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JANUARY—DECEMBER 1979



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

THE HOLY MOTHER REMINISCES*

'When I was thirteen it was time for me to go to Kamarpukur,¹ so I went. The Master [Sri Ramakrishna] was then at Dakshineswar. I stayed for a month or so at Kamarpukur and then returned to Jayrambati. Five or six months later I went to Kamarpukur again and remained there for nearly six weeks. The Master was still at Dakshineswar, but his elder brother and my sister-in-law and others were at Kamarpukur. Later when the Master came home, he sent for me and I went to Kamarpukur. This time I remained for about three months.

'... Afterwards I returned to Jayrambati. I heard from various people that the Master had gone mad and went about naked. No one understood his deep devotional moods. I thought since this is what they all say, I had better go and see for myself how he is. Just then a number of our village women were coming to Calcutta to bathe in the river Ganga on some auspicious occasion. It was about Phalguna [February-March] of the Bengali year [1278]. I said to someone, "I would like to go to Dakshineswar to see how he is." She told my father; I had been too shy and frightened to say anything myself. Father said, "If she wishes to go, certainly she may." He accompanied us. I had fever on the way, high fever, and lost consciousness. That night I dreamed that a dark woman sat beside my bed and stroked my head. She said, "I come from Dakshineswar." I said, "I too am going there. Who are you?" She answered, "I am your sister. Do not be afraid, you will get well."

'My fever left me the very next day. In the end father arranged for a palanquin. We arrived at Dakshineswar about nine o'clock at night. I went

* The Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, was the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna. After the Master's passing, she was the source of spiritual inspiration and guidance to the monks and devotees of the Ramakrishna Order. During the course of her conversations with them she often told her reminiscences about the Master. Some such are being presented here for the information of the readers. They have been edited and compiled chronologically by us from the book *At the Feet of Holy Mother* by Her Direct Disciples (Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, 1963).

¹. The Holy Mother (then Saradamani) was married to Sri Ramakrishna at the age of five; and according to the custom in those days, she stayed at her father's house at Jayrambati. She would occasionally go to her father-in-law's house at Kamarpukur.

straight to the Master's room. The others had gone to the music-tower,² where the Master's mother was staying. When the Master saw me, he said, "So you have come. That's good." He called someone, "Spread a mat here." The mat was spread inside the room. The Master said, "My Shejo-Babu is no more. My right hand is gone." He was referring to Mathur Babu, who had died a few months ago. The Master's nephew Akshaya too had died a few months before that.

'... Had Mathur Babu been alive, do you think I would have to live in that hovel of a music-tower? ... He would have housed me in a palace. I expressed a wish to go to the music-tower; but the Master said, "No, no, it will be inconvenient to arrange for your treatment there. Stay here." So I stayed in his room and one of my woman companions lay down near me. Hriday brought some puffed rice for us, as the others had already had their evening meal.

'The doctor came next day. A few days later, when I was quite recovered, I went to the music-tower. My mother-in-law had left the brick house and was staying there. She had been given a room in that house; but as Akshaya had breathed his last there she had left the house. She said, "I shall not go there again. I shall stay here, facing the Ganga; I do not want to live in the brick house any more."

'After we had been a month and a half at Dakshineswar, the Master performed Shodashi Puja.³ I was then sixteen.⁴ He had me brought to his room about nine in the night. All arrangements had been made for the Puja; Hriday had seen to that. The Master asked me to sit down and I took my seat on the north side of his bed, facing west, with the large earthen drum of Ganga water in front of me. The Master sat near the western door, himself facing east. The doors were closed. Everything that would be needed for the Puja was on my right.... After a time I lost external consciousness. I did not know what happened.

'... At the commencement of the Puja, he put Alta (a kind of crimson pigment) on my feet, vermillion on my brow, and draped a new cloth round me. He then put some kind of sweetmeat and a little Pan [betel] in my mouth.... I mentally prostrated before him and then came away....

'... The doors were closed. There were music and festivity in the temple, everyone was busy....

'There was a boy named Dinu who used to stay with him and of whom he was very fond. He gathered the flowers and Bilva leaves. Hriday arranged everything. But none was present during the Puja except him. Hriday came in towards the end. Ram Babu wrote in his book⁵ that the Shodashi Puja was

2. In the music-tower or the Nahabat-khana at the Dakshineswar Kali temple, there are rooms on the ground and first floors where the women of Sri Ramakrishna's family stayed.

3. Worship of the Divine Mother as Shodasi, a young woman being adopted as the symbol of the Shodashi aspect of the Divine Mother.

4. In the opinion of some biographers, the Holy Mother was then eighteen years old. They fix 25 May 1872 as the date on which this incident took place.

5. Ramachandra Datta, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, authored a Bengali biography of the Master entitled *Sri Sri Paramahamsadever Jivan Vrttānta* (Calcutta: Sri Ramakrishna Yogodyan, B.S. 1357).

performed at Jayrambati, but that that could never be ! As it was, there they all called him mad ! And their criticism would have exceeded all bounds if it came to the worship of a woman !

'After this I remained at Dakshineswar for almost a whole year. Later I fell ill and went to Jayrambati. Shambhu Babu [Shambhucharan Mallik] called in Prasad Babu for my treatment.'

THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE—I

(EDITORIAL)

The conception of human life varies from man to man according to his experience and temperament. For instance, Shakespeare says 'life's but a walking shawdow'; some like Pedro Calderon call it 'a dream'; others like Francis Thomson say, it is 'a coquetry of Death'; while still others like Marcus Aurelius interpret it as 'a battle and a sojourning in a strange land'. In the opinion of Swami Vivekananda : 'Every one of us comes into this world to fight, as on a battlefield. We come here weeping to fight our way, as well as we can, and to make a path for ourselves through this infinite ocean of life; forward we go, having long ages behind us and an immense expanse beyond. So on we go, till death comes and takes us off the field—victorious or defeated, we do not know.'¹ Like Swami Vivekananda, a Christian mystic also felt that 'man's life on earth is a warfare.'² But John Burroughs, in his *Summit of the Years*, says, 'Life is a struggle, but not a warfare.'

Vanity of Worldly Warfare

As Swami Vivekananda says, we come into this world 'to fight our way...through this infinite ocean of life.' Men struggle hard to make themselves and their kith and kin happy, and to live in peace; but their experience tells them that they have failed to attain real peace and happiness in spite of their lifelong gallant fight. And some day death comes, and the fight is stopped. Perhaps on the verge of death some even feel: Vain was the fight! Vain was the life! 'I have only caught the lifeless shadow,' not the thing!

Some wise men living in every age know that such a fight is always futile, and defeat is its sure end; because what one wants to gain by fighting is not of this earth. They change the course of their lives when they realize that 'vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, except to love God and serve Him alone.' According to Thomas à Kempis, 'this is supreme wisdom—to despise the world and draw daily nearer the kingdom of heaven.'³

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*), II, 1972, p. 118.

2. Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. Leo Sherley-Price, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968, (hereafter *Imitation*), p. 40.

The Path Chosen by Wise Men

But there are some people in this world who do not understand what life is, and

3. *Imitation*, pp. 27-28.

call the monk's life escapism. They feel : that these monks and saints, who renounce the world in the name of God, are trying to avoid the fight and are leading the life of cowards and fugitives. They have no guts to face the realities of life and are, therefore, good for nothing. Those who say so have perhaps not seen the monks who are efficiently running big hospitals, educational institutions, and worldwide organizations ; conducting extensive relief works, agricultural as well as religious and philanthropic activities, and so on. Not only are such monks fighting with the circumstances for the sake of their philanthropic activities, but they are also waging a war with the internal and external world for their spiritual development. Just as any intelligent general avoids futile fighting in which there is going to be sure defeat and loss of life and ammunition, similarly a wise man does not waste his precious life and energy in vain fighting. He utilizes it for a higher purpose which will make his life fruitful ; for great is the loss if he does not do so. It is rightly said in the *Garuḍa purāṇa*: 'One gets this human birth after passing through hundreds of other births ; rarer still is the religious disposition in a man. If a person does not try to develop spiritually and only fondles his senses, he misses the nectar which has as if come to his hands.'⁴

A Strategy for the Householder Devotees

It is not, however, temperamentally possible for every man to renounce the world and become a monk for attaining the spiritual goal of life. For the majority are suited for leading a householder's life. Such people have to fight on one hand the battle for their family life, and on the other hand struggle for their spiritual progress—of course, if they aspire for higher life. 'Blessed indeed is the householder,' says Sri

Ramakrishna, 'who performs his duties in the world, at the same time cherishing love for the lotus feet of God.'⁵ For such who have to face a dual warfare Sri Ramakrishna suggested a very practical strategy. Once he said to his householder devotee Mahimacharan: 'It is a great advantage to fight from inside a fort [i.e. living a family life and at the same time struggling to realize God]. You get much help from the fort. The world is the place for enjoyment. After enjoying different things, you should give them up one by one.'⁶

Sri Ramakrishna knew thoroughly well the science of spiritual warfare. He guided the devotees according to their natural inclination and capacity. Once his disciple Adhar brought to him a friend named Saradacharan who had suffered a bereavement, and told the Master the cause of his friend's grief. In order to give strength to the friend the Master sang:

To arms ! To arms, O man !

Death storms your house
in battle array !

Bearing the quiver of knowledge,
mount the chariot of devotion ;
Bend the bow of your tongue
with the bow-string of love,
And aim at him the shaft
of Mother Kali's holy name.

Here is a ruse for the fray :

You need no chariot or charioteer ;
Fight your foe from the Ganga bank
and he is easily slain.

Then he said: 'What can you do? Be ready for Death. Death has entered the house. You must fight him with the weapon of God's holy name. God alone is the Doer.'⁷

5. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda, Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, (hereafter *Gospel*), p. 842.

6. *Gospel*, pp. 629-30.

7. *Gospel*, pp. 143-44,

4. *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, U. 9. 22

Discrimination between the Good and the Pleasant

Howsoever clever a man may be, howsoever efficiently he may fight the battle of his life, one day Death is bound to defeat him. For never is immortality, eternal bliss, everlasting peace, and freedom possible for man on this earth. That is why 'a rare discriminating man, desiring immortality, turns his eyes away [from the world] and then sees the indwelling Self.'⁸

For every man there are two sorts of ideals to choose—the good (*śreya*) and the pleasant (*preya*). About these, *Yama* said to *Nachiketā* : 'Both the good and the pleasant present themselves to a man. The bold and intelligent man examines them well and discriminates. He prefers the good to the pleasant; but the fool chooses the pleasant out of greed and avarice.'⁹ Here 'the good' refers to the path of spiritual realization, and 'the pleasant' refers to the life in the world. A wise man prefers the spiritual path, not because it is easy going, but because that is the only path by following which he can attain the cherished ideal of his life, namely, everlasting bliss, peace, freedom, and immortality, as well as cessation of misery. There is no other way.

The Spiritual Warfare: Various Views

As Swami Vivekananda has pointed out in his final address at the Parliament of Religions held in 1893 at Chicago, 'holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possession of any church in the world, and ... every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.'¹⁰ If we study the history of religions, we shall find many genuine spiritual souls

irrespective of their caste, creed, nationality, or sex. And as all jackals howl the same way, many of these saints and monks felt their spiritual struggle akin to a warfare. For instance: Tukārām, a saint of Maharashtra, who lived in the seventeenth century, said in one of his Marathi verses: 'Day and night we have an occasion for war, with the internal and the external world on one hand, and with the mind on the other.'¹¹

Swami Saradananda, the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, also graphically describes the nature of the aspirant's mind engaged in hard inward warfare with his past impressions: 'What exist there are only the aspirant's mind and the infinite currents of its impressions of past lives. In that realm there exists the attraction towards high ideals leading the aspirant on to the ultimate goal, attraction produced by his constantly coming in conflict with certain external things and persons. There exists his endless unflinching warfare against his adverse impressions in order to make the mind fix itself exclusively on those ideals leading on to that goal. There exists a resolute attempt at continually diving deeper into one's own personality by turning the mind away from all external objects and withdrawing it within.'¹²

A Christian mystic, St. Simeon the New Theologian, writes to an aspirant : 'There are three methods of attention and prayer, by which the soul is uplifted and moves forward, or is cast down and destroyed. ... Attention should be linked with prayer as inseparably as body is linked to soul. Attention should go on ahead, spying out

11. रात्रंदिन आम्हा युद्धाचा प्रसंग ।

अंतर्बहिः मन, आणि जग ॥

12. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna : The Great Master*, trans. Swami Jagadananda, Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1970, (hereafter *Great Master*), p. 216.

8. *Katha Upaniṣad*, II. i. 1.

9. *Katha Upaniṣad*, I. ii. 2.

10. *Complete Works*, I, 1970, p. 24.

the enemy, like a scout. It should be the first to engage sin in combat, and to oppose evil thoughts entering the soul. Prayer should follow in its wake, instantly exterminating and destroying all the evil thoughts with which attention has been battling beforehand; for attention alone cannot destroy them. On this warfare against thoughts by attention and prayer hangs the life and death of the soul.¹³

Success in Spiritual Warfare Rare

But such noble and brave souls who have recruited themselves for a spiritual warfare are very few. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa rightly points out in the *Gītā*: 'One, perchance, in thousands of men strives for perfection; and one perchance, among the blessed striving thus, knows Me [God] in reality.'¹⁴ Surprisingly enough, the experience of the Christian mystic St. Isaac appears to be the same. He writes: 'As out of many thousands barely one can be found who has fulfilled the commandments and all that is lawful and has attained to purity of soul; so among thousands hardly one can be found who through great efforts of preserving prayer pure, has been given to achieve it, to break the bounds of this life and to gain possession of that mystery, for many have failed to achieve pure prayer, and only few have reached it.'¹⁵

Caution Against Espionage

From what Bhagavan Śrī Kṛṣṇa and St. Isaac have said, it is evident that spiritual warfare is not an easy job. One may easily succeed in worldly life by hook or crook, but to attain spiritual perfection requires great courage, talent and caution. One

must be fully acquainted with the science, strategy and equipment necessary for this sort of warfare. At the same time, one must be fully aware of the espionage system working under one's feet to make all one's efforts futile. For, although the aspirant has given up the pleasant for the good, he should know that 'the good and the pleasant approach men, as though they are inter-mixed,'¹⁶ and therefore it is difficult for a man of mediocre intelligence to discriminate between them. Such aspirants get caught in the snares of the pleasant and lose the battle. Some intelligent Christian mystics did not fail to detect this espionage working in the lives of the aspirants. For instance, St. Antony the Great, writes to an aspirant: 'You must know that the enemy tempts the faithful under the guise of good and succeeds in seducing many because they have neither wisdom nor good judgment.'¹⁷ In answer to the question: 'What is a man to do when the demon takes the form of an angel of light and tries to seduce him?', St. Gregory of Sinai said: 'In this case a man needs great power of discernment to discriminate rightly between good and evil. So in your heedlessness, do not be carried away too quickly by what you see, but be weighty (not easy to move) and, carefully testing everything, accept the good and reject the evil. Always you must test and examine, and only afterwards believe.'¹⁸

Spiritual Materialism

When an aspirant takes to spiritual life, he is very sincere about his chosen Ideal; but as days pass by, temptations come in his life in various ways and, if he is not

13. *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, London: Faber and Faber, 1973, (hereafter *Writings*), p. 152.

14. *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita* (hereafter *Gita*), VII. 3.

15. *Writings*, p. 212.

16. *Katha Upaniṣad*, Śankarācārya's Bhāṣya, I. ii. 2.

17. *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, trans. E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer, London: Faber and Faber, 1973, p. 47.

18. *Writings*, p. 84.

alert, he falls a victim to them. Some mix indiscriminately with the opposite sex and have a moral fall; some run after name, fame, power, or position; some turn out to be great scholars with no spiritual growth within; some become quarrelsome, and incarnations of hatred and jealousy; and what not! This is another kind of worldliness which may be called spiritual materialism, examples of which are often found in big religious organizations. In the *Vinaya Piṭaka* of the Buddhists numerous examples of such insincere and undeserving monks and nuns have been cited, and thereby one can know how the sex instinct and luxury can play havoc in hideous ways in the life of such aspirants. The Christian mystics were aware of this danger, and St. Simeon says in this regard: 'As men living in the world and purifying their senses and hearts from every sinful lust are worthy of praise and approbation, so men living in mountains and caves and yearning for praise and approbation of men are deserving of blame and abomination. In the eyes of God Who sees our hearts such men are equal to those who commit adultery.'¹⁹

A Word of Caution and Sympathy to the Wounded Soldier

Of course, falling a victim to temptations depends upon the spiritual calibre of the aspirant. If we study the biographies of the spiritual aspirants, we shall find that while crossing the spiritual ocean in the voyage from the land of the flesh to the land of the spirit, the life-ship of many an expert sailor got struck by the hidden rock of temptation. But spiritual experts understand the power of temptation and do not take pride in finding faults with others; rather they sympathize. For instance, Ācārya Śaṅkara says in the *Vivekacūḍā-*

maṇi: 'Finding him inclined to sense-objects, forgetfulness distracts even a wise man from his spiritual ideal due to the weakness of his faculty of discrimination, as a woman does her doting paramour.'²⁰ And it is said in the *Manu Smṛti*: 'The powerful sense-organs at times overwhelm even a wise man.'²¹ Cautioning his disciples Sri Ramakrishna said: 'One cannot obtain the knowledge of Brahman unless one is extremely cautious about women. Therefore it is very difficult for those who live in the world to get such knowledge. However clever you may be, you will stain your body if you live in a sooty room. The company of young woman evokes lust even in lustless man.... A sannyasi must not sit near a woman and talk to her, even if she is intensely pious. No, he must not talk to a woman even though he may have controlled his passion.'²²

Sri Ramakrishna was a spiritual expert and he knew how, if an aspirant does not know the science and strategy of spiritual warfare, he falls a victim to his lower impulses. The scriptures and some great souls are at least sympathetic to the aspirants even if they slide down a little while climbing the steep path leading to the spiritual goal, but Sri Ramakrishna's guru Totapuri could not tolerate such slips. He was a very hard task-master, and expected that the minds of his disciples should be like his own. Swami Saradananda has well described 'Totapuri's Mind' in his *Sri Ramakrishna : The Great Master* :

He [Totapuri] does not seem to have suffered much from the deception and hypocrisy of the mind. There is a saying amongst the Vaiṣṇavas, 'The three, namely, the spiritual teacher, the chosen Ideal and the devotees are kind indeed; but not having the kindness of one, man

19. *Writings*, p. 121.

20. Śaṅkarācārya, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 323.

21. *Manu Smṛti*, 2. 2. 18.

22. *Gospel*, p. 336.

has been sent to rack and ruin.' Here 'one' means one's own mind. If the mind is not kind, man is ruined. We do not think that the saint Totapuri had to suffer at the hands of such a 'rascall' mind. His simple mind reposed its trust in God sincerely and was going forward slowly along the path pointed out by his teacher to be trod by him. While it was going forward it never cast behind a lingering look, prompted by an ungratified desire, towards the sins and temptations of the world.... Ah, the saint did not know that when the mind becomes self-willed or refractory, its effort is washed away like a bundle of straw before a strong current of water. He did not know that in the place of that self-reliance and self-confidence there comes a terrible diffidence regarding one's own power that makes one weaker than a worm. Looking at his own life he never thought, even in a dream, that if by the grace of God thousands of things of the external world are not favourable, all the efforts on the part of mortal man produce the contrary results, instead of the expected ones, and bring him bondage upon bondage.... It is doubtful if the saint could even imagine that man can ever be in the state where his 'intellect understands but the heart does not yield'; that he incessantly feels within his heart the stings of a hundred scorpions for failing to make 'his words correspond to his thought'; that there might be a thousand agents within the mind, each wanting to carry out its own whims; that every one of the senses might be independent and disobedient; and that they might lead him on to the dark and terrible suffering of despondency.... Therefore, there was a world of difference between the picture of such states of man in the mind of the saint and that in the mind of a person who was really suffering thus incessantly.²³

From the above statement it is evident that Totapuri, being a highly evolved spiritual aspirant, did not experience during his aspirant-life the pangs of the internal warfare that goes on in less-developed aspirants. If we study the *Gītā*, we find that

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa also was compassionate to mediocre aspirants and on being told by Arjuna, 'Verily, the mind, O Kṛṣṇa, is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding; I regard it quite as hard to achieve its control as that of the wind,' he said : 'Without doubt, O mighty-armed, the mind is restless and difficult to control; but through practice (*abhyāsa*) and renunciation (*vairāgya*), O son of Kuntī, it may be governed.'²⁴

Types of Impurities and Remedies

It is not likely that the difficulties experienced by one aspirant during spiritual struggle, will be experienced by all other aspirants. This is clear from what Swami Saradananda has said above regarding Totapuri's mind. The struggle depends upon the nature of the impurities present in the aspirant's mind. According to Vedānta, there are three main types of impurities which are due to the veiling power of ignorance (*āvaraṇa*), the projecting power of ignorance (*Vikṣepa*), and the past impressions (*saṁskāras*); and the inner warfare continues till the last of the impurities is removed. The grossest impurity is caused by the past impressions, and the aspirant having it has a difficult time; but the Hindu scriptures prescribe disinterested work (Karma-Yoga) as the remedy for it. The impurity caused by mental digressions or projection (*vikṣepa*) is cleared by one-pointed meditation on God (*upāsanā*); and the impurity caused by the veiling power of ignorance (*āvaraṇa*) is got rid of by the dawn of real knowledge.

But the majority of aspirants have the grossest form of impurity, caused by their past impressions. So if they do not know the science of spiritual warfare, they may be defeated in their struggle. Arjuna belonged to this category, that is why

23. *Great Master*, pp. 480-81.

24. *Gītā*, VI. 34-35.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked him to do Karma-Yoga. Describing the nature of such a mind, Swami Saradananda says :

Anyone who has tried to know even a little of the nature of the human mind has seen that, beginning from the gross, there exist in it infinite strata of desires—subtle, subtler, and still subtler. If you are somehow able to go beyond one, another comes and obstructs your path ; and when you conquer the latter, still another takes its place. When you have left the gross ones behind, the subtle ones come and oppose you. If you give up lust of woman, that of gold arises ; if you refrain from indulging in both in a gross way, attachment to outward beauty, desire for name and fame, and the like come to you ! Or, if you carefully renounce all worldly attachments, they come and occupy your heart in the guise of idleness or compassion.²⁵

The Human Play of Incarnations

Swami Saradananda says that Sri Ramakrishna often warned his disciples regard-

ing this dangerous nature of the mind, and the Swami believes that during their divine play even the Incarnations have 'to fight like ourselves with the unruly senses.... they have to come out victorious from the fight and then proceed on their path.'²⁶ It is not because they are born with a fund of past impressions, but because, says the Swami, 'in this respect also they act in their human play like men.'

True ; if the Incarnations themselves do not have the experience of the spiritual warfare that the aspirants belonging to the lowest rung of the spiritual ladder have to fight, how will they be able to guide and uplift them? Because it is for their uplift, and for teaching them the new science, strategy and equipment of spiritual warfare according to 'the necessity of the age that they come. But they are never under the sway of their senses, rather the senses 'follow them like meek children'.

(To be concluded)

²⁵. *Great Master*, pp. 95-96.

²⁶. *Great Master*, p. 95.

REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI TURIYANANDA

SWAMI JNANATMANANDA

It was many years ago, in 1919 or 1920, that I had been to Varanasi mainly to recuperate my health. I had no intention of being on a pilgrimage. I stayed at Bangalitola and used to take my morning and evening constitutionals at the Dasavamedh Ghat.

On such an outing I chanced to meet two of my college friends. After an exchange of preliminaries, one of them suddenly asked, 'Have you not been to the Ramakrishna Mission here?' On my answering in the negative, he said, 'It is a nice place. You must go there once. We

go there very often.' The other colleague said, 'If you go there you can meet an "America-returned sadhu".' At this I laughed within myself, and indicated that it had not much charm for me. But my friends did not let the matter rest there. At their earnest requests I had at last to go to that 'American-returned sadhu'. He was none other than Swami Turiyananda, Revered Hari Maharaj.

I remember distinctly that on the day I first went to him I met many sadhus of both the Ashramas (Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, and Ramakrishna Mission Seve-

shrama) there. I must admit that many of the sadhus did not arouse in me any reverence (full of doubts as my mind then was), and although my friends paid their respects by bowing before each one of them, I did so only to some. But when I first saw this great soul Swami Turiyananda at Ambikadham at a corner of the Sevashrama, his serene appearance and sweet words were enough to bring me down to his feet.

Thereafter, my friends' repeated requests and particularly the fathomless affection of the Swami drew me to him every day. He also heard everything about me with the greatest attention, sometimes laughing to hear of my boyish pranks, and often severely scolding me in order to rectify my mistakes and drawbacks. I remember that one evening while walking with him, he drew my attention to the huge congregation of people then at Varanasi, and said : 'Look at the devotion of these people. They have assembled here from far-off places with considerable difficulty to have a dip in the Ganga on the occasion of the lunar eclipse that will take place today, the full-moon day. They will purify themselves by the holy dip during the eclipse and will be highly blessed by chanting God's name at the time.'

With my English education and a little knowledge of eclipses learnt from geography, I could not help laughing at this remark of Swami Turiyananda and said: 'Maharaj, this is sheer superstition. The Rāhu does not gobble up the moon. We see the eclipse because the shadow of the earth falls on the moon. How am I to believe that the people will earn *punya* [merit] by bathing in the Ganga, labouring under such a blind faith?' The Swami laughed and said, 'I see, you have already known everything.'

The next day when I went to him he told me lovingly : 'You see, there is another side to what you said yesterday about the eclipse. The writers of our scriptures were free from all avarice. They did not write

about earning of *punya* and so forth out of any selfish motive. They wanted everybody to move towards God. But all are not fit to proceed in the same manner. There are different classes of devotees. So our holy scriptures laid down three different methods. For those who are superior souls, they ordained that if they take God's name every day even at personal discomfort or hindrance they will attain peace. This is the rule of discipline or *niyama*. The superior souls following this rule are taking God's name regularly. For those who cannot do this, the scriptures prescribe the *moda-vidhi* (hope of some reward); that is, by repeating His name at certain times and places they will have their reward either in this life or hereafter. And those who turn their faces away from God even then, are threatened with *danda-vidhi* (the fear of hell, etc.). Earning of *punya* or heaven (after death) by bathing in the Ganga during the eclipse comes under the *moda-vidhi*. The intention of the writers of the scriptures was nothing else but to induce the people to take God's name on occasions like this at the prospect of earning *punya*.'

I remember on some other day I had laughingly told Swami Turiyananda, 'Maharaj, how can one attain particular *punya* by bathing in the Ganga, which is nothing but a river; and the Ganga passing through Varanasi can hardly be called even a river?' It was winter-time and the Ganga was quite calm.

The Swami hearing this, said in a grave mood : 'The little English education that you have is responsible for this contemptuous attitude of yours towards the Ganga. But do you know how Swami Vivekananda had impressed and confounded those whose books have turned your head? Even he lost himself in reciting Stotras and hymns about the Ganga. And why Swamiji alone? —beginning with Śaṅkarācārya, who has *not*

described the glories of the Ganga? Be respectful, my son, be respectful.'

Swami Turiyananda asked me one day, 'Have you read the *Gītā*? From tomorrow we shall be reading the *Gītā* along with this gentleman [Sri Gurudas Gupta, a professor of Narail College]. You may also join us if you like.' I agreed gladly, and although he was very ill, he began teaching us the *Gītā* from the next day. I had read the *Gītā* previously; but on hearing it from a saint like him, new dimensions were revealed to me. Usually he did not mention any particular annotation, but explained the verses freely; where necessary, however, he orally quoted the views of Śaṅkarācārya or Śrīdhara Swāmī. He started with the sixth chapter, took us up to the eighteenth chapter, and then read to us the first to the fifth chapter. The reason for his beginning with the sixth chapter was presumably to enable us to control our troubled minds so that we could be introspective.

I remember very little of what I read in those days, immature as I was then; but I remember that on the question of concentration he had said it was something very difficult, and that is why God has asked us (in the *Gītā*) to control our mind gradually by self-restraint and thus to make it concentrated on the Divine Self within. In this connection he had said: 'A devotee from America wrote to me on this subject. I replied that whenever you sit to meditate you will imagine that a "no admission" notice is hanging in front of your mind, so that nothing except thoughts of the Divinity can enter there. You will thus find that all other thoughts are gradually retreating therefrom. The devotee has written back that he has actually been benefited by the above advice.'

In this chapter, while going through the verse '*uddhared ātmanā ātmānam*' (VI.5) he had repeated the verse again and again in a grave and solemn tone. Thereafter, on

many occasions, whenever I came and paid my respects to him, he used to repeat the verse in the same tone and say, 'Yes, you have thus to save yourself; nobody except you can do that for yourself.' In this connection, I remember that on one occasion I had come to take some advice from him and saw him going out by the gate of the Advaita Ashrama. Immediately when I bowed down to him, he asked what I had come for. On my expressing my earnest feelings and queries he said, 'First open your eyes; then only can the glasses be prescribed. It is no use doing so beforehand.' He used to lay stress repeatedly on one's *puruṣakāra* (self-effort).

On another occasion, when I went to Calcutta at his behest for completing my studies, I asked for his blessings so that I might not get entangled in worldly bondages of any kind, to which he replied, 'If you feel you are bound you become so; otherwise who can bind you, eternally free as you are?'

Although he encouraged us in many ways to read the *Gītā*, it was not a serious affair all the time. So far as I remember, when, in the fifteenth chapter, the question of severing ruthlessly all worldly ties cropped up, he said in a tone of artificial gravity, 'No, no, you should not read this portion.' Feeling embarrassed, I asked him why. He replied in the same faked tone of gravity, 'This deals with *vairāgya* (dispassion); you should not read all this.' At this I could not help laughing, and he also laughed in his usual hearty way. I did not know then that he was thus kindling the flame of renunciation within me.

Swami Turiyananda used to encourage in every possible manner all the young men who came to him so that they might become respectful and self-restrained. He used to focus their mind on Swamiji and say: 'Swamiji alone was a man, and you are something else. About Swamiji, Thakur

used to say he is like a male pigeon who snatches away its beak if touched. He is like a strong bull who jumps up at the slightest provocation. And what are you? You cool down so easily ! We want boys like Swamiji.' He became overjoyed if he found the slightest spark of this spirit in any youth and used to speak of him repeatedly before others.

In this connection, I remember a youth who had come to visit Varanasi after serving two years' internment for sedition. After visiting other places of interest he came to see the Ramakrishna Mission, and coming before Swami Turiyananda, began speaking about Swamiji's ideals. In course of conversation he said, 'I am a devotee of Swami Vivekananda, and we want to see only spirited and all-renouncing sannyasis like him.' Thereafter, in course of other topics he said, 'But I have not the slightest regard for those who become monks just to avoid the worries of family life. I call them cowards.' Without the slightest displeasure at all this tall talk of the young man, Swami Turiyananda smilingly replied, 'Quite so, but your Swamiji had also become a monk in that way. What have you got to say to that?' Embarrassed, the young man slowly retreated after a while, having paid his respects to the Swami. After the youth's departure Swami Turiyananda said, 'We want boys exactly like this—he called us cowards on our face ! Swamiji liked such boys.'

If he found any faults in the young Brahmacharis, he tried to correct them by severe scoldings ; and if he found the slightest good in them, he used to say, 'You are jewels. How glad Swamiji would have been to see you, had he been living today !'

Swami Turiyananda, a strict Vedantist throughout his life, studied Vedanta and lived a hard and austere life according to its tenets ; but towards the close of his life

we found what a great regard he had for the Karma-Yoga introduced by Swamiji. Pointing to the sannyasi workers of the Mission Sevashrama he used to say, 'It is they who are doing real work : others are whiling away their time.' At the same time, he kept a strict watch on the spirit at the back of their work so that there was no aberration from the ideals of the Karma-Yogī. If he found any trace of egotism in their work, he at once gave them rebuff, saying: 'Do you think you are doing something extraordinary? I can get all this done by a sweeper at a salary of only rupees fifteen, and the work of those doing office work can be done much better by more efficient men at rupees twenty to twenty-five per month. There can be no cause for vanity about this.' But we realized the next day that he did not actually mean what he had said. He spoke so only to make the workers do the work selflessly and without egotism.

An eminent pandit of Varanasi hearing the above remarks of the Swami that day, told a monastic worker the next day : 'What Swami Turiyananda said yesterday is quite correct. Efficient and learned boys like you could do a lot had you stayed at home ; but instead you are sacrificing your lives over trifles.' When this was reported to Hari Maharaj he was very much annoyed and said : 'How can he realize what I meant? However learned he may be, he is a householder. Sri Ramakrishna used to say if you take raddish, you belch the same way. Similar is the case with him. Passing the whole of his life in the family, how can he realize the significance of selfless work? My remarks were not meant to convey what he says. What I meant was : do what you are doing, but do it selflessly and without any ego and you are sure to reach your cherished goal.' Similarly if he found any trace of ego in anybody about his *japa* or meditation he

used to say jokingly, 'What were you doing during your prayer—did you tell your beads or do something else?'— meaning thereby that one who meditates or chants God's name sincerely can never develop ego.

When we met him his days of *tapasyā* were over, and he had firmly fixed himself on the Vedantic ideals, fully realizing that the pure soul is completely distinct from the body, the mind, and the intellect. This was manifest in his every word and deed. When, with his bodily infirmities, he could hardly walk, we found him always busy discussing the scriptures and thinking about the welfare of boys like us, to give a little enlightenment to us who were considering the body as everything and who could not but believe that the pleasures and sufferings of the body amounted to the pleasure and suffering of the soul. But we were amazed to see and hear that even in the midst of his serious illness, the Swami was chanting the song, 'Let the sorrows of the flesh be confined to my body alone; O my mind, you should not be disturbed by it but always remain cheerful.' To us the song appeared to be a mere collection of words. But we and the doctor were really surprised on the day we saw how he was watching cheerfully like a child while the well-known Calcutta surgeon Suresh Bhattacharya was daily probing and dressing the wound caused by the surgical operation of a carbuncle on the palm of his hand. It was beyond our comprehension how a human being could be so indifferent to or ignore the tribulations of the body.

One day when the Swami's touch and advice had aroused some sense of renunciation in my mind and I was thinking that I had no attachment for worldly life (*samsāra*), I told him while talking about a youth, 'Maharaj, he has great attachment for his family (*samsāra*). By 'family' I understood at the time relatives, earthly

belongings, and so forth. It did not strike me that the expression might have any other connotation. Hearing me blab thus, the Swami said, 'Perhaps; but is it not that our body itself is a family?' I was wonderstruck to hear this. It had never occurred to me before that my body, of which I was thinking always, and of whose welfare the Swami was daily enquiring, and about whose ills (from which he also suffered) and remedies we were daily talking, could even be a cause of my bondage. Realizing my thoughts he again said, 'Well, am I not correct?' I asked for his blessings so that I could realize this in my life.

Highly saturated with the principles of Vedanta as he was, he tried to instil its great ideals into us. He used to say, 'We are pure Brahman, but look how mean we consider ourselves, being caught under the influence of *māyā*.' In this connection he used to tell us a story: Swami Vivekananda while travelling as a Parivrājaka found a couplet written in charcoal on the walls of a dilapidated temple which meant, 'O thou Desire, you are the meanest of the mean, worse than a scavenger. This soul of mine was Pūrṇa Brahman (Divinity itself), but to what low depths it has been dragged down by coming into contact with thee!'

Sometimes, the Swami used to sing a song meaning: once enslaved by *māyā* there is hardly any escape for us. He used to say: 'Such is *māyā*. Sri Ramakrishna while explaining the entity of *māyā* to us used to cover his face with a piece of cloth and say, "Look, although I am so close to you, you cannot see me because of this small covering." Often he also sang songs meaning 'Mahāmāyā has placed us under an enchantment, as it were. What of ordinary mortals?—even Brahmā and Viṣṇu come under Her spell!'

At some other times he used to say: 'Sri Ramakrishna pointing to some pots would say, "Fill them with the same water

and number them serially. You will imagine after a lapse of some time that the contents of each pot are different ; but actually that is not so. If you break open the pots you will find the same water in each of them. These pots represent *upādhis*. Unless they are abolished we can never realize our real Self."

He would say at times, 'The Self can be realized by *sādhana-bhajana* (prayer and meditation).' At other times he would say, 'But what is *sādhana-bhajana*? It is like tiring of the wings of a bird. Sri Ramakrishna used to give a nice example of a bird sitting on the mast of a ship. After the ship has sailed to the ocean the bird, failing to find its nest after flying to all the different directions, comes back and takes shelter on the mast. Similarly, however much we engage ourselves in meditation and prayers, we find in the end that our last refuge is God's mercy and nothing else ; but even that cannot be realized without extensive prayers.'

We were sometimes amazed to find a wonderful blending of *jñāna* and *bhakti* (knowledge and devotion) in a life-long *Jñāna-tapasvī* (a saint following the path of knowledge) like him. An austere sannyasi, Shantinath by name, used to visit Swami Turiyananda very often those days. He was observing a vow of silence at the time. Even in the bitter cold season of Varanasi he had no other covering but a loin-cloth and a blanket. One day Swami Achalananda (Kedar Baba) was describing the rigours of his (Shantinath's) *tapasyā* to Swami Turiyananda in our presence. He said in this connection : 'Maharaj, at one time myself and Shantinath used to occupy two contiguous cottages at Hrishikesh. I have seen him meditating undisturbed although a cobra crawled across his body. He has undertaken enough rigorous *tapasyā* like this.' But the Swami realized the real significance of such 'rigorous meditation'. So,

one day when Shantinath (still observing his vow of silence) came and was reverentially bowing before him, the Swami told him with great tenderness, 'Shantinath, you have done much. Why don't you now take refuge in the Divine Mother? You can achieve nothing without Her grace.' We do not know whether Shantinath accepted his advice.

At this time, the Swami used to sing a song very often which means in substance : 'O Divine Mother, I call Thee always—a child cannot call anybody else. I am not such a child either, to call someone other than Thee. Even if the mother punishes the child, the child cries taking the mother's name alone. Even if he is pushed aside the child does not leave her but clings to her alone.'

I have heard that at the time of his passing away with full consciousness at Varanasi in 1922, he breathed his last reciting with folded hands, 'Brahman is Truth, Wisdom and Eternity ; Brahman is true, the world also is true ; the world is established in Brahman.' There was much discussion amongst the learned monks of both the Ashramas of Varanasi about these last utterings of Swami Turiyananda.

Later, Swami Jagadananda, while giving us lessons on *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, said one day : 'I joined in those discussions and said, "How could one who had said throughout his life that Brahman alone is real and the world unreal, say at the time of his demise that Brahman and the world are both real? I think those who were near him at that time did not catch his words correctly." But now as I read "*sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma*" ["all this is verily Brahman"] in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and try to realize its real significance, I find that what revered Hari Maharaj had said is said here too. Actually he had attained to the status of a real Vijñānī [a knower

of Brahman in a special sense]. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, when a "Jñānī" reaches his destination by practising "*neti neti*" ["not this, not this"]—that is, he is neither mind nor intellect nor ego—he finds that he is not only unqualified and undefined Brahman, but it is he who has revealed himself in this world—in its creatures and in the twenty-five *tattvas* [material principles composing the universe] too. This is the condition of the Vijñānī, not

that of a Jñānī. For example, while going to the roof of a house people do not consider the floor or the stairs as the roof—they abandon these as being different. But having climbed upon the roof they find that the floor and stairs are all made of the same stuff as the roof. Then they see Him alone everywhere.' Thus, we are highly blessed to have had the good fortune of coming into contact with such a Pūrṇajñānī or a true Vijñānī.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND MODERN INDIA*

DR. R. K. DASGUPTA

In one of his visions Sri Ramakrishna saw Narendra (the premonastic name of Swami Vivekananda) immersed in Samadhi and at once said to the Divine Mother, 'Mother, entangle him in maya; otherwise he will give up his body in Samadhi.' This vision has great meaning for any interpreter of Swami Vivekananda's apostolic career of sixteen years from 1886 to 1902. Those of us who cannot relate a vision to the facts of history may just take it as an experience of the great Master about his disciple, his plan about his work. That plan Sri Ramakrishna disclosed to Narendra on the eve of his Mahasamadhi: 'Today I have given you my all and have become a fakir. Through this power you will do immense good to the world, and then only shall you go back.' So the mission to which the Master summoned his disciple was to 'do immense good to the world.' Since his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna in November 1881 Narendra had been slowly preparing himself for a life of the spirit. Even in his boyhood he adored wandering monks and would tell his friends that he must become a sannyasi. But when the time for a deci-

sion on what he would do in life came, he was called upon to work not for his personal salvation, but for the welfare of society. This is indeed a unique event in our history, or in the history of mankind—one who has brought himself up as a sannyasi, one who is by temper, habit and training a mendicant, and, above all, one who is the chosen disciple of his master who has found in him his spiritual heir, does not withdraw himself into a forest or the Himalayas for a life of uninterrupted meditation, but turns his attention to his countrymen to work for their regeneration.

This was in 1886. The Indian National Congress was then less than a year old. The Indian Association had worked just for ten years. Bankimchandra's *Anandamath*, modern India's first powerful expression of the new patriotism, had been published only four years before. There was a new ferment in

* This article forms the subject matter of the illuminating speech delivered by Mr. R. K. Das Gupta, Director, National Library, Calcutta, at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, W.B., on the auspicious occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, celebrated on 31 January 1978.

the air. The educated classes of the country were spelling out their new aspirations in unmistakable terms. And during the viceroyalty of Lord Dufferin those aspirations were respected. Sir Henry Harrison of the Indian Civil Service wrote in the *Quarterly Review* the same year : 'Repress the educated natives, their ambitions and their aspirations and you turn them into a solid phalanx of opposition against the Government.' In the West it was the age of science and social progress, of political and social emancipation. Herbert Spencer had given a new direction to man's view of social institutions and Marxian socialism and prescribed methods by which to transform those institutions. The liberal ideals of the reformists in western Europe were under the influence of Comte's positivism and Bentham's and Mill's utilitarian doctrine.

In this country the more influential exponents of reform were profoundly influenced by the spirit of dissent in the West, and the idea of progress was linked with the idea of nonconformity. In a situation such as this there was scope for new thinking on every aspect of national life ; there was also the danger of losing touch with the rock of an ancient culture in an effort to seize the spirit of an uncertain modernity. Swami Vivekananda took upon himself the great task of giving his people the proper insight into their historical destiny which he realized was necessarily an insight into their spiritual and moral destiny. He thought that our struggle for political freedom and civil rights, for economic justice and social equality, would gain in strength and bring about a stable and happy society only when that struggle derived its inspiration from the highest ideals of our ancient culture. He wanted to give a spiritual and a moral dimension to our national movement, thus anticipating by thirty-five years Mahatma Gandhi's

philosophy of worship of God through service of man.

The younger generation in our public life today may not at once realize the relevance of Vivekananda's message to the India of today for quite a few reasons, the foremost amongst them being that the great voices of our sages are now drowned in the noise of contentious politics. We seem to be too busy outstripping each other in a terrific game of competitive patriotism to look up to men who outstrip all of us in love and in wisdom. Secondly, for our highly sophisticated young people swearing by imported ideologies of various labels, the image of Vivekananda is the image of a revivalist, of one who pitted tradition against modernity. Thirdly, national service today is equated with state power and it is argued that there is nothing in the message of Vivekananda to direct us in our endeavour to seize or maintain that power.

But if we must judge Vivekananda as one of the leaders of modern India, we must first read what he wrote and said, and read very carefully. And there is a good deal to read : eight volumes of his Complete Works in English and ten volumes of his works in Bengali, apart from a large corpus of very authentic works on him. We often complain that our university students do not give enough attention to Vivekananda's writings. But we, their elders, must now very seriously ask ourselves the question—what have we done to bring these writings to them? Do we make an occasion to tell our students what the greatest minds of the world have said about these writings? Have we told them that Romain Rolland, one of the finest products of the modern world's Latin mind and one of the finest examples of gallic grace in intellectual culture, has said about Vivekananda that 'his words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the

march of Handel choruses'? Let us not fear that if we repeat these words to the ears of our university students, they will at once say that in politics they do not like to hear the voice of a Beethoven or a Handel: they will rather hear the voice of a Machiavelli or a Metternich. There is much greater regard for what is really noble and great amongst our students than amongst the students of any other country.

Rabindranath Tagore once said that 'if you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.' This is indeed a very striking statement to be made about Vivekananda by one of the greatest minds of modern India. And he does not ask us to read Vivekananda's works only for an understanding of our great past. He is asking us to read them for an understanding of our present. And he adds that his writings are not just a string of negative counsels, of 'thou shalt not do this' and 'thou shalt not do that'. They represent what Carlyle calls man's eternal 'yea', of a free, creative response to all that is good and all that is great in human culture. Mahatma Gandhi meant this universality of Vivekananda's ideas when he spoke of their 'irresistible appeal.' It may not be very widely known amongst our younger generation that Jawaharlal Nehru, the very embodiment of the spirit of modernity in our country, the very symbol of our youth and youthful trust in science and reason, the builder of our new republican polity and the inspirer of its ideas of liberty and democracy, found in Vivekananda a spirited interpreter of modern India's noblest and most progressive aspirations. In his *Glimpses of World History* Nehru introduces Vivekananda as one 'who very eloquently and forcefully preached the gospel of nationalism,' and adds that 'this was not in any way anti-Muslim or anti anyone else, nor was it the somewhat

narrow nationalism of the Arya Samaj.'¹ About two years later in his *Autobiography* Nehru put the name of Vivekananda as first among those who 'gave us a measure of self-respect again and roused up our dormant pride in our past'.² It is, however, in his *Discovery of India*, published years later, that Nehru offers us his profoundest thoughts on the works of Vivekananda. Nehru's four or five pages on Vivekananda in this book are perhaps the finest introduction to the ideas of the great sannyasi and their relevance to modern India. 'Again and again he laid stress,' Nehru says about Vivekananda in this book, 'on the necessity for liberty and equality and the raising of the masses.'³ It is possible to make a collection of Nehru's great sayings on the most cherished ideals and goals of our society and read them as so many echoes of the voice of Swami Vivekananda. It may now seem incredible that more than half a century before we enshrined 'liberty as one of the most sacred possessions of the individual,' Vivekananda said: 'Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth and well-being. Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go.' Again more than half a century before we made the welfare of the masses one of the directive principles of state policy in our constitution, Vivekananda declared: 'The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead.' It is important to realize that Vivekananda did not look upon the masses as just a source of strength to state power. He looked upon

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, London: Lindsay Drummond Limited, 1939, p. 437.

2. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru: An Autobiography*, London: The Bodley Head, 1936, p. 426.

3. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India*, Calcutta: The Signet Press, 1946, p. 401.

the masses as a source of moral and spiritual strength to the leaders of society.

One of the most important of modern political ideologies is that the masses are not only to receive a just deal from the upper classes, but they must also have a position in society which will eliminate classes. When Vivekananda began his apostolic work this ideology had already established itself in the Western world's political thought as socialism. Vivekananda thought that if the masses could be raised only through socialism—that is, a socialist organization of a nation's political and economic life—then socialism was certainly welcome. 'I am a socialist,' he said, 'not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing.'⁴ If the spirit of experiment is essentially modern, we have here an unmistakable expression of that spirit. If love of novelty is a trait of the modern temper, we have here an unmistakable expression of that temper. But Vivekananda did not believe in labelled ideologies or indented political systems. He did not contemplate socialism as a system imposed on the people from above, as the result of force and maintained by force. He conceived it as a spirit of human equality rooted in a belief in the divinity of man. This may seem rather mystical to modern ears. But Vivekananda realized that such socialism was the only kind of socialism which was consistent with human freedom. He had a horror of an economic paradise guarded by laws and enforced by an army. The history of socialism in the West during the last fifty years has only confirmed the truth of what he said about the foundation of a just

society. That foundation, he said, was not primarily economic or even political: the foundation of a stable social order was essentially spiritual and moral. That is the solid rock on which we can build up our social institutions. When a doctrine or a social system is established by gunpowder, it can be blown up by gunpowder.

While Vivekananda regretted our failure to organize ourselves into a stable political order, he believed that in our traditional philosophy, our world-view, there was a sounder basis for such an order than in the West. If ideal citizenship is the spirit of service, we must seek the spring of that spirit in the philosophy of renunciation. If democracy founders, it founders against the individual ego. The whole democratic system in the West, notwithstanding its many virtues, is rooted in a kind of collective self-love. Vivekananda conceived of a democracy and socialist system rooted in man's love of God as the basis of his love of his fellowmen. 'A hundred thousand men and women,' he said 'fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified in the eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor, the fallen and the down-trodden, should go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up, —the gospel of equality.' We need to annotate this system with utmost care and concentrate on the basic concepts it proposes. These concepts are usually thought to be irrelevant to politics. But Vivekananda did not believe in politics as we have imported it from the West, although he was ready to learn a good deal from the world outside. He speaks of sympathy as the source of courage; sympathy, and not desire for power or success in the polls, which alone can guarantee that power. And the other basic concept in his great declaration is the concept of holiness. It is a concept which

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mavavati: Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*), VI, 1972, pp. 381-82.

we may not easily understand. But if anywhere there has been an example of holiness in public life and national service, it has been only in this country. Mahatma Gandhi's life is a living example of the ideal of national service which Vivekananda preached during the last fifteen years of his life on earth. For Mahatma Gandhi the masses were not just a base for political power; they were a community of living individuals whose deliverance was a part of the deliverance of society as a whole.

When Vivekananda spoke of the masses, he spoke of them as people who were essentially superior to those whose material resources enabled them to dominate them. 'Trust not the rich,' Vivekananda said, 'they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Vow then to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.' Let us understand that he did not say this in terms of student power or youth power. Vivekananda did not consider national problems in terms of power: he considered them in terms of service, service in a spirit of non-attachment. When we think of our problems in terms of power we are enmeshed in a kind of competitive social work: we create a situation in which we cannot talk about the country without talking about ourselves, and talking about ourselves vainly, and without being sharp-tongued when we talk about others. The ideal of service is vitiated by the interests of politics. Vivekananda contemplated a new kind of politics for his country, not the politics of the West, a politics based on the concept of power, but a politics elevated by the spirit of renunciation. While he rejected the idea of power, he meant not only political power, but also priestly power.

To many of us this idea of politics without power may appear to be self-contradictory. 'Love of power is the chief motive,' says Bertrand Russell in his book called *Power*, 'producing the changes which social science has to study.' But at the end of the book Russell admits that 'coalescence of economic and political power is nothing but a new and appalling instrument of tyranny.' According to Russell the only precaution against such tyranny resulting from the coalescence of economic and political power is democracy. According to Vivekananda the problem is not that of devising a precaution against power as an evil. The problem is one of creating a society where such coalescence of economic and political power cannot take place.

Vivekananda believed that a truly righteous society alone can give a truly righteous government, and the foundation of that righteousness is the spirit of renunciation and service. Vivekananda anticipates in his ideas on disinterested service as the essence of a spiritualized politics, Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Anasakti Yoga as the inspirer of the right kind of political action. Mahatma Gandhi once said about himself: 'The politician in me has never dominated a single decision of mine.' 'For me the movement of Swaraj is a movement of self-purification,' he wrote in *Young India* in 1924; and in the same year he said: 'Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment, and the other by arts of love.' Vivekananda worked for a society and a polity based on the arts of love.

When we reflect on Vivekananda's writings on our national problems, we discover that he had a perspective of Indian history, of the various currents of thought and of still more various political circumstances; and he refined that perspective with his remarkable knowledge of other nations and civilizations. This gave

him insights into the nature of our national mind, into our great achievements and our failures, our potentialities and our weaknesses; and what he wanted his countrymen to do for building up their nation was based on these insights. He did not believe in sentimental exaltation of our past, and at the same time he rejected the idea that we could not modernize our country without Westernizing its institutions and values. Albert Schweitzer, the distinguished German philosopher, finds some contradictions in Vivekananda's social ideas, and we can imagine that he failed to find any consistency between his appreciation of Western civilization and his faith in our ancient culture. To understand Vivekananda's ideas of civilization, our civilization and its place in human civilization as a whole, is needed a very close and careful study of all his works and a careful analysis of their substance. Among Western students of Vivekananda's works it is Christopher Isherwood who discovered and stressed the unity of Vivekananda's thought on the courses of human civilization. In his introduction to *Vedanta for the Western World* he says: 'Vivekananda had two messages to deliver; one to the East, the other to the West. In the United States and in England, he preached the universality of religious truth, attacked materialism, and advocated spiritual experiment, as against dogma and tradition. In India, on the other hand, we find that he preferred to stress the ideal of social service. To each, he tried to give what was most lacking.'⁵ And Romain Rolland found in Vivekananda an ardent and powerful exponent of a harmonious relation between the East and the West, for what he called the 'realization of complete Advaitism'—the religious unity of the human family. This idea of

harmony or unity was not for Vivekananda just a political ideal as the basis of a peaceful international order. That was certainly a consummation devoutly to be wished. But Vivekananda contemplated a sounder and more stable base for such an international order, and this base was the spiritual unification of mankind. In his letter dated 9 August 1895 addressed to an Englishman he said: 'Doubtless I do love India. But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India or England or America to us.' This idea of the unity of man rooted in the idea of the unity of God raised him above any form of narrow patriotism or cultural nationalism.

If internationalism is one of the most powerful forces in the modern world, Vivekananda spelt out its essence many years before the modern world could conceive of a League of Nations. The most recent doctrine of internationalism is that it can bring about a stable world order only when it is sustained by a kind of global economy. While it is true that Vivekananda thought that such an order could be built only on a spiritual and moral foundation, he affirmed that nations could survive and develop only within a sound international system. 'Even in politics and sociology,' Vivekananda said, 'problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. In science every day they are coming to a similar broad view of matter.' Let us remember that Vivekananda said this at a time when we were concerned only with nationalism. Let us also remember that even in the West none proclaimed this new ideal of internationalism as power-

5. *Vedanta for the Western World*, ed. Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood: The Marcel Rodd Co., 1945, p. 26.

fully and as lucidly as Swami Vivekananda. 'There cannot be any progress,' he said, 'without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial or national or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life within its scope.'

It is now important to realize that the ideal of internationalism as Vivekananda preached it was also his warning against national pride, which he said could only isolate a nation and weaken it. So in his view, internationalism was a condition of national progress. 'I am thoroughly convinced,' he said, 'that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and wherever such attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy or holiness—the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.'⁶ He wanted his people to come into the main stream of the world's progress. 'The fact of our isolation,' he said, 'from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the rest of the world.'

The question, then, is, how are we to integrate this idea of internationalism or world unity with his central teaching as a sage and a philosopher, his doctrine of Advaita? The question may seem unanswerable to those who imagine that Advaita is a doctrine of the dissolution of the individual soul into some grand public soul of the universe and is therefore a negation of all individualism and all individual initiative for progress. This is, in fact, the popular notion of Shankara's Advaita.

Swami Vivekananda presented to the world an interpretation of the Vedanta which is rooted in the classical view of its philosophy, but is expressed in an idiom which the modern man can understand. It is an interpretation which gave the Vedanta not only its modernity but which also brings out its potentiality as the new faith of a new humanity. He did not at all suggest that for this was needed any conversion of the rest of the world into a religion that originated in our country. He never thought in terms of conversion because he did not consider religion as a thing of doctrine or scriptural text. In a letter dated 10 June 1898 addressed to a Muslim friend Vivekananda said: 'Whether we call it Vedantism or any ism, the truth is that Advaita is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, was never developed among the Hindus universally.'⁷ Let us realize that as an exponent of Vedantism Vivekananda does not indulge in any kind of spiritual chauvinism. He knew that when one talked of the things of the spirit there was no place for racial or parochial pride of any form. He felt that in the history of human thought it just happened that the Hindus, being an early civilization, developed an idea which was profounder than any other ideas; and he added that even in the land of its birth Vedantism was yet to develop into a universally understood philosophy. He even contemplated a universal faith which would

⁶. *Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems*, comp. Swami Nirvedananda, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1971, p. 17.

⁷. *Complete Works*, VI, p. 415.

be a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. 'I see in my mind's eye', he wrote in the same letter, 'the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.'⁸ He did not contemplate such synthesis in terms of any kind of theological eclecticism: he contemplated it as a synthesis emerging out of the followers of the two faiths coming together and learning from each other and building up a united and contented society. That was a great dream, and the dream is yet to be fulfilled in our national life. But what we do in our waking hours is influenced by such great dreams. Romain Rolland ends his book on Vivekananda with a short paragraph which contains two brief sentences of great hope about such dreams: 'Man is not yet. He will be.'⁹

Vivekananda's Advaita is new India's gift to the new world. It is our ancient wisdom in India's modern voice; not just an echo of an old word but the authentic expression of a new realization in which a great sage made the philosophy of his forefathers the substance of his own thought and experience. For him it was not a gospel of inaction. It was on the contrary a gospel of enlightened action. For him it was not just a system to be understood on the dialectical plane. It was on the contrary an experience. R. C. Zaehner understood the significance of Vivekananda's teachings on Advaita when he said: 'Vivekananda performed the extraordinary feat of breathing life into purely static monism of Shankara. In Europe and America he proclaimed from the housetops the absolute divinity of man and the sinfulness of the Christian preoccupation with sin.' Advaita negates sin, it negates differentiation, and

by negating differentiation it promotes universality in all aspects of human life. No philosopher in the history of our modern civilization, and no movement, has presented before the modern man such a philosophy for his deliverance. The Renaissance exalted the individual and his aspirations in a competitive world. The Reformation made the individual free to find his own salvation. The Enlightenment valued intellectual culture and had no notion of man's spiritual destiny. Positivism encouraged the scientific temper and had nothing to offer to the life of the spirit. Christian existentialism has only given a dubious modernity to a declining faith. And the other existentialists have only enthroned man in a desert and put upon his head a crown of nothingness. Vivekananda had profound knowledge of Western philosophy and he studied it with respect. And when he came to study Indian philosophy he had no preconceived notion about its superiority. As Christopher Isherwood says about him, 'his scepticism makes him one of the most reliable of all the witnesses of Ramakrishna's greatness.' This is one of the most significant of statements on Vivekananda's work not only because it mentions his initial scepticism and intelligent doubt: it is a significant statement because it presents Vivekananda as a witness of Ramakrishna's greatness. Vivekananda did not discover the wisdom of our ancient sages in our philosophical texts only, though he studied those texts with the greatest care. He found that wisdom incarnated in the life of Ramakrishna. One cannot understand Vivekananda without understanding Ramakrishna. Let us not just pick up stray sentences from Vivekananda's work to present him as a prophet of a socialist revolution. While he is really a prophet of a great human movement towards a society which gives food and comfort and dignity to the masses, it would be the height of shallowness and vulgarity to put upon his

8. *Complete Works*, VI, p. 416.

9. Romain Rolland, *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, trans. E. F. Malcolm-Smith, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1970, p. 315.

broad and noble brow one of the labels of fashionable progressive doctrines. Christopher Isherwood has very rightly warned us against such attempts to put Vivekananda in the class of political revolutionaries. Speaking of those who honour Vivekananda as a great Indian patriot he says that 'they are right as far as they go. But their statue of him would have to be a headless torso; Vivekananda without Ramakrishna.'¹⁰ Vivekananda was a great patriot: but he was much greater than just a patriot. Vivekananda was a great friend of the masses, but he was much greater than just a deliverer of the masses. Let us not try to comprehend him in terms of certain labels and goals which alone we are capable of understanding.

In an address on Ramakrishna delivered in New Delhi in 1949 Jawaharlal stressed the distinction between 'the approach of the prophet and the approach of the political leader', and he called upon our younger generation to try to understand the prophet in Vivekananda. 'Directly or indirectly he has powerfully influenced the India of today,' Nehru said in that address, and he calls his writings a 'fountain of wisdom, spirit and fire'.¹¹ Today it may not be easy for us to seize the essence of that wisdom. Perhaps we have become too quarrelsome and too partisan to have the ear for a great voice and a great message. Nehru summoned our people to that great voice when on 3 February 1963 he said in an address delivered on the occasion of the birth-centenary of Swami Vivekananda that his life was the only example of true faith and true courage from which our younger generation could derive inspiration in their task of rebuilding their nation and of realizing their moral and spiritual destiny in man's future history.

'Those who are weakest in heart shout the loudest,' Nehru said on this occasion, obviously recalling the saying of Vivekananda that by shouting we would gain nothing. That address, Nehru's last on Vivekananda, is a lucid gloss on the central teaching of Swamiji. We are vain: Vivekananda asked us to learn humility. We are noisy: Vivekananda asked us to have stillness of soul. We are quarrelsome: Vivekananda asked us to be gentle and forgiving. We are competitive even in our altruism: Vivekananda asked us to shed all desire for success. We are spiritually dead: Vivekananda called us to the life of the spirit. We believe in sycophancy: Vivekananda asked us to care for nothing but our ideals. We believe in cunning: Vivekananda asked us to make truth our only strength.

What then is the essence of Vivekananda's message to modern India and what is the relevance of his message to our endeavor for building up our future? It is a message which calls upon us to change our whole attitude towards national work, which is now dominated by the idea of politics of power. Even in our colonial days when we were organizing politically and when we thought that our salvation lay in political organization, he had the courage to say: 'politics never formed a necessity of Indian life.' Vivekananda knew that the art of government involved the art of politics and he therefore wanted to revolutionize politics; that is, transform politics of power into a politics of principle; that is, to transform a society governed by law into a society governed by love. It is only in such a society that an individual can have his true freedom. 'Too many laws are a sure sign of death,' Vivekananda said. 'Wherever in any society there are too many laws', he added, 'it is a sure sign that society will soon die.' True freedom is in love and not in law. To build up a society where such freedom is guaran-

10. Christopher Isherwood, *Ramakrishna and His Disciples*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1965, p. 326.

11. Jawaharlal Nehru, "On Sri Ramakrishna", *Prabuddha Bharata*, May 1948, pp. 197-98.

ted to all individuals is required not politics of power, politics of competition, which forces us to fly at each other's throat to find out who amongst us can really bring us our salvation; to build up such a society is required the politics of love, the spirit of renunciation as the motive of all work. When we realize the truth of this message and make it the foundation of all our national enterprise, we not only create a new society but make our contribution to the creation of a new humanity on this earth.

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*

To Mrs. G. W. Hale

1

Minneapolis
21 November 1893.

Dear Mother,¹

I reached Madison safely, went to a hotel, and sent a message to Mr. Updike. He came to see me. He is a Congregational, and so of course was not very friendly at first; but in the course of an hour or so became very kind to me, and took me over the whole place and the University. I had a fine audience and \$ 100 immediately after the lecture. I took the night train to Minneapolis.

I tried to get the clergymen's ticket but they could not give me any, not being the headquarters. The thing to be done is to get a permit from every head office of every line in Chicago. Perhaps it is possible for Mr. Hale² to get the permits for me. If it is so, I hope he will take the trouble to send them over to me to Minneapolis if they can reach me within the 25th, or to Des Moines if within the 29th. Else I would do it the next time in Chicago. I have taken the money in a draft on the bank, which cost me 40c.

* © The President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math.

1. Just a day or two before the commencement of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, a regal looking woman of Dearborne Avenue, Chicago saw Swami Vivekananda sitting quietly on the roadside, exhausted and weary. She opened the door of her fashionable house, and approaching him asked, 'Sir, are you a delegate to the Parliament of Religions?' The Swami replied affirmatively and told her that he was unable to find the Office of Dr. J.H. Barrows, the Chairman of the General Committee for the selection of delegates to the Parliament. The kind woman was Belle Hale, the wife of Mr. George W. Hale. She took the Swami into her house, and later showed him the offices of the Parliament of Religions. Since then, the Hales' house became his headquarters in Chicago, and the family became like his own. For more than a year after the Parliament of Religions Mrs. G.W. Hale looked after the needs of the Swami, and advised him in various matters. The Swami addressed her as 'mother', and wrote to her numerous letters which throw a flood of light on his activities during his early days in the United States.

2. Mr. George W. Hale a successful businessman in the steel industry of Chicago. Although a Presbyterian, he was broad enough to help and support Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji used to address him as 'Father Pope' and Mrs. Hale as 'Mother Church'.

May you be blessed for ever, my kind friend : you and your whole family have made such a heavenly impression on me as I would carry all my life.

Yours sincerely,
VIVEKANANDA.

2

Minneapolis,
24 November, 1893.

Dear Mother,

I am still in Minneapolis. I am to lecture this afternoon, and day after tomorrow go to Des Moines.

The day I came here they had their first snow, and it snowed all through the day and night, and I had great use for the arctics. I went to see the frozen Minnehaha Falls. They are very beautiful. The temperature today is 21° below zero, but I had been out sleighing and enjoyed it immensely though. I am not the least afraid of losing the tips of my ears or nose.

The snow scenery here has pleased me more than any other sight in this country.

I saw people skating on a frozen lake yesterday.

I am doing well. Hoping this will find you all the same. I remain,

Yours obediently,
VIVEKANANDA.

3

Detroit,
14 February 1894.

Dear Mother,

Arrived safely night before last at 1 o'clock a.m. The train was seven hours late, being blocked by snowdrifts on the way. However, I enjoyed the novelty of the sight : several men cutting and clearing the snow and two engines tugging and pulling was a new sight to me.

Here I met Mr. Bagley, the youngest, waiting for me at the station ; and it being very late in the night Mrs. Bagley³ had retired, but the daughters sat up for me.

They are very rich, kind and hospitable. Mrs. Bagley is especially interested in India. The daughters are very good, educated and good-looking. The eldest gave me a luncheon at a club where I met some of the finest ladies and gentlemen of the city. Last evening there was a reception given here in the house. Today I am going to speak for the first time. Mrs. Bagley is a very

3. Mrs John Judson Bagley was one of Detroit's most influential women, who had met Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. She was a great admirer and supporter of the Swami, and was his hostess during this period. She honoured him with an enormous and gala reception to which the élite of Detroit were invited.

nice and kind lady. I hope the lectures will please her. With my love and regards for you all, I remain,

Yours sincerely
VIVEKANANDA.

PS—I have received a letter from Slayton⁴ in reply to that in which I wrote to him that I cannot stay. He gives me hopes. What is your advice? I enclose the letter in another envelope.

Yours,
V.

4. Here Swamiji is referring to the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau of Chicago, with whom he had signed a contract for three years. But Swamiji soon noticed that the Bureau was cheating him by paying him less than what was due. After coming to Detroit, he broke the contract with the help of his admirer the Hon'ble Thomas V. Palmer of Detroit.

A GLANCE THROUGH JOSEPHINE MACLEOD'S LETTERS—I

(A Compilation)

SHOUTIR KISHORE CHATTERJEE

Prelude

Miss Josephine MacLeod is well known to the students of Swami Vivekananda's life. Swamiji used to call her 'Joe', and his disciples and admirers addressed her as 'Yum', 'Jaya' or 'Tantine'.

Josephine's father, John David MacLeod, married Mary Ann Lennon in 1845, and had two sons and three daughters. He was an American of Scottish descent and stayed at various places in the United States before permanently settling at Chicago. Among the daughters, Besse or Betty (1852-1931) and Josephine (1858-1949) came in intimate contact with Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna-Vedanta Movement. Betty married Mr. William Sturges of Chicago in the year 1876, and had a son named Hollister and a daughter named Alberta. Josephine always stayed with Betty even after the latter's marriage. After the death of Mr.

William Sturges in the year 1894, Betty married Mr. Francis Leggett, a business magnate of New York, in the september of 1895; and as Swamiji was by that time known to them, he attended their marriage at Paris. Josephine, Hollister and Alberta naturally became part of Betty's new household at New York and Ridgely, near Stone Ridge, in Ulster County, New York.

January 29, 1895, was a memorable day for Josephine, because on this day she and Betty attended Swamiji's Vedanta class at New York for the first time. Both the sisters were very much impressed by the personality and teachings of Swamiji, and through them Mr. Francis Leggett, Alberta and Hollister became Swamiji's close friends and admirers. The whole family loved Swamiji and helped in their own way in propagating his message and work.

Right from the first day of their meeting, Josephine accepted Swamiji as a pro-

phet; and although she disclaimed formal discipleship, she became his ardent admirer and friend, so much so that Swamiji used to call her a 'lady missionary' of the Ramakrishna Order. Even after Swamiji's death, Josephine continued to be an admirer of the Ramakrishna Order and often came and stayed at the Belur Math, headquarters of the Order, for many days.

Josephine had strong attachment for India as well, and on occasion she tried to do what was within her power for the betterment of India and her people. During British rule in India, the Ramakrishna Order had to face difficulties from time to time; and she did her best to help the Math overcome them, through her acquaintance with some British Government officers.

In spite of her roving habits, Josephine maintained a regular correspondence with her niece Alberta Sturges, who was married to George Montagu, the Eighth Earl of Sandwich, in 1905. As Josephine was charged with love for Swamiji, the Ramakrishna Order and India, we find in these letters many of her reminiscences about Swamiji, his brother-disciples and other members of the Order, and the expression of her love for India and the work she did for the country. She lived for about half a century after the demise of Swamiji, and her letters written to Alberta are naturally very informative and interesting. Alberta left this valuable treasure with her daughter Lady Faith Culme-Seymour of Bridport, Dorset, England, who very kindly loaned those belonging to 1911-1946 period, to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of England. Swami Bhavyananda, the Minister in charge of the Centre, and Swami Yogeshananda, then his assistant, worked hard on these letters and took relevant extracts from them. They prepared cyclostyled copies of these extracts and sent them, a few years ago, to some monks and devotees of the Ramakrishna Order. One of these sets was sent

to the President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in case he would be interested in publishing them in the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

At the request of the Editor, *Prabuddha Bharata*, I studied these extracts and tried my best to arrange them topicwise for the information of the devotees and admirers of Swami Vivekananda. These letters bring to light some hitherto unknown facts about Swamiji's personality and the activities of the Ramakrishna Movement in the East as well as West. The matter under quotes has been taken verbatim from the aforesaid letters to maintain the originality; and I have introduced the various topics in my words to keep the continuity. The dates of the letters are mentioned in parentheses after the quotation marks.

I

Miss Josephine MacLeod first met Swami Vivekananda in New York on January 29, 1895. About this she writes: 'Every phase of the Swamiji epoch is clear, as it is the foundation of my life since forty-eight years. We were living with Mrs. Davidson at Dobbsferry; and coming one day to lunch with aunt Dora Roethlisberger in N.Y. [New York], we found a note from her—"Do come to 54 West 33rd St. and hear the Swami Vivekananda, after which we will return to luncheon"—so Mother¹ and I went to his parlour-sitting room, where twenty ladies and two or three men were, Swamiji sitting on the floor. His first sentence made me know I had heard the Truth—the truth that 'sets one free' (December 9, 1943). 'I think that is what happened to me forty-one years ago, January 29, when I saw and heard Swamiji.

1. Mrs. Betty Leggett, the mother of Alberta Sturges by her first marriage. During this period she was the widow of Mr. William Sturges.

Somehow one was lifted *above* the body and time and space' (January 2, 1936).

Afterwards Josephine used to consider January 29, 1895, as her spiritual birthday—the day on which 'she found her own soul'. Thus she wrote: 'I'll be forty-eight—next January 29th! At the same time, eighty-four in my *physical* birthday!' (January 21, 1943). 'It seems as if all my life dated from that event. As if I'd fulfilled the mission I was born for—recognition of the new Buddha' (May 9, 1922). Ruminating on that day, in later life she never failed to wonder about that first meeting. She believed that the meeting was preordained: 'Oh, the wonder of my having *recognized* Swamiji instantly and irrevocably; on that recognition the past forty-four years of my life has been built' (March 13, 1939). 'It isn't chance that you at fifteen and I at thirty-five should come under the influence of Swamiji—as Nivedita said, "Representing the next 3,000 years as Ramakrishna did the last 3,000 years"' (October 4, 1923).

After the first meeting Josephine and her sister began to attend Swamiji's lectures regularly, but they kept these visits secret from their friends for a few weeks. About this she wrote: 'Mother and I came down to N.Y. [New York] three times a week and we brought you and Holly² on Saturdays. We never mentioned him [Swamiji] to anybody, for to us, he was holy. Some weeks after, Pater³ invited us to dine at the Waldorf-Astoria (just opposite to where Swamiji had his classes). So we accepted his invitation to dinner, but said we could not spend the evening with him. When at 8 p.m. we rose to go to the lecture, Mr. Leggett said, "Where are you going?" We said, "To a lecture"; he said, "May I not come?" We said, "Yes, do come." At once

the lecture was over Pater went up to Swamiji and invited him to dine; there, at that dinner, we met Swamiji socially and not many weeks after, we all, including you two children and Swamiji, went to Ridgely Manor for a six-day visit! . . . Then Mother and I went to visit Pater with Swamiji at Lake Christine, Percy Coos Co., New Hampshire, and when they [Betty and Mr. Francis Leggett] became engaged to be married, Pater asked Swamiji to be his witness at the honeymoon and the next day Swamiji went to stay with Mr. Sturdy in England, and Swamiji began a series of big lectures in London (St. James Hall),⁴ all the London papers quoting him as a "Yogi". Isabel⁵ read this and went to call on him and later let her house in London to the Vedanta Society, having her two children Kitty and David blessed by Swamiji—so you see Isabel's and my friendship is based on the Eternal, that came into each of our lives' (December 9, 1943).

We find in these letters how Josephine and her relations got on with Swamiji: 'It was that attitude [of giving perfect liberty] in our family towards Swamiji that kept him with and near us. Days without speaking, days and nights continuous speaking! We followed his moods and kept ourselves busy in our own lives and *happy* when he wasn't about, so that there was no sort of weight put upon him' (December 19, 1913).

Love and admiration for Swamiji was common to them all: 'We all recognized and loved Swamiji—you and Holly quite as much as Mother and Big Francy⁶ and me.

4. Miss MacLeod perhaps means the Princes' Hall where Swamiji gave some lectures during his first visit to England.

5. Lady Isabel Margesson, an educationist English friend of Miss MacLeod. She became an admirer of Swami Vivekananda, and the Swami stayed at her London residence during his second visit to England.

6. Mr. Francis Leggett.

2. Hollister Sturges, the son of Mrs. Betty Leggett by her first marriage.

3. Mr. Francis Leggett, Betty's second husband.

Perhaps on no other point did we all so heartily agree ! It was the biggest synthesis that we ever came across, and it included us one and all. Mother has gone on one line, you another, I a third, according to our talents. None of us could exhaust that spiritual force, nor come to its limitations' (November 15, 1926).

2

Josephine's attitude towards Swamiji is well revealed in her letters. To her Swamiji was unique : 'I believe Swamiji to have been the biggest spiritual force that ever came to earth'⁷ (February 25, 1913). He was to her the prophet of the present age: 'And we have known the new Buddha !' (June 22, 1939). 'I'm deep in reading the Gospel of St. John—thrilling ! So like the influence of Swamiji and his miracle of changing lives by his very presence, not by changing water into wine or healings. New prophets bring new gifts, don't they?' (June 11, 1941). She was amazed and held by his unlimitedness : 'The thing that held me in Swamiji was his *unlimitedness* ! I never could touch the bottom—or top—or sides ! The amazing size of him, and I think Nivedita's hold was that too' (March 12, 1923). Occasionally, her feeling towards Swamiji was intensely personal. She claimed to have a right on him: 'It was to set me free that Swamiji came and that was as much part of his mission as it was to give *renunciation* to Nivedita—or *unity* to dear Mrs. Sevier' (March 12, 1923). 'Swamiji was only a friend, but a friend who knew God, and so passed him on to me. Meeting Swamiji changed my life, in a twinkling !' (July 2, 1941).

But Josephine never failed to wonder at

the immensity of Swamiji and to appreciate his role in her life in particular and in the world at large : 'The Vivekananda episode in our life is of the Eternity quality ! So let's play that game' (October 4, 1923). 'I've known and lived for seven years with a world force. I'm charged through and through with it' (October 23, 1923). 'To have known and assimilated even a little of Swamiji is no small inheritance !' (April 7, 1924).

Swamiji gave her a sense of security : 'Somehow Swamiji is back of us one and all' (March 5, 1914). 'Our lives are not left to blind chance. We are directed and protected. In a way we believe that, but if we realized it we could never have another moment's anxiety' (July 12, 1916). 'I feel that Swamiji was a rock for us to stand upon—that was His function in my life. Not worship, nor glory, but a steadiness under one's feet for experiments !' (March 12, 1923).

He gave her faith : 'Our great role is yet to be played. How? Where? I don't know nor really care—but we've not lived with and loved Swamiji for nothing. It's bound to work out gloriously ; but even if it didn't, knowing Him was worth this and other worlds !' (June 15, 1914).

3

Josephine had many an occasion to know how Swamiji influenced the lives of others. To some of these instances she referred in her letters : 'Mr. (Homer) Lane says what Swamiji has done for him is to make everything holy—all life, effort, work, play, prayer—equally holy, all complement parts and necessary parts of life' (February 11, 1913). 'Yesterday Mrs. Hansbrough,⁸ who

⁷. This line is from Miss MacLeod's letter to Alberta's husband Mr. George Montagu, the Eighth Earl of Sandwich.

⁸. Mrs. Alice Mead Hansbrough, one of the Mead sisters of South Pasadena, California, who helped Swami Vivekananda during his visit to the West Coast by arranging lectures and keeping house for him.

is one of the three sisters who have always been devoted to Swamiji these fourteen years, said that after one of Swami's brilliant lectures here [Los Angeles] a man got up and said, "Then, Swami, what you claim is that all is good?" "By no means," Swamiji answered. "My claim is *that all is not*—only *God* is ! That makes all the difference." . . . And Mrs. Hansbrough says that that one sentence has been the rock on which she has lived all these years' (March 16, 1914). 'As Swamiji said to you at Rome, of the gorgeousness of the religious ceremonies at St. Peter's, "If you do believe in a personal God, surely you would give your best to Him !" (November 5, 1923). 'Today I've written (again) to the Maharaja of Alwar, asking him to come to the Birthday Celebration of Swamiji on January 17th. . . . It seems he's "on fire" with Swamiji. It was his father that asked Swamiji "What's the use of all these images and idols?", and Swamiji, turning to the Prime-Minister said, "Take that picture of His Highness and spit on it." And he said, "How can I? With His Highness sitting there?" But Swamiji insisted several times, the Prime-Minister refusing. Then Swamiji said, "It isn't His Highness, it is only a picture-image of him—not he". Then His Highness saw. The image is sacred because it reminds one of God' (December 9, 1924). 'It is Swamiji, bringing back to his race the great sustaining traditions of Hinduism, as *lived* by Ramakrishna, that is the new leaven pervading India and overflowing to the whole world. "Eternal, pervading, sustaining", as the *Gita* puts it. I can even see it in your letter this week: "Swamiji didn't bless me for nothing, or train me to sit down and cry. I may be lying down, but I will deal with this"' (November 15, 1926). 'A young Parsee, K—, given a *mantram* years ago by Shivanandaji, has told me such a lovely story of Swamiji, told him

a month ago in Ajmere by two Americans who were sent out to India by missionaries to offset Swamiji's influence. When they arrived, Swamiji was deep in meditation but when he finally appeared, his face radiating the light his meditation had given him, they were so overcome, that they turned to Swamiji asking, "Where shall we find Truth?" Swamiji's answer: "But It is with you always"—turned them into disciples: these two old men now, never leaving India' (February 9, 1939).

4

Anyone who had served or even had contact with Swamiji at any time had a special place in Josephine's heart: 'Today Mrs. Wright comes to see me, widow of the Harvard professor who sent Swamiji to the World's Parliament. I am finally to begin my quest of his staff and drinking bowl' (February 20, 1912). 'I've written to Mary Hale Matteini⁹ that if she has anyone to take her a Swamiji crystal from England, I'd gladly give her one for the Hale Family. Without them to have nourished and protected him that long year, we might never have had him in our midst. It is interesting to see how each plays a different part in Swamiji's scheme, isn't it? The Hales had him for a whole year and always gave to him, I feel, that admiration and respect for American womanhood that was so fundamental in his life—them after that, he rarely saw or heard from. Then "We" came along and remained to the end, seven years' (April 24, 1922). 'Mary Hale Matteini is living her own loving life, gentle, considerate, faithful to

9. Mary Hale, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Hale of Chicago, in whose house Swami Vivekananda stayed for a long time during his first visit to the United States. Swamiji called her sister, and wrote many letters to her. She was later married to Mr. Matteini, an Italian Tycoon.

mother, sister, husband. Deep down, there is the big note that Swamiji brought to them all, but no inclination to help his work. However she gave me £5 for the Math and £5 to buy his books. I fancy this is the first contribution she has given. They live in luxury. Beautiful rooms. Two maids, companion for Mrs. Hale, motor, and Mary feels herself to be Italian and gives and works in local charities in Italy. I love her, just as she is !' (December 15, 1925). 'David Margesson's appointment will please dear Isabel,¹⁰ to whom I owe *much*, perhaps most in her recognition of Swamiji !' (December 25, 1940). 'She [Malvina Hoffman] saw Swamiji when eight or nine years old in a boarding-house in 38th Street. So we formed a real relationship. How curious !' (May 9, 1941).

Anyone who appreciated Swamiji struck a responsive cord in her : 'I miss your personal letters dreadfully—but one from F—three days ago tells of her full life . . . and her having, at last, at forty-four years of age, discovering [discovered] *Swamiji*, whose life she is reading, and "What a Romance—his coming to Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 !" she writes. So now she and I will have new and old contacts. Life is so amazing, isn't it?' (December 27, 1940).

5

Josephine referred to many sayings of Swamiji in her letters ; for instance : "Whatever exists has a reason ; find that reason" is really the basis of Swamiji's teachings, I think' (September 14, 1922) 'I do think that "the constitutional belief in freedom is the basis of all reasoning"—as Swamiji fundamentally puts it' (October 4, 1923). "Always free on the spiritual

plane ; never free on the mental and physical—hence the struggle," said our Swamiji' (March 25, 1925). "Tell me what you've suffered, and I'll tell you how great you are," said Swamiji' (February 16, 1916). 'As Swamiji put it, "Don't fight your faults ; fill yourself with something else ; then they will drop off, not being nourished"' (March 27, 1939). 'Swamiji says, "The heart is the river of your life ; the head is the bridge over the river—always follow your heart"' (December 5, 1923). 'Get your *Post* (God) as Swamiji says, and then play any game you like : nothing matters but the *Post* (January 29, 1925). "Wherever there is filth, or degradation, or ignorance, there I identify myself", says Swamiji' (February 26, 1913). 'I don't think anyone can go far who hasn't faith in the people. That is what Swamiji had, pre-eminently. He knew that each one of us was a child of God—so he told it broadcast : "Make every man a Brahmin, a twice-born. Do it by thousands, by nations, and the people will rise *en masse*"' (April 6, 1928). 'The day before Swamiji died he told them how great this place, Belur Math, was to be ! They smiled incredulously. He said, "The power of this place will last nine hundred years. Nothing can withstand it"' (June 29, 1922).

6

Josephine was not an all-renouncing type of woman like Sister Nivedita. Nor had she the single-minded devotion to an ideal which we find in Sister Christine. But in her own way she took the propagation and realization of Swamiji's ideas as the mission of her life. Her sense of responsibility in this respect becomes evident as we read her letters.

Rejoicing when certain happenings augured well for the prospects of the Belur Math she wrote : 'It's such fun to see the

10. Mrs. Isabel Margesson.

pattern being woven, and only be responsible for one's own little thread and keep it straight and unknotted so that it can be *used*' (March 3, 1926). On another occasion she wrote : 'You can see that a great Prophet, as Swamiji was, saw in vast expanses of time, coming world-issues and changes. He saw true. To me, this is a great satisfaction. It does not lessen our today's responsibility, but gives further scope for solution' (July 2, 1941).

Josephine came into contact with all sorts of people during her long life, and she tried to inspire many of them with Swamiji's ideals. Some instances of this, scattered through her letters, are as follows:

'I've poured out all my heart of all the wealth that Swamiji poured into me—on him (Dhan Gopal Mukherjee)—and now my work is done and I feel a curious lightness' (June 17, 1922). 'I have never heard from the Bernard Shaws—have you?—if they received the Lalique Swamiji crystals. Two months ago I wrote to her to say so, but still no answer!' (November 7, 1922). 'When on Bernard Shaw's eighty-eighth birthday, there was in *New York Times* a picture of him sawing wood, I wrote to him saying we were both in the category of the eighties, he taking much exercise and I none, and at once I got a p.c. [postcard] from him in his *beautiful* writing : "My dear Josephine, how very jolly to hear from you. I have been a widower since 12th September last. A little before that we were talking about you and wondering what had become of you. You were and are a special friend ; and we always hoped that we should foregather again at Hallscroft.¹¹ But I am better out of sight now. I'm dreadfully old. G. Bernard Shaw." Of course, I answered at once, saying, in this new world there would be much for us to

do. Then I told him of the Willcock's¹² Irrigation of Bengal, etc. etc.' (September 18, 1944). 'Lord Lytton¹³ wrote on February 26th : "We were delighted with our visit to Belur [Math], and I shall long cherish grateful recollections of that haven of peace. The little Lalique statuette of Vivekananda now stands upon my writing table and every afternoon as it catches the rays of the setting sun, it shines as if lit up by a sacred flame from within"' (March 5, 1924). 'Lady Wavell has written to Isabel [Margesson], thanking her for the Lalique crystal of Swamiji, and to me for the four little Swamiji books. It is such fun to be used at eighty-five, to scatter these truths!' (June 19, 1944). 'Isabel Margesson has written a page of her glowing memories of Swamiji to the February [1939] *Prabuddha Bharata*. Perhaps some day you'll do so?' (February 10, 1939). 'Have you Sankara's *Chudamani*?¹⁴ If not ask—for one. I had sent her four. You know, Swamiji said he was Sankara ! He came back after 800 years' (April 10, 1944).

'Last evening at 6-30 two brothers came to see me after I was tucked away behind my mosquito net, to tell me that the younger, twenty-eight (since nine months a member of the Ramakrishna Math at Dacca), had been one of seventy-two new prisoners taken by the eighteenth century ordinance and had been to Dacca jail since October 24th. Today he must give himself up to the Superintendent of Police of 24-Parganas, to be interned in the village of Haroa, Bengal, till further orders.... So I had my chance of telling him what it really meant ! And what he might do for India

11. A well-known house at Stratford-on-Avon, England.

12. Sir Alfred Willcox, a retired engineer, persuaded by Miss MacLeod to take up the work of renovating the irrigation system in Bengal.

13. Lord Lytton, the then Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal.

14. The *Vivekachudamani*, a treatise on Vedanta by Acharya Shankara.

and Swamiji, whose ideal was that each village of India (over 700,000) should have a centre, one man of education, to recreate the village. So I gave him five volumes of Swamiji and told him that "Mother" had chosen him, by the Governor and Council to do Her work. . . . Darling, to have seen those two brothers' faces change from despair to hope ! Eager to begin ! And saying they "were ignorant and didn't know 'Mother God' worked that way." Simple children ! Then I told them that Swamiji's definition of his own religion is "to learn" and with that spirit go into this new village of Haroa, to learn the village's needs, to teach sanitation, English and Swamiji's ideals, and to live them, and lift India ! (November 27, 1927).

Josephine considered the propagation of Swamiji's message in the West as her special responsibility. After the outbreak of World War II she wrote : 'I am not at all inclined to go to the War zone, in India or Europe, and as Swamiji says, "My work will be more in the West : thence it will react on India." I may help more in U.S.A. than in India. Now there are hundreds interested in Indian spirituality in U.S.A. ; they will grow to thousands, then millions, and as America is becoming the leading country, its influence will react on the world" (March 6, 1940).

Whenever there was some celebration, the opening of a centre or some special worship, Josephine strove to be present there, believing sincerely that her presence lent a touch of Swamiji to the occasion. She writes : 'Little by little new openings are coming here for Swamiji's message. Yesterday three of us met to consecrate a little meditation room in the basement of Miss Spencer's house. It may mean something, or nothing. The real thing is that we keep His message ever before us that all men are Divine' (March 16, 1914). 'Today I had one hour of Kali Puja—at Nikhil-

ananda's centre, about twenty of us ; they do so like my going to them, since I knew Swamiji (October 8, 1940). 'It seems I am the last living person who knew Swamiji well, personally. This year being the fiftieth anniversary of Swamiji's coming to U.S.A., Chicago, July 1893, each Vedanta Centre is to celebrate this, and Nikhilananda wants me to give a little talk at his Centre, 17 E. 94th St., and Swami Virajananda, the Abbot of the Math, wrote in his last letter "that Tantine [Josephine] has kept alive all these forty-eight years the vividness of Swamiji shows His spirituality" ' (October 6, 1943).

Josephine spared no troubles and expenses for the publication of Swamiji's works in Western languages. She writes: 'Edgar Lee Masters has written to MacMillan (Publishers who refused to publish Swamiji's four Yogas): "I believe that the spiritual solution of the world depends upon the assimilation of these works." So without telling me the reason they have asked me to return Swamiji's books for further consideration which I have done today. But isn't life thrilling! And aren't we to play a big part?' (June 9, 1919). 'Today airmail I've sent to Toni Sussman the written manuscript of *Inspired Talks* that I want her to read—oversee—and change anything she wishes to, have typed, and sent where she sent her translation of *Jnana Yoga*. I've already paid Jean Herbert to have this printed in German, thus completing the four small [books] of Swamiji. I don't know how it was to be done, nor where, but I paid Jean Herbert the 1,600 dollars he asked, to be responsible and publish all these works of Swamiji in German. Toni has asked me what further work can she do for Swamiji. This I should like her to do, as soon as possible. Mrs. Berliner has made this translation, but she thinks Toni's *Jnana Yoga* much finer, so go ahead, please' (April 4, 1941). 'Today you go to

Hallscroft and on July 25 Toni goes there for the week end. I am writing you today, to send you her last fine letter to me, as I am also writing her airmail and send the American pocket edition of *Inspired Talks* to her, for it is this edition I want her to put into German, every word and picture and poem ! It sums up Swamiji in a synthetic way' (July 21, 1941).

Naturally, advancement of the cause of women, especially Indian women, was something dear to Josephine's heart : 'You see it is women teachers who are so rare to find in India ... and the girls [Sister] Christine trains will be long in coming to maturity, and though the method is right that she is using, the experience and prestige is not acquired except by responsibility. ... In twenty years from now there ought to be several centres for women under women in India, and we'll have to help to choose the right women ; all depends upon them' (March 20, 1916). 'Sister Gayatri ... is splendored ; has been sixteen years in U.S.A., knows Sanskrit, has been lecturing thirteen years, and wants to continue Paramananda's work in California and here, together with Sister Daya, daughter of Senator Jones of California. So now we have women capable and consecrated to found the Women's Math—a thing Swamiji always wanted. *I am rejoiced !*' (September 10, 1940).

Whenever there was any expansion in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, any new activity, Josephine was delighted. Her sense of involvement in the movement becomes evident from the following extracts : 'These little glimpses into the lives and purposes of these young monks show the lines along which the Order will grow. One of their great achievements now is that they are starting Agriculture. The Gov't expert comes today from 3 to 5 and all are gradually to be trained so as to carry scientific food-growing as part of the

outside centres' work. It's all slow, but it is *true* ; solid ! There is no good in attacking a big problem till the home one is solved, and these men have been lighted by the torch that Swamiji carried round the world. ... Remember Swamiji said, "No fact in your life can equal your imagination, Alberta"" (June 2, 1926). 'You remember Swamiji saying *Belur Math will be a great University with religious foundation*, so perhaps in yours and my lifetime, we will see his prophecy come true' (February 22, 1939). 'I'm begging them here at the Math to send the young out, to beg, as Swamiji did, his own food, on foot, walking, learning by actual experience. Swamiji didn't come full-fledged from the sky ; he *grew* ! And his monks must do the same, or else they will be soft, no fibre or resilience, power of adaptation' (February 16, 1927). 'Thrift gives me the joy of spiritually helping, for that is what money does when it saves *courage* in those I love' (October 23, 1939). 'Thousands are below [on the Belur Math grounds] ! Just to pay their tribute to that one life—Swamiji's Birthday Celebration ! I sit and wonder. Boshi Sen comes to cook the things Swamiji loved tonight. I furnish chocolate ice-cream—which they all eat. It is so *childish*, yet because of that very thing perhaps, his life is kept young and fresh and vital' (January 25, 1927).

7

What glimpses of Josephine's mind do we get from these letters? The things which strike us most are her enthusiasm and her receptivity ; for instance, she writes : 'I seldom return anywhere. "Life is beautiful, the future sacred", so I'm out for new experiences and friends. It was because Swamiji was new and fresh every day that he held one ! So if we learn every day, as he did, we will not grow old, or stale or

flat ! Life is expectancy, wonder ! So is the Lord, isn't He?' (December 7, 1938). 'Life always seems to me to be just beginning—no five-year-old ever felt it more than I do—and as at five, I had the dream in Detroit that if I'd dig in the garden I'd find gold, (and did find the gold drop of an earring),—so now I'm looking, digging into and finding wonders everywhere, now especially that my body has stopped worrying me.... There is no asceticism in me ; that I see plainly ; but recognition of the good, I find everywhere, including the *Best* occasionally. When I see what others put up with, I am filled with amazement and admiration, and it is only when one gets at the heart, the confidence of people, one learns : that is the reason I like confidence—friendships that only grow in intimacy.... If I go to New York, it is for the *Unknown* ! The Unknown God, that takes such myriad of shapes and forms, always keeping us guessing—wondering !' (March 21, 1939). 'It is this *wonder* that keeps me alive ; what the other man has to give me—not what I give to him. I like people to be different to me, and to take and *use* (not exploit) them as they *are*, thus broadening my horizon. It would be difficult to deepen it, since I lived with Swamiji' (September 7, 1946). 'I live mostly in others. *I expand*, with fresh ideas and culture' (November 27, 1938). '“The readiness is all” shall be put on my tombstone if I ever have one !... I stumbled into a family that gave *freedom* ! Then Swamiji at thirty-five, gave spiritual freedom ; no wonder I'm happy—*learning* !' (February 28, 1939). 'Life, here on earth, is a grand opportunity ; learn, learn, day and night, knowing that all one can learn on earth one can use, any and everywhere, since Spirit never dies' (December 22, 1939). 'When I joined the Town Hall Club last Monday, they asked my occupation and I wrote “*To Learn*” (October 30, 1940). 'Well, my Religion is to learn from any

and everybody, for this is the Lord's world and He has put me here *to learn*, as well as to worship !' (May 14, 1941).

Josephine herself declared : '*I haven't any Renunciation* ! But I've freedom, to see and help India grow. That's my job, and now I love it. To see this group of fiery idealists, burning new paths and outlets from this jungle called life' (March 12, 1923).

But this enthusiasm and involvement were based on deep knowledge and conviction and were imbued with a sense of detachment : 'I'm beginning to see that when the present is deepened it does become Eternity. A sort of new dimension, as Einstein puts it' (October 4, 1923). 'It's all a pretty pageant, life just now, and I do enjoy it all—but deep down knowing that empires pass away—and only God remains !' (January 29, 1925). 'You ask if I am utterly secure in my grasp on the Ultimate. Yes—utterly. It seems to be part and parcel of me. It is the “Truth” (that I saw in Swamiji) that has set me free. One's faults seem so insignificant. Why remember them, when one has the Ocean of Truth to be one's playground?' (March 12, 1923). 'But do remember that Life is fluid, like water, takes on different shapes, colours, tastes, constantly ; so if we can take on this fluidity, instead of the shape, colour, taste, we will *watch—be the witness*, instead of the victim' (December 30, 1938). 'We know so little of ourselves, don't we? Our needs? Only a tiny window is opened of ourselves, and we are so surprised at the depths, heights, widths, that have never been fathomed, only *apprehended*. We are really much finer, nobler than we know, and are so often surprised at our own capacity !' (August 11, 1928).

The following extracts sum up her philosophy of life : 'I find that when they say we must get rid of our Ego, I don't agree, for the basis of every life is the Spirit

—Ego, only covered up ! Get rid of the covering, and let the Ego shine in all its glory' (December 22, 1939). 'I do not feel called upon to adjust the world's problems, but my own little intimate one, a narrow one, limited by my physical strength first, then the moral and spiritual values as I see them. This is the reason I said to Swamiji, "I've never done an unselfish act in my life"—and he answered, "True, but there is a larger or a smaller self"—to which I agreed. If I can expand, like loving others, it is I that expand, isn't it? And the more I expand and love others, the more represent the Lord, the one, unique' (March 22, 1940).

Does weakness ever take hold of her? : 'What is this crouching fear of death that possesses one? Instead of making the occasion for a great achievement, a glory. The fact is hidden, as if it were a curse, instead of a blessing, an opportunity, to show that the spirit is triumphant over the flesh' (September 4, 1923). 'Bless you

darling, you and yours. Try to keep alive till I go out of the body ; but the *Soul is Eternal* so why trouble too much about the body?' (August 29, 1943).

But through all her robustness, at times we can see the devotee in her : 'I am rejoiced to see—keeps her heart so full of kindness towards——. I see so much anger and criticism everywhere, not changing the world, but shutting out the Lord, as if two things can be in the heart at once !' (December 7, 1939). 'I'd like Incarnation to come each generation to revive and re-inspire humanity in its own divine birth-right and outlook ; wouldn't you? Perhaps they do come. Certainly I've known one, and it is they that keep us "floating on the warm heart of the Mother", as Swamiji put it. If we could learn to float, instead of gripping so hard, we'd have more time and strength for watching and learning. However, I'm not managing this world' (September 21, 1922).

(To be concluded)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The Spiritual Warfare—I (Editorial) : There are some souls always on earth who have no taste for this world. They prefer to tread the spiritual path and realize God. Among them, the spiritually gifted ones like Sri Ramakrishna's guru Totapuri find the path smooth and easy, while others like Arjuna have to face innumerable difficulties at every step. They have to wage a constant spiritual warfare against their past impressions and make their way towards the goal. The majority of aspirants being in Arjuna's category, it will be worthwhile to take a résumé of the experiences of the successful aspirants and learn from them the necessary lessons for spiritual warfare. It will also help if the aspirant knows the

causes for failure and the secret of success. An attempt has been made in this editorial to review the spiritual experiences of aspirant of the East as well as West.

Reminiscences of Swami Turiyananda : Swami Jnanatmananda of the Ramakrishna Order had the rare privilege of coming in contact with some direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. The Swami not only availed himself of their holy company, but also noted down their life-giving words for the benefit of others. Some of his reminiscences have been published in his Bengali book *Punya-smriti* by the Udbodhan Office, Bagh-bazar, Calcutta. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, has undertaken the task

of publishing an English translation of the same for the English-knowing readers. Swami Turiyananda's birth anniversary falls in this month. So it is in the fitness of things that his spiritually elevating words be remembered.

Swami Vivekananda and Modern India: Every thoughtful Indian is bound to feel worried about the present situation in India, especially in the economic, social, educational and political fields. The main reason for such an instability and chaos is that the political and social leaders have forgotten the ideal taught by Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, namely, 'service based upon non-attachment'. Dr. R. K. Das Gupta, Director, National Library, Calcutta, has rightly pointed out in this thought-provoking speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur, W.B., on 31 January 1977, that Swami Vivekananda's message 'calls upon us to change our whole attitude towards national work, which is now dominated by the idea of politics of power.' The author has very beautifully dealt with the subject in the light of what the great men of India and the West have said about Swami Vivekananda.

Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda : In the previous numbers, we have published some hitherto unpublished letters of Swami Vivekananda written to Sister Nivedita, Sister Christine, Mrs. Bull and others, in fourteen instalments. From this

number onwards, we shall be publishing in instalments Swamiji's letters written to Mrs. G. W. Hale, who played a vital role in Swamiji's life during his early days in the United States (1893-94). Necessary footnotes have been supplied for the information of the readers. In this number the letters from 21 November 1893 to 14 February 1894 have been published.

A Glance through Josephine MacLeod's Letters—I : Swami Bhavyananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in England, and Swami Yogeshananda, who was then the editor of the *Vedanta for East and West* published from that Centre, sent us, a few years ago, some cyclostyled extracts of Miss Josephine MacLeod's letters written during 1911-1946 to her niece Alberta Montagu, the Countess of Sandwich. The extracts contain a volume of hitherto unknown information about Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, his brother-disciples, the Ramakrishna Movement, and about India and her people. At our request, Sri Shoutir Kishore Chatterjee, Reader in the Statistics Department of the Calcutta University, Calcutta, very kindly studied these letters carefully and arranged the information topicwise for the convenience of the readers. We are very much thankful to him for his labour of love. In this instalment, we get some of Josephine's reminiscences of Swamiji, and learn about her role and enthusiasm in spreading his message.

TO OUR READERS

The *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* is entering the eighty-fourth year of its publication with the dawn of 1979. On this happy occasion we offer our hearty greetings, best wishes and thanks to our readers, contributors, subscribers, reviewers, pub-

lishers (who are sending books to us for review), advertisers, friends and sympathizers.

It is well known that Swami Vivekananda's disciples started this journal at Madras at his instance in the July of 1896, but, within

a couple of years of its commencement, it was threatened with infant death due to the untimely demise of its enthusiastic and gifted editor, B. R. Rajam Iyer. But, dear as it was to Swamiji, he asked his English disciple Capt. J. H. Sevier, then at Almora, to take up the management of the journal, and commanded his sannyasi disciple Swami Swarupananda to act as its editor. Thus, the journal got a new lease of life when, due to Swamiji's efforts, its August 1898 number was published from Almora.

On this memorable occasion, Swamiji wrote a poem 'To the Awakened India' which was published in its August 1898 number. This poem is very significant. It not only tells us what Swamiji expected of this journal and its readers, but reveals his love for the same. 'Resume thy march, ... Awakener,' Swamiji writes, 'ever forward ! Speak thy stirring words. ... Speak, O Love ! ... till Truth and Truth alone in all Its glory shines.' Swamiji wanted the highest spiritual Truth to be preached to the common man, although It goes over their heads. He never liked the idea of watering down the Truth to suit the taste of the masses ; rather, he expected the masses to raise themselves to a higher level from the mire of worldliness. '*Uddhared ātmanāt-mānam*—a man should uplift himself by his own self', he thundered on one occasion ; for there is no other way for salvation.

Talking to his brother-monks and disciples, Swamiji said on another occasion :

'No compromise ! No whitewashing ! No covering the corpses with flowers ! ... Preach the highest truths broadcast.... Thus you will confer the greatest blessing on the masses, unshackle their bonds, and uplift the whole nation,'

And to the readers of the journal Swamiji said through the poem : 'Be bold, and face the Truth ! Be one with It !'

The ideal is always high, but if the common man keeps that ideal before him and struggles to attain it in his own way, he undergoes spiritual evolution ; and if all the individual members of a nation do the same, it results in the uplift of the whole nation, as Swamiji expected.

In its own humble way, the journal is carrying out the command of Swamiji, and giving a call to the thoughtful men and women of the world ; and Swamiji's wish will be fulfilled if the readers also do what he wanted.

Every month, an earnest effort is made to publish the journal in the first week ; but due to load-shedding and various other difficulties of the Press, occasionally it takes a week or two more to appear. We are very sorry for the inconvenience caused to our readers, and request them to bear with us with patience, taking into consideration our difficulties.

And if you have liked our journal, you may kindly recommend it to your friends and relatives, and thus help the pious cause of Swami Vivekananda.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SANSKRIT

DARSANA MALA: BY NARAYANA GURU, Publishers : Satsangha Seva Samithi, Gandhi Bazaar, Bangalore-560 004, 1977, pp. viii+112, Price : Rs. 2.40.

Most of the writings of Narayana Guru, the well-known saint and social reformer from Kerala, are in Malayalam—about thirty in number.

There is one in classical Tamil and nearly ten in Sanskrit. The book under review is a major work of his and has for its theme the Science of the Absolute, Brahma-Vidya. It gives the philosophy and also the Sadhana for its practices, and serves as a short and practical manual of Advaita Sadhana.

As the title signifies, the subject matter is not a discussion or speculation but a *darshana*, a

revelation to the inner sight which is rendered to the mind in terms of the intellect. There are ten chapters, giving a graded exposition. The Sanskrit text is followed by a translation in English and commentary by Swami Shaktidhara. Though the work is a classic on Advaita Siddhanta, the commentary draws upon the entire spiritual literature—the Upanishads, the Tantras, the Vedanta treatises, etc. A special feature is the important references to some of the lesser known texts like the *Siddhantasara Upanishad* or the *Katharudra*.

Speaking of Yoga in the chapter 'Vision of Unification', it is pointed out that it is not

enough to restrain the activities of the mind. The mind must be united with the Self. Restraint is a step towards that end. And when 'the mind is always the Absolute', it may take on various images but it is not conditioned by them, 'in the same way that a mirror takes on many images but itself does not change. ... When the mind is absorbed in the Self then there is endless delight in the Self. ... Yoga produces delight in the Self because after the mind, senses and body are calmed this is what naturally results.'

M. P. PANDIT

NEWS AND REPORTS

CENTRE VEDANTIQUE RAMAKRISHNA
77220-GRETZ, FRANCE

REPORT : 1978

The year 1978 was a good period for the Centre. The work went well and a noticeable increase in interest was experienced. The number of people attending lectures grew, as did the number of persons coming to the Centre to make retreats. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sri Krishna and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated, as well as Durga Puja, Kali Puja, and Shiva Ratri. The birthdays of numerous direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, as well as the birthday of St. Francis of Assisi, were marked by talks given by the young men residing at the Ashrama. Swami Ritajananda (the Minister-in-charge) visited devotees in Spain, the south of France, Switzerland, and Fulda and Fehmarn in Germany.

The Centre's quarterly magazine *Védanta* appeared regularly and interested many people. The most recent issue was distributed to more than 500 persons, of whom about eighty live outside France. This number includes both paid subscribers and the numbers sent to members of the Centre as part of their membership. Next year *Védanta* will publish *The Life of Swami Turiyananda* by Swami Ritajananda in a French translation. The book will appear in two volumes, as the first two issues of 1979. This book, published in English in 1963, was well received in India and in the West and is considered to be the standard biography of Swami Turiyananda. The French edition will include

numerous photographic illustrations. The fourth annual catalogue of books and religious goods was published in September, describing materials sold at the Centre or by mail order. A large number of catalogues were distributed. The sale of books, incense, and photographs increases from month to month.

Sarada Mandir was renovated during the year. All rooms were repainted, needed repairs were made, and everything was put in perfect order. The greenhouse is now heated from the heating system of Sarada Mandir, eliminating the necessity to maintain a wood fire there throughout the winter; and it has been furnished with electric lighting. A new road was built near the stable for the use of tractors and other farm machinery; and some trees and a hedge were planted beside it to separate the area devoted to agricultural activities from the residences.

The system of organic gardening followed in the vegetable garden continues to give excellent results. Plenty of wholesome vegetables to feed Ashrama members and guests are obtained, and the excess is canned or frozen. A ton of potatoes and several tons of apples were harvested. The chickens continue to lay well. During the year sixty litres of milk per day were obtained from the cows; and some thirty neighbours obtain their milk daily from the Centre.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION FLOOD RELIEF WORK

As a part of the extensive flood relief work conducted in recent months, the Ramakrishna Mission has distributed 7,554 pieces of Woollen Blankets, 2,937 pieces of Cotton Blankets, 9,087

pieces of Sarees, 2,990 pieces of Dhotis, 800 Old clothes numbering about a lakh have also pieces of Lungis and 15,471 pieces of children's been distributed. garments in about 100 villages of Howrah, (sd) SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA
Hooghly, Midnapore, 24-Parganas, Malda, Mur- (dt) 26-12-78
shidabad, and Bankura Districts of West Bengal. General Secretary
Ramakrishna Mission

SWAMI KAILASANANDAJI MAHARAJ

AN OBITUARY

We announce with profound sorrow the passing away of our respected Vice-President, Swami Kailasanandaji Maharaj. He entered Mahasamadhi at the Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan, Calcutta, on 16 December 1978, at 2-10 a.m. He was 84.

The Swami had been suffering from malignant ulcer in his intestines. For the past few months, he had been having haemorrhage, for which he was sent to the Seva Pratisthan. Through expert treatment there for some weeks, he showed improvement, but then his vitality started to decline rapidly, and the end came rather quickly.

Known in his pre-monastic days as Sri Sailesh Chandra Banerji, the Swami was born in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in the year 1894. For some time, he worked as a Lecturer in the Dacca University. He was deeply devoted to Srimat Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj (Mahapurush Maharaj) and was initiated by him at Dacca in 1922. He joined the Ramakrishna Order as a monastic member in November 1929, and in the following year (1930), on the Kali Puja day, he received Sannyasa from Mahapurush Maharaj.

The Swami served Mahapurush Maharaj as his personal attendant until February 1934. Shortly after the passing away of Mahapurush Maharaj, Swami Kailasanandaji served Srimat Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj, then President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, as his Private Secretary, for about six months. During the next two years (November 1934 to November 1936), the Swami worked at the Belur Math Headquarters as a Member of the Working Committee. For about eight years thereafter, (November 1936 to September 1944), the Swami was the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Centre at New Delhi. In October 1944, he was posted to Madras, as the President of the Ramakrishna Math there. He continued in this post for a period of nearly 27 years (till June 1971), during which the multifarious humanitarian activities of the Madras Centre registered remarkable progress. In addition, he had to look after several educational institutions in Madras, as their President.

In 1961, while in Madras, the Swami was elected a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math and of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission. In June 1971, he was elected Treasurer of the Math and the Mission, when the Swami came over to stay at the Belur Math Headquarters. In March 1975, he became Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, which position he held until the last.

Swami Kailasanandaji was well known for his regular habits, austere life, and meditative and devout personality. He has left behind a large number of disciples and devotees who cherish great love and regard for him. The Swami was a constant source of affection, solace, and inspiration to all—young and old, lay and monastic—who came in touch with him.