some topics on practical aspects of religion, which you feel are important and may help someone to give his life a spiritual orientation. I personally feel that this has to begin with *karma*. Philosophy is too abstruse a subject to be understood by everybody. So you may kindly start publishing at least one of such articles every month.

Thanking you in anticipation and praying—May God help you in fulfilling the vision of Swami Vivekananda—,

Yours sincerely

Anonymous

Editor's note: We request you to study Vivekananda's book, *Karma Yoga*, and *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, aside from reading this journal. There you will get the answers to your desire to know about *karma-kāṇḍa* etc., in a language suitable for all of us. Besides, there are so many books published by the Ramakrishna Order on the points you have referred to. Nevertheless, we shall try to use your suggestions.

* * *

Dear Friend,

During his sojourn in the West, Swamiji was painfully moved by the fact that the condition of even those considered 'poor' there was 'comfortable' when compared with the miserable state of affairs of the poor in India. Pondering over the reason for this difference the answer he got was *education*.

What sort of education did Swamiji have in mind? Not the kind that puts a mass of information into the brain to run riot there undigested throughout life. He stated that we must have life-building, man-making, character-building assimilation of ideas. Where do we get these ideas from? These are contained in our Upanishads. These must be brought out from the confines of monasteries and forests, from the possession of selected bodies of people, and scattered, broadcast, all over the land so that these truths may run like fire all over the country, from north to south and east to west, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, from the Sindhu to the Brahmaputra.

With this idea and his blessings, *PRABUDDHA BHARATA* (*Awakened India*) was born in 1896 to awaken people and make them harmoniously dynamic. Over the years, *PRABUDDHA BHARATA* has grown in stature to reach out to distant lands beyond the shores of Bharata (India). It has provided its readers faith and strength, given them the sense of service and sacrifice, and showed them the path to the Almighty.

The Editor has asked his readers for suggestion to improve the journal. What suggestions can be given to a journal about to step into its 100th year by a person like me who has lived on this good earth for less than half that time? I only pray that the blessing of Swami Vivekananda continue to illuminate your path this day and forever more.

Sivamastu sarvajagataḥ

paralūtaniratā bhuvantu bhūtagaṇāḥ;

Doṣāḥ prayāntu śāntim

sarvatra suklī bhavatu lokah.

May good come to the whole world;

May all people be given to doing

what is good for others;

May problems get completely solved;

May people everywhere become happy.

14 September 1994

Calcutta

Yours respectfully

Capt. S.K. Bose

* * *

Reviews & Notices

THE SOCIOLOGICAL VIEWS OF SISTER NIVEDITA: By Santwana Dasgupta; Publ. Sri Vijay Dasgupta, Sarada-Ramakrishna Saran, W2A (R) 16/4, Phase IV B, Golf Green, Calcutta, 700 045, 1994; Rs. 10/-.

Sister Nivedita is often remembered as a nun, an eminent writer, a powerful speaker, and a passionate fighter for India's freedom. In this small booklet she is also remembered as a master sociologist. Originally published as an article in a commemorative volume in 1968, the paper is presented now in booklet form where the writer, who has distinguished herself by in-depth and pioneering studies on the social philosophy of Swami Vivekananda, has compiled and analysed the sociological views of Sister Nivedita.

The aspects which are covered briefly in this paper are: (1) the sources and methods of the Sister's study, which were remarkably scientific, (2) Swami Vivekananda's vital influence on Nivedita's social, political and spiritual ideologies, (3) the main trends of Sister Nivedita's sociological thinking viewed in the light of modern sociological and political theories, (4) Nivedita's concepts of nation, culture-patterns, racial types and social organism, (5) the future social order as viewed by Nivedita, and (6) the pioneering ideas of Nivedita about co-operatives, trade unionism, Internationalism, and Secularism.

Nivedita's power of penetrating analysis, keen vision and thorough-going knowledge of social science are more evident through this paper. The author has shown that the Sister was the pioneer in putting up many sociological theories, which derived support from eminent sociologists later on. For instance, instead of supporting contemporary theory of 'purity of cultural heritage', she viewed every culture as a blend, a web made up of various elements—native, foreign and semi-foreign. And according to her, the actual glory of a

culture, therefore, lay in its distinctive manipulation of the materials and resources that came in its way (p. 13). Subsequently, after her, the theory has gained wide support from many sociologists. She was the first to preach trade-unionism in India, and the first to propose Internationalism; she is also to be hailed as the founder of modern Secularism in India.

Meandering through the pages, one is wonderstruck by the freshness and originality of the ideas, and futuristic vision of the versatile genius.

Though small and compact, the paper deals with the Sister's ideas systematically, presenting clear arguments. It is undoubtedly a welcome addition to the Nivedita literature.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Rajkot, Gujarat

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE TAMIL SIDDHAS: By T.N. Ganapathy; Publ. Indian Council for Cultural Relations, Rajendra Bhavan, 4th Floor, 210 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 110 002, 1993; pp. 233; Price, Rs. 140/-.

The philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas by T.N. Ganapathy is not only an academic thesis. In this book Ganapathy strives to gain an insight into the Siddha philosophy. Intellectual analysis is not lacking, however. In fact, each aspect of their philosophy is delved into and explained in detail with charts (Ch. 4) and even a diagram (Ch. 5) where necessary. Commonplace as well as scholastic misinterpretations of Siddha philosophy are cleared at the very outset, before the author delineates the various aspects. The book deals with the method of the Siddhas, with their conception of the human body, their mysticism, language, and social concern. Of these the last two may be of greater interest to the lay reader and the one on the Siddha's language to a student of literature. It throws light on the necessary use of paradox in the expression

of mystical experience. The variety of the resultant poetry is one aspect that strikes us. More significantly, Ganapathy draws attention to the manner in which the 'twilight-language' used by the Siddhas typifies the very nature of their spiritual experience. Thus we get a peep into that experience which is in essence inexplicable.

The other chapters are also written in a manner that all readers can understand. However, the suffusion of technical terms, giving also their apt meaning and context, would make the reading more meaningful to a practitioner of the yogic way. The book carries a fund of information, systematically codified and set out in a meaningful order, to facilitate greater understanding. It includes items of special interest, like the *ragas*, *sthalas*, *mantras*, and deities governing each *chakra*. It would certainly help the student, who wishes to pursue the path, to provide a clear foundation about the concepts in Siddha philosophy. It must be noted, though, that this provides only a theoretical background—the actual methodology for attaining the Siddha experience must be imbibed only from the Guru by the student, as Sri Ganapathy does not tire of pointing out.

The Siddha approach differs from Advaita Vedanta in the importance that is given to the body as a means to the highest spiritual attainment. Besides, the Siddhas are explicit in their deep social concern. It is their involvement in these two areas which creates the wrong impression of their being mere medicine men or alchemists.

The role of the book, therefore, is to clear the foggy understanding about Siddhas. Ganapathy establishes that, far from hobnobbing in para-mystic phenomena, the Siddhas have an intricate system of philosophy which adheres to the severe discipline of the path of yoga.

The author further places the siddha philosophy in the context of other world religions and philosophic systems by comparative analysis wherever relevant. The text is complemented by numerous references and carries a comprehensive bibliography and index.

Dr. Sarada Natarajan, Bangalore

SIKHAMOYEE NIVEDITA: A Commemorative Volume (Bengali): Ed. Belarani De, Sanjukta Mitra, Santwana Das Gupta; pub. The Nivedita Brati Sangha, W2A (R) 16/4, Phase 4-B, Golf Green, Calcutta 700 045; 1993; pp. 200. price Rs. 125/-

There were very few personalities in India during the first decade of this century whose contributions can be said to have outweighed those of Sister Nivedita towards the awakening of the national consciousness. She actualized in her life the ideal of *nishkama-karma* and selfless love towards India—a love which gave and always gave to India, without expecting anything in return. Though she did not want anything in return, India truly owes this Irish daughter of hers a deep debt of gratitude. It is only in the fitness of things that the Nivedita Brati Sangha (under the dedicated guidance of Professor Santwana Das Gupta et. al.) has come forward to acknowledge in some measure our debt to this noble disciple of Swami Vivekananda—his 'finest acquisition from the West', as he said.

Appropriately, the Sangha has installed a statue of Sister Nivedita in Calcutta (long overdue), and also published on the same occasion, on the 125th birth anniversary of Nivedita, a commemorative volume. This consists of contributions from a dedicated band of writers, and comprises in its three sections of *poetry*, *essay* and *drama* a variety of fare, at once interesting and enduring in value and quality. The poems (ten in number and covering the first seventeen pages) represent the writers' unstinted admiration for the life and work of Nivedita. The last twenty pages sum up the main facets of her life in a drama (available also in a video-cassette, beautifully presented by the Sonex group of Calcutta). In between, the poetry and drama, seventeen essays, covering some one hundred and sixty pages, reflect on the significance of Nivedita's work relating to education, religion, art and politics.

The offset printing is flawless, and the get-up of the Volume, with its frontispiece embellished with a beautifully expressive sketch by the artist Ramananda Bandyo-

padhyay, is exquisite. The Volume is a feast for the eye and also for the mind, and it can well be a prized possession of all book lovers. The publisher, Nivedita Brati Sangha, richly deserves to be congratulated by one and all for bringing out such a publication befitting the occasion.

'The whole task now is to give the word "Nationality" to India in all its breadth and meaning....India must be aroused by this great conception', wrote Sister Nivedita. That was the main burden of her life and work from the time she (born Margaret Elizabeth Noble in Ireland in 1867) came to India in 1898 at the instance of her Master, Swami Vivekananda, and dedicated the remaining fourteen years of her life to her adopted country. Nivedita believed that, without national awakening in terms of an all-round consciousness of the identity and essential unity of the nation, there could not be any advancement towards self-rule or national liberation. The awakening had to take root, first, in the minds of the people. To her this meant two things: (1) inspiring a feeling of oneness, a feeling of organic relatedness among Indian people, through appropriate educational and religious ideas, and (2) leading, on the basis of such feeling of oneness, a nationalist struggle against subjugation by the British Raj. That she wanted to motivate the people of India with the ideas of national consciousness and unity can be seen from the analysis of her thoughts and views on education, religion, art and politics in India as presented in this volume.

Contemplation and action went hand in hand with Nivedita. 'I see, therefore I do' is the approach to life which gave her thoughts and activities a unity. She *saw* that India was a unity, and an organic one at that, and therefore she made it her life's *work* to awaken among the Indians a consciousness of that existing unity. Basically, the idea that India was a unity and a nation was her Guru's, Swami Vivekananda's, teaching. But Swamiji never used the word 'nation-making'. He had said that 'man-making' was his work. It was for Nivedita to imbibe the teachings of her Guru and extend it to 'nation-making' or nationality, as she called

it. Being totally identified with the idea of Indian national consciousness, she made it her task to educate the whole country to the need for freedom from foreign hands. Being thus identified, Nivedita made it her task also to reinterpret Dharma in such a way that it contained within itself the whole idea of 'nation'. In a word, she combined her approaches to education, religion, and politics to articulate her philosophy of nationalism.

The thoughts of Nivedita, I must observe in conclusion, are crucially relevant to the society and polity of contemporary India. An India that is threatened *now* with disintegration and anti-national propensities will be well advised to turn a page from her writings on nation and nationality, which are distinguished, above all, by organic (holistic) thinking and positive doing.

Smt. Mamata Ray,
Lecturer in Political Science,
Visvabharati University, Birbhum

SWAMI RAMDAS ON HIMSELF:
Pub. Anandashram, Kanhangad, Kerala
671 531; 1994; pp. 167; Rs. 15/-

Swami Ramdas, a Self-realized man, lived in this century and guided many people on the spiritual path. A married man, he renounced the world in his late thirties, following a strong, inner call. He also received great inspiration on reading the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. As an itinerant monk, he went to Tiruvannamalai and had the *darshan* of Sri Ramana Maharshi. He palpably experienced the Maharshi's grace which helped him in his spiritual *sadhana*.

The present book is a compilation of Swami Ramdas' answers to question put to him in person or through letters. He emphasizes the importance of repeating the holy name, and in his lifetime he taught all who went to him the efficacy of repeating the Rama-*mantra*—OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI RAM. His was the path of self-surrender, and he considered himself a child of the Divine Mother.

In this book, Swami Ramdas talks of his struggle during the period of his *sadhana* and

his experiences. Naturally the book is mostly autobiographical in tenor. Writings such as this are better reserved for intimate devotees and admirers. There is a danger that intimate spiritual revelations of a great soul may be misunderstood and misinterpreted by those outside the inner circle.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

GOD AND THE HOUSEHOLDER:
By Talari Anantha Babu, Sr. Advocate.
Copies can be had from Ramakrishna
Math, Domalguda, Hyderabad, 500 029.
Price: Rs. 7/-

This is a short, reasonably priced book about the relationship of Man with God, meant for the common man or householder.

There are hardly a couple of persons among millions who do not think of God frequently. The common man, who is the most harassed person in these times of growing materialism and falling moral standards, is in dire need of enlightenment about the Supreme Force that prevails in this world of myriads of names and forms. This nicely got-up handbook is a welcome addition to the books to guide the householder who is painfully making his way through the maze of attractions and distractions, obstructions and hurdles, hopes and disappointments.

In a simple language the book advises the householder to plant and cultivate the perennial seedling of faith and devotion to God and benefit himself/herself from the flowers and fruits of beatitude the tree will yield. The human failings or negative qualities which give rise to misery and unhappiness are tackled, and positive virtues of Truth, Charity, Service, Prayer, Japa and even an advanced step like meditation are suggested. In the end, the topic of the duties of a householder for the realization of Peace and Bliss are felicitously described.

A few mistakes in grammar, like 'it's'; the non-conventional use of small capital for God in words like 'he', 'him'; Americanized spelling of words like 'endeavor' and 'vigor'; and the use of non-Sanskritic words like '*madhyamulu*' for '*madhyamas*' and

'*yagnam*' for '*yajna*', etc. detract a little from the laudable effort made by the author. His desire to contribute the proceeds from the sale of the book to Ramakrishna Math and Smt. P. Kanaka Durgamma Adhyatmika Gnana Pitham is praiseworthy. OM TAT SAT.

M.N. Rao, Hyderabad

MODERN CIVILIZATION: A CRISIS OF FRAGMENTATION: By S.C. Malik; pub. Abhinav Publications, Hauz Khas, New Delhi-16; pp. 175; Rs. 150/- (hard cover)

This book does not deal with the socio-political crisis in the modern age, as many may be led to believe. It goes deeper, to the root of all crises, that is, to the spiritual crisis, to the alienation of man from Nature and his own Self.

The author is a paleo-anthropologist and has specialized in the study of Indian Civilization. It is with this background and his deep interest in metaphysics that he proceeds to define the crisis that confronts mankind. He attempts to show how learning, communication, socio-cultural conditioning including the concept of time have created a crisis of fragmentation in man.

Among all animal species man alone has the capacity to think. This has helped him take great strides in science and technology and achieve control over his environment to a degree without parallel in human history. The author says that this has led man into a new form of extreme egocentricity and anthropomorphism.

At the sub-human level genes dominate the struggle for survival while in the human survival of thought is all-important. Our social life, politics, religion and so on are created by our thoughts. Thought-forms are converted into symbols and man takes the latter for real. He is ready to destroy all life and ready to sacrifice himself for the sake of a symbol, be it a flag or an object of worship. Thus, thought, which is man's creation, dominates its own creator.

Culture and traditions which play an important role in human life and which form part of man's history are also mere symbols. The author argues that there can never be

true objectivity in history, for all perceptions of the past are only from the point of view of the present. A concept of an experience should not be mistaken for the experience itself.

Man has entered into an era of extreme specialization of learning and so, despite a well-developed brain uses only a fragment of it, and 'a fraction of the brain is functionally tyrannizing our existence'. It does not permit any task to be completed, for that would be the end of all thought! Therefore man is continuously in search of some achievement or the other, and hopes to succeed some day in the future. This is only chasing the mirage, because future is only a concept. What exists is only *here* and *now*. It is only when man lives constantly in the present that he can find fulfilment and contentment. To live in the present all thoughts have to cease and this is a threat to the thought process. So, man feels his existence is threatened and takes shelter in the past or imagines a future.

The author has avoided, to the extent possible, common metaphysical terms and uses a language easily comprehended by a 'modern mind'. The sentences, unfortunately, are extremely long-winded and there is avoidable repetition of ideas. One has to wade through words to pick up ideas.

Although the book was published in 1989, its subject being timeless, it cannot get outdated.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

STUDIES IN KATHASARITA-SAGAR: By Aparna Chattopadhyay, Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi-1; pp. 320; price Rs. 350/-

Derived from Gunadhya's *Brihatkatha* in Parishachi, the *Kathasaritasagar* of Somadeva—an 11th century Sanskrit text—has been ranked along with the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* as a work of great merit, not merely because of its lucidity and profundity, but also because of its historical value. Dr. Aparna Chattopadhyay's work is the first of its kind to reconstruct the social and cultural life of India on the basis of this text. She throws light on a number of aspects

such as caste, education, marriage, position of women, food and drinks, dress and ornaments, art and architecture, economic condition, and the religious life of people.

Aparna Chattopadhyay firmly holds that *Kathasaritasagar* portrays the society of early medieval India. As per the text, the caste system was not rigid despite the fact that the Brahmins enjoyed high status. Although the majority of the Brahmins adhered to the traditionally prescribed six duties (study, making sacrifices, teaching, etc.), some of them became kings (viz. Vidusaka and Gunasarman) or were in royal service (viz. Viravara and Pralambabahu). Some others became agriculturists, enjoyed land grants and were well off. The *Kathasaritasagar* describes the Rajputs as a part of the Kshatriya community. The Vaishyas, too, formed an important segment of society. The Shudras were not looked down upon. Instances of Shudra girls being married to Brahmins are also found in the text. Among the aboriginal tribes of the period were: Sabaras, Bhillas, Nisadas and Kiratas.

Dr. Chattopadhyay discerns a link between the Devadasi system that 'appears abruptly' in the early medieval society and a similar institution in Central and Western Asia. She argues that the Devadasi system which is nowhere mentioned in the Dharmastras or Indian literature up to the 7th century, seems to be of foreign origin. The same could be said about *Sati* and *Purdah*. The girl-child was not an object of derision but of concern and compassion. Intoxicating beverages were used by all except the Brahmins. Meat-eating was prevalent among all the *varnas* (castes). So was *Anuloma* form of marriage. Such rites of marriage as *Kanyadana*, *Panigrahana*, and *Agni-pradakshina* frequently figure in the text. The custom of *svayamvara* was no more in vogue. Monogamy was the ideal but polygamy also prevailed among the affluent sections. Instances of divorce and remarriage are also given by Somadeva.

The religious life of people as depicted in the *Kathasaritasagar* reveals the growing influence of Puranic ideas. Although Vedic practices such as the performance of *homa*

continued, Shaivism and the cults of Mother Goddess flourished with much vigour. The ethical principles of Buddhism were also held in high esteem. Buddhist female ascetics, however, receive scant regard in this text.

Aparna Chattopadhyay deserves rich compliments for making a critical appraisal of *Kathasaritasagar* in a historical framework. She, however, needs to remove printing mistakes in the future edition.

*Dr. Saitsh K. Kapoor,
Lyallpur Khalsa College,
Jalandhar City, Punjab*

ETERNAL PLATFORM: Ed. Swami Vamanananda, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramharipur, Bankura, W. B.; distributors: Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta, 700 014, and *Udbodhan*, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta 700 003; pp. 168; Rs. 60/-

Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the Chicago Parliament of Religions (1893) was an historic event with mutagenic implications. On the one hand it gave a severe jolt to the men of religion who believed that they alone possessed the torch of truth, and that it was their moral duty to dispel the spiritual ignorance of others; on the other, it provided a pluralistic perspective to religion in terms of the plurality of human temperaments, mental capabilities and cultural milieus. While Swamiji's speeches at the Parliament reflected the mood of resurgent India, the encomiums he received in the West not only provided new confidence to the people who either detested or were apologetic about everything Indian, but also led to a new wave of social reform and nationalistic upsurge.

The book under review is a commemorative volume published on the occasion of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the Parliament of Religions and the Golden Jubilee of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramharipur. It has twenty-six insightful essays by Swamis, scholars, devotees and teachers of eminence on a wide variety of subjects, ranging from Swami Vivekananda's life and ideas to

Sevadharmā; from the Holy Mother and Josephine MacLeod to the concept of religion and spirituality in Europe, and from the Vedantic approach to management and administration to socialism.

To begin with, Swami Lokeswarananda argues that far from being a paradox, religion fulfils the inner urge of man to go beyond himself. Science is essential for gaining material prosperity, but moral perfection can be attained only by way of religion. A combination of the two, as advised by Swami Vivekananda, is the need of mankind today.

Swami Sastrananda shows how Swami Vivekananda's work and achievements awakened 'the half-dead, self-centred and selfish Indians' from 'sloth and sterile pretensions to spirituality', Richard Chambers Prescott holds that he does not merely belong to the historic tradition of India, but should be viewed 'as a living presence' within 'the depths of the consciousness of all humankind'. Swami Bhavyananda reviews his work in England. Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, in his inimitable literary style, reveals how the Vedanta philosophy of Swami Vivekananda is non-sectarian, all-embracing, and universal in its essence. Sumitona Noma shows that Swamiji was a personification of human excellence and set the highest ideals for others. C.P. Ghosh dilates on the Swami's immense faith in Mother Kali. A. Mohapatra explains that Vivekananda's Vedantic humanism 'with its vision of the infinite divine possibilities in man', his love for the masses, his scientific approach to religion, and his emphasis on a sound educational system 'suited to national conditions and realities of life' marked him out as a great soul, having dynamic approach to social issues. Amiya Majumdar suggests that the educationists must translate Swami Vivekananda's thoughts into action 'so as to achieve peace and harmony in the family, in society and among various nations'. Jasbir Kaur Ahuja brings out the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's life and message to the youth today. Nirod Baran Chakravorty describes him as 'a man of authentic religion with deep historical knowledge, wide vision and scientific

outlook': Vivekananda's Chicago addresses 'combined religion, science, history and poetic excellence to give a direction to the peaceful coexistence of all nations of the world with their differences of culture. Swami Atmasthananda argues that Swami Vivekananda's itinerary in India and his historic success at the Parliament restored 'self-consciousness' to the Indian people and ushered in a Renaissance.

The divine relationship between Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, between Sister Nivedita and the Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and between the Holy Mother and her companions such as Yogin-Ma, Golpa-Ma, Gopaler-Ma, Gouri-Ma, Sarala-Di, and others has been lucidly presented in separate articles by Swaraj Majumdar, Pravrajika Atmaprana and Pravrajika Aksharaprana. C.S. Ramakrishnan brings out the dynamics of spiritual relationship between Swami Vivekananda and his Gurubhais Swami Saradananda, Swami Abhedananda, Swami Trigunatitananda, Swami Brahmananda, and others. Chetana Mandaviya describes how Swami Vivekananda influenced Josephine MacLeod, and how the latter helped in the growth of his mission.

Arun Kumar Sinha explains that Vedantic socialism is far superior to its Western counterpart. Anthony Elinjamittam argues

that it is absurd to talk about Vedantic communism, as Vedanta and communism are diametrically opposed to each other: 'Karl Marx and Shankara are at anti-poles'.

Swami Amarananda discusses the concept of religion and spirituality in Europe in a historical framework. He shows how Europe in comparison with the U.S.A. is much more conservative and balkanized in matters of religious concepts and attitudes. Unlike the U.S.A., again, Indian cults and godmen do not have a large clientele in Europe. Frank Ziesing feels that it would take quite long before Sri Ramakrishna's prophecy that his picture would be venerated in every house comes out to be true in Europe! 'Vedanta seems to be too out of this world because mystic tradition in Europe has never received the importance it received in India.'

Swami Someswarananda's and Swami Jitatmananda's articles beautifully delineate how Vedanta can be useful in management and administration. All in all, the book makes delightful reading. One, however, wonders why there is no detailed survey of the religious and social activities of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramharipur, whose Golden Jubilee was observed in the recent past!

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor

Youth Forum

(Continued from page 789)

Q. 4: Am I a coward, always uncertain of myself and depending on someone to clear my thought, my vision?

Answer: Depending on anyone whom you think to be a wise person for clearing your thoughts, your vision, does not make you cowardly. It rather makes you wiser and wiser.

Q. 5: How to give myself up to HER, the Divine Mother?

Answer: If you force yourself to do what you think to be righteous and side by side be guided by the wise regarding what is really right and proper,—you would reach a stage where you directly feel that you are under 'Divine protection'.

And you have to love HER—the Infinite. Do you have the book, *Sarada Devi, the Great Wonder*? In case you do not, you should get it from the Ashrama on your next visit. □