

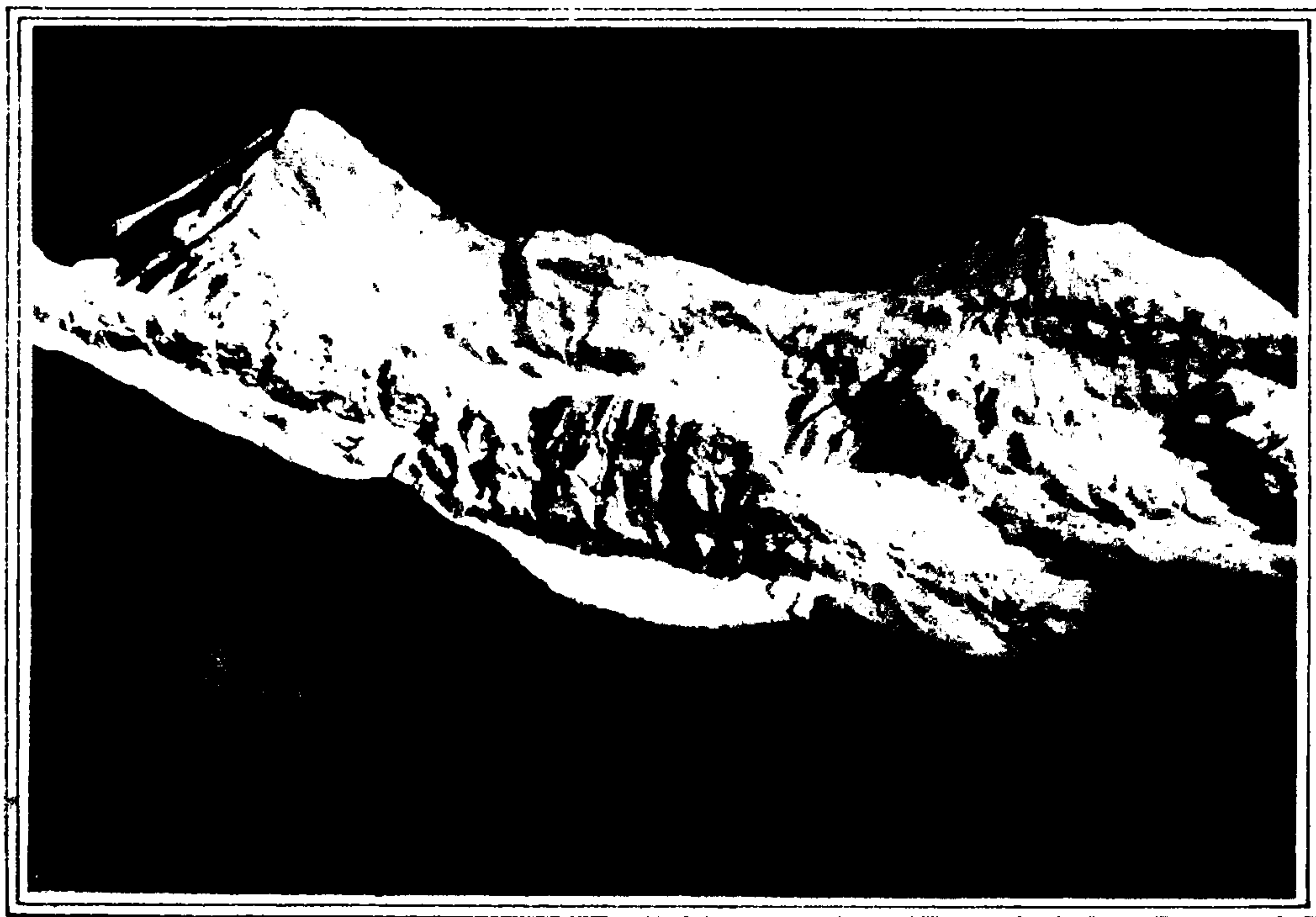
# **Prabuddha Bharata**

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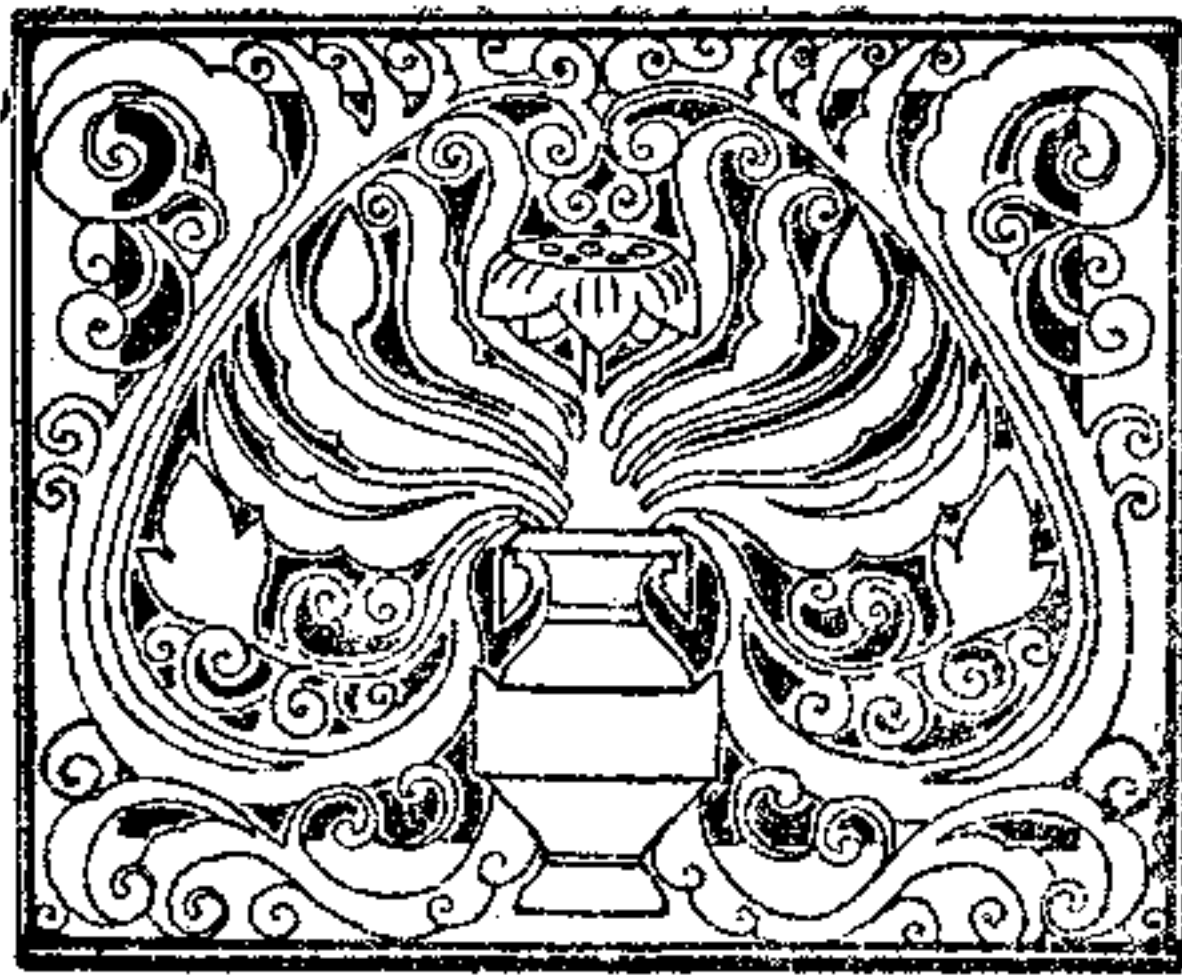
## **AWAKENED INDIA**

**VOL. LXXIX**

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# Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE  
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

MARCH 1974

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Morning Sun over NANDAKHOT

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXIX

MARCH 1974

No. 3

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (posed by himself): 'People shed floods of tears at the death of their wives, children and the like, or at the loss of worldly possessions, but who does so because he has not realized God ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Yet they say, "We called on Him so much and still He did not show Himself." Let them but once weep for God with such eagerness and let me see whether He keeps Himself back without revealing Himself.'

Question (posed by himself): 'Besides, is it not for the purpose of restraining the mind that one has to restrain the vital air by practising Pranayama, etc.?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'You will see that both mind and vital forces will of themselves be gradually restrained by meditation and devotion to God. Human beings have short lives and possess little capacity in the Kali-yuga (iron age); this is why the divine Lord has graciously made their path to the realization of Him so easy to tread. In this age if the feelings of anxiety and void, like those felt at the death of one's wife or son, are felt for God and these last for twenty-four hours only in one's mind, He is bound to reveal Himself.'

Question (posed by himself): 'Is there any one who has free will or anything like that ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'It is by God's will alone that everything has always happened and shall happen. Man understands it in the long run. But then something has to be added. Just as, when a cow is tied to a post with a long tether, it can stand at a distance of one cubit from it, or anywhere within the whole length of the rope—so it is with the free will of man. A man ties a cow with the idea, "Let her lie down, stand or move about wherever she wills within that area." Similarly God has given man some power. And He has also given him freedom to use as much of it as he likes and in any way. This is why man feels he is free. But the rope is fastened to the post. And mark this: If anyone prays to Him in all humility, He may remove him to another place and tie him there; or He may lengthen the tether, or even take it off completely from his neck.'

Question (posed by himself): 'Can one easily take refuge in the divine Lord? Inscrutable are the ways of Mahamaya! Does She allow this to happen?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'She makes one who has no relative in the world rear up a cat and lead a worldly life. One then goes round to procure milk for the cat and says, "What can I do? The cat does not take anything but fish and milk."

'Perhaps one comes of a rich and noble family. The husband and children have all died. Those who are left behind are so many widows, lingering as if there is to be no death for them. Some parts of the house are falling to pieces, others have given way. On the roof trees have grown and along with them a few plants of spinach. The widows gather them, make a curry and go on with their worldly life! But why? Why do they not take refuge in the divine Lord? Theirs is indeed the time for that. But that is not to be!

'Again, perhaps one loses one's husband soon after one's marriage and becomes a child-widow. She is now a childless grown-up widow. Why does she not call on God? But that she will not do. She becomes the guardian of her brother's household. With her hair fastened in a knot over the crown of her head and a bunch of keys tied at the end of her cloth, she wags her fore-finger at everyone and exercises her authority over all. The whole village is afraid of her—the terror of all. And she goes round saying, "My brother cannot have even a meal if I am not there." Ah, that wretch of a woman! Why does she not look to what has happened to her—what, after all, has she gained for herself!'

Question (asked by a young man in a dejected mood): 'Sir, how can one be freed from lust? Passions and unhealthy emotions disturb the mind sometimes and make me restless in spite of myself.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Ah, lust does not vanish till God is realized. So long as the body lasts, a little of it continues even after that realization; but then it cannot raise its head. Do you think I myself am altogether free from it? At one time, I thought I had conquered lust. When I was sitting under the Panchavati such an onrush of lust came that it seemed to be beyond my power of control. I then wept rubbing my face against the dust on the ground and said to the Mother, "I have done a great wrong, Mother; I shall never harbour the idea that I have conquered lust." It was only then that it vanished. Do you know, you people are now passing through a high tide of youth. This is why you cannot stop it. When a high tide comes does it heed an embankment? It then swells up, breaks the embankment and rushes forward. Then water stands as high as a bamboo over the paddy fields. But it is said that a mental sin is no sin in the Kali-yuga. Again even if an undesirable feeling happens to arise once or twice in the mind why should you feel worried because of it? It is natural to the body, it comes and goes sometimes; pay no more heed to it than to the bodily functions, the calls of nature. Do people feel worried because of such functions? Similarly consider these feelings to be very trifling, unworthy of any attention and do not think of them any more. Moreover, pray to Him heartily, repeat continually the name of Hari, and meditate on Him. Do not take notice whether they come or go. They will slowly come under control.'

---



## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*Instead of materialising the spirit, that is, dragging the spiritual to the material plane as these folks do, convert the matter into spirit, catch a glimpse at least, every day, of that world of infinite beauty and peace and purity—the spiritual, and try to live in it day and night. Seek not, touch not with your toes even, anything that is uncanny. Let your souls ascend day and night like an 'unbroken string' unto the feet of the Beloved whose throne is in your own hearts and let the rest take care of themselves, that is the body and everything else. Life is evanescent, a fleeting dream; youth and beauty fade. Say day and night, 'Thou art my father, my mother, my husband, my love, my lord, my God—I want nothing but Thee, nothing but Thee, nothing but Thee. Thou in me, I in Thee, I am Thee. Thou art me.' Wealth goes, beauty vanishes, life flies, powers fly—but the Lord abideth for ever, love abideth for ever. If here is glory in keeping the machine in good trim, it is more glorious to withhold the soul from suffering with the body—that is the only demonstration of your being 'not matter', by letting the matter alone.*

*Stick to God! Who cares what comes to the body or to anything else! Through the terrors of evil, say—my God, my love! Through the pangs of death, say—my God, my love! Through all the evils under the sun, say—my God, my love!*

*Wickham*

## FUTURE SHOCK AND VEDANTA

### EDITORIAL

### WHAT IS FUTURE SHOCK?

To the vast majority of underdeveloped and developing peoples of both the hemispheres, future shock is still decades and centuries away. In some remote corners it may never arrive at all. But in the developed, technologically advanced and affluent nations future shock and its shattering effects are already felt, widely noticed and intensely studied. For readers of Alvin Toffler's fascinating best-selling book, future shock should be fairly well known. It is the 'dizzying disorientation brought on by the premature arrival of the future'.<sup>1</sup>

Life in the advanced and affluent societies is lived at such a fast clip that the physical and psychological capacities of adaptation are strained to the utmost. Future arrives on the surging flood of accelerated change. To be sure, men and women in the industrialized societies are accustomed and adapted to a certain rate of change. But without the awareness of many, a super-industrial stage has been reached in these very societies. In the super-industrial stage the rate of change is accelerated to such a high and unnatural degree that people's psycho-biological adaptational powers become inadequate. Toffler says that he coined the term future shock to describe 'the shattering stress and disorientation that we induce in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time'.<sup>2</sup> 'It [the acceleration of change] is a concrete force that reaches deep into our personal lives, compels us to act out new roles, and confronts us with the danger of a new and powerfully upsetting psychological disease. This new disease can be called "future shock". . . .'<sup>3</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Alvin Toffler: *Future Shock* (Bantam Edn, 2nd printing), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

another place in the book he says that future shock is 'the human response to over-stimulation'.<sup>4</sup>

#### MODES AND LEVELS IN WHICH THE FUTURE CAN SHOCK US

If the first part of Toffler's book is expressively called 'Death of Permanence', the second part is named as 'Transience'. The three main aspects of life in the super-industrial society are transience, novelty, and diversity. The latter two in fact stem from the first which is the most potent factor in causing future shock.

Transience, according to Toffler, is 'the rate of turnover of the different kinds of relationships in an individual's life'.<sup>5</sup> According to this definition, people in the developing countries experience very low transience. But in the highly affluent and technologically advanced countries, people generally experience 'high transience'. Beginning with the simplest articles of everyday use through clothes and shoes to automobiles and homes, transience pervades and rules human life. If the agitations against environmental pollution have not altered the conditions described by Toffler in his book, Americans, for instance, use a large number of products only once or for a short while only. Thus there has come to prevail in America and many other developed countries a 'throw-away culture'. People make and break their ties with things around them at a faster pace than ever before. This high rate of turnover of relationships is not limited to material things. It involves places, friends, institutions, churches, political ideologies, schools, houses, family members, husbands and wives, and even children.

A close and comprehensive study of social changes and symptoms indicates that

a new unprecedented revolution is afoot. This revolution is taking certain segments of humanity towards a super-industrial stage. Revolution, says Toffler, implies novelty. The types of novelty he goes on to depict are imagination-boggling. High transience itself has created vast adaptational problems for man. Coupled with transience, novelty further complicates the situation. 'For transience and novelty are an explosive mix.' Toffler concludes the chapter on 'Novelty' with these significant lines:

'Thus two great social forces converge: the relentless movement toward transience is reinforced and made more potentially dangerous by a rise in the novelty ratio. Nor, as we shall next see, is this novelty to be found solely in the technological arrangements of the society-to-be. In its social arrangements, too, we can anticipate the unprecedented, the unfamiliar, the bizarre.'<sup>7</sup>

If standardization is the hall-mark of the industrialized society, destandardization and diversity are the characteristics of the super-industrialized society. These characteristics are strikingly manifest in the areas of industry, education, social and sexual mores, and in the subcults and lifestyles that men and women originate and avidly adopt. As a result people are faced with a surfeit of choice which seriously impairs their decision-making capacities, and group living suffers fragmentation. Thus diversity conjointly with transience and novelty pushes fast the whole society toward a 'historical crisis of adaptation'. 'We create an environment so ephemeral, unfamiliar and complex as to threaten millions with adaptive breakdown.'<sup>8</sup>

Acceleration of change has brought about the phenomenon of 'transience'. Continual

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 217-8.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 322.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 46.



changes, the structure of the new throw-away culture with its throw-away mentality, finally become the cause of a general identity crisis, a modern cultural disease. A number of studies on the adverse effects of this acceleration in the changing culture in affluent societies have been published in America. Man's adaptability has its limits. What was spread out over long centuries of evolution in former times is now compressed into the life-span of one man's life. Change disturbs our inner equilibrium and alters the very mode in which we react to life-situations. Novelty is change in situations beyond recognition and it usually triggers startle-reactions. 'If you overload an environment with novelty,' says research psychologist Ardie Lubin in an interview with the author, 'you get the equivalent of anxiety neurotics—people who have their systems continually flooded with adrenalin, continual heart pumping, cold hands, increased muscle tone and tremors—all the usual OR [orientation response] characteristics.'<sup>9</sup> Accelerated change and overdose of novelty affect physical health and cause illnesses.

The physical failure to adapt to a fast-changing and ever-new environment expresses itself as various types of illness. Certainly, however, the mind's capacity for adaptation is very great. But even that can be said to reach its limits when pitted against the enormous demands of life in a super-industrial society. Over-stimulation on the sensory level, information overload on the cognitive level, and continual demands on decision-making capacity tend to cause confusion, disorientation, fatigue, anxiety, tension, or irritability, and oftentimes lead to 'withdrawal' or schizophrenia.

Toffler's book devotes the last part to suggesting and discussing some strategies for survival in the future high-technology

world. These include strategies for individual as well as societal and governmental coping with the future. The author advocates reforming education so that the younger generation can be trained to take the future in its stride. Technology, he suggests, should continue to develop without its present side-effects on environment and society. He suggests the formation of social future assemblies, which, among other things, will serve to connect the legislators with their mass-base, the present with the future, and 'would help shift the culture towards a more super-industrial time-bias'.

#### TRANSIENCE AND VEDANTA

For all the scholarship and computer-like sweep and mastery of facts brought into the writing of *Future Shock*, the author's understanding of the *essential* nature of *man* and *the cosmos* seems to be too shallow and schoolboy-like. Religion, which holds the key to man's infinite dimension, is entirely ignored by Toffler. His understanding of it appears to equate religion with its dogmatic, ossified or institutionalized forms. Further, his analysis and understanding of the causes which make affluent, intelligent youths to join movements of 'counter culture' leave much to be desired. A deep hankering for real spiritual life and experience characterizes many of these youths. Furthermore, he has intended his book to help people to cope effectively with the future. 'To survive', he says, 'to avert what we have termed future shock, the individual must become infinitely more adaptable and capable than ever before.'<sup>10</sup> How can the individual become 'infinitely more adaptable and capable' without understanding and realizing 'the infinite' which is hidden in himself? If Alvin Toffler had pointed out this fact in his book and presented religion as a strong armour against future shock, he would have rendered a great and enduring service to

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 336.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35.



humanity. As it is, he has placed before future shocked humanity the plans for a 'modular' half-way house.

It is here that Vedānta comes to the rescue of humanity affected by future shock. Readers of this Journal hardly need any introduction to Vedānta. The body of eternal spiritual truths discovered by ancient Hindu sages and presented in the Upaniṣads is Vedānta. These truths, let us remember, are not the exclusive possessions of Hinduism or any one religion. As truths of perennial philosophy, they are also to be found as the essential core of every world religion. The validity of these truths has been time and again verified by the experiences of all saints and sages down the ages.

Vedānta teaches in the boldest fashion the potential divinity of man and the spiritual unity of the cosmos. It asserts the oneness of the individual soul with the cosmic, universal soul. Vedānta recognizes the phenomenal world, the world of our waking experience. But it points out that the phenomenal world, rooted in the Unchangeable, is characterized by change and transience. Change and transience are found everywhere in the external world and also in our bodies and minds. Millions of cells in our bodies die every hour and new cells take their place. Not for two continuous seconds we have the same thoughts in our minds. However much accelerated may be the change in today's world, it can never equal the rates of physiological changes in our bodies and thought-changes in our minds. The temporal world too changes constantly—the gross world slowly but the invisible subatomic world with the speed of light. All the same, we continue to possess our physical and psychological identities and consider the environing cosmos to be the same as the one the first man on earth had witnessed. This inalienable sense of 'permanence' in and through transience comes because of the all-pervading spiritual existence, both in

man and in the universe. Permanence is not dead, it is only obscured by the smog of change and transience. Says the Upaniṣad:

'There is One who is the eternal Reality among transient objects, the one truly conscious Entity among conscious objects, and who, though nondual, fulfils the desires of many. Eternal peace belongs to the wise, who perceive Him within themselves—not to others.'<sup>11</sup>

Vedānta, while pointing out this one eternal Reality among 'transient objects', teaches that all relationships of men, whether with material objects or with animate beings including his fellowmen, should be formed and sustained through that Reality or God. The first verse of the *Īśā-upaniṣad* teaches:

'All this—whatever exists in this changing universe—should be covered by the Lord. Protect the Self by renunciation. Lust not after any man's wealth.'

The natural corollary of the teaching is that when relationships are formed through God, they are enduring and lose the quality of apparent transience. Because God is all-pervading and the universe of name and form is, as it were, His garb, the false, selfish sense of ownership is wrong and should be given up. Without the sense of ownership, we can have a stream of things flowing through our lives. It will not affect us in the least. Without this divine perspective, the modern phenomenon of transience may turn most of us into egotistical tyrants who would not bat an eye to plunder and kill others for selfish pleasure and advantage. This strategy of covering and relating everything in this world with God incidentally helps us overcome the shocks created by novelty and diversity. However different and peculiar things, situations, and fellow-beings may appear externally, their essential divine nature remains unaltered. When we continue to see that greatest com-

<sup>11</sup> *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, II. ii. 13.



mon factor, namely, divinity, we will have 'de-fanged' the vicious adders of novelty and diversity.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL OVERSTIMULATION AND VEDANTIC ANSWER

Modern researches in the physiology of sensory perception, the process of cognition, and the nature of neuro-cerebral activities are greatly advanced. Nevertheless, these researches have not the least inkling of the nature or source of 'intelligence' and 'consciousness'. Intelligence and consciousness are not inherent in the brain cells and neurons. Vedānta says that mind and thought are as much 'material' as the body and brain. Cerebral and neural activities are known to be mostly electrical in nature. Since electricity is also a phenomenon of the physical world, we can safely classify mental activity as 'material'. Intelligence and consciousness, says Vedānta, belong to the spiritual self in man, namely, the Ātman. The Ātman uses the cerebro-neural mechanism as its instrument for its own 'ends'. Because of the very subtle, invisible presence of the Ātman behind the mind and thoughts, man appears conscious and intelligent. The true nature of the Ātman is consciousness, infinity, and bliss. The light of the Ātman shines for ever—even in the so-called unconscious state of deep sleep. When dreaming, the mind is active in the light of the Ātman alone. As a Vedāntic scripture says:

'Through all months, years, yugas, and cosmic cycles, through all (divisions of time) past and future, the consciousness remains the same and self-luminous. It neither rises nor sets.'<sup>12</sup>

It is this *antarjyotiḥ* or inner light that illuminates and sustains the mind and all its activities. It is this light again, says Vedānta, that illuminates the sun, stars, and lightnings. How can the human mind which

has such a blissful and inexhaustible source of power and luminosity become fatigued, confused or disoriented? How can there be any 'overstimulation' for it? It is because ordinary men do not know the real source of intelligence and consciousness and the art of quieting the turbulent mind that it gets fatigued, confused, and disoriented. Those who want to build up real 'future shock absorbers' must learn the art of turning back the mind to its own immortal and luminous spiritual source. That a wave of practical interest in the methods of meditation according to Christian, Hindu, and Zen traditions is sweeping over the affluent societies is a hopeful indication of man's ability to cope with future shock on the psychological level.

#### MAN AND HIS TIMELESS DIMENSION

The modern technological man has thoughtlessly narrowed his vision of himself and the universe. Though nuclear physics, cosmology, cellular biology, psychological researches into extra-sensory phenomena are raising their voices against a narrow, materialistic approach to the understanding of man and the universe, man's ego-centric delusions are proving greatly compulsive. What is known of man and the cosmos is only a thimbleful, what is unknown is oceanic. Vedānta says that our perceptible universe is only a distorted fragmented image of the infinite Reality projected through the prism of space, time, and causation. Man's own individual self-consciousness is a limitation imposed by this distorting medium and a beginningless ignorance. How can any knowledge, however thoroughgoing, within this circumscribed, distorted image be right? Vedānta declares that only by breaking this limitation and delusive dream can man truly know himself and the universe. Then he will know that everything is infinite, nondual, and perfect. How can the past, present or future shock the infinite?

<sup>12</sup> *Pañcadaśī*, I.



Furthermore, all of man's preoccupation is with the world of waking experience and his waking self. Vedānta says that there are other states of consciousness and existence where even the sense of time is transcended. Through a thoroughgoing and rational analysis of the three states of consciousness, namely, waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, Vedānta points to an infinite time-transcending, blissful Consciousness, and the way of knowing It directly. Knowing It alone man becomes fulfilled, immortal, and illumined. When one knows oneself as the all-pervading, undying consciousness, as the immortal truth, then this phenomenal world of space-time is seen altogether differently. In that state of highest wisdom, the relative world is seen as a drop of reality caught in the framework of space-time and causation. How can the 'drop' shock the 'ocean'? Knowing his own timeless dimension is the surest of 'future shock absorbers' that the high-technology man can devise for himself, his society, and for generations yet unborn.

Let us recall here a few insightful teachings of Swami Vivekananda, the greatest messenger of Vedānta that India sent forth

to the West at the very dawn of this new scientific and technological age:

'There is really no difference between matter, mind and spirit. They are only different phases of experiencing the One. This very world is seen by the five senses as matter, by the very wicked as hell, by the good as heaven, and by the perfect as God.'<sup>13</sup>

'Never forget the glory of human nature! We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which *I am*.'<sup>14</sup>

'A little of the Infinite is projected into consciousness, and that we call our world.'<sup>15</sup>

'This world is nothing. It is at best a hideous caricature, a shadow of the Reality.'<sup>16</sup>

'Remember! The message of India is always "*Not the soul for Nature, but Nature for the soul!*"'<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. V (1959), p. 272.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VII (1947), p. 76.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. I (1946), p. 226.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. II (1958), p. 174.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VIII (1955), p. 261.

# LETTERS OF A SAINT

## THE LORD MY REFUGE

Ramakrishna Kutir  
Almora  
8.7.1916

Dear—,

This morning I received the M.O. of Rs. 5/- sent by you. I had received a letter from you a few days before. I could not reply in due time, as I was very busy. It is in connection with the construction work of the Ramakrishna Kutir that I have to remain busy. A w.c. which is being built is nearing completion. Further, a breast-wall is to be built this year in the open space in front of the Kutir. Otherwise if during the rainy season a heavy landslide should take place, there would be severe damage to the structure. Therefore it should not be neglected. It must be built as soon as possible. And what a lot more things have got to be done. By God's grace all of them will be completed gradually.

I surmise that Swami Sivananda will not any more be able to come here this year. He has written me that he will accompany Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] on his trip to Bangalore. As is the will of the Lord, so shall it be. Had he come here, my worries would have been greatly lessened. However the Lord disposes, that itself is for the good. If due to building this Kutir, some people are benefited, in that case the labour will be fruitful. Though the place is small, it seems to me to have become very beautiful.

On reading your letter, how happy did I feel! But I was distressed to notice again that old self-deprecating mood. You are the Mother's child, and how can you be depraved? This kind of attitude should be totally eschewed. Our Master [Sri Ramakrishna] used to teach us to say, 'I have taken His name; how can I have any worry? Truly speaking, I feel greatly afflicted when I hear your self-deprecating talk. This is an obstacle in one's self-development—this too I have heard from our Master. Knowing yourself to be firmly related to God, you have to move forward towards Him. 'I am His child'—let this fact be never forgotten. All relationships of this world are accidental and ephemeral; but relationship with Him is for all eternity.

'It is to enjoy the bliss of liberation-in-life, and not for worldly desiring, that the eternally free Self (Ātman) takes up a body.'<sup>1</sup>

I can hardly convey to you what a wonderful joy and light descended on me when I first read this verse of Śaṅkarācārya. It was as if the whole purpose of life rose up luminously before me, and all the problems of my life were fully resolved, spontaneously. Then I realized this: the purpose of human birth is nothing but this—its only goal is to attain the bliss of *jīvanmukti*, libera-

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<sup>1</sup> जीवन्मुक्ति सुखप्राप्तिहेतवे जन्मधारितम् ।  
आत्मना नित्यमुक्तेन न तु संसारकाम्यया ॥



tion-in-life. Really speaking, the ever-free Ātman can for no other reason assume this body. Though embodied, yet it is free—the Ātman's embodiment is for attaining this realization.

You are that ever-free Ātman. Incoherent words such as you wrote do not befit you. You may not have enough strength to see the uncovered sun; but it is not difficult to see the reflected sun. Similarly, though it may be difficult to realize Brahman, which is Existence-consciousness-bliss, as oneself, still one has firmly to realize that one is His part or His child. One should by no means think that one is separate from Him: that sort of thinking is not spiritually helpful at all. Howsoever I may be, still I am His—I don't belong to anyone else. A child may be extremely unworthy, but nonetheless he is none other than one's own child.

'O Mother, a good or a wicked son, however I may be, you know it all. Does the mother disown a son just because he is wicked? To whom [but You] may I tell this?'

I am the Mother's child. I may be good, I may be bad; still I am Mother's—and none else's. You are the Mother's child. You may be good, you may be bad: you are the Mother's child. In this there is not a speck of doubt.

Accept my good wishes and love.

Ever your well-wisher,

SRI TURIYANANDA

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### A CORRECTION

In our previous issue, the caption under the photograph (facing p. 41) of Swami Santanandaji should have read 'Mahasamadhi on 17th January 1974'.

# REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

Gangadhar Maharaj [Swami Akhandananda] had the nature of a boy. We used to associate with him as his playmates. Great men while dealing with others can arouse in them their own disposition and moods. This fact is amply brought home in the episode of Śuka and Vyāsa.

Once some young women were bathing. Śuka, then in the prime of his youth, happened to pass by, in an utterly naked condition. The bathing women then came out of the water and stood by the roadside to see him. They felt no embarrassment at all. A short while after this, Śuka's father Vyāsa, a sage, came along the same way. Seeing him even at a distance, the young women felt extremely shy and quickly put on their clothes. When Vyāsa drew near, he asked them, 'Well, my daughters, you did not feel shy when you saw my youthful son; but why did you feel so shy on seeing an old man like me?' They rejoined, 'Your son has no body-consciousness and therefore body-consciousness disappeared from our minds also. But since you still have body-consciousness, we at once felt embarrassed.'<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Mother once fell into the hands of a dacoit while going on foot from Jayrambati to Calcutta. The Mother addressed him as 'father' in such an earnest manner that genuine paternal love was at once aroused in him. In this way great souls awaken in others their own moods.

One day Gangadhar Maharaj came to the Udbodhan Office. Everyone there began to press him: 'Maharaj, you must feed us *rasagollas*.'<sup>2</sup> 'Where is the money with me?' he said. 'How can I feed you with *rasa-*

*gollas*?' But one of the boys there knew he had some money hidden in the cloth about his waist; so he put his hand there and felt the coins. At this the Swami dragged the boy to Swami Saradananda [then head of the Udbodhan Office] seated in an adjacent room, and said, 'Look at this! What training have you given your boys! They want to extract a treat of *rasagollas* almost by force.' 'Very good,' answered Saradananda, 'when they are wanting it, why don't you feed them?' 'Fine!' exclaimed Gangadhar Maharaj, 'you too are siding with them.' In fact he had brought that money only to feed these boys with sweets. He was acting this way just to have some fun with us. He was also happy when we responded in such a manner.

I shall now recount one or two incidents to illustrate the Swami's deep love and reverence for Swami Vivekananda. Once when I was staying at the Advaita Ashrama, Gangadhar Maharaj was for some time at the Calcutta residence of the Rani of Puntia, whose grandsons were the disciples of Swami Saradananda. A devotee who was staying for one or two days at Advaita Ashrama, spent a little money and fed the monastics with *rasagollas* and green coco-nut during the noon-meal. As we finished our meal, a monk arrived from the Udbodhan. He too had a share of sweets and coco-nut. Later he met Gangadhar Maharaj and said to him, 'Maharaj, today there was a sumptuous feast at the Advaita Ashrama. There were plenty of *rasagollas*, what to speak of green coco-nuts!' And then he added, 'Maharaj, you are here and there was such a big feast at Advaita Ashrama, and they did not invite you?'

On hearing this the Swami said like a boy: 'How strange! I am here so near, and Prabhu did not invite me? Wait, let him come!' The monk came back and

<sup>1</sup> *vide Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, I, iv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> A kind of Bengali sweetmeat made of cheese and syrup.



said to me, 'I have lodged a big complaint with Maharaj against you. Wait, when you meet him this time, you will see the fun.'

A few days later I went to visit Gangadhar Maharaj. After I saluted him and sat at his feet, the grandchildren of the Rani of Puntia and one or two monks—among whom was the one who had reported against me—all sat down there, eager to see what would transpire. Gangadhar Maharaj sat very grave, uttering not a syllable. I too kept mum.

After a while he said, shaking his index finger at me, 'I have something to say against you.'

'I too have something to say against you,' I replied.

'What have you got to say against me?'

'Please tell me first what you have to say. After looking into your charge-sheet, I shall speak out what I have to say.'

'Then fix up a judge,' said Gangadhar Maharaj, like a little boy.

'You will be the best judge,' I said.

'How can I be the judge when I have brought an accusation against you?'

'I have faith in you only, rather than in anyone else present here.'

'Well, then, let it be so.'

Then he said, 'You had such a big feast over there and I am staying so near. Yet you did not care to invite me?'

'It was not really a feast, Maharaj,' I said. And then I explained the whole matter to him. Finally I added, 'This monk here has, for nothing, reported to you against me. And you too expressed a grievance without enquiring from me what actually had happened. Swamiji has said, "If anyone is at fault, call him and speak to him; don't tell anything to anyone else." But, Maharaj, you have acted differently.'

No sooner did I refer to Swamiji than Gangadhar Maharaj declared, 'You have spoken rightly. It was my mistake.' Saying this he pointed to the monk who had

lodged the complaint and said, 'This fellow has created all the rumpus.' And everybody began to laugh.

Two things are to be marked in this episode: firstly, the profundity of Gangadhar Maharaj's reverence and devotion to Swamiji; and secondly the trait of a great soul manifest in him—that is, acknowledging his mistake to a junior brother like me. None of us would have acted like that.

Then I said to him, 'Maharaj, I have won the case. Now I will have to claim damages from you.'

'All right, tell me what you want as damages.'

'You have to pay a visit to the Advaita Ashrama. There you will have to take your lunch, take some rest, and then after having your afternoon tea, return before the evening.'

'All right, I'll go,' Maharaj agreed.

Thus one day he came to the Advaita Ashrama in the morning and stayed on. But just after his lunch he said, 'Now I shall leave.' It was summer time. In those days there were no taxis as there are nowadays. The entire distance from Wellington Lane to Shyambazar he would have to cover by horsecab. Realizing that it would be very hard for him to go in that scorching sun, I said, 'The agreement was, Maharaj, that you would go back towards evening, after taking your afternoon tea here. You can't possibly leave now.'

'No, no, I must go right now,' he said.

In order to hold him back, I felt compelled to say, 'Maharaj, kindly stay on. If you do, I'll feed you with a new thing that you have never tasted before.'

'What new thing can you feed me, boy? I was the guest of so many kings and wealthy persons. I have travelled in so many lands, eaten many a variety of food. What new thing can you possibly give me to eat or drink?'

'Whatever you may say, the thing I am



going to offer you has surely never been tasted by you before.'

'Well, let me see what you are going to give me. I am staying on.'

I felt much relieved thinking that, at all events, I could at least stop his trip in this hot sun.

As soon as it struck four, Maharaj called out to me, 'Where is the new thing you promised? Bring it quick.' After he had gone for his rest, I had prepared some coffee and kept it on ice to cool it. In those days there were neither coffee-houses nor refrigerators in Calcutta. I offered him a glassful of that cold coffee. He drank it and was very glad. He said, 'Really, such a thing I had never tasted before.'

Another incident. Once after coming down to Calcutta from Sargachi, Gangadhar Maharaj was staying in the house of a devotee in Calcutta. With all care the family arranged for his stay in a well-furnished room. We went to see him there. He began to speak to us like a boy: 'Look how they have kept me here with so much care! Will you be able to keep me in this way at the Belur Math?'

'How can one compare this house with our Math?' I rejoined. 'This is the house of a rich man, and the Math is the place of mendicant monks. How is it possible for us to keep you in this way at the Math? But, then, there is a very important point in this regard: the Math is Swamiji's residence. Swamiji used to live there.'

No sooner did I say this than he declared, 'You have rightly said. I will go to the Math tomorrow morning, to be sure.' Immediately he called the devotee and said to him, 'Arrange for my going to the Math tomorrow morning.'

The devotee and all of us were dumb-

founded. The devotee began to request Maharaj over and over again to stay on for at least one or two more days. We also joined him. But he paid no attention to all that, and left for the Math the next morning.

Gangadhar Maharaj had a deep love for Bengali and Sanskrit. Interspersing English words in the course of speaking in Bengali was not to his liking. In those days the publication section of the Advaita Ashrama was in a room in the upper storey of the College Street Market. One day he came there and said, 'Let us go and see the Khadi Store.' The Khadi Store was then on the ground floor under the Albert Hall. We accompanied him there. He went round the entire shop. Sir P. C. Roy, the famous scientist, also happened to come there at that time. He was then making propaganda for Khadi on behalf of the Indian National Congress. While talking to the workers in the Khadi establishment, Dr. Roy was often using English words. Gangadhar Maharaj was casually hearing Dr. Roy, while looking over the goods in the shop. After thus listening for a while, Maharaj very humbly said to Dr. Roy, 'Mr. Roy, please make your language also Khaddar! [that is, unmixed with any foreign words].' Without feeling the least irritated, Dr. Roy said also very humbly, 'Swamiji, what you have said is just right. We regularly teach boys in English, and so we have developed this habit of using English words while speaking in Bengali.'

Gangadhar Maharaj would associate with us like a boy; and that was why we could behave with him as his playmates. When the moon reflects in the water, the fish play with the reflection, thinking the moon is one of them. They do not know the real place of the moon.



The Haat  
Belur  
Kousak district  
Bengal  
India  
The 15<sup>th</sup> May 1902

My dear Mademoiselle

With great sorrow, I learn the sad  
bereavement that has come upon you

These blows must come upon us all,  
they are in the nature of things, yet  
they are so hard to bear.

The force of attraction makes out of  
this unreal world a reality, and the  
longer the company; more real seems  
it seems - ~~as~~ but the day comes when  
we are torn from the unreal and then  
how sad to leave.

yet that which is real the soul;  
is ever with us, omnipresent - blessed  
is the person who has seen the real  
in this ~~world~~ of words of vanishing  
shadows.

I hope dear Mademoiselle you have  
greatly improved in health since  
our last meeting in Egypt

May the Lord always show His character  
through you, in the everlasting

Always as  
Swamiji

## A PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED LETTER

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TO EMMA CALVE

The Math  
Beloor  
Howrah District  
Bengal  
India  
the 15th May 1902

My dear Mademoiselle

With great sorrow, I learn the sad bereavement that has come upon you. These blows must come upon us all, they are in the nature of things, yet they are so hard to bear.

The force of association makes out of this unreal world a reality and the longer the company, more real seems the shadow—but the day comes when the unreal goes to the unreal and ah how sad to bear.

Yet that which is real, the Soul, is ever with us, omnipresent—blessed is the person who has seen the real in this world of vanishing shadows.

I hope, dear Mademoiselle, you have greatly improved in health since our last meeting in Egypt.

May the Lord always shower His choicest blessings on you, is the everlasting prayer of

VIVEKANANDA

*Note:* I found this letter at Millau, in the south of France, in a collection of personal possessions that had once belonged to Emma Calvé. Mme. Calvé spent the last years of her life in Millau and is buried there. Emma Calvé was, of course, the well-known French opera singer who became a friend of Swami Vivekananda and was with him on his trip to Turkey, Greece, and Egypt in the autumn of 1900.

The letter had been pasted into a scrapbook containing letters and testimonials from important people addressed to the diva. Indeed, the paste had partly obliterated 'the shadow' about half way through the letter.

Mme. Calvé had written on the same page: 'Lettre du Swami Vive Kananda, le grand maître Hindou sur le mort de mon père' (Letter of the great Hindu master Swami Vivekananda concerning the death of my father).

A letter from Swami Vivekananda to Josephine MacLeod dated the same day helps to explain the circumstances of the letter to Mme. Calvé. Josephine MacLeod must have communicated to Swamiji the news of the death of Emma Calvé's father. For in his reply to 'Joe' [*The Complete Works*, Vol. V (1959), p. 179] Swamiji wrote: 'I send you the letter to Madame Calvé.'

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

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# WHEN IS PRAYER ANSWERED ?

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

'When mind and speech unite in earnestly asking for a thing, that prayer is answered. Of no avail are the prayers of that man who says with his mouth, "These are all Thine, O Lord!" and at the same time thinks in his heart that all of them are his. Be not a traitor in your thoughts. Be sincere. Act according to your thoughts and you shall surely succeed.'

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'Pray to Him in any way you like. He is always sure to hear. He can hear even the footfall of an ant. God is extremely attentive, my boy, and has heard every time you have prayed to Him. He surely will reveal Himself to you some day or other.'

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Those who are philosophically minded, those who are sophisticated, those who want to act rationally, do not believe so much in the need or efficacy of prayer. They say: 'Man's efforts are sufficient. Why do you depend upon something which you have not experienced and of which you cannot furnish any proof? It is better to depend upon your efforts, on your reason. Cultivate your intellect; study and think for yourself, and act. That is really sensible.' It sounds very logical, very nice. But we do not live by logic alone. We find to our great cost that our intellect does not always help us. We are in situations where we find our powers are insufficient. So much so that we do not know what is right, even. We do not see any way out.

Abraham Lincoln said, 'I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for the day.' I understand that he would literally go to his private chamber to pray when there would be very, very difficult problems which he could not solve.

Bertrand Russell—a thinker, a representative of modern rational thought—even he said in his beautiful essay, *A Free Man's*

*Worship*: '...in our early age we think we can do everything; but through experience we learn that everything is not attainable. By death, by disease, by poverty we learn that the world is not made for us. God did not make this world only for your enjoyment. There are other things. And what is the solution? What is the solution for a free man, for a free man's worship?' He said this very sincerely. I like his statement. He said, 'It is the part of courage, when misfortune comes, to bear without repining the ruin of our hopes, to turn away our thoughts from vain regrets.' How to do that? His solution is: 'Submit to Power, submit to Fate' ('P' and 'F' being capital letters)! Now it sounds very nice, but practically what does happen? How to get that courage to bear misfortune without repining, and not to regret? Where do we get the courage from? That is the real problem. And he says, 'Submit to Power.' Simply the capital letter 'P', of Power, does not solve the problem. His way of solving it is over-simplification. How can you submit to Power and not regret? Or submit to Fate? You cannot. And when a problem comes which you do not know how to solve you are forced to pray. Everyone prays consciously or unconsciously. In expressed

words or unexpressed thoughts, everyone prays; if not to God, to man. When there is a serious disease, you go to a doctor in a helpless condition. I saw a case when the guardian, I think the grandmother, of a patient fell at the feet of the hospital superintendent, saying, 'Just save her, save her!' You see, perhaps she was a very rational person, and would not have prayed to God, but she was forced to pray to a person who was the substitute for God in her case. The same thing happens when you are involved in a legal case, a criminal case. You go to a lawyer on bended knees, as it were, to ask for help. 'Save me, O Lord,' you say. One cannot deny that these are facts of experience. When you need money, you go to a rich person and beg or borrow money from him.

These are forms of prayer. I mean that these indicate that when our power fails, we look for help somewhere—somewhere outside of ourselves. And, fortunately or unfortunately, we find as we go in our life, when we have sufficient experiences of life, that our powers are limited, that we are not all-powerful. There is bound to come frustration, hopes are bound to be ruined. This is not said to frighten you, but it is the nature of things, a fact of life. What does happen when we depend simply upon our own efforts? That is, when we depend simply upon our ego, as we say. The ego is bound to be knocked down by circumstances at one time or another. When the ego fails, there is nothing else to sustain us. This is the situation. Nobody can then say that he will not pray. It is only that you do not know whom to pray to, and you do not do prayer systematically. But we are always unconsciously longing intensely for help in times of need, in times of crisis. Prayer means intense longing, if we send it in the right direction to the proper source, and in the proper way.

Swami Vivekananda, speaking of Buddhism, said, 'So long as there will be death, so long as there will be human weakness, so long as there will be disease, so long as man will feel helpless, he will seek for a saving hand.' Consciously or unconsciously, one is bound to do that.

All religions speak of prayer—and the dualistic ones more so. Original Buddhism and Jainism did not talk of God, did not talk of prayer. Buddha talked of self-effort. It was possible for him. He had an iron will; he had tremendous will power. When he was meditating and was assailed by Māra, or by thoughts from the subconscious as psychologists would say, he said: 'I shall not leave this seat. My body may be reduced to atoms, my bones and flesh may dry up, but I will not leave this seat unless and until I get enlightenment. Stars and planets may fall from their orbits; the waters of the ocean may dry up; all human beings may be of one mind; impossible things may be possible; but it will not be possible that I shall leave this seat unless and until I get enlightenment.' That was Buddha; and he got it.

Buddha emphasized very much the need for self-effort. He did not talk of God, did not talk of praying to God. He spoke of living the ethical life—right means of livelihood, right means of conduct, right work, right speech, and so on. Meditate and analyze what you are and you will get the true enlightenment. By an irony, even his direct disciples began to pray to Buddha. I was amused when I read that one direct disciple—not a third or fourth generation disciple with whom I had imagined it might more easily have happened, but a direct disciple—, while meditating, was given trouble by his mind, as it gives trouble to all of us. In his helpless condition he began to pray to Buddha.

In Communist Russia, I have heard, they



ousted God, and Stalin was put in His place. Do not worship God, they said, but worship Stalin or Lenin and so on. At least there had to be a substitute. Voltaire said, 'If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him.' It is such a great need. Being very sophisticated, we may reject God, but this or that person becomes our God. It is a constitutional necessity. We cannot do without that. So long as there is human weakness, so long as there is any incurable disease, so long as there is death—any of these hard things that we cannot escape from—we shall feel the need for God. As we get these experiences, we begin to understand this truth.

The first question we ask is, to what God should we pray? Unconscious prayer is going on within our hearts always, because at every moment we feel some want. We want this and that—in the conscious or subconscious, these cravings are there. Some things we can solve by ourselves; some we cannot. So, unconscious prayer is continually arising from our hearts. But to whom is that prayer directed or to whom should it be directed? If you read the history of religions you may in pride say that in primitive religions we find savage people praying to spirits, personified forces of nature, and so on. But still they are praying to something, praying to a power that is not human power, praying to a power which is beyond human power. We cannot set this aside by saying that these are merely primitive people. According to the conditions of their culture, according to the level of their thought, they were praying to some spirit, let us say to some departed spirit or to the spirits or forces of nature. That does not mean that their prayer was not desperate, that their prayer was not earnest. It is not necessary, and certainly it does not happen that one have a perfect idea of what God is, according to the latest model of philosophical conceptions. We may not be

able to have that; but when we pray earnestly and our prayer is genuine, then the prayer is likely to be answered.

Bertrand Russell has recourse to what he calls Fate and Power. 'Submit to Power...', he says. Primitive people submit to power which they call the spirit or the forces of nature. What difference does it make? When one is in earnest, one must get relief. One must get peace. Nobody has a correct conception of God. What God is, nobody can know—unless he realizes God. So it is not a question of to whom we should pray, for there are different stages of development and a religion of primitive people may be suited to the primitive state of those people.

Sri Ramakrishna said to a person who was highly intellectual and critical about prayer: 'Why do you criticize others? Does not God see, does not God know everything? Pray, and if you do not have the right conception of God, God will listen in spite of that. Pray saying, "I do not know, Lord, what Thy real nature is but I pray to Thee. Let it reach Thee in Thy real perfection. I do not know what Thy real nature is, but whatever Thou art, may my prayer reach Thee."' That is the important thing. Even though a person does not know exactly to whom to pray, if he sends his prayer, it will reach wherever and whomever God is. Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Suppose a person does not know how to express his prayer: God will come and teach him to pray in the right way. Suppose you want to go on pilgrimage to Puri, but you go in the wrong way. Somebody will come to help you if you persist and if you are earnest. In strange ways He comes. That is the way it happens, so why do you quarrel about that?'

To whom should we pray? Modern minds will have their views. But the history of religions indicates that there are different processes. Some persons will see an earth-



quake and will think that there is a god of earthquakes. Similarly, they will think of a god of cyclones, a god of hurricanes, a god of rain, and so on; and they will pray to these gods. Afterwards they will see that there is only one power behind all things, and they will pray to that power and that power may be the god of justice or the god of protection. Each tribe and each people will say, 'God will protect us and will not let others hurt us.' But do not think that in this respect, only the primitive people belong to a lower state of civilization. Even in the modern age, in a war, both the fighting parties begin to pray to God. God should be on their side because of the large number of their churches and mosques and temples. God will listen to them because they can spend so much money. So in India during the Second World War, I was surprised to see that a monk organized prayer ceremonies lasting for three or four days, to which many were going to pray for peace and victory. I was surprised that they were doing these things, as if God would side with their particular party.

Even in modern times all these things are done. We are all primitive in mind so long as we have not realized the highest Truth. No wonder one prays to God for victory on one's own side. A higher conception of God is the God of justice, who will punish the wrongdoer and bless those persons who do the right. In that there comes a new difficulty: why does God make us weak? You see, we do wrong because we are weak. Then comes a more refined idea of God—the God of compassion or the God of love. But the efficacy of our prayer does not depend upon our 'correct' conception of God. Rather it depends upon how earnestly we look to God and what kind of prayer we say or what we pray for.

The next question is: is prayer answered at all? Frankly, it is very difficult to say from the outside. Sometimes we pray and

find that what we prayed for has come out exactly as we wished. But can we prove that it is due to our prayers? Or could it be the force of circumstances? Can we prove it? It becomes difficult. For when I am thinking, various thoughts come; and whether it is my thoughts or help from others or chance that brings relief, we cannot exactly prove. Sometimes people laugh at others' praying. In one State in India, there was a great drought, and a political minister of that State, a cabinet minister, asked people to pray. A large number of persons went to temples and prayed, and fortunately the rains came. That was what happened, but the foreign reporters were making fun of the people who were praying. When I first came to this country, I found that prayer in public here too had abundant expression. There was a drought in California and the Bishop of California asked the members of his diocese to pray to God. In this case I do not think the rains came. But in the other case they did come. How to account for that? When I think of these things, I remember a place in a hot, very hot climate where there was no rain for a long time. The children of persons of a lower class would go from house to house and very beautifully sing. And I think they were praying to the clouds for water. I remember they sang once: 'O, my brother who is black in complexion, O, my brother who is white in complexion, give us rain so that we become drenched with water and go to our homes with water.' It might be that they were singing this way one afternoon and that rains came that night. We do not know. But if we are rational in these matters, we cannot really prove by examining from outside whether these things are changed by our prayers. If one is challenged one cannot say, one cannot give any proof. And our minds are such that doubts come into them. Doubts come even into the minds of great souls. In Swami Vive-



kananda's letters I find that something happened which overpowered him with gratitude and joy. Great souls are a mixture of the divine and the human and he gives us a glimpse into the mind of a great soul. He wrote, 'In the face of such mercy, my faith totters, doubts come.' What happened had been beyond his expectations and was very vivid, but he wrote that in spite of this his faith sometimes tottered. So, rationalism comes in to question whether these things happen by chance or exactly due to our prayers. The question is whether God will change His plans because of our prayer. Can you make Him do that? These are the questions we cannot answer. If we want to be rational, doubts will come. We want an answer. Do these things come by chance or by accident, or are they due to our prayers? Did God change His plans because of my prayers? One cannot answer. But one can see that it is a question of one's feelings. A man prayed and because he got an answer, he prays again. And he gives advice to others to pray. Not only saints, but also those who live in the vortex of worldly activities, have such experiences.

Abraham Lincoln, as I said, was a man of prayer. He would pray that way. Literally he would go to his private chamber to pray. He got something, otherwise he would not have repeated it. We find the same thing in the life of Mahatma Gandhi, who said: 'Prayer has been the saving factor of my life. Without that, I would have been a lunatic by now.' On another occasion he said: 'In spite of despair staring me in the face on the political horizon, I never lose my peace of mind. As a matter of fact, my friends envy my peace of mind. That is due to my prayer.' In his writings he further explains: 'I started with belief in God and prayer. Peace at length came into my life. I do not have to fill any void in my life.' You see we get experiences in

life, sweet and bitter experiences, successes and failures. We do not remember the successes, but only the failures and frustrations. Gandhi said that there was no void in his life. That was the outcome of prayer, and this was personal testimony. These are not things for a psychologist to compute and prove, or to say, 'This is all an infantile father-complex; the habit of praying to your father turns into praying to your God.' What will you say about such explanations, when one tangibly gets so much out of prayer? One may not get exactly what one wants, but the sum total of effects on one's life, as Gandhi's striking personal testimony shows, is to give one great peace of mind, and courage too.

On another occasion, Gandhi said: 'By nature I am timid and cowardly, but circumstances have not found me wanting. This is due to my prayers.' After starting his non-violent movement in South Africa, he had returned to India. Later he went back to South Africa by ship and as the ship approached the pier, a great crowd of people gathered, who wanted to stone him to death. The Police Commissioner came to the ship and told Gandhi, 'Don't land. Let the ship go somewhere else. There are so many people gathered here; it would be impossible for me to control them.' You see, this was a great test. For if Mahatma Gandhi, who was not known as a Mahatma at that time and did not have many followers, went away and saved himself, what would be the effect on his followers, even though he had said that he was by nature timid, cowardly, and gentle? So he said, 'No, I will land.' And he wanted to land in the usual way. But the wife of the Police Commissioner came and took him through some by-lanes away from the fury of the mob which was waiting to kill him. It might have been by chance, but you see, the fact is that he was saved. So what do you say to such things?

Next comes the question, how is prayer



answered? In difficult circumstances we pray. Sometimes we get what we want. We cannot rationally prove whether the things really came from God or not. But this much we cannot deny, that even if we do not get what we want, we may at least have peace of mind. Really, if you get what you want, you may for the time being feel vain. God has answered your prayer. God has acted like a delivery boy. You just telephoned Him as to a grocer, and the things were delivered. So you might well feel proud and vain. But the person who does not get what he wants may change his or her outlook, thinking that what he prayed for was not God's will. And who knows whether, if our particular prayer is answered, it would be good for us? That is a great danger when we pray for particular things.

It is said that a person was sitting under what Hindu mythology calls a wish-fulfilling tree. Sitting under that tree, whatever one wishes one will get. The person, tired from the sun, sat under that tree, not knowing that it was a wish-fulfilling tree. He desired some water; so all of a sudden a spring came up and he drank water. Again, to his surprise, when he wished for food, food came. He was much more surprised when he said, 'Let there be a palace here', and a palace was at once built there. He saw that everything he wanted or thought about came. But then he happened to think: 'Suppose a tiger comes!' Instantly a tiger came and killed him.

So it is dangerous to pray to God for a particular thing. If you believe in God, leave it to God. He will give you what you need. But I know it is not easy to leave it to God. Pressed by circumstances, with our inner longings and particular desires, we want something to happen, even if it be not according to God's will. We forget that there would be greater benefits if we really could depend on His will. When we try to do that, we come closer to God.

If we desperately pray to God, we come closer to Him. That is a real benefit which cannot be denied. The important thing is not that we get exactly what we want, but that we have been able to pray. We turn to God for help—that itself is a great thing.

Prayer brings you peace of mind. It brings you in touch with something which is beyond human power. In that way you grow in your life. It may be that you find many things have come to you through your prayer. But experience shows that even when your prayers are not answered, you grow in your spiritual life. In this way we come to the stage where we do not feel like praying for particular things. We pray to God for a particular thing when we feel we live in our ego. But when through our prayer our egoism becomes less and less, we no longer wish to pray for any particular thing. 'God's will' is enough. So, with our human nature we pray for particular things, but if we develop our spiritual life, then we will not pray that way. We will try to abide by God's will.

To Sri Ramakrishna came a person who asked to be blessed in some difficulty. Ramakrishna said, 'Let it be according to God's will.' He would not give any blessing. Sometimes he would say, 'Don't ask me for blessings. Blessings come from God only, and, if you want any particular thing, let it be what God wills.'

One thing is very interesting. Such a mind cannot think anything against the will of God. One leader of the Brahmo Samaj—the Protestant school of Hinduism—, Keshab Chandra Sen, was a great devotee and very fond of Sri Ramakrishna, and Ramakrishna was very fond of him. He became sick and Sri Ramakrishna was praying for him very much. He said he prayed for him all through the night. In many Indian villages, when one prays to or worships God, one offers coco-nut and sweetmeats. Accordingly, Sri Ramakrishna



prayed to the Divine Mother and told Her that if Keshab Chandra Sen was cured, he would offer Her coco-nut and sweetmeats. That time Keshab recovered. But later when Keshab was dying, Ramakrishna said, 'I do not feel like praying for him.' His mind was so much in tune with the will of God that he would not deliberately do anything contrary to it. He had completely become an instrument in the hands of God. One might be surprised that Ramakrishna prayed so much for Keshab the first time he was sick, but when Keshab actually died, Ramakrishna did not pray. But, you see, Sri Ramakrishna all the time sensed the will of God. In any case after we grow spiritually we shall not feel like praying to God for any particular thing.

So we come back to the question: to whom do we pray? To God. But, where is God? If God is all-pervading, God is in us. In every heart there is God. God is everywhere. God is nearer to us than our thought. God is within us.

What does happen when we pray? Psychologically we can say that at first we are separate from God but as we grow in our spiritual life, we become more and more close to God. When we think intensely that we are not separate from God, our thoughts become one with the thought of God. Or, even though we may not exactly realize oneness of thought with God, when we long for a thing with great intensity, through that longing we reach the level where consciousness is one. When our consciousness, by that intensity, becomes one with the universal consciousness, our consciousness is purified of human factors, and the result comes. If a pure person thinks intensely, or if by the intensity of his prayers his thoughts for the time become pure, he will get into touch with the universal consciousness, and then the result comes. So when we pray intensely, prayer is answered.

Putting this in a philosophical way, Swami

Vivekananda said, 'Christ and Buddhas are simply the occasions on which to objectify our own inner powers.' Prayer really is answered from within. God is within you. By intense thinking you come into contact with the will of God. Your will becomes purged of human impurities and becomes one with the will of God. And the answer comes, the result comes. You become perfectly satisfied. That is what happens. That is the ultimate answer, the ultimate result.

Then what about praying for ordinary things? Prayer is of different kinds. First there is petitionary prayer, sending appeals, as if begging of God. Petitions are prayers for particular things. That is also good, I should say. Because you pray to God, you come into contact with God. To be precise, try to come into contact with God. As I have said, even if your prayer is not answered, there is great gain.

However, as you grow in your spiritual life, you get beyond liking to pray for any particular thing. You want guidance in life, to know what is right. At that stage, you do not want particular things. You want what is right. You pray for guidance. That is a great step. Why should you want any particular thing? You want guidance to do the right thing.

When you grow even higher, prayer becomes contemplative. You do not like to pray for anything—not even for guidance. Know that God *is*; that is enough. If a child knows that its mother is there, that is enough. The child does not have to pray to its mother for anything. When you grow and feel that God *is*, that is enough. What else do you want? Why should you have to pray to God for any particular thing, even for guidance? He will give. He will give whatever is needful for you. When this conviction comes, one feels ashamed to pray to God for anything.

At this stage, prayer and meditation come

close together ; they merge right into each other. At that level you cannot distinguish between prayer and meditation. You feel the presence of God—that is enough! And in meditation you also do that. You do not necessarily have to pray in words. When you pray in words, the words make loud sounds and sometimes distract you from your spiritual thought. Through silent prayer we get intensity of faith, intensity of the presence of God. In that way we grow.

These are the facts, the sum and substance. Whatever the process, prayer is answered in this way. The particular thing we want may not come, but it is true that we grow in our spiritual life through prayer. Prayer for particular things may not be fulfilled in our life ; but if we pray for devotion, it is bound to be fulfilled. There is no doubt about it. You see there is no human desire in that prayer, no ordinary desire. You pray for devotion. What is devotion ? To come into contact with God, to get love for God. What is the result of loving God ? To be one with Him. Love unites ; hatred separates. The more we love God, the more does love for God increase ; so we come

closer to Him. Then it is like going to our own home. If we want to go to our own home, nobody can prevent us. In the same way, when we pray for devotion, there is nothing to obstruct us ; our way is clear. So far as prayer for other things is concerned, one does not know. But so far as devotion is concerned, if we pray for devotion, if we pray to reach God, there is no power on earth to prevent us from reaching Him.

But what is needed is earnestness and sincerity. All saints have said, 'What you seek, you will get.' They say this with reference to devotion, to getting the realization of God. They will all say, if you pray sincerely and earnestly, you will get it. If you are earnest and sincere enough, you will get it in no time.

When you have developed purity of life, when you have developed ethical life, when you are earnest and sincere, when there is harmony between your words and thoughts, when there is great intensity of feeling in your prayers—all saints say that prayer is at once answered. They say that if one is earnest enough, even by one prayer one can get the realization of God.

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## 'BHĀRATA-RATNA'—A GENUINE INDIAN GEM

To become a legend in one's own lifetime, to merit respect and admiration from all quarters—especially of those who, on various grounds, differed, disagreed and even fought with one—is a rare phenomenon. To be described by Indians and foreigners, friends and foes alike, in such glowing terms as 'the Wisest Man', 'Socrates of India', 'Bhīṣma of our Times', etc., is no common occurrence. And more, to deserve and sustain such a high reputation all through a long span of life, and that on the basis of an impeccable character and solid achievements in many directions, is unique distinction indeed.

But that is what actually came to pass in the life of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, popularly known as 'Rajaji', or 'C. R.' Even at ninety plus, he was bright, bold and manly. He truly deserved the honour and title of 'Bhārata-Ratna' (Gem of India) bestowed on him; a jewel of a man representing the best of Indian culture and tradition, a true gem of quality, clarity, intensity, and brilliance.

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His was an incredible public career. In his earlier years he was a brilliant and successful criminal lawyer; but feeling unhappy for 'prostituting' his intellectual gifts in that profession, he was eager to give it

up. Soon the right opportunity came when the country and Mahatma Gandhi called him. His character, talents, and capacity soon made him one of the foremost leaders of the Indian independence movement and the trusted right-hand man of Gandhiji, who described him as 'the most God-minded man', and 'the keeper of my conscience'. When the Indian National Congress decided to form ministries in the States, he became the natural choice to head the government in the large and important State of Madras. 'His forensic skill, matchless wit and gift of repartee, analytical mind and crystal-clear expression' made him a remarkable speaker and parliamentarian. But as an administrator he rose to even greater heights. The public and the officials alike found his rule 'an object-lesson in administration'. When important negotiations had to be conducted, his skill, patience, and courtesy made him the right person for the occasion. In one of its most critical junctures, when, rocked by communal riots, the state of West Bengal needed a cool, courageous and competent person to take charge as Governor, it was C. R. again. And as a happy culmination of India's freedom struggle, when the country became free in 1947, it was Rajaji who was chosen to become the first Governor-General of free India, an office he adorned



for four years with singular dignity, refinement, and grace.

And when he retired as Governor-General, even then it was not the last act of his public life. More was to come. The country needed him again; and in response to the call, without standing on conventional prestige and formality, he became the Home Minister in the Central Government. After that, when Madras, torn by strife, needed a special person to hold things together, it was again he who was called in to take up the difficult task of Chief-Ministership a second time.

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All this he did from a sense of duty to the country and to the people, and not for personal profit and glory, or out of any sense of obligation to the powers that be. He was never a 'yes man' to any one, however tall or great. When his conscience and sense of truth dictated any particular course, he spoke and acted according to it, in an utterly fearless way, braving the disapproval of even his nearest and dearest. Thus it was that in 1942, he pleaded for giving a trial to the 'Pakistan' idea, when everyone else opposed it, when even Gandhiji said that by canvassing the idea he was 'committing a sin'. Thus it was that in the sixties he opposed the policies of Nehru, whom he personally held in the greatest regard and affection and broke away from the Indian National Congress to found a new conservative party, the 'Swatantra', when everyone swore by radicalism. Thus it was that he, a staunch lover and supporter of Hindi, took up cudgels against the misguided imposition of Hindi on the non-Hindi speaking people of India, boldly declaring, 'the English language is the greatest gift of Goddess Sarasvatī to India'.

But time and events, as a rule, bore out the correctness of these rather isolated stands, and his reputation for truthfulness shone brighter than ever. Nothing could

express this better than the tribute of Gandhiji himself:

'Rajaji can safely be entrusted with any matter where an impartial decision is desired. . . . He is one of my oldest friends and has been the best exponent in word and deed of all I stand for. That in 1942 he differed from me I know. All honour for the boldness with which he publicly avowed the difference. . . . He never takes up a standpoint without the fullest consideration and having taken it he follows it to the bitterest end. He is too brave to need any support from anybody and he is too philosophic to harbour an injury.'

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He was a right thinker and, therefore, also a man of action in the right spirit, with vision and courage as implied in the Hindu ideal of *dhīra*. He was a living example of the power of *sattva*: of how a man with a frail body, born, bred and living in the simple, gentle and abstemious traditions of a Hindu home, could yet be a person of indomitable courage and will-power, cosmopolitan sympathy and astonishing achievements. This power of *sattva* made him a rare combination of competence and compassion in his role of political leader as well as administrator.

Ever punctual at the office, nay present and working before time, prompt and scrupulous in attending to all papers and giving prompt decisions, he left no other reasonable alternative to the other ministers and civilian officials but to follow suit. Such was his exemplary efficiency that in his time, there were no people hanging about in the secretariat corridors, no files piled up on tables, and the ministers found plenty of time to work. One cabinet minister confessed, 'We are like schoolboys under a very strict Headmaster.'

Intensely alive to the vital needs of the people, aware of the pitfalls in the path of social well-being and shunning all cowardly



compromises and slogan-mongerings, he declared to his colleagues, 'Let us attend to agriculture and character first.' To the communists in opposition, he made it clear, 'You are my "public enemy number one", I am your "public enemy number one".' But he also warned his own Public Works Department (then popularly equated with wastage and corruption), 'You are my "public enemy number two"!'.

He drew a firm line between his own party functions and administrative business, and never allowed the politicians to interfere with the functioning of the services. The public servants were allowed to do their duty according to the best of their ability, free from political pressures.

The officials too, felt encouraged by his integrity and high standard of administration. They could afford to be bold in doing the right things. They knew they had freedom to tender advice, even opposed to his own view-point. None was above law, be it the President of the Congress or the Prime Minister or a local business magnate. Rajaji conducted himself in such a way that not the faintest breath of corruption, nepotism or favouritism touched him. What to speak of his extremely simple habits of food and dress, even as a Chief Minister he would wash his own clothes. Even his worst political enemies had to acknowledge the excellence of his clean and efficient administration.

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Yet he was full of courtesy and consideration, personal kindness and sympathetic understanding, wherever needed. He operated on the basis of practical common sense; prestige and pride were strangers to him. When an urgent matter had to be attended to, he would himself go to the chief secretary's room—and would stand and talk while the secretary sat. On railway journeys, the chief secretary would be travelling first class, while by the same

train, the Premier would travel by a lower class. And yet, with great nobility, he would defend his civil servants and tell the people, 'Don't draw wrong conclusions that the permanent services consider themselves superior to the Ministers!' A Britisher was the chief secretary then. To him Rajaji presented a suit length of khadi (handmade cloth in India) out of which the Englishman got a suit made and wore it proudly. But the same C. R. refused to prescribe khadi uniform for the *caprāsīs* (office-attendants). Why? 'Let the simplicity be for the great in the land and let the love of khadi show itself in acts and deeds in favour of the poor'—was his approach.

When C. R. was inducted into the Central Government in his post-Governor-General days, the then Finance Minister was asked to forgo Chairmanship of the important Economic Committee in C.R.'s favour. What C.R. then did gives a clue to his character. He would come regularly to the meetings, take the chair, then he would say to the Finance Minister, 'Now you please conduct the meeting.' Neither procedure nor courtesy was sacrificed; only graciousness prevailed.

He was particular to maintain the dignity of the office he occupied and not to profit by it. On the eve of his retirement as the Governor of West Bengal, he got a dozen rosewood showcases made and left in them all the presents and souvenirs he had received. He would not take with him any of those articles, not even a walking stick. 'It was all for the Governor of West Bengal and not for C.R.', was his clear stand.

It was this spirit of renunciation and detachment that gave him the strength and courage to face public animosity and ridicule and 'to go into the wilderness' for the cause of truth as he saw it. Several times, while espousing unpopular causes he became the target not only of heckling and jeering but also of more tangible and ugly



missiles. Some one threw stones at him in a meeting and missed. C.R. warded it off with humour: 'That young man cannot aim properly. Had he been a good marksman, he could find a place in the police department and rise very high.' The crowd burst into peals of laughter. At another place sandals were thrown at him, with better aim. But he warded them off with his hand and calmly continued speaking for his cause. At Bombay, while trying to address an irate audience on the issue of conceding Pakistan, some one went to the extent of throwing coal-tar over his venerable head. He coolly wiped off the tar and continued his speech. Going back to his room, he changed the shirt, washed and slept soundly, without further thought or word about the incident!

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Along with this cool courage and detachment, he had a warm heart too, full of humour, humanity and humility.

Once cholera struck Madras necessitating governmental measures and issuing of an order. When he read the draft of the order, 'His Excellency the Governor is pleased to declare Madras City as cholera affected', he remarked: 'Is it such a *pleasure* for His Excellency to announce that there is cholera in town? Why not simply put it, "He declares"...?' "

As Governor-General of India, while on an official visit to Madras, his eyes fell on a man in the crowd, who happened to have been his cook thirty years ago. He stopped the car, greeted the man and asked him to come to his camp and see him. When the cook went there he talked with him kindly and made a generous cash gift.

Earlier, when once he found the kitchen-chimney of his house needed some fixing, he started to go up himself to attend to it. Seeing it, his affectionate daughter immediately protested, 'What are you doing! It is very dangerous, Chinna (the servant) is

there; let him do it. What if you fall and hurt yourself...!' In a reproving way, C.R. retorted, 'If *he* falls and hurts himself, *that* does not matter...?' and resumed his work.

A most memorable day in his life to him was when, as a result of his endeavours on behalf of the Harijans (outcastes), the orthodox temples of South India were thrown open to admit them also. As he and a fellow minister who was a Harijan went in to worship, he remarked with great emotion, 'This one act which has enabled me and my friend to offer worship to Him together is enough. I do not want even to be a minister again.'

After he became the Premier of Madras, he was invited to preside over the annual College Day Celebrations of his Alma Mater, as a distinguished alumnus. When he rose to speak he told the organizers, 'It is too late! You only respect position, not the person. You should not worship position and authority. You should have invited "C. R." and not the "Premier"! About himself, he would not hesitate to say, 'Don't think that I am a particularly good man!' When he was asked, why he would sometimes change his opinions so quickly, his answer was, 'You cannot prevent me from getting wiser.'

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How could anyone resist such a person? Thus it was that a very distinguished Pakistani statesman and legal luminary addressed him with the words, 'I revere and honour you as a very great man. I am your humble servant.' Thus it was that a top Indian political leader, a crusty person renowned for his stern bearing, felt himself 'privileged to have his (C.R.'s) affection'. Thus it was that another very influential political leader, who happened to be C.R.'s political rival for some time and had deep political differences with him, found C.R.'s heart irresistible. On his 61st birthday, C.R. found the old man waiting a long time



to felicitate him. Rajaji blessed wholeheartedly 'You must live longer than me', and the recipient was so much thrilled that he treasured it as a unique experience. And this erstwhile opponent was moved to declare, 'He (C.R.) is the one man who has the rare quality to consider and respect man as man.'

But perhaps the most significant tribute came from a leader of the Communist party, of the same Communists whom C.R. had declared as his 'public enemy number one': 'His political attitudes have irked me but I have sensed something of the immemorial strength and dignity of India in his personality.' This 'stupendous Indian' was one of those who 'evoked in diverse and paradoxical ways the good old Indian drumbeat, the three *da's*—*dāmyata*, *datta*, *dayadhvam*—restraint, generosity, compassion—reverberating from end to end of our emerald land'.

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Yes, being above all a genuine product of Indian culture, moral and spiritual values naturally became the very core of C.R.'s life, actions, and words. The secret of his quiet power and courage was God and truth and he feared none but God. About the right kind of leaders we need, he says:

'It is easy enough to come to rational conclusions. The difficult thing is to do what one concludes as the right thing to do. Here it is that selfishness and worldly desires and difficulties intrude. It is here that God-guided leaders are wanted. Truth and God are the essentials of all victory.'

And he warned against negative secularism:

'Religion has fortified men against temptation and given them the courage to live and work and die for good causes . . . the value of religion to human beings lies in the self-restraint it imposes on them to act justly and fairly to others, even when they have the power to act otherwise. There is no antidote to abuse

of power, except the influence of religion and the code of self-denial inculcated by it. Against the temptations of material ambitions and pursuits and the brutalities they are apt to lead to, religion is society's sole armour and protection.'

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As a student Rajaji had the great privilege and blessing of meeting Swami Vivekananda in person. What an inspiration Swamiji was to him becomes revealed from the fervent tribute he paid to him some seventy years later: 'Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and his wisdom ever inspire us that we may keep safe the treasures received from him.' Whatever others have done or not, it is obvious that C.R., for one, had imbibed Swamiji's inspiration. He has manifested faith, courage, and wisdom in his life and done his best to preserve and promote India's moral and spiritual values. In his own life, he never accepted the 'axiom' that contradictions between religion and practical affairs, especially politics, are unavoidable. He has demonstrated that public life can be practised and lived, not only unostentatiously but without stooping to fraud or corruption and according to the dictates of dharma. So it is no wonder that among all his achievements, he considered his re-narration of the stories of *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*, the holy Indian classics, as his best and most satisfying service to humanity. And it is natural also that this much-admired man, in turn, admired not so much the high and mighty as the humble—such as that Harijan who refused to sell his vote for a sum which to him represented a year's earnings.

—EXPLORER

Source : 'Rajaji 93—Souvenir'.



# THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S BANGLADESH RELIEF WORK

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

Seldom has human misery been seen on such a scale as when ten million refugees took shelter in India following the Pakistani military crackdown in what was then East Pakistan in March 1971. When the first few refugees trickled into India, no one realized that it was the precursor of a human tidal wave. Soon hundreds and thousands of them were swarming over the borders: wild-eyed men and women fleeing horrors of torture, ignominy and death, all reduced to skeletons through hunger and exhaustion and some of them carrying gunshot wounds of which they died. Many died on the way from disease, especially old people and children; and more died even after they had crossed the border and reached the haven of safety, for they already had had life drained out of them. Their legs swollen with walking and unable to carry them further—many of them sick with cholera and dysentery and some of them even raving mad due to the physical and mental torture they had gone through—the refugees lay down wherever they could find an open space, quietly awaiting what fate might bring them. Some forcibly occupied school-buildings, club-houses, temples, even court-buildings or private houses, but most of them were left in the open, helpless against the merciless April sun. They had no drinking water except what was available in the near-by half-dry tanks, and of course there was nothing by way of sanitary arrangements. Inevitably, epidemics appeared, the victims once again being children and old people who died like flies. The stench that filled the air would invade the nostrils from miles afar. But the refugees were still coming. As the border villages within a depth of ten to fifteen miles were already crammed, the refugees spread further afield threatening to overrun the nearest towns and cities. At one

stage, they had come dangerously close to the international airport at Dum Dum rendering navigation difficult. Wherever they went they spread disease, and soon the people of West Bengal were battling against several epidemics, one of them being ophthalmia which people with grim humour nicknamed 'Jai Bangla' (Victory to Bangla).

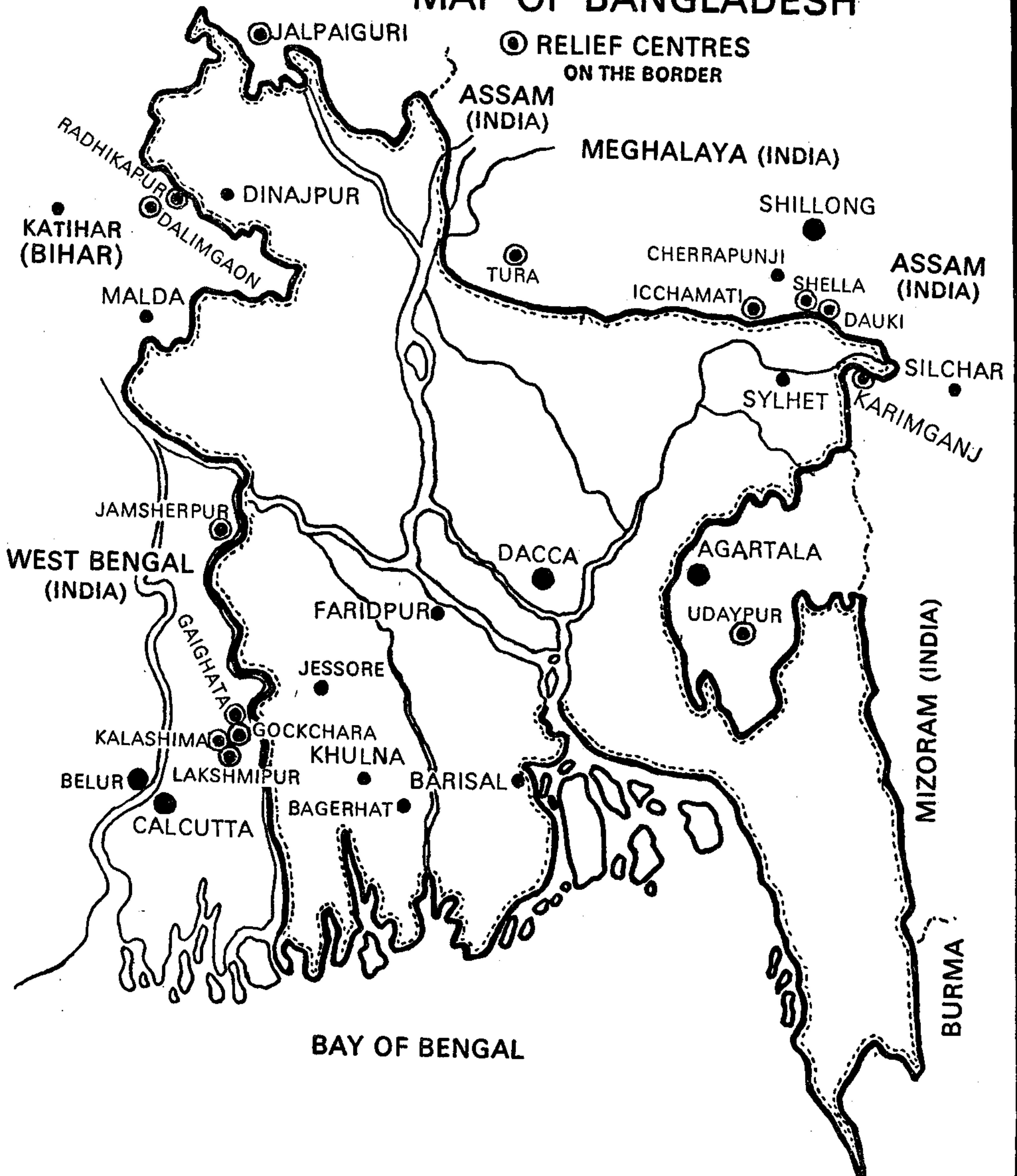
## *The First Camp of the Mission*

Caught unawares, the Government of India naturally took time to gear its machinery to meet the situation, but in spite of everything it did, it was not able to touch even the fringe of the problem, the task being too stupendous for any single Government. When word got around of the plight of the refugees, many voluntary agencies appeared on the scene with relief materials, some of them international, some national or even local. The Ramakrishna Mission, too, with its history of disaster service reaching back to the nineties of the last century, did not sit idle though its hands were already full with its permanent work of running schools, hospitals, orphanages, etc. Through its branch at Katihar in Bihar the Mission started its first camp on 13.4.71 to provide shelter, food and other necessities to the incoming refugees. The Government through its local officials had already been doing whatever it could to help relieve the hardships of the people, but what was needed was a band of dedicated men who would be able to give a human touch to the work to heal the wounds in the minds of the people. This is where the Mission workers had an advantage, and naturally enough, the local Government officials leaned heavily on them, requisitioning their services whenever a difficult situation had to be tackled. The fact that the Mission was a non-sectarian and



# MAP OF BANGLADESH

◎ RELIEF CENTRES  
ON THE BORDER



non-political body gave an added advantage to its workers, for they were trusted by all parties and groups of people—by the Hindus and Moslems alike.

At Radhikapur, for instance, the Mission workers had every possible handicap, but they were nevertheless able to bring order into what was chaos before, and keep the work running smoothly. The camp with a population of approximately twenty-four thousands was a model in many ways though lacking in many basic amenities. The camp, however, did not continue at Radhikapur for long, for it was susceptible to being shelled and was in fact shelled by the Pak troops. The Government therefore decided to shift the refugees to Dalimgaon, some miles away. The monks also followed the refugees.

### *Other Camps*

By the end of April more camps had been organized by the Mission at different points of the border, the total population under its care at the peak period being 2,20,000. There was demand that the Mission start more camps but already it had staked too much. The camps the Mission ran were scattered widely along the border, some of them situated in difficult terrain also. Take the case of the camps of Meghalaya, in particular those situated in the Garo Hills. The communications were primitive, there being hardly any road over which trucks could carry supplies. The Mission had right from the beginning followed the policy of handing over the management of the camps to the nearest Mission branch. So far as the camp in the Garo Hills was concerned, the Mission branch in Shillong was supposed to be in charge. But it was nearly 300 miles away! Yet the monks of the Shillong branch manfully undertook the work and managed the camp to the great satisfaction of everybody.

The problem about the camps in Tripura was, however, worse, for there was no Mission branch in Tripura to which their

management could be entrusted. The Mission authorities got together a few workers drawn from different centres and asked them to work in Tripura under the supervision of the headquarters direct.

### *The Nature of Relief Given*

In all the camps the Mission ran it took it as its responsibility to see that the refugees had everything they needed—food, clothing, medicines, etc. Of course, the Government helped with money and sometimes also with materials, but the Mission supplemented these to the extent necessary to ensure that the refugees did not miss anything essential. At first the Mission supplied cooked food to the refugees as other agencies were doing but it soon transpired that this had the risk of the food getting contaminated or otherwise going bad as the number to be fed daily ran into several thousands. Also, the food could never be cooked to suit the tastes of all. This was why instead of giving cooked food dry rations (rice, lentils, and vegetables) were distributed once a week, sometimes twice a week. To avoid omission or duplication, a register was maintained in which full details of the families living in the camps were recorded. The heads of the families were then given identity cards. Supplies were issued to the families only on production of these cards. In addition to rations, the refugees received from the Mission some cash to cover expenses on fuel, oil, and other commodities. Few families had cooking pots or any kind of utensil. The Mission issued a supply of these to each needy family. Milk was supplied to them every morning, child and adult alike. At first, baby food posed a problem, for it was costly and also not easily available; but a Bombay firm sent large consignments of a brand manufactured by them as a gift and this eased the situation to some extent. The Mission was



fortunate in being able to provide adequate medical care, for it received gifts of medicines from several sources and many doctors gave free voluntary services or served against a token remuneration. This kept the death-rate very low.

Many refugees had no clothing except what they wore. It made bathing difficult for them, specially for women. It is not difficult to imagine their discomfort in hot summer if they missed their bath. The Mission, therefore, went to much trouble to provide them with a change of clothes. It also supplied them with cotton blankets as they did not have anything by way of bedding.

### *Mental Condition of the Refugees*

Many refugees had had such a harrowing experience that even after their arrival in India they remained dazed for quite some time. They were just living corpses! If you asked them anything they either did not talk at all or talked vaguely and incoherently. Young girls who had lost their husbands stared wild-eyed and clutched at their babies if somebody mentioned about the way their husbands had been shot dead. Their mothers-in-law, however, howled with grief. Often foreign journalists came to interview the refugees, but it was impossible to get a clear picture from what they said. There were women who had been dishonoured but how could anyone expect that they would discuss it? In fact, most people resented being questioned about their experience, for they did not want to be reminded of the humiliation and horror they had gone through. A survey of the refugees revealed that there were very few young men and women among them. Social workers who visited the camps could not help noticing this. If they asked any refugee the reason for this, his face fell. He either kept quiet or babbled an answer which made no sense. The reasons to most

of us will be obvious.

The refugees took quite some time before they were able to settle down to their life in the new environment. Slowly they overcame their apathy and began to take interest in life again. Their immediate concern was about the dear ones they had left behind. Were they alive? Some of them had seen their houses burnt to ashes but what about their paddy fields? A farmer would not worry much about his house being destroyed so long as his fields were intact. But suppose they too had been occupied by others? To a farmer this was the cruellest thing that could happen. There were some who taught school, ran shops, plied some kind of trade, worked in offices or were professional people. They had been respectable men and women in their areas, but now their life was a heap of ruins. They lived on doles but how long could they do this? Would life never be the same again? The thought that haunted them most was: would they ever be able to go back to the land of their birth? Some of them followed the struggle their countrymen were making but they could see no hope that the country would ever be free. Many among them did not understand politics and were not in the least interested in it. They could not help blaming those hot-headed people who had brought on this situation. But there were others who felt proud of their great leader, Mujibar Rahman, of the youth of the country for the sacrifice they were making, and the small contribution they themselves had made to the cause. They gave glowing accounts of the heroic acts they had seen performed by their fellow-countrymen and in which perhaps they themselves had played a part. They were not sure that the country would win freedom this time, but they had no doubt that the struggle would go on till freedom came. To such people the present misfortune was only a temporary set-back



which must be borne with patience and was only a small price which a nation aspiring for freedom could pay.

### *Slow Change in the Attitude of the Refugees*

As the refugees began to realize that they were going to be forced by grim circumstances to live in the camps for an indefinite period, they started to make efforts of their own to help improve their conditions of life. Some volunteered to help with distribution of rations and other materials, some with maintenance of order and discipline among the camp inmates, some with office work, some with improving sanitary arrangements. They did their best to lighten the burdens of the Mission workers whose services they appreciated very much. There were others who tried to earn some money by hiring themselves out for whatever work was available in the locality. Some worked as day labourers, some as shop assistants, some as teachers. There were women who helped with sewing and knitting. There were fishermen who caught fish in nearby rivers and sold it in the markets. Carpenters, tailors, barbers, cobblers, etc., started their trades again and earned whatever they could. They were anxious to depend less and less on doles. As the days rolled into months their hope of being able to return to Bangladesh receded. They now wanted to stand on their own feet as soon as possible.

### *Setting up Schools*

A large number of the camp population were children who were receiving no education at all. Soon their parents approached the Mission workers with the request that they start schools for them. It was a reasonable request but there was the question of finance. If paid teachers had to be employed, the expense would be enormous. When the Mission workers were worrying about finance, it transpired that there were

quite a few people among the refugees who taught school at home. When they came to know that a move was afoot to start schools, they volunteered their services. They said they did not want any remuneration. So the schools got going. And without buildings, without furniture, without equipment of any kind—they were the most peculiar schools that had ever been seen. The Mission supplied textbooks and other requisites to the students and were also able to pay some honoraria to the teachers. The schools continued to the last day of the camps.

### *Recreation*

The Mission workers soon realized that provisions for recreation must be made in order to relieve the gloom from which the refugees suffered. They, therefore, frequently arranged film-shows, music recitals or other forms of entertainment. It so happened that among the refugees themselves there were a number of talented artists; naturally, their services were often requisitioned for this purpose. Thus, every attempt was made to revive the drooping spirits of the refugees, but so deep was their depression that despite everything, they languished both physically and spiritually.

### *End of the Nightmare*

When about eight long months had gone by and the refugees had almost come to accept their present life as the final doom, they were electrified by the news that Indian troops had crossed the border. As the war advanced it became clear to them that the day was not far off when the country would be free and they would be able to go back to their country. The excitement that ran through the camps had to be seen to be believed. Even the most spiritless among the refugees bubbled with joy and anticipation. When at last the news came



through that Pakistani troops had surrendered and Bangladesh was free, the refugees sang and danced with joy.

Soon the call came from the newly-formed Government of free Bangladesh asking the refugees to go back home. There was doubt in some quarters whether the refugees would leave India, but the doubt proved groundless. There was feverish activity among the refugees as they began to prepare to leave. They packed whatever they possessed, careful not to leave behind anything, for they knew they would need it when they began life afresh on their old home-sites. Before they left, meetings were held at which prizes and certificates were distributed to those refugees who had rendered valuable services during the period and to those students who had shown good progress in their studies. At some of these meetings the General Secretary of the Mission was himself present. Invariably, these meetings were marked by highly emotional speeches delivered by both representative refugees and Mission workers. Soon the day arrived when amidst cries of 'Jai Bangla' the refugees began to leave. The nightmare had ended. As they took leave of the Mission workers and climbed into the trucks which the Government of India had provided, eyes on both sides were moist.

#### *Invitation to Work in Bangladesh*

Even before the refugees left, a letter addressed by the Home Minister of Bangladesh to the President of the Ramakrishna Mission arrived requesting that the Mission participate 'in this grand endeavour of ours to build Sonār Bāṅglā [lit., Golden Bengal]'. The Mission authorities replied that they would gladly do so. The General Secretary personally went to Bangladesh to study the situation there. He then saw the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Minister and his officials, to settle priorities. It was decided

that the Mission would concentrate on reconstruction of houses, sinking tube-wells, distribution of clothing, conducting mobile medical services and distributing milk and baby foods. The work began almost immediately.

In a sense, the work had begun earlier. For when the refugees started back on their homeward journey, it was felt that they would need being looked after on the way and accordingly the Mission had set up several transit camps in Bangladesh along their route where they found not only shelter for a night's halt but also food and other necessities. The Home Minister's letter had suggested that the Mission revive its several branches—closed or abandoned during the hostile and repressive Pakistani rule—in Bangladesh some of which were half a century old. From the point of view of reconstruction of the country this was a very necessary step, for these branches had always rendered valuable services to the poor and had thereby earned the love and respect of all sections of the public. The Mission authorities also felt that this was a good plan, for the workers—monastic and lay—then would have places to stay and would also be able to operate in areas where the Mission was already well known.

#### *Reopening of Branches*

The first branch to be revived was the one in Dacca. A meeting was held on the occasion of its opening at which the General Secretary presided and the Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation Minister of Bangladesh was present as Chief Guest, besides many other distinguished guests. The Minister praised the work which the Mission had done on the Indian side of the border and hoped that the Mission would now work with the same zeal to help rebuild Bangladesh which was almost completely devastated. The Mission immediately began to work in Dacca and its suburbs distributing milk,



clothing, and other materials and operating mobile medical services. Later, the work was extended into villages chosen in consultation with the Government officials. At the peak period the number of people covered by this programme was 25,000 or more.

Almost simultaneously, the Mission branches in Mymensing, Faridpur, Khulna and other districts started work on similar lines. Among the country's most urgent needs was—and still is—clothing, especially clothing for women. The Mission was able to distribute, until the end of March 1973, 1,55,190 saris. It also handed over to the Government a few thousand saris for distribution through its own agencies. Everywhere people welcomed the Mission, for though there were other organizations working in the country with perhaps bigger resources, what was most striking about the Ramakrishna Mission was that it helped those who needed help most; and in selecting such people it made no distinction between one community and another. It also reached into areas where communications were very poor and where no help had gone before. The Mission had the good fortune of being able to enlist the cooperation of local young men, both Hindu and Moslem, who worked with zeal in the service of the poor. To give only one instance: a Moslem M.P. accommodated a monk in his house for six months, treating him as a member of his family and giving him the care and attention due to a religious teacher.

Besides the Mission's affiliated branches, there were some altruistic institutions in Bangladesh run by lay people which worked on similar lines as the Mission. They too had the reputation of being entirely non-sectarian and had in the past worked under the supervision of the Mission whenever any calamity had hit the areas constituting Bangladesh. The Mission helped

reactivate those institutions and through them carried on relief work in areas surrounding them. Thus working either directly or through such institutions, the Mission did and is still doing though on a reduced scale, relief and rehabilitation work in thirteen out of the country's nineteen districts. Amongst other things, it distributed till March, 1973:

Milk powder	2,39,561 lbs
Baby food	12,203.5 kgs
Balahar (a brand of balanced baby food)	8,205 kgs
Canned food	1,21,199.5 kgs
Biscuits	10,902 kgs
Men's wear: Dhoti	61,039 pieces
Lungi	18,709 „
Blankets	76,368 „
Children's garments	52,418 „
Old clothing	1,40,763 „
Soap:	
Cakes	11,300
Other types	771 kgs
Shoes	2,044 pairs
Utensils	4,263

It also distributed mosquito-nets, quilts, textbooks, stationery and sports goods. Every necessity of life had to be given, for most people had lost everything and had to begin life again from scratch. There were many tradesmen who needed tools and implements. These too were supplied to them.

### *Housing*

The Mission took time to begin work on housing, for corrugated iron sheets, needed for roofing, were in short supply. As soon as these were available, it started reconstructing houses for those who had lost them. It was heartening to see that many families had already put up houses with bamboo, mud, and leaves. For roofing some used tarpaulin or polythene sheets. Flimsy of course,



but the enterprise was commendable. The Mission now offered them corrugated iron sheets, wood, and other materials. Labour was provided by the families themselves. The houses they built were small but quite neat. Till March 1973 the Mission, with such assistance, had constructed 1384 houses. The work is still going on. To supply drinking-water 222 tube-wells have been sunk in the villages rebuilt by the Mission. More are in the process of being sunk. In some villages the Mission was responsible for rebuilding, fully or partially, school-houses also.

The rehabilitation work of the Mission in Bangladesh is still going on. It is of course slowly tapering off as the need decreases. At the moment, the Mission is concentrating on child feeding and medical work. It is also trying to build two textbook libraries, one in Dacca and the other in Khulna. For work in Bangladesh proper, the Mission has so far spent over Rupees 1,00,00,000/-, in cash and kind. Although

this is not much perhaps, still the Mission's efforts are appreciated by all sections of people because of the spirit that prompts them and the humility and affection that accompany them.

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of the Ramakrishna Mission's relief work in East Bengal for the evacuees :—Distributed : foodstuffs 57,76,538 kg; patients' and baby foods 51,738 kg plus 1359 tins; clothings new 1,65,960, old 38,836 plus 21 bales; soap 2779 kg; utensils 6763; school and recreational articles 18,008; camp equipment; bleach; needles and thread; fuel; etc., etc. Canteens run 14. Recipients at canteens 12,971. Schools run 10. Teachers involved 313. Students 9504. Vitamin tablets distributed 79,200. Cholera vaccine 38,187 units. Patients treated 2,05,120. Huts constructed 86. Families helped per day 43,747. Total recipients of service per day 1,86,509.

<sup>2</sup> The summary for the period up to 31 December 1973 is: foodstuffs 3,77,029 kg; clothings, blankets, etc. 5,56,433; shoes 2619 prs; camp equipment articles 312; soap 2200 kg; leather 101 kg; school and recreational articles 6337; utensils 5419; miscellaneous articles 1430. Huts constructed 1466; huts repaired 6; tube-wells sunk 248; patients treated 2,34,389; total recipients of service 14,56,022.

## MONASTIC SPIRITUALITY: CHRISTIAN AND HINDU

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

Another Sister : I am amazed to hear you speak all the time as a Christian and presenting the Christian point of view; but you are an Indian and a Hindu, are you not?

Swami : When you understand the real meaning and scope of Hinduism and of the philosophy of the Vedānta behind it, you will not be so amazed; for the watchword of Indian philosophy, and of Hinduism, is acceptance and inclusion and not rejection and exclusion. Accordingly, Hinduism

accepts Christ and Christianity and treats him as a divine incarnation, exactly as the professed Christians do, except that he is looked upon only as one of the many divine incarnations, and not as the 'only begotten Son of God'. The Hindu also sees fundamental harmony between the spiritual teachings of the two religions, in fact, of all religions. Differences relate only to myths and dogmas and institutional expressions. There is the Christian religion, the Christian spiritual experience, based on

Jesus and his teachings, on the one side, and the Christian church organizations, such as your Catholic, on the other. The latter is Roman and specifically western, whereas the former is specifically Christian and oriental and close to the Indian spirit. Your worship, prayer, meditation, and even some of your rituals are very much akin to those of Hinduism. The same is the case with respect to your monasticism, with its poverty and chastity. Only the third vow, that of obedience, in Christian monasticism, does not find a place in Hindu monasticism. Monasticism is essentially an Indian institution which finds manifestation in its Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist expressions. It is anathema to the mainstreams of Judaism and Islam, in fact, to most of Semitic thought. But Jesus introduced monasticism for the first time, against the powerful elements in his heritage and environment. And for the next 1,500 years, Catholic monasticism wrote a glorious chapter in the history of monasticism. But it received a set-back at the time of the Reformation, when the older elements reasserted themselves in Christianity; to this has been added a reassertion of the frankly secular Roman elements in the modern age, both forming a formidable challenge to Christian monasticism. It can face and overcome this challenge by reasserting its oriental, truly spiritual, elements, in which task it can possibly receive valuable help from the hoary Hindu philosophy and experience. Obedience does not find an important place in Indian monasticism, because it, unlike Catholicism, is not organized and centralized in a powerful Church.

Sister: Don't you think that there has to be a certain authority in a convent of a church?

Swami: Yes, there is such a need; but there is no need for a vow about it; it is an ordinary human need in a social and community context; the members respect

the person in charge and obey his directions; it is a practical need, but need not form a monastic vow, especially now when many are discarding the centuries-long idea of a church 'militant and triumphant'. The church organization, with its vow of obedience is, as I said, your Roman heritage of Christianity; it has become a little more rigid than is good for a spiritual institution. Monastic vows in India are only two, namely, poverty and chastity. No individual earning of money and keeping of bank accounts, but dependence on God. But the institution can do these things on behalf of the members. The aim of monastic life is the elimination of the little 'I'. That I consider to be one meaning of the Cross—in English writing, when the 'I' is cut, it becomes the sign of the Cross! Cut off this ego. Says St. Paul: I, and yet not I, but the Christ that liveth in me. This little I, the old man, in Christian mystical language, is dead. To achieve this state is what you are constantly attempting in the convent.

Another Sister: That seems to be too idealistic.

Swami: Yes, the ideal is high, must be high; and one must strive to achieve as much of it as one's strength permits—5%, 10%, and so on—but one should not bring the ideal down. One achieves the full 100% of it only through the grace of God. Hard work and struggle, and dependence on God's grace—this is the way of all true spiritual life.

Another Sister: Do you use any mantras in Hinduism? What is their spiritual relevance?

Swami: Mantras form an important element in the spiritual part of every religion; what is special about Hinduism is that it has developed a philosophy of it. In Christianity, especially in its Catholic variety, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, save me, a sinner', is one such mantra; Hindu-



ism, however, will slightly modify it by eliminating the last two words—a sinner—since it considers the best attitude for a spiritual seeker to adopt is that of a child of God, one in whom is ‘the kingdom of Heaven’. ‘Ave Maria’ is another such mantra. In many religions, rosaries are also used. In India you can see thousands of devotees sitting in temples; on the banks of holy rivers like the Gaṅgā (Ganges), or in homes and reciting some mantra, with or without the rosary. They may be householders, they may be monks or nuns. Mantras are generally short; they are in Sanskrit; and most or even all of them are preceded by that holiest of the holy words or sounds, namely, Om, which is the sound symbol of God, the all-pervading and infinite Self of all. A short mantra is most effective. As some of the Christian saints have expressed it: ‘A short prayer pierceth heaven!’

Sister: What do you mean by realization or enlightenment?

Swami: It means actual experience of God; it is what is meant by that most significant saying of Jesus: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they *shall see* God.

Sister: How can one reach it?

Swami: One has to keep it as one’s life’s goal and work towards it. Meditation, prayer, holy study, doing one’s work in a spirit of service and dedication—all these impel one towards God, who is truly near man, nearest to him, but appears to him as far, far away due to his ignorance or spiritual blindness. This blindness lifts slowly by spiritual practice; often, the seeker misses his way, even backslides; a true devotee is not frightened by this. He knows that, as he is in search of God, God also is in search of him, and that one day the search will end in discovery. God has been realized by men and women in the past; He can be realized by all today also. This is also the conviction behind all spiritual striving.

Sri Ramakrishna compares this to fishing. We cast the bait, attached to the end of the line, into the lake, and wait silently and patiently. Sometimes, the fish come near the bait, even nibble at it, and we get this information from the trembling of the float on the water; but then they move away without swallowing the bait and without being caught. But we are convinced that there are fish in the lake, that others have caught them and that even if we fail a hundred times to catch a single fish, we shall eventually succeed if we continue patiently and steadily, following the proper technique. The ‘bait’ represents the devotion of the spiritual seeker.

Another Sister: Is God-realization possible for everyone?

Swami: Theoretically, yes. Nature has endowed every human being, except the very mentally retarded, with the organic capacity to search for and discover God, who is the ever-present Self of all. But all people do not utilize these capacities for this purpose; many are under strong biological pulls; many also are under wrong impressions as to what constitutes the spiritual life, or mix it up with superstition and mystery-mongering. But in the modern age, as rational ideas are growing about the vast possibilities lying hidden in every human being, men and women will understand increasingly *that religion means spiritual growth, that there is a science and technique for that growth*, just as there is the science and technique for man’s more obvious growths in his physical and psychical dimensions, *and that his all-round growth alone will lead to total human fulfilment*. If and when this awareness becomes universal, everyone will strive, according to his strength, to take at least his first steps on the road of spiritual growth, while some will also advance further and further on that road. Religion so understood is not of the limited ethnical variety, but is univer-



sal, according to the Vedānta, and none is outside its pale.

Another Sister: Are all problems solved after realization?

Swami: Yes; for the one who attains the realization. But other people may present their problems before such a one and he may treat them as his own and help the persons concerned. When a wheat cake is being fried, says Sri Ramakrishna, it makes a sizzling noise. That sound ceases when it is fully cooked. When, however, another cake is put into the pan for frying, the sizzling sound starts again till that also gets fully cooked, and so on.

Sister: I cannot believe it. Indeed, when you accept everything and when you close your eyes, there is, of course, no problem any more. That is logic.

Swami: It is not just accepting everything. When your heart is full, your problems are finished. If your idea is that you will realize God after you have solved all the problems of the world, that is never going to happen. (*Laughter*) There is a Sanskrit verse, which says that he who thinks he will remember God (and realize Him) after all worldly problems have been solved, is like that foolish man who says to himself that he will take his bath in the ocean after all its waves have subsided! <sup>1</sup>

There is another rational consideration. It is that the world is a duality of good and evil, and will ever remain so. A perfect man there can be, but not a perfect world. But if more people become ethical and spiritual, the world will become a little better. There is a general experience of spiritual hunger today, in spite of the prevailing atheism and worldliness. The crisis in the world today is born of the very struggle to move towards a bet-

ter world. We all, monks, nuns, and laymen alike, are caught up in that crisis. And if we are to make the world a little better, it is not by remaining crisis-ridden ourselves, but by resolving the crisis within ourselves and then helping the world to resolve its crisis. Nobody loves to *live* a tragedy, though many love to *witness* it on the stage or on the screen or to read about it in literature. When we live through a tragedy, we are caught up in its coils, and cannot extricate ourselves but need someone else to extricate us. But on coming out of it, we become more chastened, often more compassionate and more human. And it is only when we have the capacity to struggle through a crisis or a tragedy, that we develop the capacity to help the world in its crisis. It is only one who knows how to swim that can save another who is drowning.

Sister: We nuns belong to the Catholic Carmelite convent; its life is its own, essentially cut off from the world and its crisis and problems. If the convent is like a boat and the world is like a sea, what is the use of the boat without the sea? The boat, to my mind, misses its function.

Swami: The boat sailing on the water is preferable to the boat capsized and sunk in the water. Your life in the convent is not unconnected with the crisis in the world around. By developing the light of spiritual awareness in yourself, you help to dispel the darkness around, and that is truly solid work for the world. A lighthouse, though stationary in one spot, does immense service to ships cruising in the sea by guiding them to the safety of the harbour. This service it cannot do if it is itself submerged in the sea. That is the meaning of the dictum of Jesus: Ye are the light of the world; but if the light is in darkness (is enveloped in darkness), how great becomes that darkness! So it is best for

(Contd. on p. 122)

<sup>1</sup> य इच्छति हरिं स्मृतुं व्यापारास्तगतैरपि ।  
समुद्रे शान्तकल्लोले स्नातुमिच्छति कुर्मतिः ॥





## ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

### DEVOTION TO DUTY THE MEANS TO THE HIGHEST KNOWLEDGE

There was once a Brāhmaṇa named Jājali who lived in a forest leading the life of a recluse. Engaged in austere penances, he went on a certain occasion towards the sea-shore. Having arrived there, he began to practise the most severe penances. Observing many vows, fasts, and restraints, his body clad in rags and skins, with matted locks, smearing his body with ashes and clay, that intelligent Brahmin passed many years there. He attained some yogic powers with which he could go anywhere and see anything he wished. One day while sitting he began to think : 'In this world of movable and immovable creatures, there is none equal to me ! Who can roam with me among the stars and planets in the firmament and dwell again within waters !' While he mentally uttered this, the unseen spirits said to him :

'It behoves thee not to say so ! In Banaras there lives Tulādhara, a man of great fame. He runs a shop there. Even he is not worthy of saying such words.'

'I shall see that famous Tulādhara, a man of wisdom,' said Jājali.

Thus addressed by those beings, Jājali proceeded onwards with a cheerless heart. After a considerable time he reached the city of Banaras and saw Tulādhara engaged in selling miscellaneous articles. As soon as

the shopkeeper saw him coming, he cheerfully stood up and received the guest with proper salutations.

Tulādhara : I had no doubt that you would be coming here. However, please listen to what I say. Living on the sea-shore you have practised great austerities. But, it seems, you do not know the secret of dharma. When you were undergoing penances certain birds laid their eggs in your matted locks. In course of time little ones were born. Gradually they grew and developed wings. They then began to go out in search of food. Finally when they were fully grown and strong, they left and never returned. All through this period you remained unmoved and unperturbed. But in your heart you began to feel the impulse of pride thinking that you had achieved great powers. Then, O Brāhmaṇa, you heard a voice in the sky referring to me, and as the consequence thereof you have come here. Please tell me what can I do for you ?

Jājali : You sell all kinds of juices and scents, as also plants and herbs and their roots and fruits. How did you succeed in acquiring steady intellect ? Whence has this knowledge come to you ? Please tell me all this in detail.

Tulādhara : O Jājali, I know dharma, which is eternal, with all its secrets. This



ancient dharma has been known to all: universal friendliness and beneficence to all beings. That is the highest dharma which does not harm others at all, or which (in case of actual necessity) involves the least harm to other beings. I live by this dharma.

All the articles of trade I purchase from other people and sell without cheating. He who is always a friend of all and who is engaged in the well-being of others in thought, word and deed, truly knows the dharma.

I neither solicit any one nor quarrel, neither hate nor cherish desire for any thing. I look upon all with an equal eye. Behold, O Jājali, this is my vow. My scales are perfectly equal with respect to all beings. In my scales a Brāhmaṇa is not heavier than a Caṇḍāla or an elephant heavier than a cat or dog. He who is not an object of fear to any creature succeeds in attaining a state of fearlessness. On the other hand, that person who is harsh in speech, bad in temper, a source of trouble to other creatures, attains a state which is fraught with fear. Whatever fruits one enjoys by penances, by sacrifices, by catholicity, by speaking truth, may all be had by practising harmlessness. That person who gives unto all creatures the assurance of harmlessness, obtains the merit of all sacrifices and at last wins fearlessness for himself as his reward. Practice of harmlessness is sure to lead one to prosperity and heaven. Of all gifts assurance of non-injury is the highest in point of merit.

Dharma, however, is subtle. This dharma is proclaimed in the Vedas either for attaining heaven or for liberation. This subject of dharma has many secrets and mysteries. It is so subtle that it is not easy to understand it fully. Why don't you treat with contempt those that torture animals in various ways and cut their flesh after killing them? Not only this, men are seen to own men as slaves and by beating, binding and

otherwise subjecting them to restraints, cause them to labour day and night. Little do such tormentors know that in every creature resides God. These are men who earn their living in sinful ways. But what fault can be attached to my selling oil, butter, honey, herbs, and other articles?

One should practise what one considers to be one's dharma guided by reason instead of blindly following the practices of the world. Listen now, O Jājali, what my behaviour is towards him that injures or praises me. I regard both of them in the same light. I have none whom I like or dislike. The wise applaud such a course of conduct as consistent with dharma. This course is followed by even the ascetics and righteous.

Jājali: The dharma (of non-injury) you preach closes the door of heaven to all beings and even denies them means of subsistence. From agriculture comes food. Food supports you too! With the help of animals, crops, herbs, human beings support their living. From animals and plants food sacrifices flow. You talk like an atheist. This world will come to an end if the means by which life is supported are to be abandoned.

Tulādhara: I shall now speak on the means of subsistence. I am not an atheist, neither do I blame sacrifices. The man, however, is rare who is truly conversant with sacrifices. Many persons of some degree of faith who are greedy, money-minded, without understanding the true meaning of the declarations of scriptures, and proclaiming things that are really false but have a show of truth, introduced many kinds of sacrifice. The consequence of all this, O Jājali, is that theft and many evil acts spring up. It should be known that only those sacrificial offerings, which are acquired by honest means, please the gods. Scriptures indicate that worship of deities can be performed by prostrations or by



sacrificial offering or by chanting the Vedas or by use of plants or herbs. That man who regards those acts obligatory which have been laid down in the Vedas and directed to be performed every day, who is penetrated with fear if he fails to accomplish them any day, who takes all essential sacrifice as identical with Brahman and who never regards himself as a doer, is truly a Brāhmaṇa. If the acts of such a person are incomplete, even then they are of superior efficacy.

Again those who covet emancipation as the highest object of life, who are satisfied in renunciation, who discard all provisions for the future and are free from envy, betake themselves to practice of truth and self-restraint as their sacrifice. They that discriminate between body and the indwelling Self, are devoted to yoga, meditate on Om as the symbol of the Reality, always succeed in pleasing others. When, therefore, such a man eats and is gratified, all the deities become gratified and contented. One who is satisfied with all kinds of tastes does not desire any particular taste; similarly one who is happy in the Self has everlasting gratification which is the source of perfect bliss. Those wise men who are the refuge of righteousness, and whose delight is in righteousness, have knowledge of what is to be done and what should not be done. One possessed of such wisdom always regards all things in the universe as having manifested from his own Self. Such persons attain

high regions which are free from sorrow and anxiety, and whence there is no return. They walk on the path of righteousness and perform sacrifices without injury to any creatures. He is a Brāhmaṇa who has given up all desire for the fruit of his actions, who has no interest in worldly-minded actions, who does not bow down to anyone, who never flatters anyone and is endowed with strength. And what will be the fate of that person who does not recite the Vedas, does not perform sacrifices properly, is not charitable but does everything desiring fruits? By properly reverencing the duties that appertain to renunciation, one is sure to attain Brahman.

Jājali: I never heard before these doctrines. These are difficult to understand. Please tell me by what acts happiness can be attained?

Tulādhara: In performing sacrifices, as I have pointed out (by non-injury to all creatures), one may make faith one's wedded wife. By duly honouring such sacrifices one is sure to attain Brahman. All rivers are as sacred as Saraswatī and all mountains are sacred. O Jājali, one's own Self is itself a *tīrtha* (sacred place). Do not wander about on the earth for visiting sacred places. A person by observing his own dharma certainly succeeds in attaining the blessed regions hereafter.

Source : *Mahābhārata*, 'Śānti-parvan', Ch. 261-3.

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(Contd. from p. 119)

monks and nuns, it is best for you all here, to strive to manifest that light of God within, 'the light that lighteth every soul that cometh into the world', as Saint John's

Gospel beautifully puts it; and serve the world in that unique way. You have my love and best wishes.

(Concluded)

# CULT, CULTURE, AND CIVILIZATION: THE DYNAMICS OF THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP

DR. DONALD SZANTHO HARRINGTON

On the north wall of The Community Church of New York there are four lofty windows which help give the building its feeling of dignity and aspiration. For some time we have thought of giving more religious character to the church by the use of stained glass in the windows. Artists have come up with some interesting concepts for the portrayal in these four windows of the four ages of historic man. The first would suggest pastoral and agricultural man, the second urban man and the age of machines, the third cybernetic man, the man of computers, thinking machines, artificial brains, space travel, test tube babies, the indefinite prolongation of life. The fourth window—well, the artists don't know what to call it, except simply 'The Future'. Thus far they have not been able to develop any clear idea of what to describe as coming after the age of cybernetics.

I have tried to imagine by focusing upon the factors which have produced the age of urban, scientific, cybernetic man, which of these might be the lead-outs to the age beyond. After all, history is a continuum. The past flows into the present, and the present forms the foundation of the future. It should be possible to determine the next steps forward for man from a look back at the three to four thousand years of recorded history. Yet no picture emerges. Having attained a kind of apex in the age of cybernetics, the human pilgrimage seems to reach a dead end.

It is possible to imagine a reversion to an earlier kind of life, pastoral or agricultural, even to an earlier stage in urban development when cities were small and quality of human life easier to maintain. It is possible to imagine the end of human time in the

destruction of human civilization and the rendering of the earth inhospitable to life. But modern man seems to be unique in that he cannot imagine a future along the lines of his past and present line of development.

This is reflected in the literary world. H. G. Wells was the last of the Utopians. The best literary prophets of our time, the Orwells and the Huxleys, are dystopians who portray the degradation of human life in the mass society of the age that is arriving.

We are, thus, once again living in a world under the pall of an apocalypse. The 'End of Days' is no longer just a historical reference to a mood which dominated the Jewish world before the beginning of the Christian era, two thousand years ago. It is a present possibility, which dominates the conscious and unconscious mentalities of a large portion of the world's people today.

Holocaust and horror, and the deliberate mass slaughter of innocent human beings are no longer fading memories hidden away in Biblical texts, but current events, portrayed in living colour on the family TV set.

In the last generation the world has witnessed the deliberate, cold-blooded massacre of six million Jews, while most of the Christian world held its nose, stopped its ears, looked the other way, and said, 'Go somewhere else.'

At this very moment millions of Americans will applaud a President's call to opposition to busing and scattersite housing to achieve racial integration and a more equal opportunity for those Blacks and Puerto Ricans caught in ghetto-slums who have been long denied them; though if he had shouted, 'Lock them up in their ghettos!' his intent could not have been clearer.



We continue placidly to pay our taxes to support the mass slaughter of fellow human beings running into the millions in Vietnam. We are willing to be what we appear, a rich and powerful nation trying to beat a small, underdeveloped people into submission, using weapons of mass destruction and indiscriminate slaughter of military and civilian alike, tossed in comparative safety from the air. Most of us look the other way and try not to let ourselves think of what murder on this scale must mean in a universe supposed to be just and moral.

There could be no clearer evidence of the essential atheism of our age, and of the death of God in our consciousness than the simple fact that the American people and their leaders are able to go on with this unholy and immoral slaughter without fear of the consequences to be visited upon them and their children.

We live in a society where we can watch the rich grow richer and the poor poorer, as our representatives in Congress fumble all around the problem and ultimately retreat into impotence or self-interest, and somewhere deep down inside we are aware that, unless some radical change takes place to restore vitality to our democratic processes, the end of this line of development has to be violent uprising and a long period of chaos.

We watch the polarization of races within our society force us apart from each other, releasing mass fears and furies which it becomes ever more difficult for us to direct creatively or to control at all. W. B. Yeats put it clearly:

'Things fly apart.  
The centre cannot hold,  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.'

Now, in addition to all of this we are told by environmentalists at M.I.T.—our greatest scientific technological institution, whose discoveries have sparked our industrial explosion and created our problem and our

power—that we have only to the end of this century to stabilize population and industrial development, for otherwise we will destroy the life-support-system of the biosphere upon which we all depend to stay alive.

We are, thus, the generation, fortunate or unfortunate, which happened to be alive when western civilization reached its peak and had fulfilled to the uttermost the thrust implicit in its cult and culture, and seem driven to the conclusion that our civilization will now be forced to turn in a radically new direction.

Such a time is bound to be one of crisis, dominated by a sense of alienation and anxiety, of anger and frustration, of paralysis of will and conscience simply because people no longer know how to cope with their rapidly changing world, or to conceive of the future for which today's living should be preparing them.

Now if the present generation has thus lost the capability of imagining its future, it has also lost meaningful contact with its past. The past of western civilization was intimately related to the great myths and legends of Judeo-Christianity. These myths and legends were largely undermined during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the rise of modern science. Today the great religious myths of the West are no longer believable as literal truth and the modern mind has been rendered inhospitable to the whole realm of mythological truth, with the result that the past has become largely meaningless to modern men. The same science which has given us the age of cybernetics has undermined the structure of religious faith which held our world together and helped us to distinguish right from wrong and good from evil.

The result is a 'now' generation which has lost contact with its past and is unable to conceive of its future, and thus hangs suspended in space and in eternity without any solid ground for decision-making or



basis for action, without any clear idea of what or who it is or where it is going, and therefore without any real foundation of hope.

In the face of this, men have varied responses. Some strive desperately to hold the deteriorating social organism together by patching it up wherever it seems obviously to be coming apart. But this is rather futile, for the break up is faster than our ability to repair it. We can delay but we can no longer halt the process of disintegration.

For some the prospect is so painful and so frightening that they turn to drugs as a temporary escape from their own, open-eyed nightmares which they gradually see to be part of the Great Nightmare of our time, namely, the impending collapse of western civilization. As the old Biblical religion would put it, 'God has turned his face away from us; nothing any longer has meaning.'

What, if anything, can be done to halt and, if possible, reverse this process? We all, of course, have ideas, mostly relating to one or another of the superficial, more visible aspects of the problem. We need to improve the processes of our civil government with a new and improved constitution here in the United States, and a strengthened United Nations functioning as a world government. We need world law for the sea-bed, and some kind of world environmental control to preserve our natural environment. We need population planning and control, and a more just distribution among all men of the goods of life that are available. But all of these endeavours, fundamental as they are, are little more than a patching up of the civilization that is falling apart faster than we are able to keep patching it. And they are the symptoms, not the root, of the problem.

If we want to have any real chance of saving our civilization, we must ask the deeper questions. What is western civili-

zation? Where did it come from? What is happening to it and why? What is the source of civilizations? From what forces do they draw their character and strength? How does culture relate to civilization, and what is the source of the world's great cultures?

Cult is the word we use to describe the collection of myths and religious practices which sparked and formed the world's great cultures.

We are living in an age of religious disintegration, in which the traditional cults no longer retain their vitality. These religious cults, with their symbols, myths and archetypal images, arose in the most primitive days of man's life on earth in response to the challenge of his environment with its geography, weather, resources, dangers and constant need to define basic and elementary relationships. Out of the interplay of the environmental forces and man's own creative mind in search of meaning and a better life, there came the religious cults, which in their turn nurtured western culture, which in its turn gave style, personality and character to western civilization.

Let us pause for a moment to analyze what we mean by 'cult', 'culture', and 'civilization', and the dynamics of their interrelationships.

The culture of a people is its particular way of life, its habits, thought characteristics, action patterns, style and personality. It is a total picture embracing all the major aspects of the common life, including knowledge and belief, science, art and morals, laws and customs, economic organization, festivals, and thrusts. All cultures today are mixed blends of many influences, and composites of earlier cultures now extinct, yet each one remains coherent and distinctive in important respects. All are dynamic, not static, appropriating what they find useful and good in adjacent cultures, constantly evolving towards new definitions



of that which is implicit in their cultures and their neighbours'.

What are the sources of a culture? What are the factors which influence the evolution of a particular style and the emergence of a coherent cultural outlook? Anthropologists would tell us to look at climate and resources, geography and topography, natural resources and movements of peoples, varieties of temperament and outlook, myths and symbols. Beyond this, each culture at each particular moment of history would contain traits assimilated from other cultures, and be moving from its own past into a future affected not only by the germinal ideas contained within its own tradition but by those coming in from the cultures with which it was in contact. One can understand a culture only by understanding its background, the basic conditions faced by the people, *and the spirit, or mentality, with which those people faced their conditions.*

Most of our greatest anthropologists and sociologists have been preoccupied with this question.

Dr. Ruth Benedict wrote:

'A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action.... The form these acts take we can understand only by understanding first the emotional and intellectual main-springs of that society.'<sup>1</sup>

Bronislaw Malinowski put it this way:

'Magic and to a much higher degree religion are the indispensable moral forces in every human culture. Grown out, as they are, of the necessity to remove internal conflict in the individual and to organize the community, they become the essential factors of spiritual and social integration. They deal with problems which affect all members of the community alike. They lead to actions upon which depends the welfare of one and all. Religion and to a lesser extent

magic thus become the foundations of culture.'<sup>2</sup>

And Dr. Clark Wissler has said, 'It is a core of ideas and beliefs actuating a people and in large measure controlling their career, that forms the backbone, or at least the unifying element, in a culture-complex.'<sup>3</sup> In other words, their religion or cult.

Arnold Toynbee developed the concept of the stimulus of hardship as a producer of culture. The high cultures, he pointed out, have appeared along the storm tracks of the world. Karl Marx propounded the paramountcy of the economic situation of a people. All of these are parts of the picture.

But Dr. Von Ogden Vogt, in his excellent little book, *Cult and Culture*,<sup>4</sup> asks: 'Why not argue that it is the response rather than the condition that is decisive? Why have peoples in the same condition responded so differently?' Dr. Vogt answers his question as follows:

'The finally decisive factor as to the *quality* of the culture is not the environment, but the total attitude and spirit of the men who compose the society. It is this total attitude and spirit which is the religion of the tribe or nation.'

He points out that though certainly affected in major ways by physical circumstances, the origins of primitive religion lie chiefly in the realm of mind and spirit, of dreams, fears, hopes, longings, loves, responding to the encompassing situation. It is these which have created the myths, symbols, rites and practices of primitive religion, out of which there evolved in time the high religions which in turn nurtured

<sup>2</sup> Bronislaw Malinowski, 'Culture as a Determinant of Behaviour' in *Factors Determining Human Behaviour* (Harvard Tercentenary Publications), p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Clark Wissler: *Man and Culture* (Thomas Y. Crowell Co.), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Von Ogden Vogt: *Cult and Culture* (Macmillan Co., 1951).

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Benedict: *Patterns of Culture* (Houghton Mifflin Co.), p. 46.



the great cultures which evolved into world civilizations. In all the great religions and cultures there was an important role for creative individuals as the answer to the question of origins:

'Is religion the chief source both of cultural order and cultural variation? My answer is yes. It is the religion of any people which gives them political order and aesthetic unity, and also that special kind of politics and the special quality of artistry distinctive of their society.'<sup>5</sup>

Von Ogden Vogt's viewpoint is borne out by the testament of many other cultural anthropologists and religious philosophers. Christopher Dawson writes:

'Religion is not a matter of personal sentiment which has nothing to do with the objective realities of society, but is, on the contrary, the heart of social life and the root of every living culture.

'We are just beginning to understand how intimately and profoundly the vitality of any society is bound up in its religion. It is the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive force which unifies the society and the culture. The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product: in a very real sense, the great religions are the foundation on which the great civilizations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture.'<sup>6</sup>

James Feibelman places responsibility for cultural breakdown in religious disintegration:

'Religion is the name given to the institutions owning whatever myth dominates a culture. The lack of power in a religion sometimes means that the institution has survived its myth. In this case the institution loses its value and continues to exist but only as a hollow shell and without the domination of the cul-

ture. The institution within a culture which is deemed by the members of that culture to have the greatest value, is ipso facto the religion of the culture.'<sup>7</sup>

If this is true, let me ask you what is the religion of our American culture today? Where is our Treasure, and therefore our heart today?

Finally, as Von Ogden Vogt points out:

'Where society is highly complex, the permeating task of the cult is more difficult. Success depends upon many more events and circumstances. When religion fails in its social function then men cannot enjoy the unities of a great society, and culture is lost . . . whatever is the real religion of any tribe or nation is the primary ordering force of that society. When this coincides with concrete religion, then men enjoy the happy fortune of a beautiful culture. Where there are deep clefts in the worship of men's hearts, there will be disorders in the state.

'Whenever in human history there has been formed a harmony of beliefs and customs, of industries and laws and arts, of desires and fulfilments so nearly complete as to comprise the design of a great societal culture . . . the pageant of that social culture has been the outer projection of the inner movement and actions of a great religious cult.'<sup>8</sup>

I have quoted these scholars at some length because I think it essential to our understanding of our problems in western civilization, and thus in world civilization, today, to understand the relationships between religious cult, culture in general and their outworking in the civilization's institutions. Our civilizations have grown slowly out of and around their cultures. Their cultures have been based on ideas, images, myths, mores, morals, and particular styles of personality, developed by their

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Dawson: *Inquiries into Religion and Culture* (Sheed and Ward, Publishers), p. 295.

<sup>7</sup> James Feibelman: *The Theory of Human Culture* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce), p. 116.

<sup>8</sup> Vogt: *op. cit.*, p. 36.



peoples in response to the conditions of life into which they were born, and then their response to or interpretation of those conditions, which make up their religion or cult. They can be known by studying the cultus which they have developed to express the cult. But always the decisive factor is the attitude of the people, the spirit with which they confront their problems, and this is both the result of their religion and is their religion.

The principal problem with western civilization today is that its religion has lost its credence and power. Traditional Judeo-Christianity no longer speaks to modern minds, schooled in the literal realism of science. The myths and symbols have lost their viability because they are no longer believed to be true, historically or scientifically. The science which has produced the unprecedented power and rapidity of change in modern times, has undermined the myths and symbols on which western civilization was based, leaving that power without religious direction or control.

More dramatically, the scientific adventure itself, which was sparked by the Biblical images and attitudes of the Old Testament, portraying man as the master and exploiter of the earth and nature, has undermined its own foundation so that science, too, has lost its context and flounders in an orgy of materialism and purposeless self-proliferation. Science can produce goods, but not a meaning of life, power, but not values; and it appears to have brought us close to a new apocalypse. The same people who are turning against religion are turning against science as well.

Listen to Paul Goodman, writing in *The New Reformation*:

'For a long time, modern societies have been operating as if religion were a minor and moribund part of the scheme of things. But this is unlikely. Men do not do without a system of "meanings" that everybody believes and puts his

hope in, even if, or especially if, he doesn't know anything about it;—what Freud called a "shared psychosis", meaningful because shared, and with the power that resides in deep fantasy and longing. In advanced countries, indeed, it is science and technology themselves that have gradually, and finally triumphantly, become the system of massed faith, not disputed by various political ideologies and nationalisms that have also had religious uses.

'Now this basic faith is threatened. Dissident young people are saying that science is anti-life, it is a Calvinist obsession, it has been a weapon of white Europe to subjugate coloured races, and scientific technology has manifestly become diabolical. Along with science, the young discredit the professions in general, and the whole notion of "disciplines" and academic learning. If these views take hold, it adds up to a crisis of belief, and the effects are incalculable.... Every status and institution would be affected. Present political troubles could become endless political wars. Here again, as in politics and morals, the world-wide youth disturbance may indicate a turning-point in history, and we must listen to it carefully.'<sup>9</sup>

What we appear to require is a reworking of the basic western myth to spark a new surge of faith, capable of relating past myths to present scientific knowledge, of reconciling the religious values of the past with the scientific knowledge of modern man—capable of speaking in the scientific idiom of today as well as reinterpreting the religious idiom of yesterday. Such is likely to come only from a continuing conversation in depth between scientists and religionists, out of which there might come new understanding of the direct relationship between old religious myths and symbols and contemporary culture and civilization, permitting us to understand better where those evil and good impulses which move us came from and how they can be controlled,

<sup>9</sup> Paul Goodman: *The New Reformation*, 1969.



and permitting out of this a gradual construction of a new synthesis and compelling new world view for modern man.

John Dewey wrote many years ago, foreseeing the present crisis, 'A culture which permits science to destroy traditional values, but which distrusts its power to create new ones is destroying itself.'<sup>10</sup> It would seem to me that this is precisely what is happening today, and the great question is, what will the forces of religion do about it? Is the human spirit still capable of rising to the challenge of a major point of new departure? And in what direction shall we look for this new and better faith?

Michael Novak, Roman Catholic philosopher at the University of New York at Stony Brook, Long Island, says flatly:

'A philosophy of the human spirit ... will have to be invented as a public discipline, maintaining empirical control and scientific methods. Such a philosophy would make other demands on the philosopher than the philosophy of science or the philosophy of ordinary language.'<sup>11</sup>

Henry Nelson Wieman, citing Kenneth Bolding, in an interesting article in *Zygon*, says it a little differently, 'A change so radical and so swift requires adaptive changes in the basic institutions that shape the conduct of human life. If these changes are not made, civilization will destroy itself, and possibly all human life with it.'<sup>12</sup>

And Wieman himself tells us:

'If we are to survive the great transition of our time, and actualize the constructive potentialities of the new age, we must have a religion which differs from the religions of civilization as much as *they* differ from the tribal religions.

'Civilization, along with all its religions, is a brief, tumultuous and precarious transition from tribal life with its religions to post-civilization with its religion.'<sup>13</sup>

All of these indicate the direction in which we must look for the faith capable of bringing renewal to our now crumbling civilization. The bringing of that faith into being out of the reworking of the religious images of the past and the relating of them to scientific knowledge of the present is the challenge above all others to this generation. Unless we can meet it, there may be no future.

Let me, then, attempt to summarize. Civilizations are like great, towering, wide-branching, blossoming trees, like the huge honey locusts of our American south, just one of which can suffuse with its fragrance a small town. The blossoms and fragrance, the beauty of the luxuriant foliage, the shape and shade and motion which give the tree its distinctive personality are the culture. But the tree stems from a tiny seed in which the whole proliferation was implicit. Destroy the seed or the seed-producing character of the tree, and that species is finished. Cut the tap-root of the tree and the leaves begin to wither, the blossoms to fall and the tree to die. Soon the trunk and branches stand stark and bare against the sky, and within a few years all that is left is a rotting trunk on the ground returning its various elements to the common resource pool. The seed is the elemental myth that nurtured the civilization in the first place, and the tap-root is the cult and cultus which grew out of the myth and nourished the growing culture and spreading civilization. We had better protect, renew, and reinvigorate the tap-root cult of this great western culture or it will not long survive.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted from an article by Dr. Clyde Kluckhohn, 'The Scientific Study of Values and Contemporary Civilization' in *Zygon*, Vol. I, p. 230.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Novak: *Belief and Unbelief*.

<sup>12</sup> *Zygon*, Vol. I, p. 374.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Nelson Wieman, in *Zygon*, Vol. I, p. 375.



Of course, it may be time for this great tree to die. Why should we think that civilizations, any more than trees or men, have a right or destiny to live for ever? But surely this one remains as yet unfinished and unfulfilled. And if we should master the secrets of the seeds and of the evolutionary master plan, perhaps we might dream of a universal culture and world civilization with the built-in correctives to keep growing, improving and renewing itself indefinitely. It is something to dream about, something for which to hope, to labour and to pray.

## DYEING THE MIND

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

Our minds can well be compared to a canvas on which are painted different pictures. Some European philosophers have said that when we come to this world we bring a blank mind, *tabula rasa*. But many other thinkers and all the systems of Indian thought state that we do not bring a blank canvas with us when we are born. Instead, we bring with us a mind already painted with the impressions of our previous lives. In childhood, of course, all these impressions are not shown, but as we grow older, those *samskāras* (latent impressions) manifest themselves. Again, in our present life whatever our minds experience through the senses, the imagination, or our emotions makes an impression and colours the mind. For example, consider our visual impressions. We are continually receiving countless impressions from the outside world through the eyes; whatever we see is bound to impress itself on the mind. Some of these impressions may not be fast colour; they may come and go, and we forget them. Some impressions, however, do stay, and we can recall them as memories. The same holds true for our experiences of sounds, touches, tastes, and smells. This canvas of the mind is extremely elastic. There is no limit to its expansion. Stretching farther and farther, it can receive millions of im-

pressions. In fact, every day these impressions, or *samskāras*, are being added to this canvas of the mind. It is a wonder how our mind can store up so many impressions from one single life, not to speak of the billions of impressions, good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, from our past.

Emotions are also stored in the mind. For instance, you might have visited a holy place many years ago. You had felt a kind of inspiration, or profound religious emotion. It did not end at that time, but left an impression and added another daub to the canvas of your mind. Unpleasant emotions can also be retained for a long time. Some time you may have had an unhappy experience with someone, with feelings of anger or hate. Those feelings usually do not end at that moment. Through memory they can well reappear in your mind. Thus we are continuously adding more and more pictures to the canvas of our mind. This is our situation.

When we come to spiritual life, it is necessary to re-dye our mind. Just as it happens sometimes in our life that we buy a house painted in a colour we do not like and begin painting the rooms according to our liking, we do a similar thing when we begin a serious spiritual life. The undesirable colours of the mind have to be elimi-



nated and new colours brought in. *Samskāras* of faith, devotion, discrimination, detachment, and so on have to be implanted in the mind. This is a difficult but not an impossible task. Cultivation, with great care and relentless efforts, of what Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls *daivī sampad* (divine attributes) in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and what Jesus Christ mentions as 'treasures in heaven' is the most important factor in spiritual life.

A spiritual seeker who is following the path of knowledge and trying to experience that one consciousness which includes everything, that is his true self, knows that the Self is not the body or mind. So he wants to remove all the paints and pictures from the canvas of his mind without any compromise. He rejects whatever ideas, emotions, desires there are in the mind. From the very beginning he asserts the truth. He says, 'These manifold impressions coming to my mind are not real, they are just appearances. Sight, sound, smell, emotions, and memories are all really *māyā*.' By such negation, he removes all colours from his mind and replaces them with just one picture in one colour—the colour of *Sat-chit-ānanda*—indivisible Existence-consciousness-bliss. For a knower of Self, there is nothing else but that infinite consciousness, outside or inside, that one self-evident unity. After Self-realization, if there are pictures, he does not try to give an independent existence or reality to them. Instead, he says, 'Everything is the Self.'

The technique of one following the path of devotion is comparatively easy and pleasant. Such a person does not have to be ruthless with himself. He accepts all pictures of the mind, but tries to put new colour into those pictures. He relates all these impressions, past and present to his beloved God, the source of all beauty and harmony. A particular face may create a disturbance in your mind: but if you feel that in all faces God is shining, you will

begin to see that all faces are really God's. He is the source of all consciousness. If there is beauty, it is God's beauty; if there is ugliness, that is also God's manifestation, because God is the indwelling spirit in every living being. A devotee of God sees mountains, valleys, rivers, plants, animals and instantly relates them to their maker—God. Indeed, placing God into this world, anything coming to his mind through his eyes comes with the light of God, and that light re-dyes his mind. Spiritualizing sense-experiences is beautifully shown in the following poem written by a Christian devotee:

I see His blood upon the rose,  
And in the stars the glory of His eyes.  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies.  
All pathways by His feet are worn,  
His strong heart stirs the ever-beating  
sea.

His crown of thorns is twined with every  
thorn,

His cross is every tree.

In the creative imagination of this poet, the whole universe is the story of Jesus Christ's life. Every artist needs creative imagination. A man whose mind is very matter-of-fact cannot be an artist. In the same way re-dyeing the mind requires great imagination, and this Christian devotee knows this. 'I see His blood upon the rose.' Everybody sees a red rose, but this devotee associates the red colour with the blood of Christ. Whenever he sees any red colour, he thinks of the great sacrifice of his beloved Christ rather than looking at it as a material object. 'And in the stars the glory of His eyes.' The Christian devotee looks at the stars and they remind him of the eyes of Jesus Christ, those glorious eyes shedding compassion, sweetness, and tranquillity. 'His body gleams amidst eternal snows.' Seeing the snow, at once his creative imagination projects the body of Christ. Christ's body was not an ordinary body; it was the body of the divine incarnation—



white, pure, and holy. And this is how the devotee sees the snow. 'His tears fall from the sky.' Seeing the raindrops falling, he says at once, 'Oh, these are the tears of Jesus Christ.' Through creative imagination, he has associated rain with the tears of Jesus Christ, the tears of compassion that came when Christ's heart melted at seeing man suffer. The poet continues, 'All pathways by His feet are worn.' Jesus Christ walked through the Holy Land, and for this devotee, the whole world has become Christ's path.

The creative imagination of man has the ability to envision such things. This poet is actually re-dyeing the mind with new spiritual ideas. Thus he continues, 'His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea.' When he sees the sea and its waves, at once Christ comes into his mind, for the heart of Christ is not the weak heart of an ignorant human being; Christ's heart is like the ocean. The poet, watching the ocean, remembers the mighty emotions that came through the heart of Christ and all the waves become the holy emotions swelling in Christ's heart. The 'crown of thorns' and the cross were symbols of Christ's suffering for man. To this devotee's mind every thorny bush and tree recall the last chapter of Christ's life.

The impressions of other senses could also be re-dyed. Take the case of smell. Often in our mind there are likes and dislikes associated with the experience of smell. A devotee of God sits in a temple and smells the fragrance of flowers and incense. This fragrance stays in his memory. Whenever any good smell comes he associates that smell with worship. When he is working outside in the garden, the fragrance of flowers rouses spiritual emotions in him. He feels that in the cosmic temple of God these flowers are already offered. Sound-impressions can similarly be spiritualized. A devotee who practises the holy name of

God regards it as the word-form of God—the essence of all sounds. During contemplation he may feel that all sounds have joined in his mantra. Slowly, by his creative imagination, he develops the ability to spiritualize all sounds and words. No sound or word can distract him because his whole heart becomes filled with the music of the Holy Name. For a devotee of God the *samskāra* of taste takes a spiritual pattern. When he is eating *prasāda*, or offered food, he feels that there is no taste in the world that can compare with that of offered food. It fills his heart with a new kind of joy. The sense experience of taste is there, but it is a transformed experience. It has been associated with God. In this way all the impressions that come to our mind through our different senses can be spiritualized and the canvas of the mind re-dyed.

Desire is one great distraction in our spiritual life. We have been storing our minds with endless unnecessary desires—'I want this, I want that.' Spiritual teachers tell us that we have to get rid of desires. That is, of course, a difficult task. But a person who has learned to love God does not say, 'I will banish all desires, I will kill all desires.' Instead, he says, 'I will transform all desires, I will re-colour my desires.' There can still be desire for beauty, there can still be desire for love, but this man of God transforms all these desires. Once a young man came to Sri Ramakrishna. He was very much bothered by the passion of sex. He asked the Master how he could control it. Sri Ramakrishna answered, 'Why should you kill your desire? Just turn lust for woman into love for God.' When the heart wants to be proud, that pride can also be re-dyed. A devotee of God is the proudest man in the world. His pride is in God, the highest treasure. When we read the lives of great seers and saints we find that they have thus transformed the natural

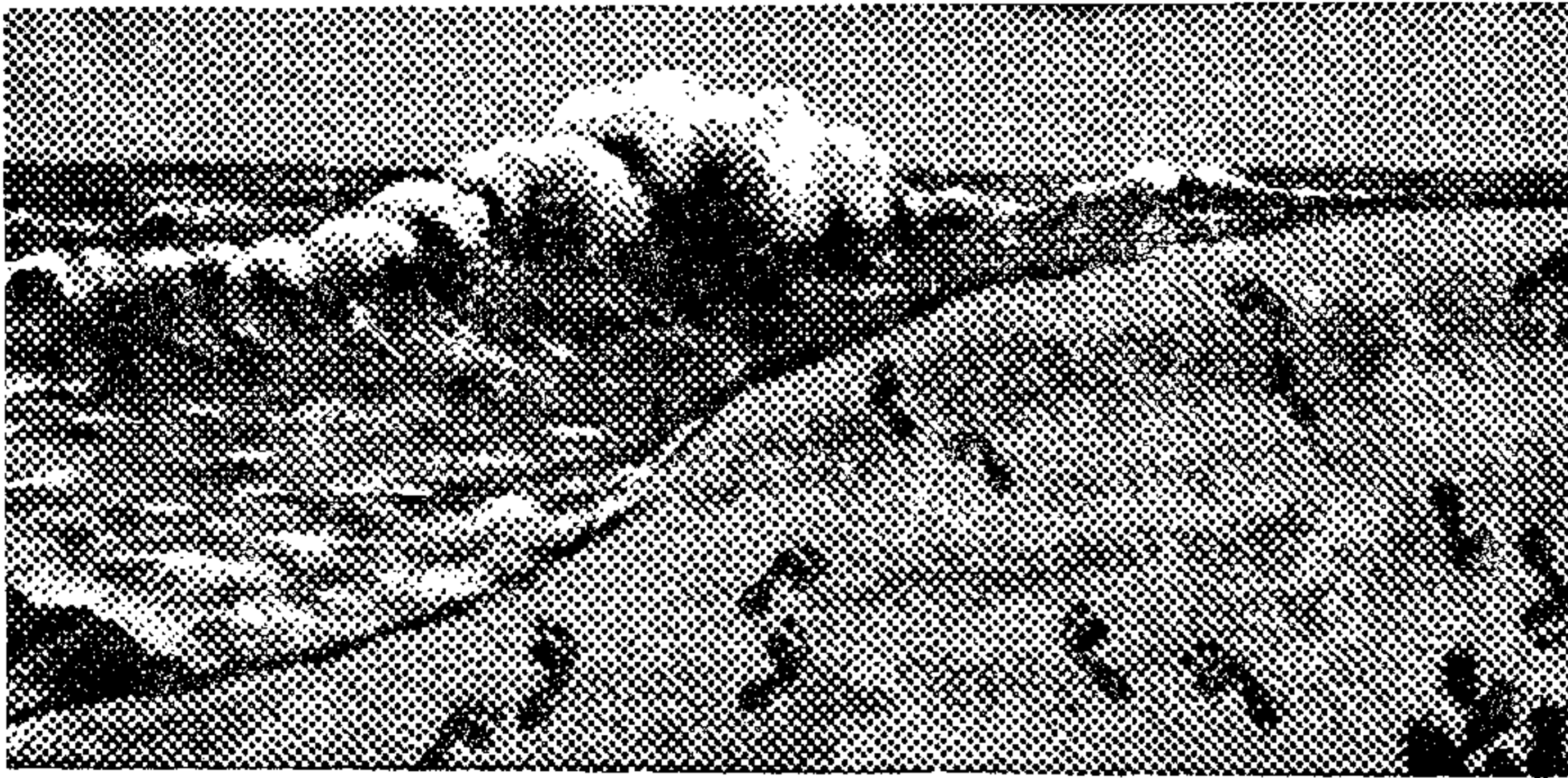
tendencies of the mind to spiritual impressions. All that has been stored in the mind can indeed be re-painted. The spiritual seeker has to set up a studio with all spiritual colours and wonderful brushes of creative imagination. He has to transform the impressions of lust, greed, pride, jealousy, hate, and attachment into magnificent pictures of God's beauty, power, love, sweetness and knowledge. As he masters more and more the art of spiritual dyeing, no undesirable impression, no sub-conscious desire can trouble or terrify him. All experiences of the world are placed on the shelves of the studio of his heart as amazing paintings—his own creations. The material world loses its gross materiality for him. It is then a world shining with God's light and love, a world vibrating with divine music. The great Vedāntic philosopher Vācaspati Miśra (A.D. 841), in the beginning of his work, *Bhamatī*, salutes Brahman as the Being whose smile is this vast universe. Thus, on the canvas of his own mind, the *bhakti-yogī* no longer finds any obstructive, ugly picture. All the pictures that are there are bright with the colour and life of God.

The other seeker—the *jñāna-yogī*, who is trying to reach the unity of supreme consciousness, has to shut off his senses to the manifold. He has to remove all pictures from his mind by the practice of detachment. He negates all limited images and puts only one impression in his mind by his creative imagination—the idea of the boundless infinite *Sat-cit-ānanda*. However, when he has ultimate Self-realization, his

mind, after coming down from *samādhi*, can again see the manifold, but now in another light. He sees everything as Brahman, that same unitary consciousness. In the end, the experience is the same. The devotees of God call that experience God and the *jñānī* calls it his true Self. Many Vedāntic teachers tell us, particularly, in this age, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, that the goal of knowledge and the goal of devotion are the same. A true devotee of God, when he reaches his ultimate goal, through faith, love, worship, and prayer, experiences the same truth as the *jñānī*, who reaches the ultimate spiritual reality by negating the world of appearance.

In spiritual life we cannot afford to have the canvas of our mind painted with all sorts of undesirable pictures. We have to re-dye that canvas. In other words, the natural mind, full of distractions, passions, and desires, has to be re-moulded until it becomes a pure mind. Jesus Christ said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Our mind is our great friend and also our terrible enemy, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*. When you have transformed your mind and given it a new spiritual orientation, it becomes your great guru. That mind guides you at every step. It has acquired the power of discrimination and protects you from all the thrusts of *māyā*. We should not be afraid at this great task of the spiritual transformation of our mind. Spiritual life is really a great adventure. It is arduous, but extremely interesting. If we can work at it patiently, the labour is infinitely rewarding.





# HUMAN TRENDS

## CUMULATIVE DECEITS AND ARROGANCE (THE ABUSE OF POWER)

Rome, ruler of the western world, was red with fire and blood.

While flaming buildings collapsed into heaps of smoking, charred wood, men begged for their lives while women wept and clutched their children. Anarchy controlled the city that controlled the western world. On this day, no emperor ruled. Angry mobs ruled, consumed by a frenzied bloodlust. They looted, killed and burned at will, with no authority daring to come forward and challenge them.

The mobs were composed of thousands of hungry people, their near starvation turning them into desperate, destructive near-animals. This was the effect of brutal taxes squeezed from them in support of a mammoth army patrolling an empire stretching from Asia to Britain.

The mobs' fury could not be quelled by thoughts of empire, for tales of conquests could fill no empty stomachs.

Nero, Emperor of Rome, descendant of Caesars, inherited their corruption and weakness. Therefore few were surprised when he abandoned the imperial city to the mobs, and hid trembling behind thick walls, his quaking royal person surrounded by hard faced guards grasping swords and spears.

In the midst of this frightening crisis, a

military officer arrived breathlessly, fist clutching an urgent message for one of the few Roman officials still to be found at his desk.

'Excellency, at this moment ships are ready to leave Egypt for Rome. They can be loaded with grain to quell the riots or they can be loaded with sand to cover the arena floor for the games.'

The official's fist pounded the desk. 'Fool! Have you lost your mind? Tell them to load the ships with sand!'

The games. Death as diversion and mass entertainment. Men, women, children, animals dying by the thousands in a gigantic public arena as thousands more looked on—cheering, applauding, laughing.

Incredible as it seems today the games of Rome, in all their stunning horror, remained an accepted political tactic for many years. They were used to perpetuate political power, to win enough votes to achieve public office or merely as a means to win public favour for unsteady egos who sought personal popularity.

Rome's games are an example of how those in public offices can retain their positions by appealing to the lack of virtue in those around them. This practice has been a feature of western political life for



hundreds of years, and is one of the major abuses of power and public trust to be found then and now.

Today the West is confronted by moral corruption in its political institutions to such a depth that the most depraved of Caesars would be astounded. In America, the cumulative deceits and arrogance at the highest level of government read like a bad novel. Resignations by officials, investigations by committees, shocking revelations by the press have come upon us in staggering sequence and we can only agree with Lord Acton's maxim that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely'.

The American Vice-President elected in 1972 has resigned, accused of bribe-taking and publicly branded a deceiver by investigators who documented their accusations with forty pages of charges against him. The United States Congress is investigating the possibility that the American President may have to be impeached and removed from office for both financial sins and political violations of the law of the land. In America, historians no longer list our political transgressions with pen and scroll. Such transgressions are too numerous, so why be surprised if they are listed with computers?

Abuse of power and the public trust is at an all time high, it appears. Seemingly unending scandals in high places have caused politics and immorality to become regarded as synonymous. When President Richard Nixon addressed the nation via television, emphatically denying any role in the wrongdoing by men he had selected to work for him, a newsman was moved to quote Mark Twain who once said, 'It's hard to believe a man is telling the truth when you know that in his place you would lie.'

Still, the president denied his guilt, despite evidence pointing to his having more knowledge of murky matters than can be

accepted in a person claiming to be virtuous.

A great deal of the evil in the world is committed by men trying to convince others—and themselves—that they are in the right. Behind much moral corruption in in any age lies self-proclaimed righteousness, and the current series of power abuses in the West is no exception. In keeping with Doctor Samuel Johnson's observation that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, much of the corruption roaring into our homes via ghastly newspaper headlines has been the work of men wrapped in the nation's flag.

The republic is in danger, they cry, and therefore we are justified in taking any course of action that will save it. The nation had been on a collision course, they claim, and disaster was just inches away. Ah, but a closer look is most revealing. For it is then that we find hardly any crisis existed and the imagined confrontation was just mainly that—imagined.

A monster was created and carefully kept out of sight. An appeal to the negative in people—fear, greed or some sort of immorality—was used to tighten the power abusers' grip around the throat of a people. Such is arrogance that in its own ignorance it sees but that in all others.

And that is the unending hell of power abuse. Deceits accumulate. Deceit begins with the seeking of political office and continues in that direction until the point is reached where no moral restraint remains. Thus the man in power becomes a danger to himself and to the nation.

It was the Roman army which gave birth to the word *decimate*, defined as destroying in huge numbers. An early meaning of the word, taken from the decimal system of computation, meant the execution of every tenth soldier in a battalion for real or imagined cowardice. Thus did Roman generals and nobles cover their own mistakes of high strategy on many occasions. Cumulative



deceits and arrogance by western authority are not new.

For indeed the French are correct—the more things change, the more they remain the same.

The story is told of the political candidate seeking votes, speaking to a huge throng. 'My opponent is a thief,' he shouted. 'He has stolen your tax money and enriched himself during every year of his political term. Friends, all I ask is that you give me a chance.'

It is to be hoped he received more laughter than votes.

### WAR, GUNS, TRUTH

War, once defined as an extension of politics, remains a consistent abuse of power. Not too long ago, a journalist noted that 60 wars were going on simultaneously in various parts of the world. Undoubtedly, all were deemed righteous wars by participants, despite the fact that someone was seeking power by killing others. No matter how often warriors enlist God in their ranks, power is the goal and the basis of even such conflicts.

Western radicals, so-called, are fond of quoting Mao Tse-Tung that all power comes from the barrel of a gun. All of a *certain* type of power, yes. But this power is limited, yielding to either a bigger gun or another finger on the trigger. In time, it all yields to a much higher power compared to which gun-carrying leaders of state are as a spoonful of water to a ton of flame. Not man but time and circumstance determine the outcome of this play. And that which controls those forces is the most powerful of all.

Truth will out, it is said. Buddha said truth alone abides for ever. And so some of the power-abusers have been caught with their hands in the cookie jar, as the American saying goes. Despite loud cries of patriotism, some of those in this country's

recent political scandals have been hauled into court and convicted of criminal acts. The steel doors of prisons slammed behind them, proving as Abraham Lincoln once said that you can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.

One analysis of the men who faced criminal charges resulting from Watergate showed that each was ambitious, arrogant, and consumed with the need to vindicate his own judgement. Above all, each was willing to harm others for the sake of this ambition. T. S. Eliot wisely noted that all the world's troubles stem from people who want to be important.

With deeper insight, Swami Vivekananda wrote that desire and want are the father of all misery. And nowhere does one see more want than in and around centres of power. Wanting makes us beggars, he said. Looking at the faces of those involved with power, one sees that they rarely smile. When they do, it is the smile of a man on a scaffold, forced and ill at ease to the extreme.

After the chess game, goes the Italian proverb, the king and pawn go into the same box. If the paths of glory lead but to the grave, as Gray's *Elegy* says, few seem to know or care. Power-seeking and abuse continue. And so do the scandals.

It is interesting to note that the game of chess was originally conceived of as a game of power. Check or chec was one way of pronouncing Shah or king. Mate meant to kill. So the object of the game was to kill the king.

Years ago, one actual king was said never to have lost a game despite having played consistently with his prime minister, a man considered to be the most outstanding chess master of his time. The king used to win this power struggle in a most direct way. Whenever he found himself in a losing position, he would simply overturn the board.



That is one way of using power. If it was a power abuse, it seems unlikely that anyone around such a king would have brought the subject up.

Western political scandals show that power can become a narcotic, drugging men, robbing them of morality. So strong is its pull that attempts to maintain power beyond the grave are not uncommon. Whether this world or the next, the desire to rule burns white hot. The pyramids of ancient Egypt, those monuments to greed, were tombs of the ancient Pharaohs, containing their mummified bodies, wealth, food, drink and freshly killed slaves—all of the things a ruler needed to be as happy in the next world as he supposedly had been in this one.

In the West thousands of years later, Viking warriors did the same. Huge graves were dug and filled with everything from a chieftain's body to the carcass of his dead horse, his wealth, sword, jars of beer and the freshly slaughtered body of at least one unfortunate servant.

It is clear that the quest for power leaves an appalling number of victims in its wake. Swami Vivekananda says power is a bondage. And so it is. It binds men to dangerous courses of action, among other things. It seats them on tigers from which they dare not dismount for fear of being devoured. Power-purges through the years show this, for here we see the consequences of making virtues of our objectives.

In the 1930's, Joseph Stalin consolidated his own iron rule over Russia through purges of real and imagined enemies. The result was the death of over 30,000 people. Stalin kept his power, but lived a lonely, tense and guarded life. Recent events in South America are similar, specifically the governmental change in Chile which resulted in the machine-gunning of hundreds of people, many for non-existent treasonable acts. Those gaining power in this fashion appear to be paranoid and dependent upon

threats and 'enemies' which are conspicuous only by their absence.

'Being unable to make what is just strong,' wrote Pascal, 'we have made what is strong just.'

#### THE DANGER INCREASES

Those with some degree of spiritual awareness among us are still sometimes ambivalent. On the one hand we try to cling to the idea that the universe is proceeding according to a much higher plan than we can see, while on the other hand we find it difficult not to be affected by the dangers from such men as those whose names we find splashed across the pages of our morning newspapers.

We know such men often help form the moral tone of an entire nation, which may account for the indifference many westerners show towards day-to-day morality. Lacking any obvious example of such morality in today's world, it is not surprising that its adherents are few. Historical examples haunt us. Adolf Hitler, crazed and deluded, persuaded millions to follow him and the world has not yet recovered from the devastation he left behind him.

'The triumph of demagogues is short-lived,' wrote Peguy, 'but the ruins are eternal.'

Perhaps the answer and—as we often read in our scriptures—the joy, lies more and more in the struggle, the struggle to understand more clearly what lies behind the crumbling institutions of the visible world. Our initial reactions of dismay are understandable, due to our limitations. We read this too, and it is true for those who are less self-absorbed.

Which leads to a brighter note: can we not see that more of our scriptures are also 'true', that is to say, understandable by our limited minds? Forced to think more and more about what is happening and why, is not it possible that spiritual awareness will



grow from these most chaotic of times ? by making a determined effort to reflect upon these interesting times in as spiritual a manner as possible ?

If we are blessed, yes. There is a Chinese curse, 'May you live in interesting times.'

Why not turn that curse into a blessing

—MARC OLDEN

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from—Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1956. References: Question 1, p. 157; Question 2, pp. 159-60; Question 3, p. 81; Question 4, pp. 96-7; Question 5, pp. 341-2.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from The Complete Works, Vol. VI (1963), pp. 261-2.

Future shock is a subject receiving a great amount of attention from thinkers, leaders, and scholars in many parts of the world. But in many of the view-points and discussions *man* himself is considered as a pitiable prisoner of the monstrous technological forces unleashed by his own hands. This trend of thinking must change. Man, his essential spiritual nature, must receive the due attention and emphasis. In the *Editorial* of this month we have discussed future shock in the Vedāntic perspective which emphasizes man's immortal, infinite, and timeless dimension.

One important quality that characterizes a man of God is artlessness—a guileless, childlike nature. He is free from self-will and egotism. Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the third President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, had this characteristic to a remarkable degree. 'Reminiscences of

Swami Akhandananda', by Swami Vireswarananda, the present President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, recounts a few incidents in which this trait of the great Swami—along with other noble qualities—is prominently revealed.

These reminiscences, originally published in our Bengali Monthly, *Udbodhan*, have been translated and presented here for the benefit of the readers of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

We are glad to offer our readers elsewhere in this issue a hitherto unpublished letter of Swami Vivekananda. As the note on it by its discoverer, Swami Vidyatmananda, informs us, it was written to the famous French *prima donna*, Emma Calvé, soon after Swamiji heard of her father's death. Swami Vidyatmananda is the Assistant Minister of Centre Védantique Ramakrichna, Gretz, France. The Swami has been trying with some success to unearth details of Swami Vivekananda's work and travels in Europe, and we hope our readers remember his valuable contributions to the *Prabuddha Bharata* on this theme. The present discovery of Swami Vivekananda's unpublished letter is a result of Vidyatmananda's devout and painstaking research. The discovery is all the more valuable as the letter was written less than two months before Swamiji's *mahāsamādhi*. Among the published letters hardly half a dozen belong to this period.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā* speaks of four types of worshippers: the man in distress, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of enjoyment, and the man of wisdom. 'All of them are noble' is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's opinion. For, a person may well make a spiritual evolutionary journey from the first to the fourth stage. That is possibly the mode of development of most human beings. Petitionary prayer, or prayer for being rescued from some worldly difficulty may be a very low form of prayer. But such prayers prove to be the swaddling clothes of new-born divine love. Even the lower forms of prayer have their own purificatory value. Just as a human baby will not remain all its life wrapped in swaddling clothes, so persons who offer petitionary prayers must gradually outgrow that practice and learn higher forms of prayer culminating in divine communion.

In 'When is Prayer Answered?' Swami Pavitrananda, head of the Vedanta Society of New York, while answering the question contained in the title, discusses the whole theme of prayer in an enlightening manner. The article is the edited tape-recording of his Sunday talk given at the Vedanta Society on 18 October 1964.

Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, or Rajaji, belonged to the illustrious group of leaders who rose from the soil of India and struggled to win her political freedom. Though in his patriotism and spirit of sacrifice he was second to none, Rajaji will be remembered for decades to come as one who, while being rational and modern, embodied the true spirit of the ancient dharma of this land. He was rooted in the past but was progressive in his attitude to contemporary problems. He was a brilliant intellectual and administrator, but at the same time humble, God-fearing, and dedicated to duty. He belongs to that class of all-time greats who, without dazzling, inspire common men to lead a moral and purposeful life. Rajaji

passed away on 25 December 1972, at Madras, in his ninety-fifth year.

An impressive profile of this great Indian is contributed to our columns by 'Explorer'.

Following the army crackdown and the terrible blood bath in the former eastern wing of Pakistan, which is now independent Bangladesh, India experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees, in late March of 1971 and succeeding weeks. The manner in which the Government of India, the people, and voluntary service agencies shouldered this human burden and rendered all possible aid has few historical parallels. In this mammoth relief operation the Ramakrishna Mission played its own modest role—and still continues to do so.

Though the general public may know this in a vague way, not many have any clear idea as to how extensive was the relief rendered—and now being rendered inside Bangladesh—by the Mission on both sides of the Indian borders. At the peak period of its relief operations, nearly a quarter million refugees—equal to the population of a small-sized city—were cared for in the Mission's many camps. 'The Ramakrishna Mission's Bangladesh Relief Work' by Swami Lokeswarananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, who was intimately associated with the relief work from its early phases, depicts with illustrations this great saga of service rendered to fellow-men in the darkest hours of their national crisis.

We began serializing 'Monastic Spirituality: Christian and Hindu' from this January and the instalment offered now is the last of the three. This is the transcript of a question-answer session that Swami Ranganathananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, held with the Roman Catholic Carmelite nuns at their convent in Amstelveen, Amsterdam, Netherlands, on



15 September 1972. For more details we refer the readers to our prefatory note published with the first instalment.

In this concluding part of the dialogue, the Swami's replies to questions regarding cultivating a spiritual attitude in our day-to-day life are practice-oriented and illuminating.

Discharging one's duties, neither disparaging them nor desiring their results, is eulogized by the *Bhagavad-gītā* as a very efficient means of attaining the highest wisdom. This view finds repeated expression elsewhere in the *Mahābhārata*. The story of the pious housewife and the ascetic, which climaxes in the exposition of *svadharma* by the hunter, in the *Vyādha-gītā*, is very well known. Another such instance is the encounter between Jājāli and Tulādhara which is being presented to our readers in this issue. The dialogue occurs in the famous 'Śānti-parvan' of the *Mahābhārata*.

Whether one accepts the cyclical or the linear theory of the birth, growth and decline of human culture and civilization, one has to concede the decisive role religion plays in the unfoldment of the drama of human history. Because religion concerns the core of human nature and personality, and binds man with a bond of fraternity to the rest of creation. With the dominating of life, in recent decades, by science and technology, materialism seems to rule human thinking, and religious values and beliefs are being fast jettisoned as vestiges of an ignorant past. But, then, the present younger generation in affluent countries is turning against even science and technology because of its sins of environmental pollution, preparations for a nuclear holocaust, human exploitation, racial rivalries, etc. The way out of this historic and moral quandary lies in the direction of experien-

tial religion which is not afraid of rational enquiry and a scientific approach. If primitive myths and beliefs served as the seeds of ancient culture and still serve as roots of our present-day civilization, true religion, which bestows a cosmic perspective, unfailing insight and supreme sanity, is the flower and fruit of the wide-spreading tree of that very civilization.

'Cult, Culture, and Civilization : The Dynamics of Their Interrelationship' is a thought-provoking and scholarly analysis of the contemporary human dilemma, packing a strong hint that religion coupled with science holds the key to the solution of this dilemma. Dr. Donald Szantho Harrington is the senior minister of the influential Community Church of New York City, and the author of at least two books and many papers and articles. The present article is the text of his first talk in the series of Minns Lectures for 1972.

The *Yoga-vāsisṭha*, which is a mine of spiritual wisdom, has a verse to this effect: 'Thought is the cause for all things. When it is active there are the three worlds ; when it subsides the world subsides. Therefore the mind is to be treated with diligence.' This diligent 'treatment' of the mind can be done in different ways by adopting the disciplines of the yogas of *karma* (work), *bhakti* (devotion), *jñāna* (knowledge), etc. Swami Shraddhananda's 'Dyeing The Mind' in essence points out the process of purifying the mind by filling it with goodly thoughts and associations.

Swami Shraddhananda is the head of the Vedanta Society, Carmichael, Sacramento, California, U.S.A.

One of the unmistakable symptoms of our declining civilization is widespread moral corruption. That it should infect and overwhelm persons occupying high seats of



power, administration and leadership, makes one all the more sad and almost desperate. Yet, in such times of moral epidemic, discerning men and women should not despair. On the contrary, they must strengthen their own inner defences and stand fortified against its assaults. This is not a negative step at all. By maintaining unassailable moral health, they imperceptibly set in motion a counterwave of moral regeneration which will check the wave of decadence.

'Cumulative Deceits and Arrogance' by Marc Olden, is a thought-provoking analysis of the moral decadence in western society, with particular reference to the U.S.A., and a sincere plea for all to 'turn that curse into a blessing' through serious reflection which should spur them on to determined action.

Marc Olden, who is already well known to our readers through his contributions to the 'Human Trends' column, is a member of the Vedanta Society of New York.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**MEDITATION: BY MONKS OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER,** Published by Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, 54 Holland Park, London W11 3 RS, 1972, pp. xxiv+161, Price, in U.K., 85 p. net (Indian Price, Rs. 10/-; Available from: Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 700-014).

Owing to the increasing search for inner peace in affluent societies, and intense research and development in instrumentation for measuring brain-activity, there has come to prevail in the West a genuine interest in eastern spiritual thought and practices as well as a flourishing racket in spiritual goods. With the pseudo-gurus resorting to modern commercial tricks of window-dressing and high-pressure salesmanship, seekers after the genuine eastern 'commodity' are likely to be misled and trapped. The book under review comes to the rescue and guidance of such sincere seekers, both western and eastern.

The Swamis who have spoken on the theme of meditation here, were all blessed and trained by the great disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. They were deputed by the Ramakrishna Order as spiritual teachers and Vedantic missionaries to the western peoples. There is therefore a twofold merit in the teachings given here. First, what is taught is authentic as being both in the mainstream of the great Hindu-cum-Ramakrishna tradition and stemming from the writers' inner life. Second, the presentation is fitted to the needs of western students, whose approach to religion is predominantly rational and whose background is non-Hindu. To many contemporary Hindu aspirants, also, this book has a special appeal and relevance, as they are desperately cultivating western rationalism and trying to shake off their Hindu past.

Among the contributions to the book, Swami Ashokananda's comes first, as it speaks of the necessary preparations for meditation. Most of us fail in our attempts at meditation, because we want to leap to *samadhi*, its culmination, without having mastered the means. Swami Gnaneshwarananda's contribution deals elaborately with the practical aspects of Raja-yoga, and even a thoroughgoing student of Swami Vivekananda's book on this subject can find in 'Lessons in Meditation' a number of helpful new hints. *Japa* or repetition of mantras or holy names, the divine and psychological mysteries underlying its science, and the monistic methodology in meditation, are ably presented by Swami Ghanananda, in his three contributions to the book. The 'Introduction' by Swami Bhavyananda, present head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, and 'About the Guru' by Swami Yogeshananda, the assistant Swami of the Centre, enrich the whole layout of the book. The publication is very well designed and produced, and the price is reasonable. Possibly the only defect—and that very minor—is the imperfect execution of the transliteration scheme for Sanskrit words, especially in indicating the sacred *bija* mantras.

Undoubtedly, the book is a very good supplement to the corpus of luminous teachings on meditation and allied topics transmitted by Sri Ramakrishna and his great disciples.

After all is said and written, the strongest and best argument in favour of meditation as an efficient means of attaining peace and illumination lies in the long and determined practice itself, and the results that follow from such practice. As the author of the celebrated Vedantic treatise *Panchadasi*



says pointedly: 'Through the practice of meditation, the identification with the non-self weakens day by day. Though witnessing this result, if a person still does not meditate, tell us, sir, if there is any thoughtless creature other than him.'

S. T.

**BOVARYSM:** BY JULES DE GAULTIER (Translated by Gerald M. Spring), Philosophical Library, New York, 1970, p. 173, \$ 8.75.

On the analogy of 'Spoonerism', the author has coined 'Bovarysm', taking his cue from the heroine of Flaubert's novel, Mme Bovary, to connote the faculty by which man acquires the power 'to see himself as other than what he is'. Kept within bounds, the power works normally, and is the basis of man's aspirations, his achievements, and his ever increasing improvement and evolution to higher spiritual levels. For man, Vedantically oriented, sees himself as other (that is, the Divine Self) than what he is (namely, body and mind). This, however, is the Indian view.

Bovarysm, according to the author, distorts man's perception and personality, and results in the morbid. The entire first part of the book, comprising seven chapters, is devoted to a fine psychological analysis of pathological Bovarysm. The characters of French novels are pressed into service as symbols for the morbid Bovary lurking in 'normal' men and women. As with individuals, so with groups, Bovarysm plays havoc with human nature (chapters 4 and 5). '....Human collectivity conceives itself as different from itself in consequence of having undergone the suggestion of a general idea....' (p. 75).

In chapters VI and VII the author dispels all doubts in the reader's mind regarding the universal operation of Bovarysm in human nature. He goes on to demonstrate by cogent arguments, that free will and unity of the self are illusory ideas (pp. 84-109). We may not agree, yet we should admit that the psychological analysis in these pages is illuminating and penetrating.

From psychological analysis one passes to philosophical analysis in parts II, III, and IV. The arguments are as sophisticated and persuasive as in part I. Yet the author does not escape the usual illusions that envelop all western thinking—first, that Reason is the last word, there being nothing that transcends or supersedes reason; second, the complete misunderstanding of Indian views of Self and Self-realization (especially on p. 139). There is clear evidence of inability to climb above the phenomenal and the empirical. The author in consequence

affirms the radical empiricists' concept of reality rather than the absolutist's view of *truth*. This is a compromise and moves at a lower phenomenal level. Be this as it may, the book makes fine reading and may well be studied by all students of philosophy. The beginner will not find it too difficult nor the expert too easy.

The reviewer would like to conclude with a question. If, as the author says, everything and everyone is gripped by Bovarysm, if *sarvam khalvidam Bovarysm*, then is not the book itself a fine example of Bovarysmic illusion?

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

### BENGALI

**SRI MA-DARSHAN:** BY SWAMI NITYATMANANDA, Published by the Secretary, Sri Ramakrishna-Sri-Ma Prakashan Trust, 579, Sector 18B, Chandigarh; Vol. XIII, 1973, pp. 240, Price Rs. 8/-.

Following his Master's advice, 'M' ('Sri-Ma' or Mahendranath Gupta) lived a householder's life in name only, for he lived unattached to the worldly life 'like a maid-servant in a rich man's house'. The Master's message, filtering through 'Sri-Ma', inspired many a pure young soul to take to the pathway of God, and helped stricken humanity to come nearer to the eternal verities of life. 'M's' life was a living laboratory which successfully demonstrated the efficacy of holy company. In the present volume the author highlights the way in which the influence of the company of holy men like 'M' sets off a resculpturing of a spiritual aspirant's mind.

This volume, unlike the first few in the series, furnishes very little new material on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna or of 'M' himself, but devotes many pages to describing the impact of the daily life and teaching of 'M' on the author. In fact we wonder if anyone would miss much if he happened to skip over this volume in the series.

Still students of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature will certainly continue to regard this series as a compendium of devotional inspiration and guidance.

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

### BOOKS RECEIVED

**DIVYAYAN** (Aurobindo Birth Centenary Commemoration .... in Bengali and English), CHIEF EDITOR, MANOMOHAN DATTA, Published by Sri Aurobindo Smaraka Grantha Prakashan-Upasamiti, Midnapore, W. Bengal, 1973, pp. 163+xiv+128, Price Rs. 7/-.



**MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SANKARA:** By SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI, Published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur (Hassan Dt., Karnataka), 1973, pp. 16+130, Price Rs. 3/-.

**THE SUPREME MASTER (SRI AKKALKOT**

**MAHARAJ):** By E. BHARADWAJA, M.A., Published by the Author, at Vidyanagar, Gudur Tq., Nellore Dt., A.P., 1973, pp. 95, Price Rs. 2.75.

**SOUL, KARMA, AND RE-BIRTH:** By P. PARAMESWARA, Published by the Author, at 2 Haudin Road, Bangalore, 42, 1973, pp. 212, Price Rs. 5/-.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION: SINGAPORE REPORT FOR 1972

Started in 1928, this Centre at first was concerned with cultural and educational activities; but during World War II, considerable relief work was done. After that emergency ended, a Boys' Home was started, finally completed in 1959; meanwhile in 1952 the Temple of Sri Ramakrishna was built. The Mission now also conducts three Primary Schools, serving different areas, as well as Library with Reading Room adjacent to the Mission office and auditorium.

*Library and Reading Room*, with a Children's Branch near the Boys' Home, makes available educational books in five languages, for people of the neighbourhoods. In this year there were 5238 books in the Library and 30 periodicals available in the Reading Room; 1,270 persons made use of these facilities.

*Cultural Activities:* Weekly scriptural classes were given by a monastic member, who also delivered a number of lectures and talks in Singapore and surroundings. The monastic head gave interviews to spiritual seekers as well as to those studying Hinduism. A Spiritual Retreat was conducted in the Temple, Dec. 30th to January 1st ('73). A Sanskrit class was conducted by two learned friends of the Mission in the premises of the Boys' Home. Books of religious and cultural value (including Mission publications) were kept available, and sales totalled \$5,948.96.

*Celebrations:* Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji were observed with programmes of Puja, discourses, devotional songs, etc. Sivaratri, Ram Navami, birthdays of Krishna, Christ and Mohammed, Vesak Day, Navaratri, Durga Puja, and other sacred occasions were also fittingly observed. Ramnam-kirtan was held, every Ekadasi.

*Educational:* The Vivekananda Tamil School and the Saradadevi Tamil School are at the same

address near the Ashrama, the former open in the mornings, the latter in the afternoons: enrolment this year was 80 in the morning and 91 in afternoons. The Kalaimagal School, some distance away, enrolled 86 pupils. All are Primary schools, receiving aid from the Ministry of Education, Singapore, and using Tamil as the medium of instruction. All made good showings in the various examinations, competitions, and extra-curricular activities.

*Six Night Classes for Adults* were conducted, in the buildings of the Primary Schools. Two were in English, four in Tamil; total enrolment was 111. The Singapore Adult Education Board helped in the support of the classes.

*Boys' Home:* Situated in beautiful natural surroundings, adjacent to the Temple, the Home this year housed 47 boys, aged 7 to 17, all studying in Primary or Secondary Schools. The Ministry of Social Welfare grants about \$15.00 per month per boy towards the expenses. The boys attend morning and evening prayers in the Temple, plus other regular functions there; learn to sing devotional songs; and receive religious instruction from monastic members of the Order. Sports are encouraged; and the boys regularly use the Children's Branch of the Library.

*Swami Vivekananda Centenary Permanent Memorial:* This recently-completed building includes accommodation for senior students, teachers and other personnel of the Boys' Home, plus a reading room and library. The Reading Room was officially opened in December this year; it is already being used for regular classes on Upanishads, as well as its usual function.

*Immediate Needs:* (1) To repay debts of \$40,000.00 incurred in completing the Vivekananda Centenary Memorial; (2) to complete the Outdoor Dispensary at estimated cost of \$175,000; (3) to maintain the Boys' Home, requiring \$4,000.00 per month.



## THE RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA AND MISSION, BOMBAY

REPORT FROM APRIL 1972 TO MARCH 1973

This Centre, started in 1923 in a rented house, had its own building inaugurated in 1926 by Swami Sivanandaji. Of the two branches, the Ashrama has the following activities:

*Spiritual and Cultural:* Daily—worship and prayers, Vedic and *Gita* chanting were held in the Temple; Weekly—classes on *Sri Ramakrishna Vachanamrit* (Saturdays, in Hindi) and the *Gita* (Sundays, in English); On Ekadasi days—'Ramnam Sankirtan'. Durga Puja celebration, as usual accompanied by musical entertainments, educative dramas, and other interesting programmes; Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji were publicly celebrated with great eclat, and fitting programmes for the birth-anniversaries of Krishna, Buddha, Sankaracharya, and Jesus Christ.

The monastic head granted interviews to earnest seekers.

Classes and lectures were held in the Ashrama and elsewhere in the city, on Religion and Culture; also some were held outside the city and even the State. At the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, Dadar, regular classes in Marathi were given by a monastic member; also a fortnightly class on the *Gita* at Koliwada, and a weekly class at Parel.

*Recitation competitions:* open to all school students of Bombay and suburbs, these events included students of Classes 6 to 11, divided into four language-groups, etc. All recitations were from the works of Swami Vivekananda; the competitions were held on the Mission campus. This year 3,043 students participated—from 78 schools. 153 prizes were distributed at the ceremony in the Vivekananda Hall.

The activities of the Mission may be summarized under the following heads:

*Educational:* A Students' Home for college boys—76 in number this year—supplements their academic training with spiritual classes, plus other opportunities to acquire the basic values of Hindu culture and tradition. The public Free Reading Room

and the Sivananda Library, with more than 18,500 books and 145 periodicals in seven languages, continued to be widely used. During this year, 11,228 books were lent.

*Medical:* The Charitable (Indoor) Hospital treated 516 patients during this year, the great majority being surgical, involving 441 operations. The Outdoor Dispensary has both Homoeopathic and Allopathic sections, of which the latter is equipped for Surgical, Pathological, Gynaecological, Dental, E.N.T., Ophthalmic and Radiological work. During this year, 27,804 new cases were treated, plus 123,397 repeats.

*Philanthropic:* With its long history of active work in times of national calamities, the Centre this year collected donations—in cash and kind—for East Bengal Refugee Relief, West Bengal Flood Relief, and Jawans' Relief, and Purulia Drought Relief. Moreover a medical relief centre for drought-stricken area of Jawhar Taluka in Thana District about 100 miles from Bombay, with help from eight qualified doctors, gave medicines, injections, vitamins and foods to extent of over Rs. 47,000 to 7037 people (from February through June 1973); 239 new saris were also distributed.

*Rural Health and Welfare (Adivasi Relief):* The Mission carried on its 'mobile medical centre' at village Sakwar, Palghar Taluka, about 55 miles from Bombay. This Adivasi village, with similar surrounding villages, includes about 2000 people. The honorary medical staff included 14 doctors, and had valued help from a group of social workers. The team visits the village weekly, distributing medicines, vitamins, foods, garments; seriously ill people are helped toward admission into proper city hospitals. In this year, 12,289 people were served.

Following are the *Immediate Needs of the Mission*:

(a) Expansion of Hospital building, plus purchase of equipments: Rs. 2,00,000.

(b) Shifting Library and Reading Room to new house (hardly any room now remains for new books or for increasing number of readers) Rs. 2,50,000

(c) Adivasi Relief work Rs. 50,000.



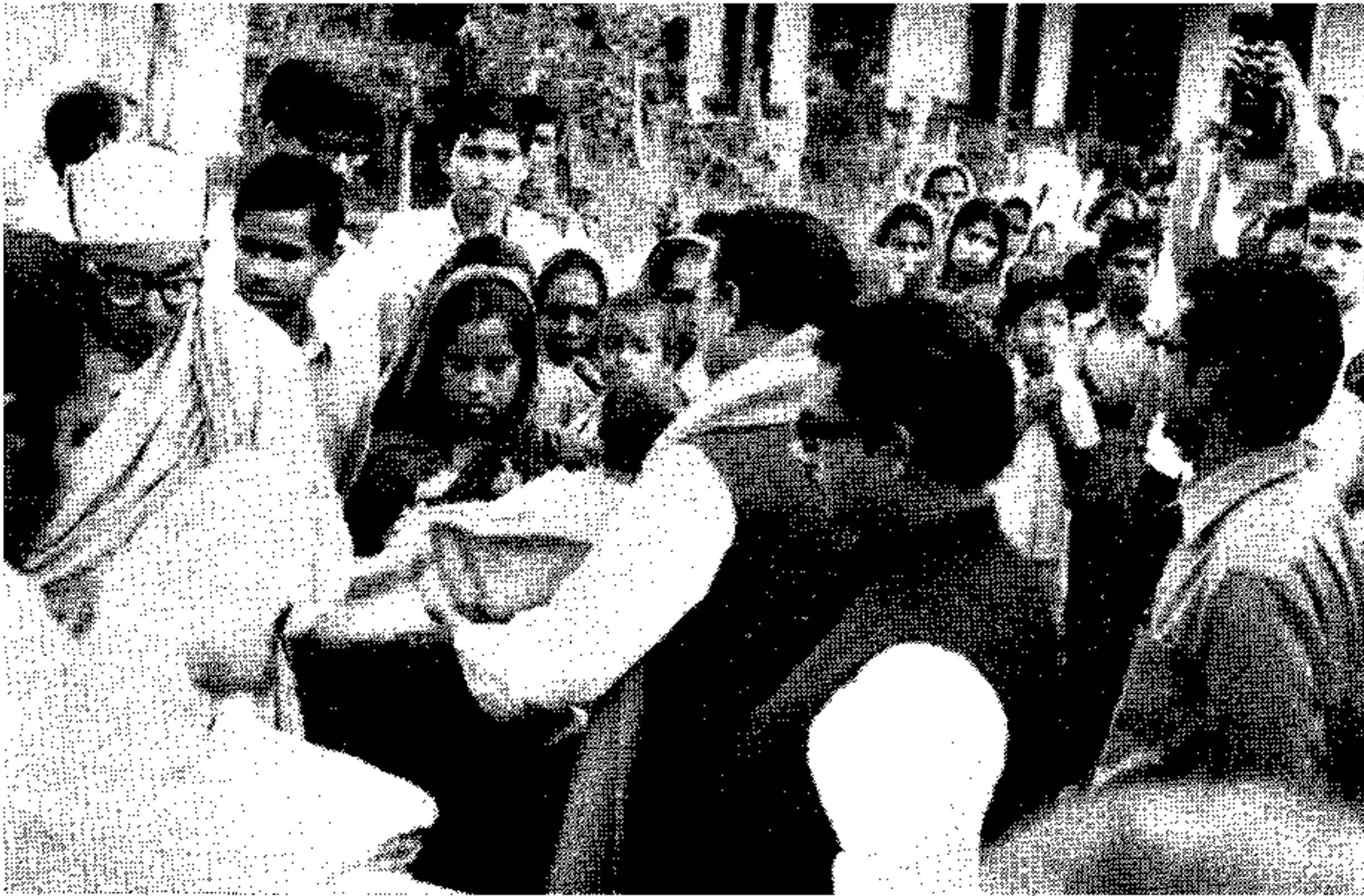


*Part of a make-shift camp run by the Mission, at Gaighata, Bangladesh border.*



*Games organised for refugee children at Kalishima on Bangladesh border.*

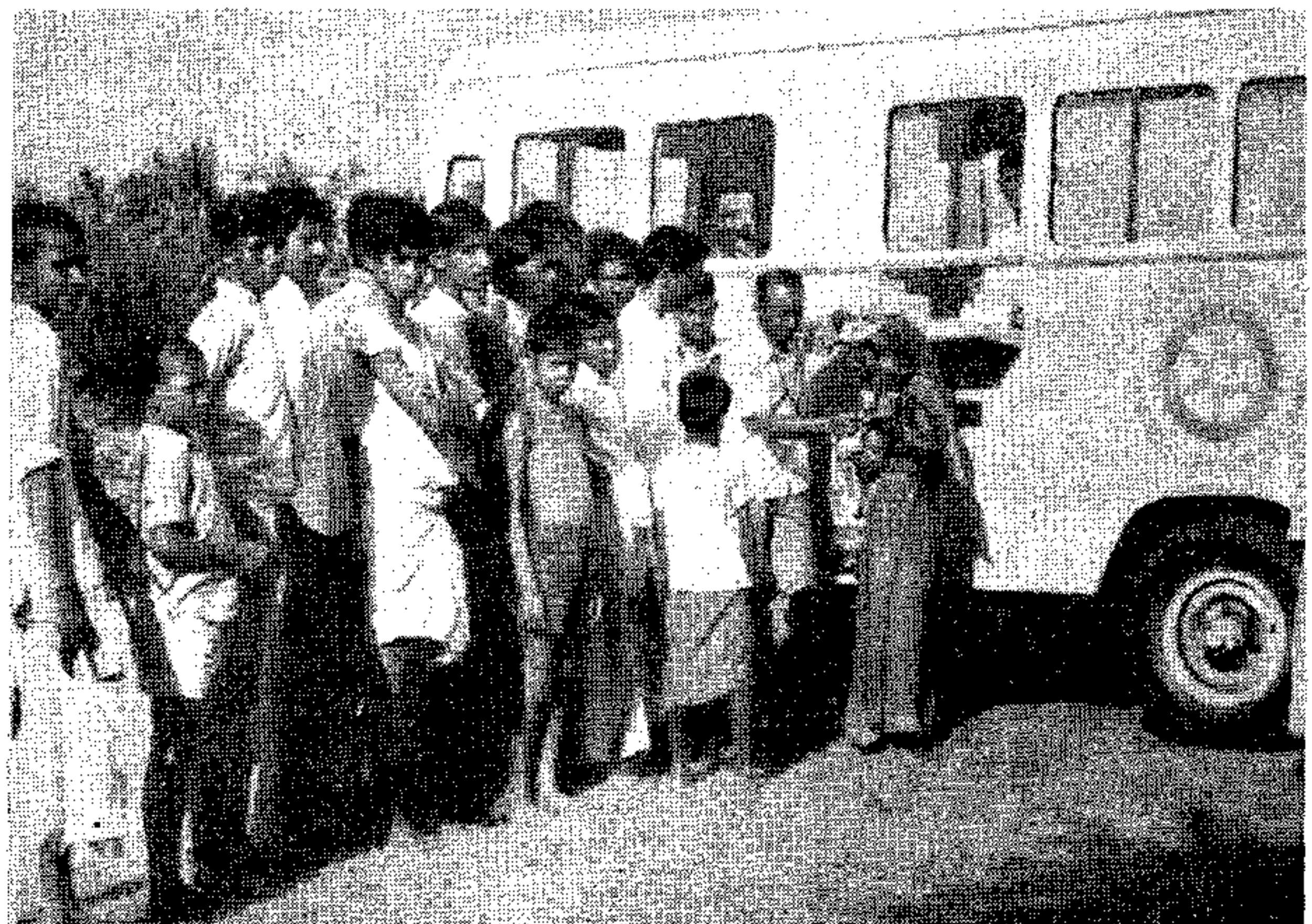




*Saris being distributed to women in Bangladesh. Minister for Refugee Rehabilitation, Mr. A.H.M. Kamaruzza-man, is handing them over.*



*Milk and fruits being served to school children in Bangladesh.*



*Mobile medical van operating in Bagerhat, Bangladesh.*

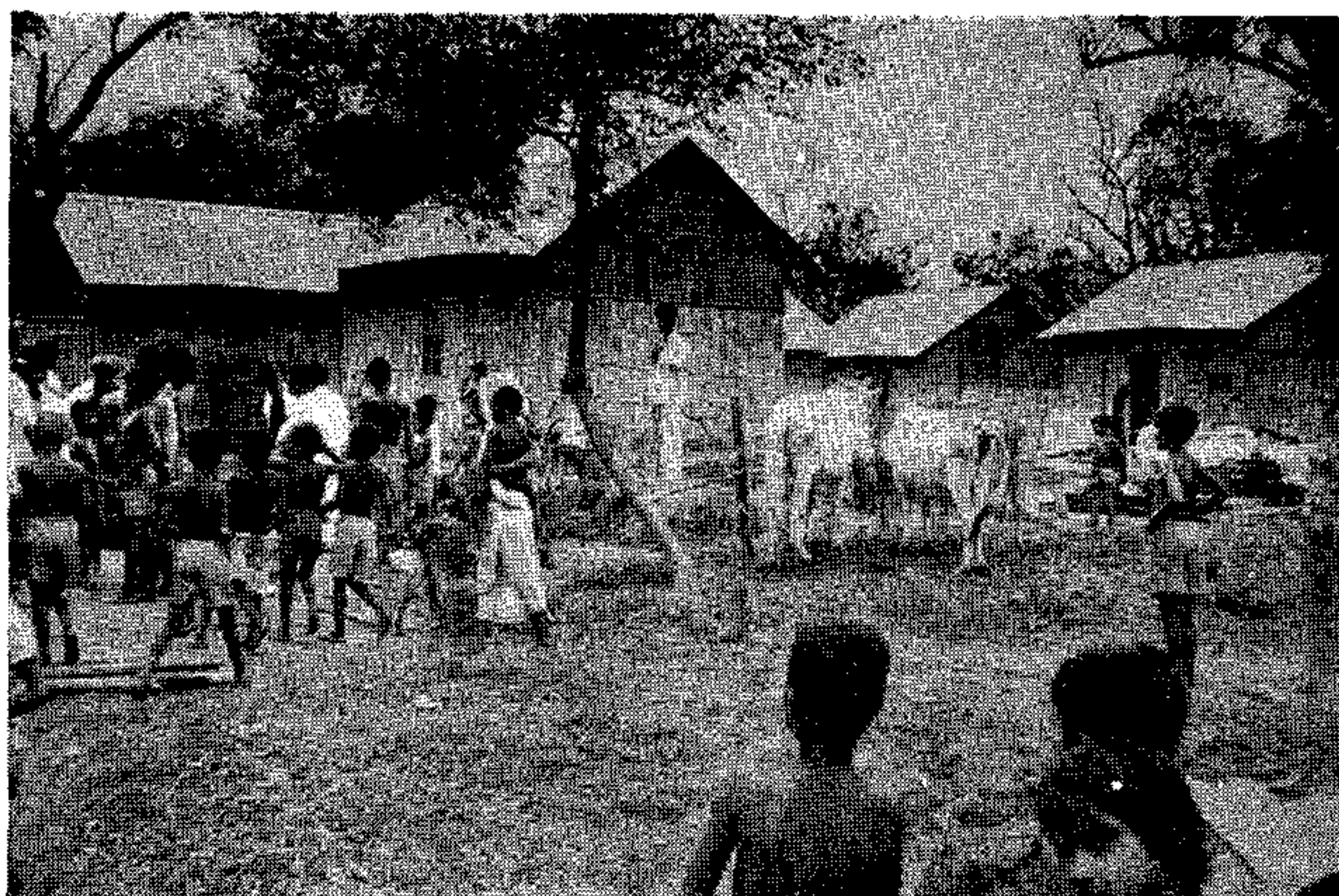




*Milk being distributed to mothers and children from the Mission centre in Dacca.*

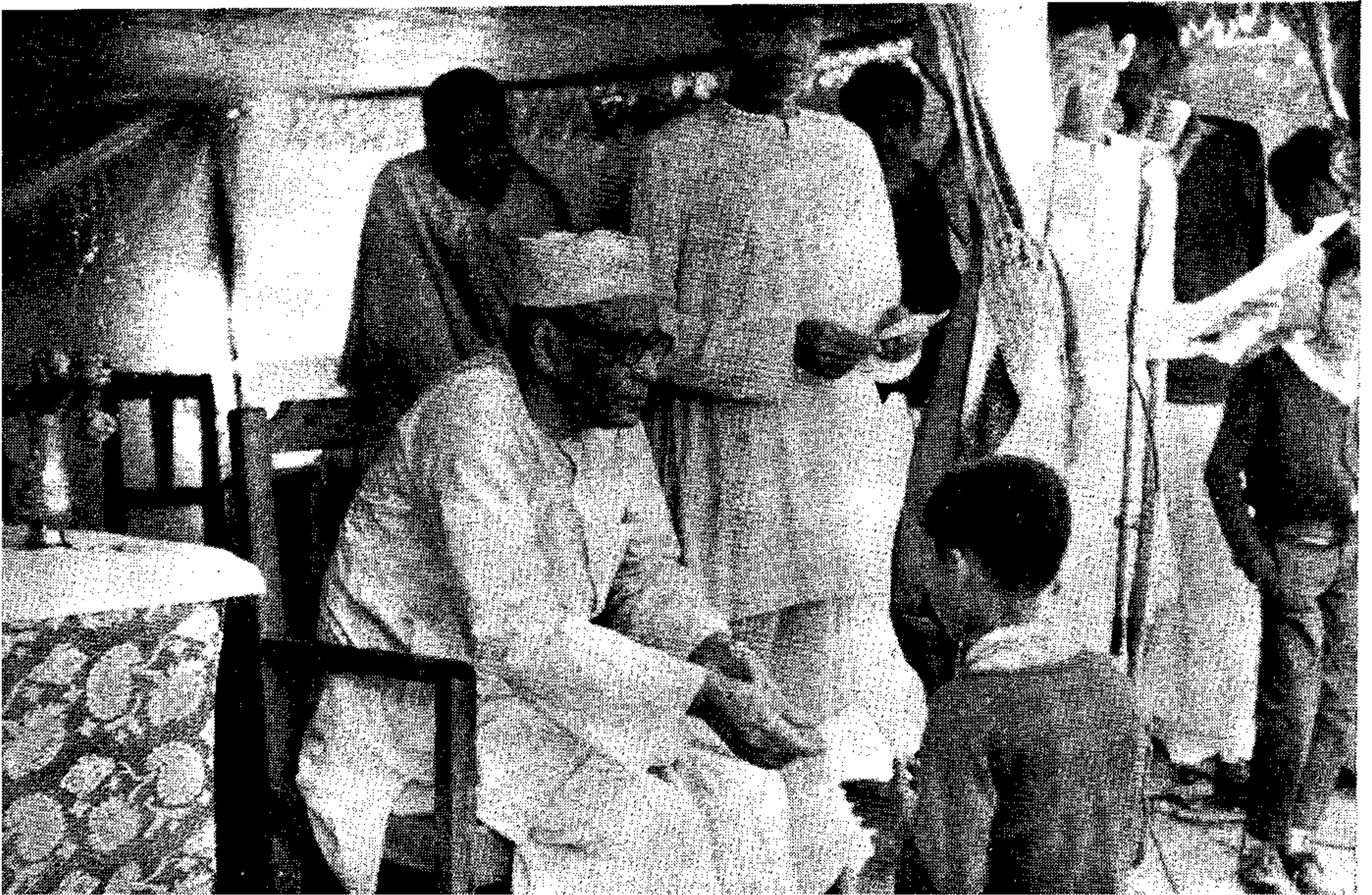


*Houses rebuilt by the Mission in Dacca.*



*Houses rebuilt in Khulna.*





*Swami Gambhirananda, General Secretary of the Mission giving prizes and mementos to school children before their departure for Bangladesh.*



*The Relief and Rehabilitation Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Kamaruzzaman, speaking at a public meeting held at the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission, Dacca to mark its revival. Swami Gambhirananda on his left,*