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or Awakened India





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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

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No. 1

Homage to Swami Vivekananda^{*}

(Iman-Bhūpālī; Tritāl; Pajjhatikā-meter)

SWAMI GARGANANDA

शिवस्वरूपं मूर्तविवेकं नमामि वीरं महायतीन्द्रम् ।

विश्ववरेण्यं जगदाचार्यं प्रेमपरं चिरनिर्भयचित्तम् ॥

1. I salute you whose real nature is Śiva, who are an embodiment of discrimination, a hero, and King among the great sages; who are adored by the world, a world-teacher full of love, whose mind is ever fearless.

समग्रभारत-विचरणकारी दलितपतितजन-भयार्तिहारी ।

सेवात्याग-सुकेतनधारी नरोत्तमस्त्वं ममचिरशरणम् ॥

2. O best among men, who are a monk wandering over the whole of India; dispeller of the miseries and fears of the downfallen and the oppressed; bearer of the beautiful banner of service and renunciation—for ever are you my refuge.

असीम-करुणा सततं नयने मानवमहिमा तव हृद्गगने ।

जागरणी श्रुतिवाणी वदने जयोऽस्तु ते त्वं शक्तिनिदानम् ॥

3. In your eyes you always have limitless sympathy; in your mental firmament, the glory of humanity; and on your lips the rousing message of the Upanisads. Victory to you, the source of strength.

देहि देव तेजः शुभबुद्धिं पौरुषमभयम् जीवन-शुद्धिम् ।

बलं प्रधानं श्रद्धां ज्ञानं हे स्वामिन् वन्दे तव चरणम् ॥

4. O divine being, grant me spiritual power, right understanding, (unflinching) self-effort, purity in life, chiefly—strength, conviction and spiritual Knowledge. O revered monk, I prostrate at your holy feet.

* Swami Vivekananda's Birthday is on 23 Monday this month.

To the Awakened India

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Written to Prabuddha Bharata or Awakened India in August 1898, when the journal was transferred from Madras to Almora, Himalayas, into the hands of the Brotherhood founded by Swamiji.

Once more awake!

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

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest even of the roadside dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold, and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,

Where loving hearts had brought thee up and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong—
This is the law—all things come back to the source
They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh

From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new The heavenly
River tune thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

And all above,

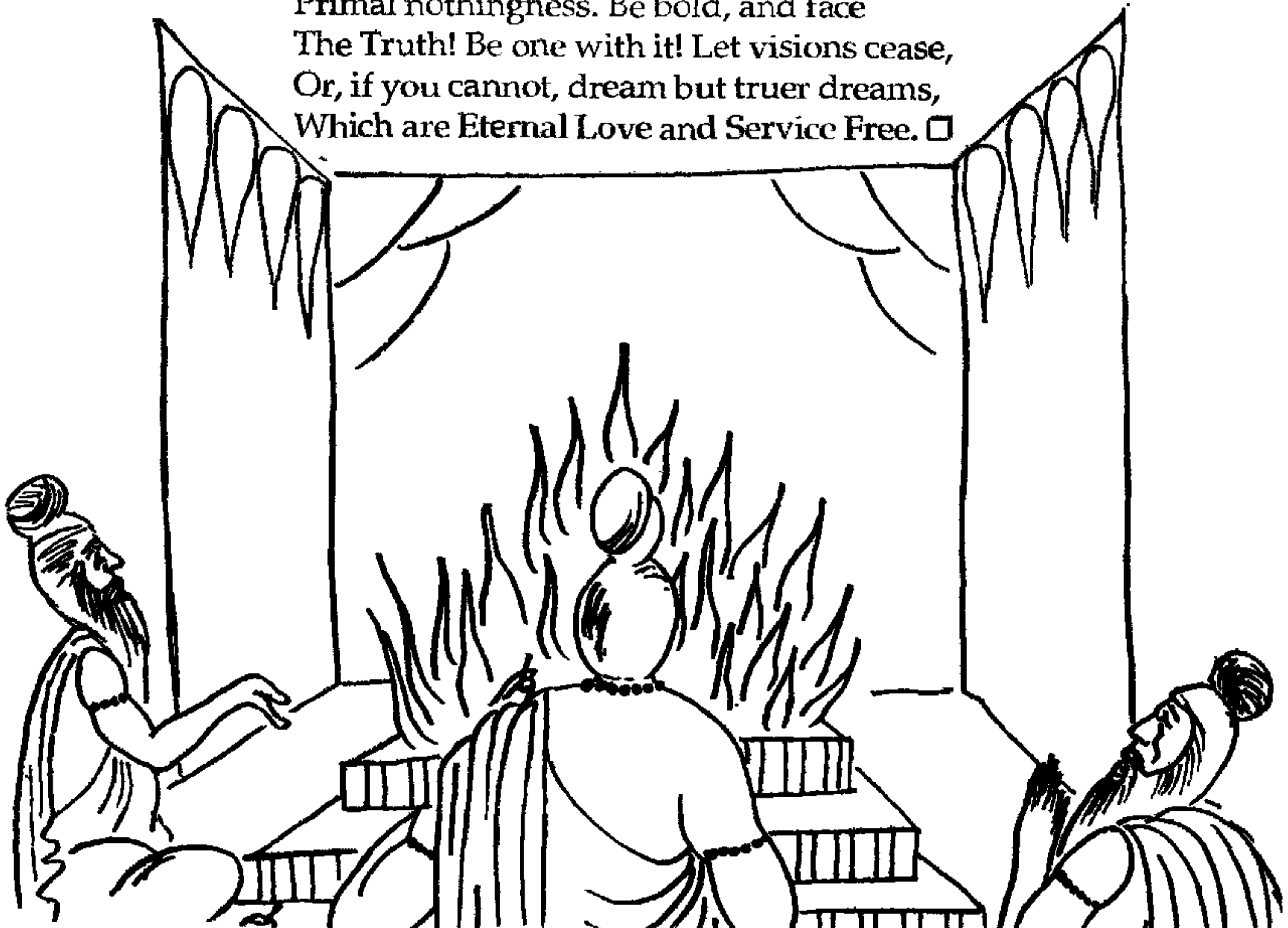
Himala's daughter, Umā, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, who works all works and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Ope's the gate to Truth and shows

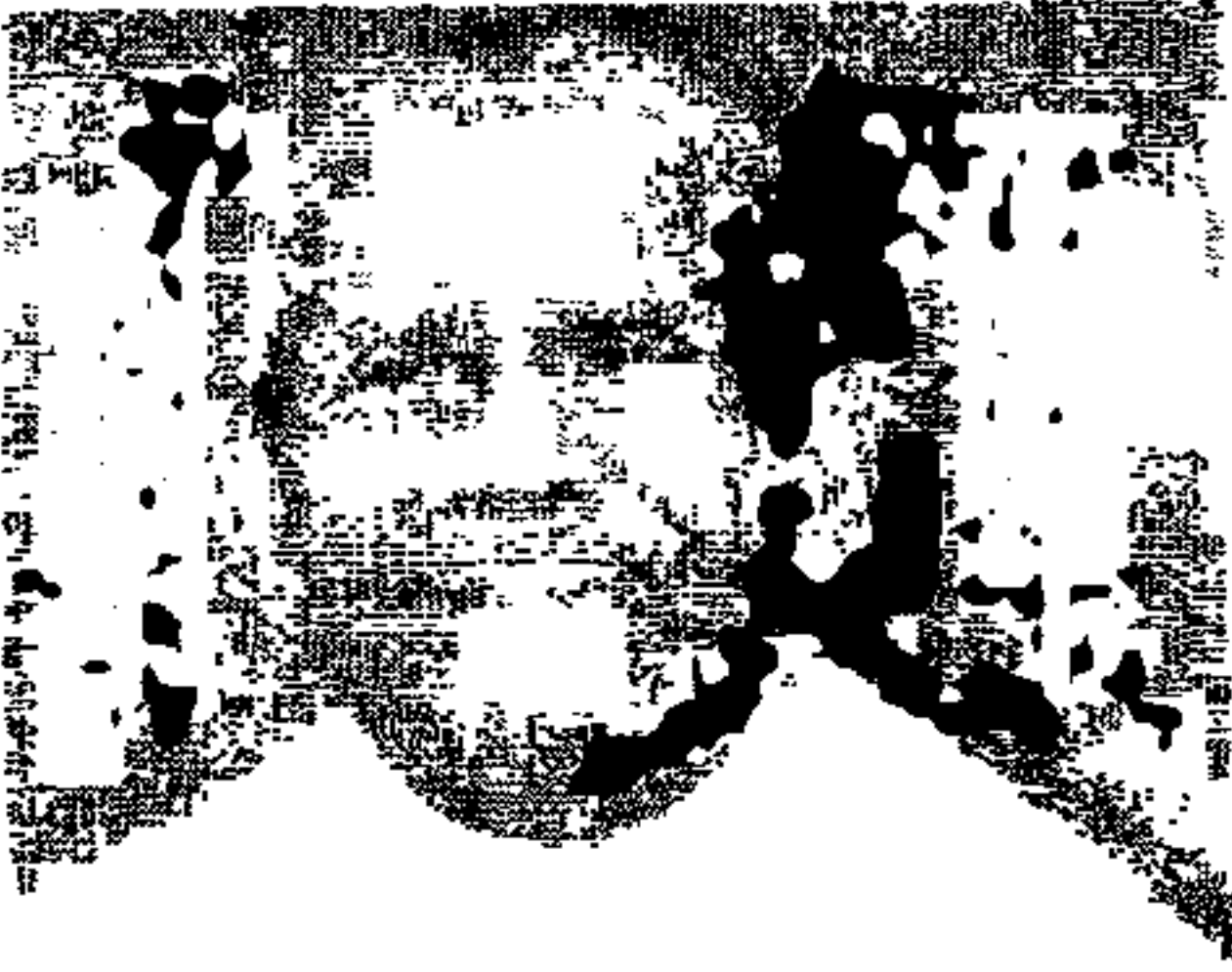
The One in All, give thee untiring
Strength, which is Infinite Love.

They bless thee all,
The seers great, whom age nor clime
Can claim their own, the fathers of the
Race, who felt the heart of Truth the same,
And bravely taught to man ill-voiced or
Well. Their servant, thou hast got
The secret—'tis but One.

Then speak, O Love!
Before thy gentle voice serene, behold how
Visions melt and fold on fold of dreams
Departs to void, till Truth and Truth alone
In all its glory shines—

And tell the world—
Awake, arise, and dream no more!
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts
Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free. □





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The *Prabuddha Bharata* has entered the hundredth year of its glorious life, and on this memorable occasion, I am extremely happy to convey my hearty greetings to everyone associated with it.

Founded in Madras under the inspiring guidance of Swami Vivekananda in 1896, it was discontinued owing to its editor's death. Shifted later to Almora in 1898 and thence transferred to Mayavati, the magazine had to face initial hardships, but never looked back. Just like the great nation whose name it bears, the *Awakened India* continued to carry the message of hope, love and divine knowledge far and wide, in spite of all the vicissitudes. With the limited infrastructure, machinery and know-how, the journal has succeeded in overcoming hurdles and entering its centennial, thanks to the illustrious editors and a few dedicated monks, determined to carry on the work.

It was for the love of Swamiji and his great mission of the regeneration of mankind that many writers of repute contributed to the magazine, enhancing its worth. Its readers have all been more than satisfied with the food of knowledge that it is serving month after month. The magazine is a genuine source of inspiration to many in this country as elsewhere. Little doubt remains that the journal has the eternal blessings of Swamiji who not only inspired it in the beginning, but also wrote, looked into meticulous details, and even suggested improvements on its front cover. For, he wanted the journal to be the mouthpiece of the awakened spiritual India, the nation which he helped awaken out of long slumber. About such a journal, we shall hope with him: 'The world in need awaits. No death for thee!...Strong and steady, blissful, bold and free, Awakener, ever forward!'

I pray to Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swamiji that their grace be constantly showered on *Prabuddha Bharata* so that it may flood the world with light spiritual for many more centuries to come. I wish the publication of the centenary issue all success.

Swami Bhuteshananda

Swami Bhuteshananda
President

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission



RAMAKRISHNA MATH
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The monthly, *Prabuddha Bharata*, was started by Swami Vivekananda from the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, Himalayas, after shifting it from the earlier venue in Madras. The name chosen for the monthly is very significant, namely, Awakened India, and Swami Vivekananda himself was the first awakener of our country. This subject of awakening of India finds powerful expression in the first lecture delivered by him on the Indian soil at Ramnad. In the course of his triumphant march from Colombo in the south to Almora in the north, on his return from 4 years of cultural and spiritual work in the West, he had said in reply to the tremendous welcome from the Prince and the public of Ramnad (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. III, pp. 145–6):

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet

India has been awakening since then and entering the modern age by steadily solving its many centuries-long human problems.

Prabuddha Bharata has been a journal carrying very thought-provoking and inspiring articles and editorials. It has readers in various parts of the world. Its Himalayan home was established by Swami Vivekananda with the help of Captain Sevier and Mrs. Sevier of England as a centre for preaching and practising the philosophy and spirituality of Advaita, non-duality, with a view to bringing about the unity, harmony, and spiritual awakening of all humanity.

The Advaita referred to by Swami Vivekananda is not the then current *sampradāyic*, or sectarian, variety, but a philosophy and spirituality that comprehend all dualistic philosophies and religions—which always conflict with each other—, and of all secular and spiritual human concerns. Gaudapāda, the teacher's teacher of Saṅkarācārya, refers to this conflicting nature of all dualistic philosophies and religions, and to the unifying and harmonizing nature of this Advaita philosophy and spirituality, in his *Kārikā* on the *Māndūkya Upanisad* (3.17):

*Svasiddhānta-vyavasthāsu dvaitino niścītā drdham;
Parasparam virudhyante tairayam na virudhyate.*

The dualist is firm in establishing as the truth his or her own religion, and thus comes into conflict with other dualistic religions. With all these mutually conflicting dualistic religions, this Advaita is not in conflict with anyone of them.

Again, expounding the unifying nature of Advaita, Gaudapāda says: (*ibid.*, 4.2):

*Asparśayogo vai nāma sarva-sattva-sukho hitah;
Avivādo aviruddhaśca deśitastam namāmyaham*

I salute this teaching of (Advaita) which is well known as Asparśa-yoga (that is, the yoga of non-touch or non-duality), which is interested in the happiness and welfare of all beings, and which is free from all disputation and contradiction.

We can look forward to the *Prabuddha Bharata* rendering its above service for centuries to come.

With that hope and wish, I convey my best wishes for the success of its centenary programme.

Ranganathananda

Swami Ranganthananda

Vice-President

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission



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At the thought of the centenary of *Prabuddha Bharata* or Awakened India, my mind races back fifty years to those difficult days in 1944–45 when the Golden Jubilee issue (1945) of the journal was to be published. The Second World War had reached its final critical phase, and there was great scarcity of everything. I was then working as a novice in the publication department of Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta. The Art Press, where most of the books and *Prabuddha Bharata* were printed, was considered to be the best press in the city. Several forms of the journal had already been composed when, like a bolt from the blue, came the government order requisitioning the Art Press for the use of the army. We had to appeal to the highest authority, and at last the Golden Jubilee number was allowed to be printed as a special case.

In those days *Prabuddha Bharata* was known as one of the best philosophico-cultural journals in the world. Eminent writers, philosophers and thinkers thought it a privilege to contribute articles to the journal. Readers would eagerly await its arrival on the first of every month. The journal was highly regarded not only for its rich contents but also for what it represented. It stood for Swami Vivekananda's vision of the regeneration of humanity and of the role India's ancient culture had to play in this process.

For Swamiji, Bharata meant not a political unit as it does today but a cultural unit. He regarded it as the perennial source of spirituality for the whole humanity. 'Shall India die?', asked Swamiji and continued, 'Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct...' Owing to various historical causes, the spirituality of India had lost some of its vigour and had caused to feed the great cultural arteries of the world. But with advent of Sri Ramakrishna, India began to undergo a spiritual renaissance. The Great Master created a new trumpet, that is, a new message, to awaken the souls of men, and he gave it to Swami Vivekananda. At the clarion call of Swamiji, 'Awake, arise!', India's age-long slumber broke and the masses began to awaken. Never before had this country experienced awakening of human souls on such a massive scale. Swamiji held that the awakened India must throw open her treasure-chests and distribute her spiritual wealth among her own masses and the rest of mankind. It was as an effective instrument for this distribution process that Swamiji got the *Prabuddha Bharata* started.

India's spiritual wealth consists chiefly in the knowledge of the truths and laws of the spiritual world that she has accumulated through millenniums. These truths are embodied in the concepts of Vedanta such as divinity of the soul, basic oneness of the universe, the ideal of direct realization through the four yogas, and the principle of harmony—harmony between religion and science, between the sacred and the secular, between the East and the West and, above all, harmony of religions. Swamiji wanted these life-giving principles to be brought out from caves, monasteries and

the hold of privileged people and be made available to the fisherman, the peasant, the student, the lawyer — everyone. Not only that; he wanted that these principles should find application in every field of human endeavour — from farming and fishing to art, science and social service— everywhere in the world.

This was the stupendous task in which Swami Vivekananda expected *Prabuddha Bharata* to play a significant part. In this context I am reminded of a famous verse of Rabindranath Tagore. The setting Sun asked, 'Who will take charge of my work?' The world remained silent. Then a little earthen lamp said, 'Lord, I will do as best I can.' Like the little earthen lamp, *Prabuddha Bharata* has been shedding the light of wisdom and knowledge in a world darkened by wars, violence, immorality, religious conflicts, and materialistic views. May the journal continue for centuries to come guiding humanity to the realization of the ultimate Truth, Eternal Love, Universal Harmony and Peace



Swami Gahanananda
Vice-President
Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

A Word On This Special Issue

On behalf of the Advaita Ashrama, the *Prabuddha Bharata* and the staff we wish you a Happy New Year. A special one at that. For, this your journal—so far as we know, the oldest religious magazine in continuous circulation (except for a month's break in 1898) in India—has now entered its 100th year and comes to you as a bumper Commemorative issue.

Work on this began nearly a year ago. In April '94 we had addressed a 'letter' to you, calling for articles, poems, etc. Also, we appealed individually to many writers in India and abroad, monastic members and others. Some of these are new, but most have been long associated with Swamiji's *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*. The response, happily, far surpassed our expectation.

Considering the occasion, we requested a good many of the writers to present their articles as overviews—of current events and of the last hundred years, including what they see beyond the horizon of AD 2000—in relation to Swamiji's Message. Naturally so, because, being human, we are inclined to try to understand the present and the past, and also to peer into the future, hoping to adjust our course towards better days.

As a result, we get in these following pages a two-level picture of humanity: one, familiar, projecting the persistence of the singularly human characteristic—which one worried writer has expressed thus: '...we have learnt nothing in the last one hundred years!', which put another way implies that during the last ten decades, as in the farther past, we have been snail-slow in learning from our follies, and, in some matters, have not cared to learn at all! The

other picture, blurred though, is remarkable and gratifying, because it shows that, notwithstanding the above weakness, the world is maturing as Swamiji had predicted.

Likely than not, after reading the authors' observations you are going to exclaim as we did: 'Ah! But aren't these what Swamiji had cautioned us against and foretold? Why did not past leaders listen to Swamiji? And, even now why are our leaders so reluctant to admit their errors and the correctness of his views?—on divinity of Man, true freedom and democracy, the farce of political democracy, the rise of the Shudra ('the working class' as the privileged group refers to them, 'the holy feet of the divine Cosmic Person' as Vedanta refers to them), the basis of universal ethics and religious harmony in a shrunk world, the priority that should be accorded to producing Men and Women instead of to enacting more laws, the convergence of Religion and Science....? If only we had endeavoured to understand and assimilate his insights, we might have done better.'

Our exclamation, however, was not one of despair. It was born of expectant joy; for, the positive ring of the articles and poems rises clearly above their reference to the chaos, uncertainty, despair and violence filling the world: No, things have not gone out of hand, we are not too late. In spite of all the errors of the past and the present, and our having not heeded Swamiji sooner, we are not doomed. What if we are suffering because of reliance on reason, individualism and self-effort? Haven't there been great achievements? In fact, our follies have led us to awake and arise and frantically search for wiser ways of organizing our world. This

will not be in vain. Surely, only those things do we perform right which we first did wrong. Swamiji would say, 'You have done well. Now do better.'

Yes, the world has been crazily lurching all these past decades, moving in the flare-light of its 'we can fix it' youthfulness fired by modernity, science and technology. Many are its scars and bruises. But the heartening evidence uniformly thrown up by the following articles suggests that the world has been unconsciously and haphazardly, but unmistakably, inching towards discovering—as Swamiji had foretold—the all-illuminating light of Vedanta with which it will henceforth be able to see better its goals and paths. In support of this we see that in many parts of the world and from many fields of science there are signals of spiritual awakening—spread of democracy, stress on Human Rights, faint revival of the idea that marriage and family are sacred, and so on.

Strange though it sounds, our singleminded 'gold prospecting' in the ever receding external Frontier is about to turn round towards the inner frontier, prospecting for peace, meaning and spiritual fulfilment. From the certainties of scientific modernity we had moved into the uncertainties and chaos of post-modernity. Now, beyond the horizon of AD 2000, we are about to enter a different order of Vedantic certainty: Life is divine; we and the other living beings, and the entire cosmos are united in the one Universal Soul; from that we emerge, in that we exist, and into it we again merge in time, as participants in a phenomenon which is but an expression of that Soul's blissful nature.

Humanity seems to be getting ready for evolving with a 'flip'. As one of our monks remarked, it is only when a being from a higher order of evolution intervenes in the life-processes of beings of a lower order that these latter undergo an evolutionary 'flip' change into the former's level. Sri

Ramakrishna's and Swamiji's advent has, it seems, initiated such a change.

These are the various ideas which the articles underscore in one way or another, and which tally with Swamiji's foresight. From this point of view, then, we can say with some justification that the *PB* has played well its small part: Awakened India has carefully kept burning the lamp of Vedanta Swamiji lit a hundred years ago as the world was fated to get caught up soon in a centurylong storm. It has shared with its readers this light so they too could guide themselves through the gloom while the storm lasted. This is a gladdening thought for us, and we believe Swamiji is satisfied, and you also are pleased with our service.

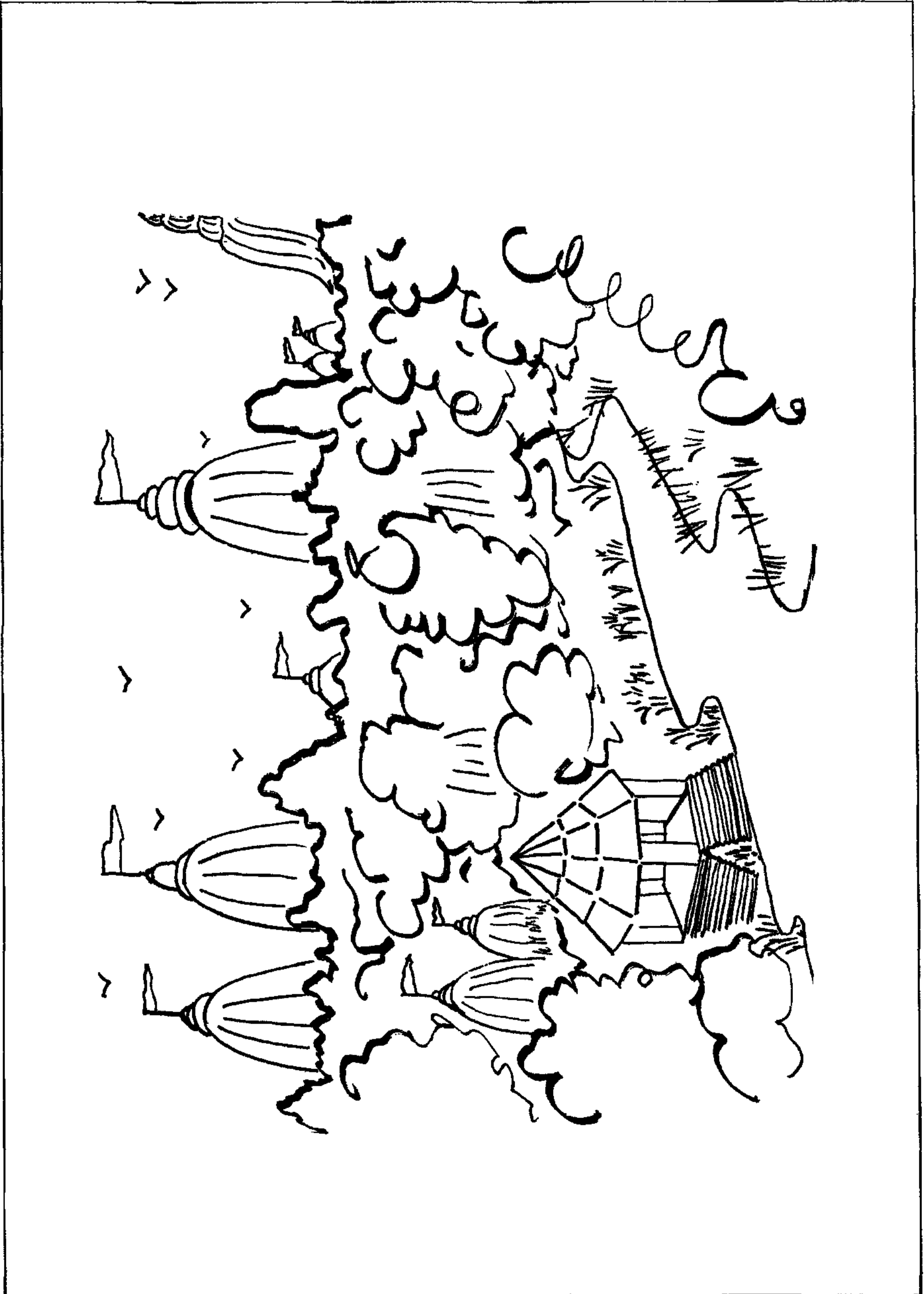
As for this year's special service—placing before you this hundred years' hopegiving survey and other absorbing articles—the credit goes to those who unhesitatingly helped us set it up—the eminent writers and the advertisers. To them, and to the Press and others who ensured timely publication, we convey our warmhearted thanks.

Articles received so far are from Indians and Americans. We are expecting contributions from Australia, Africa and Europe. Besides, we hope to collect some articles on Islam, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism also. These and letters from our readers regarding their impression about the *PB*, and the remaining selected drawings and writeups from enthusiastic students will be distributed over the remaining issues of the centenary year.

We are sorry we could not collect, much as we wished to, articles on all the engrossing fields of human activity and progress after *PB*'s birth. Nevertheless, you will enjoy reading what we have managed to garner for this happy occasion—an occasion which apparently has coincided with a period in human history considered by many as an especially promising turning point. □

ON *PRABUDDHA BHARATA*

pp. 11-49



On Ourselves

BY THE EDITOR

We offer our thanks and greetings to all our numerous friends who have helped us in various ways in the bringing out of the Golden Jubilee Number of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, and who have been well-wishers and supporters of the cause for which the *Prabuddha Bharata* stands.

The *Prabuddha Bharata* tries to stand for what India was, is and will be. About India, Swami Vivekananda, one of her most illustrious sons, said:

This is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, the same India whose influx of spirituality is represented, as it were, on the material plane, by rolling rivers like oceans, where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snow-caps, look as it were into the very mysteries of heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. Here first sprang up enquiries into the nature of man, and into the internal world. Here first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a supervising God, an immanent God in nature and in man, and here the highest ideals of religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points. This is the land from whence, like the tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world, and this the land from whence once more such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigour into the decaying races of mankind. It is the same India which has withstood the

shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning, and without end, immortal, and we are the children of such a country.

The *Prabuddha Bharata* wants the children of India to be legitimately proud of the greatness of their motherland, and to rise to their true heights and proclaim fearlessly the inspiring message of true spirituality, love and tolerance, so that the power-blind peoples of the world may see the folly of their ways and turn to the paths of real civilization and peace. Prof. L.P. Jacks truly characterized the civilization of Europe as the civilization of *power*, and that of Asia as the civilization of *culture*. Contrasting these two he says:

The civilization of power aims at the *exploitation of the world*, which is thought of as a dead or mechanical thing, existing that men may exploit it. That of culture aims at the development of man, thought of as the citizen of a living universe which can be loved, enjoyed and revered.

India calls upon the world to desist from this inhuman exploitation of man, and to turn to the development of humanity the wonderful agencies of organization and scientific method. Each nation has a flag embodying its national ideals. Now the time has come for all humanity to have but one

* Reprinted from the *Prabuddha Bharata*, Golden Jubilee Number, 1945.

(Continued on page 35)

Prabuddha Bharata —100 Years

SWAMI SHIVAPRASADANANDA

A captivating story of the birth of the PB and its first few decades, describing the hard work put in by the pioneers to give a concrete shape to Swamiji's ideas and place the journal on an unshakable foundation.

The author is a member of the journal's staff at Mayavati.

Felicitous greetings to *Prabuddha Bharata*, Vedanta magazine of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, now entering its 100th year of circulation, ever stirring the world and the Indian people to a higher and fuller life in universal Vedantic spirituality! It has been a spiritual struggle. For 100 years the magazine and its editors and staff have laboured to spread the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and the liberal philosophy of Vedanta, renouncing desire for gain and never advocating short cuts in the occult or machinations of political process to achieve religious goals. It is not surprising that *Prabuddha Bharata* has had a long good life.

Now *Prabuddha Bharata* is perhaps India's oldest monthly in circulation. No evidence is seen to cast doubt on this happy possibility! If indeed true, how interesting must be its tale—if justice could be done in the telling—, full of inspiration, dedication, joyful labour, and success. Therefore with much humility, and craving the blessings of the Founders of the Order, we attempt to narrate its story as it unfolded. May the inspiration of the Master, Holy Mother and Swamiji, who brought the journal into being, and whose teachings have been its very life for the last five-score years, help us in this summing up of their work!

The inspiration began, who knows from where?... 'O Lord,' said the Master to the

disciple(!), 'I know you are that ancient sage, Nara—the Incarnation of Narayana—born on earth to remove the miseries of mankind'—perhaps that was the beginning! At first the young disciple was struck mute to hear such astonishing words from the lips of the Saint of Dakshineswar, but time was, that the truth of them became clear to him. Narendranath Datta was then transformed into the World-teacher (*jagad-guru*), Swami Vivekananda. Later, hearing the Master say—'not compassion, but service to the *jīvas* as Shiva'¹ is the way to help the world and earn one's salvation too, the mission of his life also became clear. Narendra thought to himself, 'If the Divine Lord ever grants me an opportunity, I'll proclaim everywhere in the world this wonderful truth I have heard today.' We know how this grand idea became central to his life and message and proved the uplift of millions of human beings. But too soon the Master and the disciple were physically separated by the untimely passing away of the Guru. The spiritual work continued, however, for Vivekananda had been created and, inheriting Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual powers, he carried the Torch forward.

Luminosity of Vivekananda's life and his success at every step never caused the great man to forget his origins. He always upheld the dignity of small and insignificant

1. The individual soul of all creatures is the *jīva*. Shiva—the Lord.

things—little tasks and obligations, duties and trivial details of the work, and the precious lives of ordinary people who helped him as workers to spread the nectar-like message of Sri Ramakrishna all over the globe. Vivekananda used to say that, a great man can be known by the attention he gives to seemingly insignificant things; and he followed this maxim of his.

By the same token, we are convinced that every act and every undertaking of the great Swami was full of importance, full of grace, and contained the brilliant spark of his Pure Being. Seeing his own work for humanity so vast and unlimited, and his body so limited, he used to wish to be 'a voice without a form'. 'It may be,' he said on one occasion, 'that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.'

Perhaps Swami Vivekananda truly achieved this hoped for power of subtle existence when he inspired the founding of the journals that came to express and symbolize the ideals of the Ramakrishna Movement—*Prabuddha Bharata*, *Brahmavadin*, *Udbodhan*, *Vedanta Kesari*, *Ramakrishna Jyoti*, *Prabuddha Keralam*, *Vivek Jyoti*, *Samanvaya* and others. One likes to think so!

The Magazine

First thought of starting a magazine was to help voice Swamiji's ideas in India and abroad. It came from his South Indian disciples soon after the Parliament of Religions' success in America in 1893. Though his letter no longer exists, Alasinga Perumal probably brought up the subject. From Swamiji's reply on 28 May 1894, we find he was rather cool to the idea at this time. Perhaps he had had no time to consider it.

I could not reply to your note earlier

because I was in a whirlwind to and fro from New York to Boston.... Try to work without me, as if I never existed. Do not wait for anybody or anything. Do whatever you can. Build your hope on none.... Train up a band of fiery young men. Put your fire in them and gradually increase the organization, letting it widen and widen its circle.... Printing magazines, papers, etc. are good no doubt, but actual work, my boys, even if infinitesimal, is better than eternal scribbling and talking.

But after a few months we see that the Swami was himself thinking in that line. In letters to his brother disciples and Alasinga he wrote

Learn business. We will do great things yet! Last year I only sowed the seeds.... Keep up as much enthusiasm as possible in India.... Start the journal and I will send you articles from time to time. (11 July 1894)

...With a magazine or journal or organ—you become the Secretary thereof.... Calculate the cost of starting the magazine and the work... I will send you the money myself, and not only that, I will get others in America to subscribe annually to it liberally. So ask them of Calcutta to do the same (31 August 1894)

...It is welcome news that Madras is in a stir [the magazine not having been started yet]. Were you not going to start a paper or something of that sort, what about that?... You shall have to edit a magazine, half Bengali and half Hindi—and if possible, another in English.... (25 September 1894)

The Swami's correspondence with Alasinga first inspired the latter to start the *Brahmavadin* in September 1895. It was to be

a scholarly fortnightly Religious and Philosophical journal to propagate the principles of the Vedantic Religion of India. *Prabuddha Bharata* (hereafter *PB*) would be like it—having no quarrel with other religions, but ‘always trying to uphold the work of strengthening and ennobling man, under the banner of *whatsoever* religion such work might be accomplished.’²

First mention of the magazine which would become *PB* we find in the Swami’s letter to Nanjunda Rao, another of his fiery Madras disciples:

I have every sympathy with your proposed magazine *for boys* (italics ours), and will do my best to help it on. You ought to make it independent, following the same lines as the *Brahmavadin*, only making the style and matter much more popular....I will write stories, as many as I can, when time permits. Avoid all attempts to make the journal scholarly—the *Brahmavadin* stands for that...and it will slowly make its way all over the world, I am sure. Use the simplest language possible and you will succeed. (14 April 1894)

The proposed magazine for boys did not mean for children only. The *Prospectus* in *PB*’s first issue (July 1896) reads, in part: ‘*Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*...will be a sort of supplement to the *Brahmavadin* and seek to do for students, young men and others what that is already doing so successfully for the advanced classes.’ Nanjunda Rao’s name is conspicuous by its absence from the list of signatories for the magazine, but he became its manager. Signatories for *PB* were P Aiyasami, B.R. Rajam Iyer (Editor), G.G. Narasimhacharya and B.V. Kamesvara Iyer. The *Prospectus* continued:

‘...the conductors of the magazine undertake the work purely as a labour of love and they have secured the sympathy and support of some of the eminent Thinkers of the day, including Swami Vivekananda now in America.’

From England Swamiji wrote to Nanjunda Rao giving his impressions when the first issues arrived:

The numbers of *Prabuddha Bharata* have been received and distributed too to the class. It is very satisfactory. It will have a great sale no doubt in India. In America I may get also a number of subscribers...in England the progress will be slower indeed. The great drawback here is—they all want to start papers of their own; and it is right that it should be so...One point I will remark, however, the cover is simply barbarous. It is awful and hideous. If it is possible, change it. Make it symbolical and simple. Without human figures at all. The banyan tree does not mean awakening nor does the hill, nor the saint, nor the European couple. The lotus is a symbol of regeneration. We are awfully behindhand in art, especially in painting... (14 July 1896)

Our homage & the Swami’s plans

With bowed head we contemplate the wonder of the ‘Cyclonic Monk’s’ motiveless outpouring of life-energy for the good of the world; coming away from his native country alone and friendless, and carrying the day amongst the great savants of the scientific and cultured West! At the same time by a steady stream of correspondence with his countrymen, starting a veritable turning of India’s national thought currents. But not India alone, the world was his field of action. In the *Life*³ he is quoted to a dis-

2. ‘Prospectus’, *Brahmavadin*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Sept. 1895, p. 12.

3. Swami Nikhilananda, *Vivekananda, A Biography* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982),

ciple on the *Brahmavadin*, saying he was pleased with the work the magazine was doing and:

...he was planning to start a similar magazine in the vernaculars also, and ...intended to start a paper under management of writers from all nations in order to spread his ideas to every corner of the globe.... 'You must not forget,' he wrote, 'my interests are international and not India alone.'

We know also that it was in his thought to start a daily paper for the dissemination of Vedantic ideas. But up till now neither of these ideas has been realized.

'Inspired-by-heaven' surely is the best word to characterize Vivekananda's intelligence, willpower, and *savior faire* in the field of work and preaching. One might hesitate to declare he was a divine Being in human form, but one surely must admit that he was a great conduit for the creative Energy of the Divine Mother. With what inspiration! and with what feeling and knowledge did he imbue his workers and their journals—particularly the *PB*!

The Ideal & the Philosophy

Sister Nivedita, Vivekananda's Irish disciple and one of the most able elucidators of his message, wrote: 'The Swami's Vedantic mission served a twofold purpose—one of world-moving, and another of nation-making. The function of the Swami's movement as regards India, to quote his own words, was—

...to find the common bases of Hinduism and awaken the national consciousness to them.⁴

p. 203.

4. *PB*, Vol. 28, p. 109 (footnote).

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life.⁵

The object of his carrying the spiritual message of India to the West he clearly said in the following terms:

To give and take is the law of nature. Any individual or class or nation that does not obey this law, never prospers in life. We must follow the law. That is why I went to America. They have been for a long time giving you of whatever wealth they possess and now is the time for you to share your priceless treasures with them. And you will see how the feelings of hatred will be quickly replaced by those of faith, devotion and reverence toward you, and how they will do good to your country even unasked.⁶

One of the Swami's disciples, Swami Shuddhananda, eloquent, erudite in Bengali and English, and later President of the Ramakrishna Order, wrote with obvious relevance to the *PB* story: '...considering many [of his] utterances...we find him as a passionate adorer of his own motherland...yet he was an ardent advocate of the unification of the East and the West, and this by spiritualizing the materialistic West and by teaching the East the Westerners' power of organization and knowledge of machinery. How could he combine in him these two apparently contradictory principles? We answer, it is because his real message was practical *advaitism*. This message

5. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), Vol. 1, p. 532.

6. *PB*, Vol. 28, p. 109 (footnote).

he gave to his disciples in the form of the following mantram—*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*—For one's own liberation and for the good of the world'.⁷

The Swami was his own best spokesman. The ideal for *PB* he gave expressly in the form of *mantras*, some of which were adopted as mottos at different times by the journal:

'For the liberation of the Soul and
the good of the world';
'Arise awake, approach the great and learn;
stop not till the goal is reached';
'Help all who are trying to do and be good'

He wrote to his Gurubhais and followers:

We are Sannyasins, who have given up *everything*—Bhakti, and Mukti, and enjoyments, and all. To do the highest good to the world, everyone down to the lowest—this is our vow. Welcome Mukti or hell, whichever comes of it. (1894 letter to the Math)

This powerful encouragement with *mantras* was characteristic of Swamiji in his correspondence. He also warned:

...Your determination is good, your hopes are high, your aim is the noblest in the world—to bring millions sunk in darkness to the light of the Lord. But, my son, here are the drawbacks. Nothing shall be done in haste. Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success and, above all, *love*. (30 November 1894 to Dr. Nanjunda Rao)

...I like to work on calmly and silently, and the Lord is always with me. Follow me, if you will, by being intensely sin-

cere, perfectly unselfish, and, above all, by being perfectly pure. My blessings go with you. In this short life there is no time for the exchange of compliments. We can compare notes and compliment each other to our hearts' content after the battle is finished. Now, do not talk; work, work, work!. (11 January 1895 to G.G. Narasimhachariar)

Impoverished as India was, Hinduism leaned heavily on rites and rituals, or in desperation renounced activity altogether, hoping to find repose in silence. So the Swami was writing to those whom he expected to implement his ideas:

If you want any good to come just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it—this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials. (1894, to his brother disciples)

Show me...a press, a paper... (1894, to Alasinga)

In a letter to Madras the Swami set down briefly and succinctly what the *PB* and the other journals and the monastic Organization stood for. The points have been universal inspiration ever since. When nothing seemed to be there, to do or to think, or to put into practice, these words have lifted and put life into many a poor soul:

God, though everywhere, can be known to us in and through human character. No character was ever so perfect as Ramakrishna's, and that should be the centre round which we ought to rally; at the same time allowing everybody to regard him in his own light, either as

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 29, p. 112.

God, Saviour, teacher, model, or great man, just as he pleases....

We reject none, neither theist, nor pantheist, monist, polytheist, agnostic, nor atheist; the only condition of being a disciple is modelling a character at once the broadest and the most intense. Nor do we insist upon particular codes of morality as to conduct, or character, or eating and drinking, except so far as it injures others.

Whatever retards the onward progress or helps the downward fall is *vice*; whatever helps in coming up and becoming harmonized is *virtue*.

We leave everybody free to know, select, and follow whatever suits and helps him....

We believe that every being is divine, is God. (*This does not, however, mean the Personal God!*⁸, the Swami noted.) Every soul is a sun covered over with clouds of ignorance, the difference between soul and soul is owing to the difference in density of these layers of clouds. We believe that this is the conscious or unconscious basis of all religions, and that this is the explanation of the whole history of human progress either in the material, intellectual, or spiritual plane—the same spirit is manifesting through different planes....

We believe that it is the duty of every *soul* to treat, think of, and behave to other *souls* as such, i.e., as *Gods*, and not hate or despise, or vilify, or try to injure them by any manner or means. This is the duty not only of the Sannyasin but of all men and women.

The soul has neither sex, nor caste, nor imperfection....

Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.

Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.

Therefore, the only duty of the teacher in both cases is to remove all obstructions from the way. Hands off! as I always say, and everything will be right. That is, our duty is to clear the way. The Lord does the rest. (3 March 1894)

PB has always invited scholarly research and commentary on this modern Vedanta of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Progress

Under the capable first editorship of Sri B.R. Rajam Iyer, the journal prospered. After the first year, 'In Retrospect' appeared, written modestly by the Editor in June 1897:

The present number concludes the first volume of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and it is now time enough to ask what we have learnt from it. Thus questioning ourselves, we find we have learnt many things.

We had no grand ambitions when we started the journal such as bettering the world and so on. All that we wanted was to improve ourselves, and we had a conviction that what is good for us may at the same time be useful to some others.... What success has attended us is due entirely to the blessings received and the purity of our hearts. And that success has been of no small measure. On every side we were 'crammed', as it were, with sympathy, and everywhere, men—for whom we cannot be sufficiently thankful—identified themselves with the cause *quite unsolicitedly* and worked for its success—so that at the very starting we had 1,500 subscribers and every month the number has been steadily increasing, and now it stands at about 4,500. Our journal thus happens to be the most widely circulated monthly in all India. The first two issues have had to be

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), 'Reason and Religion' Vol. 1, p. 379.

reprinted, and we have a very limited number of copies of the other issues though we printed 5,000 copies of every number...⁹

Sri Iyer was an adept editor and a scholar and, though not a disciple of Swamiji, admired him greatly. Having Swamiji's profuse blessings on him, he launched his work fearlessly and confidently. Every one of the Swami's suggestions for *PB* (except

in conception at least,—except, may be, some of our hair-raising modern problems! A hundred years ago was the same human flesh and blood as now. Great fascination with the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda inspired the *bhaktas* to think about the great riddles of existence just as we do today—'Who am I?', 'From whence has all this come?', and 'What comes after all this is over?'—The same mystery of the Unknown Self!—'The Atman is all!' The

Even in those days when the world was half our numbers, so many writers, devotees, monks,—and even trekkers and escapees from western materialism were attracted to live in India, finding solitude and life unspoilt by wonderful modern civilization.

changing the cover!) was used by Sri Iyer, proving the undoubted wisdom of the Swami that, 'we should take the help of all; alienate none'.

Eleven-by-eight inches, with fine print and careful composition, issues of *PB* were twelve pages, with up to 1,200 words on a two-column page. Like the *Brahmavadin*, *PB* too was published in Madras and modelled, as Swami Vivekananda said it should be, after the former, though not so scholarly or philosophical in tone, and definitely more attractive and readable. The cover, mentioned earlier by the Swami, which he didn't like, strikes us now as being 'not so bad', but certainly we agree it was a collage of quite a collection of objects. In colour, light green, it pictured people, natural scenery, animals, trees, mountains, a temple, a hermitage, a very tiny sun, and a huge banyan tree that covered about half the page

Browsing through these first issues, nearing (as we are) the end of our 20th century, we think: How the times have changed! —Or have they! Hardly anything we know today was totally 'foreign' to them,

same mind grew silent ... resisted ... rebelled ... again took up the challenge to know, to escape from this veil of *māyā*! If ultimate Reality (if God) exists, why don't we see Him or It?...the words of Swamiji echo—'Every soul is a sun, covered over by clouds of ignorance; the differences are due to the densities of these layers of clouds!' How to remove those clouds?!

Then...how *unlike* us today they were who lived 100 years ago! How charming to pick up an old diary or magazine. Anticipation soars, and we hope to find some forgotten treasure! some secret essence of knowledge of our unknown past! But mockingly, the knowing mind replies softly,...Ah, 'tis but vanity to dream so, vain and useless childish fantasy! It is all here and now!

Curiously, we often find mention in the old *PBs* the desire of people to 'get away from it all'! Even in those days when the world was half our numbers, so many writers, devotees, monks,—and even trekkers and 'escapees' from western materialism were attracted to live in India, finding solitude and life unspoilt by wonderful modern civilization. How they

9. *PB* Vol. 1, No. 12, p. 133.

rejoiced to find a quiet corner at *PB*'s headquarters in the Himalayas!

The Early Story

In Madras, *PB* was progressing well, when Sri Rajam Iyer suddenly passed away in May 1898. Taking stock in the publishing office, the workers and devotees recognized sadly that the Editor himself had been writing most of the articles that appeared in every issue. He fastened many pen-names to them to cover his identity. This was not unknown to others heretofore, but the fresh realization of their overdependence on their esteemed colleague now came as a shock. No help for it now, he had made himself irreplaceable. *PB* would have to close the Press! Before leaving, however, Sri Iyer had corrected his proofs for the 1898 June issue; so that issue could appear. But what after that? On pages 133–5 came the obituary, 'Our Late Editor', and a farewell to the readers and subscribers of the journal:

It is with the deepest sorrow that we announce the death on the 13th of last month, at the very early age of 26, of Mr. B.R. Rajam Iyer, B.A., Editor of *Awakened India*.... Those who were with him till his last moments were struck with his serene and calm bearing to the last.¹⁰

Full two pages thus enumerated Sri Iyer's many qualities and recounted his life. The 'Farewell' followed:

We regret very much to intimate to our subscribers that we are forced to stop the journal with this issue, as we find the loss sustained in the premature death of our Editor, Mr. B.R. Rajam Iyer, irreparable. Except the few 'Extracts' and 'Contributions', all the articles were written by him, some under the following pseudonyms: T.C. Nataraja, M. Ranganath Sastri, A Recluse, and Nobody-Knows-Who. And if the articles were pleasing and edifying in a high degree, it was because the writer had himself some

realization of the Truth, and his views were developed under a great sage, the Mauni, whose 'Meditations' appeared in the journal....

Swami Vivekananda was already on his whirlwind homecoming tour of India following his triumphant return from the West in January 1897. He delivered the great addresses and speeches all across India, now famous as '*The Lectures from Colombo to Almora*', which roused the country to ever greater longing for freedom. The Swami reached Almora in May 1897, from whence he toured most of the northern provinces. Returning to Bengal in January, he again came to Almora in May 1898 to rest and recover his failing health. Captain and Mrs. J.H. Sevier of England had accompanied him the year before. These two English disciples toured with the Swami, but stayed in the northern hill stations for most of the hot months. When the Swami met them in Almora this time, they discussed the plight of *PB*, and it was suggested by Swamiji that the journal be revived. Captain Sevier, enthusiastic in agreement, was willing to assume the managership of the journal. He also came forward with the offer to meet all the preliminary costs of setting up the Press anew, purchasing a new one in Calcutta, with type, paper, and other necessary materials, and bringing the press up to Almora, which he did. Swami Vivekananda's disciple, Swami Swarupananda, with his previous editorial experience, became the new Editor. Accordingly, the new double-crown hand press was brought up in parts by railway to the terminus in Kathgodam, then by four-footed beasts over the remaining 50 mile path through the hills. It was indeed an age of heroes! *PB* was published gloriously in August 1898, missing only one issue—July 1898! To the joy of all, Swamiji wrote a poem, 'To the Awakened India' which appeared on the first page of the first issue out of Almora. The most remarkable stanzas, the first, second, and

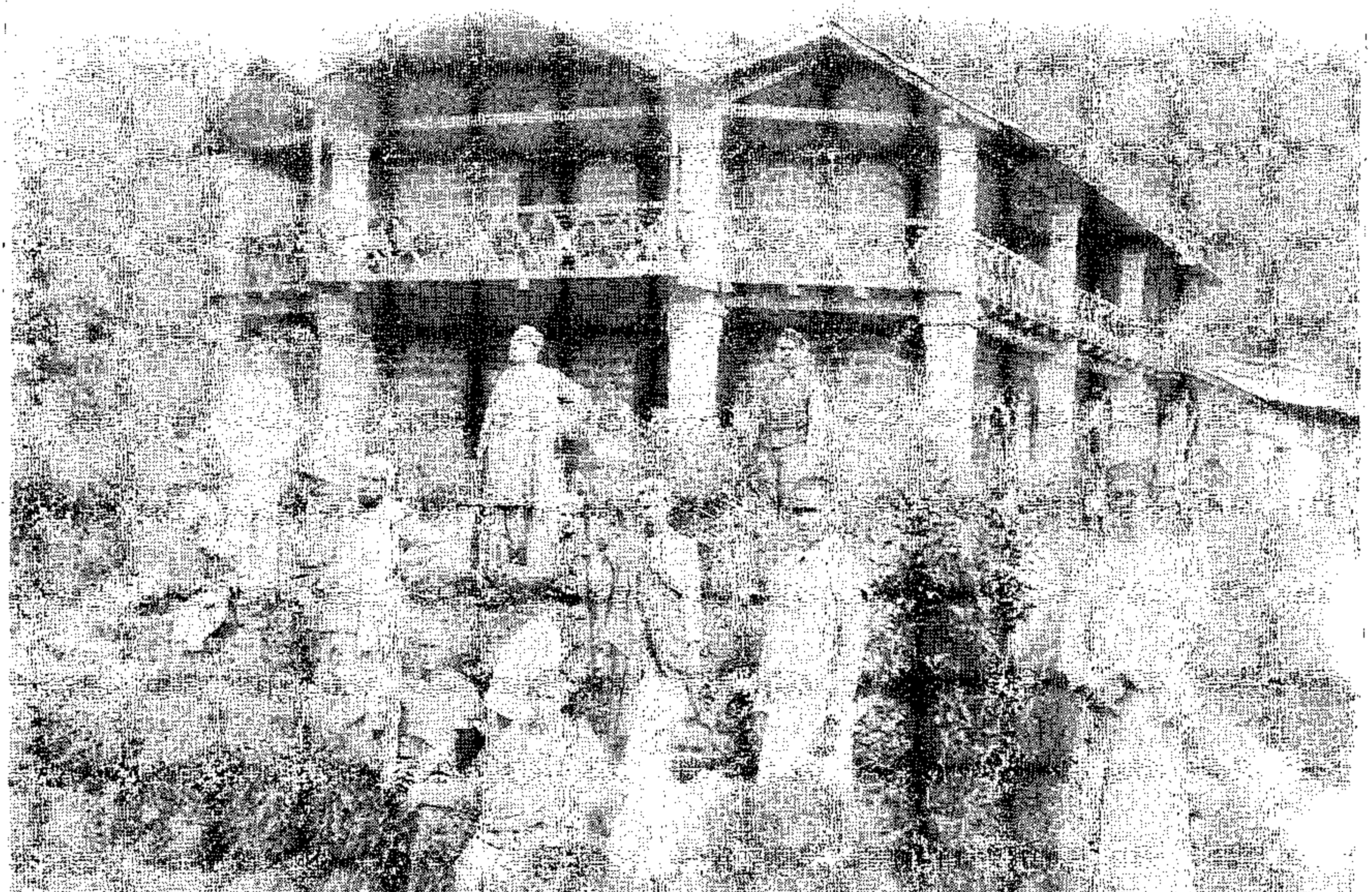
10. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, No. 12, p. 133.



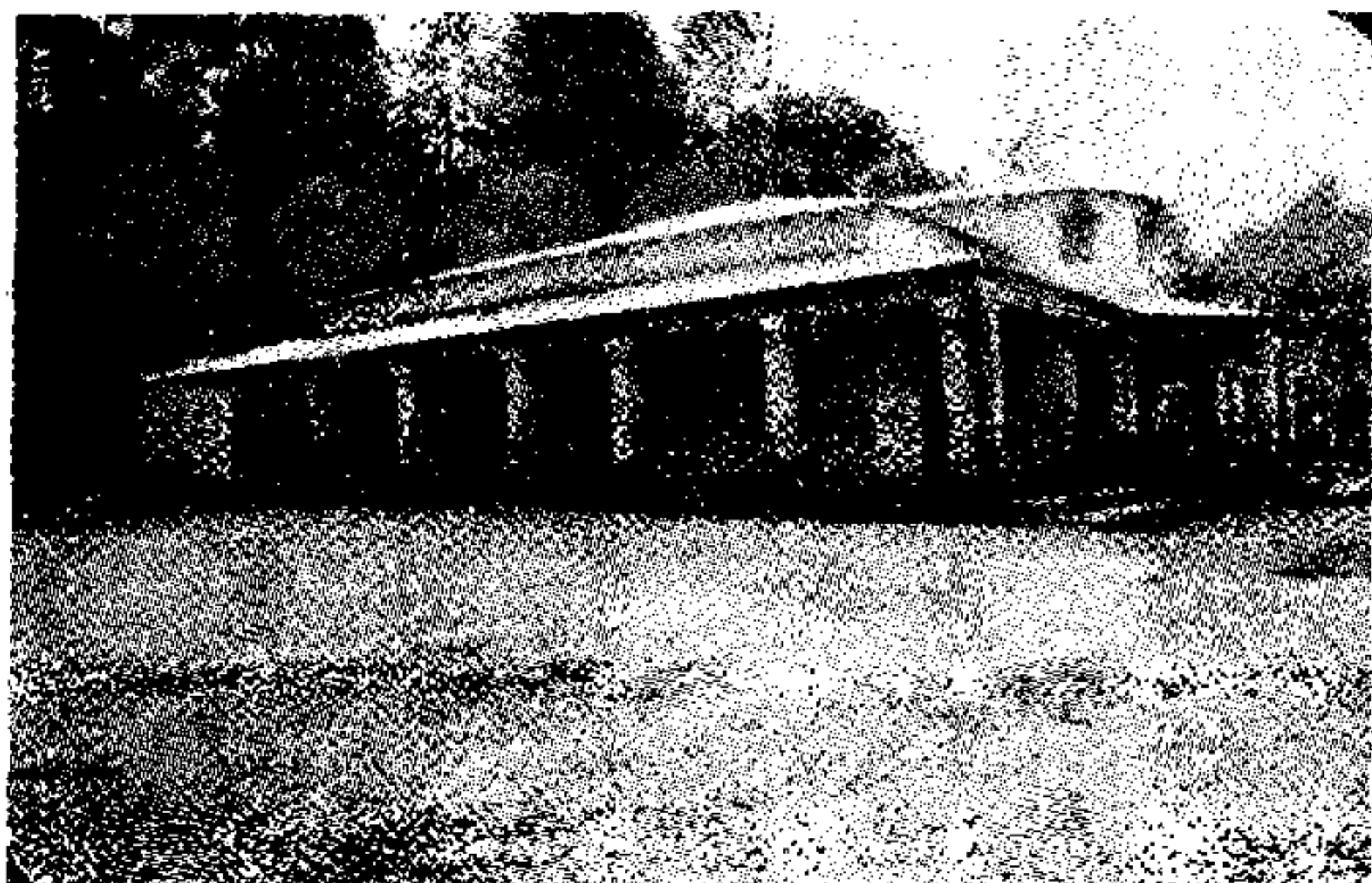
Shahji, a dedicated PB Press staff



Swami Swarupananda



*1914: In front of the PB building: Back row, standing centre, Swami Prajnananda
Middle row, standing left, Swami Virajanauda; second from right, Bharat Maharaj*



*Thompson House, Almora,
where the Press was first installed (1898)
in the second room to the left*



*The Press now in the PB office building,
Mayavati, since 24 April 1994*



*Swamis Yatishananda (left),
who was instrumental in recovering the Press,
and Shivaprasadananda*

The Press



eight were:

Once more awake!

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

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the road-side dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

And tell the world—

Awake, arise, and dream no more
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands with our thoughts
Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none
Has root or stem, being born in naught, which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.¹¹

Besides a new life for *PB*, the Swami also hoped to find a suitable place for an ashrama high in the Himalayan foothills. Mr. and Mrs. Sevier had in fact already been trying for that during the last several months but had not been able to find a place to their liking. Now more than ever they felt the urgency, for the *PB* would need a permanent home. For the ensuing five months while the Journal was being printed and published in Almora Town, they kept their watch for a suitable site. Finally the Mayavati estate was located in the eastern part of Almora district in a part known as Kali-kumaon (named after the ancient name of the country, Kūrmānchal, and the Mahākālī river). The estate was ideally located and available for new ownership, picturesquely situated

amidst beautiful forest and mountain scenery. With good water supply, commanding view of the Himalaya snows and salubrious climate, it delighted the monks and European devotees. The deed was signed over to the Seviere; 'the Press was moved *thither*'¹², as Swami Virajananda wrote, and 'Mr. and Mrs. Sevier with Swami Swarupananda took up their residence here on 19 March 1899', Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday. Swami Virajananda wrote more: that the secluded Mayavati tea estate with its extensive acreage and jungles fifty miles from Almora, and with two commodious houses, was an ideal place for the ashrama, where the East and the West could meet and practise the Advaita philosophy. The operating of a *Press* in such a remote place, however, was something else! Swami Virajananda writes:

Swami Vivekananda intended to make the Advaita Ashrama the Centre, among other things, of the Ramakrishna Mission, for diffusing Vedanta Teachings by means of a monthly journal and other publications in English, and it is gratifying to note that the Ashrama has been discharging this function with admirable and ever-growing success, notwithstanding all the difficulties in conducting a Press in the midst of the Himalayan jungles, 63 miles from the nearest railway station, and at a height of 6800 feet above sea-level.¹³

We may quote Swami Virajananda a little more for the illumination he sheds on the early days of *PB*:

...The members are allotted such works at the Ashrama, manual and intellectual, as they are fitted to do, or capable of doing. This helping in the general work of the Ashrama practised in the spirit of Karma Yoga, takes up 5 or 6 hours daily. For the rest of the day the members are free to practise self improvement by private and class study, medita-

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 1.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 18, No. 11, p. 216.

13. *Ibid.*

tion and Japan....Manual labour includes Press work, agriculture and gardening, and the supervision of other outdoor works. No external worship of images, pictures, etc., or any religious ceremony or ritual except Viraja Homa, is allowed. Since from the time of the inception of the Ashrama up to the end of 1910, 32 workers were admitted in all; out of which 12 were unsuccessful in continuing the life of renunciation or were unsuitable, and just left. Out of the remainder, 6 are at present workers at the Ashrama, 3 died in harness and 11 are now useful members at other Centres....¹⁴

In the diary the monks kept at Mayavati of all the important happenings at the Ashrama, frequent, sometimes daily mention is made of the Press. From these excerpts the reader can appreciate the hard labour they and the village boys and men had to undergo to keep the Press running. Curiously, 'tigers' also were mentioned frequently, as if they too were part of the overall worries of the Pressmen, who had often to walk the distances through the forest to Post Office and to and from their homes. Fortunately, however, only now and then did the wild animals become a really serious concern to the members of the Ashrama. Reads the diary in short but pithy remarks in the summer of 1922:

15 June—The *Prabuddha Bharata* is delayed owing to shortage of ink and paper.

21 June—Day cloudy but no rains. Everyone is anxious for paper and ink. Tonight a hot discussion took place...as regards bringing the goods from Tanakpur [85 km. away].

25 June—The mailman brought the news that a tiger had killed a man near Champawat the other day.

26 June—BHARAT is now at Tanakpur with JAYDEVA. He has succeeded in hiring 14 horses from near Champawat [10 km. from Mayavati] on his way to Tanakpur.

30 June—77 bundles of paper arrive from

Tanakpur.

3 July—Dispatch [of June issue *PB* (?)] is going on. Today first forme of the July issue of *PB* is being printed. A tiger is reported to have killed some horses near Bisung and today a woman on the Dharam Char hill.

27 July—Day Clear. BHARATMAHARAJ gets a bad attack of malaria as a result of his trip to Tanakpur.

Roles of Prabuddha Bharata

The greatest role played by *PB* in the early days was that of publisher of the early Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta literature, some of the items for the first time. In the first four years appeared long excerpts from Swami Vivekananda's *Jnana* and *Karma Yogas*, and full texts of some of his miscellaneous writings like 'Aryans and Tamilians', 'The Sages of India', and 'The Life Sketch of Pavahari Baba'. There were some fifteen to twenty other of the Swami's utterances, writings, poems, stories, songs. Extracts from Ramchandra Dutta's *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* appeared. *PB* and *Brahmavadin* shared honours of publishing Swamiji's writings. Soon the *PB* Press would be used also to print and publish the first edition of the *first two volumes* of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* in 1907. Other volumes of the five-volume set were printed in Calcutta, although published by *PB* Press, Mayavati, in 1908 and 1909. Excerpts appeared in the Journal.

Other important matters were the lectures and activities of Swami Saradananda, Swami Abhedananda and Swami Turiyananda in America and Europe, and Sister Nivedita in India. 'Reports' gave up-to-date news of the movements of Swami Vivekananda and Gurubhais in the West. *PB* published many of the 'Addresses of Welcome' to Swami Vivekananda when he returned from the West in January 1897 and was received with honour and rejoicing in the great cities.

14. *Ibid.*

It is noteworthy also that *PB* published for the first time the penetrating elucidations and commentaries on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda by his disciples. Appointed by the Swami himself for the task, Swami Swarupananda, Swami Virajananda, Sister Nivedita and Swami Shuddhananda were eminently qualified for the role of expounders and teachers. Each of them had their own original contributions in *PB* too, which reflected the ideas of Swami Vivekananda and the 'new Vedanta'. Sister Nivedita, who was a great worker for *PB*, contributed numerous articles, including her famous 'Our Master and His Message', 'The Master as I Saw Him', and 'Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda'. Her 'Interviews' with Swamiji appeared regularly in *PB*. The journal was thus able to play a significant role in the dissemination of the harmonizing and universal ideas of Vedanta.

The years rolled on and *PB*'s pages provided wholesome reading for quite a large number of people. Not only wholesome, but the magazine was informative, thought-provoking and entertaining as well. Astronomy notes and archaeological

tion towards the maintenance of the Ashrama.

For the G.K. enthusiasts there was: 'The cotton factories in Lancastershire spin enough thread in 6 seconds to go round the world!' And a news item in 1903 (sounds familiar?):

The slaughter of the elephant in Africa is going on at such a rapid rate that unless it is possible to have a 'close' time for the animal...it will not be long before the world's supply of ivory will be exhausted.

Mayavati Charitable Dispensary in 1903, the year of its opening, reportedly treated 654 patients in the half-year.

Dr. Samuel Smiles' fine book, *Self Help*, got decent advertising space in *PB* in 1897.

'Leaves from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna', translated by Sri 'M.' himself, was highlighted in 8 full pages of the March 1898 issue.

Sri Kaliprasanna Chattopadhyaya, the noted editor of *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, delivered an enthusiastic address to the

He was a Bengali, but it was Madras that sent him on his mission to America. The Raja of Khetri and the Raja of Ramnad were his devoted disciples and the Maharajas of Mysore and Kashmir as well as the Maharaja Dev Samser Jung of Nepal were his bhaktas. In the Punjab...what a flood-tide of enthusiasm there was when he visited...

discoveries, science notes, exploring and mountain climbing news, and miscellaneous 'gleanings' from all over appeared! Some examples?

Under 'News and Notes' in 1903 appeared:

Swami Sivananda of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Benaras, acknowledges with thanks the receipt of Rs. 20 from Lala Badri Shah, Almora...as a contribu-

gentry of Benaras town on Swamiji's birthday in 1912. He said in part:

In order to understand the life and teachings of a mahapurusha (great soul) like Swami Vivekananda, it is necessary for us who are steeped in worldly matters to attune our minds to the pitch of harmony which rings in his soul....He it was who for the first time brought home to the hearts of the people in different parts of India, that they were one people. Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab, all

were tied together, as it were, with the common string of his love. He was a Bengali, but it was Madras that sent him on his mission to America. The Raja of Khetri and the Raja of Ramnad were his devoted disciples and the Maharajas of Mysore and Kashmir as well as the Maharaja Dev Samsar Jung of Nepal were his *bhaktas*. In the Punjab, I remember what a flood-tide of enthusiasm there was when he visited that province. He it was who made the Indians realize that they were inheritors of spiritual treasures, which were to shed beneficence on the West.

Standing bold

Of two great requirements of the era that were met by *PB* in pre-independence India, one was the need to clarify for the public, at home and abroad, what methods the Ramakrishna Order favoured to serve the world and to bring uplift to the mal-nourished, the poor, the ignorant masses.

Some expected the Mission to enter the fray of political fight as a sort of army to wrest by force India's freedom from Foreign Rule. Others, not so extreme, were also for various kinds of more or less 'direct action'. The authorities, however, the spiritual giants, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Shivananda, and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, did not concur with those urgings. From their association with the great Master, they understood the letter and the spirit of his teachings and felt there was a better way to serve India.

All along, the editors of *PB* stood for truth, independence, justice, and freedom, but they declined to pitch the Monastic Order or enlightened religion into political squabbling and inevitable descent into force, violence and hatred to achieve the goal. One of the monks editorialized: 'Only a proper application of the religious spirit can take out the poisonous sting of violence and hatred which lurks in political institu-

tions.'¹⁵ And he noted that Mahatma Gandhi too was firm; Organized religion should not enter into politics, but religious ideals should infuse the political process and spiritualize it, enabling society to run smoothly.

Through *PB's* pages, the Mission fully adopted Swamiji's view that the religious and spiritual ideal must not be dragged down—God belongs to all equally and not merely to a favoured section of the people; for needed reforms in society, the Mission would work at building foundations for such reforms, so that when improvements came—as come they must, they would be lasting. If there was a panacea for the social ills in India, it could only be a character-making and man-making education, where *learning* and *doing* go hand in hand. How this special type of education can be transmitted has always been a moot point.

PB rendered a real service to the public by reporting over the last century all, or nearly all, of the emergency Relief Operations and other services of the Math and Mission to society, in education, in hospitalization, and other areas. Illustrations abound of the wisdom of the Order in knowing how and when to help.

The twin Organizations, the Math and the Mission, would work at foundations in their own humble way, ready to make any sacrifice when they put their heads to it, to bring education and medical care to every door of the needy, the poor, the distressed, and the young and old. They would tender relief, bring all kinds of material aid to those ruined by flood, fire, drought, famine, earthquake, epidemic, war, population displacement, and communal disturbances, year after weary year. But the monks would try not to put their hand into partisan

15. *Ibid.*, Vol. 51, No. 7, p. 254.

politics or volatile social disputes. Their primary concern—in keeping with India's time honoured traditions—was God, and not religious 'busybodying'. Cases in point were the dissensions arising out of sectarian or communal disputes.

In the month of May 1926, there appeared in *PB* a report-article on the Convention held that year by the Math and Mission. A witness, signing himself as 'An Observer' wrote:

The Ramakrishna Math and Mission Convention held at the Belur Math, the first of its kind in the annals of the Order, was a unique affair, whose importance may be attributed to more reasons than one. Graced and blessed by almost all the living disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, the occasion afforded an opportunity for the representatives of the Math and Mission from far and near to congregate together at their headquarters. About 90 centres of the Order, from Mayavati to Jaffna, and Bombay to Assam, as also from the United States of America were represented. The Math wore a picturesque appearance with the ochre robes and white dresses of about 200 monks and Brahmacharins. Members representing the various philanthropic, educational, preaching and publication departments of the organization sat together and discussed only to find that their apparently diverse items of work converged to one ideal only, viz., the realization of Truth through different channels of activities. People speaking different languages—Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Hindi, Malayalam, Assamese and English—created a polyglot of tongues which gave expression to one ideal alone—the grand ideal realized by Sri Ramakrishna and interpreted by Swami Vivekananda. It was really a great sight to see how various communities that have otherwise very little in common in them could unite on the common platform of spirituality. The Convention meeting under the shadow of the Belur Math, which, as Swamiji emphatically prophesied, would supply spiritual food to the world for at least 1,500 years to come, gave ample inkling of the future development of the Order that would by its benign

influence enable the different communities to discover their national unity based on religion, and ultimately usher in a new age for the world by preaching the ideal of toleration and love, urging everyone to work without malice and hatred.

... An outside observer is not expected to know anything that might happen behind the screen. But that outwardly the Convention breathed a spirit of love, toleration and creative ideals may be admitted without any fear of dispute. No event happened to mar the harmony of the occasion by creating a rift in the lute...

By a curious irony of fate, while various speakers were preaching the unity and harmony of religions and exhorting all to foster a spirit of mutual love and toleration on the Convention grounds, the metropolis on the other side of the Ganges was witnessing great orgy of murder, assassination, incendiarism and destruction of property owing to the deeds of religious fanatics among the Hindus and Mohammedans. While speaker after speaker explained the gospel of love and service in the public meetings here, the Calcutta mob, gone beyond the bounds of control, exhibited the worst fury of hatred, jealousy and other beastly propensities. In the Convention Swami Saradananda sounded a note of warning.... 'Reconciliation between different communities of India will never be effected by mere interdining and exchange of social courtesies or considerations of political expediency. Only a proper understanding and practical application of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna can bring about this happy consummation.' He exhorted everyone to understand the responsibility resting upon his shoulders and consecrate his life and soul to the discharge of it.¹⁶

PB's editorials over the years reveal that, after national independence people realized the wisdom of the great Souls who founded the Math and Mission—Swamiji's words are recalled:

Social ills or evil customs are a sort of disease in the social body. If that body is

16. *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, p. 220.

nourished by education and food, those evil customs will disappear by themselves...When one waters the root of a tree, does he not water the whole tree?¹⁷

The Staff of *PB* the broad and large-hearted monks with infinite capacity to feel human sadness, were deeply wounded by the many tragedies the country had to pass through in the struggle for freedom. Living memory still recalls the pangs and trials and sorrows of the partition of Bengal in 1905, Jallianwallahbagh Massacre in Punjab (1919), the human losses, and defeat of hope, when Subhas Chandra Bose fell with the Indian National Army in W.W. II, and the resulting multitude—thousands every day—that died for want of food on the scorched earth; the thousands of men and women, young and old, who suffered martyrdom at the cruel hand of the alien military

...older people were not a little amused however that, ironically, in the name of 'science' or 'scientific', anything could be swallowed without salt.

power, for love of the motherland, with no friendly hand in any country of the world to console or rescue them, not to mention the second partition and dismemberment of the nation that took place before Independence Day in 1947, when all sense of calm reason and human brotherhood was overthrown, and the resulting confusion soon brought the sacrifice of thousands of innocent lives and that of the Nation's best loved leader. Even to utter mild protest in print invited reprisal and surveillance from the secret police,—*all was known*, and the prayers went up from *Awakened India* unto the Lord.

Challenge of Science

World wide, the second need of the era was for a modern religion to advance to answer the challenges of modern science and modern scientific materialism. Popularity of science and enthusiasm for its positive blessings to humanity, tended to overshadow all other human achievements, real or possible. Sadly too, the moral and religious values that had given shelter and spiritual comfort to people for ages began to be eroded and looked upon as *passé*, fit only to be thrown off. Nowhere was this more true than in the suddenly affluent West, but in the East, and in India too, people were affected, particularly the youth and the fashionably intellectual. Everywhere popular religion was under attack because scientific fad and fashion wanted 'proof' of everything. The older people were not a little amused however that, ironically, in the name of 'science' or 'scientific', anything could be swallowed without salt.

The fascination for scientific ideas was general. When Charles Darwin published his *Origin of the Species*, advancing the 'Theory of Evolution' (1859), the world's attention was held captive for decades. If man was biologically ascended from lower forms of life by the process of evolution and natural selection (i.e. 'survival of the fittest'), was man then no more than an earth-bound animal, with body and brain-structure not very different from apes and monkeys? Religious leaders in the West were indeed up in arms over the theory that cast suspicion on accepted traditional doctrine that God had created man specially with His own hand at some 'beginning point' of creation. In the East, in India in particular, there was no such great disturbance though. Long familiar with the concepts of evolution (and involution too) of the Sāṅkhya, which comprises Hindu cosmology, the teachers of Vedānta knew what to say and how to say, to save the face of theistic religion all over

17. Swami Gambhirananda, *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Udbodhan, 1373), pp. 230-1.

the globe. It was the privilege of the followers in the Ramakrishna Movement, and *PB* especially, to spread those ennobling ideas that declared man was not an animal but a spiritual Being.

Yet Vedanta, far from eschewing Science, stood for the application of the full blaze of scientific knowledge and reason even in the realm of religious experience. Solving the West's particular problem with the novel Evolutionary Theory of Darwin, Vedanta showed that biological evolution could indeed be accepted—up to a point, but beyond that, Darwin was unreasonable. When man evolves spiritually, the *summum bonum* of human life is achieved not through natural selection and survival of the fittest, but by self-giving (self-sacrifice) for the good of humanity and all living beings, and by merging with the Infinite after the Knowledge comes that one's own Self is the Self of all that exists. Very briefly this is the idea. Vivekananda wrote in his *Raja-Yoga* of the practicality and challenge of modern Vedanta:

The question is:...Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to science and knowledge outside, to be applied to [the experience of] Religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as

any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.¹⁸

Astonishing words, but brave and bold as the times demanded. Religion is realization, the Swami said. Without the 'proof' of experience, the words of the prophets have no real meaning for many people in our modern scientific age.

The Printing Press's Story

Printing of *PB* continued on the hand

'One who is our Guru [Sri Ramakrishna], He is Advaita. Since you are all His followers, you too are Advaitins. I can emphatically say, you are surely Advaitins.'

press at Mayavati until the end of the magazine's 28th year. Then the Editor (Swami Yatiswarananda) and others thought to make an improvement. On a leaflet 'Notice' attached to the front cover of the last issue of 1923 was explained:

To improve the printing and general get-up of the Journal, we have decided to publish it henceforth from our Publication Department, 18 College Street Market, Calcutta. The reading matter also will be increased by 8 pages [bringing it to a total of 50]. All this will, we hope, make the Journal more attractive to our readers....The editorial department will continue to remain at Mayavati, amid the old congenial surroundings.

Henceforth, the printing was managed by Swami Vireswarananda at the Gouranga Press, Calcutta. All-round improvement was soon in evidence, type and paper quality.

Meanwhile the old Press had been

18. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 'Reason and Religion', Vol. 1, p. 367.

installed in a new building erected for the purpose at Mayavati since 1914. After the shift to Calcutta of the printing work, the Press remained mostly idle for several years, until 1930, when it was sold to a local gentleman who wanted to move it to Pithoragarh town, some 80-odd kms. away. Men disassembled the machinery and shouldered it on stout poles part by part to Forti village halfway down to Lohaghat. There, however, due to the fact that the huge iron frame and parts were so heavy, or for some other reasons, the press never got farther than the gentleman's house in Forti, where it lay in disarray, with parts more or less scattered around, almost forgotten, for 64 years. Last year (1993) during the Centenary Celebrations in the District (commemorating Swami Vivekananda's *Bharat Parikrama*), relatives of the press's owners decided they would like to return it as a gift to Mayavati. It was a great occasion and many villagers helped to lug the pieces back up the hill—this time to the road, where the Ashrama jeep met them. From there the press returned to Mayavati on 24.4.94. The Swamis with the help of local mechanics reassembled enough of the original parts (some of them were not found), that the impression is given that printing work could start at any time! The machine will serve as some of the memorabilia of the early days and be appreciated by all the future generations.

Dvaita or Advaita?

Certainly, the last word of *PB* is Advaita Vedanta, the final statement of all Hindu philosophy—the absolute identity of the individual soul with the Supreme Brahman; yet the importance of the personal lives and, indeed, the 'living presence' of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and the Holy Mother to the monks who conducted the journal through the years can never be exaggerated. How could the magazine have been established and succeed if Thakur, Swamiji

and the Holy Mother were absent? It is true, not one of this holy triune ever announce themselves as founders of great institutions or even of a literary religious journal! The Saint of Dakshineswar, immersed always in the ocean of *sat-cit-ananda*, was not a roving preacher or writer. The disciple, Swamiji, always encouraged others to plunge into the work without leaning on anybody. He exhorted them: 'Work on without me, as though I never existed!—My name should not be made prominent; it is my ideas that I want to see realized!' But the Holy Mother *was* the Light of the world in the early days of the Ramakrishna Mission activities.

Once, in a time of temporary bewilderment for a few of the staff of *PB* and the Advaita Ashrama, Holy Mother revived the conscious experience of the Master's *advaita-bhava*. Sri Ramakrishna had said:

Nothing exists except the One. That One is the Supreme Brahman. So long as He keeps the 'I' in us, He reveals to us that it is He who, as the Primal Energy, creates, preserves and destroys the universe....Let me ask you not to disbelieve in the forms of God. Have faith in God's forms. Meditate on that form of God which appeals to your mind.¹⁹

For some reason several *PB* workers and members of the Ashrama started a regular worship of Sri Ramakrishna's picture with rituals at Mayavati. But this was not in Mayavati's tradition or permitted by its rules. A sort of 'rift' grew up between those who claimed to uphold strict Advaita and the group of ritualists. The former may have been overzealously thinking that the Advaita Vedanta was antagonistic to dualistic worship or *dvaita*. Anyway, one of the

19. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985), pp.242, 272.

shrine room worshippers became (partially, at least) convinced by them that he was doing something wrong, and therefore perhaps was not fit to be a member of the Advaita Ashrama! This monastic brother wrote to Holy Mother, then staying at Jayrambati, and expressed his dilemma to her. Perhaps he lodged a complaint too against the others and wanted the Mother's sanction to again set up the *puja*, though it was clearly stated in the rules that though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama was dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone, and that there should be no external worship or ritual allowed.²⁰

Holy Mother wrote to the Swami that the worship room should indeed be closed, but not however because it was in conflict with the Advaita philosophy or its thought or practice, but only because it went counter to the rules upon which the Ashrama was founded. Then she wrote:

One who is our Guru [Sri Ramakrishna], He is Advaita. Since you are all His followers, you too are Advaitins. I can emphatically say, you are surely Advaitins.²¹

Swamiji had seen the shrine room when he came to visit Mayavati in January 1901. At the time, however, he only indicated that he had noticed it, but later that day he disapproved of it saying, 'It should never have been done.' But he declined to give an order

to break up the worship room at once, preferring instead to let those responsible for it understand for themselves why they should do so.

Swami Vivekananda was the supreme Teacher of Advaita Vedanta with all its practical applications. In a letter he had written:

Everyone says that the highest, the pure truth, cannot be realized all at once by all, that men have to be led to it gradually through worship, prayer, and other kinds of prevalent religious practices....In India I work both ways.

In Calcutta I have all these images and temples—in the name of God and the Vedas, of the Bible, and Christ and Buddha. Let it all be tried. But on the height of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth.²²

Here at Mayavati 'attention was to be paid only to the subjective elements of religion, such as private meditation, individually and collectively studying the Scriptures, and the teaching and culture of the highest spiritual monism, free from any dualistic weakness or dependence'²³ Yet the Swami recognized that along with the great Principle of Advaita, the worship of the Guru was also necessary. Both Principle and Personality are necessary. 'Now I will tell you my discovery,' modestly he wrote to his Madras disciples:

All of religion is contained in the Vedanta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedanta philosophy, the Dvaita, Vishishta Advaita, and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three

20. With the exception of the *Virajā-Homa*, the Fire-worship with ritual done at the time when one formally takes the vows of Sannyāsa, renouncing the world. cf. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples*, Vol. 2, p. 571

21. cf. *Ibid.*; and also Shankari Prasad Basu, *Vivekananda O Samkalin Bharatvarsha* (Calcutta: Mondal Book House, 1981), Vol. 5, pp. 338-9.

22. *PB*, Vol. 54, p. 30.

23. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples*, Vol. 2, p. 571.

stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of religion; the Vedanta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e., Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism. The Advaita as applied in its Yoga-perception form is Buddhism, etc. Now by religion is meant Vedanta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings, and other

God is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss to the deep thinkers and philosophers, but He is Truth, Goodness and Beauty also to the simple-hearted devotees—such was the broad and liberal outlook of the Hindu Religion in the *PB*.

The end or a beginning?

No one knows why, the Divine Lord likes to remain hidden. One lyrical line of song has it that 'from a distance, hidden as it were, She [the Divine Mother is thinking], "If I reveal Myself to this child crying for Me,

Not only will...religion be made scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but [it] will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.

circumstances of different nations. You will find that although the philosophy is the same, the Shaktas, Shaivas, etc., apply it each to their own special cult and forms. Now, in your journal write article after article on these three systems, showing their harmony as one following after the other, and at the same time keeping off the ceremonial forms altogether. That is, preach the philosophy, the spiritual part, and let people suit it to their own forms. (6 May 1895)

The *PB* followed this instruction of the Swami fearlessly and unselfconsciously. All religious views found an honoured place in the journal, and none was ever rejected or slighted. In every volume were to be found contributions by representatives of nearly every world religion and philosophy, and in those articles the mood of rancour or false pride is never encountered, but only search for truth, sincerity, and universal sympathy. Not only toleration but acceptance of all religions, and 'helping others who are trying to do and be good', was the attitude that Swami Vivekananda tried to encourage.

then he will stop calling to Me and cease to remember Me!" Sri Ramakrishna, too, used to tell some of the visitors at Dakshineswar to walk and see all the gardens and temples, and he used to say, too, 'In the game of hide-and-seek, the "granny" doesn't like to be touched. Then everything would come to a standstill. She likes the play to continue.'

With the passing of years, the first generation of devotees also passed away. Somehow it was felt that with this, a greater 'distance' was created between the Lord and the world. Is this really so? It is true, the teachings of the Great Master and the direct disciples are with us in purest form, as clear as on the day they were spoken. But who feels their impact now, by reading? True, many who saw and heard Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji and Holy Mother could not snap the bonds of māyā and go free. But even reflecting thus, not finding solace, still the younger generations felt a loss. No doubt the editors of *PB* and their workers also felt that at times, despite sheltering in the impregnable fortress of Advaita, and living in the fastness of the sylvan retreat at Mayavati. A certain creeping nostalgia is

found in the old pages of the journal. No thought of deriding it comes in the mind though. In whose mind does not the question echo—'Where now is the Master?; where is Dakshineswar—where is *that* Dakshineswar?; *that* Shyampukur, Cossipore, Balaram Mandir, or Baranagore!! Can the past ever be brought back? Not to speak of the present generation, the direct disciples and Swamiji—all the Gurubhais felt like that occasionally. Here are two remarkable and moving incidents, an anecdote and an obituary, both beautiful and inspiring, found in the volumes 1923 and 1924. One concerns a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Atmananda, and the other (evidently a disciple of Swami Brahmananda), Swami Narayanananda.

After the passing away (*mahasamādhi*) of Swamiji, he (Swami Atmananda), with another monk, used to besmear their body with ashes and pass his time mostly in contemplation and meditation in a thatched hut near where Swamiji's temple (at Belur Math) is now. He (Atmananda) would come out only to attend a class of Swami Shivananda and to take his noon meal. Near the end, he related a dream of his to Swami Shuddhananda, his life-long friend from boyhood. He was floating, as it were, on the surface of an ocean, lying in the lap of the Mother. At last he felt an indescribable bliss—as if torrents of bliss were gushing up everywhere—and he lost outward consciousness. As he came back to his senses after a long time, he found himself to be a little child dancing in the arms of the Mother. 'I never had,' he said, 'the experience of *samādhi* (spiritual absorption) in my life. It may be that what I felt in dream was something like that covetable state.' (p.434)

The second is:

We announce with a heavy heart the sad news of the passing away of Swami Narayanananda, a young promising worker of our Mission (Vrindavan)... The circumstances of his death were very remarkable. He had clear premonitions of his

coming end, as will appear from the following unfinished letter written by him at 2:30 p.m. on the day of occurrence to a friend at Rangoon:—

'Since yesterday I am having some peculiar experiences. Last evening, as I was coming from the interior of the town along the bank of the Jumna, I suddenly heard someone calling me in an endearing tone, 'Come, come away.' The voice was exceptionally sweet, but I could not trace its origin, for there was nobody by. I returned to the Ashrama and had my supper. At night I had a strange dream. I saw as if I was in the presence of Sri Maharaja (Swami Brahmananda) and the Holy Mother. Oh the joy of it! That call is coming constantly to my ears since this morning, and my mind, too, seems to be longing to go somewhere. I am feeling no more attachment to anything of this world. I do not know what it all means.

'Ah! I hear that call again. It is so sweet! Such a bliss I never experienced before in my life. Can you tell me who it is that calls me? Ah! Ah! Such sweetness! Such joy! It seems as if I am drifting somewhere—somebody is carrying me in his arms. A peculiar sensation is in my heart! It is unique. Again, what soul-ravishing strains of music!—"Behold the Blissful Region!" "Let us go to that City!" Glory be unto the Lord! Mother, Mother! Bliss, bliss, bliss ineffable! What a marvellous experience it is! It seems the world does not exist, nay, it never did. Was it but a dream? I see that I am ever in the arms of the Mother. Glory unto the Divine Mother! I cannot write any more.—'

He had attended to his usual duties in the morning, after which he had shut himself in his room and sung some devotional songs. After taking his meal, he was busy settling the accounts. In the evening some visitors came and there was *bhajan* (songs), in the midst of which he had an occasion to go near the bank of the Jumna. On his return shortly after, he said that he had been bitten by a snake. The marks of the bite were distinctly visible.²⁴ Being certain of his imminent end, he had his rosary

24. On our making enquiry about Swami Narayanananda, a Swami of Kasi Advaita Ashrama tells us he heard about the incident; and he added that the late Swami had gone

brought and began to repeat the name of the Lord, asking, besides, a worker to take over the charge of the Ashrama. The deadly poison began to do its work, and soon he became unconscious. All available means were tried, but nothing could restore him to consciousness. His spirit left its mortal tenement and sped to the eternal presence of the Lord. Surely such a death is most enviable and shows the intense spiritual nature of the late Swami. All we can say about it is—'The Lord's will be done!' (p. 285)

Asked by someone: 'Swamiji, do our spirits pass at death into a state of happiness?' To which the Swami replied: 'Death is only a change of condition. Time and space are in you, you are not in time and space. It is enough to know that, as we make our lives purer and nobler, either in the seen or the unseen world, the nearer we approach God, who is the Centre of all spiritual beauty and eternal joy... 'HERE' and 'HEREAFTER' are words to frighten children. It is all 'HERE'. To live and move in God, even here, even in this body, all self should go out, and superstition should be banished... the whole world is full of God and not of sin. Let us help one another, let us love one

out to answer nature's call and the snake had struck him on the head.

another.... This is the world my brother—this illusion of Maya—the Lord alone is true. The forms are evanescent; but the spirit, being in the Lord, and of the Lord, is immortal and omnipresent. All that we ever had are round us this minute, for the spirit can neither come nor go, it only changes its place of manifestation.'²⁵

Maybe, hundreds of workers have come and gone. Twenty distinguished editors of *PB* have completed their earthly careers, and some ten to twelve are still with us. Having gone on to other posts and assignments, or retired, may they all be with us spiritually; and may all our 'entrances' and 'exits' be remembered as such, not as 'lives' and 'deaths'! 'Work on,' said the Swami,... 'be "unattached"; let things work; let brain centres work; work incessantly, but let not a ripple conquer the mind. Work as if you were a stranger in this land, a sojourner;... this world is not our habitation, it is only one of the many stages through which we are passing.'²⁶

So, Congratulations, *Prabuddha Bharata*, 100 years young! □

25. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 7, p. 500; Vol. 5, pp. 413–5.

26. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 'The Secret of Work', p. 56.

On Ourselves

(Continued from page 13)

flag, the ochre flag of Renunciation and Service of Śiva in the Jīva, or as the Christians put it, of man made in the image of God. The world will be raised—'not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love.' The 'mild and gentle' Hindu is pre-eminently fitted by his innate tendencies to be the spiritual teacher of the

world of the future. This is our heritage. We call on every Indian to take his stand on this heritage and carry forth once again the saving message of the divinity of the human soul fearlessly to the four corners of the world, and thus help to lay the spectres of ignorance, lust, greed, and racial superiority which threaten to make a hell of this fair earth. □

One Hundred Years of the Prabuddha Bharata (1896-1995) A Brief Survey

PROF. B.N. SIKDAR

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1. The subject of this survey is too large for any work of this length. Within the spatial limit every editor is constrained to impose, it is not possible to do justice to a monthly which has opened paths to human possibilities and, taken at its own valuation, has a commendable record in pursuing its set course of popularizing the best of all religions mankind has evolved in its search after Truth and Perfection ('Prospectus', issue no. 1).

This survey could have been acceptably organized in several ways. The easiest was to proceed by chronology. But that would have condensed a century-long narrative so drastically as to make it shallow or superficial. So, adopting flexibility, I have chosen to tell the long story—possibly the longest in the history of India's journalism—at once backward and forwards. I have had to delimit a great tradition, and be content with a few of the most important historical and/or thematic generalities. It is an external history I have attempted, an outline, not a detailed treatment.*

However, no survey can entirely dispense with dates; for, a survey has to be

* Abbreviations used in this article:

PB means *Prabuddha Bharata*; *CW* means *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, English, Mayavati, 1989; 1:2 means vol. no. 1, page no. 2; XI:5:83 means Letter no. XI in vol. 5 of *CW* at page number 83.

coherent and ordered. In this study, the significant periods in the journal's life have been neither sharply drawn nor arbitrarily determined. Instead, I have (as I must) kept an eye on the content, emphasis, and diversification. Though I have done my best to ensure as much objectivity as possible, and to suppress personal critical tendencies, 'no man can walk save on his own shadow'.

Finally I have to say two things: so many and varied works have found their place in the *PB*'s pages that we cannot do more than merely chronicle the most important of them, and, while letting the facts tell their own story, give but selective references in support. All through the work I have been sorrowfully conscious of the omissions I had to make. When one has to boil down first class stuff, the work is cheerless.

2. 'The longest journey begins with but a step', says a Chinese Proverb. Behind every step is an idea. From his letters (1895 and 1896) to his ardent devotees in Madras, it is clear that Vivekananda is the periodical's inspiration and guiding angel (XXXIX:5:83; LXII:5:108); he continues to act as its guide and philosopher throughout (editorial in the forty-fifth year, LIV:6). In 1896, Vivekananda receives copies of the first issue and is glad though disappointed with the cover design ('barbarous', 'hideous') and the quality of its content and style ('tawdry') (see specially LXII, LXVII:5:83, 108, 114).

Another matter that invites attention is the fact that *PB* is a purely South Indian affair, managed by five South Indians: B. Rajam Iyer is its editor. (Incidentally he is also a novelist of some sort; Sept. 1900; 'In Memoriam'). Most of the advertisers too belong to the Madras Presidency, and the ware offered for sale are locally manufactured. 'It is from Madras that the new light must spread all over India', wrote Vivekananda (LXII:5:109). The great man was not entirely correct—the new light spread from Dakshineswar, but was first visible in the South (*From Colombo to Almora*). The Peninsular certainly is awakening faster than the Himalayan region. The first editor's death in June leads to temporary suspension in *PB*'s publication, but there is no sharp break. Vivekananda is back in India. He takes over the responsibilities, transfers its headquarters first to Almora and then to Mayavati (about 6800 ft. above sea-level), and places it under the management of the newly-formed Brotherhood of Ramakrishna Monks. (Later on, in 1924, for the sake of convenience and owing to lack of transport facilities in the foothills of the Himalayas, the Printing Section is shifted to Calcutta, first to British Indian Street, later to Wellington Land, and finally to Dehi Entally Road.) From the first twenty issues or so it is apparent that the initial phase is a period of sore trial for the *PB* owing to financial stringency and other troubles such as paucity of good articles and advertisements, lack of modern printing machine, etc. Proof for this is found in the frequent appeals for donations, offer of backnumbers to agents at half the price (12 annas, or 75 paise, 12 issues). Captain J.H. Sevier, Mrs. Sevier and Swarupananda (the second editor) with their joint efforts effect some improvements both in the appearance and the content.

On 1 July 1898, the *PB* resumes publication with a new motto, in 'a new garb' like

a newly-risen Phoenix'; its size has been slightly reduced, and four pages have been added to the twelve of the original. The editorial appears with new energy, promising 'a regular supply of material from the pen of Vivekananda.' These changes soon prove to be a success and *PB* acquires some stability. There is a new cover design—simple and symbolic of the reawakening and in keeping with the rousing sonorous ode Vivekananda writes on the occasion. This ode adorns its first page for several years, to be replaced later on by *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (by Saradananda), and *Leaves from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Dec. 1900) by Sri 'M.', who is described as 'a son of the Lord and His Servant'. Thus starts a tradition of serializing biographical material, which soon comes to include *The Master As I Saw Him* (by Nivedita), *Brahmananda: The Spiritual Son of Sri Ramakrishna* (by Satprakashananda), *Shivananda* (by Pavitrananda) and others right up to the sixties of this century.

Almost simultaneously with the *PB*'s resuscitation and articles from Vivekananda and Saradananda, comes in Nivedita. She continues to write in various ways until her premature death in 1911; she is always delectable whether in biography, travelogue, mythical tales, or letters. Contributions come in also from Ella Wheeler Wilcox, F.J. Alexander, A. Christina, Virajananda, Dorothy Krugger and Abhedananda. They provide nourishment to the infant until more well-known writers from overseas, e.g. C. Isherwood, Romain Rolland, Nicholas de Roerich, lend a hand. Sri M's *Leaves from the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* is destined to become a classic. More than fifty years later N. Bangariayya calls him (Mahendra Nath Gupta) 'a recording angel' after hearing him reminisce about his 'Lord', in an enraptured mood (June 1949).

The *Gospel* inspires thousands with its

poise and narrative appeal. However in some of the tales about Sri Ramakrishna by the Brotherhood there is justly a touch of emotional evangelism. In the reminiscences by lay devotees the characters of Turiyananda, Brahmananda, Shivananda and others appear in vivid colours. Lytton Stratchey and Maurois are still to become hot favourites, and no biographer is yet prepared to take up the dissecting scalpel. As history reveals, great men, rarely appreciated in their days, become fluid and unfixed in Time—each successive generation viewing them differently. It is enough to note that the *PB* absorbs the shock, and the work goes on. 'Ourselves'/'News and reports' reveal that Abhedananda has taken up in right earnest the task of preaching Vedanta in the West, continuing Vivekananda's work.

The beloved founder of the *PB* passes away in 1902. Tributes pour in in a flood, thinning to a stream later on. These include essays, sketches, sonnets. Their number is legion. Space will not allow us to trace further the course of devotion and love given vent to in this regard. To do so will leave less room for other concerns of this paper.

3. There is one pseudonymous essay (Sept. 1898) in a dialogue form on 'Islam, A Mighty Testimony to Vedanta' by one 'Mohammedananda', which is rather amusing. There also follow a number of saints' lives (as Vivekananda wished) beginning with 'Nanda, the Pariah Saint'; one almost in each number in the early years, and thereafter less frequently as, perhaps the readers' taste for them diminishes. The flood of scepticism released in Europe by Darwin, Julian Huxley and others have reached India's shores. At first the great ones are treated: Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Chaitanya, Kabir, Nanak, Frey Francisco (Spanish) and, when the sacred store is well-nigh exhausted, the less known ones—Rabia of Basra; St.

Catherine of Italy; Habib i Ajmi of Iran, who could not quote a single verse of the Koran and was yet revered as a saint; Tyagaraj of South India (Abhedananda); Louis of Blois of Spanish Netherlands (Aug. 1940); Dadu (Lokeswarananda) and—to leap across a decade—John the Baptist (LXV:12); Guru Govinda Singh (M.V. Bindra, LXV:11); St. Teresa: the Bride of the Sun (Sept. 1980). The Holy Mother walks in shyly at a slow pace from the twenties onwards. Gandhiji's and Aurobindo's impact is felt from the forties. And, naturally enough Ramakrishna is there in every number, in one form or another.

A few of the above keep reappearing at intervals, each time in a new garb, since their appeal is perennial. Thus, for instance, we come across Krishna and Richard Rolle in 1980; Buddha, or rather his 'brain', is discussed in April 1983. On Ramakrishna there are eight articles in 1937 (and three on Vivekananda), and twenty four years later there are six. The 'illiterate' saint is evoking warm response though the wind of scepticism is blowing hard. A Hindu, Harendra Chandra Paul, writes for years on the Sufi saints and Sufism. Ramana Maharshi of Tamil Nadu is another of the Greats.

In a hundred ways the *PB* reveals Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and other saints according to the writer's conviction or conscience. A jewel's brilliance depends on the power of the light under which it is turned round and examined. Every age makes and remakes its gods in its own image. With the passage of time the periodical has to evolve new lines of exposure as there are signs of impatience among readers. Hence the series called 'The Lamp Vivekananda Lighted', 'Profiles in Greatness', 'How They Walked on the Razor's Edge', 'They Lived with God', 'God Lived with Them', and so on to the eighties.

Poetry is the natural language of lovers when they are entranced by a human being. Between 1898 and 1925 there are numerous devotional verses dedicated to Rama-krishna and others of the Brotherhood by their devotees' disciples, but their proportion decreases sharply in time.

4. Though the First World War did not come as close to India as the Second, it generated enough suspense and anxiety to cause a drop in the quality of the *PB*'s content between 1915-20. The energies of the intellectuals are engaged in mundane affairs more than before. 'Swami Vivekananda and Mysticism' is anonymous (1915)—its writer is either too modest or too shaky. There is scarcely a writer now who appears to have a distinctive style.

During the thirties and halfway through the forties, contributions come pouring in both from overseas and North and South India; now and then, from as far as Japan. This may be called the Golden Age of the journal. Among the writers are Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Mahendralal Sarkar, Brojen Seal, Nicholas de Roerich (he writes for many years to come); Richard C. Thurnwold, W.H. Koch ('A Great Western Mystic and the Universal Message of Bhakti', Aug. 1937), and George Russell (AE), some of whom continue to write during the following two or three decades, to live for ever in the *PB*. Excellence and abundance, precision, profoundness and variety mark the output while in the preceding period excellence crept in only now and then. Dorothy Krugger's 'Sonnet Sequence' opens the 1938 volume. The enhanced dignity of *PB*, by virtue of the Mission's work abroad and in India, attracts a large body of research material to the periodical. The practice of 'Jiva is Shiva' begins to pay dividend.

The surest indications of *PB*'s stature are the reviews of J. Nehru's *Letters from a Father*

to *His Daughter* (1930) and *Poems* (English translation) of Tagore's lyrics. The reviewer is D.M. and his criticism has been upheld by posterity (Sept. 1942)

Much of the meat the *PB* provides now is tough for ordinary teeth; scholasts are unburdening their eminent learning in ancient, medieval, religious, and secular subjects. First we have a comparative study of 'Sankara and Bradley' (1930); then, at intervals, 'The Upanishadic View of Truth', 'Philosophical Implications in Einstein's Relativity' (1937), Asokenath Shastry's 'Universal Causation' (series), and S.C. Chatterjee's 'Alexander's Theory of Space and Time' (this is Samuel Alexander, not the world conqueror). There also appear a critique of Aurobindo's *Life Divine* (May 1940), which is anonymous; 'Psychological Orientation to the Concept of Culture'; Kalidas Bhattacharya's 'From Existence to Superexistence'; Provas Jivan Chowdhury's 'Physics and Metaphysics'; Chinmoyee Chatterjee's 'Samvarga Vidya' (1955); 'A Vedantic Approach' (Jan. 1949); and 'Vibhuti Yoga in the Vedas'. The pens of Justices, Bar-at-Laws, (among them Sarat Chandra Bose, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's brother), advocates, scientists, economists, mathematicians, historians, psychologists, ICS and IES men, PRSs, Ph.D.s and D. Litt.s, and D.Sc.s, are all here. Benoy K. Sarkar, Suniti K. Chatterjee, Anil Baran Roy, Haridas Bhattacharya, and Satkari Mukherjee, are all versatile scholars and prodigies in more than one field of learning. South India too has its contributors in B. Kupuswamy, S.S. Raghavachar, V.S. Iyer and S.N.L. Srivastava. We cannot place R.M. Loomba 'The Empirical Ego, Metaphysical Ego and Mystical Ego', (Nov. 1940).

A little later some change in the level of scholarship is noticeable with the appearance of Kalidas Nag, Roma Chowdhury, O.C. Ganguli, Sudhindra Nath

Bose and Haren Ch. Paul—less of thoroughness and a stereotype approach, showing perseverance, not intensiveness. There is a small drop in the number of anonymous writers—there are only two in 1945—'A wanderer' and 'A Vedantist'—but a larger number of translations. Diversification, cutting down articles' size, fewer intrusions of long ones, etc. indicate that the editorial board is pretty busy. And there are members of the 'heaven-born' service 'condescending' to write of whom Charles Johnson is the first ('The Destiny of India'), followed by N.C. Mahato, P.K. Acharya (XLV), B.N. De, S.W. Shivesh Warker (March 1942), and the I.P.(S) R.E.R. Lees, who, in a war-torn world, muses: His (*Ramakrishna's*) very thesis of unity in itself is a philosophy of toleration. Had Ramakrishna been alive, he would have believed that it is by divine will that we are forced to fight, that evil must be combated...'. This from a much-harassed officer of the British Raj is a surprise. The fiftieth volume has 'Draft Hindu Code' by four Hindu Justices of the Calcutta High court, and another by Rashbehari Mukherjee, and still another by Francis Young-husband (KCSI). There is, it seems, 'a regular crowd in the valley'!

In 1939, when the earth is literally blood-soaked, a balanced and judicious appraisal of the Ramakrishna Movement is made by Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India. He finds in Ramakrishnaism 'a message of hope' for the horror-stricken world. A year later, A.R. Mudaliar (a 'Dewan Bahadur') speaks more or less in the same strain.

5. It is 1945. Time changes, and with time human tendencies. The *PB* steps into its fiftieth year, which is celebrated by bringing out 'Golden Jubilee' edition in addition to the general one. An ex-member of the ICS, Sant. Nihal Singh 'takes a backward glance' at the fifty volumes of the past, and extends his article's caption with 'A Semi-Century's

Striving in the Fields of Bharata's Culture'. The journal has journeyed a long way from the collection of secondhand material, reports, obituary notices, extracts from the classics of one kind or another, news culled from various sources and other sorts of space-fillers. It has marched with the times, diversified further and grown into a research journal. Some of the matter printed in the fifties and sixties are certainly not for consumption by ordinary minds. The spirit of the *Brahmavadin* has come into the *PB*. The theological element necessarily diminishes, and singularism gets scarcer, but the magazine can hardly do without *Bhakti* and mysticism (LXV)!

However, there is always some dish left for the simple palate in every number. Of readily intelligible historical, economic, scientific matters there is plenty. As many as six articles on education appear in Vol. XLV. For the widest audience—even for students in graduate schools and teachers—at all levels are the travelogues published down to the nineties. The scents and colours of the western Himalayas, Amarnath, Nanda Devi, Nasik, etc. and the blurred splendour of Rajasthan as well as of South India, their many races and sharp contrasts vivify these travel accounts. As the journal steps into its fiftieth year, the Editor promises anew to stick to the path laid by Vivekananda (Jan. 1945).

6. The pride of the *PB* of the fifties is certainly the series on 'New Discoveries regarding Swami Vivekananda' by 'An American Devotee', begun in the March issue of 1955, and later brought out in book form (six volumes) with the title slightly altered: a monumental work, into which Marie Louis Burke poured her love, labour, patience and money.

As the century advances, the conflict between new knowledge and received

opinions fills the pages with the hubbub of debate, though the tone is subdued. A systematic effort at modernization is evident from the inclusion of Harold B. Phillips's 'Six Systems of Hindu Philosophy', Provas Jiban Chowdhury's 'Vedanta as Scientific Philosophy' (1960), Ranganathananda's 'Appeal of Vedanta to Modern Man', Nityabodhananda's 'Bhakti Yoga of St. John of the Cross' (1962), and so on. This year, in June, our Journal reviews a book sent from New York, *The Science of Philosophy*. S.K. Balasubramanian subjects 'Agastya and Ravana' to a scientific appraisal, though there seems to be little 'science' in it

In the years after the partition of India and its tragic aftermath (1945-60), the quality of the paper as a whole dips, and the language begins to flag. The writings, including the Editorials, now must willy nilly deal with ephemeral problems of the day. A certain degree of cynicism is apparent in the volumes from 1955 to 1960. But Vivekananda's *PB* rallies swiftly. As the sixties gradually flow into the seventies and as the reputation of the Ramakrishna Mission grows with its expanding philanthropic work, the periodical acquires a fresh momentum. A new generation of scholars emerges and takes us on to both old and new pastures. There is room for naming only a few of the outstanding: Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, P. Sama Rao, Sudhindra Dasgupta, Max Nolan, G. Srinivasan, Lokeswarananda, Nityabodhananda, Yatiswarananda, T.M.P. Mahadevan ('Aurobindo's Interpretation of the Vedas', March 1973) and Joel Middleton. M.L. Burke is still indefatigable as we see from her 'Swami Vivekananda in Boston, March 1896', in the May issue of 1973. A careful, analytic assessment in guarded language is also made in the Editorials of India's performance in various spheres of national life. Despite its best efforts, the Mission can scarcely cope with the prevailing social atmos-

phere; the jazz culture is slowly but surely taking over.

From the latter part of the seventies through the eighties to the opening years of the nineties, there is again a sharp drop in quality. The veteran members of the Brotherhood are working feverishly to fill in the vacuum as Vivekananda and his small band had to in the earliest numbers. The excellent College System, evolved in Europe after trials and errors over three centuries, and introduced into India by the British, has been thoughtlessly and cruelly tampered with; the externals of the system appear to be the same, or nearly the same, but the spirit has fled by the end of the century's third quarter. Things are literally falling apart; noteworthy material is difficult to get, and research papers are poor, with footnotes borrowed from other sources trying to hide the shallowness.

Therefore, once again the noble Brotherhood steps into the breach and fights: Budhananda ('Worldly Duties and Spiritual Life' — captioned by the Editor as 'An essay on Applied Religion', Jan. 1973), Prem-ananda, Lokeswarananda ('The Role of Religion in a Modern State', March), Bhuteshananda ('Sri Ramakrishna's Message of Hope'), and Ranganathananda, ably supported by Leta Jane Lewis ('Vedantic Ideals of Beauty', March 1980) and Margaret Bedrosian ('Is Vedanta a Philosophy of Escape?') ensure that the *PB* maintains its standard. Quite delectable is the Editorial pen-picture of Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, illustrated and in limpid English in 'The Mayavati of Vivekananda': 'Mayavati Life has got its own dimensions.' The January number of 1989 has several illuminating pieces: Gargi's (M.L. Burke) 'Hail Swami Vivekananda' speaking of a documentary discovery; a One-Act Play on the Swami; Tathagatananda's tribute to Freidrich Maximillian Muller (Nov. 1989),

and Nirod Baran Chakraborty's simplification of 'Swami Vivekananda's Contribution to Indian Philosophy' (Dec. 1989).

The approach of the centenary of Vivekananda's sudden emergence on the world stage in 1893 leads to an outburst of enthusiasm so that the hero is invested with a halo of romantic idealism, which probably he himself would have disliked. Most of the articles received are naturally prolix. To make up the deficiency the Editorial Board has taken certain steps: 1. Long editorials (e.g. 'Work and Discipline', 'Meditation and Sacrifice'); 2. Serialization of articles (e.g. 'Joy of the Illumined', 'Hints to Seekers of God'); 3. Reprints from other journals (March 1989, p.136); 4. Reproducing from other compilations (e.g. on Ramana Maharshi); 5. Translation of work published in the *Udbodhan*; 6. New features entitled 'Dharma Samanvay' (Harmony of Religions); and 7. Last Page Comments. These and the unpublished letters of Vivekananda, Nivedita, Turiyananda and others of the Mission fill the pages.

So far as the externals of the *PB* in the last quarter of this century are concerned, better editorial management, systematic arrangement of material, and introduction of sub-head lines which help to clarify the organization of matter may be mentioned.

7. To one more feature of the *PB*—one that historically is not a little important—attention must be drawn before we conclude. That is the interesting social picture which emerges in the advertisements of the first numbers (1896–1920). The heterogeneity of commodities offered for sale makes a curious reading by their ludicrous contrasts and/or strange ways of inculcating, eliciting or stimulating consumers' demands. Notices of sacrificial brassware, *ghanta*, *kamandalu*, *ghata*, Vedic schools, theological magazines, devotional

books, quack medicines, Grouse's *Translation of Tulsi Krit Ramayana* and umbrellas rub shoulders in the young journal's pages. One insertion in bold type runs as follows: 'Unprecedented Hindu Watches for Rough Wear and Presentation'(I:2). It passes our comprehension how watches could be Hindu - or Muslim or Christian! G.A. Nateson and Company of Madras announces the publication of 'Himalayan Series', and there is *PB*'s own 'Pure Himalayan Tea Manufactured on the Mayavati Plantation' (April 1912)! A Vaidya Shastry promises, in 1915, 'removal of all troubles and elimination of doctor's bills'; another asks readers 'to try his preparation once' because that would cure 'all kinds of diseases'; and how cheap it seems to us: One tin for 40 days at Rs.2/- !

However, of more serious and significant notices and advertisements too there is a sum: Nivedita wins a prize of Rs.100/- in an all-India essay competition for the best essay in English against the caste system. One of the five examiners was Pandit Hara Prasad Shastri, Principal, Sanskrit College, Calcutta (Vol. 5). An appeal for funds is issued in October 1902 by High Court Vakils and A. Natesen (Editor, *The Indian Review*, Madras) for a memorial to Vivekananda, describing 'the Order of Sannyasins to which the disciples of Ramakrishna belong' as 'the noblest in the world for their work of philanthropy untainted by any consideration for the promotion of selfish ends.'

By the twenties the *PB* is attracting notices from Luzac and Co. (London), Thacker Spink & Co. (Calcutta and Bombay), and Higginsbotham (Madras). Obviously our paper has become popular with the English-reading audience. Brahmachari Gurudas's book *Why I became a*

(Continued on page 49)

Postmodernism, *Prabuddha Bharata* and Ramakrishna-Vedanta

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

This original paper, studying the PB from an anthologist's angle, uncovers a heretofore unnoticed wealth in its 100 years' pages—anticipation of and solutions to the problems thrown up by deconstructive postmodernism.

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I

In the recent history of Western (sic?) thought nothing has been more inimical to religious/wisdom traditions than 'postmodernism'. Though Nietzsche and Hegel could be regarded as pioneers, postmodernist thought took shape mainly in the writings of Saussure, Foucault, Lacan and, above all, Derrida. Complex and highly polemical, their discourses resist generalizations. A few assumptions, however, emerge clearly:

1. Whether it is linguistics, psychology or philosophy, the experiencing subject is dissolved and decentred. An autonomous, unified self processing experience from a fixed, unalterable centre is a mythic monster. The self is a socially *constructed* complex of invented *episteme*, that is, formalized ways of perception, meaning and knowledge. Thus, if the modernists celebrated the death of the deity, the postmodernists declare the dissolution of an integrated self.

2. With the self decentred, we can no longer sustain any 'foundational narratives': first causes, origins—God, ethical systems, laws, etc.—are all historically invalid, experientially indefensible.

3. With all absolutes negated,

binaries (mind/matter, man/woman) are not *natural* cognitions but socially constructed structures often used for privileging one and marginalising the other. Here are the roots of gender bias, colonialism and racism.

4. Language neither reflects an ultimate absolute nor does it reveal a transcendental dimension. It neither reveals nor reflects but constructs reality (realities, rather). In effect, there are no prelogical, transcendental links between the signifier and the signified. The links are arbitrary and random. Words are signs, not symbols of a language-transcending reality. As Richard Taranaš in a recent assessment of the postmodern has put it: 'the most radically sceptical epistemological currents in the post-modern mind,'¹ are rooted in the analysis of language as, in Wittgenstein's image, 'a cage' which prevents access to any form of reality other than the one determined by its own structure

Thus, we do not have a logically coherent view of language, since language itself is an indeterminate chain of words or signifiers referring endlessly to other signifiers. With no possibility of any fixed, foundational meaning, even the unconscious—long

1. Richard Taranaš, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 399.

assumed as the ground of being is, in Lacan's view, structured like language.

5. With texts having only contexts and no immanent pre-texts, there can be no definitive meanings or final interpretations. What we have is a constant *difference*, an endless *deferral* of meaning. No logos—or logocentre is conceivable. 'No presence beyond play' is assumable.

II

The overall impact of this great epistemic rupture in Western systems of thought is both negative and positive. Negatively, it signifies ethical relativism. Ethical behaviour can now be wholly sensate, with impunity.² Since there is no ultimate meaning or significance, one commits oneself to what Charlene Spretnak calls 'the ideology of atomized detachment.' As a character says: 'There's nothing to be grounded in except what we invent. It's all just discourse—sociologically produced language games people take for some kind of objective correlation with a fixed outer reality because that makes them feel secure.'³

Endless deferral leaves no scope for what Derrida calls 'transcendental signifieds.'⁴ Therefore, religious systems are just those: systems validated not by any extra-sen-

suous sources of knowledge and experience but by an accepted set of assumptions. Similarly, since no ultimate meaning and significance are envisaged or endorsed, the meaning of any thing is its structure. In short, if traditionally religion was the centre, with the dissolution of that centre, it can no longer be regarded as the nucleus of reconstructive potential.

This is one 'text' of deconstruction: on the more 'positive' side, Western thought seems now to be slowly 'deconstructing' deconstruction itself. In the wake of contemporary experience embodied in features such as ecocide, institutionalized violence, exemplified in the media, politics and gender, and above all, neocolonialism which leads to amoral exploitation of the Third World, (the 'disintegration' of the socialist block, too!), an attempt is made to examine and appropriate modes and correctives imbedded in wisdom traditions. And, after the euphoria of the New Age,⁵ 'the flower children', the promise of instant *nirvana* and other vagaries of the exotic transplants of 'Eastern' traditions, an attempt is now evident to set the whole thing in perspectival correctives. The effort is to trace interconnectedness of texts and traditions.

What Professor Sidney Hook said in the columns of *Prabuddha Bharata* on the eve of the sixties has—if any retrospect is allowed by postmodernists—great immediacy:

In the quest of wisdom, it seems to me absurd to fall victim to vocational or professional imperialism and to make invidious distinctions between the different disciplines....Wisdom is found in the recognition and solution of life's

2. For a fascinating and highly original interpretation of the senses see *A Natural History of the Senses* by Diane Auckerman (New York: Random House, Inc., 1991).

3. Charlene Spretnak, *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), p. 16.

4. Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', *Modern Criticism and Theory*, ed. David Lodge (London: Longman, 1988), p. 110. For a comparative study of Derrida see *Derrida and Indian Philosophy* by Harold Coward (Albany: State University of New York, 1990).

5. For an interesting study of these tendencies see Rachel Storm, *In Search of Heaven and Earth* (London: The Aquarian Press, 1992).

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

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No. 1

Homage to Swami Vivekananda*

(Iman-Bhūpālī; Tritāl; Pajjhatikā-meter)

SWAMI GARGANANDA

शिवस्वरूपं मूर्तिविवेकं नमामि वीरं महायतीन्द्रम् ।

विश्ववरेण्यं जगदाचार्यं प्रेमपरं चिरनिर्भयचित्तम् ॥

1. I salute you whose real nature is Śiva, who are an embodiment of discrimination, a hero, and King among the great sages; who are adored by the world, a world-teacher full of love, whose mind is ever fearless.

समग्रभारत-विचरणकारी दलितपतितजन-भयार्तिहारी ।

सेवात्याग-सुकेतनधारी नरोत्तमस्त्वं ममचिरशरणम् ॥

2. O best among men, who are a monk wandering over the whole of India; dispeller of the miseries and fears of the downfallen and the oppressed; bearer of the beautiful banner of service and renunciation—for ever are you my refuge.

असीम-करुणा सततं नयने मानवमहिमा तव हृद्गगने ।

जागरणी श्रुतिवाणी वदने जयोऽस्तु ते त्वं शक्तिनिदानम् ॥

3. In your eyes you always have limitless sympathy; in your mental firmament, the glory of humanity; and on your lips the rousing message of the Upanisads. Victory to you, the source of strength.

देहि देव तेजः शुभबुद्धिं पौरुषमभयम् जीवन-शुद्धिम् ।

बलं प्रधानं श्रद्धां ज्ञानं हे स्वामिन् वन्दे तव चरणम् ॥

4. O divine being, grant me spiritual power, right understanding, (unflinching) self-effort, purity in life, chiefly—strength, conviction and spiritual Knowledge. O revered monk, I prostrate at your holy feet.

* Swami Vivekananda's Birthday is on 23 Monday this month.

publicity hype, number of instant converts, centres, larger-than-life gurus, etc.

The result is the forging of an alternate idiom remarkably free from the problematic binaries of most logical thinking. As Huston Smith in a perceptive critique of the postmodernist mind (if such a monistic monster could be conceived!) observes: 'The leviathan of nature was not to be drawn from the great sea of mystery by the fishhook of man's paltry mind.'⁸ An obvious implication is how to come to terms with *different* fishhooks or, as current idiom would have it, how do we constitute credible and not marginalized versions of the Other/Otherness? The project has been elegantly evoked by Ruth Nanda Anshen: '...spiritual and moral solidarity of humanity is now a practical possibility, not to say a necessity, and can be achieved without attempting to obliterate or surrender variations in belief, culture or institutions which bestow upon mankind its pluralism, richness, and vigour.'⁹

The language here is philosophical but the issue is clear: how do we relate ourselves to the Other, whether the Other is culturally 'alien' or politically antithetical. A recent statement of this issue is more sophisticated; says R.S. Khare:

The issue now is not simply to represent the Other but to *recognize* it anew, with its own powers of recognition, representation and persuasion intact. However, to recognize the Other this way is to examine the *unresolved* issue of one's own self-identity, especially as we

privilege self via different critical accounts (historical, cultural, and political). But such privileging processes have a cost: they increase ethnocentrism, alienate the Other and produce 'a crisis of representation.'¹⁰

Ramakrishna himself would find no difficulty in suggesting a way out of this issue stemming from his own experience. (He would, one feels, find *only* the language of the Other tiresome!). Among what Khare calls 'the Hindu's own major athletes of spirit',¹¹ Ramakrishna would ask us to recall his own experience of religions other than his (own?) as paradigmatic for a possible solution. His experience is essentially religious but sustains discursive variations. Thus, as Francis X. Clooney has noted, 'certain new experiences may precede the formulation of correct terms in which to speak about them, and may have to be described in a somewhat unrefined fashion and in a mixture of terms from various terms.'¹² Whatever the implications Clooney's remarks carry, one thing is obvious: not only various terms but various frames find Ramakrishna a sustainable figure. We have now even a unique 'subaltern' Ramakrishna incisively studied by Partha Chatterjee, Sumit Sarkar¹³ and 'others'. Here is a

8. Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (Wheaton: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), pp. 5-6.

9. Ruth Nanda Anshen, 'India and America: Their Idealistic Traditions', *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1955, p. 48.

10. R.S. Khare, 'The Other's Double—The Anthropologist's Bracketed Self: Notes on Cultural Representation and Privileged Discourse', *New Literary History*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 1-2.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

12. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., 'Ramakrishna and Christ', *Studies on Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1988), p. 96

13. See Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Indian reprint (Oxford University Press, 1994), specially chapter III; Sumit Sarkar's 'Rama-

To the Awakened India

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Written to Prabuddha Bharata or Awakened India in August 1898, when the journal was transferred from Madras to Almora, Himalayas, into the hands of the Brotherhood founded by Swamiji.

Once more awake!

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

Resume thy march,

With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest even of the roadside dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold, and free. Awakener, ever
Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Thy home is gone,

Where loving hearts had brought thee up and
Watched with joy thy growth. But Fate is strong—
This is the law—all things come back to the source
They sprung, their strength to renew.

Then start afresh

From the land of thy birth, where vast cloud-belted
Snows do bless and put their strength in thee,
For working wonders new The heavenly
River tune thy voice to her own immortal song;
Deodar shades give thee eternal peace.

And all above,

Himala's daughter, Umā, gentle, pure,
The Mother that resides in all as Power
And Life, who works all works and
Makes of One the world, whose mercy
Ope's the gate to Truth and shows

mode of experiencing reality in its proliferating multiplicity. Ranging from the 'Mother's play' to Ramakrishna's own 'play within the play' we are constantly led to deconstruct, for, at every stage there are 'subversive' texts. An artist/actor—which probably helped Ramakrishna to constantly decentre his 'self'—Ramakrishna assumes many apparently contradictory 'roles': an incurable innocence jostles with the profoundest experience; similarly, an acute observant eye gets dissolved in an 'eyeless' experience; moreover, the mimetic modes/texts of song/dance/drama rupture, so to say, the 'centrality' of mystical discourse; above all, a child-like worry about illness—about an injured arm, an 'upset' stomach, even the dreaded cancer—exists simultaneously with *evident* transcendence of the 'centre' of illness: the body.

This constant deferral of the referents of 'play' in Ramakrishna is also free from the endless ethical relativism it generates in discourses today. This freedom has as its source love—a mode of coming to terms with one's own and others' self increasingly visible in today's discourse of the Other. Expression and experience of love, as R.S. Khare argues, are free, largely from 'the will to secure self-privilege and textual power.' This is a direction 'postmodernist temper' should consider as a (subversive, subaltern?) text for 'issues of power, domination, and control in different guises for the self via the Other.' (One context where love of the opponent, conversion rather than coercion, led to tangible results is the Gandhian technique. There is the recorded instance in the Master's own life of the tangible experience of the Other's pain on being whipped registering itself as bruises on the Master's body!).

Finally, this love has another feature in Ramakrishna which is remarkably free from the binary or sacred/profane. Any kind of

love, even infatuation, could be a centre for freedom, provided—here is the sharp difference from amoral postmodernism—it involves exemption from getting frozen at only one level. Thus, the love of a paramour is a *text*, but a text which has to be decentred; conversely, even getting lost in the love of God is to be destabilized; the lover of God has to move from the mountain to the market place.

From this perspective, the culmination (sorry for a hierarchical word; old habits die hard!) of this love for Ramakrishna is the Mother. And in the context of the nearly global assertion of woman/feminist stances and widespread activism and the recent emergence of women's religious texts as subversive texts, Ramakrishna's Mother and all that She (as an archetype?) entails has tremendous implications as discursive/narrational texts with the emergence of a new genre called 'women's spirituality and the re-emergence of the Goddess', Ramakrishna-Vedanta's insights into this area are of immediate significance. In this regard many women writers regard the Hindu paradigm of the Mother as a counterpointing for the pervasive (and threatening) Western Oedipal structure. As Elinor W. Gadon in a massive study of the re-emergence of the Sacred Female has pointed out, what is needed is a 'resacralization' of the purely(?) biological:

The re-emerging Goddess metaphor, symbol, divine force, is larger than the Westernized idealized model of maternal being. When Hindus cry to Kali in their devotion 'Ma! Ma!' they are not calling out to her as they would to their biological mother but to the mother of the universe, the life force that brought all into being and that sustains all that lives.¹⁷

Thus, love emerges as the encompassing

17. Elinor W. Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*

language of any context. Neither random, nor arbitrary, it functions both to communicate and to express oneself. A new syntax of plurality without reduction of it to any pathological unity makes even 'translation' acquire new configurations in Ramakrishna.

IV

Prabuddha Bharata has been obviously and remarkably 'mediating' texts in changing contexts with dedicated openness and committed interiority. The nucleus is Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta but this is open and adaptive, amazingly flexible cutting across cultural/religious idioms with unique resilience. What Dr. George Williams, the Harvard theologian, observed in the fifties is becoming increasingly visible. He said:

On the philosophical level...while the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order look back to their founder as one more than a saint, the philosophical significance of their enterprise is that they have found in Ramakrishna a formula for adapting the philosophy of India, Vedanta, for expansion

beyond the borders of India and for serious scrutiny in the centres of philosophy and psychology around the world. Without the impulse of Ramakrishna, the great treasures of the Indian philosophical speculation might not have become so available, in the present flexible and constructive form, to the Western world.¹⁸

Flexibility and constructive form, indeed, sum-up the thrust of Ramakrishna Vedanta and to let the eminent Harvard astronomer Harlow Shapley to have the last word: 'The mind and heart of Sri Ramakrishna encompasses all who work and think on the problems of man's place in the scheme of things.'¹⁹

In these terms, *Prabuddha Bharata* has endless temporality to cover and may (spiritual) promises to keep! □

(Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: The Acquarian Press, 1990), p. 304.

18. George Williams, 'Harvard and Hinduism', *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1956, p. 57.

19. Harlow Shapley, 'Mankind in a World of Stars', *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1956, p. 18.

One Hundred Years of the Prabuddha Bharata

(1896-1995) A Brief Survey

(Continued from page 42)

Hindu, biographies of eminent Indians, photographs of Ramakrishna and his disciples are also in the market.

8. The advertisements and notices are amusing and interesting, no doubt. But the modern reader who goes to the *PB* expecting only lightness and vivacity is apt to feel disappointed, because the principal content of the journal is of great historical

importance and has a perennial value. In the history of Indian journalism few alliances have been more fruitful than that between the *PB*'s writers and readers. And rightly so, for the *PB* has followed the path laid down by Vivekananda a century ago. Vivekananda (to borrow a Biblical phrase) cast a bit of bread on the waters in the distant past, and, as promised, it has been returned to us many fold. □

FROM OUR READERS

Dear Swami,

Your Magazine is excellent. My suggestion is that you may please have a column where we readers can write and tell you their enquiries regarding subjects not well known to them.

18.7.94

Lily De
Calcutta

Dear Swami,

It is refreshing to note that plans are afoot to open a dialogue between 'consumers' and 'producers' of *Prabuddha Bharata*! Swamiji surely will be happy to see the periodical responding to changes in time—ever flowing and not stopping to stagnate.

An ordinary middle-aged housewife, till three years ago I did not know *Prabuddha Bharata* existed. A whirling eddy in life's stream pulled me into the world of Thakur, Ma and Swamiji, and consequently I had to be a subscriber. At first it was a question of blind loyalty, but now it is paying dividends beyond expectations.

In this audio-visual age, inclusion of photographs in the *Prabuddha Bharata* will add colour to the scene. But political figures should not sneak in—either in speeches or in snapshots. Readers of *Prabuddha Bharata* would treat it as disrespect to Swamiji's ideals to make such allowances. It would not then be any different from scores of other periodicals in the newstand.

There is no junior section in *Prabuddha Bharata*. Children must be attracted to spiritualism even before they are fifteen, while they are really soft and malleable. Easy-to-read stories from Scriptures, with animated sketches, will liven the pages. This section may be for juniors, but definitely that doesn't mean that quality will suffer, because writing for children needs serious dedication, love and special talent.

It would be wonderful if a way was found for readers of *Prabuddha Bharata* to form a ring of friendship. Like-minded souls transcending local limitations can be the gate way to a practical United Nations:- drops uniting to make the ocean...

1.5.94

Smt. Nandita Ghosh
Calcutta

Dear Swami,

Prabuddha Bharata—Swamiji, the Great God Shiva, Mahadeva—wants India Awakened and so it must happen: individual awakening and national awakening.

Yes, *Prabuddha Bharata* is doing just all that your 'letter' (April '94) wants to know.

It was after reading the *Complete Works* of Swamiji, from the very first page, that there was an awakening in me. It made me realize what an utterly subconscious or unconscious life I was leading, an utterly ignorant existence, existence without direction or meaning. But his words, from the very first page of his *Complete Works* gave me a jolt, made me sit upright, and open my eyes to this Creation, this World Phenomenon! Some wider consciousness was aroused after reading his words.

Prabuddha Bharata is one of the holy rivers with its source in the lofty Himalaya-like thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and it will flow eternally taking care of humankind and creation.

Whoever has thirsted for Truth has benefited from *Prabuddha Bharata*, myself, my family, friends, and others—all look forward to its monthly arrival and hungrily go through the articles. Give us pure spiritual stuff and keep us happy. Like minute homeopathic doses, these *Prabuddha Bharata* numbers cater to our needs.

Swamiji and his *Prabuddha Bharata* have made Vedanta, the Science of sciences, the Science of Living, reach every man who would care to know, and in such simple direct language—nothing could be easier to understand.

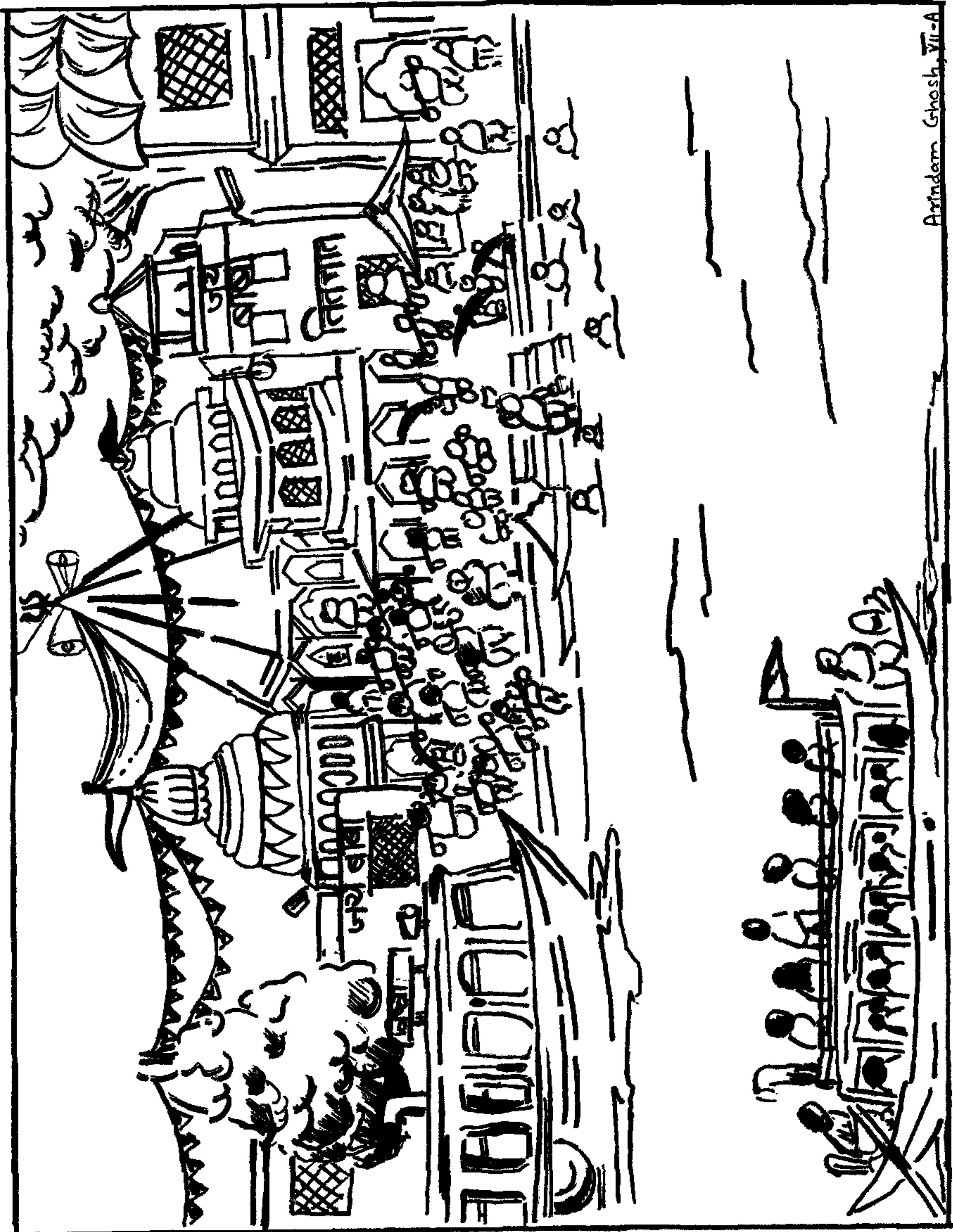
Every word that Swamiji uttered is a mantra: 'Do not look for Him, see Him,'; 'Each one of us is a bubble in the Ocean, some are waves. What is in the Ocean is also in the bubble and the wave; the bubble and the wave go back into the ocean.'

Reading his *Works* or *Prabuddha Bharata* is like breathing in oxygen, the vital air.

22.7.94

Mrs. S.H. Padubidri
Bombay

ON MAYAVATI
pp. 51-80



Festival at a place of pilgrimage

Mayavati, The Home of Prabuddha Bharata

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

Prabuddha Bharata has entered the fiftieth year* of its useful life. My hearty congratulations to the staff and management on the celebration of its Golden Jubilee by a Special Number. During this long period, its life-current has not flowed in a uniformly even stream; there have been ebbs and flows. Started at Madras under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda, shortly after his unprecedented success at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, U.S.A., in 1893, it ceased to appear for a time in 1898, on the untimely death of its gifted editor, Mr. Rajam Iyer. But it soon re-emerged, gathering fresh momentum, as it were, at Almora, under the able editorship of Swami Swarupananda. When captain and Mrs. Sevier, ardent English disciples of Swami Vivekananda, founded the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, 50 miles east of Almora, in 1899, *Prabuddha Bharata* was transferred there. From that time on, Mayavati has remained its home, although it is printed and published from Calcutta since 1924. For the last fifty years it has been carrying from door to door the eternal, life-giving message of Vedanta, the universal message of the oneness of existence and the divinity of man, so eloquently preached by Swami Vivekananda. His benediction on the journal is to be seen in his poem 'To the Awakened India' (*Complete Works*, vol. IV, p. 387). The progress it has made in its Himalayan home amply justifies the Swami's high hopes about its mission. The torch of illumination it has borne all these years burns in undimmed lustre and guides countless pilgrims on the path of Truth. *Prabuddha Bharata* has long been considered

* Extracted from the Golden Jubilee Number of *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1945.

to be one of the best cultural magazines not only in India but in the outside world as well. Its lofty vision of mankind as one Brotherhood united in bonds of love is a potent force for universal uplift—'the regeneration of man the brute into man the god.' As years roll on, its beneficent influence will be felt more and more throughout the civilized world.

It has had notable contributors, including Swami Vivekananda himself, whose memorable visit to Mayavati in January 1901, was a great impetus to the band of selfless monks who were untiringly nursing the magazine in those early days. Sister Nivedita was a regular contributor, and wrote besides other valuable articles the Occasional Notes since the premature death of Swami Swarupananda in 1906 till her own untimely death in 1911. One also recalls the name of Frank J. Alexander, a brilliant young American, whose facile pen and remarkable insight into Indian philosophy and culture enriched its pages with fascinating articles sometimes anonymously or under assume names such as 'Monk Tej Narayan'. It was he who, during his stay at Mayavati in 1911 and subsequent years, helped in writing *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, published in four volumes by the Advaita Ashrama. The premature passing away in America of this radiant soul, full of love and admiration for India, was a sad loss to India and the world. Another editor who made noteworthy contributions to the magazine was Swami Prajnananda, whose untimely death in 1918 robbed the Organization of a deep thinker, a powerful writer, and an accomplished worker. Among other talented editors whose writ-

ings have done much to raise the magazine in the estimation of the cultured public, I can mention the present Head of the Vedanta Societies at San Francisco and Berkeley, in U.S.A. Since his time the journal has appreciably gained in size as well as in quality, and has drawn an increasing number of important contributors both from India and abroad.

Prabuddha Bharata has always taken a keen interest in the humanitarian activities of the Ramakrishna Order. Swami Swarupananda organized the Kishengarh famine Relief in 1899, and the Dharmasala Earthquake Relief in 1905. He also actively helped the Kankhal Sevashrama in its early days. Reports of different types of permanent and temporary work and appeals for them have always found a place in the magazine. One such appeal in aid of Famine Relief inspired an eminent subscriber, Mr. S.N. Pandit, Bar-at-Law, Rajkot, to take a vow, in 1915, that he would not touch food till he had collected Rs. 10,000 for the work. He succeeded in it, and forthwith sent a cheque for the amount to the Manager *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Even in 1910, when I went to Mayavati for the first time, I was struck by the extraordinarily simple conditions in which the publication department of the Ashrama was conducted. A double crown hand press was turning out not only *Prabuddha Bharata* but also *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. A new *Brahmacharin* from Southern India was composing the fifth volume of the *Complete Works*, while the magazine had a salaried compositor, who could speak Bengali, and for his urban manners was treated more as an Ashramite than as an outsider. The press also dealt with reprints from both the magazine and the *Complete Works* often in a different format. The printing and book-binding staff were all people from the neighbouring villages. No wonder that the get-up

of the publications was not at all up to the mark. The monastic workers were few. In fact, in more than one winter, when there was usually more work, there were only three, who divided among themselves the entire work of the Ashrama.

Mayavati, being situated deep in the Himalayan forests, 37 (then 60) miles from the nearest railway station, is an ideal place for leading a contemplative life. There being only a bridle path, it is not very easily accessible. Being about 6,800 feet above the sea-level, it is delightful in summer, when the plains of Northern India are like a furnace. The spring and autumn are also charming. The monsoon is generally heavy, and the winter is cold. But the luxuriant vegetation and the rush of torrents are a feast to the eye and the ear in the rainy season, and in the winter the exquisite beauty of snow-falls, which turns the whole place into a fairyland, more than compensates any discomforts caused. The most elevating sight, however, is the magnificent snow-range extending for over 200 miles, from Badrinarayan in the west to Panch-chuli in the east, with Nanda Devi (25,661 ft.) and Trisul in the middle. Nearly 70 miles off as the crow flies, it is visible on most days of the year, and with its play of colours, particularly at sunrise and sunset, it never fails to inspire and thrill everybody's heart. Its silvery dazzle in moonlight is also enchanting: it at once reminds one of Shiva's form, as set forth in the 'meditation' prescribed for that form of God.

The silence of Mayavati is a thing that needs to be felt to appreciate it. The monastery is the only settlement on the hill, the nearest village being one and a half mile off. Lohaghat, the sub-divisional town, is 3½ miles and Champawat, the Tehsil, is 4½ miles from Mayavati, which is about a thousand feet higher than these. The trade route from Tanakpur (O. & T. Ry.) to Thibet

passes through these. Since only ordinary necessities of life can be had at Lohaghat, many things have to be brought from the plains and stocked for the year. Captain Sevier's idea of having a place free from frequent intrusion from the public has been fully realized at Mayavati. But the disadvantages of carrying on any kind of work, especially publication work, from such a place are obvious. The difficulties have to some extent been obviated by transferring first the book department and then the magazine to Calcutta. The additional expenditure consequent on the maintenance of two establishments has been offset by the fine get-up and larger circulation of the publications, which would have been impossible at Mayavati.

The Mayavati Ashrama has always sought to combine plain living with high thinking. Along with work, there is enough scope in it for study, meditation, and recreation. A good library and a large number of periodicals supply sufficient food for thought. In the early days, there were three buildings of stone with slated roofs, at different levels, within two minutes' walk of each other. The uppermost one was (and still is) the main Ashrama, where all the monks lived in cubicles on the first floor, which also contained the editor's humble office. A hall on the ground floor, with an open fire-place, fed by logs, served as the sitting and dining room, office, and library. In another hall on the same floor were the printing and book-binding paraphernalia. A single almshouse of medicines etc. in the passage between the two halls was the dispensary, which was run by one of the Swamis. On account of this congestion, a small meditation cabin had been built at a short distance from the main Ashrama, secluded by trees, which was much resorted to by the Swamis in the early days, and latterly on occasions. The other two buildings were the winter and summer residence of Mrs.

Sevier, and the guests' quarters. A small building for the dispensary with 6 beds, and a very much larger building for the publication department were constructed in 1914. Since then this editors' quarters have been in the latter building, which also contains the post office, opened in 1919—the telegraph office being at Lohaghat; formerly it was at Almora. Subsequently a fine building has been constructed for the hospital, which, with its much larger number of beds, under the charge of a qualified doctor, is a boon to the sick for many miles around. The Ashrama has some outhouses, a kitchen garden and some flower gardens and orchards. It has a number of cattle, but of poor breed. Up to 1918 it had a horse too. The Ashrama has got extensive lands. At one time it had a small tea plantation.

Captain and Mrs. Sevier, or 'Mother', as she was generally called on account of Swami Vivekananda's so addressing her, came to India along with the Swami in 1897, and after accompanying him to various places, settled at Mayavati in 1899. The Captain was Manager of *Prabuddha Bharata* till his death in 1900. His body was cremated by the monks with Hindu rites on the rivulet that flows below Mayavati. It was to comfort Mrs. Sevier that Swami Vivekananda, accompanied by Swami Shivananda, paid the visit to Mayavati, to which reference has already been made. Mrs. Sevier was a jewel of a lady, of *advaitic* views, and was truly a mother, full of loving kindness for everybody, so much so that the hill people used to speak of her as an 'angel'. Everyone of the Ashrama inmates had a taste of her motherly love. We used to take the afternoon tea with her by turns, after which she would come up to the Ashrama for a game of croquet. Despite her age, she was of active habits, and helped in the editing of the Ashrama publications, occasionally also contributing articles to the magazine, signed 'C. E. S.', etc. At her invitation Dr. (after-

wards Sir) J. C. Bose and Mrs. (now lady) Bose, whom she addressed as 'Shakuntala', visited Mayavati on several occasions during summer, together with Sister Nivedita and sister Christine. A solitary path has been named 'Bose's Walk', because he used to walk there, just as the path immediately below the Ashrama has been named 'Monk's Walk' after Swami Vivekananda. When such parties came, badminton was an alternative game. Latterly it and volley ball have replaced croquet. During one of his visits Dr. Bose gave us a talk on his favourite subject, the response of plants to stimuli, demonstrating it, as far as possible in such circumstances, with the mimosa, (*vide Prabuddha Bharata*, August 1911, p. 150). Earlier, Mr. A.M. Bose, the patriot, had also been a guest at Mayavati. After Mrs. Sevier had left for England in 1916, Mr. C.R. Das with family was similarly a guest of the Ashrama.

There were other types of guest also. One of these was a doctor who at one time was the Port Health Officer at Rangoon. He was an amiable person, of a devotional turn of mind, which made him give up his service and live with the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. Latterly, during his state of convalescence from an illness, he would sit in a chair in the upper verandah and make any servant who passed by do some job for him. We used to ridicule him for this weakness. One day, when he was bringing his clothes for the laundryman, from the head of the staircase he saw a servant and asked him to take the clothes down. I happened to be there by accident and remarked, 'Just in time!' The doctor laughed and went towards his room. But he returned in a minute and said to me, 'Swami, which was just in time? My finding the boy, or your being there to see it!'

Mayavati has off and on had a number of distinguished visitors also, including high Government officials. Once two pilgrims,

on their way back from Kailas, halted for a day at Mayavati. One of them was a writer and the other an artist of repute. The former regaled the Swamis with tales of his adventures in Thibet. He said that at one place he thrust his stick into a cleft in the ground, and it struck a vein of gold! But his ingenuity in ousting a gang of robbers was more interesting. When faced with them, he said, he took out from his pocket his spectacle case, and holding it erect before them, told them firmly that if they advanced a step further, they would die! At this they got frightened and went away. His companion, however, whispered to the listeners that it was all a yarn—which they already knew.

External worship is banned at Mayavati, only the ceremony connected with taking the monastic vow being permissible. The inmates are at liberty, however, to tell beads in private, and they chant, recite, or sing on holy occasions. On the *Shivaratri* day they fast and keep vigil at night, although the nights are long in winter. The lovely autumnal atmosphere during the *Dussera* festival, with hundreds of pink, yellow, and white cosmos flowers dancing in the breeze, automatically suggests to the mind that the Divine Mother, on Her journey to the plains from Her home at Mt. Kailas, has passed through the Ashrama. Occasional trips to near-by places where there are temples, mostly dedicated to Shiva, are also undertaken. Swami Saradananda who visited Mayavati in 1906, introduced the recitation at meal time of that well-known verse of the Gita (IV.24) in which everything connected with a sacrifice is described as Brahman or God Himself.

Regular scriptural classes are held at Mayavati for the inmates. When I was there, the main class used to be in the afternoon. Sometimes, when a specially qualified monk, like Swami Suddhananda, was present, the class would be very interesting.

Often there would be another class at night, in which readings from some devotional book like the *Bhagavata* would take place. Once a weekly session of lectures was organized, in which the Swamis by turns had to speak on some prescribed subject. Although it was started more as a pastime, it developed the power of extempore speaking in the inmates, which some of them afterwards turned to good account. Swami Suddhananda presided over these meetings, and always gave us illuminating presidential addresses.

For a short time we conducted a small school for a number of boys who came from Pithoragarh, a sub-divisional town 30 miles above Mayavati. It arose out of our desire to engage one of the Swamis who wanted to run a school at Lohaghat. Even the most indolent among us took part in teaching the boys. After the school went on for some time, there was a severe snow-fall, and the boys, unable to stand the cold, took French leave, bringing our enthusiastic endeavours to an abrupt stop. But one of the boys has immortalized himself to us by a wonderful discovery of his: On seeing a dismounted form of *Prabuddha Bharata* laid on the ground for washing, he scanned the matter for some minutes with rapt attention and then exclaimed, 'It is all a, b, c, d, ... a, b, c, d!'

The daily menu at Mayavati did not admit of much variation. This deficiency was made up by occasional *bhandaras* or feasts. Before the War, the spending of such a small sum as two rupees extra would provide for a few dainties. Milk and its products being cheap, it was easy to prepare delicious dishes out of them, and some of the monks were expert cooks. In this connection an amusing incident comes to my mind. A Parsi gentleman, living at Mayavati to test his fitness for future monastic life, was entrusted with the task of making an Index to Swami Vivekananda's *Complete Works*.

When, in the course of his work, he came to the episode of King Yudhishtira refusing to go to heaven without the dog which was accompanying him in his last journey, he was so struck with it that he said, 'I shall give two rupees for a *bhandara* in honour of Yudhishtira and his dog.' He was told in fun that if he wanted to include the dog, he must double the amount!

On another occasion, we had as guest a young American writer who came to Mayavati with a view to leading a severely simple life. When, in answer to his query about the charge, he was told that he might pay twelve rupees a month, he exclaimed, 'It is ridiculous!' Dressed in half-size dhoti, he would sun himself on a bench with a bare body, and outbid us in his eagerness to get as far away from the civilized mode of life as possible. One of his self-imposed restraints was on writing. One day, when he failed to control himself in this, he was penitent and offered two rupees for a *bhandara* as an expiation! Some years later, this gentleman kindly looked me up after a service at San Francisco. Evidently the memories of Mayavati had not been lost upon him.

From the early days the Mayavati Ashrama has devised a very convenient type of dining table, which is a compromise between the oriental and occidental modes of eating. In India one eats from a plate placed directly on the floor. This has a twofold drawback. In the first place, dust is very easily blown into the plate, and secondly, one has to maintain a stooping posture while eating. At Mayavati, a low rectangular table, about 14 inches in height and covered with oil-cloth, is used, on which the plates are put, and the persons eating also sit on low seats, about 3 inches high. Obviously, this simple arrangement is advantageous from various standpoints. When there are many persons, two such tables are placed

end to end.

For the Ashrama servants there used to be two *bhandaras* every year. One of these was on Swami Vivekananda's birthday, which fell in the thick of winter. Since it is the custom among hill people to eat dressed only in a dhoti, half their gusto was gone in fighting the cold, for the feast took place in the evening, and the little piles of live charcoal placed near them did not suffice. The feast was followed by music, in which the sweeper, who had the bearing of a gentleman, was given a leading role because of his skill in it, and the cobbler entertained the audience with a bear dance! The 'funny little barber', as Mrs. Sevier used to refer to him, would also follow with his antics.

Mayavati is exposed to depredations from wild animals. In the jungles around there are barking deer and antelopes, leopards, and sometimes tigers as well as bears. The deer, though innocent-looking, do much damage to the crops and vegetables. The antelopes, when they cannot reach the branches of fruit trees, shake them with their bodies, so that fruits drop down. Parrots and hornets also cause havoc to the fruits. Leopards, as also tigers, sometimes attack the Ashrama cows as they graze, and succeed in killing them. Attempts to lure them to the kill did not prove successful. Tigers' growls are heard now and then, and sometimes man-eaters also prowl about. Once a man-eater killed an exceptionally strong man belonging to the next village. He was cutting grass at about sunset in the jungles near the Ashrama, when he was attacked from behind. On information being received that the man had not returned home in the evening, a search party was sent out with lanterns, but no trace could be found in the night. Next morning the party came across the remnants of his body, with the tiger at some distance. Once, in order to frighten the deer, a lantern was placed

under an apple tree in the fenced garden. To our surprise, we found in the morning large footprints of a tiger that went round and round the light to satisfy his curiosity. It was an eye-opener to one of our Swamis, who, on the common notion that tigers keep clear of lights, used to wave a lantern as a warning to them, while going to an outhouse near the jungle. Among other nuisances at Mayavati, leeches in the rainy season and fleas almost throughout the year are the worst. Leeches make it an ordeal to take even short walk. One has to play at carrom with them as they, on hearing footsteps, rush to climb the shoes. Some loss of blood is the inevitable penalty for carelessness with regard to them. Fleas, too, often baffle all our ingenuity to avoid them. The absence of mosquitoes is a great relief.

Forest fires are also a great menace to the Ashrama. Villagers in the hills, in order to promote the growth of grass for fodder, start fires at the foot of a hill, which spread upwards and destroy innumerable plants. They look like shining garlands at night, but become a positive danger when they come too close to habitations. The Mayavati Ashrama has often had to fight against such fires. One indirect benefit of these, however, is that leeches are practically eliminated for the year.

In an out-of-the-way place like Mayavati, one has to be very alert so as to meet any emergency that may arise. Fortunately we had in our midst a Swami who was equal to any occasion. People who came to Mayavati for medicines or for some other purpose, or who passed through it on their way to Lohaghat or Champawat, would sometimes take some fruits or vegetables from our garden without permission. One day, in the rainy season, the postman from Lohaghat, who used to carry milk for us daily from a roadside village, was on his way back with the empty can, when the

above-mentioned Swami, for no known reason whatsoever, had a notion that he might be taking away some egg-plant seedlings. Down he hurried from the Ashrama, overtook the man at some distance beyond the gate, and quite casually asked him to show what was in the can. Sure enough, the seedlings were there! The man, thoroughly discomfited, was let go with a warning. By the way, it was at his suggestion, prompted by his desire to rid himself of the daily trouble of having to climb a mile of steep ascent each way, that we applied, successfully, for a post office at Mayavati itself.

Mayavati life has its lighter side also. As a diversion, the monks occasionally indulge in practical jokes at somebody's expense. One or two, for instance, were sent out in torrential rain under the plea of an invitation from the sub-divisional officer or some such person. Of course the joke would not be carried too far. One such prank was played on a very clever young monk, who was directed by a faked telegram, purporting to come from the Headquarters, to proceed to Rangoon and take charge of a preaching centre. He soon warmed up to the idea, and got ready by collecting, among other things, a complete set of the back volumes of *Prabuddha Bharata* as a help to his future work. Two American lady devotees were staying at Mayavati at the time, who, being taken into confidence, arranged a farewell feast in his honour. A photograph was taken, and on the appointed day a large party started to see him off, but without his baggage. When a respectable guest, who had been kept in the dark about the affair, pointed out that the baggage was left behind, he had to be silenced. After the party had gone some distance, and the Swami was taking his final leave of them, he was handed a slip containing a couplet of Rabindranath Tagore, in which a grain-stealing bird was told that its day of reckoning was come. At first he thought that this

was a joke, and was eager to proceed, since it was getting late. When, however, the painful truth came home to him, he was stupefied!

Another Swami, a guest, who on account of his knowledge of certain Yogic postures and processes considered himself a Yogi, was fooled by a card trick into believing that the performer, the resourceful monk previously mentioned, was an adept in thought-reading. So he approached the latter at dead of night and expressed his eagerness to know how it was done. The other, in order to continue the joke, said in all seriousness that before it could be imparted, certain very rigorous conditions must be satisfied! This damped the ardour of the inquirer.

Another inmate, who had a liking for milk and had at one time run a *Goshala* (cow-stall) at Tanakpur, once gave occasion for mirth. Some members had the idea of inserting his name in the Birthday Honours list. Unfortunately, the only blank space left in those columns of the paper was under the title 'Shams-ul-Ulema', which is reserved for the highest Islamic scholarship. Since there was no other way, that very space was quickly utilized to imprint the required name. When the paper was opened in the presence of all, congratulations were showered upon the lucky recipient of honour, together with the explanation that it must be due to his services in connection with the *Goshala*. The inappropriateness of the honour was a serious handicap; so he doubted its genuineness. But he was told that he could verify it in another daily on the next day. That day he was kept engaged for a little while, and when, on the mails being brought, he removed the wrapper of the newspaper, he found his name there also. Then his only question was why that particular title should have been given to him. But he did not seem to disbelieve it altogether. Had it been 'Rai Saheb' or some

such title, we could have scored a complete success.

Once, on the last day of the year, one of the Swamis rang the dinner bell which hung below the staircase at midnight, took another Swami into his confidence, and quietly slipped into his bed upstairs. Startled by the sound, the other inmates got up one by one, and wondered who could have rung the bell. They began a thorough search of the Ashrama premises. The other two kept on trying to explain it away, and when, at the end of an hour, no trace of any intruder could be found, they solemnly attributed it to the spirit of Captain Sevier, who thus sent his New Year's greetings to the inmates!

Mayavati has its supply of water from a near-by spring. Once, in order to bring the water to the Ashrama itself, two monks enthusiastically set out to dig a channel for it. But it was summer, and they had not calculated the rate of flow. The result was that the dry earth soaked all the water that entered the channel before it covered one-third of the distance. This made the two pioneers cry halt in their labour of love. Later on, however, arrangements were made to have the water conveyed in a pipe to the Ashrama.

Mention should be made of Mrs. Sevier's Bhutiya dog, Glama. He was not just an ordinary dog, but a highly psychological being. Shortly after my reaching Mayavati, I saw one of the *Brahmacharins* pose to snatch away the dog's food, repeating, as he did so, 'I shall have it!' When I asked him why he was teasing the animal like that, he said that otherwise the dog would not eat, but just hold the bread. I soon saw that it was a fact. There must be a rival claimant to his possession before he would enjoy it himself! On account of age, he was blind of one eye, was subject to fits of asthma, and had a poor memory. Sometimes, while going to

Mother's Bungalow with a piece of bread in his mouth, he would bury it in the ground with the intention of eating it afterwards. But he would invariably miss the exact spot, and a pair of watchful crows would help themselves to the food in his stead! He had a tendency to sleep at night in the President's deep chair. So we had to upturn a small chair on it to prevent his doing so. Then one day poor Glama died. Mrs. Sevier was so deeply moved by it that she would not see anybody that day, and she arranged for a decent burial of her faithful dog.

Many of those who were closely connected with the Mayavati Ashrama for a considerable length of time are now occupying important positions in the organization. Chief of them is the present President of the Order. Associated with the Ashrama from its very inception, he was its second President, as also editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, this double function continuing up to the time of his successor, Swami Prajnananda (1918). A good many ex-workers, including Swami Prakashananda, were or are heads of centres in America or of important centres in India; some are holding responsible posts at the Headquarters; while a few more have distinguished themselves in other capacities. Swami Vivekananda's dictum, 'Work is Worship', is spontaneously instilled into one's mind at Mayavati. Its very tradition does this. When one hears that so great a person as Swami Turiyananda, one of the foremost disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, once acted as a fly-boy for the Prabuddha Bharata Press, one cannot help realizing that work is indeed on the same footing as worship or meditation. His example was cheerfully followed in our time also, one of the brothers sometimes doing even the hard job of the ink-boy. The service which the publications of this Ashrama have rendered to truth-seekers all over the world is inestimable. The sense of peace and joy experienced by a stay at Mayavati is shared by all, inmates and

guests alike. Mayavati is a happy link between the East and West, between the past and the present, between contemplation and action. Those who cannot do without the amenities of modern city life, may find the place too solitary or dull; but those in whom the least hunger for spiritual realiza-

tion has arisen, and who, rising above the intellectual plane, want to commune with the Spirit immanent in Nature and in their own selves, will hail this Ashrama as a fountain-head of perennial bliss—the precious gift of Swami Vivekananda to care-worn humanity. □



The lake at Mayavati in which
Swamiji had gone boating

Mayavati and Its Message

SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

What is special about Mayavati? What does it offer to its monastic members and to the numerous spiritual aspirants and devotees who come there for short stays? What might Swamiji have had in his mind when he laid down the rule that at the Mayavati Ashrama Advaita alone should be practised, without any kind of ritualistic worship?

The author presents a short and beautiful discussion regarding these, based on his eight years' stay there. He is presently a Trustee of our Order and an Assistant General Secretary at the Headquarters, Belur Math.

It was in the Holy Mother's Centenary year that I first encountered *Prabuddha Bharata* at home. The journal had its subscriber even in that remote village. Although for a teenager understanding its articles, especially the editorials, was a tough nut to crack, there was something sublime about the journal which was at least partly due to the surrealistic view of Jayrambati on the pale greenish yellow cover.

Of course, I could never foresee that one day I would be asked to go to Mayavati and take charge of the editing of the journal. When, however, that actually happened twenty-five years later, I was reluctant to go. One main reason for this was the intense cold of the place. Swami Madhavanandaji used to say, 'Mayavati has only three seasons: cold, colder, coldest!' For people who don't have much of adipose under the skin, Mayavati can create problems especially in the winter.

And winter was in full swing when I went to Mayavati. As Dhan Singh's truck carrying us droned up the winding path from Lohaghat, I could see on either side frozen pools of water fringed by wild roses. It had rained the previous days and water drops glistened on pine needles in the morning sun.

Mayavati is at an altitude of 6,500 feet. However, the Ashrama and its grounds are in a crater-like valley with hills on three sides. The fourth side on the west opens out overlooking vast plains far below dotted with houses and farms and, beyond them, there looms in the horizon the spectacular range of snow-clad mountain peaks.

The main monastery building is more than a hundred years old. It originally belonged to an Englishman, General MacGregor, who owned the tea estate, and the building itself was being used as a shed for curing tea leaves. When Swami Vivekananda visited Mayavati on 3rd January 1901, he must have found the building in that condition. Later on it was converted into a two-storeyed house, but the upper floor is even now one single hall partitioned into rooms with wooden walls. The fireplace on the ground floor, near which Swamiji slept, was until recently used in winter. Though Swamiji stayed at Mayavati only for two weeks (from 3rd to 17th January, 1901), his spirit seems to pervade the whole area, and there is no other centre in India where you are reminded of him in such an exclusive way.

What strikes a sensitive mind first in Mayavati is the intense silence of the place. It is not mere absence of noise (since people

stay there, one may hear voices) but a positive, perceptible silence. And, beyond that silence, more sensitive minds may also tune in to the unbroken undercurrent of uncreated *dhvani* or subtle 'sound'—something like the back-ground noise of the universe, the remnant of the Big Bang, discovered recently by astrophysicists—which is a part of the mystique of Mayavati. The room I stayed in had been used as a living room by several illustrious monks of our Order. It afforded a magnificent view of the snow-range. But it was also the coldest room in the building. A huge oak-tree nearby, under which Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj used to meditate, ensured that the warmth of the sun never reached that room. A coal-scuttle containing charcoal provided some heat. But the half-burnt charcoal gave off carbon monoxide which could produce severe headache, if not death, and so I rarely

which houses the editorial department of *Prabuddha Bharata*. The editor's office is a small room with panes of glass on two sides, which not only let in the sun but also provide a fine view of forest-clad hills and valleys. One of these hills, known as Dharamgarh, is a place of interest to the followers and admirers of Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji had expressed a wish to have a hermitage built there and spend his time in undisturbed contemplation. The other buildings in Mayavati are a two-storeyed guesthouse for lay visitors, the 'Mother's Bungalow' where Mrs. Sevier used to stay, and the 25-bed hospital. The hospital, which treats more than 50,000 outdoor patients annually, completely free of charge, is well known in that area, and it is a moving sight to see the sick being brought on ponies and in improvised sedans from far off places including Nepal.

During the early years even the practice of Japa with the help of a rosary was frowned upon. No rituals or religious ceremony is permitted. The Ashrama does not have a shrine. There is no external worship of images or symbols of God.

used the scuttle. On the second day of my stay, in the small hours of the morning I was sitting in my room when a bird started singing quite near the window. Never had I heard such a melodious bird-song before. I came to know later on that the songster was the Himalayan Blackbird—a plain-looking thrush of the size of a Mynah (Starling), dark except for a patch of brown on the belly. His smaller cousin, the Magpie-robin (Doyal in Bengali), is one of the finest songbirds in the plains. The cheerful musical out-pouring of the bird helped to brace up my spirit considerably.

A little away from the main building where most of the monastic brothers live is another two-storeyed building (built in 1914 and opened by Sister Christine, an American disciple of Swami Vivekananda)

The area around the monastery was originally a tea estate and terraced for tea cultivation. Now most of the terraces have been converted into orchards and farms growing wheat and potato. These are surrounded on all sides by virgin forest. Most Indians will sadly miss here banana, mango, jack, coconut and other trees of the plains. The trees that are found here such as the oak, rhododendron, pine, cypress and deodar have a distinctly 'foreign' look. Among these the deodar (the India cedar) is undoubtedly the most graceful and useful tree. Its light, fragrant, fine-grained wood takes good polish and is very durable. It is indeed the 'timber of gods', which is what its original name *devadaru* really means.

Unlike tropical forests, which are made impenetrable by the tangled mass of low

branches, creepers and underbrush, Himalayan forests consist mostly of tall, stately trees without much undergrowth. Many bridle-paths and foot-paths criss-cross the forests in and around Mayavati. Some of these paths look deceptively familiar, but if you follow them without a guide, you may get lost as in a maze. Formerly tigers used to roam freely in these forests. Now only leopards are left. In the evening, as darkness descends upon the forests, you can hear the growl of a hungry leopard on the prowl. Leopards have killed calves and dogs in Mayavati, sometimes in broad day-light. More dangerous than the leopard is the bear, a temperamental animal which may attack without provocation. Occasionally a bear may be found perched on an oak tree gorging on acorns. The forest also gives shelter to the large deer known as Barasingha, and the diminutive 'barking deer'. The latter, whose peculiar 'barking' can be heard at night, is perhaps a small antelope or mountain goat. Other than the two species of monkeys whose frequent forays into potato fields and orchards cause considerable damage to crops, there are also smaller mammals such as the civet cat, wild pig, weasel, porcupine and flying squirrel. Weasels are fond of the nectar of rhododendron flowers; once in a while they steal into the apiary at night, topple the beehives and eat the honeycombs. The flying squirrel climbs a tall tree in great hurry and, after reaching its top, glides down to a smaller tree, occasionally giving out a spine-chilling screech at night. With the exception of the Indian jungle fowl, the progenitor of the domestic fowl now reared all over the world, and the master songster the black-bird, all the other birds are local migrants. They go away in October and return in March-April

Apart from the forest owned by the Advaita Ashrama, a large tract of forest all around is also managed by the monks as the

sole constituent members of the Mayavati Panchayat. The nearest village is four kilometres away, and the nearest railway station seventy kilometres away. Until India's border conflict with China in 1961, there were only bridle paths leading to Mayavati, and it used to take at least two days to traverse the distance from the railway station on horse-back or on foot.

The area owned by the Ashrama was purchased by Swami Vivekananda's English disciples Captain J.H. Sevier and his wife Mrs. Charles Elizabeth Sevier. Captain Sevier passed away in 1900, and in 1903 Mrs. Sevier transferred the ownership of the place to the monks by executing a trust deed. She left for England for the last time in 1916 and passed away there in 1930. There is no inscription or monument in Mayavati, except the 'Mother's Bungalow', to commemorate the self-sacrifice of Captain Sevier and Mother Sevier. But those who have the heart to feel can find everywhere in Mayavati the imprint of the memory of a noble-hearted English couple who sacrificed their all for the sake of their Guru and his country. To borrow a few lines from the contemporary British poet, Stephen Spender,

Near the snow, near the sun, in the highest fields,
See how these names are feted by the waving grass
And by the streamers of white cloud
And whispers of wind in the listening sky.
The names of those who in their lives fought for life,
Who wore at their hearts the fire's centre.

It is well known that the Seviere bought the Mayavati estate at the explicit wish of Swami Vivekananda. What was Swamiji's idea in starting a monastery in this far off secluded place? It is clear that Swamiji had a definite plan, a clear dream about the future of Mayavati. What was that? And how far has Mayavati, during nearly a century of its existence, fulfilled that plan or

dream of Swamiji? What exactly is expected of the inmates of this Ashrama? These questions used to recur in my mind all through my eight years' stay at Mayavati.

It is generally believed that Swamiji's main purpose in starting the monastery at Mayavati was to put into practice Advaita, the non-dualistic system of Vedanta. He himself stated clearly this point in a letter he wrote to Swami Swarupananda, the first President of the Advaita Ashrama, in March 1899:

To give this One Truth a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone.

called 'Vidyās', and also the process of *neti, neti* (not this, not this). Then there is the *śabda-aparokṣa* doctrine developed by Sureśvarācārya and accepted by the Vivaraṇa school, according to which Vedanta *vākyas* (dictums) such as *tat tvam asi* have the inherent power to induce in a purified mind the direct intuition of Brahman. The Bhāmati school of Advaita emphasizes the need for repeated practice of a higher type of meditation known as *nididhyāsana*. Later Advaita teachers admitted yoga techniques into the fold of Advaita. None of these techniques, however, are meant to be learnt from books. They are all to be learnt directly from a guru. But Swamiji is not known to have left explicit instructions for the members of Mayavati Ashrama to follow any particular method of getting direct transcendental experience of Advaita.

In the absence of such instructions, ordinary aspirants can follow only dualistic methods of attaining spiritual realization. During the early years of the Advaita Ashrama even the practice of Japa with the help of rosary was frowned upon, but later

The very first step in the practice of Advaita is to stop identifying oneself with one's body and discover one's true nature. It is in silence and solitude that man can encounter his self and discover the true springs of his existence. For most aspirants external solitude and silence are of great help. Silence and solitude were the primary consideration in Swamiji's choice of Mayavati.

It is important to understand the practical implications, the actual possibilities, of the above statement of Swamiji. In the first place, Advaita does not mean a mere system of philosophy, much less a creed or intellectual conviction or attitude. It is an incontrovertible direct experience of the non-dual, infinite Self, attained by following definite spiritual disciplines. There are several traditional paths to the attainment of this experience. The Upaniṣads speak of a number of subjective-objective techniques

on the use of rosary was permitted. No ritual or religious ceremony is permitted at the Ashrama (except the *Virajā Homa*, the fire ritual of Sannyasins). The Ashrama does not have a shrine. There is no external worship of images or symbols of God and, naturally, no *prasād* is available there. Even the act of *pranam*, or obeisance to God, or offering of flowers is not allowed in the Ashrama. It cannot be denied that, in view of the difficulties of maintaining ritual purity of body and clothes in that cold place, the prohibition of

external worship is to some extent a blessing. But it would be too simplistic to equate avoidance of rituals with the practice of Advaita which is much loftier than that. Furthermore, the system of Advaita is so broad-based that it can accommodate at its lower tier any amount of rituals and images. As a matter of fact, the orthodox heads of the four Maths established by Śaṅkarācārya spend several hours every day in ritualistic worship.

Moreover, Swami Vivekananda wanted Advaita to be made practical not only at the mountain tops but in all walks of life, not only for the monk and the recluse but also for the fisherman, the lawyer and the student—for everyone. In fact, making available to the common man the highest truths of Vedānta, which had till then been in the hands of a few privileged people, was one of the major achievements of Swamiji.

The system of Advaita developed by Śaṅkara is based on three quintessential concepts: (1) the ultimate Reality is of the nature of consciousness, and it is one and infinite; (2) it appears as many owing to Māyā, or cosmic ignorance; (3) the individual self is illusory. Of these the last one is the least emphasized but, from the practical standpoint, the most important concept Śaṅkara begins his monumental commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra* with an explication of this concept of the illusoriness of the Jīva (individual self). The very first step in the practice of Advaita is to stop identifying oneself with one's body and mind and discover one's true nature. For both these processes it is necessary to encounter one's self in the depths of one's consciousness. This is difficult to do in the rush and hurry, din and bustle, of everyday life. It is in silence and solitude that man can encounter his self and discover the true springs of his existence. An advanced spiritual aspirant can create the interior

silence and solitude wherever he is, but for most other aspirants external solitude and silence are of great help. Here comes the importance of solitary places like Mayavati.

In the path of devotion, known as Bhakti Mārga, God is regarded as the *object* of one's love and adoration, and hence attention is focussed on the objective pole of experience. Rituals and worship of images help in this process of objective concentration, and hence they are freely used in Bhakti Mārga. But in Jñāna Mārga one starts directly with the inner Self, and the emphasis is on the subjective pole of experience. In this path rituals and images can divert one's attention from the self to the non-Self, from interior encounter with the self to objective experiences which are not of much help in the realization of the true nature of the Self. This is the rationale behind the prohibition of rituals and worship of images in Mayavati.

Silence and solitude were the primary consideration in Swami Vivekananda's choice of a place like Mayavati. He wanted to have a centre where spiritual aspirants could practise contemplation free from the distractions of the world. He also wanted that the centre should be in a cool place so that his western followers could also stay there. This idea finally took a definite shape in 1896 when Swamiji was touring the Swiss Alps. There he told Mr. and Mrs. Sevier, 'O, I long for such a monastery where I can retire from the labours of my life. It will be a centre of work and meditation, where my Indian and western disciples can live together... Subsequently, Swamiji expressed this idea in several of his letters to Alasinga, Mary Hale and Lala Badri Sah of Almora.

Silence and solitude are needed not only for the followers of Advaita but also for those who follow the devotional path of

contemplation. One of the definitions of religion that Swami Vivekananda has given us is: 'Religion is the eternal relationship between the eternal soul and eternal God.' In order to realize the eternal God it is necessary first of all to discover the eternal soul, the true inner Self of man. Solitude helps us in this task and also in recovering the luminous cord of true Religion that is lost in the midst of the hundreds of sensual cords that bind us to the world. Silence and solitude have therefore been emphasized by spiritual masters in all religions, especially for monks

Christian monasticism itself began in the desert wilderness of Egypt. *Fuge, tace, et quiesce* ('solitude, silence, and quietude') was the watchword of the Desert Fathers. The Eastern Churches, which continued the original tradition, have a whole peninsula, with more than a dozen huge monasteries, entirely devoted to contemplative life. The Catholic Church has several monastic Orders—Carthusian, Camaldoli, Trappist, etc.—which are exclusively devoted to contemplative life. Even Ignatius Loyola, who founded one of the most active orders, the Jesuits, made it compulsory for his followers to withdraw periodically into 'Retreats' for meditation. In India contemplation has always been the core, the very heart, of all Indian religions—Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. And from time immemorial the Himalayas have given shelter to thousands of contemplatives and seekers of Truth. By starting an Ashrama in the Kumaon area Swamiji has only renewed the contemplative tradition in a modern setting.

Solitude is necessary not only for monks but also for lay spiritual seekers. Sri Ramakrishna used to advise his house-holder disciples to spend some days, at least three days or even a single day, in solitude now and then. According to him, this kind of occasional detachment from worldly cares

and entanglements is necessary to foster discrimination and knowledge. And Swami Vivekananda says in his *Inspired Talks*:

Go into your own room and get the Upanishads out of your own Self. You are the greatest book that ever was or ever will be, the infinite repository of all that is. Until the inner teacher opens, all outside teaching is in vain...Books are useless to us until our own book opens; then all other books are good so far as they confirm our book.

Meditation is solitude unlocks the hidden doors of the unconscious and revives the repressed memories of the past. It also enables you to encounter the ego and understand the masks it puts on, the houses of cards it builds and the innumerable other forms of self-deception. A man who has not confronted himself alone in solitude, who has not grappled with the demons of passions lying in hiding within him, cannot be trusted. Such a person cannot even trust himself. Exhortations such as 'Be fearless!', 'Have trust in yourself' will not work unless the root-causes of fear and insecurity are removed from one's mind.

And yet, there is nothing that many people dread more than confronting themselves. In fact, the vast majority of people are unconscious escapists: they are constantly trying to run away from their own true selves. They want to forget themselves by goofing around, watching TV, reading worthless novels, filling one's time with innumerable activities and so on. All these are signs of what Eric Fromm calls 'inner passivity'. In his book, *The Revolution of Hope*, Fromm states,

The trouble is that most people who think that they are very active are not aware of the fact that they are intensely passive in spite of their busyness.

Without some stimuli from outside to trigger activity they are lost. If nothing is done, it is time to confront oneself which is to be avoided.

Another problem facing modern man is the loss of identity and significance. In modern times a man's worth is judged by what he *has*—by the number of houses, cars, objects of enjoyments, security guards, etc. that he has—not by what he *is*. He himself is nothing. Or else he becomes a marketable commodity. A scientist, a writer, musician, a football player, an actor, a handsome person—everyone sells himself or herself for money. As W.H. Auden has put it,

Well, you will soon
Not bother but acknowledge yourself
As market-made, a commodity
Whose value varies, a vendor who has
To obey his buyer.

Unfortunately, in spite of all the money they earn, people feel themselves to be worthless and their lives meaningless.

A third problem that modern man faces is loneliness. Of course, this problem has been with mankind from the beginning of creation. And he has been trying to solve this problem through marriage, through family life, through clubs, through social service organizations and so on. But loneliness always persists. The husband and wife *stay* together but each *lives* in his own or her own world. As the title of David Riesman's well-known book, *The Lonely Crowd*, suggests, even when you are in a crowd, you feel lonely.

Paradoxical as it may seem, the cure of loneliness lies in solitude. The real cause of loneliness is man's alienation from his own true Self, the Atman. The more he identifies himself with his body, other people and things, the greater becomes his loneliness.

Loneliness disappears only when man dives deep into his inner being and discovers his true Self. This idea is expounded in a dramatic way in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad* (1.4.3-8). The Creator himself, says the Upaniṣad, once felt lonely and created man and woman, and all male and female animals down to ants. But did He get happiness out of all this? No, He didn't. At last He realized two things: (a) duality is the cause of all fear (*dvitīyād vai bhayam bhavati*); (b) the Atman, the true Self, is dearer than the son, dearer than wealth, dearer than all other objects.

The other problems of inner passivity and loss of identity and meaning mentioned above can also find their lasting solution only in the realization of one's true Self, which is the source of all power, all bliss, all glory. It is in the depths of contemplation that man recovers his lost self-identity, dignity and power. When the true Self, the Atman, is awakened in us, says Swami Vivekananda, '...power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come and everything that is excellent will come' (III.143).

Self-knowledge through contemplation in solitude is the first blessing that Mayavati confers on those who are devoted to her.

Another blessing that she confers is the opportunity to come into close contact with nature in all its virgin purity and unspoiled splendour. For a person with an awakened mind or at least the fresh, uncluttered receptive mind of a child, Nature can communicate many a lesson.

One of the important things we may learn from Nature is the impersonal attitude. For those who want to follow the path of Advaita, the cultivation of the impersonal attitude is an unavoidable necessity. Even for others the impersonal attitude

helps to keep one's cool in difficult situations. And the impersonal attitude can be cultivated only by identifying oneself with Universal Life. Advaita is identification of one's self with Universal Consciousness. But unless this is preceded by an experience in identification of oneself with Universal Life, the Advaitic outlook would be nothing more than glorified solipsism. In the Vedas we can find this double identification. The Upaniṣadic sages first discovered Universal Life before they discovered Universal Consciousness.

Most of us get so wrapped up in ourselves, or get so emotionally involved in the lives of men and women, that we tend to forget that Life is much vaster than our petty selves. It may not be possible for us to talk to a tree as we talk to our friends, or smile at a rose as we smile at a child, but it is good to remember that there are other forms of life which have their own ways of expression. There is such a thing called Universal Life, and we can feel it throbbing through all living forms. The well-known nature mystic Guy Murchie writes in his book *Song of the Sky*:

Put your ear close to the whispering branch, and you can catch what it is saying: the brittle twitter of dry oak leaves in winter, the faint breathing of junipers, the whirring of hickory twigs, the thrumming of slender birch clumps, the mild murmuring of the sugar maple...

A person who identifies himself with Universal Life never feels lonely even when he is alone.

Sri Ramakrishna worshipped God as the Mother of the Universe. It may not be possible for us to have a direct vision of the transcendental form of the Divine Mother as Sri Ramakrishna had, but it is not difficult

for us to see the working of a trans-human Mother Power everywhere in the world. For this we have only to watch birds, cats and other animals bring up their young ones at great self-sacrifice. The truth of the trans-human Mother Power was, however, brought home to me in an unforgettable way at Mayavati through the following incident.

At the ceiling above the verandah near my office a pair of swallows used to build their nest and bring up their young ones. Swallows (*Ābābīl*, in Bengali and Hindi) spend most of their time on the wing, even feeding the young ones in mid air. One fine morning I saw through the partly closed door the two parent birds flying excitedly in long circles in front of their nest and chirping loudly. Over the years I had learnt what the chirp meant: it meant the parents' call to the young ones to jump out of the nest for their maiden flight. Soon, one by one, three chicks jumped out and started flying with their parents. There was still one more chick left deep in the flask-shaped nest. It was responding with a chirp but was not coming out. Nor would the parents leave that place. Finally, after nearly ten minutes, unable to resist the parents' call, the fourth chick also jumped out. But it could not fly. It spun like a top and parachuted to the floor of the verandah. I then saw why it had hesitated to come out: one of its wings was defective. It was a handicapped chick!

But the parents did not abandon the helpless chick. The mother bird would come down and feed it. After some time, frightened by some noise, the chick glided down into a deep gorge in front of the building. From there it went on sending out its chirping note. To my surprise I saw the mother bird never forgot her young one. Every ten minutes or so she would sweep down into the gorge and feed the handicapped chick. This went on all through the day till dusk. That night there

was a big hailstorm which must have killed the poor chick in the gorge. Next morning I saw hailstones piled up everywhere, and all was quiet in the gorge.

The most spectacular sight in Mayavati is undoubtedly the view of the mighty snow peaks of the Himalayas, which are some of the highest mountain peaks in the world, forming nearly four hundred miles of the horizon in a semi-circle. On the Indian side of the Himalayas the view extends from Chowkhamba (Badrinarayan) in the west to Panch Chūli in the east, with Nanda Devi and Trishul in the middle. At dawn, as the first crimson rays of the sun fall on the peaks, they become ensheathed in an auburn veil; this soon turns into a purple glow, and within a short time all the peaks begin to shimmer in a cascade of golden rays. The scene is repeated in the reverse order at dusk.

For most Indians another unusual and unforgettable experience in Mayavati is snowfall. Unlike rainfall, which is so noisy and disturbing, snowfall is an incredibly silent affair. But for the gentle rustle of leaves caused by falling snow-flakes, there is a hushed silence, and the sun or moon glimmering gently through the gauze of falling snow adds to the eeriness of the spectacle. After the snowfall the sight of houses, hills, valleys and miles of forest covered by an endless, sheet of snow, with the golden rays of the sun filtering in through the misty air, unrolling a million-spangled mantle under the sky, conjures up an altogether different world.

Spring creeps in reluctantly in April. The swallows with their joyful twittering are the first to herald the spring. Very soon rhododendrons begin to bloom everywhere, and the whole forest is ablaze with red flowers. The summer is usually brief and is soon overtaken by the rainy season. With

the onset of the monsoon the hills and valleys reverberate with the deafening roar of hundreds of waterfalls to which thousands of cicadas add their crazy din. Through all these changes we come face to face with the mystery of creation and the astounding fecundity, diversity, resilience and dynamism of life. Every living being displays strength, the quality which Swamiji stressed most. You can't but admire the courage of the pear tree bearing silently the merciless onslaught of the hailstorm in spring which destroys almost all its newly opened delicate flowers. One is reminded of the truth of the Japanese prayer:

Give us the unchanging bravery of the pine, that we too may face the storms of life unconquered and unafraid. Give us the courage of the plum to flower gloriously in the midst of bleak adversity. And give to us throughout the years the straight, tough fibre and resilience of the green bamboo.

A prayer of this kind is likely to well up spontaneously in our hearts in a place like Mayavati where, as Swami Vivekananda has stated, one can see *Virāt pūjā*, cosmic worship, going on with the varying rhythms of nature.

For nature-mystics Mayavati is a paradise on earth. Nature mysticism is not the artist's appreciation of the beauty of nature or the naturalist's love for nature. It is rather an intense form of communion with nature, in which you feel you are possessed by a mysterious Presence which blots out the past and the future and fixes your awareness to the living present; you directly perceive that you are a part of Cosmic Life throbbing through all beings all around.

The supreme mystic Sri Ramakrishna had this experience, perhaps of a higher order, in his childhood when he once saw a

line of white cranes winging past a vast dark cloud. The intensity of feeling that this sight produced in him was so great that the child Gadadhar lost all consciousness of the outer world. In a far less intense way many children and some adolescents may experience this form of communion occasionally. William Wordsworth has described it in his famous 'Ode' as follows:

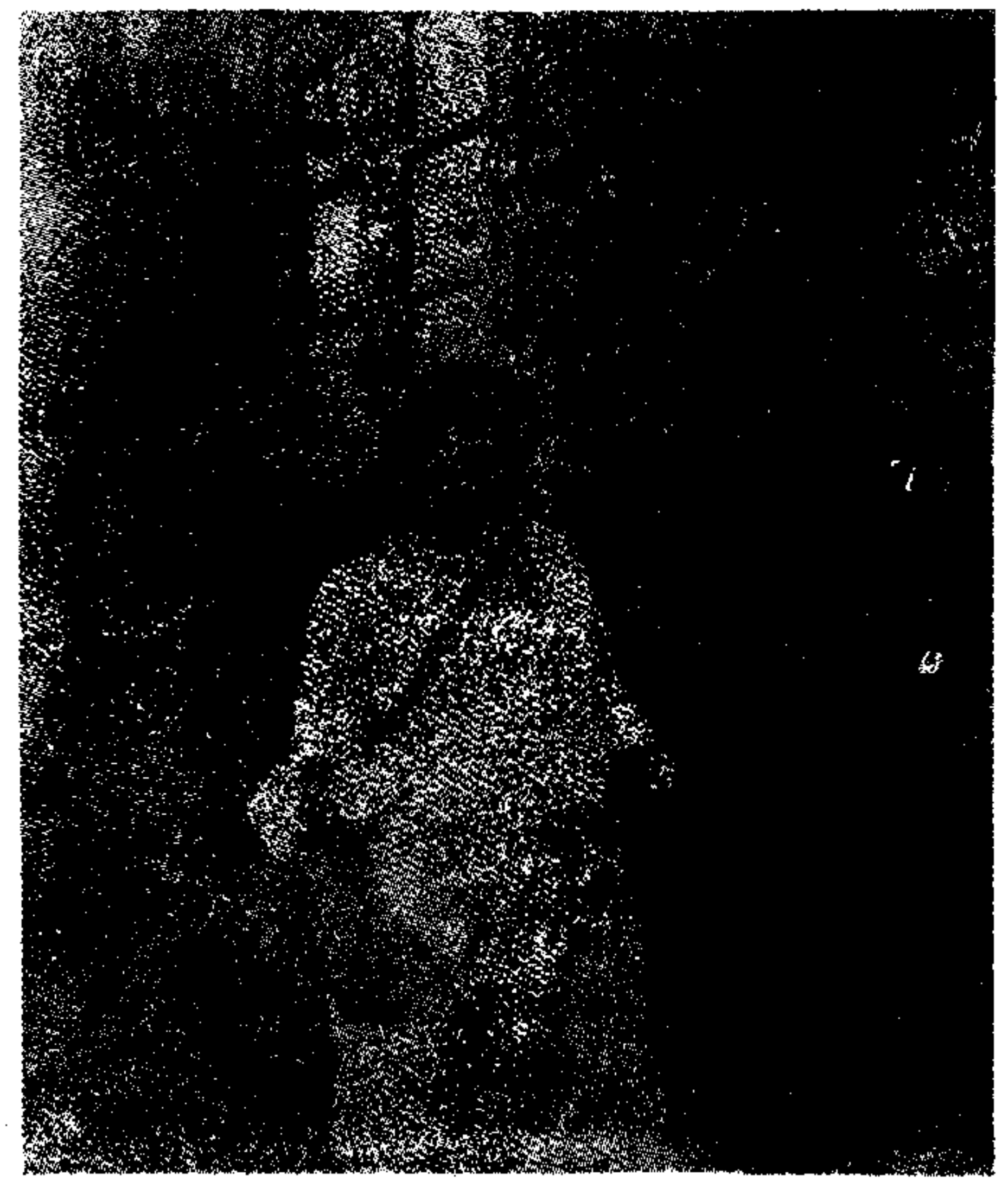
There was a time when meadow, grove and
stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and freshness of a dream.

Most adults, for some reason or other, lose the faculty for this sublime experience. There are, however, a few adults who retain it, and they are the nature-mystics. The most well-known among them are Wordsworth, John Muir and Richard Jeffrief. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore also

undoubtedly belonged to this group. About his experience Tagore wrote:

One day, while I stood watching at early dawn the sun sending out its rays from behind the trees, I suddenly felt as if some ancient mist in a moment lifted from my sight, and the morning light on the face of the world revealed an inner radiance of joy. The invisible screen of the common place was removed from all things and all men, and their ultimate significance was intensified in my mind; and this is the definition of beauty.

Mayavati stands as the living manifestation of this definition of beauty. In a shrinking world characterized by dehumanization of man, mechanization of life and depletion of environment, Mayavati stands as a symbol of the Vedantic vision of non-dual Reality, spiritual fulfilment through contemplation, harmony with nature, and peace. □



At Mayavati, in front of the Seviars' bungalow

Sir (Dr.) J.C. Bose

Lady Bose

Mayavati: Swamiji's Home of Advaita in the Himalayas

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

In his inimitable style the author, currently the President of Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot, Gujarat, draws an inspiring picture of the Himalayan Ashrama which Swamiji had loved so dearly and had willed to be the preserver and propagator of his message of Advaita for the masses.

Himalayas: The Home of Advaita:

It is in the holy and sublime Himalayas of Kumaon Valley that the Prophet and Pathfinder, Swami Vivekananda, established the Advaita Ashrama for spreading Advaita Vedanta—the *zeitgeist*—, the gospel of the innate divinity of all human beings and the essential unity of all existence. This is the saving message for the modern civilization. Eleven hundred years earlier, in the Himalayan Valley of Badri Narayan, Shankaracharya planted the same gospel of Advaita for saving and unifying the Indian culture. Since time immemorial the Himalayas have been for Indians the source of the highest spiritual knowledge of Advaita, handed down by seers and sages like Vyāsa, and Gauḍapāda.

It is in the Himalayan valley and forests of Almora that the wandering monk Vivekananda first felt the vibrant presence of divinity in nature. To him the Father of the Mountains, the Himalayas, was *Devatātmā* (ensouled by divinity), the repository of all the best and the highest in Indian civilization. It was, indeed, the *mānadaṇḍa*, 'the standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present and future must be tested'¹ he said. In the rushing streams of the Himalayas the wandering

monk first heard the sound of Shiva's drum, 'Hara, Hara, Vyom, Vyom'. It is in this Himalayas, under a huge peepul tree at Almora, that he had the supreme realization of Advaita, the oneness of the microcosm and the macrocosm, the potentiality of the entire universe in a grain of sand, the dormant presence of the Almighty God in man, the truth that *Atman is Brahman*

In this abode of Shiva, Vivekananda himself indeed became Shiva. A pilgrim who had suddenly seen him at the turn of a mountainpath stood transfixed, whispering 'Shiva, Shiva'. Here in his presence a disciple heard the pines murmuring 'Mahādeva! Mahādeva! Mahādeva!'² Here in the Kumaon Himalayas, at Nainital, for the first time he was recognized by a Mohammedan gentleman as being a Prophet: 'Swamiji, if in aftertimes any claim you as an Avatar, remember that I, a Mohammedan, am the first.'³

1. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), p. 100.

2. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita's Girls' School, 1972), vol. 1, p. 276.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 286.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 3, p. 285.

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 354.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 467.

The eternal Himalayas, as Vivekananda would say, 'rising tier above tier with their snow caps, look as it were into the very mysteries of heaven.'⁴ 'The Himalayas stand for that renunciation,' he said.⁵ With the same 'Himalayan-fever', 'the devilish inwardness', he confided to some one dear to him, 'I was never a missionary, nor ever would be one—my place is in the Himalayas.'⁶ It is here in the Himalayan valley that he sometimes got absorbed in dreaming of his favourite saint, Śuka, 'the ideal *paramahansa*'. Again and again he would speak of this great ideal in his life: 'To Śuka alone amongst men was it given to drink a handful of the waters of that one undivided ocean of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*—Existence, Knowledge and Bliss absolute! Most saints die, having heard only the thunder of Its waves upon the shore. A few gain the vision—and still fewer taste of it. But Śuka drank of the Sea of Bliss!' With exuberant joy he would recite the celebrated line: "'I know, and Śuka knows, and perhaps Vyāsa knows—a little," says Śiva.'⁷ His master, Sri Ramakrishna, used to call him 'My Śuka', and saw in him 'the embodiment of the Atman'.

Did not Vivekananda foresee that, like Śuka, he was destined to bring from the Himalayan Home of Mayavati the Ganga of the Advaita Vedanta—the gospel of the essential divinity and unity of life—to a world suffering from the pangs of its soul, attacked by the dragons of fundamentalism which are separating man from man, and already cursed with diseases of a sensate culture?



The Mayavati-Dream Comes True!

7. *Sister Nivedita*, vol. 1, pp. 294–5.

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol 6, p. 383.

It was in the snowy heights of Switzerland that Vivekananda's idea of an Advaita Ashrama first began to crystallize. To a friend at Almora he wrote on 5 August 1896: 'I want to start a Math at Almora, or near Almora rather.' In November the same year he reminded again, 'We want a whole hill, with a view of the snow range, all to ourselves.'⁸ In 1894 he wrote to the Dewan of Junagadh, Haridas Beharidas Desai, that his dream was to create a new type of people heretofore not seen on the earth, who would combine Western dynamism and rationalism with Hindu spirituality based on the holistic vision of Advaita. In 1895, in Thousand Island Park, Vivekananda, dreaming of this 'new type', spoke to his disciple Christine Greenstidel that they would emerge as the 'Super Women' and 'Supermen' of the future. The Prophet was, in fact, dreaming of the future Mayavati: 'It will be a centre for work and meditation,' he said, 'where my Indian and Western disciples can live together, and them I shall train as workers, the former to go out as preachers of Vedanta in the West, and the latter to devote their lives to the good of India.'⁹

This dream of the Advaita Ashrama—a meeting point of the East and the West—materialized through the enormous sacrifices of his two great English disciples, Capt. J.H. Sevier and Mrs. Sevier. At Swamiji's direction they first started this Advaita Ashrama in the Thompson House at Almora, and later on in 1896, while searching for a more secluded place, landed in the 65-acre Glen-Gyle tea estate at Maipoot, or Mayavat, on the southern slopes of Champavati valley of the Kumaon Hills, at a height of 6,400 ft. The word 'kumaon' is

9. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern & Western Disciples* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 423.

10. Mayavati Diary.

derived from the Sanskrit *kūrmānchal*, which means a hilltop shaped like the back of a tortoise, considered auspicious for spiritual practices. On 19 March 1899, when the Advaita Ashrama was finally started on the new site, 'Mayavat' was changed to Mayavati.¹⁰

The English monthly journal, *Prabuddha Bharata*, which had started publication in 1896 from Madras under the direct guidance and inspiration of Vivekananda, suddenly stopped publication with the death of its first editor, the brilliant young Advaitin, Rajam Iyer. Vivekananda brought a rebirth to *Prabuddha Bharata*, now in an atmosphere of Himalayan sublimity. In August 1898 the first Himalayan number of *Prabuddha Bharata*, came out from Almora. And, within a year or so, its editorial office was again moved to its present home in Mayavati.



In March 1899, with the inauguration of the Mayavati Ashrama, Vivekananda sent the draft enunciating his Advaitic vision for Mayavati. In 1900, January, a year before Vivekananda himself came to Mayavati, it appeared in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, in the form of a prospectus for the Ashrama:

*THE ADVAITA ASHRAMA,
HIMALAYAS*

In Whom is the Universe, Who is in the Universe, Who is the Universe; in Whom is the Soul, Who is in the Soul, Who is the Soul of Man; knowing Him—and therefore the universe—as our Self, alone extinguishes all fear, brings an end to misery and leads to Infinite Freedom. Wherever there has been expansion in love or progress in well-being, of individuals or numbers, it has been through the perception, realization and the practicalization of the Eternal Truth—THE ONENESS OF ALL

BEINGS, 'Dependence is misery, Independence is happiness.' The Advaita is the only system which gives unto man complete possession of himself, takes off all dependence and its associated superstitions, thus making us brave to suffer, brave to do, and, in the long run, attain to Absolute Freedom....

To give this ONE TRUTH a freer and fuller scope in elevating the lives of individuals and leavening the mass of mankind, we start this Advaita Ashrama on the Himalayan heights, the land of its first expiration.

Here it is hoped to keep Advaita free from all superstitions and weakening contaminations. Here will be taught and practised nothing but the Doctrine of Unity, pure and simple; and though in entire sympathy with all other systems, this Ashrama is dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone...

Arrangements, therefore, are in the course of progress for training Indian and European men and women side by side, for Advaita work in the East and West.

Vivekananda was not merely interested in giving new interpretation of Advaita Vedanta, or in founding a Himalayan retreat for monks. His primary motive was man-making, the creation of a spiritual humanity, and providing a demonstration of the Advaitic way of life. In his San Francisco lecture, 'Is Vedanta of the Future Religion?', Vivekananda emphasized that this Advaitic truth, pure and the highest, can be realized. For that, however, 'men have to be led to it gradually through worship, prayer, and other kinds of prevalent religious practices.' But Mayavati, as he said, is 'dedicated to Advaita and Advaita alone':

In Calcutta, I have all these images and temples—in the name of God and the Vedas, of the Bible and Christ and

Buddha. Let it be tried. But in the heights of the Himalayas I have a place where I am determined nothing shall enter except pure truth. There I want to work out this idea about which I have spoken to you today. There are an English man and an English woman in charge of the place. The purpose is to train seekers of truth, and to bring up children without fear and without superstition. They shall not hear about Christs and Buddhas and Shivas and Vishnus—none of these. They shall learn, from the start, to stand upon their own feet. They shall learn, from their childhood, that God is the spirit and should be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Everyone must be looked upon as spirit. That is the ideal.¹¹

This is the philosophical foundation of Vivekananda's Mayavati.



The Ashrama in Himalayan Silence:

As the pilgrim winds up the lonely nine kilometre walk to Mayavati from the small hill-town of Lohaghat, he sees from a distance a dark green mountain—its top thick with pine and oak forest and, most of the year, surrounded by clouds and mist. As he finally covers this long zig-zag way, passing under the tall Himalayan trees, he enters the small Ashrama premises, which has a gorgeous garden of roses, dahlias, chrysanthemums, lilies, and other flowers looking skyward in an all-engulfing silence. Beyond the few yards of the garden begins a yawning gorge, sloping down several hundred feet into a dense forest of oaks. At the end of the slope runs a rivulet.

Standing in the midst of unbroken silence, the pilgrim can see the towering

dark-green mountains on three sides of the Ashrama. But as he looks up northward, a magnificent view opens before his eyes. He beholds, with unspeakable joy and wonder, the vast Himalayan range—250 miles wide, including the glittering snow-capped peaks of Nanda Devi, Trisul, Nandakot, Panchachulle, Kamet, and others—, which, to the Indian mind, is the first visible manifestation of Shiva, the Absolute. As one gazes with awe at those white forms, calm and immaculate, the unstruck music of OM seems to reverberate in the Great Active Silence, the *Maunam*, offering a hint of the illimitable Calmness, of the infinite Bliss, which is Brahman, the Self within and without, the ultimate Reality. This is Mayavati—Vivekananda's home of Advaita in the Himalayas.

Vivekananda enters Mayavati:

At long last, on 3 January 1901, the prophet finally stepped into Advaita Ashrama of his dream. He was only thirty-nine. But this difficult upward journey from Kathgodam, in mid-winter, and interrupted now and then by snowfall or pouring rain, exhausted him. On the last lap he had to support himself with a staff in one hand, putting the other on the shoulder of his disciple. Breathing heavily, he had mused: 'You see, my son, now I am coming to the end!'

But before Vivekananda reached Mayavati, Capt. Sevier was gone. Vivekananda had told Capt. Sevier to stay put in Mayavati until he arrived. However, the austerities and the rigours of the first two years told heavily on Capt. Sevier's health. A few months before the Swami could reach, Capt. Sevier fell sick. Despite many requests he refused to leave Mayavati until his Master came, and thus died quietly at Mayavati. The ashramites performed his last rites in the Hindu way on the banks of the rivulet in the gorge below. On that

11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 8, pp. 139–41.

sacred and secluded spot there stands no monument. That was the Advaitic wish of Capt. Sevier. 'He passed away like a martyr,' as Vivekananda loved to say with the deepest respect and gratitude to the departed soul. Mrs. Sevier continued at Mayavati and waited for the coming of the Master.

Vivekananda came to Mayavati along with brother-disciple Swami Shivananda and disciple Swami Sadananda. Initially he was accommodated in the first floor, but soon, due to extreme cold, he came down and stayed in the ground floor which has a fireplace, and which today is the sacred spot for after-dinner get-together and meditation. On 7 January, he along with Mother (Mrs.) Sevier and others, went up the hills to Dharamgarh, from where he had an unobstructed view of the miles of snow peaks stretched out in the North. In great joy he expressed a desire to build a small hut at this beautiful spot and meditate there! His spirit soared high. He wrote to a dear one, 'The snow is lying all-round six inches deep, the sun is bright and glorious.' Another day he took a walk by the Mayavati Lake, and declared that he would soon give up all public work and spend his days at Mayavati, writing books and whistling merry tunes with the birds! On another morning he stood enraptured looking at the snow-white peaks, and showed to a disciple, Br. Jnan, the immaculate white face of Shiva imprinted there. Then he began to recite Shankaracharya's invocation to the all-white Shiva:

O Shiva! Thy body is white,
White are Thy smile and the skull on Thy hand,
White are Thy bull and the flowers in Thine ears,
White like foam is Ganga flowing down

12. *Smṛtir Aloke Vivekānanda* (Calcutta: Udbodhan), 'Reminiscences' by Br. Jnan Maharaj.

From the matted locks of Thy hair.
White is the crescent moon on Thy forehead.
O Thou, all-white Shiva,
Give me the boon of freedom from all sins!¹²

Gradually his voice became soft and sublime, and in the all-engulfing silence Vivekananda went into deep meditation.

In this home of Advaita, Vivekananda wished that no one should lean on any kind of dualistic worship or ritual, but, to his surprise; one day he discovered a small shrine where his disciples were worshipping the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna! That evening the lion of Advaita Vedanta roared. He thundered like a Gaudapāda, or Aṣṭāvakra, or Shankara. Vehemently he said that, in this Ashrama, it should be the endeavour of the seekers of God to live only on the subjective side of religion, such as meditation and study of the scriptures. At least in this place one should try to rise above all rituals and external worship of personal gods, thus freeing oneself from any dependence on this God or that book. Here in this Himalayan home, one should derive all his strength and joy from the Infinite Divinity, Bliss and Consciousness within. That evening they heard in his voice the truth of Shankara's *Niroāna-śatakam* — '*Cidānandarūpaḥ Śivo'ham, Śivo'ham.*' The words of the Master cleared once and for all the minds of the disciples.

Ramakrishna-worship, or for that matter any ritual or worship was felt unnecessary from that day onwards in this home of Advaita. Yet, no thoughts against rituals or worship arise in Mayavati. In Vivekananda's words: 'Jnana is creedlessness, but that does not mean that it despises creeds. It only means that a stage above and beyond creeds has been gained. The Jnani has to

13. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 8, pp. 8-10.

come out of all forms, to get beyond rules and books, and be his own book.¹³ Today when you go to Mayavati, you see a picture of the Madonna with the holy Child, and of the Buddha in the library-room; a portrait of Vivekananda hangs on the staircase wall; and a picture of Ramakrishna stands above the fireplace. No hymns are sung or flowers offered to them. A few steps out, and the Mayavati garden, with its abundance of flowers, stands out as a perpetual floral offering, silently worshipping the 'One Reality, beyond all form and colour, beyond time and space', as Vivekananda used to sing.

The thoughts of the future of Mayavati consumed Vivekananda. He saw with his prophetic vision—that the monks at Mayavati would meditate for long hours in the Himalayan solitude; but once the meditation was over, they would carry baskets of apples on their head and sell them in the nearby market.

Today, after a hundred years, Mayavati literally fulfils the words of the Prophet. The Mayavati monks ring no bells and perform no rituals. In small wooden cells they study, meditate, write or read. But they do not live only cogitating on 'Brahman alone is real; the world is illusory.' When meditations are over, they have work in the apple orchard, the wheat-fields, the cow-shed, the market, the vegetable garden, or the editorial office. Sometimes they go to nearby towns and villages for preaching. Someone goes to nurse the sick and the wasted in the Mayavati Charitable Hospital—the most trusted place in the area—to which patients come—by dandi, on horseback, or by hired jeep—, sometimes even from a distance of 80 kms. Advaita, the holistic vision of life, is thus put into practice.



The Need for Practical Vedanta:

Greek Civilization got buried in the Aegian Isles because the Greek Philosophers refused to 'return' to the market place of life, leaving their ivory towers of knowledge. Vivekananda saw that, despite perfection in external arts and sciences, the Greek Civilization degenerated into 'immorality' due to lack of spiritual culture among the masses, and it slowly died. Similarly, the Roman Civilization, despite perfection in law and administration, lacked the Advaitic vision of essential unity of mankind. It ended in 'Roman brutality' and invited self-extinction. India's Vedic culture, on the other hand, despite reaching perfection in grasping the universal spiritual principles of life, failed to put those lofty ideas into practice. And because of this 'impracticality', it suffered twelve hundred years of slavery. The weakening of its social-fabric with rigid caste-distinctions led to exploitation of the masses and women in the name of religion.¹⁴ Vivekananda stemmed further decline by making Vedanta—the essence of the Vedic culture—practical and applicable to every sector of life for the regeneration and continuation of the Indian culture. 'The Paragon of Advaita Vedanta', as Sir William James called him, implanted in the heart of Mayavati the seed of this Practical Vedanta.

Vivekananda knew his own historic role and defined it in clear terms:

But one defect which lay in the Advaita was its being worked out so long on the spiritual plane only, and nowhere else; now the time has come when you have to make it practical. It shall no more

14. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984), vol. 2, p. 384.

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 3, p. 427.

be a *rahasya*, a secret. It shall no more live with monks in caves and forests, and in the Himalayas; it must come down to the daily, everyday life of the people; it shall be worked out in the palace of the king, in the cave of the recluse; it shall be worked out in the cottage of the poor, by the beggar in the street, everywhere; anywhere it can be worked out.¹⁵



All Knowledge is Sacred:

And this wisdom of Advaita must penetrate into all branches of human knowledge, sacred or secular. He said:

In our country we go down on our knees before the man who reads the Vedas, and we do not care for the man who is studying physics. That is superstition; it is not Vedanta at all. It is utter materialism. With God every knowledge is sacred. Knowledge is God. Infinite knowledge abides within every one in the fullest measure.¹⁶

To his disciple Nivedita, Vivekananda said, 'Arts, science and religion are three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita.'

Inspired by this vision of her Master, Nivedita wrote that 'the crowning glory' of her Master's teaching was that it obliterated the distinction between the sacred and the secular.¹⁷ Vivekananda is the first prophet to declare that explorations in the secular will one day lead us to the sacred:

Some say that by controlling internal nature we control everything. Carried to the extreme both are right, because in

nature there is no such division as internal or external... Just as a physicist when he pushes his knowledge to its limits, finds it melting away into metaphysics, so a metaphysician will find that what he calls mind and matter are but apparent distinctions, the reality being one.¹⁸

Mayavati put into practice the Prophet's wishes. Dr. J.C. Bose, whom Bernard Shaw described as 'the greatest living biologist', visited Mayavati four times, and in 1907 May-June, 1911 May, and 1918 June, he gave three talks on 'Consciousness in Plants' to the ashramites in that room sanctified by Swamiji.¹⁹ The celebrated Nobel-physicist, Erwin Schrodinger, too, has confirmed the Prophet's words when he, through the latest findings of Quantum Physics, arrived at the Atman = Brahman equation of the Upanishads as the 'only solution to the conflict' regarding the role of consciousness in modern Physics. He writes: 'From the early great Upanishads, the recognition Atman = Brahman (the personal self equated to the omnipresent, all-corresponding eternal Self) was in Indian thought considered, far from being blasphemous, the quintessence of the deepest insight into the happenings of the world.'²⁰

A Place for Highest Spiritual Worship:

Who would work as the Protagonists of this new dynamic religion, this Practical Vedanta? At Almora he prophesied:

Strong souls from all quarters of this earth, in time to come, will be attracted to this Father of Mountains,...when all

18. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 131.

19. Mayavati Diary.

20. Erwin Schrodinger, *My View of the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1963), Chapter 4.

Schrodinger, *Mind and Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976) pp. 90-3.

16. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 137.

17. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. xv-xvi.

this fight between sects and all those differences in dogmas will not be remembered any more, and quarrels between your religion and my religion will have vanished altogether, when mankind will understand that there is but the eternal religion, and this is the perception of the divine within, and the rest is mere froth.²¹

In April 1900, in San Francisco, Vivekananda mercilessly rent the veil of dualistic weaknesses which had enslaved human thinking for millennia:

There is no help for man. None ever was, none is and none will be. Why should there be? Are you not men and women? Are the lords of the earth to be helped by others? Are you not ashamed? You will be helped when you are reduced to dust. But you are spirit. We are so lazy, we do not want to do anything for ourselves. We want a Personal God, a Saviour or a Prophet to do everything for us....No more of these superstitions bred through thousands of years! It takes a little hard work to become spiritual.

Like a lion breaking out from the cage of Maya, he cried out:

I am the soul of Buddha, of Jesus, of Mohammed. I am the soul of the teachers, and I am all the robbers that robbed and all the murderers that were hanged, I am the Universal.²²

To seekers of *mokṣa*, or spiritual freedom, his bold words are: 'Only by worshipping SELF can freedom be won. Even personal God is but the SELF objectified.'²³ 'Man is spirit

and, therefore, Infinite, and Infinite alone can worship the Infinite. We will worship the Infinite, that is the highest spiritual worship.'²⁴ It is this 'highest spiritual worship' that Vivekananda wanted to implant in Mayavati.

He asserted that men must become like Christs and Buddhas, each one must become a prophet:

There were times in olden days when prophets were many in every society. The time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city in the world. In olden times, particular peculiar persons were, so to speak, selected by the operations of the laws of society to become prophets. The time is coming when we shall understand that to become religious means to become a prophet, that none can become religious until he or she becomes a prophet.

This, the training of prophets, is the great work that lies before us; and consciously or unconsciously all the great systems of religion are working towards this one great goal.²⁵

Mayavati Continues

Only history can tell when Mayavati will fulfil the Prophet's dream. Vivekananda knew that such developments take millenniums to work out. He said: 'Light comes to individuals through the conscious effort of their intellect; it comes, slowly though, to the whole race through unconscious percolations.' Throughout the last nine decades, Mayavati has made every effort to realize the Prophet's vision. Outstanding preachers of Vedanta and saintly personalities have come out of Mayavati, and have radiated the divinity of life both in the East and in the

21. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 3, p. 427.

22. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 341.

23. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 57.

24. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 341.

25. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 10-11.

West. Highest contemplation has been happily combined with the most down-to-earth action. It is at Mayavati that so great a personality as Swami Turiyananda once acted as the flyboy for the *Prabuddha Bharata* press. This was in the early days of Mayavati, when Captain Sevier himself would run the press; Mother Sevier would correct the proofs; and Swamis Swarupananda and Virajananda would write the first biography of Vivekananda, and compile the *Complete Works*—the Vedas for the modern world. Monks would walk for days together, a distance of ninety kilometres, to the town of Tanakpur to bring food stuff and other materials for the Ashrama. Those early days of intense austerity have been recorded as the golden days of spiritual struggle in the annals of the Ramakrishna Order.

Nearly a hundred years have passed. Despite a few amenities, like electricity and the Lohaghat Road, Mayavati retains the same old Himalayan charm. Those snow peaks have stood unchanged. Mayavati hills are covered with the same dark and deep woods. More visitors come in order to feel the living presence of the Prophet in this Himalayan home. For, it is from here that he wished the message of pure Vedanta to go forth—to lift humanity, on the strength of the Self within, to the heights of prophets,—a message much needed in these days of scientific reductionism and religious fundamentalism. In its silence and sublimity, Mayavati infuses a genuine seeker with the grace and power of the Spirit, and with the dreams of the day when the Prophet's vision will be fully realized. □



Swami Virajananda

Swami Sacchidananda
(Moti Maharaj)

At Mayavati

**MESSAGE OF
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VEDANTA
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Interview with Swami Vivekananda*

In an interview which a representative of *Prabuddha Bharata* had recently with Swami Vivekananda, that great teacher was asked: 'What do you consider the distinguishing feature of your movement, Swamiji?'

'Aggression,' said the Swami promptly, 'aggression in a religious sense only. Other sects and parties have carried spirituality all over India, but since the days of Buddha we have been the first to break bounds and try to flood the world with missionary zeal.'

'And what do you consider to be the function of your movement as regards India?'

'To find the common bases of Hinduism and awaken the national consciousness to them. At present there are three parties in India included under the term "Hindu"—the orthodox; the reforming sects of the Mahomedan period; and the reforming sects of the present time. Hindus from north to south are only agreed on one point,—viz. on not eating beef.'

'Not in a common love for the Vedas?'

'Certainly not. That is just what we want to reawaken. India has not yet assimilated the work of Buddha. She is hypnotized by his voice, not made alive by it.'

'In what way do you see this importance of Buddhism in India today?'

'It is obvious and overwhelming. You see India never loses any thing; only she takes time to turn every thing into bone and muscle. Buddha dealt a blow at animal sacrifice from which she has never recovered; and Buddha said, "Kill no cows", and cow-killing is an impossibility with us.'

'With which of the three parties you name do you identify yourself, Swamiji?'

'With all of them. We are the orthodox

Hindus,' said the Swami, 'but,' he added suddenly with great earnestness and emphasis, 'we refuse entirely to identify ourselves with "Don't-touchism". That is not Hinduism: it is in none of our books: it is an unorthodox superstition which has interfered with national efficiency all along the line.'

'Then what you really desire is national efficiency?'

'Certainly. Can you adduce any reason why India should lie in the ebb-tide of the Aryan nations? Is she inferior in intellect? Is she inferior in dexterity? Can you look at her art, at her mathematics, at her philosophy, and answer "yes"? All that is needed is that she should de-hypnotize herself and wake up from her age-long sleep to take her true rank in the hierarchy of nations.'

'But India has always had her deep inner life. Are you not afraid, Swamiji, that in attempting to make her active you may take from her, her one great treasure?'

'Not at all. The history of the past has gone to develop the inner life of India, and the activity (i.e. the outer life) of the West. Hitherto these have been divergent. The time has now come for them to unite. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was alive to the depths of his being, yet on the outer plane who was more active? That is the secret. Let your life be as deep as the ocean, but let it also be as wide as the sky.'

'It is a curious thing,' continued the Swami, 'that the inner life is often most profoundly developed where the outer conditions are most cramping and limiting. But this is an accidental—not an essential association, and if we set ourselves right here in India, the world will be "rightened". For are we not all one?'

*Reprinted from *Prabuddha Bharata*, vol. 3, no. 2, September 1898.

What is Vedanta?

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

To some the Vedantic teachings on the Atman appear to be an over-simplification. 'It is, in a way... Whether it is over-simplification or not, it is an incontrovertible truth', says revered Maharaj, the President of the Ramakrishna Order, in this talk given at the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, U.S.A., on 18 September 1988.

Vedanta means the culmination, or the deepest mysteries, of the Vedas. Vedanta is not any sectarian scripture. You do not find any mention of any sect in the whole Vedic literature. The word Vedanta connotes being absolutely free from all denominational religions. It is a way of life, and it is an exhortation to realize the Ultimate Truth which can be attained through long practice, and one does not require any religion as such, any dogma, or any special ritual. Usually Vedanta means the rational understanding of the mysteries of the Vedas. Now this rational understanding is such that any man, just with his common understanding, can understand every bit of it; it does not require, does not demand, any faith in any particular religion or philosophy. A rational understanding of it one can have just by one's common sense. That is one thing. And another thing it means—it is not only an intellectual understanding, but it is also a way of life. The direct realization of the Ultimate Truth. That is the aim of the Vedanta

Firstly you should remember that the Vedas have stated categorically that the Truth cannot be attained by the exercise of your intellect alone. That is not enough. There is one passage which I would like to tell you; it is a preliminary requirement for understanding the Vedas. It is stated there—first I mention in Sanskrit, and then I shall give you the translation: *Nāvirato duṣcaritāt...*:¹ Unless one has refrained

from bad conduct, wrong conduct; unless he has calmed down his mental states, the process of thinking, ideations; unless one has withdrawn his senses from sense-objects which constantly make the thinker go astray; unless one has concentrated his mind on the truths, the fundamental truths; unless one has become constantly engaged in the pursuit of that Truth—the Truth cannot be attained by mere exercise of the intellect.

Though I tell you it is to be understood by the mind, (because the mind alone is capable of thinking), mere mind is not enough. The mind has to be freed from all preconceptions, all desires, all our likes and dislikes. Unless we have freed ourselves from any bias that we may have, the Truth cannot be attained by mere intellect. Because the intellect will always be vitiated by these tendencies that we have acquired through, perhaps, generations, or through the series of births and deaths, as we believe in rebirth. Therefore the study has to be done very carefully so that our individuality, our biased mind, does not superimpose something on the Truth and make It distorted, just like a bad glass that distorts the vision. So our mind also has to be carefully prepared for the study of the Vedanta. I mention this as a precondition, without which we shall not be capable to understand the Truth.

1. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.2.24.

Now the process is very simple. The process of thinking of the Vedanta is very simple. As I have told you, our mind is the instrument by means of which we can consider the Truth, and the mind has to be freed from all biases, all preconceived notions. And the sages, who have propounded the Truth, have simply instructed us to understand our experiences, the sum total of our experiences. It is a comprehensive study. Our whole human experiences should be brought within the subject of consideration.

Our experiences consist mainly of two sections, or two categories. One is external, and the other is internal. We can study the objective world, which Science has chosen as its subject. They have discussed the things that are the material objects, and have made wonderful discoveries through the processes of analysis, and of course with their method of investigation and generalization. Now that is the objective world which has been the subject-matter of the scientific enquiries. The Vedanta does not give so much emphasis on that enquiry and does not go on at length with that process of analysis. But simply for the sake of our understanding we try to analyse the objective world that is perceived by us through our five senses, the five senses with which we are endowed. We see the world through the five senses, and corresponding to the five senses there are five sense-objects of the senses, the existence of which we can know only through our sense-organs. There is no other way of reaching the objective world except through the mind which functions with the five sense-organs.

Therefore, the Vedanta just summarily disposes of all the detailed experiences, and goes to the root, pointing to the five sense-objects, namely — in Sanskrit they are called *kṣiti, ap, teja, marut, and vyoma*. *Kṣiti* is earth; *ap*, water; *teja* fire; *marut*, air; and *vyoma*, ether or space — the five objects that we

experience through our five sense-organs. Now, they have not gone into the details of these. Some scriptures give details, by just imagining of course, and not by investigating in a laboratory, that ultimately these can be reduced to what is called 'atom', *paramāṇu*, or the 'minutest part of it', 'the subtlest form'. And then they come to the conclusion that the gross has been derived from the subtle; the subtle from the still more subtle; and ultimately from that which is the cause of these five elements.

That is how they dismiss the objective world. And then, when they dismiss the objective world that way, they come to the conclusion that there must have been a first cause, a cause which is not itself caused by something else. From it come the different effects—from the subtlest to the less subtle, and gradually to the gross. The Ultimate Cause is the object of enquiry. So much for the objective world. I am giving you a very brief summary of it. There are detailed discussions about it.

Then we turn to the subject of the *internal world*, our own selves. We know our personality as the experiencer who experiences the external world and also the internal world. Now the experiencer has got for his internal functioning the five senses, corresponding to the five objects outside. And then, behind that is the mind. That mind has been divided into four parts according to their functions. The mind, according to Western philosophy, has three functions thinking, feeling, and willing. In the same way they have studied the functioning of the mind, which undergoes changes constantly like the external world. The change is continuous in the external world as well as in the internal world. We can perceive the changes taking place in the external world, and if we try to focus on our thinking then we can see what changes are going on in the internal world of man's experiences. His

mind is constantly functioning, constantly changing.

But then, behind all these changes there must be the perceiver himself, who himself does not undergo change. If he underwent change, then he would not be able to perceive the changes. Change implies something static, something unchanging. On the basis of this process they say that behind all these mental states and processes there must be a perceiver who perceives the changes. Without the perceiver, who will perceive the changes?

Now, of the Western philosophy and of the Eastern philosophy — I say Western and Eastern, dividing them, but it is not a clear division because there are many Western philosophers who are thinking in the same way as the Eastern philosophers, and the

process must be considered to be different from the things that undergo change. That is the simple process of analysis. Everywhere in our experience there is the consciousness which is a constant factor. We are conscious of this thing; we are conscious of that thing. We are conscious of the external world; we are conscious of the internal world comprising the states and processes of our mind. Therefore I must necessarily be different from the changing factors, and must be unchanging.

You may say it is very easy to say so. But have we perceived the unchanging factor distinct from the changing factors? No, we have not. Because whenever we have any experience, that experience includes the experiencing consciousness and the experienced objects. They always go together. But the changing factors have

Unless we have refrained our senses from their pursuit of the external objectives, unless we have controlled the waves of our mind, unless we have concentrated our thoughts on the one objective, we cannot, simply by the exercise of our mind, reach that state...cannot be actually free from all these identifications and their adverse effects.

Eastern philosophers also, when they are thinking of the objective world, follow the Western philosophers. So, only for the sake of classification I mention that, one gives stress on the subject, and the other gives stress on the object.

The Eastern philosophy gives stress on the perceiver. I am thinking and therefore I am the perceiver of the states and the processes that are going on in my mind. Now, if I can perceive the changes of the mind, I cannot be classified into the same category. I must be different from the perceived, from the changing objects of my experiences. Therefore, the perceiver has to be considered as an unchanging factor. When we consider the changing experiences, the factor that is constant in all the changing

behind them an unchanging factor also. Therefore, through mental analysis, we can say that the unchanging factor is different from the changing factors. And thus we arrive at the truth that consciousness is distinct from the objects we are conscious of. That is the process of the Vedantic reasoning.

It is a simple process, but it requires a very close consideration. It is a faculty of seeing through all these jumbled factors, analysing them, and separating that which is constant, and therefore different. So the Self, or Atman (as it is called in Sanskrit) is that all pervading Existence which is the common factor in all our experiences. That is why in Sanskrit it is called Atma. The word Atma means 'all pervading'. It exists

everywhere; without that we cannot have any consciousness of it, any knowledge of it. Therefore that factor is considered to be the ultimate reality without which we cannot exist.

Whatever may be our condition, this unchanging factor, namely 'I', remains. In the Western philosophy also, Descartes, the French philosopher, started with a similar condition, '*cogito ergo sum*'—'I think; therefore I exist'. Now I may doubt everything—that is, the process of thinking—, but the doubter cannot be doubted. We may doubt everything, but the doubter must be there who doubts, without whom no doubting is possible. If we doubt the doubter, that is inconsistent. That will be just contradicting my own experience. Therefore the Self is the ultimate reality according to the Vedanta.

We have come to the highest rationalization of that, but what does it matter? How does it help me? I can say that I am that Eternal Consciousness, and other things come and go, but I remain forever. In a Sanskrit passage it is said (I mention the Sanskrit verse just to remind myself; I shall give you the translation): *nodeti nāstametyekā saṁvidēṣā svayamprabhā*. The *saṁvid*, consciousness, is self-manifesting, and it neither rises nor sets. It remains constant. Other things are changing.

We have got the experiences of the objective world. We have the experience of the changing mind. But through all these runs the golden thread of consciousness. Unless I was conscious of this I could not have said that I have experienced these. So the consciousness continues. It never comes to an end. It never begins; it never ends. And it is self-manifesting, because if it were not self-manifesting it would require something else for its manifestation. How could we know that something else? This consciousness, this perceiver, must be there to understand

whatever that cause may be. So, that consciousness—it is not a mental process—is the precondition which enables us to perceive the changing world, objective or subjective. That is the simple process of arriving at the Vedantic Truth.

But then how does it help us? It helps us this way: we are constantly feeling affected by the changes, outside as well as inside, [caused] by the environment and the perceiver himself. That is, the individual feels affected by that. I am sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy. I have got so many moods: anger, fear, etc. An infinite number of moods are there. These affect me. But suppose I can stand firm on the Unchanging Entity, namely, what is called the Pure Consciousness, then other things are extraneous to me. I am the Pure Consciousness which itself is manifesting not requiring any condition for its manifestation. If it requires any condition, then how does that condition get manifested? So it has to be considered that this Consciousness is itself manifesting. Now I can stand firm on that. Then the bodily changes or mental changes cannot affect me.

It is said in the Upanishad²: *atmānam ced-vijānīyād ayam asmīti pūruṣaḥ, kimicchan kasya kāmāya śarīraṁ anusañjvaret*—If one realizes the Self in its true character, that it is an unchanging, eternal factor, then through what desire, or for the sake of what should one get affected when the bodily changes take place? The bodily changes are inevitable. When a man is born, his death is inevitable. Everything that has a beginning must come to an end. And between these two processes, two factors—that is, birth and death, there are so many changing factors: decay, growth, and so on. They say, summarizing it, that whatever is there in existence, as a factor, as an object of

2. *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.4.12.

experience, has a beginning. Then it must, as I think, grow and undergo transformation. After that decay begins. And ultimately death is there—inevitably. So this process is true for all things. The process of beginning and end, and in between so many varieties of transformations, and at last, behind all these, the Self, a constant factor which is not affected directly by these changes, unless we have identified ourselves with the changing process. If we identify ourselves with the body, then bodily changes must affect us. If I identify myself with the mental process, then I must be affected by the mental changes. But if I am neither the body, nor the mind; if I am the eternally existent Consciousness, ever manifested, then there is no question of my being affected by the changing circumstances.

Changing factors cannot affect me. That

as free from all different qualities, different changes, then that consciousness remains as One Self-manifesting Entity which cannot be described. Description means either attributing some qualities or negating some qualities there. So far as the negating of the qualities is concerned, we can say that the Atman is neither this nor that. But when we ask, 'What is it?', we have to keep dumb. Because there is no factor known to us through which the Self can be known, because It is always the Knower, the Perceiver.

Therefore *vijñātāram are kena vijānīyād-iti*³—How, by which process, will you know the Knower? A beautiful summarization of the truth! The Knower, the Perceiver, cannot be known by any other means. Then is It unknown? No, because we are always directly aware of our Self. There is nothing

We are conscious of the external world; we are conscious of the internal world comprising the states and processes of our mind. Therefore I must necessarily be different from the changing factors, and must be unchanging.

is the truth the Vedanta teaches. And if that is the truth, if the Pure Consciousness is the ultimate reality, then your consciousness and my consciousness cannot be distinguished. It is because of the other factors that we consider ourselves to be different, according to our identifications with different bodies and minds. Now you see, we are going deeper and deeper into the self-analysis. If I am really the Pure Consciousness, it cannot be distinguished because of the distinctions of the bodies and the minds. So it must be one. It must be one indivisible and without the extraneous' characters, extraneous attributes that we are imbued with. That is the point.

By simplification we say, when you know the Self as such, that is, as free from all identifications, as free from all limitations,

else in the world which is so closely known as the Atman, not as the object of our knowledge but as the Knower Himself. That is the simple process of deduction by means of which the Vedanta teaches us what our real essence is.

Now, based on this solid truth of the Vedanta, we can say that as Atman we are free from all limitations, free from all ignorance, free from all changes, free from birth and death, free from all the vagaries of the mind. That unchanging eternal principle is the Self, my true reality, my essence. Other qualities that I attribute to it are falsely attributed. It is only a sort of illusion that you are thinking that the Atman is born, the Atman is dead. It is all with reference to the body. That the Atman is happy, the Atman is unhappy, is with reference to the mind.

But not to the Self as such. You may say that is over-simplification. It is, in a way. But it has to be understood. If there is anything false in the questioning, that has to be pointed out. But many philosophers have cogitated on this point and never could controvert this realization. So, whether it is over-simplification or not, it is an incontrovertible truth.

Now, if that be so, then, knowing This as our Self, as I just quoted, why should we still be affected by the changes? By knowing This, why does one not gain the ultimate objective of the knowledge? As I told you: a hundred times I may be told 'I am Brahman, I am the all-pervading Reality', but still the identification with the changes continues. I know in my heart of hearts that however much we may repeat, 'I am Brahman', however much our guru tells us, 'You are Brahman', that does not help. The ignorance continues, without any change. Why? Because we are hypnotized that way. We have been conditioned through our lives thinking the other way. And therefore that wrong thinking—illusion or delusion, whatever it be, cannot be got rid of.

So what is to be done? That is why the processes just mentioned in the beginning are necessary. Again I repeat: *nāvirato duṣcaritāt...* 'Unless we have restrained our sense from their pursuit of the external objectives, unless we have controlled the waves of our mind, unless we have concentrated our thoughts on the one objective, we cannot, simply by the exercise of our mind, reach that state; cannot realize it; cannot be actually free from all these identifications and their adverse effects. That is why it is said for the process: *ātma vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nīdhyāsitaḥ...*'⁴ Atman alone has to be seen, or realized. And, as a process, you hear about It, you cogitate about It, and then when you have found the truth of It, go into

deep meditation on It, so that It becomes your nature. We have been hypnotized, perhaps by ourselves; and therefore, to free ourselves from that hypnosis it is we who are to de-hypnotize ourselves, free ourselves from this hypnosis.

Now, that is the process of the Vedanta. But that is a very tough way. That is a very tough way because we do not easily want to take that trouble. It is so deep-rooted in us—the other thoughts—that we are identified with the body and the mind. It is not easy for us to free ourselves from that superstition. It is a superstition—nothing else. That superstition has to be got rid of. How? Let us constantly think, let us analyse, and then go deep into the meditation so that we may be free from the other biases, the other prejudices. This is the Vedantic process.

But the Vedanta is not merely that. It is a standpoint to which all other religious or spiritual practices can come and contribute towards the final realization. They are all harmonized from this standpoint. When a devotee offers his devotion to his God, the God does not exist outside of him. But He is inside the devotee. He is all-pervading. The devotee does not think that God is limited to a particular point. So his conception of divinity will gradually be more and more clarified, chastened. Finally he will see that his God is all-pervading—within him and also outside him. He goes on devoting his mind to God, meditating on His divine qualities. When the meditation will be deep, continuous, his individual personality will undergo transformation. Gradually the devotee becomes transformed into the object of his devotion. And lastly he will be identified with it.

A story of two birds is given in the Upanishad. Both the birds are on a tree. One is on a lower branch and the other is at the top. The lower bird eats fruits, sweet and

bitter, and feels happy and unhappy. Then he looks up at the other bird and finds that the upper bird is not eating anything, and yet is full of joy. So, gradually the lower bird just hops on towards the upper bird. And when it comes very close to the upper bird, it comes to realize: 'Oh, I was not different from the upper bird! I was only a glory, a halo, a manifestation of the same thing.' So the devotee also ceases to be a lower manifestation, and becomes identified with his object of devotion. That is the process of devotion.

So Vedanta does not exclude any process by means of which the highest truth is attained. And all the different practices of religion, ultimately, are to reach that state where every man will realize his innate divinity. That divinity is considered to be away from him, but as he proceeds towards it the distance decreases, and ultimately the devotee merges in the object of devotion — the same thing as the Vedanta teaches.

Therefore the Vedanta is all-comprehensive. It includes every stage, every process of spiritual practice. The paths may be different, but that does not matter. The result is the same. And it is only on the standpoint of the Vedanta that all religions can be harmonized. The more we give emphasis on our differences, the more we are divided, the more we become limited by those from whom we feel different. I become limited, ultimately coming to a small point. But if I fix my mind on the Ultimate, then gradually my expansion begins. And finally, as God is the omnipresent, I shall be omnipresent; as God is omniscient, I shall be omniscient; as God is the all-Powerful, I shall be all-powerful—because I shall not exist separately from the Divine. I shall be one with the Divine. It is the question of merging into the One. That is all. A devotee by his devotion proceeds towards the Divine, and merges

into the Divine.

A man of knowledge, having a rational bent of mind, goes on analysing and ultimately frees himself from all the superimpositions he had attributed to the Atman, and the Atman then shines clearly in all its glory. That is the ultimate realization for everybody. We all have the germ of the Infinite, the Everlasting, the Omniscient, in us. That is why we are thinking of God, and we are trying to free ourselves from the limitations of existence, limitations of time, space, and causation. And ultimately what will happen? When I shall be free, the whole world will be in me. I shall be in the whole world.

Now just see how the application of the Vedanta can change our behaviour completely. We shall see no difference. We shall see no enemy. We shall have the same identification with everybody, with everything. And that is how our conduct will change completely. That is the way the Vedanta teaches us to proceed. Whether we go through devotion or through the mental analysis, if we are sincere, if we pursue our objective without any kind of faltering, I am sure, we shall all reach the Goal.

I need not further elaborate the points because these require our own thinking, and nothing else can give us the conviction, which will be the result of our concentration and the desire for having the Goal without being distracted. And as I told you, we should free ourselves from other considerations and distractions, and be one-pointed, and proceed straight towards the Goal. Under any circumstances we should not falter in our steps. 'Stop not till the Goal is reached'—the Vedanta says. In your search do not halt at any place unless and until you have reached the Goal. This is the truth, and that is the instruction the Vedanta gives. □

The Uses of Brahman

A WESTERN DEVOTEE

Brahman is no good for
winning battles,
buying and selling,
getting rich,
gaining fame,
beating the competition,
achieving success,
getting ahead in life.

All these require
a sharp mind,
an aggressive ego,
a sense of self and other,
a desire for gain.

The man of Brahman has
a clear mind,
a sublimated ego,
a sense of oneness,
and no desire for anything more.

What then is Brahman good for?

It is
a safe harbour,
a place of rest,
a home to return to,
a nourishing mother.

The man of the world has no use for Brahman,
And no use for the men of Brahman.

But a little Brahman will
calm his passions,
round off his rough edges,
smoothe his abrasiveness,
mellow him out.

And a little Brahman
Goes a long way. □

Swami Vivekananda: His Message of Vedanta and the Western Way

SWAMI ADISWARANANDA

A lucid study of the essentials of Vedanta, the consequences of neglecting it in India, and its unique capacity, shown by Swamiji, to remove the imbalances in modern society—through spiritual humanism and spiritual democracy. The Voice of Vedanta is becoming louder and louder; and can be heard in such movements as 'Save the Planet', 'Conserve the Forests', 'One World, One family', and others. Humanity must wake up and strive to make the Vedantic spiritual Reality a social reality by blending the best in the East and the West.

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THE MESSAGE OF VEDANTA

Swami Vivekananda is the world-teacher who first brought the teaching of Vedanta to the Western Hemisphere. Vedanta was the message he delivered at the Parliament of religions in Chicago in 1893.

Vedanta, the Voice of the East

Vedanta literally means 'end of the Vedas', that is, the final teaching of the Vedas. It is the consummation of the spiritual thoughts of Hinduism. The conclusions of Vedanta are based on universal principles and are applicable to all people of all times. Vedanta reflects the mood and outlook of Eastern spirituality; its echo can be heard in Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, theistic Hinduism, and other spiritual traditions of the East.

The way of Vedanta is direct and decisive. Breaking the barriers of traditions and conventions, and cutting through the speculations of theology and philosophy, Vedanta leads the individual soul to its inevitable destiny—union with Brahman, the Supreme Soul. It pushes its search for truth as far as human reason can go, and seeks to reach the dizzying heights where

everything is reduced to Pure Consciousness. Though developed and perfected in the Indo-Gangetic plain, Vedanta cannot be called an Indian way, just as the law of gravitation discovered by Newton cannot be called a British law.

The View of the Ultimate

Vedanta maintains that the Ultimate Reality is one without a second, and designated It by the name Brahman. Brahman is incorporeal, immutable, all-pervading, Absolute Pure Consciousness, beyond all names, forms, and attributes. The various names, forms, and epithets of the Divine, such as Shiva, Kali, Vishnu, Jehovah, Allah, Father in Heaven, are merely superimpositions of the individual seekers on Brahman. For the spiritual fulfilment of the seekers of truth, the Supreme Brahman assumes various names and forms.

The View of the Individual

The individual soul is a focus of the Supreme Brahman. Designated by Vedanta as Atman, it is ever divine and ever pure. Atman is different from the ego-self that is generally assumed to be the soul of a person.

A human individual is a layered being whose soul is encased by five material sheaths—physical body, vital air, mind, intellect, and bliss.

The World View

The world of myriad diversity is the dynamic manifestation of Brahman in time and space. In ever recurring cycles, such manifestation is followed by non-manifestation; again, non-manifestation by manifestation. Vedanta describes this process as the outbreathing and inbreathing of Brahman. The diversity of the universe exists only in name and form. In the case of a mirage in a desert, the ignorant see water and trees, but the enlightened see the desert; similarly, what appears as the diverse universe to the ignorant is perceived by the illumined as nothing but Brahman.

The world appearance of Brahman is caused by Its own power, known as *Māyā*. *Māyā* blocks the view of Brahman, and in its place projects a world of diversity; therefore it is said that the world exists only in the mind of the individual. Good and evil, pain and pleasure, heaven and hell, are all in the individual mind. Nothing in this world is absolutely good or absolutely evil. In a psychological sense, the earth rotates not so much around the sun as around the individual mind.

Māyā is not a peculiar concept of Vedanta. The Buddhistic tradition calls it Mara; the Taoist tradition says it is being 'out of harmony with Tao'; the Judeo-Christian tradition personifies it as Satan, the Islamic as Iblis, and the Zoroastrian as Ahriman; the Platonists refer to it simply as delusion. Beings and things in the realm of *Māyā* are not nonexistent, although they are illusory and ephemeral. They appear real because they reflect the light of the Absolute.

The Problem of Suffering

The sufferings of life are not due to the retribution of God, to luck, chance, hostile stars or planets, or to any other external agency. Vedanta attributes suffering to five causes: ignorance that brings loss of contact with the Real that is the centre of our being, the Atman; ego; attachment; aversion; and clinging to life. Loss of contact with the Real forces the individual into the world of ego—a fanciful world of polarization, imagination, and dream. Birth and death, pain and pleasure, here and hereafter, the law of karma and reincarnation, all apply to ego and its world. The decisive way to the end of suffering is to re-establish contact with the Real through Self-Knowledge.

The Goal of Life

Self-Knowledge is the goal of human life. It alone can put an end to all our sorrows and sufferings. Ignorance, the root cause of all ills, gives rise to ego, which obscures the world of non-dual Reality. Darkness that causes delusive cognition can be removed only by the light of Self-knowledge.

The Quest for Immortality

Self-knowledge alone can conquer death. The doctrine of the total annihilation of the soul at the point of death is inconsistent with the desire for immortality innate in every person, and is against the moral order of the universe. The doctrine that the soul is created at the time of birth and then lives forever lacks a rational basis; it does not satisfactorily explain the fact of inequality between one person and another in physical, mental, moral, and spiritual spheres. The doctrine of eternal happiness in heaven after death goes against logical thinking. Everlasting life in terms of time is irrational. Again the doctrine of eternal suffering in hell for the mistakes of a few years on earth is contrary to any sense of justice and God's impartial love for His created beings. In contrast, Vedanta says that the individual soul

is no other than the Supreme Soul, the Common Soul of all beings, and is immortal. Despite its immortal nature, the individual soul experiences birth and death because of its identification with the body and mind due to ignorance. Experience of pain and suffering through life after life forces the soul to ponder over the so-called happiness on earth and in heaven, and spurs the soul on to practise desirelessness and realize its immortal nature. Self-Knowledge is the inescapable destiny of every soul. Through repeated birth and death, each soul, consciously or unconsciously, is moving toward Self-Knowledge. Conscious spiritual quest hastens this process.

The Meaning of Liberation

Self-Knowledge is the liberation of the soul from the bondage of body and mind. It is true awakening, a return to the divinity of one's real Self. Vedanta maintains that there is no liberation without the realization that the individual soul and the Supreme Soul are identical in essence, and this liberation, in order to be true, must be attained before death. Any other form of liberation after death is a matter of faith and speculation. He who sees diversity in life will go from death to death. The knower of Self is called a free

Present day, secular culture has ignored the Socratic aphorism that knowledge is virtue, and replaced it with its own knowledge is power. This has set in motion a chain reaction of alienation.

soul. Such a person is no longer deluded by appearances. Having realized the oneness of existence, he regards the pleasure and pain of others as his own pleasure and pain. He loves all beings and never becomes a cause of fear to anyone. Such a free soul demonstrates the reality of God and gives validity to the words of the scriptures. The

continuance of the body after the attainment of Self-Knowledge is not incompatible with liberation.

The Four Values

Vedanta speaks of four values of life; righteous conduct, acquisition of wealth, enjoyment of legitimate pleasures, and Self-Knowledge. Righteous conduct is the performance of the duties of life in accordance with the laws of morality and ethics—the foundation of self-development and self-fulfilment. Acquisition of wealth is necessary for the preservation of life and the promotion of the welfare of others. Without the enjoyment of legitimate pleasures, life becomes joyless and dry. The first three values must find their fulfilment in the fourth, Self-Knowledge. Moral perfection when not attained for the sake of Self-Knowledge creates enlightened egoism. Wealth and prosperity when not used for the sake of Self-Knowledge breed delusion and attachment. Art and esthetics when they do not reflect the light of the Self degenerate into promiscuity. Knowledge of science and technology when not directed to the attainment of Self-Knowledge proves to be a weapon of self-destruction. Self-Knowledge is neither intellectual conviction nor emotional thrill. It is a burning realization that silences all doubt and transforms a person forever. Self-Knowledge is neither miraculous nor is it achieved vicariously. It results from the total response of the whole mind gathered through the practices of self-control and desirelessness.

The Four Paths to the Goal

The way to the liberation of the soul through Self-Knowledge is called yoga. Vedanta speaks of four yogas, or paths to the goal: Jnana-Yoga, or the direct way of Knowledge; Bhakti-Yoga, or the natural way of divine love; Karma-Yoga, or the practical way of selfless action; and Rāja-Yoga, or the scientific way of concentration

and meditation. The primary roadblock to Self-Knowledge is the restless mind. The four Yogas are four ways to overcome the mind's restlessness.

When we move towards God voluntarily and consciously, we call it a spiritual quest; when this move is involuntary and forced by nature, we call it an evolutionary process.

The path of Jnana-Yoga advocates the method of persuasion through reason, saying that only reason can overcome unreason, the cause of all restlessness. Bhakti-Yoga looks upon the cause of restlessness as the mind's impurity, and prescribes worship, prayer, and self-surrender to the Divine for its purification. Karma-Yoga views the intoxicated ego as the cause of all restlessness, and calls for eradication of the ego to overcome restlessness. Rāja-Yoga upholds the method of confrontation, maintaining that restlessness of mind has its roots deep in the psychophysical system. It holds that reason is too weak to uproot ingrained habits, that worship and prayer require inborn faith in God in order to be effective, and that eradication of the elusive ego is almost impossible. Therefore, Rāja-Yoga calls for confronting the restless mind through concentration and meditation and by control of posture and breathing (*prānāyāma*).

To bring the mind under control is the central purpose of all the yoga disciplines. For the spiritual seeker, the ultimate battlefield is his mind. Vedanta maintains that the mind never becomes controlled by itself. It is to be controlled only through conscious and deliberate effort.

The Four Cardinal Principles

The four cardinal principles of Vedanta are non-duality of the Godhead, divinity of

the soul, oneness of existence, and harmony of religions. These are not dogmas, but four universal principles in keeping with reason and everyday personal experience. There is but one Ultimate Reality, and It is described by various names. Furthermore, all religions proclaim that the individual soul is divine. This divinity is innate, not acquired or given; practice of spiritual disciplines endows us with faith in our own divinity. Oneness of existence is the foundation for ethics and morality; life is interdependent, not independent. Harmony of religions is the natural corollary to the first three cardinal principles. Different religions are only different pathways to the same common goal—God. When we move toward this goal voluntarily and consciously, we call it a spiritual quest; when this move is involuntary and forced by nature, we call it an evolutionary process. Vedanta repudiates the idea of proselytism, which seeks to wipe out the social memory of a person—a psychologically disruptive and morally reprehensible act. Harmony of religions is not uniformity. It is unity in diversity. This harmony is not to be attained by mere intellectual understanding and interfaith deliberations, nor can it be enacted by law. It is to be discovered and realized by deepening our individual God-consciousness.

VEDANTA'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD THOUGHT

Vedanta's contributions to world religious thought may be said to be the following: spiritual democracy, spiritual humanism, and an enduring bond of world unity.

Vedanta advocates spiritual democracy. While other religions present only one ideal and one path, Vedanta offers an infinite variety of ideals and paths to choose from, in order to reach the same ultimate goal. Lacking this freedom of spiritual

democracy, religion becomes authoritarian and oppressive, insisting upon blind obedience to rigid traditions and dogmas and unquestioning belief in ceremonials and creeds. Spiritual freedom ensures spiritual welfare, development and fulfilment, by encouraging spiritual individuality, critical inquiry, honest doubt, choice of the path, and verification of truth through personal experience. The ideas of 'exclusive salvation', 'a jealous God', 'a chosen people', and 'the only way' are alien to Vedanta.

The second major contribution of Vedanta is spiritual humanism, as opposed to secular humanism. Spiritual humanism is

Moral perfection when not attained for the sake of Self-Knowledge creates enlightened egoism. Wealth and prosperity when not used for the sake of Self-Knowledge breed delusion and attachment. Art and esthetics when they do not reflect the light of the Self degenerate into promiscuity.

not so much doing good to others as it is rendering loving service to the Divine, seeing Its presence in all. Spiritual humanism embraces the whole of humanity, regardless of race, culture, country, religion or social affiliation.

The third major contribution of Vedanta is its ideal for an enduring bond of world unity. World unity based on political considerations, economic interest, cultural ties, or humanitarian principles is not enduring. The bonds of such unity are too fragile to withstand the stresses and strains of social diversities. Social diversities without spiritual unity become explosive and dangerous to society. Unity of the world-body, in order to be real, must be organic—and this requires a World-Soul that embraces countless diversities of culture, creed, religion, and human experience and aspirations. Such a World-Soul must be the Soul of all beings. Vedanta designates that

World-Soul as the all-pervading Self, which is the Common Self of both the macrocosm and the microcosm. The unity of this Self includes not only humans, but also animals, plants; and every form of life.

Superficial critics often perceive this unity as anthropomorphism. Science, however, has proved that consciousness is as much present in the galaxy as it is in a tiny plant, an animal, or a human being—it is only the manifestation of consciousness that varies. The fabric of life in the universe is organically woven. No one can move one atom of the universe without affecting the whole universe. No one can be truly happy by keeping the rest of the world unhappy.

No one can live in peace on an island of prosperity surrounded by a sea of poverty and suffering.

Present day secular culture has broken the unity of existence. It has replaced cooperation and interdependence with competition and the struggle for survival. It has ignored the Socratic aphorism that knowledge is virtue, and replaced it with its own: knowledge is power. This has set in motion a chain reaction of alienation—from Reality, from nature, and from our true Self. Vedanta seeks to give us back our spiritual connection with all beings and things.

Vedanta is the soul of India's spiritual wisdom. It is the message of the Upanishads, the voice of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the song of its prophets and Godmen, past and present. The conclusions of Vedanta are not speculation, but guidelines of life that have been tested and verified.

Deviation from the wisdom of Vedanta always brought India spiritual decline, moral chaos and material degradation, and recovery came by invoking the spirit of Vedanta.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ECLIPSE OF VEDANTA

The nineteenth century witnessed an unprecedented spiritual eclipse in India, the land of Vedanta. Vedanta lost its fire and vigour and ceased to be a social reality. That which is the teaching for the strong-minded became a refuge for the weak and the escapists. The philosophy of Vedanta became life-negating, not life-giving. The spiritual values it championed became separated from the material values that were their support. In search of God in heaven, Vedantists ignored God in the human heart. The connecting link between mysticism and humanism was lost. Followers of Vedanta forgot that holiness means nothing unless it brings happiness, that filling the empty stomach must come before filling the empty heart, and that renunciation presupposes acquiring and enjoying things to renounce. Passivity became the keynote of Vedanta and self-withdrawal its prime virtue. Inertia passed for tranquillity, hopelessness for dispassion.

Vedanta's spiritual quest encouraged a morbid inwardness, a flight from the world, in despair over life and its problems. Once a teaching of hope and strength, Vedanta of that time exaggerated human weakness, unworthiness and sinfulness, focusing only on human limitations and not on human possibilities. As a result, Vedanta became a hollow philosophy of life that produced only fake reformers, dreamy idealists, idle philosophers, and so-called knowers of truth who sought transcendental solutions for earthly problems. It created pessimists who proved life intolerable, yet continued to tolerate it. Except in the case of a few

sannyāsins, the wisdom of Vedanta got lost in the wilderness of superstition, false piety, pseudo-mysticism, eroticism, occultism, and fatalism.

The reasons for the eclipse are obvious. Self-Knowledge, the goal of Vedanta, has two aspects; mysticism and humanism. One is seeing God with eyes closed, seeing all in one's Self. The other is seeing the same God with eyes open, seeing one's Self in all. The first without the second is sterile, the second without the first is meaningless. Vedanta of nineteenth century India tilted too much toward mysticism and lost sight of humanism.

When mysticism and humanism get separated, both degenerate. Mysticism turns into a dreamy search for salvation in transcendental cloud-land. Humanism without mysticism turns into secular humanism and becomes the practice of enlightened egoism, which eventually degenerates into a dark egoism obsessed with self-interest. Philanthropy and works of welfare become drab substitutes for spirituality, futile efforts to fill the spiritual void left by the decay of faith. Where there is nothing beyond the present to be hoped for, the philosophy of secular humanism tries to make life less wretched. As the tide of spirituality recedes, the tide of materialism rises. We cease to think of our immortal soul, of the supreme goal of our life, and of the sublime secrets of the universe. This is where Western humanism stands today, having lost its link with mysticism.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA REVITALIZES VEDANTA

Swami Vivekananda was a synthesis of the cultures of the East and West. As young Narendra, he was daring, quick, razor-sharp, and full of life, and tempered in the fire of purity and holiness. His fastidious

oriental intellect seized upon the theories and practices of both the Eastern and Western minds, but was in a dilemma to reconcile faith to reason. The Western readiness to reason its way to truth, its active and often bloody quest for liberty and social justice, fascinated him in his early youth. Yet in the midst of his intellectual joy there was a deep longing for God, whose existence could not be proved by reason. The two streams of thought created a terrible commotion within him, and he became a kind of roving threat to the holy men of his time with his single forthright question: 'Sir, have you seen God?'

The search for God ultimately brought Narendra to Sri Ramakrishna, whom, after six years of struggle, he accepted as his master. From his great master he learned the true spirit of Vedanta. If Narendra reasoned too much and doubted too long, it was because his longing for knowledge was too deep and his spiritual hunger was too intense. His contact with the Godman of nineteenth-century India turned the iconoclastic, rebellious young Narendra into a flaming Vivekananda, the very embodiment of Vedanta. One day his dying master passed onto him his final word of Vedanta, the worship of the living God.

His master asked Vivekananda to become like a huge banyan tree, under whose shade would gather weary souls in search of peace and solace in life. After Sri Ramakrishna's passing, Vivekananda set out on a pilgrimage to the shrines of the living God. What Vivekananda saw of India's masses made him restless, and brought his mind down from the heights of transcendental consciousness to the misery of the world around him. He saw the land of the all-pervading Brahman filled with cries of sorrow and suffering. The living God in all hearts, whom Vedanta glorifies, was being neglected, insulted, and trampled

underfoot. The people, beaten into submission by centuries of foreign rule, had lost all hope. Their never-ending poverty made them deaf to the song of the soul sung within.

The lion-hearted Vivekananda roared in agony and frustration, and became determined to put an end to this insult and neglect of the living God. He decided to awaken the masses by sounding the thundering drumbeats of Vedanta. He saw people in India worshipping local superstitions in the name of Vedanta. A proliferation of dogmas, creeds, rituals, and theological speculations concealed the real teachings of Vedanta, until Vedanta had come to be a mere collection of empty ceremonials and intellectual jugglery.

The most important contribution of the new Vedanta is its practicality [in religion].... Practical Vedanta is not just a philosophy; it is a guideline for robust living, for being divine and also fully human. One cannot be divine unless one is human first....

Vivekananda saw India in a deep spiritual coma. He looked toward the West and realized that he needed Western vigour, courage, and tenacity to make Vedanta alive. He wrote that he wished to infuse some of the American spirit into India, into 'that awful mass of conservative jelly-fish, and then throw overboard all old associations and start a new thing, entirely new—simple, strong, new, and fresh as the first-born baby—throw all of the past overboard and begin anew.'¹

1. *Vivekananda: The Yogas and Other Works*, chosen and with a biography by Swami Nikhilananda, (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, 1984), p. 113

CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST

There is an apparent contradiction between the outlook of the East and that of the West. The two often stand at opposite poles. What seems wisdom to the one is regarded as folly by the other; what delights the one disgusts the other. For the East, knowledge is virtue; it is 'being' as opposed to 'becoming'. For the West, knowledge is not merely the satisfaction of virtue but is also a tool to improve the quality of life. Knowledge is 'becoming'. To know is to be able to deal with the objects we know in dynamic way that is practical and capable of changing external nature, accomplishing goals, and bringing about material improvement. Progress in the West is material, while in the East it is spiritual. The East seeks peace of soul even at the price of submission, while the West seeks freedom even at the price of bloody combat.

The East is concerned with finding the ultimate solution to the problems of life by absorption in the silence of the Self; it considers the world 'a mirage', 'a framework of illusion', 'māyā', and a 'dog's curly tail' that is impossible to straighten. Progress, the East says, is illusory, for we live not in a progressive world but in a changing world. To try to build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth is futile. Nothing truly good is to be achieved by material improvement. There is no use trying to make the dog's curly tail straight, to run after the mirage for water. It is foolish to try to save this world of delusion or make it better. Liberation of the soul calls for renunciation of desires, not their multiplication.

In contrast, the West looks upon these views as pessimistic, otherworldly, and self-defeating. The ultimate goal can never be reached by bypassing immediate needs; one who is not fit for the earth is not fit for heaven either. Without material fulfilment,

the hope for spiritual attainment is an empty dream. Without fulfilment of legitimate desires, our disinterestedness leads only to uninterestedness, dispassion to depression, and self-surrender to self-pity. The West holds that however the East may brand the world as illusory and unreal, we know that it is all too real. That the saints and mystics struggle hard to overcome the lures and temptations of this world only shows that the world is real and has power. The human individual is not just a soul, but is body-mind-soul. For the West, liberation is cessation of suffering. Pragmatically speaking, when you are lost in a forest, the true view of the way out is the view by which you get out. Living life calls for educating ourselves to face reality by knowing that we have nothing to rely on except our own power and potentiality. The West looks upon the Eastern way as life-negating and depressive, and its so-called moralism as fanaticism. Such a way engenders self-isolation, selfish individualism, and cowardly retreat from the challenges of life. The Easterner is viewed as gloomy, fatalistic, impractical, and brooding.

The East responds by saying that the Western way, with its love of unrestrained pleasure, is suicidal. Its so-called life-asserting views only create speed without destination. In the name of reason its philosophy goes round and round in a circle. Its freedom of self-expression in art and esthetics only caters to promiscuity. Its blind pragmatism seeks to nourish the body at the cost of soul, the centre of our being. The greatness of a person is not to be judged by what he does, but by what he is; a monkey trained to ride a bicycle, drink a glass, and smoke a cigar is still a monkey. The Westerner is viewed as sunny, shallow, noisy, and naive.

THE NEW VEDANTA

Vivekananda saw the Western way as the missing counterpart of Vedanta. He

admired the Western spirit—its penchant for heading into the future with courage and tenacity; its impatience, not to wait for things to happen but to make them happen; and its readiness to take responsibility upon itself, taking risks, making mistakes, and forging ahead propelled by nothing but itself. He loved America and the American spirit. He wrote:

I love the Yankee land—I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins and mope a life out about old histories and keep sighing about the ancients. I have too much vigour in my blood for that. In America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything new. I have become horribly radical.²

The high voltage of pluck and the thrust of the Western spirit fascinated Vivekananda. He passionately believed that the wisdom of the soul would never become a social reality without the support of the Western spirit, and that the Western way—its speed and thrust—, unless guided toward the wisdom of the soul, would be the surest way to doom and destruction. Vedanta, in order to be complete, must combine the spirit of the East with that of the West. If the Vedic statement, 'All this is verily Brahman', is true, then the other Vedic statement, 'That thou art', is equally true. Truth is to be realized through both knowledge and experience. Holiness and happiness are interrelated; meditation and action are complementary. Unselfishness is the greatest virtue, and working for the good of others the highest form of worship. Self-control is the supreme austerity. Our direct experience of the Ultimate is our greatest saviour, and the surest sign of direct experience is permanent transformation of character.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

The most important contribution of the new Vedanta is its practicality. It replaces the humanitarian ideals of compassion and charity with the spiritual precept of service to the living God dwelling in the hearts of all beings. Practical Vedanta is a call to make the spiritual reality a social reality. Its essential teaching, in Swami Vivekananda's words, is that:

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature: external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.³

The new Vedanta regards the four yogas—the paths of Jnana (Knowledge), Bhakti (devotion), Karma (selfless action), and Rāja (concentration)—as four independent paths leading to the goal of Self-Knowledge, a departure from the old view that the first yoga was the highest and a culmination of the other three. The new approach not only declares that a human individual is divine, but also has daring faith in that divinity. Practical Vedanta is in agreement with Carl Jung, who rejects the belief that the brain is an 'appendage of the genital glands', the view which leads to the neglect of the most important aspect of man's being. Practical Vedanta is not just a philosophy; it is a guideline for robust living, for being divine and also fully human. One cannot be divine unless one is human first.

The new Vedanta is available to all regardless of caste, colour, or race. Its practice does not require a person to have a male body and *brāhmin* birth, and to live in the

3. *Ibid.*, p. 575.

seclusion of the forest. The old Vedanta said that one who did not believe in God was an atheist; the new Vedanta says: He who does not believe in himself is an atheist. For the new Vedanta, material and spiritual development are conjoined. Work and worship go together. The inner and the outer dimensions of a person must be balanced in a pleasing harmony. The new approach does not believe in a God who promises a person eternal bliss in heaven but cannot give him bread here. Practical Vedanta is an active spiritual quest—not letting things happen, but causing them to happen.

The East responds by saying that the Western way, with its love of unrestrained pleasure, is suicidal. Its so-called life-asserting views only create speed without destination.

Swami Vivekananda foresaw that the East needed the West as much as the West needed the East—not only for success, but also for survival. In his view, India possesses the wisdom of the soul but lacks a strong body to house that soul. The West, on the other hand, possesses a strong body but lacks a soul. The soul and the body need to be united to make life meaningful. The West needs the wisdom of the soul so that its mighty achievements in science and technology will not prove self-destructive. India needs Western muscle, vigour and vitality, human concern, and self-dignity for her material regeneration. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'By preaching the profound secrets of Vedanta in the Western world, we shall attract the sympathy and regard of these mighty nations, maintaining for ourselves the position of their teachers in spiritual matters; let them remain our teachers in all material concerns.'⁴

4. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda

Of the West, Swami Vivekananda wrote: 'The present-day civilization of the West is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men'⁵; 'Nowhere have I heard so much of "love, life, and liberty" as in this country [America], but nowhere is it less understood.'⁶ He predicted that within fifty years Europe would crumble to pieces if it did not mend its ways. Nearly fifty years after he had uttered this warning, the Second World War ended, leaving Europe shattered and in ruins. Mere knowledge without understanding and love can lead to human catastrophe. The Western catchword, 'man's right to knowledge, and the free use thereof', is a dangerous slogan.

In his message to India, Swami Vivekananda called for strength: 'Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men'⁷; 'First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the *Gītā*.'⁸ Of Hinduism, he observed: 'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and low in such a fashion as Hinduism.'⁹

THE NEW VEDANTA DRAWS FIRE

Vivekananda, with his new Vedanta, created a stir both in the East and in the

Centenary Committee, 1963), p. 187

5. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

7. *Thoughts of Power*, by Swami Vivekananda, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), p. 13.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

9. *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971), p. 154.

West. While many universalists and scientifically-minded persons in the West applauded his new message and the noble-minded breathed the air of freedom, justice, equality, and spiritual democracy, the entrenched dogmatists denounced his teachings as monstrous and profane. They concocted false stories and spread rumors about his authenticity and personality, and invented the vilest of lies, assailing his character. It is said that there was even an attempt to do away with him altogether by mixing poison with his coffee in Detroit. On his return to India, he recalled: 'It struck me more than once that I should have to leave my bones on foreign shores, owing to the prevalence of religious intolerance.'¹⁰

There were also attempts in India to suppress Vivekananda and his message. Leaders of orthodox Hindu society looked upon his message of new Vedanta as a veiled imitation of Christianity. They accused him of violations of caste rules and monastic traditions, on the grounds that he had crossed the black waters of the ocean, lived in foreign lands, and dined with foreigners. His followers, the Ramakrishna Order monks—who were engaged in work of service nursing the sick, providing for the poor, and conducting epidemic and other relief work—were branded as 'scavenger monks', whose conduct was unworthy of the monastic life. Even some of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna expressed doubt in the beginning about Vivekananda's new Vedanta, considering it a departure from their master's message. The followers of Vivekananda were but a handful of young men fired up by the spirit of worshipping the living God. They truly believed his message and were ready to die for their beliefs. Vivekananda's message prevailed: nothing could stop it, because it answered the crying

need of the time.

The same love that was born as Buddha, the Compassionate One, once again assumed a human form as Vivekananda. It was this unbounded love for suffering humankind that gave Vivekananda the mandate for his message. It gave him a power that nobody could match, a wisdom that no doctrine could qualify. Vivekananda's message bridged the gulf between man and God, and broke through the wall that traditionally separates the physical from the spiritual. In him the immortal message of the Upanishads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* came to life again. Despair over degradation turned into hope for the future.

Saints and savants think ahead of the contemporary world. They come to give us not the things we want, but the things we need. Small wonder then that contemporary society would condemn Socrates to die, denounce Buddha, crucify Jesus, and assassinate Gandhi. Truth must struggle hard against entrenched dogma, hardened superstitions, and credulous mass thinking. History tells us that the Jesuits, the disciples of St. Ignatius, were accused of violating the orthodox commands of the Gospel. Carlyle condemned them as most fatal of all time; Napoleon hated them; and the American President John Adams warned his successor Thomas Jefferson about them. Yet the Jesuits prevailed in their efforts because of the fire of their faith.

In spite of opposition, Vivekananda scattered the seeds of Vedanta wherever he went. Those seeds were not sown in vain. From them have sprung up societies and centres of Vedanta, both in the East and in the West, under the banner of the Ramakrishna Order. These centres are not merely houses of worship but homes of service where the living God is served with

10. *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, p. 213.

material, intellectual, and spiritual offerings.

**THE NEW VEDANTA AS
THE RELIGION OF THE FUTURE**

Vivekananda envisioned Vedanta as the religion of the future; in a prophetic mood; he said that his message would sustain the world for the next fifteen hundred years. Science has shaken dogma-based religion to the very root. The decay of organized religion is in the air. Material usefulness is becoming the measure of all value. In spite of all our technological achievements, the world is experiencing a great spiritual void. Holy days are giving way to holidays. Psychotherapy is replacing the counselling of priests and pastors. Confession, once considered good for the soul, is being looked upon as bad for the reputation. The word 'sermon' in the present-day Western world is an unpopular word, and a preacher is regarded by some as a salesperson. For many, the word 'liberated' means liberated from all religions

dogma-based religion can fill the spiritual void. What is needed is a spiritual teaching that can meet the challenges of science and secularism, and make the spiritual quest meaningful for all. This is where the value of Vedanta lies.

Since the time of Vivekananda, Vedanta has silently but surely influenced the thought currents of the world, and built a consensus of amity among all the branches of human knowledge. When Vivekananda visited America, Robert Ingersoll, the famous orator and agnostic, told him: 'Forty years ago you would have been hanged if you had come to preach in this country, or you would have been burnt alive. You would have been stoned out of the villages if you had come even much later.'¹¹ But today the religions are in a process of continuous dialogue. The voice of Vedanta can be heard in such movements as 'Save the Planet', 'Conserve the Forests', 'Preserve the Ozone Layer', 'Stop Cruelty to Animals', 'One World, One Family', and others. At the

Unity of the world-body, in order to be real, must be organic—and this requires a World-Soul that embraces countless diversities of culture, creed, religion, and human experience and aspirations. Such a World-Soul must be the Soul of all beings. Vedanta designates that World-Soul as the all-pervading Self—of humans, animals, plants, and every form of life.

The myths and symbols that once gave emotional support to humankind have been shaken by the cold conclusions of science. After the Thirty Years' War, Europe lost faith in God, and after two World Wars, humankind lost faith in itself. A culture of unbelief and scepticism has pervaded the world. Whatever claims the idealists put forth, the materialists try to disprove. The sceptics claim that there is nothing inherently spiritual about energy or wave equations. To the idealists the fourth dimension may seem to be out of this world, but to the sceptics it is no stepping stone to heaven. No

present time, there is more consciousness of world unity than ever before. The voice of spirituality is becoming louder and louder, and the wave of spiritual democracy is breaking down the barrier of religiosity. Religious belief, for so long sure of its scriptural evidence, is now looking for the corroboration of science for its survival.

VIVEKANANDA:

WORSHIPPER OF THE LIVING GOD

Vivekananda was the worshipper of the

¹¹ *Vivekananda: The Yogas and Other Works*, p. 87.

living God. He made God in the heart of all the sole object of his worship. Even as a child he would be overwhelmed to see the sufferings of the poor. To see God in all and serve Him became the passion of his youth, the dream of his wandering days. He lived with the poor masses of India, slept with them, ate with them, cried for their material salvation. Untiringly, he lobbied for them with his master Sri Ramakrishna and at the doors of heaven. Service of this living God was the joy of his last days. Like Prometheus, he brought down the spiritual power from heaven and made it spring up on earth in the hearts of all. This shifting of God from a far off heaven to the human heart, as our innermost Self, marks a momentous advance in the spiritual history of the world.

Vivekananda passed away in 1902 before reaching the age of forty. But he left behind

a promise for his living God:

And may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. And above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races of all species, is the especial object of my worship.¹²

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God.¹³ □

12. *Ibid.*, p. 929.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Interview with Swami Vivekananda

(Continued from page 83)

'Your last remarks, Swami, raise another question. In what sense is Sri Ramakrishna a part of this awakened Hinduism?'

'That is not for me to determine', said the Swami. 'I have never preached personalities. My own life is guided by the enthusiasm of this great soul; but others will decide for themselves how far they share in this attitude. Inspiration is not filtered out to the world through one channel, however great. Each generation should be inspired afresh. Are we not all God?'

'Thank you. I have only one question more to ask you. You have defined the attitude and function of your movement

with regard to your own people. Could you in the same way characterize your methods of action as a whole?'

'Our method,' said the Swami, 'is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. Buddha preached *renunciation*. India heard, and yet in six centuries she reached her greatest height. The secret lies there. The national ideals of India are RENUNCIATION and SERVICE. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself. The banner of the spiritual cannot be raised too high in this country. In it alone is salvation.' □

He knows this supreme abode, this Brahman, in which is placed the Universe and which shines holy. Those wise ones indeed, who having become desireless, worship this (enlightened) person, transcend this human seed.

—*Munḍaka Upaniṣad*, III.ii.1

Advaita in the Modern World

WILLIAM PAGE

Creeds may satisfy groups to some extent, but of necessity they are parochial. Today's world requires more Advaitins—people who are whole-heartedly committed to realizing the nondual and unifying spiritual Reality that is Brahman. For, Advaita is non-credal, and in it all creeds attain their full potential.

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If you were to ask me what the status of Advaita is in the modern world, I should have to say it is that of an orphan. The modern world is a disaster area, and the daily news presents an ongoing spectacle of multiplicity run amok. There seems to be an ever-escalating trend toward divisiveness, fragmentation, contentiousness, and chaos. To suggest that there is an abiding unity underlying all this turmoil is to invite smiles all around, and perhaps polite queries as to the condition of one's brain.

Where is that one shining Brahman? In all this, no doubt—but well hidden. The modern world, with all its shallow glitz, its hype, its vulgarity, its addiction to consumerism, contentiousness, and greed, is antithetical to Brahman. One is tempted to say, with Chuang Tzu, 'The world has lost the Tao, and the Tao has lost the world.'

Yet, paradoxically, the world with all its flaws is a manifestation of Brahman. Brahman has so thoroughly wrapped Itself in Māyā that it takes a rare mind indeed to even guess at Its existence. If you try to tell modern man that the universe is essentially one, with a spiritual basis, he will laugh. Lao Tzu anticipated this long ago: 'When ignorant people hear of the Tao, they laugh. If they did not laugh, it would not be the Tao.'

Modern man is a sceptic, grounded in the empirical world. He believes what he sees, and what he sees is multiplicity. So he can be forgiven his incredulity when Vedantists claim that reality is one. If reality is one, he will say, why don't we see it? Multiplicity is such an obvious fact that any one who insists on an underlying oneness has got to have his head either up in the clouds or buried in the sand. Vedantists, the sceptic will say, assert the unbelievable in the face of the undeniable.

Well, the Vedantist will reply, multiplicity is only the surface of things. Beneath it, behind it, supporting it, is the one Reality, the imperishable Brahman. Just as the waves are many but the ocean is one, so the empirical world is many but the underlying Reality is one. Modern man is very clever, but if he were really clever he would look a bit deeper, and try to see the ocean beneath the waves.

Modern man will respond by asking what evidence we have that Brahman exists. It is easy to assert the existence of a transcendent Reality—but where is the proof?

Here the average Vedantist is in an awkward position. Unless he has realized Brahman himself, unless he can claim, 'I

(Continued on page 115)

Vedanta as Political Ideology: The Passion of Vivekananda

PROF. D. PRITHIPAUL

D. Prithipaul, Professor Emeritus, who had been teaching Indian philosophies and religions at the University of Alberta, Canada, observes: 'Vivekananda does not call for a return to a golden age that existed in some remote time in history'; nor does he 'believe that Humanity is evolving towards the attainment of an apocalyptic fulfilment in a cosmic omega point.' He gave forth instead 'the rallying call for the re-discovery of the great religion bequeathed by the ancient ṛsis'. For, this spiritual rejuvenation would give rise to a 'virile concept of Man...of uninhibited daring' so essential for the nation's political freedom. The author, it appears, wishes to suggest that every Indian ought to go back to Vivekananda for one's own good and for the good of the world.

The role of the State

Most of the important philosophers in the West have dwelt on the importance of the State as a regulative norm in the daily lives of the individual citizens. It is significant, in contrast, that the thinkers in the Vedic tradition have paid scant attention to the State as an ontological reality. The *smṛti* writers have indeed considered the art of government as an integral part of dharma. The *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* represent successful persuasions in bringing home to the individual citizen that what counts most in social life is the public morality that favours the self-fulfilment of each. While religious practices retain their relevance and their particularities within the economy of the family it has always been *dharma* that the Vedic tradition has regarded as essential in the relationships which the individual entertains with others in civilized society.

Poverty and Spirituality

When one reads the life story of Sri Ramakrishna one does not come across any indication of his being aware of the extreme poverty into which the rule of the British had sunk India, in particular of Bengal

where he lived. One may be tempted to attribute this indifference to his lack of formal university or college education and to the consequent lack of understanding of the political and economic effects of alien rule on the daily lives of the Indians. In speech after speech delivered by Swami Vivekananda one can hear no echo of anger or resentment with the nefarious and ruthless economic harshness imposed upon a weakened population by alien rule. Indeed he was the first to transform the ideal and the practice of sannyasa by integrating it with the ideal and practice of Karma Yoga. Perhaps for the first time in the history of India Vivekananda sends out the sadhus into the streets to carry out relief work when plague, or cholera, or floods struck at the defenceless poor. Yet he does not call for revolt against the aggressor: his call does not extend the message of those who staged the first War of Independence. There is nothing of the heroism of the Jhansi ki Rani, or of Bhahadur Shah Zafar's lament over the failure of his revolt, in the Swami Vivekananda's stirring call upon the people to rise and affirm themselves

His visit to the West exerted a transfor-

mative impact upon his conscience. India had a reason to be proud, he kept on saying on his return from attending the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. In his view India was one, unified in the integrative vision of the Vedic seers. He sees in the expression, '*Ekam-sad-viprā-bahudhā vadanti*' ('Reality is one, the learned speak of it as manifold'), the fundamental justification of Vedic tolerance: divinity in the Hindu tradition is not a tribal concept. It includes all articulations of Man's relation to the Ultimate: the forms vary, but the essence which they manifest is the Same. Just as the social structure of castes recognizes hierarchy and difference in daily life, but each being is the Same in its metaphysical reality, so do all religions constitute the various forms of the same reality. This idea was late reformulated in the first chapter of *Western Religions and Indian Thought*, undoubtedly the most significant contribution of S. Radhakrishnan to the literature on comparative religion.

Many Indians—especially during the period of the struggle for independence from British rule—felt that their country had become weak and got conquered on account of the dominance of the Vedanta in Indian culture and especially on account of its concept of *Māyā*. Vivekananda provides a refreshing view of *Māyā*. He unambiguously defines it as a statement of the fact of this universe, of how it is going on. He says:

Animals are living upon plants, men upon animals and, worst of all, upon one another, the strong upon the weak. This is going on everywhere, and this is *Māyā*. What solution do you find for this? We hear every day many explanations, and are told that in the long run all will be good. Taking it for granted that this is possible, why should there be this diabolical way of doing good? Why cannot good be done through good, instead of through these diabolical methods?

The descendants of the human beings of today will be happy; but why must there be all this suffering now? There is no solution. This is *Māyā*.¹

One can find in such statements the precedents of Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on the necessity of the means to be as pure and good as the end. But the interpretation which Vivekananda gives to the term '*Māyā*' is drawn from his perception of the prosperity of Christian nations being the outcome of their preying on non-Christian nations. Without saying it directly he argues that '*Māyā*' is a form of exploitation, of the oppression of the weak by the strong, of the application of '*matsya-nyāya*' on a global scale. He argues that if all nations become Christian then there will no more be any non-Christian nation to prey upon and accordingly the argument of prosperity being inseparable from being Christian destroys itself. He harks back to the man in the forest

who does not know how to be jealous, to be in law courts, to pay taxes, to be blamed by society, to be ruled over day and night by the most tremendous tyranny that human diabolism ever invented, which pries into the secretes of every human heart.²

Vivekananda and Māyā

Māyā is also an aspect of progress which brings in its wake pain as well as pleasure. so for Vivekananda *Māyā*

is not a theory for the explanation of the world: it is simply a statement of the facts as they exist, that the very basis of our being is contradictory, that everywhere we have to move through this tremen-

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p.94

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 96.

dous contradiction, that wherever there is good, there must be also be evil, and wherever there is evil, there must be some good, wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and everyone who smiles will have to weep, and vice versa. Nor can this state of things be remedied.³

The Vedanta is neither pessimistic, nor optimistic. It takes the world as it is, and postulates that there is nothing that is absolutely good as there is nothing that is absolutely evil. Fire may burn a child; but it also cooks a meal for a starving man. the contradictions are only relative. The Vedantist looks at this worldly situation with a sense of irony. Man takes himself out of the mess of contradictions by work which lessens misery and frees from the web of ambiguities.

The Vedanta suddenly becomes a virile ideology, a purusakāra, that invites the imagination to recapture the unique and soul-elevating message that the ancient seers gave on the basis of their own experience. Indians should relive that experience.

What fills one with wonder even today is the manner in which Vivekananda eulogizes the ideal of renunciation in his public speeches, as if it is the most natural and easy thing to do. For him renunciation is the essential characteristic of the religious life. the infinite, he argues, is always trying to express itself in the finite, though this is impossible,

and it will then have to beat a retreat, and this beating a retreat means renunciation which is the real beginning of religion.⁴

Agnosticism is not a solution to the problem of living within the egg of Māyā. The transcendence of Māyā lies only in a doing, in a striving towards freedom. Māyā is a collective, cosmic neurosis woven into the fabric of the natural mix of good and evil. The Vedanta thus takes cognizance of the necessity of the Man's taking hold of his destiny and liberating himself, from the determinations of place and time, in an experience that transcends the natural. For Vivekananda agnosticism denies the possibility of the individual initiating the movement of his freedom. It ignores the finality of Man and of his ultimate destiny. As such agnosticism cannot be an efficient means for the dissolution of Māyā. Agnosticism does not even rise to the level of a contemplation. It remains confined to its aesthetic limitations.

On his return from his tour of the West, especially after his stirring success at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda gave a series of lectures in which he poured out his enthusiasm of being a Hindu and his immense love for his Motherland. Despite his direct acquaintance with the high level of material prosperity available in the West, Vivekananda does not seem to entertain any political understanding of the soul-destroying poverty into which India had been plunged and which could not escape his eyes. One scarcely encounters in his speeches any trace of anger or resentment with the dehumanizing effect of the British Raj on the Indian masses. On the contrary he is driven by a frenzy of eagerness to move the Indian masses to a reintegration of what they have lost and neglected to preserve. It is this loss which, he argues, lies at the root of Indian weakness, poverty and of the abject condition in which Indians are wallowing. He sees the world as a whole in which each nation contributes its share, its specific genius.

3. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 97.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 99-100.

Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty, but these the Hindu mind does not understand and does not want to understand. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the infinite, on spiritual freedom, and I assure you, the lowest peasant in India is better informed on these subjects than many a so-called philosopher in other lands. I have said, gentlemen, that we have yet something to teach to the world. This is the very reason, the *raison d'être*, that this nation has lived on, in spite of hundreds of years of persecution, in spite of nearly a thousand year of foreign rule and foreign oppression. This nation still lives; the *raison d'être* is, it still holds to god, to the treasure-house of religion and spirituality.⁵

Vivekananda is not known to have referred at any time to Hegel or Karl Marx, or to the Commune in Paris; or even to the first stirrings of nationalism in the voices of Dadabhai Naoroji, B.K. Gokhale and others, though by the time he was making those lofty and heroic utterances, resonant with the boldness of the upanishadic seers, the Congress Party had already been in existence for about a generation. One must also bear in mind that at the time when Vivekananda sent forth his call for the spiritual redress and regeneration of the Indian, China was undergoing the trials of the end of an imperial dynasty and of the rise of republican ideals under the impulse of Sun Yat Sen's activism, the isolationist United States of America was bent upon itself under the weight of the Monroe doctrine, the African Continent and the whole of South Asia still lay crushed under

the iron heels of the imperialisms of Britain, France, Holland; and Lenin was getting ready to say and act.

Indian weakness

Nevertheless Vivekananda roundly condemns his contemporaries for their weakness; his faithfulness to the sources of his experience lead him to be honest with himself and with his listeners. We must not forget that Vivekananda relied mostly on the spoken word to make his ideas felt. He is perhaps the only social reformer in the twentieth century to have used oratory as the only effective means to rouse the Indian elites from their slumber. It would have been easy for him to lay the blame of India's weakness at the door of the foreign ruler, especially of the British who, with a conscience untrammelled with Christian scruples, relentlessly impoverished the nation with their politics of greed and rapacity. Vivekananda goes to the heart of the matter. And the root cause of the misery which overwhelmed his youthful conscience, he constantly emphasizes, lies in the collective forgetting of the teaching of the Vedas and of the spirit of the Vedanta. He calls to the people to rise, not in revolt against the foreign oppressor, but in revolt against their own self-alienation, to repossess, not the wealth of the nation, but the wealth of the spirit lost.

...Stand and die in your own strength; if there is any sin in the world, it is weakness; avoid all weakness, for weakness is sin; weakness is death.⁶

...Because, in spite of the greatness of the Upanishads, in spite of our boasted ancestry of sages, compared to many other races, I must tell you that we are weak, very weak. First of all is our physical weakness. That physical weakness is

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 3. p. 148.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 151.

the cause of at least one-third of our miseries. We are lazy, we cannot work; we cannot combine, we do not love each other; we are intensely selfish, not three of us can come together without hating each other, without being jealous of each other. That is the state in which we are—hopelessly disorganized mobs, immensely selfish, fighting each other for centuries as to whether a certain mark is to be put on our forehead this way or that way, writing volumes and volumes upon such momentous questions as to whether the look of a man spoils my food or not!...We cannot expect anything high from a race whose whole brain energy has been occupied in such wonderfully beautiful problems and researches! ⁷

Vivekananda's view of progress

Vivekananda rejects the Western ideology of linear evolution and progress by using the vantage point of the doctrine of *Māyā*. There is no intrinsic evolution in the sphere of *Māyā*. That is not a reality on which one must build one's vision of man's destiny. What counts ultimately is the manifestation of the Self within.⁸ At the time of Vivekananda's flourishing the positive sciences were triumphant: the first world war had not yet loomed above the horizon, the belligerent preparations of Delcassé and Kaiser Wilhem being not apparent even to the well-informed public. The West was intoxicated with the triumphalism of Science and of its successes, in Biology, in Physics, in Chemistry, in Medicine. The idea of progress which the philosophers of the eighteenth century had elaborated as the triumph of Reason was well entrenched and even adopted by the new westernized elites of India. Against such a background Vivekananda's denunciation of the Western idea of evolution and of progress must have

been an act of significant courage.

Again, we often hear that it is one of the features of evolution that it eliminates evil, and this evil being continually eliminated from the world, at last only good will remain. That is very nice to hear, and it panders to the vanity of those who have enough of this world's goods, who have not a hard struggle to face every day, and are not being crushed under the wheel of this so-called evolution. It is very good and comforting indeed to such fortunate ones. The common herd may suffer, but they do not care; let them die, they are of no consequence. Very good, yet this argument is fallacious from beginning to end. It takes for granted, in the first place, that manifested good and evil in this world are two absolute realities. In the second place, it makes a still worse assumption, that the amount of good is an increasing quantity and the amount of evil is a decreasing quantity. So, if evil is being eliminated in this way, by what they call evolution, there will come a time when all this evil will be eliminated and what remains will be all good....As we increase our power to be happy, we also increase our power to suffer, and sometimes I am inclined to think that if we increase our power to become happy in arithmetical progression, we shall increase, on the other hand, our power to become miserable in geometrical progression. We who are progressing know that the more we progress, the more avenues are opened to pain as well as to pleasure. And this is *Maya*.⁹

Vivekananda indeed calls for a revolt, a revolt of the spirit. The Hindu is a spirit which the sword cannot cut, the fire cannot burn, the water cannot melt, the air cannot

7. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 241–2.

8. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 239.

9. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 95–7.

dry—words and phrases borrowed from the Upanishads and from the *Gītā*. But he invests them with the immediacy of his own immediate experience and the spontaneity of his conviction.

The Ideal Man

The Hindu believes that every soul is a circle whose circumference is nowhere, but whose centre is located in the body, and that death means the change of this centre from body to body. Nor is the soul bound by the conditions of matter. In its very essence, it is free, unbounded, holy, pure, and perfect. But somehow or other it finds itself tied down to matter, and thinks of itself as matter.¹⁰

He formulates ancient utterances to declare that the Hindu is not the freak of a terrible law of causation; he wants to come face to face with the reality beyond the senses; the proof of the existence of the soul is in realizing it directly and that becomes the seal and condition of perfection. Being is not a matter of belief, but of itself.

In Vivekananda's spiritual and moral perspective it is only in the Vedic scriptures that one can come across the exact definition of the perfect Man. The Hindu is a child of immortal bliss; he is naturally holy and perfect; it is a sin to call a man a sinner when he is actually a divinity on earth.

Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.¹¹

Such a virile concept of Man lends itself to a statement of uninhibited daring. This is

perhaps the most characteristic feature of Vivekananda's call to India at the turn of the century. He resolutely, without any hesitation and with infinite self-confidence criss-crosses the sub-continent with the rallying call for the re-discovery of the great religion bequeathed by the ancient ṛṣis. The Vedanta suddenly becomes a virile ideology, a *puruṣakāra*, that invites the imagination to recapture the unique and soul-elevating message that the ancient seers gave on the basis of their own experience. Indians should relive that experience; that they do

When one considers the ardour of the oral aspect of Vivekananda's Karma-Yoga, one finds therein the entire programme which Mahatma Gandhi was later to implement during the forty years of his campaign for independence.

not realize the urgency of this task is because they have allowed themselves to forget what should have never been left in the dark alleys of history. Before Vivekananda no one in India—not even Dayananda Saraswati—had issued such a stirring call for virile manhood, for national independence, by the teaching of the old truths. What strikes one in this message—if one may use a comparative method to look at the issue in a global perspective—is that Vivekananda does not call for a return to a golden age that existed in some remote time in history. It will be left to Mahatma Gandhi to refer to Ramrajya as a symbol which the masses, reared on the annual performances of the Ramlila, would easily understand. Nor does Vivekananda believe that Humanity is evolving towards the attainment of an apocalyptic fulfilment in a cosmic omega point. Futurity has no relevance to the virile self-fulfilment which he advocates. The upanishadic fulfilment cuts through the gordian knot of the Māyā-moment in a vertical, complete appropriation of Self-knowledge and selfless action in

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 9.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 11.

a Now-eternity. Vivekananda has moreover no time for references to myths. He is driven to issue his call and to press upon his listeners to do—in the immediacy of Now! He appeals for an inner transformation, for a return to the anthropological authenticity as defined by the ancient texts. Let the Indian return to his roots, let him be himself, let him realize himself, and all the national and social problems would be solved. It is spiritual decadence that had brought India into such a pitiable state.

The timeless realization of Truth rejuvenates: it is not conditioned by evolution, or by progress, or by history, or by becoming. *'Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth....'*¹²

Vedanta becomes heroic in his oratory. He says:

What good is it to talk of the strength of your muscles, of the superiority of your western institutions, if you cannot make Truth square with your society, if you cannot build up a society into which the highest Truth will fit? What is the good of this boastful talk about your grandeur and greatness, if you stand up and say, 'This courage is not practical'. Is nothing practical but pounds, shillings and pence? If so, why boast of your society? *That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical.* That is my opinion, and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth!¹³

And this is how he understands the ideal Man to be:

The ideal man is he who, in the midst of the greatest silence and solitude, finds the intensest activity, and in the midst of the intensest activity finds the silence and solitude of the desert. He has learnt the secret of restraint, he has controlled himself. He goes through the streets of a big city with all its traffic, and his mind is as calm as if he were in a cave, where not a sound could reach him; and he is intensely working all the time. That is the ideal of Karma-Yoga, and if you have attained to that you have really learnt the secret of work.¹⁴

The downfall of India

Vivekananda has a strange, arresting explanation for the downfall of India. He attributes it to the separation between Buddhism and Hinduism: the Buddhists cannot stand without the brain and philosophy of the Brahmins, nor the Brahmin without the heart of the Buddhist. That is why, he further adds, the country is populated with three hundred millions of beggars, and that is why India has been the slave of conquerors for a thousand years.¹⁵

When one considers the ardour of the oral aspect of Vivekananda's Karma-Yoga one finds therein the entire programme which Mahatma Gandhi was later to implement during the forty years of his campaign for independence. The Gandhian ethos evinces the same insistence of the purity of means to match the purity of ends. Vivekananda refers to a yogi, a *mauni*, who did not speak and did not teach anyone. But during a conversation the yogi once told him the secret of work: 'Let the end and the means be joined into one.'¹⁶ That is, when one works, one must not think of anything beyond. Historically, Gandhiji is not the

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 84.

13. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 85.

14. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 34.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 23.

16. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 71.

originator of the insistence on the spiritual essence of man: he made that aspect of the upanishadic teaching the mainstay of his non-violent struggle. Besides it is the belief in the omnipresence of the Atman in all beings that Gandhi, with heroic persistence and undiminished perseverance, avoided conflict with the Muslims and with the British rulers. Gandhi's nationalism was already spelled out by Vivekananda several decades earlier. In his reply to the address delivered by the Maharaja of Ramnad (who had financed his voyage to Chicago) Vivekananda had these stirring words:

Your Highness of Ramnad, if there has been any work done by my humble self in the cause of our religion and our motherland in the Western countries, if any little work has been done in rousing the sympathies of our own people by drawing their attention to the ines-

He (Swami Vivekananda) calls to the people to rise, not in revolt against the foreign oppressor, but in revolt against their own self-alienation, to repossess, not the wealth of the nation, but the wealth of the spirit lost.

timable jewels that, they know not, are lying deep buried about their own home—if, instead of dying of thirst and drinking dirty ditch water elsewhere out of the blindness of ignorance, they are being called to go and drink from the eternal fountain which is flowing perennially by their own home—if anything has been done to rouse our people towards action, to make them understand that in everything, religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes India will die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of every one of her children—if

anything has been done towards this end, India and every country where any work has been done owe much of it to you, Raja of Ramnad....Great works are to be done, wonderful powers have to be worked out, we have to teach other nations many things...This is the motherland of philosophy, of spirituality, and of ethics, of sweetness, gentleness, and love. These still exist, and my experience of the world leads me to stand on firm ground and make the bold statement that India is still the first and foremost of all the nations of the world in these respects....In this land are, still, religion and spirituality....Give up! That is the watchword of the Indian religions. This world is a delusion of two days....Beyond is the Infinite, beyond this world of delusion; let us seek that....the characteristic of my nation is this transcendentalism, this struggle to go beyond, this daring to tear the veil off the face of nature and have at any risk, at any price, a glimpse of the beyond....Aye, in spite of the sparkle and glitter of Western civilization, in spite of all its marvellous manifestation of power, standing upon this platform, I tell them to their face that it is all vain. It is vanity of vanities. God alone lives. The soul alone lives. Spirituality alone lives. Hold on to that.¹⁷

It is perhaps to be regretted that in the decades that have intervened since the voice of Vivekananda was stilled India has so little to show as the deserving response to his call. If one of the ṛṣis he loved so much were to come back, with him as the guide for a tour across contemporary India, what would he say to the Indian so enamoured of his secular pursuits which have been determined by ideologies born of the Western stuff of the vanity of vanities? □

17. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 146–9.

The Kite

MS. NOBEENA GHOSH

In this remarkably insightful poem, Ms. Ghosh, of Calcutta, compares individuals to kites—each distinct from the other, each with its own unpredictable flight, but each controlled by a line. As a kite floats off into the infinite blue sky when its lines is cut, so too does a rare soul float away into the infinite effulgence of the Divine when its line of worldly attachment gets cut.

The day was clear, the sky was blue
The breeze was blowing just right;
In the midst of several others
Was one big blue kite.

It was simple, with no tassels or trails,
Nor with great skill did it fly;
It just floated here & there
Writing poems in the sky.

Around it, the battle was on,
A frenzy of string and kite;
But the big blue one unaware of this,
Was blissful in its flight.

Unaware of other kites
Whistling through the wind;
Unaware of their fight to survive,
Unaware of enemy or friend.

The only thing of which it was aware
Was the very thin long line
Which jerked every now and then
As if of the Earth to it remind.

Everytime the last verse
Of each poem the kite did write,
A gentle tug pulled it
to another different height.

Thus writing different poems,
Each with unfinished end,
The big blue kite sailed on
With complete trust in the wind.

(Please turn over)

All of a sudden it shivered and tensed
 In ecstasy and pain combined,
 As a passing kite on whistling by
 Severed its earthing line.

The big blue kite with one big sweep
 Now finished each unfinished verse,
 And then rose up in supreme flight,
 Free of all tugs and jerks.

The blue of the kite and the blue of the sky
 Then merged into one,
 As the kite rose higher out of sight
 Towards the midday Sun.

The day was clear, the sky was blue,
 The breeze was blowing just right;
 All the kites were turning to Earth,
 Except for one big blue kite. □

Advaita in the Modern World

(Continued from page 105)

have seen it, I have perceived it, my consciousness has been flooded with that vast shining One'—he will be hard put to offer convincing proof. And unfortunately most of us are in his position. Those who talk about Brahman are many; those who have realized it are few. In the absence of personal experience, we are forced to appeal to authority. All we can say is that the ancient sages—and some not so ancient—have realized Brahman, and we accept their testimony as valid. We can also cite recent sages like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramana Maharshi, who experienced Brahman, were transformed by the experience, and transformed others.

The sceptic is not likely to be impressed by such evidence, and this is one reason why Advaita is an orphan in the modern world. No religious philosophy can have an impact on the world unless it has living exemplars, and those who have had the nondual experience are relatively few.

One of the reasons the world is in such a mess is that too many people lack the universal worldview that Advaita provides. Their outlook tends to be tribal: parochial, narrow-minded, and fanatical. Advaita could be a force for healing and unity. It could help to bind up the wounds of the world by affirming the fundamental oneness of all living beings. But it cannot do that unless it has adherents who have realized its truth and are willing to proclaim it to others.

So if Advaita is an orphan in the modern world, it is partly our fault. If we want it to have an impact on the world, we have to begin with ourselves. First we have to realize the nondual truth then we have to proclaim it to the world. In short, we need to produce from within our ranks an army of Vivekanandas. A big army: because the problems of the world are greater and more complicated than when Vivekananda lived. A daunting task: but if we are easily daunted, what sort of Vedantists are we? □

Sri Shankara and Modern Man

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

The following is a pithy elucidation of some important teachings of the great Acharya. It rebuts widely held misconceptions, and shows how vital Sri Shankara's Advaita philosophy is to the modern world.

The author is the President of Ramakrishna Math, Madras, and a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Order.

Sri Shankaracharya, who lived twelve hundred years ago, and the modern man voyaging to the moon; the Acharya, who said this world is only a superimposition on Reality, and the modern man for whom objects perceived by the senses are alone true—what can indeed be in common between them?

Historically speaking, Swami Vivekananda's assessment of Shankara is significant: 'Advaita has twice saved India from materialism. The materialism that prevailed before Buddha was a crude sort of materialism...Buddha brought Vedanta to light, gave it to the people and saved India. A thousand years after, a similar state of things prevailed...the masses brought their gods and devils and hobgoblins out again, and a tremendous hotch-potch was made of Buddhism in India. Then Shankaracharya arose and once more revived the Vedanta philosophy. By Buddha the moral side of the philosophy was laid stress upon, and by Shankara, the intellectual side. He worked out, rationalized, and placed before men the wonderful system of Advaita.¹

Today, since the nineteenth century, Indians influenced by the western culture have joined their western patrons in making many uncharitable criticisms about Sri Shankara and his philosophy. These spring

mainly from misconceptions, resulting from a lack of knowledge of Sri Shankara's commentaries in the original. These criticisms can be briefly summed up as follows:

- (i) Shankara was against *karma* of all kinds, and this made the people lazy and averse to all useful activity.
- (ii) Shankara's philosophy was life-negating and pessimistic.
- (iii) His outlook was narrow.
- (iv) He had nothing for the householders—all for the Sannyasin only.

Before we answer these charges, let us remember that a prophet comes to fulfil the need of his times. So before passing judgements about him, we must not lose sight of the historical perspective. Our judgement must take into account the time and the clime of the prophet's work. The norms and values of the present day should not be applied to judge a person who lived so long back.

The reader may say, 'Well, then, why bother about Sri Shankara? He was meant for his historical period and not for the modern man.' To this our reply is that every great teacher of humanity has focussed the attention of the people on certain eternal values. Only with regard to their practical application, they taught practices suitable for their particular age. But the eternal values they represented are true for all times.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 138–9.

One of the important aspects of modern thought is the place occupied by reason and rationalism. The scientific approach demands a rational outlook, because then alone it becomes universal. In this respect, we should remember that Sri Shankara has built up his philosophy on the adamant rock of strong reasoning, which even the best philosopher of modern times finds difficult to refute.

Man needs a satisfying world-view (*weltanschauung*) to live by. Only a scientific and universal philosophy can fulfil such a need. Sri Shankara gave such a philosophy, the Advaita Vedanta, to the world twelve centuries back. That it was misunderstood in course of time is another matter. We will come to this point later. Now we shall try to answer the objections against Shankara, mentioned earlier.

(i) *Shankara was against karma of all kinds:* This is totally wrong. Let us look at the picture properly. When Sri Shankara appeared on the Indian scene, what was the

Upanishads was also ignored by these Acharyas.² The mistakes committed in the pre-Buddhistic period were about to be repeated. It was at this juncture that Sri Shankara appeared. While placing Advaita Vedanta on the firm footing of the Upanishads, which form part of the Vedas, he also took extraordinary pains to show that one should not plunge headlong into *karma-kāṇḍa*. *Karma* cannot be the goal of life. When he said this, he meant the ritualism of the Vedic *karma-kāṇḍa*, and not work in general. Otherwise, if he believed in no work at all, but only in quietism, how can we justify the tremendous volume of work done by him in a short span of 32 years? He wrote the wonderful commentaries on the Upanishads, the *Gītā*, and the *Brahma-Sūtras*, apart from numerous *stotras* and treatises; he traversed the length and breadth of the land twice, meeting scholars and defeating in argument the opponents of Vedanta; he established the four monasteries in the four corners of India; he evolved a system of worship for the com-

He was a Brahma-vaṇī, not a Māyāvādi... 'Make your vision one of true knowledge, and see the world as Brahman. This is the highest and correct vision, not just looking at the tip of your nose.'

position? Buddhism, which had ruled the roost for over a thousand years, had horribly degenerated. The decadent form of Buddhism had given rise to many diabolic practices in the name of religion. The philosophies of Buddhism, full of sophistry, did not give the people a place to stand upon.

On the other side, the Mīmāṃsakas like Prabhākara, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, and Mandana Miśra were trying to revive the Vedic religion by resuming the ceremonials of the *karma-kāṇḍa*. It was forgotten that over-emphasis on Vedic rituals was responsible for the birth of Buddhism and Jainism. The discouragement of the rituals by the

mon man by his *ṣaṅ-mata-pravartana*, worship of six deities. Finally, he got renovated and rededicated many temples in India, and arranged for their maintenance on a permanent basis. The shrines of Badrinath, Kedarnath, and Pashupatinath in the Himalayas are witnesses to this even today. How many persons in history can claim to have accomplished so much in so short a time? Still to say that he was against all activity? Did he then go against his own teachings? So the criticism that he was responsible for the passivity of the people is

2. 'Plavā-hi-ete adṛḍhā yajñā-rūpā...' (*Muṇḍaka-Upanisad*, I.2.7).

totally misplaced.

(ii) *Shankara's philosophy is life-negating and pessimistic*: First of all, let us remember that it was Sri Shankara who gave a positive turn to the negative philosophy of Buddhist *śūnya-vāda*. He replaced it by *Brahma-vāda*, that is, everything has pure existence as its basis. The various objects, the names and forms are only *upādhis*, rather limiting adjuncts, adhering to the one and only substance, namely, *pure existence*. As it is asked in the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, 'Asti-iti bruvato-anyatra katham tadupalabhayte?—Except as existence, how is That perceived?'³ Does the *śūnya-vādin*, who says that nothing exists, exist or not? So the Acharya says, 'Yo-eva-hi nirākartā sa eva tasya svarūpam—He who denies the existence of everything, he, verily, is his real form, *svārūpa*.'⁴ Thus we find he saved India from negativism, and did not preach a negative philosophy.

But he had to find an explanation for the world phenomena to answer the Buddhist critics. So he evolved his doctrine of *Māyā*, which Swami Vivekananda describes as a 'statement of facts', 'neither pessimistic nor optimistic'. This doctrine had its germ in the Upanishads.⁵ It gives a coherent explanation as to why the 'One' should become the 'many'. A look at the post-Shankarite period of Indian history would inform us that, except for some scholars who argued and wrote volumes on this subject, the general mass of people never bothered their heads about it. Therefore the passivity and laziness of the Indian people during the last thousand years was due to many historical factors, particularly political, and the blame for that should not be laid at the door of Sri Shankara.

3. *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, VI.12.

4. *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, II.3.7.

5. *Māyām tu prakṛtiṃ vidyāt, māyīnam ca mahēsvaram*
—(*Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, IV.10).

(iii) *His outlook was narrow*: In support of this view, the incident⁶ that took place at Manikarnika Ghat on the Ganga at Varanasi is cited. Further, one's attention is drawn to his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtras* (I.3.34–8), where he admits that the Śūdra has no *adhikāra* for studying the Vedas; but he can study the Purāṇas. This means that, as the Śūdra would not be in a position to study the Vedas, he could get the same knowledge through the Purāṇas. By this he only upheld an existing custom. Why did he do it? Only a person who has the proper moral and educational foundation or eligibility could be taken to a higher level. So everyone has to begin from where he or she stands. *Adhikāra* here means not 'right' but 'eligibility'. However the Acharya does not deny the Śūdra the right to attain knowledge of Brahman through the Purāṇas etc.

(iv) *He had everything for the Sannyasin, nothing for the householders*: What had he for the Sannyasin? *Vairāgya* and *tyāga* (renunciation), *śama* and *dama* (control of the mind and the senses), and, through *sādhana*, attainment of the highest knowledge. He considered these practices as pre-requisites for attaining the knowledge of Brahman. Since these were not possible for the householders, he held that *sannyāsa* (total renunciation) was a pre-condition for attaining *Brahma-jñāna*. However, the householders could attain *citta-śuddhi* (purification of the mind) through the performance of *niṣkāma-karma* (selfless action) and thus become eligible for true *jñāna*. Let us not forget that almost all the work he did was

6. While the Acharya was ascending the steps after his bath in the Ganga, a Chandāla happened to touch him. The Acharya protested, 'Why did you touch me?' The person replied, 'Sir, neither have I touched you, nor have you touched me. You are not the body, but the Pure Atman', and disappeared. Shankara understood that he had been taught a lesson in Advaitic oneness by the Lord Himself.

for the householders and not for the *sannyāsin*.

Now, how are we to understand that the Acharya's Advaita Vedanta is suitable for modern man to help him develop a healthy world-view? To answer this, we shall have to see what his Advaita Vedanta means for us today, without going into a detailed discussion on it, since hundreds of volumes have been written on it.

'Before awakening into the knowledge of the oneness of Atman and Brahman, all activities—both sacred and secular—are in their place.'

Vedanta is both transcendental and immanent. Its transcendent aspect denies all multiplicity as '*neti, neti*', 'not this, not this', and establishes that Brahman is the only reality, the one substratum for all existence. It is *advaya*, one without a second. All variety that we see and experience are superimpositions on that substratum and, therefore, ultimately not real, i.e. in the *pāramārthika* (absolute) sense. No doubt, this aspect of Vedanta has been emphasized more in Sri Shankara's *bhāṣyas*, because he had to contend with the *vijñānavādi* and *sūnyavādi* schools of Buddhism. He used their strong logic, but put it on a firm positive foundation, which had its roots in the Upanishads, thus restoring in the process the Vedic tradition. The negative aspect of Buddhism was rejected.

This naturally takes one to the immanent position of Vedanta. '*Sarvam khalu idam brahma*—All this is Brahman.'⁷ Sri Shankara has, in all his works, accepted also this immanent aspect of Vedanta. This is called '*Sarvātmaka bhāva*—Oneness of everything that exists'; *Neha nānāsti kiñcana*—No difference whatsoever exists'.

7. *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*, III.14.1.

Taking up the position of Vedanta, that the Truth is transcendental, the modern man can practise a little of withdrawal from sense-objects. In fact, the consumerism of today needs to be curbed, even from a worldly point of view. A transcendent view of Reality would be of help in this. However, one is not to curse or reject the world. Here comes the relevance of the immanent point of view. Sri Shankara says: 'Make your vision one of true knowledge, and look at the world as Brahman. This is the liberal vision, not just looking at the tip of your nose.'⁸

Today, even though the immanent Vedanta would be more attractive, without a sound transcendental base it may degenerate into mere pantheism. The Upanishadic position of unity, or sameness of Brahman and Atman, can be realized only after rejecting the idea that multiplicity of names and forms are true. The basis, the substratum of these names and forms is true; not they, the *upādhis*, or limiting adjuncts.

This does not mean that Sri Shankara rejects the world totally. Only he gives it an inferior position. Man has to transcend this state so as to rise up to the Absolute state, which is his very nature, his birthright. Till this is achieved, the activities in the world have their rightful place. Says the Acharya: '*Prāg-brahmātmātūpratibodhāt upapanno sarvo vaidiko laukikaśca vyavahārah* — Before awakening into the knowledge of the oneness of Atman and Brahman, all activities—both sacred and secular—are in their place.'⁹

Therefore rejection of the world was not what he preached, but a change of outlook. 'Don't take only sense perceptions as real; the Atman, which is beyond speech and

8. *Drṣṭim jñānamayīm kṛtvā,
paśyet brahmamayaṁ jagat;
Sā drṣṭiḥ paramodārā,
na.nāsāgra-avalokaṇī.
—(Aparokṣānubhūti, 116).*

9. *Brahma-Sūtras*, II.i.14.

mind, alone is the Truth, he says. His emphasis is on *ātma-sākṣātkāra*, self-realization. All activities, even religious activities, which do not lead to this realization are in vain.¹⁰

It is also clear from his writings that he accepted Shakti, the power of Brahman, which is non-different from Brahman, as the efficient cause of all creation.¹¹

For example, he says in his *Gītā-Bhāṣya* (XIV.27): 'Indeed, that power of God through which Brahman sets out, comes forth, for the purpose of favouring the devotees, etc., that power which is Brahman itself, am I. For, a power and the possessor of that power are non-different.'¹²

We find he has composed many *stotras* on various forms of the Divine Mother. At Sringeri, one of the monasteries established by him, he installed Sharada, the Goddess of power and knowledge. Therefore, dismissing him as a 'Māyāvādin', as some people have done, is out of prejudice or ignorance, and is not warranted by facts.

Sri Shankara's whole life was devoted to bring about a healthy transformation in society, based on high moral and spiritual values. He was certainly not a misanthrope. *Brahma-Vidyā*, he says, is meant for raising human beings to the highest level. '*Sarveṣāṃ hi brahmaṁvidyā puruṣārtha-siddhaye upadiṣyate.*'¹³ All his activities were meant for *loka-saṅgraha*, good of the world. If 'Māyāvāda' meant total unreality of the world for him, then how can we justify all these actions which were meant for the betterment of society?

Now, all said and done, the question may

be raised, How is his thought relevant to modern man? We may conclude this paper by stating briefly these points:

(1) Advaita Vedanta as explained and systematized by Sri Shankara has stood the test of time, and provides modern man with a rational, scientific and, therefore, universal philosophy to live by. If put into practice, this philosophy can cure many of the ills of modern society: (i) It can contain greed and avarice; (ii) it can provide the human psyche with a mechanism to withstand the shocks of day-to-day life, which have become too many these days; and (iii) it can give one a goal to reach, and make one's life meaningful.

(2) Since Sri Shankara advocated freedom of worship, his philosophy does not reject dualistic methods of spiritual practice; for he was aware that formal external worship was needed for the common man.

(3) At the same time, he avoided complicated ritualism, as that kills the spirit of religion. Of course, modern man has no time for such rituals.

(4) By establishing a monastic order and giving importance to a life of renunciation, he has preserved for human society the higher values of life. Of course, unlike Buddha, he did not think that *sannyāsa* was suitable for everybody. But at least a few could live a life of *tyāga* as an example to others.

Therefore, we may conclude that Sri Shankara was one of those rarest of world teachers whose message transcends time and place, and holds the beacon of peace and true knowledge before the world for all time. □

10. cf. *Anātma-Śrī-vigrahaṇam*

11. Vide *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, I.iv.3.

12. *Yayā ca īśvara-śaktyā bhakta-anugrahādi-prayojanāya brahma prati-tiṣṭhate, pravartate, sā śaktiḥ brahmaivāham, śakti-śaktimator-ananyatvāt.*

13. *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya*, III.ii.13.

Vedanta: Inside and Out

PROF. DAVID APPELBAUM

The author, Professor at the State University College, New Paltz, New York, deals with some fundamental questions—How does an empiricist explain self-awareness, perception, and the functioning of the senses and the mind? How do saṃskāras and vāsanās influence knowledge? What is the Advaita Vedantin's position? What does he mean by saying that the 'world' is anirvacarīya, indefinable? Is he right in asserting that Atman is self-manifest and cannot be known in the ordinary sense?

An excellent paper giving some idea of the strait path of the Advaitin to Self-realization through clinical analysis of the working of what we imagine we know well—our senses and mind. After a close reading, we cannot but wonder at the brilliance of Gaudapāda and other Advaitins.

**As often as the mind is outgoing,
so often it should be turned within.**

—Ramana Maharshi

Is there an alternative way of viewing the Vedantin's phenomenology of perception other than through empiricist's eyes? In developing his account of *pratyakṣa*, is the Vedantin concerned with the construction or reconstruction of an external world, a world containing objects such as chairs, pens, paintings, bombs, and people? I want to suggest an approach to these two questions by examining what the Vedantin means by the exteriorizing, external, projective aspect of perception, that which allows us to say with conviction that the world is 'out there'. Through this examination, to the first question, I will answer 'yes', to the second, 'no'.

1. For the Vedantin, perception is one of the six valid ways of knowing (*pramā*).¹ Each *pramā* must meet the tests of non-contradiction (*satyatvam bādharāhityam*) and novelty (*anadhigata*), which together are necessary and sufficient. Non-contradiction lies beyond the scope of my discussion, although it seems to me a notion stronger than logical consistency, which would

apply only to empirical existence (*vyāvahārika*), but not the Absolute (*pāramārthika*).² About novelty, I will say more below. For each *pramā*, moreover, there is a characteristic source of that knowing, or *pramāṇa*, which is the operative or instrumental cause (*kāraṇa*). It is uniquely (*asādhāraṇa*) and actively (*vyāpāra*) responsible for the working of the *pramā*. In the case of *pratyakṣa*, the sense-organ, or *indriya*, plays the role of *pramāṇa*. Though a cause in the chain of causes leading to knowing, neither the mind (*antaḥkāraṇa*) nor the object perceived can be the *pramāṇa*; the first is not unique to *pratyakṣa*, the second not active. Thus, for the Vedantin, perception arises through a certain action of the *indriya*, leading to knowledge of what is.

1. Although I do not distinguish non-dualist from dualist Vedanta, I primarily have in mind Advaita. Works on epistemology and perception did not arise until late in Vedantin literature. The *Vedāntaparibhāṣā* of Dharmarājadhvarīndra did not appear until about 1550, and does not rest on the distinction.
2. Being beyond the realm of contradiction might be a better rendering. In the truth of liberation (*mokṣa*), all opposites are reconciled.

This much, being common ground, may not be denied by any account of the Vedantin's perception. Frequently, however, expositions include an additional assumption which does not belong to the focal meaning proper. That is that the contact of the sense-organ (*indriya*) with its object is an essential aspect of the *pramāṇa pratyakṣa*. The effect of the assumption is to place a necessary condition on the action of the *indriya*, that of *prāpyakāri*.³

What *prāpyakāri* means is that the functioning of a sense-organ, and of perception in general, is characterized by the mind's (*antaḥkāraṇa*) going out or exiting through it, and taking on the form of the perceived object. The *Vedānta-paribhāṣa* describes *prāpyakāri* in these terms:

Here, just as the water of a tank, going out through a hole and entering fields through channels comes to have, even like those (fields), a quadrangular or other figure, similarly, the internal organ too, which is of the nature of light, going out through the sense of sight, etc. and reaching the locality of contents like pot, is transformed into the form of contents like pot. This same modification is called a psychosis (*vṛtti*).⁴

Prāpyakāri is clearly an assumption of enormous power. As a result of its externalizing movement, the mind is set in opposition to the objective world, for contact is necessarily of at least two things. With the loss of a

unitary phase of perception, the mind once again uncovers the spatiality (but not spaciousness) of phenomena, and in this known space, the mode in which it stands over and against the perceived object is: it is 'in here', the thing, 'out there'. As the transposition of its own transit of the *indriya*, *antaḥkāraṇa* records the source of its impression as distant from, not merely other than, itself. Let me call this consequence of *prāpyakāri* the projection hypothesis.

2. The projection hypothesis, and *prāpyakāri* in general, can be rejected as belonging to the core meaning of *pratyakṣa* on purely conceptual grounds. The epistemological source of perception (its *pramāṇa*) must be the uniquely specific and active cause of cognition. Because the mind's contact with the form of the object arises only during *pratyakṣa*, and not in other ways of knowing, *prāpyakāri* is singularly associated with perceiving. But it itself is only a way among other ways that a sense-organ has to function. It cannot be an activity issuing, for the Vedantin, in percepts. To believe it so is to confuse the Naiyāyika position with Vedānta, for the Naiyāyikin is willing, as the Vedantin is not, to define *pratyakṣa* in terms of sense-contact.⁵ Or, possibly, there is a confusion between sense-contact and a contact between the attention and the world, the *saṁnyoga* of Bhikṣu or the *yogyatā* of Vācaspati, of the Sāṁkhya school. For, specifying that the *indriya* is the instrumenting source of perceptual knowledge leaves open the question of how contact between the knower and reality is established.

It follows that, if projection is not a necessary condition of perception, the position of *a-prāpyakāri* is equally tenable, viz., that the sense-organs can function without going

3. *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṁgraha*, by Vidyāraṇya, ed., Rama Shastri Trailanga: Vizianagaram Sanskrit Series, no. 7; (Benaras: E.J. Lazarus and Co., 1893), p. 188.

4. Dharmarāja, *Vedāntaparibhāṣā*, ed. and trans. S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri (Madras, Tamil Nadu, India: Adyar Library and Resource Centre, 1971), 'Pratyakṣa', no. 18.

5. Gotama, *Nyāya-Sūtras*, tr., S.C. Vidyabhūṣana, Sacred Books of the Hindus, VIII (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1930), I:1.4.

out to reach the object.⁶ What can this mean? That the mind is internally prepared with its array of objects, whose correspondence to the outer world is unknowable, pragmatically supposed, or 'proved' by pre-established harmony? Certainly, empiricists have held, at one time or another, all these views, and others, the assumption being that knowledge has to give an account of its object. But the tenability and primacy of the *a-prāpyakārī* position, for the Vedantin, depends, first of all, on acknowledging another, non-empirical cognitive capacity, one not so geared to the matters of exteriority, correspondence, and reconstruction of the world

suffers. Locke says that 'perceptions are produced in us by exterior causes affecting our senses.'⁸ It follows that the mind knows no further than its own mental states, the products derived from processing the sense-organs's stimulation. Sensation, perception, judgement: all that arises from the operation of *pratyakṣa* must be marshalled into an account of how the percept depicts a reality external to it. The tremendous demand this places on the activity of knowing has the effect of funneling all interest on the logic of representation. The so-called problem of the external world—of how perceptual thought can be organized to portray an outer world of objects—is a direct consequence of the

It follows that, if projection is not a necessary condition of perception, the position...is equally tenable that the sense-organs can function without going out to reach the object. What does this mean? That the mind is internally prepared with its array of objects, whose correspondence to the outer world is...pre-established...?

3. Sometimes one hears *prāpyakārī* defended on the grounds that it supplies an important revision to the empiricist's view of perceptual knowledge.⁷ This is an odd twist in the argument, serving only the empiricist's own ends, since at first glance the role of the sense-organ and its object seem reversed. In Vedanta, *indriya* is active (being the *pramāṇa*), the object, passive; in empiricism, the object is the active cause whose effect (sensation) the sense-organ

causal theory of perception.⁹ But unless one has some direct contact, or privileged access, to that which is real and is to be represented, the problem is unsolvable. The most one ends up doing is comparing two copies of the same newspaper.

Enter the proponent of *prāpyakārī*. If he reasons, as Datta does, that an 'approach must be made from the side of our organism towards the object,'¹⁰ it becomes plausible to jettison (to a certain extent) the passivity of the sense-organ. It is, however, only a minor corollary to empiricist perception.

6. *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha*, p. 187.

7. Datta gives a good example in *The Six Ways of Knowing* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1932), pp. 42–6. Also Swami Satprakashananda, *Methods of Knowledge* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965). A revised version of the defense, which takes into account modern holographic theory, is provided by Stephen Kaplan, 'Mind, Maya, and Holography: a Phenomenology of Projection', in *Philosophy East and West*, 33, no. 4, pp. 367–78.

8. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Cranston (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 353.

9. A good statement of the causal theory is H.H. Price's, 'that belong to M is the same as being caused by M, and that perceptual consciousness is an inference from effect to cause....' *Perception* (London: Methuen, 1932), p. 67.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

while it remains axiomatic that one perceives only objects capable of having conceptual form. Conceptualization is thereby preserved as soon as it is seen that, by going out to take on the form of the object, *antahkaraṇa* splits into percept (*grāhya*) and perceiver (*grāhaka*). An objective realm is revealed as spatially distant from the one beholding it. One discovers the world 'out-there' by enacting a physical traversal to get from here to it. This constitutes the Vedantin's unconventional account of the 'approach from the side of the organism': there is an actual (perhaps measurable) exiting of physical energy through the sense-organ, particular to that organ and corresponding to the medium of perception. Through the eye, for instance, light (*tejas*) shoots 'out' to the object, joining with and illuminating it, thereby yielding a percept. If one is willing to accept this unusual description, Datta is right in urging the 'usefulness' of Vedanta in advancing the empiricist position. Their superficial conflict shows a deeper agreement. But he is wrong in presuming that the cul-de-sac of representation is thereby eliminated. For, contact with the form of the object is not yet an open access to what exists, but only the mind's version of it. The projection hypothesis does nothing to relieve the empiricist of a need for a way to participate, through perception, with reality. To do that, a more body-centred, less conceptual contact is necessary.

4. How do I understand the tendency, most apparent in an account of *prāpyakāri* perception, to empiricize the event? There are two aspects: (a) to treat perceptual knowledge strictly as an ingredient in, and thereby reducible to, conceptual judgement; and (b) to divorce such knowledge entirely (as Kant tries) from the self-revealing force of metaphysical investigation. Locke again provides a classic statement:

It is therefore the *actual receiving* of ideas

from without that gives us notice of the existence of other things, and makes us know, that something doth exist at that time without us, which causes that idea in us, though perhaps we neither know nor consider how it does it.¹¹

The 'actual receiving' is the moment of sensation. That it arises 'from without' means in fact that it is the result of an unnoticed cause, calling the attention to it. That moment is instantly lost, as sensation becomes material for thought, provoking for Hume the clusters of mental associations, guided by 'gentle custom'. Sensation has a place for the empiricist only as the trigger of a reflex that supposes that the objective world is sending the mind messages; this reflex Marcel calls the message theory, Merleau-Ponty, the constancy hypothesis.¹² Once released, the impressive weight of the concept and thought, judgement and theory is installed until the next moment of sensation, beginning the reflex anew. The recurrent creation of a spatial realm external to sensation, one that seems to be sending signals to the mind, is beguiling enough to distract one from the fact that it happens automatically. True, within the reflex arc, there is 'projection', in the sense of creating the grid of distance and locale that characterizes the world of objects. It springs into being at the same instant as the object; it is the object's aura. In this sense, Datta and others are correct in saying that projective perception 'goes out to reach' the object, and finds it only at some distance from the mind. But once one acknowledges that object and distance are stored in the

11. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

12. See, Marcel, 'Existence and Objectivity', in *Metaphysical Journal*, B. Wall, tr. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1952), pp. 327–30; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, C. Smith, tr. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), pp. 7ff.

mind, and together spring out on the cue of sensation, then the projection hypothesis takes on another colour. The object, its qualities, spatial coordinates all are projections of *antaḥkaraṇa*'s reactivity. They arise together when it is provoked; they subside at quiescence. I have said that projection in the first sense cannot prove an external world; it is internal to it. Neither can it in the second sense. It is only a symptom, to the knower, that that world is again on the brink of mechanically arising.

5. Does that mean that there are no objects, no chairs, watches, tidal waves, or toll booths? Part of what the Vedantin means by calling the real *anirvacanīya* (indefinable) is that affirmation or denial here blurs the genuine act of perceptual apprehension by again deferring the attention to the conceptual apparatus upon which *antaḥkaraṇa* has come habitually to rely. More urgent is the need to understand, in terms of the ongoing metaphysical investigation which the Vedantin conducts, the meaning of the triggering event. Gauḍapāda, in the *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā*, gives important information. He says:

[The] mind goes out resembling that [the objects] because of the stored attachment to the nonexistent. When it [the mind] comes to know the nonexistence of the object, it returns without contact. [The mind] which comes back and does not go forward is then in the condition of being without movement.¹³

Here is a rather different picture of the mind's exiting. 'Going out' results from attending to the deeply entrenched conceptualization of existence, from being distracted from a concrete approach to it. From this mental automatism springs the object.

13. *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā*, 4: 79–80; Kaplan's translation, 'Mind, Maya, and Holography', p. 369.

When one becomes aware of the automatism, there arises the possibility of seeing through the projection of that realm. One sees that the object is a projection of a thought; and, as when one discovers that a view of the Eiffel Tower comes from a slide, one knows the unreal as unreal. The mind is no longer so taken with the form of the object, ceases to go out, and returns to its habitat, in search for a way to be.¹⁴

Gauḍapāda is clear that the external world and its problems arise from an exteriorizing movement, having a physical

The mind is no longer so taken with the form of the object, ceases to go out, and returns to its habitat, in search for a way to be.

basis, which takes one from the centre of one's being, and deposits one at the outskirts. This is the region of the *kalpanā*, the constructive imagination. The opposing movement, which he also describes, is not thereby a denial of all reality other than one's own being. Of this, he must remain silent. But, it is a denial of the thought of such reality, or at least a perception of the staleness of the periphery. Another name for this centrifugal motion, throwing one out from one's existential orbit, is projection. Perception in the mode of *prāpyakāri* is forgetful of what it leaves behind.

6. What is an *indriya*, or sense-organ? This question seems to me crucial to an understanding of non-projective, of *a-prāpyakāri pratyakṣa*. The issue concerns how *antaḥkaraṇa* relates to a capacity, function, or mode of operation, not a physical site. For the empiricist, as said, a sense-organ

14. This is part of what Marcel means when he says, 'It is essential to the very nature of the object not to take "me" into account.' *Metaphysical Journal*, p. 261.

is a supplier of the raw material for mental operations.¹⁵ In this respect, the *indriya* can be likened to an aperture, out through which *antahkarana* streams. In remaining passive, the mind does nothing to participate in the sense-organ's operation. Unattended, the *indriya* is simply a channel for the determinate perception of objects, *savikalpaka pratyakṣa*. Is there another possible approach the mind has with respect to *indriya*? Surely it can be other than mechanically attracted to the *samskāras*, the stored attachments, the mental paraphernalia, that result in its 'going out', becoming less concentrated, less concerned with finding a way toward an impartial view (*sākṣi*) of reality. The moment that *antahkarana* is able to relate to a sense-organ, sensation becomes other than a trigger for the (representation) reflex. When it ceases to project an objective world, it can take part in the unobstructed function of the *indriya*, the ongoing unfolding of sense-experience. This activity is decidedly non-cognitive. It cannot be taken up into a mental construction. It is of the moment *and* of the body. This sensing, the uniting of *antahkarana* and the organism through the vehicle of the *indriya*, is called *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*, non-determinate, non-objective perception.

The *indriyas* are sometimes known as organs of internal perception. Where this suggests the capacity for sensing, and not introspection (wherein *antahkarana* 'goes out' to its own mental states), it is valid. For, being a *pramāṇa*, a source of perceptual knowledge, that which the *indriya* tells one of is the primordial condition of all perception: that one inhabits a body, that the mind too is incarnate, that knowing implies awareness of the organism. Needless to say,

15. cf. Locke: 'This great source of most of the ideas we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by them to the understanding, I call sensation.' *Ibid.*, p. 62.

this telling is not in word or thought, but through direct contact with the living habitat of the body. This incarnate way of knowing, body consciousness, Marcel calls coenesthesia; I prefer proprioception.¹⁶ *Nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* is proprioception. Mind joins organism to attend to an immediate and concrete connection with what exists around one. It is no longer deflected by the representation reflex, but 'stays in' to receive actively the confluence of forces supporting life.

7. *A-prāpyakārī* perception belongs to *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*. It is, however, not right to view it as perception without contact. It has real, not mental, contact, as projection brings. Once proprioception is awakened, and the way to the sense-organs unimpeded by representational habits, the world can announce itself. One is open to its colours, overtones, fragrances, and textures in a way no longer predisposed to make something of them. The frontier dividing interior and exterior that empiricism conceptually supposes—the skin's surface—no longer is a barrier to influences on many levels impinging upon one's organism. Instead, that organism is a sensitized registry of one's participation in the unfolding of a reality that is not separate from, but fully encompasses oneself. Through *a-prāpyakārī*, contact is assured because the mind has not, in its measured way, distanced itself from the world. The world has the nearness of sensation. It has the intimacy of breath.

With *a-prāpyakārī*, there is contact because there is unobstructed penetration of

16. Marcel, *ibid.*, p. 19. See my 'Note on Pratyakṣa in Advaita Vedānta', in *Philosophy East and West*: 32.2 (April 1982), pp. 201–5; 'A Second Note on Pratyakṣa in Advaita Vedānta', *Prabuddha Bharata*: 90:7 (July 1985), pp. 301–5.

world and organism. As the attention contacts the body, it contacts the world. The projection hypothesis has plausibility only for the distance-making senses, sight and hearing. For the contactile senses—smell, taste, and particularly touch—it has no real explanatory power.¹⁷ With the attention contained within the body, one is already *with* the world. Being incarnate means being with things, in a relation Marcel calls 'sympathetic mediation.'¹⁸ One's relation to things, moreover, is no different from one's relation to his or her own body. Sensing one's body, one senses at the same time what occupies a place in the environment. Things become 'prolongations' of one's own body; the texture of a tree is no less directly accessible, say, than the sensation of one palm or another. All this is very far from the empiricist's fear of the world disappearing when thought ceases; indeed, it is the opposite. The world is there only before judgement is. Or, as Merleau-Ponty says,

to perceive in the full sense of the word (as the antithesis of imagining) is not to judge, it is to apprehend an immanent sense in the sensible before judgement begins.¹⁹

8. 'If not objects, what is *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* a perception of? Is that a pseudo-problem when one remembers the Vedantin's caution that the world is *anirvacanīya*? I think not, if it is borne in mind that to speak of the matter, in a language geared to empiricist pragmatics, is to risk loss of disclosure. It seems clear to me that

17. cf. Datta's *non-sequitor*: 'If all the senses, including even those of touch and taste, could perceive objects without coming into actual contact with them, we would have been able to have the touch and taste of distant objects.' *The Six Ways of Knowing*, p. 40.

18. Marcel, p. 246.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

proprioception provides an opening onto the being of beings. It is a means through which one initially embodies an impartial vision of the reality of oneself (*sākṣi*). What one lacks, in the sphere of relative truth, is being. Proprioception reminds one that the body has a role crucial to one's coming to be. Returning the attention to the organism, having the mind 'stay in', one avails oneself to that mysterious fruition whose first promise is given in sensing. In its physicality and organicity (for it is pre-eminently of the body) lies the correctness of the clue which Datta provided: *indriya*'s action is corporeal. This proprioceptive mode of perception allows a progressive approach, however interspersed with lapses into projection, representation, and construction, to the knowledge of being. That is its unique value as a *pramā*, as an entry-point for the wayfarer in search of existence. Only then is it distinct from another *pramā*, inference (*anumāna*). The empiricist, by conflating inference and perception, remains forgetful of being. He enacts this confusion each time he is forced to infer, from judgement, the existence of the external world.

By what action can one hope to come closer to one's own existence? By entering more deeply into *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*. This is an echo of Merleau-Ponty's claims, that 'this act is perception, in the wide sense of the knowledge of existences.'²⁰ The state of proprioception does not seek knowledge of any determination, quality, property, or attribute. Conceptualization arises only at the moment that a concerned attentiveness to perception becomes fixed, frozen. That moment occurs when *antahkaraṇa* takes on the form of the object. Where the attention is durable enough to persist in its participation with the percipient process of the organism itself, no-thought results. Sensitivity, responsiveness, community with things and

20. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

forces, a sense of a presence to the world: these are aspects of the awareness of existence (*sattā*) alone. That is what the Vedantin discovers in perception freed of the projection hypothesis.²¹ What is uncovered is a state of being-on-the-way, of readiness, of self-sacrifice, *ātmayajña*. This is not yet the advent he awaits, which

is not to be obtained by instruction, nor by the intellect, nor by much learning. It is to be obtained only by the one whom he chooses; to such a one *ātman* reveals his own person.²²

It is nonetheless a necessary phase of the passage to full embodiment of his being, the stringent requirement of keeping himself disposed to welcoming the moment of being. Marcel gives a clear statement:

I must keep myself at the disposal of the unknown Me, so that one day he can come into my place without meeting any resistance from Me that I am still, but shall have in that second ceased to be.²³

9. From an empiricist perspective, *nirvikalpaka* perception, and the whole context of non-projective perceiving, lacks all meaning. This is a consequence, as I have said above, of his cleaving metaphysics from epistemology. The further fruit of the cleavage is the rejection of any valid search for self, any notions about which, Hume concludes, 'are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.'²⁴ His version of perception is

shot through with the projection hypothesis. When he describes the changefulness of the perceptual field, moreover, he remains a spectator too, and not a participant in it. He identifies perceptual knowledge with the result (*phala*), and not the process, or awareness. By contrast, Vidyāraṇya makes the correct distinction: 'The cognition of a jar means the knowledge resulting from the reflection of consciousness (*cidābhāsa*). The resultant knowledge is not *Brahma-caitanya*, which is prior to perception.'²⁵ The stage is set for an account whereby the active instrumentation of the sense-organ (*pramāṇa*) coordinates and unifies the perceiver (*pramātā*) with the perceived object (*prameya*) so that all partake of one movement. In the kinship shared by perceiver and perceived, one moves closer to an acknowledgement of that which endows the entire field with reality. One engages thereby the essential character of metaphysical knowledge, its self-manifestness, *svaprakāśatva*. This character is explained by the Vedantin (*Citsukhī*) as immediate and objectless.²⁶ One does not know that one knows; one is, rather, with knowledge. Further, such knowing manifests the self, reveals it directly, in the momentary unity of percipient experience. One is not one who thinks one is. One is seen impartially for what one is. In this knowing lies release from the constraining automatism of the empiricist, including its denial of a path of self-inquiry.

10. Let me return to the point that, in perception, and in every way of knowing, a criterion of validity is novelty, *anadhigatatva*.

21. cf. Datta, p. 98.

22. *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, 2:23, in R.E. Hume, tr., *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921)

23. *Being and Having*, K. Farrer, tr. (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 52.

24. *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1888), p.252.

25. *Pañcadaśī* (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1935) VIII: 10; Satprakashananda's translation.

26. cf. Citsukhācārya, *Citsukhī* (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagar Press, 1931), p. 9, cited in Datta, p. 137.

A percept must present new material, and not be a reproduction by memory, past knowledge.²⁷ On the surface, the test excludes, as valid perception, the instance when one forms a visual image of what was on the desk, instead of looking to see what is present. By the same token, when one 'sees' the dress one has heard a friend is wearing because it was hanging in the closet last week, perception is not being validly employed. Hence, the Vedantin wants to claim that *pratyakṣa* can never be reproductive, only presentational. Is this so? When the empiricist tendency is examined, this distinction between memory (*smṛti*) and perception becomes blurred. Consider when the sound of a bell reaches my ear. According to the empiricist, the impact of the stimulus gives me an auditory impression which (triggering the representation reflex) immediately associates different objective properties to the event—pitch, volume, location, timbre. My perceptual knowledge warrants me to think things like 'The bell is loud', 'It is made of silver', 'It sounds unclear'. I am able, as a result, to place it in a large, expansive conceptual frame, explaining its cause, function, origin, application, future, appeal, and value. But, my actual perceptual experience of 'bell-sound' has shrunk to the vanishing-point. The occasion of the bell has prompted a tremendous volume of analysis; it itself is an almost instantaneous notice. There is, for the empiricist, the repeated loss of the content of sensation, in favour of its conceptualized form. It is of the essence of the concept to be memorable. It must be repeatable, have a class of instances fall under it. Where the projection hypothesis determines perceiving, therefore, *pratyakṣa* derives from memory, not from the unique contact one experiences proprioceptively.

In empiricism, sensation activates traces remaining of previous experience, Hume's ideas or faint impressions. The appearance of a new perceptual experience is intercepted by the web of remainders, which, like hungry ghosts, devour it immediately. This is the web of *samskāras* and *vāsanā*, constituting the stored attachments of which Gauḍapāda speaks. The web is definitive of one's ego-position, how one postures, poses, assumes, preconceives about each and every occasion the world presents. By beginning to bear witness to its fabric, one places one's automatism under the fiery eye of self-inquiry. Only in its light can the self-manifestness (*svaprakāśatva*) of knowledge of being appear. Returning to perception, one leaves the empiricist behind. He belongs to a subtle memory, a persisting reflex, that ceases to be in the moment of knowing. In this direction, the Vedantin finds the support of his own way of perceiving.

11. Conclusion. Although I do not take it in the same direction, I am greatly impressed by Merleau-Ponty's discovery of the body's own perception. 'External perception,' he writes, 'and the perception of one's own body vary in conjunction because they are the two facets of one and the same act.'²⁸ To have real contact with one's surroundings, one must reach them by reaching into and through one's own body. Becoming prolongations of the body's perceptivity, what there is is allowed to show itself in the intimacy of sensation. Organic sensitivity, not formed of pre-cast thought, is a channel through which the newly unfolding real can appear. Lacking corporeality, as it does when the projection hypothesis is opted for, perception lacks body. Though it can have great pragmatic value, it breathes a staleness. This vital lack is in the end a symptom of a metaphysical vacantness, which inflects perception that

27. Annam-Bhaṭṭa, *Tarka-saṅgraha* (Bombay: Bombay Sanskrit Series, 1918); cf. Datta, p. 24.

28. *Op. cit.*, p. 205.

fails to provide access to existence. It is the investigation of being, one's being and the world's that continually and by its own consent eludes empiricism. It attempts to treat perception as a species of dis-incarnate thought, a kind to use Locke's expression, one cannot avoid having.²⁹ But, I have gone to lengths to show how the temptation to endow the Vedantin notion of *pratyakṣa* with this tendency is disastrous. It spells the ruin of a school one of whose primary concerns is how the metaphysical self (*ātman*) becomes known to itself through acts of per-

29. *Op. cit.*, p. 353.

ception, and how perception reveals an awareness (*caitanya*) which speaks only through the voice of being:

One effulgent Being is hidden in all creatures. He is all-pervasive and is the innermost Self of all. He presides over the law of *karma* and all beings reside in Him. He is the Witness and He is Pure Consciousness, transcendent and free from relativity.³⁰ □

30. *Śvetāśvatara-Upaniṣad*, 6:11; Satprakashananda's translation.



Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati—members in 1914

(L to R) standing: Swamis Prabuddhananda, Raghavananda, Shahji,
Swami Prabhavananda

Sitting: on the bench: Swamis Prajnananda, Virajananda, Atulananda

On the ground: Swamis Abhayananda (Bharat Maharaj), ?, Shamananda,
Atmabodhananda

ON INDIA
pp. 131–236

Sri Ramakrishna And Future India

How can we accept this claim that a perusal of the books written on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna reveals that he said nothing, [in fact, he] the Inner Controller of all beings, the Bhagavan, did not foresee the formation of the new thought prevailing in the country, the thoughts now flooding entire India, inspired by the power of which thought-waves numerous young men have been sacrificing their lives giving up everything, considering everything to be worthless? We do not believe that he—the touch of whose feet have caused the advent of *Satya-Yuga* on this earth, at whose touch the earth is immersed in bliss, whose advent has driven away the *tamas* (inertia) accumulated over many ages, the mere beginning of the manifestation of which power has caused reverberations everywhere, he who is perfect, he who is the founder of the Religion for the New Age, he who is the personified consummation of all the past incarnations of God,—did not foresee the future of India or did not say anything on that subject. We believe what he did not express orally he did in action. He modelled the future India, seating the representative of the future India before him. This representative happened to be Swami Vivekananda. Many think that Swami Vivekananda's love for his country was his own contribution [to the nation]. But when seen with a delicate vision it is understood that his love for the country was the contribution of his Gurudeva, whose feet were supremely worthy of worship. He too never claimed anything to be his own. The way in which the world teacher (*Loka-guru*) moulded him is the superior way to mould future India. There was no consideration of rules for him [i.e. Sri Ramakrishna never set any rules to be observed by Swami Vivekananda]. He moulded him entirely as the *Vīra-sādhaka* [a heroic instrument]. He was a hero from the day of his very birth, heroism was natural to him. Sri Ramakrishna used to tell him: 'Why, you are a hero!' He knew that the power he was infusing into him would in course of time cover the country by its manifest brilliance as by the rays of the sun. Our young men too have to practise this *Vīra-bhāva*, working like heroes. They have to be fearless and work for the country, always keeping in mind the *Bhagavad-vānī* [words of God], 'Why, you are a hero'.

—Sri Aurobindo

Contributions of the Indian Subcontinent to Civilization

PROF. V. KUMAR MURTY

Prof. Murty, of the Department of Mathematics, University of Toronto, had presented this interesting and informative paper to the Toronto Board of Education in May last year. His conclusion is significant: 'Neither are you nor am I responsible for the calamities or the glorious achievements of the past. We can accept neither the praise nor the blame. We can, however, appreciate the good and let it inspire us to do better, and recognize the bad and try to learn from the mistakes of the past...The time for nationalism...is passing. In this global village, we need internationalism, a world view which recognizes the contribution of all the cultures.'

The topic is very vast and we will only attempt to catch a few glimpses of some of the most prominent contributions. To begin with, it is necessary to fix a few terms of reference. In the first place, I will not speak in country-specific terms. Countries as political entities with well-defined borders are relatively recent phenomena. By contrast, cultures are much more ancient and more relevant when we are discussing the origin and evolution of ideas. For simplicity, I will use the words India and Indian to refer to the entire sub-continent. Secondly, we are discussing knowledge which has evolved over a period of several thousand years. The dates are only approximate, especially in the older periods. I will not deal uniformly with the entire span of time since, for example, the contribution of the ancients is more well known than the contributions of other periods. Thirdly, though I will mention other fields, there will be a tendency to emphasize science since I am more familiar with the work in this area.

We shall divide the period of discussion into five time periods:

- (1) Ancient times to 600 BC.
- (2) 600 BC to AD 400.

(3) AD 400–1000.

(4) AD 1000–1700.

(5) AD 1700 to the present.

(1) *Ancient times to 600 BC*

The oldest record of Indian civilization dates back to 3000 BC. It extended along the Indus river from Mohenjo-Daro to Harappa and as far south as modern-day Gujarat. This highly organized society was divided into agricultural and urban communities. The Harappans had a script which is still undeciphered. They had a fairly advanced brick-making technology. According to some historians (see, for example, Joseph or Chattopadhyaya), this technology was developed as bricks were needed for flood control. The use of a kiln for making bricks was a major breakthrough of ancient India.

The Vedic literature is thought by some to have evolved in the period 1000 BC— to 700 BC. Other historians place the date much earlier: The Vedas are a body of knowledge, perhaps an encyclopaedia of the knowledge of that society. One of the striking features of the Vedas is the sublime poetry through which the ideas are expressed. The poetic form of expression was better suited for memorization, which was essential for the

preservation of the texts. But it also showed the idealistic nature of those people. The Sanskrit word for sage and poet are one and the same: *kavi*.

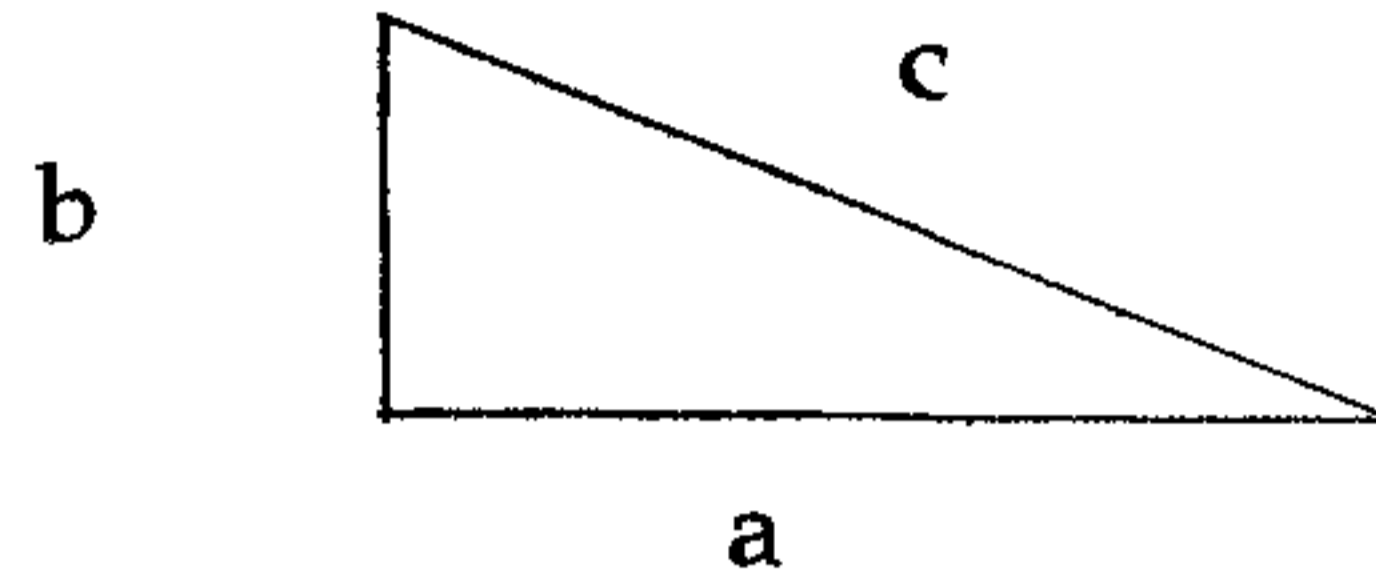
The Upanishads are the culmination of Vedic ideas, and they present a philosophy which is a bold enquiry into the nature of existence. A collection of them was translated into Persian in 1656 and into Latin in 1801. The German philosopher Schopenhauer wrote, 'There is no study more beneficial and elevating to humanity than the study of the Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life and it will be the solace of my death.'

The philosophy of the Upanishads was simplified and rearranged in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Some scholars date this work around 1400 BC, while others feel that it may be as late as 500 BC. Though the year of its composition is in doubt, the text itself is not. The English philosopher Carlyle studied it and then recommended it to Emerson. The study of the Upanishads and the *Gītā* was a favourite recreation with Emerson, and they clearly had an influence on his writings. For example, his poem, 'Brahm', is almost a literal translation of parts of the *Gītā*. In his own poetic style, Thoreau, the New England thinker, writes, 'What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like the light of a higher and purer luminary ... like the full moon after the stars have come out.'

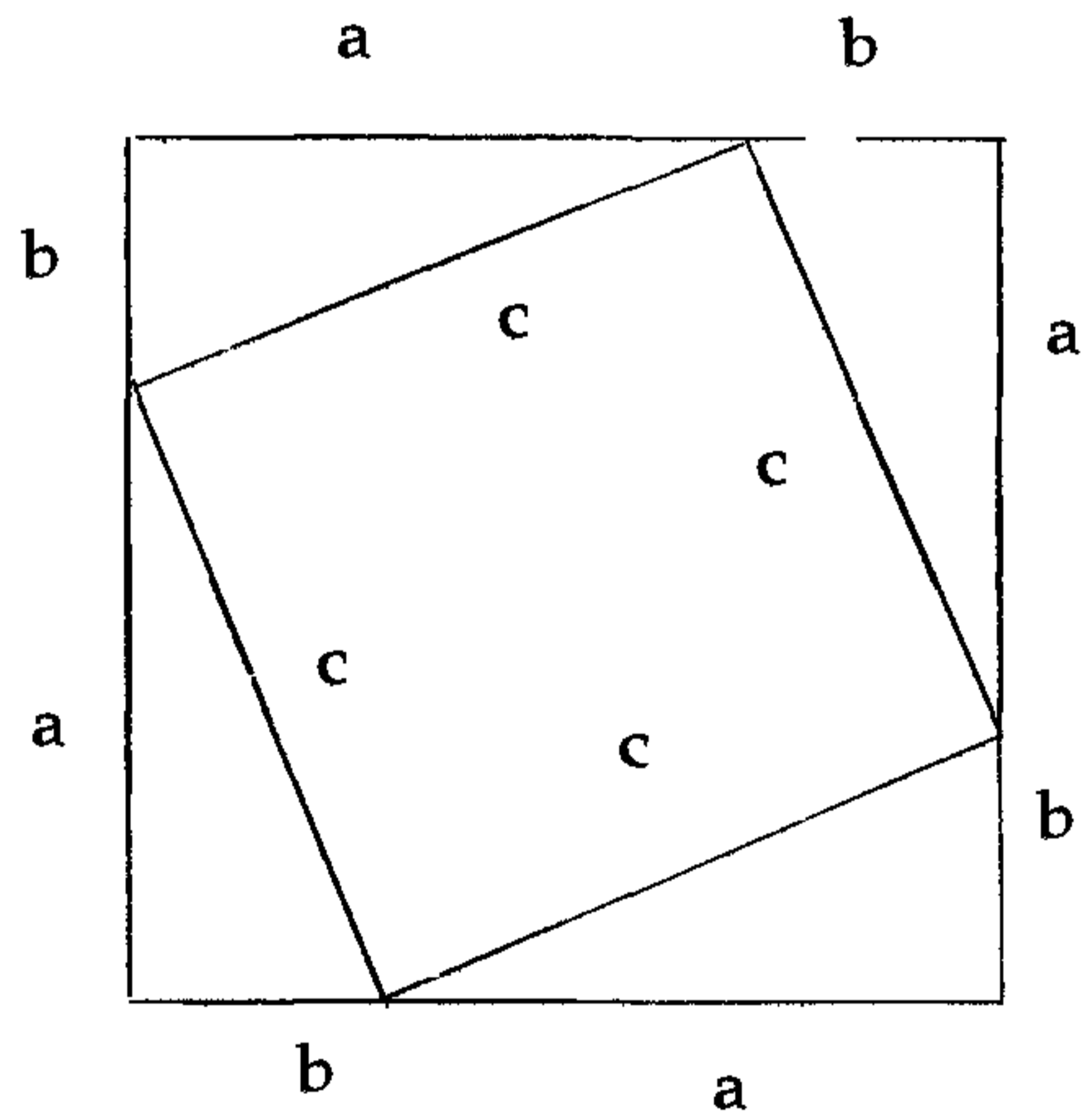
(2) 600 BC to AD 400

In the ancient world, the different cultural and philosophical outlooks of the Indus valley civilization and the Hellenistic civilization are reflected, to some extent, in their mathematics. Let me illustrate this with the different proofs given of the results known in the West as Pythagoras' Theorem. The Greeks were worshippers of physical manifestations of beauty, and their mathematics was geometry. The inscription at the

entrance of Plato's Academy read, 'Let no one ignorant of geometry enter these portals. The proof of the Pythagorean school of the theorem, which relates the length c of



the hypotenuse of a right angled triangle to the lengths a and b of the other sides proceeded as follows: one constructs a large square of side $a+b$ in which are inscribed four copies of the given triangle:

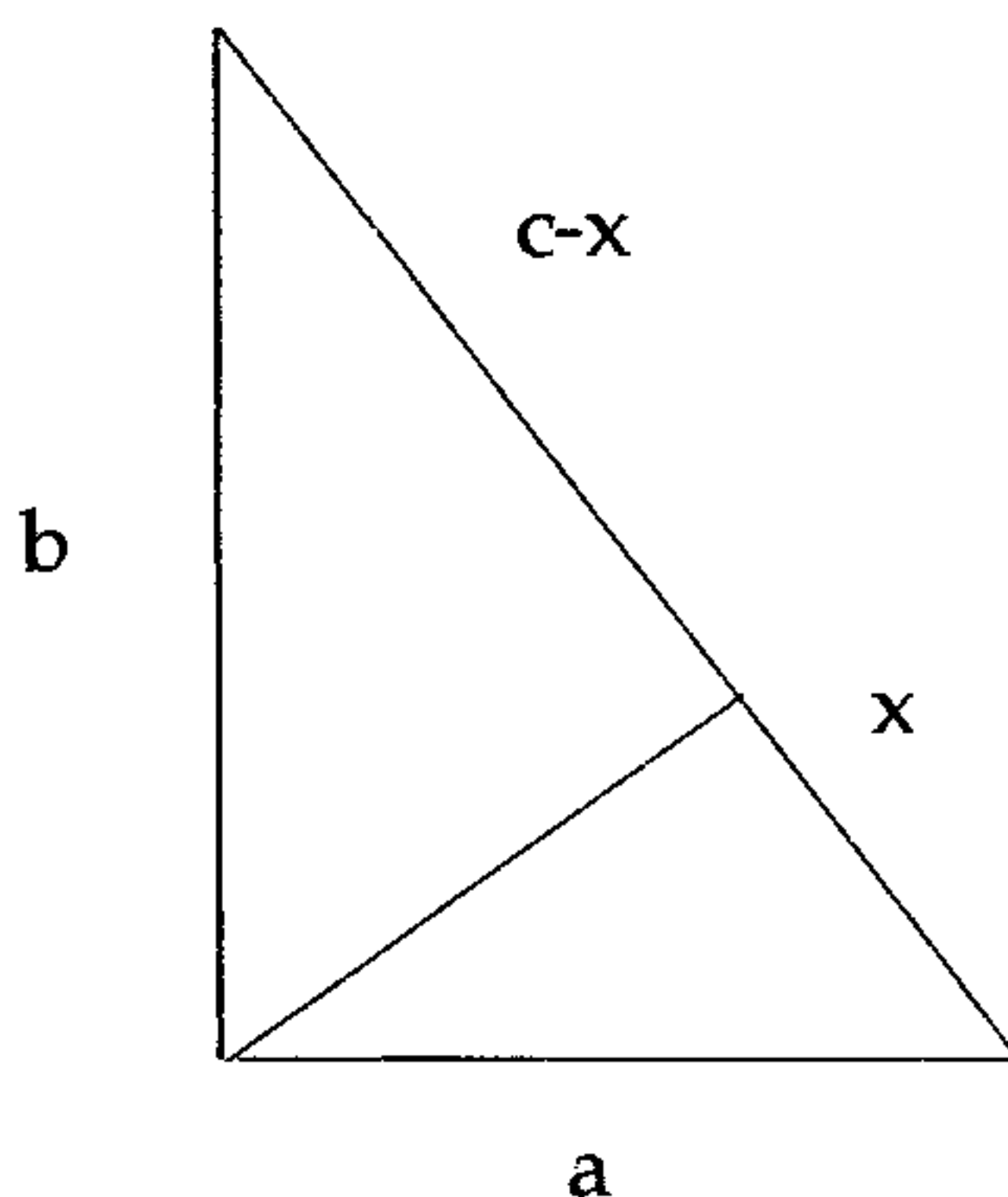


Now adding areas gives $(a+b)^2 = 4(\frac{1}{2} ab) + c^2$

That is, $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$

The Indians, on the other hand, had an abstract philosophical outlook on life. To them the beauty of physical forms was but a reflection of the beauty of a truth which transcended both mind and matter. Their

mathematics was algebra. Though it belongs to a later period, we can contrast the above proof with that given by Bhaskaracharya in his magnum opus, *Siddhanta Siromani*¹. His proof of the above result begins by drawing a perpendicular to the hypotenuse, thereby dividing the original triangle into two smaller ones. They then observe that each of the smaller triangles is similar to the original one (i.e. after suitable orientation, a blow-up of either of the smaller triangles will exactly give the original large triangle). This implies that the sides are of proportional length. Writing this



down explicitly gives the equations,

$$\frac{a}{x} = \frac{c}{a}, \quad \frac{b}{c-x} = \frac{c}{b};$$

and simplifying gives,

$$a^2 = cx$$

$$b^2 = c(c-x) = c^2 - cx$$

Adding these gives the relation,

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

The abstract approach of the Indians also gave rise to the positional notation. The idea that information could be conveyed not only by a symbol but its position in relation to other symbols was a tremendous leap of imagination. The Babylonians, Chinese and Mayans also were using positional notation to some extent. However, these were not decimal systems. Moreover, in India, a further crucial step was taken: the realization that the absence of a symbol also carried information. Thus was born the concept of zero. This was one of the most significant breakthroughs of the ancient world. One estimate dates this discovery around 200 BC to AD 400.

Indian numerals evolved over a period of centuries. The system which most closely resembles the present-day notation for numerals and the use of the place-value system may be as old as the third century AD. Ever since ancient times, calculation seems to have been performed in the decimal system. Vedic mathematicians seemed to be comfortable with very large numbers, for they had names for powers of ten upto 62. This is to be compared with the largest power of ten for which the Greeks had a name: 10^4 was a myriad.

The decimal place-value system was in use before AD 587. This system became known to the world through one of the works of Mohammed ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (AD 825). It was translated into Latin, with the title, *Algorithmi de numero Indorum*.² This translation spread throughout Europe,

1. The date of Bhaskaracharya's work is approximately AD 1150. The Pythagorean Theorem itself occurs in the *Sulbasutras* of Baudhayana (about 800–600 BC). It was also known in many other cultures throughout the ancient world.

2. This book dealt with techniques of computation using the Indian numerals. The word algorithm, a corruption of the name of al-Khwarizmi, has thus come to mean a method of computation. Also, the word algebra

and despite its title, the system was known at first as 'Arabic notation'. On this point, Cajori writes:

The grandest achievement of the Hindus and the one which, of all mathematical inventions, has contributed most to the progress of intelligence, is the perfecting of the so-called Arabic notation. That this notation did not originate with the Arabs is now admitted by every one.

One now refers to this notation as Hindu-Arabic numerals. The decimal place-value system is a fundamental contribution to civilization. Much of science and technology, business and commerce depend in an essential way on this system.

This age also saw major developments in language, the performing arts and in medicine and chemistry. About 500 BC Panini composed the *Ashtadhyayi*. It was an attempt to systematize language and led to the birth of modern Sanskrit. Panini's approach was original and phenomenal. He composed 4000 aphorisms to express all known rules of grammar. Oxford Indologist Max Muller describes him as 'the greatest grammarian the world has seen.'

Sanskrit' literally means refined or polished or cultured. Many of the languages of the world have been derived from it. The influence on Latin and English is especially striking. Here are a few illustrative examples.³

English	Sanskrit
mother	<i>mātr̥</i>
father (pater)	<i>pit̥r̥</i>
brother	<i>bhr̥ātr̥</i>
sister	<i>śvas̥r̥</i>
daughter	<i>duhit̥r̥</i>
serpent	<i>sarpa</i>
punch	<i>pañca</i>

The word 'punch' is derived from the Sanskrit *pañca*, which means 'five'. Thus to give a punch is to 'give five', i.e. to give a fist.⁴

The influence of Sanskrit on world languages has been accepted by linguists for some time and it has filtered down to the schools if in slightly distorted form. I still remember how as a grade 9 student in an Ottawa high school, I listened to an English teacher explain that the most ancient language was 'Sandskit', and she proceeded to write this name in large letters on the board, blissfully unaware of the distortion she had introduced.

The development of Sanskrit influenced the entire Indian approach to knowledge. Joseph feels that the algebraic character of ancient mathematics is a by-product of the already developed linguistic tradition of representing numbers by words.⁵ The words then become changed into symbols. Sanskrit has also had an impact on the development of music. Where Sanskrit scholarship has flourished, art, music and science have tended to be more analytical.

The performing arts were studied in *Nāṭya Shāstra*. It belongs to the sixth century BC and even today it is *the* authority for

comes from another of al-Khwarizmi's works entitled *Hisab al-jabr w'al-Muqabalah*.

3. In general, we have not given the diacritical markings when transliterating Sanskrit words. However, it is essential here: the notation ṛ is to be pronounced as midway between *roo* and *ri*.
4. The reader is referred to the book by Swami Abhedananda, Chapter 6, and the pamphlet by Swami Ashokananda where these and many other facts of the influence of Indian thought on the thought of the West are presented.
5. See also Cajori, p. 89.

students of Indian dance. In music, it already describes a 7-note scale and a complete musical notation. According to the nineteenth century historian Sir William Hunter, this notation travelled from India to Persia and from there was taken to Spain by a monk named Guido d'Arezzo in the eleventh century. The notation spread slowly throughout Europe and as it did, it underwent a series of changes until it reached the modern solfa notation.

The study of medicine was compiled in Ayurveda. The word *ayus* means life or well-being, and *veda* means knowledge. This science predates the sixth century BC. By comparison, the texts of Hippocrates, *Materia Medica*, is later, than the fourth century BC, and some scholars feel that it directly incorporated aspects of the treatise on Ayurveda. The advanced state of Indian medicine was known to Alexander when he came into contact with India around 350 BC. He inducted many Hindu physicians into his camp. Ayurveda is still studied and practised today.

A powerful spiritual wave spread across Asia around 600 BC with the birth of Buddha in India and Confucius in China. Buddha's philosophy was highly ascetic in its spiritual aspect but all inclusive in its social aspect. The spread and practice in India of the principle of non-violence is due largely to his teachings.

The Buddhist period was extremely rich in all aspects. During this time, Sushruta and Charaka wrote exhaustive treatises on medicine, and these were translated into Arabic and widely circulated. Chanakya, the prime minister of Emperor Chandra Gupta, wrote a treatise on the science and art of politics.

The grandson of Chandra Gupta was Ashoka ≈ 260 BC perhaps the greatest Indian

emperor. Though he was known for his military exploits, his enduring fame is more for being the first monarch in the history of the world to renounce violence as state policy. During his reign extraordinary advances were made in culture, arts, the sciences and philosophy. He made Buddhism the state religion. He sent missionaries far and wide and negotiated peace treaties with many of the surrounding kingdoms. His symbol was 'the wheel of virtue' (*dharma-chakra*), and today it adorns the Indian flag.

(3) AD 400–1000

In mathematics, this period saw Aryabhata (AD 476), who was considered the Newton of India. He wrote many works on Algebra and Astronomy; discovered the rotation of the earth on its own axis; the cause of solar and lunar eclipses; the idea of gravitation (*madhyākarshana*) though perhaps not the mathematical relation governing it; and he calculated the earth's circumference. His student Varahamihira (AD 500–587) wrote an encyclopaedia of natural history *Bṛihat-Samhita*. Brahma Gupta (AD 598) described the calculation of eclipses. He also described a method of solving what is known in the West as Pell's equation. In the West, the first complete solution was given by Legendre in 1767. It was partly through a translation of Brahma Gupta's work on astronomy that the rest of the world became aware of Indian astronomy and mathematics.

In elementary education, the *Panchatantra* and the fables of Pilpay were written around AD 500. They taught moral values and aspects of good character to children. They were translated into French by LaFontaine, and in the preface to *LaFontaine's Fables* is his acknowledgement of this fact. R.C. Dutt (as quoted by Swami Abhedananda) gives the following account of the 'migration' of the *Panchatantra* stories:

Panchatantra was translated into Persian in the reign of Nausharwan (AD 531–572)...The Persian translation was rendered into Arabic, and the Arabic translation was rendered into Greek by Symeon Seth about 1080.

This migration of fables is exhaustively documented by Max Muller in his multi-volume work, *Chips from a German Workshop*.

In literature, the legendary Kalidasa belonged to the fifth or sixth century. He has been called one of the greatest dramatists of the world. Some speak of him as the Shakespeare of India. One of his works, *Shakuntala*, has been described by the poet Goethe (1749–1832) as 'the essence of sweetness in heaven and earth'. The drama, *Megha-duta*, shows Kalidasa rivalling Shelly or Wordsworth as a romantic poet. Kalidasa had a command of language, keen insight into human nature (which in my view was the basis of Shakespeare's greatness) and the idealism of which Indian thought is redolent. Kalidasa was succeeded by a host of great poets and dramatists including Bhartrihari, Bhavabhuti and others. Kalidasa was supported by the emperor Vikramaditya.

In the ninth century, the saint and philosopher Shankaracharya was born. Vedic philosophy had seen an erosion and gradual decline during the Buddhist period. As even the Buddhist teachings degenerated, there was a general confusion and disarray. Shankara reestablished Vedic thought throughout the country. It is because of his commentaries that many works including the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became available to scholars.

The period AD 500–1000 has been called the Dark Ages. In fact, as we can see, it was dark only in Europe. In other parts of the world, it was an enlightened and intensely

creative period.

(4) AD 1000–1700

The most famous mathematician of this age was, perhaps, Bhaskaracharya (≈ 1114). His major works are on arithmetic, solutions of equations and astronomy.

A series of events that were to profoundly change the subcontinent took place in the eleventh century with the attacks by hordes of Turks, Arabs and Afghans. By 1340 a Muslim empire was established which embraced most of the subcontinent. The coming together of Indian culture and thought with Arabic and Persian culture, brought by the Moghuls, on the soil of India greatly enriched her art, science, administration and law.

The cultural fusion was truly remarkable. The Muslims carried Indian science, especially mathematics and astronomy, to North Africa and Europe. In India, the Muslims introduced their own style into architecture. The Taj Mahal, one of the wonders of the world, was built during 1632–1653. A monument in marble, it is a truly spectacular sight no matter which perspective one views it from. There is a rare perfection of balance and proportion which seems to produce an intense aesthetic thrill.

The period also gave rise to many mystics and philosophers who tried to harmonize aspects of Islam and Hinduism. These included Guru Nanak (1469–1539), the founder of the Sikh faith, as well as poet-saints like Kabir (1425–1505). There was also a 'bhakti movement' during this period with teachers such as:

Ramanuja	≈ 1017–1137
Nimbarka	1130–1200
Madhva	1197–1276

(Please turn over)

Namdev	1270–1350
Jnanesvar	1271–1296
Chandidas	1350–1430
Surdas	1478–1583
Vallabhacharya	1479–1530
Chaitanya	1485–1533
Mirabai	1498–1546
Tulasidas	1532–1623

One of the greatest Mughal emperors was Akbar. His liberal and catholic view of religion, art and science allowed all of these to flourish. He would often invite scholars of different faiths to his court and try to assimilate their points of view. In his court was one of the most famous musicians, Tansen (1506–1589). It is said that the power and purity of his voice was such that even animals would be charmed. Holroyde writes:

Tansen is the personification of the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim cultures....Abul Fazl, an historian of the court at the time, wrote of Tansen that he was the greatest singer to be born in the last 1000 years.⁶

Indian music has been profoundly influenced by his interpretation of the musical arrangements called *rāgas*. He systematized and placed his own distinctive stamp on many of them. By way of orientation, the period of Tansen corresponds roughly to the birth of the Baroque style of music in Europe. This style, which belongs to the period 1550–1750, is characterized by its highly embellished and ornate melodies and the use of fugue and counterpoint.

In South India, there was another style of music which flourished several centuries later among the trinity of saint-composers Tyagaraja, Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri.

This period ended with the supplanting of the Moghal emperor by the British Raj.

(5) *AD 1700 to the present*

During this period, there was a general decline in scientific and educational activity, as the British discouraged the development of these institutions. Nevertheless, we see extraordinary scholarly activity. There are too many names to mention here, so I will refer to a few

In mathematics, the most colourful figure of this period is Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887–1920). The story of how he progressed from solving problems in a book meant for college students to doing research of a fundamental and far-reaching nature, on par with or even surpassing the best mathematicians of the day has captured the imagination of several generations of scientists around the world. In 1987, universities around the world observed the centennial of his birth with conferences and seminars. Several large volumes of the proceedings and related material have been published. This fascinating story can be found in Kanigel's recent book, *The Man Who Knew Infinity*.

A less colourful personality, but who no less has profoundly influenced mathematics is Harish Chandra (1923–1983). After receiving his Master's degree in physics from the University of Allahabad, he continued his studies in Bangalore and Bombay, but soon transferred to Cambridge University to complete his doctorate under P.A.M. Dirac. His work brought him closer and closer to mathematics, and over a period of several decades as Professor at the prestigious Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, he singlehandedly created and developed the theory of infinite dimensional representations of semisimple Lie (named after Sophus Lie and pronounced Lee) groups. His scientific publications constitute more

6. *Indian Music*, p. 89.

than 2200 pages and is a treasure for mathematicians and physicists alike.

A scientist who as a child was inspired by the legend of Ramanujan was Subrahmaniam Chandrasekhar (1910–). He saw how Ramanujan had sprung from the dust of India, as it were, and earned for himself a distinguished place on the world stage of mathematics. Chandrasekhar himself has become a legendary figure for his many contributions to astrophysics and mathematics. His story begins at the age of nineteen when he boarded a ship to England where he was to begin his studies at Cambridge. During the voyage, Chandrasekhar wrote on a small piece of paper a calculation which was to profoundly affect the field he was yet to study. His calculation predicted the existence of black holes and was far ahead of his time. Eddington, the most distinguished astrophysicist of his time, publicly ridiculed the finding in a meeting of the Royal Society where Chandrasekhar presented his paper. It took several decades before the ideas were vindicated, and in 1983 Chandrasekhar was awarded the Nobel Prize. For more than 50 years he has been on the faculty of the University of Chicago. Chandrasekhar is known as an inspiring teacher. One of his students, Carl Sagan, describes a physics class:

There was an electricity in those discussion (approximately enough, as it was a course on electromagnetism that I was attending). I will never forget the excitement that Chandrasekhar exuded in discussing general relativity...

Chandrasekhar was not the only Nobel Laureate in his family. His uncle, C.V. Raman, the foremost Indian physicist of his time, was awarded the prize for his work in spectroscopy and the discovery of what is now called the Raman effect.

Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858–1937) was born in Bengal. He began his college studies at the University of Calcutta and went to the University of London in 1880 for graduate work in medicine. He soon moved to Physical Science at Cambridge University. On his return to India, Bose began to work on transmitting wireless signals. He succeeded in 1895, a full year before Marconi. At a meeting in the Calcutta town hall presided over by the lieutenant-governor of Bengal Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Bose sent electric signals from the lecture hall to a room 75 feet away where they tripped a relay which threw a heavy iron ball, fired a pistol and blew up a small mine. He was the first to demonstrate that plants have a certain kind of consciousness. They respond to music, light and perhaps even thoughts.⁷

Bose united in himself a command of physics, physiology and psychology. In 1900, he was sent by the Government of India to present a paper entitled, 'On the similarity of responses in inorganic and living matter', at the International Congress of Physics in Paris. In his Paris talk, Bose stressed the fundamental unity among the apparent diversity of Nature. 'It is difficult', he said, 'to draw a line and say that here the physical phenomenon ends and here the physiological begins.' The typical reaction to his results was astonishment. He found that such apparently lifeless matter as tin showed curves of electrical response closely resembling muscle response. He found that if he used chloroform to 'tranquilize' a huge pine tree, he was able to uproot it and transplant it without the usually fatal shock of such operations.

Bose's research demonstrated that carrots and turnips emit an electric 'shudder'

7. This account and the other facts given below can be found in the book of Tompkins and Bird, pp. 84–103.

when they are pinched or stabbed. In 1927, his books, *Plant autography and their revelations*, documented this evidence. Bose was knighted for his contributions to science.

The French author and Nobel Laureate, Romain Rolland wrote, 'In the European scientist the steeling of the mind to the interpretation of nature has often been accompanied by a withering of the feeling for beauty. Darwin bitterly lamented the fact that his research in biology had completely atrophied his appreciation of poetry. With Bose it is otherwise.'

All his life Bose, who demonstrated his experiments before the Royal Society and other learned bodies, wanted the scientist to come out of his cubbyhole and be witness to the idea that all of nature pulsed with life.

Another great figure of this period to be mentioned is Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) He came from a family distinguished for its many accomplishments in the arts. Tagore studied English literature at University College, London. While quite young, he made a name for himself through writings in Bengali journals. In due course, he became known as a highly gifted poet. In 1913, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature for his work, *Gitanjali* (literally, 'an offering of songs'). In 1886, his father founded a rural retreat, about 200 kilometers from Calcutta, which he called 'Shantiniketan' (Abode of Peace). Rabindranath established an educational centre there in 1901, which attracted students from around the world. This institution sought to create an atmosphere of freedom in the midst of nature. Tagore wrote: 'Firstly, true education should be the life of discipline in the home of a teacher, away from pre-determined influence of a particular home and particular society, under the soothing quietness of an environment congenial to the building of a human

personality.'⁸ The student roll at Shantiniketan includes many luminaries, including the young Indira Gandhi.

There are more names to mention such as Vikram Sarabhai, Homi Bhaba, Har-Gobindh Khorana, and many other distinguished scientists, who are the architects of modern science and technology in the subcontinent.

We shall close with two major contributions in the fields of politics and religion. The independence movement in India began in the latter half of the last century. The highest principles of humanity such as respect for life and a high sense of justice and fairness, were taken out of philosophy books and brought on the field of actual struggle. The world had not before witnessed an independence movement whose basis is non-violence. Mahatma Gandhi made the apparently impossible possible, and rightly has Einstein said that generations to come will scarcely believe that such a person walked this earth. Here was a man who was deeply involved in a political movement and yet was able to practise and teach the highest spiritual values of life.

Gandhi's life and teachings have influenced many statesmen and leaders. Both Ben-Gurion of Israel and Mugabe of Zimbabwe displayed a picture of Gandhi in their offices. He was an inspiration to Martin Luther King. In a speech entitled, 'Non-violence and Racial Justice', given in 1957, he said:

The alternative to violence is non-violent resistance. This method was made famous in our generation by Mohandas K. Gandhi who used it to free India from the domination of the British

8. This is quoted in Swami Jyotirmayananda, pp. 605–06.

empire.

Later in a speech entitled, 'My Trip to the Land of Gandhi', given in 1959, after his visit to India, he said:

While the Montgomery boycott was going on, India's Gandhi was the guiding light of our technique of nonviolent social change... By all standards of measurement, he is one of the half-dozen greatest men in world history.

Gandhi also inspired Lech Walesa and Nelson Mandela, amongst others, and you will find references to Gandhi in their writings.

Another significant contribution is the idea of the harmony of faiths as taught by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Ramakrishna's message was that all that we see around is the manifestation of a Divine consciousness, and that the essential nature of the human being is divinity. The goal of human life is to manifest this divinity and there are innumerable ways to do this. His student Vivekananda saw all human activity as part of the spiritual quest. He taught that science, religion, service, education and all other fields of human endeavour are but means for the human mind to experience the fundamental unity of all existence. In his view, the aspiration to gain this experience is devotion.

Historian Arnold Toynbee writes that if there is to be any hope for the survival of humanity, it will be to realize the non-violence of Gandhi and the harmony of faiths of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. It is not an ecumenical concept nor the naive and incorrect statement that all religions are the same. It is the statement based on experience that the goal is the same though the paths be many. It does not stop there. It speaks not of toleration but of acceptance. There is no idea

of conversion, but one must try to assimilate that which is beneficent and inspiring in other faiths to enrich oneself and to better understand one's own faith. The movement began by Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is one of the most significant in modern India.

This, then, is a glimpse, in brief, of some of the major contributions to civilization made by the Indian subcontinent. I would like to conclude with some remarks of a general nature.

Many of our problems in this world are caused by historical identifications. We identify ourselves with this or that country or culture or religion. This inhibits our ability to see that every region and every culture has both positive and negative aspects. Neither are you nor am I responsible for the calamities or the glorious achievements of the past. We can accept neither the praise nor the blame. We can, however, appreciate the good and let it inspire us to do better, and recognize the bad and try to learn from the mistakes of the past. This is the cosmocentric attitude to history, to knowledge, and to life. We may be born in a culture or in a nation, but we have to outgrow that. As Nehru said, we want to be world-citizens. The time for nationalism, or for a Eurocentric or Asiatic or Afrocentric view is passing. In this global village, we need internationalism, a world view which recognizes the contribution of all cultures. □

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The Prabuddha Bharata building surrounded by snow

Sri Ramakrishna and the Spiritual Awakening of India

PROF. SAMARENDRA KRISHNA BOSE

Prof. Bose formerly a lecturer at the Vidyasagar College, Calcutta, highlights those aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings which underscore the necessity of an open mind, doubt, personal verification and comparison even in spiritual life.

Contemporary Society

The uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teaching can be justly evaluated and appreciated only when it is viewed in its proper historical perspective. One is reminded, in this connection, of Allardyce Nicoll's wise observation:

One of the greatest secrets of the study of literature is to regard individual works not in the light of present-day theories and of present-day beliefs, but in the spirit of the age in which they were produced.¹

What is true of the study of literature is, no doubt, equally true about the study of man—and then of such a man as Sri Ramakrishna, a Man among men!—*Narañcaiva narottamah*.

The age in which Sri Ramakrishna was born was an age that was just waking up from a long torpor produced by blind submission to religious authority and mechanical observance of rites and rituals. Or, in other words, it was the dawning of the Renaissance in our Land.

The term, Renaissance, means 're-birth', or, more precisely, 're-awakening'. In the Middle Ages, which extended roughly from

the eleventh to the seventeenth century, it was firmly believed that all knowledge was contained in the holy scriptures, such as the Vedas, and *Manu-Samhitā*, which were the sources of Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Religion) in its philosophical and applied aspects, and that the moral and ethical principles laid down there were axiomatic truths and admitted of no doubts or disputes. They were absolute and inviolable.

While the pre-Renaissance attitude is based on submission to authority, particularly to that of the scripture mentioned above, the Renaissance-attitude is founded upon observation and experimental verification. This attitude, popularly called the scientific attitude, is contained in the motto of the Royal Society of England: *Nullius in verba*, i.e. 'We take nobody's word for it'. Everywhere there was a re-awakening of the old, free, enquiring spirit of man. Hence the significant label—Renaissance.

Renaissance

The spirit of Renaissance was first perceptible in Italy towards the end of the fifteenth century. Its waves reached the shores of India in the nineteenth century. The impact of new ideas and outlook thus brought about struck at the root of the insular habits and prejudices of the Indian people. Under its influence began, on the one hand, extensive cultivation of Western literature, science and philosophy, and, on

1. *Theory of Drama* (Delhi: Doaba House Booksellers & Publishers, 1969).

the other, a genuine in depth study of the classical literature, and culture of ancient India. It was Bengal (then undivided) that took the lead in this, justifying Gokhale's famous observation: 'What Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow.'

The display of this scientific attitude of mind strikes one as something unique and unprecedented in the field of religion, for, usually, fanaticism and conservatism are associated with religion. The history of religion is a history of intolerance and dogmatism. This intolerance and bigotry has inevitably led to inhuman cruelty and persecution. The religious history of the world is tarnished by barbaric violence and torture. The Crusades of Christianity and

Sri Ramakrishna appeared at the critical period of the religious life of our nation. Nominally lettered though he was, his innate insight and uncommon power of assimilation enabled him to realize the spiritual significance of the cardinal principles of the Sanatana Dharma as also of other religions.

Jehads of Islam were, in their times, regarded as sacred (?) religious wars against non-believers. The enormity of cruelty perpetrated in such wars may be imagined by considering the fact that, in the Third Crusade alone the number of the slaughtered exceeded three lakhs! Besides these, there were such barbaric acts as the massacre of the Jews, forcible conversion to particular faiths, etc.

C.E.M. Joad, the eminent critic and journalist, has rightly observed:

This intolerance has been particularly common in religious matters. All over the Western world, for instance, people have killed and tortured other people for

not believing the same things as they did or for worshipping God in a different way.²

In a famous verse of the *Gītā* (4.7), Lord Sri Krishna declares that whenever there is decline and degeneration of religion, and the rise of impiety, He incarnates Himself to re-establish the glory of religion. This has proved to be historically true.

At the time of Sri Ramakrishna's advent there certainly prevailed a state of anarchy in the field of religion. Sanatana Dharma, the most liberal religion of the world, as then practised, appeared to have lost its ideal of spirituality and degenerated into a mere system of soulless rites and rituals. Tagore, grieved at heart by this state of affairs in the spiritual life of his nation, uttered a poignant prayer to the Almighty:

'Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the desert sand of dead habit;...

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country *awake*.'³

Unable to perceive the Sanatana Dharma hidden behind thousands of taboos, and meaningless and mechanical observance of rituals, the elite of Hindu society found nothing in their tradition to satisfy their spiritual aspirations. They were craving for a faith that would be in keeping with their spiritual ideas and ideals. This is the reason why so many enlightened men of the time, especially the Young Bengal, started embracing faiths that seemed to be based on a more profound and comprehensive philosophy, such as Brahmoism and Chris-

2. C.E.M. Joad, *The Story of Civilization* (London: Macmillan Co., 1958), p. 72.

3. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (London: Macmillan Co., 1945), verse 35.

tianity.

Vedic Self-renewal through Ramakrishna

Sri Ramakrishna appeared at the critical period of the religious life of our nation. Nominally lettered though he was, his innate insight and uncommon power of assimilation enabled him to realize the spiritual significance of the cardinal principles of the Sanatana Dharma as also of other religions. Thus he saw that rituals and observances in all the religions were preliminary aids to experience a common higher reality. So, on the authority of personal Knowledge he taught that religious differences—rituals, speculations, dogmas, etc.—, which gave rise to multiplicity of creeds and antagonism, should be transcended through spiritual illumination. Only then can the harmony underlying religions be discovered. In this way he brought into the field of religion the scientific attitude of mind suited to the times. To a world troubled by disbelief, antagonism and antitheses, he gave his message of synthesis: Religions are but so many ways of reaching God, who is one and the Absolute. He boldly declared, as none other had ever done, that it is utterly futile to argue regarding the paths since their destination is the same, viz. realization of the Supreme Being, the Ultimate Reality, mentioned in the various scriptures under different names.

Let us quote in this context Sri Ramakrishna's honeyed and highly significant words:

I find all men quarrelling in the name of religion. Hindus, Mussalmans, Brahmos, Shaktas, Vaishnavas, Shaivas,—all are quarrelling with one another. They never think that He who is called Krishna is also called Shiva, that He Himself is named Adyashakti—the Primal Energy, Jesus or Allah!—'One Rama having a thousand names!'...The same tank has

got many ghats. From one ghat, the Hindus are taking water in jars,—they say it is *jal*; the Mussalmans take water in leathern bags from another ghat, they call it *pani*; the Christians take water from a third ghat, they name it water.

Now if some one were to argue that this substance is not *jal* but *pani*, or not *pani* but *water*, or that it is not *water* but *jal*, it would be very ridiculous indeed.⁴

Polytheism, henotheism, non-dualism

Judged in the perspective of his period, this utterance may appear to many as revolutionary. However, the truth of the matter is that Sri Ramakrishna inaugurated the process of self-renewal of the Vedic religion; or the Sanatana Dharma. It will be relevant to point out here that, the popular belief that the doctrine of polytheism has been upheld in the Vedas is entirely erroneous. Max Muller, the erudite German scholar and Indologist, carefully studied the four Vedas in the original, and came to the conclusion that they teach neither polytheism nor monotheism. On the contrary, what they present has no parallel in the history of the world religions. He designated it as *henotheism*. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines henotheism thus: 'Belief in god without asserting that He is the only God.' This definition perfectly applies to the attitude of the Vedic sages. When the *ṛṣi* (sage) offers his prayer to a particular deity, he regards Him for the time being as the Supreme, and his devotion to Him then is wholehearted. Let us cite, by way of illustration, a few hymns from the *R̥g-Veda*:

Do thou, O Indra, give us hope of beauteous horses and of kine in thousands, O most wealthy One. (BK. I,

4. 'M' (Mahendra Nath Gupta), *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1922), vol. 2, p. 248.

hymn xxix, verse 1.)

Varuna, hear this call of mine: be gracious unto us this day. Longing for help I cried to thee.

Thou, O wise God, and Lord of all, thou art the King, of earth and heaven.

Hear, as thou goest on thy way. (Bk. I, hymn xxv, verses 19.20.)

O Agni, in our deeds of might may we obtain all precious things: The Gods are central in thee. (Bk. III, hymn x, verse 9.⁵)

Sri Ramakrishna's mode of worship of God completely conforms to this ideal of the Vedic sages. When he worshipped a particular deity, he did it with single-minded devotion, to the exclusion of all other deities. That God or Goddess became then the be-all and end-all of his life. His self-dedication during that period used to become so total as to culminate in self-identification with the object of worship.

Verification and Synthesis

Sri Ramakrishna's frame of mind, as already stated, was rational and analytical. In this sense he was a true product of the Renaissance. His rationalism prompted him to verify by experiment what had been gained by intuition. His whole spiritual life consisted of a succession of such experiments and explorations. He had realized by intuition that all religions lead by different paths to the same God. But his scientific attitude would not allow him to rest content until he had explored them all to verify his intuition.

Not only were the manifold modes of

worship prescribed by the Hindu scriptures practised one after another by him with deep and serious contemplation and complete dedication, but the exploration was also carried on in non-Hindu faiths, viz. Islam and Christianity. And it goes without saying that in these cases also the depth and sincerity of his quest was beyond question. The story of Sri Ramakrishna's practising Islam and Christianity, and attaining the highest mystical experiences possible through them is too well known to be repeated here. Suffice it to say that these experiences further confirmed the conclusion he had arrived at after practising to perfection all the principal Hindu spiritual disciplines: Different religions are but different paths that lead to the same Truth.

Sri Ramakrishna's noble and unique synthesis of diverse religions stirred the minds of the people. It touched the hearts of the elite and the illiterate alike. The simple Truth had never before been uttered so simply and yet so effectively. It was something unprecedented in the domain of religion! It carried with it the force of experience.

Let us quote him once again:

I had to practise all the religions once, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and I have walked the paths of the different denominations of Hinduism again, of Shakta, Vaishnava and Vedanta and other sects. And I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are travelling, only they are coming through diverse ways....Let me tell you one thing. One should follow various paths. One should practise each creed for a time...⁶

This is certainly the true scientific

5. R.T.H. Griffith, *The English Translation of the Vedas*, Part I: 'The Hymns of the Rig Veda' (Benaras: E.J. Lazarus & Co).

6. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1922 edition, vol. 2, p. 17. Cf. 1985 edition: vol. 1, pp. 128-9.

attitude—based on the principle of experimental verification. Sri Ramakrishna was thus in his application of the scientific method a true exponent of the Renaissance. The innate bent of his mind refused to accept anything solely on the basis of authority. He was far above that comfortable indolence which takes things for granted.

Doubt

J.B.S. Haldane, an eminent scientist of the modern age, has, in his essay, 'The Duty of Doubt', extolled the virtue of doubt. He says there: 'Modern Science began with great acts of doubt.' Then he adds that in the realm of religion and ethics this spirit of doubt is conspicuous by its absence. Dogmatism and conservatism reign supreme there. His elegant exposition deserves quotation:

'Modern Science began with great acts of doubt.'—J.B.S. Haldane

'Mother, send me someone to doubt my realizations.'—Sri Ramakrishna

'Even if millions of men called you God, if I had not proved it for myself, I would never do so.'—Vivekananda

Scientific men agree to suspend judgement when they do not know. On the whole, however, the opposite has been the case in the history of religion. When there was obvious room for different opinions, for example, as to the nature of Jesus' relationship with God, a highly complex theory was gradually built up and was accepted by most Christian Churches. The Unitarians regard themselves as more reasonable than the Trinitarians and have adopted a quite different theory. To my mind a far more rational view than either would be as follows: 'I believe in God and try to obey and imitate Jesus, but I do not know

exactly what is their relationship.' That is certainly the view of millions of Christians, but no important religious body dares to adopt it. They prefer to go on thinking along pre-scientific lines. And it is this pre-scientific outlook of religion, rather than anything specific in its tenets, which brings it into conflict with science.⁷

Sri Ramakrishna had nothing pre-scientific in his conception of God or religion. When Keshab Chandra Sen declared that he hated idolatry, the Master smiled and said quietly but emphatically:

God is with form and without form. Images and other symbols are just as valid as your attributes. And these attributes are not different from idolatry, but are merely hard and petrified forms of it.

For myself I have a burning desire to worship the Lord in as many ways as I can;...Those who believe that God is without form attain Him just as well as those who believe He has form. The only two essentials are faith and self-surrender.⁸

Sri Ramakrishna had been heard to pray, 'Mother, send me someone to doubt my realizations.'⁹ And his prayer was granted. Naren came, and from their very first meeting began examining Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and conduct, instead of simply believing, unlike others who had hitherto gathered round the Master. He went to the length of doubting Ramakrishna's divinity.

7. J.B.S. Haldane, 'The Duty of Doubt' in *Topics and Opinions*, First Series, A.F. Scott ed. (London: Macmillan Co., 1979).

8. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, edition 1970), p. 161.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

He had the courage to tell the Master: 'Even if millions of men called you God, if I had not proved it for myself, I would never do so.'¹⁰ The Master's face illuminated with satisfaction. He whole-heartedly approved this attitude of the young disciple, which was in conformity with his own, and smilingly said: 'Do not accept anything because I say so. Test everything for yourself.'¹¹

Ramakrishna's scientific attitude was further gratified when Naren once hid a coin under his bed in order to test the truth of the Master's assertion that he could not bear the touch of metal. No sooner had Ramakrishna sat on that usual bed of his than he sprang up with a burning sensation. With his keen intelligence and penetrating insight, Ramakrishna at once realized what had happened. He took it in good grace and, beaming with joy, advised Naren to thus verify everything before accepting it.

Similar was the Master's reaction in the case of Kaliprasad Chandra who came to him in the year 1884. Kaliprasad defiantly declared that he neither believed in God, nor in the Vedas, nor in any Scripture. The Master readily realized that this agnosticism and scepticism arose from a scientific attitude of mind which was eager to find truth by direct evidence rather than by taking things for granted. The Master quietly and confidently assured him that his doubts too, like those of Naren, would be removed in time and he would become a believer with all his heart. The Master's prediction proved true. Kaliprasad later became one of the Master's great apostles—Swami Abhedananda.

The Message of Awakened India

Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual path, it should be noted, led him not only to the

realization of pantheism but also to something beyond it, viz. monism, or, more correctly, non-dualism (Advaita). Vivekananda, with his psychological acumen, had understood as well as he could the true depth of Ramakrishna's attainments, and later said: 'Outwardly he was all Bhakta, but inwardly all Jnanin...I am the exact opposite.'¹² Ramakrishna never tired of preaching this final Truth to his disciples:

Kali is no other than what you call Brahman. Kali is the Primal Energy (Shakti). When inactive we call It Brahman, but when It functions in creation, preservation and destruction (of the universe), then we call It Shakti or Kali. Whom you call Brahman, the same I designate as Kali. Brahman and Kali are not different even as fire and its burning quality are not different. To think of fire necessarily means also to think of burning. To accept Kali means to accept Brahman, and to accept Brahman means to accept Kali. Brahman and his Power are not different. That I call Shakti or Kali.¹³

It was Sri Ramakrishna who for the first time realized and revealed that the three great systems of metaphysical thought—Dualism (Dvaita), Qualified Monism (Vishishtadvaita), and Absolute Monism, or Non-dualism (Advaita), are steps on the way to the supreme Truth or Ultimate Reality. He, by means of the numerous religious practices connected with the principal faiths, traversed them all one by one with utmost care and devotion, and ultimately reached the highest sphere of spirituality.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 234–5.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

13. Conversation of Sri Ramakrishna with Naren (Vivekananda) published in *Vedanta Kesari*, November 1916 issue, p. 195.

Thus Sri Ramakrishna made the people aware of the true significance of Sanatana Dharma, and thereby brought about the spiritual regeneration of India. Vivekananda, as desired by his Master, conveyed the message of Awakened India (Prabuddha Bharata) to the world when he proclaimed at the World Parliament of Religions:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.

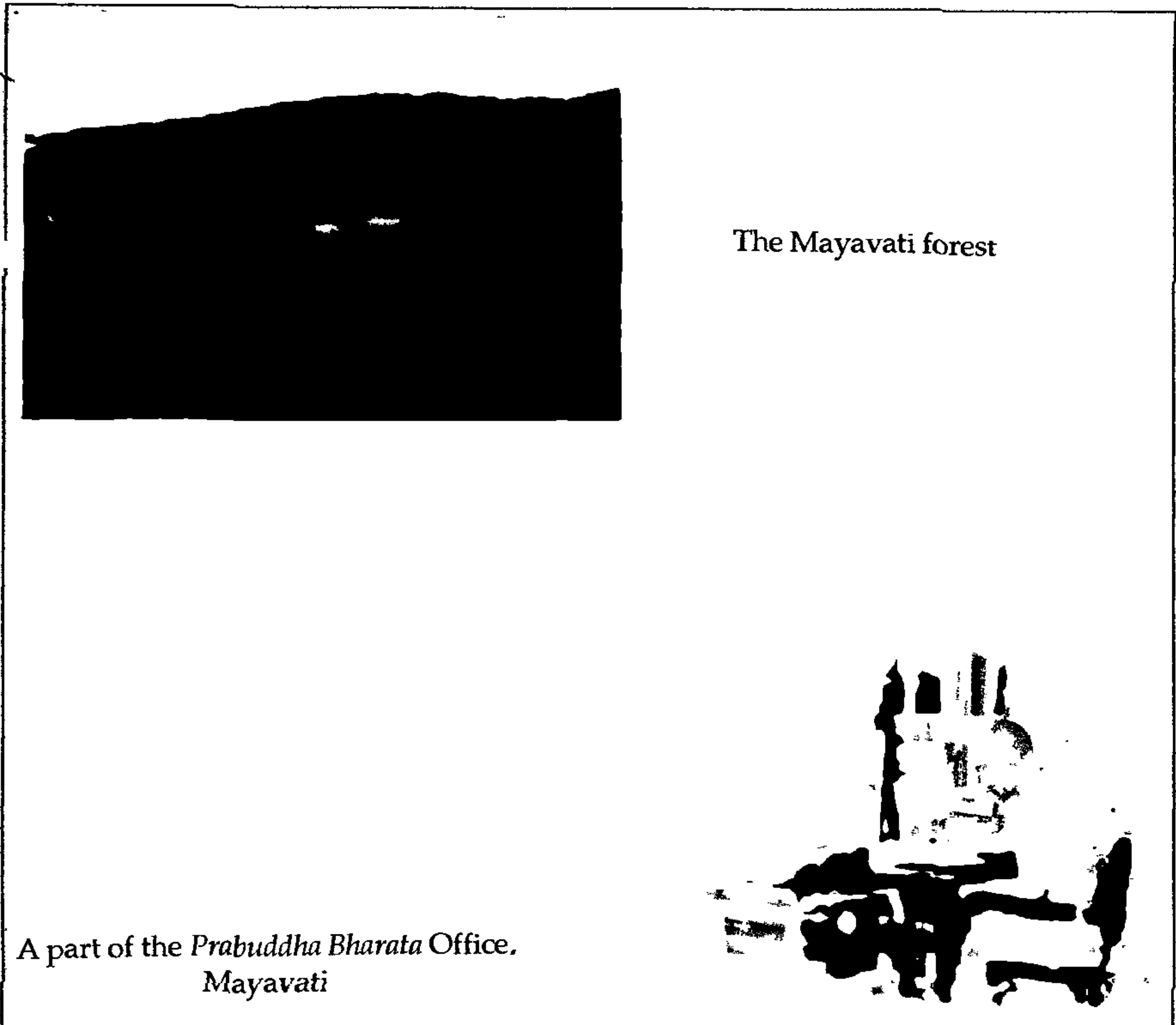
His dynamic speeches won the hearts of most of his hearers, among whom were the representatives of all the major religions of

the world.

It will be relevant to quote Sri Aurobindo's observation in this context:

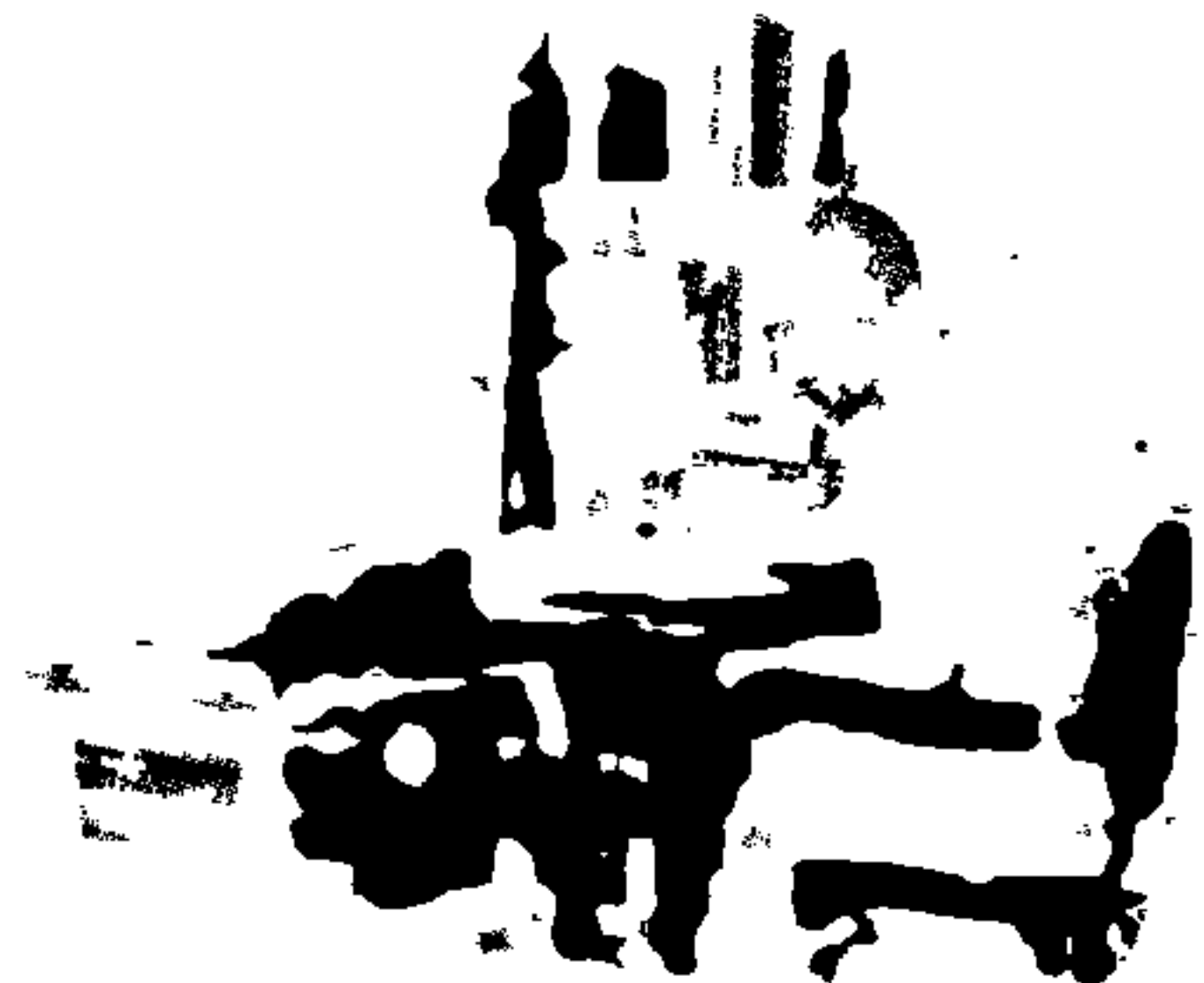
The going forth of Vivekananda marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it was the first visible sign to the world that India was *awake* not only to survive but to conquer.¹⁴ □

14. Sri Aurobindo, *The Complete Works of* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), vol. 2, p. 37.



The Mayavati forest

A part of the *Prabuddha Bharata* Office,
Mayavati



Awakened India: Vivekananda's Vision

SWAMI ANANYANANDA

Though he took birth and lived at a time when his motherland was under subjection, Vivekananda had a vision—not a dream—of a new and Awakened India seated majestically as the queen of all nations. He therefore never failed to inspire his countrymen to plunge into the task of nation-rebuilding.

In this article, Swami Ananyananda, President, Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, tries to recapture that vision, the role India will be required to play to bring fresh life and vigour to the now decadent societies, and the part every Indian has to play in this worldwide transformation.

Swami Vivekananda prophesied in his famous reply to the address of welcome accorded to him at Ramnad (now Ramanathapuram), on his triumphant return to his motherland, after unceasing work in the spread of Vedanta for nearly three and a half years in the West, following his striking appearance at the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893, that India has awakened, in these words:

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work. India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming to us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining in volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours,

from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet

Prophetic are these words. It is a happy coincidence that *Prabuddha Bharata*, started by this great 'patriot monk of India' in 1896, to carry the message of an 'Awakened India' to her own people and to the world, enters its hundredth year this month. It was on 25 January 1897 that the Swami uttered those prophetic words quoted above in extenso. Again, it was on 26 January 1950 that India became a sovereign democratic republic and gave herself a constitution which secures for all her children 'justice—social, economic, and political; liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship; equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and unity of the nation.' On the twenty-sixth of this month, we will be celebrating the forty-sixth Republic Day with great éclat all over the country. Vivekananda's spirit, which is still living and vibrant, will be witnessing the grand celebration from the spiritual world, from where he is still inspiring young men and women with India's national ideals of renunciation and service.

Again, it is in this month (12 January) that India celebrates the birth anniversary of her immortal son, Swami Vivekananda. Recognizing the relevance of his message to today's youth, the Government of India declared in 1985 that 12 January every year be observed as the 'National Youth Day'. Accordingly this is being celebrated with due solemnity all over the country, with meetings and rallies, in many educational institutions and private organizations, specially in those run by the Ramakrishna Mission. A communication issued on that occasion by the Government of India declared: 'It was felt that the philosophy of Swamiji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration to the Indian youth.'

Paying his tribute to Swamiji, the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had said, nearly fifty years back:

I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him, and I think that it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, and they would learn much from them...If you read Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, the curious thing you will find is that they are not old....He gave us something which brings us, if I may use the word, a certain pride in our inheritance....What Swamiji has written and said is of interest and must interest and is likely to influence us for a long time to come....Directly or indirectly, he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of spirit and fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

Let our young men and women pay heed to the sage advice of this great leader

On this blessed occasion, it is proper to invoke the spiritual presence of Swami Vivekananda, who took the world by storm by his inspiring utterances and exhortations. The wisdom, the spirit, the fire that raged in his seraphic personality can kindle the dormant fire in the youth of India, guiding them to rebuild India in tune with her hoary heritage and undying tradition and genius.

The Swami unfolded his plan of reconstruction of India in a series of lectures delivered in India on his return from the West in 1897. All of them have been collected and published in a book entitled *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*. They find a place also in the third volume of *The Com-*

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda was the nation's response to the challenge India faced in the middle of the last century.

plete Works of Swami Vivekananda. Of them, his Madras lectures are justly famous, for they give out practically all his ideas for the regeneration of India according to her own genius. It may not be out of place if the titles of his Madras lectures are enumerated here: 'My Plan of Campaign', 'Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life', 'The Sages of India', 'The Work Before Us', and 'The Future of India'. In these and other lectures, Swamiji had dealt with the various problems confronting India of his time—those problems persist even today—in social, economic, educational, and other areas. Besides, he had tirelessly repeated that it is necessary to cultivate moral and spiritual values in our lives, and that 'religion is the backbone of India'.

Among the successive saints and patriots of India, who have left behind for us a legacy rich in spiritual values and ideas on right living, the personality of Swami Vivekananda stands out prominently. For the first time, he broke with the tradition of the recluse and carried the message of the Vedanta philosophy, the message of India, to the world outside and placed India, his dear motherland, on the map of the world.

In the context of the rapid strides that free India is taking to build up a new social and economic order, it will be of immense value to us if we have a glimpse of his mighty personality, of his vision of Awakened India, and of the role she has to play among the nations of the world; and of how, according to him, India is to reconstruct herself.

This new India of today and Swami Vivekananda are inseparably bound up together. We cannot think of the one without thinking of the other. For his contributions have been diverse and have touched almost all the aspects of national resurgence—political, social, educational, cultural and spiritual. Almost every institution born during this century bears the impress of his forceful message, and every movement has drawn inspiration from this patriot monk of modern India. 'Directly or indirectly, he has powerfully influenced the India of today.'

Swami Vivekananda, first and foremost, was a realized soul, who had himself experienced the highest truths of the Vedanta and touched the very core of Reality. He had realized the spiritual oneness of all existence, which is Truth, Goodness and Beauty. This he had achieved at the feet of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, who appeared on the Indian scene as the consummation of her age-old spiritual ideals and aspirations. The advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami

Vivekananda was the nation's response to the challenge India faced in the middle of the last century. For that was when the national urge to re-establish itself and to set its moorings properly was beginning to assert. The spiritual conscience of the nation, which had become anaesthetized, as it were, owing to a sort of paralyzing materialistic outlook and scepticism, was gradually coming to itself. Earnest attempts were being made to rediscover and restore in the heart of the nation the eternal spiritual and moral values for which it had always stood.

The experience of the One Religion amidst many religiosities and the perception of Divinity in humanity, which Sri Ramakrishna had realized and taught, the Swami treasured and, having realized their import himself, set out to preach them in India and outside India. By the one, he taught the universal aspect of Religion and its lofty principle of 'Unity in Variety'; and by the other, he endeavoured to lift humanity to its divine consciousness. This was the keynote of his life and mission.

His personality, however, was not confined to the sphere of the spirit alone. He was a man of the people. A patriot of the first magnitude, his spirit would never rest until India reoccupied her rightful place in the world. He was second to none in his love for his motherland, which was to him, Sister Nivedita tell us, 'the queen of his adoration'.

Like some delicately poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these

faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness.

For the first time in that formative period, he raised his powerful voice 'in defence of India and her people'. Wherever he went he expounded the grand universal principles of Vedanta, and brought India, her people, and her thought before the world more prominently than ever before. India rediscovered herself once again. A certain pride in her own inheritance was instilled in her heart thenceforward, and it marked the new beginning of India's influence on Western nations. Since then the process has gone on, paving the way for a respectful understanding of her spiritual, moral, and cultural values and ideals.

What was Swami Vivekananda's plan of work for the regeneration of India?

First of all, he kindled in us a burning love for India and her people, and taught us to be proud of our glorious heritage. He infused in us a sense of living faith in India's future and a spirit of self-confidence and self-respect. He wanted us to believe that India had not only a great past, but she was destined to play a greater and brighter role in the future history of mankind. Although he was firmly rooted in the past, drawing all his inspiration from the ancient wisdom of our sages, he was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and 'was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present'.

With his clear vision, freed from all obstructive predispositions and born of true understanding, it was possible for the Swami to view India in her true perspective. Of that vision, he says:

I stand in awe before the unbroken procession of scores of shining centuries,

with here and there a dim link in the chain, only to flare up with added brilliance in the next, and then she is walking with her own majestic steps—my motherland—to fulfil her glorious destiny, which no power on earth or in heaven can check—the regeneration of man the brute into man the God.

In all that he said and did, the Swami was fully conscious of the significant part he was playing, for he says:

I am one of the proudest men ever born, but let me tell you frankly, it is not for myself, but on account of my ancestry. The more I have studied the past, the more I have looked back, more and more had this pride come to me, and it has given me the strength and courage of conviction, raised me from the dust of the earth, and set me working out that plan laid out by those great ancestors of ours.

The Swami's inspiring call roused the nation from a deep slumber of self-forgetfulness, and made her stand on her feet once again with fresh vigour and selfconscious enthusiasm. He reminds us:

From time immemorial, India has been the mine of precious ideas to human society; giving birth to high ideas herself, she has freely distributed them broadcast over the whole world.... This is the land from whence, like the tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world; and this is the land from whence once more such ideas must proceed in order to bring life and vigour into the decaying races of mankind.

As a true reformer, Swami Vivekananda believed in root and branch reform, and not in patchy reform. He was aware in detail of

the social and economic ills that were eating into the very vitals of the nation, but he went to the root of the problems. Unsparingly he talked our weaknesses and failings, pointing out, like a physician diagnosing the disease of a patient after feeling his pulse, that the decadence of our country was due to various reasons, such as (1) not taking inspiration from the past and following its direction, (2) developing a narrow and isolationistic outlook with regard to other countries, (3) perversion of the life-current of our national existence—religion and spirituality, (4) tyranny of the masses by the so-called higher castes, and (5) neglect of our women.

India rediscovered herself once again. A certain pride in her own inheritance was instilled in her heart thenceforward, and it marked the new beginning of India's influence on Western nations.

Years before Swami Vivekananda burst upon our society as a patriot and a reformer with his message of practical Vedanta, he had walked the length and breadth of India as an unknown wandering monk. During that period, he had come into intimate contact with the 'real India' and seen the grinding poverty of her teeming millions. On the one hand, he saw rank materialism and, on the other, arrant superstition ruling the minds of the people. An utter absence of practical appraisal of the precious inheritance from the past was noticeable all round. The land of the *ṛsis* was fast going to be overwhelmed by godless and irreligious people. The nation was losing faith in itself. The so-called reformation movements that were in the field were either un-national or anti-national, leading the country away from her tradition and genius. The heart of the nation looked as if it was exhausted and could supply no more energy to the coming generations. The Swami's heart bled at what

he saw.

Despite what he saw during that unhealthy interregnum of our country's career, the Swami knew, because of his firm faith in the destiny of India, that that was but a passing phase in her colourful history. Even during his own time, he had already perceived the undercurrents of national resurgence and the signs of an 'Awakened India' For he charges the nation saying,

Up, up, the long night is passing, the day is approaching, the wave has risen, nothing will be able to resist its tidal fury. Believe, believe, the decree has gone forth, the fiat of the Lord has gone forth—India must rise, the masses and the poor are to be made happy. Rejoice! The flood of spirituality has risen. I see it rolling over the land resistless, boundless, all-absorbing....Behold, the sleeper is awakening!

Having diagnosed the maladies that were making the country weak and sterile, the Swami set himself to the task of reconstructing India on national lines. As the very first step in this direction, he wanted to deluge the land with spiritual ideals:

The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our scriptures, in our Puranas, must be brought out from the books...and scattered all over the land....After preaching spiritual knowledge, along with it will come that secular knowledge and every other knowledge that you want; but if you attempt to get the secular knowledge without religion, I tell you plainly, vain is your attempt in India, it will never have a hold on the people.

To carry on this work, his plan was that,

a hundred thousand young men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social rising-up—the gospel of equality.

Although Swami Vivekananda's attention was primarily focussed on the awakening of a new India, he never lost sight of the great mission she had to fulfil in the wide world. He was never tired of narrating to his countrymen how, in the past, India had time and again flooded the different countries of the world with her life-giving waters of spirituality. And he saw before his eyes the new India, freed from all narrowness of vision, rising once again on a similar mission:

We are destined by the Lord to do great things in India. Have faith. We will do—we the poor and the despised who really feel....Furthermore, understand that India is still living, because she has her own quota yet to give to the general store of the world's civilization....For a complete civilization the world is waiting, waiting for the treasure to come out of India, waiting for the marvellous spiritual inheritance of the race which, through decades of degeneration and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast....Therefore we must go out, exchange our spirituality for anything they have to give us; for the marvels of the regions of the spirit, we will exchange the marvels of the regions of matter.

While India thus went out with her gems of spirituality, she was to bring back in exchange the marvels of science and technology for the material betterment of her

people. She was to sit at the feet of the western nations to learn their system of social organization, governance, etc. connected with the social, economic and political life of the nation. In fact, for the material prosperity of the nation, the Swami had deeply felt the need for grafting on the Indian soil the western concepts of socio-economic development. He wanted, no doubt, all the gifts that the West could give, but not at the cost or in the place of our national heritage. Says he: 'Now, this is to be brought about slowly, and by only insisting on our own religion and giving liberty to society. Can you make a European society with India's religion? I believe it is possible and must be.'

The Swami urged his countrymen to come out of their narrow shells of isolation and compare notes with other nations of the world:

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness, the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.

India's past history itself bears ample witness to this phenomenon.

The other thing that Swami Vivekananda put his finger on was the general ignorance about the pristine religion of the Upanishads. The religious life of the country had drifted away from the main current; and its pure waters, by a gradual process of degradation, were caught up in little, stinking mud puddles of weakening mysticisms, and debasing and primitive superstitions. Religion was getting confined to the kitchen, and the cooking-pot was replacing the deity! In order to liberate that pure religion from

the incrustations that had grown over it, the Swami's bold method was to bring out the truths of the Upanishads and make them accessible to one and all, irrespective of caste, creed, or sex:

The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand....Every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion....The most wonderful truths confined in the Upanishads, in our Scriptures, in our Puranas—must be brought out from the books, brought out from the monasteries, brought out from the forests, brought out 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...National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces.

Although Swami Vivekananda's attention was primarily focussed on the awakening of a new India, he never lost sight of the great mission she had to fulfil in the wide world.

In the social sphere, the most important item, however, in Swami Vivekananda's programme for the regeneration of India was the uplift of her masses and women. In this regard, he sums up our national problem in two words, 'the women and the people'. 'In India, there are two great evils,' he says, 'trampling on the women and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.' 'Can you better the condition of your women?' he asks, 'then there will be hope for your well-being.' He could not bear even a remote suggestion of the superiority of man over woman. He would come down like a thunderbolt upon anyone who suggested

that women could not solve their own problems, saying, 'Are you the Lord God that you should rule over every widow and every woman? Hands off! They will solve their own problems.'

What stirred the Swami's heart to its depths was the condition of the poor and the uncared for masses of India. He knew that they were the backbone of the nation, and that unless they were raised, there was no hope of India rising once again. It was this intense feeling for his suffering brethren that drove him from place to place in search of some help and succour for them. He says: 'I travelled twelve years all over India, finding no way to work for my countrymen, and that is why I went to America....Who cared about this Parliament of Religions? Here was my own flesh and blood sinking every day, and who cared for them? This was my first step.' 'I love my God, my religion, my country, above all—myself, a poor beggar—I love the poor, the ignorant, and the downtrodden. I feel for them.' In sheer agony he asks:

Who feels there for the two hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance? Where is the way out? Who feels for them? They cannot find light or education. Who will bring the light to them—who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these people be your God—think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly—the Lord will show you the way. Him I call a *Mahātman* whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *Durātman*. Let us unite our wills in continued prayer for their good....My heart is too full to express my feeling; you know it, you can imagine it. So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.

Swami Vivekananda's recipe for the amelioration of the condition of our masses was to give them secular education and to prepare them to work for a better standard of life. But he believed that even this secular education should be imparted only through religion, for it was only through religion that even ideas of political or social advancement could take root in India. He exhorted his people to go forward and 'complete the practical realization of the scheme of human progress that has been laid out in the most perfect order by our ancestors. I only ask you to work to realize more and more the Vedantic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature.' 'These conceptions of the Vedanta must come out,' says the Swami,

must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with students that are studying....If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks that he is the Spirit, he will be a better student....and so on....And that is what we want, no privilege for any one, equal chances for all; let every one be taught that the divine is within, and every one will work out his own salvation.

This was Swami Vivekananda's practical

Vedanta as applied to his country, the effects of which have not escaped the attention of discerning persons, notwithstanding the social turmoils, As Sri Aurobindo says:

Vivekananda was a soul of puissance, if ever there was one, a lion among men....We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India, and we say, 'Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his motherland and in the souls of her children.'

Now it is for us to take up the scheme he has formulated and work on for the future glory of India, which, he believed, would be far greater and more glorious than her past.

In conclusion, let us sing with this illustrious son of our motherland the song of 'Awakened India':

...let new India arise...out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains. □

There can be no perfection for people who have proclivity for multiplicity, tread for ever the path of duality, and talk of plurality. Hence they are traditionally held to be pitiable.

They alone will be possessed of unsurpassable knowledge in this world, who will be firm in their conviction with regard to That which is birthless and uniform. But the ordinary man cannot grasp That (Reality).

—Mandukya Upaniṣad, IV.94-5.

Social and Political Impact of Swami Vivekananda

J.M. KAUL

It is difficult to assess the influence of Swamiji on the different aspects of human existence and evolution. As he himself remarked, 'Only a Vivekananda can understand what this Vivekananda has done.' It is indeed significant that today, nearly a century after these words were first pronounced, we are witnessing the tremendous global transformation he had predicted.

Mr. Kaul, of Calcutta, studies the social and political impact of the phenomenon called 'Vivekananda' as it unfurls and reveals itself with the passage of time.

Shortly before his mahasamadhi Sri Ramakrishna had asked Narendra what he wanted. 'Narendra begged for samadhi so that he might forget the world for three or four days at a time. "You are a fool," the Master rebuked him, "There is state even higher than that."'¹ Sri Ramakrishna had also prophesied that Narendra would teach people both at home and abroad.

In these statements of Sri Ramakrishna there is a significance much deeper than is evident on the surface. Not to escape from the world but to try to move it in a new direction, not to get away from his fellow countrymen but to try to build the nation. This was the role assigned to him by his Master. As Sister Nivedita put it many years later, Swami Vivekananda had a two-fold mission, 'nation-building' and 'world-moving'.

The prevailing conception had been that the sannayasi was one who withdrew from the world, retired into a forest or a cave and spent his days in meditation. This followed, again, from a superficial and partial under-

standing of the concept propounded in the scriptures that the world is an illusion, maya. The world is indeed unreal in the sense that it is not what it seems, but not in the sense that it is not.

Sri Ramakrishna has beautifully explained the seeming paradox: 'God includes the universe and its living beings. Suppose you have separated the shell, flesh and seeds of a *bel*-fruit and someone asks you the weight of the fruit. Will you leave aside the shell and the seeds, and weigh only the flesh? Not at all. To know the real weight of the fruit, you must weigh the whole of it—the shell, the flesh and the seeds...The phenomenal world belongs to that very Reality to which the Absolute belongs; again the absolute belongs to that very reality to which the phenomenal world belongs....'²

After his Master had left the world, Narendra proceeded to fulfil the mission assigned to him by Sri Ramakrishna. He had understood that there were many facets to the role that he had to play. When departing, Sri Ramakrishna, referring to the young disciples who had gathered round him, had told Narendra: 'I leave these young men in

1. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985, 8th edition), p. 70.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 327–8.

your charge. See that they develop their spirituality and do not return home.' He had also given the ochre cloth of the sannyasi to some of them, including Girish. Thus the Master had himself laid the foundation of the future Ramakrishna Order of monks, and handed Narendra the responsibility of giving it shape and structure, framing its rules and regulations, and ensuring that it carried on that task of spreading the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna in the years to come. It

It is in this way that Swamiji shattered the hegemony so assiduously established by the British and paved the way for the development of the struggle for Indian independence. His mission of nation-building was on the way to fulfilment.

is an eloquent commentary on the genius and will-power of Swami Vivekananda that he was able to fulfil this task and set the Order on a course which succeeding generations of monks have followed with such remarkable success.

But there were also other tasks allotted to him by his Master, and in the remaining years of his life he proceeded to carry them out.



Towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the country was passing through a phase of demoralization. The revolt against foreign rule that had broken out in 1857 had been crushed. It had only resulted in the rule of the East India Company being replaced by the direct rule of the British Crown. Viceroys appointed by the British government in London firmly ruled the country with the help of the Civil Service. Percival Spear, in his *History of India* characterizes the period

from the Company's proclamation of the end of the revolt in 1858 to the partition of Bengal in 1905 as the 'hey-day of British rule in India.' He then goes on to make a significant observation: 'The British not only felt themselves to be superior but they found their superiority acknowledged by the old traditionalists and by the new westernised classes.'³

Political analysts such as Gramsci have pointed out that a despotic ruling class is able to maintain its rule over a country not merely by overt use of force. It is only when the rulers are able to establish their hegemony over the people, when their ideas and their culture begin to exercise a dominant influence over the minds of their subjects that their control can be said to be firmly established.

This was precisely the situation that prevailed in this period. The military might and technical superiority of the British had overawed the masses. Christian missionaries were carrying on propaganda about Indians being barbarous idol worshippers, about the many irrational superstitious beliefs of the natives. British administrators continuously tried to justify their rule over India as part of their mission to civilize a backward country. And unfortunately many even among the educated people were beginning to echo these sentiments.

Meanwhile a class of Indian intellectuals who had come into contact with western science and culture had begun to develop following the resolution adopted by the Government—at the instance of Lord William Bentick and reinforced by his Law Member, Thomas Babington Macaulay. The resolution adopted in 1935 declared that,

3. Percival Spear: *The History of India*, vol. 2. p. 153.

'the great objects of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European Literature and Science', and that, 'available funds should be henceforth employed in imparting to the Native population knowledge of English literature and science through the medium of the English language.' Schools and colleges for this purpose were accordingly set up. English replaced Persian as the official state language and the medium of the higher courts of law.⁴

This gave rise to a class of English educated people who viewed Indian society with the eyes of the western intelligentsia, feeling ashamed of many of the rituals and practices of the Hindu society. Unable to defend the worship of numerous gods and goddesses, they felt that the criticism of the Christian missionaries was not baseless. One group broke away from Hindu society and established the Brahma sect, believing in one formless God and condemning idol worship. Some others were converted to Christianity. As a whole they were on the defensive, and appeared convinced that the culture and values of the British rulers were superior. In other words, the cultural and ideological hegemony of the British had largely been established over India in this period.

No struggle for independence could obviously gather strength unless the mind-set of the people changed, their self-confidence was restored, and a sense of pride in their cultural and ideological heritage was instilled in them.

The historical contribution of Swami Vivekananda lay in the fact that he was able to restore this self-confidence and make the people aware of the richness of Indian thought in ancient times. He was also able

to interpret the ancient scriptures the real content of which had lain hidden and been obscured, and, in some cases, distorted by so-called pundits and priests. The shining glory of the Vedanta philosophy was presented to the people in simple terms for the first time in the course of his many lectures and writings in India and abroad.

It is in this way that he shattered the hegemony so assiduously established by the British and paved the way for the development of the struggle for Indian Independence. His mission of nation-building was on the way to fulfilment.

Apart from creating the ideological basis for the rise of nationalism, Swami Vivekananda directly provided inspiration to freedom fighters in India. Referring to his contribution in this sphere a well-known historian says:

This great-hearted sannyasi remains to so many in India the harbinger of a new hope, the proud apostle of Indian freedom as the pre-condition of fulfilment. It was this man who actively inspired a whole host of national revolutionaries in the swadeshi era and afterwards, whose influence was a powerful, pervasive factor in the making, let us say, of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (born in 1897) and so many other freedom fighters with diverse ideological affiliations. No wonder the Sedition (Rowlatt) Committee Report (1918) affirmed that Vivekananda had an important influence on those who created a big, pro-freedom tumult in the first decade of this century. That influence continued and pervades whatever is forward looking in the national scene even today.⁵

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

5. Hiren Mukherji, *Vivekananda and Indian Freedom*, pp. 15-16.

One of India's most respected old-time revolutionaries, Hemachandra Ghosh, has put on record how deeply inspired he was by the words of Swami Vivekananda when he met him as a young man. He recalls in particular the parting exhortation of Swamiji:

The Great Master gave us a four-fold programme of work: going among the masses, eradication of don't-touchism, opening of gymnasiums and libraries...The patriot-saint blessed me with a gentle look and said: 'Man-making is my mission of life. Hemachandra, you try with your comrades to translate this mission of mine into action and reality. Read Bankimchandra and emulate his Deshabhakti and Sanatana Dharma. Your duty should be—service to the Motherland. India should be freed politically first.'⁶

Although the Swami took a deliberate decision to personally abjure direct political activity, he was fully aware of the political currents that were sweeping across the world and particularly across Europe and America, and tried to study them to see if they had any relevance to India. Swami Vivekananda had an intimate knowledge of such movements as Anarchism, Socialism and Communism from their literature as well as from personal contacts. He met Peter Kropotkin at the Paris International Exhibition (1900); and Plekhanoff's Party was then very active in England. These movements were then in their infancy, and even their protagonists had no great hope for the causes they advocated. It was remarkable, therefore, for such an orientalist as Swami Vivekananda to prophesy at that distant date that 'socialism of some form was com-

ing on the boards.'⁷

That the Swami was not indifferent to politics is also confirmed by the statement made by Sister Christine who reported that Swami Vivekananda had once said:

What does Nivedita know of Indian conditions and politics? I have done more politics in my life than she. I had the idea of forming a combination of Indian princes for the overthrow of the foreign yoke. For that reason I have tramped all over the country from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. For that reason I made friends with the gun-maker, Sri Hiram Maxim. But I got no response from the country.⁸

One also needs to note that some of those who were close to him decided to play an active role in the social and political movements of the period. Obviously, they drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Sister Nivedita stands out amongst them. She was so deeply convinced about the need for actively participating in the national movement that she severed her formal ties with the Ramakrishna Math, so that her activities may not be a source of embarrassment to that organization. But she never thought for a moment that she was being disloyal to her guru: She had sensed the anguish and agony the Swami felt at the continuing subjugation of India by a foreign power. She too realized, as he did, that without political freedom the poverty and misery of the masses would not end.

Mr. Nevinson, a western admirer, said of her that it was 'as a soldier in the war of

6. *Swami Vivekananda: Mahabiplavi Hemachandra Ghosher Dristite*, p. 84.

7. *Caste, Culture and Socialism, Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), Preface.

8. Dr. Bhupendranath Datta, *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet*, Foreword, p. xxii.

liberation that I remember her—a soldier with a flaming sword.⁹ and yet Nivedita never forgot in all her campaigns and the numerous articles and books she wrote that India could not go forward by disowning her past. The past had to be rediscovered and reinterpreted so that Indians could be proud of their heritage, and discern the underlying unity in the diversity of the country.

Sister Nivedita was a friend, philosopher and guide to almost all the luminaries of India at that time, beginning from the scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose to the revolutionary—and later rishi—Aurobindo Ghosh. She had imbibed Vivekananda's message of service to God through service to humanity, and dedicated her life to the uplift of the people. The sphere of education, particularly women's education, was of course the field her guru had especially chosen for her, and her contributions in this field are particularly invaluable.

It is significant also that Swami Vivekananda's brothers, Mahendranath and Bhupendranath, both in their own way devoted their lives to the social and political movements of the day. Although Mahendra Nath was in close touch with his elder brother and the other monks who had taken up their residence at the Baranagar Math, and visited them often, he chose the life of a householder rather than that of a sannyasi. He went to London as wished by Swamiji, and at first thought of taking a degree in law. But Swamiji advised him to study electrical engineering, and wrote to Sara Bull with whom Mahendranath was in touch: 'I do not like anyone whom I love to become a lawyer. What my nation wants is pluck and scientific genius.' On another occasion he

wrote to her: 'I want him (Mahendranath) to be daring, bold and struggle to cut a new path for himself and his nation.'¹⁰

This is precisely what Mahendranath did, engaging himself in serious research on a wide variety of subjects at the British Museum in London. Among his interests were philosophy, literature, history, politics and, of course, science. On reading his book, *Energy*, Romain Rolland wrote to him: 'I send my appreciation of your striking study and interpretation of the great problem of energy.' Mahendranath published more than 87 books in English and Bengali, and

The past had to be rediscovered and reinterpreted so that Indians could be proud of their heritage, and discern the underlying unity in the diversity of the country.

thus contributed to the development of the arts and sciences of India. He was truly a renaissance man and at the same time, as Brahmanandaji Maharaj said, 'More than a monk in his householder's attire.'¹¹

Swamiji's youngest brother, Bhupendranath Dutta, charted a somewhat different course for himself, but it is clear that he too was deeply influenced by his eldest brother. He imbibed from him the burning patriotism and the firm determination to free the country from the yoke of foreign rule. He joined the revolutionary group, Anushilan Samiti, and took active part in the *Yugantar*. In the inspired articles Bhupendranath wrote week after week as the editor, he exhorted his countrymen to rise against the British rulers. This led to his arrest and trial in 1907. At the trial Bhupendranath boldly declared: 'The

9. *A Soldier With a Flaming Sword: Sister Nivedita*, Sister Nivedita Installation Commemoration Volume: Preface, p. 1.

10. *Prabuddha Bharata*, Sept. 1994, pp. 384-5.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 391.

British rulers, who have kept India under subjection by means of force and perfidy, have no right to seek any explanation from me. I am a patriot who loves his country, and fully defend what I have written.' The court sentenced him to one year's rigorous imprisonment. On the day he was given this sentence, Sister Nivedita in a letter commented: 'B. has done us proud today.'¹² On release, he went to America again, assisted by Sister Nivedita. In addition to pursuing his studies at New York and Brown Universities, he continued to maintain contact with Indian revolutionaries. Later he went to Berlin where another Indian revolutionary, Virendranath Chattopadhyay (brother of Sarojini Naidu) has formed the Indian Independence Committee in 1914. Bhupendranath joined the committee and later became its president. The draft

returned to India. He participated in the national movement and was elected a member of the All-India Congress Committee. At the Karachi session of the Indian National Congress, a historic resolution on the fundamental rights of workers and peasants was passed. This had been drafted mainly by Bhupendranath.

Bhupendranath later wrote the well-known book, *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet*, which reveals that although he had chosen to tread a path different from that of his illustrious brother, he had received inspiration from the latter and tried in his own way to contribute to the nation-building mission of Swami Vivekananda.

This discussion on the life and activities of some of those who were close to the

The full import of the legacy Swamiji has left to India and to the world is perhaps not fully realized even now...his thoughts and ideas are helping to tackle the problems arising as we proceed on our journey towards full nationhood...On a global level his ideas of harmony, of striving to see the underlying unity behind the apparent diversity in the world, of the need to seek spiritual development are beginning to move the world.

manifesto of the Berlin Committee declared that independent India would become a socialist republic. Bhupendranath was probably the first Indian to have come under the influence of Marxism. He also corresponded with Lenin, whose advice to collaborate with nationalists and to contact peasant organizations Bhupendranath took to heart. He wrote a letter to his friends in India calling on them to reject revolutionary terrorism and take to the path of mass movement of peasants and workers.¹³

After a brief sojourn in Moscow, where he represented the Berlin Committee of Indian revolutionaries, Bhupendranath

Swami is intended to show how far-reaching were the ramifications of his thought-process, and how deeply they influenced the course of social and political transformation that was going on in India.

If today the concepts of secularism and social justice are among the guiding principles of the Indian Constitution, if the importance of a scientific attitude is recognized and there is a general consensus on imparting education which included western learning, it is largely due to the ideas first propounded by Swami Vivekananda. Again, if the question of giving equal rights to women, of ensuring that they have access to education and equal opportunities in social and political life is on top of the agenda in India today, it is again because of Swami

12. *Swami Vivekananda: Patriot-Prophet*, p. ix.

13. *Ibid*, p. xi.

Vivekananda's championship of these ideas and his early steps to begin the education of women against stiff opposition from the conservative and rigidly orthodox sections of the society.

If religion has been rescued to a large extent from the clutches of obscurantism, superstition, and priestcraft, it is again largely because of Swami Vivekananda's bold denunciation of those who were misusing religion for their own ends. A few extracts from his numerous utterances on these subjects show how far ahead he was of his time, and how effectively he charted out the course of social and political progress that India was to follow.

Swami Vivekananda gave a totally new connotation to the concept of secularism. Until he did so, it had been understood in the narrow sense which, for instance, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* give to it: 'concern with the affairs of this world, not sacred or monastic or ecclesiastical', and again, 'sceptical of religious truth or opposed to religious education etc.'

But the Swami enunciated a new charter of secularism in his opening address at the Chicago Parliament of Religions:

I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all the religions and all nations of the earth...Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been

for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of those convention may be the death-knell of fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feeling between persons wending their way to the same goal.

If today we have opened our doors to western science, it is to a great extent the result of Swami Vivekananda's exhortation to learn from the West. At the same time Vivekananda repeatedly tells us not to imitate the West blindly, not to be oblivious of our spiritual heritage, not to be dazzled by the splendour of the materialism of the West. We can ignore these warnings only at our peril.

Let us note some of the things he says:

As western ideas of organization and external civilization are penetrating and pouring into our country, whether we will have them or not, so Indian spirituality and philosophy are deluging the land of the West. None can resist it, and no more can we resist some sort of material civilization from the West. A little of it is perhaps good for us and a little spiritualization is good for the West; thus the balance will be preserved. It is not that we ought to learn everything from the West or that they have to learn everything from us...

We have to find our way between the Scylla of old superstitious orthodoxy and the Charybdis of materialism—of Europeanism, of soullessness of the so-called reform—which has penetrated to the foundation of western progress. These two have to be taken care of. In the first place, we cannot become westerners, therefore imitating the

westerners is useless...

Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can man degrade his brother and himself escape degradation?...Can one injure anyone without injuring himself?...The mass of Brahmana and Kshatriya tyranny has recoiled upon their own heads with compound interest; and a thousand years of slavery and degradation is what the inexorable law of Karma is visiting upon them.

Root out priestcraft first. Come, be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march...We must travel, we must go to foreign parts, we must see how the engine of society works in other countries and keep free and open communication with what is really going on in the minds of other nations if we really want to be a nation again.

Finally, Vivekananda was the apostle of social justice:

And where are they, those through whose physical labour only are possible in the influence of the Brahmana, the prowess of the Kshatriya, and the fortune of the Vaishya. What is their history, who, being the real body of society, are designated at all times and in all countries as 'they the base born'...the Shudras of all countries other than India have become, it seems, a little awake. But they are wanting in proper education...What avails it if they greatly outnumber the other classes? That unity by

which ten men collect the strength of a million is yet far away from the Shudra...Yet a time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class *with their shudrahood*: that is to say, not as at present when the Shudras are becoming great by acquiring the characteristic qualities of the Vaishya or the Kshatriya; but a time will come when the Shudras of every country will gain absolute supremacy in every society. The first glow of the dawn of this new power has already begun to slowly break upon the western world; and the thoughtful are at their wit's end to reflect upon the final issue of this fresh phenomenon. Socialism, anarchism, nihilism and similar other sects are the vanguard of the social revolution to follow.¹⁴

The full import of the legacy Swami Vivekananda has left to India and to the world is perhaps not fully realized even now. Silently and steadily his thoughts and ideas are helping us to tackle the problems arising as we proceed on our journey towards full nationhood in the true sense of the term. On a global level his ideas of harmony, of striving to see the underlying unity behind the apparent diversity in the world, of the need to seek spiritual development rather than to be lost in the craze for material wealth and consumerism are beginning to move the world. □

14. All quotations are from the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* as extracted in *Caste, Culture and Socialism*, published by Advaita Ashrama.

(It is) effulgent, near at hand, and well known as moving in the heart, and (It is) the great goal. On It are fixed all these that move, breathe, and wink or do not wink. Know this One which comprises the gross and the subtle, which is beyond the ordinary knowledge of creatures, and which is the most desirable and the highest of all.

—*Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad*, II.ii.1

Bipin Chandra Pal and His Vision

DR. AROOP CHAKRAVARTI

Bipin Chandra Pal, the stormy petrel of pre-independence Indian politics, was known for his uncommon grasp of contemporary national and international political trends. The author, who teaches in the Department of Medieval and Modern Indian History, University of Lucknow, discusses below some of the important—and still relevant—views of Pal.

Bipin Chandra Pal, the stormy petrel of Indian politics, saw the light of the day at a time when the great upsurge of eighteen fifty-seven was mellowing into a softer glow. His world vision underwent a process of evolution. Apart from being a nationalist, Pal was an intellectual par excellence. His original works give us a deep insight into his intellectual capabilities. Views expressed by him on various issues of national and international importance reveal an undaunted spirit and a rare clarity of vision.

Bipin's views about India's relationship with the British imperialism underwent a significant change during his foreign sojourn in the years 1908 to 1911. During this period he came into close contact with the enlightened intellectuals of England. He realized that though absolute independence was necessary, yet total isolation would be fatal. regarding the relationship between Free India and British Dominion, he favoured the 'Federal Ideal'. Commenting further he said, 'I frankly confess that this federal ideal, not only in relation to the different communities and provincialities of India, but comprising within itself the different units of the existing British empire, was not revealed in the early years of our Nationalist agitation.'¹ This was because Pal believed that this kind of protest was absolutely needed, first, to awaken the

people of the country, and second, to impress upon the British rulers the supreme need of working out a reasonable reconciliation with the Nationalist Ideal.² (In this context, one may question the view of Leonard A. Gordon that Pal was a moderate and also idiosyncratic.³ The observation of Dr. Amalendu Prasad Mookerjee is equally questionable, for he contends that Pal's world vision, steeped in an idealistic and philosophical serenity, had an air of unreality. Similarly, Dr. Mookerjee too appears wrong in asserting that Pal was entangled in the usual incongruity between the ideal and the real.⁴)

Bipin Pal had acquainted himself with the political leaders in South Africa as well as in Turkey. Together with this, Pal's close study of the liberation movement in Egypt, the Irish Home Rule movement, and the political situation in China and Japan made him realize the significance of Federal Imperialism.⁵ Pal believed that a Federated Nation would be the practical ideal for the Indian Nationalists.⁶ Thus Pal believed in equal cooperation, but with full freedom for the country in its affairs, like 'Common-

1. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Nationality and Empire* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1916), p. x.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1974), p. 91.

4. A.P. Mookerjee, *Social and Political Ideas of Bipin Chandra Pal* (Calcutta, 1974), pp. 78-9.

5. Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, pp. ix-x.

6. *Ibid.*, p. xi.

wealth Nations', provided Great Britain gave India the status of an equal partner and equal among equals in the Federation of Nations.⁷

Pal's illustrious contemporary, Lala Lajpat Rai, too, held the opinion that it was impossible to separate India altogether from the rest of the world. The post-war world in 1918 was entering a phase of new internationalism, and chauvinistic nationalism was on the decline.⁸ Again, like Pal, Lajpat Rai too felt that India should be given a position of equality in the British Commonwealth.⁹

Explaining his concept of nation-idea and empire-idea, Pal said that the latter is essentially the larger of the two, for it aims at the unification into an organic whole of widely separated territories, divergent interests, cultures and characters.¹⁰ Besides the ethical value of the empire idea was

Bipin Chandra further exposed Britain's grossly unjust exploitation of the Indian labourers and deliberate destruction of native crafts and industries.

superior in its capacity to offer a much higher and wider formula of human association.¹¹ Pal asserted that federation was only another name for organized internationalism, and freedom of the various parts in the unity of the whole was the very soul and essence of the federal idea.¹² The nationalist leaders, Pal opined, should try to

adjust to the idea of Federal Internationalism, as it was decidedly emerging as the dominant idea in modern world-politics.¹³

Bipin Chandra, though he advocated equal partnership with Great Britain, yet emphasized at the same time that there must be complete autonomy for India before she could be rightly incorporated into Commonwealth.¹⁴ He appreciated the attitude of Lord Hardinge, in particular, which was quite flexible with regard to the needs of the Indians.¹⁵ Many British statesmen were aware that India had not been won only by the sword, and therefore could not be ruled over by its might alone. British leaders therefore wanted, as Pal said, to reconcile their rule, at least apparently, to the wishes and sentiments of the Indians. So, by advocating autonomy for India on the one hand and partnership with Britain on the other, Pal hoped that the continuance of the British connection with India in and through the gradual evolution of federalism would in way conflict with the truest and the highest nationalistic ideal.¹⁶ This, however, made Pal quite unpopular among his friends, so much so towards the last decade of his life that he was completely isolated.

As regards economic matters, Pal, in his monumental work, *the New Economic Menace to India*, has dealt with the various aspects of the British policy in India, putting forth his idea of 'trusteeship'. To quote him in reference to the high-salaried posts Britain created for the Britishers in India: 'Every provision in the administration of India for the employment of Englishmen to posts carrying high salary and great responsibility means so much economic, intellectual and moral loss to the people. What is England's gain is India's loss...and it proves "adverse"

7. *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.

8. Purushottam Nagar, *Lala Lajpat Rai* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1977), p. 184

9. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

10. Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, p. 6.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

12. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Character Sketches* (Calcutta: Yugayatri Prakashak, 1957), pp. 84-5.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

14. Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, p. 129.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

interest in those who claim to be our "Trustees" '.¹⁷ Pal, to counter this loss, advised his countrymen to have alliance with the British Labour Party: There were only two dominant political forces in the United Kingdom and the Empire—the force of Capital and the force of Labour. These two forces were tending towards a mighty conflict with one another soon. Therefore our only chance of rising out of economic helplessness and gaining political power lies in an open, courageous and uncompromising alliance with the British Labour.¹⁸ Supporting this idea, Lala Lajpat Rai too maintained that if there is any class in England upon whom we could rely, it is the Labour Party.¹⁹

Pal emphasized an alliance with the British Labour because of common interests: the British Labour had realized that the exploitation of labour and resources in India by the British Capitalists might affect British Labour interests. Similarly, Pal discovered, Indians, who were engaged in the fight for freedom, were actually struggling for rights which, once secured, were bound to benefit the British working class while hurting British capitalist interests in India! Thus here was the ground on which to appeal to the enlightened self-interest of the British workers and try to build up an alliance between Indian nationalists and British Labour.²⁰

Bipin Chandra further exposed Britain's grossly unjust exploitation of the Indian labourers and deliberate destruction of native crafts and industries. He asserted that though Indians could be accused of being ignorant of politics and modern systems of administration, and therefore in need of being shown the way, their industrial

products and crafts should not be pushed out of the world market, for they were of high quality. Quoting Horace Hayeman Wilson in support of his argument, Pal said that, Britain's policy in India was indeed a sad instance of the wrong done by the country on which India had become dependent. Had India been independent, she would have imposed prohibitory duties upon British goods and thus protected her industries from annihilation.²¹ So, as things stood, Britain, by secretly working against India's interest and among other questionable acts forcing her industries, trade and labour to become dependent on external 'help', was in practice negating its claim of being India's trustee.²²

Studying deeply the economic drain India was suffering, Pal pointed out that the wages earned by the labourers were being siphoned off to Britain in the form of the prices paid for imported commodities thrust upon India.²³ In contrast, increased wages in Great Britain, Germany or America as a result of profit made in India meant higher standards of living for their masses; besides, the wages earned by their labourers got distributed among their own people and remained within those countries, thereby increasing the national wealth.²⁴ As against this, in the case of India the situation was just the opposite; the constant drain of the resources was leading to the economic downfall of the people. Even regarding the inflow of foreign capital for development purposes in India, Pal remarked with foresight that a national government, if it encouraged foreign nations to invest in the country, should strictly protect the rights of the people over their land and to everything it held in its womb.²⁵ From this point of view

17. Bipin Chandra Pal, *The New Economic Menace to India* (Madras: Ganesh & Co., 1920), p. 60.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 227.

19. P. Nagar, *Lala Lajpat Rai*, p. 22.

20. Pal, *The New Economic Menace to India*, p. 230.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 67–8.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

too, an honest assumption of trusteeship by the British would have compelled them to act like a national Government—for the uplift of India and its people.

In this context, it is worthwhile noting that Dadabhai Naoroji too had pointed out how the economic drain prevented India from building up capital while, on the other hand, the Britishers, by bringing back the capital which they have drained from India itself, secured a near total monopoly in trade and import industries, thus further exploiting and weakening India.²⁶

Pal advocated re-investment of profits: He said that huge profits of the British industrialists and businessmen in India should be taxed, and the revenue thus generated should be utilized for the socio-

golian combinations.²⁸ As regard the former of these, which has been noted by the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences* also, the falling fortunes of the Muslim States and their inability to withstand the pressure of the European federation has give birth to it.

However, Bipin Pal had pointed out that of these three threats, the most dangerous to India was not Pan-Europeanism but Pan-Islamism and Pan-Mongolianism. Pal maintained that the focal point of the dangers of Pan-Islamism lay in the apparent fanaticism of the Moslem populations of the world,²⁹ and therefore to counter it India should have a bilateral arrangement with Britain: British statesmen should recognize the urgent need of satisfying the demands of Indian nationalists, and Indians too should frankly

...Pal remarked with foresight that a national government, if it encouraged foreign nations to invest in the country, should strictly protect the rights of the people over their land and to everything it held in its womb.

economic betterment of the people. In this way Pal, through his visionary socio-economic ideas, also tried to promote the welfare of his countrymen.

Bipin Chandra was also a keen observer of the international trends. Analysing the world situation and its possible repercussions on India, Pal predicted threat from three combinations which might come into conflict with one another in the following decades. The first of these is evident: a world-wide confederacy of white races. Imperialistic white confederation on the one hand and the new diplomatic moves in the form of 'peace-and-Arbitration-Treaties' on the other are clear signs of it.²⁷ The other two threats he forecasted and cautioned India against are the Pan-Islamic and Pan-Mon-

accept the 'British connection', which is different from British subjection.³⁰

Bipin's apprehensions were well founded. Pan-Islamism then was gradually emerging as an important factor in the social and political evolution of modern India, if not indeed of the modern world.³¹ So Pal cautioned India by saying that, if sixty million Muslims in India, inspired with Pan-Islamic aspirations, joined the Islamic powers across the western and northwestern frontiers, they could easily put an end to all our nationalistic aspirations at any moment after the British rule was terminated. This presumption of Pal³² should be viewed against the fact that when he wrote it in 1880 or 1881, Djemal-ed-Din,

26. Dada Bhai Naoroji, *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1969), p. 35.

27. Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, p. 89.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 93.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 362.

32. *Ibid.*

the founder of the Pan-Islamic movement, had come from Afghanistan to India. He had confidential discussions with the leaders of the Mohammedan community, during which he (Djemal-ed-Din) perhaps injected into them his idea of Pan-Islamism.³³ Pal noticed that the educated Indian Muslims, particularly in Bengal, who were till then cooperating with the Hindus for the advancement of India's political interests, thereafter gradually withdrew their political support so that a wide gulf was created between the two communities.³⁴ This lack of Muslim participation in the rebuilding of India was of great concern to Pal.³⁵

Pal advised us that while we should be alert against political Pan-Islamism, we must try to benefit from cultural and spiritual Pan-Islamism.

Here let us remember that he was not reacting as a narrow-minded Hindu. For he has also spoken of two aspects of the Pan-Islamic movement, one cultural and the other political.³⁶ Pal advised us that while we should be alert against political Pan-Islamism, we must try to benefit from cultural and spiritual Pan-Islamism.³⁷ Therefore, it is because Bipin Chandra saw the rapid inroads made by the political 'Pan-

Islamism and extra-territorial mentality' into Indian political life—shown in the 'extra-territorial mentality' of some Muslim leaders—that he urged Indians, including Muslim leaders, to give serious thought to initiate a process of re-interpretation and re-adjustment of the Indian Muslims' views.³⁸

Pal's perception of the 'Yellow Peril' grew out of the simple logic that four hundred millions of Chinese could gain control of India through their sheer superiority in numbers! Thus he had aptly remarked, 'This awakening of China is, therefore, a very serious menace.'³⁹ Pal's exposition of the problem of Mongol expansionism too is an instance of his keen observation of the world-situation,⁴⁰ and it was on the basis of such original views that he tried to shape India's political thought.

Thus this great son of India tried with his dynamic ideas to illumine the path of his countrymen. Jawahar Lal Nehru has rightly said about Pal that men like him fulfilled the qualifications for representing the 'inner sentiments and spirit of the people'.⁴¹ Dr. Rajendra Prasad also, while paying glowing tributes to Pal, said that Pal was a 'great son of India,'⁴² and that he was one of those pioneers whose lifelong efforts created the climate in which the struggle for freedom could be fruitfully waged, leading to our desired goal of political emancipation. □

33. Bipin Chandra Pal, *Memories of My Life and Times*, vols. I and II (Calcutta: 1973), pp. 274-5.

34. Pal, *Memories*, pp. 274-5; A.P. Mookerjee, *Social and Political Ideas*, pp. 92-5.

35. Leonard A. Gordon, p. 93.

36. A.P. Mookerjee, *Social and Political Ideas*, p. 92.

37. Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, pp. 388-9.

38. A.P. Mookerjee, *Social and Political Ideas*, p. 94.

39. Pal, *Nationality and Empire*, p. 362.

40. A.P. Mookerjee, *Social and Political Ideas*, pp. 89-92.

41. *The Hindusthan Standard*, 8 November 1958

42. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 8 November 1958.

In the supreme, bright sheath is Brahman, free from taints and without parts. It is pure, and is the Light of lights. It is that which the knowers of the Self realize.

—Mundaka Upaniṣad, II.ii.9

The Militarism of Subhas Chandra Bose

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

A nostalgic study of one of the greatest leaders during India's tumultuous pre-Independence decades, reviewing the formative influences during his youth, Swami Vivekananda's sway on him, his all-consuming love for the country and her peoples. One question that has repeatedly cropped up in the minds of several Indians is—Wouldn't things have been different today if Subhas had succeeded, considering that he was so intensely imbued with Vivekananda's ideas? Who can say? But, nevertheless, his patriotism, love for the poor masses, character and courage ought to be infused into all Indians.

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'Nothing in our field of investigation is capable of being rightly understood save as it is illustrated by the processes of its development.'—Harold J. Laski

By militarism I mean a combative spirit, a belief in violent or militant action by organized force, and the capacity of a patriot to suffer and sacrifice in the larger interest of his country. Subhas Chandra Bose exhibited in his life a combination of all these elements of militarism. His militancy was not, however, a sudden or fortuitous development. The sparks were there for a long time, and they burst into flaming fire, under pressure of circumstances, in the 1940s. That is to say, the development of militarism in Subhas Chandra Bose was gradual, up to the time it culminated in his assumption of the supreme command of the Indian National Army (I.N.A.) in 1943. The main contention of this article is that his militarism can best be appreciated in the light of its causes during his lifetime.

I

Background

In tracing the roots of Subhas Chandra's militant spirit, we should perhaps begin with an analysis of the influence of Swami Vivekananda on him in his early years. At the age of fifteen, Subhas chanced upon

some books of Swamiji, which gave him an ideal that stuck with him throughout his life.¹ He learnt from Swamiji that the attainment of personal salvation lay in the service of humanity, and that to serve humanity truly, one had to be selfless. Whatever form it took, that selfless service of humankind was the highest religion and the highest spirituality. Vivekananda thus brought relief to Subhas Chandra's mind on two counts. He had felt trouble with the ancient doctrine of Maya, but now he knew that this material world must be regarded as real, and that we must work here with selfless devotion, which by its very nature entails

1. In the words of Subhas himself: 'My headmaster had roused my aesthetic and moral sense—had given a new impetus to my life—but he had not given me an ideal to which I could give my whole being. That Vivekananda gave me....I was barely fifteen when Vivekananda entered my life. Then there followed a revolution within and everything was turned upside down.'—Subhas Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co., 1948), pp. 42-3.

suffering and sacrifice for the welfare of others. In short, from Swamiji Subhas imbibed the ideal of spiritual realization through a type of renunciation that manifested itself as service to humanity.

To Subhas service to humanity meant, in particular, service to his own country² which at that time was in bondage under a foreign power. This power, by its very selfish act of keeping a people in subjugation and exploiting it, was unspiritual and, as such, an evil. This evil had to be done away with, Subhas Chandra thought, by force if necessary. Service to the country thus demanded winning its freedom from the foreign subjugator. Secondly, service to the country meant service to its people, especially the poor and the downtrodden masses who needed it the most.³ The first required

political work while the second required social. Subhas took to the second at a tender age, organizing as a school boy the *Swechha Seva Sangha*, or the Voluntary Service Corps, for village reconstruction work, serving the needy by distributing free rice to poor students, and even nursing smallpox and cholera victims. The political work had to wait for some years. As proof of how deeply he was influenced by Swami Vivekananda in both the social and political aspects of service to the country, we have a letter written to his mother in 1912 or 1913 when he was fifteen years old:

In his more mature years, Subhas Chandra noted that, 'In the work of man-making, Swami Vivekananda did not confine his attention to any particular sect but embraced the society as a whole. His fiery words—"Let New India arise—out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains"—are still ringing in every Bengali home....The gospel of democracy that was preached by Swami Vivekananda has manifested itself fully in the writings and achievement of Deshbandhu Das, who said that 'Narayana (God) lives amongst those who till the land and prepare our bread by the sweat of their brow, those who in the midst of grinding poverty have kept the torch of our civilization, culture and religion burning.'

The first step towards nation-building is the creation of true men, and the second step is the organization.' Vivekananda and others tried to make men while Deshbandhu tried to create political organization. See *The Indian Annual Register*, ed. Nripendra Nath Mitra, 1929, I, p. 375.

2. He noted with special emphasis Sister Nivedita's observation that 'the queen of his [Swami Vivekananda's] adoration was his motherland. There was not a cry within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo.'—*Ibid.*, pp. 42–3.

3. In this, too, young Subhas drew his inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. He noted in his autobiography that the Swami himself in one of his passionate utterances had said: 'Say, brother, at the top of your voice...I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother...the ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the Pariah Indian, is my brother...the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age. Say brother: The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good.'—Quoted from Swami Vivekananda, 'Modern India', found in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 4, p. 480. Also, cf. *An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 43.

...Mother, how much longer shall we sleep? How much longer shall we go on playing with non-essentials? Shall we continue to turn a deaf ear to the wailings of our nation?

He himself answered the question as he continued:

One cannot wait anymore—one cannot sleep anymore—we must now shake off our stupor and lethargy and plunge into action. But, alas! how many selfless sons of the Mother[land] are prepared, in this selfish age, to completely give up their personal interests and take the plunge?...⁴

One can very well hear in these words the echo of Swamiji's thoughts—his idea of selfless action, of relentless pursuit of the goal, of the country as Mother, and, perhaps, also his idea that for the soldiers of freedom there is only one God—Mother India. An avid reader of Swamiji,⁵ Subhas Chandra could not have failed to note Swamiji's exhortation to his countrymen: '...And slaves must become great masters. So give up being a slave. For the next fifty years [that] alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India.'⁶ From his studies Subhas came to the conclusion that the essence of Swamiji's teachings lay in the cultivation

of strength⁷, and, in the context of the political situation prevailing then in India, this meant the cultivation of strength for the deliverance of the country from its foreign subjugators. In the opinion of Joyce C. Lebra⁸, Vivekananda helped Subhas reach a conclusion at a young age that, 'political emancipation was a desirable goal for India,' and that, without the cultivation of strength—if necessary in the form of military power, India could not hope for independence.⁹

II

Formative Influences

While Subhas Bose was a student at the Presidency College, Calcutta, in 1916, Mr. E.F. Oaten, a professor of the College, was beaten up by some of the college students for his allegedly insulting behaviour towards

4. *Netaji Collected Works* (Calcutta: Netaji Research Bureau, 1980), vol. 1, p. 143.

5. To quote Subhas Chandra, 'For days, weeks, months, I pored over his works. His letters as well as his speeches from Colombo to Almora, replete as they are with practical advice to his countrymen, inspired me most.'—*Ibid.*, p. 37.

6. This was how Swami Vivekananda spoke at Madras in 1897. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 3, pp. 300–1

7. As Subhas Chandra himself puts it, 'To the ancient scriptures he (Swami Vivekananda) had given a modern interpretation. "Strength, strength, is what the Upanishads say", he had often declared.'—*Netaji Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 37.

8. Joyce C. Lebra, *Jungle Alliance* (Singapore: Asia Pacific Press, 1971), p. 103.

According to Lebra, if Swami Vivekananda determined the key note of Bose's life, Aurobindo Ghose gave an extension to the tune that was already set in his mind. The words of Aurobindo Ghose, the revolutionary, which appealed most to young Subhas were to the effect:

'I should like to see some of you becoming great;—great, not for your own sake, but to make India great, so that she may stand up with head erect amongst the free nations of the world. Those of you who are poor and obscure, I should like to see your poverty and obscurity devoted to the service of the Motherland. Work that she might prosper; suffer that she might rejoice.' See also: *An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 75.

9. Joyce C. Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*.

his students, and his galling and derisive remarks against India and Indians in general. Subhas Bose was suspected of being involved in the incident, and despite his assertion that he was only a witness and not a participant, he was expelled from the college. This incident was so important in the development of Subhas Bose that it would not be wrong to call it a turning point in his life and career. That is how Subhas himself characterized it:

Little did I realize the inner significance of the tragic events of 1916. My Principal had expelled me, but he had made my future career. I had established a precedent for myself from which I could not easily depart in future. I had stood up with courage and composure in a crisis, and fulfilled my duty. I had developed self-confidence as well as initiative, which was to stand me in good stead in future. I had a foretaste of leadership—though in a very restricted sphere—and of the martyrdom that it involves. In short, I had acquired character, and could face the future with equanimity.¹⁰

Apart from helping develop his strength of mind and character, this incident was momentous in developing his militant attitude towards the British. A witness to the misdeeds of the Britishers, not only in the premises of the college but also 'in the streets, in the tram-cars, in the railway trains', he was now convinced that Indians should no longer take such things lying down.¹¹ He also became convinced now that, if protests were to be made, they would have to be from a position of strength. The cultivation of strength was thus an utmost necessity, and without building up military power India would not be able to root out

the injustice suffered at the hands of the British and attain independence. The outbreak of the First World War convinced him of the soundness of the conclusion he had come to after the episode at the Presidency College. As he himself testifies:

...I began to re-examine all my ideas and to revalue all the hitherto accepted values....If India was to be a modern civilized nation, she would have to pay the price, and she would not by any means shirk the physical, the military problem. Those who worked for the country's emancipation would have to be prepared to take charge of both the civil and military administration. Political freedom was indivisible and meant complete independence from foreign control and tutelage. The war had shown that a nation that did not possess military strength could not hope to preserve its independence.¹²

Henceforward the proposition that political emancipation was the goal for India, and that she could not achieve this without military strength became a recurring theme in the thinking of Bose. And he reasoned that, if the Indians were to meet the British on equal terms in a military contest, they needed to have military training.

In the interval between his expulsion from the Presidency College and his admission to the Scottish Church College in July 1917, Bose applied to be enlisted into the 49th Bengalees. He was not successful in this effort, because his eyesight was not up to the mark—according to the officer examining him physically.¹³ Disappointed for the time being, but not willing to give up his efforts to secure military training, he tried his luck again during his study at the

10. *An Indian Pilgrim*, p. 93.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 86.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Scottish Church College. He applied to the University unit in the India Defence Force. This time he was successful. The military training of the recruits began in mufti at the Calcutta Maidan, under the officers and instructors provided by the Lincolns Regiment in Fort William. Bose learned to handle rifles and found immense pleasure in soldiering. To quote him:

Not only was there no sign of maladaptation to my new environment, but I found a positive pleasure in it. This training gave me something which I needed or which I lacked. The feeling of strength and of selfconfidence grew still further. As soldiers we had certain rights, which as Indians we did not possess. To us as Indians, Fort William was out-of-bounds, but as soldiers we had right of entry there, and as a matter of fact the first day we marched into Fort William to bring our rifles, we experienced a queer feeling of satisfaction, *as if we were taking possession of something to which we had an inherent right, but of which we had been unjustly deprived.*¹⁴ (emphasis added)

The expression, 'as if we were taking possession of something to which we had an inherent right, but of which we had been unjustly deprived', holds the key to understanding the intensity of feeling Bose had for his goal of getting military training.

Subhas Chandra went to England for higher studies in 1919, where he entered Cambridge. Ever eager to continue his military training, he applied to the University Officers' Training Corps. But not willing to admit him to the O.T.C., the university authorities told him that the India Office objected to the enlistment of Indians. When Bose personally contacted the India Office,

he was told that the War Office objected because, when fully qualified, the members of the O.T.C. would be entitled to commissions in the British Army. This implied that, in the opinion of the War Office, Indian officers should not be allowed to command the British soldiers in India. To this, Bose gave the assurance that he and his fellow Indian students aspiring to be enlisted in the O.T.C. 'were more interested in getting the training than in joining the army as a profession.'¹⁵ Even this assurance was not enough to overcome the prejudice of the authorities, and this incident of discrimination at Cambridge led him to observe that, 'I have not misjudged British mentality as I found it soon after the war.'¹⁶ The Cambridge incident shows at once two things: that Bose resented the supercilious attitude of the Britishers towards Indians as much in England as in India, and that his sense of deprivation made him crave more than ever for India's military power in the future

Had Bose joined the Indian Civil Service after passing the qualifying examination in 1920, that would have been the end of the soldier in him. But he was consistent in regard to this: how could he join the service of a government that he dreamt of ending? He therefore took the very conscious step of resigning from the Service after being selected for it, and 'joined' instead the service of the Motherland, after coming back to India from England.

III

In India

As a leader of the Indian National Congress in Bengal, Subhas showed the first overt sign of his growing militancy at the session of the Congress in Calcutta in 1928. He not only pressed for adoption of an 'Independence' resolution by the session, as

14. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 120.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

opposed to 'dominion status' for the country proposed by leaders such as Gandhi, but also incensed Gandhi by organizing a volunteer corps in uniform and having it parade along the streets of Calcutta. As Nirad C. Chaudhury reminisces:

For it [the 1928 Calcutta session of the Congress] Bose organized a volunteer corps in uniform, its officers being even provided, so far as I remember, with steel-chain epaulets. Bose designated himself as its General-Officer-Commanding, G.O.C. for short, and his uniform was made by a firm of British tailors in Calcutta—Harman's. A telegram addressed to him as G.O.C. was delivered to the British General in Fort William, and this was the subject of a good deal of malicious comment in the Anglo-Indian Press. Mahatma Gandhi, being a sincere pacifist vowed to non-violence, did not like the strutting, clicking of boots, and saluting, and he afterwards described the Calcutta session of the Congress as a Bertram Mills circus, which caused great indignation among the Bengalis.¹⁷

Pacifist Gandhi and militarist Subhas Bose were so unlike each other in temperament, and so different in their views on how to bring an end to British rule in India, that their parting of ways was inevitable and only a matter of time. The parting came finally in late April 1939 at Tripura, when the Congress met only to vote down Bose's militant proposal for *Purna Swaraj* (complete Independence) and his demand for an ultimatum to the British government to grant *Swaraj* to India within a six-month time limit. Gandhi was against this. Rejecting such a demand and calling it 'inoppor-

tune for the moment,' Gandhi further said that Bose's proposal was likely to breed violence. He asserted that he actually 'smelled violence in the air', to which Subhas replied that Gandhi had a bogey about violence and there was no such smell.¹⁸ Failing to carry the Congress along with him on the main issue of his demand for *Purna Swaraj*, and determined not to have any truck with British Imperialism or with those Congressmen who 'talked but did not fight'¹⁹, Bose eventually submitted his resignation as Congress President in late May 1939. The soldier in Bose was tired of endless talks and toothless resolutions passed by the Congress. As he said shortly after resigning his Presidentship:

Today our leaders are wobbling and their vacillation has demoralized... They seem to have forgotten that the supreme need of the hour is a bold, uncompromising policy leading us on to a national struggle. Whatever strengthens us for this purpose is to be welcomed. Whatever weakens us is to be eschewed.²⁰

The theme of strength and weakness is

17. Nirad C. Chaudhury, *The Continent of Circe* (London: 1965), pp. 103-4.

18. Quoted in: Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal The Nationalist Movement, 1876-1940* (New Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1974), p. 274.

19. To quote Subhas Bose:

'Unfortunately for us, the British government has ceased to take the Congress seriously and have formed the impression that however much the Congressmen may talk, they will not ultimately show fight.'

See 'The Presidential Address of Subhas Chandra Bose at the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference, Ramgarh, Bihar, 19 March 1940', in Sisir K. Bose, Alexander Worth, and S. A. Ayer (editors), *A Beacon Across Asia* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1973), p. 268.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 271-2.

always the favourite of a soldier, and Bose honestly felt that to wage a successful struggle against the British imperialism, India needed a military-type leader rather than a 'reformist guru'.²¹ He attributed India's downfall in the material and political spheres to her latter-day philosophy and adherence to *ahimsa* (non-violence), carried to the most 'absurd length' by Mahatma Gandhi.²² As Leonard Gordon observes, 'He [Subhas Bose] viewed Gandhi, the High Command, and the Government of India as restraints on the radical and militant nationalist forces with which he identified.'²³ Bose's resignation from the Presidentship of the Congress must be viewed as yet another example of his militant mentality.

The fighter in Subhas had always led him to take the stand 'that the destruction of British power in India was the *sine qua non* for the solution of all India's problems, and that the Indian people would have to fight for the achievement of this goal.'²⁴ The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, especially the war between Germany and Great Britain, which broke out in September of that year, convinced Bose that India could win her independence if she played her part well in the war and collaborated with those Powers fighting Britain.²⁵ Finding his way blocked in India, both by the British Policy of repression, and the Congress' policy of not seeking independence out of Britain's ruin²⁶, Subhas Bose, after a brief period of

incarceration in 1940, from July to December, quietly left India to carry on India's struggle for independence from the soil of the Axis powers. Thus a new chapter in the history of India's struggle for freedom began.

IV

Emissary Abroad

Seeking military support and collaboration from the enemies of Britain was not an unexpected move for Subhas Bose; it was a logical extension of his ideas, given the militarist spirit with which he identified himself since his youth. Destruction of the British rule in India was his goal, and if the goal could not be achieved from within the country, then it must be tried with military support from outside. That was his logic. The question is: Did Subhas Bose, in his eagerness to secure the Axis military cooperation, play in any way a subordinate or subservient role in relation to Hitler or Tojo, and did he thereby dilute in any way the first and foremost goal of his life, i.e., the independence of India? The following is an attempt to answer this question.

After he arrived in Berlin in March 1941, Bose's first effort was to try to secure a Nazi declaration in favour of India's independence as one of Germany's war aims. He made desperate efforts to convince Hitler to that effect. In response to Bose's request for such declaration and for active help and intervention in favour of Indian independence, Hitler told him that as a soldier

21. Leonard A. Gordon, *Bengal: The Nationalist Movement 1876-1940*, p. 262.

22. *Ibid.*,

23. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

24. Subhas Chandra Bose, 'The Indian Struggle' in *Netaji Collected Works*.

25. cf. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

26. 'We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin. That is not the way of non-violence', Gandhi said in May 1940.

Criticizing the campaign of civil disobedience that Forward Bloc, under the leadership of Subhas Bose, launched in April 1940, Jawaharlal Nehru observed on 20 May, 1940 that 'launching a civil disobedience campaign at a time when Britain is engaged in a life and death struggle would be an act derogatory to India's honour.'—See: *Ibid.*, pp. 384-5.

he could not promise that he could not deliver. A declaration in favour of Indian independence could not be followed up with direct action in the battlefield. Hitler thus ruled out any such step by Germany. While Bose listened silently to Hitler's observation that 'the power of a country could only be exercised within the range of its sword'²⁷, he could not appreciate the racial slurs that Hitler put on Indians in *Mein Kampf*, and at this meeting Bose expressed his objection to such remarks. This shows at once the boldness of Subhas and proves, more than anything else, his independent and heroic mettle.²⁸

The meeting with Hitler was, no doubt, a failure from the point of view of Bose. He failed to secure the Nazi declaration in favour of India's independence. Italy too refused to oblige him with such a declaration.²⁹ But Bose would not so easily give up his efforts towards this end. He was a fighter and he would keep on trying. Since Germany and Italy were not the answer to his hopes, the logical place that he would next turn to was Japan.³⁰

Bose's first meeting in Tokyo was with

27. Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero* (London: Quartet Books, 1982), p. 199.

28. Despite his disappointment with the German leader Bose was able to raise in Germany an Indian Legion, consisting of some three thousand Indian prisoners-of-war from units which had fought in Africa. He recruited only those who unconditionally agreed to fight for India, excluding those who wanted to bargain with him before offering their services.—See: Joyce C. Lebra, *Jungle Alliance*, p. 109.

29. See: *Jungle Alliance*, p. 108.

30. Slipping stealthily away from Germany aboard a German submarine in February 1943, Bose finally arrived in Tokyo in May 1943.

the Japanese Army Chief of Staff, Sugiyama. And the very first question that he put to Sugiyama is characteristic of the straightforward boldness with which the soldier in Subhas Bose pursued his goal of Indian independence: 'Will Japan send soldiers to India or not?' Having asked Sugiyama this question, Bose went on to observe that 'We are going to fight our way to India step by step. If we don't push on with determination, we won't be able to achieve independence.'³¹ He proposed to Sugiyama that Japan first take Chittagong in an attack on the British India, and then push on deep into Bengal. He was sure that the very association of his name with such an offensive would inspire the Bengalis to stage a revolt against the British. Sugiyama was, however, non-committal to this proposal.³²

31. Quoted in Lebra, p. 115.

32. Mihir Bose, in his biography of Bose the following interesting comment on 'the Chittagong-attack' proposal of Bose:

'Bose, as we have seen, had pressed Sugiyama at their first meeting in June 1943 to launch an attack through Chittagong. The fall of this East Bengal port would simply be the catalyst for the I.N.A.: the British would be thrown into disaster, and Bengal would form a ready and welcome base for revolutionary activities. It was about this time that Ian Stephens, then editor of the *Calcutta Statesman*, told a Calcutta dinner party that, were the Japanese to parachute Bose onto the *maidan*, some ninety-percent of the city's inhabitants would rush to join him. Stephen's guests were not amused, but this was the assumption Bose was working on. For the Japanese, however, Chittagong was strategically impossible: the supply problems, compared with those for Imphal, would be horrendous, and being a port it would be exposed to attacks from both air and sea—two sectors in which Japanese strength was rapidly diminishing.'—*The Lost Hero*, p. 219.

Bose had his first meeting with Tojo, the Prime Minister of Japan, on 10 June 1943, and the second four days later.³³ Lebra's account of the second meeting is revealing:

Bose, with his customary frankness, asked Tojo, 'Can Japan give unconditional help to the Indian independence movement? I would like to confirm that there are no strings attached to Japanese aid.' Tojo immediately gave Bose an affirmative reply.³⁴

This shows that at the earliest available opportunity Bose made it clear to Tojo that there was no question of his own or of Indian subservience to Japan, and that he would accept Japanese military help for his armed struggle only if such help were offered unconditionally, with no strings whatever attached to it. To continue with Lebra's account of the Bose-Tojo meeting:

...Bose had been favourably impressed and was grateful he had made a friend in Tojo. If [he] was to secure meaningful help from Japan for the INA, Tojo's sympathy and cooperation was the crucial point. In this Bose had succeeded admirably, and Tojo was ready to make public his official support of Bose and the INA.³⁵

Return to the East

After winning Tojo over to the cause of Indian independence, Subhas Bose's next move was to take over from Rash Behari

Bose the leadership of the Indian Independence League (IIL) and the supreme command of the Indian National Army, which had so long rested in the hands of the older Bose. The charge was formally taken over by Subhas on 4 July 1943. As the Supreme Commander of the INA, or Azad Hind Fauz, as he called it, Subhas soon came to be known as *Netaji*, the title by which he has been ever since known. Having completed the reorganization of the INA by August 1943, Netaji announced his formation of the Provincial Government of Azad Hind (Free India) on 21 October 1943—a government which was swiftly recognized by as many as eight States, including Japan, Germany and Italy. Subhas Bose was now the Supreme Commander of a national army as well as the Head of the provisional Government of a country. It was the crowning glory of a man who always spoke the language of struggle and battle, and who now lived up to it by bringing into operation in the field of battle his combative spirit, indomitable belief in the efficacy of military action, and his capacity to suffer and sacrifice limitlessly in the cause of liberating his Motherland.

The high water mark of Bose's militarism lay in his effecting a synthesis of the three constituent elements: of militarism, of dealing with the Axis powers as an equal (within the limits, of course, of the difficult military situations prevailing at the time), and of never agreeing or allowing himself or his country to become, even in thought, subservient to any foreign power. His only subservience, if it can be so called, was to his cherished goal of India's freedom. Like a true soldier he gave his all to the cause and to the cause alone, and therein lies his claim to a place in history.

V

The Summing-up

Subhas Chandra Bose was a born rebel.

33. Tojo was so charmed in his first meeting by the personality and earnestness of the man from India that he granted him another interview four days later.

34. *Jungle Alliance*, p. 116

35. *Ibid.* Within two days of this meeting with Bose, Tojo declared in the Japanese Diet that Japan would do everything possible to help Indian Independence.

a fighter with soldierly qualities, who had since his youth sought military training for the purpose of fighting the British in India on equal terms, who actualized his goal in this regard by commanding the INA on the battlefronts of South East Asia and North-east India, and who thus, once mocked at as a fake G.O.C. (in the 1928 Congress), proved that he was no imposter.

Subhas Bose might have been a losing here.³⁶—he was not able to overthrow the entrenched British army by force of arms—, but the blow he struck with the Azad Hind

36. And what a hero! As E. Farley Oaten (who once supposedly suffered himself at the hands of Subhas Bose at the Presidency College) acknowledged in a glowing tribute to this ex-student of his:

Let me recall but this, that while as yet
The Raj that you once challenged in
your land
Was mighty; Icarus-like your courage
planned
To mount the skies, and storm in
battle set
The Ramparts of High Heaven, to claim
the debt
Of freedom owed, on plain and rude
demand.
High Heaven yielded, but in dignity
Like Icarus, you sped towards the sea.

Fauz, no doubt, hastened the fall of the British government in India. His lasting contribution to the freedom movement in India lay in his combative spirit and mentality—the countermodel of the pacifist ‘good fellow’ mentality—that he bequeathed to the nation. He showed an alternative way to subjugated India’s deliverance, and a way as well to independent India’s future prosperity. The only condition for such deliverance and prosperity, as he himself said, is that ‘one has to love new things, one has to grow mad for the unknown, one has to express himself in the free mind and under the open sky by breaking through all the barriers of life and by razing them to the ground.’³⁷ □

Your wings were melted from you
by the sun,
The genial patriot fire that
brightly glowed
In India’s mighty heart, and
flamed and flowed
Forth from her Army’s thousand
victories won.

The poem was presented by the author to the Netaji Research Bureau in 1969. See: *Netaji Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 269.

37. Subhas Bose, *Prison Notebook III, Mandalay 1925–7*. Quoted in Mihir Bose, *The Lost Hero*, p. 1.

To him who has approached duly, whose heart is calm and whose outer organs are under control, that man of enlightenment should adequately impart that knowledge of Brahman by which one realizes the true and imperishable Purusa.

—*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I.ii.13

India's Spirit

DR. HOUSTON SMITH

On contemplating the commissioned portrait of a British Viceroy of India, carrying the caption, 'Served with Distinction, 1910–1932'.

Dr. Smith is a leading figure in the study of comparative religion, and is the author of The World's Religions and Beyond the Post-Modern Mind, besides five more.

Who could have dreamed, gazing on this willful face,
That India touched him more than he touched her.

Trains multiplied, of course; huge
Baby-booms of belching smoke and whistles' wail.

English, too improved, as Eatons
— short pants, broad white collars, the works —
Sprouted in unlikely places.

Even the manly sports took hold,
As yogas bowed to bat and ball.
Horses wheeled to mallet's stroke,
While women watched in printed frocks.

But I have heard:

His wife declared he mellowed through the years.
Listened more, insisted less.
Was more patient when a servant slipped.

And when the time to leave rolled round,
He knelt and kissed the parched, red ground.
A tear met the dust in that waterless land,
That had known so well his heavy hand. □

Creation and Chaos: The Lessons of a Century

DR. RAMESH CHANDRA SHAH

The author, from Bhopal, M.P., takes us at a fast pace through the light and shade, and sunshine and storms of the last hundred years, leaving us at the gates of the next century. What we might find beyond those gates depends on whether or not we accept Vivekananda, Gandhi and Aurobindo as our guides.

We have just now celebrated two momentous events in our recent history: the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's speech at the Chicago Congress of World Religions, and the Centenary of the homecoming of Sri Aurobindo. What did they mean for us? Mircea Eliade, the famous Indologist, has said somewhere that, 'there is no more an absorbing story than that of the discovery and interpretation of India by Western consciousness.'

But this is only half of the story which, considered in the light of the so-called Europeanization of the Earth, may well appear to obliterate the other half of the story, which is the discovery and interpretation of the West by Indian consciousness. We seem to have absorbed the West as a whole; its very substance appears to have entered our life and our mentality; whereas the West in its encounter with the East would appear to have appropriated the East only on its own terms, without letting it disturb its main stream cultural history. It is this imbalance, this one-sidedness of the exchange which is clearly at the root of our present predicament and chaos. On the other hand, it is apparent that the best of our creative minds have been roused to their full activity by means of this very catalyst—their contact with the West. We have to cope with and come to terms with this paradox.

If we concentrate just for a moment on the two personalities mentioned above—

and also on a third, viz. Mahatma Gandhi—, what do we witness? Openness to and appreciation of the Western experiments with Truth, and full exposure to its institutions and personalities; and yet, after having recognized the human worth of this 'otherness', a refusal to fall into the trap of an easy, but derivative, satellite relationship with it, and, instead, a willingness to embrace the struggle of self-exploration and self-discovery. Our three exemplars did precisely this, and by example and precept sought to put their countrymen on the safest road to self-determination and self-realization.

How is it, then, that today we find ourselves in such a sorry plight—a spectacle of chaos rather than self-confident creativity? 'Thy hands, great anarch'—as Nirad Chaudhury has phrased it; or still more tellingly perhaps, as V.S. Naipaul has put it: 'India: A million mutinies now'.

In the world scenario as well, the ideal brotherhood of nations, the dreamed of universal Whole is nowhere in sight. The so-called world civilization remains only a mockery of the spirit of true world-fellowship. It's only another name for the Europeanization—or to sound more factually up-to-date—for the Americanization of the Earth. At the start of this century, Sri Aurobindo had laid his finger on this corrosive imbalance: he had expressed an urgent need to correct this undue

predominance of the West which is disturbing the universal economy of ideas. Gandhi too had raised a powerful voice of protest in 'Hind Swaraj'. Not only that; our only original philosopher at that time, K.C. Bhattacharya, had pointed out the derivative shadow-like behaviour of the Indian intelligentsia, and had emphasized the urgency of achieving what he called 'swaraj in ideas'.

That was way back in 1929—i.e., at the height of our soulful struggle for independence. But the course of events since then appears to have taken quite a different turn. It's only now—towards the close of the century that we have realized the need to undertake a thorough reevaluation of our confused attitudes and actions, to clear the muddle as far as it is still possible, and to regain the self-possession and the will to self-determination that was manifest in our early leaders.

'Our hard-hearted intelligentsia has been a constant nightmare for me.'

—Gandhi

Let us look back towards the last decade of the previous century which has meant so much to us, and which had brought forth those momentous events mentioned at the very outset. Let us recall that that decade was equally momentous for Europe as well. It had sent powerful waves over that continent—rousing some of the most creatively sensitive souls there to a feeling of utmost awe and mystery. There were strange apprehensions, strange hints and intimations, which came to be characterized then as 'the trembling of the veil'. Alas! that glorious dream soon lapsed into a nightmare, and the same poetic voice had to cry in despair:

Things fell apart; the centre cannot hold
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world
The best lack all conviction; and the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Uttered in a very different context, why do these words acquire such an ominous ring for us? Indian society does seem to be in great turmoil today. The scenario at present is the polar opposite of what it appeared to be at the beginning of this century. That sense of cohesion and that vision of a young resurgent India seems to have receded into an illusion. There is not one leader today who can command nationwide respect and attention. Our political culture is at its lowest ebb, and the spiritual-religious domain too seems to have been drained of all its inspiration.

What an irony! When the country was sunk in the lowest depths of despair, we were blessed with the descent of Sri Ramakrishna—'the finest flower of Indian spiritual culture', in the words of R.C. Majumdar. That was a living demonstration of the truth of those words of the *Gītā*: 'Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there.' And we witnessed thereafter other manifestations too of that 'extraordinary holiness and power': Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi. Which country in modern times can boast of such a rich harvest of spiritual genius? In addition to being the perfect representatives of their own culture, these great men had displayed a vision of universal character and efficacy.

And now?... 'Whither is fled that visionary gleam?' Political and organizational ability had never been our strong point; politics is an entirely new passion for us and it seems to have gone to our head. What we are witnessing today is rank politicization of

everything—of even those spheres of life which must be most immune to it, which can maintain their creativity only when they operate in complete freedom and autonomy. But now the situation is such as reminds us of those terrible lines—‘the best lack all conviction, and the worst are full of passionate intensity’. One wonders when and where did things go wrong?

Somewhere, somehow, a betrayal seems to have taken place—betrayal of that vision of a young India seen by Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi. Somewhere, somehow we seem to have forsaken that path and followed another—the path of least resistance, the path dictated by expediency rather than by the urge for self-realization. Who could have foreseen such lack of political will, such abject compromises, such failure of nerves and such proliferation of crises?

But why not? Hadn't there been signs of confusion and cowardice right from the beginning? The novelist E.M. Forster, who had found Hinduism rather incomprehensible but most profound among the world-religions, had, during his visit to India in 1925, observed with great dismay that ‘Indian intellectuals thought of nothing except politics; they hardly ever thought about economic and cultural issues, and had no vision at all of national reconstruction.’ We also remember what Gandhiji thought about these very intellectuals: ‘Our hard-hearted intelligentsia,’ he had once observed, ‘has been a constant nightmare for me.’

This hard-hearted and soft-brained intelligentsia then, must be held responsible for the chaos that prevails today. They were hardly receptive to Vivekananda; they did not care to take Aurobindo seriously; and for all their lip-service to and expedient following of Gandhi, they in their heart of

hearts were never really with him. The philosopher K.C. Bhattacharya was right when he characterized these intellectuals as ‘shadow-minds’ who had buried the native soul beyond redemption, and were content to live and act in an eternity of second-hand. ‘Swaraj in ideas’—that was his prescription for national regeneration. But, like Aurobindo and Gandhi, he too was consigned to oblivion by our rootlessly cosmopolitan and apish intellectuals.

It just won't do to shift the responsibility for our tragic deviation on to some one political leader. No doubt, the dialectical challenge of the West had to be faced and coped with: there was no easy way out. But hadn't our most nationalistic visionary leadership already taken care of that? The patriot who revealed the ‘foundations of Indian culture’, and gave thus a resounding reply to unjust and prejudiced foreign critics, developed into the sage who wrote *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Wasn't his spirit at once the most Indian and the most universal? Similarly, the values that Gandhi endeavoured to exemplify are centrally related to that holistic Indian vision of life which has a universal appeal and is relevant to everyone.

In fact, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo now appear to have been much more radically and responsibly transformative of the human condition than Marx and Nietzsche—their European counterparts. True to his tradition, Gandhi had declined to reduce his lifetime's work into what they call a clear-cut ideology. Similarly, the very luminous and lucid thought of Sri Aurobindo too yields its significance only to one who achieves a certain inwardness with his praxis, his *sādhanā*. We cannot, after all, reduce life to a logical process. These great men were without intellectual arrogance. Now, reductionist and hatred-driven ideology has been the most rampant evil beset-

ting the modern mind. But our modern sages cannot be reduced into a mere ideology. Ideology, like the prophetic traditions of the West, is passion-oriented; but the Indian tradition has always upheld the view that truth can only be apprehended by a dispassionate, disinterested, *anāsakta* mind.

So, Indian civilization, in spite of its many lapses and deviations, had indeed accepted the great dialectical challenge of the West, without completely surrendering its integrity. Fifty years after independence, we are painfully learning the lesson that it is not enough to have had such great leaders in the past. The people as a whole have to raise themselves in moral and mental stature to be able to emulate such exemplars. There has to be a responsible and ever-alert intelligentsia to bridge the gulf between the sage and the masses. Obviously it is our

'Indian intellectuals thought of nothing except politics; they hardly ever thought about economic and cultural issues, and had no vision at all of national reconstruction.'

—E.M. Forster (1925)

intelligentsia that has failed to respond to this challenge. It is this hard-hearted and self-centred intelligentsia that is guilty of neglecting the urgent task of educating the masses. Just look at the frantic and pathetic attempts of all those busybodies and governmental agencies to make up for that deficiency now.

We have been trying for quite some time to modernize ourselves. We have been trying to catch up on a time-lag of about two centuries, and we have been doing this in our political, legal, economic and educational systems through the process of Westernization. All choosing entails neglect of other

alternatives, and by choosing to follow the easier path, we have had to pay for it. To take just one example: Max Muller himself has noted somewhere the damage done to traditional Indian truthfulness by the system of Indian law.

There have been several signs of conflict in the Indian psyche right from the beginning. It was reflected in the controversy that had arisen between Tagore and Gandhi, between Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo even—not publicly vocal though—and between Gandhi and Nehru. It is a great pity that this last and the most crucial of these dialogues was cut off by Pt. Nehru himself. Was it then a marriage of incompatibles from the very beginning and thus foredoomed to failure? It is difficult to judge by hindsight.

Is it possible to look at it thus: Nehru was Gandhi's anti-self or creative mask, just as the West in general is India's anti-self and creative mask? Why do we borrow the terminology of a poet (W.B. Yeats) to understand a political event? Why do we want to assure ourselves that it was, after all, not a sterile relationship but a more or less necessary one? Obviously Gandhi must have felt some sort of an elective affinity with Nehru precisely because he was different and capable of independent thinking. Hadn't he himself declared his preference for independent personalities rather than mere loyal followers? Only a profoundly religious soul could have had such trust in an agnostic. After all, the great leader of the masses had to come to terms somehow with the leader of our half-hearted and shadowy intelligentsia. Well, Gandhi was realistic enough to make his choice among those available to him—in spite of his early and constant disillusionment with the intelligentsia. He chose Nehru, and, paradoxically, at the same time advised the Congress party to dismantle itself and become a grass-roots organization of dedicated workers for

national reconstruction at all levels. Naturally, like every counsel of perfection, it was fated to be dismissed and forgotten.

There is hope in the change that is becoming noticeable in Western circles also. There is a perception now within the West of a one-sidedness in its own historical development, a realization of its own lapses vis-a-vis its own tradition. They are becoming aware of the possible validity of other perspectives. Greater attention is being devoted now to comparative religion and comparative mythology. At the same time, some Western scholars concentrating on the process of social change in India now speak of 'the modernity of tradition'. As Milton Singer, one of such scholars, has observed, 'The traditionalism of Indian civilization is not opposed to innovation and change, to modernity, to the foreign and the strange.'

cive regimes, and who can combine feudal loyalty with modern technological organization. But the problem of forging a modern unity and identity out of such endless diversity and plurality as we have fostered in this land of ours is incomparably more challenging.

As an Indian philosopher, Prof. J.L. Mehta, tells us, 'The greatest peril threatening man today comes from the destiny of homelessness in which men all over the world are caught today.' Mere religious coming together of East and West in a spiritual supermarket cannot penetrate into the depths from which the peril emanates. Prof. Mehta invokes Heidegger on the one hand, and Sri Aurobindo on the other to define this peril and to suggest the way out of it. This peril according to Heidegger springs from the unthought and unarticu-

There is a perception now within the West of a one-sidedness in its own historical development, a realization of its own lapses vis-a-vis its own tradition.

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So, in spite of the drift and disorientation, in spite of the omnipresent corruption and neglect of work-ethic, the optimistic view of V.S. Naipaul—otherwise one of our severest critics—does not seem to be quite unwarranted. Indian society through the ages has displayed a unique in-built resistance as well as resilience. Here is a paradox: nō people in the world have evidenced such sympathetic understanding of the West as the Indians; at the same time, no people have offered it such resistance at the deeper levels as our best representatives have done. It is rather easy to achieve quicker results with a homogeneous people who have been accustomed to imperialistic and more or less coer-

lated foundations of the Greek experience of Being and Saying—that is, from the very source of western philosophical enterprise, which thus, according to Heidegger, came to view the conceptual control of the universe as the only real task of philosophical thought. This was the root from which nihilism and modern homelessness were bound to arise in this philosopher's view.

In our tradition, however, philosophy adopted a very different path, and it is this ancient wisdom which resurrected itself through Sri Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi, and was articulated clearly in Sri Aurobindo's writings. It won't be irrelevant

here to conclude this article with a quotation, which is an invocation of this universal significance of Sri Aurobindo's work:

From the massive corpus of Sri Aurobindo's writings there comes to us a voice charged with a sense of impending breakthrough to a new dimension of consciousness, of a new beginning for humanity, beyond the determination of civilizations, religion and culture, of a step being taken beyond the edge of history and the East-West dichotomy. Like Nietzsche before him, Sri Aurobindo speaks of man as a transitional being, but

unlike the former, he is not led astray by the nihilistic metaphysical adventure of the Western tradition, and can therefore say: 'Man's glory is that he is the closed space and secret workshop of a living labour in which superhumanhood is being made ready by a divine craftsman.'¹

Isn't that one of the many creative lessons that the twentieth century has taught us amid all its confusion and chaos? □

1. Prof. J.L. Mehta, *Philosophy and Religion*, p. 43.



The Charitable Hospital, Mayavati

Swamiji on Sense & Non-sense of Castes*

SWAMI GAUTAMANANDA

Misunderstood and misinterpreted by pseudo-scholars and petty leaders, the caste-system has become a national scourge. Even Gandhiji, who stood as a powerful spiritual and cultural link between the upper and lower castes, and personified a practical solution to caste-problems, today stands mischievously vilified as a perpetrator of caste-division and exploitation!

Before the 'war of castes' gathers uncontrollable momentum, the secret of 'caste', its true meaning and power for good, revealed by Vivekananda, and the dangers of the current false views he had cautioned against, need to be scientifically studied as a law of Nature—if the nation wants a sane solution. The most important solution is: the upper castes should come forward to serve, educate and culturally uplift the lower, reviving the Vedic arrangement in which the scope for the latter's upward mobility was fully open because of the freedom to choose one's vocation, inter-caste marriages, and valuing calibre and character over lineage.

The author, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur Math, discusses the burning question.

The colossal ignorance

There is a story told of a poor man who went to a king to beg for some wealth. The generous king not only gave him a bag full of gold coins, but also persuaded the man to carry a sword in one hand and a shield in the other. Obviously the king wanted the man to protect himself and the wealth from dacoits on the way. As expected, the dacoits did come, robbed the beggar of his gold and disappeared. Hearing this, his relatives asked him, 'What were you doing with these shield and sword when they were taking away your wealth?' The miserable man replied, 'These were my undoing. Both my hands were occupied with these and the dacoits could easily knock away my bag of coins!'

A weapon meant to be an asset became a curse because of his ignorance of its use!

Similarly, according to Swami Vivekananda, caste—a glorious social institution of Hindu society of the past, and one which can again be instrumental in bringing great social stability and development—has become a curse in the hands of the present day socio-political leaders because of the colossal ignorance about it.

Criticism galore

You open any newspaper in any language in any city. You will find news of reservations of jobs and educational seats for B.C. and O.B.C., and vehement opposition to it by other castes, the lower castes criticizing upper castes and vice versa; proselytization of lower classes into Islam or Christianity, and consequent protests and processions; political parties, owing allegiance to specific castes, publicly spitting venom at other castes as if they were not Indian citizens at all—these form almost 50% of the news! It appears that India has no other concern except to discuss caste and get vivisected socially day by day and hour by

* Note: Portions of quotations in the above article have been italicized by the writer for emphasis.

hour, becoming a laughing stock of international communities!

Why Swami Vivekananda

The wonder of it is that, practically everyone who writes or speaks about castes seems to rely on the same hackneyed statements quoted from Manu, *Mahābhārata* or *Rāmāyana*. They never seem to go deep into the origin of these castes, and, worse still, they do not even read a patriot-prophet like Swami Vivekananda who has spoken so much about the nature and role of castes in such great depth and detail! Swamiji based all his teachings on his very deep study of Hindu society and religion from its Vedic to modern times, as also of Indian and world history from ancient to modern times. Swamiji was the awakener of India's nationalism. His addresses at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, from 11th to 27th September 1893, heralded the awakening of this sleeping nation. As Romain Rolland, the French savant, puts it, 'Modern India has arisen from the ashes of Vivekananda.'

Even in these days when all public leaders seem to have lost their credibility, the one leader whose teachings are regarded as the beaconlight for the progress of this nation is Swamiji. It is this reason that makes this writer discuss Swamiji's ideas on the sense and non-sense of castes. The writer hopes that a proper understanding of Swamiji's perspective on this most confused issue will surely help our leaders to guide their flock along the right road to national pride, unity and regeneration.

Swamiji's perspective

From what point of view does Swamiji look at this institution of caste? We have the selfish religionists upholding hierarchy of castes only to further their privileges; the politicians to set up their vote-banks; and the money-makers to secure their man-power (like horse-power)! Unlike them,

Swamiji looks at it with the utmost objectivity of a saint. Read his remark: 'The conviction is daily gaining on my mind that the idea of caste is the greatest dividing factor and the root of Maya; all caste either on the principle of birth or of merit is bondage.'¹

Does this mean that he wants castes to be thrown overboard? In fact, that is what most of our past and present social reformers would advocate! But Swamiji has something different to say: 'Our cultural history as can be read in our *Itihāsas* (Histories), like the *Mahābhārata*, tells us that there was only one caste in the beginning, i.e. in the Satya Yuga, the Age of Truth. It got divided into various castes by and by through vocations. In the end again all the castes will go back to the one caste that was in the beginning.' Here Swamiji makes an oracular pronouncement, as it were, saying, 'This cycle is turning round now and I draw your attention to this fact.'² Swamiji hints that the various castes are on the way to becoming amalgamated into one caste, i.e. one of high spirituality and learning. He further states: 'This Vedantic idea is applicable not only here but over the whole world. Such is our ideal of caste as meant for raising all humanity slowly and gently towards the realization of that great ideal of the spiritual man, who is non-resisting, calm, steady, worshipful, pure, and meditative.'³

Role of castes

Here we notice Swamiji emphatically telling us that *castes are mere social institutions*, which are instruments for raising humanity to its ideal state of godliness and spirituality.

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1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 6, p. 394.
 2. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 197, 293.
 3. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 198.

He explains this role of caste further thus:

Two great problems are being decided by the nations of the world. India has taken up one side and the rest of the world...the other side. What makes one nation survive and others die?...

Our solution is renunciation...and love. These are the fittest to survive. Giving up the senses makes a nation survive...This big, gigantic race...survives because it has taken the side of renunciation.

Competition is the law of Europe. Our law is caste, the breaking of competition, checking its forces, mitigating its cruelties, smoothening the passage of the human soul through this mystery of life!⁴

Some method of social grouping, Swamiji says, exists all over the world. In India we call it *caste* and we base it on cultural and intellectual hierarchy. In other parts of the world they call it *class-of-millionaires, commoners, Lords and Ladies, royalty*, and so on, and base it on wealth. Which should we prefer and which reject? Swamiji replies:

It is the nature of society to form itself into groups; and what will go will be these privileges. Caste is a natural order...Caste is good. That is the only natural way of solving life...wherever you go there will be caste. But that does not mean that there should be these *privileges*. The fisherman will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same god in me as you have in you...*No privilege for anyone, equal chances for all...and everyone will work out his own salvation.*⁵

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 204–5.

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 255–6.

Privileges, a curse

Swamiji moots an important point, which he says has been the cause of all caste rivalry in India, and that is the privileges attached to the higher castes. The more intelligent castes appropriated all the good things of life at the cost of the suffering of millions belonging to the lower castes. This is a fact of Indian history, especially of its medieval period. Thus the earlier spiritual-cultural hierarchy in castes was displaced, by the selfish higher castemen, by a hierarchy of socio-economic privileges, which was bound to recoil. And that is what is happening now. The so-called upper castes possess, instead of higher learning and spirituality, only higher material prosperity and the power that accrues. Oppression has been the result. As the lower castes are realizing the injustice done to them, they want to overthrow the oppressor along with the caste to which he belongs. They feel that the oppression is the result of his caste. The hatred of Brahmins by non-Brahmins in the South, that of the Savarnas by the Avarnas in Gujarat, that of Brahmins and Thakurs by the Scheduled castes in U.P., and so on, are evidences for everyone to see. Swamiji draws our attention to the real cause of the mischief, which is not the 'castes' but the selfishness and 'privilege-seeking' by the so-called upper castes.

Are castes beneficial?

Swamiji therefore advises the lower castes not to be misguided that 'castes' themselves are bad. That would mean that they should disown their own 'caste' too! That would be a tragedy. It is caste that has bound a large group of similarly cultured men into a social group, helped them to live a life of co-operation and mutual help in times of trial and also against the invading alien cultures of Muslims and Christians, and this kept them away from proselytization. Is it a small achievement? It is this idea Swamiji explains thus:

Caste had its bad side but that its benefits outweighed its disadvantages. In brief, the caste system had grown by the practice of the son following the business of his father always. In course of time the community came to be divided into a series of classes...But while it thus divided the people, it also united them, because all the members of a caste were bound to help their fellows in case of need...As no man could rise out of his caste, the Hindus have no such struggles for social or personal supremacy as embitter the people in other countries.⁶

Here we should remember Swamiji's idea that in the west the groups are formed by one's wealth. Naturally anyone from a particular group when he accumulates greater wealth will leave his group and join the next higher one. Thus the mother-group, which helped him to rise, loses the benefits of his talents and accomplishments. But in the Indian castes, the community continues to get the benefits of its members as there is a bar in changing one's caste.

Thus in India, the competition of an agriculturist or a carpenter, for example, is limited to only his caste-members, thus reducing the economic struggles for earning a living, which is a terrible struggle in western societies.

'But,' Swamiji remarks, 'the worst feature of the cast is that it makes people weak, less gifted in winning the economic competitions with other nations, and thus becomes the cause of their downfall when powerful foreign forces attack!'

What would we then have? Castes with their weakning effects? Or castelessness with its cut-throat competitions? The question appears like choosing between the devil

and the deep sea!

The meaning of caste

Here we should know what according to Swamiji is the principle underlying caste. Swamiji gives us his rather revolutionary idea of it. He says:

Take the case of caste, in Sanskrit, *jāti*, which is species. This is the first idea of creation...Unity is before creation, diversity is creation. Now if diversity stops, creation will be destroyed. So long as any species (caste) is vigorous and active, it must throw out *varieties*. When it ceases from breeding varieties, it dies. Now the original idea of *jāti* was this freedom of the individual to express his nature...And so it remained for thousands of years. Not even in the latest books is inter-dining prohibited, nor in any of the older books is intermarriages forbidden. Then what was the cause of India's downfall? The fixing up of this idea of caste. As *Gītā* says, with the extinction of caste the world will be destroyed. *The present caste is not the real jāti, but a hindrance to its progress...* Any crystallized custom or privilege or hereditary class in any shape really prevents caste (*jāti*) from having its full sway. And *whenever any nation ceases to produce this immense variety it must die.* Therefore what I have to tell you my countrymen is this: that India fell because you prevented and abolished caste. Every frozen aristocracy or privileged class is a blow to caste and is not caste...*Break down every barrier in the way of caste and we shall rise.* Now look at Europe. When it succeeded in giving free scope to caste, and each developing his caste, Europe rose. In America, there is the bet scope for caste to develop and so the people are great.

Every Hindu knows that astrologers try to fix the caste of every boy or girl as

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 242.

soon as he or she is born. That is the real caste, the individuality.

This is my method, to show the Hindus that they have to give up nothing, but only to move on in the line laid down by the sages and shake off their inertia...⁷

Here we should note the following two salient point discussed by Swamiji:

1) To keep any caste vigorous, we should give it freedom to interact freely with other caste members as their equals. There should be no bar to healthy inter-dining and inter-marriage of members of a common level of learning and culture, irrespective of their hereditary castes.

2) Castes must be based on learning and culture alone, and not on heredity.

If the above 'principles of vigourization' were kept up, India would not be having such a weak society as we have today. These very principles have been followed by the Western societies and it is for anybody to see the superior strength of their societies!

More than everything else, the need of the hour is sympathy and love towards the neglected castes, and practical help to lift them up by the upper privileged castes. Hear Swamiji in this regard:

It is the duty of the Brahmin therefore to work for the salvation of the rest of mankind in India...but he is no Brahmin when he goes about making money...he only is a Brahmin *who has no secular employment...*To the Brahmins I appeal that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries.⁸

Future of castes

The Hindus should stop doting on their past mistakes and start believing in a bright future India where all castes would be united on the basis of a common culture and learning, and caste-rivalries due to privileges would be things of the past. Hence Swamiji vehemently pleaded thus:

I believe that the Satya Yuga will come, when there will be one caste, one Veda, and peace and harmony. *This idea of Satya Yuga is what would revivify India. Believe it.*⁹

Levelling up

After all, what makes the difference between caste and caste? At least in India, it is only learning and culture. Learning of the Sanskrit language opens the gate to all that is glorious in the Vedic or Indian culture so much admired by even Orientalists such as Max Muller, Paul Deussen, et al. The very word of Sanskrit elicits respect in India. If one has, through a knowledge of Sanskrit, access to the Vedas, and the Puranas such as the *Bhāgavata*, *Rāmāyana*, and *Mahābhārata*, he is sure to be considered to have the highest culture. Add to this the cultivation of truthfulness, purity, self-lessness, and unshakeable faith in one's own eternally perfect Atman. Be he a man from any caste, he will be considered to belong to the highest caste. Swamiji therefore advises us thus:

The only safety, I tell you men who belong to the lower castes,...is to study Sanskrit, and this fighting and writing...against the higher castes is in vain...and it creates fight and quarrel, and this race unfortunately already divided, is going to be divided more and more. The only way to bring about the

7. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 371-3.

8. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 297.

9. *Ibid.*, vol.5, p.27.

levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes....¹⁰

Lower castes have to be raised to the level of higher castes through imparting learning and culture. This should be done primarily by the higher castes, until the whole society is raised to a high level of culture and learning. That would be the Satya Yuga, when all castes would merge into one caste and one culture. If necessary, this transformation can be brought about by stages. How? Swamiji explains:

All the castes are to rise slowly. There are thousands of castes, and some are even getting admitted into Brahminhood...Let us suppose that there are castes here with 10,000 people in each. If these put their heads together and say, we will call ourselves Brahmins, nothing can stop them.¹¹

Swamiji refers to India's medieval history when such things have happened. He says:

Shankaracharya and others would sometimes get hordes of Baluchis and at once make them Kshatriyas; also get hold of hordes of fishermen and make them Brahmins forthwith.¹²

What discovery! If our learned upper castes likewise had absorbed the alien invaders from Islam and Christianity into the main fold of Hinduism, what a wonderful and powerful society we would be having now!

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that India

needs social unity today more than anything else. This can come only by instilling faith into vast sections of neglected common people through proper education and culture. For this, great sacrifices are required of the higher-caste members. Hence Swamiji puts forth his most feelingful appeal to them and predicts the galvanic outcome of such a noble effort in the following words:

Our poor people, these downtrodden masses of India, therefore, require to hear and know what they really are. Ay, let every man, woman, and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness of strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind every one, there is that *Infinite soul, assuring the infinite possibility and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good*. Let us proclaim to every soul, *Uttiṣṭhatha jāgrata, prāpya varān nibodhata*—'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.' Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! too much of inactivity, too much of weakness, too much of hypnotism, has been and is upon our race. O ye modern Hindus, de-hypnotize yourselves. The way to do that is found in your own sacred books. Teach yourselves, teach every one his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and every thing that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.¹³

The fiery words of the Prophet inspired our freedom fighters to mount fearlessly the

10. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 291.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 293–6.

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 293–6.

13. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 193.

gallows with shouts of '*Vande Mataram*' and finally brought us freedom. Mahatma Gandhi said that his nationalism increased thousandfold after reading Vivekananda. Swamiji's words carry with them the living spirit of his heroic self-sacrifice. It was Swamiji, like a Vedic *r̥ṣi*, who said, '*Mūrkhadēvo bhava, daridra-dēvo bhava*'; serve the ignorant as God; serve the poor as God. He rarely spoke anything negative except when he chastised his countrymen for *not being proud of their glorious ancestors and their culture* and for the sickening imitation of western culture. Of late we see that these very two demons are possessing our so-called leaders, who seem to *pride* themselves in denigrating our past national leaders

whose blood has brought us our freedom. They seem to have no shame in disowning their own hoary Indian history, culture and religion so ably fostered and propagated all over India and even abroad, by prophets like Buddha, Chaitanya, Nanak, Kabir, Dadu, Vivekananda and their followers. Let us, for our nation's sake, stop this suicidal vilification of one another, harken to Vivekananda's words, and dedicate ourselves to bring in the Satya Yuga of his dreams, when there would be no dissensions among the castes and classes due to colour, sex, or religion, but all will recognize one another as members of one Human Family. □



The Himalayan peaks in the far north seen
from Mayavati

Human Values in National Development: Their Necessity and Importance

DR. SIDDHARTHA GANGULY

India's rural development programmes over several past decades have produced far less than the targeted results. One of the big loopholes has been the lack of education among the beneficiaries, who due to ignorance could not build further on what little they gained materially. Now they must be educated in self-reliance and higher values too, so they can better utilize their income. The primary need, however, is for the planners and their staff, down to the fieldworkers, themselves to undergo a re-orientation course to understand that food, money, materials, trade, and so on alone do not comprise development. Higher human values must motivate both the planners and the beneficiaries for a balanced development.

The author is well acquainted with the highly successful rural and tribal development activities of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ranchi, Bihar.

I

Two parallel streams of development are visible in the history of mankind right from the most ancient times. On the one hand man has made attempts to make his life more secure and comfortable. Most developments in the field of science and technology can be traced to this desire to live well. On the other, man has constantly been troubled by questions such as: What is his true identity, his purpose of life, his relationship with fellow humans, and the identity of the Creator. The search for the answers led to tremendous developments in the fields of religion, philosophy, art and literature, which later on became the bedrock of great culture and civilization. Man expressed himself in unique ways to manifest his understanding of the life beyond the mundane, much of which could only be intuitively perceived, and not tested empirically. This development, on the one hand, refined human sensibility, and on the other helped man to transform himself from an animal to a superman—that is, an entity capable of transcending the senses. This in turn saw the development of human values.

It is difficult to say whether in all cases the search for satisfaction of the needs for his survival took precedence over the search for the metaphysical entity. However, this is certain that satisfaction of the senses alone never made man contented. Constantly there was an urge to attain something far beyond that. Even the caveman, whose life was not very secure or comfortable, drew pictures on cave walls to express himself. History of nations and civilizations shows that every great civilization has concentrated not only on military prowess or economic muscle, but has also produced people and schools of thought which interpreted the meaning and purpose of human existence. The Chinese produced a Confucius, the Greeks a Socrates, the Israelites a Moses, and the Indians a series of great figures, from Manu to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. These men strived to go beyond the senses, and in the process left nourishment for their societies. Swami Vivekananda observes:

If we read the history of nations between the lines, we shall always find

that the rise of a nation comes with an increase in the number of such men; and the fall begins when the pursuit after the infinite has ceased.¹

It is thus clear from a perusal of the history of mankind that material prosperity cannot be the only factor responsible for the greatness of a nation or a race. Even in the modern times the progress of humanity has not been observed as being exclusively due to things which make life more efficient and comfortable. Pursuits and critical appraisal in the field of the moral and spiritual needs of man has continued, and this has not been confined to the Orient alone, but has also been carried on in the economically progressive West.

II

In recent times the governments and policy-planners of developing countries like India have faced a dilemma while fixing priorities in the process of development. There is a feeling that, in nations where hunger, poverty, illiteracy and exploitation persist, and where resources are limited, it should be possible to divert just a fraction of the resources used in the war against material insufficiency to developing human values. The choice has indeed been a hard one because it is difficult to ignore immediate needs for the sake of those that can apparently wait. Growth of utilitarianism has, more often than not, ensured that the choice is made in favour of an all out war against physical poverty. The argument is —man goes in search of the spiritual only after satisfying his physical needs. Therefore in India, as in similar other nations, development has come to mean provision of material inputs like finance, technology, implements and infrastructure. The results

are naturally measured in terms of increases in production, income and availability of facilities like schools, hospitals and roads.

Education, which was defined by Swami Vivekananda as the 'manifestation of perfection already in man',² is measured in terms of the number of people who can read and write, the number of students who are enrolled in the schools, colleges and universities, and the number of institutions of professional and technical education. The two recent commissions³ set up to enquire into the problems in Indian education and suggest ways of improving it have taken a similar view of education. They have talked about the need of making education relevant so that it can be used for accelerating the process of national development, but, sadly, human values and character have been ignored. National development is evaluated in terms of the material benefits that can accrue to the nation from education.

The results of this kind of perception about national development are slowly and steadily coming to the forefront. Education is being increasingly viewed as a means of earning money, and those pursuits or skills which promise the greatest rewards are pursued vigorously. This often results in the dehumanization of noble professions. For example, a doctor who does not feel for his patients, or a teacher who does not produce good citizens, cannot contribute even to the process of bringing about material upliftment of society.

Secondly, the educated from the cities and the villages are often unable to identify

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 66.

2. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama 1970), p. 70; to Kidi, dated 3 March 1894.

3. a) Kothari Commission (1964–1966);
b) New Education Policy Commission (1984–1986).

themselves with their less educated or uneducated brethren, and try to keep a distance from them. This, on the one hand, denies the uneducated the benefit of informal education, knowledge, and awareness which they could have easily got through contact with the educated. Hence exploitation and neglect of the uneducated continues as lack of awareness makes it difficult for them to think, plan and choose an alternative model of life. In India, if a poor man is asked how he would like to change his present life, he would most likely become silent. On the other hand, the gap between the two sections becomes more pronounced and painful. Education, instead of bringing in harmonious growth, has brought in greater compartmentalization.

The overt emphasis on the material aspects of national development manifests itself in other forms also. The needs of the people, particularly in rural areas, are decided by planners or social workers in places far away from the actual beneficiaries. It is commonly seen in our rural development programmes that things that are not immediately required are provided (e.g. TV sets where electricity supply is often erratic), or things that are too complicated to operate are distributed. The lack of awareness makes it impossible for the people to choose their models of development or to have a say in the way they want development for themselves. So the process of development often becomes counter-productive. Development in such cases increases exploitation as people become habituated to the doles. They become dependent on the Public Distribution System, and people with vested interests are only too ready to misuse such opportunities. So, free books, medicines, etc. only make people indolent instead of helping them to stand on their feet. This cannot be the ideal of any programme for development.

The intention here is not to denounce the present approach to planning and implementing new ideas in the villages and towns of our vast country. It has its share of success stories and it is an undeniable fact that some parts of our country have indeed prospered under the present methods. The pertinent question that we have to ask ourselves is, to what use has that prosperity been put? Rare indeed are instances where material prosperity has brought in character or human refinement. Instances of material prosperity leading to social evils such as drinking, gambling or petty crimes are numerous. The absence of the struggle for bread finds people idle and perplexed, and lack of development and inculcation of human values leaves people with an emptiness which only gives rise to perversions. In the West we have many examples of material affluence giving rise to problems in

Swami Vivekananda observes, 'We must learn to control the grand powers that are already in our hands and by will power make them spiritual instead of merely animal.'

society, and in India we have instances of material prosperity supporting cults of violence, terrorism, etc.

The reasons for this can easily be seen in the neglect of human values in our concept of national development. Seldom has any one thought of development as a human process where man needs something higher than mundane satisfaction. The energy of the uneducated masses was so far spent in struggling for a livelihood. But now that this is being made easy through extensive governmental aid, their energy-surplus can run riot and become destructive in the absence of a higher ideal. Swami Vivekananda observes, 'We must learn to control the grand powers that are already in

our hands and by will power make them spiritual instead of merely animal.⁴ It is this process of transformation, or proper channelization, that requires inputs very different from those required for material prosperity. Here the question of inculcating human values comes in.

The idea is not to argue that the material aspect of development is unnecessary. It is indeed essential. Sri Ramakrishna had said that an empty stomach is no good for religion,⁵ and Swami Vivekananda went one step further and declared, 'I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.'⁶ The intention here is to state that emphasis on material development alone, neglecting human values, can lead to a state where the process of development becomes self-defeating. Satisfaction of the mundane needs is a stepping stone to higher levels of progress of society. Human values lead to society's refinement.

III

In ancient India, religion and society were, to a great extent, linked together. Daily prayers, rituals and other practices gently brought about internalization of certain basic character-building qualities amongst the people. These included respect for others, truthfulness, purity, love and sympathy, and charity, to name a few. That close-knit socio-religious system ensured that violators of these norms felt guilty for deviating from established conventions. The influence of that system can be gauged from the fact that even Swami Vivekananda,

when addressing the World Parliament of Religions the first time, remembered the hymn he had repeated from childhood, which taught the truth of all religions.⁷ There was no difference among the various religions in that India regarding the development of an attitude which lessened human tensions, strife, and sorrow.

The Buddhists teach a certain way of solving the sorrows of mankind. Their advice is that man suffers in life because of his uncontrolled desires. Hence, to transcend sorrow, one should overcome desires by following the eight-fold path, consisting of right thought, action, speech, and so on.⁸ The Christian solution is that one should become meek and humble, and give in charity. Poverty is acclaimed as a quality which endears one to the Father. In other words, the quality of love and charity have been emphasized as essential characteristics of a happy and peaceful life. In the Hindu scriptures too we have teachings which can help us lead a contented and joyous life. Basically these teachings emphasize the need for detachment from worldly things, since life on earth is only a passing phase, and limitless accumulation of wealth or possessions, and desire for more enjoyment are futile. Bhartrihari observes that, in the end we are eaten up by what we want to eat and enjoy.⁹

These are essentially human values preached by religion, so that men and women might know the purpose of life and mould their attitudes and actions accordingly. However, these were lost in the maze of rituals, superstitions and narrowmindedness of the Middle Ages. Naturally, in the modern era arose a feeling that religion was

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 8, p. 46.

5. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985).

6. *Letters*, p. 169; to Alasinga Perumal, dated 27 October 1894.

7. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 4.

8. Paul Caurus, *Sermons of Buddha* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972).

9. *Vairāgya-Śatakam*, verse 7.

against progress, it was irrational, and it spread hatred and discord. The movement away from religion saw the rejection of all the values associated with it. Since then, nothing adequately replaced religion. No doubt, the materialistic and scientific approach has brought material prosperity, but this at the cost of human contentedness. Prosperity has not brought peace and harmony, because people have not put prosperity to proper use.

Swami Vivekananda realized that the modern mind is fond of a rational and scientific approach. Further, he knew that action is an integral part of human existence and, therefore, he emphasized a proper attitude towards action, which could indeed change our lives. He declared, 'Why should we do good to others? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves. All this beautiful world is very good, because it gives time and opportunity to help others.'¹⁰ He went even further to say that service to others is really a form of worshipping God manifest as Man.

Not only was doing good to others given the status of true worship, but he changed our idea of various types of action being intrinsically good or bad, and emphasized that all work—whether religious, personal, or professional, could be considered service to the Supreme if we did it in a non-attached manner, with the same sincerity of purpose and devotion that we accord to worship. This is a revolutionary concept, helpful for the regeneration of human values, because it puts an end to the artificial segregation of normal life from religious life, of action in the temple from action for survival. Further, Swamiji's teaching that each is great in his own place¹¹ brings forth the idea that no one can be sneered at for what he or she is doing,

because potentially every action has its own dignity and deserves respect. This transformation of mundane action into *yoga*, through transformation of attitude, is one of his greatest contributions to the field of inculcating human values in society, because it gives a philosophical interpretation to all our activities so that they can easily be moulded into something more positive and productive. Cultivated, it can help ensure that everybody does his duties devotedly and perfectly, because, as worship, and being for the good of others, all would know that by performing duties thus they are in fact worshipping their Self. Besides, this new attitude evokes mutual respect, because all are viewed as working on an equally important mission. This is a unique and practical contribution to the understanding of human values.

IV

To achieve this kind of balanced development, the primary need is for the spread of real education in our villages and towns on a massive scale. This has to embrace our rural people and also those who are engaged in the task of bringing about rural development. The present method of opening more formal schools in the rural areas is not sufficient, because poverty in the countryside is so great that farmers would rather send their children to earn than to learn.¹² This is borne out by the high dropout rate in rural schools. So, education has to come to them, to their huts, their markets and their places of work. Secondly, education must be more than mere passing on of information. It has to be an education by which, as Vivekananda observed, 'character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'¹³ Education for the masses, particular-

10. *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, p. 75.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 36

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 362-3.

13. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 342.

ly for the rural people, should not be limited to teaching them the proverbial three R's (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic), but it should be the harbinger of a revolution in their body and soul.

To help the Indian people achieve a truly balanced and integrated development, in the rural sector and in the urban sector, that education is needed which trains the mind to think, will, and act properly. As Swamiji said:

The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education,...which helps the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life....¹⁴

'Why should we do good to others? Apparently to help the world, but really to help ourselves. All this beautiful world is very good, because it gives time and opportunity to help others.'

This is what is wanted. Half a dozen men and women thus truly educated, with character perfectly formed, the Swami said further, can bring about a revolution in the whole world. Thus the primary aim of our programmes of development should be propagation of strength-giving ideas, and not just creating models. Again, the Swami said:

The only service to be done for our lower classes is to give them education, to develop their lost individuality...Give them ideas—that is the only help they require, and then the rest must follow as the effect. Ours is to put the chemicals together, the crystallization comes in the

law of nature. Our duty is to put ideas into their heads, they will do the rest.¹⁵ So, these ideas must also be put into the minds of our rural development workers, and the benefits and progress will come by themselves.

A time has come when we can no longer separate the material and the human aspects of development. Neglecting one for the other has been disastrous. After all, without men there cannot be a national development. The development of human values will free people from bondage, both internal and external (psychological and physical), and equip them to become independent. Human values will transform the people now groaning under the burden of poverty, exploitation and dependence into people with love, sympathy and, above all, confidence in their destiny and ability to move towards its realization. And it will be a development where no one gives alms to others, but which will recognize the right of all to be free, to live with dignity and to move towards ultimate spiritual emancipation. People working in the field of national development should keep these aspects in view and strive for a balanced human development with both food and wisdom.

V

As an epilogue it may be added that the history of mankind shows that not all civilizations waited until the complete satisfaction of body before beginning their quest for the higher self. In many cases that quest began much before the fulfilment of all the mundane needs. The reawakening of India in the nineteenth century, and the surge for freedom through the struggle for independence did not wait for the green revolution of the fifties to fill the stomach. The hungry and exploited nation roared to its feet on the strength of its spirit, because the

14. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 490.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 362.

people saw a higher ideal before them. Life and death were of little consequence, as the people were ready to go even to hell for bringing salvation to others. This awakening came as a result of commitment to a value beyond matter and materialism. Similarly, if an awakened nation wants further progress, it cannot rest content with only calculating its national income or number of schools and colleges. It has to ensure that human values are simultaneously developed and grasped firmly. As Swami Vivekananda observed, 'Neither money pays, nor name, nor fame, nor learning; it is character that can cleave through adamant walls of difficulties.'¹⁶

All of us have a dream for our lives, for our nations. We have our idealism and the like. These dreams and ideals, however, occasionally grow dim because our memory clouds and our vision of the ultimate goal is not very clear. Doubts arise, and sorrows, deviations and confusions. It is true for nations as well as for individuals. So, it is here that the mission of inculcating proper human values comes in, as a part and parcel of our programme of national development. As we have started our war against illiteracy, let the spread of real education become part and parcel of that. □

16. *Letters*, p. 184; to Swami Brahmananda, 1894.



The people around Mayavati

Humanism, Development and Peace: Communication in India Re-visioned

MS. KIRAN RAMACHANDRAN NAIR

All right-minded people the world over are aware of the constructive and destructive powers of the Media. In the hands of wrong people, it can cause havoc in the minds of the millions, including children, particularly in India where illiteracy and poverty are widespread.

Ms. K. R. Nair, a lecturer in the Department of Communication and Journalism, Sri Padmavati Mahila University, Tirupati, highlights in this excellent article what should be the content of communication in India, how some priority areas have been ignored altogether, and how, instead, highly injurious themes are being projected in the name of commercial viability. She concludes saying, 'India, which has been blessed with the legacy of a long and ancient tradition of refined spiritual communication, has the power and resource to revive that tradition.'

Introduction

The United Nations designated 1986 as the Year of Peace. But the world scenario is bleak and the question still remains whether man is closer to peace. Despite various efforts by people all over the world to restore universal peace, this precious jewel evades the grasp of mankind. Man is living today in a world plagued by an iniquitous international order, increasing impoverishment of developing countries, incessant civil wars and ethnic conflicts—the epitomization of lopsided development. These dissensions threaten to explode into a nuclear holocaust, which may result in the total extinction of life on this planet. The realization of this imminent danger has spurred international dialogue on vital issues to diffuse the explosive situation. Dialogue on nuclear disarmament, the use of safe technology for sustainable development, an equitable and just human order, and the pursuit of global peace have marginally succeeded in rescuing the human race from the brink of an irrevocable disaster. The challenge to communication is great, given the mounting problems in our

country.

Humanism, Development and Peace: Whither Indian Communication?

'It is man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want.'¹ These prophetic words of Swami Vivekananda, though uttered more than a century ago, still voice the need of our country which is being savaged by destructive forces. It was entrusted to mass communication in India to help achieve the cherished dreams of education and development. Mass media were envisioned as instruments of healthy social change and modernization. The dissemination of developmental news, promotion of social harmony, national integration, environmental protection and sustainable development were the goals set before the media. But these goals are increasingly being dis-

1. *Vivekananda: His Gospel of Man-making* (with a Garland of Tributes), Swami Jyotirmayananda (Ed.) (Shakti, Madras, 1988), p. 29.

placed by entertainment which often diverts peoples' attention from grave matters and lures them further and further away from reality and serious problems into a world of make-believe and fantasy. There is need for introspection by our media on how far priority is being accorded to the original aims.

A serious crisis arising out of personality problems and an almost total erosion of values due to a marked shift from God-centred to man-centred ideas has seen a tremendous decrease in the communication of religious ideas and thoughts. This crisis, characteristic of Western societies, has now spread its tentacles in the East. With mass communication in India becoming increasingly westernized in thought, content and conduct, religious communication, which should bring about adjustment on the material and spiritual planes, has not been accorded due priority.²

Despite all the scientific advancements and technical power, we do not see a corresponding decrease in mental and emotional distresses. Man has soared to great heights of physical and mental power, but has spiritually remained a baby. This is witnessed by us with ever growing despair in the widespread violence, crime, bribery, corruption, indiscipline and social atrocities. It is of paramount importance that our education brings out the spiritual possibilities in every one of us. Only when such an education is given by our mass media can we effect total human development. It would auger well to reflect on our present communication practices and the wisdom guiding them. Do they have the power for 'man-making' and 'nation-building'?

2. Kiran Ramachandran Nair, 'Religious Communication of Swami Vivekananda: An Exposition of Hinduism to the World', *Journal of Dharma*, vol. XIX, no. 2, p. 176.

The western conception of development attaches central importance to economic progress. But the atemporal Indian tradition envisages a higher plane of development, raising man to God-head by making him realize his inherent divinity. This view is radically different from the western perspective which emphasizes the material aspect of human existence. The Indian mass media have become votaries of western consumerism, and have led society into a cultural trap by propagating western capitalistic values. Development Communication strategies founded on western theories sadly lack that vital element of humanism, without the incorporation of which political, economic, social and ecological development do not stand. The failure to advance this dynamic catalyst, viz. humanism, with our development-support-communication has brought instability and disharmony.

So mass communication in India is faced with the challenge of promoting scientific temper, filling the spiritual vacuum and bridging the morality gap.

Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer states that we have two phrases in the Indian Constitution: Scientific temper and humanism, which go together. 'It is not that scientific temper means mere materialism...No science is worthy of being called a science unless it is humanistic. No religion is real religion unless it has humanism central to its teaching.'³ So mass communication in India is faced with the challenge of promoting scientific temper, filling the spiritual vacuum and bridging the morality gap.

However, Communication in India works under a great handicap as there is a

3. Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, 'Religious Fundamentalism and the Present Crisis', *Journal of Dharma*, vol. XIX, no. 1, p. 14.

dearth of well-trained communicators who understand the special need for development-related science communication and have a new awareness of the poor-oriented development concept which has basic-needs-fulfilment as its goal. For example, scientists these days often constitute popular movements against destructive forces such as nuclear arms. Reporting these peace movements should be an essential feature of mass communication.⁴

Instead, communication focusses greatly on scientific advances on diverse fronts and innovative technologies. The eminent economist Kenneth Boulding observes: "The spectacular changes that have taken place in a small segment of the earth's activity should not blind us to the fact over a large part of human society. The great and intractable problem is not to deal with technology that is advancing too rapidly but how to advance technology rapidly enough to promote the welfare of the concerned people."⁵ Development communication needs reorientation from elitism to populism. It should shed its urban bias and take up the cause of bringing remote, backward and farflung areas into the mainstream of national life. Media have a responsibility to present change in a manner that is comprehensive and aid the process of development. The trickle-down hypothesis of development, which states that the benefits of science and technology percolate to the weakest sections of society, is not evident in action, as many of our remote villages are untouched and unaware of the rapid transformation occurring in parts of the country. Mass media, which are

instrumental in the innovation diffusion process, have not been successful in integrating into a unified whole the developments occurring at varying levels.

The Green Revolution has been glorified by our media in stark contrast to the rare reports of starvation deaths. Had these latter been filed adequately, people would have felt such a pathetic condition exists even after more than forty-five years of independence, and our hearts would have failed to be joyful at the successful indigenous rocket launches. Thus the vital concern for man and his well-being, which should be the prime consideration behind all scientific and technological endeavour, is missing. Besides, our media are replete with negative reports reflecting a steep decline in human values, lack of respect for purity and truth, irresponsibility in public life and growing violence for satisfying narrow, selfish wants, and so on. Changing this approach, mass communication must make efforts through healthy positive reporting to arrest the nation's decline and bring about the necessary transformation in values, and usher in a new era of dynamism, determination and enlightenment

Mass communication in India, in passionate pursuit of western liberalism, has long forgotten our country's composite culture founded on the bedrock of a great heritage of humanistic values and egalitarian ethos. Conversely, it has initiated the process of desensitization—wiping out the sense of dignity, decency and empathy in human life. The portrayal of vulgarity, violence and distorted ways of life have misguided our youth into misadventures and a false understanding of life and its purpose. Our communications philosophy needs to undergo a sea of change, and its policies should be revamped to preserve and promote a holistic synthesis of the material, moral and spiritual dimensions of life. This

4. Kiran Ramachandran Nair, 'Newspapers' Social Responsibility in Science Journalism', *Communicator*, vol. XXIX no. 3.

5. *Peace, Technology and Development*, K. N. Sharma (Ed.) (Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1990), p. 23.

is of paramount importance if India is to achieve a balanced developmental quantum jump.

Organized human energies are a reservoir of tremendous strength, unity, progress and prosperity in any country. So, disciplining this presently chaotic and free-flowing energy in our country, and channellizing it for nation-building should be the goal of our media. Communication in our country now seems to be way off this mark when viewed in the face of widespread misuse of power and human degradation evident in society. Therefore our mass communication stands in need of an urgent reorientation towards 'man-making', 'character-building' and 'nation-building'. It should play a pivotal role in the process of making our young people

entering an old text from a new critical direction.⁶ The western conviction that mass media are indisputable aids to development has time and again been proved otherwise in culturally rich parts of the world with time-tested and trusted oral and folk tradition. This re-vision calls for a realization that technology is not of prime importance from the development perspective; rather there should be a shift in emphasis from the *techno-economic* to *human* development.

A rather frightening array of technologies, which is almost overwhelming the West, brings to our mind Nobert Weiner's warning that, cybernetic devices may come to control men and overpower them, instead of man controlling the machine. Such is the face of the imminent communication

It is important to understand that ultimately every citizen is responsible for active participation in public communication through debate and action. The media must make the public its active partner; a critical public is needed to ensure a critical media.

understand, assimilate and envision the true essence of education and its underlying wisdom. That is also the *re-education* our mass media should initiate of which our already educated people stand in immediate need.

Communication Re-visioned

Communication is a dynamic process of continual interactions and influences among various groups with diverse cultural experiences. Charles Cooley, the famous sociologist, defines communication as the mechanism through which human relationships exist and develop. Edward Sapir, an anthropologist, goes further when he states that society in the more intimate sense is the highly intricate network of understanding between the members of organizational units. Society is thus the sum of information-sharing-relationships linked by a communication network. Re-vision is 'the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of

revolution. Marshall Macluhan, who is regarded as the 'Media Prophet', cautions developing nations against the current functioning of their communication system. Says he: 'Do not make the mistakes we have made in the West. Don't use the audiovisual media as we have done. Our media have all but destroyed us. You should plan your own way so that these media resurrect and support and not destroy your culture and values under changes and modern conditions.'⁷

6. Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision' in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*, Adrienne Rich (Ed.), (New York: Norton), p. 35.

7. Marshall Macluhan quoted by Vijaya N. in 'Traditional Media as a Communication Right with Special Reference to Rural Communication Process' in *Religion and Society*, vol. XXXIX no. 1, p. 27.

The developing countries, especially India, are experiencing this cultural crisis. Mass communication has become a commercial enterprise, and only media and information that are profitable are sold. This denies us free access to the gamut of information and makes us choose from a limited range:

...the principle of maximization of power and the principle of maximization

threat in this process will be an imperceptible but effective evolution of democratic institutions into technostuctures that are insensitive to and intolerant of public needs and interests.⁹

The Human Rights Movement has traversed a tedious path in its struggle to secure individual freedom (born of the French and American Revolutions) and invoke the cooperation of the States in

Present-day mass communication relentlessly pursues objectivity, carrying it to such an extent that there is no commitment to action. The result is—absence of sensitivity and the sense of intense involvement to get to the depth of a problem.

of profit merge in the communication sphere to the detriment of that part of global society which is not governed by these principles. As a consequence, citizens are shifted away from participation in decision-making and control towards strengthening their consumer function. The consequence of this process is an erosion of civil society.⁸

It is important to understand that ultimately every citizen is responsible for active participation in public communication through debate and action. The media must make the public its active partner; a critical public is needed to ensure a critical media:

...the critical role of the media is contingent upon the existence of broad-based democratic movements. Otherwise, the decline of the public sphere under the present commercially dominated media systems spells a continuing decline of the critical functions of the media in public affairs. The ultimate

implementing human rights. Finally it is pursuing global concerns such as people's right to self-determination, socio-economic development, communication, ecological balance and peace. This spirit has been embodied in the New World Information and communication order (NWICO) concept which arose out of the deliberations of the Sean MacBride Commission. The MacBride Report puts it thus:

...the success of the measures to improve communication, in both form and content, is inextricably linked with steps to make society itself less oppressive and unequal, more just and democratic.¹⁰

This existential philosophy of communication infuses a spirit of optimism with its belief that existence in its purest and truest form is communication—that life is dialogue.

8. Slauko Splichal, 'Are the State and Civil Society Merging?' *Media Development*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1991, p. 5.

9. Majid Tehranian, *Technologies of Power: Information Machines and Democratic Prospects* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1990), p. 173.

10. Sean MacBride, *Many Voices, One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow* (MacBride Report), Kogan Page, London, 1980, p. 18.

The end of human communication is not to command but to commune, and that knowledge of the highest order (whether of the world, of oneself, or of the other) is to be sought and found not through detachment, but through connection, not by objectivity but by subjectivity, not in a state of estranged aloofness but in something resembling an act of love.¹¹

Present-day mass communication relentlessly pursues objectivity, carrying it to such an extent that there is no commitment to action. The result is—absence of sensitivity and the sense of intense involvement to get to the depth of a problem.

Communication, then, is the aim of philosophy, and in communication all its

11. Krishan Sondhi, *Beyond Mass Communication* (Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corp., 1991), p. 9.

other aims are ultimately rooted: awareness of being, illumination through love, attainment of peace. Karl Jaspers vests communication with the highest responsibility—to restore harmony, to foster love and understanding between men and enjoin them to live in peace with one another.

Conclusion

India, which has been blessed with the legacy of a long and ancient tradition of refined spiritual communication, has the power to revive that tradition. Our modern mass communication and development-support communication have systematically distorted and disfigured our humane communication tradition into a crass imitation of western notions. A renaissance is awaited, arising out of a communication 're-vision'. The endeavour to promote humanism by restoring its vitality will grow out of the appropriate Philosophy of Communication discussed above. □



New members of the dairy at Mayavati

The Bird and the Battered Wing

DR. KAMALA S. JAYA RAO

Dr. Jaya Rao, of Hyderabad, analyses the extent to which India has responded to Swamiji's call for the uplift of women. Making the observation that 'the greatest threat the world faces today is not physical, but it is the erosion of family values and bonds, and the parent-child alienation', she concludes that 'women's progress has to be viewed also—rather chiefly—in terms of equipping them to be enlightened mothers—educated, spiritually inclined and man-makers—, free to seek employment or participate in cultural and social reform activities' without compromising their role as mothers.

In moments of great intuition, Swami Vivekananda would say to Sister Nivedita, 'Never forget, the word is "Women and the People".'¹ He realized that at the root of all evils that plagued India was the neglect of the masses and the women. The term 'people' naturally includes women, yet it somehow generally suggests only the males. Hence Swamiji specially mentioned the sadly neglected segment, viz. women. Nearly a hundred years after this forceful message, and close to five decades after India's political independence, it is worthwhile to examine the extent to which the nation has paid heed to Swamiji's emphasis.

The nineteenth century

To appreciate his views, however, we should bear in mind the condition of women in the last century, which he had observed first-hand during his travels. By and large, women's position then was far from satisfactory, and in some respects it was very bad. Child-marriage, dowry or bride-price, restrictions on women's outdoor activities, their economic dependence, harassment of widows to make them part with their share in the family's property, and so on, were fairly common.

The low status accorded to women was not entirely due to the circumstances created by foreign invaders and alien rule, as is generally believed. For reasons still unclear, their decline started much earlier as can be seen in the Smritis and Puranas (ca 500 BC to AD 600),² and was accentuated during foreign rule.

There was, nonetheless, some good too in the lives women led. Although living in large joint families was attended with the usual frictions and tension, it taught them patience, obedience, cooperation, kindness, etc. Self-denial and service, extolled by Swamiji as our twin national ideals, came naturally in such an atmosphere.

Child marriages were the rule. Either the system of dowry or of bride-price was prevalent. The latter, in a way, was the worse; due to the lure of money child-brides were married off to men old enough to be their grandfathers. This not only brought untold misery to the young wife but also early widowhood.

Married women had to live a secluded

1. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1972), p. 280.

2. *Great Women of India*, Ed. by Swami Madhavananda and R.C. Majumder (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1982) p. 1, p.26.

life, which was enforced to an extreme degree in the North. Women learnt many fine arts such as decorating idols and pictures of gods and goddesses, *rangoli* or *ālpānā*, embroidery, etc. These formed a part of their daily life, and there was no such dichotomy as household chores and hobbies. We may recall Sri Ramakrishna's teaching Holy Mother the art of preparing betel-rolls, lamp wicks etc. Household duties were thus lightened and brightened and were not seen as drudgery.

Everything with which one came into contact was sacred, for the Indian believed in the immanence of the Divine. To the Indian woman, therefore, the earth, plants and trees, animals, water and food had each an inviolable sanctity, and there were strict rules by which each had to be treated. Thus, she unconsciously imbibed principles of ecology and knew how to live in harmony with nature.

Religion was the mainstay of a woman's life and through all the vicissitudes of Indian history it was she who guarded religion and culture, which in the Indian context are complementary. The calendar was dotted with festivals, rites and rituals, fasts and vows, which kept the women free from boredom and idleness. These also provided them opportunities to exhibit their artistry and also for socializing. Visiting temples, bathing in holy waters and pilgrimages have a deep hold on the Indian psyche, and these were not denied to women. Sister Nivedita's charming narration of life in Indian households gives us some idea of that period,³ though we may not accept it as true in every case.

Considering these two pictures—one bright and the other dark—of the way of life

of women in the nineteenth century, we clearly see their three principal handicaps: First, their cloistered life cut them off from the national mainstream, leaving them ignorant of the developing social realities. Second, they remained illiterate, superstitious and custom-bound. Third, male dominance forced upon them dependence and insecurity.

Social reformation

Though women had apparently taken their lot as an unchangeable circumstance, unseen forces were building up to help them. The latter half of the century saw the birth of great reformers and reformist movements. In the North, Dayananda Saraswati restored to women the right to education and Vedic rites, as was available to them in ancient days. In Bengal, Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and the Brahmo movement took up the cudgels against child-marriage, and advocated female education and widow-remarriage. This found ready support in other parts of India, particularly in Maharashtra and coastal Andhra.

Swami Vivekananda and women's education

On the stage thus set appeared Swami Vivekananda. He appealed directly to the Indian mind which was still deeply rooted in its spirituo-cultural traditions. He referred to women as 'living images of Shakti' and therefore worthy of the highest veneration. The early stirrings of the National Freedom Movement had by then filled the air, and with prophetic vision he saw that the destiny and development of the country was inextricably linked with that of its women. He therefore warned that the nation cannot become great unless women are properly respected,⁴ and, using a telling

3. Sister Nivedita, *The Web of Indian Life* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama).

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972), vol. 7, p. 215.

metaphor, said, 'It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.'⁵ Swamiji, however, was not a superficial reformer. He wanted the basic conditions to be so altered as to enable women to think for themselves and then initiate whatever changes they themselves thought necessary. In other words, he wanted the society as a whole to reform itself so conditions could improve.

To him, the first step in this process was the education of women. Swamiji's concept of education being different from mere for-

and independence.

The dawn of a golden era

Subsequent events proved that Swamiji's assessment of women's calibre was correct. Women themselves began coming forward to demand raising of the age of marriage, widow remarriage, abolition of polygamy, and so on. This dramatic change has been portrayed with personal pride by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, one of her important observations being that these issues were raised not on a gender basis but

...in the nineteenth century, we clearly see their (women's) three principal handicaps: First, their cloistered life cut them off from the national mainstream. Second, they remained illiterate, superstitious and custom-bound. Third, male dominance forced upon them dependence and insecurity.

mal schooling, he wanted a character-building education: one that would give them mental strength and the ability to rely on themselves in all situations.

In the broad perspective he had of the national problems, women's problems, significantly, were *not defined in socio-economic or socio-political terms*. Hence it is certain that he saw their education as much more than a means to the joy of economic independence. The different roles women might assume in the world outside was of secondary concern to him, the more important being their attitude towards the challenge in each vocation. Women, he insisted should develop self-esteem, and become fearless and independent. Fearlessness is the *sine qua non* for independence, and that was his watchword. The idea of perfect womanhood is perfect independence, he told his American audience.⁶ So, no wonder he paid great tributes to American women, in whom he saw a combination of education, fine culture

as social maladies in need of an integral approach for rectification.⁷

The purdah system too was broken by women, and soon they were in the thick of the national freedom movement, fighting for political rights. India then had very enlightened leaders with Mahatma Gandhi in the vanguard, and therefore fighting alongside men was not a contentious issue; on the other hand, it was welcomed and encouraged.

The dream shattered

The first half of the twentieth century thus raised hopes of a golden era for women—at least of the middle class, for the poor continued to be weighed down by severe financial and social constraints. At the dawn of Independence, we dreamt of a glorious future, when the nation would be strong, progressive, economically and socially advanced, and in which women

5. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 328.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 198.

7. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, *Indian Women's Battle for Freedom* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1983).

would be playing a significant role. However, today that bright period is remembered as only a lightning flash. As the nation bade farewell to its leaders of the freedom movement when they passed away one after another, it appears to have simultaneously bid farewell to moral values, national pride and human dignity those leaders upheld, and women are once again at the receiving end of newer forms of oppression. Even fifty years after gaining political independence, women's status in India is a none too happy one.

Literacy and education

Let us consider particularly the middle class, which constitutes a very large seg-

ces, with little attention to humanities, literature, ethics, and aesthetics has cut off the youth from our ancient spiritual traditions. The repercussions of this are greater on women. As Kamaladevi says,⁸ it has killed all initiative, destroyed all creativity, and the girls are poorer in quality than their ancestors. On the other hand, Swamiji was emphatic that learning modern science should not be at the expense of ancient traditions.⁹

Cheap modernism

The great strides in technology and rapid industrialization have given rise to gross consumerism. This unfortunately has occurred just as the middle class women are

The lopsided emphasis on the natural sciences, with little attention to humanities, literature, ethics, and aesthetics has cut off the youth from our ancient spiritual traditions. Swamiji was emphatic that learning modern science should not be at the expense of ancient traditions.

ment of the population and plays a significant role in the national activities.

The urban upper and middle classes have shown keen interest in sending girls to schools and for higher education. With special colleges and universities for women, now we have many women doctors, engineers, scientists, technologists, administrators and business executives, and, recently, some have even joined the air force as pilots. Today, no profession is considered an exclusive male domain.

This, however, is a glossy veneer, hiding the condition of the rural and semi-urban middle class women, who still are suffering suppression because of illiteracy.

Further, that our educational system has deviated from what Swamiji desired has been repeatedly discussed in various fora. The lopsided emphasis on the natural scien-

gaining economic and social freedom. So we see houses cluttered with consumer items, and living rooms, which formerly contained at least a few classics, turned into a sort of showroom with cheap pieces of art and the 'essential' television set. The sanctum sanctorum of an Indian home, the shrine room, is no more to be seen

The market is flooded with a mind-boggling variety of cosmetics. Indian society had never frowned upon beautification of the body, but it was to be done gracefully—to bring out the inner spiritual glow and beauty of the person. Today, however, the body as such is the centre of attention and gratification, and this in a country which always considered the body ephemeral. The acclamation that followed the recent selection of an Indian as Miss Universe indicates

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-7.

9. *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 292.

the rot that has taken hold of the Indian mind. The great danger here is that future generations are being reared by mothers whose minds are captivated by cheap western ideals, and who are totally alienated from the great ancient Indian ideals. Swami Ranganathananda often points out the distinction between being modern and what he terms 'modernistic',¹⁰ the latter being vulgar. Swami Vivekananda's prophetic vision had not missed this possible danger, and Sister Nivedita writes: 'The infinite danger that attended the introduction of knowledge by foreign minds,...was never for one moment hidden from him.'¹¹

Work opportunities

Next, looking at the question of employment, generally speaking women face no discrimination in getting appointment to posts or receiving wages in government institutions. Therefore they have been able to occupy positions of responsibility and to get satisfying jobs. But this has not been true of employment in the private and the unorganized sectors, where tremendous gender bias still exists; in the latter sector, where mostly the poor and the illiterate work, exploitation is rampant.

While an educated girl today can choose from a variety of jobs, some undreamt of even a generation ago, her freedom, however, is quite restricted—the male members of the family deciding the job she may take up! In the case of a married woman, her burden is twofold—running a home, and handling her vocation. This not only saps her physical energy but also brings on great mental stress and tension, with the result there is much domestic strife.

10. Swami Ranganathananda, *Women in the Modern Age* (Srinagar: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1987), p. 10.

11. *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 292.

Much of the blame for this is sought to be laid on the 'misuse of independence' by women and on the feminist movements. This is not true. On the contrary, women are aware that unhappy homes and broken families adversely affect social harmony. But those who in the wake of the feminist movement have got educated and employed have at least an alternative to suicide when faced with extreme domestic suffering. So, instead of grudging women's progress, what should be rectified is the male's attitude towards women. And this will come when enlightened and liberated women correct their male children's behaviour.

Economic independence

In the absence of this, women's ability to earn money has failed to win for them the expected economic freedom. Instead the consequences have been totally unexpected and demeaning. With an increase in the number of employed girls, marriage, which in the Hindu society was a sacramental vow, has degenerated into an insulting business proposition. A prospective bride is seen more as an income generator than as a life-mate. The matrimonial advertisements show that what is considered important about a bride is neither her lineage nor her education, not even her physical beauty, but the job she holds!

Even after marriage women, notwithstanding their education and their capacity to earn, are mentally and physically ill-treated by their husbands, often out of sheer jealousy. Added to this, sometimes, is the harassment by the mothers-in-law—most of whom are uneducated, and themselves victims of a male-dominated society, who are unable to come to terms with educated, employed and independent-minded daughters-in-law. Internecine conflicts are common in suppressed, oppressed and enslaved groups; for, that is the only outlet

for their frustrations. As Swami Vivekananda has said: 'If you do not allow one to become a lion, he will become a fox. Women are a power, only now it is more for evil because man oppresses woman; she is the fox, but when she is no longer oppressed, she will become the lion.'¹² So a basic change in the outlook of men is essential for women's development to bear fruit.

Humiliation outside the home

Compounding the women's woes at home—in fact, as an extension of male behaviour at home—is the treatment women receive outside, and in the work place. Earlier, when women led a cloistered life they were at least protected from humiliation in public places. In contrast, these days women, irrespective of their social status and education, feel unsafe on city streets. Whereas sexual violence appears to be a universal phenomenon, the shameful everyday offence of eve-teasing, verbal and physical, has gone out of hand in India. As bad, and sometimes worse, is the atmosphere in the work place. Though the mass media deserve to be blamed for all this, the situation only reflects the common attitude of the society.

The nation may feel proud of the increasing literacy and employment among women, but let us not forget that a nation's real progress begins only when women can freely and with dignity participate in its developmental process. Swamiji has warned that a nation which does not respect women will always remain backward.¹³ But respect, in his view, is not to be equated with Western conventions of chivalry, for he saw gender distinction in that too.¹⁴ Therefore he

wanted women to be respected for their innate divinity, power, intellect and character—without the least reference to the physical being of women. From this point of view then, even reverence for motherhood, the highest that ordinary humanity is capable of, is insufficient. True respect for women, as much as for men, should, Swamiji says, transcend all notions of femininity and masculinity: it should spring from the idea of human divinity.

The sanctum sanctorum of an Indian home, the shrine room, is no more to be seen.

Cultural alienation

Thus the cause of the malady afflicting the modern middle class can be traced to its gradual alienation from our ancient spiritual traditions. Swamiji, no doubt, admired the way the American women, educated and cultured, remained at the centre of their national life.¹⁵ Marie Louise Burke too remarks that American women saw to it that the materialistic society did not get brutalized.¹⁶ However, the rapid industrialization in the post world-war period has brought about a sea change in that nation's cultural scene. India too stands in similar danger of a cultural decadence as the middle class, the traditional support of spiritual and moral values, loses its moorings

As a precaution, it is essential that children be familiarized with our ancient system of values. They need to be taught about gender equality at the spiritual level, and helped to develop healthy gender

12. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 7, p. 22.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

14. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), p. 198.

15. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 5, pp. 25–8.

16. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), vol. 1, p. 100.

relationships. To address every female, irrespective of her age and social status, as 'mother' is an age-old Indian tradition. This is now being replaced in urban and semi-urban areas by the terms 'auntie' and 'madam'. *Per se*, this may appear trivial, but it is a part of what is called in 'common jargon' the 'mummy-daddy' culture, where the adoption of the English language and a cheap Western life style is considered social progress

India too stands in similar danger of a cultural decadence as the middle class, the traditional support of spiritual and moral values, loses its moorings.

In this regard Swamiji was acutely aware of the 'moral and ethical failures which result from too easy an adoption of foreign ideas, without regard to...social continuity and cohesion.' For language is a powerful vehicle of cultural traditions, and when a race loses its grip on it, their culture stands in danger of extinction.

Alienated families and social chaos

Humanistic, moral and spiritual values which constitute culture have to be imparted to children right in their homes. The home and the family are buffers against the onslaught of social pressures. With more and more middle class women joining the work force, families hardly have time to be together. Commuting to work in the metropolis saps all the energy and time, and parents are hardly in a position to look after even the physical needs of a child! The solution to this, viz. the one-child norm, however essential from a larger national perspective, bears the risk of making the child self-centred and a social recluse.

These factors are contributing to serious behavioural problems among adolescents and youth. The upper classes are already

beset with the problems of alcoholism, drug addiction, licentiousness, divorce and homosexuality. At the lower strata of society, grinding poverty, illiteracy, and the highly visible economic disparities are the known causes of the above problems as also of crime and violence. However, in the name of modernity, if the large middle class segment too, educated and economically better placed, carelessly lets itself get spiritually impoverished, the resultant societal chaos will be unmanageable and unimaginable. This warning has already been sounded by Swamiji in his speech at Ramnad.¹⁷

Women's role in national development

In this situation a question that needs serious consideration is whether every educated woman should seek employment. This may sound reactionary, but it is not so in the ultimate analysis. A large number of working women are not in intellectually satisfying jobs but in low-paid, routine ones—as clerks, typists, accountants and so forth. Many of them work not out of economic compulsions but to fulfil artificial wants created by a consumeristic culture. Besides, they have neither true economic independence nor social freedom, as discussed earlier. So, what is needed is a revolutionary, attitudinal change in a male-dominated society, and suitable legislative reforms to ensure every woman a rightful share in her parent's wealth as well as in the wealth and income of her husband.

No woman should, however, be denied the right to a career if she so desires. Conditions and terms of employment should be altered for her so that her role as a mother is not compromised. Nor should an educated woman feel compelled to work. That is, education should be seen not as a means to

17. Swami Vivekananda, *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975). See pp. 47-54.

earn but as an ennobling end in itself. For, a woman's greatest contribution to society is as a mother, and an educated mother is a great blessing. This is a woman's right and a responsibility which should be neither denied nor shunned. Hers is a burden heavier than that of any social position held by a person.

While it is necessary that women should contribute to national progress, this need not necessarily be in economic terms. Can they not contribute to the spiritual regeneration and cultural development of the nation? Educated women will be able to handle this very efficiently. In fact, relieved of the compulsion to earn, they can turn their attention to social and political problems. Today there are hardly any women of stature in this field (that there are no men of stature either is a different matter).

It is widely believed that career-women are less prone to accept bribes and to other forms of corruption. This is due to the fact that our women have not as yet totally isolated themselves from spiritual values. So, even without going in for employment, educated women can contribute a great deal as mothers or by participating in the programmes to solve social and political problems. Religion is a strong component of the Indian ethos. Therefore women can focus on upholding spiritual and philosophical values, without which religion breeds

superstitions and fanaticism as contemporary history reveals.

The greatest threat that the world faces today is not physical, but it is the erosion of family values and bonds, and parent-child alienation. Human society is an aggregate of families, and when the basic units break up, it will disintegrate. Indian women, with their rich spiritual heritage, can play a great role at this crucial juncture of history.

At present their economic independence and social freedom, instead of strengthening them, has trapped them in a modern version of slavery and tyranny. Thus one wing of the nation-bird has remained weak. So the remedy lies in dispelling the wrong conception that more employment opportunities and social freedom will consolidate women's position. Otherwise, it is likely that that wing will get further battered, grounding the bird altogether. Therefore, women's progress has to be viewed also—rather chiefly—in terms of equipping them to be enlightened mothers—educated, spiritually inclined and man-makers—free to seek employment or participate in cultural and social reform activities. As commented in an editorial of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, a man who does not recognize a woman's role in his own development has yet to reach 'the human level in his mental evolution.'¹⁸ □

18. *Prabuddha Bharata*, 1975, vol. 80, p. 485.

Those to whom the entity presented by the Vedantic knowledge has become fully ascertained, who are assiduous and have become pure in mind through the Yoga of monasticism—all of them, at the supreme moment of final departure, become identified with the supreme Immortality in the worlds that are Brahman, and they become freed on every side.

—*Mandukya Upaniṣad*, III.ii.6

A Glorious Promise and What We Can Do to Redeem It

SWAMI SHASTRANANDA

India has a definite mission to fulfil in the comity of nations, and it is therefore appropriate that Indians become conscious of this as a great responsibility—towards themselves and the rest of the world. Swami Shastrananda, a senior monk of our Order, presents, in the forceful language of Swami Vivekananda, the ideas of Man-making Self-realization and nation-building which Indians must assimilate before hoping to set out on the 'spiritual conquest of the world'

The Revelation

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA is the great 'Voice of Truth'—Truth which was the very core of his life, actions and message. He attached supreme importance to it in human affairs, be it for the individual or for society, and declared:

Truth does not pay homage to any society, ancient or modern. Society has to pay homage to Truth or die....*That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical.*

Stand up, men and women....dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth.¹

He was indeed a *seer*, a *r̥ṣi*, one in whose mind Truth flashed in profound dimensions as eternal truths relating to man and the universe, an empirical truths relating to history and human affairs. That was the case regarding India and her people. One such revelation made him declare, 'A wonderful glorious future India will come.' But he also

1. This writing is based on the writings and utterances of Swamiji himself. Quotations are sometimes taken in part. Most of the Italicized portions are the writer's. References are omitted in order to avoid tedium to the reader.

added, 'On *our work* depends the coming of the India of the future....Let us all work hard, my brethren, this is no time for sleep.'

A 'prophecy' and the conditions for its fulfilment

We have done the great mistake of hailing his prophecy and promise of a glorious India to come, but failing to note the conditions for its fulfilment. We have failed to put in the work *needed*. Any and every thoughtless, selfish or frantic activity is *not* the work needed. Only what is done consciously and conscientiously, with understanding, faith and commitment bears fruit. And this work is to be based on sound and worthy values, the means adopted must be clean and right, and so also the human instruments who carry on the work—persons with a clean and noble character.

We alone are our friend and we alone our foe.

If we carefully reflect upon some of the vital utterances and warnings which emanated from Swamiji in this context, then we may realize where and how things have gone awry and how they could also be set right

...there is no power to injure us unless we first injure ourselves. Let us blame

none....We are to blame. Stand up be bold, and take the blame on your shoulders. (He says,) 'Blame yourself'; (but that is not enough; he adds), 'and do better'.

Swamiji knew how vital self-reliance and self-help is for the survival and security of a nation:

The whole national character is one of childish dependence....You do not deserve to live if you cannot help yourselves....You must *not* depend on any foreign help. Nations, like individuals, must help themselves. This is *real patriotism*. If a nation cannot do that, its time has not yet come. It must wait.

Never depend on external help

The worst part, perhaps, of a continued seeking and accepting of external 'aid—which should be resorted to only in very exceptional and grave situations, comparable to the need for an emergency blood transfusion,—may escape our biased minds. It is the danger to our freedom and independence. The temptation to fritter away easily-gotten aid on speculative or over-ambitious plans may lead the nation in the direction of permanent dependence on others, causing loss of self-respect and moral rectitude. This softening would amount to emasculating the nation and is to be avoided.

Let us not forget that we *never* can get anything in this world without paying fully its price. If we can 'buy' now easily, we have to pay later painfully. Ill-advised and insufficiently self-respecting approach to finding solutions to our problems (mostly self-created) would even mortgage the honourable existence of the future generations. Few crimes could be as serious as that

substitute for honest and intelligent labour—at all levels. No nation can survive if its people are not geared to make immense sacrifices when necessary for preserving individual and national honour and integrity, inspired by worthy leaders whom the people can trust and respect. Any person's act or policy which would compromise these two vital and imperative elements of ethical life—honesty in word and deed, and the common sense need for personal sacrifice and hard labour to achieve desired goals—must be regarded as dangerous to the society. Whether done consciously or willingly—or committed regretfully and apologetically, dishonesty and inadvertence in leadership must be regarded as tantamount to treachery and betrayal of the country and the people.

So stand out Swamiji's anguished words: 'We are lazy, we cannot work....Speaking and *not doing* has become the habit.'

What is to be a responsible person's attitude?—'Each one of us has to believe that every one else in the world has done his work, and the only work remaining...is to be done by *himself!*'

Priority in planning

In planning and executing our projects for nation-building, we must make doubly sure that our resources, material and human, physical and mental, are not being squandered away on short-term, one-sided and populist schemes, but are expended on what really contribute to lasting and all-round good for the nation as a whole. A wise leader will take up only such constructive and beneficial projects and lead his aides (and the people) along such a path to completion, even if the cost is hardship and sacrifice, and even if he encounters some opposition at first.

Let us also never forget that there is no

The removal of poverty, disease and in-

justice from society are very important and noble aims in life. But even where programmes for their eradication are conscientiously pursued and are successful, the higher goals of human life remain to be achieved and should not be forgotten.

Swamiji, if any one, was the great champion of our poor, ill-fed, down-trodden masses. So while he held that the very backbone of our nation is spirituality or dharma, or 'religion' (in its true sense), and that the spreading of moral and spiritual truths is of prime importance, even that could not be done among starving and emaciated people. He gave priority to improving the material conditions of the poor masses, providing them with the means to get food and shelter and enabling them to stand on their own feet as men. But he also clearly pointed out that these were not ends in themselves, but only important means, the first steps to a more important and vaster goal of man.

Yes, man is to be fed so that he can live. He must be provided with medical facilities so that he can enjoy health and happiness. Healthy mind and body is to be provided with wholesome and positive training and education, not just the brain-stuffing, money-making and self-aggrandizing type, but that which would help him to make his own honest living and stand on his feet, to understand life and its problems intelligently, to face them wisely and work out solutions. Most importantly, Swami Vivekananda emphasized, the masses are to be made happy so that they can discover the great potentialities for good within themselves, for their own fulfilment and for the good of society. This Swamiji stressed again and again in several of his talks and writings. The gist is found especially in his classic work, *Karma Yoga*.

Man—the central factor

For Swamiji, of supreme priority was man,² the human being himself. Man, manliness, and man-making were the three key factors in his message and work, whether it was in the field of religion, in education, or in dealing with social issues and problems. It should be for us too, in all our schemes for nation-building. 'Men, men,' he said, these are wanted; everything else will be ready, but...men...are wanted.' Men—good men, worthy men, noble men.

*Greatest need and asset—
goodness in man*

The basis of all systems, social or political, rest upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good. Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world....When you have men who are ready to sacrifice everything for the country, sincere to the backbone—when such men arise, India will become great in every respect

Swamiji's revelations include both promises as well as warnings. Both will have to be taken into account together—not in isolation.

Today all that goes on under the cover of 'economic prosperity' and 'for progress of the country' is not the cloud's silver lining. In fact the plight of the common man seems to grow sadder all the time. Affluence is often seen only to bring out the beast in man. His spiritual nature and 'goodness', so important to Swamiji, is rarely in the news,

2. The term is to be understood to include 'woman' as well. It means the individual, the person. Swamiji considered men and women to be equally important for the well-being of the nation, and he showed equal respect to each.

whether on the side of the masses who are being 'raised up', or on the side of the privileged classes who are doing the lifting!

Power and primacy of the spirit

The frantic pursuit of what is considered to be 'economic prosperity, by any and all means, at the same time turning a blind eye to the value and elevation of noble human character, poses one of the greatest dangers, which should make us sit up and take notice. Swamiji points out:

One must admit that law, government and parties are phases, not final in any way....the basis is not law...morality and purity are the only strength. You have the saying that men cannot be made virtuous by an Act of Parliament. And that is why religion (which concerns the very core of all humans, and the fountain of all nobility and virtue) is of deeper importance than politics, since it goes to the root, and deals with the essentials of conduct.

For Swamiji, religion is the noblest of human endeavours. It is the manifestation of *divinity* already in man; *Divinity*, which is perfection of truth, purity, courage, generosity, wisdom, love, and sacrifice for the good of others. The recognition of it in all human beings is the one sure basis and guarantor of peace, unity and goodwill on earth. Their practice constitutes being 'spiritually-minded'. So he said:

National union in India must be a gathering of its scattered *spiritual* forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.

True Religion, the backbone of India

As if he foresaw what wrong courses we are taking today, Swamiji warns:

...if you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics or society, or any other thing as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will *become extinct*....Religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when *that goes*, India will die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of Kubera's³ wealth poured upon the head of every one of her children. If you give up your spirituality and go after the materializing civilization of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race!

Swamiji most certainly was not an obscurantist or bigoted traditionalist. An enlightened and progressive thinker and a noble realist, he added:

I do not mean to say that political and social improvements are not necessary, but what I mean is this, and I want you to bear it in mind that they are secondary here, and that religion is primary.

*True significance of religion:
the foundation of character*

'Religion', to Swami Vivekananda, stood for the very foundation of truth, goodness, virtue and nobility; it is that which transforms 'man the brute' into 'man the God'.

It is when the national body is weak that all sorts of disease germs...crowd into the system (—in the political arena, in the social system, and the educational or intellectual spheres—)⁴ and produce disease. To remedy it...strengthen the man...make the blood pure, the body vigorous, so that it will be able to resist

3. Kubera, the legendary god of wealth.

4. Parenthesis by the author.

and throw off all external poisons⁵ ...our vigour, our strength, nay, our national life is in our religion. That is the life of our race⁶ and that must be strengthened.

The adage: 'If wealth is lost *nothing* is lost; if health is lost, something is lost; if character is lost, *everything* is lost', is for us a timely reminder to give our affairs a wholesome direction. We see now to have become much pre-occupied, almost obsessed, with our 'gross national product', national income, attracting investments and obtaining aid and loans, while ignoring the wholesome 'character' of our people, particularly those who are at the helm of our affairs at the various levels of government and social life.

This serious lapse should ring an alarm bell in our responsible quarters.

Sources of our real strength

Again, Swamiji is very clear about where our real strength lies and what should receive our primary attention. He does not mind warning us, even if that may jar some of our ears:

...each race has a peculiar mission to fulfil in the life of the world....*Political greatness or military power was never* the mission of our race; it never was, and, mark my words, *it never will be...* (what, then, is our mission? It is) 'to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate...all the spiritual energy of the race.... This is the theme of Indian life-work,...the *raison d'être* of her very existence—the *spiritualization* of the human race.... Whether *you believe* in spirituality or not, for the sake of *national life*, you

have to get hold on spirituality and keep to it. Then stretch the other hand out and gain all you can from other races, but everything must be *subordinated* to that *one ideal* of life....

Let us not fail to note it with the deepest care.

We need 'power' for rebuilding our nation. But its real source should be recognized as lying in the spiritual and moral life of our people. Swamiji therefore stressed:

Truth is infinitely more weighty than untruth; so is goodness....be true, be honest, be pure....No amount of force or government or legislative cruelty will change the conditions of a race, but it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better.

Cardinal virtues vital for our survival and success

The core of religion. viz. spirituality, which Swamiji prescribed for national survival and nation-building, is constituted in the great value of truthfulness, (*satya*), non-coercion, and non-resorting to force (*ahimsa*), purity and chastity (*brahmacarya*), and simplicity and non-self-aggrandizement (*aparigraha*). These are the time-honoured and requisite virtues held forth by Indian sages and saints as the *sine qua non* of a worthy person and nation. They are supplemented by the famous mantra: 'Da, Da, Da'—meaning 'dama', or self-control, 'dāna', or generosity, and 'dayā', or love and compassion. These when perfected merge into the dimension of the Divine.

5. Including the intrusion of 'foreign hand', if any.

6. Not the 'ethnic' race, but the collective and continuing group or people who have made India their cherished home.

It is imperative that we revive and go back to these perennial sources of our national vitality and greatness, and, on their basis restructure the nation by re-orienting the thought-current of society. Yes, it would

be slow and arduous and would demand sacrifices, but either we succeed or perish. Those are our true leaders who tread this path and lead their followers to do so, thus serving and saving the nation.

So if we are to survive and become strong, not to mention becoming great, then we must adhere to India's time-honoured values and the teachings of her great masters of spirituality and religion.

Glory of truth and non-coercion

Non-violence, another name for truthfulness (since what I regard as good for others, I must regard as good for myself—and vice-versa), must become the very fabric of our way of life.

Our adopted national motto: *Satyam eva jayate*—'Truth alone triumphs' can remain simply a ritualistic emblem embossed on our stationery; or, better still, it must become a holy reminder and energizer with us, something to implement at all levels of our national life, including the political, the diplomatic, the commercial, and in our day-to-day social interactions.

The non-coerciveness attitude must be brought back to us as a cardinal principle in our national life and thought. This would in no way be at odds with our legitimate right to self-defence either as individuals or as a nation. The difficulty sometimes in distinguishing between 'vigorous action' and 'violent action' is no doubt problematic—say in the time of battle for self-defence or when a small child blames his parents for coercing him into the practice of gentle manners and behaviour; but just because of difficulty, the principle should not be abandoned!

Now, when the use of coercive methods has become a sad and perilous way of life amongst us—perilous because 'forceful

methods' seem always to degenerate into violence—there is the danger that the calling of statewide and nationwide strikes (*bundhs*), walk outs, demonstrations and agitations, shouting-downs, and sit-ins (sometimes on the slightest whims of excited people) may become 'accepted' in our society as an unavoidable evil. Even our leading political parties sometimes promote surreptitiously these dubious methods; conciliatory and peaceful talks, and constructive interchanges of useful ideas for their own sake have become rare phenomena! Let us not rationalize, saying to ourselves that all these signs of violence are only an indication of the awakening of the people. If we go that far, then God save us!

The signs of real strength are resoluteness, steadfastness and courage in the face of adversity, great patience in resisting evil, and calm but energetic action, compassionate and never vindictive. An individual or group which has lost its self-control, generous nature, and feelings of love and compassion, is surely headed towards disintegration and self-destruction, though in the process of its decline it may bring much harm and suffering to others also.

True democracy

A true democracy derives its strength from the quality, strength and wisdom of its people, who create it and live by it—not just from numbers of ignorant, excited and misguided zealots. Swamiji makes some vital observations regarding democracy which command our earnest attention: 'The new order of things is the salvation of the people by the people, and it takes time to make it workable.' We have to focus our attention and energies towards educating our people 'till they understand their needs and are ready to solve their problems.' So right and fruitful education holds the key—the education which is character-building and man-making, and which helps our people to

develop into wise, upright, courageous, self-reliant, industrious, creative and compassionate persons.

Again Vivekananda stressed another important aspect of education which we are recklessly ignoring today:

The secret of a true Hindu's character lies in the subordination of the *knowledge* of European (i.e., western) science and learning, and of his wealth, position and (good) name (and reputation) to the one principle theme, which...is the spirituality and purity of the race.

*Renunciation and Service:
the National Ideals of India, and
the root of our strength*

If today we should have to provide a right motto to our people for our collective uplift, what could it be?

In ringing tones Swamiji proclaimed: 'Renunciation and Service are the *national ideals* of India. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself.' That is the fiery mantra he has given to us. Those at the helm of others' affairs, who have been elevated there by others, have to take urgent steps to implement this in our national life. Renunciation endows one with strength and is the ideal of our people—renunciation of the unreal to attain the Real; of the lower to gain the Higher; and renunciation of the world to attain God. True service attracts and wins love and respect.

More than the courage it takes to face a cannon on the battlefield, Swamiji prized spiritual boldness resulting from the spirit of renunciation. Renunciation of everything for God or for the service of Man invests the individual and the nation with honour and dignity, and earns the respect of others as well.

Swamiji was most eloquent whenever he spoke to his audience about the encounter of Emperor Alexander with the Indian holy man.

Stand up and be strong....Fearless! And in my mind rises from the past the vision of the great Emperor from the West,...and I see, as it were in a picture, the great monarch standing on the bank of the Indus, talking to one of our Sannyasins (monks) in the forest; the old man he was talking to, perhaps naked, stark naked, sitting upon a block of stone, and the Emperor, astonished at his wisdom, tempting him with gold and honour to come over to Greece. And this man smiles at his gold, and smiles at his temptations, and refuses; and then the Emperor standing on his authority as an Emperor, says, 'I will kill you if you do not come,' and the man bursts into a laugh and says, 'You never told such a falsehood in your life, as you tell just now. Who can kill me? Me you kill, Emperor of the material world! Never! For I am Spirit unborn and undecaying; ...I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient: and you kill me, child that you are!

That is strength, that is strength!

Only such a strength, based on the truth of man's real nature, can inspire men of true renunciation. They gladly sacrifice the 'self' to serve others. So Swamiji points out: 'The essential thing is renunciation; without renunciation none can pour out his whole heart in working for others.' To his most intimate disciple he would say, 'I love you all ever so much, but I would wish you all to die working for others—I should be rather glad to see you do that.'

Such a spiritual strength can bring only blessings; it can *never* spell a threat or danger

to others. All our policies, plans, schemes and projects, our politics, education and religious pursuits, should give highest priority to the development of such individuals, who are endowed with faith, energy and consciousness of the hidden divinity lying in the heart of all beings, and who gladly sacrifice themselves for the good of their fellow human beings and the nation. Out of that self-sacrifice will emerge again the India which Swamiji envisioned.

India will be raised not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of spirit; not with the flag of destruction,

but with the flag of peace and love....One vision I see clear as life before me, that the ancient Mother has awakened once more, sitting on Her throne, rejuvenated, more glorious than ever. Proclaim her to the world with the voice of peace and benediction.

Swami Vivekananda bequeathed to us that glorious vision and promise. It has been most cruelly left unattended by us so far. But by faithfully following the noble path he marked out for us, surely we can redeem it. Shall we? □



Adrift is Wave of Change

S. N. PUROHIT

A touching poem revealing the soul of India which has remained attuned to the Divine despite the ups and downs in her long history, and which her people, to rise once more, should harmonize with modern thought. The writer hails from Jaipur, Rajasthan.

Adrift is wave of change in sub-continent
For better or worse the time only will show;
'Tis wise to hope for better and get prepared
For worst; the flux is tempest with no moorings
On face of it but carries some central
Point within, our sight may fail to discern,
Our insight never fails to encompass;
In ultimate nature of things 'tis nucleus
Other elements rotate around, as also
In analytic assessment of behaviour
Of groups called nations index is group ethos;
We have a history unchangeable,
We have longed to keep our geography so,
In hail and frost
At any cost
We have to nourish our national ethos.

Our temples, domes, minarets proclaim
A vision of the beauty par excellence,
Imagination sublime and ethereal,
Well-fed, well-clad bodies housing souls
Fully aware of stimuli around,
In religion was wrapped our response;
With dawn of civilization was the Nature
Our greatest ally and benefactor,
While bowing to her majesty and order,
Her secrets we pried with religious fervour;
Our all sciences and arts, pleasures and pains,
Wonders and wisdoms and losses and gains
In the wide spectrum of great religions shaped;
At unconscious level our behaviour,
Immersed in religions as ways of life,
Was almost apt, raising us to great heights;

We were great without its consciousness,
 The scorching heat
 We will beat,
 We have to cultivate greatness consciously

Religion as our apt response to Nature
 At unconscious level raised us to heights
 That other peoples reached later than us,
 Our fall on and often, as spectacular
 As our rise, was by failure to slough off
 Reason from cover of religion caused,
 In other parts of world change was in offing,
 The old fabric Renaissance duly rent.
 Dominance of religion came to close,
 Disciplines of thought to a rebellion rose,
 But we didn't budge and so we fell,
 Indeed we are to the change now attuned
 To give full play to religion and reason in response
 To the world in which we live and strive and die,
 The change we need
 We will give heed
 We have to be rational yet spiritual to earn reprieve.

The universe in which our eyes opened
 We liked, cherished and loved with full vigour,
 The wonders of the world we respected,
 We made the most of what was available,
 But more we wanted in every sphere,
 It was restlessness and the quest for more
 And ever more in this world *and beyond*
 We were imbued with that has stood the test
 Amidst our trials and tribulations galore,
 It is our national ethos magnificent
 We have to nourish
 So as to cherish
 Over-all peace, progress, prosperity. □

Rural Development Work of Ramakrishna Mission

SWAMI SHASHANKANANDA

The author is the Principal of the Samaj Sevak Sikshan Mandir, Belur, and has been associated for several years with the Ramakrishna Mission's rural development activities.

Even in the Vedic and Pauranic age India was active in rural development, for India has been an agricultural nation, with 80% of its population living in the villages:

...O Brahman, thou God of gods, may the Brahmins of our land be all endowed with the fire of the knowledge Divine; may the kings be all heroes skilled in warfare and remain untouched by any meanness; may the cows be all full of milk, the bulls be strong and healthy enough to carry loads, and the horses be all strong and swift; may our women be all endowed with womanly grace and beauty and be prepared to look after the household well; may our children be all victorious; may our youth be self-controlled and well cultured;...may sufficient rain fall to all lands and houses; may the medicinal herbs of the land be fully developed and efficacious; may all our people be endowed with sufficient ability to gain the objects of their longing and may they be fit to preserve and make right use of what they have already acquired. (*Sukla-Yajurveda*)

In the *Mahabharata* also we find Narada reminding King Yudhisthira of his duty towards the common masses. He asks the King:

Are the agriculturists in thy kingdom contented? Are large tanks and ponds

established all over thy kingdom at proper distances so that agriculture is not entirely dependent upon the rains only? Are the foodgrains and seeds belonging to the farmers protected? (In case these are damaged) do you generously advance them loans on a minimum interest of one hundredth per measure?

O Child, are the three professions of agriculture, cattle rearing and trade managed by honest persons? Upon these, O Monarch, depends the happiness of thy people

In the Vedic age India was spiritually rich, morally alert, and socially and economically developed. It continued to be so till foreign invasions began, resulting in exploitation and poverty of the rural masses. By the nineteenth century, degradation was widespread and people had forgotten their potential. Swami Vivekananda said about them: 'The poor, the low, the sinners in India have no friends, no help—they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower everyday, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men. And the result is slavery.'

Swami Vivekananda's heart bled for the poor, the distressed and the down-trodden masses. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, social leaders of our country were

busy with such problems as widow marriage, child marriage, casteism, dowry system, etc. of a small section of society, without going to the root of these problems. They had practically ignored the problems of the masses. It was Swamiji who first became greatly concerned about the welfare of the masses and worked hard to find ways and means for their uplift. In his lectures, letters and conversations he stressed the necessity of going to the villages to spread social awareness and secular knowledge among the rural poor, thereby helping them to stand on their own legs. Growth and development on national lines was his objective. Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion was the motto he placed before the then social reformers. 'Service of God in Man' was his gospel. He believed in fundamental change. He said: Educate our people so that they may be able to solve their problems; until that is done all these reforms will remain idle talks only.

The mantras he uttered, '*Daridra devo bhava, mūrkhā devo bhava*', became the redemptive gospel for the regeneration of the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*' was another mantra he proclaimed, to give effect to which he established the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission in 1897.

THE FIRST EFFORTS AT RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The first monk of the Order, however, who gave shape to this cherished desire of Swamiji to begin rural development work—even before the Mission was established, was Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. His experience as a wandering monk, like those of Swamiji, moved him to take steps to remove the distress and misery of the masses. While in Khetri, Rajasthan, during 1894, he went from door to door, all alone to bring aware-

ness in the people about the utility of education, and it was because of his efforts that the number of students in the Khetri Rajya English School rose from 80 to 200. Under his inspiration the Maharaja of Khetri arranged for the education of the Golas (illiterate slaves) and also set up a permanent Education Department to open schools in the villages. Akhandananda also arranged for the publication of a newspaper on agriculture in order to educate the farmers of that area. He also contacted renowned landlords in the numerous villages of Khetri, inspiring them to take some concrete steps towards removing the miseries of their poor labourers.

Again, it was Swami Akhandananda who started an orphanage in Mahula, West Bengal, in July 1897, and then established the first Rural Branch Centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Sargachi in 1898. In 1899, he opened a free school there to deal with the problem of illiteracy in the locality. A carpentry and a weaving section also were added to revive those perishing village industries and make the boys self-reliant. Cotton-cultivation too was taught to the village ladies to enhance their family income.

Then onwards the following rural Centres were started: Mayavati (1899), Koalpara (1906), Nattarampalli (1912), Chandipur (1914), Shyamalatal and Quilandy (1915), Garbeta (1916), Sarisha (1921), Jayrambati (1923), Trichur (1923), Shella (Cherrapunji) (1924), Jamtara (1928). (See Table at the end)

Free Primary Schools were opened in Chandipur and Jayrambati. Sarisha opened a free Primary School and a Spinning & Weaving section. Sargachi, Shella and Trichur started free Middle English, or High School, with vocational training specially in weaving and spinning. Coimbatore, started

in 1930 and affiliated in 1934, has many educational units: Higher Secondary School, High School, Physical Education College, Basic School, an autonomous Arts & Science College, an autonomous Polytechnic School of Agriculture, and Rural Dispensary.

NATIONAL SCENARIO OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Other Rural Development programmes include those started by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921; the Marthanda programme by the Christian Missionaries; and the famous Sarvodaya programme by Mahatma Gandhi.

In 1948, the Mahewa Pilot project was started as an experiment in 300 villages, benefiting a 2,00,000 population. The evaluation of this after 4 years suggested that the programme should be tried all over the country. So a programme named 'Community Development Project' was started in 1952, which aimed at economic and social development. It was based on the concepts of self-help, mutual cooperation and self-reliance. It was now a people's programme with Government participation, and not a Government programme with people's participation.

In this project much importance was given to social development, but not to economic development, and so the poor remained poor. Besides, since India is an agriculture-dominated country, she remained poor because neither was attention given to increase agricultural productivity and allied products—on the other hand, the nation was paying heavily to import food. Realizing this, attention was now shifted to agricultural development, and programmes such as MFAL and SFD were started for the weaker sections of the rural population. These programmes were followed by IADP (Intensive Agricultural

Development Programme) in 1960, Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Desert Development Programme (DDP), Hill Area Development Programme (HADP), Tribal Area Development Programme (TADP), Crash Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE), Food For Work (FFW), Minimum Need Programming (MNP), etc. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was extended to all the Development Blocks of the country with effect from 2 October 1980, as a part of the 20-point programme.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION TOWARDS ALL-ROUND DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS

The Ramakrishna Mission remained active in its own way in rural development. In course of time it was felt that the Mission should go to the people in the most remote rural or tribal areas since they could not come to the ashramas.

The first attempt by Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur

In 1952, Swami Lokeswarananda, the then Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama at Pathuriaghata, inspired a group of students to start organizing welfare activities in a neighbouring slum. From this was born the Lokasiksha Parishad. In 1955–56 the Ashrama shifted to Narendrapur, and the Lokasiksha Parishad became an extension of the development programme from the Calcutta slums to rural Bengal. As this rural activity rapidly grew, an independent training centre—first named Gram-Sevak Training Centre, and subsequently renamed Agricultural Training Centre—was established in 1967. Gradually it has become an important factor in the field of rural development. At present the Parishad is working in about 3,000 villages through 570 affiliated youth organizations and about 700 associated organizations.

The success of the efforts of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, to reach rural Bengal in this way through a network of youth organizations and related cluster associations is clear from the following list of activities of the Lokasiksha Parishad:

Training Wing:-

1. Leadership Training Programme
2. Agricultural Training Centre (ATC)
3. Animal husbandry
4. Farming Systems Research & Extension (FSRE)
5. Soil Testing Laboratory
6. Information Development & Resource Agency (IDARA)
7. Training Orientation & Research Centre (TORC) for National Service Programme
8. Shramik Vidyapith (SVP)
9. Residential Vocational Training Programme
10. Field Training Institute for Urban Basic Service Programme
11. Research & Evaluation Cell

Field Wing:-

1. Education & health care of children
2. Adult and Non-Formal Education
3. Enrichment of environment & public health
4. Self-employment and Entrepreneurship development
5. Family Helper Project
6. Community Saving Project (Village Bank)
7. Wasteland Development Programme
8. Participatory Forest Management Programme
9. Integrated Rural Development Project

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama,
Morabadi, Ranchi**

This centre has developed another model of the Rural Development by the Mission. Started in 1964 under the name

'DIVYAYAN', in 30 years it has brought hope to the tribal youth of Ranchi and its surrounding districts. What is significant is that the rousing of the general awareness of the tribals and the integrated development in their lives—economical, educational, health and social—has been accomplished without injuring their cultural and religious traditions.

In 1977, Divyayan established a Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) which is one of the best in our country.

Training Programmes at Divyayan:-

General Training:	6 weeks
Special Training:	
Agronomy	3 months
Horticulture	3 months
Poultry	3 months
Dairy	3 months
Farm Machinery	3 months
Carpentry	6 months
Welding	6 months
Lathe	1 year
Bee-Keeping	2 months

Other reinforcing activities are:

Short-term training before the start of crop seasons; monthly meetings of the Seva Sangha functionaries; Annual Ex-trainees' Sammelan; Demonstration Farms at the two villages Getalsud and Maheshpur; publication of *Divyayan Samachar*.

In the beginning a non-monastic organization, 'Ramakrishna Seva Samity', looked after the Extension and Follow-up programmes of the Divyayan. However, after the KVK started functioning, the Ramakrishna Seva Samity and the Divyayan shared that responsibility, and from 1987 the Divyayan took up the work completely on its own.

Under the direct supervision of the monks, the Divyayan established close con-

tact with the tribals through its dedicated field workers and by having its faculty members frequently visit the tribal villages. This supported by intense follow-up programmes has made it possible to guide the tribal youth form 'Vivekananda Seva Sangha', through which further development programmes are carried on thus galvanizing a large number of villages in the interior regions of Chotanagpur.

**DIVYAYAN:
ACHIEVEMENTS IN A NUTSHELL
(1969-1993)**

Farmers Trained in composite motivational courses	5156
Farmers trained through special training programmes	1560
Farmers trained through short courses	3063
One-day training programmes in villages (1992-93)	3977
SC/ST farmers in Training Programmes (%)	62.4
Vivekanand Seva Sangha:	
Rural Self-Groups	55
Rural night schools	55
Audio-visual programmes	4548
Regional Kisan Melas organized	35
Central Kisan Melas organized	15
Social Forestry (are in hectares)	41.2
Lab-to-land programmes (beneficiary families)	1568
Beneficiaries of Rural Health Care Service (annual)	4728
Dug-wells constructed	805
Low-cost dwelling houses for Birhors	17
Construction of Community Centre in villages	30
Micro-lift irrigation schemes installed	15
Water recharge tanks constructed	1
Bio-gas plants constructed	33
Solar Light systems installed	16
Pump-sets to dug-well beneficiaries	781

Hasti irrigation pipes (20'-lengths distributed)	3310
ASPEE' sprayers/dusters etc. distributed burtee	87
Hasti Sprinklers systems distributed	29
Books in the library	17384
Average daily readers in the reading rooms	126
Beneficiaries under ASPEE Foundation Vegetable-kit distribution programme	4173
Oil-seed programme (Beneficiaries)	297
Agricultural inputs to well-beneficiaries under SDC programme	378
Smokeless Chullah	256
Monthly meetings of ex-trainees	120
Field days organized	27
Ex-trainee Sammelans	12
Rural Medical care (average monthly attendance)	394
Youth Conventions organized	12

Abujmarh Project, Madhya Pradesh
A big tribal project has been taken up in 1985 by Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, at Narainpur in Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh to raise the pitiable condition of Abujmarhias (probably the most backward tribe in the country), numbering about 19,000 and scattered over an area of 4,000 sq km. At Narainpur the Mission has started a residential school for tribal boys, and a centre to train tribal youths in agriculture, horticulture, bee-keeping, bakery, tailoring, carpentry, woodcraft, bamboocraft, bell-metal fabrication and welding. Besides these, teachers' training and health workers' training is also given to them, and they are employed as multipurpose social workers inside Abujmarh. The Mission also runs a charitable hospital, a mobile dispensary, and a fair-price shop which provides necessary commodities to the tribals at reasonable rates. Further, the

Mission runs three service centres at 5 villages inside Abujmarh, each having a school, a hotel and a fair-price shop. Thus an attempt is being made to initiate an all-round development in the condition of the most neglected area of the country.

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore

In Mysore the Mission is conducting Integrated Tribal Development programme in three Taluks, specially in the field of Agriculture, Horticulture and Sericulture. These activities were started with the following objectives:

1. To introduce appropriate agricultural technology
2. To provide required agricultural amenities on community basis
3. To improve the dryland cultivation, i.e. to double the dry land production
4. To bring more area of land under irrigation by providing community borewells
5. To introduce sericulture and horticulture
6. To impart knowledge of modern agriculture and sericultural technology
7. To provide Elephant Proof Trenches
8. To undertake soil conservation measures
9. To provide electrified field fencing.

Through persistent work it has been possible to achieve the above-mentioned objectives to a great extent.

Pallimangal, Belur

Pallimangal, a project of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission H.Qrs. is an altogether novel approach. With the spread of rural development activities in the interior villages, it was felt that, since the Mission did not have suffi-

cient number of monks to go from village to village and bring Swamiji's dream to reality, the local youth should be trained as a dedicated voluntary force; and that they should be equipped with the know-how of management and given the responsibility to develop their own areas.

With the blessing of the then President of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Vireswarananda, the project started in 1980 with 20 young men from Kamarpukur and Balidewanganj of the Hooghly district, training them to manage rural development activities.

After the training, they were placed in Jayrambati of the Bankura district and Kamarpukur and Balidewanganj of the Hooghly district to implement the Integrated Rural Development Project under the able guidance of monks. This is Pallimangal's method aimed at mobilizing the human resource, renewable resources and financial and other resources for an all-round development of the people in the rural areas.

With the help of this trained youth force methods of scientific agriculture, pisciculture, poultry, dairy and bee-keeping, as also the skill necessary to run cottage industries such as manufacture of incense sticks, operation of handlooms, spinning, etc. are taught in the villages themselves with the help of farm demonstrations and workshops. After this the beneficiary groups take up some suitable economic project for self-reliance. They run these projects as self-supporting autonomous units on the principles of non-formal cooperatives. Suitable outlets for selling their finished products have also been established by the Mission.

Besides economic development, stress is laid on the development of human values.

A Mobile Medical Unit is serving in and around Koalpara, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur and Balidewanganj. An Eye-Operation-camp has been conducted every year for the last 11 years. A well-equipped Soil Testing Laboratory has been built at Kamarpukur.

Rural industry is an attractive feature of the Pallimangal, specially in the area of Jute Industries. The Mission has set up a Mini Jute Spinning Unit at Kamarpukur, which is the first of its kind in India. The Government of India has suggested to all the Jute growing States to replicate such units in their areas. The Mission has also done pioneering work in jute diversification, particularly in handloom and handwoven items from raw jute. This project has not only drawn appreciation from the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal, but it has brought home to the planners the tremendous possibilities of self-employment for the rural youth through multiplication of such projects. UNDP, through the Government, is assisting such projects throughout the country.

Ramakrishna Mission, Saradapitha

This is one of the educational centres under which the following departments are conducting rural developmental activities:-

- i) Janasikshamandir
- ii) Community Polytechnic (Shilpamandir)
- iii) Samaj Sevak Sikshan Mandir

Janasikshamandir: Since 1949 it has been conducting mass education activities. It has spread out now to 41 villages in the Howrah district, conducting non-formal centres, post-literacy centres for adult neoliterates, and free coaching centres. It conducts vocational training in Tailoring, Machine Wool Knitting and Carpentry. Besides, it constructs Smokeless Chullah. Bratachari dance, physical exercises, yogasanas, etc. are taught to the rural children. It has also

an Audio-visual unit which screens educational and cultural films in the villages.

The Community Polytechnic, a wing of the main Polytechnic (Shilpamandir), conducts skill development courses in trades such as welding, wiring, carpentry, T.V. repair, refrigerator and airconditioner repair, Computer programming and maintenance, etc. It also conducts classes in tailoring etc. for women in the Amta Block-1 area of Howrah.

Samaj Sevak Sikshan Mandir

Swami Vivekananda said, 'All the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves.'

Notwithstanding the achievements made by our country in various fields since Independence, national development at all levels would have been much more and achieved in lesser time with much less investment, and many social evils and political ills could have been avoided if along with skill development programmes and fund allotments, necessary efforts were made to bring a change in the attitude of our youth. Then these youth would have become the harbingers, architects and builders of New India. This is still possible only if education in our country is aimed at character-building and man-making. Swamiji has said:

Educate our people, so that they may be able to solve their own problem. Until that is done all these ideal reform will remain ideals only. The new order of the things is the salvation of the people, by the people, and it takes time to make it workable, especially in India, which has always in the past been governed by the kings.

Today we need that education which

helps character-building and creates in the people sincerity, unity, self-confidence, spirit of self-reliance, love, dedication and service of fellow beings. Obviously these values cannot be imparted by legislation or police action. This has to be a growth from within and that requires proper education.

With a view to including this in the national development programmes, the Ramakrishna Mission has established this Youth Training Centre. It is based on the ideas and ideals of Swami Vivekananda, whose teachings rest on the strong foundation of Indian culture and heritage and which, at the same time, recommend science and technology.

Aim: Achievement of one's own spiritual uplift and along with it the uplift of the masses. Be and make: Become good yourself and help others also to become good.

With this object, a nine-month Training Programme has been started since 1986.

The syllabus is framed in such a way that the training produces sincere and dedicated Organizers or Social Workers for rural development, who are able to transfer appropriate technology to rural society and transform it for the better.

Speciality of the Institution

A) It is not only

- i) An Agricultural Training Centre,
- ii) An Entrepreneurship Development Programme,
- iii) Or a Certificate Course in Social Service,

B) But it is an institution which aims at

- i) Creating a band of spiritually and morally evolved youth, trained in 'Appropriate Ideology' to work for the uplift of

the masses, specially of the backward and neglected sections of our rural society.

ii) Training the youth not to be 'Job Seekers' but 'Job Creators' by choosing the path of self-reliance and working for generating national wealth by harnessing human, material and financial resources otherwise being misused.

iii) Motivating young men (a) to return to their respective villages after training, and to stand on their own feet by generating wealth from their own lands, ponds, and yards, (b) to bring awareness to the people of their respective villages, specially at the grassroot level; transfer technology to them, and enable them to earn their livelihood; and thus help build their character and preserve their cultural and spiritual heritage.

In brief, Samaj Sevak Sikshan Mandir creates a band of Rural Development Organizers to take the responsibility of all-round development of their own areas and, at the same time, stand on their own feet without unnecessarily running after white-collared jobs. Since they get equipped with skills in various Appropriate Technologies, they pass on training to the local unemployed youth and enthuse them to start their own projects immediately. This way the process of transfer of technology and creating of jobs in the villages becomes very fast.

Besides their self-employment or skill development activities, this band of Rural Development Organizers of the Samaj Sevak Sikshan Mandir conduct health programmes on sanitation, purifying drinking water and safeguarding environment. They also impart training in first-aid and scouting techniques. Further, they conduct National Open School Tutorial Centres. They also arrange for construction of smokeless chullahs, low cost latrines and water filters. They also organize study

circles, Yuva-sammelan, Bhakta Sammelan, etc.

Most of these farmers have already established themselves financially. Seeing this success, a large number of unemployed rural youth have approached our ex-trainees and requested such skill development training for themselves. Not only individuals but other organizations also, even the organizations working on the ideals of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Bhavadhara, have approached the ex-trainees for help in conducting such activities in their respective areas.

Samaj Sevak Sikshan Mandir has no extension programme of its own. But its ex-trainees have formed an organization named 'SARVIK VIVEKANANDA GRAM SEVA SANSTHA', and they are taking care of rural development activities in 8 districts of West Bengal.

Besides these centres, there are many other centres, e.g. the Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay, conducting rural development or tribal welfare activities as a part of their programme as detailed in table below.

Table : Centres of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission conducting Rural Development Work

Location of the Centre	Types of Rural Programme Medical and/or Educational	Welfare Integrated Rural Development	In Non-Tribal Areas	Rajahmundry	Perria-naicken-palayam
In Tribal Areas	Itanagar	Ranchi		Nattarampally	Narendrapur
	Ranchi	Agartala		Shyamalatal	Trichur
	Along	Jamtara		Mayavati	Chandipur
	Narottam-nagar	Cherrapunji		Kalady	Manasadwip
	Silchar	Mysore		Sargachi	Ramharipur
	Agartala	Raipur		Chengalpattu	Kamarpukur
	Shillong	Bombay		Rajahmundry	Jayrambati
	Guwahati			Vrindaban	Bangalore
				Kankhal	Puri (Mission)
				Calcutta: Seva-Pratishthan	Vidyapith (Madras)
				Madras	
				Belur Math: Saradapitha	

In this world in search of wealth, Thou art, O Lord, the greatest jewel I have found. I sacrifice myself unto Thee. In search of some one to love, Thou art the One Beloved I have found. I sacrifice myself unto Thee.

—Yajurveda Samhitā

'Let My Country Awake'

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high;

Where Knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up
into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms
toward perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee
into everwidening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake.

—*Rabindranath Tagore*

ON SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

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Swami Vivekananda the Man

SWAMI ATMASTHANANDA

Swami Vivekananda, though a monk, typifies the Ideal Man, who continues to draw universal admiration and devoted followers from among the young and the old, men and women, the poor and the rich, social activists and spiritual seekers. In a significant way he foreshadows the birth of the heretofore unseen world-citizen of tomorrow.

Swami Atmasthanandaji, General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Belur Math, presents a multi-angled study of the phenomenon called 'Vivekananda', so that we too, trying to understand Vivekananda, can strive for the total development of the Man in us.

Swamiji's identification with humanity

One day in 1897, soon after his return from the West, Swami Vivekananda was seated with his disciple Sarat Chandra Chakraborty in the house of Balaram Babu in Calcutta. Girish Chandra Ghosh entered the room and the conversation turned to the miserable condition of the Indian society. The great writer and actor began to describe vividly the depths of misery to which the poor masses had sunk. Deeply moved, Swamiji sat motionless and speechless, with tears rolling down his cheeks. In order to hide his feelings he rose and left the room. Turning to Sarat Chandra, Girish Babu said, 'Didn't you see, Bangaal? What a great loving heart? I honour your Swamiji not simply for being a pundit versed in the Vedas but for his great heart which has made him retire weeping at the sorrows of his fellow-beings.'

Incidents of this kind in which the great world teacher and prophet-figure was seen weeping at the sufferings of other people were quite common in his life. On the opening day of the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, Swami Vivekananda was the guest of honour in a wealthy man's mansion. Swamiji had become a celebrity, and a luxuriously furnished room had been given for his use. But

he could not lie on the cosy bed. The thought of the millions of poor and downtrodden masses in India tortured his mind. He lay on the floor crying, 'O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty! To what a sad pass have we poor Indians come when millions of us die for want of a handful of rice....Who will raise the masses in India? Who will give them bread? Show me, O Mother, how I can help them.'

Swamiji's suffering at the suffering of other people was not mere emotional effervescence. It arose from his sense of identity with humanity and his awareness of the basic oneness of humanity. Love is the capacity to identify oneself with somebody. The greater your love, the greater the number of people you can identify yourself with. An ordinary man can identify himself with only the members of his family. A social leader may be able to identify himself with many more people. But world teachers like Swami Vivekananda can identify themselves with the whole humanity.

Spiritual basis

Swamiji's identification with humanity came from a deeper layer of awareness of the essential oneness of humankind. Ordinary people see only differences every-

where. They divide humanity into so many races, so many religion and linguistic communities, so many castes, political parties and so on. Swamiji's vision cut through all these barriers. He saw unity everywhere. And wherever possible he strove to create unity—by breaking down barriers, by building bridges, by clearing the clouds of misunderstanding and suspicion, by strengthening the chords of love and trust.

Swami Vivekananda represented human possibilities at their best. Having attained the highest level of super-conscious awareness at a young age, he habitually dwelt at a high state of divine consciousness all through the rest of his life. He did not,

who denigrated his religion and motherland. He carved for his motherland a place of dignity in the comity of nations.

Spirituality and service

In India Swami Vivekananda awakened the minds of educated people to the glories of ancient spiritual heritage, and aroused their conscience with regard to their duties to the poor and the downtrodden. He raised social service to the level of a national ideal, and invested it with the sanctity of worship and the power of a spiritual discipline. He established a new monastic ideal and a new monastic way of life, which are fast replacing the older ones. His love for his motherland and exhortations to his countrymen

Swami Vivekananda represented human possibilities at their best...Of course, he was a monk. But his personality was so vast that his monkhood in no way reduces his universal significance. One can find in him the fulfilment of all the higher values and noble ideals that humanity cherishes all over the world.

however, live the life of a solitary mystic or recluse. He did not try to run away from the battle of life. He was a born fighter. Not without reason was he known as the 'warrior monk' in the West. After the death of his father his life was a continuous struggle against the adverse forces of life. His achievements were indeed superhuman. Without a single copper in his pocket he travelled all over India studying the life and culture of the people, staying with princes and paupers alike. He carried his Master's message across oceans and continents, and burst upon the world scene like an avalanche. At the Parliament of Religions in Chicago he did not merely represent Hinduism. As Sister Nivedita has stated, Swamiji rose to speak about Hinduism, but when he ended, Hinduism had been created. He converted an ethnic, caste-bound religion into a universal religion with an irresistible appeal. He fought, alone and single-handed, all those religious fanatics

provided the springs of inspirations for nationalistic spirit and struggle for freedom in India. It is doubtful whether in the history of mankind anyone else achieved so much in such a short span of life.

Swami Vivekananda was more modern and more progressive than not only his contemporaries but also the people of the present-day world. In the midst of the growing materialism and sensuality of the present-day world, the image of Swamiji stands as a beacon light. There is no better ideal for the modern people, especially for the younger generation. Of course, he was a monk. But his personality was so vast that his monkhood in no way reduces his universal significance. One can find in him the fulfilment of all the higher values and noble ideals that humanity cherishes all over the world. He rejected nothing that is of value for human progress and lasting fulfilment. Nor did he lower himself to pander to the

lower instincts of man. Nobody who studies his life and teachings will go empty handed. Everyone is sure to find something, if not everything, to make his life meaningful and a blessing to others.

Swamiji's primary concern was man. He saw everywhere, in the East as well as in the West, mankind in chains. The present age prides itself on humanism and glorifies man above everything else. By unlocking the secrets of Nature man has acquired enormous power. However, all this power has not increased his happiness or given him peace of mind. On the other hand, various kinds of mental disturbance, immorality, violence, etc. are on the increase at an alarming rate. For quite a large section of humanity human life has lost its sanctity and value.

Divinity of Man

The basic cause of these problems is ignorance about the true nature of man and his ultimate destiny. Swami Vivekananda gave the world a new concept of man. According to Swamiji, man's essential nature is divine. This of course is not a new idea. Centuries before the Christian era, sages in India had discovered that man in his true nature is neither the body nor the mind but the spirit which they called the Atman. Furthermore, all individual spirits are parts or reflections of the Supreme Spirit. That is to say, one and the same Supreme Spirit or God dwells in all people as individual souls or selves. Thus each individual soul is divine but, owing to ignorance, most people are not aware of this fact. This wonderful truth forms one of the central principles of the ancient system of philosophy known as Vedanta. But it had remained in the possession of small groups of privileged people in India for centuries. It was Swami Vivekananda who could understand the immense practical significance of this doctrine. He interpreted it in the

modern idiom and made it available to the common people

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within.' This principle forms the foundation of Swami Vivekananda's thought. He looked upon human evolution and progress as the unfoldment of the inner spirit. Swamiji has himself summed up his basic philosophy in a few words. To quote his own statement, 'My ideal, indeed, can be put in a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to manifest it in every movement of life.'

It was the manifestation of the inherent Divinity in man that Swamiji called Religion. In popular usage 'religion' is always associated with creeds, rituals, customs, festivals and so on. But Swamiji regarded these only as 'secondary details' of religion. The core or essence of religion is the realization of the true Self of man which is divine. This is the main doctrine of the Upanishads. Swamiji gave this ancient doctrine a new turn and importance.

Service as worship

According to Swamiji, from the highest standpoint, Self-realization is Self-manifestation. He gives the illustration of a bright light covered by a screen with a small hole. As the hole becomes bigger, more light manifests itself. In the same way, the Atman manifests itself more and more as the ignorance covering it gets reduced more and more. Every human effort which helps to reduce ignorance and favours the manifestation of the Self is religion. Spiritual life is not a specialized activity meant to be followed at certain hours of the day. The whole of human life is spiritual life. As Sister Nivedita has put it, 'No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion.'

This is the new religion that Swami Vivekananda has given to the modern world—a religion which converts every human activity into a spiritual practice. He wanted that the highest principle of Vedanta should be made available to even the poorest and the most downtrodden people. Religion must meet the needs of all people in all situations. It should raise a man from where he is. For, 'if religion cannot help man wherever he may be, wherever he stands,' says Swamiji, 'it is not of much use; it will remain only a theory for the chosen few. Religion, to help mankind, must be ready and able to help him in whatever condition he is in, in servitude or in freedom, in the depths of degradation or in the heights of purity; everywhere, equally, it should be able to come to his aid.'

Swami Vivekananda had a comprehensive view of the welfare of the world, especially of India. He aimed at the economic, social, moral and spiritual development of

work and organizational skill. When he returned to India he wanted Indians to master western science, technology and business expertise. One of the main purposes of his starting the Ramakrishna Mission was to spread spiritual and secular education among the masses and encourage industries.

The crying need of India was, as it still is, food. How the ever-hungry millions can get enough food was the problem that had agitated Swamiji's mind even during the days of his wandering all over India. Can religion help the people in solving their economic and social problems? He said, 'I do not believe in a religion which cannot wipe a widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to an orphan's mouth.' Swamiji saw that centuries of foreign domination, social tyranny and priestcraft had deprived the poor masses of faith in themselves and the urge to improve their condition. Swamiji believed that the Vedanta doctrine of the

Other than service, the virtues that Swamiji stressed most was strength and fearlessness. Strength is the one sovereign virtue that every man needs every second in his life...Because, without it, it is not possible to practise properly any other virtue.

the people. He believed that the principles of Vedanta, if properly understood and applied in life, would bring about all-round development of humanity.

Forms of worship

Swamiji paid special attention to the economic development of India. It is well known that one of the main reasons for his going to the West was to seek financial help for his project of uplift of the masses. In the West he carefully studied how various institutions were being managed. He went to schools, technical institutions, prisons and observed how the Western people had achieved economic prosperity and social well-being through dedicated, cooperative

potential divinity of the soul has the power to change their crippling attitudes and rouse their dormant capacities.

In the field of moral development Swami Vivekananda's contribution is of inestimable value. He stressed two main moral principles—unselfishness and strength. According to him, 'The only definition that can be given of morality is this: that which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.' The idea of unselfishness is based on the idea of the basic oneness of humanity in God.

From this was derived the famous idea of serving man as God, *Śiva jñāne jīva seva*.

Swamiji converted ordinary mundane forms of social service into worship. 'We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called Man', said Swamiji. It is this idea that service to man is service to God that forms the basis of all the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission.

This kind of service has two main features. In the first place, it makes no distinction between different types of work. Every kind of work—from 'mending shoes to chanting the chandi', as the Bengali saying goes—is sacred. It is not the work that elevates us but the way we do it. Secondly, it makes no distinction between the people who are served. When we serve people, we don't ask them about their religion or caste or race. What is important is that they are human beings for as Swamiji said, 'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man...' These two principles are followed in all forms of service conducted by the Ramakrishna Mission.

When we see all around us corruption, immorality, crime, violence, terrorism and so forth, we tend to lose faith in man. These evils were present in society in Swami Vivekananda's time also. But he never lost faith in the essential goodness of man. He looked at only the infinite possibilities inherent in the human soul and not at man's weaknesses. He did not like the idea of looking upon man as a born sinner. For him the so-called sin is nothing but ignorance. He also knew that good and evil are relative terms which vary in meaning from culture to culture.

He never allowed such considerations to obstruct his love for mankind. His love and compassion went out to all—to the saint and the sinner, the rich and the poor, the easterner and the westerner. With the deepest sincerity and anguish of heart there

welled forth from his great heart this great prayer: 'May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'

Essentials in worship

Other than service, the virtue that Swami Vivekananda stressed most was strength and fearlessness. Strength is the one sovereign virtue that every man needs every second in his life. Why did Swamiji stress strength so much? Because, without it, it is not possible to practise properly any other virtue. We make so many pious resolutions to be good and virtuous but fail to carry them out. Why? Because the strength of will is not there. Hence Swamiji says, 'Strength is goodness, weakness is sin.' This is indeed a novel way of teaching moral values. Strength is the root virtue; all other virtues are only branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Explaining the importance of strength, Swamiji said: 'It is weakness, says Vedanta, which is the cause of all misery in this world. Weakness is the one cause of suffering. We become miserable because we are weak. We lie, steal, kill and commit other crimes, because we are weak. We die because we are weak. Where there is nothing to weaken us, there is no death nor sorrow.'

Although Swamiji gave great importance to physical strength and moral strength, real strength according to him is that which comes through the realization of the true Self of man. Even a strong faith in the divinity of the Self is enough to give one great strength. Swami Vivekananda's prime interest, therefore, was in the spiritual development of man. We should not forget that Swamiji was first and foremost a great spiritual luminary. He was a born Yogi, as

his Master Sri Ramakrishna himself had said of him. Having scaled the highest peaks of spiritual experience, the natural tendency of his mind was to soar in the higher realm of the spirit. He could have remained alone absorbed in the bliss of the Supreme Self, but his Master had commanded him to serve humanity.

Synthesis of Yogas through worshipful service

Though outwardly Swamiji appeared to be a man of knowledge, inwardly he was a supreme lover of God. As a matter of fact, he attained the highest development in each of the four Yogas and he was the best exemplar of the harmony of the four Yogas. Rarely has the world seen such a multifaceted spiritual genius with a balanced personality. This has been pointed out by no less a person than Romain Rolland. The French savant wrote: 'In the two words equilibrium and synthesis Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four Yogas in their entirety,

balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion.'

The ultimate goal of each Yoga is the same: realization of the Supreme Self, and each Yoga is capable of leading the aspirant to that goal. This point has been established by both Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. Nevertheless, Swamiji has also held that a combination of all the four Yogas is the best way for the modern age. He made this the ideal of the Ramakrishna Order and Mission, embodying it in the well-known emblem which he himself designed.

The complete Man through synthesis

The total development of man that we have discussed so far constitutes what Swamiji called 'man-making'. Man attains full manhood only when the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of his personality are fully developed. Swamiji himself was one of the finest examples of the fully developed Man. The spiritual potential

The full significance of such a historical phenomenon cannot be understood in the course of a few years...Swamiji's message is meant for everyone. And no one, no group or nation, can lay exclusive claim on it.

renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical...He was the personification of the harmony of all human Energy.'

According to Swami Vivekananda, each of the four Yogas represents the development of one particular mental faculty—reason, emotion or will. Swamiji wanted total development of personality. Hence he advocated a combination of all the four Yogas. As he put it, 'Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full!...To become harmoniously

lies dormant in most people, and unless it is also awakened and developed, no man can claim to have attained the fullness of manhood. Swamiji believed that development of the spiritual potential in man would be the next phase in the evolution and advancement of humanity. To quote his words, 'So is the infinite power (potentially present) in the soul of man, whether he knows it or not. Its manifestation is only a question of being conscious of it. Slowly this infinite giant is, as it were, waking up, becoming conscious of his power, and arousing himself. And with his growing consciousness, more and more of his bonds are breaking, chains are bursting asunder, and the day is sure to come when, with the full consciousness of

his infinite power and wisdom, the giant will rise to his feet and stand erect. Let us all help to hasten that glorious consummation.'

Unfolding significance of the Message

Swami Vivekananda was a unique phenomenon that occurred at a critical juncture in the history of India and of the world. This phenomenon has been described by Swami Abhedananda as follows: 'Such a preacher of Truth occasionally appears like a gigantic comet above the horizon, dazzling the eyes and filling the hearts of ordinary mortals with wonder and admiration, and silently passes away into the invisible and unknown realm of the universe. The late Swami Vivekananda was one of those great comets who appeared in the spiritual firmament once perhaps after several centuries.'

The full significance of such a historical phenomenon cannot be understood in the course of a few years. Sister Nivedita, who knew about his message more than anyone

else, has stated, '...not even yet has it been given to us to understand the vastness and significance of the message that he spoke.' Swamiji himself has said that he has given enough for fifteen hundred years. A message so vast in its foundations, so vast in its implications, meant for such vast numbers of people, will take not one century but several centuries to work itself out. Swamiji's message is meant for everyone. And no one, no group or nation, can lay exclusive claim on it. Overcoming all obstacles, all resistance, beyond the limitations imposed by human mind and society, beyond the confines of the senses and reason, beyond the narrow interests of people, beyond the pettiness of all human strife, Swami Vivekananda's message of wisdom, love and strength will roll on across oceans and continents for centuries to come—informing, inspiring, guiding untold numbers of people, bringing into their hearts peace and fulfilment, liberating them from the bonds of ignorance for ever. □



Swami Vivekananda : A Profile

NABANIHARAN MUKHOPADHYAY

Sri Mukhopadhyaya, who is well known for the vital role he played in the founding of the youth organization, Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal, in the '70's when West Bengal was in the grip of the Naxalite Movement, presents here an inspiring profile of Swamiji—the man of spiritual realization, a blazing fire of renunciation, a lover of humanity, a servant of the downtrodden masses, the preacher of strength and fearlessness, a model for the Youth of all times.

'Of the bodily presence of him who was known to the world as Vivekananda, all that remains today is a bowl of ashes',¹ wrote Sister Nivedita in a character-sketch appearing in *The Hindu* of Madras, shortly after the Swami's passing away. She went on:

He passed, when new and greater calls were ringing in his ears, silently ignoring the great fame that had shone upon his name. Man-making was his own stern brief summary of the work that was worth doing. And laboriously, unflaggingly day after day, he set himself to man-making, playing the part of the Guru, of father, even of school master by turns. External success and leadership were nothing to such a man. During his years in the West, he made rich and powerful friends, who would gladly have retained him in their midst. But, for him, the Occident, with all its luxuries had no charms. To him, the garb of a beggar, the lanes of Calcutta, and the disabilities of his own people, were more dear than all the glory of the foreigner, and detaining hands had to loose their hold of one who passed over onward toward the East.²

She posed the question: 'What was it that the West heard in him, leading so many to hail and cherish his name as that of one of the greatest religious teachers of the world?'.³ And Nivedita herself answered:

He made no personal claim. He told no personal story. He made no attempt to popularize with strangers any single form of creed, whether of God or Guru. He quoted nothing but the Upanishads. He taught nothing but the Vedanta. And men trembled, for they heard the voice for the first time of the religious teacher who feared not Truth.⁴

Burning renunciation was the chief aim of all the inspirations that spoke to us through him.⁵

He was at once a sublime expression of superconscious religion and one of the greatest patriots ever born. He lived at a moment of national disintegration and he was fearless of the new. He lived when men were abandoning their inheritance and he was an ardent worshipper of the old. In him the national destiny fulfilled itself—that a new wave of consciousness should be inaugurated always in the leaders of the faith. In such a man it may be that we possess the

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), 1982, vol. 1, p. 369.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 369-70.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 370.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

whole Veda. of the future. We must remember however that the moment has not come for gauging the religious significance of Vivekananda. Religion is living seed, and his sowing is but over. The time of his harvest is not yet. But death actually gives the Patriot to his country. When the Master has passed away from the midst of his disciples, when the murmurs of his critics are all hushed at the burning-ghat, then the great voice that spoke of Freedom rings out unchallenged and whole nations answer as one man.⁶

She asks:

What then was the prophecy that Vivekananda left to his own people? With what national significance has he filled that *gerua* mantle that he dropped behind him in his passing? Is it for us perhaps to lift the yellow rags upon our flagpole, and carry them forward as our banner?⁷

She affirms: 'Assuredly. For here was a man who never dreamt of failure. Here was a man who spoke of naught but strength.'⁸

He had learnt not only the hopes and ideals of every sect and group of the Indian people but their memories also. A child of Bengal returned to live by the Ganga side, one would have supposed from his enthusiasm that he had been born, now in the Punjab, again in the Himalayas, at a third moment in Rajputana, or elsewhere. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Mira Bai and Tansen on his lips. Stories of Prithvi Raj and Delhi jostled against those of Chitore and Pratap Singh, Shiva and

Uma, Radha and Krishna, Sita-Rama, and Buddha. Each mighty drama lived in a marvellous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by his very name.⁹

Swami Nikhilananda wrote in his *Vivekananda—A Biography*:

Since the day of his success at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, which had filled with joy and pride the hearts of his countrymen, Swami Vivekananda had been inspiring his faithful followers to lay down their lives for the uplift of the masses of India, and in particular to help the hungry and illiterate. In his heart of hearts he felt that India would not be able to resist his appeal. Many months before, he had said, 'But India shall listen to me. I will shake India to her foundations. I will send an electric thrill through her veins. Wait! You will see how India receives me. It is India, my own India, that knows truly how to appreciate what I have given so freely here, and with my life's blood. India will receive me in triumph.'¹⁰

Swami Vivekananda was the Eagle who soared high up in company with the kingly Swan to snatch from the heavens truths that would transform the lives of the human gods caught up in the quagmire of *samsara*. Filling the quarters with his cry, 'Arise, awake! and stop not till the goal is reached', the hero of the era waged a total war against bondage, enthusing all to tear asunder the illusory fetters and be free. Freedom, freedom, freedom—was the song of his soul. Taking the globe in his hand, as it were, he

6. *Ibid.*, p. 371.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 372.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, p. 375.

10. *loc. cit.*, pp. 220-1.

gave it a good shaking. Frightening bad dreams vanished, and the long dark night melted into a smiling dawn, ushering a new day in the history of mankind. This is the meaning of the birth of Vivekananda. He was not born on the 12th January 1863, at a particular moment. He is still being born each day, each moment, in the hearts of hundreds of men and women.

Did not the prophet-poet Vivekananda sing?:

Move on, O Lord, in thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world,
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed!¹¹

Close came his assuring words:

It may be that I shall find it good to get outside of my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God.¹²

In January 1904, Swamiji's birthday celebration was going on at Belur Math. Sister Nivedita rose to speak in the public meeting held on that day. She said :

We have not assembled here to get lost momentarily in the exhilaration and exuberance of the celebrations. The celebration is arranged in order that we may acquire the power through which we may put our heart and soul to translate the teachings of Swamiji into action. What did he teach? Did he want that men should sing in his praise? No. We know

that he hated name and fame from the bottom of his heart. Did he want that the name of his master Sri Ramakrishna be spread by all far and wide? No, he did not want that. Did he want that his special advices and methods of work be followed by all? No, he did not want that even. What did he want then? He wanted all to stand upon their own feet and to be men.¹³

Vivekananda, the prophet-philosopher, surveyed at the world phenomenon and made a brief summary: 'After all, this world is a series of pictures, and man-making is the great interest running through. We were all watching the making of men and that alone.'¹⁴ Vivekananda's observation catches a glimpse of the whole in its dynamic state, giving a meaning to the perplexing present. It also gives dynamism to Neo-Vedanta, or Practical Vedanta, preached by Swami Vivekananda. Thus his slogan was, 'Move on, *Charaiveti, Charaiveti*'.

Rising like the sun as the messenger of the Gospel of Light of the Lord of this age, Sri Ramakrishna, he scattered it in all directions. To use the lines of a poet of his century:

And not by the eastern windows only
When the daylight comes,
comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly.
But westward, look! the land is bright.

And he said:

Bring all light into the world. Bring light to the poor, and more light to the

11. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) vol. 5, p. 440.

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 414.

13. *Swamiji ki chahiten*, Bengali, Compiled by Swami Chetanananda.

14. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), p. 286.

rich, for they require it more. Bring light to the ignorant, and more light to the educated, for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous. Thus bring light to all and leave the rest unto the Lord.¹⁵

He had seen God face to face. He had touched the feet of the God incarnate. He knew God is everywhere.

So came to us a saint the like of whom is rare indeed on earth, as eulogized by the philosopher-poet-prince Bhartrihari in a verse of which Swami Vivekananda was so fond :

मनसि वचसि काये पुण्यपीयूषपूर्णः
त्रिभुवनमुपकारश्रेणिभिः प्रीणयन्तः ।
परगुणपरमाणुं पर्वतीकृत्य नित्यं
निजहृदि विकसन्तः सन्ति सन्तः कियन्तः ॥

*In his mind, word, and deed the holy nectar always flows. He pleases the three worlds with a series of benevolent works. He makes a hill out of an atom of goodness discovered in anyone and that enlarges his own heart. Rare is such a saint.*¹⁶

His vivifying message is in fact the call of the age to man: 'Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake great ones. The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake. What more is in life? What greater work?'¹⁷ 'Be and make—let this be our motto.'¹⁸

If you seek your own salvation, you will go to hell. It is the salvation of others that you must seek and even if you have to go to hell in working for others that is

worth more than to gain heaven by seeking your own salvation. Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come.¹⁹ Ye, divinities on earth, Sinners! It is a sin to call a man so. It is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal. Ye are not bodies—Matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.²⁰

He taught life, he taught expansion of heart, he taught universal love, and he taught renunciation and service. Also, manliness and fearlessness. He took each man where he stood and gave him a lift. Thus Swami Vivekananda does not give us some fixed ideas, fixed creeds, fixed rites and rituals. What he gave is a general plan—a master plan for the future to suit the needs of individuals of all climes and clans, belonging to all religions and philosophies.

Vivekananda stands between the sacred and the secular, *sannyasa* and *samsara*, the individual and society, depth and diffusion, the East and the West, past and future, faith and reason, religion and science, knowledge and action—and synthesizes them in his magnificent personality.

He has called upon particularly the young, the energetic, the intelligent—to put their shoulders to the wheel of future construction, to come forward with brain and brawn, and a heart as soft as the tender flower and as strong as the thunderbolt.

He said: I have given you advice enough. Now put at least something into practice. Let the world see that your listening to me has been a success.²¹ □

15. *Complete Works*, vol. 3, p. 247.

16. *Nitishatakam*, sl. 78.

17. *Complete Works*, vol. 7, p. 501.

18. *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 351.

19. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 501.

20. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 11

21. *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 175.

Vivekananda: East and West

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Swamiji was born 'to remove the miseries of mankind', Sri Ramakrishna had foretold. His ideal in life—to preach unto humanity its inherent divinity and how to manifest it in every movement of life—required that he travel extensively, mix with people, diagnose the cause of their grief and anxiety, and prescribe a remedy. In this article, Swami Chetanananda, the Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis describes how Swamiji devoted nine intense years (1893–1902) to achieve this goal.

'I have a Message to the West'

After his great success at the Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda joined a lecture bureau, which arranged for him a lecture tour all over the Midwest. Later he found that he was being cheated by the bureau, so he severed his contract with it. The American media made him well-known; as a result, he received invitations to lecture from various organizations. On 30 December 1894, Vivekananda said at the Brooklyn Ethical Society, 'I have a message to the West, as Buddha had a message to the East.'

What did Vivekananda teach in the West? He taught Vedanta, the universal philosophy and religion of the Upanishads, which originated thousands of years ago in India. The Western audience heard something new in his message: Sectarianism, bigotry, superstition, and intolerance were swept aside to make room for the harmony of all religions. It was an overwhelming message of goodwill and brotherly love.

'The Swami had little patience with the constant harping on original sin in the West,' wrote Cornelius Heijblom [later, Swami Atulananda]. 'Why do you dwell on sin so much?' he exclaimed. 'You are heirs of immortal bliss. We Hindus refuse to call you sinners! Ye are the children of God.' 'Thus the Swami,' wrote Heijblom, 'cleared the theological atmosphere of the West. He sounded the trumpet call of glad tidings, of hope, of cheer, of salvation for all. And a

new thought-wave swept over America. The swami brought the Gospel of the divinity of human beings.

Swami Vivekananda had come to speak the truth, not to flatter the American nation to win their applause and sympathy. He had a great reverence for Christ and his teachings, but he saw the flaws in current Christianity....In Detroit, before a large audience he exclaimed: 'I have come to make you better Christians. Remember Christ's saying, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Everything that has selfishness for its basis must perish. If you want to life, go back to Christ. Go back to him who had nowhere to lay his head. Go back to him, and give up your vain pursuits. Better be ready to live in rags with Christ than to live in palaces without him.'

Vivekananda redefined religion for his Western audience: 'You must bear in mind that religion does not consist in talk, or doctrines or books, but in realization. It is not learning but *being*'. 'The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.' 'Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and man unto God....Take religion from human society

and what will remain? Nothing but a forest of brutes. Sense-happiness is not the goal of humanity. Wisdom is the goal of all life.'

The supreme goal of human life, according to Vivekananda, is to manifest the divinity that is within all beings. How does one do it? Vivekananda described four paths, which he called yogas: karma yoga, the path of unselfish action; bhakti yoga, the path of devotion; jnana yoga, the path of knowledge; and raja yoga, the path of meditation. These yogas, or spiritual paths, help people to unite themselves with God. Thus they overcome all weaknesses and problems in their lives and attain supreme bliss and freedom.

East Meets West—I

From July 1893 to December 1896, Vivekananda travelled and lectured extensively in America and Europe. He met many distinguished men and women of the West, and tried to establish a bridge between the East and the West by removing social, religious, and cultural barriers. He emphasized in his lectures that the Truth is one and universal, and all human beings, knowingly or unknowingly, are marching towards it. In the realization of this oneness of Truth, people attain peace, bliss, and harmony.

'When we talk of East and West,' writes Laura Glenn, an American writer, 'we must remember one great fact that spirituality has no geographical limits. Truth is the same at all points of the compass: the law of gravitation does not function more in Europe than in Africa or Asia; the facts of chemistry are as true in an Indian as in a German laboratory; the heavens are as visible through a telescope in Tokyo as in Cambridge.'

A knower of Truth is a universal person. He or she transcends all geographical, social, and religious barriers. Vivekananda experienced this Truth. He wrote to an Indian disciple from New York on 9 August 1895:

Every day my sight grows clearer. What is India or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called MAN. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree?... There is but one basis of well-being, social, political, or spiritual, to know that I and my brother are one. This is true for all countries and all people.

As a lover of humanity, Vivekananda voiced what was good for the West as well as the East. There was no motive, fear, or compromise in his message. Observing the materialistic civilization of the West, he said: 'Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism. Armies when they attempt to conquer armies only multiply and make brutes of humanity. Spirituality must conquer the West.' In 1897, during one of his lectures, he said: 'Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground, and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upanishad.' The last two world wars are the proof of his prophecy.

Vivekananda had powerful insight. Like a good doctor, he could diagnose correctly and precisely the causes of the sufferings of a people as well as the degradation of a nation. On 18 November 1894, he wrote (from New York) to Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherji, a distinguished Indian:

I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness—the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.... Give and take is the law; and if India wants to raise herself once more, it

is absolutely necessary that she bring out her treasures and throw them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, hatred is death.

It is amazing how Vivekananda's letters from the West aroused the Indian nation and made him a patriot-prophet.

*'Arise! Awake! And Stop not
Till the Goal is Reached!'*

After staying three and a half years in the West, Vivekananda returned to India with some of his Western disciples. He arrived at Colombo on 15 January 1897 and received a triumphal reception. When he reached South India, millions of people paid homage to the swami, and even the rajas prostrated

he had this thought: 'To organize or not to organize? If I organize, the spirit will diminish. If I do not organize, the message will not spread.' However, on 1 May 1897, Swamiji founded the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta and framed its rules and regulations. He delineated the aims and ideals of the Ramakrishna Order, which is purely spiritual and humanitarian in nature and is completely dissociated from politics. He started two centres—one at Mayavati in the Himalayas, where Westerners could practise nondualistic Vedanta, and the other in Madras. He also started three magazines to propagate the ideas and ideals of Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna.

Meanwhile Vivekananda was receiving heart-warming letters from his Western disciples and friends about the Vedanta work. One letter was signed by Lewis G. Janes, President of the Brooklyn Ethical Associa-

Vivekananda had powerful insight. Like a good doctor, he could diagnose correctly and precisely the sufferings of a people as well as the degradation of a nation.

themselves before him. He travelled all over India, this time as a national hero. He began to awaken the sleeping, subjugated nation with the clarion call of Vedanta:

'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!' 'Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. Be not weak. Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Stand up and be strong.' 'The first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe: "I am the Soul. I am the Omnipotent, I am the Omniscient." Repeat these blessed saving words....These conceptions of Vedanta must come out, must not remain only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, and in the cottage of the poor man.'

Vivekananda knew the pros and cons of organized religion. While he was in America

tion; C.C. Everett, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School; William James and Josiah Royce, both professors of philosophy at Harvard University; Mrs. Sara C. Bull (also known as Mrs. Ole Bull), the promoter of the Cambridge Conferences; and others. It runs: 'As members of the Cambridge Conferences, devoted to comparative study in Ethics, Philosophy, and Religion, it gives us great pleasure to recognize the value of your able expositions of the Philosophy and Religion of Vedanta in America and the interest created thereby among thinking people.' The Swami's Detroit friends wrote: 'We, Western Aryans, have been so long separated from our Eastern brothers that we had almost forgotten our identity of origin, until you came and, with beautiful presence and matchless eloquence, rekindled within our hearts the knowledge that we of

America and you of India are one.'

In 1898, a piece of property was purchased at Belur, across the river from Calcutta, which became the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order. Swamiji began to train his brother monks and disciples so that they could properly carry on the work. But his health began to fail as a result of constant work. He badly needed rest. His American disciples and friends wanted him to return to America, and his brother disciples also felt that a sea voyage would do him good.

East Meets West—II

On 20 June 1899, Vivekananda left for the West for the second time accompanied by Swami Turiyananda and Sister Nivedita. This journey with the Swami turned into a wonderful education for both of them. He trained Turiyananda in how to work in the West and Nivedita how work in the East. One day, before leaving India he had said to Nivedita: 'Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface: really, it is full of tragic intensity. Now here [India], it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment.'

Vivekananda's belief in the effectiveness of Vedanta grew through his travels and observations, experiences and insights. He saw it not as a mere religion or philosophy, but rather as a means to reconcile science and religion, and to harmonize material prosperity and spirituality. He noticed that the East was strong in noble religious and spiritual traditions even though it suffered from grinding poverty; and that the West, for all its technological advancements and affluence, suffered from spiritual poverty. There was no reason, he thought, why East and West could not profit from each other's strengths by removing each other's weaknesses.

Vivekananda arrived in London on 31 July 1899, and stayed a couple of weeks. He

met with some of his old friends, but did not lecture because of his fragile health. He then left for New York with Turiyananda and two American devotees, arriving there on 28 August. It was arranged that the swamis should live temporarily at Ridgely, the beautiful country home of Mr. Francis Leggett. That fall Vivekananda rested and gradually recuperated. He was happy seeing the activities of the Vedanta Society of New York (which he had founded in November 1894) under the leadership of Swami Abhedananda; and he engaged Turiyananda to give classes in Montclair, New Jersey.

On 22 November, the Swami Left for Los Angeles via Chicago. Vivekananda stayed in southern California from 3 December 1899 to 22 February 1900, and gave several lectures in Los Angeles and Pasadena. He then went to northern California and founded the Vedanta Society of San Francisco. Swamiji's oratory and magnetic personality overwhelmed the people. 'He once told us,' Mr. Thomas Allan recounted, 'that he had such faith in the Divine Mother that if he had to speak on a subject that he knew absolutely nothing about, he would get on his feet, for he knew that Mother would put the words into his mouth.'

During his second visit, Swamiji worked mainly in California. He had a premonition of his approaching end and wrote to Miss MacLeod, 'My boat is nearing the calm harbour from which it is never more to be driven out.'

Swamiji left California on 30 May and reached New York via Chicago on 7 June. He sent Turiyananda to start a retreat in northern California, which later became the Shanti Ashrama. Swamiji gave a few more lectures and classes in New York and then left for Paris on 26 July to attend the Congress of the History of Religions. He spoke twice there and closed his Western mission. He then visited some countries in Europe with Madame Emma Calvé and Miss

Josephine MacLeod, finally returning to India in December 1900.

'I Shall Never See Forty'

Vivekananda arrived at Belur Math unannounced on 9 December 1900. His brother monks and disciples were jubilant to have their leader back. Later, Vivekananda received the sad news of Mr. Sevier's passing away. On 27 December, he left for Mayavati in the Himalayas to console Mrs. Sevier, arriving there on 3 January 1901. It was a severe winter. He stayed there for a couple of weeks and then returned to Belur Math on 24 January.

During this time the Swami received invitations for a lecture tour in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), and his mother also expressed a desire to visit the holy places in that part of the country. On 26 January, he wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull: 'I am going to take my mother on pilgrimage.... This is the one great wish of a Hindu widow. I have only brought misery to my people all my life. I am trying to fulfil this one wish of hers.'

On 18 March, the Swami, in spite of his poor health, left for Dhaka with a large party. He exhorted the people of Dhaka to cultivate manliness and the faculty of reasoning. To a sentimental young man he said: 'My boy, take my advice: develop your muscles and brain by eating good food and by healthy exercise, and then you will be able to think for yourself.' On another occasion, addressing the youths of Bengal, who had very little physical stamina, he said, 'You will be nearer to heaven through football than through the study of the Gita.'

He returned to Belur Math on 12 May. Vivekananda tried to lead a carefree life at the monastery—sometimes talking to the poor labourers who were levelling the ground, sometimes supervising the cooking

arrangements, sometimes singing devotional songs with the monks. At other times he imparted spiritual instructions to visitors, or engaged in meditation or serious study.

He continued to train his disciples:

In every country, nations have their good and bad sides. Ours is to do good works in our lives and hold an example before others. No work succeeds by condemnation. It only repels people. Let anybody say what he likes, don't contradict him. In this world of maya, whatever work you will take up will be attended with some defect. 'All undertakings are beset with imperfections, as fire with smoke.' [*Gītā*, 18.48] But will you, on that account, sit inactive? As far as you can, you must go on doing good work.

His fragile body could not dampen his spirit to work. When urged to rest, he said to a disciple: 'My son, there is no rest for me. That which Sri Ramakrishna called "Kali" took possession of my body and soul three or four days before his passing away. That makes me work and work and never lets me keep still or look to my personal comfort.'

At last the final day came: 4 July 1902. He meditated three hours that morning, conducted a class on Sanskrit grammar and Vedanta philosophy for the monks in the afternoon, and then took a long walk with Swami Premananda. At dusk he took a cup of tea. Then while going to his room he said to Bodhananda, 'See that they [monks] all get new mosquito curtains.' He was concerned that the monks might suffer from malaria. He went to his room and said to his attendant, 'Wait and meditate till I call you.' He himself sat for meditation and gave up his body through samadhi. □

If your cause has to come out of an effect, it can have no right to recognition. How will a cause, which is not established as such, produce a result?

—*Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad*,

Swami Vivekananda—The Optimum Person

DR. M.D. PARADKAR

An interesting and thoughtful study of Swamiji's personality from a fresh point of view. Dr. Paradkar is the Honorary Chancellor of the Bombay Hindu Vidyapeeth

It is universally acknowledged that Swami Vivekananda's life and message are a source of great inspiration to many in their individual as well as collective life. His words, 'Even the least work done for others awakens the power within; even thinking of the least good of others gradually instils into the heart the strength of a lion. I love you all ever so much but I would wish you all to die working for others—I should be rather glad to see you do that',¹ are full of transparent sincerity coupled with the courage of conviction.

His simple opening words addressed to the audience in the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago on 11th September 1893, namely, 'Sisters and Brothers of America', have proved to be unique and historic in point of their overwhelming influence on the assembly. Romain Rolland said, 'It was a tongue of flame among the grey wastes of cold dissertation, it fired the souls of the listening throng.' It has to be admitted that, there was no innate novelty in either these words or the short speech that he delivered at the time; many other speakers before him had given expression to that sentiment, had listened to many platitudes. But, for the first time it was experienced that 'here was a soul, greeting thousands of other souls by sweet and living terms, Sisters and Brothers... Was it this or was it the Divine Power behind him that had seized the audience by a whirlpool of spiritual ecstasy—for it was nothing short of

ecstasy.² The reason for such an abiding influence evidently lies in the surprising combination of all the qualities of the optimum person in him. A look at these qualities is bound to prove interesting as well as instructive.

First among these is *efficiency*, which can be said to be the hallmark of his career. It is known that he shook the whole world in his short life of thirty-nine years five months and four days; this life was one of most intense activity, especially after his phenomenal success in the Parliament of Religions. The whirlwind tours that he carried out in America and England (he visited England thrice: September to the end of November in 1895; April to the end of July in 1896; and October to mid-December in the same year; and toured India from January 1897 to June 1899) speak volumes for his efficiency.

He was never tired of showing to his countrymen the value and significance of the culture they had inherited from their able ancestors. The concern he felt for its revival was revealed in his founding the Ramakrishna Mission as well as by the carefulness he showed in training his disciples, both Eastern as well as Western. It has to be underlined that all this was done with a view to carry out his plan for the regeneration of India, the motherland. Really speaking, he closed his public lectures in America

1. See *Thus Spake Vivekananda* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1969) p. 68.

2. See: Sailendra Nath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975), vol. 2, p. 462.

in the last part of February in the year 1896 for the purpose of giving a concrete shape to his Vedantic work on that Soil. He had thought of a plan of bringing from India some of his brother disciples to carry on the religious teaching in America, as in his eyes it was necessary for Americans to be aware of the catholicity and universality at the basis of real religion.

He also succeeded in having some of his American and English disciples for spreading in India the message of science, industry, economics, applied sociology, organization and cooperation. India in his opinion needed energy and dexterity in action as well as the thirst for improvement which characterized the freedom-loving people of the active West. He wanted to benefit the Orient by inducing in it the greater activity and energy of the West, while he took great pains to make the West learn from an admixture of Eastern introspection and meditative habits. This is really 'yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam—dexterity in action' of the *Gītā* amply illustrated by the activity of the revered Swami.

But mere efficiency or dexterity in action will not be sufficient in the optimum person, who has to be a traveller on the road of perfection. He must be endowed with creativity, which is really a result of *navanavonmeśāsalinī pratibhā* (creativity capable of manifesting in new and newer ways). It is on account of this *pratibhā* (creativity) that he founded the Ramakrishna Mission—with the purpose of realizing that, service to the needy as well as the downtrodden amounts to approximating the worship of the divine in man. According to Vivekananda, each soul is potentially divine, and serving man amounts to serving the Divinity, whether one does it knowing or unknowingly.

He preached practical Vedanta which is a philosophy not merely to be thought about or discussed intellectually. His teaching was not confined to a select group of sadhus or monks, but he wanted to bring the spirit of

self-realization to all people in every walk of life. Practical Vedanta, in his opinion, means the practice of truthfulness and integrity, and strengthening the will against the temptation to compromise with forces of ignorance and injustice. His greatness lies in his interpreting Vedanta in a futuristic language and revealing Hinduism as an open tradition, capable of harmonizing all creeds.

Vivekananda's creativity is best displayed in his expression of the basic ideas of Advaita Vedanta in a rationalistic language. The ideas that matter is a form of energy, and that consciousness is the Primal Cause behind all creation were placed convincingly by Swami Vivekananda before the intelligentsia of the West. Similarly, his idea that the microcosm, the smallest matter, contains potentially the macrocosm, the universe, inside itself, was really an exposition of that idea already implicit in the Vedantic statement of identity of Brahman and Atman. It was left to the creativity of Swamiji to declare this in one of his lectures in London in 1890. Here he said, 'It is possible to demonstrate that what we call matter does not exist at all. It is only a certain state of force. Solidity or hardness or any other state of matter can be proved to be the result of motion.'³

It must be admitted that Swamiji's *pratibhā* had anticipated the conclusions arrived at by physicists of repute like Steven Weinberg, who flourished twenty-five years later. This physicist wrote, 'Material particles like electrons and protons were conceived to be external; on the other hand, photons were supposed to be merely a manifestation of an underlying reality, the quantified electro-magnetic field, and could be freely created and destroyed.'⁴

Similarly, Swamiji's analysis that the gross human body, the *sthūla śarīra*, is con-

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 2, p. 76.

trolled by the finer *sūkṣma śarīra*, the final controlling and regulating principle, is borne out by Dr. Rupert Scheldrake, the author of the book, *A New Science of Life* (1981). This great scientist writes, 'The universe as a whole could have a course and purpose only if it were itself created by a conscious agent which transcended it.' In 1895–96, Vivekananda with his penetrating insight spoke of the inadequacy of western psychology due to its underestimating the powers of mind. This is accepted by Nobel Prize winning physicist Eugene Wagner (1914).⁵

Granting the importance of these two attributes, namely efficiency and creativity, the significance of a third, i.e. *inner harmony*, cannot be overlooked. In fact, if this harmony within the person were to be conspicuous by its absence, one would have no conviction or courage to 'call a spade a spade'. Swamiji's letters to his disciples and admirers in India, as well as to some of his western disciples, are replete with such boldness and at times bluntness. This is the inevitable outcome of his possessing that great quality. This made him say, 'I may perish of cold and hunger in this land (America), but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go down on your faces before Him and make a great sacrifice, the sacrifice of a whole life for them—these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.'⁶ He was sure that 'hundreds will fall in the struggle, hundreds will be ready to take it up.' It is only on account of this crucial quality that this monk, unknown before the World's Parliament of Religions, having no titles and ties or credentials, blossomed into a world-figure, became the man of the hour and

retained the laurels that came to him unsought and totally unexpected. This harmony within the personality was undoubtedly the result of the *anugraha* (grace) of the Master, the great Acarya Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the apostle of serene peace in Dakshineswar.

This also accounts for the sense of his indebtedness to society, rather to the suffering masses of his motherland. In fact this sense of *relatedness* happens to be the fourth attribute of the Optimum Person. Sympathy towards human beings was not a mere notion with Vivekananda to sweep him off his feet, but this innate sense of being related to the suffering humanity and his identification with the common man was characteristic of him throughout his life.

Vedic seers of this ancient land had already envisaged this truth of *relatedness* when they spoke of every person being born with debts (*ṛṇas*) to society. The authors of *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*, the teachers of *dharma*, laid down that a person who thinks of his own emancipation without paying off these debts is bound to suffer. Swamiji had drunk deep at the fountain of ancient Indian culture, adequately represented by his great Guru. This is the reason why in the midst of the recognition of his genius in the West, amidst universal applause and immense popularity he was never unmindful of his duties to the suffering masses of India. On the very day of his great triumph in the Parliament of Religions, he was invited by a man of great wealth and distinction to his home and was lodged in a princely room, in luxury beyond his conception. But he could not have a wink of sleep as the bed of down appeared to him a bed of thorns, and his host was surprised to hear his sobs. He rolled down on the empty floor and his heart cried, 'O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in

4. Steven Weinberg, *Cosmic Code*, p. 239.

5. Dr. M. D. Paradkar, 'Vedanta and Science', from *Vivekananda: A Tribute* (Bombay: Vivek Vyasapedt, 1993), pp. 60–1.

6. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, pp. 16–17.

utmost poverty? Who will raise the masses in India? Who will give them bread? Show me, O Mother, how can I help them.'⁷

At the call of Swamiji, Miss Margaret Noble (Sister Nivedita), along with Miss Henrietta F. Muller, began educational work in India by starting some model schools. He had also begun to train other western disciples—Mrs. Old Bull, Miss Josephine MacLeod, the Seviars, and others—not only by giving discourses but also by setting out on a journey to India with them to help them develop a clear understanding of the problems of the people in the country and bring the ideals and methods of Western scientific culture to bear upon the task of solving India's problems. In the later part of 1901, he served a beautiful feast to Santhal labourers working on the Belur

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Math grounds, saying to his disciples, 'Today I have entertained Narayana (God) Himself...See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are. Will you be able to relieve their miseries to some extent at least? Otherwise of what use is our wearing the gerua (the ochre robe of the sannyasin)?'⁸ His sense of being indebted to the people at large is impressed on us at once by his utterance— 'So long as the millions die in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.'⁹ Nay, he has gone even to the length of saying that, 'so long as even a single dog in my country is without food, my whole

religion will be to feed it!'

Such an innate sense of owing a debt to the society can have its root only in *spirituality*, true perception of the spiritual unity and oneness of all beings. It is the crowning glory of all the attributes of the Optimum Person. God and Truth had been the constant theme of the talks of this great teacher at the Thousands Islands in America. It has been rightly said that during these lectures he used to take his pupils 'daily aloft on his mighty wings, and at a bewildering speed, making them survey the entire universe of the Spirit in a way that a new vista was opened up before them almost every moment.' Sister Christine's records of those inspired talks are indeed very eloquent. She wrote: 'It seemed as if we had left the body and bodily consciousness outside. We sat in a semicircle and waited. Which gate to the external would be opened for us today? What heavenly vision should meet our eyes? There was always the thrill of adventure. The Undiscovered Country, the Sorrowless Land opened up new Vistas of hope and beauty. Even so, our expectations were always exceeded. Vivekananda's flights carried us to supernal heights. Whatever degree of realization may or may not have come to us since, one thing we can never forget. We saw the Promised Land.'¹⁰

It is pertinent thus to note that Swami Vivekananda was not just a traveller on the road of perfection, he spoke through his personal experience of *Aham brahmāsmi*, the identity of the Soul with God. It is well known that as a young man he was hankering for a taste of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, where the human personality merges in the ocean of that true individuality which is God. This *samādhi* can be called the transfiguration of human personality into Divinity, which the Upanishads speak of and Buddha describes

7. Swami Tejasarananda, *A Short Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), p. 50.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1.

9. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 5, p. 58.

as 'the breaking down of the ridge-pole of that tabernacle of thought and form in which the soul has made its abode for unaccountable ages.'¹¹

Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the gifted teacher, knew that his extraordinary pupil's drift and tendency was like that of the *mahāpuruṣa* (great soul) who remained immovably fixed in Brahman and whose thoughts silently permeated mankind, but that his real nature was of the *mahāpuruṣa* who having attained oneness with Brahman wished to transmute the highest knowledge into the highest service. That was the reason why he wanted his Narendra to taste that highest state of bliss. But he never wanted him to remain in that state leading to the extinction of personality. In fact he wanted its transformation, its saturation with omnipotent powers to help in redeeming the world. It has been recorded that on one evening Narendra experienced that highest consciousness, unexpected and unawares, as it were. He had told of this experience to Swami Saradananda, when 'the moorings of his sense-consciousness were cut and he soared into the realms of which none speaks.'¹² He was certainly fortunate to have a Guru of the status of Sri Ramakrishna who in his early days had given him an inkling of that experience.

On getting that wonderful experience on his own, Narendra had beseeched his Guru to allow him to remain in that state of utmost ecstasy in the infinite stillness of peace, only to get a rebuke from him for his selfish thought. This great Guru was kind enough to say, 'This realization will become so

natural to you, by the Grace of the Mother, that in your normal state you will realize the One Divinity of all beings. You will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor.'¹³

No wonder that the prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna proved to be true. In fact there were instances of the Swami living on the verge of the Absolute—when he had experiences of *nirvikalpa samādhi* thrice in America: at Chicago, at Camp Percy and at Thousand Island Park. Thus in Swami Vivekananda is a rare example of spirituality at its best, illustrated in his short but truly fruitful life. Marvellously he could keep himself clear of all the so-called temptations of the West as well as from the prejudices created in the missionaries by his outspokenness.

It is abundantly clear that Swamiji lived, worked and died for the world. He was a man with a world mission. He combined in him all the qualities of the Optimum Person: (i) efficiency, (ii) creativity, (iii) inner harmony, (iv) relatedness, and (v) spirituality or transcendence. On account of this he was able to conceive of progress of the world in materialistic terms as well as see new values or reiterate old ones. His universal teachings and profound learning made a deep impression on the minds of the intelligentsia in the West as well as in the East. He also succeeded in converting his Gurubhais (brother disciples) from the individualistic to the universal idea of religious life. Besides, his public spirit of service to the needy endeared him to the common man. Indeed, taking all things together, his life was one of unique achievement. □

10. *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern & Western Admirers (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961), pp. 171–2.

11. *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 1, p. 179.

12. Sister Nivedita, *The Master As I Saw Him* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1930), p. 458.

13. *Comprehensive Biography*, vol. 1, p. 182.



What Kind of India Would I Like to Live In?

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We are lucky enough to have been born in a country which is better than heaven. The physical features of our country seem to me to be divine. If snow-covered Himalayas serve as crown, the rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra serve her as garlands. The Indian Ocean continuously washes her feet with uncountable hands of its waves. We enjoy six seasons in India that come one by one and go, after giving much pleasure. Nature has also always loved India.

Though we enjoy so many advantages, we are suffering from many social and economic problems as well. These evils are causing harm to the society and hampering the growth of our country as a whole. Our society still suffers from many ills. Narrow casteism and the stigma of untouchability persists even today. Position of women in India is not at par with men. Cases of child marriage and purdah are quite common. There are other problems, like child delinquency, beggary, drinking, drug addiction, dowry, communalism, and various other economic offences.

We are suffering from various economic ills and there is lack of prosperity in our country. Our industries are not very developed. On the other hand we are facing the pressure of population

growth.

I would like to live in that India which is free from such evils, which does not suffer from such economic and social problems. I would like to live in that India where it is not a matter of shame to work with the use of hands and legs; where each and every man is employed. I would like to live in that India where everyone is able to get adequate food, clothing and shelter. I would like to live in that India where the condition is—सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः। सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःखभाग् भवेत्।।

The India in which I would like to live should be a combination of big cities and prosperous villages. It would be the age of wonderful technology, computers, electronics and robots. There should be a number of hospitals in that India, where specialized doctors could work with complicated machines and could treat the patients in no time, and I would like to live in that India where there will be no greed, theft, murder and robbery.

But it is very hard to make such an India. No doubt, our Government is trying its best to develop India in all fields. So, let us work hard and see, to what extent India can progress.

The India of My Dreams

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O! What a country India is, with its multi-Maharastrians, busy-Bengalians, challenging-Tamilians! People belonging to different castes and following different customs and traditions, speaking different languages are living in India. We are proud that our India cannot be compared with any other country in the universe. Our land is the only land of holy and lengthy rivers, of famous and fabulous temples, the land of art and architecture.

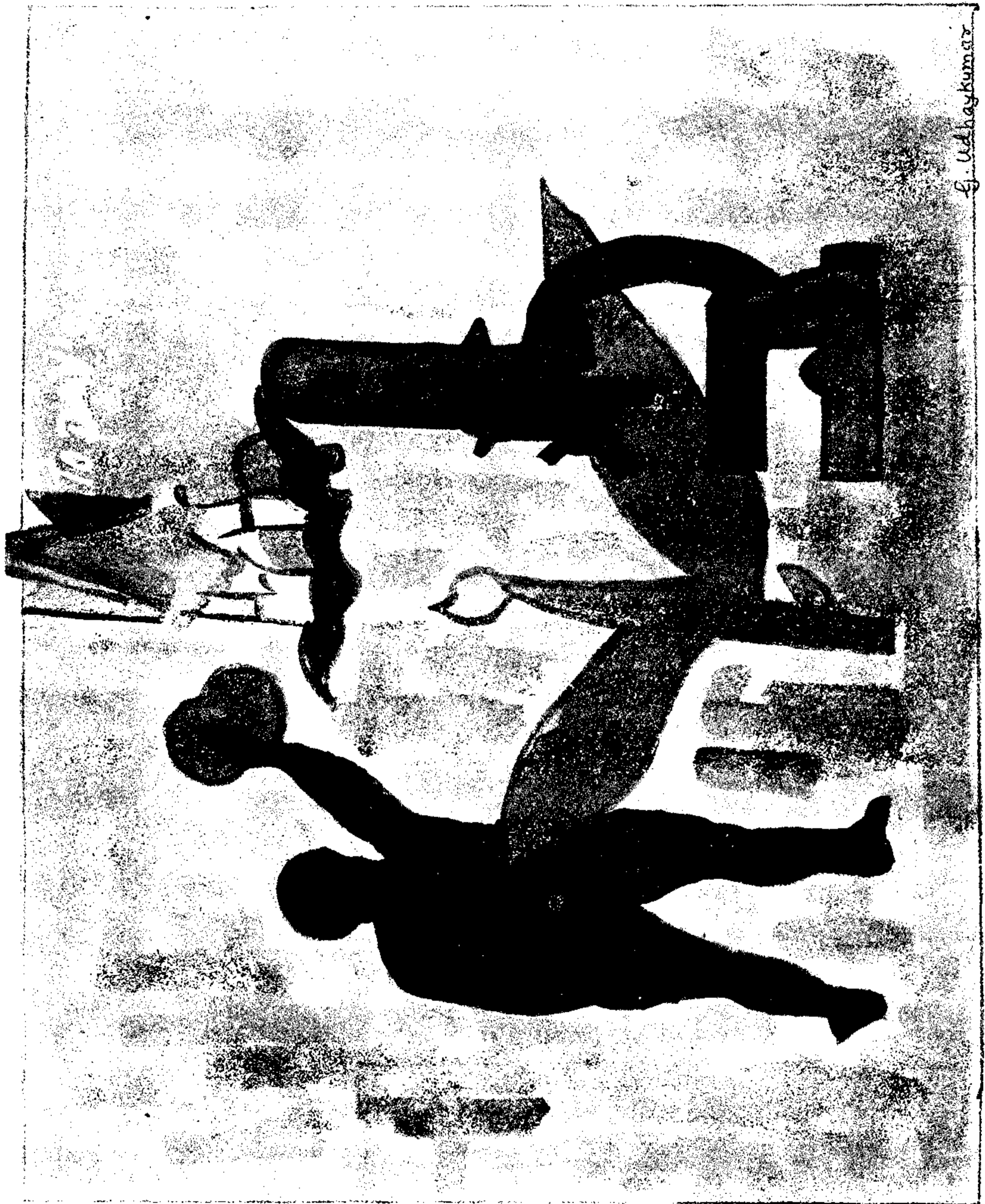
I wish my country to be for all—no Punjabis

or Kashmirians can be separated. Bharat (India) is common for all. It was formed from the toil and tears of each and every Indian. My country India is a country in which no casteism is pronounced, a country in which no language can separate any group of individuals, a country in which no unsolvable problem arises—no more Phoolandevs.

My wishing is for India to be a country having neither Punjabis or Kashmirians—only Indians! Jai Hind! ☐

CONCERNING HUMANITY

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G. Udaykumar

A Century of International Change

A. N. D. HAKSAR

In this comprehensive paper we have a reliable overview of the past 100 years or so of global political changes, presented under five broad sections: i. the age of European Supremacy; ii. conflicts within the European system manifested in two world wars; iii. the emergence of a bi-polar world divided by the cold war; iv. the anti-colonial upsurge leading to the independence of subjugated countries; and v. the end of the cold war and the search for a new world order, in which search the ancient wisdom of India has a crucial role.

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The world scene has witnessed dramatic changes in the near century since *Prabuddha Bharata* was founded. Amidst the shifts of power and prosperity, the rise and fall of states and empires, and the ebb and flow of ideas, the feature which stands out, perhaps most prominently, is a remarkable expansion: of human knowledge and its material applications; of human awareness, spurred by the new speed of information; and of sheer human numbers. At another level the absence of change is equally dramatic. Despite external progress, human motivations and propensities leading to deceit and violence, cruelty and cupidity, oppression and suffering in the world, have remained essentially the same.

A look back at the changing contours of the global political landscape reveals a world now divided between over one hundred and eighty sovereign, independent states, while it had been dominated by barely half a dozen empires a century ago. In between political power flowed from a multi-polar to a bi-polar, and back again to a multiple state system. A connected phenomenon was the surge to independence of subjugated people, leading to the collapse of colonial empires, and the rise of new countries in their stead. Subjugation

and deprivation also gave vent to great revolutions in search of equality and social justice in the name of socialism. The states to which they gave birth have recently undergone radical transformations as their ideological underpinnings crumbled.

This kaleidoscopic pattern of continuing change and accompanying friction, already marked by two world wars and a cold war punctuated by numerous local conflicts, now appears poised in a precarious peace with new flashpoints, of ethnic and fundamentalist violence on the one hand, and of economic tensions arising from trends towards globalization, regional protectionist groupings and widening disparities on the other. Within the insecurities and discontent which cloud this fluid landscape, some signs can also be perceived of a hankering for more permanent values.

This brief survey is confined to the political scene, but it must necessarily begin with the implications, both positive and negative, of the landmark features to which reference has already been made. The most striking of these is human progress in science and technology, resulting in unprecedented advances in man's conquest of external nature. Industrial and agricultural produc-

tivity and prosperity increased immensely as a result, and disease and ignorance declined correspondingly. At the same time economic competition between and within states intensified to the point of political confrontation. The resulting violence was further aggravated by the continued invention of newer and more potent weapons of destruction and war.

Among the most significant products of scientific discovery in the last century has been the revolution in the means of communication. Telegraph, radio, telephone and television, combined with optics, electronics, satellites and the other panoply of computerized telecommunications, and the great advances in air and surface transport, have knit the world together as never before. Above all they have speeded the flow of images and ideas so that, in the prescient words of this Journal's founder, 'one atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake.' Thus the last ten decades have seen the progressively swifter and wider spread of the ideas of justice and equity, freedom and independence, no less than of group fears and hatreds, and of ever infectious consumerism fuelled by greed and titillation.

The global population explosion is without doubt one of the most far reaching social phenomena of the last hundred years. Overall human population more than tripled from 1.7 to 4.8 billions in this period, with still to be calculated consequences for global ecology and environment, the finite planetary fuel and mineral resources, and worldwide social and economic competition for living and working space. While the advance of science has already laid to rest some of the Malthusian prophecies of doom about the increase of numbers, some dis-

turbing features remain. The foremost among them is that population growth is concentrated in the poorer parts of the world, largely neutralizing the efforts for their development, and increasing the dangerous global gulf between the rich and the poor nations.

Against the background of the features mentioned above, a survey of political change can best adopt the historical form, and be divided for convenience into some broad sections. These are: the age of European supremacy; conflicts within the European system, manifested in two world wars; the emergence of a bi-polar world divided by the cold war; the anti-colonial upsurge leading to the independence of subjugated countries; the end of the cold war and the search for a new world order. A final section touches the relevance of the moral dimension to this search.

The Age of European Supremacy

'The supreme power that rules the world is Europe,' noted Swami Vivekananda at the turn of the century. 'Why are the black, the bronze, the yellow, the red inhabitants of Asia, Africa and America,' he asked, 'bent low at the feet of the Europeans?' The answer lay not only in the former's backwardness and stagnation, but also in the efficiency, perseverance and self-confidence which had led to the European 'conquest of external nature' at the time.

A handful of European powers occupied the centre of the world scene at the end of the last century. The largest was the British Empire, covering nearly a quarter of the global population and about 12 million square miles of its land surface. It was followed by Czarist Russia, which had steadily expanded over the Eurasian land mass from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, and possessed the largest standing army in Europe. France, the recently united Germany and

Italy, and a declining Austria-Hungary were the other major European powers. At the fringe of this group was the USA, rapidly recovering from its Civil War, and already on way to economic leadership by virtue of its population, area and resources. Also on the fringe was Japan, whose elite had deliberately embarked on western style reforms and modernizations to avoid the western domination and colonization which had taken place elsewhere in Asia.

The power of all these states, based essentially on industrial productivity through the application of science and technology, was already in mutual competition by the beginning of this century. Efforts at power-sharing, exemplified by the 1884 Berlin Conference on trade, navigation and territorial claims in West Africa, provided temporary relief as European rivalries continued to intensify. France was concerned at the rise of Germany, and Austria at that of Italy. Britain worried about Russian moves towards its Indian Empire, and the growth of American influence in the Caribbean. The underlying sources of tension were clear to visionaries like Vivekananda, who wrote in 1895: 'Europe, the centre of manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position....Europe is on the edge of a volcano. Unless the fires are extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will be blown up.'

The Age of European Conflicts

The first half of the present century was dominated by conflicts which exploded in Europe, resulting in two world wars. The first tremors were felt in the Fashoda Crisis of 1898, ranging Britain against France, and the Morocco Crisis of 1905, confronting France against Germany. Japan's naval victories over Russia in 1904-05 were far removed from the European theatre, but they established the former's place in the

ongoing manoeuvres of alliance diplomacy which increasingly lined Russia and France against the Germanic block located between them. The 1908 eruption of the Balkan Crisis following Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina set the fuse which blew up six years later with the assassination of the Austrian heir-apparent in Sarajevo.

If predominantly economic fears and rivalries led to World War I, its outcome was also determined principally by the combatants' capacities to mobilize and sustain their economic and industrial potential for a long conflict. The entry of the USA swung the balance in favour of the Anglo-French alliance. The war ended with the collapse of the German, Austrian, Turkish and Russian empires, and the emergence on their former territories of new states like Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Estonia among others. In Russia, the October Revolution introduced an important new factor on the scene

The material costs of the war were enormous for Europe, nearly 60 million casualties and \$260 billion worth of damages according to historian Paul Kennedy. On the other hand countries untouched by the fighting, like the USA, Japan, and the British dominions including India, benefited economically from the war. The post-war world, however, remained eurocentric with the USA retreating into isolationism, Russia caught in revolution, and the British, French, Dutch and Portuguese empires still intact.

Present scholarship sees the period between the two world wars as essentially one of a 'twenty year truce', with the social and economic consequences of one leading to the other. The tussle over the payment of German war reparations and the liquidation of allied war debts raised one set of tensions. The USA had meanwhile become the

world's leading creditor nation, and the Wall Street Crash of 1929 was followed by widespread industrial depression in the early thirties. Socio-economic distress in Italy, Germany and Spain had led meanwhile to the growth of an aggressive and intolerant fascist movement in those countries, reinforced in Germany by the humiliations of defeat. Nazi Germany sought to consolidate its economic and military recovery through political aggrandizement, a course in which it was fatally encouraged by the appeasement policies of Britain and France who were more concerned at the success of the Bolshevik revolution. Japan also looked to expansion

but gained territories in both the East and the West, apart from ring of satellite states; it also had the largest defence establishment. Both it and the USA armed themselves with nuclear weapons and delivery systems, acquiring an unprecedented strategic superiority over other countries. The multi-polar political landscape of competing European powers was thus replaced by an almost bi-polar scenario of two contending nuclear super-powers.

The Cold War

The cold war began with the aggravation of mutual fears and suspicions between the victorious allies over marking out their

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in Manchuria, China and South-East Asia in search of economic security. The stage was thus set for another conflagration in 1939.

World War II too began as a European conflict, though Japan's later entry gave it an additional Asian dimension. As with the first war, the USA's participation gave a decisive edge in industrial and economic staying power to the allied coalition which eventually prevailed over Germany and Japan, specially after the failure of the former's Russian campaign. However Europe was devastated by the war and even Britain and France, though on the winning side, were severely weakened. Power flowed away from Europe to the USA and the USSR. The former emerged as the wealthiest state in the post-war world, providing a third of its manufactures and trade, and possessing nearly two-thirds of its gold reserves. The USSR had suffered enormous population and economic losses in the war,

spheres of influence in continental Europe. The USSR succeeded in Poland, the West in Greece. The Berlin Crisis led to the creation of NATO. Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech of 1946 and the Truman Doctrine of 1947 had earlier spelt out the theoretical dimension to the East-West confrontation in terms of freedom versus communism. The concept of containment of communism also germinated first in the European context, but was soon extended as cold war confrontation spread beyond Europe.

An early cold war tremor was felt in Iran, where the USSR unsuccessfully attempted to penetrate in 1946. But the main shock followed four years later in the Korean peninsula. The Korean war marked the entry of communist China into the global cold war confrontation, and hardened US containment policies in Asia. The theory that 'soft' Asian countries could fall like dominoes before a communist wave led

eventually to the US involvement in the Vietnam War.

Another cold war feature was a relentless arms race between the two super powers which gradually saturated each with the capacity of MAD, or mutual armed destruction. Vivid realization of this during high risk standoff occasions like the Cuban missile crisis led to a temporary process of detente, starting with the Test Ban Treaty of 1963 and the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreements of 1972 and 1975. This process was also facilitated by the Sino-Soviet split, which began in the sixties, leading to the triangular diplomacy of the seventies between the USA, the USSR and China. Meanwhile cold war politics had come to colour local crises and confrontations in every continent. Though the nuclear balance of terror deterred war between the super powers, local conflicts which they supported or encouraged totalled over one hundred in the same period, with some 20 million casualties, according to a UN report. This phenomenon also needs to be seen against the backdrop of decolonization and the resultant birth of new states.

The Decolonization Movement

There was surge of decolonization after World War II as exhausted European powers withdrew or were evicted from their empires, protectorates and zones of influence. The beginnings of this process lay more than half a century earlier, when an awareness of national identity and the urge for independence began to stir among the various people under European subjugation. There is little doubt that a lead in this direction came from the reawakening in India. The long Indian struggle for intellectual and material freedom from foreign domination, and the rediscovery of India's own personality had increasing reverberations in other colonized societies in Asia and Africa; Indian independence was certainly

the precursor of freedom in other lands under the British Empire. The Dutch, French and Portuguese empires in Asia and Africa also dissolved, sometimes after nationalist wars as in Indonesia, Indo-China and Algeria. China and Egypt emerged from western tutelage after the communist and Arab-Socialist Revolutions.

The cold war contenders attempted to extend their influence among the newly independent countries with mixed results. The USSR supported several anti-colonial struggles, while the USA gave material assistance to many of the new states. Most of the latter preferred however to avoid entanglement in cold war rivalries, and instead safeguard their new freedoms by cooperating among themselves. This was the background of the Asian Relations meet in Delhi, the Bandung Conference and the start of the nonaligned movement. By the seventies nonaligned countries came to constitute a majority in the United Nations Organization which had been set up by the victors of World War II, and began to agitate for a more equitable world order which would be truly responsive to their development needs.

Rivalries and conflicts erupted in the decolonized world as naturally as they had prevailed in the preceding era among the colonial powers. Fuelled by territorial disputes, ideological incompatibilities and political competition, they were sometimes encouraged by the former rulers whose attitudes were often inherited by the governing elites of the successor states. They were also instigated or aggravated by the cold war politics of the super powers. The India-Pakistan conflicts are fresh memories in the Subcontinent, but their duration and destructive results were far exceeded by the wars between Iran and Iraq, Ethiopia and Somalia, and in Cambodia, Angola and Afghanistan. While some of these conflict

situations are still simmering, the era of classic decolonization is now coming to an end with the recent introduction of majority rule in South Africa and the beginning of the Middle East peace process, both expedited by the relaxation of cold war tensions.

*The Post-Cold War Search for
a New World Order*

The cold war and its arms race imposed increasingly unbearable economic burdens on the principal contestants. It has been calculated that in the fifties the US defence expenditure was consistently higher than that of the USSR. The latter caught up and surpassed the USA in the sixties. But it began to taper off in the seventies and, by the eighties, clearly needed radical internal reforms to sustain sufficient increases in defence expenditure while providing a standard of living expected by its people. The *perestroika* reform process, however, generated uncontrollable forces which undermined the Soviet state edifice itself. Underlying these forces was the urge for individual freedom long denied under the Soviet system.

As *perestroika* spread to Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union disintegrated, it seemed that cold war bi-polarity would be replaced by the unipolar domination of the USA, the surviving super power. Gradually it appeared that the latter's economic strength had also been affected, and the real beneficiaries of the cold war had been West European countries and Japan who had prospered under their ally's nuclear umbrella. The emerging power pattern thus appeared once again to be multi-polar, with its focal points located in the USA, the European Union with Germany at its centre, Japan, a weakened but still significant Russia, and a rapidly modernizing China. Around the fringes stand the small Asian countries of the Pacific Rim with their fast economic growth, the slower moving large

countries like Brazil, India and South Africa and 'distant western' countries like Canada and Australia.

The post-cold war world situation has been described succinctly by the Secretary General of the United Nations in his *Agenda for Peace*:

We have entered a time of global transition marked by uniquely contradictory trends. Regional and continental associations of States are evolving ways to deepen cooperation and ease some of the contentious characteristics of sovereign and nationalistic rivalries. National boundaries are blurred by advanced communications and global commerce, and by the decisions of States to yield some sovereign prerogatives to larger, common political associations. At the same time, however, fierce new assertions of nationalism and sovereignty spring up, and the cohesion of states is threatened by brutal ethnic, religious, social, cultural or linguistic strife. Social peace is challenged on the one hand by new assertions of discrimination and exclusion and, on the other, by acts of terrorism seeking to undermine evolution and change through democratic means.

This scenario is exemplified by growing peaceful cooperation within regional groupings like the European Union, NAFTA and ASEAN, and also by new conflicts in the Gulf, former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The passing of colonialism has not produced the expected golden age in most of the formerly colonized countries, notably in Africa, nor has the end of the USSR ushered in peace and prosperity in its successor states. Disparities and deprivations have given rise to fundamentalist extremism in many states; in others there has been progress, but with new risks of

ecological damage, disruption of family and community life, and greater intrusion into the lives and rights of individuals', to quote the UN Secretary General once again.

Recently attention has increasingly focussed on the concepts of human rights in democracy, free market forces in economic growth, and sustainable development for environmental protection, in the search for a new international order. The unquestionable relevance of these concepts must naturally be seen in the wider context of social order and harmony, equitable spread of affluence, and the human dimension of environment. The divisive and disruptive

and all people.' The relevance of this truth, which is enshrined in all the great faiths of mankind, needs to be remembered no less in the fashioning of any international order. All efforts to the latter end would be greatly strengthened by the introduction of a moral dimension; its absence makes them extremely fragile.

Much of this brief, general survey has concentrated on Europe or the West, which has been the main driving force of global political changes during most of the last century. The so-called Third World has largely been at the receiving and reacting end of this force. Now that it is beginning to assert an

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implications of human rights, the economic disparity and inequity arising from the free play of market forces, and the dangers of exclusive emphasis on the natural environment, must also be taken into account. Reality is one but has many different aspects, according to an ancient Indian precept. The place of moral concepts like mutual tolerance and respect in any new order is also deserving of consideration.

The Moral Dimension

'No civilization can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed and brutality stop. No civilization can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another, and the first step towards that much-needed charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious convictions of others.' These words of Vivekananda a hundred years ago flowed from his burning conviction that 'there is but one basis of well being, social, political or spiritual—to know that I and my brother are *one*. This is true for all countries

active role, it is tempting to speculate that it may also provide a new impulse for a better world. Its history as the birth place of great religions and cultures lends further credence to such beliefs.

Such optimism may seem less than justifiable in the light of some current trends. Newly independent countries appear mostly to be emulating their former colonial masters in seeking to become a 'centre of manifestation of material energy'. The success of their efforts has tended to produce consumerist societies replicating all the weaknesses of their Western prototypes. Frustration, on the other hand, has tended to lead towards fundamentalism, which is intolerant of dissent or divergence, and terrorism which seeks to enforce change through fear. In some other cases conditions have become so chaotic as to revive nostalgia for the orderliness of the colonial era.

Yet the need for a moral dimension is

recognized and the search for it continues for bringing greater stability and harmony in world affairs. The *panchashila* principles of peaceful co-existence was one attempt in this direction; the ongoing debate about a new international order is another. Recalling the cultural source of the former, it is possible to conjecture that the ancient wisdom of India may have an essential role in the quest for a new world system. This wisdom is embodied in the Vedanta's perception of the divinity, and therefore the unity of all existence, and the essential validity of different paths since they all lead to the same

goal. The spreading appeal of Vedanta among thinking people in different civilizational backgrounds is another notable trend of the present times. It may also be a portent for the future. □

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Scientific Materialism and Religious Provincialism:

Two Major Obstacles to the Emerging Global Civilization

GEORG FEUERSTEIN

The world is moving towards a global civilization. However, in the meanwhile we must be able to cultivate a corresponding universal and spiritual view about ourselves and the world on the basis of the mystical core of religions. This alone can prevent the dangers against a beneficial globalization posed by the present inter-religious narrow-mindedness and the possible growth of economic and cultural imperialism.

Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D., who lives in California, is a historian of religion and the author of over twenty books, including Structures of Consciousness and Holy Madness.

We are witnessing the birth of what could be the first global civilization on our planet. It is a birth that is accompanied by much pain and confusion, and whose outcome is by no means certain. It could be the beginning of a glorious era of worldwide understanding and peace. Or it could be a still birth, leading to planetary devastation as a result of unchecked economic imperialism and political elitism.

There are two mighty ideological forces at work in the world today that endanger this civilizational birth process. One is scientific materialism; the other is religious provincialism. The former is science masquerading as an overarching philosophy of life that pretends to have all the answers, but in effect offers only reductionistic explanations. The latter also is a form of reductionism but on the level of religion, which is based on a fundamental confusion of religious doctrine and conformist behaviour with genuine spirituality.

Both religious provincialism and scientific materialism share a common 'flatland' view of the nature of reality and the human being. Both, each for its own reasons, dismiss the spiritual perspective that is essen-

tial to the mystical core of such traditions as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. For the scientific materialist there can be no 'spirit' or 'higher reality', and all metaphysics is mere delusional verbiage. For the religious provincialist, the great spiritual truths are nothing but the doctrinal truths, and the idea that the human being can not merely commune with the spirit but realize its greatness through a process of mystical identification is completely anathema.

Each ideology thus represents a severe conceptual limitation that curtails our emotional and deeper spiritual response to reality. Each in its own way is a potent misinterpretation of reality. Both imply certain behavioural imperatives. Most importantly, both contain implicit or explicit injunctions against mystical identification with the ultimate reality (which is either denied or reinterpreted as the separate deity or God-Father).

From a spiritual viewpoint, both scientific materialism and religious provincialism are stop-gap solutions to the problem of existence. They are, as the American transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber

would say, perversions for the 'Atman Project'. The Atman Project is the impulse present within our psyche, even within Nature itself, to move toward ever greater unification and simplification until the ultimate singularity, the transcendental Self (*ātman*), is actualized.

This impulse is not allowed to manifest itself fully in religious provincialism, where it is channelled along conventional lines of behaviour: A religious individual is expected to worship God but is prohibited from realizing the Divine. Self-knowledge is permitted only to the degree that it does not lead to Self-realization (*ātma-jñāna*).

Similarly, scientific materialism represents a singularly powerful perversion of the Atman Project. Not a few sociologists of knowledge, historians of science, and psychologists recognize today that many 'unchurched' people turn to scientific

While religious provincialism has a long history, as part of the exoteric culture surrounding the esoteric core of a spiritual tradition, scientific materialism is comparatively young. Yet it is just as virulent, if not more so. Its virulence stems from the fact that science—through the medium of technology—has apparently been more 'successful' at transforming people's lives than religion. For generations, scientific progress has been hailed as the alpha and omega of human evolution. Today this naive view is challenged by widespread (and apparently unstoppable) environmental pollution and social disintegration, and a whole host of other problems bedevilling our contemporary civilization.

Yet, over the course of the last three centuries, science has so bedazzled the ordinary citizen that its practitioners have in many respects become the new priesthood. Scien-

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materialism as a substitute religion, though they themselves would deny this. But the baneful influence of scientific materialism goes beyond the minority group of secular humanists and others who are consciously committed to a nonspiritual, materialistic interpretation of existence. The mass media constantly expose us to ideas and values that can be said to embody the flatland principles of scientific materialism. Even those who profess to belong to this or that religious tradition or denomination are often cryptomaterialists whose religious beliefs are only a thin veneer that they display whenever convenient. Beneath they are agnostics or cynics who, when push comes to shove, turn to scientific materialistic rather than religious doctrines for solace, hope, and meaningful explanations.

scientific materialism is the ideology of one-dimensional metaphysics crafted onto science itself. It is a deliberate distortion of science, which is first and foremost a method and certainly not a philosophy of life. Science is a means of understanding the universe in its parts. As it is practised today, it is even a very limited means, which can give us partially meaningful answers to only some of our questions about specific aspects of existence. It clearly has no spiritual function.

Science has been called the Western form of Yoga, but this is misleading. As a path to truth, science primarily utilizes what yogis would describe as the lower mind, which deals in so many truths (or facts) rather than the ultimate Truth. Science offers no insight into higher realities, never mind the

transcendental Reality. It has no saving function. By its own definition, science is concerned with the finite realm of phenomena. It cannot touch the Noumenon.

Good scientists, like Einstein and Newton, saw this. But good scientists seem to be relatively scarce. Many, it would seem, indulge in a fatal hopefulness about their discipline, which they deem capable of solving all the world's problems. This spirit of hubris is perhaps best embodied in the misplaced optimism of those physicists who think that a Theory for Everything is just round the corner. Most scientists may be good technicians but they are no more qualified than any other ordinary person to pass judgement on the larger issues of life. Their blind faith in science (as scientism) in a way blocks an unbiased study of the most meaningful existential questions, because the materialistic premises of scientism are false.

Both scientific materialism and religious provincialism operate with a deficient model of the human being and the universe by denying spiritual depth to either. Therefore in our struggle to give birth to a benign global civilization we would be wise to recognize the limitations of both these ideologies. To create a global civilization we must first have an adequate understanding of human nature itself, and to understand human nature we must first have an adequate picture of the place of the human being within the cosmic framework. Specifically, we must recognize that both cosmos and human being are inter-connected multidimensional realities that, at the highest (or deepest) level, converge in the singular reality of the spirit, or *ātman*. Hence, because of this ultimate convergence of subject and object, we must also acknow-

ledge the fact that our highest human potential is Self-realization as the flower of authentic spirituality. Once we have gained this understanding, we will naturally derive other important insights from it. Those insights, as we will learn, have already been more or less successfully articulated in the world's spiritual traditions.

Thus the ancient wisdom teachings have a very special role to play in the creation of the global civilization. Without them we are bound to achieve little more than economic superimperialism, which would be utterly destructive of the natural and social environment of our planet. With their help, however, we can embark on a new, less troubled course in the evolution of our species. They can assist us in realizing the transcendental unity that underlies all the countless differences that characterize human life and conditioned existence in general. On the basis of that realization, which exceeds mere intellectual knowing and involves our whole being, we can endow our creativity with that eternal spark of goodness that marks all the truly great works of humanity and that is sorely absent from modern life.

Before anything else, that realization is a personal one. The transformation we desire in the world at large—the birth of a truly global civilization—must first be accomplished in the microcosm of our own personality. Only when our own inner house is in order can we hope to create order in our external environment. Thus each individual alive today is faced with a tremendous challenge and responsibility. Wisdom and compassion can help us bravely confront that challenge and patiently bear that responsibility. □

The Self is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great, is lodged in the heart of (every) creature. A desireless man sees that glory of the Self through the serenity of the organs, and (thereby he becomes) free from sorrow.—*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.ii.20

Earth in the Balance^{*}

AL GORE

The following is an abridged version of U.S.A.'s Vice President. Al Gore's introduction to his book, Earth in the Balance, which is clearly a work inspired by political vision, global perspective, and spiritual conviction. The echo of Vedanta in his views is unmistakable.

Writing this book is part of a personal journey that began more than 25 years ago, a journey in search of a true understanding of the global ecological crisis and how it can be resolved. It has led me to travel to the sites of some of the worst ecological catastrophes on the planet and to meet some of the extraordinary men and women throughout the world who are devoting their lives to the growing struggle to save the earth's environment. But it has also led me to undertake a deeper kind of inquiry, one that is ultimately an investigation of the very nature of our civilization and its relationship to the global environment.

The edifice of civilization has become astonishingly complex, but as it grows ever more elaborate, we feel increasingly distant from our roots in the earth. In one sense, civilization itself has been on a journey from its foundations in the world of nature to an ever more contrived, controlled, and manufactured world of our own imitative and sometimes arrogant design. And in my view, the price has been high. At some point during this journey we lost our feeling of connectedness to the rest of nature. We now dare to wonder: Are we so unique and

powerful as to be essentially separate from the earth?

Many of us act—and think—as if the answer is yes. It is now all too easy to regard the earth as a collection of 'resources' having an intrinsic value no larger than their usefulness at the moment. Thanks in part to the scientific revolution, we organize our knowledge of the natural world into smaller and smaller segments and assume that the connections between these separate compartments aren't really important. In our fascination with the parts of nature, we forget to see the whole.

The ecological perspective begins with a view of the whole, an understanding of how the various parts of nature interact in patterns that tend toward balance and persist over time. But this perspective cannot treat the earth as something separate from human civilization; we are part of the whole too, and looking at it ultimately means also looking at ourselves. And if we do not see that the human part of nature has an increasingly powerful influence over the whole of nature—that we are, in effect, a natural force just like the winds and the tides—then we will not be able to see how dangerously we are threatening to push the earth out of balance.

Our perspective is badly foreshortened in another way as well. Too often we are unwilling to look beyond ourselves to see

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the effect of our actions today on our children and grandchildren. I am convinced that many people have lost their faith in the future, because in virtually every facet of our civilization we are beginning to act as if our future is now so much in doubt that it makes more sense to focus exclusively on our current needs and short-term problems. This growing tendency to discount the value of investments made for the long term—whether of wealth, effort, or caution—may

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have begun with the realization that nuclear weaponry had introduced a new potential for an end to civilization. But whatever its genesis, our willingness to ignore the consequences of our actions has combined with our belief that we are separate from nature to produce a genuine crisis in the way we relate to the world around us. We seem to sense something of our jeopardy; we seem to share a restlessness of spirit that rises out of the lost connection to our world and our future. But we feel paralyzed, too attached to old assumptions and old ways of thinking to see a resolution to our dilemma.

I have been wrestling with these matters for a long time. My earliest lessons on environmental protection were about the prevention of soil erosion on our family farm, and I shall remember clearly how important it is to stop up the smallest gully 'before it gets started good'. When I was a boy, there were plenty of examples elsewhere in the country of what happened when gullies got out of control and cut deep slashes through the pasture, taking the topsoil and muddying the river. Unfortunately, little has changed: Even now, about eight acres' worth of prime topsoil floats past

Memphis every hour. The Mississippi River carries away millions of tons of topsoil from farms in the middle of America, soil that is now gone for good. Iowa, for example, used to have an average of 16 inches of the best topsoil in the world. Now it is down to eight inches; most of the rest of it is somewhere on the bottom of the Gulf of Mexico.

I always wondered why the families that lived on those farms never taught their boys and girls how to stop gullies before they got started. I have since learned part of the answer: People who lease the land for short-term profits often don't consider the future. From fence row to fence row, they strip-mine the topsoil and move on. And even if you own the land, it's hard to compete in the short term against somebody who doesn't care about the long term.

Our farm taught me a lot about how nature works, but lessons learned at the dinner table were equally important. I particularly remember my mother's troubled response to Rachel Carson's classic book about DDT and pesticide abuse, *Silent Spring*, first published in 1962. My mother was one of many who read Carson's warnings and shared them with others. She emphasized to my sister and me that this book was different—and important. Those conversations made an impression, in part because they made me think about threats to the environment that are much more serious than washed-out gullies—but much harder to see.

This nearly invisible poison, which had been first welcomed as a blessing, became for me a symbol of how carelessly our civilization could do harm to the world, almost without realizing its own power. But later, during the Vietnam War, I encountered an even more powerful new poison, which was also welcomed at first. I went to Vietnam with the army and vividly

remember travelling through countryside that used to be jungle but now looked like the surface of the moon. A herbicide called Agent Orange had cleared the jungle, and we were glad of it at the time, because it meant that the people who wanted to shoot at us had fewer places to hide. Years later, after learning that Agent Orange was the suspected cause of chromosomal damage and birth defects in the offspring of soldiers, I came to feel differently about it. Indeed, along with many others, I started to feel wary of all chemicals that have extraordinarily powerful effects on the world around us. How can we be sure that a chemical has only those powers we desire and not others we don't? Are we really taking enough time to discover their long-term effects? Agent Orange, after all, is just one of the better-known examples of a whole new generation of powerful compounds created

Memphis, 75 miles to the west, had bought up the neighbouring farm and dumped several million gallons of hazardous waste into trenches that leaked into the well water for miles around. As a result, I organized the first congressional hearings on toxic waste and focused on two sites, the small rural community of Toone, Tennessee, and one other recently discovered waste dump at a little place in upstate New York, Love Canal. Subsequently, of course, Love Canal became synonymous with the problem of hazardous chemical waste. Toone didn't, but the family received one of the biggest judgments ever handed down in a lawsuit over damages from toxic waste. But strip-mined topsoil and hazardous chemical waste—bad as they are—still represent essentially local threats to the environment. They are serious, but they are minor compared to the global threat we now face.

And if we do not see that the human part of nature has an increasingly powerful influence over the whole of nature—that we are, in effect, a natural force just like the winds and the tides—then we will not be able to see how dangerously we are threatening to push the earth out of balance.

in the chemical revolution, which picked up speed after World War II; over the past 50 years, herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, chloroflourocarbons (CFCs), and thousands of other compounds have come streaming out of laboratories and chemical plants faster than we can possibly keep track of them. All of them are supposed to improve our lives, and hundreds of them have done so. But too many have left a legacy of poison that we will be coming to terms with for many generations.

I carried these concerns with me to Congress, and in 1978 I received a letter from a farm family near Toone, Tennessee, about the sickness they felt was caused by pesticide waste dumped next to their land. It turned out they were right: A company from

I was introduced to the idea of a global environmental threat as a young student when one of my college professors was the first person in the world to monitor carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere. Roger Revelle had, through sheer persistence, convinced the world scientific community to include as part of the International Geophysical Year (1957–58) his plan for regularly sampling CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere. His colleague C.D. Keeling actually took the measurements from the top of the Mauna Loa volcano in Hawaii. In the middle 1960s Revelle shared with the students in his undergraduate course on population the dramatic results of the first eight years of measurements: The concentrations of CO₂ were increasing rapidly each year. Professor Revelle explained that

higher levels of CO₂ would create what he called the greenhouse effect, which would cause the earth to grow warmer. The implications of his words were startling: We were looking at only eight years of information, but if this trend continued, human civilization would be forcing a profound and disruptive change in the entire global climate.

Since that time, I have watched the Mauna Loa reports every year, and, indeed, the pattern has been unbroken—except that now the rate of increase is faster. Even 25 years ago, the basic premises of the greenhouse effect were never subject to serious scientific challenge, although most people assumed then, as some still do today, that the earth's ecological system would somehow absorb whatever abuse we heaped upon it and save us from ourselves. But Professor Revelle's study taught me that nature is not immune to our presence, and that we could actually change the makeup of the entire earth's atmosphere in a fundamental way. I think this understanding came as such a shock because I had inherited an assumption that is still handed down to most children today: The earth is so vast and nature so powerful that nothing we do can have any major or lasting effect on the normal functioning of its natural systems.

Twelve years later, as a young congressman, I invited Professor Revelle to be the lead-off witness at the first congressional hearing on global warming. Remembering the power of his warning, I assumed that if he just laid out the facts as clearly as he had back in that college class, my colleagues and everybody else in the hearing room would be just as shocked as I had been—and thus galvanized into action. Instead, I was the one who was shocked. Not by the evidence: It was even more troubling than I had remembered it. This time I was startled by the reaction on the part of some smart

people who I thought should know better. But unrestrained burning of cheap fossil fuels has many ferocious defenders, and this was my first encounter, though hardly the last, with the powerful and determined opposition to the dangerous truth about what we are doing to the earth.

Over the next few years, I began seriously studying global warming and several other difficult environmental issues. I held hearings, pushed for research funding and precautionary legislation, read many books and journals, and spoke to people all over the country—experts and concerned citizens alike—about how we could resolve the growing crisis. In some ways, the response was encouraging. By the late 1970s, the issue was of at least some concern to a broad segment of the population. But despite mounting evidence that the problem was truly global, few people were willing to think about the comprehensive nature of the response needed.

My own initial efforts to spread the word about global warming were an example. Most people still thought of the environment in local or regional terms, so it was impossible to get adequate funding for research on global warming. Nor was there any consensus about the need for immediate action. Even the major environmental groups resisted the issue: Some told me they had other priorities. Many were cautious about what seemed like scanty evidence at the time, and a few of them were overly sensitive to an admittedly difficult political problem: If global warming were taken seriously and the world began searching for substitutes for coal and oil, nuclear power might receive a big boost. Still, an awareness of global warming as a major threat slowly began to rise, and we made real progress on several other fronts. In December 1980, for instance, in the lame duck session immediately before the Regan inauguration, I final-

ly succeeded, along with Congressmen Jim Florio, Tom Downey, and others, in passing the Superfund Law to clean up hazardous chemical dump sites.

Ironically, my own understanding of the global environmental crisis was greatly enhanced by my involvement in what seemed like a very different issue. Beginning in January 1981, I spent many hours each week for more than 13 months intensively studying the nuclear arms race. In the spring of 1982, I offered a comprehensive approach to dealing with it, an approach that differed from older efforts to solve the problem in three important respects. First, it located a principal source of the nuclear impasse in

fundamentally local in nature, like hazardous waste sites, from those that represented threats to the entire globe. Going further, I began to understand the importance of looking beyond simple questions about what we are doing to the various *parts* of the environment; it became clear to me that we have to consider the complex nature of our interaction with the *whole* environment; more specifically, I zeroed in on the central importance of our way of thinking about that relationship.

I also now had a deeper appreciation for the most horrifying fact in all our lives: Civilization is now capable of destroying itself. My work in Congress took on a new

Every education is a kind of inward journey, and my study of the global environment has required a searching reexamination of the ways in which political motives and government policies have helped to create the crisis and now frustrate the solutions we need.

the military relationship between the arsenals as it was perceived by each superpower. Second, it identified the ways in which the characteristics of particular weapons technologies affected those perceptions and influenced the ways both countries thought about the relationship between the two arsenals. Third, it prescribed a specific, simultaneous, and step-by-step evolution in both weaponry and arms control designed to eliminate the fear of a first strike on both sides. One of my chief recommendations—to ban multiple-warhead missiles and deploy a new, more stabilizing single-warhead ICBM instead—was actually adopted as a centerpiece of our nuclear strategy.

My study of the arms race led me to think about other issues, especially the global environment, in a new, more productive way. For example, I began to separate the parts of the environmental issue that were

urgency, in part because, just as Samuel Johnson said that the prospect of hanging in a fortnight serves to concentrate the mind wonderfully, my work on nuclear arms control served to concentrate my mind on some of the larger purposes of politics. And as I began to think in broader ways about the course of our nation and our civilization, I also began to think about what role I might play in determining that course.

In March 1987, I decided to run for President. This is not the place to discuss my campaign in any detail, but a few observations may be instructive, since it taught me a great deal about the way our country perceives the environmental crisis. In fact, one of the main reasons I ran was to try to elevate the importance of the crisis as a political issue. In the speech in which I declared my candidacy, I focused on global warming, ozone depletion, and the ailing global environment and declared that these is-

sues—along with nuclear arms control—would be the principal focus of my campaign. Little did I know that even a more seasoned and experienced candidate than myself would have had a difficult time keeping his campaign focused on issues that were considered exotic at best by pollsters and political professionals. The columnist George Will, for instance, described my candidacy as being motivated by ‘a consuming interest in issues that are, in the eyes of the electorate, not even peripheral. These are issues such as the “greenhouse effect” and the thinning ozone.’

Worse, I started to wonder whether the issues I knew to be important really were peripheral after all. I began to doubt my own political judgement, so I began to ask the pollsters and professional politicians what they thought I ought to talk about. As a result, for much of the campaign I discussed what everybody else discussed, which too often was a familiar list of what the insiders agree are ‘the issues’. The American people sometimes suspect that campaign agendas come straight from the pollsters and political professionals. Too often they’re right.

In my own defence, I will say that throughout the campaign I did look for opportunities to return to the issue of the global environment. And even though I came to downplay it in my standard stump speech, I continued to emphasize it heavily in my meetings with editorial boards throughout the country. But the national press corps, reflecting the consensus of the political community, resolutely refused to consider the global environment as an important part of the campaign agenda.

I don’t want to leave the impression that the media’s unwillingness to focus on the global environment was the only reason why the issue failed to ignite serious debate during the campaign. The truth is, most

voters didn’t consider it an overriding issue, and I didn’t do a good job of convincing them otherwise.

George Will and other campaign analysts had been correct; the issue of the global environment would not help me get elected president. But when I returned to the Senate in the spring of 1988, I at least had the satisfaction of seeing what I thought were some results from the hundreds of discussions I had had with editorial boards around the country. And more people were beginning to pay attention to the issue: During that summer, temperatures reached record levels, and for the first time in what was already the hottest decade since temperatures were first written down, people began to wonder out loud whether global warming was responsible. By the fall, the issue I had sought to introduce into the campaign was, if nothing else, being discussed in public by the nominees of both major parties. For example, George Bush declared in one speech that he would, if elected, exercise leadership on global warming and ‘confront the greenhouse effect with the White House effect’. It was, as we now know, an empty promise, but at least it could no longer be said that the global environment as an issue was ‘not even peripheral’. It was now clearly peripheral!

My campaign gave me a fresh perspective on a lot of things, but especially useful was a new way of looking at the role I could play in Congress. I remember, for example, a long car trip one day with Tim Wirth, my colleague from Colorado, during which he and I had an exceptionally candid conversation about the politics of the global environment inside the Senate. We had worked together as close friends on other issues for a dozen years, but now we were in danger of getting in each other’s way as we made similar points on the same issue. Both of us were familiar with examples of petty rival-

ries that interfered with the development of sound policy, and both of us felt so strongly about this issue that we wanted to figure out how to avoid destructive forms of competition. It was the kind of conversation I probably wouldn't have been comfortable having only a few years earlier, but by then it seemed entirely natural. Tim and I agreed to work together whenever it was productive; since then, we have worked closely together and with a number of others on a variety of new approaches to the issue.

Every education is a kind of inward journey, and my study of the global environment has required a searching reexamination of the ways in which political motives and government policies have helped to create the crisis and now frustrate the solutions we need. Ecology is the study of balance,

But the strengths of our political system ultimately rely on the strengths of its individual members, and each of us must achieve our own balance, what we hope will be a healthy integration of our hopes and fears, desires and responsibilities, needs and devotions. I am reminded of a new form of holistic photography that captures three-dimensional images of people and objects called holograms. One of the curiosities of this new science that makes it useful as a metaphor is that every small portion of the photographic plate contains all the visual information necessary to recreate a tiny, faint representation of the entire three-dimensional image. The image becomes full and vivid only when that portion is combined with the rest of the plate. Since I first heard this phenomenon described, it has often struck me that it resembles the way

The more deeply I search for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of a better word, spiritual...what other word describes the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe?

and some of the same principles that govern the healthy balance of elements in the global environment also apply to the healthy balance of forces making up our political system. In my view, however, our system is on the verge of losing its essential equilibrium. The problem is not so much one of policy failures: Much more worrisome are the failures of candour, evasions of responsibility, and timidity of vision that characterize too many of us in government. More than anything else, my study of the environment has led me to realize the extent to which our current public discourse is focused on the shortest of short-term values and encourages the American people to join us politicians in avoiding the most important issues and postponing the really difficult choices.

each individual, like a single small part of a holographic plate, reflects, however faintly, a representation of the sum total of the values, choices, and assumptions that make up the society of which he or she is a part.

But civilization is not a frozen image; it is in constant motion, and if each of us reflects the larger society, we are also carried along by it. Our ways of thinking and perceiving, our desires and behaviours, our ideologies and traditions—all are inherited in significant measure from our civilization. We may suffer the illusion from time to time that we are going to go our own way, but it is genuinely hard to break out of patterns of thought and action that are integral to our culture. Meanwhile, civilization now rushes ahead with tremendous momentum, and even the individual who believes we are on

a collision course with the global environment will find it difficult to separate his or her course from that of the civilization as a whole. As always, it is easier to see the need for change in the larger pattern than to address the need for it in oneself. Nevertheless, with personal commitment, every individual can help ensure that dramatic change does take place.

I have therefore come to believe that the world's ecological balance depends on more than just our ability to restore a balance between civilization's ravenous appetite for resources and the fragile equilibrium of the earth's environment; it depends on more, even, than our ability to restore a balance between ourselves as individuals and the civilization we aspire to create and sustain. In the end, we must restore a balance within ourselves between who we are and what we are doing. Each of us must take greater personal responsibility for this deteriorating global environment; each of us must take a hard look at the habits of mind and action that reflect—and have led to—this grave crisis.

The need for personal equilibrium can be described in an even simpler way. The more deeply I search for the roots of the global environmental crisis, the more I am convinced that it is an outer manifestation of an inner crisis that is, for lack of a better word, spiritual. As a politician, I know full well the special hazards of using 'spiritual' to describe a problem like this one. But what other word describes the collection of values and assumptions that determine our basic understanding of how we fit into the universe?

This book, and the journey it describes, is thus a search for ways to understand—and respond to—the dangerous dilemma that our civilization now faces. Looking for a map to guide me on this journey, I reluc-

tantly concluded that I had to look inside myself and confront some difficult and painful questions about what I am really seeking in my own life, and why.

I believe deeply that true change is possible only when it begins inside the person who is advocating it. Mahatma Gandhi said it well: 'We must be the change we wish to see in the world.' And a story about Gandhi—recounted by Craig Schindler and Gary Lapid—provides a good illustration of how hard it is to 'be the change'. Gandhi, we are told, was approached one day by a woman who was deeply concerned that her son ate too much sugar. 'I am worried about his health', she said. 'He respects you very much. Would you be willing to tell him about its harmful effects and suggest he stop eating it?' After reflecting on the request, Gandhi told the woman that he would do as she requested, but asked that she bring her son back in two weeks, no sooner. In two weeks, when the boy and his mother returned, Gandhi spoke with him and suggested that he stop eating sugar. When the boy complied with Gandhi's suggestion, his mother thanked Gandhi extravagantly—but asked him why he had insisted on the two-week interval. 'Because,' he replied, 'I needed the two weeks to stop eating sugar myself.'

I have tried to confront in my own life the same ill habits of thought and action that I am attempting to understand and working to change in our civilization as a whole. On a personal level, this has meant reexamining my relationship to the environment in large and small ways—everything from wondering how my spiritual life can be more connected to the natural world to keeping a careful eye on our household's use of electricity, water, and, indeed, every kind of resource—and recognizing my own hypocrisy when I use CFCs in my automobile air conditioner, for example, on the

way to a speech about why they should be banned. I don't claim any special skill or courage as a seeker of truth, but I'm convinced of one thing: Anybody who spends serious time looking hard for the truth about anything has to become more sensitive to the many distractions and distortions that interfere with the task—whether they are obstacles in the line of sight or inside the searcher.

I have become very impatient with my

own tendency to put a finger to the political winds and proceed cautiously. The voice of caution whispers persuasively in the ear of every politician, often with good reason. But when caution breeds timidity, a good politician listens to other voices. For me, the environmental crisis is the critical case in point: Now, every time I pause to consider whether I have gone too far out on a limb, I look at the new facts that continue to pour in from around the world and conclude that I have not gone nearly far enough. □



Too Many Crowding the Earth? *

C. RAMMANOHAR-REDDY

The final statement of population summit of the world's scientific academies at New Delhi recently will not please anyone who already believes there is a black or white in the interaction between population and the environment. The scientists felt that while environmental degradation was 'accelerated' by population growth, the relationships between population development and the environment were 'complex'.

Does population growth degrade the environment?

It seems absurd to even ask the question. More people means more food has to be produced, increasing environmental pressures on soil and water resources. More people means more crowding, increasing air and water pollution. More people means more spewing of noxious gases from thermal and oil-based power plants. There seems no question that population growth is one of the prime culprits in environmental degradation.

Yet population was not an issue in the 1992 Earth Summit. Indeed, this became controversial when many environmental groups from the West insisted that since population growth and its effect on the environment was absent from the agenda, the Rio conference was a sham.

Scientists themselves do not, however, make unequivocal inferences about the impact of population growth on the environment. Consider three of many examples that were mentioned at a meeting of scientists in New Delhi in October.

- * Soil erosion is as severe in the U.S. state of Indiana as it is in India, though

population density in Indiana is just a fraction of that in India.

- * Rapid population growth in the 1980s in an already densely populated agrarian region of Nigeria did not lead to soil deterioration. The quality of soil remained comparable to that in an uncultivated area.
- * Botswana has population density of just two persons for every square kilometre but it is one of the fastest desertifying countries.

These examples were not meant to prove that population growth did not matter. Indeed, it was partly to correct the neglect at the Earth Summit that the United States Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of London took the initiative in organizing the New Delhi meet, a population summit of the world's scientific academies.

The summit's final statement will not please anyone who already believes there is a black or white in the interaction between population and the environment. The scientists concluded that while environmental degradation was 'accelerated' by population growth, the relationships between population development and the environment were 'complex'. And that poverty 'increases incentives for environmental degradation'.

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If the message so far from the scientific community has been quite different, then it is largely because biologists and ecologists have been in the forefront in arguing that population is a major factor in degradation of the natural environment.

Dr. Sam Preston, a demographer from the U.S. who discussed population growth and environmental change at the Delhi conference, said: 'It would be foolhardy to think that problems of food production and resource maintenance can or should be solved by population policy alone. There are times when certain biologists and ecologists appear to take this position. The reason is, I think, they are too wedded to the primitive, biological, model of human beings, whereby humans are distinguished from ants or seagulls only by their greater capacity for ecological destruction.'

Dr. Preston added: 'While this model helps us understand certain features of resource use, it is entirely inadequate as a guide to policy because it ignores the vast repertoire of social arrangements that humans have constructed to govern their behaviour. Problems of poverty and resource degradation have multiple sources and admit to multiple forms of intervention.'

Yet the concerns that ecologists otherwise express about human intervention remain valid. Human beings are increasing what they take out from nature, often consuming not just the 'income' that Nature provides but also eating into its 'capital'. It is estimated that at present human appropriation of net material production—what Nature yields—is 40 per cent, with the millions of other species on Earth having to make do with the remaining 60 per cent.

However, now even the prediction that we are fast approaching the stage where

there will not be enough food for the world's population is being questioned. Dr. Michael Chadwick of the Stockholm Environment Institute startled the New Delhi conference when he drew on research on photosynthesis in different latitudes to suggest that the world could produce enough food (including meat) for 64 billion people—12 times the world's population today.

Such global scenarios do not reveal environmental stresses at the local level, where population pressure can result in over-utilization of particular natural resources. As Dr. Malin Falkenmark of Sweden, who maintains that there is not yet sufficient recognition of the world's freshwater crisis, puts it: 'Global estimates of the food production that is possible overlook the fact that, in many developing countries there is simply not enough freshwater available to droughtproof agriculture so as to attain self-sufficiency in food production. And in many cases the areas where water stress is acute or near acute are the ones where population is growing rapidly.'

Dr. Falkenmark does not, however, feel that population control is the key to solving the water crisis. She says, 'In my view, poverty and unequal distribution are important factors that influence the mismanagement of water resources the world over.'

Inevitably, whatever the natural resource and whatever the kind of environmental crisis, discussions by scientists now lead to the pressures generated by poverty as well as unequal distribution of incomes between countries and within societies.

Unequal distribution of consumption is what underlies Dr. Chadwick's questioning of the 'tyranny of numbers' in many discussions of population pressure and the environment.

The basic argument is a familiar one. China and India have the largest populations in the world, but when the demand of each country's population on natural resources is considered, the countries to blame for jeopardising the future of the Earth's natural resources are the U.S., Japan, Germany, etc., and not the large developing countries. As Dr. Chadwick sarcastically described it in his study for the population conference: 'In this context it is quite evident that one plus one rarely equals two—In the case of Indonesia, the U.S. exceeds its resource demand by a factor of 50. It is not difficult to see where the population control effort should be applied!'

Dr. Norman Myers of Britain, who has worked extensively on biodiversity, makes the same point differently. He feels, for example, that just because population growth in Bangladesh is 23 times that in Britain, one cannot conclude that the children of Bangladesh are a bigger threat to

prevent species loss, is that it can yield new medicines and more hardy plant varieties.

Biodiversity is concentrated in the tropical forests, which themselves are to be found almost entirely in the developing countries. Scientific opinion is that we are now at a stage of 'mass extinction' of species, with the pessimists speculating that 20 per cent of the species on Earth will be extinct within the next three decades. The blame for destruction of species habitat, that follows deforestation, is usually put at the door of encroachers who clear forests to take up agriculture.

There is no unanimity even about the extent of species loss. Prof. James K. Egunjobi of the African Academy of Sciences provides facts contrary to conventional opinion. He says: 'In 1938 the British colonialists did an inventory of 250,000 species in Nigeria. Five decades later we did a resurvey, in the forests as well as the

Inevitably, whatever the natural resource and whatever the kind of environmental crisis, discussions by scientists now lead to the pressures generated by poverty as well as unequal distribution of income between countries and within societies.

the future of the Earth. 'The average British family comprises less than two children, but when we factor in resource consumption and pollution impacts, and then compare the British lifestyle with the global average, the real world size of a British family is more like 15 to 25 children.'

It is the role of population growth in causing biodiversity losses as well as being one of the more controversial issues that has been highlighted the most in recent years. A conservative estimate of the number of species on Earth is 10 millions (the upper end of estimates is 100 millions), of which only a fraction has been identified. The value of biodiversity, and hence the need to

savannahs of the country.' And the results? 'You will be surprised to know that not one of those 250,000 species is now extinct. Yes, in about 500 species there were only small populations remaining, and those are on the danger list. But when people talk of species loss, they never come out with names or areas where it has taken place'

The results of Prof. Egunjobi's research have not yet been published in a scientific journal. The case he cites may be exceptional. But the fact that even in a densely populated country like Nigeria there has been no 'biodepletion' does suggest that the alarm bells may not be fully warranted.

Wherever biodiversity losses have taken place, scientists are circumspect about assessing the contribution of population growth. Dr. Myers, for instance, does not discount the role of population growth in thinning biodiversity in the forests of the developing. But, for him population growth is a prominent factor rather than, as is often made out, either the predominant or overwhelming cause.

Dr. Myers goes a step further in suggesting that landless labourers, in the struggle to survive, are forced to clear forests. This understanding of the deforestation process is perhaps not universally true. But the strategy that Dr. Myers suggests for relieving the pressure on forests is close to the mark: a larger process of socio-economic advancement, whose components include 'reform of land tenure systems, build-up of agricultural extension services, improvement of rural infrastructure and provision of agrotechnologies [for]...intensive and sustainable farming in established agricultural areas.'

Rapid population growth in the developing countries has its roots in poverty. And the crisis of survival pushes the poor to extract as much as possible from the water, soil and forest resources that they do have access to. An end to poverty will reduce population growth, but it will not by itself end certain kinds of environmental

degradation. What it will do is create the right conditions for building arrangements that use natural resources more carefully.

If the children of today's poor tomorrow have the incomes to acquire the products and services that cause environmental destruction, they cannot be expected to listen to sermons about the need to make do with a less consumerist lifestyle. Nor can all hopes be pinned on science and technology to come up with new materials and new ways of production that use less of natural resources and use them more efficiently. This is an issue that can no longer be avoided. As Dr. Chadwick said, 'I hope the next summit of the world's scientific academies will discuss how to change lifestyles.'

The way in which population growth affects the environment is mediated by so many factors. What seems to matter is not the growth in numbers but how societies—large and small—use natural resources. Yet, why is it that some scientific models (which Dr. Preston says violate the basic standards of science) are still used to hone in on population growth as a major culprit in environmental degradation? Dr. Preston can only smile and say, 'Those who have apocalyptic visions of what population growth can lead to can't be convinced easily.' □

Is it not the fact that there is in the body a clot of blood which, if it is in good condition, the whole body is, too; and if it is in rotten condition, so too is the whole body? Is not this the heart?

—Islam, *Forty Hadith* of an-Nawawi, 6

Transition to the Global Society: Towards a Dharma for the New Millennium

DR. KARAN SINGH

The author, internationally renowned in various forums and also as an able exponent of Vedanta, makes a few important observations: New and faster paths to prosperity are pushing nations to devise rapidly ways to cooperate at the political and material levels. However, the way to bring together the hearts of people still remains thorn-ridden. The temptation is to force will-nilly a uniform secular, political and economic ideology on the world, regardless of the immense cultural and religious diversities. On the other hand, Vedanta, yet unknown the world over to people who matter, shows how to clear the way, guaranteeing unity in diversity at all levels, and thus inaugurate the Global Village.

Moments come, which come but rarely in history, when quite perceptibly one age draws to a close and another dawns, when we stand poised between a collapsing past and an indeterminate future, when established landmarks disappear one by one, and we seem to be adrift on a boundless ocean stretching in all directions towards the horizon, when, in essence, to survive we need not merely a linear progression but a quantum jump in consciousness, not merely a reformulation of established concepts but a paradigm shift in perception.

Humanity has, in fact, reached just such a crossroads. It has been through many transitions in its long and tortuous history on this planet, but this time we are involved in what will surely be the most crucial and difficult of all the transitions we have encountered so far, the transition to a global society. The indications are now quite clear, although we may be too close to the event to grasp its immensity. Impelled by the explosion in science and technology over the last fifty years, all aspects of life on planet earth are undergoing a process of globalization, as even a brief survey of some of the

more tangible manifestations of this phenomenon will show

Thomas Mann once said that in this age man's destiny leads him back to politics. Political activity is one of the most visible aspects of public life, and the current Westphalian model of the nation-state has dominated human history for the last few centuries. However, the nation-state itself is now being eroded by two contradictory forces. On the one hand, nationalism is being transcended, the most dramatic example being the movement towards a European Community. It is astonishing that European nations, which were at each other's throat for centuries and whose rivalries plunged the world repeatedly into wars of unsurpassed ferocity, should now have been able to overcome their age-old animosities and, despite continuing reservations, have been impelled by the sheer logic of economic survival to move towards a single economic and, ultimately, political entity.

Other regional groupings are also slowly moving in the same direction, and perhaps SAARC will ultimately follow suit. It is thus

possible to visualize the present chaotic situation of almost two hundred nation-states moving steadily over the next few decades towards ten or twelve regional groupings. Perhaps it is a further integration between these regions that, before the end of the next century, could finally result in what Tennyson so eloquently described as 'The Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World', and fulfil Sri Aurobindo's vision when he wrote on 15 August 1947 that 'a new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race'.

On the other hand, the second force eroding the nation-state, or rather the artificial constructs established by Marxist-Leninist dictatorship in Eastern and Central Europe, is the reassertion of ethnic and religious identities. The astounding implosion of the erstwhile soviet Union has been an event of prime significance, because it shattered an artificial entity whose presence was distorting the inevitable transition to a global society by the negative polarization of the Cold War. As long as that lasted, evolution of society stood frozen, as it were, and the forces of political growth remained in abeyance. It is a tribute to Mikhail Gorbachev that he was able to release tremendous democratizing forces, an act which, even if it ultimately cost him his Presidency, has assured for him an undying place in the annals of the human race. In fact the end of communism marks the *beginning* of post-modern history, not the end of it as some have asserted.

The explosion of Yugoslavia, a much smaller but far bloodier event, has also proved that if genuine nation-states are themselves in a crisis, artificial ones can certainly no longer expect to survive. Way back in 1967, I happened to travel around India with President Tito. In the course of a conversation I asked him whether he didn't think that the constitution of Yugoslavia

was too federal, and expressed the doubt that after his passing the country may break up. Pat came his answer—'If, after me, the republic decide to break, let them break.' So, even the maker of modern Yugoslavia was aware that the experiment could well turn out to be of a limited duration, although he could not have foreseen how violent the break-up would be.

However, the collapse of communism leading to the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia does not, in the final analysis, contradict the globalization thesis. Clearly, the national entities so long subsumed under the Communist rubric need a period of real freedom before they can start the process of transcendence. Communism, therefore, would at best have been able to delay the process of globalization, but not, in the longer view, reverse it.

If politics is in the process of globalization, economic activity has for a long time transcended national boundaries. Economic and financial decisions now impinge upon the human race on a global basis. In particular, the rise of trans-national corporations has introduced a powerful new element of globalization which will increasingly erode national barriers. Economic compulsion has brought together the countries of Western Europe, and this factor will inevitably operate in other regions of the planet also. After the seemingly endless 'Uruguay Round' a GATT agreement finally emerged, and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are triumphantly propagating what Reagan once called 'the magic of the marketplace'. Whether the magic turns out to be white or black depends, of course, on the nature of the economy involved, but for purposes of our present argument it is obvious that national boundaries are getting less and less important in the world's economic context, and that this constitutes a powerful thrust

towards the emerging global society.

Environmental problems are by definition global. The historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 highlighted this fact. Whereas the Stockholm Conference twenty years earlier was attended by only two heads of Government—the host Olof Palme and our Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the intervening twenty years brought home quite clearly that there are simply no partial solutions to such problems as global warming and attenuation of the ozone layer, river and ocean pollution, CO₂ emissions, biological diversity, deforestation and desertification. These reasons impelled over a hundred heads of State and Governments to attend the Rio Summit. The growing awareness of the global nature of environmental problems and solutions is in fact one of the most tangible indications of the rapid emergence of a global society.

tum. That most beautiful of all photographs ever taken, the one of planet earth from outer space, stands as a glowing symbol of global awareness. It is as if we have seen our face in a mirror for the first time, for that shows our planet as it really is, a tiny speck of light and life against the unending vastnesses of outer space, so beautiful and yet so fragile.

Of all the factors impelling the movement towards a global society, perhaps the most powerful is the multiple revolution in communications, triggered by space exploration and the development of satellite technology. When Yuri Gagarin first broke the space barrier, and Neil Armstrong first set foot on the moon, they were charting an entirely new course for human history. The sheer scientific and technological feats involved were staggering enough. That a creature on this planet could make the transition from cave to space station—so

While there have been many transitions in the vistas of human history, the one to the global society has a major difference with the earlier ones—the time-scale involved...almost all the seminal changes that are transforming the planet have taken place over the last fifty years...within the memory of at least two generations of human beings still alive on the planet.

The green movements and environmental activists throughout the world are in some ways pioneers of this new consciousness. From being regarded as far-out, fringe movements even a couple of decades ago, they have moved into centre stage, and governments throughout the world are obliged to take cognizance of their views. Indeed the whole concept of the planet as a living entity, the mother that has nurtured consciousness up from the slime of the primeval ocean to where it is today—GAIA in the Greek tradition, BHAVANI VASUNDHARA in the Hindu—has become a powerful factor in the phenomenon of globalization that is now gathering momen-

dramatically portrayed in Stanley Kubric's mind-bending film, 2001 A SPACE ODYSSEY—in less than a hundred thousands years is astonishing. But the long-range implications are likely to be truly momentous.

Apart from other applications, the major impact of space-satellite exploration has been in the field of communications, radio and, more dramatically, television. The recent development of cable networks has virtually transformed human consciousness in large parts of the world, as it simultaneously enables millions of human beings scattered throughout the globe to witness programmes and events. This global con-

centration of consciousness is unprecedented, and its impact still impossible to assess.

The cultural impact of television is also substantial. For the first time in human history a world language has emerged—English—, which is a pre-requisite for a global civilization. This is not to say that English will replace other languages, but simply that it is rapidly becoming the link language for linguistic and national groups around the world. Rock music has, likewise, emerged as the first truly global music. Young people dance to the same beat whether in New York or New Delhi, Bombay or Beijing, Reykjavik or Rio de Janeiro. Similarly jeans are becoming a sort of global uniform for young people, and the cola drinks a global refreshment. These examples do not imply a value judgement. Many will continue to prefer Beethoven to the Beatles, Champagne to Coca Cola. But the point is that the mass impact of the popular brands, whether in music or refreshment—is rapidly assuming global dimensions, thus building the foundations for a global society.

Another factor that has made a tremendous impact on eroding national and linguistic barriers is the phenomenon of jet-age tourism. The world's largest industry in terms of annual turnover—larger even than petroleum or armaments—, tourism now involves millions of people every year who leave the confines of their countries. Made possible by the development of jet airliners—itsself a miracle of engineering technology—, this massive tourist traffic is bringing people from different races and religions, linguistic and national groups together in an unprecedented manner. During a recent visit to the Great Wall of China, for instance, we encountered people drawn from at least a dozen countries and speaking a veritable babble of tongues, and

visitors to the Taj Mahal or the Statue of Liberty are sure to have a similar experience. These tourists criss-crossing the globe are, as it were, spinning the warp and woof of the new garment of global consciousness that is steadily enveloping this planet.

Comfortable assumptions are being widely shaken, and we find ourselves hit by a typhoon of change which is pushing us willy-nilly into a global civilization. While there have been many transitions in the vistas of human history, the one to the global society has a major difference with earlier ones which makes it unique, and this relates to the time-scale involved. Previously many generations would elapse in the course of a transition, but this time round, time itself has telescoped, as a result of which the phenomenon, which Alvin Toffler first termed 'future shock', has become widespread. It is an amazing fact that almost all the seminal changes that are transforming our planet have taken place over the last fifty years, that is, within the memory of at least two generations of human beings still alive on the planet.

Whether it is atomic power or jet aviation, television or computerization, robotics or organ transplants, satellite technology or space travel, genetic engineering or cybernetics, these and many more revolutionary developments took place in our own lifetimes. So rapid has been the pace of change that vast numbers of people seem to be numbed and disoriented. On the one hand, the global society with all its myriad implications is rapidly emerging while, on the other, the mindset of millions is still frozen in pre-global attitudes. It is this time-lag that is largely responsible for the curiously ambivalent state of the world today, in which contradictory movements and forces seem to be arising simultaneously in startling juxtaposition.

It is clear that not all the implications of globalization are positive. The very act of globalization magnifies the original phenomenon which, if malign, assumes even more menacing dimensions. With terrorism having attained global dimensions, the real nightmare now lies in the possibility of a terrorist group getting hold of a nuclear weapon and using it for their malign purposes. The narcotics trade has now become so menacing that it threatens the very stability of societies and, in at least two countries, the very existence of the State itself. The multi-billion dollar drug trade, with the tremendous increase in addiction and drug-related crime, represents a malign underworld which is the dark shadow thrown by the glitter and glamour of Western civilization. And the processes of

The AIDS pandemic has, in ten years, assumed truly alarming proportions, and has exploded on all the continents, cutting across barriers of nationality and religion, sex and sexual preference. If current forecasts are to be believed, by the end of the century tens of millions of human beings on this planet will be infected by the HIV virus, and millions will die from it every year. In some African countries it is feared that as much as one third of their populations could be wiped out, thus crippling their productive capacity and causing a major set back in their plans for economic development. The sheer human pain, physical and emotional, caused by AIDS is a truly tragic global burden. Sexual mores have changed greatly over the last few decades, but, more than any particular form of sexual activity, what

On the one hand, the global society with all its myriad implications is rapidly emerging while, on the other, the mindset of millions is still frozen in pre-global attitudes.

its globalization are inexorably multiplying its tentacles to clutch more and more societies in the developing world.

The growth of violence also, individual and collective, has a global dimension. With all its amazing potential, television often becomes the vehicle for the most blood-curdling violence and horror to enter tens of millions of living rooms around the world. The level of violence that many of the films shown on television contain, not to speak of the masochistic approach to evil, demonic possession, horror and other such distortions of human consciousness, is posing a grave threat to balance and sanity of people throughout the world. What long-range effect such films have on impressionable young minds can hardly be fathomed, but quite clearly this is a significant negative impact of the global revolution.

has become so glaring now is the general level of promiscuity that pervades much of Western society. And this, through the process of globalization, is now spreading throughout the world as videos have brought pornography into every home. Certainly there was the celebrated KAMA SUTRA in India, but the activities were surely meant to be carried out in privacy rather than through the universal nudity of the television screen.

So while globalism has many positive aspects and is an irreversible process, it also has its menacing, darker side which we would do well to keep in mind, because unless we are able to develop a positive consciousness that can overcome this negativity, the whole transition could turn out to be abortive and, ultimately, self-destructive. Indeed, carrying further the analogy of transition and metamorphosis,

one can liken the present global scenario to the time when a caterpillar enters the chrysalis before it becomes a butterfly. The experience could not be a pleasant one; there must be a terrible sense of constriction and crisis. But if it succeeds in undergoing that painful process, an ugly, earthbound worm is transformed into a beautiful, multi-coloured butterfly that can fly through the air rather than crawl on the leaf. Hopefully, that is what could happen to human consciousness provided we are able to make safely the transition to globalism.

The major question facing us, therefore, as we hurtle towards the end of this most violent and gory century in human history, is how to develop a consciousness that could sustain the emerging global society. What we need is a global 'dharma', a paradigm of thought that would stress co-operation in place of competition, convergence in place of conflict, holism in place of hedonism. For this we can turn to the great spiritual traditions of humanity, and I would like to explore briefly with you some of the universal concepts of the Vedanta, surely one of the high points of world philosophy.

Let me place before you five seminal concepts from the scriptures which, taken together, could provide an alternative holistic paradigm of thought as against the fractured and fragmented nature of our present perceptions. These begin with the most fundamental one, the all pervasiveness of the divine—*Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiṁ ca jagatyāṁ jagat*. The first line of the *Īśāvāsyā-Upaniṣad* tells us that this entire cosmos, not merely this tiny speck of dust that we call planet earth but the billions upon billions of galaxies in the borderless universe around us, *anantakoṭi brahmāṇḍa* as the texts say, are all permeated by the divine. Wherever there is manifestation, it is illuminated by the divine, and this in a way represents the philosophical correlate of the unified field

theory that the scientists are looking for, a single theory that would explain all phenomena.

The second concept flowing from this is that, if the divine is all-pervasive, then it is also seated in the heart of each individual—*Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hr̥ddeṣe tiṣṭhati*. In each one of us dwells the divine, concealed but discoverable. This concept immediately gives a dignity to each human being, whose consciousness embodies a spark of the divine. The Upanishads have a marvellous phrase for 'human race,' *amṛtasya putrāḥ*, children of immortality. We are not just chance products, automata or puppets pushed around by fate, who have no say in our destiny, but we are children of immortality. This concept is in some ways the basis for democracy, because that is the only form of political organization in which, at least in theory, every individual is recognized and honoured because of his individuality. And this cuts across all barriers of caste or creed, sex or religion, economic status or nationality. Vedanta has never postulated a chosen race or a chosen people, a chosen sex or a chosen nation. It deals with the entire gamut of the human race, and places before us this great principle of the divinity that is inherent in each individual.

The third concept is that, if the divinity is inherent in each person, then despite all the conflicts and the terrible happenings in humanity since the dawn of history, in essence the human race is an extended family. On the first gate to our Parliament House there is inscribed a beautiful mantra:

*Ayaṁ nijaḥ paroveti
gāṇanā laghucetasām;
udāra caritānām tu
vasudhaiva kutumbakam.*

This is mine, that is yours, is a small and restricted way of looking at reality. For those

with higher consciousness, the world is a family

Those two words, *vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam*, have got to become the motto of the new global society that is emerging. Thousands of years ago when it was not possible to move more than a few miles a day on foot, the seers of the Upanishads had this vision of the essential unity of the human race, of humanity as a family, which must inform any viable global society.

The fourth Vedantic concept which I would recall is that of the essential unity of all religions. The oft quoted lines from the *Ṛg-Veda*, '*Ekam sadviprā bahudhā vadanti: Truth is one, the wise call it by many names*', or the *Mundaka* verse:

*Yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre
astam, gacchanti nāma-rū pe vihāya;
tathā vidvān nāma-rūpād vimuktaḥ
parāt-param puruṣam upaiti divyam.*

As rivers and streams arise from different parts of the world but finally flow into the same ocean, so do all the creeds and religions of humanity arise differently, but ultimately reach the same goal.

Hinduism was born in the snowy mountains of the Himalayas, Islam in the burning

desert sands of Saudi Arabia. Other religions have been born in different places in different times in human history, in different economic, social and political circumstances. But if there is an intrinsic divinity, it cannot, in the ultimate analysis, be different for people even though they

happen to be born in different religious traditions. Surely the limitless effulgence of the divine can appear in a thousand ways. Is it not the height of hubris, *ahamkāra*, for creatures like us, denizens of a tiny planet, to say that the divine can only manifest at this time and in this way. Certainly each revelation, each appearance, is valid in its own right. There is no attempt to denigrate any particular form, but clearly there are many paths to the divine, and while the great religious traditions of the world represent powerful revelations and inspirations, there can be no monopoly of spiritual truth. So, if the divinity inherent in each human being is the basis of democracy, then the essential unity of all religions is the basis of religious pluralism and the worldwide Interfaith movement.

What is common in all religions is the capacity to move the individual towards the divine. And as long as that is there, it does not really matter which religion you follow. Vedanta does not seek to replace the religious traditions that exist, it offers a whole new paradigm of looking at the multiple religious traditions of the world. Every religion must continue in its own way, must have its individuality, but what Vedanta tells us is that all these religions must be

The major question facing us is, how to develop a consciousness that could sustain the emerging global society. What we need is a global 'dharma', a paradigm of thought that would stress cooperation in place of competition, convergence in place of conflict, holism in place of hedonism.

honoured and respected as methodologies towards divine realization and not as mutually exclusive or hostile phenomena. And if that can be achieved, it will go a long way towards building a harmonious global society.

The fifth concept of Vedanta that I wish to place before you is that of the welfare of the many, the happiness of the many—*Bahujana sukhāya bahujana hitāya ca*. There is an erroneous view that Vedanta is basically a selfish philosophy interested only in individual salvation, and does not pay adequate attention to poverty, to disease, to the problems of the real world around us. This is not true. The *Ṛg-Veda* tells that our goal in life is twofold—'*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca*: For the liberation of our souls, and also for the welfare of the world.' Swami Vivekananda constantly stressed this point, the service of those whom he called '*daridra nārāyana*: my god in the poor', and said that when we help somebody who is needy, we should not expect gratitude but rather thank

him because he has given us an opportunity to help. And he added that it was an insult to teach religion to somebody who was starving. So the social conscience is not absent in Vedanta; in fact it is at the heart of the teachings, because it flows from the theory that all human beings are permeated by the divine and, therefore, by serving fellow human beings we are really serving the divine.

These five concepts taken together are of universal import. I am sure similar ideas can be gleaned from other great religious traditions, but the clarity with which they have been enunciated in Vedanta is startling in its contemporary significance and provides an excellent dharma for the new millennium. □



Contemporary Relevance of Vivekananda— A Question of Consciousness

PROF. S. C. MALIK

In this paper, S. C. Malik, a U.G.C. Professorial Research Scientist residing at New Delhi, highlights the relevance of Swami Vivekananda's concept of the unity of existence running through the physical, mental and spiritual planes as a basis for global order and well-being. The discussion takes the reader through current developments in medical research which are pointing to the 'convergence of contemporary knowledge and ancient insights'.

A century ago Swami Vivekananda, in Chicago, initiated a powerful world-wide movement to bring about global harmony, which had the greatest impact on the audience. His was a living presence of someone who had directly realized the Self, and hence did it empower others—who too were this Self. Of course, the same knowledge of Reality is viewed from different perspectives in different cultures and religions. Nevertheless, for him Consciousness was the focal point of mutual communication, for in that Consciousness existed the unity underlying all the disparate peoples, religions and ideologies. The experience of this was therefore not to remain confined among a few, but it was to be spread to all individuals so as to remove all forms of bigotry, persecution, sectarianism, and religious fundamentalism which he was against. He states clearly that the sole cause of human suffering is experiencing one's-self—Self—as the body and mind. 'All our fear, all worries, anxieties, troubles, mistaken weakness, evil, are from that one great blunder—thinking that we are bodies.'

Furthermore, ignorance of the real Self-Consciousness—is the sole cause of the collective problems of the world:

...that we are little minds, that we are

little bodies....As soon as I think I am a little body, I want to preserve it, to protect it, to keep it nice, at the expense of other bodies; then you and I become separate. As soon as the idea of separation comes, it opens the door to all the mischief and leads to all misery.

The source of the human predicament is the Self's mistaken belief that It is the mortal, pain-ridden and problem-filled mind and body. Even Its identification with thought, thinking, 'I am this thought', is a source of bondage, Vivekananda explained: 'The mistake is that we want to tie the whole world down to our plane of thought and to make our mind the measure of the whole universe.'

To whatever extent a human being is able to expand his limited 'I' to include other people, to that extent he is openminded, altruistic, and universal in his understanding. The message which Swamiji proclaimed is that of Universal Consciousness, of the one Being that is the true nature of all the manifold forms of this universe in the same way that water is the true nature of all the different whirlpools, waves, bubbles, and currents in the ocean. He believed the philosophy of Oneness to be the only true practical system of thought. The ultimate

and only solution to the problems that confront humankind today is for people to realize the interconnectedness of all within this context of Consciousness.

He, however, stresses the fact that the knowledge of this order is not a thought, a feeling, or an acquired belief. Rather, it is a state of awareness of the Reality that one already is, has always been, and will always be. In this quest for knowing who one truly is (not what one thinks one is), Truth is directly lived, breathed and perceived as it is. This is the concrete means needed to unfold the direct and immediate experience of Oneness. 'Man is to become divine by realizing the divine.' Meditation is, logically, the means to separate the real 'I', the Knower, from its identification with the mind and body.

What has been stated above is well known. However, it is equally well known that not many give time to the dictum,

...in recent years consciousness has come under the increasing attention of the neuro-sciences and of those who are scientifically studying the phenomenon of the brain as a physio-neuro organ.

'Know Thyself'. So, little has been achieved by way of peace and harmony. We are all aware of the critical inter-human problems threatening life and the earth as a whole. But, only by first improving one's self can one be of any real assistance to others. In this highly technological and utilitarian era, it is not sufficient merely to rhetorize about peace—an agitated mind cannot preach harmony. Swamiji reminds us, '...prophets were not unique; they were men as you or I....The very fact that one man ever reached that state, proves that it is possible for every man to do so.' But the message has not reached many, and it has been neglected

especially by Indian intellectuals and decision-makers, by and large. It has been forgotten that you and I and all have the same Source.

This paper is not about meditation and so on. The aim is to suggest the relevance of Swamiji's notion of Universal Consciousness as the base of a global order, within the context of current developments in scientific research. The rest of the paper discusses the convergence of contemporary knowledge and ancient insights with regard to this question of Consciousness, which Swami Vivekananda has emphatically pointed out to us.

1. Matter and Consciousness

Correlating consciousness with matter, as a subject of science, has been a long standing puzzle. Recent developments, since 1970, in cognitive science has attempted to unravel this puzzle somewhat. Especially the developments of quantum physics and chaos theory have shown us that, in any strict sense, science cannot always predict and control. Some 'consciousness' comes into play which is qualitatively different from the reductionist causes of science. It may be that the all-pervasive energetic field of quantum zero-point energy is the all-pervasive field of Consciousness, of which the esoteric traditions too talk about.

However, all recent attempts basically retain the old tested approach of science, which wants to understand things from down-upwards causation. First one must understand this, and then reverse this approach; direct it towards an all-inclusive holistic one, an up-downwards causation. Implying thereby that the basic stuff of the universe to be studied is not physical energy/ matter, even if it is in terms of fundamental particles and their associated interrelationships. It has been a mistake of modern science to assume that reductionis-

tic scientific answers are the ultimate explanations of everything. That does not provide an adequate world view, since it has resulted in gaining control through manipulation of the physical—and thereby the psychological-cultural—environment, albeit within that context everything seems to work well. It has led to conflicts and confrontational dualities—between science and religion, free will and determinism, you and me, and so on.

Of course, these foundational assumptions have been modified with the advent of quantum physics, particularly by the indeterminacy principle and the necessarily statistical nature of measurement of the very small. Agreement is spreading among a few that science must develop the ability to look at things, particularly living things, more holistically. There is accumulating evidence that everything physical and mental that is experienced is part of an intercommunicating unity, a oneness, and there is no justification for the assumption of separateness; and that, within specific contexts, even if parts are isolated from the whole the ordinary concepts of scientific causation remain applicable.

In other words, if we take into account both the ways, inner and outer, then we know that reality can be known in two ways that are not separate but interlinked. Should reality be limited to our being aware of it as that which gives meaning to the objective messages from our physical senses? Should it not also include the subjective aspects—the intuitive, aesthetic, spiritual, poetic and mystical aspects? In fact, ethics and aesthetics (elegance) do enter conventional science in various ways! So, while restructuring of our view of science and of matter, 'inner explorers' should be included. By doing so, science would become more inclusive without invalidating any of the current physical and biological sciences. This

way a scientist can both distance himself from *and* participate as the subject in the field of his study.

The purpose of the above discussion is to point out the new direction of holistic science—toward oneness, toward Consciousness as the new foundation and metaphysics of science. This opens new vistas before us. Many anomalies, e.g. paranormal phenomena, will begin to fall into place in this framework, because it does not insist on fitting everything into a reductionistic science. Neither does it insist that we humans are here in a meaningless universe solely through random causes; nor that our consciousness is merely a product of the chemical and physical processes of the brain.

So far few scientists have been inclined to question the philosophical issues underlying their work, or recognize that they are part of the definition underlying science—say the objectivistic, positivistic, deterministic, or reductionistic assumptions of logical empiricism. No doubt these definitions have served well scientific and technological developments well, but the consequences of a social scientist swallowing them have been disastrous.

Most scientists might defensively assert that science has moved away from those definitions over half a century ago. May be, but what is not clear is—moved away towards what? Moreover, 'consciousness' has not yet come sufficiently into the picture even though major paradoxes continue to confront science. For instance:

1. The fundamental nature of things does not appear to be convergent—more and more of fundamental particles are appearing—, though reductionism is in fact pointing to a wholeness!
2. The fundamental organizing force

in living systems, from the largest to the smallest, is unexplained by physical principles (by homeostasis, for example). Intricate flower patterns, butterfly wings, etc., and healing, regeneration, ontogenesis, etc. still remain unexplained.

3. The problem of action at a distance, i.e. non-local causality, appearing in the far reaches of quantum physics; meaningful coincidences or connections, or Jungian Synchronicity—called paranormal, telepathic or clairvoyant communication, and a host of other phenomena still are paradoxical.

4. Knowledge of the universe is incomplete since there is no place in this knowledge for the consciousness of the observer, as if he is not in it. The notion of free will, volition and such other characteristics of consciousness too have been ignored. Going from the physio-chemical to 'consciousness' does not work. It is the movement from the higher, the subtler, to the lower or gross which can take many of these aspects into account.

In this quest for knowing who one truly is (not what one thinks one is), Truth is directly lived, breathed and perceived as it is. This is the concrete means needed to unfold the direct and immediate experience of Oneness.

5. The notion of the self: the concept is not clear, and has not been taken into account even though it is involved in the act of observation.

6. What are those 'altered states of consciousness' which mystics know of, and which in ordinary mundane lives also are unconsciously sought after by one and all—in aesthetic experiences and so on? If atomic splitting can release such unforeseen energy, may not the 'splitting' or destruction of the ego release another dimension of consciousness which is but vaguely

experienced in everyday living—in the sleep-dreamlike state?

Given the above puzzles, researchers are moving into new areas to understand matter and consciousness, unthinkable a couple of decades ago. It requires a reorientation of the approach towards a 'oneness' picture, a 'wholeness' science as some would like to call it. This is to say that we should try to experience the world from its inside as consciousness, which (consciousness) is also the whole since the 'outside' experienced by the senses is its (consciousness's) external manifestation. Evolutionarily speaking, evolution is the *manifestation of consciousness*—, not just a linear track of evolution of something separate from consciousness. Consciousness thus becomes the agent in the relevant data we desire to create for our images and pictures of reality.

This approach thus implies a sensitization of the observer, whereby he/she is altered or is willing to be transformed in an ongoing dialogue—which is the essence of creation and not any rigid stand of authority or expertise that leads to entropy. This transformation, if it is true for the anthropologist and the psychotherapist, should be true also for the scientist who wishes to study meditation and altered states of consciousness. His movement will be up and down, as in an hour glass or in a spiral, from matter to consciousness, and from consciousness to matter. This meditative process of attaining conscious awareness or altered states of consciousness involves unconscious processes, volition, a concept of the self, and so on.

Naturally, in this new approach (which, for example, sees not that bodies have consciousness but that consciousness has bodies), the questions asked will radically change: how does separateness arise if all is one? does the brain act as a filtering and reductive mechanism? and so on. No longer

will one ask how to integrate the universe. On the other hand, the question will be, how is multiplicity perceived in the universe? Or, how to explain its interconnections without referring to the linear processes of the big bang; or to the unified theory involving many different fields (gravitational, electromagnetic, morphogenetic, etc.) or the various energies? Following the manner in which light's velocity was taken to be basic to many explanations, once we make consciousness the base line, different explanations will follow, leading to a quantum jump! This will serve us well individual and social development as well. Openness to alternative theories, explanations and healthy scepticism will remain a part and parcel of this new scheme, to the same extent that they are part and parcel of conventional science. In short, the new approach of research includes both the inner world's and the outer physical world's experiences in the unity of consciousness without excluding any human experience.

...We should try to experience the world from its inside as consciousness, which (consciousness) is also the whole since the 'outside' experienced by the senses is its (consciousness's) external manifestation.

2. A Question of Consciousness.

One may ask, why am I aware of anything at all? Would it not be simple without consciousness? But the 'experience of being' does not go away, whatever question one may ask! What is awareness, or consciousness? For many decades science has ignored any inquiry into this energy and its workings. And anthropologists, sociologists and others who deal with the human phenomenon do not even regard it as belonging to their realm. Either it is taken for granted as given, or it is considered a question to be dealt with by religion. At best it is

dealt with from an evolutionary point of view—as an epiphenomenon of the increasing complexity of organic matter, of its growth through time.

This is similar to the notion with regard to intelligence which too is supposed to be a gradual outcome of the evolutionary, material organic process. The totally different view that intelligence or consciousness was there first as the primordial substance, so to speak, and then it manifested itself—in itself and by itself—in various forms is seldom considered. It is thought to be either a nonscientific or non-empirical statement since scientific 'evidence' is to the contrary, albeit science is itself based on certain apriori assumptions that are questionable but seldom looked into. In the same manner, consciousness is considered to belong to the realm of mysticism and occultism, to philosophy or ecstasy—to some airy-fairy area of meta-realm discourse!

However, in recent years consciousness has come under the increasing attention of the neuro-sciences and of those who are scientifically studying the phenomenon of the brain as a physio-neuro organ. Many different experiments have been carried out, and literature is available in this regard. But, strangely, some anthropologists, the physical ones, who study Man do not consider these neurological studies focusing on consciousness to be crucial for understanding Man. As if socio-cultural aspects are independent of the neurological-psychological or their chemical processes which constitute individual and collective mental activities.

For example, at the level of 'social behaviour', consider dual social organization—moieties and such other recorded social units—which anthropologists have tried to understand in order to explain these peculiar functioning groups since these appear contradictory to the common norm.

These manifestations may be seen, on the one hand, as a result of the dominating binary system which generally governs human psychology—i.e. as a result of the dualistic nature of thought intrinsic to consciousness; and, on the other, modern Western thought looks upon these dualities or binary systems (which Louis Dumont and Levi-Strauss talk about in structural-functional terms) as irreconcilable opposites, as confrontational dualities, and not as reconcilable complimentary modes that leave alternatives open for societies to function in different contexts.

It is important to note here, beyond the controversies of social-scientists, that

probably all dualistic functions arise from a psycho-physiological structure in a partial, not the whole, area of the brain which has a binary system built into it for operational and appropriate purposes. But the functioning of this has become dominant at the expense of the functioning of the rest of the brain, thereby leading to overspecialization in various fields of science. Hence arises the external manifestations of systems that operate within the dual system, that is, within this spectrum between two states which, even if seemingly opposite, yet really form parts of one *system*. Those dualistic systems, like thought, move like a pendulum in an either/or or an 'and' system. □



Scientific Insights for the Third Millennium

DR. SAMPOORAN SINGH

Despite the attempts first by religious teachers and later by scientists to lead humanity towards peace, prosperity and fulfilment, we continue to be haunted by a sense of uncertainty, contradictions, and disintegration in life, and we are desperately looking for a firm place to anchor ourselves. Marking the end of the futile search 'outside', the perceptible trend now is toward our 'inside', hoping to find there a globally acceptable paradigm that may bring cohesion into individual and collective human behaviour.

Besides, it is being recognized that the 'outside' and 'inside', the 'object' and 'subject', the function of the right and left hemispheres of our brain have to be harmonized before we arrive at the solution we all are looking for. This is evident from the views of some leading contemporary thinkers, as Dr. Singh has tried to show in the following article.

One hundred years ago, people of many religions came together in the hope that religions would 'no longer make war on each other, but on the great evils that afflict humankind'. They met in Chicago in 1893 for the World's Parliament of Religions. A hundred years later, in 1993, a second Parliament of Religions met, again in Chicago, and issued a declaration which, startlingly, sounded more like an admission of the failure of the first Parliament: 'Peace eludes us....the planet is being destroyed....neighbours live in fear....women and men are estranged from each other....children die'; 'the earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first.' Since the 'great evils that afflict humankind' have not suffered any significant defeat between the two parliaments, in this paper we wish to explore what the last hundred years have taught us, the root cause of human suffering, and the scientific insights that may help resolve our challenges in the third millennium.

What the last hundred years have taught us

Swami Vivekananda, in a speech delivered in London, 1896, had proposed a

way of resolving human problems:

In Buddha we had the great, universal heart and infinite patience, making religion practical and bringing it to everyone's door. In Shankaracharya we saw tremendous intellectual power, throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything.¹

The fine *samskaras* are to be conquered by resolving them into their causal state....By resolving the effect into its cause....Meditation cannot destroy these.²

This suggests that in our thirst for knowledge (information gathering), we have rejected intuitive and instinctual perceptions, and have cut ourselves off from wisdom. We are living in a man-made social cosmos which is a construct of the human mind-brain system.

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1971), vol. 2, p. 140.

2. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 242.

The World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) met in Kyoto in 1970, Louvain in 1974, Princeton in 1979, Nairobi in 1984, Melbourne in 1989. The Nairobi declaration stated,

We acknowledge the painful fact that religion too often has been misused in areas of strife and conflict to intensify division and polarization....Regional conflicts become swiftly polarized by East and West, and raise the level of instability and insecurity in the whole world.

John B. Taylor, at Melbourne, stated that 'religion often divides rather than unites'.

Similar warnings have been issued from time to time by other world figures also. Jacques Monod, the Nobel-prize-winning biologist, has said:

Instead of healing the diseased psyche, we have been engaged in 'consequences of conflicts', 'symptoms of conflicts', and 'temporary curing the symptoms'. It is high time we started exploring the causes of conflict in our psyche, in the inner world.

No society before ours was ever rent by contradictions so agonizing....(The) nineteenth-century scientism seemed to be leading mankind infallibly upwards to an empyrean noon hour...whereas what we are opening before us today is an abyss of darkness.³

The concluding remarks of Dr. Bernard Lown, Co-President, International physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), at the 10th World Congress

held at Stockholm in June 1991, were:

The all-pervasive certainty was that the 20th century will be graced by an expansion of human decency and a growth of human dignity. Expected was the gradual disappearance of national or tribal passions, displaced by improved means of communication and better scientific understanding of the universe. It turned out dismally otherwise. No prior age had perfected such malevolent instruments of mass murder. No prior age had indulged in such a gargantuan orgy of bestiality. Indeed our century cast a shadow of shame and revulsion unto the most distant expanse of time..

We perceived educating the human imagination with learning and culture as the assured antidote to mass violence. Yet the cancer of the human spirit, the ultimate in human savagery, was unleashed.

Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, told an international conference at Geneva on 20 July 1992 that, 'Displacement seems to be the goal, not just the result of the war, with the motive being clearly ethnic relocation.' The Secretary General of the UN, Boutros Boutros Ghali, at a conference on September 9-11, 1992, noted, 'Today, however, the world is faced with numerous civil wars and ethnic conflicts. These realities challenge the UN to define new standards which can guide it toward effective responses consistent with its humanitarian principles.' We opine that the United Nations must transform its charter to understand man in its wholeness, and to resolve the fundamental crisis of perception.

In a review of the book, *The Reenchantment of the World*, by Morris Berman, Wills W. Harman wrote:

3. Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (New York: vintage Books, 1972), p. 171.

Western industrial society will probably be remembered for the power, and the failure, of the Cartesian paradigm...Western society is drifting toward increasing entropy, economic and technological chaos, ecological disaster, and ultimately, psychic dismemberment and disintegration.⁴

So we find that, in the last one hundred years, neither has a holistic world view been developed in some credible form, nor has an epistemological revolution taken place to heal the psychic disease.

Mankind has failed to transform human motivations. Man has failed to resolve his psychological imbalances and bring sustainable peace on the planet. He has dehumanized himself. It is apparent that we have learned nothing in the last one hundred years. The pathogenesis of our dismal failure is that the international inter-religious and interfaith organizations have been engaged in peace-keeping, peace-making and peace-building operations in the external world, without exploring in the internal world the conflicts' dynamics, their cause, which, science tells us, is the wrongly conditioned human mind-brain system, the diseased human psyche. Instead of healing the diseased psyche, we have been engaged in 'consequences of conflicts', 'symptoms of conflicts', and 'temporary curing the symptoms'. It is high time we started exploring the causes of conflict in our psyche, in the inner world. Peace is related to human psychology. We cannot have peace till our psyche is healed. If we avoid or postpone healing our psyche, we do so at personal peril.

4. Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Cornell: Cornell University Press), reviewed by Wills W. Harman in *The Holistic Bulletin*, 1992, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 7.

Our conditioning and beliefs, based on an infinitesimal sampling of the information available to us, have gone deep into the subconscious mind. Though seemingly there is order, in fact there is slow decay. A wave of destruction is superimposing itself on our way of life. The conditioning of the psyche is leading mankind towards self-annihilation. The possibility of extinction of life is at the core of our anxieties.

The root cause of human suffering

The entire world today is in the throes of a common crisis, called the crisis of perception. It is an unprecedented crisis having global dimensions. The root cause of this crisis is the mind's self-division into subject and object. This sets off a chain of psychological consequences, one of which is the perception of 'object' as entirely different from and, often, as opposed to, oneself, the 'subject'.

Conflicts and violence, which are considered indications of psychological immaturity, are basically harmful products of the subject-object duality or separation. So, as long as our minds have this sense of separateness, the tendency to conflict is sure to persist, and we shall never be able to end wars or create peace in the world. Thus the principal problem facing mankind is—how to transform the human psyche?

Toward a shared world ethics

We are at present faced with the challenge of a breakdown in human values, which is threatening the stability of society throughout the whole world. David Bohm stated, 'I suggest that existing knowledge cannot meet this challenge, and that only insight can give rise to the sort of overall new approach that might meet it.'⁵ Edwin Hubble wrote, 'The world of pure values,

5. David Bohm, 'Within the Mind: On J. Krishnamurty', *KFI Bulletin*, 1982, p. 42.

that world which science cannot enter, has no concern whatsoever with probable knowledge.⁶ It is obvious that values cannot be taught in hourly lessons in schools/colleges. Values cannot be imparted at the intellectual or conceptual or ideational level. They cannot be imparted by quoting scriptures or enumerating prescriptions and prohibitions.

Thought expresses its 'objective' nature as a time-space matrix in a symbolic-dualistic frame of reference. Whereas it expresses its 'subjective' nature as values in a non-dual frame of reference. Obviously a global ethic is possible only when we learn to function in a non-dual frame of reference.⁷ Ethics emerge from the depth-potential, from the subjective aspect of man, not from matter, not from the objective aspect. A mind that has set aside seeking in the future and has denied its past in an ethical mind. Ethics are universal, or global, and not individual. We have to realize that a global ethic is essential for our survival.

Hans Kung declares,

In recent years I have become increasingly convinced that the world in which we live has a chance of survival only if spheres of differing, contradictory or even conflicting ethics cease to exist. This one world needs one ethic. Our society

does not need a uniform religion or a uniform ideology, but it does need some binding norms, values, ideals and goals.⁸

An awareness of the subjective and objective natures of thought bestows a perception of its wholeness. And the needed global ethic flows only when there is this perception of wholeness.

Living in harmony with nature

Science is way of communication, a dialogue with nature. The dialogue is partial as science deals with a time-space matrix and excludes subjectivity. Ilya Prigogine concludes, 'In this sense the dialogue with nature isolated man from nature instead of bringing him closer to it. A triumph of human reason turned into a sad truth. It seemed science debased everything it touched.'⁹ Reason or intellect is always dualistic, and dualism is the root of fragmentation of the human mind. The waking state of mind, which constructs symbolic-dualistic knowledge, can never be in harmony with nature.

A deeper look, however, at the psychodynamics of the mind-brain system suggests that the 'outer' and the 'inner' are not two separate movements, but one unitary dynamic movement. This implies that science must restructure itself so that it takes in its realm both the subjective (values) field and the objective (time-space matrix) field, or in other words, it deals with wholeness. Karl Pribram wrote, 'Brain science must deal with the awareness of awareness. It could no longer afford to shut out that part of the world which we call subjective.'¹⁰

6. Edwin Hubble in *Synthesis of Science and Religion*, (Bombay: The Bhakti Vedanta Institution, June 1988) p. 119.

7. Sampooran Singh, *National Seminar on Value-Oriented Education*, Report of the Proceedings, Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education, Mysore, October 1986; & 'A Renewed Look at the Wave-Particle Complementarity in the Light of Mind-Brain Interactions', India: *Bulletin of the Theosophy Study Group*, June & August 1988, vol. 26, nos. 3 & 4, pp. 35-7.

8. Hans Kung, 'Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethics', in *IIOCC Leaflet*

9. Ilya Prigogine & Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos* (London: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 6.

10. Karl Pribram, in Ken Wilber, *The Holographic Paradigm and other Paradoxes*, (Boulder, USA:

The symbolic-dualistic frame of reference in the mind-spectrum is repetitive and mechanistic. It constructs and lives in a synthetic world of time-space, and is totally devoid of reality. It brings in fragmentation in, and disharmony with, nature. There is an urgency that we work for a quantum jump from the symbolic-dualistic frame to the non-dual frame of the mind-spectrum. In the non-dual frame, the original (the Reality, the Absolute) and its mirror-image (the perception) are identical. Therefore such a mind lives in harmony with Nature.

Harmony with Nature implies communion with it. Communion has within it the seed of perfect communication. In the ground of communion, communication becomes natural, effortless and spontaneous. It is obvious that this kind of communion leads to nonviolent communication.¹¹

Sharing visions on holistic education

At all levels there is a growing realization that the existing models of education have failed and that there is a total lack of relevance between human beings and the complex contemporary society. Roger Sperry points out that, 'the current concepts of the mind-brain reaction...give full recognition to the primacy of inner conscious awareness as a causal reality.'¹² Our educational structure must accommodate this truth and transform itself. The vision of this new educational structure is that it should have two components: first, students should

be helped to become aware of the process of their thinking, feeling and action, and second, they should also be taught various disciplines and skills to earn their livelihood. The first component is primary and fundamental, and requires the introduction of the study of the psychodynamics of the mind-brain system in the science faculty, and transpersonal psychology in the art faculty in all schools/colleges/universities. This will create an awareness in the students of the psychological process within themselves, or in other words, it will give them the capacity to be awake to the psychodynamics of their minds. The second is secondary and derivative, because it enables the students to fulfil their biological needs within the framework of a non-dual mind. Thus the aim of education is not to teach *what* to think about but *how* to think.¹³

Science is way of communication, a dialogue with nature. The dialogue is partial as science deals with a time-space matrix and excludes subjectivity.

To educate the educator, that is, to have him understand himself, will be one of the most difficult undertakings of the new educational system, because most of us are already crystallized systems of thought or patterns of action. So, as a practical measure, parents and teachers will have to attend evening or Sunday workshops on the principles of the new education—the holistic education.

Holistic education is concerned with nourishing the total human being—the nur-

Shambhala, 1982), p. 17.

11. *The Human Survival: The Emergence of a New Global Civilization*, Sampooran Singh, (Ed) (Chandigarh: The Faith Publishers, 1993), pp. 21–41.

12. Roger Sperry, 'Changing Priorities' in *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, 1981, quoted in Wills W. Harman, 'Synthesis of Science and Religion', *Op. cit.*, p. 199.

13. Sampooran Singh, *The Fundamentals of Holistic Education & Education: A Scientific Appraisal* (Chandigarh: Faith Publishers, 1986) pp. xix and 92; & *The Holistic Education* (New Delhi: Siddhartha Publication, 1987), pp. xlvi and 390.

turing of the heart-mind-brain-body system. It is imperative to initiate a method of integrating the functions of the right and left hemispheres of the brain. This is fundamental for entering the next stage in human evolution. The holistic education programme must be initiated *here and now*, preferably under the auspices of the United Nations.

Integration of religion and science

'Pure religion', in the words of Albert Einstein, is defined as,

...the most beautiful thing we can experience...the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science....To know that what is impenetrable to us really exists, manifesting itself as the highest wisdom and the most radiant beauty which our dull faculties can comprehend only in their most primitive forms—this knowledge, this feeling, is at the centre of the true religiousness.¹⁴

Thus 'pure religion' is almost synonymous with 'true science'.

The integration of religion and science blossoms into insight or intuition. It is insight that brings discoveries, and a discovery is a direct communion. Therefore the answer to our problems lies embedded in direct perception (intuition).

Both pure religion and true science aim at discovering the truth, and this requires a proper understanding of the mind-brain system in action. From this point of view, there is no conflict between science and religion, between physical science and spirituality. A dynamic interplay of these

two complementary disciplines will produce fully integrated human beings, who will constitute a complete civilization for which the world is waiting.

The wholeness of life

David Bohm concludes,

Relativity and quantum theory agree in that they both imply the need to look on the world as an *undivided whole*, in which all parts of the universe, including the observer and his instruments, merge and unite in one totality...The new form of insight can perhaps be called *Undivided Wholeness in Flowing Movement*.¹⁵

He adds,

In the implicate order the totality of existence is enfolded within each region of space (and time). So, whatever part, element, or aspect we may abstract in thought, this still enfolds the whole and is therefore intrinsically related to the totality from which it has been abstracted. Thus wholeness permeates all that is being discussed, from the very outset.¹⁶

Perception of wholeness implies awareness of the implicate order (values) and the explicate order (time-space matrix) without any distortion. It is perception of what is 'fact', of 'what is' that bestows insight.

Modern physics abandons the distinction between matter and empty space, it advocates continuity in Nature. A deeper look at life suggests that it has two aspects: form and formlessness, motion and motionlessness, birth and death, sound and silence,

14. Albert Einstein, *I Believe: Nineteen Personal Philosophies* (London: Unwin Books, 1962), p. 26; & *Out of My Later Years* (Connecticut, USA: 1970 edition), pp. 6-8.

15. David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: ARK Paperbacks, 1980), pp. 11, 172.

16. *Ibid.*

the two aspects together constituting the wholeness of life. We have to understand this wholeness of life.

The waking state, or the symbolic-dualistic frame of reference in the mind-spectrum, is engaged in 'data gathering' and 'storing it as memory', but there is no true understanding—no discovery as mentioned earlier. Understanding comes only when the mind is quiet; it comes into being from the now, the present, which is always timeless. Only truth can liberate the mind from its ideation. But to see truth the mind must realize that as long as it is agitated, it can have no 'understanding'. Without understanding, wholeness of life cannot be realized.

The oneness of life

Morphogenetic fields at the biological level and morphopsychic fields at the mind level ensure continuity of life; and the sub-

Krishnamuri, questioning the concept of individuality, draws a pertinent conclusion: 'I am humanity, not the collective.'¹⁸

We share the consciousness of all humanity; for, all human beings are conscious of suffering, pleasures, beliefs, conclusions, opinions etc. Thus consciousness points to the oneness of life.

In this context, Roger Sperry's observation is noteworthy: 'When the brain is whole, the unified consciousness of the left and the right hemispheres adds up to more than the individual properties of the separate hemispheres.'¹⁹ Studies like those of Sperry raise the issue of Simultaneous Consciousness in a new way, strongly suggesting that when Simultaneous Consciousness—i.e. consciousness of Oneness of Life—baths the brain, all problems vanish and one revels in peace, freedom and bliss.

Understanding comes only when the mind is quiet; it comes into being from the now, the present, which is always timeless. Only truth can liberate the mind from its ideation. But to see truth the mind must realize that as long as it is agitated, it can have no 'understanding'. Without understanding, wholeness of life cannot be realized.

stratum of both is pure Consciousness, the Absolute, the Fundamental Vibration.¹⁷

The brain has evolved through uncountable aeons. Our cultural belief-structure too has grown through ages of partial observations and fragmentary knowledge. The brain or thought has a general structure common to mankind. Similarly, the cultural belief-structure indicates that 'I am the conclusion of all the experiences of mankind. The story of mankind is me. I am neither individual nor collective; I am humanity.' J.

There is growing evidence that the universe is of the nature of a cosmic symphony, where each note, however feeble and minute, contributes to its total effect. We have to perceive this cosmic interrelatedness and live in the light of that marvellous insight.

Humanist technology, or Science of Life

If one can find the cause of a problem, he

17. *The Human Survival: The Emergence of a New Global Civilization*, Sampooran Singh, (Ed), pp. 54-63.

18. J. Krishnamurty, *KFI Bulletin*, 1982, No. 1, p. 40.

19. Roger Sperry, in *Madras: Bulletin of the Theosophy Science Study Group*, India, February & April 1988, p. 23; & June & August, 1988, pp. 27-31.

can put an end to it. The cause of our present cultural belief-structure is, as said earlier, partial observation and fragmentary knowledge, and this arises basically from inattention. The solution to this is not separate from the problem; the answer is embedded in the problem, not outside it. When there is an inner urge to enquire into the conditioning of the mind, or in other words, to see the cause of its conditioning, then the psychological frame of reference makes a quantum jump to the scientific mode. The scientific frame is unrelated to our beliefs, ambitions, or hopes. This frame is synergistic to the psychological frame. It sees thought with non-reactional attentivity; that is to say, non-reactional attentivity takes the role of the subject. This non-variable subject sees a thought without interfering in its flow: there is no interaction (energy transfer) between the subject and the object; thought blossoms and withers away. When such an observation is continued over a long time, it decrease the 'matter-content', called transformation or mutation of human psyche.²⁰

In the psychological frame of reference, the mind takes the role of a doer or an experiencer; in the scientific mode it takes up the role of a witness; and in the state of simple awareness, both the subject and the object coalesce and vanish.

20. Sampooran Singh, *Science and Spirituality Booklets: One to Five*, 1988.

Concluding comment

The human race is in peril as never before. The fate of humanity and of the planet is at stake. We are about to enter the potentially cataclysmic third millennium, and we cannot continue with the present chaos.

Dr. Bernard Lown, a Nobel laureate, declared at the Stockholm plenary session of the IPPNW, 'A moral sensibility to injustice is the only guarantee for the continuance of life on the earth.' Moral sensibility arises from a global ethic, and global ethic flows from a non-dual state of mind. Hence the prime task before us is: mutation of the human psyche, or healing the diseased mind-brain system.

We are at the crossroads; we have to make a choice between the Buddha (Wisdom or Intelligence) and the bomb (our conditioned mind). We have an inherent capacity to make a quantum jump from knowledge to understanding, from intellect to intelligence, from successive consciousness to Simultaneous Consciousness. Such a quantum jump involves a major shift to complementarity in place of competition, convergence in place of conflict, holism in place of hedonism. This can end the split within the human psyche, and heal the diseased mind-brain-body system. This can also jettison pain and misery, and create a society in which everyone can live in peace, freedom and bliss, and also in perfect harmony with nature. □

It is because one antelope will blow the dust from the other's eye that two antelopes walk together.

—*African Traditional Religions.*
Akan Proverb (Ghana)

The Reach for Meaning: Swami Vivekananda and Postmodern America

PRAVRAJIKA VRAJAPRANA

'America' evokes diverse estimates—that it is a land of materialism, of democratic freedom, of daring experiments to realize her 'dream', of economic and technological power, of discontent and so on. Indeed, no one seems to have clearly seen behind all these superficial forms—manifested during the transition from modernity to postmodernity—lying hidden the inchoate spiritual urge of her people and their future contribution to the world.

Swamiji had, and therefore he devoted the best part of his life to work in America, foreseeing the transformative spirituality she would soon be hungry for: 'In America I have raised only one or two waves; a tidal wave must be raised...the world must be given a new civilization. The world will understand what that Power is and why I have come.'

The Pravrajika, a member of the Sarada Convent, Vedanta Society of Southern California, offers an excellent study of America's current search for meaning and self-identity in the context of Swamiji's prescience.

And tell the world—

Awake, arise, and dream no more!

These lines, penned by Swami Vivekananda to grace this journal whose centenary we are now celebrating, could well serve as a spiritual billboard for America on the brink of the twenty-first century.

Whether she topples into a chasm of self-doubt and cultural dysplasia or whether she merely steps back in order to vault into a morally vigorous future is anyone's guess. But what is obvious to all observers is that whatever America does—positive or negative—has tremendous significance for the rest of the world.

For better or worse, America is the center of a powerful vortex that pulls, sooner or later, much of the world into its center of gravity. Certainly Swamiji understood this well: it was not accidental that he gave nearly four years of his life—shattering his

health in the process—to this land. Nor was it by chance that Swamiji deputed four other disciples of his great master to till this rocky American soil—knowing as he did the forces that would stir the world's future.

This overarching view needs to be taken as a sort of corrective lens when we focus on Swami Vivekananda's role in postmodern America, for a danger lies in taking a cursory glance. Assessing Swamiji's Western work through the astigmatism of the current American mental landscape can easily lead to a distorted view: we miss the deeper implications of what is happening, and we lose sight of what may be in the future. With this cautionary note in mind we can ask, What do we see?

America is perplexing even to (or perhaps especially to) her inhabitants. Walt Whitman once described America as 'not a nation, but a teeming nation of nations.' A contradictory place in the most stable of

times, in times of transition—such as we see today—America seems a mass of wildly diverging ideals and attitudes, incapable of resolution. For example: A steady 95 percent of American adults believe in god or a universal force; of that percentage, 62 percent assert that religion is ‘very important’ in their lives. Further, the pollster conducting the research found that ‘many people who might have held orthodox [Christian] views in the past have embraced a much broader set of beliefs. There is a big trend toward a diverse and inclusive spirituality.’¹

Well and good. How, then, is it possible that we read equally valid statistics—published within the same month—that indicate a near-moribund state of the American family? For example: In the 1970s, 66 percent of American children were raised in the sheltering arms of the ‘nuclear family’—i.e., children who live with both biological parents. By the 1990’s, the percentage had dropped to less than 51 percent.² News reports indicate that the divorce rate, usually reported to be hovering around 50 percent, in reality may be closer to 60 percent. Drug abuse, alcoholism, and violence are increasing in nearly every sector of American society. Daily news items speak of children gunning down other children; so prosaic has such news become that public reaction has become one of grim disappointment, not outrage.

A nation whose ideals arch up in one direction but whose daily life deflects the trajectory can only produce a bifurcated worldview, a national character that yearns for the highest but expresses in everyday reality a bitter contrast. This moral conflict is not a comfortable state of existence for anyone, let alone an entire nation. How did we come to this impasse and how do we get

out of it? And amidst all this tangle, what is Swami Vivekananda’s role?

The America that Swamiji took by storm one hundred years ago was a vastly different nation than the one we encounter today. In the past century, the American worldview—and the worldview of the entire West—has profoundly changed. Recent decades have seen the West segue from modernity to postmodernity—a change as momentous as when Medieval Europe entered into the Renaissance, as defining a change as when the Renaissance channeled its momentum into the modern era. ‘There are good reasons,’ said Václav Havel, President of the Czech Republic, ‘for suggesting that the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something is on the way out and something else is painfully being born. It is as if something were crumbling, decaying and exhausting itself, while something else, still indistinct, were arising from the rubble.’³

The term ‘modern’ was, once upon a time, a synonym for ‘contemporary’ and an adjective of praise, but no longer. Modernity reflects a particular worldview that grew out of the seventeenth-century’s scientific rationalism, which can be characterized by the belief that the universe we inhabit is an ordered reality that can be perceived, measured, and accurately assessed. Human beings are capable of understanding this reality through the process of reason, and our happiness and fulfilment are to be found in discovering and utilizing—again through reason—the laws that govern the universe. The world, in effect, is our oyster. It is here for our use.

1. *Los Angeles Times*, 13 August 1994, p. B-4.

2. *Los Angeles Times*, 30 August 1994, p. 1.

3. From the speech given on the occasion of President Havel’s receiving the Liberty Medal Ceremony, given on 4 July 1994, in Philadelphia, USA.

'Progress' was the mantra that powered the modern age, and people were compelled to have it whether they wanted it or not. Progress was the process that would usher the world into modernity; it was the ultimate goal toward which human history was inexorably leading. In the process, modernity extricated humanity from its nurturing world and created an antagonistic mentality which set people at odds with nature. Instead of regarding ourselves as an integral part of a meaningful cosmic matrix, humanity was seen enthroned upon an ascending pyramid of insentient and sentient matter—its only value being in what it could provide humanity.

'Progress' in the modern worldview meant material progress—progress for the sake of prosperity. Progress was modernity's most cherished credo, and was closely aligned to the companion doctrine of Social Darwinism—the process of 'natural selection' whereby the strong naturally trampled over the weak.

Such was the Western mind-set that Swamiji encountered in America one century ago. His reaction to modernity, not surprisingly, was akin to a brisk slap in the face: 'I do not see what you call progress in the world is other than the multiplication of the desires,' he succinctly remarked.⁴ Nor was technology a panacea for human fulfillment: 'Machines are making things cheap, making for progress and evolution, but millions are crushed, that one may become rich; while one becomes rich, thousands at the same time become poorer and poorer, and whole masses of human beings are made slaves.'⁵ So much for Social Darwinism. Nor was that all; Swamiji asked that we search

for progress on the appropriate level: 'Machines never made mankind happy, and never will make....[Happiness] is always in the mind.'⁶ Though Swamiji had a genuine admiration for Western technology, efficiency, and know-how, real progress was not to be found on the material plane: 'Mankind has made gigantic advance in knowledge. The highest utility of this process lies not in the creature comforts that it brings, but in manufacturing a god out of this animal man.'⁷

His message to the West? Awake, arise, and dream no more!

In effect, modernity had tried to make a god out of whatever could fulfil desires; if God in heaven couldn't answer one's material prayers, then technology certainly would. Yet this peculiar mind-set was not always the West's worldview. Before the Scientific Revolution, God was the measure of all things. His existence was unquestioned and his pronouncements, found in sacred scripture, determined what was right and wrong, good and bad. The *fact* of God brought meaning to every other corner of human existence. Faith harnessed reason; faith disciplined the intellect. *Credo ut intelligam*; Anselm said; 'I believe in order to understand.' Whereas the human intellect was directed by God in this scenario, the picture went topsy turvy by the mid-seventeenth century. Reason had ascended God's throne. Throughout the modern period, the question of God was determined through the process of reason, and what previously had been god's domain was assigned to reason's court of justice. The blessings and benefits that were once seen as God's mercy were sought in the cooler corridors of the laboratory and the corporate board room. True enough, science and technology gave

4. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973), vol. 2, p. 172. [Hereafter referred to as CW]

5. CW, vol. 2, p. 96.

6. CW, vol. 4, p. 155.

7. CW, vol. 4, p. 210.

humanity almost limitless blessings: wealth, comfort, a longer and healthier lifespan; desires could be gratified almost as soon as they arose. But what technology could not provide was a reason to live.

But in the twentieth century, modernity was ushered out of existence—ironically enough—by science itself. Subparticle physics announced the grave news: God does indeed play dice. The orderly universe that was modernity's foundation no longer seemed orderly at all. Matter and energy were not airtight compartments. Nor were time and space. Old definitions and formulas no longer meshed: How could light be *both* a wave and a particle? Science attained such an airless reach of comprehension that physicists like Harvard's P.W. Bridgman said,

If modernity seemed like an army marching in lockstep toward Progress, postmodernism seems more like an army in wild retreat, scattering in all directions without discernible pattern or purpose. If modernity advanced an ordered universe, disassociation and disconnection are the hallmarks of postmodernity. If modernity pulled humanity out from the crucible of an integrated cosmos, postmodernity pulls humanity apart from everything and everyone else in the universe. Modernity's yardstick for the existence of God was whether or not he could be ascertained by the faculty of reason. Postmodernism threw the yardstick away, shrugging it off as useless and irrelevant. Above all, postmodernism negates any absolute order that our minds can comprehend.

The specific system of philosophy closely identified with post-modernism is called deconstruction, or deconstructive postmodernism...if modernity advanced an ordered universe, dissociation and disconnection are the hallmarks of postmodernity. If modernity pulled humanity out from the crucible of an integrated cosmos, postmodernity pulls humanity apart from everything and everyone else in the universe.

The structure of nature may eventually be such that our processes of thought do not correspond to it sufficiently to permit us to think about it at all...The world fades out and eludes us...We are confronted with something truly ineffable. We have reached the limit of the vision of the great pioneers of science, the vision, namely, that we live in a sympathetic world in that it is comprehensible by our minds.⁸

It was by the rational mind that modernity stood or fell. Fall it did, and with its demise the postmodernism came into being.

The specific system of philosophy closely identified with postmodernism is called deconstruction, or deconstructive postmodernism. Inspired by pragmatism as well as the European philosophers Wittgenstein and Heidegger, deconstruction reached its fruition in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida. He, along with Foucault and other French thinkers, took the deconstructive ball and ran with it, creating a tight system of philosophy that has profoundly influenced contemporary Western thought. In earlier years one would find deconstruction saturating only academia; during the past decade deconstruction has overflowed the banks, making powerful inroads into the thought patterns of Western society at large.

8. Quoted in Huston Smith's *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (Wheaton, Ill: Theosophical Publ. House, 2nd edition, 1989), p. 8.

Deconstruction, says contemporary

American philosopher David Griffin, 'overcomes the modern worldview through an anti-worldview: it deconstructs or eliminates the ingredients necessary for a worldview, such as God, self, purpose, meaning, a real world, and truth as correspondence.'⁹

What is the basis of this anti-worldview? that human life is irredeemably trapped in an encasement of culture and language. Every individual is so unique that his or her own life's experience is intrinsically, radically different from everyone else's. Every individual has her or his own genetic code that is tempered by an admixture of interpersonal, cultural, and historical interplays. This being the case, no human universals are possible.

Those aspects of human existence that we assume to be universal are, in fact, only cultural constructions, socially produced. All human knowledge is locked within and filtered through a particular culture; knowledge is received through the bias of that culture. Thus no aspect of life has any ultimate meaning. Everything that we assign meaning to is created by and necessarily limited to our own culture. Because all meaning is culturally assigned, all meaning is necessarily relative and temporary.

Human experience consists of *nothing but* cultural constructs: what we assume to be 'reality' is merely a series of these constructs which we have unavoidably digested and assimilated. Whether the 'reality' in question is God or self or humanism or Marxism or capitalism or reason is not important. Transcendence, either as a concept or as an experience, is not a human possibility.

9. Griffin, David Ray and Huston Smith, *Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNNY Press, 1989), p. xii.

Outside language, according to Derrida and other deconstructionists, there is neither meaning nor consciousness. Wittgenstein saw language as 'a cage', and later deconstructionists deconstructed language down from there. Culture, they argue, absolutely determines language and language absolutely determines thought; within these strictures human beings live their limited lives. Language is built from words—'signifiers' in deconstructive philosophy—and words/signifiers can have no fixed meaning 'since the meaning of a word or concept occurs only in a specific context...every time it is used. We...can never know the precise mental context in which a writer used a word, but her or his intention is not important anyway...since all language is self-referential, a chain of signifiers referring to other signifiers so that language is always indeterminate.'¹⁰

There can be no Truth with a capital 'T', because the concept varies according to each individual, and each individual's concept has been carefully baked in his or her own special oven of culture and language. Further, the very *idea* of Truth—capitalized—is dangerous in itself. Why? Because Truth 'marginalizes and occludes. It occludes, because if we think we *have* the Truth we will not be inclined to look further; it marginalizes, because the conviction that *we* have the Truth shuts out those who disagree.'¹¹

An extremely relativistic worldview necessarily comes in deconstruction's wake. If there is no ultimacy, if meaning is impossible to ascertain, then human behaviour becomes problematic. Ethics and morality become slippery with no spiritual or intel-

10. Spretnak, Charlene, *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993), p. 234.

11. Smith, p. 26.

lectual guidelines. 'Values. A terrible business', Wittgenstein once remarked. 'You can at best stammer when you talk about them.' With no right or wrong, everything depends on the whim of the individual. The danger here, as Nietzsche and Heidegger predicted, is that the West (though we need to remember that the West is only spearheading the trend) will reach a condition where nothing will seem to be better than anything else.¹²

One of the most pronounced symptoms of postmodernism is the primacy of the part over the whole, the particular over the general. No unifying strands are ever sought; singularity and centerlessness, difference and multiplicity are promoted. Cul-

ly, if every individual has her or his own set of values, and these value-systems can never coincide, then individual alienation and social disorder are inevitable.

But, one may wonder, isn't all this postmodern deconstruction philosophy merely the effluence of overwrought university thinkers? Isn't postmodernism lost in the trackless deserts of academia, leaving American society—all the West, and eventually the world—untouched? Sadly, no. It is not. If we look we can see the effects throughout American society and reaching across the globe.

It is naive to think that any major transformation in a nation's thought-pattern can

But it is in television and cinema that we can see postmodernism as having the greatest and most far-reaching influence...flashing images of MTV...disjoined, disconnected images...quick, visceral, dazzling and powerful. No meaning can be found beyond the immediate image flashed before the mind; significantly, a large percentage of the images are laden with violence and sexuality.

tural relativism, one of the most significant effects of postmodernism, is a natural extension of this trend and its brushstrokes can be seen across the globe.

Before the earth became the small sphere that it is today, cultures never were forced to interface. There was only *our* view of reality—whatever it may have been—and that view was reality. Today cultures knock into each other at every step. When cultures interact, aware of the unity which attests to humanity's higher values, the effects are glorious. But when cultures meet and back off, aware only of insurmountable differences, the effects are invariably disastrous. One effect is the notion that since cultures hold different values, no particular value has any more significance than others. Final-

remain confined *anywhere*. Educational facilities aren't petrie dishes: their inhabitants live in the world and interact with the rest of us. The brightest minds make the greatest contributions to the world's culture; the brightest minds have the greatest ingress into what *constitutes* culture.

Again, for better or worse, whatever America does—or even thinks—profoundly effects the rest of the world. Television, satellite dishes, movies, telephones, and faxes have made it nearly impossible to extricate one culture from another. The world is a thick web of interconnected cultural threads.

Even a brief glance at contemporary culture will render powerful evidence of postmodernism's influence. Art in any culture reflects the values of the society which

12. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

nourishes it. Western Medieval paintings reflected a profoundly religious society, deeply steeped in Christian faith. Renaissance art was 'this-worldly' rather than 'other-worldly'—their painting and sculpture reflected a preoccupation with and celebration of human interests. Modern art experimented with form and colour—accurate visual representation was no longer a prerequisite for what constituted 'art'. Yet meaning was not divorced from art. Today one wonders if Nietzsche and Heidegger's prediction, 'nothing will seem to be better than anything else', has not already come true. A visit to a contemporary art museum will show paintings of Campbell's Soup cans and garish pop icons; the paintings are heavy with irony, but little else. Superficiality is sought, no distinction between the banal and the sublime is made.

Music offers another example: A significant number of highly-regarded contemporary composers eschew thematic development. The individual note is preeminent, not the unity of theme or melody. Aaron Copland, one of America's foremost mid-century composers, described the music of today's young composers as 'a disrelation of unrelated tones. Notes are strewn around like *membra disjecta*; there is an end to continuity in the old sense and an end of thematic relationships.'¹³

The same critique can be made of current trends in contemporary Western literature. Literary critic Russel Nye says of the twentieth-century novel, 'If there is a discernible trend in the form of the modern novel, it is toward the concept of the novel as a series of moments, rather than as a planned progression of events or incidents....often their arrangement is random rather than sequential.'¹⁴

13. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

But it is television and cinema that we can see postmodernism as having the greatest and most far-reaching influence. What better illustration of postmodern culture than the flashing images of MTV—the ubiquitous three to five minute films that accompany current rock recordings? Made for the 'TV-generation' youth whose attention spans have been truncated by constant exposure to television's rapidly-changing scenes and commercial interruptions, MTV's disjointed, disconnected images are quick, visceral, dazzling, and powerful. No meaning can be found beyond the immediate image flashed before the mind; significantly, a large percentage of the images are laden with violence and sexuality. While MTV originated in America, it quickly ingratiated itself into millions of homes around the world. A natural derivative of postmodern American culture, MTV became affixed—through the medium of worldwide communication—to wildly divergent cultures, creating strange hybrids and cultural improbabilities.

Cinema, too, tells the same tale. A current, widely-acclaimed movie tells the tale of two young people on a killing rampage across the country. The story is presented in a brilliant collage of cinemagraphic footage, cartoon images, overlays of a laugh-track, and jarring images at odds with one another. The movie is being hailed as a work of genius.

At least, then, a significant segment of Western culture is 'buying into' the postmodern version of what constitutes reality, and that segment of Western culture is sending its thought—like small but palpable seismic tremors—across the globe.

The major problem with this postmodern mind-set is what it makes—and indeed how little it makes—of humanity. The renowned American author,

Saul Bellow, noted in his 1976 Nobel Laureate Lecture:

The intelligent public is waiting to hear from Art what it does not hear from Theology, Philosophy, Social Theory, and what it cannot hear from pure science: a broader, fuller, more coherent, more comprehensive account of what we human beings are, who we are, and what this life is for. If writers do not come into the center it will not be because the center is preempted. It is not.

But, to Bellow's dismay, art and culture have not been able to fill the hole that contemporary culture has effectively hollowed out. Nor can it do so under the current circumstances. In the same Nobel address

antagonistic camps. According to the perspective that we learn in school, human beings are organism not radically different from other organisms. We are genetically and culturally programmed to behave along certain predictable lines. Like Pavlov's dogs, we expect nothing more transcendent than dinner. Over and against this rather depressing scenario is the view of humanity that we learn in churches and synagogues. There we hear that we are made in the image of God. Humanity is uneasily lodged between hell and heaven, between angels and beasts.

America's rebellion against these conflicting self-images has, it now appears, reached critical mass. Significant, hopeful signs are now on the horizon, the most

Peggy Noonan, author and former presidential speechwriter, said that 'the New Frontier of the '90's is an inner one.'

In today's multicultural world, the truly reliable path to coexistence, to peaceful coexistence...must start from what is at the root of all cultures and what lies infinitely deeper in human hearts...: it must be rooted in self-transcendence. —Václav Havel.

Bellow declared, 'We do not think well of ourselves; we do not think amply about what we are.'

If there is any overweening sin of postmodernity, it is precisely this lessening of the human spirit. It has made humanity doubt the very value and truth of its own existence. And that is why Swami Vivekananda's message is so vital to the West, and that is why it will be able to put our Humpty Dumpty back together again where contemporary culture has failed.

At heart America is a deeply religious nation whose intellectual life and contemporary culture are at bizarre odds with its own most cherished beliefs. The western view of humanity falls into two mutually

notable of which is that people are awakening to the fact that we do, indeed, have a problem. A recent poll found that '76 percent of adults agree that the United States is in moral and spiritual decline.'¹⁵ That we acknowledge the problem is a starting point. The next step is finding a way out of the problem. Peggy Noonan, author and former presidential speechwriter, said that 'the New Frontier of the '90's is an inner one.'¹⁶ This is hardly the sort of talk one expects to hear from one in her profession, but that in itself is an indication of the transformation in the current intellectual and spiritual climate. Former Secretary of Education William Bennett's book, *The Book of Virtues*, has

15. 'The Virtuecrats', *Newsweek*, p. 31.

16. *Ibid.*

been on the best-seller list for several months. A mere one or two years ago the prospect of such a book making the best-seller list would have been laughable. Today it indicates a sea change overtaking the nation. To be in the midst of an ocean without a compass is a wretched experience; Americans are yearning to see the safe land of the shore, and are reaching for meaning in their lives as never before. Never has the call been more urgently sought. The frontier of the 90's, the inner one, is increasingly an object of pursuit.

Awake, arise, and dream no more! In this disquieting, transitional time, the message of Swami Vivekananda is here to adjust the Western worldview, to correct the myopic vision of how we perceive ourselves. It is a dream, a dreadful nightmare, to think of ourselves as small, limited individuals, forever encased by petty egos and pettier desires. 'Vedanta says that this separation does not exist', Swamiji declared. 'It is not real. It is merely apparent, on the surface. In the heart of things there is unity still. If you go below the surface, you find that unity between man and man, between races and races, high and low, rich and poor, gods and men, and men and animals. If you go deep enough all will be seen as only variations on the One.'¹⁷

Swamiji tells us that there is a viable moral code, and that moral code does not consist in what my culture or your culture or an African Bushman's culture dictates; the simple moral code is a universal—and yes, there *are* universals—truth: There is but one existence. We are one with one another. If I hurt you, I hurt myself. 'The more ignorant, the more unenlightened the soul, the more it thinks that it is separate from the rest of the universe', Swami Vivekananda said. 'But we find that, as knowledge comes,

man grows, morality is evolved, and the idea of non-separateness begins. Whether men understand it or not, they are impelled by that power behind to become unselfish. That is the foundation of all morality. It is the quintessence of all ethics, preached in any language, or in any religion, or by any prophet in the world.'¹⁸

This great truth has found expression in today's world leaders. Again to quote Václave Havel, 'In today's multicultural world, the truly reliable path to coexistence, to peaceful coexistence and creative cooperation, must start from what is at the root of all cultures and what lies infinitely deeper in human hearts and minds than political opinion, convictions, antipathies or sympathies: It must be rooted in self-transcendence.'¹⁹

'The more we think of ourselves as separate from the Whole, the more miserable we become', Swamiji said. 'From this monistic principle we get at the basis of ethics.'²⁰ If America—and by extension, the West—is turning her face toward ethics and values, if the century's end finds us seeking that 'inner frontier', we will have to find it here, in the truth of oneness. This great truth, first declared by the Upanishadic sages, and in our own age vigorously reaffirmed by Swami Vivekananda, has the capacity to awaken our inner vision. This truth of oneness is that inner frontier we are all seeking—some knowingly, others unknowingly.

'You see,' Sister Nivedita wrote in 1906 to Josephine MacLeod, 'when we who understood Swamiji, and remember Him are dead, there will come a long period of obscurity and silence for the work that He

17. CW, vol. 1, p. 153.

18. CW, vol. 6, p. 65.

19. See footnote 3, above.

20. CW, vol. 2, p. 334.

did. It will seem to be forgotten, until, suddenly, in 150 or 200 years, it will be found to have transformed the West.'²¹ For those of us in the West, this prescient letter gives message of inspiration and hope. 'I have just begun my work', Swamiji declared in 1896. 'In America I have raised only one or two waves; a tidal wave must be raised, society

must be turned upside down, the world must be given a new civilization. The world will understand what that Power is and why I have come.'²²

For those of us in the West whose lives have been given meaning and direction by that Power, there can be no doubt that in time the work Swamiji began here a mere century ago will inevitably result in enduring, transformative spirituality. □

21. Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana, 'Chicago and Its Impact: Swami Vivekananda's Influence on American Religion and Philosophy,' *Swami Vivekananda: A Hundred years Since Chicago* (Belur: Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission: 19994), p. 129.

22. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West New Discoveries, The World Teacher*, vol. 4 (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986), p. 142.



How to Begin Again

The following item is by the Rev. William H. Houff, Ph.D., author of Infinity in Your Hand, with whose permission it is reprinted. He is the Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

There are few things more difficult in life than starting over.
And yet that is what life is about—
Being born...and dying...and being born again.

The poet Kenneth Patchen has written:
'There are so many little dyings that
it doesn't matter which of them is death.'

The same cannot be said for the birthings.
Each beginning is unique; we have never met it before,
And initially we wonder how we will ever meet its challenges.
Beginnings are such a problem for some people
That they decide they will have no more.
They have arrived; they may even try to go back.

But existence is not put together that way,
And when we elect to allow no more beginnings
We open the way for the dyings to take over.

Death and rebirth—these are the themes of this season;
Each is contained in the other—rhythm and balance
Within which lies the wholeness of life.

When we accept the dyings, then the beginnings come
easily,
And where the beginnings are welcome
Death, in truth, loses its sting.

'Beginnings without end,' thus spake Sam Keen.
'I have learned one important thing in my life,'
He said—'How to begin again.' □

Why I Don't Like our Teaching System

ABHISHEK DAS, Class X - A/2

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar

Our life begins with some natural education, at home and with early schooling. So man needs education from his early days. One can't do without it. The main role in imparting education is played by the teachers—the role of guidance. They are responsible for preparing the base in one's life.

The Indian teaching system is very old. The tradition of the yester-years, starting in about the 13th century, is still being followed. It was then that the system of teaching a certain number of students by a certain teacher started. Bentinck was responsible for bringing a slight change in the system. The present day educational system wants to provide the students with whatever knowledge there is given in the book. It is not the least concerned about the ability of the students to grasp it. The teacher comes and lectures the class the whole period, giving a reading of a whole chapter and answering the students' questions (correctly or wrongly), asks them to get those by heart. If the student fails, the medicinal cane is there to play its role. Thus, we find our teaching system not too effective.

The worst feature in our teaching system is the passive role being played by the students. The regular picture of today's class shows that the student's task is only to listen to what the teacher is speaking, whether it is clear to him or not. Next he is to copy the answers given by the teachers and memorize them, only to pass in the ensuing exams. Is this how a student should learn, not participating in the process of teaching? The topic will certainly not be clear to them. Their own knowledge and intelligence is neither evaluated nor brushed up. And when they face tricky questions, they feel helpless.

In a class, the teacher comes and gives the same lecture on any topic, which he has been giving for the last one decade. His lectures are exactly of the same pattern and contain the same words. How then can the teachers be as enthusiastic as the students, for whom the topic is new? So, the lectures become boring. The syllabus should be such that every time a teacher comes and gives a lecture, the teacher becomes as interested as the students. Then the lectures would be very ear-catching. But, it is absent in our teaching system.

Another striking fault in our teaching system is its negligence in giving fundamental knowledge to the students. Every time the teacher starts a new chapter, he starts with the important aspects of the chapter, without any introduction of the

fundamentals. How can one expect a student to learn words like 'elephant', without knowing A, B, C, D, ...?

What sounds most disgusting in our teaching system is the absence of any practical usage of what is being taught, unless the situation in which its need arises is discussed. The teachers impart formal teaching, giving stress on practicality. Of course, we must study Math, Geography, Physics, and so on, but is it not funny to find that no such incidents are discussed which are going to play a leading role in our lives, or which are going to guide us! Actually, this point had already been pondered upon by Swami Vivekananda, earlier. He said—'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.'

But, strange enough, the Indian teaching system still doesn't follow it, thinking it all rubbish.

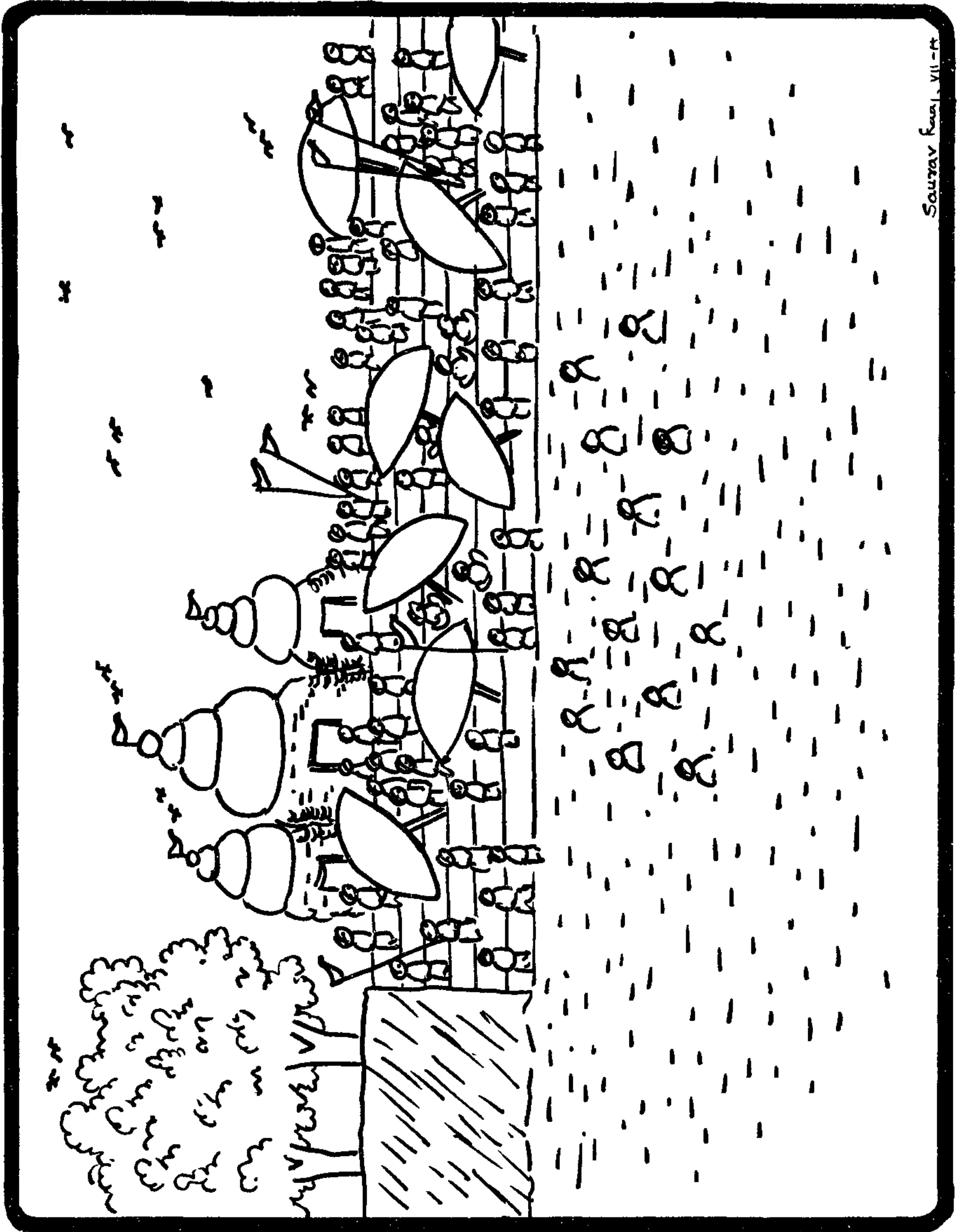
Our education system has a very bad disease of repeating the same topics, specially in the senior classes—it is very irritating. This case holds good specially for the very good and intelligent students. They just lose their precious time in the process. They could utilize this time to prepare for higher studies. And more irritating is the fact that whatever is taught in the junior classes are just broadly discussed in the senior classes. We can take, for instance, class VII topics. They are repeated in class X (Social Science). So the students actually don't gain anything by this. New topics must be discussed.

Thus we find that many steps are to be taken to improve these conditions. In addition, the need for students to learn to speak before an audience is not appreciated. They do not even communicate among themselves in English. Perhaps they never have occasion to appear on the stage to address an audience in their student-life! So when they have to speak before a crowd in their later life they stumble.

So what this teaching system at last produces is a student who only knows what was there in the book, what the teacher put in his mind, and what he memorized. No broader knowledge, no ability to tackle difficult situations, and little or no ability to compete in crucial examinations is developed. Thus our Indian teaching system curbs all the intelligence of each and every student. How can one expect then an Indian to get the Nobel Prize, or any other prize, with such a teaching system?

SPIRITUALITY IN AMERICA

pp. 321–348



In Friendship

ANN MYREN

What are the similarities between America and India? Why did Swamiji first broadcast his Message of Advaita in America? What are the special characteristics of the Americans because of which Swamiji found they possessed the right type of soul-soil to receive his Message?

Discussing these with great perceptivity, the author, a regular contributor from California to the PB, presents a heart-warming vision of the immense benefits humanity may derive from the experiment Swamiji initiated in America—the upholder of individual freedom and equality—by preaching to the masses Advaita—the upholder of individual divinity and spiritual unity

**May all beings look on me with the eye of a friend;
May I look on all beings with the eye of a friend;
May we look on one another with the eye of a friend.¹**

—Yajur-Veda

Passage to India!

**Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
The races, neighbours, to marry and be given in marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together.²**

—Walt Whitman

As the poet predicted, our lands, India and America, have been welded together. Now, welded together at the deepest level by Swami Vivekananda, who lived and taught among us, we can never be separated. We are friends. Swamiji came armed with a prophetic message for India, America, and the whole world. Genuinely prophetic. In his letters, Swamiji clearly revealed that he was a messenger of God. Swamiji's impetus to go to America came from Sri Ramakrishna in a dream in which the Master indicated that he should cross the

ocean.

Here it should be said that to fulfil his prophetic function, a prophet needs a place to give his message and a people to receive it. There must be a certain affinity between the prophet and the people to whom he

1. A.C. Bose, *The Call of the Vedas* (Bombay: Bhavan's Book University, 1970), p. 285.

2. Mark Van Doren, ed., *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), p. 276.

gives his message or it will not take hold. Just such affinity existed between Swamiji and Americans. Swamiji, with his wonderful love of everyone, his ease among men and women, and his democratic outlook, was a prophet whose authority was as easy and incontestable as the rising sun.

Welded together as we Indians and Americans are, we must look at America and see why India's great modern prophet came to this particular land. According to Swamiji's own way of thinking, each nation represents an ideal being worked out consciously or unconsciously; and that before we can understand a nation, we must first understand its ideal.³ A prophet as great as

common understanding of what it means to be an independent people, free from foreign domination. And both our nations are democracies, America the oldest and India the youngest, but common in our goal to respect the individual. Both nations are often stunned by problems stemming from the diverse nature of our societies. Shocking things happen in these mixtures of races, languages, religions, and people. Yet both nations struggle to remain democratic.

Both Indians and Americans are generous. And America as a nation often assists other nations. So does India. Any American who has travelled in India has experienced the generosity and warm

The spirit of self-reliance permeates Americans...They like work, thinking it gives dignity to both men and women and helps them grow as human beings...Liking work and paying it honour is one of the end-products of self-reliance.

Swamiji would not have wasted his time on America if she did not have a great ideal, if the soul-soil were not rich and fertile. From the very fact of Swamiji's coming to America, we know that America, like India, has some special purpose, a mission, India has long been the guardian of Vedanta in its most genuine forms. The advent of Swamiji in America and his subsequent work in America raises this question—does America, the land of freedom and equality, provide a special spiritual ground for Swamiji's teachings which will give Vedanta a new tilt?

But before we answer this question, let us look at the similarities between India and America. Right off we must note that we both threw the British out. So we have a

hospitality of her people. India has tried to allow many religions to flourish and so has America; we both have had our failures. Americans actually think that the practice of religious freedom began after the establishment of the United States in 1789. Most Americans believe that this ideal originated in their country, and it did for the Western world. But history tells us that India is the mother of religious freedom. Religious freedom in India has fostered the value of the individual, particularly in Vedanta, in which the very basis of that religion is the individual. Americans not only give value to the individual's right to freedom of thought and action in matters of religion, but also in matters of society. The very mobile structure of American society lends itself to the expression of freedom on many levels.

Historically, India is the country of the twice-born. America too has a tradition of

3. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 8, p. 55.

the twice-born. In India the second birth is a rite of passage, whereas in America our second birth is a different kind of passage, namely the coming to this land where the individual person gets a second chance. Except for a very small population of native Americans, we are all either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, most of them coming in freedom, but some coming in servitude. Here is a contradiction: 'A new nation conceived in liberty, dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal... had slavery and a brutal civil war to rid the nation of it. We find the same type of contradictions in all nations. But in spite of our flaws and failures, we continue to try to improve the practice of equality in our society. Being democratic is, in fact, the spiritual practice of same-sightedness. Democracy is rooted in a spiritual conception of humanity, otherwise how could any equality exist, much less be practised.

What kind of soul-soil did Swamiji, who said that he 'is the servant of that God called MAN,'⁴ need? Of course, MAN—in capitals—is not only what we know now, but he is, more importantly, potential MAN, men and women coming to their fullest development in *every way* including the spiritual. In Swamiji's heart God and MAN had become one. That's something to think about—God and Man one. Swamiji wanted suffering ameliorated, but he also wanted individual men and women to have the opportunities to grow to their full potential, to become MAN. This MAN is the person who works to develop all sides of himself or herself, philosophical, religious, aesthetic, and active. Then a new MAN, a new PERSON will people the earth. Men and women—fearless, energetic, capable, spiritual, who give expression to their individuality—will walk in freedom, regardless of whether they live in old or young societies.

4. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 349.

It is because of MAN, the new PERSON, that Swamiji came to America. Swamiji as prophet, had the power and vision required to make possible this new MAN. He injected deep into the soul-soil of America the spiritual power which would bring about this transformation. He said himself that he made at least three thousand American disciples. In America we are beginning to see the evolution of MAN as more and more sincere men and women seek a life with genuine spiritual meaning.

Let us look further into the past and into the depths of the American mind and find other reasons why Swamiji came to America. This kind of deep mind exists in all cultures. It is the mind formed by the experience of a people. To comprehend the deep mind of a nation, we must look way beyond the obvious material conditions. That India has this deep mind nobody would deny; it is recognized and revered. America has this kind of mind, this soul-soil, too. However, it's different from India's in one way for certain. India generally looks back and finds the greatness that continues to invigourate her society. America looks forward. We see, with the optimism born of youth, the opportunity of giving birth to the new MAN. We had this idea even before Swamiji came. The conception of the new man led many people to the wilderness called America.

When Swamiji came here, America was a very young nation, only a little more than one hundred years old with a total history of a people who had been on the continent for less than three hundred years. Because America is a young nation, her people tend to value youth and have little reverence for the old. Swamiji liked the newness of America. He once said that he had too much vigour in his blood to loaf about old ruins and sigh over the ancients. He liked the vigour of Americans—the fact that a person

could come to America, head bowed, downtrodden, and a few weeks later stand erect, head upheld, a new man or woman. The past, and there isn't much of it, rests lightly on the shoulders of America's people. There are few iron-bound social forms. It is easy to see why America is the place where Swamiji planted the seeds necessary for the making of new MAN. American society is fluid, changing all the time, always creating new opportunities.

America is a new nation which in its beginnings was literally cut off from some

there is no servant class, which is a good sign. Liking work and paying it honour is one of the end-products of self-reliance. It works the other way too, work gives people self-reliance. Although it appears that in America all work is aimed at material achievement, Americans are not satisfied by material achievement alone. America was first settled by people who wanted to practise their own religions and slake their spiritual thirst. This mood has persisted in America, surfacing at different times as religious 'awakenings'. Without spiritually awake audiences Swamiji could not have

Although it appears that in America all work is aimed at material achievement, Americans are not satisfied by material achievement alone. America was first settled by people who wanted to practise their own religions and slake their spiritual thirst. This mood has persisted.

of her European roots. European social forms underwent a pruning when transplanted to American soil. Immigrants left the rigid class system in Europe. Classes yes, but the ideal of equality overrides the distinction of class. Motivated by belief in equality, Americans have tried to solve the problem of the 'common man'—how every person can live in dignity. There is also a sense of the 'sovereignty of the living'. That is to say, that each generation creates its own principles of judgement. It sounds chaotic, but somehow it works because of the overarching ideals of freedom and equality. Society is not rigid, it is fluid because democracy, based on individual freedom, is in itself attuned to the necessity of change.

The spirit of self-reliance permeates Americans. People think that they can do anything, using whatever is at hand and getting whatever else is needed. In the beginning nature provided a great bounty. Americans like work, thinking it gives dignity to both man and woman and helps them grow as human beings. In America

made such a tremendous impression on Americans at the Parliament of Religions.⁵ Right now this awareness of religion is surfacing once again for the third time in America's short history

Americans agree as a people that there are 'principles of universal validity' which underlie the common life of men and women. For me it's God, for others Natural Law, for some it's humanism, but most sing in one chorus that these principles exist. The clashing notes come in the application of the principles. But without these principles, freedom and dignity would not exist at all.

Americans believe that the dignity of the human personality cannot be realized unless the individual is free to express him-

5. In the 1993 Parliament of Religions at Chicago, which the author attended, Swami Vivekananda was the only participant of the 1893 Parliament who was referred to by the major speakers.

self or herself and to take part in decisions that are important to the well-being of society. An extension of this idea is the belief that America has a mission of great importance for the world—to further 'the cause of freedom and humane living' at home and abroad.

In Swamiji's heart God and Man had become one. That's something to think about—God and Man one.

And finally, when we view America, examine her past, her accomplishments and her failures, we must always keep in mind the fact that America is first and last an experiment; it is a place where ideals and principles, political, economic, social, and religious, are continually subjected to experimentation. This ingrained pragmatic approach forces Americans constantly to try to 'perfect' society and to perfect themselves. We are inundated with Self-Help books which promise every kind of improvement—psychological, physical, material, and spiritual—to the individual person. They sell like hot cakes! And on a broader scale we *know* society cannot be perfect, but we always think we can make it better, that we can extend freedom, equity, and material well-being to more and more individuals.

This American nation or experimenters provided the ideal setting for the experimenter *par excellence*, Swami Vivekananda. Let us quickly review some of the experiments that Swamiji conducted. He did two very unusual things as a monk: he stood for the independence of Indian women in particular and all women in general, and for all efforts to improve their condition. Swamiji also raised money to help his homeland.

In America his experiments would make a book, beginning with his coming to America. Let us list a few: he established two Vedanta Societies; relied on women as organizers and helpers and made them disciples; dressed in Western clothes and ate Western food; initiated a woman into *sannyāsa* with the title of swami; accepted land for an *āshram* in California; spoke at universities and colleges; and lived with American families. And he broke the hold American missionaries had on India, reversing the flow of spirituality from West to East to East to West.

To continue, as a student of humankind, he made himself the master of Western history and the Western mind. As a man of great spiritual power he proposed that the highest philosophy, the truth, be taught to everyone from high to low. He combined the paths of karma-yoga and jnana-yoga, creating a new path to spiritual attainment.

In India he wanted to establish an Advaitin colony in the centre of the country. He succeeded in that aim by founding Mayavati in the Himalayas. He founded magazines, wrote articles, shed light on India's problems, filled India with a renewed spirit of her greatness, and set the stage for independence. And finally, Swamiji established the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, organized the Math on democratic principles, and initiated service as the Order's major activity.

We must note that this is only a partial listing of Swamiji's experiments and innovative ideas. Now, we must ask ourselves, exactly what experiment did Swamiji want to tackle in the West? In 1896, he said,

Dualistic ideas have ruled the world long enough, and this is the result. Why

(Please turn over)

not make a new experiment? It may take ages for all minds to receive monism, but why not begin now?⁶

Swamiji wanted to make a truly earth-shaking experiment—teach monism or Advaita to one and all, to shake people loose from superstition, from weakening thoughts, to rattle their cages, so to speak, to make them know for themselves the highest realization of freedom and equality. He wanted every man, woman, and child to have the knowledge of the Atman or Self

On his second visit to the West, toward the end of his lecture, 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?', he struck another blow for liberty, when he said,

I want to make the experiment. The teachings of Vedanta I have told you about were never really experimented with before. Although Vedanta is the oldest philosophy in the world, it has always become mixed up with superstitions and everything else.⁷

He concludes his lecture with these words:

The hour comes when great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and shall make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the spirit by the spirit.⁸

6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 2, p. 200.

7. *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 141.

To join Swamiji in his experiment, we must begin by acting on the principle he stated, the 'worship of the spirit by the spirit'. Or to put it another way, seeing the Atman or Self in ourselves and in every other person. America is a ready-made laboratory for his experiment because the national character, already imbued with the ideas of freedom and equality, is predisposed to the high teachings of monism or Advaita.

In America the world is not denied, but affirmed, and in Swamiji's vision, it is by participation in the activities of the world that MAN develops all sides of himself. Having unlimited potential, all men and women can develop all of their capacities. For example, there will be philosopher-plumbers, mother-artists, sportsman-poet-philosophers, saint-teachers, and so on. All will practise and some will realize the 'worship of the spirit by the spirit', seeing Divinity in themselves and in their fellow beings. To realize Swamiji's vision each person must stand firm on the ideal that the Atman or Self is the real nature of every individual. This is Swamiji's superb experiment.

The rocky stream flows on; hold together!
Stand erect, and cross over, my friends!⁹

—*Rg-Veda* □

8. *Ibid.*

9. Bose, *The Vedas*, (*Rg-Veda*, X, 53-8), p. 233.

Arise, awake, and learn by approaching the excellent ones. The wise ones describe that path to be as impassable as a razor's edge, which, when sharpened, is difficult to tread on.

—*Katha Upanisad*, I,iii,14

Prabuddha Amerika: Awakened America?

SWAMI ATMARUPANANDA

An absorbing study of America's basic spiritual tendencies still preserved in the culture of the Native Americans and her Founding Fathers. Stirred by Swamiji's message, those tendencies seem to be about to spring to life as American society undergoes radical changes under the impact of multiracial and multireligious interactions, and searches for the means to integrate its immense diversity.

The author, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, spent several years in India and now resides at The Vedanta Society, San Diego, California.

Devotees of Sri Rama have compared the *Ramayana* of Valmiki to the Veda, and the 'Sundara Kandam'¹ to its Upanishad. The 'Sundra Kandam'—which aptly means 'beautiful chapter'—begins with the story of Hanuman's leap from the southern coast of India to Sri Lanka in search of Sita. There he is struck with wonder at what he sees.

That city of the King of the Rakshasas which Hanuman entered, was illuminated by the light of its glowing edifices;...it looked like a handsome lady of perfect and well-decorated form, whose garments were constituted of the shine of precious gems studded everywhere; ear pendants [constituted] of cow-pens; and breast, of [the city's] mechanical worships.²

So far one might think Valmiki is creating a poetic effect by using the device of personification, through which a poet speaks 'as if' a thing or idea were possessed of human personality. But Valmiki continues:

The presiding deity of that city (Lankasri), assuming her real form as a woman, saw the powerful Hanuman, the son of the Wind-god, entering into the city. Standing before [him] she produced a terrific sound, and gazing at him said: 'You...monkey! Why have you come here? Speak the truth if you want to save your life....It will be impossible for you to penetrate into this city of Lanka which is protected on all sides by Ravana's troop....I am the very embodiment of the city of Lanka, and I am protecting it with great vigilance.'³

Here we see that Valmiki is not using a poetic device, but is giving expression to a Vedic experience: everything has a controlling consciousness or deity, whether it be the sun, the moon, the wind, the earth, rivers, human bodies, cities, or nations. Though not Vedic, there is a beautiful verse used in *Puja*, or ritual worship, which exemplifies this attitude. It invokes 'Mother Earth' for purification of the worshipper's seat: 'O Mother Earth, thou holdest all on thy lap. Thou art held by the Supreme Lord. Hold me always, and make pure the place where I sit.'⁴

1. The fifth of six chapters.

2. *Sundara Kandam of Srimad Valmiki Ramayana*, tr. Swami Tapasyananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1983), p. 28. Hereafter *Ramayana*.

3. *Ramayana*, pp. 28-9.

4. ॐ पृथ्वि त्वया धृता लोका देवी त्वं विष्णुना धृता ।
त्वं च धारय मां नित्यं पवित्रं कुरु चासनम् ॥

The human body is made up of billions of tiny cells, each of which is alive and responsive, busy in its own sphere of activity. But man is more than a collection of cells. So a city or nation is composed of many people, each person busy with his or her own activities. Yet, according to this viewpoint, a city is more than a collection of individuals: it has a life and consciousness, a personality, of its own. And Hanuman saw, spoke, and fought with this person whose body was Sri Lanka.

We find an amazing parallel to Hanuman's vision in an experience of George Washington during the American War of Independence.

In 1777 Washington retreated with his troops to Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, to pass the winter, a period remembered as the darkest days of the war for the freedom fighters and for their commander. It is well known that Washington often retired to the forest to pray for guidance and support during these difficult times. But it was there, also, according to Washington's associate Anthony Sherman,⁵ that he had singular experience that foretold his eventual success and the future of the republic-to-be.

Anthony Sherman describes the scene and the experience:

One day, I remember it well, the chilly winds whistled through the leafless trees, though the sky was cloudless and the sun shone brightly[; Washington] remained in his quarters nearly all the afternoon alone. When he came out, I noticed that his face was a shade paler than usual, and there seemed to be some-

thing on his mind of more than ordinary importance. Returning just after dusk, he dispatched an orderly to the quarters of the officer...who was presently in attendance....Washington, gazing upon his companion with that strange look of dignity which he alone could command, said to the latter:

'I do not know whether it is owing to the anxiety of my mind, or what, but this afternoon as I was sitting at this table engaged in preparing a dispatch, something seemed to disturb me. Looking up, I beheld standing opposite me a singularly beautiful female. So astonished was I, for I had given strict orders not to be disturbed, that it was some moments before I found language to inquire into the cause of her presence. A second, a third and even a fourth time did I repeat my question, but received no answer from my mysterious visitor except a slight raising of her eyes. By this time I felt strange sensations spreading through me. I would have risen but the riveted gaze of the being before me rendered volition impossible. I assayed once more to address her, but my tongue had become useless. Even thought itself had become paralyzed. A new influence, mysterious, potent, irresistible, took possession of me. All I could do was to gaze steadily, vacantly at my unknown visitant. Gradually the surrounding atmosphere seemed as though becoming filled with sensations, and luminous. Everything about me seemed to rarefy, the mysterious visitor herself becoming more airy and yet more distinct to my sight than before. I now began to feel as one dying, or rather to experience the sensations which I have sometimes imagined accompany dissolution. I did not think, I did not reason, I did not move; all were alike impossible. I was only conscious of gazing fixedly, vacant-

5. The following description is taken from Wesley Bradshaw's words reprinted in the *National Tribune*, vol. 4, no. 12, December 1880.

ly at my companion.

'Presently I hear a voice saying, "Son of the republic, look and learn," while at the same time my visitor extended her arm eastwardly. I now beheld a heavy white vapour at some distance rising fold upon fold. This gradually dissipated, and I looked upon a strange scene. Before me lay spread out in one vast plain all the countries of the world—Europe, Asia, Africa and America. I saw rolling and tossing between Europe and America the billows of the Atlantic, and between Asia and America lay the Pacific. "Son of the Republic," said the same mysterious voice as before, "look and learn." At that moment I beheld a dark, shadowy being, like an angel, standing, or rather floating in mid-air, between Europe and America; dipping water out of the ocean in the hollow of each hand, he sprinkled some upon America with his right hand, while with his left hand he cast some on Europe. Immediately a cloud raised from these countries, and joined in mid-ocean. For a while it remained stationary, and then moved slowly westward, until it enveloped America in its murky folds. Sharp flashes of lightning gleamed through it at intervals, and I heard the smothered groans and cries of the American people. A second time the angel dipped water from the ocean, and sprinkled it out as before. The dark cloud was then drawn back to the ocean, in whose heaving billows it sank from view. A third time I heard the mysterious voice saying, "Son the Republic, look and learn". I cast my eyes upon America and beheld villages and towns and cities springing up one after another until the whole land from the Atlantic to the Pacific was dotted with them. Again, I heard the mysterious voice say, "Son of the Republic, the end of the century cometh, look and learn."

'At this the dark shadowy angel turned his face southward, and from Africa I saw an ill-omened spectre approach our land. It flitted slowly over every town and city of the latter. The inhabitants presently set themselves in battle array against each other. As I continued looking, I saw a bright angel, on whose brow rested a crown of light, on which was traced the word "Union," bearing the American flag which he placed between the divided nation, and said, "Remember ye are brethren." Instantly, the inhabitants, casting from them their weapons, became friends once more, and united around the National Standard.

'And again I heard the mysterious voice saying, "Son of the Republic, look and learn." At this the dark, shadowy angel placed a trumpet to his mouth, and blew three distinct blasts, and taking water from the ocean, he sprinkled it upon Europe, Asia and Africa. Then my eyes beheld a fearful scene: from each of these countries arose thick, black clouds that were soon joined into one. And throughout this mass there gleamed a dark red light by which I saw hordes of armed men who, moving with the cloud, marched by land and sailed by sea to America, which country was enveloped in the volume of cloud. And I dimly saw these vast armies devastate the whole country and burn the villages, towns and cities that I beheld springing up. As my ears listened to the thundering of the cannon, clashing of swords, and the shouts and cries of millions in mortal combat, I heard again the mysterious voice saying, "Son of the Republic, look and learn." When the voice had ceased, the dark shadowy angel placed his trumpet once more to his mouth, and blew a long and fearful blast.

'Instantly a light as of a thousand suns shone down from above me, and pierced

and broke into fragments the dark cloud which enveloped America. At the same moment the angel upon whose head still shone the word Union, and who bore our national flag in one hand and a sword in the other, descended from the heavens attended by legions of white spirits. These immediately joined the inhabitants of America who I perceived were well-nigh overcome, but who immediately taking courage again, closed up their broken ranks and renewed the battle. Again, amid the fearful noise of the conflict, I heard the mysterious voice saying, "Son of the republic, look and learn." As the voice ceased, the shadowy angel for the last time dipped water from the ocean and sprinkled it upon America. Instantly the dark cloud rolled back, together with the armies it had brought, leaving the inhabitants of the land victorious.

once more gazing upon the mysterious visitor, who, in the same voice I had heard before, said, "Son of the Republic; what you have seen is thus interpreted: Three great perils will come upon the Republic. The most fearful is the third, passing which the whole world united shall not prevail against her. Let every child of the Republic learn to live for his God, his land and Union." With these words the vision vanished, and I started from my seat and felt that I had seen a vision wherein had been shown to me the birth, progress, and destiny of the United States.⁶

The first two perils shown to Washington are easily interpreted through the cheap wisdom of hindsight. The first refers obviously to the Revolutionary War itself, concluded in 1783, and the second to the Civil War, or War Between the States, of 1861-65.

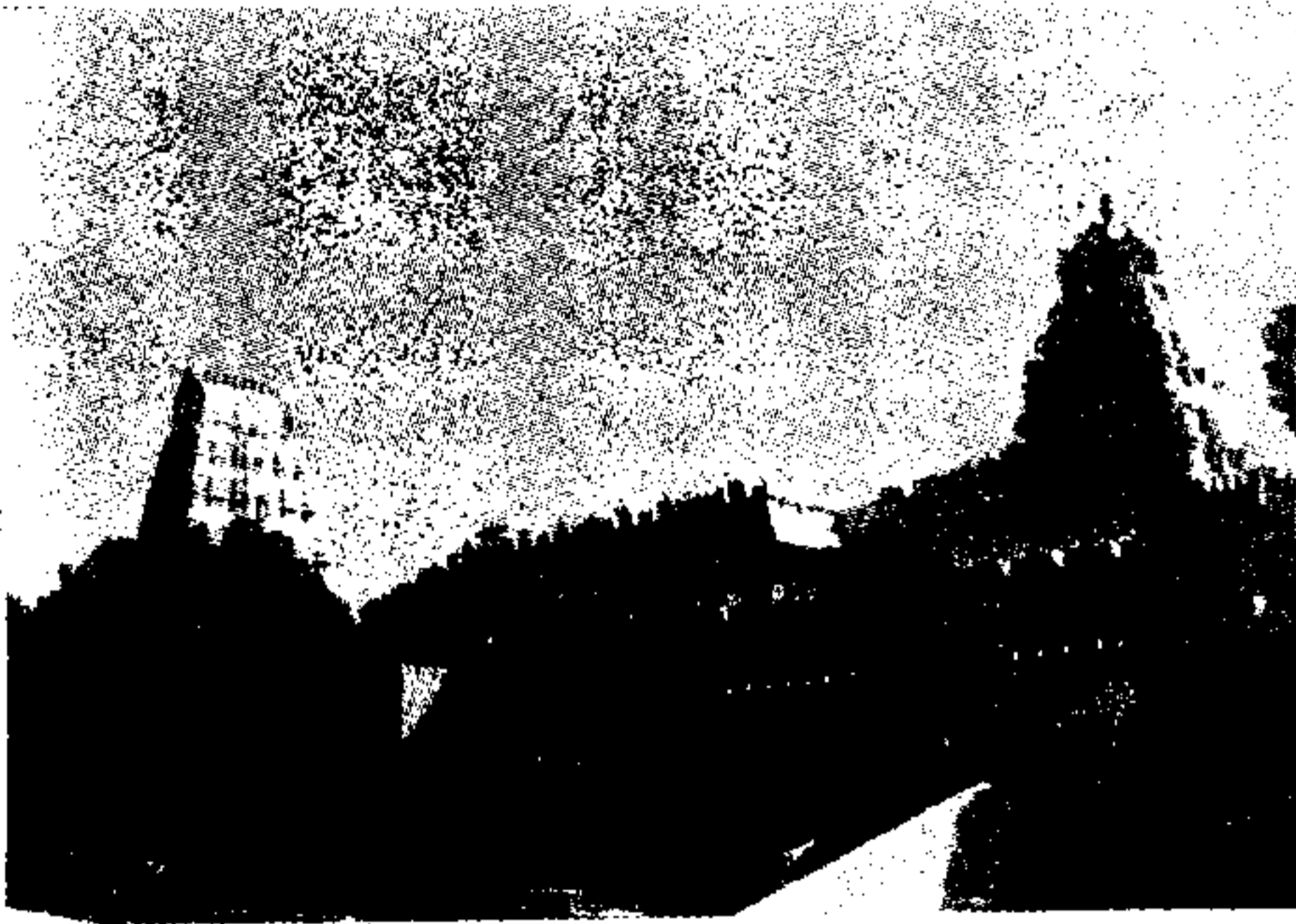
One of Swami Vivekananda's profound contributions to social thought was his idea of a national ideal. At the heart of every nation's life, he would say, lives an ideal which is its reason for existence...America's ideal is certainly and without question democracy. Swamiji not only realized this, but gave a spiritual foundation for the ideal, something which, though intuited to some degree by a few great Americans, was so sorely missing for the country as a whole.

"Then once more I beheld the villages, towns and cities springing up where I had seen them before, while the bright angel, planting the azure standard he had brought in the midst of them, cried with loud voice: "While the stars remain, and the heavens send down dew upon the earth, so long shall the Union last." And taking from his brow the crown on which blazoned the word "Union," he placed it upon the Standard while the people, kneeling down, said, "Amen."

"The scene instantly began to fade and dissolve, and I at last saw nothing but the rising, curling vapour I at first beheld. This also disappearing, I found myself

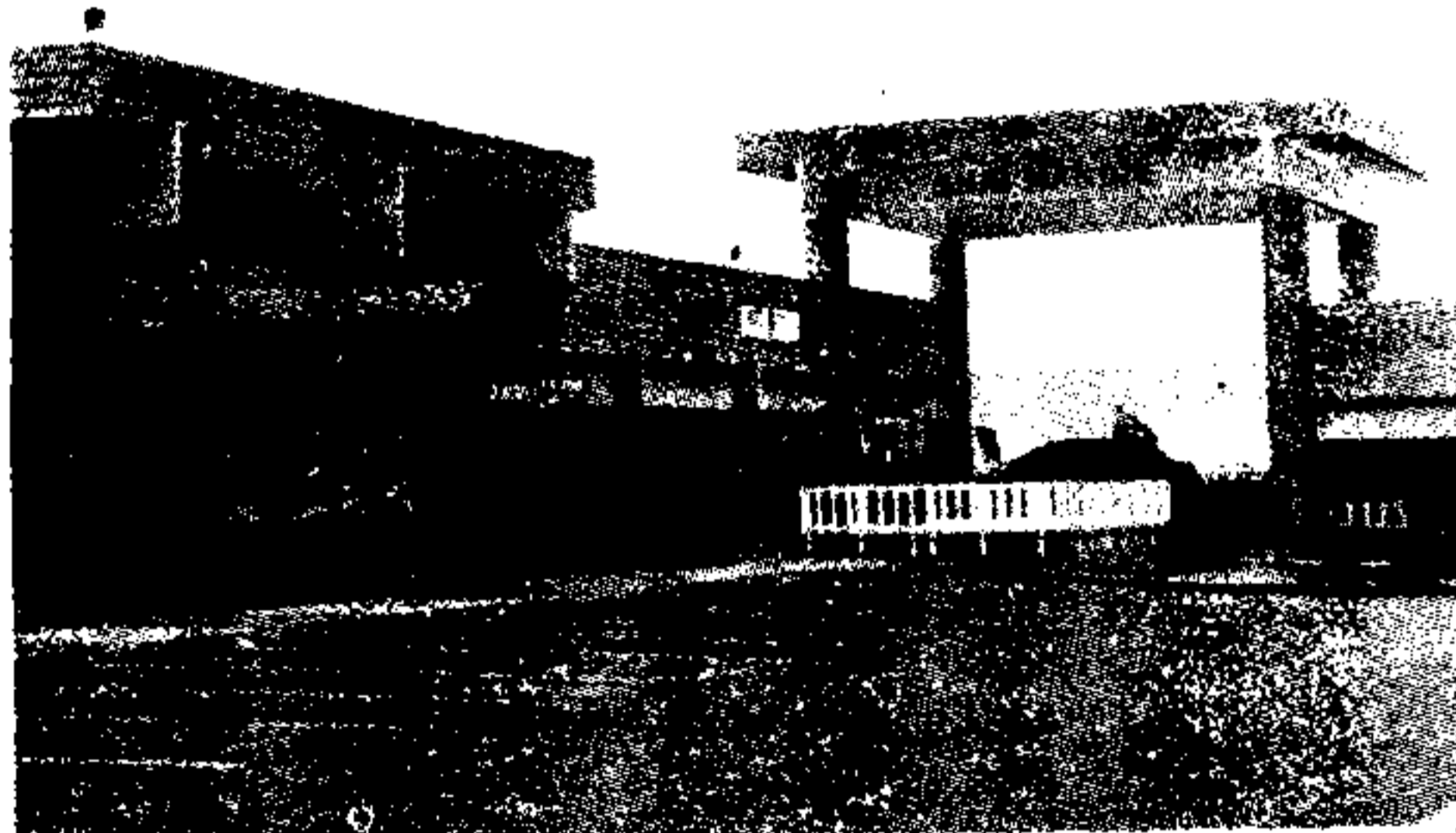
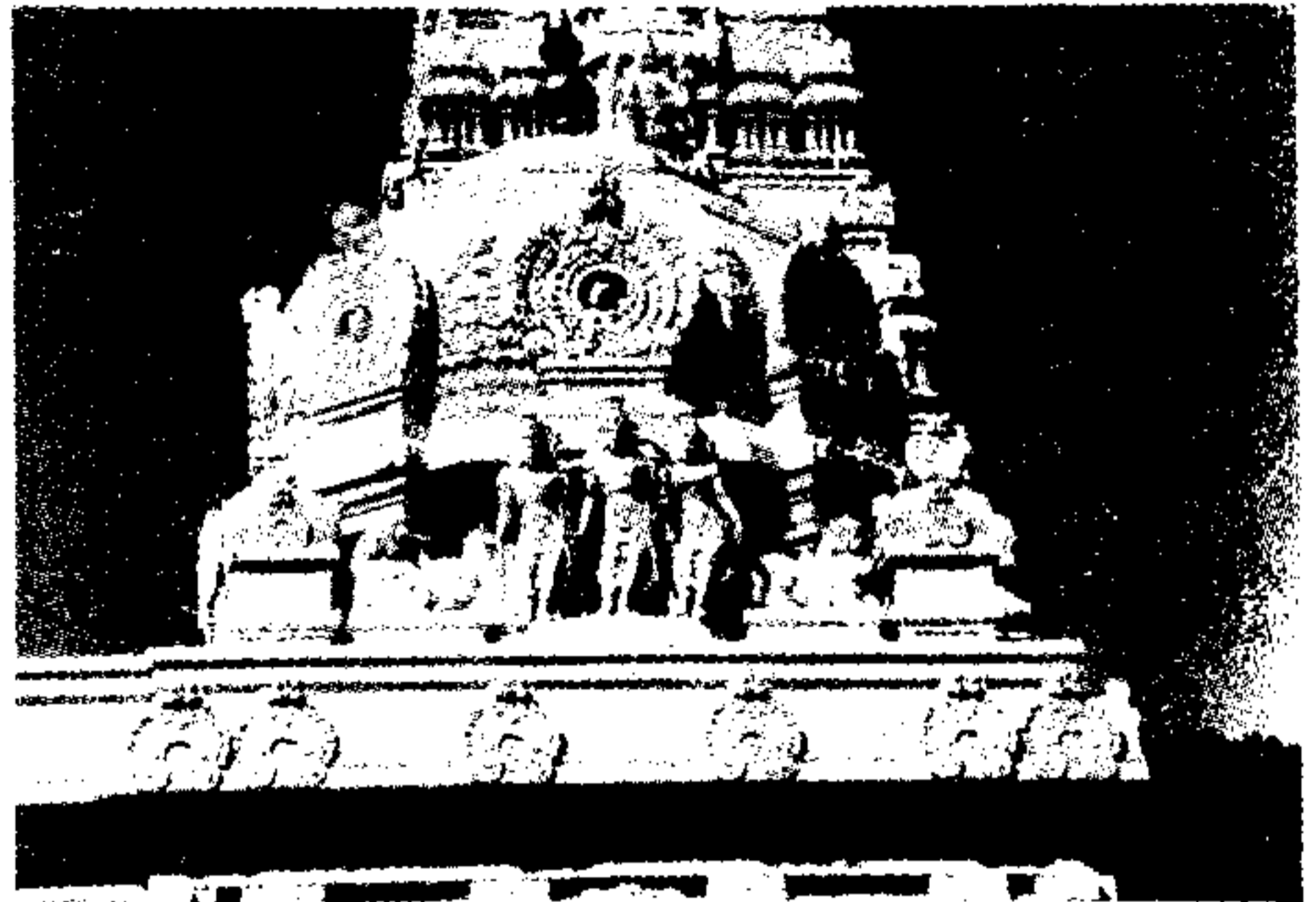
The third has not yet occurred. Neither of the World Wars would fit the description, because no fighting took place on U.S. soil, and with the exception of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States was not itself endangered by either war. If the vision granted Washington is true, then the third and greatest peril is yet to come.

6. There is no possible way to confirm Wesley Bradshaw's retelling of Anthony Sherman's account of Washington's vision. All we can say is, it might well be true, and it has the ring of truth. Though it is discussed here as though it were true, the author realizes that such an assumption is debatable.



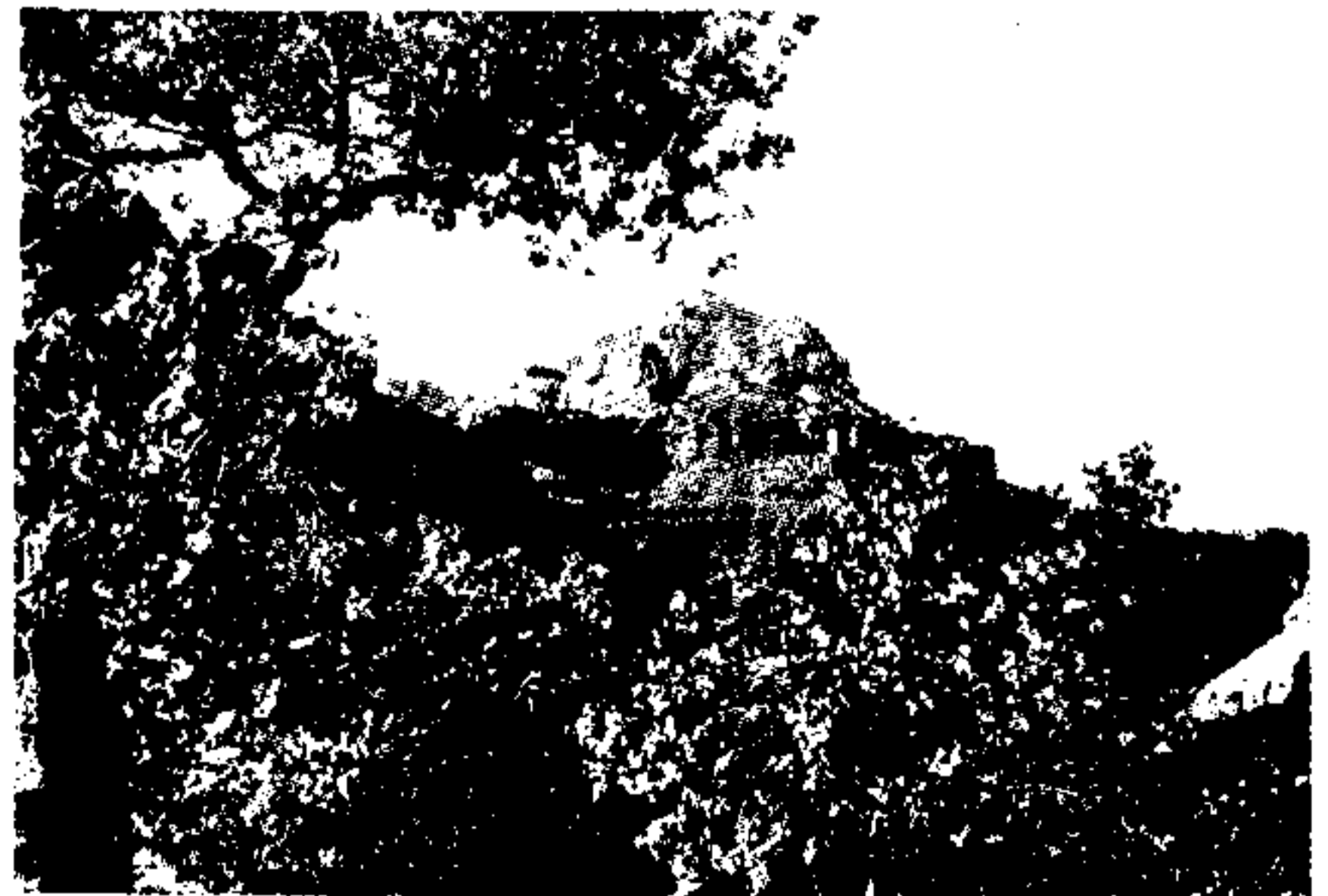
*Traditional Hindu temples
are springing up across America:
Sri Venkateswara Temple, Malibu, California*

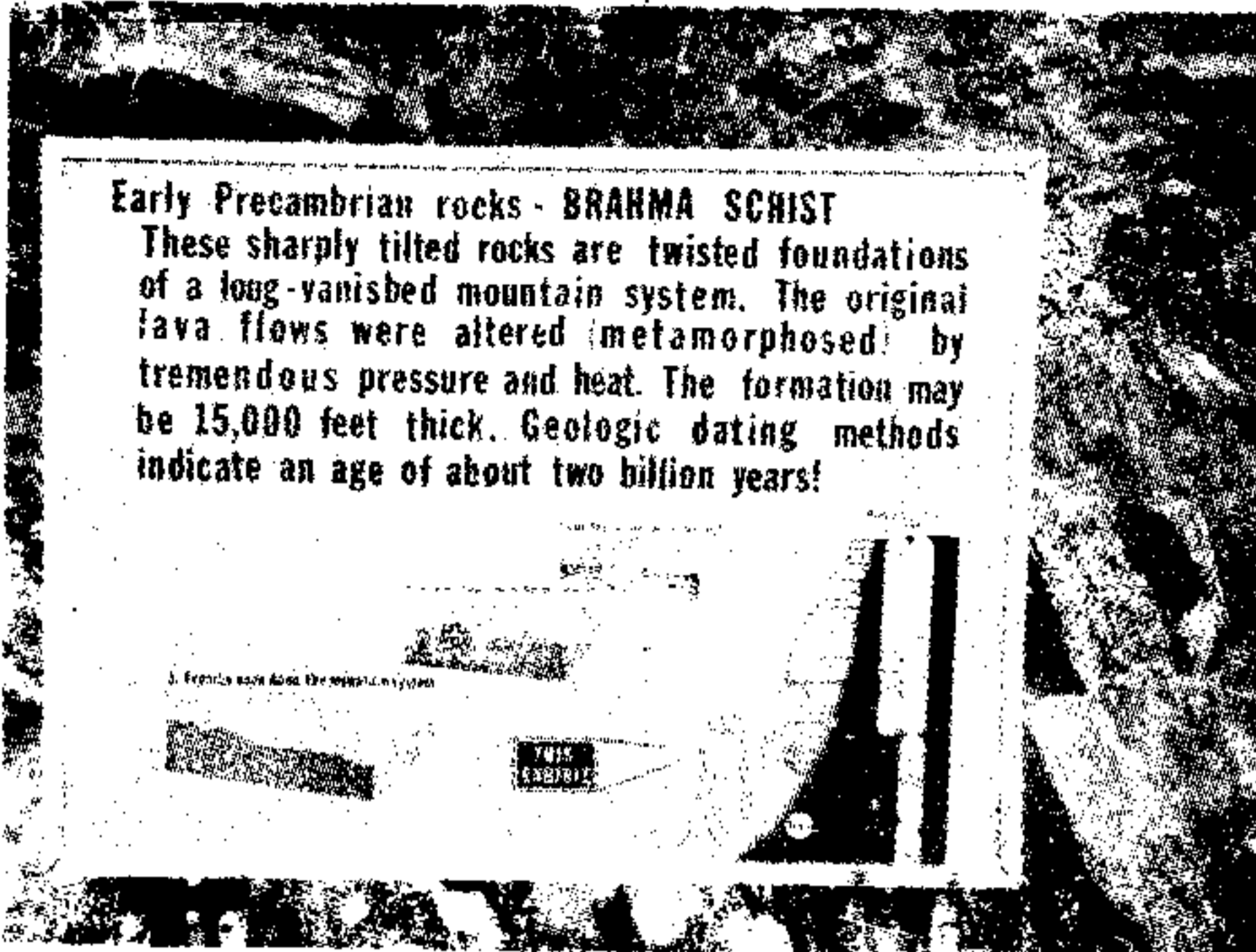
Detail from the temple's Gopuram



*A corner of an Indian shopping centre,
with an Indian restaurant and
a storefront temple: San Diego, California*

*Hindu 'temples' in natural stone:
Brahma Temple rock formation,
Grand Canyon, Arizona*





*Prajapati enshrined in the bedrock of America:
A sign at the bottom of the Grand Canyon*

*The San Francisco Peaks
near Flagstaff, Arizona: Sacred sites for
the Hopi and Navajo Indians*



*A Native American performing
the Aztec Wisdom Dance:
Balboa Park, San Diego, California*

And yet, in a sense a similar peril has begun, not a physical peril like that envisioned by Washington but a cultural peril.⁷ That is the unprecedented influx of people from all continents, of all races, of all religions, into America. This diversity is a great wealth, and yet a great risk. Certainly it is testing the strength of the nation's foundation like nothing before it.

When European settlers first arrived to stay in America, the vast continent was already populated by the Native Americans, or American Indians. In spite of the fact that these native peoples had rich and diverse cultures of their own, the European settlers dismissed them as savages and set about clearing them from the land.⁸ This ensured that early America was relatively homogeneous, culturally speaking.

Yet the little diversity that there was—a minority of Roman Catholics, a few Jews, and the black Africans brought as slaves, all among the dominant Protestant Christians—proved a source of continuing friction in American history. Later there were the Hispanic⁹ people, mainly in the American Southwest, and the Chinese and Japanese who settled mainly on the West Coast, none of whom were welcomed with open arms. It took three and a half centuries

even for Roman Catholics and Jews to gain full acceptance, though they shared many common roots with the Protestant majority. And only since the 1960s have African Americans been freed from legal discrimination, while the process of granting them full acceptance continues.

And then, just when it seemed like the country might be healing its racial and ethnic tensions, the immigration laws were liberalized. Now, thirty years after that liberalization, what diversity, unimaginable thirty years ago! Muslims in America now outnumber Jews by a wide margin. There are very large communities of Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Koreans, Indians, Pakistanis, Ceylonese, and people from all countries of the African continent. In several western states, Hispanic peoples are expected to form a majority of the population early in the next century. There are Buddhists of all types with their temples and monasteries, Muslims with their mosques, Hindus with their temples, beturbaned Sikhs with their Gurudwaras, Taoists with their sanctuaries, spread north and south, east and west. In larger cities you can choose a restaurant according to what suits your momentary craving: Afghani, Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Ethiopian, Persian, Polynesian, or any cuisine in between. Even in small villages in the rural South and Midwest you are likely to find at least Chinese and Mexican restaurants.

How can such immense diversity be contained? What is America now? Who is an American? Where is that confident sense of identity that was possible with people who shared common cultural and religious roots? In countries like Sweden and Norway with relatively homogeneous populations, it is comparatively easy for the citizens to agree on a general course of national action. Where, however, is the unifying factor in

7. This is not to suggest that the peril of Washington's vision symbolized the cultural peril about to be described; it is merely a comparison.

8. Actually, since the time of the first settlers, Americans have alternated between admiring, despising, and romanticizing the native peoples; but whenever the Native Americans occupied land or controlled resources desired by the white population, they were dealt with ruthlessly.

9. Literally, 'Spanish', but here referring to Latin Americans, most of whom have mixture of American Indian and Spanish blood.

modern America?

Fundamentalist Christians in America are alarmed over this very question. They say, unity lies in our Christian heritage; our greatness as nation was built on Christian values. Therefore, let us go back to those Christian roots, enacting laws and rebuilding public life in a way that reflects this shared heritage.

This isn't possible, nor is it desirable. It's not possible for two main reasons: (1) even many Christians do not agree with the fundamentalists' idea of Christianity or with their political agenda, and (2) America is not a Christian nation. Even many of the Founding Fathers of the nation were Deists, not Christians in any orthodox sense. Still, at one time Protestant Christians so outnumbered everyone else that Protestant

Yet even at an earlier period, when most Americans looked proudly to Europe—especially the British Isles—as their ancestral home, they found themselves distinct from Europeans: even as early as the years preceding the Revolutionary War. The new land had changed them in the course of one and a half centuries, from the first settlements in the early 1600s to the Revolution in 1775. The American Indians had a profound influence over the settlers, which is only now becoming recognized and studied with open sympathy. And the black Africans, brought first as slaves, had as well a profound influence. The land itself was so different from Europe, where most of the forests had been cleared and nature tamed many centuries earlier and where the population was comparatively dense: this wilderness, too, influenced the American settlers deeply.

Or have some of the seeds already begun to sprout? For those with eyes to see, here and there throughout the culture, his ideas are beginning to manifest. The idea of the divinity of man is springing up in many places, even among Christians... The growing appreciation for the harmony of religions, the awakening of women, the interest in Mother worship, all manifest, in some aspects at least, the message of the Swami.

attitudes and ways coloured public life. Now, though all Christians taken together make Christianity the largest religion in America, there are very many Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and followers of other religions, as well as many atheists and agnostics: these diverse peoples, together with the large number of liberal Christians, will never allow a national reversion to fundamentalist Christianity. It's the dream of a few, born of fear

Even our European roots are no longer deep and strong, so a common European heritage is too uncommon to be a unifying factor. There are peoples of all races, from all countries of the world, and large numbers of them.

Now, in recent decades, Orientals and South Asians, Arabs, Iranians and others have come in large numbers and are further diversifying the population and modifying the culture.

So again, who is an American? And what unites the country? No one seems to know, or at least no clear majority of people have the same answer. Clearly, without some unifying element among its population other than geographical proximity, a nation becomes a collection of communities rather than a nation. Then political and social fragmentation are inevitable. That has not happened yet, but signs of it are visible. And certainly one factor in the moral decay which has become so widespread is the loss

of national purpose and vision. America has taken on too much diversity too quickly, not from an absolute standpoint but from the standpoint of its own inner resources for assimilating diversity. The solution, as we see it, however, is not to go backwards and reduce diversity, but to increase the nation's inner capacity for assimilating diversity.

One of Swami Vivekananda's profound contributions to social thought was his idea of a national ideal. At the heart of every nation's life, he would say, lives an ideal which is its reason for existence. As long as that ideal is strong, the nation will be vital; if it is weakened, the nation is affected; and if it dies, the nation's end is near. All outside influences on a nation, he believed, must be assimilated, not imitated; and all such assimilation must harmonize with this national ideal.

India's ideal, the Swami often stressed, was spirituality, religion, not religion as understood in the West, but the realization of God.

America's ideal is certainly and without question democracy. She may have sinned against democracy at times, but that is her ideal. Swami Vivekananda not only realized this, but gave a spiritual foundation for the ideal, something which, though intuited to some degree by a few great Americans, was so sorely missing for the country as a whole.¹⁰ This, then, is what alone can hold the country together: if this ideal dies under the stresses of change, the country will die; if it lives, all changes can be absorbed. (And we see from this how undesirable the direction of the Christian fundamentalists is: it is a movement away from the democratic ideal, a closing of the mind and heart.)

10. See especially his lecture 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?'

Will America succeed?

The Swami thought so. One morning in the Himalayan town of Almora the Swami 'launched off into a glowing prophetic forecast of how America would yet solve the problems of the [common man]—the problems of freedom and cooperation...'¹¹

Before America can solve the problem of the common man, there will need to be a spiritual awakening in the country. The solution cannot come through political or social or economic or technological means, though these all have their place. It must come through spiritual awakening for it to be a real solution; for the problems of America are spiritual, as was seen so clearly by the Swami.

What is the chance of such an awakening?

Swami Abhedananda, before returning to India from his many years in America, said that he foresaw a huge wave of spirituality rising between Seattle and San Diego and sweeping across America, bringing great changes in its wake. He didn't say when this would happen, but he said that he could foresee it.

Such a phenomenon almost happened already. In the 1960s the Hippie movement arose on the West Coast and spread across America. Unfortunately, though the awakening of the Hippie movement had a spiritual core, the people involved had no discipline or purity of character to comprehend or sustain it, and so it wasted itself in drugs and sex. It was much like what happens to an individual who has a premature spiritual awakening through artificial

11. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama; 1982), vol. 1, p. 289.

spiritual excitement and not through conscious discipline.¹²

Such prophecies as Swami Abhedananda's can be made only by prophets. The rest of us can only make predictions. So let us risk the ridicule of later history and make a few. (We aren't foolish enough to predict a time frame, just a few elements that might compose such as awakening.)

First of all, and at the centre of any awakening, we see the blessed hand of Swami Vivekananda. It is of no small importance that in the early youth of this country a great soul, a world teacher, came and spent his best years here. The work he did here, the seeds he sowed, must bear fruit in time. The seeds are germinating now, and germination takes place underground. But the time will come when the mighty sprouts will begin to work their way above the cultural soil, easily where the soil is well-worked and prepared, with a burst of power where the asphalt and concrete try to obstruct.

Or have some of the seeds already begun to sprout? For those with eyes to see, here and there throughout the culture, his ideas are beginning to manifest. The source is usually unrecognized, but the ideas have his unique signature. The idea of the divinity of man is springing up in many places, even among Christians who have taught for two thousand years that human nature is corrupt and sinful. The growing appreciation for the harmony of religions, the awakening of women, the interest in Mother worship, all manifest, in some aspects at least, the message of the Swami.

12. See Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math), where several cases of premature awakening are given.

Indian wisdom, according to Swami Vivekananda, had much to offer the world, including America. He seems to have looked upon India and America as two countries of destiny. He brought Vedanta, the very heart of India's ancient wisdom, to this country at a time when Americans had nothing but distorted ideas about India. Since his time, many Indian spiritual teachers of various traditions have come, teaching Vedanta, meditation, *bhajan*, (devotional singing), and Hatha Yoga

In recent decades, the Indian presence—and thereby the Indian influence—has expanded greatly. Now there are teachers of Ayurveda, with a small but significant number of American doctors incorporating Ayurvedic ideas and remedies into their treatment. There are schools of Indian music, headed by some of India's great modern *ustads* (virtuosos). Traditional Indian temples are springing up in many metropolitan areas across the country. Sanskrit has been taught at some of the larger universities for decades, but there are efforts¹³ to bring Sanskrit to more people. And, though seemingly insignificant, there are many Indian restaurants and Indian groceries which, if nothing else, stand as further meeting points between India and America, and meeting points which are 'safe' because they demand no commitment or belief.

In the larger historical perspective, these Hindu temples, schools of Indian music and Indian groceries are not important in themselves, because they are—we predict—not destined to be permanent, static fixtures in American life. Once the tide of Indian immigration lessens, and the grandchildren of the immigrants have become Americans, traditional Indian cultural monuments will themselves either become visibly trans-

13. Like that of Vyaas Houston.

formed and Americanized, or they will lose their significance and either disappear or remain as cultural curiosities. But they are significant now in the fusion of influences, the cross-pollination of cultures and values.

Everything Indian in America, however, was not brought over by teachers or immigrants. Travelling to the Grand Canyon, which reaches deep into the geological heart of America, one is met with extraordinary natural stone formations, which look like great, ancient temples. An American geologist many decades ago noticed this similarity and named these formations accordingly. Here, in the most famous geological phenomenon in America, visited by many millions of people every year, the visitor finds the Temple of Brahma, the Deva Temple, Shiva's Temple, Krishna Shrine and Rama Shrine, Vishnu Creek, all of which are the official names, found on maps and printed on signs at tourist viewing points. And deep, very deep in the canyon, at the lowest and therefore the oldest layer of earth exposed in America, the rock stratum is known as Brahma Schist, named after the Grandfather of us all, Prajapati.

Another important element—according to our prediction—in the awakening of America will be the contribution of the American Indians. To avoid confusion, we'll refer to them as Native Americans or native peoples. The conquered will in time conquer, not through military conquest, because their few remaining numbers preclude that, but through the influence of their martyrs and living descendants seeping into and changing the dominant culture. This won't mean a return to a hunter-gatherer society: the influence will be more in the realm of values and perhaps symbols.

Much that makes America unique is attributable in some way to the Native

Americans. Even our form of government and its Constitution, which continues to hold the country together,¹⁴ were patterned after Native institutions: Benjamin Franklin and other Founding Fathers studied the Indian ways of governing in order to design a new form of self-rule, different from the European models of government, which were built on aristocracies and kingships. Alexis de Tocqueville, the famous French observer of early American life, had no liking for Native Americans; yet even he said of them, 'Indians, although they are ignorant and poor, are equal and free.'¹⁵ These qualities, 'equal and free', so dear to all Americans, were inspired in some part by the native peoples of this land.

There are many ways in which the Native Americans influenced for the good the development of this country. But there are yet more important contributions they have to make. For long it was thought that they first came to the Americas from Asia 11,000 years ago. Now there is significant evidence—convincing many anthropologists—that they were here at least 48,000 years ago. Thus, for many thousands of years they practised their ancient religion here, offered their prayers, performed their sacred ceremonies. For them, all of life was sacred, life meant spiritual life, everything was to be done in a sacred way. The hills, mountains, rivers, and fields were holy places where they went to commune with God, the Great Spirit. The plants were sacred plants, the animals were sacred. They weren't savages, as assumed by the early settlers, but proud and cultured peoples with rich traditions. But theirs was not a

14. And which has given America an unusual political and social stability, in spite of the criminal violence and moral decay

15. Quoted in Jack Weatherford, *Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1991), p. 184.

mechanized society. Even militarily they were superior to the Europeans except in two fatal ways: they didn't have the numbers or the modern hardware.

What do they still have to offer towards the awakening of America? Their vision that this land is sacred. Their vision that the plants and animals are sacred and holy. Their vision—so much in accord with the teachings of Swami Vivekananda—that all acts are sacred acts, life is sacred, death is sacred. Their legendary generosity. Their prayerfulness. Their awareness that life without spiritual vision is the worst sort of blindness. Their valuing of personal virtue above material possession.

There is currently a revival among the Native Americans. There is also a growing eagerness in the dominant society to learn ecologically sound ways of life and attitudes from the native peoples, who are seen as the world's greatest ecologists. Hopefully this interest will deepen into an interest in the spiritual values which formed the basis of Native American ecology.

There are other notable influences that will go into the awakening of America besides the Hindu and the Native American. But an article is an article, and not a book. So we have selected these two as very significant elements of such an awakening. May such an awakening come soon, and may it avert—if possible—the turmoil and

peril foreseen by George Washington. If it's not possible to avert it, may the spirit of the people be strengthened that they might face it bravely, and in a sacred manner. A-Ho!¹⁶

I am blind and do not see the things of this world; but when the Light comes from Above, it enlightens my heart and I can see, for the Eye of my heart sees everything. The heart is a sanctuary at the center of which there is a little space, wherein the Great Spirit dwells, and this is the Eye. This is the Eye of the Great Spirit by which He sees all things and through which we see Him. If the heart is not pure, the Great Spirit cannot be seen, and if you should die in this ignorance, your soul cannot return immediately to the Great Spirit, but it must be purified by wandering about in the world. In order to know the center of the heart where the Great Spirit dwells, you must be pure and good, and live in the manner that the Great Spirit has taught us. The man who is thus pure contains the Universe in the pocket of his heart.

—Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Indian¹⁷ □

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16. A Native American word meaning 'Amen'.
 17. Quoted in *Yellowtail, Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief: An autobiography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 105

Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of his feet...Neither shalt thou swear by thy head for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of evil.

—Matt. v.33-7

The Meeting of Franklin Sanborn and Swami Vivekananda

DR. JEROME J. POLLITT

Almost every event in the lives of Prophets is deeply significant. Spoken words, writings and works are but the perceptible ways in which their Message spreads. However, their influence on the deeper levels of thought and spirit of the people they meet, even by chance, is imperceptible. Sometimes, as in the present instance, such meetings are spiritually symbolic, says Dr. Pollitt, President of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York.

Those familiar with the life of Swami Vivekananda will recall that after he arrived in the United States in the summer of 1893, the first person to offer him hospitality was an American woman named Kate Sanborn. Burdened by the expenses that he had incurred while staying in a hotel in Chicago during the first two weeks after his arrival in North America, and discouraged by the discovery that he needed credentials to attend the forthcoming Parliament of Religions, Vivekananda set out for Boston, where, he had been told (probably erroneously), life would be less expensive.

While on the train to Boston he somehow made the acquaintance of Miss Sanborn*,

* Note: Recent information suggests that Swamiji met her during his journey by train from Vancouver to Chicago:

When I had the honour of entertaining a Hindu monk last summer, a man of wondrous learning, eloquence, and philanthropy, the excitement rose to fever height.

I had met him in the observation car of the Canadian Pacific, ...*en route* for Chicago....

But most of all was I impressed by the monk, a magnificent specimen of manhood...with a lordly, imposing stride, as if he ruled the universe, and soft, dark eyes that could flash

who was an author of witty books and articles about her travels and personal life and seems to have been an outgoing and gregarious person. At this early stage of his life in America, Vivekananda was still wearing a turban and colourful Indian robes, and he must have stood out like a beacon among the gray, rumped, bearded gentlemen in the railroad car. It does not require much

fire if roused or dance with merriment if the conversation amused him.

He wore a bright yellow turban many yards in length, a red ochre robe, ...this was tied with a pink sash, broad and heavily befringed. Snuff-brown trousers and russet shoes completed the outfit.

He spoke better English than I did, was conversant with ancient and modern literature, would quote easily and naturally from Shakespeare or Longfellow or Tennyson, Darwin, Muller, Tyndall; could repeat pages of our Bible, was familiar with and tolerant of all creeds. He was an education, an illumination, a revelation!

I told him, as we separated, I should be most pleased to present him to some men and women of learning and general culture, if...by chance he should come to Boston.

See *Samvit*, pub. Sarada Math, New Delhi; no. 26, Sep. 1992, pp.18-19.—*Ed.*

imagination to envision the kindly and naturally curious Kate singling him out and striking up a conversation.

When they arrived in Massachusetts, Kate took Swami Vivekananda to Breezy Meadows, her home in Metcalf, where he stayed for about a week. As Swami Vivekananda confessed in a letter to Alasinga Perumal, dated 20 August 1893, Kate seems to have devoted a fair amount of energy to showing him off, undoubtedly with kindly intentions, as an exotic Oriental curio, all of which Vivekananda bore with patience.¹

Trivial and transient as Vivekananda's stay at Breezy Meadows might seem, however, it may have had a deeper historical and spiritual significance, one could even say purpose, than is at first apparent. While he was there, Kate introduced him to her cousin, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, who was a significant figure in American political history in the second half of the nineteenth century and also the last great apostle of the American transcendentalist movement. Not much importance has previously been attached to this meeting, but it had, I think, profound symbolic significance for Swami Vivekananda's career in the West.

Before turning to the symbolic aspect of Sanborn's meeting with Vivekananda, we

should look briefly at its practical consequences. Sanborn had initially expressed some misgivings about meeting Vivekananda because he feared that his cousin's Indian guest might be a Theosophist and felt he was 'too old to be cheated by the esoteric Buddhists'.² This remark perhaps reveals a combative side of Sanborn's nature that, as I shall explain, was not untypical of him. When they met, however, Sanborn's doubts clearly vanished, and the 61-year-old American transcendentalist quickly came to appreciate the then unknown 30-year-old Hindu monk. Since Vivekananda's letter is dated August 20, and he says that he expected to meet Sanborn 'to-day', and since Sanborn escorted him to Boston on Thursday, 24 August, it may be that the two men spent as many as five days together.

During his stay at Breezy Meadows, Vivekananda was taken to visit the Sherborn Reformatory for Women, which, because of its humane, reform-minded treatment of the inmates, he described in his letter to Alasinga as 'the grandest thing I have seen in America'. At some point he addressed the inmates of this institution, and because prison reform was one of the philanthropic causes that particularly interested Franklin Sanborn in his later years, one wonders if it was not he who arranged for this address (Vivekananda's first speech, as far as we know, in the United States).³

In any case, it was Sanborn who first introduced Vivekananda to the serious, intellectual side of American culture, initially by taking him to Boston, and arranging for his introduction to Professor John Henry Wright (thereby beginning the process that

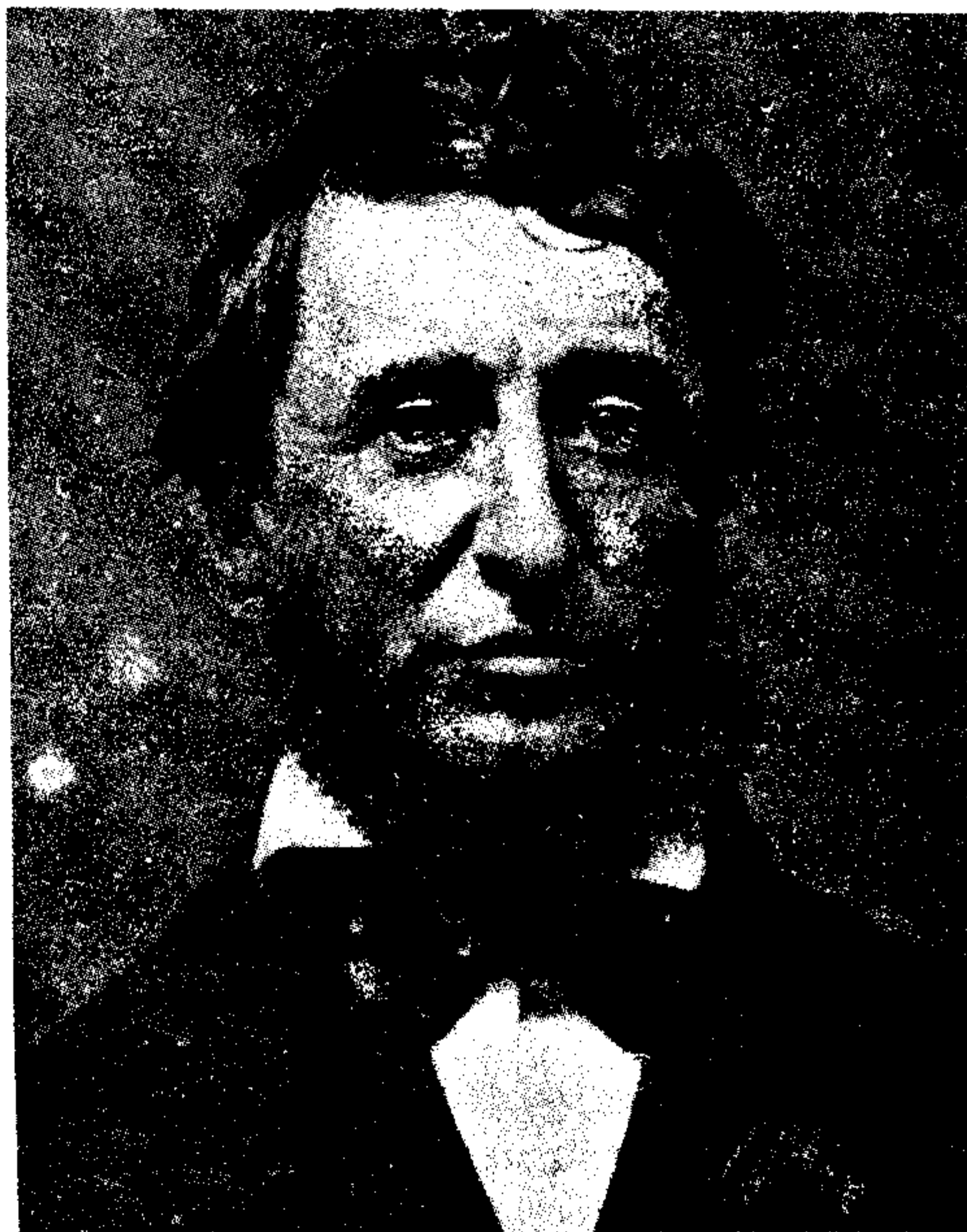
1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 5, pp. 11–19, esp. p. 12. Although this long letter is dated August 20, it is possible that Vivekananda continued to write it over a period of several days. Omitted portions of the letter appear in Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983–87), vol. 1, pp. 22–7. (hereafter abbreviated SVW).

2. SVW, vol. 1, p. 26.

3. On the details of his visit to the Sherborn Reformatory see SVW, vol. 1, p. 25. The address to the inmates seems to have taken place on August 22.



*Franklin Benjamin Sanborn
A photograph taken in the 1890s,
around the time when he met
Swami Vivekananda*



*Henry David Thoreau
From a daguerrotype taken in 1856,
two years after the publication of Walden.*

enabled Vivekananda to become a delegate to the Parliament of Religions) and, ten days later, by inviting Vivekananda to the annual convention of the American Social Science Association, in Saratoga Springs, New York. Sanborn was then the secretary of this association, and the fact that he arranged for the young monk to give three lectures at this meeting obviously attests to his respect for Vivekananda's intellect.

After the Parliament of Religions and Vivekananda's rise to prominence on the American intellectual scene, the two men almost certainly met again at least once. This was in the summer of 1894 at the Greenacre conference in Maine, where Vivekananda taught from July 27 to August 13 and where Sanborn gave a lecture on 'The Humane Treatment of Mental and Spiritual Aberrations'.⁴ It is also quite possible that Sanborn attended some of the cultural and philosophical discussions held at Mrs. Bull's house in Cambridge while Vivekananda was there in the autumn of that year.⁵ There is no reason to conclude, however, that Sanborn ever became one of Vivekananda's close followers.

So, the few facts that we have about Vivekananda's meeting with Franklin Sanborn would seem to make it a relatively minor, if interesting, event in the Swami's career in the West. Sanborn, however, also brought another, intangible factor to this meeting, one which lent a deeper meaning to the encounter and makes it appropriate that he should have been Vivekananda's first serious host in America. What Sanborn brought was a tradition in American

thought that anticipated the spirit of Swami Vivekananda's teaching, and it is this tradition that I would like to explore in the present article.

Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, who was born in New Hampshire in 1831 but lived most of his adult life in Concord, Massachusetts had a long, enterprising, fruitful, and sometimes dramatic life. In the thirty years prior to his meeting with Swami Vivekananda, he had achieved prominence as an influential newspaper correspondent and editor, as a philanthropist, as an important spokesman for social reform in the state of Massachusetts, as a founder of the American Social Science Association and the Concord School of Philosophy, and, above all, as a biographer and literary historian. By 1893 when he escorted Swami Vivekananda to Boston he had already become one of America's most distinguished men of letters, and much of his most important writing still lay ahead of him. He remained intellectually active up until his death at the age of 86, and retained an innate, although sometimes controversial, idealism to the end. When he died on 24 February 1917, the legislature of the State of Massachusetts ordered that flags on the grounds of the State House be hung at half mast for three days to honour his memory.⁶

4. See *SVW*, vol. 2, pp. 138, 162, and 396. Sanborn's lecture was on July 16, before Vivekananda arrived at Greenacre, but assuming that he remained for the entire conference, the two obviously would have met.

5. *SVW*, vol. 2, pp. 227-43.

6. The basic facts are summarized in George Harvey Genzmer's article in the *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1935), vol. XVI, pp. 326-7. Sanborn's voluminous writings, especially his *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Boston, 1909; reprint Detroit 1967), contain many autobiographical reminiscences, and to a great extent he was his own biographer. A collection of biographical tributes to him, both during his lifetime and after his death, is appended to a selection of his writings entitled *Transcendental Youth and Age* (edited by Kenneth Walter Cameron, Hartford, 1981).

It would be easy to assign Sanborn, politely and respectfully, to that category of high-minded, dignified New England sages of the late nineteenth century whom we find admirable in every way but who, when we are candid with ourselves, also often strike us as rather dry and boring; but this would fail to do justice to Sanborn. Behind the dignified and quiet sagehood of his later years, one discovers a remarkable early life that saw not only unique human contacts but also moments of high drama. Sanborn's experiences when he was in his twenties, in fact, shaped his entire life, and the last half century of it was to a great extent devoted to working out the implications of these early experiences.

Two meetings in particular seem to have transfixed Sanborn and preoccupied him for the rest of his life. One was his close contact with the brilliant but outspokenly unconventional American philosopher, Henry David Thoreau, and the other was his association with the famous and controversial crusader against slavery, John Brown. The latter seems to have appealed to a fiery and combative quality in Sanborn's nature, one that made him a passionate advocate of freedom and justice throughout his life. His association with Brown is a dramatic story⁷ and one which tells us much about one side

of Sanborn's character, which the poet Walt Whitman described as that of 'a fighter: up in arms, a devotee...the revolutionary crusader sort: gets hot under the collar about the enemy...quick on the trigger'.⁸ In this article, however, I would like to concentrate on Sanborn's association with Thoreau, an association which aroused the philosophical side of his nature and led to his becoming the keeper of the flame of transcendentalism long after the great thinkers who had shaped that movement had passed away.

From 1855, when he graduated from Harvard and first settled in Concord as a school teacher, Sanborn had close contact with the great writers and thinkers who had settled in that famous village—Emerson, Alcott, Hawthorne, but above all, Henry David Thoreau. It is no accident that Sanborn's earliest major literary work was the first extensive biography of Thoreau (1882) and that his last publication, in 1917, was a new, expanded biography of Thoreau.⁹ Throughout his own long career as an author the example of Thoreau's life and the inspiration of Thoreau's thought seem to have galvanized Sanborn, and in addition to writing two biographies, he also devoted a substantial amount of time to preparing some of Thoreau's unpublished writings for publication and re-editing much of the published work.

7. Prior to the American Civil War, as a result of his having helped Brown obtain money and weapons to support his famous raid on the federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, Sanborn was accused of treason by the United States Senate, and an order was issued for his arrest. He escaped after putting up a fierce fight when an angry crowd of citizens in Concord drove the arresters out of the town, and a Massachusetts court subsequently declared the attempted arrest illegal. Sanborn brooded over this incident, and the moral significance of his association with Brown, for the rest of his life.

8. Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (New York, 1912; reprint 1961), vol. 3, p. 402.

9. The very first biography of Thoreau was published in 1873 by the poet William Ellery Channing, who was a close friend of both Sanborn and Thoreau. Sanborn, who by that time had become an influential newspaper man, later admitted that the publication of Channing's work was made possible 'through my means.' (See the introduction to the revised edition of his own 1882 biography [Boston and New York, 1910], p. viii).

Although in the later twentieth century Thoreau has become one of the most admired, if still sometimes controversial, American thinkers, we must remember that at the time of his death at the age of 44 in 1862 he was not widely known outside of Concord, and that even many of those who knew him regarded him, as Sanborn himself records,¹⁰ as an insignificant disturbing eccentric. Franklin Sanborn played a major role in keeping Thoreau's thought, and his personal example, alive until that time when his countrymen were ready to absorb it. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth he was Thoreau's most effective and influential apostle in the United States.

What Sanborn strove above all to keep alive were the ideas of Thoreau's great book *Walden*, published in 1854. *Walden* grew out of Thoreau's experiences between July 1845 and September 1847 when, spurred by a dispassion which arose from observing a soul-desiccating futility in the life around him, he built a cabin on the shores of Walden Pond, a mile and half outside the village of Concord, and resolved to live a life of simplicity, self-control, purity, and contemplation. His purpose in doing this, as he put it, was 'to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.'

This led to his practising, guided largely by his own instincts and intuitions, what in the Hindu tradition would be called a form of *sādhana*, an effort at spiritual discipline involving both *brahmacharya* and *yoga*. In

setting about this task he was unquestionably deeply influenced by Hindu thought.¹¹ Even a casual reader of *Walden* cannot fail to notice that Thoreau had a surprisingly extensive knowledge of the Hindu scriptures and that he expresses his admiration for Indian philosophy time and again, culminating toward the end of the book in an inspired tribute to the 'stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy' of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* that he felt must refer 'to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions.'

Walden essentially embodies, then, a Vedantic point of view, i.e., that the purpose of human life is not the pursuit of pleasure, or wealth, or power, but to discover the enduring reality that underlies both nature and the human mind; and it insists that this quest requires not only deep thought but also a certain asceticism. It also, quite remarkably in view of the time in which it was written, argues for the universality of religious experience.

In addition to his deep respect for Hinduism, Thoreau also studied Buddhist, Zoroastrian, and Confucian traditions and praised their ideas. At one point in *Walden* he remarks, 'That age will be rich indeed...when the Vatican shall be filled with Vedas and Zendavestas and Bibles, with Homers and Dantes and Shakespeares, and all the centuries to come shall have successively deposited their trophies in the world.' He made no secret of the fact that he

10. See his *Recollections of Seventy Years*, p. 452. Of Alcott, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Channing he says: 'all these four, when I first lived in Concord, were regarded as oddities, and as more or less reprehensible in their eccentricity.'

11. This subject has been discussed by many writers, sometimes sympathetically and sometimes not. Still fundamental is Part III of Arthur Christy's pioneering work, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (New York, 1932). Noteworthy among more recent studies is Frank MacShane, 'Walden and Yoga'. *The New England Quarterly*, 37 (1964), pp. 322-42.

did not consider Christianity in any way superior to the other religions of the world, a startlingly radical idea at the time and one that infuriated many of his contemporaries. Let the man who is 'driven into exclusiveness by his faith,' he says, '...humbly commune with Zoroaster then, and, through the liberalizing influence of all the worthies, with Jesus Christ himself, and let "our church" go by the boards.'

Thoreau's ideas about the purpose of life and the nature of religion were obviously in harmony with what Swami Vivekananda would later preach in America and Europe, and he played a major role in creating a tradition in American thought that would later make many Americans receptive to Vivekananda's message.

In addition to Thoreau's ideas about the quest for spiritual enlightenment and his immersion in Hindu Philosophy, there is another aspect of his thought that also deserves mention because it reflects a deep bond both with Sanborn and also, in a way that neither Thoreau nor Sanborn could have foreseen, with India. In 1846, while he was living at Walden Pond, Thoreau was arrested and briefly jailed for refusing to pay a poll tax, that in his opinion was being used to support an immoral war (in Mexico) and the institution of Negro slavery. The existence of slavery in the United States at that time outraged Thoreau, and he never missed an opportunity to denounce it. Although his family, despite his protest, paid his tax the next day and he was immediately released, Thoreau brooded about the significance of this incident for years, and in 1848 gave a lecture explaining why he had acted as he did.

This lecture was published in 1849 in a periodical that ceased publication after one issue, and probably would have been entirely forgotten had it not been anthologized

after Thoreau's death in an obscure collection of his essays, where it was given its now famous title, *Civil Disobedience*.¹² Even so, it was largely ignored for about forty years, and it was not until its significance was rediscovered by a young Indian who was then practising law in South Africa that the essay came to be recognized as one of Thoreau's most important writings. That young Indian lawyer was, of course, Mohandas K. Gandhi, who had begun reading Thoreau in 1906 or early 1907, and in October of 1907 published substantial excerpts from *Civil Disobedience* in the South African newspaper, *Indian Opinion*. Gandhi himself acknowledged on numerous occasions the role that Thoreau's ideas played in steeling his determination to resist injustice by organizing the passive resistance movement that eventually led to India's political independence.¹³

Later in the century the power of *Civil Disobedience* reasserted itself again, this time in the country where it was written, when Thoreau's essay, now augmented by the example of Gandhi, helped to inspire the American civil rights movement led by the Reverend Martin Luther King. Thus, in a way that no one would have predicted in the 1840s, Henry David Thoreau, the eccentric 'loner' who lived in a cabin on the shores of an obscure pond in Massachusetts and whom many people regarded as an irresponsible good-for-nothing, became the political guru of two of the most profoundly moral movements of the twentieth century.

12. *A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers* (Boston, 1866).

13. Gandhi's reference to Thoreau in his conversations, letters, and articles are usually summarized in George Hendrick, "The influence of Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" on Gandhi's Sayagraha", *The New England Quarterly*, 29 (1956), pp. 462-71.

Such, then, was the legacy that Franklin Sanborn carried with him when he met Swami Vivekananda in 1893. There is no record, as far as I know, of how Vivekananda and Sanborn reacted to one another and of what impression one may have made on the other. Their meeting was obviously a cordial and constructive one. Vivekananda almost certainly respected the older man's learning and his generous spirit; he may also have sensed and admired a hint of that fiery, revolutionary spirit, akin in some ways to his own, that had made Sanborn notorious in his youth. With his deep intuition he must also have sensed the fervent idealism that Sanborn brought with him, an idealism that had been made tangible both in the youthful Sanborn's political activism and in the intense spiritual hunger and urge for freedom that had driven Thoreau to Walden Pond.

Whether Sanborn on his part responded to the power of Vivekananda's personality and ideas, as John Henry Wright was soon to do, remains unclear. Sanborn was clearly well informed about Hindu philosophy, but he seems not to have shared Thoreau's (and Emerson's, and Alcott's) intense personal involvement in it. One wonders, however, if meeting Vivekananda did not kindle in him a new interest in the Hindu thread that ran through Thoreau's intellectual life. In any case, it is a fact that four months after meeting Vivekananda Sanborn published an article in *The Atlantic Monthly* describing

how Thoreau's English friend, Thomas Cholmondeley, had acquired an extensive collection of translations of Hindu scriptures and sent them as a gift to Thoreau in 1855. Sanborn himself had been present when Thoreau, who treasured these volumes, enshrined them in a bookcase that, in typical Yankee fashion, he had constructed with his own hands, mainly out of driftwood from the Concord River.¹⁴

Whether or not Sanborn completely appreciated who and what Vivekananda was when he welcomed him into the orbit of American intellectual life in August 1893, and whether or not Vivekananda knew that he was meeting an apostle of the American philosopher who most fully absorbed the spirit of Vedanta, the meeting of the two men can be regarded as an important symbolic moment in the spiritual history of the United States. Sanborn, one might say, passed on to the young Hindu monk a sputtering torch, one that had been lighted by Thoreau fifty years earlier and that Vivekananda would soon reignite with a new and brilliant flame. □

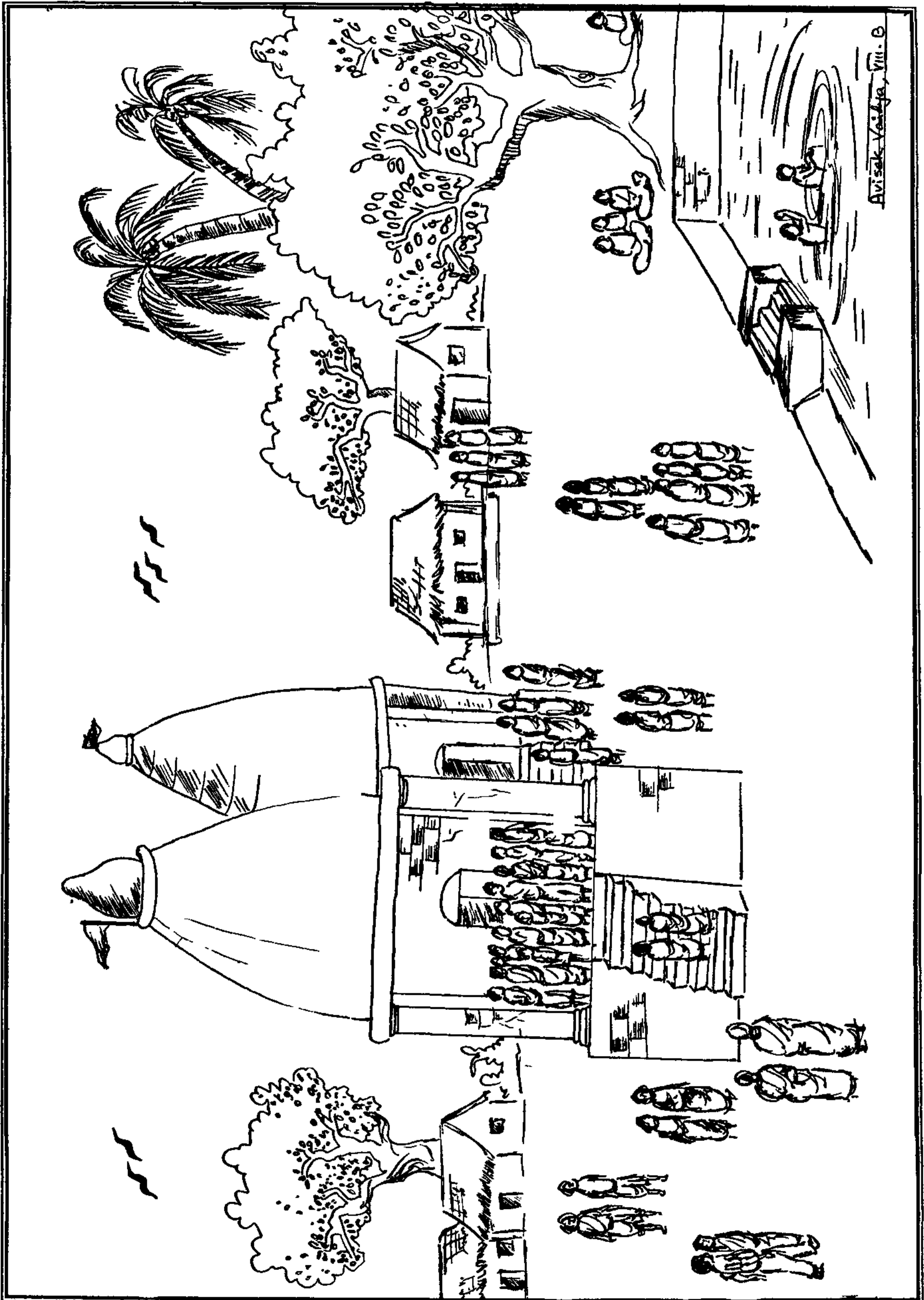
14. 'Thoreau and his English Friend, Thomas Cholmondeley', *The Atlantic Monthly*, (Dec. 1893), pp. 741-56. Some of the volumes that Thoreau received from Cholmondeley are now on exhibition in the Concord Museum.

Knowledge relating to God keeps pace with faith. Where there is little faith, it is idle to look for much Knowledge. The cow which is over-nice in matters of eating is not liberal in its supply of milk. But the cow which welcomes all kinds of food—herbs, leaves, grass, husks, straw and the rest—and eats them up with great appetite, gives an abundant supply. Her milk comes down from the udder into the pail in torrents.

—Sri Ramakrishna

STUDIES IN VEDANTA

pp. 349–379



The Elusive Self-Image

SWAMI MUKTIRUPANANDA

The author, who is now the President of the Ramakrishna Math at Ooty, examines the instability of the commonplace self-image, its ill effects, and how one may free oneself from its prison-house. As one goes through the article, one is convinced that life, whatever its definition, acquires a special godly charm if our minds be kept as innocent as those of children.

We all love life. In fact, not only human beings but all living beings love life dearly and want to preserve and continue it. We find this common and powerful trait in all living beings. This is the fundamental characteristic of life, and the rest that follow are secondary. Whatever the circumstances, favourable or adverse, yet holding on to life never weakens or loses its tenacity. One may be wealthy or poor, learned or ignorant, famous or a nobody, healthy or fatally sick—in spite of these apparent differences, one instinctively clings to life. Medical science has been doing wonderful work in stalling death and prolonging life. We have placed our hopes in its miracles. Even patients in coma stay alive for many years. That shows the general thirst for life and fear of death or discontinuance.

People have as much abhorrence of talking about death as of thinking about it. We abruptly end our discussion about death because it is detestable and distasteful. We do not allow our children to see dead bodies, and adroitly avoid their inconvenient questions about this phenomenon. In western countries dead bodies are removed from hospitals at dead of night, so that nobody may see them. "These days," writes the famous physician Dr. Lewis Thomas, 'the habit has become addiction: we are hooked on living; the tenacity of its grip on us, and ours on it, grows in intensity.'¹ Euthanasia, or mercy killing, has recently become a hotly debated subject. In spite of our carefully

avoiding the thought of death, we see and hear all around us the wily dance of death.

This fear of death has been referred to as *abhiniveśa* in Patañjali's Yoga, and considered one of five sources of human suffering: *avidyā, asmitā, rāga, dveṣa, and abhiniveśa*. Wherever there is life this struggle to ensure its continuity goes on. Even in microscopic germs, microbes and bacteria, uppermost is this instinct. We think only the human life is worthy and that the rest is worthless. But that is not so. Vyāsa was once walking through a field in Kurukṣetra, when he found a little worm crawling away as fast as it could at the sound of his feet, lest it get crushed under them. The sage smiled and said to himself, 'We regard these creatures as worthless and despicable, but look at its anxiety to preserve its life! Ah, what a wonder!' Then, by virtue of his yogic powers, he gave the worm power of speech and asked: 'How is it that having got this wretched worm-life, you are anxious to save it?' The worm replied: 'O sage, even in this worm-life, I have sufficient regard for myself, and am content with my pleasures and pains. Though mean and despicable in your eyes, I am not so in my own view, and that is why I am anxious to protect my life.'

Thus we see the indisputable fact of love of life. Then the next question we face is, what is life? There are many definitions as

1. Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of Cells* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 56.

regards what life means. Instead of going into lengthy biological or philosophical explanations, we can just say that life is living: Continuity of living till death terminates it. That is, from the moment of appearance of this physical body till its disappearance, what goes on in between is living.

What is the purpose or meaning of this life, or living? Each one of us has some concept or idea regarding the purpose or significance of life. Surely, asking different persons will elicit a plethora of answers. Rather bewildering. To a businessman, expanding his business and increasing his wealth alone constitutes purposeful living. To a scholar, such a concept is repulsive. To him, acquisition of more and more knowledge is the fruitful ideal of life. To an ordinary woman, possession of jewels and things more than in other homes amounts to fulfilment of life. A doctor or a lawyer or a psychiatrist feels

sons narrowly escape from fatal accidents or illness, then they miraculously come back from a brush with death, the overwhelming feeling they experience is that they are alive. Nothing else matters to them for a while. But soon they become trapped again by their greedy ambitions and pursuits and totally forget the wonderful gift of life. Being assured of life, we want to use life as a means to become someone. Life as such appears empty, as nothing. So we strive to enrich it, decorate it, and fill it up with things we think worthy.

This enrichment may be with material goods, social status or intellectual achievements. No one likes to feel that he is a nobody in the world. One desires that one should add some adjectives to his life. Without these adjectives, or epithets, people think that their life is in vain and meaningless. What are these adjectives? 'A great scholar', 'a big officer', 'a famous person', 'a

Being assured of life, we want to use life as a means to become someone. Life as such appears empty, as nothing. So we strive to enrich it, decorate it, and fill it up with things we think worthy.

contented and satisfied when his practice reaches its peak, drawing more patients or clients. A man working in a company or government feels that his goal of life is to climb the ladder of promotions as quickly as possible. Ask any poor man and he will say that the sole desire of his life is to get enough to eat and a shelter to rest his tired limbs.

So this concept of goal or ideal differs from person to person. Seeing these divergent concepts as regards the purpose of life, it appears that every one of us has been working towards different goals. Our satisfaction and happiness lie in different directions. However, we notice one truth underlying this medley of opinions. That is: we are not satisfied with life, with just being alive, but wish to become someone in society. That we love life is a basic fact. When some per-

wealthy man', 'a powerful person', and so on. Without such descriptions, we think life is worthless. 'Being' is supplanted by avaricious 'having'. We think we can make our life meaningful and purposeful by acquisition—by acquiring material things, position, power and wealth. 'Acceptance of the fact,' Eric Fromm rightly observes, 'that nobody and nothing outside oneself gives meaning to life, but this radical independence and nothingness can become a condition for the fullest activity devoted to caring and sharing.'²

Interestingly, children are happy with the mere awareness that they are alive. They have only that wonderful feeling of being

2. Erich Fromm, *To Have To Be* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 156.

alive. They do not think that their little possessions add meaning to their lives. Wealthy or poor, they are happy in living. A child cannot describe or say anything about itself as 'I am so and so.' Children are not weighed down by self-concept or self-image. Therefore they experience pure joy, cheerfulness and spontaneity. Grown-up people are artificial, care-worn and miserable. Is it because they have moved away from the fountain of life and are caught in the whirlpool of wanting to have more and more? When a person says, 'I am what I have', he is under the spell of his swollen self-image.

As we grow, we are hooked by our self-concept or self-image. Self-image is the thought that one is so and so. We struggle throughout our life to build this self-image. We carefully nourish and strengthen this

The 'I'-thought in the child is not coloured or chained by other thoughts. It is objectless, pure subjectivity. Thought is an object. That is why a child cannot tell anything about itself. People may say that it is beautiful or ugly, intelligent or dull, but the child has no such thoughts to tell about itself. Therefore it is uninhibited in its behaviour, and it speaks and does what it feels. It has nothing to hide or something else to project. Its mind is transparent and there is no in or out in it.

But that innocence is not left like that by the elders. In the name of learning, it is taught many desirable and undesirable things. It is given a name and told about its family, caste, religion, tradition, country, and so on. As children are helpless physically and mentally, the power of reason not having developed in them, they swallow whatever their elders teach. At home and in

Self-image is illusory and is the product of imagination. Trying to protect a non-existent something and getting anxious about it is the tragedy of our life. People spend restless nights and are tortured by fear, insecurity and grinding stress on account of this imaginary entity.

image we have of ourselves. Day and night we are concerned about and worried about it. Our elders and society encourage image-building. There are also many books with suggestions on how to do it. That appears to be the goal of human society, and with breakneck speed we are racing towards it.

How does this self-image come into existence? Everyone has an idea or knowledge about himself—what one is and the account one can give about himself. We always introduce ourselves in glowing terms to others, describing our achievements, successes, status, and so on. If we do not have anything to tell others, we feel ashamed and crest-fallen. How has this knowledge been gathered? From childhood onwards one starts gathering such knowledge. A child has only untainted subjectivity, without the burden of self-concept.

the school he is told that he should be like this or that. By the time children are seven or eight years old, they vaguely know something about themselves. Pure subjectivity slowly gets contaminated by objectivity. A boy or a girl learns to identify the self with external things. The joy of living is lost the moment they start thinking that they should be someone in this world. Then the focus is shifted from themselves to the world: career, competition and success.

Power, status and money are the pillars of our acquisitive society. It rests solely on these. Those who possess any one of these are admired and honoured as superior and important persons, whatever be their integrity. If one cannot say anything about himself in terms of any one of those three, one thinks one's life is useless. But the moment one is able to identify with some one

of those, and think he is such and such, a corresponding self-image comes into existence, giving a false sense of self-importance. For if we examined that image we would know how unstable it is:

1) It depends on external conditions and circumstances. But external conditions do not remain the same, they are constantly changing. One may lose one's wealth, power and position. They come and go. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna cautioned, 'Some people pride themselves on their riches and power—their wealth, honour, and social position. But these are only transitory.'³ So the tenuous image which depends on those things can break in no time into pieces. The world has seen many arrogant despots appearing on the scene and departing miserably. We too get into all sorts of trouble and misery because of our futile attempts to build and improve this elusive self-image.

2) There cannot be one firm and dependable personal image. It always keeps changing. The idea of oneself exists in the mind. And that mind is flippant and changes its colours frequently. If you get success after success in your endeavours, you feel you are an extraordinary person. You also think that nothing in this world can thwart your onward march. With each success your personal image reaches a new summit. But when you meet nothing but failure and disappointments in life, when your confidence reaches its nadir, your self-image is reduced to dust. Thus your thoughts about yourself are constantly changing, and the states of the mind also continuously vary. The image which depends on these varying states of the mind is unreliable. How can there be a stable image in an unstable mind?

3) Why do we try to construct this image of ourselves with much effort? It is in order to impress upon others that one is not ordi-

nary but special, one who should be taken note of and not be ignored. We are trapped in this ruthless image-building competition and spend sleepless nights over it. We look to others for their praise, appreciation and respect. When one is flattered his self-image gets inflated, and when adversely criticized the same image receives a severe jolt. One's self-worth depends on one's character, and not on the changing opinions of others.

Self-image is illusory and is the product of imagination. Trying to protect a non-existent something and getting anxious about it is the tragedy of our life. People spend restless nights and are tortured by fear, insecurity and grinding stress on account of this imaginary entity. 'What will happen to me, what will people think about me?'—such thoughts make one miserable. In spite of suffering, we never let go this self-concept. We are possessed by a ghost, and that ghost never gives us any respite.

This unsubstantial and shadowy entity has heaped on us troubles and tortures. Caught in its tenacious grip man has forgotten cheerfulness, simple joys of life, laughter and carefree naturalness. This self-concept does not do any good. On the contrary, it does harm to a person. We can see some of its ill effects: a) Self-image is a mask. We lead an artificial life wearing a mask. We meet one another hiding behind our masks. We try to project outside that picture which we think is impressive and pleasing. Display of knowledge, scholarship, wealth, status, kindness and generosity impress others. Whatever picture one may project outside to attract others' attention, inside he knows what he is. So this double life, inside and outside, causes anxiety and fear, because one has to guard always that picture one has projected of himself for the outside world. Therefore our relationship with others is artificial, resting on our unnatural behaviour. That is why we hardly experience deep love or pure affection in life. One image meets another image, put-

3. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985), p. 316.

ting considerable strain and stress on our nerves. Divorces, clashes, irritability and hostility in interpersonal relationships are frequent because of these deceptive images. We do not realize that deceiving another means deceiving ourselves.

b) Self-image imposes an unnecessary limitation. A bloated self-concept does not allow freedom to a person. A person in high position thinks that he should not joke or laugh with ordinary people, or with those who work under him. A wealthy man thinks it is below his prestige to talk to poor people. Such persons with swollen image are numerous in our society and are the really miserable ones. They are, as it were, walking a tightrope. To live in a prison-house built and decorated by one's self is terribly lonely and depressing.

c) Whenever our status or position is threatened, we become panicky and lose our balance. Things come and go in this world. One may lose one's wealth, power and posi-

tion. The very thought of losing is nightmarish. Therefore people often resort to wrong means—lies, deception, and money, to retain their position. What a torturous life that is!

d) Stronger the self-image, stronger the hurts and insults. A person with an inflated self-concept never forgets his humiliation. Till he retaliates he never gets a wink of sleep. Little things are enough to upset our self-image. A little disrespect, a little rude talk, or an unhelpful gesture are enough to ignite the explosives in our mind.

Freedom from this image opens the portals of bliss. For example, when we play with children and when we join in their pranks, we too become childlike without being troubled by our status or power. That simplicity and spontaneous cheerfulness are bliss divine.

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So, to live with this oppressive self-image is to live a miserable life. Freedom from this image opens the portals of bliss. For example, when we play with children and

when we join in their pranks, we too become childlike without being troubled by our status or power. That simplicity and spontaneous cheerfulness are bliss divine. Children do not wear masks, nor do they have an artificial image. Therefore when we are with them, we also throw away our self-image and become simple and innocent. When we go to meet a saint, we do not carry this burden of self-image, because a saint does not have any thought about himself. Liberation, or *Mukti*, is not of this image but from this image. If one thinks that he is very spiritual, it is nothing but a false self-concept. Spirituality means freeing one's self from this illusory entity.

Sir Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swamiji did not have the ordinary self-concept. They were utterly un-self-conscious. Many examples can be cited from their lives. Vivekananda often had to live under the trees, at dharmashalas (free boarding-houses), and also in mansions and

palaces. But in no way did such external circumstances affect his blissful nature. While travelling in America during his first visit he was refused admission in some hotels because they mistook him for a negro. But Swamiji, without uttering a word, would come away quietly. Later, when he became well known in America, someone asked him why he did not explain that he was not a negro. To that question Swamiji said, 'What! Rise at the expense of another! I did not come to earth for that!' ⁴ Once, in Lahore, Swamiji was discussing religious

4. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967), vol. 1, p. 153.

subjects in a gathering of some two hundred residents. He was praising someone at length, when a listener objected: 'But, Swamiji, that gentleman has no respect for you!' Swamiji at once replied, 'Is it necessary to respect me in order to be a good man?' The objector was immediately silenced.⁵

Trailokyanath, Son of Mathur Babu, once flew into a rage due to a misdeed of Hriday, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew. In that fit of anger he not only ordered that Hriday should immediately leave the temple precincts, but also made some remark against Sri Ramakrishna. Accordingly one of the officials went and told Sri Ramakrishna also to leave the temple at once. Without the least sign of resentment or dismay, the saint picked up his towel and left the room—which had been his home for twenty-six years. He had almost reached the outer gate of the compound when Trailokyanath came running, stopped him and asked, 'Sir, where are you going?' 'But didn't you want me to go away?' said Sri Ramakrishna innocently. 'No, the officials made a mistake. I request you to stay.' Sri Ramakrishna smiled and came back to his room, and continued his conversation with the devotees as if nothing unusual had happened. This extraordinary saint was beyond hurt and humiliation. The Holy Mother too was frequently insulted and tormented by her relatives, and also harassed by some inconsiderate devotees with all sorts of demands. But she faced these storms, thunders and maelstroms of life, never losing for a moment her wonderful equipoise.

To think one is this or that entails living

with fear, anxiety and stress. The joyous life begins only when one sees the futility and myth of self-concept. Renunciation denotes renouncing the constricting thoughts about oneself. A human being is, in reality, infinite consciousness. But he limits himself by putting, as it were, a barbed fence of thought that he is such and such.

The following few suggestions may help us free ourselves from this illusive confinement:

i) Do not imprison yourself with artificial limitations borrowed from the world. Do not think you are so and so. The moment you do that, you put yourself in a straitjacket. The knowledge, 'I am', or 'I am alive', does not need adjectives or external dressing. Self-image is the product of imagination and the source of all troubles.

ii) Never try to impress others by wearing a false mask. Be natural. Be yourself. In the words of Thoreau, 'No face which we can give to a matter will stand us so well at last as the truth. This alone wears well. Say what you have to say, not what you ought. Any truth is better than make-believe.'⁶

iii) We live in our own little mental world and presume that that is the whole world. In that puddle we consider ourselves very important. It is foolish to think that the world cannot go on without us. Millions like us may come and go, the world does not care.

iv) God, the Supreme Power, is the Doer. Good or bad, name or no-name, accept whatever comes in life as His will. Pray to Him to show the right path: 'It is Thy will and not my will.' When we install God in place of petty self-images, peace and happiness will descend. □

5. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern & Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), Vol. 2, p. 288.

6. H. D. Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Signet Books, 1949) p. 217.

He who has faith has all, and he who lacks it lacks all.

—Sri Ramakrishna

Karmic Evolution

DR. LETA JANE LEWIS

Two of the maladies today are—the absence of a universal perspective of life, and the absence of a constant undercurrent of thought that sooner or later we will have to reap the fruits, good or bad, of our actions. These are the consequences of disbelief in reincarnation and the law of karma.

The author, a long-time contributor to this journal, offers a comprehensive argument in favour of reincarnation and the law of karma, refuting the common misconceptions. She, however, pointedly observes: 'Although the law of karma presents a rational explanation (for many aspects of human life as also) for the apparent inequalities we see all around us, it is imperative to use caution in interpreting its action, or better still, not to interpret it at all.'

The belief in reincarnation, which pervades India, is intimately involved with her sages' consistently recurring vision of the divinity of man. India's wise men and women make a clear distinction, however, between the body and the divine spirit inhabiting it.¹ Acknowledging no physical source of consciousness, they maintain that the spirit lends consciousness to the mind and body, which would otherwise be insentient. Vedantic sages assert that the supremely conscious spirit is the real Self and that the ego-self, with which we mistakenly identify ourselves, is a mere superimposition upon it. Thus, the ego-self, depending entirely upon the divine Self for an illusory existence, can be likened to a mirror image which an ignorant savage takes to be real. The sages insist that the only legitimate reason for living is to dispel this psycho-physical illusion which stands in the way of our realizing our innate divinity. They could compare us to princes or princesses, who, having been kidnapped as infants and reared far from home, are ignorant of their royal heritage. Like them

we must unlearn our false identities in order to come into our birthright. The sages offer no explanation as to how our spiritual ignorance originated, but it is not necessary for them to do so. It is enough that those who have known our divinity testify to it and that we ourselves have an unaccountable instinct for a higher state of being.

Since the ego depends for its existence upon the immortal divine Self, which is pure Consciousness distinct from any particular mind or body, Indian thinkers reason that it is possible for it to identify itself briefly with one psycho-physical complex after another in a succession of incarnations extending indefinitely in time.

But does India's theory of reincarnation present the best possible solution to the problem of our destinies? Before attempting to answer this question, let us examine the dominant Western approach to the subject.

Because almost everyone will die without fulfilling his or her spiritual potential, theologians and philosophers in both East and West have made provision for the post-mortem salvation of less-than-perfect souls. According to the prevalent Western

1. In India they cremate their dead because they do not believe that the spirit will ever again need a cast-off body.

theory, those whose sins have been forgiven will spend endless time in a heaven untouched by pain and sorrow. But going to heaven does not necessarily mean reaching perfection as Jesus commanded or attaining Self-realization as the Vedantic sages advise. Redeemed souls who had never aspired to sainthood on earth would hardly do so in heaven. If they were expected to change radically, heaven would no longer be heaven for them. They would feel uncomfortable and out of place. There is a pertinent Indian saying that if a threshing machine were to go to heaven, it would continue to thresh grain. Viewing human nature thus realistically, the Indian sages conclude that most people will need more than one lifetime to actualize their divine potential. Consequently, they maintain that reincarnation is not only a logical possibility but also an imperative spiritual necessity

Nature plays hostess to the reincarnating soul as it gradually passes from life to life avoiding the shock of sudden drastic changes. Indeed, spiritual evolution could not occur without nature's beneficent aid. As nature evolves, paralleling and supporting changes in the evolving soul, it produces the bodies and surroundings requisite for the soul's development. In this connection India's ancient evolutionist Kapila, who, unlike Darwin, made both spiritual and physical evolution integral to his respected Samkhya philosophy, proposed a viable hypothesis.² Kapila's unique theory of evolution had an indispensable physical aspect involving the three *gunas* (bundles of energy)³ but its goal and the means to its

goal were primarily spiritual. Kapila did not teach that natural selection and the survival of the fittest were prime movers in evolution. On the contrary, he taught that the proximity of *puruṣa* (conscious spirit) to *prakṛti* (inert primordial matter) induces evolutionary change in a manner similar to the action of a magnet on a piece of iron.⁴ Although *puruṣa* is motionless like the magnet, it energizes *prakṛti* producing the three *gunas* which by their interaction create the bodies and environments needed by the soul in its journey toward enlightenment.⁵

Modern Indian philosophers have observed that all souls evolve at their own speed beginning with the mineral world where consciousness is latent, passing through the plant world where it is only rudimentary, then going on to the animal kingdom where instinct prevails. Finally, having attained self-consciousness and risen above pure animality, the evolving souls become human beings capable of spiritual illumination. Swami Saradananda explains the various degrees of evolutionary consciousness as stages of the one divine Mind:

The subconscious existence that we find in the lower animals and in still lower organisms, the consciousness as it exists in man and in beings higher than man, and then the highest stage of consciousness, the superconscious existence—all these have never been looked

2. Kapila developed the first known theory of evolution. Most Indian philosophers after him incorporated evolution into their philosophical systems.

3. 'It is extremely difficult to give an exact English equivalent of the word *guna*.'

Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick

Manchester, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 214. For a thorough discussion of this problem of translation see the page just cited.

4. Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, *The Spiritual Heritage of India* p. 211.

5. For details see *The Spiritual Heritage of India* pp. 215-19.

upon as the functions of three different minds, but as different stages of the One Mind. Self-consciousness is a step in advance of the subconscious stage toward development and progress, and reaches its perfection in the super-conscious existence. Indeed, there is no difference between them except in degree.⁶

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Although the evolution of consciousness within nature is a typically Eastern concept, it was not unknown to some eighteenth and nineteenth century Westerners. Like Swami Saradananda, the German evolutionist Schelling wrote that consciousness is simultaneously manifesting itself in varying degrees throughout nature from the rock to the most highly evolved human being. His theories were consistent with eighteenth century Germany's optimistic assumption that humanity's evolution was moving forward so rapidly that a golden age of peace and harmony was imminent. Indian philosophers, on the other hand have never suggested that evolution is linear; they have always assumed that it is cyclical. At the apex of each cycle they perceive a golden age when most reincarnating souls reach, or are close to, perfection and at the nadir an iron age, an age of materialism when spiritual values are commonly felt to be impractical. They do not believe, however, that all incar-

nating souls are constrained to follow a cycle's upward or downward course. A few persons may attain illumination while humanity as a whole is approaching the nadir, and isolated individuals may regress while the majority are approaching the golden age. Fortunately for those who do regress, the memory of progress once made will awaken to aid them when they resume their spiritual practice.

Although the idea of reincarnation makes good common sense, there have always been arguments against it, the most common of which is our inability to remember our past lives. But a moment's reflection will show that we do not remember many things that have occurred in this life. For instance, we do not remember the trauma of our birth, yet there is no question that we were born. We do not remember what we had for dinner on a certain day last month to say nothing of when we cut our first tooth. Although many details of this one life are lost to the surface consciousness, they are stored in our unconscious minds and can be retrieved by hypnotism and psychoanalysis. Going one step farther than Western psychologists, Indian psychologists speak of a still greater store of latent memory, recorded, not in the physical brain but in a fine body which goes with us from birth to birth. Latent memories in the fine body, like those in the unconscious mind, have been found to rise to the surface consciousness given the right conditions. Swami Abhedananda elucidates:

In a dark room pictures are thrown on a screen by lantern-slides. The room is absolutely dark. We are looking at the pictures. Suppose we open a window and allow the rays of the midday sun to fall upon the screen. Would we be able to see those pictures? No. Why? Because the more powerful flood of light will subdue the light of the lantern and the pic-

6. Swami Saradananda, 'The Problem Universal' in *God is Evolution, Evolution is God*, ed Gail Northe (Cohasset, Massachusetts: Vedanta Centre Publs., 1993), p. 7.

tures. But although they are invisible to our eyes we cannot deny their existence on the screen. Similarly, the pictures of the events of our previous lives upon the screen of the subliminal self may be invisible to us at present, but they exist there. Why are they invisible to us now? Because the more powerful light of sense consciousness has subdued them. If we close the windows and doors of our senses from outside contact and darken the inner chamber of our self, then by focusing the light of consciousness and concentrating the mental rays we shall be able to know and remember our past lives, and all the events and experiences thereof.⁷

Being engrossed in the affairs of this life, we block out the memory of our past lives. But sages who have transcended their ego identities are said to have seen their previous incarnations immediately prior to their final illumination. At that moment their many earthly careers appeared before them like nightmares from which they were only too glad to awaken.

Some critics of reincarnation object that the prospect of an eternity in which to gain salvation will make its advocates spiritually lazy. They contend that reincarnationists might be tempted to postpone the rigours of serious spiritual disciplines to some future incarnation. Reincarnationists reply that delaying one's spiritual struggles would offer no easy solution. Instead it would mean exposing one's self to the vicissitudes of unseen lives to come. Although they agree that life can offer happiness and fulfilment, they remind us that nothing is permanent. Given time, joy will inevitably alternate with sorrow, and death will end them both. A classic Buddhist story tells of a piteously grieving mother who pleaded

with the Buddha to revive the dead child in her arms. The Buddha answered that he could do as she wished if she would bring a grain from a home in which no one had died. The poor woman ran from one end of town to the other, but to no avail. In every house she found that someone had died, a father, a mother, a grandparent, or a child. Finally she understood that death and grieving cannot be avoided; they come to everyone. This sobering revelation could hardly have assuaged her grief, but in time she may have realized that she could end her suffering by following the Buddha's noble eight-fold path to the unalloyed bliss of nirvana. The compassionate Buddha knew that the wheel turns; death follows life, and life follows death bringing with it the uncertainties of future incarnations.⁸

Indian philosophers, on the other hand, have never suggested that evolution is linear; they have always assumed that it is cyclical.

veantists, for their part, are concerned that the one-birth theory will foster spiritual lethargy. Because the majority of its adherents feel it impossible to overcome all their faults in the short time allotted them on earth, their natural tendency is to compromise, that is, to live reasonably good lives more or less tainted with such weaknesses as anger, avarice, and jealousy. Of course a few are capable of great devotion, philanthropy, and self-sacrifice, but since

7. Swami Abhedananda, *Reincarnation* (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1951), p. 25.

8. Like the Buddha the Vedantic sages admonish mankind to strive wholeheartedly for spiritual fulfilment, but they do not recommend shunning the world as some Hindus and Buddhists have done. The Vedantic ideal for monastics and householders alike is to practise meditation, devotion and discrimination while serving the world until Self-realization brings release from pain and suffering to everyone.

Self-realization is not their goal, most persons accepting the one-birth hypothesis limit their spiritual effort.

As a general thing advocates of the one-birth theory assume that we have free will. But how is free will possible given their belief in an omniscient creator? If an all-knowing deity created the universe and everything in it, he must have determined our propensities for good and evil and the environments which nourish or thwart them. Our characters and destinies in this life and the next would therefore have been foreordained. Advocates of reincarnation, on the other hand, believe that the conditions of our lives are of our own making. By way of explanation they refer to the 'law of karma', which gets the name 'karma' from the Sanskrit *kr* 'to do'. Swami Paramananda finds the law clearly defined in ancient India 'by Manu, the great law-giver of India...: "Thou canst not gather what thou dost not sow; as thou dost plant the seed so it will grow." '9 Swami Paramananda also notes that 'Lord Buddha, the great compassionate teacher of India, gives a very interesting and graphic picture of the whole process when he says: "If a man speaks or acts with evil thought, pain will follow him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage." '10 In other words, the karmic effects of our actions are certain, automatic, and impersonal.

It seems only just and fair that what we do to others should come back to us, but the karmic law of cause and effect should not be interpreted casually. For instance, a spiritual aspirant may suffer one calamity after

another, but that does not mean that he has been an unusually wicked person. Perhaps the bad karma accumulated over several lifetimes is being dissipated so that he can more easily go on to better things. According to Swami Yatiswarananda, 'Your karma has to be worked out, and this means suffering and pain for everybody. But the true aspirant is glad that these come to him, for this always means that so much of his bad karma has been exhausted.'¹¹ In one of his Sunday lectures, Swami Prabuddhananda suggested that disease and poverty are good karma if they intensify one's aspiration whereas health and wealth are bad karma if they result in spiritual apathy. So although the law of karma presents a rational explanation for the apparent inequities we see all around us, it is imperative to use caution in interpreting its action, or better still, not to interpret it at all.

For the law of karma to operate properly there must be an accurate record of our thoughts, words, and deeds. When I was a child I thought Saint Peter in heaven had a book in which he recorded everything I did, bad as well as good, and I had better be careful not to be naughty. (Now, I suppose the book would be replaced by a computer!) But of course the idea of a heavenly scribe is ridiculously naive. We keep the record ourselves. We keep it in the subtle memory of the fine body in which we depart this life and which goes with us from incarnation to incarnation. This fine body is the repository of our *samskāras*, that is, the impressions comprising the talents, ideals, and character traits which determine our destinies. These *samskaras* create the natural affinity which draws us to parents and environments in harmony with our natures. A person with saintly *samskaras*, for instance, would not

9. Swami Paramananda, 'The Great Law of Justice' in *God is Evolution, Evolution is God*, ed. Gail Northe, p. 57.

10. Swami Paramananda, 'The Great Law of Justice' in *God is Evolution, Evolution is God*, ed. Gail Northe, p. 61.

11. Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (Bangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, 1979), p. 670.

be attracted to a family of thieves and felons, and a person with the samskaras of a thief or felon would not be attracted to a family of saints.

Although it is possible to dissipate most, if not all, of our karma on earth, Indian myths posit the existence of numerous heavens and hells where we may work out some of our karma between incarnations. Our sojourns in these heavens and hells would obviously be only brief interludes. Orthodox Westerners likewise speak of regions in which the deceased reap the consequences of their past lives. Their theology differs, however, from the Indian myths in that it admits of only one heaven and one hell to which the blessed or the damned, as the case may be, are sent for eternity. In Western children's mythology, angels, harps, and pearly gates are associated with heaven where nothing can go wrong, and

According to the law of karma, each of our mental and physical actions has a definite quality, intensity and duration which produce an exactly equivalent karmic reaction.

devils, fire, and brimstone with hell where nothing can go right. A more mature and less physical interpretation conceives of heaven as a place where one experiences the bliss of God's presence for eternity, and hell as a place where one is forever tortured by the icy withdrawal of his presence. Coming face to face with God, however, might be more than the average good person had bargained for. Studies in hagiography indicate that the fullness of the divine presence is so intense that saints who were about to experience it drew back in terror afraid that they would die. Only those who were ready to lose their lives in order to find them entered beatitude.

To Vedantists the idea of everlasting bliss in heaven and everlasting torment in hell is extreme and unrealistic. Vedantists know that most of us have loved God with only a fraction of our hearts while on earth and would continue that way in heaven. Few could enjoy heavenly bliss without longing for the worldly pleasures to which they had become accustomed. The sages cannot imagine, however, that anyone is so beyond redemption as to deserve eternal damnation.¹² They maintain that few of us are good enough to go to heaven and none of us are bad enough to go to hell. They explain that karma dispenses justice to us exactly in proportion to what we have done; we reap what we sow, no more no less. According to the law of karma, each of our mental and physical actions has a definite quality, intensity, and duration which produce an exactly equivalent karmic reaction. Consequently, no one could be rewarded with everlasting bliss or punished with everlasting damnation because of what he or she had done during one brief lifetime. Although it may take many incarnations in some cases, the karmic effects of everyone's actions must eventually come to an end.

There is comfort and hope in the assurance that our present personalities with their mixtures of virtue and vice cannot establish our fates forever. Each incarnation will offer opportunities for the development of new and better identities until the supreme identity is reached. Swami Vivekananda likens us to silkworms:

We are like silkworms; we make the thread out of our own substance and spin the cocoon, and in course of time are

12. Many thoughtful Christians agree. They cannot imagine that a compassionate Creator would send any of his children to eternal damnation, but they are not clear and consistent regarding an alternative.

imprisoned inside. But this is not forever. In that cocoon we shall develop spiritual realization, and like the butterfly come out free. This network of Karma we have woven around ourselves.¹³

While persons with no appreciable spiritual inclinations will make blundering progress through the learning process of trial and error, those who consciously practise spiritual disciplines will have an easier time of it. Not only will new, more favourable, samskaras replace the old, but the increased intelligence, aesthetic sensitivity, and creativity, which go hand in hand with spiritual refinement, will enable them to make gratifying achievements in fields such as philosophy, art, and medicine. Nevertheless, the most worthwhile cultural fulfilment will fade into insignificance in the face of their deepening spiritual insight.

The conviction that this present life is merely a point of transition between past and future lives, which are held together on the seemingly endless thread of ego-consciousness, puts the here-and-now into sober perspective. In each of our previous lives we took our successes and failures, our loves and animosities, very seriously because we thought they were final. But they weren't final. They passed away to be forgotten in later lives which in turn became focal points in our struggles for happiness. And this present life which seems all-important to us now, will also end one day and become lost in the oblivion of future incarnations.

The memory of our past lives has slipped away and our identities have changed, yet we are haunted by the fact that we, *we* ourselves not long-forgotten strangers, once

13. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 2, p. 355.

lived those lives. So we analyse our dreams and undergo regressive hypnosis in search of our former selves, which, we are tempted to hope, were superior to our present selves. How gratifying it would be for us ordinary mortals to find that we were once exceptionally talented persons acclaimed for their contributions to society. We could then shift our identities to these former selves—at least in part. But if we have been improving from incarnation to incarnation, it stands to reason that we were less virtuous and less talented in our past incarnations than we are today; we could have been hopeless derelicts, fugitives from justice, or mentally retarded persons incapable of fending for themselves. Under such circumstances there could be little value in burdening ourselves with the memory of lives that no longer matter.

Reincarnation is a logical theory that facilitates spiritual practice, but is it absolutely essential for a spiritual aspirant to believe in it? Swami Prabhavananda gives the Vedantic answer to this question: 'When people tell me that they do not believe in reincarnation, I answer: "What does it matter? But you will have a surprise in store for you." The belief in reincarnation or the lack of belief in it is of little importance.'¹⁴ What is important to the swami is making progress toward realizing the divinity at the core of the universe. And what is the method to attain this realization of divinity? It has been given to all the great religions of the world. It is to become devoted to God by keeping the mind fixed in him or by discriminating between the unreal and the real.¹⁵ □

14. Swami Prabhavananda, 'A Hindu View of Bridey Murphy' in *Vedanta and the West* (Hollywood, Vedanta Society of Southern California, May-June 1956), p. 11.

15. *Ibid.*

Who Can Pioneer a Religious Movement?

DOROTHY MADISON

A veteran Vedantin from the U.S. scans the last 100 years to examine why 'new religious sects spring up like flowers after April's rain. The hardy perennials endure, but others succumb after a season of two.' She points out that the qualities of the pioneers, which made it possible for Vedanta to get firmly established in the West, are courage, holiness, sacrifice, obedience, generosity, spiritual joy, and empathic religious and scientific scholarship. So, the cultivation of these by the succeeding generations of Vedantins is essential for its outspread in the next stage to become steady and noticeable in the context of the world culture.

'We are, after all, the handful of individual souls who, out of our own experience of Vedanta's redemptive power, look toward the day when Vedanta, fully universal and supportive of all faiths, shall act as a dynamo of strength and spirituality in all levels, regions and pockets of human life.'

Whether we belong to the old guard, the Young Turks, or plain ordinary people, all first-century Ramakrishna Vedantins belong to the category known as pioneers. That is, we share traits common to pioneers in all walks of life. In our particular walk, Vedanta, these traits manifest themselves not only in our *sādhanā*, but also in the ways we think about ourselves, conduct our lives, face the world, and treat others. Psychologically, the traits of the pioneer are the predisposing factors which have made us the standard-bearers, vehicles, movers, and dynamos of Vedanta, first brought to the West by Swami Vivekananda in 1893.

Now there are periods in history when new religious sects spring up like flowers after April's rain. The hardy perennials endure, but others succumb after a season or two. Why one religion survives and one hundred others do not depends on many things, one of them being the traits of the pioneer adherents. Certainly, for Vedantins imbued with Swami Vivekananda's passion to scatter Vedanta broadcast, a long, hard look at these pioneer traits is both useful and of intense interest. We are, after all, the

handful of individual souls who, out of our own experience of Vedanta's redemptive power, look toward the day when Vedanta, fully universal and supportive of all faiths, shall act as a dynamo of strength and spirituality in all levels, regions, and pockets of human life.

For the most part, pioneers—all pioneers—are pretty self-evident. Their traits tag them as clearly as fins tag fish and feathers, birds. Take, for example, boldness. All hero-types are bold: explorers, knights errant, buccaneers, adventurers, founders, builders, colonizers, settlers, and the God-seekers inhabiting banks of holy streams and craggy fastnesses. In some pioneer types this boldness adds up to audacity, in others to silent fortitude, in still others to pluck, gameness, and enterprise. Whatever its colour, it is blessedly free from insolence, cheek, and macho swagger. At bottom, of course, it is raw courage, but courage animated by gallantry. Never, for instance, does it try to avoid danger, but courts and defies it. It is also—shades of Swamiji!—great with the two inseparables, self-reliance and faith in one's self, both total and

unswerving.

From this, it should be plain that while all pioneers are made of courage, there are some who exhibit impossible, heroic courage. Heading into the unknown, these ultra-fearless ones prefer to go up and over or through, never down or around. Swami Vivekananda is a case in point. To more temperate souls this is madness; to the fearless, a day's work. No thought of retreat or failure enters their heads. Completely one with their action, they are propelled along their unpredictable ways by a marvellous combination of will, idea, and energy. Such Zen-like unity of character has no seams, no yes-buts, and certainly no doubts or ditherings.

Usually boldness is associated with sinew, brawn, and the wild freedom of land, sea, sky, and air. The Spanish main was full of it, likewise the Oregon Trail; and so is outer space. But so, contrariwise, are sheltered nooks and corners, labs, studios, libraries, and brown-shingled houses with roll-top desks and kitchen chairs. These no-sweat places are where stereotypes get flattened into scrap. A soft, plump scientist, for example, possesses audacity equal to the whirlwind's. And so indeed does the pioneer poet, painter, dancer, actor, builder, musician, inventor, and industrialist, and all non-muscular asthenic and tubby types. And so does—we all have come under her scrutiny—the ancient, queenly non-conformist who, ignoring the temptations of bridge, cat, teapot, and TV, blissfully sticks to God in the heavenly wilds of spirit and truth.

This stress on pioneer boldness does not mean that the pioneers of religion come equipped with a compulsion to live dangerously. Anything but. In all matters other than religion they can be dull as ditch water if such be their fancy, politics, or call-

ing. But whatever their tempo or style, their non-stop, freedom-loving individualism, engaged in cosmic combat with *avidyā* (spiritual delusion), is bound to show at any time of the day or night. For example, although pioneers are usually open-minded, forthright, and kindly-disposed, they can turn to ice when pestered by bores about issues dear to their heart. This is notably true of religious pioneers, in whom the strength of their conviction serves as the nerve centre for their entire conduct of life.

This is not to suggest, however, that pioneers of religion become so root-bound in their belief-systems that God Himself hesitates to approach them. No, they are as open as the next person to reason, persuasion, and oceanic feeling. It is simply that, being roaring individualists, they hug to their bosom their God-given right to freedom of conscience. But, here, in this act of hugging, exists a great paradox. For these pioneers, individualists to the marrow, find themselves ready and willing to commit themselves and their all to high religious purpose. They do this, not in a state of anesthetized conscience or wilted self-reliance, but in a state of lively understanding, on fire with zeal, sincerity, sacrifice, and a profound concern for others. Mixed in with this supreme religious commitment is the willingness to take orders. And this, we say, is nothing but obedience.

The word obedience always comes as a shock to people whose sense of themselves is lawless as lions. Obedience to what? to whom? and why? Shock or no shock, pioneer-obedience is an ancient pan-religious fact. From the Vedic sages on down through Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and even the Church of the Latter Day Saints, and Christian Science, it is a fact that for the sake of their new religion, pioneers are willing, even eager, to take orders, receive guidance, and be influenced by

someone other than themselves.

Now it has never been satisfactorily explained how such a thing can be possible; how temperamentally undocile persons such as pioneers—meaning *all* pioneers—can and do give uncompromising obedience to authority in the pursuit of some high purpose, goal, dream, or vision. Perhaps, like the stiff-necked king who bowed his head only to Krishna, they place their stubbornness squarely on the side of obedience. Whatever the case, the pioneers' obedience is not mild but spirited, not a matter of taste but of principle, and swift, forceful, and completely ungrudging. This the quality of obedience Swamiji kept urging upon his pioneers in India. In a rousing letter to one of his disciples he wrote:

I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Everyone of you must be a giant—*must*, that is my word. Obedience, readiness, and love for the cause—if you have these three, nothing can hold you back.¹

The necessity for obedience centres around the fact that it functions as the glue of organization itself, without which nothing ever goes right, chaos and entropy take over, and eventually everything vanishes, including, the originating impetus and spiritual power of the new religion. Obedience is, in short, as vital to the spread of religion as the breath of life. As Swamiji explained it in a letter to Swami Akhandananda, a fellow-disciple:

It is not at all in our nature to do a work conjointly. It is to this that our miserable condition is due. He who knows how to obey, knows how to command. Learn

obedience first. Among these Western nations, with such a high spirit of independence, the spirit of obedience is equally strong...Great enterprise, boundless courage, tremendous energy and, above all, perfect obedience—these are the only traits that lead to individual and national regeneration.²

On a level with obedience and boldness, the pioneers' reflex to give to others is all but ungovernable. They give of themselves, their time, energy, and worldly goods as if they were the only people on the planet. These dynamos of generosity do not live for comfort behind high fences and locked doors. Neither do they slave for the cushioned comfort of others. But they do assuredly live their religion, the unfailing source of their entire good. Here, we admit, not all pioneers have the same power of giving; some come into the world with giant hearts and others do not. But in all of them the impulse to give is the same. Without question, their greatest gift is themselves in the service of their new religion. No! not a gift, they say, but a privilege

Lest generosity's impulses drag them by the heels, the pioneers learn to practice discretion. They guard against going all-out for causes extraneous to their 'living the life'. They also refuse to run themselves ragged helping others in worldly aims and objects. And they take care to earn their livelihood in decent, non-injurious ways that do not block their spiritual progress.

Indeed, purity is axiomatic in the ways religious pioneers conduct their lives. However much this law may rub them the wrong way, pioneers take care to observe it. But why, you ask, is purity so everlastingly harped on? Swamiji commends its *sattivka* force. 'The power of purity', he said, 'it is a

1. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 8 vols. (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986), 7: 509.

2. *Ibid.*, 6: 349

definite power.³ Like the sun, 'the eye of the day', purity actually radiates the energy of uncompromised spirituality' and by its all-devouring magnetism, draws the divinity within each of us toward union with God in full and perfect freedom. Certainly, purity—any kind of purity—contributes to the prime function of pioneers. They are, from first to last, the only living, breathing witnesses to the spiritual potency and truth of their new religion. They are, God help us! the vessels of its spirituality; they are its maintainers and custodians, and the spreaders of its spiritual contagion. They are certainly its only champions and only justification.

How can we deny these facts? A living religion does not reside in scriptures and temples or in clear dawns and breezy meadows. Its only source is pure spirit; its only seat the pure heart. Whose heart is this, we ask, except the pure heart of religious pioneers?

Figuratively, pioneers of a new religious movement stand before the world and say: 'What you see are lives shaped by the practice of religion. If they strike you as being full, happy, rational, productive, genuine, and running on strength, then look at the values we live by, investigate our new religion. If you like what you see, go soak yourself in its teachings and practices as we are doing.' Naturally, pioneers make no such speeches. If they did, religion would founder and so would they. Except for the thunder of prophets, people tend to change their ways more from simply rubbing up against the happy and the strong in the mix-ups and messes of daily life, than from listening to good advice. But the happy and strong must be twenty-four carat.

In this matter of influence and example-setting, religious pioneers do not stop to

take soundings. They know little about the spiritual attraction that emanates from their persons, and they couldn't care less in any case. As for acting as role-models with the eyes of the world upon them, even extroverted pioneers wince a bit, what to speak of the non-outgoing who are by nature aloof, reserved, and intensely private. The aloof person's love of privacy is in no way deviant, but straightforward and rational, as if spun out of the theory of *Māyā* itself. Granted this world is a stage, the aloof soul says, and we poor sods are the players, *my* role, if anybody really wants to know, is to mind my own business, remain unknown, and climb my crags in peace. Let the dead bury their dead; the unreal world can take care of its unreal self. *Soham* (I am that Reality).

These offish pioneers should not be considered less spiritual simply because they prefer to practise silence in solitude or narrow corner. Even if they feel no urge or obligation to pass on the benefits of their new religion, and make no effort to combat their indifference in this regard, they still serve as the silent witnesses and transmitters of the spiritual truths that govern them.

But here we must point out that there is a special class of this reticent, reclusive type of pioneer who play a vital role in a new religious movements. By shunning the life of society, and escaping public notice, these pioneers travel light and focus their attention and energies upward, inward, and beyond the mind and senses. People know that they are different, and that is about all. These are the renouncers, the chaste and the celibate, who take vows and live dedicated lives as monks or nuns, alone, as it were, in like-minded communities, removed from worldly noise and odours. Deliberately converting their tastes and tendencies into religious behaviours, they go straight for the goal, more up, more over, and more through

3. *Ibid.*, 4: 33.

all obstacles than possibly any other pioneer-type. Their boldness is courage at its most refined.

The strength and holiness, which these monastic pioneers infuse into the foundations and growth of their new religion, cannot be reckoned. Because of their rigorous yet watchful forcing of spiritual growth, they are more likely than people in the world to achieve high states of religious experience, and even of supreme sanctity. Without question, the saint is the test of a religion's excellence. A second function of these renouncers is equally imposing. By their renunciation and austerity, they help to preserve and maintain the original force, purity, truths, and inspiration of their new religion.

Here we do not mean to suggest that only reticent, reclusive types renounce the world to live as monastics. Companionable people do likewise. Neither do we imply that only monastics preserve the original purity and force of their religion. So do the ordinary pioneer amateurs, according to the breadth and depth of their selflessness. Ordinary pioneers have the further responsibility of supporting and carrying on the work of their religious organization. Both these things become second nature because of their internal renunciation, and learning how to work without ego or greed.

In the practice of renunciation, for example, pioneers try to iron out that absurd but chronic spasm of spiritual muscle, self-importance. When they succeed, they become selfless workers. Meanwhile, they work, however imperfectly, in the interests of their new religion for their own spiritual good. They also go after the desires that spoil, if not block outright, every decent effort to gain spiritual altitude. In the end, their everlasting grinding away at mindfulness gets the dross out of their systems, and

eventually raises them to states of strength, steadiness, and total joy. One result of all the skilled, dogged, happy determination with which pioneers set about their religious business is that an occasional admiring onlooker will throw in his lot with the pioneers.

Here, at the hazard of preachiness, we venture the opinion that pioneers, who shy away from active service and support of their religious movement, cut themselves off from a potent means of speeding up their own spiritual progress. There is no mystery about this. To take endlessly without making so much as a token of return, is to invite spiritual parasitism and its attendant atrophy of strength, will, and even spiritual capacity. Conversely, to give endlessly, without thought of return, generates moral and spiritual power, and abilities to reach out.

Not to take advantage of this basic spiritual law is sheer waste. To ignore or defy it is idiocy. Pioneers simply may not behave as if they were recipients in a kind of spiritual welfare state, and expect to prosper in Spirit. The law governing renunciation and selfless work is not the product of self-seeking legislation. It is, like it or not, a law which no democratic process or organized revolt can change one jot.

Lest this talk offend, we point out that most pioneers have a healthy respect for this simple truth—nobody gets something for nothing. They also know very well, indeed, that the spiritual process is a joyous one. It has to be, from the very nature of spirituality, which is nothing if not strict joy. If, to get down to cases, a person is glum or lumpish by nature, spiritual growth leavens the lump. Or if he naturally tends to whine, find fault, say no all the time, or wrangle, spiritual practice carries him past even these shoals. Yes, we insist on the joy of spiritual

living. Wretchedness, in the last analysis, springs not from Spirit, but from its grimy overlay of good old nescience.

Be that as it may, we know that some people in religion tend to dramatize their deficiencies, sufferings, and humiliations. Even pioneers can make religious life sound like a progress through the circles of hell, and often put off newer members with catalogues of misery. Sometimes they do this because they find relief in aerating misery, or they love drama and going up and down the scales, or because of a simple failure of nerve.

Veteran pioneers come to know that the very best defence against weaknesses and failures of this kind is character, the unshakable child of a thousand falls. The terrible cycle of failures, and the learning from failures—sometimes the same failure over and over—can best be handled by building up certain inner strengths. (We hesitate to say 'virtues; in this nonjudgemental era). Far from being an item of pious pep talk, strength-building is a factor in any kind of life. But in spiritual life it is the one ingredient without which all hope of religious attainment goes out the window. Just as an athlete, dancer, or musician brings his or her performance to top pitch by certain forms of exercise, so do religious pioneers practise certain strengths. Everybody knows what these are.

Take faith, for example. Who can argue that a shot of faith does not steady the irresolute mind; or that loyalty does not overcome crisis; that toughness does not give suffering its proper niche in the long haul toward Spirit? And who, again, can deny the advantages of energy and enterprise over the temptation to die on the spot.

Undoubtedly this list of strengths

describes the strenuous life of the Pāṇḍavas in their forest exile and of Colonel Roosevelt at large. But they hardly seem to apply to religious souls at prayer or penance, or have anything to do with cloistered walks, minarets, *garbha-grihas*, arks, or chants. But here the mind trips us up with its slovenly tendency to stereotype. For who has possessed just these strengths in more stupefying array than the charter-pioneers of modern Vedanta, beginning with Sri Ramakrishna's matchless disciples, all of them incomparable meditators and impassioned doers of selfless action?

But then, we support the view that *any* kind of life without passion or the opportunity to apply head and heart along lines of excellence is to miss out on a great deal of happiness. This is not, however, the case with pioneers whose passion for work carries them like a jet stream toward divine states beyond mind and intellect. Indeed, the happiness of pioneers who labour as skilled masters, without thought of self, is more than intoxicating; it is one with the inebriation of *Īśvara* in action. This happiness of pioneers, we think, is one of the most attractive things about them. Who does not delight in joy and laughter? And who, on the other hand, does not pull back at the advice to ...live as by the side of a grave, and looking in.' Pioneers, God be praised, know the proper uses of the grave, and continue joyous. Their irrepressible overflow of happiness draws others as hollyhocks draw bees, which is good and necessary, as we have said before.

Still, what about the pioneer who inspires respect and admiration in his contemporaries, but whose efforts to make them understand the religion behind it, falter or stop midway? What we are getting at here is that pioneers must have sufficient command of their religion so as to satisfy their questioners. Sooner or later interested

inquirers need more to chew on than the lone existential fact of human happiness. This is particularly true where the religion in question is rooted in a great and complex philosophy.

In Vedanta, for instance, pioneers must not only be able to explain matters of metaphysics and religious psychology, but also to relate them to other religions and to modern science as well. They have to do this, because they live in an age of universal education, geared to scientific exactitude, and impatient of hazy, halting, off-the-cuff answers. If Vedantins cannot give straight answers about their own religion, happy or not, they may be dismissed as happy imbeciles, and their religion along with them.

An informed mind and trained intellect greatly magnify religious pioneers in the eyes and minds of their beholders. And they themselves are much the richer for being thus equipped. That is, through close and constant study of sublime concepts, they awaken within themselves a latent power to sense and eventually experience the spiritual realities upon which they constantly dwell. To be sure, not all pioneers can stand tip-toe on intellectual mountain tops, but a good many become illumined in trying.

Besides developing the intellect, pioneers must become adepts in their spiritual practices. No matter what the religion, these practices have one common, if unstated aim, namely, converting the mind into an instrument capable of spiritual perception. In Vedanta, for instance, pioneers must learn to control the mind in the practice of meditation. They must also train it to discriminate between the real and unreal, and to perceive the divinity in everybody including themselves.

Such practices as these are not easily

accomplished, as certainly Vedantins know, for the mind has fits of being scattered, sluggish, and is always unpredictable. Nonetheless, the great, unremitting contest with the mind can be won—some of us have witnessed this in the great ones who taught us. Calm, elevated, and expanded, the mind shines in luminous intelligence and purity. It is this pure and concentrated mind that provides the vast and glass-like stillness from which the great leap into the indivisible Infinite can be made.

Pioneers who can make this leap are, of course, the exception, ineffably attractive to others, sources of spiritual contagion, and the very last word as to the authenticity of their religion. Although rare, these consummately spiritual men and women seem to occur more plentifully among a religion's pioneers than among its later throngs of followers. Perhaps this can be accounted for by their nearness in time to its fresh and powerful beginnings. Certainly the flowers of spring seem more riotous, bright, and abundant than autumn's or winter's. At any rate, pioneers need not fret that the truly great deeds are reserved for their inheritors. In truth, it is posterity who envies *them* their greatness. And also copies them.

What do these members of established religions copy? They try to recapture the pioneer's startling boldness of spirit, their heroic obedience, their grand generosity, their courageous, innocent conduct of life, their selfless work, renunciation, and austerity, their robust character, splendid joy, their easy familiarity with the ins-and-outs of their religion, their astute handling of spiritual practices, and in general their irreversible identification with their religion in all its fortunes, good and bad.

And further, we must add, posterity sees that without pioneers to embrace their teachings and spread them far and wide, the

divine founders and prophets would have become nothing more than graven images of spiritual knowledge and power, existing without comment in a barren, human wilderness. Even more vividly, posterity sees that the pioneers, popping with destiny and boldness, averted all this by making the wilderness bloom.

Now, the fact that first-century Vedantins have taken up a new religion in Christianity's twentieth century, a time of intense irreligion, passion, and darkness, makes us kin to the Jewish, Greek, and Roman pioneers of Christianity's first century. Obviously, this parallel—the advent of Christianity during the heyday of the Roman Empire and the advent of Rama-krishna-Vedanta during the heyday of the West—is a matter of tremendous interest. We know, for example, that the spread of Vedanta during its first century has been all but imperceptible when viewed within the context of western and world culture. The same can be said of its visibility in intellectual circles and schools of religion. It is not even listed in the Library of Congress catalogues

Now, should we panic? Should we look

for scapegoats? Should we blitz the media and choke the Infobahns with Vedanta propaganda, churned out by the ad experts, processors, and merchandisers of religion? No, of course not. If we remember that it took Christianity three centuries to get on its feet, and about the same for Buddhism, we can take heart. The answer seems to be that it is neither the swiftness nor the glut of communications that ensures the growth and spread of a new religion, but the slow, tortuous evolution of the pioneer spirit and character. Squarely on us, however much our reach may exceed our grasp, lies, therefore, the present well-being and the future of our religion. One hundred years ago Swami Vivekananda said,

The world requires a few hundred bold men and women. Practise the boldness which dares know the Truth, which dares show the Truth in life, which does not quake before death, nay, welcomes death, makes a man know that he is Spirit, that, in the whole universe, nothing can kill him. Then you will be free. Then you will know your real Soul.⁴ □

4. *Ibid.*, 2: 85.

Music expresses the harmony of the universe, while rituals express the order of the universe. Through harmony all things are influenced, and through order all things have a proper place. Music rises to heaven, while rituals are patterned on the earth.... Therefore the Sage creates music to correlate with Heaven and creates music to correlate with the Earth. When rituals and music are well established, we have the Heaven and Earth in perfect order.

—*Confucianism*, Book of Ritual, 19.

Go Inward

V. DHURANDHAR

We all know how exasperating it is to convince the mind to go on with spiritual practices in spite of repeated hurdles. In this beautiful poem, Sri Dhurandhar of Madras, a sincere seeker of Truth since many years, shares with us his way of bringing cheer to a fatigued mind.

Go inward, O my broken mind,
There in the sacred deeps you will find
The glistening Love that will mend you, make you whole,
The peace beyond all turbulence you seek
The Ultima Thule — the frontier of Light, the sharply defined goal,
Beyond the anesthesia of dreams, of all humankind
The magnificent obsession of the wise, the discriminating and the meek.

Though the path is brambly and jagged that you tread
You never need balk or be in dread
Of disasters, your feet by a kindly power will be led
In the journey to the thought-free centre of beingness
Pulsing with the primal rhapsody of knowingness.

And the tall summit that beckons you
Though sheer and ringed in misty blue
Is but the contour of your own Heart
(Not something far off from you, or apart)
Imaged out there to 'ring out the false, ring in the true'
When the structure of the ego is liquidated
And the scaffolding of illusions, your foolhardy perch,
Is dismantled, and you are — oh no, not spread-eagled in a void, or left in the lurch,
But through the mystique of grace instead
Poised atop the shimmering peak of your own Godhead. □

'Remain in Bhavamukha'

The Empowering of a New Wholeness

DR. BEATRICE BRUTEAU

Beatrice Bruteau, of North Carolina, U.S.A., a friend of the PB for several years, analyses in this article the fact of Wholeness which in the field of religion was established by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and which, again, is unstoppably manifesting in other fields of knowledge as well.

Sri Ramakrishna is particularly noted for teaching that God is both formless and possessed of a multitude of forms. I believe that this doctrine is essentially connected with the word he heard from the Divine Mother, 'Remain in *bhāvamukha*', and that both are important for those who are striving to relate the Vedanta creatively to secular life.

We are told in *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*¹ of the three occasions on which Sri Ramakrishna received the command: 'Remain in *bhāvamukha*'. Fairly early in his *sādhana*, when he was seeing many visions of the Divine Mother and hearing her words, he was one day disturbed by the argument that God is utterly beyond form and that therefore all his visions must be delusion. He prayed earnestly to the Mother and then saw in a 'smoke a beautiful living face.... that figure looked steadfastly at me and said in a profound voice, "My child, remain in *bhāvamukha*." That figure repeated those words thrice and...dissolved.'

Sometime later the same doubt resurfaced and he again pressed the Mother for reassurance. 'Mother then appeared...in the

guise of a woman named "Rati's mother" and said, "Do remain in *bhāvamukha*".' Finally, after Tota Puri, the teacher of non-dualism, had initiated Sri Ramakrishna into the Advaita Vedanta and helped him to attain the *nirvikalpa* plane of consciousness devoid of any form concept, Sri Ramakrishna remained in that state for a period of six months. But towards the end of that time he again 'heard'—had an inner profound awareness of—the divine will of the Mother of the universe directing him to 'Remain in *bhāvamukha*'.

The word *bhāvamukha* is curious one. The glossary of *The Great Master* says: '*Bhāva* means a being, an idea, and *mukha*, the source. The word means the source of all beings and thoughts and ideas.' *Bhāva* also means 'state', while *mukha* literally means 'mouth' or 'face'. In a Vaiṣṇavaite context, *bhāva* refers to the love one has for the personal God, the state of consciousness into which one slips again from the heights of union with the impersonal Formless. This *saguna* aspect, of course, is the source of all formed beings and states of consciousness. We might say that *bhāva* represents a sort of 'frontier' which the returning consciousness 'faces' on its 'way back'.² Extending this into a contemporary metaphor, we could say that *bhāvamukha* means 'the *bhāva*

* Please refer to the glossary at the end of the article for the meanings of some of the Sanskrit terms the author has used.—Ed.

1. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, tr Swami Jagadananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1983), pp. 190, 295.

2. I am indebted to Swami Yogeshananda for this interpretation.

interface', the conscious plane that is *both* nirguṇa *and* saguṇa, and this fits Sri Ramakrishna's reality exactly

For the one who has attained to the *nirguṇa* aspect and is returning to the *saguṇa* aspect, the world appears as a single immense mind in which oneself and all other beings are like component waves—or perhaps like those nodes where the waves meet and overlap. Oneness and manyness are both verified here, as the One Real Being projects and pervades all the many appearances of the finite world. 'That which is *nirguṇa* in its own nature is *saguṇa* in sport.'³

'Remain in bhāvamukha' then means: Do not limit yourself to the *nirguṇa* aspect of the Real, but be also the *saguṇa* aspect, the entire finite world and the particular incarnation that you appear to be, remembering all the while that you are the Whole Reality, both with form and without form. 'Live at the Source of All!' All that appears in the world passes through you, issues from you; and all that you desire and do comes from the Supreme itself. The Supreme Self engages in its divine play through you and as you. You are the Interface of Divine Love, which attracts human hearts to God and through which God's love reaches out to suffering humanity lost in ignorance. Be such a Mediator, such a prism through which the white light of the Formless diversifies into the rainbow of the divine forms, and through which the various Forms unite again into the root Reality of the Formless.

Deeply imbued with this sense of the Divine Will, Sri Ramakrishna taught it to Vivekananda accordingly. When the young Naren complained to his master that all the other disciples had had profound spiritual experiences, and he also wanted, he said, 'to remain in *samādhi* for three or four days only, coming down to the sense-plane once in a while, to eat a little.' Sri Ramakrishna's

response was:

You're a fool—there's a much higher state than that! You are fond of singing the song, 'All that Exists Art Thou'—well, after coming down from *samādhi*, one may see that it is God himself who has become the universe and all that exists. Only an ishvarakoti can reach that state. An ordinary man can only reach *samādhi*, at best. He can't go any further.⁴

This revelation seems to say that the *bhāva*-interface, Divine Love as the mediator between the Formless and the world of Forms, is superior to either alone. It is that 'much higher state' than *samādhi*, the realization in 'ordinary' consciousness that 'it is God himself who has become the universe and all that exists.' The liberation achieved in the *nirvikalpa* realization is what makes this 'higher state' possible, because it detaches one from identifying with any particular finite form. But the full development apparently means that neither is one to identify with formlessness alone. Full realization requires both the formless and the multitude of forms, and the consciousness that the Forms are precisely the presence of the Formless.

We set up disjunctions, either/or views, by thinking that two states cannot be present at the same time. The whole thrust of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching is that this sort of mistake is to be corrected. One does not need to choose between holding that God is formless and holding that God has form. One does not need to recognize a quarrel among absolute nondualism, qualified nondualism and dualism. One does not have to insist that only one's particular religion is true and all others are false. The Reality includes all.⁵

3. *The Great Master*, p. 443.

4. Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (Hollywood, Calif.: Vedanta Press, 1965), pp. 297–8.

5. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, compiled from various authentic sources (Calcutta: Advaita

Where the forms differ, they are nevertheless forms of the One. Anyone who insists on believing that one of these is right and the other wrong has not realized the Wholeness. Sri Ramakrishna is the prophet of Divine Wholeness.

As we can see already here, the Wholeness that Sri Ramakrishna is urging—the *advaita* of the Forms and Formlessness—grounds several other instances of wholeness, first among religions and theologies, but then among all the Forms themselves. I will say something about the religious wholeness, and then I want to explore other ways in which a new sense of wholeness is appearing among us, a century after Swami Vivekananda brought this liberating and energizing word of Wholeness from his master to the rest of the world.

Some sense of the coming possibilities of religious wholeness can be gained from the recent events of the Parliaments of the World's Religions held in the United States and in India. That these events should have happened at all is the point. Religion has been one of the most divisive features of human life in historic times (last five thousand years). It has probably been the source of more injustice and cruelty and stupidity than any other cultural institution. Now here are representatives of practically every religion, large or small, on the face of the Earth, coming together to talk, to share, to experience each other first hand, to make friends, to accept comparison with their opposite numbers, to see side by side the alternatives, to perhaps join on some common issues and interests. When people actually meet and live together for a few days, they begin to realize that they have basic similarities, even if they continue to have significant differences.

But a new respect usually emerges. The Dalai Lama, for instance, confessed that he

had not known that Western religion had any room for spirituality until he met Thomas Merton. Each religion makes itself the standard and measures the others by how close they come to doing and valuing things the standard does and values. One of the things that is discovered in such a Parliament is that everybody else is doing the same kind of evaluating relative to itself and considering other religions inferior. It is a little harder to hold seriously to one's own absolutism when you meet face to face the absolutisms—equally sincere and well founded—of all your 'outsiders'.

Getting close reveals depths and refinements that we had not accorded the unbelievers and idolaters. And while differences are evident—we had expected that—certain very general similarities now show up. It is these similarities, together with the willingness to accept one another enough to engage in serious and respectful conversations, that reframe the religious dimension of culture. From now on, *our* religion exists in the context of the other world religions. How we are to regard these 'others' becomes a sensitive and embarrassing issue for some religions, a perhaps too easy one for others. But nobody can ignore the presence of other sophisticated and spiritually profound religions; no one can exist in that kind of isolation any more. This is therefore the beginning of some adjustment in this area. What it will be remains to be seen. But we will be doing it in the context of the NEW WHOLENESS created by our recognition of one another and our interactions with one another.

In the economic sector of our common life, we are all so interdependent that self-sufficiency is impossible for any ethnic or political unit. Not only are raw materials produced at one location and finished goods at another, but various components and sub-assemblies of any product may come from the four quarters of the globe before being shipped everywhere for distribution.

Ashrama, 1964), pp. 258–9.

The new economic institutions don't even identify with national boundaries anymore. They operate all over the world, simultaneously global and local. The recent resurgence of ethnicity in its own way testifies to the imminence of globality. Lest we all disappear into a uniformity of designer jeans and hundred dollar sneakers, nourished by hamburgers and entertained by rock bands at soccer games, we grasp for our local identities.

This is coming about because of the new technologies and especially because of the new information and communication systems. Our conscious activities, amplified by the subtle machines we have invented, have created an interaction world of their own so complex that our former notions of identity

job of a machine. We can't spare human beings for that anymore. Human beings will be needed for creative work.

So the old hierarchies of respect and deference will crumble. The work-team of the future will be more like what are called 'neural nets', in which each information handling unit is linked to every other unit in its area of concern. Everyone makes inputs into the system, everyone receives inputs from other elements of the system. Everyone is respected for a contribution which is unique and indispensable. The system has no top or bottom but a multitude of connections. There need be no central executive authority overseeing the system. Global networks now, such as the international financial system, operate this way: there is no

...Our conscious activities, amplified by the subtle machines we have invented, have created an interaction world of their own so complex that our former notions of identity boundaries are irrevocably obsolete. We all belong to one great system of sharing. We are coming into an age in which we will become acutely aware of our WHOLENESS.

boundaries are irrevocably obsolete. We all belong to one great system of sharing. We are coming into an age in which we will become acutely aware of our WHOLENESS.

For instance, our sense of *workplace* will be different, for the 'place' in which the work is done will be just the communications system, the net of messages among the various computer stations. It won't make any difference whether all the workers associated with a given project are physically present in one building or not. They can be scattered all over the world and still be 'together' for their work. They can stay home and yet go to work. And they can be in direct communication with each other in every way. No more need to 'go through channels'. Those who functionally need to consult, can consult directly. Decision making can be very local. Everyone will have creative inputs. No one will merely take orders and do as told to do. Doing as told to do is the

commander in charge, and yet it runs and evolves and life develops through it. It is interesting to remark that the human brain itself has not revealed its master control centre, if it has one.⁶

And when we work together this way to produce projects that are ideas, that are *information*, how do we sequester our wealth, how do we isolate our 'possessions'? When I tell you an idea, do I have it any less? Information can be shared without being divided or diminished. When information becomes the basic commodity in the new exchange system, what will happen to our concept of private property? Will we try to—will we be able to—control the exchange of information? Information cannot be locked up; not and be used too.

The markets for information will be

6. Heinz Pagels, *The Dreams of Reason* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), p. 50.

global and will interact with one another, and have no discernible limit to their growth, any more than we can say how many books can be composed with the twenty-six letters of our alphabet. The 'economics' of the Information Society will have a kind of infinity built into it, as well as a kind of 'mutual indwelling' among the participants—a new kind of Wholeness.

This is our economic situation, in which it will become more and more difficult to identify ourselves by distinguishing 'outsiders' from 'insiders'. This gives us a certain shift in the perception of our world. But add to this, now, the emotionally overwhelming graphic reality of the actual sight of the earth as a whole, the view from a position off the Earth. The astronauts, the cosmonauts, report that national and cultural boundaries are not visible from the Moon, or even from the orbiter of the Space Station. There is only the little blue planet, hanging in the black void of space, illumined by a friendly star. So far as we know, this is all we have of life and consciousness and culture. Just this one little ball. Once you've seen that, you become possessed by what Frank White calls 'the Overview Effect': 'You don't see the barriers of colour and religion and politics that divide this world. You wonder, if you could get everyone in the world up there, wouldn't they have a different feeling?'⁷

The transformed perception has been offered to us; the transforming economic system is in process all around us and is opening the way to transformed ways of life and culture and creativity never before available. The boundaries are dissolving. *Wholeness* is becoming possible in a way it has never before been really possible.

Meanwhile, the scientists and scholars are creating new sciences of wholeness that cut right across the old departmental lines,

and cannot even be called cross-disciplinary any longer, for the 'disciplines' are being designed from quite different points of view. Complex adaptive systems, especially, constitute a new field of study which encompasses such apparently diverse phenomena as the economic patterns just mentioned, biological, evolutionary and developmental pathways, all sorts of sociological processes. The method of investigation is no longer just taking the thing apart to see what it's made of, what the pieces are, but rather figuring out how it *works* when all the pieces are interacting—because that's what the 'thing' itself is. It's not a pile of pieces, but an *organization of actions*.

The richness of these individual local actions allows the system as a whole to *self-organize*: whether it is atoms sharing electrons to bond into molecules, or molecules taking advantage of one another's special properties and catalyzing themselves into living cells, or cells further specializing and cooperating to constitute multi-cellular organisms, or organisms of various species interacting with one another in an ecosystem, or people buying and selling in the marketplace, the properties of the *bonded collective* quite transcend the properties of the constituents. But no one put these properties into the organization; they spontaneously emerged from the wholeness of the exchanges of matter, energy, and information, intention, and value among the components.

The exciting realization that comes out of this is that Nature has a compulsion for self-organization. There is something about *wholeness* that is what Nature is always working toward: bigger, better, more complex, more interactive, more far-ranging, more diverse behaviours, more freedom for wholes composed of wholes composed of wholes.... Step by step, not random, but built logically, yet stage after stage developing qualities in their *collective interactions*

7. Frank White, *The Overview Effect* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1987), p. 39.

that the composing units did not display. And each time, constructed by self-organization and winnowed by natural selection, more diversity in behaviour appears, allowing for still more interactions with still more opposite numbers, so that *complexification itself accelerates*. And the more complex the organizations become, the more possibilities open up for their internal and external behaviours and experiences, and the more sophisticated become both the kinds of self-organization and the kinds of selection. The total community of systems of different degrees of complexity operates in a space of endless novelty and creativity, always—apparently—moving toward greater complexity, greater wholeness, greater creativity.

We feel this growing sense of belonging to a greater whole, in our recognition that we are members of an *ecology*. We realize now that all the participants in a living community are co-evolving, co-adapting to one another. The plants and the animals, the predators and the prey, the bacteria and the eukaryotic organisms, even the inanimate aspects of the ecology—the chemical cycles, the sediments and erosions, the weather, all alter and adjust according to the circumstances and activities of the other members of the system.

However, note a characteristic of life and of evolution and development in general. Changes come slowly. Their beginnings are imperceptible. The new way overlaps with the old way, often for a long time. There were small mammals around when the dinosaurs ruled the Earth. They had been there for a long time before they came forward and became one of the growing edges of earth life. Today, many say that things are getting worse; there is violence, war, corruption, degeneration of traditional values all over the world. I want to urge that this is not a sufficient argument against the beginnings of a new era, for life is messy and contradictory. Construction and destruction work

side by side. Cooperation and competition are almost two sides of one coin. Nothing is automatic; we are not following a script. What we are facing is an opportunity, not a destiny. There are signs of a new wholeness, but it is not guaranteed, we will have to work for it.

In the past, spiritualities often used the device of setting up definite distinctions as a way of directing attention to a value that was at that time hard to discern. So the teachers 'sharpened' the image, 'enhanced the contrast', we would say. The sacred was separated from the profane—even the 'believers' from the 'infidels', the 'monastics' from the 'householders'—in order that a keen sense of the sacred could be developed. But once the sacred was deeply and truly discerned, then that sense could 'return' and invade the profane and discover the sacred resident there as well. It is in that moment of 'return' that the Bhāvamukha is realized, and when the sense of the sacred has thoroughly penetrated what had been the profane, then the knowledge of the Divine is complete.

This completion in *wholeness* may be said to be metaphorically indicated by and to be empowered by the Divine Word spoken to Sri Ramakrishna: 'Remain in bhāvamukha'. I believe that as his disciples, we are recipients of an invitation to explore the possibilities of this state, *his characteristic state*. This means that those who answer this call must plunge deeply into the abyss of the Absolute *and* bring that insight into the secular domain. They must renounce the desire to escape the world. They are to 'remain' in bhāvamukha. I believe that this is a vocation requiring a high degree of commitment and courage, the ability to proceed on one's own initiative, the ability to explore and to adapt and to create. It cannot be fulfilled by merely repeating a tradition. The wonderful thing about the Bhāva Interface is that it is where all the creativity takes place. It is the Śiva/Śakti dance of glory.

The Dance is an improvisation. No one can tell us exactly how to perform it in our time. This, of course, is the point. The Dance, as the Divine Mother is dancing it in our day, through our lives, has never been danced before. It passes through *our* consciousness, through our creative visions and actions. Therefore, we must be willing to let Her dance in us, *as we*, by ourselves being creative, taking initiative and bearing responsibility.

This is, in a way, a hard doctrine to hear and a hard path to embrace. It says to us that the forms of the world are not just illusions to be ignored. As Ramakrishna says explicitly and emphatically, 'It is God himself who has become...all that exists.' If God has chosen to express as the world, who are we to despise and neglect it?

Finally, this revelation says to us that it is not only a matter of an interface of the absolute and the relative, the formless and the forms; it is a *bhāva* interface, the creative zone of Divine Love. This means first, God's love for the world; secondly, our love for God; and thirdly, our love for each other. This fulfils the *bhāva* mood of God's dance—the 'ecstasy', the 'going out' of oneself to love the other; for when we love one another, God loves us and we love God, for it is God alone who is disporting as everything that exists.

Divine Mother said to Sri Ramakrishna,

'Remain in *bhāvamukha*', dwell in this zone of Divine Love moving in every possible way. As his spiritual children, we may inherit this particular invitation and in our time and place and circumstances strive to answer it.⁸ □

Advaita Non-duality
Īsvarakoti A perfected soul born with a special spiritual message for humanity. 'An Incarnation of God or one born with some of the characteristics of an Incarnation is called an *Īsvarakoti*.' (Sri Ramakrishna)

Nirguṇa lit. without attributes; referring to Brahman or Ultimate Reality, beyond conceivable powers of the mind and therefore indescribable.

Nirvikalpa Highest *samādhi*; realization of total oneness with God.

Sādhanā Practices leading to spiritual perfection.

Saguṇa lit. 'with attributes'; Brahman conceived of as with attributes; i.e. the Personal God.

Samādhi Ecstasy, trance, communion with God.

8. Portions of the first two and the last two pages coincide with my article, 'Remain in Bhavamukha' for Vedantic Free Press (USA), expected. Pages 3 and 4 share with my 'Life in Planetary Village', in *The Theosophist* (Madras), expected.

Surely, the path that leads to worldly gain is one, and the path that leads to Nibbana is another; understanding this, the bhikkhu, the disciple of the Buddha, should not rejoice in worldly favours, but cultivate detachment.

Buddhism, Dhammapada, 75

FROM OUR READERS

Dear Swami,

Thanks for sending me some issues. In one of them, you ask for input from your readers. I wish I could give you more specific input. I think the best way in finding out what the readers want to read about is to write about those things that you would like to read. Chances are high that most of your readers are interested in exactly the things you are interested in

The danger running a religious house organ is to remain too high level and abstract. I think, it's good to have a healthy mixture of abstractions and specific things. Also, there's a danger of carrying stories that may be politically correct but boring....A little controversial sting here and there should keep things lively.

31.5.94

E.U. Harding
California

Impact of the Ramakrishna Order and its Organ *Prabuddha Bharata*

Lord Krishna has promised that when *adharma* (irreligion) prevails, He manifests Himself to protect the good and punish the evil doers, and establish *dharma* (true religion). Further, the Lord has emphasized that all glorious things in the world are from a fragment of His splendour.

In the birth of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda we find the incarnation of God. Both did wonderful things in the world. Their teachings elevate even the wretched to aspire for a higher life, viz. spiritual attainment.

Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Tagore, Aurobindo, Tilak and others are the finest luminaries of our country. It was the will of God that

Swami Vivekananda, the disciple of Ramakrishna, should carry the torch of Indian Vedanta and enlighten the Western world with its universality and all-embracing nature. He inaugurated this from the platform of the World's Religious Meet at Chicago. All cynical views about India and her spirituality were erased out from the minds of the Western people. In fact, he laid the firm foundation for the future of India.

Eventoday, the Ramakrishna Mission and its Organ *Prabuddha Bharata* are doing yeoman service to the cause of World Unity, correct understanding of Vedanta and the various aspects of the different religions in the world. In India, until about three or four decades ago, the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda had not penetrated the interior regions of our country. Now it is not so, thanks to the efforts of the Mission and its Organ.

Prabuddha Bharata has become my constant companion for the last many years. The articles in the magazine opened the doors of the dark chamber of my mind, focussed the light on it and made me realize that religion is not confined to activities within the four walls, and all objects of nature are the manifestation of God; any harm done to them is a treachery, and loving the creatures of God is the primary lesson that one has to learn.

To conclude, the Magazine is spreading the message of devotion to God, emphasizes compassion for all animate objects of nature, encourages to view religion in a scientific manner, and to work for the welfare of humanity all over the world.

23.9.94

S.K. Nagappa
Thirthahalli, Karnataka

**HINDU-CHRISTIAN
INTERACTION**

pp. 381-404



The Mental and Mystical Journey of Fr. Bede Griffiths

FR. IGNATIUS HIRUDAYAM, S.J.

This is an inspiring study of Fr. Bede's (1906-1993) autobiography. Undoubtedly a great mystic, his frank and humble narration of his spiritual travelogue—from reason to faith to doubt and confusion, and then finally, through God's grace, up the steep ascent to illumination—explains many aspects of the Christian tradition which to the uninformed appear to be dogmas. Further, his life reaffirms that mystical life alone holds the key to religious harmony and peace.

Fr. Hirudayam, unable to send a fresh article because of indifferent health, kindly suggested we reprint this article from the Ashrama Aikiya, News-letter, of Sep. '93, adding: 'Fr. Bede Griffiths said he came to India to discover the other half of his soul. And this article develops that theme.' (For want of space, we have abridged the article without impairing its excellence.—Ed.)

Alan Richard was the youngest of the four children of the Griffiths family. After the preparatory school, the boys were sent to Christ's Hospital, which was a grammar school meant for the relief of the poor. His autobiography begins with the narration (in the Prologue) of a mystic experience during the last term at this school. 'Up to this time,' he says, 'I had lived the life of a normal school boy quite content with the world as I found it.'

Being encouraged to read and think for himself, he began with the romantic poets Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats. He says that he devoured with passionate enthusiasm the complete sets of Fielding, Jane Austen, Meredith, Conrad and Hardy. He soaked himself in Shakespeare and *Paradise Lost*, and he confesses that there was more of enthusiasm than discrimination in all this reading.

He read through Shakespeare's early comedies and histories, and through the critical period of *Troilus and Cressida* and *Measure for Measure*. But the tragedies culminating in *King Lear* gave him, he says,

what he felt was the most profound criticism of life. 'This was confirmed by the reading of the Greek tragedies of *Aeschylus* and *Sophocles*'. Giovanni Papini's *Story of Christ* and Tolstoy's *Kingdom of Heaven*, he says, filled him with a love of the 'Sermon on the Mount' and proposed the ideal of conduct. Bernard Shaw's sceptical attitude to Christianity made a profound impression. But he says that it was Shaw's master, Samuel Butler, who shook his faith more than anybody. Thus the whole course of his reading encouraged a sceptical attitude towards Christianity and a prejudice against any 'dogma'. That is to say, he did not believe in any authority beyond his own reason. He had his own code of behaviour—which must have been the cause of a great deal of repression. But of the existence of any moral law or of the meaning of sin he had no notion.

Such were the different influences when he experienced that kind of 'mystical exaltation in the presence of nature' during the last term of his school. Of that experience he says, 'I was suddenly made aware of

another world of beauty and mystery....It began to wear a kind of sacramental character for me....

At Oxford

From school, with a scholarship, he went up to Oxford in October 1925. After taking classical Honour Moderation, instead of going on to what is called Greats, which would have meant reading some philosophy he decided to turn to English Literature hoping, as he says, to come nearer to truth for which he was seeking. He had the good fortune to have C. S. Lewis as his tutor, who became his friend and guide. He was seeking a state of ecstasy like Keats. His two great friends were Hugh Waterman and Martyn Skinner.

Sense of that Presence

The three friends escaped whenever it was possible into the surrounding country. When they had finished their time at Oxford, they went on a motor tour starting from Cambridge up to the Lake District of Wordsworth to find communion with nature. 'There', he says, 'I went once alone among the hills, when a mist began to gather and I felt myself alone in that mysterious solitude as though I had been at the bottom of the sea cut off from all the haunts of men; and once again the sense of that Presence which I had experienced at school took possession of me. But such experiences were never more than transitory....

'One year, when we camped on the West Coast of Ireland, we could go out alone each day and find some place where we could sit in solitude and read or write or just meditate....in some obscure way without knowing it, we were seeking God.' They thought in terms of Keats of the later version of *Hyperion*, who had learnt that he must leave behind the beauty of the senses and emotions, and discover the beauty that comes from suffering which has been accepted....

'These were the inspirations of our lives,' he said. 'To feel all the forces of evil, allow it to enter into the very depths of one's being and to conquer it by not resisting it, this seemed to us the height of perfection, and this is what we felt had been realized in the death of Christ. We did not believe in the Resurrection. Christ's death had given meaning to life just as Shakespeare and Beethoven had given new meaning to life. Keats' idea of "dying into life", as the expression of that mystery, underlies all great poetry and all great art, but we were far from realizing its implication in our own lives. Reason without imagination and without morality were two sources of evil in human life and in our civilization in particular.'

The climax of the story turned on the answer of Christ to the question of the High Priest, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' and he replied unequivocally: 'I am.'

Another friend, Hugh L'Anson Fausset, lent them D. H. Lawrence's *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and some of his novels, and he began to see more clearly into the causes of the disease of modern civilization. 'I had been living,' he says, 'all through my life at school and at Oxford on my conscious mind, and the unconscious life of instinct had been habitually repressed.' Lawrence revealed 'the power of sex as one of the poles of our being, which can only be suppressed at the risk of destruction.' Lawrence taught that sex is essentially holy, sacred. The evil of immorality is the profanation of something sacred. With all our science and reason, morality lost this sense of the 'holy', and therefore our works were ugly and our mind sterile.

Friendship of C.S. Lewis

'When I came down from Oxford, C.S. Lewis advised me to read some philosophy

to make up for my not having read Greats....When I was reading philosophy I kept up a constant correspondence with him and it was through him my mind was gradually brought back to Christianity....'

Bede started philosophy with Descartes' *Meditations* and *Discourse of Method*. He went on from him to Spinoza, a philosopher (he adds) 'after my own heart'. He had, moreover, begun to read the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius. Now he began to read Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*. Berkeley, being a bishop, claimed a certain respect and gave a hint of being a bit orthodox.

'I saw quite clearly,' he says, 'that it was absolutely impossible to conceive of things existing without a mind to know them, that

tory over passion there is something greater than tragedy. Not by surrender to passion, not by suppression, but by its transformation was the victory of life and of love to be won....

'My mind was moving now towards the thirteenth century as the supreme period of European art and philosophy, and already I began to see the Renaissance as the initial stage in the decline of the culture and spread of civilization of which we were witnessing the last stages. I was travelling on my own with very little guidance. The effort of thought was so intense, the desire for a new life which I experienced was so fervent, the light which I received penetrated so deeply into my mind that the marks of it remain in my soul. I still feel it as part of a *living process* of *thought* which has never ceased.'

'I did not clearly understand what repentance was nor was I aware of any particular sin of which I had to repent. It was simply that the unrest in my soul had turned from discontent with the world to a feeling of discontent with myself.'

things were essentially ideas, ideas not of our minds but of that universal mind or spirit of the universe.' But, going beyond Spinoza, he asserted, 'God was mind, a pure Spirit', and he recognized that 'the eternal Spirit' of Berkeley was 'one with that *presence* which I had experienced in nature, and now, for the first time, I perceived that it might have some relation with the God of Christian orthodoxy. This was a momentous event in my life.'

St. Augustine and Dante

Two books which now engaged his attention were the *Confessions of St. Augustine* and the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. In St. Augustine he first heard of the 'Catholic Church'. 'St. Augustine took his place in my mind along with Marcus Aurelius and Spinoza, and I felt no more called on to be a Christian than to be a Jew or an ancient Roman...Dante showed me that in the vic-

Three other books of a totally different order entered into the current of his thought at this time. They were the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Buddha's Way of Life* (a version of the *Dhammapada*) and the sayings of Lao Tzu (a version of the *Tao Te Ching*) in the *Wisdom of the East* series. 'They were to act as a secret ferment in my soul and to colour my thought almost without my knowing it. The Buddha and Lao Tzu took their place with Socrates, Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius, along with the Christ of the "Sermon on the Mount".'

Experiment in Common Life

From April 1930, the three friends passed at a single bound from complexities of the twentieth century civilization to a life which was primeval in its simplicity in a small Cotswold village. Here they learnt the differences between culture and civilization.

While civilization is concerned with the

continual extension of material luxury, often at the cost of the health and happiness of those who work for it, a culture like that of the Cotswold is based first of all on the necessities of human life, on need for food, clothing and shelter. On this basis it builds up a network of human industry in which the skill of human hand is employed in cooperation with nature. A culture was an organic growth in which man and nature work together in profound harmony which satisfied the deepest instincts of the human heart. Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*, which were the first books he began to read at this time, confirmed this conception. Thus beneath the economic and political structure he was led to study the religion which had sustained it for so many centuries.

Bible Before Breakfast

It was in these circumstances that he began to read the Bible before breakfast, as was suggested by Hugh. He seemed to be touching the very heart of the revelation of the Old Testament. It was not a rational explanation of the nature of God in the manner of Spinoza. It was the record of an experience of meeting with God, the supreme reality which had changed men's lives. When God spoke to Abraham, when Moses met Him in the Burning Bush, when Samuel heard Him calling, these were events of vital significance which determined the lives of men and peoples. They were experiences of the soul which gave a new meaning to existence. That was why they had such poetic character.

The message of the Hebrew prophets came with the force of a revelation, a judgement on our own civilization which was not merely an offence against beauty and truth but an offence against the moral order of the universe. The breakdown of morality, the exploitation of the poor by the rich and all this was traced by the prophets to the people's rejection of God and their subjection to the material world. The source of evil

was to be found in the human mind rising up against God, whose will is the ultimate source of all human happiness.

The Beginning of Faith

Chapter five of the Autobiography is entitled 'The Beginning of Faith'.

He relates how he began the *New Testament* with St. Mark's *Gospel* because he expected to find there the figure of the human Christ free from all the accretions of later legend. He found the human figure certainly, but 'with this element of realism and of living humanity there was that of the supernatural which was no less evident, nor was this something which could be easily detached leaving the human figure unimpaired. The human teaching which I had always loved' was implicated with supernatural claims of an astounding kind which had the same quality of authentic utterance. The authentic speech was intimately related to the facts which were recorded so that the one could not be separated from the other. The climax of the story turned on the answer of Christ to the question of the High Priest, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' and he replied unequivocally: 'I am.' It was clearly impossible to dismiss this as an accretion; it was the keystone in the structure of the whole. The evidence for the Resurrection in St. Mark was of the same factual character as the rest.

When he turned to St. Matthew and St. Luke he found in them the same kind of actuality as in St. Mark though there was not quite the same realism. Matthew was nearer to the original speech of Christ, particularly in the 'Sermon on the Mount'. The structure of St. Matthew was different but there was the inner coherence, the sense of an organic whole. Luke was a Greek writing for the Greeks, but there were elements in his *Gospel* which were clearly as authentic as anything in St. Matthew or St. Mark. 'When I came to compare the different accounts of the Resurrection...I came back to the overwhelming

impression of truthfulness, that quality which I sought in all literature.'

Then he turned to St. John's *Gospel*, different not only in point of view and whole style and character, yet close to the actuality of history, as St. Mark. He says, 'I realized that to reject this would be to reject the greatest thing in all human experience; on the other hand, to accept it would be to change one's whole point of view. It would be to pass from reason and philosophy to faith, to place oneself with St. Augustine and with Dante. The true meaning of the Gospels would only be seen as a living whole, and Christian traditions could give this sense of the whole by which all the apparently conflicting elements were integrated. Might there not be a sense of the whole, a spiritual perception by which the inner meaning of the Gospel would be revealed?'

Our Problem and St. Paul

But before he had to answer this question, he had begun to read St. Paul, and here a new experience awaited him. In Paul's condemnation of the pagan world, one could not but see a condemnation of our civilization. Paul was facing the problem more profoundly. It was the insufficiency of conscience and morality which Paul was proclaiming. Paul's way out was love, something more than human love; it was a gift of God, a means of transcending the limitations of human love. And the substitute for imagination was faith, the 'very thing which we had been blindly seeking with our theory of imagination. Would not faith be the reaching out of the human will toward the universal will, the discernment of its presence in the person of Christ?'

'By now I was prepared to face St. Paul's doctrine of Original Sin. I remember writing a long letter to Lewis on the text: "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I. Cor.). There is an organic unity in mankind; we all inherit the same nature and we all receive the promise of a

new nature in Christ.' And he adds, 'It was then that for the first time the real meaning of the Church dawned on my mind. Now I realized that the Church was nothing less than a new humanity. It was a social organism of which Christ was the "head" and all men were potentially its members.'

'I began to read Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*. I had accepted the common opinion of a corrupt ecclesiastical system which had been cleaned up by the Reformation. Now when I read the pages of Bede's *History of the Church of England* from the earliest times, my whole perspective was changed. The Church in the seventh century, to which Bede belonged, the discovery that the Church of England had been founded by a Roman Pope, and the first Archbishops of Canterbury and York had been sent from Rome came as a new light to me.

'That night, before I went to bed, I opened a book by St. John of the Cross and read in it the words, "I will lead thee by a way thou knowest not to the secret chamber of love."'

'And I went on to read Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. This inevitably struck me with tremendous force. For Newman had followed the same path as I had been following. I would have to visit a Roman Catholic Church. I remember my mother once said that nothing would give her greater pain than that any one she loved should become a Roman Catholic. Little did I know that I whom she loved so much was to be the cause of this pain to her. But a visit to Roman Catholic Church and conversation with the young priest proved a great disappointment.'

The Conflict

In Chapter Six of his autobiography he speaks of the Conflict he underwent in his

mind. He says:

'I had a strong inclination to fasting. My reason often counselled me to give way, especially as I began to grow incredibly thin and weak, but at the same time I felt a constant renewal of spiritual power and a deep longing for prayer which increased from day to day—which seemed almost miraculous.

'I had bought a book of Bishop Ken...and in it I read some word about the need of repentance. Up to this time...behind all my fervour and enthusiasm there had been an intense egoism I acknowledge no real authority over myself. My religion was based on my own reason and my own will, and though I had come theoretically to accept the authority of the Church it had *no* real effect on me.

'Now for the first time I felt an overwhelming *need to repent*. I did not clearly understand what repentance was nor was I aware of any particular *sin* of which I had to repent. It was simply that the unrest in my soul had turned from discontent with the world to a feeling of discontent with myself. There was nothing conscious or deliberate about it, it *came to me* as a *command* and I kept saying to myself, scarcely knowing the meaning of what I said, "I must repent, I must repent"...

'I went therefore to my room and began to pray kneeling on the floor beside the bed, and immediately a furious conflict started in my mind. Reason and common sense versus an irrational impulse. My first experience of the beauty and mystery of nature had been confirmed by my reading of the poets and then of the philosophers. My discovery of Christianity had also gone on rational lines; at each stage I had seemed to find the book which I needed to satisfy both my reason and my instinct for beauty and holiness. And now this call to repentance had come as an apparently irrational urge and my reason rose against it. Which was I to obey?

'It was indeed the turning point of my

life. I had to surrender myself into the hands of a power which was above my reason. Yet this power presented itself as nothing but darkness, as an utter blank. In this state of mind I had but one resource. In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ had faced the utter darkness of death. This hour had come on me. I could only place myself beside him and wait for the night to pass. Once I had made up my mind not to listen to reason, the conflict ceased. Keeping my mind fixed on the figure of Christ, I managed to endure until it was morning. But as I was leaving my room I suddenly heard a voice say: "You must go to a retreat." '

Made a Retreat

'The message came to me as a direct inspiration. I went to the Anglo-Catholic church and asked if there was such a thing as a retreat to which I could go. "Yes, there is one beginning this morning at Westminster House." I found it to be a house of the Cowley Fathers. The repentance for which I had blindly asked the night before now came over me like a flood. I went to confession for the first time in my life and tears poured from my eyes, tears of a kind which I had never known before. When I went into the Church and heard the chanting of the Psalms it seemed that the words were being spoken in the depths of my own soul and were the utterance of my prayer. It was as though I had been given a new power of vision. When I looked at the crucifix on the wall, the figure on it seemed to be a living person. When I went outside, I hardly felt the ground as I trod. When I returned to the house I went to my room and took up the *New Testament* and read St. John: "Not that we loved God but that He loved us."

'That night before I went to bed I opened a book by St. John of the Cross and read in it the words, "I will lead thee by a way thou knowest not to the secret chamber of love." And now I felt that love take possession of my soul...not only my soul but also my

body. My body seemed to dissolve as things about me had done, and felt light and buoyant. When I lay down I felt as though I might float on the bed, and I experienced such rapture that I could imagine no ecstasy of love beyond it.'

When he returned home the troubles had only increased. The old passion for fasting returned and the thought of watching and praying at night. 'I seemed to see the darkness opening up in front of me again and something seemed to urge me to cast myself into it. But I drew back in fear.' He turned to the mystics to find some help. 'After I had left the Cowley Fathers the glow of feeling had remained with me for some time and

all to put my life in His hand and to trust Him alone....Now I determined to do what an obscure impulse had been urging me to do all the time, to pray without reserve and not to rise from my knees until I had received an answer. I shut myself in a little closet which opened out of the room where there was only a skylight. Then I placed myself in imagination at the foot of the cross and began to pray with all my strength. Immediately I seemed to be carried away by a great wave of prayer and I lost consciousness of everything else. Almost immediately it seemed that an answer came. It was so simple...I must not try to live as I had been doing but to take work on the farm and work

'But something happened to me then in the depths of my soul which determined the rest of my life...Beyond all thought and feeling and imagination, there is an inner sanctuary into which we scarcely enter. It is the ground or substance of the soul where all the faculties have their roots and which is the very centre of our being.'

when it faded, I was left with a permanent sense of the presence of God in everything which I saw and heard...I did not seem so much to act for myself as to let an unseen power act within me.

'I did not know how to decide to think and act for myself. Thus the need for some guide, some authority on which I could rely became ever more pressing. I began to doubt exactly what I believed about God. Was He truly a Person as Christian writers maintained, or might He not be conceived impersonally like Brahman, or, again, might not the absolute reality be simply a state like the Nirvana of the Buddha? Thus my mind was gradually reduced to chaos...and I was lost in confusion. At last I decided that I must make a new start.'

He spent two or three months in this way trying one thing and then another and never finding any peace. 'At last I was reduced to despair...Then it came into my mind that I must turn to God and find out His will at whatever cost...I determined now once for

out my purpose in this way. This was revealed to me with perfect clarity and certainty.'

When he rose from his knees he found that he had been completely unconscious of the passage of time totally absorbed in prayer from 8 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon. 'But something happened to me,' he says, 'then in the depths of my soul which determined the rest of my life.' And he goes on to explain, 'Beyond all thought and feeling and imagination, there is an inner sanctuary into which we scarcely ever enter. It is the ground or substance of the soul where all the faculties have their roots and which is the very centre of our being. It is here that the soul is at all times in direct contact with God. It was into this region that I believe I was drawn at this time, and my will in the silent depths of its being reached out to the will of God.'

He took work on a farm and life was normal. It happened that he bought a copy of Newman's *Development of Christian*

Doctrine. He found Newman turning all his learning and all his powers of exegesis to showing that the Church of the Scriptures and the Fathers was none other than the Church of Rome...that it had a continuous history from the time of the Apostles to the present day. Newman showed that the Church was the Body of which Christ was the Head, founded by Christ and inspired by his Spirit and so infallible.

It only remained for him to make contact with the Catholic Church. The Catholic priest (pointed out by his bookseller) lent him R.H. Benson's *Christ in the Church* and the *Friendship of Christ*, which showed how Christ continues to live and act through the social organism of the Church and how he is none the less present to each individual soul, revealing himself as its friend and lover.

The Monastic Community

Father Palmer introduced him to the monastery in the neighbourhood. It was Prinknash priory with thirty monks, whose Prior was Father Benedict Steuart. He was invited to stay as long as he liked. He stayed for six weeks mostly reading in the library. Father Steuart answered all his questions. He was received into the Church on Christmas Eve 1931 and made his first Communion at midnight Mass in the little Church at Winchcombe.

In less than a month after his reception into the Church, he entered the monastery to try his vocation as a monk. Abbot Marmion's *Christ the Ideal of the Monk* was read again and again till the ideal took complete possession of him. He was given a year's postulancy. He was clothed as a novice on 20th December 1933. He was given the monastic name of Bede after St. Bede whose history had meant so much, a name for which he has won an international reputation by his writings. His first name has not found a single mention in the autobiography. He made his simple profes-

sion on 21st December 1934, and his solemn profession on 21st December 1937. Soon he was made the guest master of the monastery.

Benedictine Life

Father Bede Griffiths, in Chapter Nine, 'The Work of God', defines contemplation as a habit of mind which enables the soul to keep in a state of recollection in the presence of God whatever may be the work with which we are occupied, and he describes Benedictine centuries and the Benedictine life accordingly. In an Epilogue he declares that, from the earliest times it seems to have been understood that our life in this world is a journey towards God. He refers to Karl Jasper's theory of the axial period of human history.

And finally, 'Perhaps no modern writer has fathomed the depths of suffering in the human soul with such insight as Dostoevsky in the *Brothers Karamazov*. If we are ever to find peace either in ourselves or in the world, we shall have to learn again that ancient wisdom which alone can give man peace with nature and with God, and which was summed up by Dostoevsky in the words of the Prior of the Monastery (or was it not Father Zozima?) where the Brothers Karamazov met: "Brothers have no fear of men's sin. Love a man even in his sin, for that is the semblance of divine love, and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf and every ray of God's light. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love."'

Thus with a prologue and an epilogue Fr. Bede Griffiths' mental and mystical travelogue was completed in 1951. With the permission of the Abbot of Prinknash he came to India intending to found a Benedictine monastery. After two years of fruitless effort, he joined Father Francis Mahieu

(Acharya) in 1958 and established the Kurisimala Ashram.

Christian Ashram was the first book to come from his pen eleven years after the *Golden String*; it was published first in England and then in the U.S. with the name changed to *Christ in India*. The long Introduction in it takes up his autobiography again and throws light and insights to enrich the story of his life. For instance, during the First World War he comes in contact with Indian soldiers and learns that the Sikhs as a rule neither drink nor smoke. And later under the influence of Tolstoy he read about Lenin and Gandhi and felt how Lenin, with his belief in violence, materialism and mass organization, 'stood for everything which I disliked, while Gandhi with his faith in non-violence and truth (*ahimsa* and *satya*), the spinning wheel and the village community, stood for all that I admired.'

In 1931 Gandhi went to London to the Round Table Conference, and Alan Richard was staying in Bethnal Green, not far from

democracy and humanism will prevail, but (he adds categorically) it becomes more and more clear that modern civilization has no answer to give as to the ultimate meaning of life. It has lost sight of its goal which all the ancient cultures held steadily before their eyes, and therefore beneath all its external achievements there is a growing sense of emptiness and of the meaninglessness of life. The problem is how we are to recover the sense of the absolute, of an unconditioned to which we can commit ourselves, of an ultimate meaning in the apparent meaninglessness of life. The answer to this problem, it seems to me, can only come through a meeting of East and West; neither can solve it by itself...It is only when this meeting of religions has taken place that an adequate spirituality will be found for the needs of the modern world.

'It is this meeting between the orthodox tradition of Christianity (whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant in form) and the spiritual tradition of India (whether Hindu,

'It is this meeting between the orthodox tradition of Christianity (whether Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant in form) and the spiritual tradition of India (whether Hindu, Buddhist or Jain) and also Islam, especially in its mystical tradition in which it stands to some extent between the two, which seems to me to be the great need of the world today.'

where Gandhi was staying. But the deep spiritual crisis at the time, which led to his becoming a monk soon after, prevented his seeing him. But Gandhi and his conception of life remained fixed in his mind as an ideal which never left him. The spiritual principles which underlay Gandhi's way of life by reading the *Bhagavad-Gītā* became the first introduction to Indian spirituality, and it left an indelible impression on his mind

Buddhist or Jain) and also Islam, especially in its mystical tradition in which it stands to some extent between the two, which seems to me to be the great need of the world today.' And he affirms: 'For a Christian the meeting of religions can only take place in Christ, because in Him is found the meeting point of the relative and the absolute, of time and eternity, of the one and the many, of God and man.'

Meeting of East and West Called For

There is another clarification he makes: 'No one can doubt that modern civilization with its science and technology, its

The Hope of the Future

'The hope of the future would seem to lie with the small communities...consisting of men and women, married and single, seek-

ing a new style of life which will be in harmony with nature and with the inner law of the Spirit....It is to such a community that, now at the end of my life, the Golden String has led me. It was put into my hand while I was still a boy at school, and led me first to the discovery of God, then to the discovery of Christ and the Church. I thought then that I had reached the end of my journey, but then it led me to India and a whole new understanding of the world opened before me. It was not I who was leading but that something was leading me. Now it has led me to the point where I have to become a Sannyasi.'

Fr. Bede proposes a paradigm for a synthesis or a unifying plan, and invites Christianity also to a new enlargement of its horizon, which would involve a recognition of the limited character of its original revelation. 'Christianity,' he declares, 'is a unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ and, although it was conditioned by the circumstances of its origin, the revelation has unique message for the whole world.' 'But this message does not mean the imposition of the structure which it has developed during the centuries of its growth in the West. This structure, including the papacy and the episcopacy, has to be subjected to a restructuring along with the development of a new theology, so that a cosmic, universal religion can emerge in which the essential values of the Christian religion will be preserved in living relationship with the other religious traditions of the world. This is a task for the coming centuries as the present world order breaks down and a new

world order emerges from the ashes of the old.' He ends his book (*A New Vision of Reality*) with these words.

Journey Not Ended

Fr. Bede thought his whole life was journey seeking God, but in point of fact—and Bede acknowledges it—it had been the journey of God seeking him, very often putting in his hands books needed just at that time and, sometimes, as in the life of Abraham, directly intervening and giving him a new command.

Fr. Bede Griffiths was called to his reward on 13th May 1993, but the journey of God that began with his birth on 17th December 1906 has not ended. From the life of one particular person it has widened into a world movement. The basic Christian communities of India called Ashrams have to continue this journey in the coming centuries, gently and discerningly. This is the message given by his demise before his bodily eyes could see his last book, *Universal Wisdom*, coming out of the press. This perhaps was symbolically expressed over twenty years ago, when he and I were conducting two seminars for formators of various religious congregations at the Christa Prema Seva Ashram at Pune, when a devout Hindu ascetic composed for us the *mantra*:

Aum

Namah Sri Christa Devaya

Divya Pavitriya Rupine

Prasanna Prema Rupaya

Santi Rupaya Te Namah □

Beware of...hypocrisy. There is nothing covered up, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known. Wherefore whatsoever ye have said in the darkness shall be hard in the light; and what ye have spoken in the ear in the inner chambers shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

—Christ, *Matt. x. 26–7; Mark iv.22.*

Hundred Years of Hindu-Christian Dialogue

FR. JOHN B. CHETHIMATTAM CMI

The Message of Lord Jesus took roots in India through the efforts of St. Thomas nearly two thousand years ago. Since then Christianity has grown through various stages, contributing significantly to the national life. At the same time, it has got influenced by the Hindu spiritual traditions. In this article the liberal-minded scholar—of Dharmaram College, Bangalore—studies the history and nature of the Christian-Hindu interaction against the background of the fundamentals which theologians have identified as the basis for their international interreligious dialogue. He has also dealt with future possibilities, the Christian views on religious harmony and the eight issues that remain to be tackled before achieving greater harmony.

We have added footnotes only where it was felt essential to state the correct Vedantic position.

Hinduism and Christianity have existed side by side in India for almost two millennia, since St. Thomas, an immediate disciple of Jesus brought the Gospel to India in AD 52. But there was very little dialogue between the two religions, since Christians were automatically accommodated in the caste hierarchy of the country with very little mobility among castes. Only within the last few centuries, since the European colonial powers appeared on the scene and tried to use religion as a political tool, there emerged an active interaction between the two religions, and most of it in the past hundred years. The approach of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British missionaries was rather condemnatory of Indian religions and social abuses like child-marriage and widow-burning. The Hindu response, particularly of reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy and Kesub Chundra Sen was rather positive, aimed at achieving effective reform of the Hindu society. Only starting with the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, and with people like Swami Vivekananda and S. Radhakrishnan who went on the offensive against Western Christianity, did a real discussion of religious issues between the two

major religions of the world start in earnest.

The Christian outlook on Hinduism went through various stages of appreciation. The initial view was stated in J.N. Farquhar's *The Crown of Hinduism*, in which, acknowledging that religions like Hinduism and Buddhism had some basic truths, the author contended that these religions, based mostly on tradition rather than on rational thought, could not survive a crisis. The next position, which emerged after World War I, in which all rational systems failed, was that all religious systems including Hinduism and Christianity had to be evaluated in the light of the unique historical, divine revelation in Jesus Christ. The missionary conference at Tambaram, 1938, stated that one had to die to Hinduism and other 'natural' religions in order to experience the 'supernatural' divine self-disclosure in Jesus Christ. But with the loss of faith in history in the trauma of the Second World War, emphasis shifted to an existential encounter with God in Jesus Christ, the incarnate divine Logos. There was much recognition of the Hindu emphasis that religious faith is basically an experience of the Divine in the cave of one's heart, and that it could not be

exhausted by conceptual formulations and external structures of social control. An earnest effort was made by Christian theologians to discover their own ultimate concerns also in other religions and to look at them through the eyes of the respective followers of each religion. A significant sign of this deep appreciation of the Indian religious ideals was the emergence of the Christian ashram movement, which saw a good number of prominent Europeans like Bede Griffiths, Monchanin and Les Saux introduce in Christianity the unique ideals of sannyasa practised in India first by the Jains and the Buddhists and later embraced by

was an appreciation of Indian ideals of religious life, the Ramakrishna Mission obviously adopted the efficient ideals of social work from a deeply religious point of view exemplified by the Christian religious orders and congregations of the West.²

The Presentday Situation of Dialogue

One fact of the present age is the presence of the great many religions that have come to world consciousness particularly after the Second World War. There is a general acknowledgement that all major religions are endeavouring to provide answers to the ultimate existential questions, principally

There is a general acknowledgement that all major religions are endeavouring to provide answers to the ultimate existential questions, principally the human bafflement at the phenomena of life and nature, the meaning and role of suffering, and the existence of evil in the world of a good and all powerful God. No one can hope that one's particular belief system is going to replace all others in any foreseeable future. So the question for all believers including Christians is how to relate to other religions.

Hinduism as well.¹ This emphasized the need of a reflective approach to religious truths far removed from the conceptual gymnastics of academic theology. A good number of Christian theologians have made great efforts to express Christian faith in Indian idioms to make it an authentic expression of Indian cultural experience.

From the Hindu side, starting with Ram-mohan Roy and other Hindu reformers, there was a deep appreciation of Christian morality set forth in the Sermon on the Mount and the whole of New Testament. People like Kesub Chundra Sen and Pratap Chunder Majumdar introduced ecumenical movements in Hinduism with titles like the 'New Dispensation' and 'Brahmo Samaj', which recognized the unique personality of Jesus as a universal teacher and even as an 'avatar'. If the Christian ashram movement

the human battlement at the phenomena of life and nature, the meaning and role of suffering, and the existence of evil in the world of a good and all powerful God. No one can hope that one's particular belief system is going to replace all others in any foreseeable future. So the question for all believers including Christians is how to relate to other religions. The sad fact is that most religions are rather exclusivist in their attitude. For centuries isolated in their own traditions, they never gave a thought to other religious traditions. Each one of them thought that its religion alone was the true one—otherwise why should people embrace this religion and not the others?—

1. The ideal of sannyasa is of Vedic origin.—Ed.

2. 'The efficient ideals of social work from a deeply religious point of view' is implicit in Karma Yoga, and in the socio-religious commitment enjoined on every householder by the Vedas by prescribing such duties as *iṣṭa*, *pūrta*, *datta*, and the *pañca-yajñas*.—Ed.

and that all other religions were wrong or inadequate.

For Christianity this is particularly significant, since according to the New Testament, Jesus stated: 'Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' (Matt. 11:26-27; Lk 10:21-22). Similarly at the Last Supper he tells the disciples: 'I am the Way; the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through me.' (Jn 14:6). So how can the Buddhist or Hindu go to God since they do not approach him through Jesus? But today there is an understanding from the part of Biblical scholarship that Jesus' statement is more complex than it appears. He is addressing a particular context in which he is saying that only the simple of heart could receive his message, and that only through the Father could any one reach him. This means that the simple

he wills the salvation of all his children. The divine economy of salvation for all human beings is one, and faith is a divine gift which cannot be deserved or merited by any one. All religions are actually elaborations of that faith into the differing coordinates of human existence. Some emphasize the historical character of human existence, others the metaphysical view of reality, and yet others the sociological and psychological dimensions. Hence, religious pluralism is a fact today, and it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

But there are different kinds of pluralism which all cannot be said to be equally valid. At one extreme is the Buddhist view that all these religions with their differing metaphysics are just efforts of blind men to draw a composite picture of the great transcendental elephant of the Deity. We can place at the opposite extreme the Jain *anekāntavāda* and *syādvāda* which say that all religions contain partial truths and that they

With the thousands of new religions movements, which recently emerged even within major religions, proposing and promoting radically different doctrinal concerns, it may be practically impossible to reduce them all into some kind of unity. All that can be expected is to devise strategies to bring out their relevance to the basic human concerns and institute a meaningful dialogue among them.

of heart go directly to God and through him come to the understanding of the Son and that from the realization of that sonship they appreciate better God's paternity. As Peter told Cornelius and his companions at Caesarea: God has no partiality for any one; any one who seeks him in sincerity is acceptable to him. It is to the disciples who feel lonely and abandoned at the imminent departure of the Master that he says that he is still the Way, the Truth and Life.

What cannot, however, be denied is that there is only one God for all religions, for believers as well as non-believers, and that

have to pool together their experiences towards forming one Great Religion. They use the Buddhist analogy of blindmen trying to describe the elephant to show that each religion has at least a partial experience of the ultimate meaning of life. But the problem with the example is that, for the blind men to know that they are dealing with the same animal, some one with eyes should tell them so. Between these two extremes there are a number of shades of unity in plurality. Though all religions are discussing the same existential questions of human life and are relative to the ultimate reality, they are not relative to each other. Though a Hindu's

understanding of God may not be perfect he is not expected to go next door and consult his Muslim neighbour to learn from him how to perfect his faith. After all, no one's understanding of the infinite divine reality can be absolute, and nor even by pooling together everyone's understanding can a perfect understanding be produced. Buddhism pointed out, that the scope of religion is attaining a perfect understanding not of God, but rather of the meaning of human life, and that God would come into the picture only as the ultimate source, ground and goal of the human strivings. As Rabbi Abraham Hoeschel once remarked, religion is not an ontology of God for man, but rather an anthropology of man for God.

As for an understanding among religions, an approach through actual religious praxis may be the best way. A direct encounter with each other's belief systems may not be the most appropriate strategy. Their underlying philosophies are so radically different that any one of them cannot hope to replace others, nor can a synthesis be made of all of them. We are in a far worse situation than the one Siddhartha Gautama Buddha faced with the sixty-five metaphysical schools to interpret ultimate reality. With the thousands of new religious movements, which recently emerged even within major religions, proposing and promoting radically different doctrinal concerns, it may be practically impossible to reduce them all into some kind of unity. All that can be expected is to devise strategies to bring out their relevance to the basic human concerns and institute a meaningful dialogue among them. When we examine, however, the broad outline of religious praxis especially on the level of moral behaviour, there may not be much that divide believers of one tradition from those of another. To love one's fellow human beings as part of the total orientation of life to its ultimate goal

and meaning is the basic concern of all religions

Hence the focus of interreligious dialogue has shifted from the doctrinal to the practical level. Formerly each religion and sect was exclusivist in its approach to others. The assumption was: we alone have the truth; others are actually in error or at best have only the rudiments of truth. From this a generous shift was made to inclusivism, which conceded that others also had the truth, but in a less developed manner. So, with condescension followers of one religion tried to interpret the others from their own specific angle. This too had to be abandoned as too arrogant a claim, and pluralism was the result. But pluralism itself now appears rather contradictory and irrelevant when viewed within the one religious history of humanity, and the one divine economy of salvation for all human beings.

Perhaps the crucial concepts in the inter-religious relationship are 'understanding' and 'faith.' Often, in the perspective of comparative religion, to understand any religion was to reduce it to a bunch of concepts regarding God, salvation, cult and the like. 'His' faith was his 'ideas' and the 'system' within which he understood and presented them. One can properly 'understand' another's faith only by identifying oneself with it. A Muslim's faith has to be seen as 'my' faith rather than 'his' faith, since it is my basic religious concern that he also is expressing through his belief system. Faith itself is differently understood by different religions. For some it is identical with belief, the sum total of truths one accepts on divine authority. For others it is total trust and confidence in God who discloses himself in words and deeds. Yet others will talk of faith outside the inter-personal relationship as taking one's whole life in hand and making a leap in the dark. What is important is to

take a comprehensive view of all concerns brought together under the concept of faith, particularly the crucial role it plays in human salvation. Since belief itself is a translation into practical concerns of the basic commitment of faith, one has to be critical of the accuracy of such translation. This self-criticism has to be extended to other religions also.

The Central Issues in Hindu-Christian Dialogue

The Hindu-Christian dialogue has been going on in the past hundred years on a number of different levels. On the most popular level it was the coexistence of Hin-

of the Sermon on the Mount and work against the social abuses prevalent among Indian masses, as long as they did not have to change their religious allegiance. Missionaries on the other hand, found the essence of religion not in a few observances but in a personal commitment to God in the personality of the Son of God made incarnate. People like Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya argued that one could not accept Jesus as a true guru, without at the same time also recognizing that this Jesus of Nazareth was really divine. For the guru really made the Divine actually present to the disciple. This called for the total surrendering of oneself totally to the Master.

Hindus who placed the essence and primary scope of religion in self-development and self-realization, were most willing to accept all the moral precepts of the Sermon on the Mount and work against the social abuses prevalent among Indian masses, as long as they did not have to change their religious allegiance. Missionaries on the other hand, found the essence of religion not in a few observances but in a personal commitment to God in the personality of the Son of God made incarnate.

dus and Christians in the same community participating in each other's feasts and celebrations. In fact in some parts like Kerala the Christians had the peculiar task of removing the pollution contracted by high caste Hindus from the low castes, and for this specific purpose the rajas had brought Christian families and given them lands and other privileges. On the political level different communal groups formed alliances of convenience to gain each one's political and social goals. But the need for dialogue was felt very much on the doctrinal level. One of the first questions raised in the dialogue between the Hindu reformers and the Christian missionaries was whether the emphasis should be on the praxis of religion and morality or on the personality of the religious founder. Hindus who placed the essence and primary scope of religion in self-development and self-realization, were most willing to accept all the moral precepts

A second serious issue for discussion between Hindus and Christians was the very approach to the Divine. The actual approach to the Divine in both the Greek and the Indian traditions is through the absolutization of the basic idea of experience. The Greeks perceived the world as being, and when that being was projected into absolute perfection it was conceived as supreme Being. According to Plotinus this absolute Being had to be also infinite and one. The Vedantic thinkers found consciousness the basic common factor of all experience. When all limits and imperfections were removed from this basic consciousness it became in-

3. The Divine, according to Advaita Vedanta, is pure Consciousness, devoid of individualized self-consciousness, i.e. devoid of the ordinarily experienced awareness of oneself as a self-conscious individual distinct from others and other things.—Ed.

finite and immutable consciousness. 'One-alone-without-a-second', which was considered the best definition of the Divine. This consciousness is pure light shining by itself, and hence is even without self-consciousness.³ Both these are naturally projections of basic experience.

For Christians a more natural approach to the ultimate Reality is from the spontaneous interpersonal human relationships. Though the father-son and lover-beloved relationships among humans are limited and tainted with the imperfections of dependence and duality, these limitations can be removed and the relationships themselves projected to picture the divinity. The Christian theology of the Trinity postulates an inner relationship of persons within the one, infinite and immutable divinity. This introduces a new category of 'person' which is radically different from the categories of being, truth, goodness and beauty which belong to the field of essence. Person signifies total receptivity and total availability. The Son receives the whole nature from the Father, and love demands total self-surrender. In both cases the giver in giving does not lose anything. The same interpersonal relationship is indicated in the veneration of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the mother of God. When the 'person', who is the Son of God, attaches to himself a complete human nature and is really born as a human being, he has a real relationship to the human person from whom he received the human nature. So, in calling Mary the Mother of God, Christians are emphasizing the social framework of personal relationships as the proper context in which the ultimate concerns of human life may be discussed. The need of this framework of personal relationships as fundamental to religion is attested to by the whole Bhakti movement, which was an inter-religious phenomenon of the Middle Ages. By extending that personal framework even into the sphere of the

Divine, Christians are saying that it is also metaphysically acceptable.

Another area of discussion between Hindus and Christians is the appropriate methodology for dealing with religion in an appropriate way. In explaining faith Christians have followed different methods. Born in the bosom of Judaism and brought up within the framework of Palestinian culture, the original documents of Christianity can be understood only against the background of the cultural concerns of the people of Jesus' times, as well as the particular contexts in which the early Christian preachers proclaimed their Gospel. But when Christianity passed into the Graeco-Roman world the Christian thinkers readily assumed the methodology of the cultures germane to the European nations. In fact, leaving behind the seemingly anthropomorphic spirituality of Judaism, people like Gregory of Nazianus, Gregory of Nyssa and Basil, who came from a Greek philosophical background, imbued with Neo-Platonic mysticism easily accepted the Plotinian mystical framework to propound Christian spirituality.

It is only natural, therefore, that Indian theologians in explaining their Christian faith should embrace the traditional Indian methodology. This is a method that places the emphasis on experience and the centrality of consciousness. In all ultimate questions they have to follow the traditional Indian concern. While the Hebrews were asking 'who' was behind the phenomena responsible for all the happenings, and the Greeks sought the 'what' or essential reality of things and their objectivity, Indians looked for the material cause or maternal womb from which all things emerged. Hence authenticity and genuineness form the main preoccupation of Indian philosophical thinking. God 'up there' of the Hebrews, and the 'supreme' Being of the Greeks has to be seen in the Indian perspec-

tive as 'that from which are the origin, sustenance and final dissolution of all things'. Salvation is not a question of obtaining the pie in the skies nor attaining the unification of all things in a pinnacle of perfection, the One and the Good, but rather realizing the authenticity of one's own being and consciousness in the one infinite and immutable ground of all things. Human history itself cannot be viewed in an anthropomorphic way as the realization of a blueprint of things which God, the supreme architect, made in the beginning, but more in a mythological sense as the shadow and reflection of the immutable existence of the Divine, a presence of the eternal in time. Jesus Christ is presented in the West as the greatest of the prophets, the one Mediator between God-men, and the definitive personal entry of the Logos in the course of human history. But in the Indian experiential approach he has to be perceived as the dialectical external pole opposite to the inner pole of God dwelling in every human heart. Analogous to the Hindu conception of Vishnu as the source and sum total of all *avatāras*, Jesus Christ is the God-made-man, summarizing in himself the whole human history. He is the human pole of religious experience revealing not so much the divine mystery but rather the wealth of humanity and showing how people can live an authentic human life.

The Western conception of the Church is rather instrumentalist, a closed community to which admission could be given only under definite conditions, a militant group for establishing God's Kingdom in the world. But this is rather a historical accident resulting from the particular circumstances in which Judaism, Christianity and Islam were born, rather than something pertaining to the nature of things. All the three originated under more dominant, alien, political cultures, each having a secret philosophy of its own, with a perceived mis-

sion of establishing its special view of things on the rest of the world, and each with a Scripture, the definitive text of its faith. But if faith is seen as God's gift to all his children, and if God's salvific will for all as well as the unity of the economy of divine salvation for the world is recognized, the 'Church' has to be seen more in the Hindu and Buddhist fashion as a fellowship of expeerencers, sharing and proclaiming what they all received from the same source. In this perspective the Sacraments cannot be seen as so many 'means' for obtaining a divine life which is otherwise absent, but rather as social celebrations of the special moments of life that are stages of growth and development.

Points for Ongoing Discussion

In spite of the great deal of progress made in the past century in the Hindu-Christian dialogue, there are a number of outstanding issues that call for honest and open discussion.

1) *Religious Fundamentalism*: The first question is that of fundamentalism that attaches great importance to a particular religious text, or a rite or a place of worship. Fundamentalism literally means placing emphasis on what is considered fundamental and non-negotiable in maintaining the

God 'up there' of the Hebrews, and the 'supreme' Being of the Greeks has to be seen in the Indian perspective as 'that from which are the origin, sustenance and final dissolution of all things'

identity and specific contribution of a particular religion. It becomes an 'ism' when it is exaggerated and irrational. It is absolutizing the trivial. The term was first used in the West to designate the conservative stand of certain Christian groups against liberal or modernist tendencies. It indicated a specific

movement following a reductionist principle to formulate and codify the Christian religion at a particular moment with an official interpretation of texts that was declared non-negotiable. The term was then applied to conservative stands in all religions with a rigid insistence on certain inherited values or practices or texts without being open to the present demands of society. So fundamentalism proclaims an exclusive, aggressive and uncritical adherence to an ideology and it also absolutizes symbols as if they were the reality. The uncritical adherence to beliefs, diluting the mystery because of efforts to manipulate the divine is the basic characteristic of all fundamentalism.

It comes from the passion for security. Since faith is basically the substance of things we hope for, it is obscure and cannot provide the clarity and confidence that people look for. So they hang on firmly to something immediate and tangible and absolutize it. Most of the religious wars in history were occasioned on account of the transference of the unquestioning adherence of faith to a particular country, as in the case of the Crusades or to a particular religious text, as in the 'Scripture alone' motto of the Protestant revolution.

Fundamentalism, however, arose as a reaction against liberal or modernist trends in order to maintain what was believed to be traditional values. It may often be well intentioned to achieve a revival of forgotten or neglected religious values. Religion is not always about absolute values but more often than not about the cultural expressions of faith in human social life. So there emerged a conservative trend not to do away with but rather preserve those aspects of religion which one did not understand. The conservative groups established their own schools and special conferences to communicate the literal meaning of Scripture

against the liberal interpretations. This is a trend found in all religions to make people prisoners of the past. So a collaborative effort of people of all faiths is required to preserve authentic religious values without making people simply prisoners of the past. Fundamentalism has to be clearly distinguished from deep personal faith and conviction which produces an emotional attachment to religious symbols.

2) *Place of History in Religion*: Another important point of debate between Hindus and Christians is the role of history in religion. There are a number of Hindu scholars who claim that they can present from the point of view of Advaita Vedanta all the doctrines of Christianity such as the word, the law, suffering and salvation. Their claim is that the genuine values of time and worldly existence can be appropriately presented only by a Logos, a Christ, who remains above time. The 'saguna' side of God represented by Christ is exactly the same as the 'nirguna' or transcendental divinity. So, only from a theo-centric or God-centred perspective can even a Christo-centric world be explained.

But the Christian response to this is that even an Advaitin cannot be indifferent to the historicity of his own personal existence, the historical existence, for example, of his parents and grand parents. An Advaitin who would deny any part of human history, for example, the historical existence of Mohammed, as irrelevant for his God-realization, cannot be a genuine Advaitin. One who would deny any part of truth would be denying truth itself. The essence of Christianity is that without any modification of the one divinity, the Son, the person of the Logos, really entered human history. If he was not really in time he would not be a historical person. By taking on himself everything that is truly human, he became by the very sublimity of his personality the

head of the human race. Of course, the finite human nature of Jesus can never exhaust the infinitude of the divinity. But when one member of the human race could really say 'I am the Son of God' the human history itself reached a definite stage in its eventual return to the bosom of its Creator, under the leadership of the divine Logos. Christianity does not claim to be a metaphysics like Advaita or a spirituality like Plotinian Neo-Platonism. It is simply 'news', some positive information, that the return of the finite world to the bosom of the Creator, which all rational beings and religions are waiting for, has reached a definite stage. That is why that realization is expressed in the New Testament writings through the mouths of the simple-hearted, the sinners and the marginalized of society, 'because they stand most in need of reaching the divinity, not by their own resources, but through a merciful intervention from the part of God.

3) *Religious Pluralism*: As already has been pointed out above, the approach to religious pluralism itself is a serious point of contention between Hinduism and Christianity. Most religions including various sects and groups of Hinduism are even today exclusivistic or at best inclusivistic in attitude and outlook towards other religions. They claim that their faith alone is the true one, and that the others are at best imperfect forms of religion, already implied and included in their own superior form of faith and worship. But today religious pluralism is accepted as an actual fact, and no particular religion or sect can hope that their world vision and belief system will replace all others in any foreseeable future. There are some who think of the different religions as parallel strands totally independent of each other as so many rivers flowing into the same ocean or different paths leading to the same summit of the mountain. But this type of parallelism forgets that these different religions are dis-

cussing the same fundamental problems of human life, and hence they cannot be totally indifferent to each other. Emperor Asoka's rock edicts instruct that people of religion should look with respect on other religions and treat them as dimensions of their own faith. The fact is that the different religions are all trying to interpret the same faith experience, which is a direct encounter with the ultimate meaning of human existence. Though the encounter itself is integral and comprehensive and, therefore, adequate, its interpretations tend to be differently focussed according to the different coordinates of human existence each religion is immediately dealing with. Thus Christianity emphasizes the historical and social dimension of human existence and insists that the divine economy of human salvation is realized in the course of events down the centuries. Hinduism, on the other hand, takes a rather metaphysical approach and finds the core of human salvation in each one realizing the Divine as the Self of one's own individual self as well as of all things.

4) *Religion and Philosophy*: How religion relates to philosophy is a crucial question in a rational understanding of religions, and it is one of the sticky points in the Hindu-Christian dialogue. Since reason is the highest faculty with which man searches the meaning of his own existence, and divine revelation can work only through the rational understanding of man, there should be very little opposition between religion and philosophy. But only three countries of the world developed integral philosophies, Greece, India and China, and the different religions have adopted one or another of these three philosophies. Judaism, Christianity and Islam followed mostly the Greek philosophical tradition to interpret their faith; Hinduism, Buddhism and the other Indian religions followed a common Indian philosophical trend of thought, while Confucianism, Shintoism and Zen Buddhism

adopted the Christian pattern. These three philosophical traditions have radically different concerns and the questions formulated by them are not the same. Hence religions in their long histories responding to different lines of philosophical questioning have a great deal of difficulty in translating their answers into other philosophical contexts. But in a world grown small through giant strides in cybernetics such translation is a necessary condition for meaningful inter-religious dialogue.

5) *Need for a Global Ethic*: In the context of global inter-religious dialogue, an outstanding task is to discover the moral values that are binding on all human beings including the followers of all faiths. But a purely syncretic approach of putting together the core values of all religions as absolute, immutable and universal principles from which to draw practical conclusions in all situations can lead only to misunderstanding and confusion. First of all separating the so called 'core' values from an integral religious experience is arbitrary. Besides, each religious concept can be properly understood only within the framework of the special world-vision of the particular religion, in the cluster of concepts that deal with a particular issue, and the specific meaning the concept has in the historical tradition of the religion. Even though the same or similar words may be used in different religions, they have radically different significance in their distinct contexts. While there is almost unanimity in the daily praxis of peoples on the moral plane, an approach to the moral system has to start with the complementarity of world-visions evolved by the different traditions. Christians made a synthesis between the Jewish morality based on the explicit commands of God and the Graeco-Roman natural law ethics. In spite of the great appreciation of the Hindu reformers for the moral teachings of Jesus, the correspondence and coherence

between the Christian moral vision and the *ṛta-satya-śraddhā-dharma-karma* perspective of the Hindus are not very obvious. Symbolic of this radical difference is the gulf between the Christian vision of a retribution of heaven or hell after this life and the Hindu idea of an indefinite cycle of births and deaths which may or may not lead to final liberation!⁴

6) *Religious Festivals*: The diversity of feasts and celebrations organized by people at different times in the year is often a source of friction and rivalry among followers of different religions. Most of the feasts like the feast of lights, Deepavali, Hanuka and Christmas, birth of the New Year, celebration of fast and penance like Lent and Ramzan, and the feasts of thanksgiving like Easter and Onam are common for all peoples though the particular events and interpretations they are connected with in each religion may be different. What is important is that an effort be made by leaders of the different religions not to make these celebrations of joy and religious devotion an occasion for inter-religious rivalry, but to explain to each other their real meaning and permit others also to participate in this communal celebration.

7) *Religion and Politics*: 'Give what is Caesar's to Caesar and God's to God' was one of the clear statements of Jesus that showed the value of secularization. One has to distinguish between secularism and secularization. Secularism is a denial of religion since it denies all reality beyond this

4. The correct Hindu position is: Transmigration or cycle of births and deaths is not indefinite; going to heaven is not the same as salvation or liberation; sooner or later every soul attains salvation, and true or final liberation comes only with knowledge of one's relationship with God or of one's true nature.
—Ed.

world. On the other hand, it is equally bad when the religious authority tries to control areas of human life that belong to this world such as political government, social organization and economics. So the secularization process that began with the Enlightenment and liberated these areas from ecclesiastical control was a good thing, which has to be promoted by all religions. Equally problematic, however, is that the political forces constantly try to make religion a tool for their own vested interests. Most of the religious splits and wars in history were actually political conflicts that exploited religion for some material gain of individuals and groups.

An area of inter-religious cooperation is to examine carefully the moments in Indian history when the religious sentiments of one group or another were exploited by political leaders, and also discern the hidden secular interests that brought Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and other religions into open conflict. It is ironic that religion, which should unite human beings in the experience of the Divine, came to be the principal motivation for hating and killing each other. This only shows that religion has to be nurtured in the body politic not by reason alone, but by an integral humanism that takes into account all the cultural and social aspects of human life. There is no doubt that religion is the deepest motivating force in all the spheres of human life. It will be unnatural to banish it from politics and the secular life of man. While religion should inspire the secular spheres, it is essential that it should not dominate them nor be dominated by them.

8) *The Critical Task of Religion.* Since religion is the interpretation of faith and man's personal encounter with the Divine, such interpretation always remains imperfect and inadequate. Hence there is need of self-criticism about one's understanding of

religious faith and its translation into the various coordinates of human life. Encounter with other religions can help to make one aware of one or other dimension of it that he may have ignored or neglected. On the other hand, one has to be willing to render the same service of criticism to people of other faiths. Inter-religious dialogue is actually a critical presence to each other. This is the scope of mission work in religion. Faith has to be taken not merely as a private personal privilege, but a common trust that has to be communicated to and shared with others. This is perhaps the most serious point of disagreement in the Hindu-Christian dialogue. Though the Hindu Acharyas like Sri Sankara and Sri Ramanuja were famous for their debates with those who did not agree with them, Hindus generally do not appreciate the way Buddhists, Christians and Muslims carry on their '*dharma vijaya*' especially against Hindu believers. A religion like Hinduism, which places the emphasis on interior experience and inner realization, cannot see the point of some one acting as a salesperson for faith. But for social religions like Buddhism and Christianity faith is 'news' to be shared. While inter-religious dialogue endeavours to find out the positive points in other faiths and discover how God has revealed himself to them, mission work simply wants to tell other people how one has experienced the Divine and how God has disclosed himself in one's historical tradition. To communicate one's ideas and opinions to others and to invite others to share in the same is one of the basic rights of rational beings. As long as one does not use coercive means or material inducements, nor presume a superiority of one's religion over the others, mutual communication of faith is a basic condition of human freedom. After all, inviting someone to join my religion is not condemning his faith, but actually asking him to help in humanity's common search for truth, and to share with

all his own authentic faith-experience.

Conclusion: Looking Towards a New Century of Dialogue: If the past hundred years of Hindu-Christian interaction is taken as a norm, we can expect a more friendly and more vigorous relationship not only between Hinduism and Christianity but also among believers of all other faiths. That people can openly discuss religious issues without any apology and also agree to disagree is a clear indication of the progress which inter-religious dialogue has made in the past hundred years. Definitely, there is a

rising tide of religiosity. There is a resurgence of faith expressed in a variety of ways on a global scale. The whole world is realizing that religious rivalries and conflicts in the name of God are outrageously wrong. The reasons for such quarrels lie outside religion. We have not, however, seen the end of religious wars which have their origin not in the best sentiments of faith, but in the worst feelings of pride and prejudice. The task of religion is to fight these base human emotions and work together towards a fuller realization of the ultimate meaning of human existence. □



Sri Ramakrishna's Temple, Belur Math

NEWS & REPORTS

VEDANTA SOCIETY, NEW YORK ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATED

JOAN SHACK

On 30 November 1894, in a letter to Alasinga, his beloved disciple, Swamiji wrote. 'I have started (an organization) already in New York and the Vice President will soon write to you.' The organization Swamiji was referring to is the present-day Vedanta Society of New York City. This year therefore marks its 100th anniversary—a historic event that is being widely celebrated. This article begins with a brief history of the Center.

Historic beginnings

On Tuesday, 24 August 1894, a seed was sown. At the Waldorf Hotel in New York City, Swami Vivekananda gave his first lecture entitled 'India and Hinduism'. In November of that same year, the Vedanta Society of New York was organized. The Society managed Swamiji's financial concerns, arranged for lectures and classes and later took up the task of publishing his discourses. Rented rooms in the city served as its headquarters throughout the earlier years (1894–1900).

On 7 July 1896, Swami Saradananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, delivered his first lecture in the U.S. He worked in N.Y. City at the Vedanta Society in 1897. When Swami Abhedananda, another direct disciple, arrived in August 1897, the work of Vedanta in the West fell to him. Due to his prodigious efforts, for a period of sixteen years (1897–1912), the Society flourished. Its growth during those years was marked by the following events. In 1898, the Society was formally established; it was incorporated under the laws of the State of New York. In 1900, a membership roll for the

Society was opened, whereby funds could be raised. This income enabled the Society to rent an entire house for its headquarters, a modest four-storey at 102 E. 58th St. Arriving there on 7 June 1900, Swamiji expressed his approval, 'I am very happy to see the Society has a house of its own.' During this stay, in response to a request for an emblem on a circular of the Society's, Swamiji designed the symbol of the Ramakrishna Mission. In 1907, the Vedanta Society purchased a house at 105 W. 80th St., its first truly permanent home.

In 1912, Swami Bodhananda, a direct disciple of Swamiji, took over the work in N.Y. Through the difficult war years and great American depression, as membership declined, Swami Bodhananda stood strong. In 1921, through a generous gift from one of his students, Miss Mary Morton, the Society purchased outright a spacious house half a block from Central Park at 34 W. 71st St. This is the Society's present home. Mary Morton was the daughter of Levi Morton, ex-governor of New York (1895) and former Vice-President of the U.S., during the term of President Harrison (1889).

With Swami Bodhananda's passing away in 1950, Swami Pavitrananda assumed charge of the Society until 1977. During this time, the Chapel in the Society was reconstructed. The Vedanta movement gained momentum. Swami Tathagatananda arrived as his assistant in 1977 and is the present spiritual head of the Center. As such, he continues in the tradition of those who came before him—committed to the development of Vedantic principles in the lives of the Center's members.

To duly mark its centenary, the Vedanta Society is sponsoring a number of programmes throughout this year. Accounts of

several events follow.

Production: ARISE! AWAKE!

On Saturday, 30 April, a four act play on the life of Swami Vivekananda was presented by the Vivekananda Vidyapith, an academy of Indian Philosophy and Culture from Wayne, N.J. A cast of one hundred, aging from four years of age to college level, performed before a receptive audience of 500 at the Martin Luther King Jr. High School in N.Y. City. Entitled, '*Arise! Awake!*', the four-hour performance was an ambitious undertaking: a fitting opening to the centennial celebration.

Before the play began, Swami Tathagatananda, spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society, asked guest Swamis, Swahananda (Hollywood), Prabuddhananda (San Francisco) and Adiswarananda (N.Y. Ramakrishna Center) to give an opening benediction.

The prologue of the play depicted a vision that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had while meditating on Kali, the Divine Mother of the Universe. A Divine Child appears before Seven Sages, Saptarishis, seated in meditation. The child throws his arms around one of the sages inquiring, 'I am going. Will you come with me?' The sage smiles, silently accepting the child's request. The child was Sri Ramakrishna and the sage was Swami Vivekananda.

In part one of the play, Swamiji's early life was depicted. The audience was amused by the antics of 'Biley', (Swamiji's nickname in his early years). Even in his boyhood, Swamiji evidenced fearlessness, compassion and leadership.

Sri Ramakrishna's room at Dakshineswar was the setting for part two. Narendra tested the Master time and again. Sri Ramakrishna's gentle and affectionate ways

with Narendra were convincingly portrayed. The Master would feed him, have him sit next to him and counsel him.

In part three, Narendra set out as a wandering mendicant, travelling the length and breadth of India. Black and white slides of cities in India enhanced the dialogue he had with people from all walks of life.

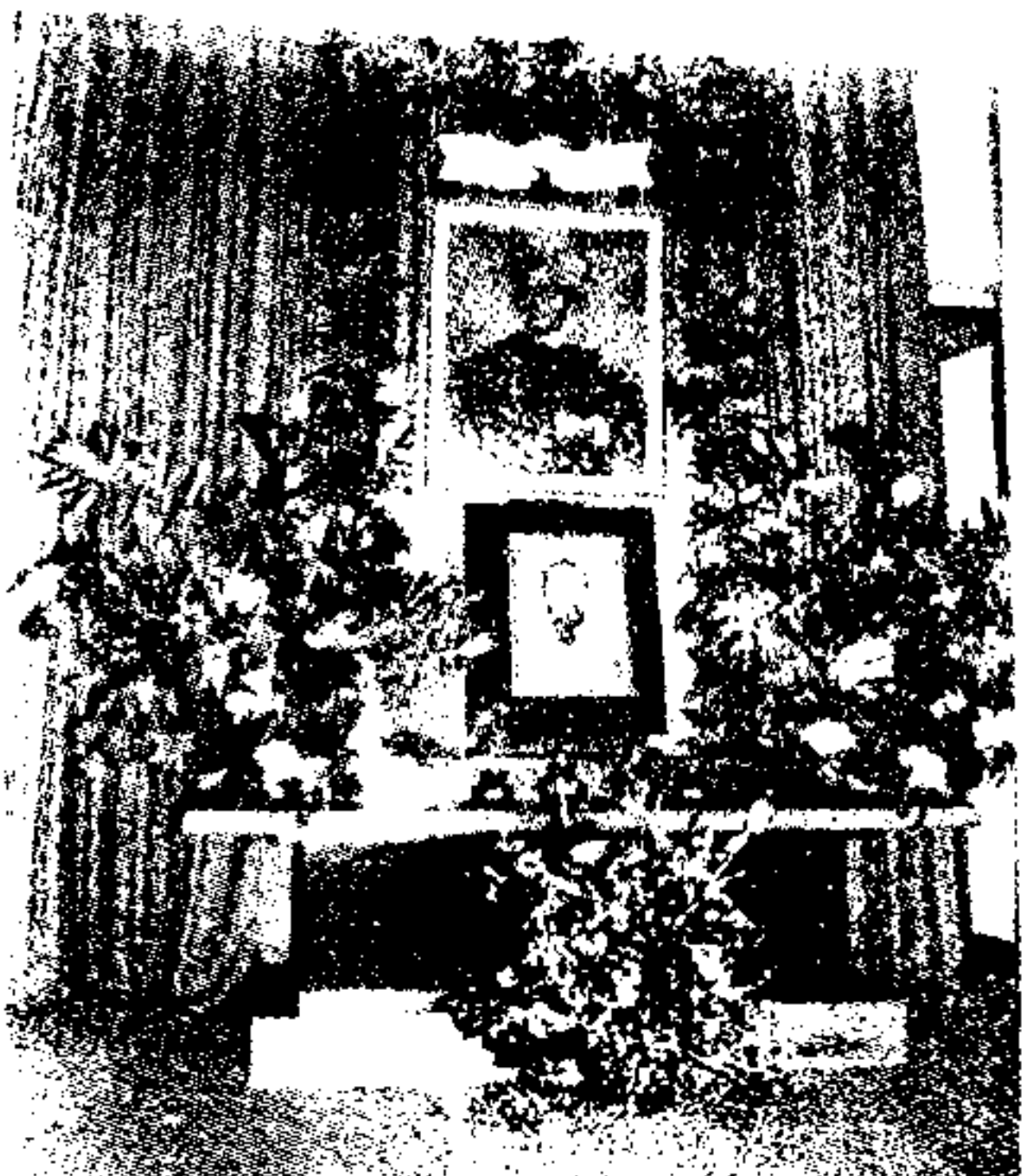
The last act was set in America, in the living room of the Lyons, who hosted Swamiji during the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893. One moment, the audience was charmed by the interaction of Swamiji and Mr. Lyon's granddaughter, Cornelius. The next moment, the audience was roused by the forcefully presented opening speech of Swamiji's at the Parliament. Excerpts from two of his other speeches were also delivered emphasizing his message of the harmony of religions.

The performance concluded with the entire cast on stage singing *Arise! Awake!*—the theme song. The curtains closed to a standing ovation.

Temple Service

On Sunday, 1 May, a special two-hour service was held at the Vedanta Society of New York on West 71st street. Two hundred devotees from across the country and Canada were present. The opening prayer was given by Swami Tathagatanandaji. Noting that the One consciousness—addressed as God—is the source of everything, he prayed that we may all be captured by its beauty and feel the bliss of a relationship (with the Godhead).

Swami then read several congratulatory messages, received on the occasion of the Center's 100th anniversary. In his letter Revered Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, described the centenary as a 'mat-



1 May 1994, Service



1 May 1994, Service.

L to R—Rabbi Asher Block, Swamis Prabuddhananda, Tathagatananda, Swahananda, Adiswarananda



9 July 1994, Convocation. Opening procession: Father Dolan and Dada Vaswani, centre, leading the procession are greeted by members of the audience



9 July 1994; Convocation hymn during the Opening Plenary being sung by the Society's Choir



9 July 1994; Convocation, the Opening Plenary Session



30 April 1994; Vivekananda Vidyapith performance



ter of joy'. He prayed, 'May the blessings of Swamiji and Sri Ramakrishna be showered on the centre, and by their grace may all activities...be continued effectively during the years to come.' Revered Swami Ranganathanandaji, Vice-President, conveyed his 'best wishes for the success of the centennial celebration', recalling 'with joy the several occasions of my stay at this Society and speaking at its Sunday services.'

Swami Aseshanandaji, spiritual leader of the Portland Center, prayed that the Center may 'continue to enjoy the benediction of Swamiji and the Divine Grace of Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother in giving spiritual solace to those who are associated' with it. Swami Shraddhanandaji, head of the Sacramento Center, conveyed his 'deep congratulations and best wishes...on the occasion of your celebration.' He concluded his letter with a blessing that 'the inspiration of Swami's message to the West' will bring 'new interest, hope and courage for the practice of Vedanta in your lives.' Swami Sarvagatanandaji, leader of the Boston Center, noted that the Center has rendered 'valuable service all these one hundred years', and prayed, 'may Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda bless this Society.'

Congratulatory letters were also received from the Archbishop of New York, the Indian Ambassador to the U.S. and the representative of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

Swami Tathagatanandaji then invited a close friend of the Center, Rabbi Block, and guest Swamis Swahanandaji, Adiswaranandaji and Prabuddhanandaji, to address the congregation.

Rabbi Block observed that Swami Vivekananda's message at the Parliament, that all religions must be respected, is as

fresh today as when it was first delivered. In fact, it is the universal appeal of this message which makes, he stated, 'this center *unique* among so many' religious groups in New York City. To him, the distinguishing feature of Vedanta is that it links philosophy and practice to produce what is called a practical religion.

In his introductory remarks, Swami Prabuddhananda commented that the Vedanta Society has grown in strength over these 100 years—a strength which is 'measured by its influence on the lives of people.' The Society is growing by 'bringing us closer to God', by making God 'more real' to us, indeed, by making God a 'matter-of-fact' in our lives. And behind its efforts, he remarked, lies the blessing of Swamiji and behind him the Great Power, the Great Spirit.

Speaking on Vedanta's influence in the West, Swami Prabuddhananda pointed out that the thoughts of Vedanta were mainly in Sanskrit. Swamiji's contribution was that he didn't just translate, he interpreted Vedanta based on his experience of the English language. Swamiji presented Vedanta in a democratic, modern spirit. Vedanta means realism. Swamiji didn't predict a millennium. The world is a dog's curly tail, after all. However, we can and should arouse positive forces.

Swami Adiswarananda was then invited to speak. He remarked that Vedantic teachings are based on principles. Vedanta is universal, not Indian. It is a way of life, not merely a philosophy. He characterized Vedanta as: pragmatic, non-dogmatic, democratic, non-proselytizing and preaching self-endeavor. Swami Adiswarananda underlined the fact that Swamiji viewed Vedanta as the meeting point of East and West. The East needed the West as much as the West needed the East. They must see

each other's best points. Swamiji admired the spirit of the West, its ability to look to the future, its readiness to take responsibility on itself and its willingness to take risks. Swamiji's words, 'I may have cast off the body but I will continue to inspire men and women everywhere', were the capstone of his address.

Swami Swahananda concluded the service pointing out that Swamiji's words appealed to the people of the West because of Vedanta's boundlessness and vastness. Swamiji transplanted a new thought form in the consciousness of the nation: the glory of the Self...the 'gloriousness' of man's existence. The freedom which Swamiji gave the individual to think for himself was also appealing. Vedanta's teaching, that all religions are true, is attractive to the Western mind (it allows for choice, which is a Western idea). For an idea to survive, it requires a body, an external expression, an organization.

Bengal Studies Conference

On May 27-29, Swami Tathagatananda, members of the Vedanta Society and Swami Shantarupananda, Assistant minister of the Portland Center, participated in the Bengal Studies Conference at the State University of New York College at Old Westbury, N.Y. The Swamis and two members of the Society presented papers and the Vedanta Society Choir performed songs relating to Swami Vivekananda.

Convocation of Global Religions

A two day inter-religious convocation was held July 9th and 10th at Queens College in New York City. The purpose of the conference was twofold: to bolster the spirit of celebration, begun last summer, in the observance of the centennial of the World Parliament of Religions of 1893; and secondly, to mark the centennial of the foundation of the Vedanta Society of New York City.

The convocation represented the first time that members of the New York Indian community had organized an inter-faith conference. The programme for the conference consisted of two simultaneous events. The first was a series of lectures and cultural activities presented in the auditorium of the Performing Arts Center on campus. The second parallel event was a dialogue among religious leaders and community representatives led by Father Louis M. Dolan, Acting Executive Director of the Temple of Understanding, an international, inter-faith organization based in N.Y. City. Basically, the objective of their discussions was to foster understanding between religious groups and to encourage cooperative efforts in resolving the inter-ethnic conflicts facing the City.

For the opening procession of religious leaders into the auditorium, the Vedanta Society Choir and the Shikshayatan Cultural Center provided the musical accompaniment. Twenty-two spiritual leaders were present. The traditions represented being: Christian, Sufi, Buddhist, Vedanta, Jain, African Indigenous, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Sikh and Brahma Kumaris

After the religious leaders were seated, a lamp lighting ceremony marked the beginning of the convocation. To the blowing of conches, two candles, one from the East and one from the West, were brought forth and lit for blessings on the assembly.

An overview of the conference was presented by the Chairman, Father Dolan. He opened by remarking that though he was not a Hindu, 'I remember Chicago...with awe and reverence,' because of what Swami Vivekananda said there. Furthermore, he pointed out, we must 'learn from the cradle of religions...India.'

During the plenary session, two musical

works on Swami Vivekananda were performed by the New York Concert Singers and the Vedanta Society Choir, under the direction of Judith Clurman. Composed by John Schlenck of the Vedanta Society, they were entitled, *The Universal Gospel*, and *Epistles 1893–1894*. The text of the former was taken from the scriptures of all world religions...*Al Koran, Rig-Veda, The Gospel of Buddha, Deuteronomy, Bhagavad-Gita*, and the Gospels: *Matthew* and *John*. Excerpts from letters of Swami Vivekananda (written during 1893–1894) with a connective narrative by Erik Johns of the Vedanta Society, formed the text of the other musical selection, *Epistles*.

The keynote speaker was H.H. Dada J.P. Vaswani, spiritual head of Sadhu Vaswani Mission, an educational and service organization with headquarters in Pune, India. In giving expression to the vision of the conference, he referred to the vision of Swami Vivekananda, who 'rejoiced in the many', for in 'all (religions) he saw the one spirit...he saw the one light.' He didn't believe in tolerating all religions. He accepted them.

Vivekananda's spiritual magnetism, his electric personality and strength of character were remarked upon. 'Swami Vivekananda reminds me of the ocean, infinite, fathomless....The world had yet to measure the effect of his mind and heart.'

But to understand Vivekananda's legacy, one needs 'to understand the great master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.' Swamiji himself said of the Master, 'All my ideals are only attempts to echo his ideas.' For thirty minutes, Dadaji waxed eloquently on Sri Ramakrishna. For a devotee of the Ramakrishna tradition, it was a unique and thrilling experience. One rarely hears Sri Ramakrishna spoken of outside of Vedanta circles, among adherents of such diverse

religious backgrounds, and then so powerfully. Usually, Swamiji is viewed as the spokesperson of Vedanta and liberally quoted.

Dadaji delineated six 'beautiful truths' taught by Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master. First is the mother aspect of the Godhead. The second is the harmony of religions. Third, Sri Ramakrishna identifies a man of wisdom—a jnani—as one who lives in a house with glass doors. The explanation given for this statement was that, wherever he (a jnani) turns, he sees the one in all. The fourth truth concerns education. Dadaji asserted that Ramakrishna Paramahansa *realized*, 'the true scholar is a man with three marks,' namely, 'meditation, discrimination and renunciation.'

The fifth teaching is for man to be in the world but not of the world. A boat plys through water but if water enters a boat it sinks. Lastly, Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Behold Shiva in Jiva.' Every man is the tabernacle of God. We are to serve the poor in that spirit. In his concluding remarks, Swami Vivekananda was gauged as 'revolutionary in the new and highest sense of that term.' Humanity wants 'revolution of the mind, of attitudes—a silent revolution.' Swamiji sought 'to bring people to the true values of life', to effect this revolution.

In a forthright manner, Dadaji emphasized that the 'time has come to experience harmony of religions.' 'A fellowship is needed of men and women of different religions to talk and worship together...to worship together in silence...' We get 'heart unity'. Only then we will 'know we belong to one fraternity, one family. Krishna is my father. Jesus is my uncle...come together and worship in silence.'

Also at the opening plenary session,

Swami Tathagatananda representing Vedanta, was among the religious delegates to give a blessing for the success of the conference. He prayed that, 'Enlightened men and women for whom good-will prevails will hear his (Swamiji's) message.' 'Let us (spiritual leaders) go with promise to better our life in light of tolerance and fraternity...so our practitioners can learn from us.'

Over the two days, each spiritual leader was given an opportunity to address those assembled. The common themes were: the unity of mankind, recognition of the validity of all religions, outlines for inter-religious dialogue and bringing the wealth of religious convictions into society. Swami Tathagatananda addressed the assembly on the topic of *peace within*. He concurred, 'It is good for leaders to meet in order to establish harmony and peace among themselves, let it multiply and grow.' But also, 'Think how we can translate (religious) principles in our lives in order to give an example to our near ones and friends.' 'The basic purpose of religion is to build our inner life...for the light to be kindled within.' Religion is not 'academic discussion.' Try to practise peace within ourselves. Without peace within one cannot give peace to others. Try to build your character, your nature, so as to radiate peace and joy to others. The Swami summarized, 'By living, eloquent preaching can be done.'

Pravrajika Bhaktiprana, senior nun of the Ramakrishna Order from the Hollywood convent, also participated. She outlined Swamiji's legacy as three-fold. First, Swamiji stressed belief in oneself. That is, consciousness of one's inner life. Secondly, he upheld the independence of women. Thirdly, he promoted the harmony of religions.

Daniel Gomez Ibanez, a Vedantist and Executive Director of the 1993 Parliament of

the World's Religions in Chicago, recalled the small beginnings of that particular Parliament. It all began 'around a kitchen table'. No one present at that time could have imagined the ramifications of the undertaking. Consequently, he urged each individual to 'do whatever you can—it makes a difference. Don't rest.' Try to bring our daily practice into our lives—'service of God into the community of all life.'

Fifth International Congress of Vedanta

The Department of Philosophy of Miami University, in the state of Ohio, sponsored the Fifth International Congress of Vedanta, from August 10th to 14th. One hundred scholars and professors from Canada, USA, and England read papers. A large photograph of Swami Vivekananda was placed in the hall where the deliberations took place.

A special feature of this five-day Congress was a plenary session held on August 11, entitled, *One hundred Years of Vedanta in America*. This symposium's objective was to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Vedanta Society of New York by Swami Vivekananda. It was chaired by S.S. Rama Rao Pappu from Miami University. Speakers were: Swami Tathagatananda, Vedanta Society of New York; Robert N. Minor, University of Kansas; K. Sundaram, Lake Michigan College, and Tim Bryson, Harvard University, whose Ph.D. thesis was on Swami Vivekananda at Harvard. Each speaker addressed different aspects of Swamiji. Swami Tathagatananda spoke about Swamiji's contribution to Indian philosophy and world thought.

Other Centenary Event

October 16, Centenary Concert: *A Mission to the World*, an oratorical trilogy on Swami Vivekananda in America, presented by the New York Concert Singers and Or-

chestra with Judith Clurman conducting at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, in New York City (music composed by J. Schlenck, text composed by E. Johns with quotations from Swami Vivekananda).

**RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
VIVEKANANDA MEMORIAL
AT LIMBDI (GUJARAT)**

It was during the early months of 1891 that Swami Vivekananda entered Limbdi via Wadhwan. Exhausted after wandering through this arid semi-desert area of Saurashtra, he took shelter, quite unknowingly, with a group of sadhus who belonged to a degenerate group of sex-worshippers practising strange rites. Soon he decided to leave the place, but, to his horror, found that the door of his room was locked from outside. The high priest of the sect summoned Swamiji and said, 'You are a sadhu with a magnetic personality. Evidently, you have practised Brahmacharya (celibacy) for years. Now you must give us the fruit of your long austerity. We shall break your Brahmacharya to perform a special type of spiritual practice, and thereby acquire for ourselves certain psychic powers.'

Swamiji, however, kept his presence of mind and started contemplating a way to escape. Early next morning, when a boy came to deliver milk to him, Swamiji saw his chance. Taking a bit of charcoal lying nearby and picking up a piece of shard, he scrawled a message to the Maharaja of Limbdi, explaining his predicament and asking for help, and told the boy to deliver it directly to Maharaja Thakore Saheb Sri Yashwantsinghji. As soon as he received the message the Maharaja sent some of his guards to rescue Swamiji, had him brought with due respect to the Royal Darbar Hall where he was, and requested him to stay in the palace itself.

The scholarly Maharaja, who had recently lost his younger brother and had come back from a trip to England, was impressed by the prodigious intellect and manifest purity of the unknown monk. Both of them became good friends and soon the Thakore Saheb became a devoted disciple of Swamiji by receiving spiritual initiation from him. It is said that the idea of going to the West to preach the universal ideas of Vedanta came to Swamiji first at Limbdi. After a short stay of ten days at Limbdi, during which the Thakore Saheb had the privilege of hearing Swamiji's religious discourses and holding discussions with him on various matters, Swamiji left for Junagadh and then to other parts of Gujarat. Sometime later, Swamiji went to Mahabaleshwar to spend the summer, only to find to his surprise and joy that the Thakore Saheb too was holidaying there. After spending the summer with Maharaja at Mahabaleshwar, Swamiji proceeded to Poona where he again spent a few days with the Thakore Saheb. The Maharaja became so much attached to Swamiji that he requested him repeatedly to come to Limbdi and remain there for good. But Swamiji replied, 'Not now, Maharaj, I have work to do. It presses me onwards...But if ever I live a life of retirement, it shall be with you.'

The prophetic utterance of Swamiji, that he would come back to Limbdi, has been realized today. It was through a series of strange incidents that the Royal place with a clock tower has been transformed today into a Ramakrishna Mission Centre of medical, spiritual and cultural service to the public of Limbdi and adjoining areas. Late Shri Chhabilbhai Shah—a cotton merchant of Limbdi, belonging to an orthodox Jain Family—, who was inspired by Sri Ramakrishna and his teachings, had formed a group of devotees and used to conduct prayer meetings in a small rented house. One day he approached the present Rajmata Sri Pravinkunverba Saheba requesting her





The Prabuddha Bharata Pioneers



Rajam Iyer
First Editor
1896–June 1898



Alasinga Perumal



In Madras, February 1897

*L to R: Standing: Alasinga Perumal, J.J. Goodwin, (third) unidentified
Sitting: On chairs: An unknown monk, Swamis Shivananda, Vivekananda,
Niranjanananda, Sadananda
On ground: (second) Biligiri Iyengar, (fourth) M.C. Nanjunda Rao*



Mother, Mrs. C.E. Sevier



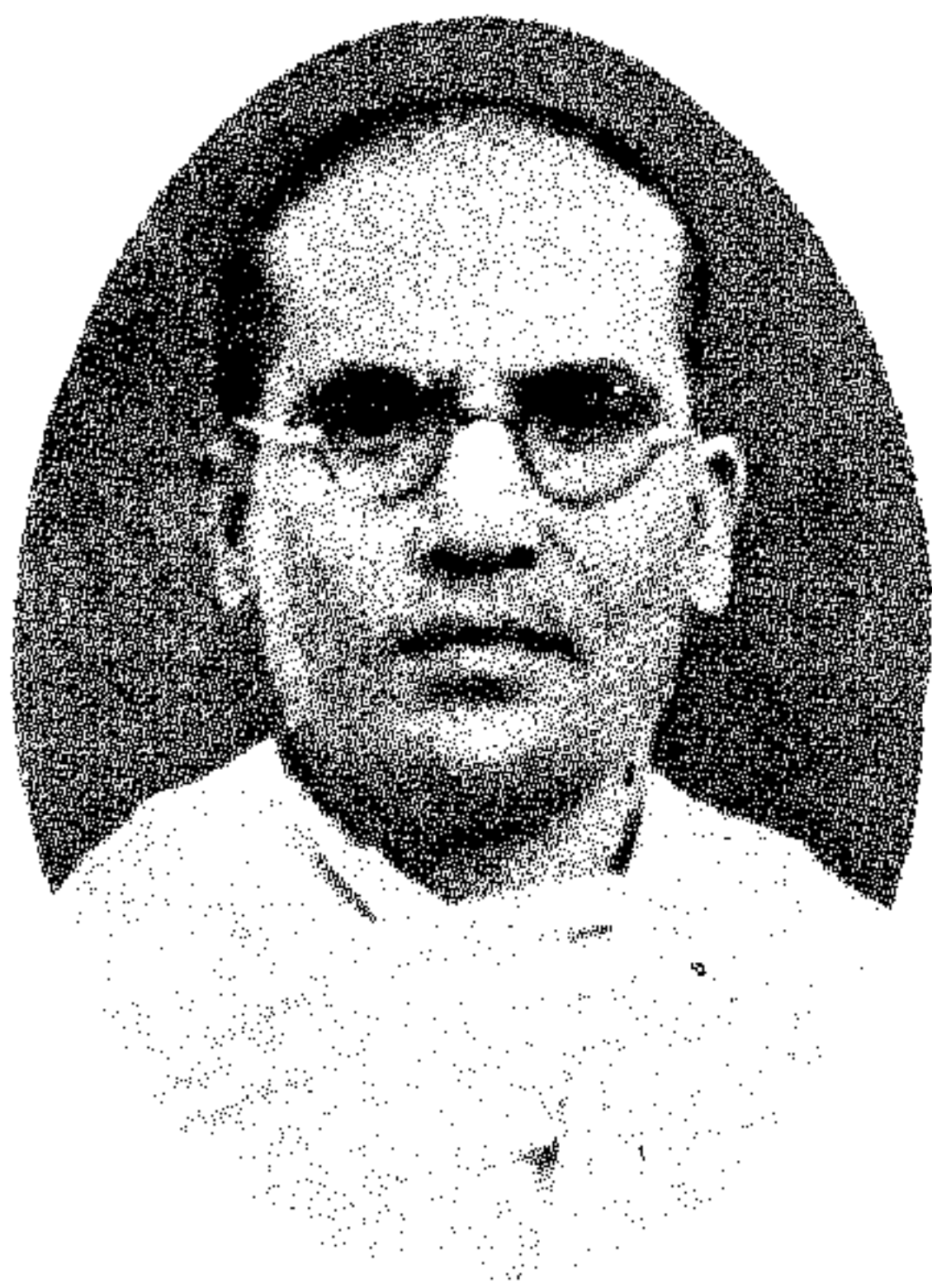
Capt. J.H. Sevier



Sister Nivedita

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Swami Tejasananda
1938–1939 (Ed.)



Swami Vipulananda
1940–1941 (Ed.)



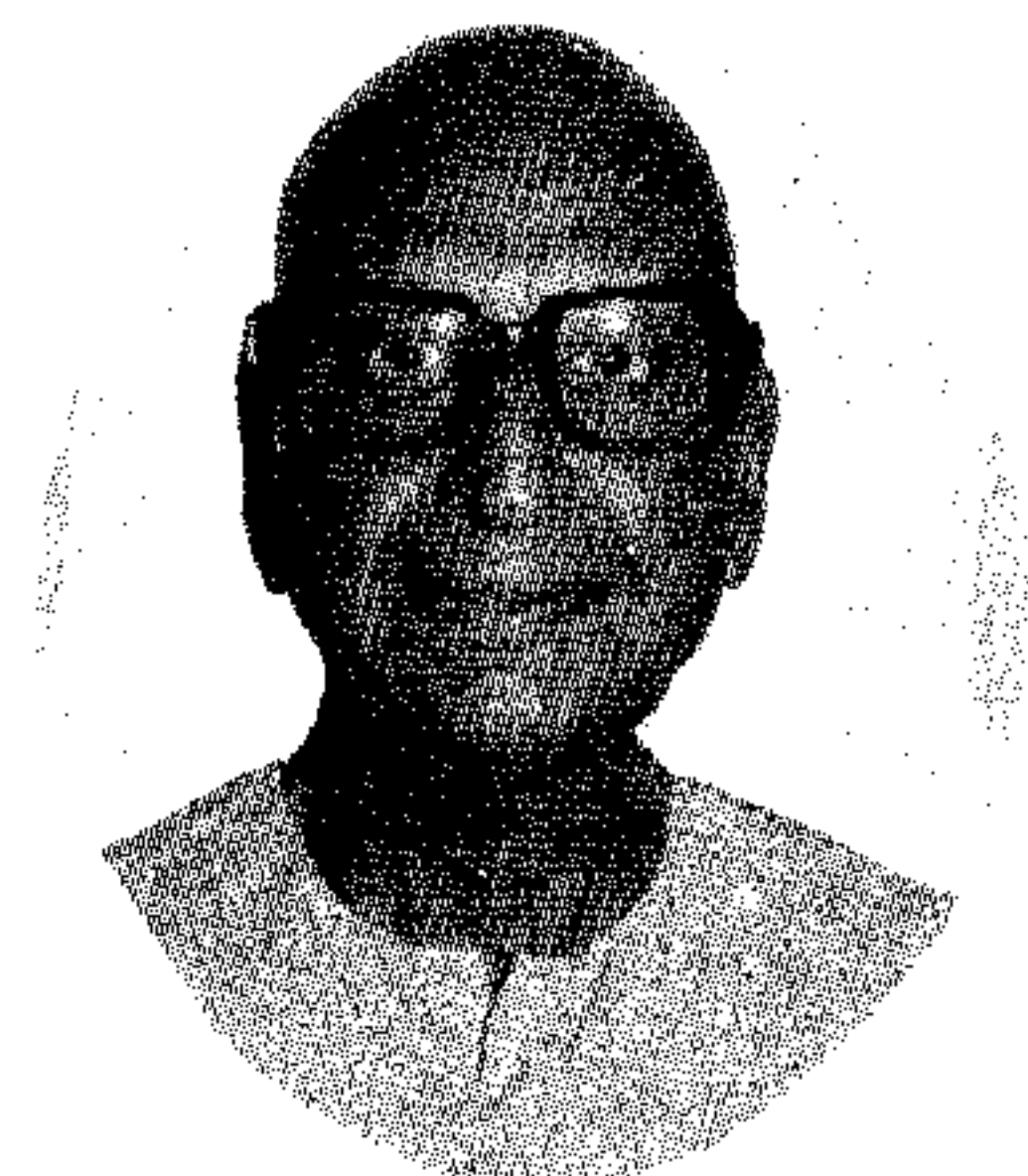
Swami Gambhirananda
1942–1944 (Ed.)
1959–1963 (Ed.)



Swami Yogeswarananda
1945–1947 (Ed.)



Swami Brahmamayananda
1948–1949 (Ed.)



Swami Vandanananda
1950–1954 (Ed.)
1976–1977 (Ed.)



Swami Satswarupananda
1955–1956 (Ed.)



Swami Nihreysananda
1957–1958 (Ed.)



Swami Chidatmananda
1962–1963 (Jt. Ed.)
1964–1968 (Ed.)



Swami Kirtidananda
1964–1965 (Jt. Ed.)



Swami Adiswarananda
1966—July 1968 (Jt. Ed.)



Swami Budhananda
1968, Aug. to Dec. (Jt. Ed.)
1969–1976 (Ed.)



Swami Rasajnananda
1969–1970 (Jt. Ed.)



Swami Tadrupananda
1971–1976 (Jt. Ed.)
1977–1978 (Ed.)



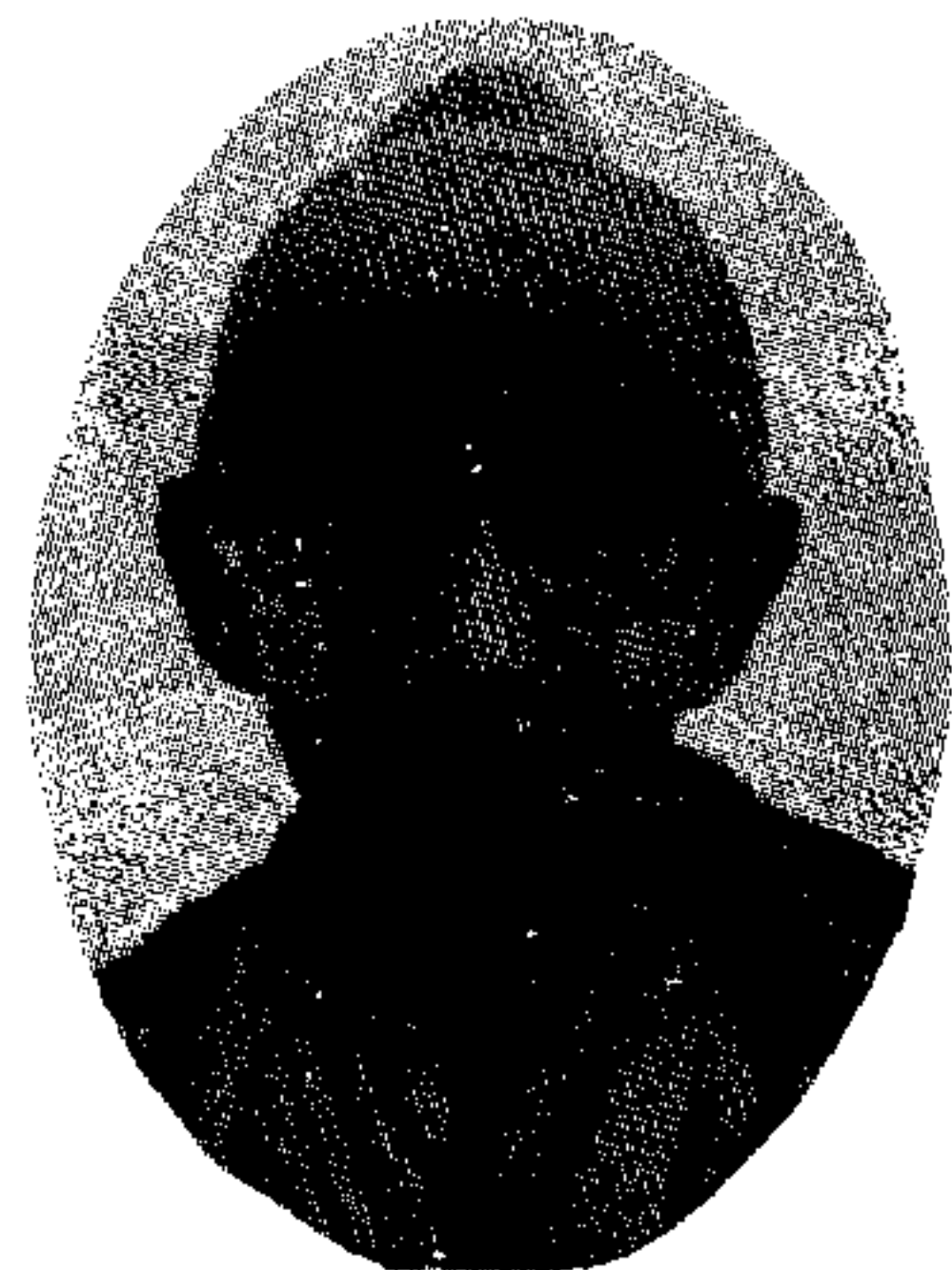
Swami Ananyananda
1959–1961 (Jt. Ed.)
1978–1988 (Ed.)



Swami Swananda
1988–1990 (Ed.)



Swami Balaramananda
1977–1979 (Jt. Ed.)



Swami Bhajanananda
1979–1986 (Jt. Ed.)



Swami Jitatmananda
1987-1989 (Jt. Ed.)



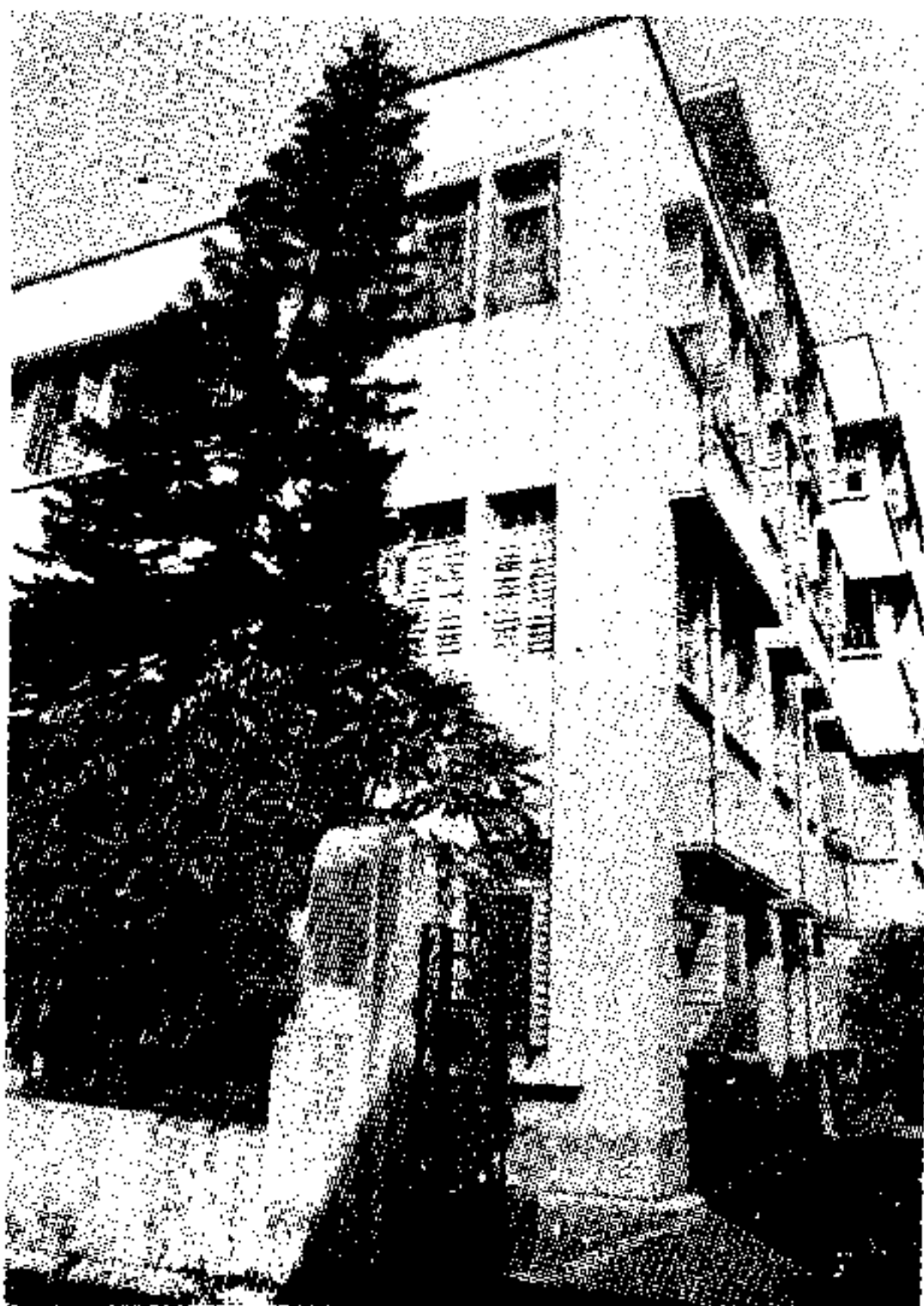
Swami Mumukshananda
1991-1993 Aug. (Ed.)
1993 Sep.- (Mg. Ed.)



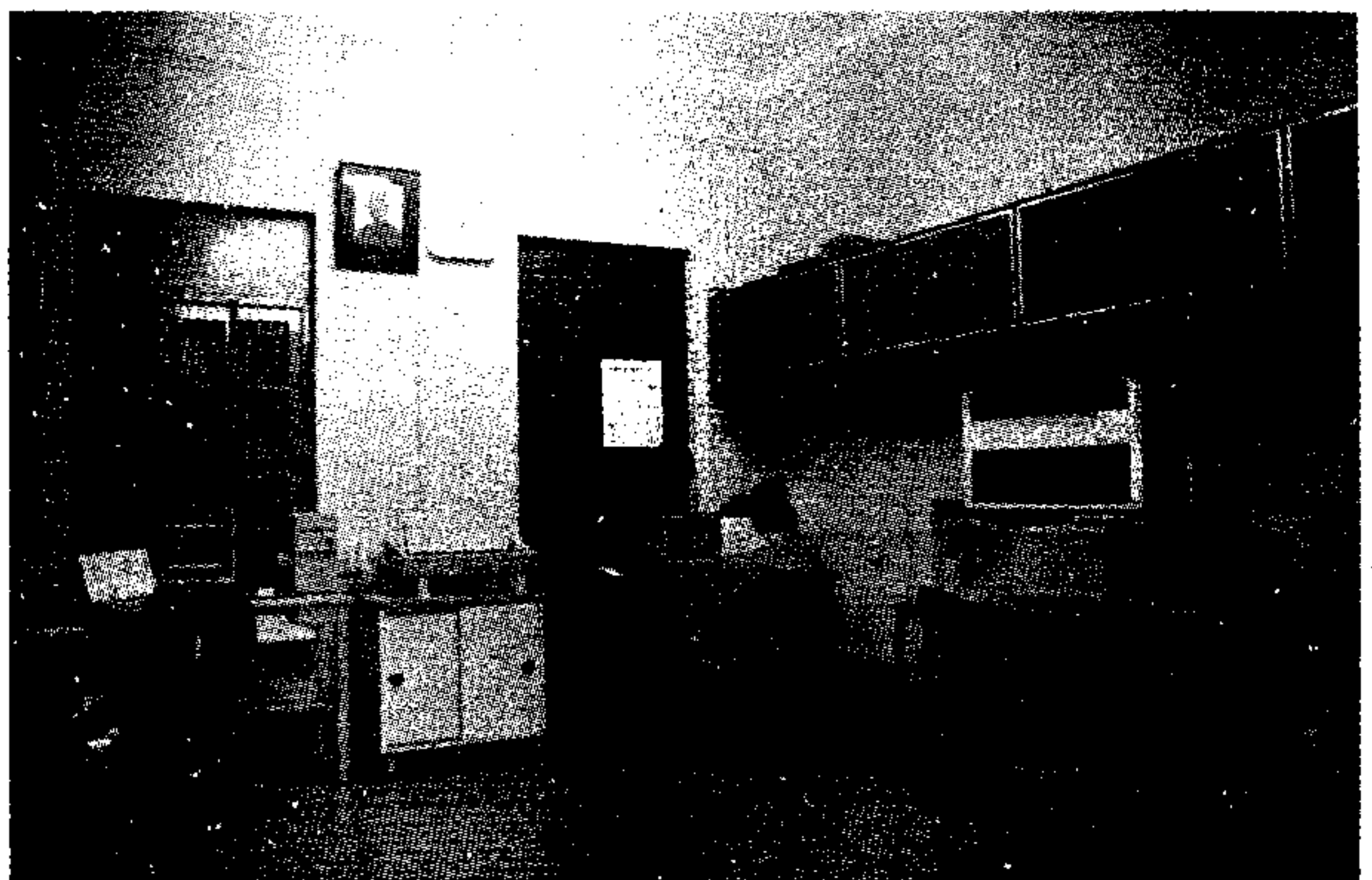
Swami Muktirupananda
1990-Aug. 1993 (Jt. Ed.)
1993, Sep. to Dec. (Ed.)



Swami Atmaramananda
1994- (Ed.)



Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

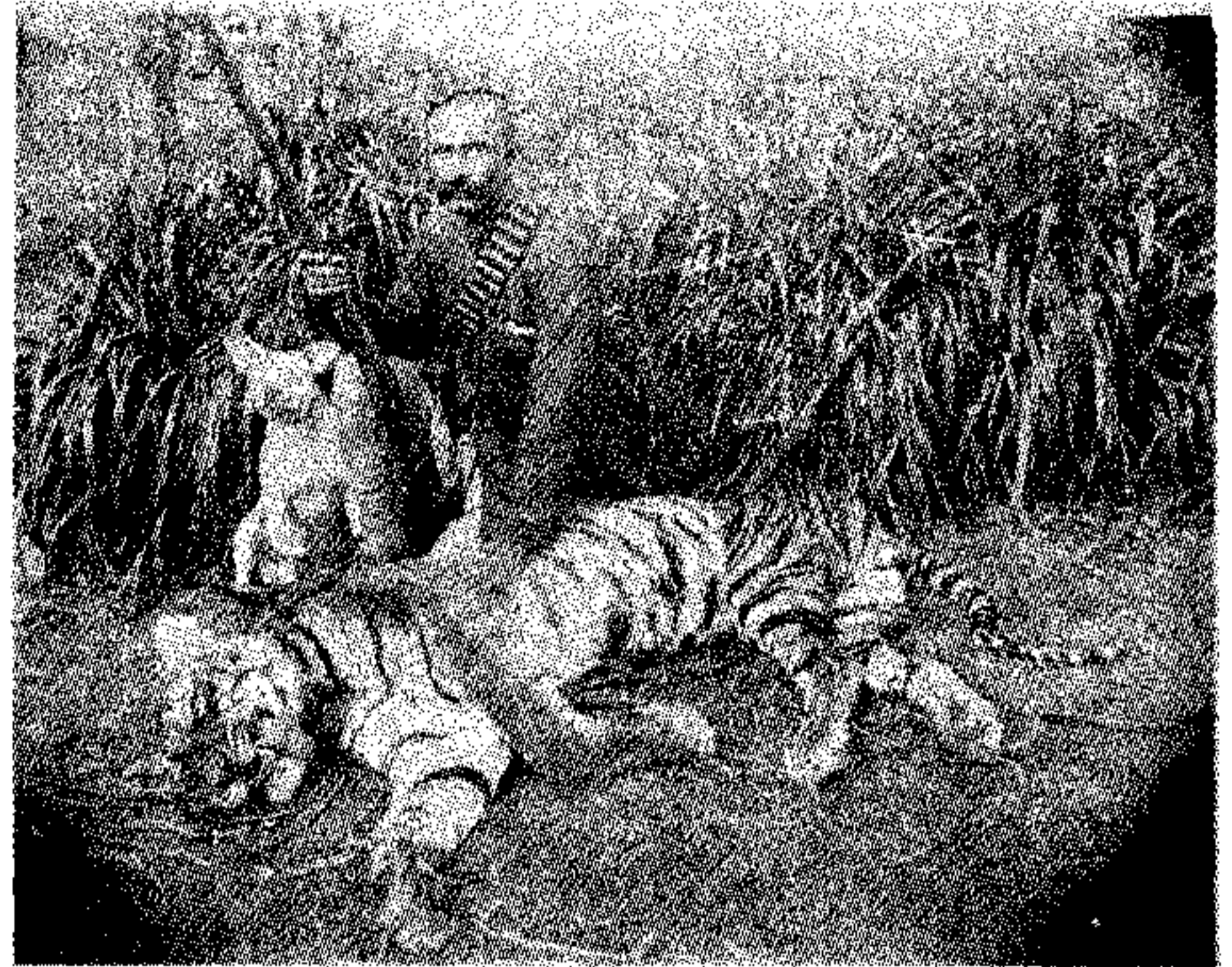


Prabuddha Bharata City Office

Faces of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati



Old Lohaghat Road



Killed by the Tahashildar of Champawat



Some disciples of Swamiji at Mayavati

Top row (l to r): Swamis Prakashananda, Swarupananda and Sacchidananda

Bottom row (l to r): Mrs. Sevier, Swamis Nirbhayananda, Virajananda, Vimalananda, and Brahmachari Amritananda

THE PRABUDDHA BHARATA OR AWAKENED INDIA

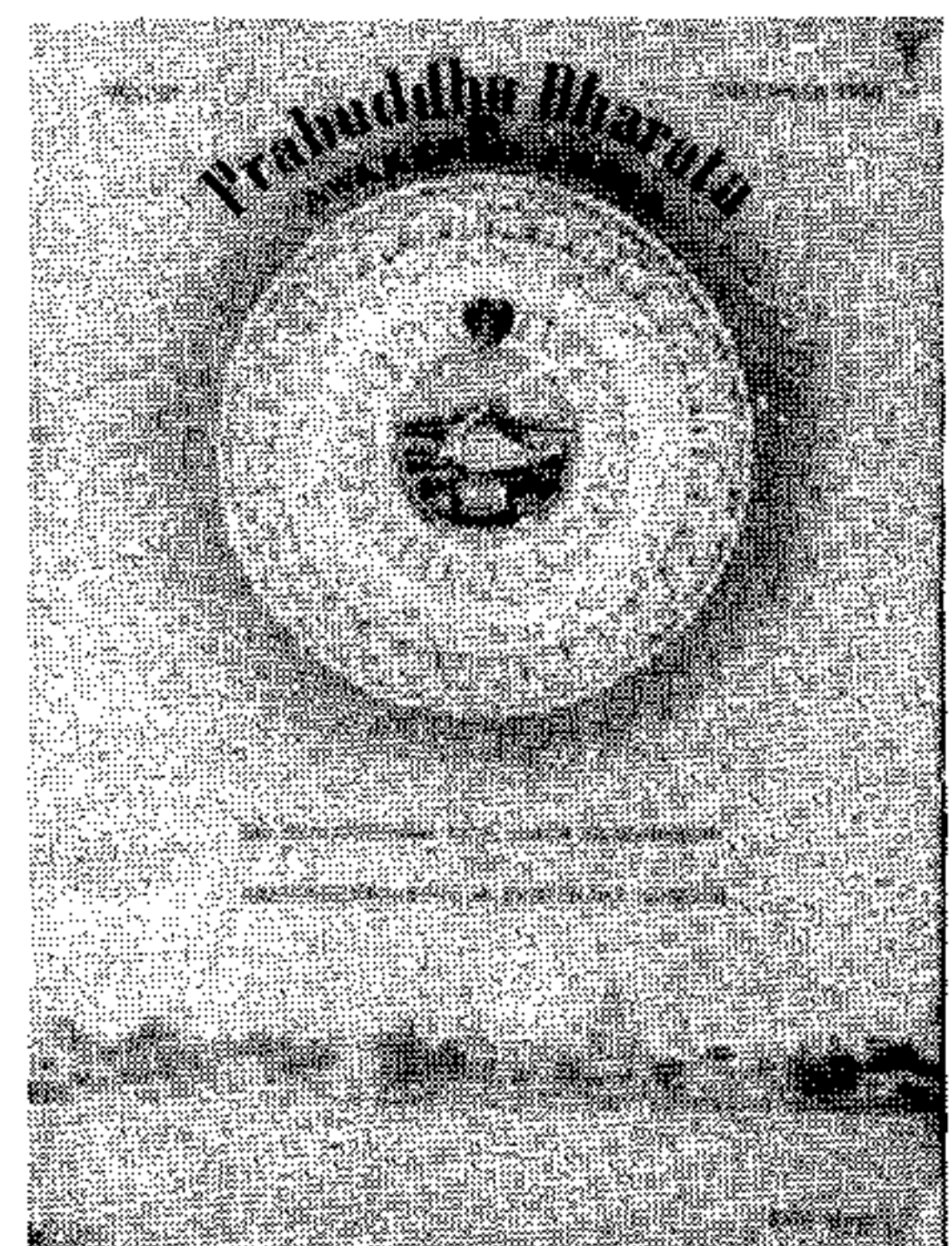
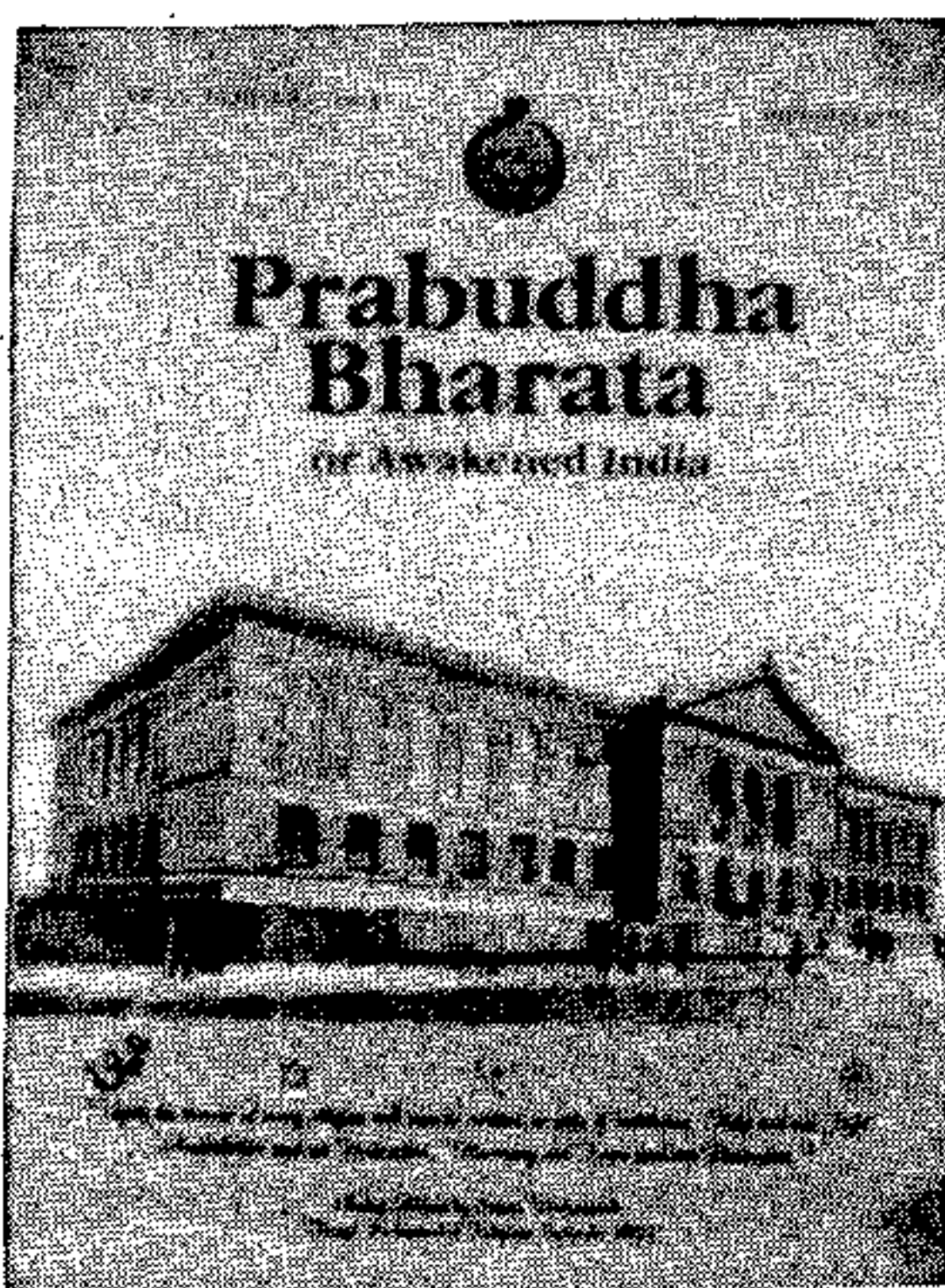
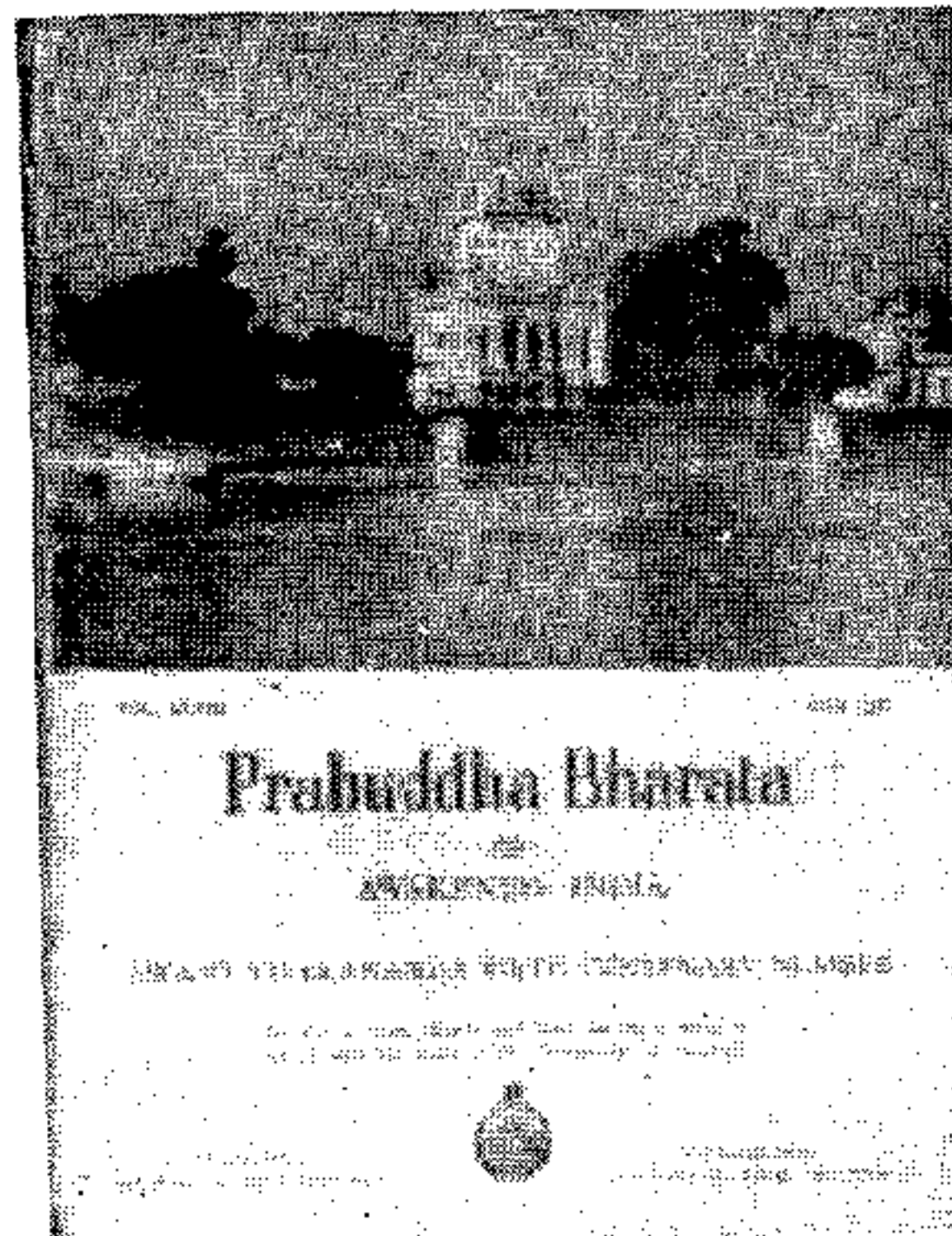
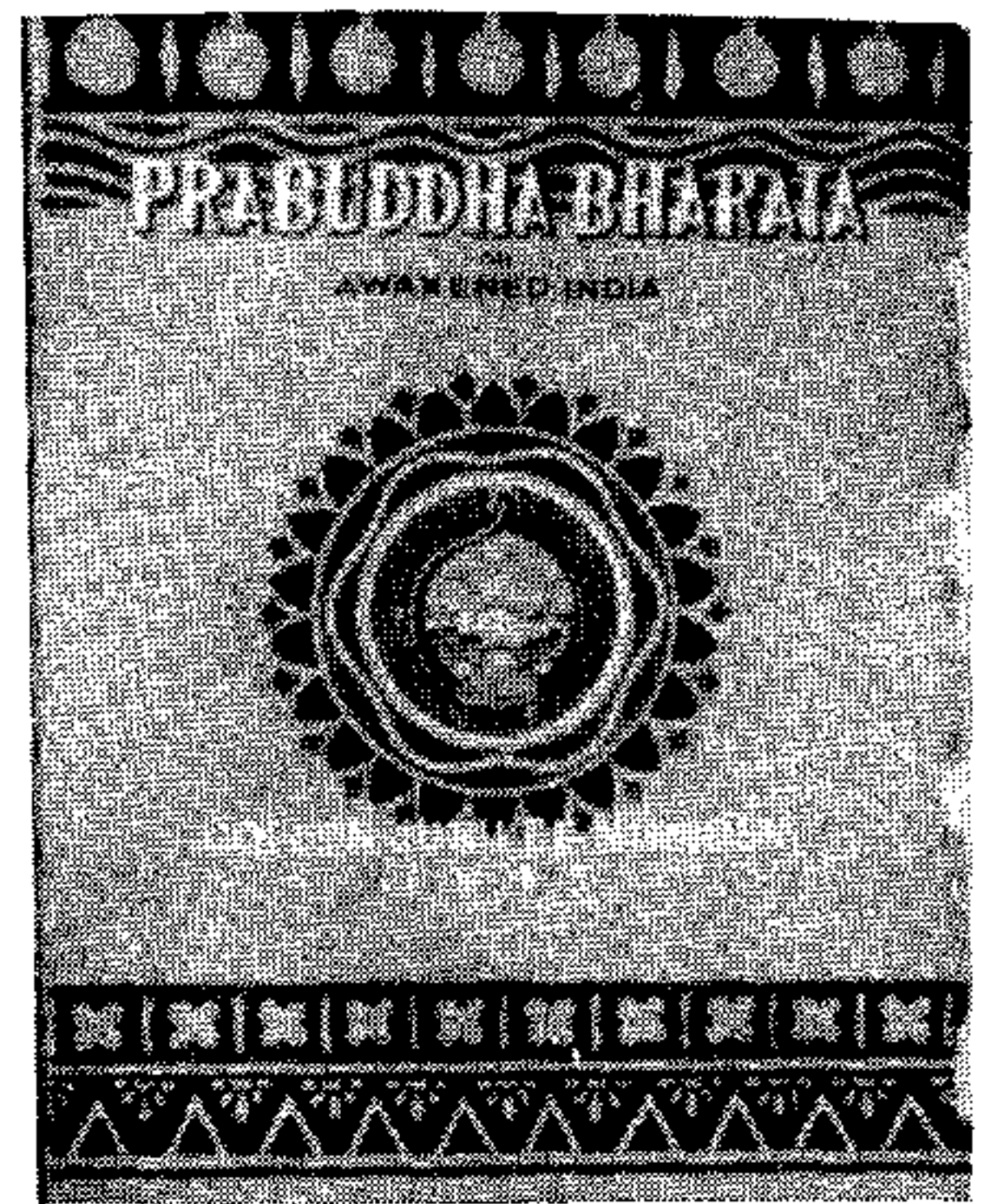
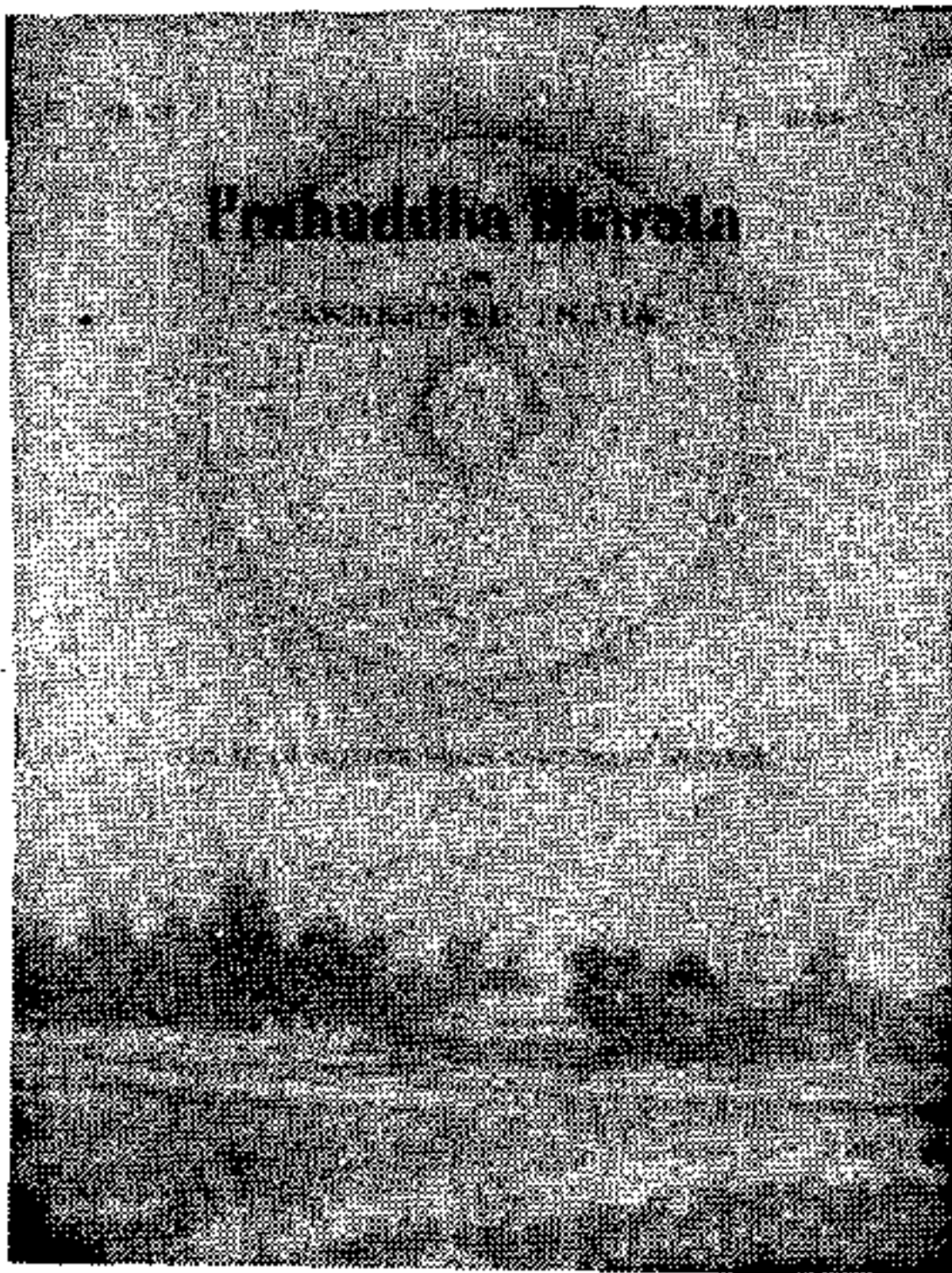


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The first cover design for the *Prabuddha Bharata*



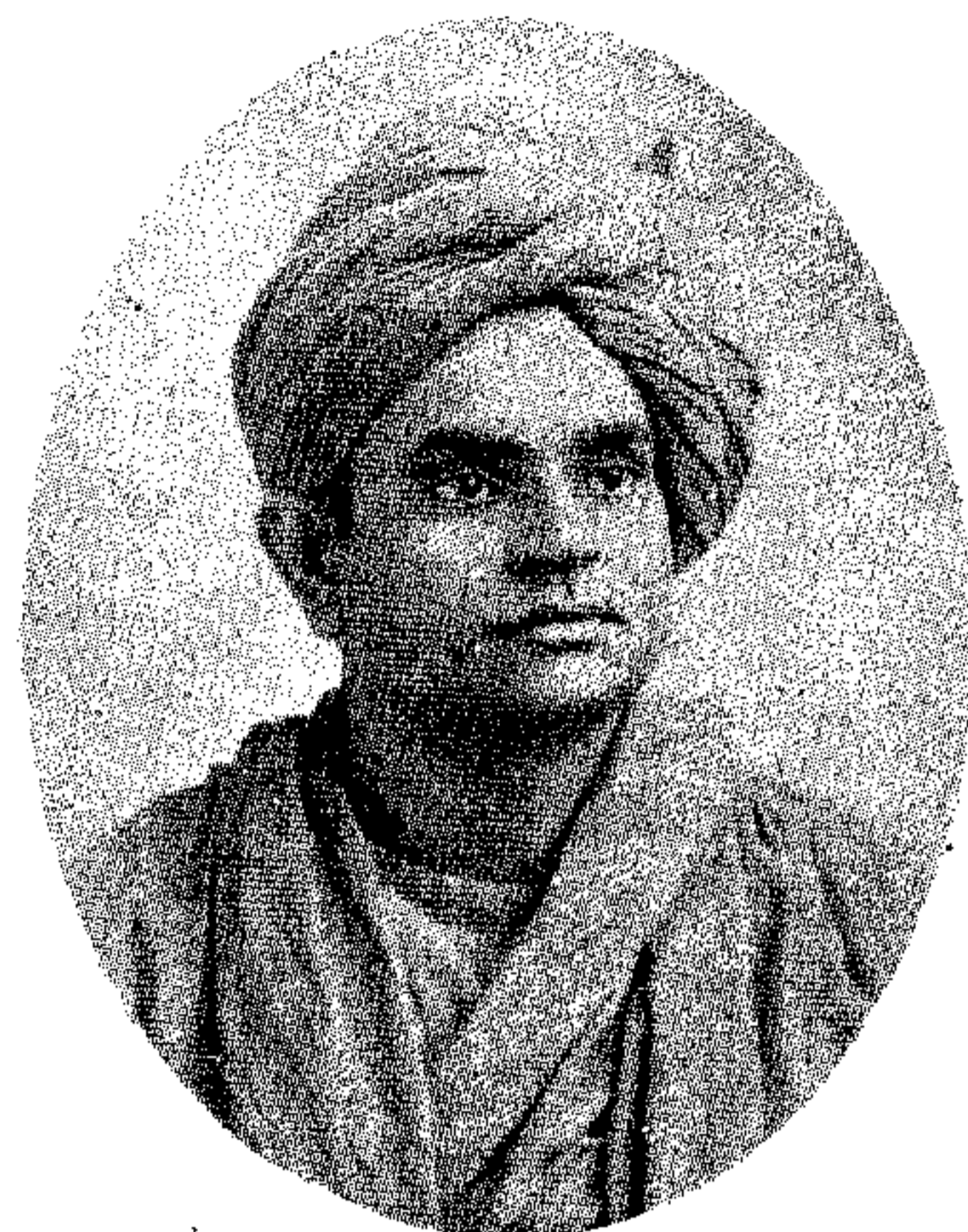
Different Covers of *Prabuddha Bharata*



Presidents of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati



Swami Swarupananda
1899–1906



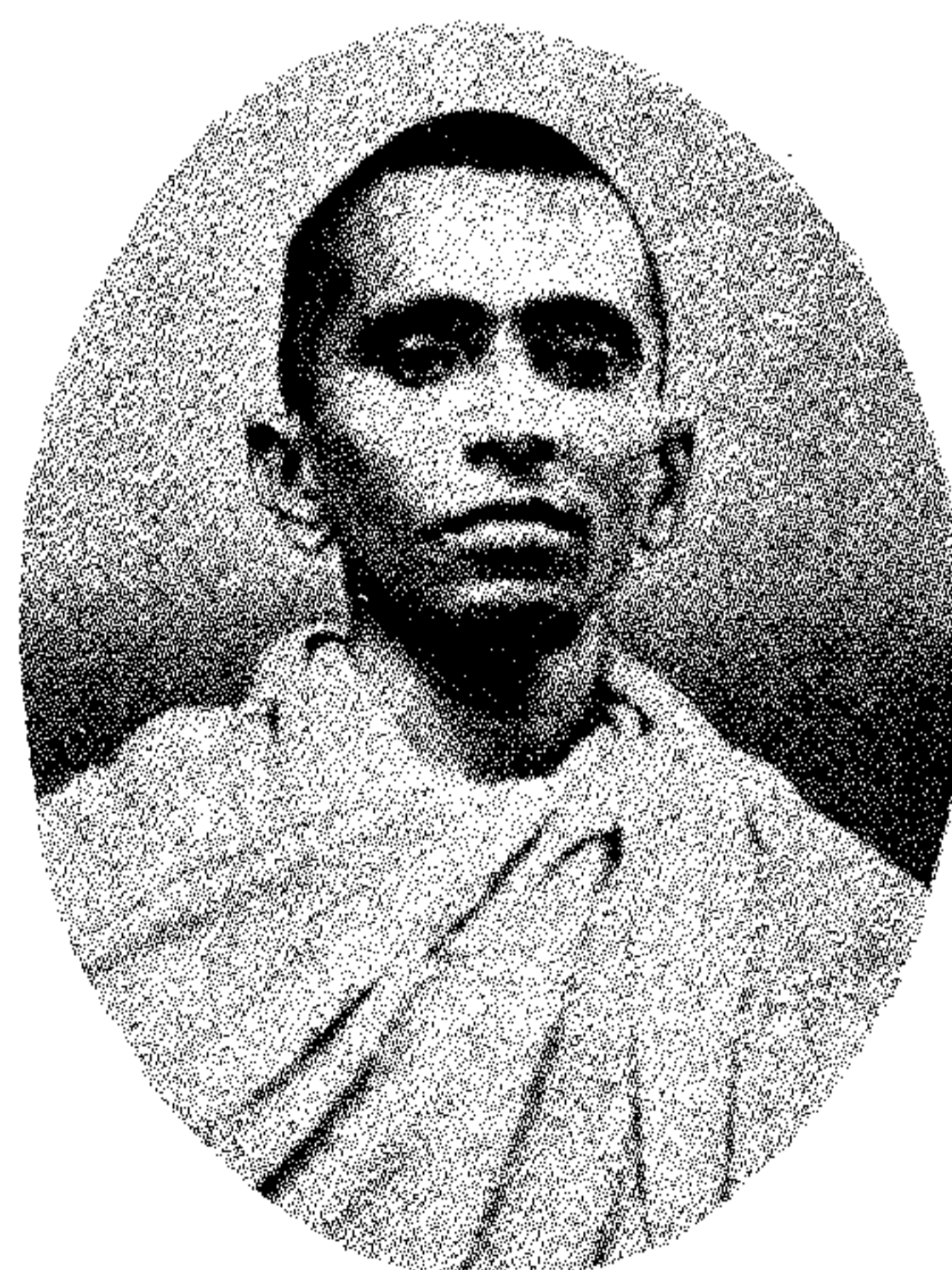
Swami Virajananda
1906–1913



Swami Prajnananda
1914–1918



Swami Madhavananda
1918–1927



Swami Vireshwarananda
1927–1937



Swami Pavitrananda
1937-1947



Swami Yogeshwarananda
1948-1953



Swami Gambhirananda
1953-1963



Swami Chidatmananda
1964-1968



Swami Budhananda
1969-1976



Swami Vandanananda
1976-1977



Swami Tadrupananda
1977-1978



Swami Ananyananda
1978-1988



Swami Swananda
1988-1990



Swami Mumukshananda
1991-

Faces of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati



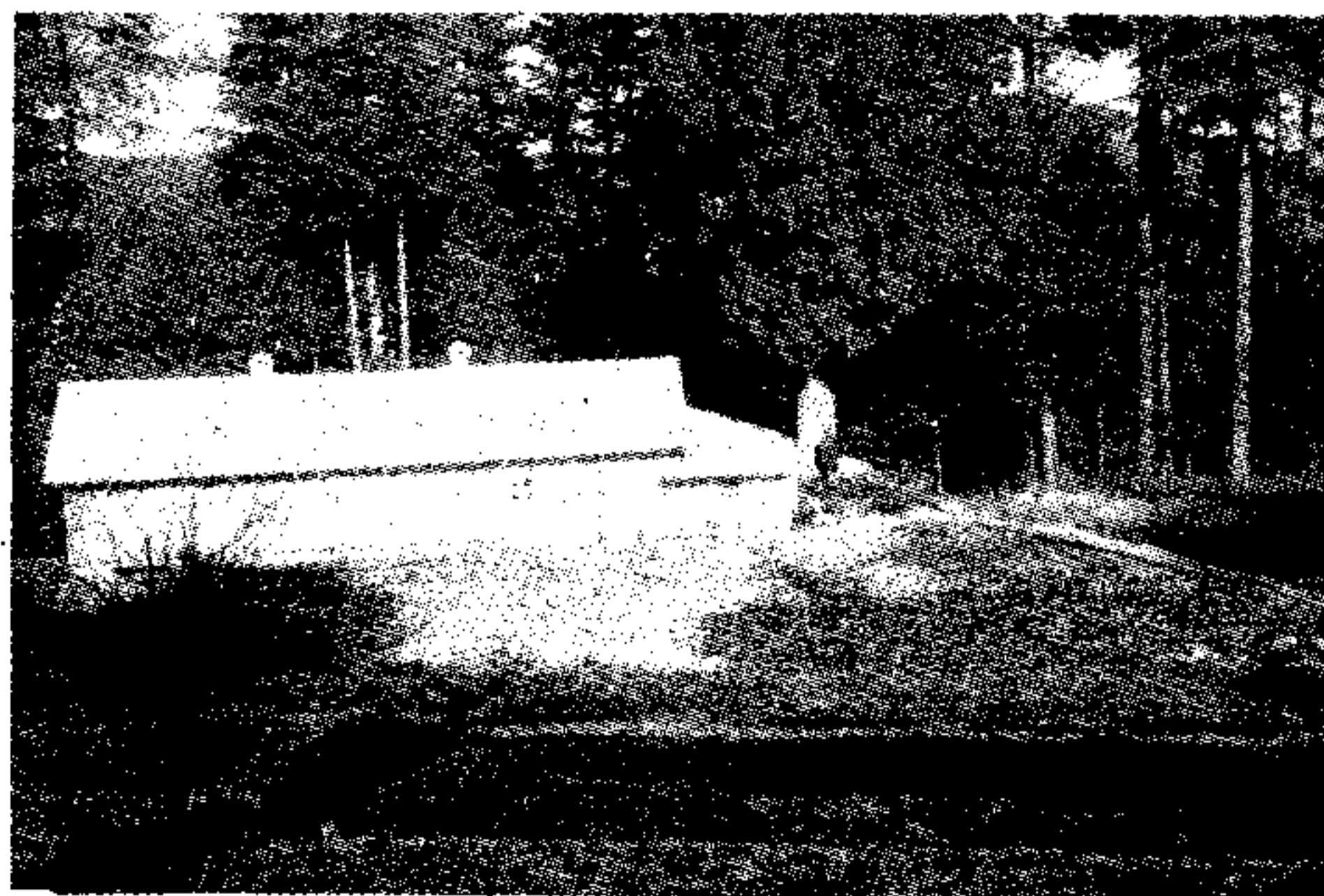
Gol-kamra—the room with a fireplace
—in which Swamiji stayed



Rām-nām is sung in the Gol-kamra
on *Ekādashis*



The oak under which Swami Turiyananda
used to meditate



The Seviars' bungalow

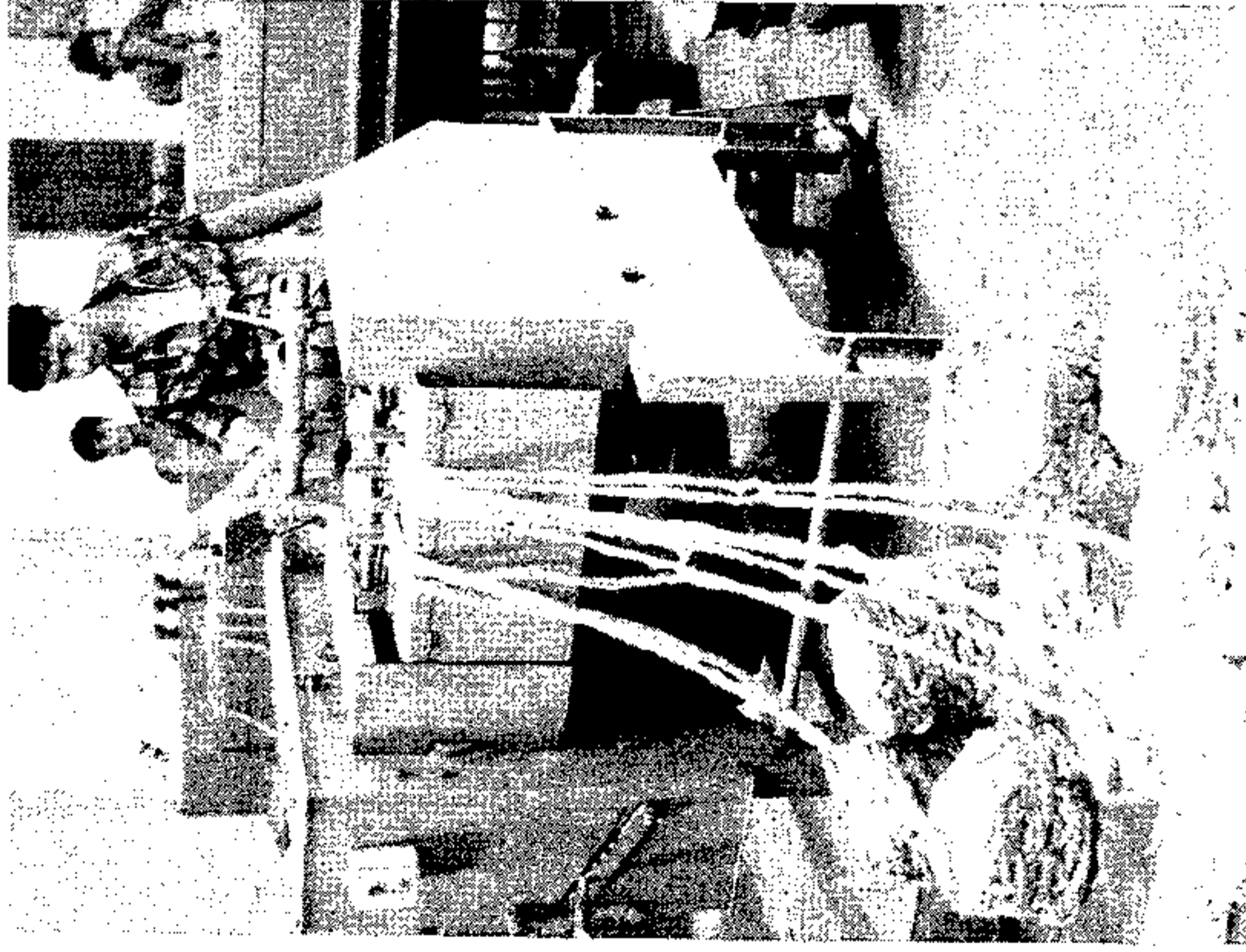


Agricultural Training-cum-Demonstration Farm

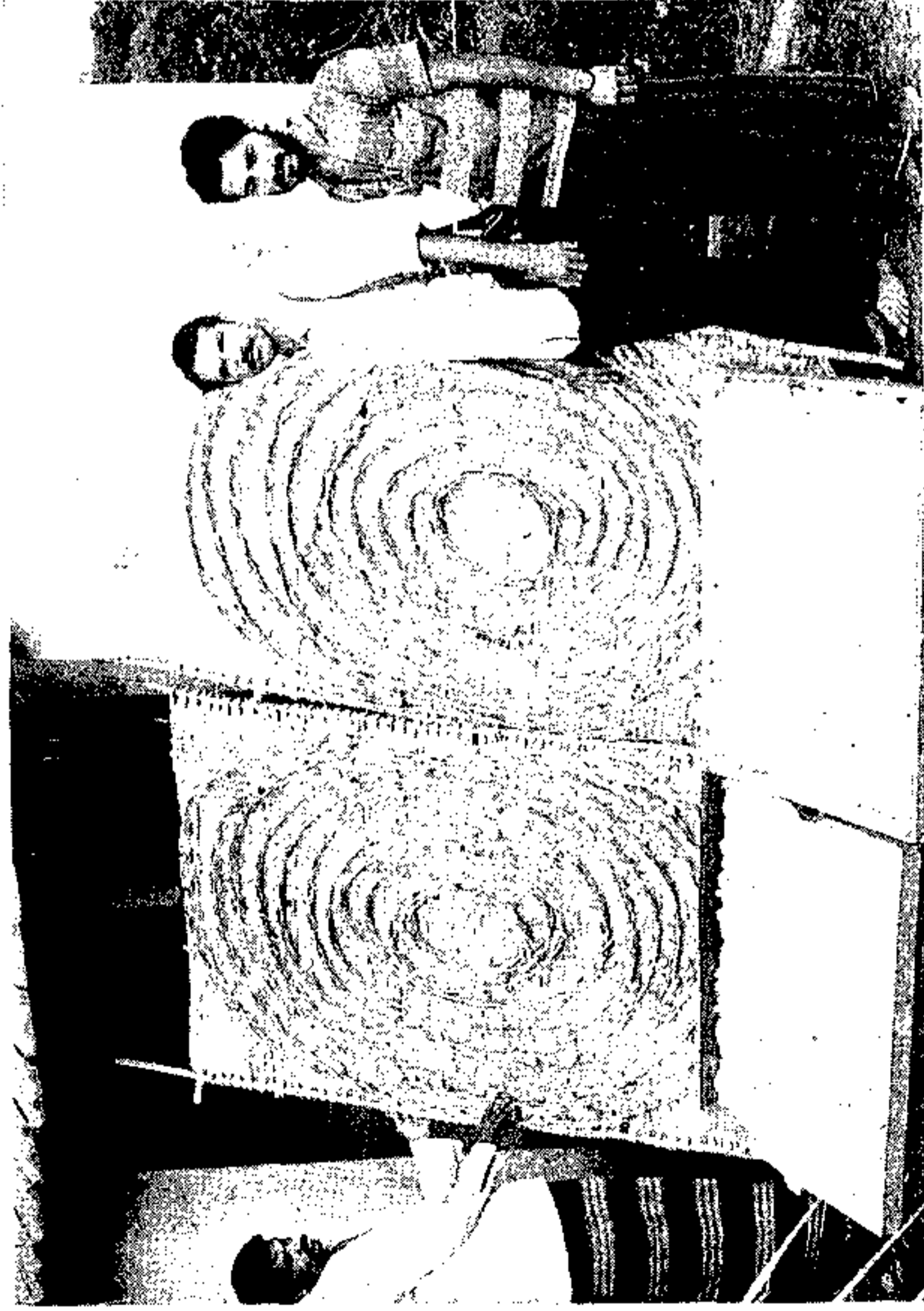


Abujmarh inhabitants

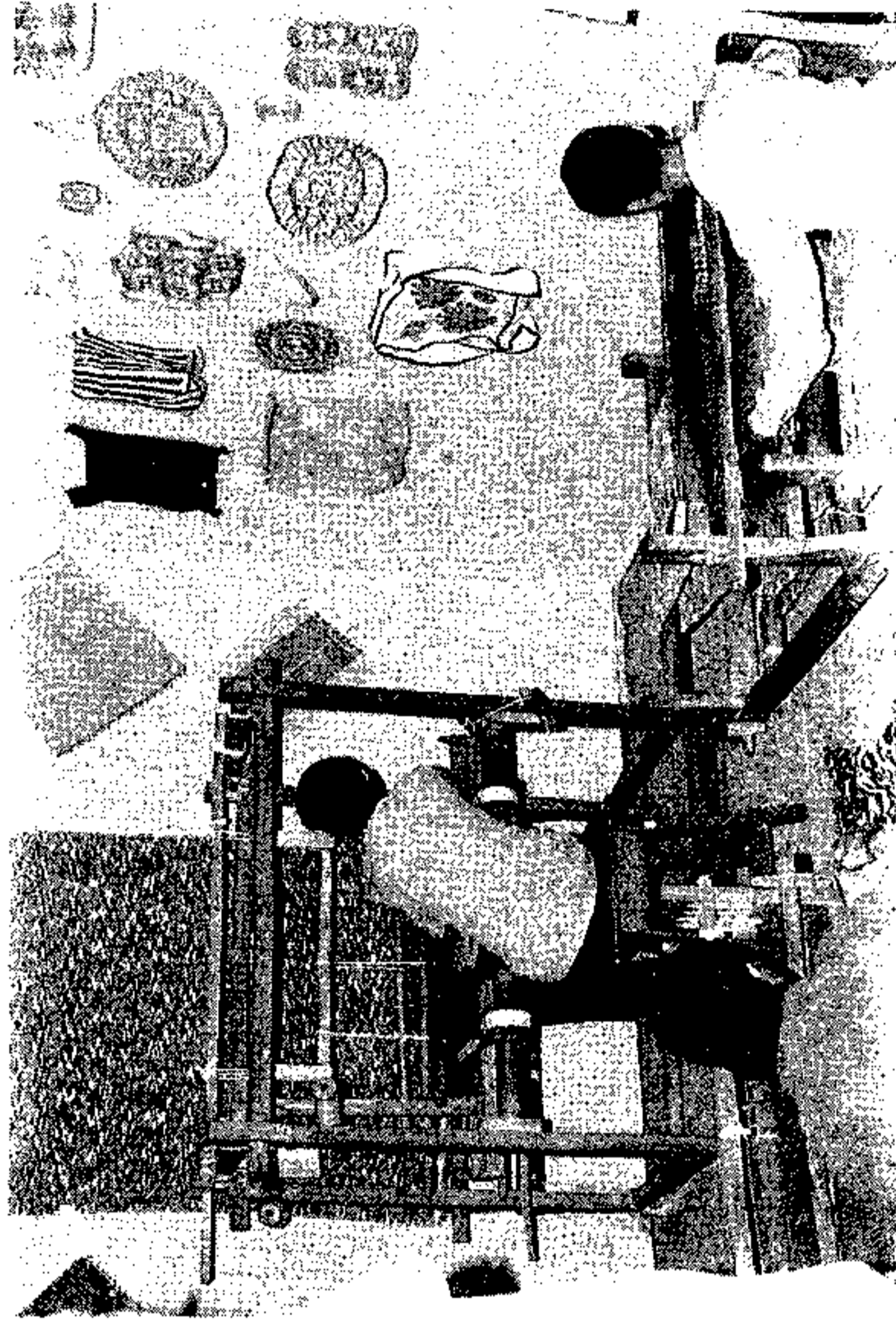
FRUITS OF PALLIMANGAL



Mini
Jute Mill,
Kamarpukur



Rearing silkworm cocoons, Mysore



Pallimangal handicrafts, Balidewanganj