



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXIV

MARCH 1979

No. 3

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

THE HOLY MOTHER REMINISCES*

'When I was at Dakshineswar, I never went outdoors. The steward used to say, "I have heard that she is here, but I have never seen her!"

'Sometimes I did not see the Master for two whole months. But I would comfort my mind saying, "What have you ever done to deserve the sight of him every day?" I would stand for hours and listen through the cracks in the bamboo screen to the refrains of the Kirtanas. That was how I got my rheumatism. He used to say, "If a bird from the forest is shut up in a cage day and night, it gets rheumatism. Go out and visit the neighbours sometimes."

'I would take my bath at four in the morning. A little sunlight would reach the staircase in the afternoon and I would dry my hair there. I used to have a load of hair in those days. My room was very small and filled with all sorts of things. Hooks were hanging from the ceiling. When I went to bed at night, I could hear the fish moving in the earthen pot hanging from the hook. We kept Singhi fish for the Master. But I never felt any difficulty except for the toilet.

'Sometimes [I stayed] alone [at Dakshineswar], sometimes my mother-in-law would be there. Golap, Gauridasi¹ and the others would come sometimes. We cooked, lived, ate, all in that tiny room. We cooked for the Master. You see, he often suffered from indigestion. He could not stand the rich food given as offerings to the Goddess. We also cooked for the devotees. Latu would be there; he came after a disagreement with Ram Datta. The Master said, "Here is a nice boy. He will knead dough for you." The cooking went on day and night! For instance, Ram Datta would arrive and shout as he got down from the carriage: "I would like to have chapatis² and *chholar dal*³ today." As soon as I heard him, I would start cooking. We used six or eight pounds

* 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. Golap and Gauridasi (or Gauri Ma) were women disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

2. Small flat unleavened bread.

3. Dal is a kind of liquid curry prepared out of pulse. *Chhola* means chick-peas.

of flour for chapatis every day. Rakhal lived here. We often prepared Khichuri⁴ for him. Suren Mitter⁵ contributed ten rupees every month. Gopal senior⁶ did the marketing.

'Once at Dakshineswar I carried some food to his [the Master's] room. Thinking it was Lakshmi [the Master's niece] and not I, he said to me as I was coming away, "Close the door as thou goest," using the familiar second person singular [that is, thou] as is the custom [in Bengal] when addressing juniors or inferiors. I answered, "Yes, I am doing so." He was embarrassed when he recognized my voice and said, "Oh, it is you ! I thought it was Lakshmi. Please do not mind my addressing you that way." Even the next day he came to my room and said, "Look, my dear, I could not sleep last night, wondering how I could speak so rudely to you."

'One day at Dakshineswar the Master asked me to cook something nice for Naren. I prepared *moog dal*⁷ and chapatis. After the meal he asked Naren, "Well, how did you like it?" Naren replied, "Quite nice, just like patient's diet." Then the Master said to me, "What was that you cooked for him? Make *chana dal*⁸ and thicker chapatis." In the end I did so. Naren ate it and was highly pleased.

'When I was at Dakshineswar during the Master's illness, I used to boil his milk every day till it thickened. And if I gave him a whole seer, I would say it was half a seer—I always made it less. One day the Master found me out and said, "What is this ! You must always cling to truth. See how I have been taking too much milk and have made myself ill !" As soon as the idea entered his head, he really had indigestion.'

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'[This picture of the Master is] a very good one. It belonged to a brahmin. They made a few copies, and this brahmin had one. It used to be very dark, dark as the Goddess Kali. So they gave it to brahmin. When he went away from Dakshineswar, he left it with me. I placed it among the pictures of the other gods and used to worship it. I was then living below the music tower. The Master came there one day and seeing the picture, said, "Now, what is all this !" We were cooking in the space underneath the staircase, on the other side. Later I saw him pick up some *bel* [*Bilva*] leaves and flowers, etc. that were lying there, and place them before the picture, worshipping it. This is the same picture. That brahmin never came back ; so I still have it.

'[Once] the Master declared in an ecstatic mood : "I shall be worshipped in every home in future. -There is no telling of the number of devotees I shall have."'

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'At Dakshineswar I felt unwell one day and rose a little later than usual. In those days I used to get up at three in the morning. The next day I rose

4. A preparation made by boiling rice and lentils together with spices and ghee.

5. Surendra Nath Mitra, a householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

6. A monastic disciple of the Master ; later Swami Advaitananda.

7. Dal made from one type of pulse called *moog* in North India.

8. Dal made from split peas.

later still. Gradually I noticed that I no longer felt inclined to get up early. I said to myself, "Now you are in the clutches of indolence." Then I made up my mind and began to rise early again and everything was as before. A little determination is necessary to maintain these good habits.'

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

Sri Ramakrishna the Unknown (Editorial : An Incarnation of God has two aspects : one the historical or temporal, and the other the transcendent and eternal. A study of the biography of Sri Ramakrishna gives us knowledge only of the former aspect of his nature, while the latter aspect is unknown to us and can be known only through his direct self-revelation. This month's editorial points out that in evaluating the significance of the mission of Sri Ramakrishna on earth, we must take into account both the known and the unknown aspects of his nature.

A Fruitful Search for God: Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*: 'One, perchance, in thousands of men strives for perfection; and one perchance, amongst the blessed ones, striving thus, knows Me in reality.' Hereby, the Lord shows how rare is spiritual realization. As a matter of fact, every aspirant feels that he is sincere enough in his aspiration to realize God but to his surprise he does not find any spiritual progress in his life in spite of years of practice, and he naturally feels frustrated. In this learned article Swami Shraddhananda, Minister in charge of the Vedanta Society of Sacramento, California, U.S.A., has very beautifully pointed out the reasons for such frustration, and given due encouragement to such aspirants. He says, 'If there is sincerity, the right attitude and patience, an aspirant's search for God will be fruitful, no matter with what notion of God he

begins his search.' In his opinion 'a fruitful search for God is possible', if only one proceeds along the right lines.

Science, Religion and Swami Vivekananda—I: The writer of this brilliant article, Marie Louise Burke, also known as Gargi, who has done extensive research work on Swami Vivekananda in connection with his visits to the United States of America and Europe; she has presented her findings through two voluminous books : *Swami Vivekananda in America, New Discoveries* and *Swami Vivekananda : His Second Visit to the West, New Discoveries* (both published by the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta). At present she is writing one more volume concerning the Swami's stay in the United States and England during 1895-96. The present article reveals the versatile talents of the gifted writer, who has very skilfully tackled this subject. The author believes that 'in the last decade of the nineteenth century dharma was on the decline indeed.' And to fulfil the need of the age God came in the form of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. She has beautifully shown in this article how Swami Vivekananda influenced the nineteenth century thought-world by his dynamic message of Vedanta.

A Bengali translation of this article appeared earlier in the book *Chintanayak Vivekananda* published by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

The Vedantic Conception of Immortality:

In this illuminating article Leta Jane Lewis, Professor in the School of Humanities, California State University, Fresno, California, U.S.A., has very thoughtfully dealt with this subject mainly in the light of the teachings of the *Katha Upanisad* and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. She spoke on this subject at the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, on the Easter Sunday of 1978, and later at the Santa Barbara temple of the same Society. She rightly points out that 'immortality is not everlasting life in time and space.' And 'we must renounce our illusory identification with the body, the mind, and the senses, this mortal clinging to egotism in order to experience everlasting life.'

The Ramakrishna Mission Work among the Tribal People of India: The Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission conduct various types of activities in India and abroad. Its work outside India is mainly the preaching of Vedanta and propagating the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda; but in India, in addition to the preaching work, various humanitarian activities are conducted by the Math and Mission at different centres, of which educational and cultural activities for the tribal people of India form a part. In this article Swami Shantarupananda of the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, has narrated the various activities of the Mission among the tribals of India. The narration is authentic and lucid because the author himself did Mission work amongst the tribals of Meghalaya.

'Look to Saint Christopher and Go Ahead Reassured': In this write-up on St. Christopher, Swami Vidyatmananda of the Centre Védantique Ramakrishna, Gretz, France, has very graphically described how the Saint realized his goal through disinterested service or Karma-Yoga. Aspirants

are of various categories and so many are the paths prescribed in the scriptures to bring them to God. Although St. Christopher's legend narrated in this article is a myth, the author is of the opinion that 'mythology is one of God's ways to impart truths'. So if anyone 'looks to St. Christopher and goes ahead reassured' on the spiritual path, he is bound to reach the goal. As Swami Vivekananda says in his lecture 'Work and Its Secret': 'With the means all right, the end must come.... Once the ideal is chosen and the means determined, we may almost let go the ideal, because we are sure it will be there, when the means are perfected.' St. Christopher is a concrete example of this teaching of Swamiji.

The author has also supplied some photographs relating to St. Christopher's story, which add flavour to his article.

The Tao of Physics: In this thought-provoking article Dr. Fritjof Capra, the author of a book of this title published by Wildwood House, Fontana, London, presents the similarities between the world-views of physicists and Eastern mystics. He is doing research in theoretical high-energy physics at the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and lectures at the University of California at Berkeley. He is of the opinion that the two basic theories of modern physics, namely, the quantum theory and relativity theory, exhibit all the main features of the Eastern world-view. The former theory has abolished the notion of fundamentally separated objects and has come to see the universe as an interconnected web of relations whose parts are only defined through their connections to the whole; and the latter theory has, in a way, made the cosmic web come alive by revealing its intrinsically dynamic character by showing its activity as the very essence of its being. This world-view is akin to

that of the Eastern mystics who see the cosmos as a system of inseparable, interacting and ever-moving components of which the observer is an integral part.

Blaise Pascal's Les Provinciales : In this learned article Dr. S. Subhash Chandra, M.A. (Osmania), Dr. Phil. (Köln), Dr. Phil. (Paris), has deliberated at length on the impact of Blaise Pascal's polemical letters *Les Provinciales* on the Christian mind of the seventeenth century. Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) was a French thinker whose life was beset with many an inner crisis and external upheaval. In the opinion of the author, who has spent five years of his life in Germany and about twelve years in France studying French and German literature, these historic letters of Blaise Pascal provoked great convulsive reactions in the Christian world that 'even three intervening centuries have failed to pacify'.

Do We Understand the Religion Taught by Swami Vivekananda? : In this thoughtful and thought-provoking paper Dr. Nancy Tilden, Professor of Philosophy at the San Francisco State University, U.S.A., has rightly said that due to the apparent contradictions in the statements of Swami Vivekananda, 'we' do not really understand the religion taught by him. By 'we', she perhaps refers to the Westerners only, because, due to their age-long tradition, the Indians in a way understand the harmony lying behind the apparently contradictory statements of their scriptures, and the teachings of their great Incarnation. The conflict may, however, arise in the Western mind, which is not accustomed to it. In the article, the author has deliberated on four main types of contradictions found in Swamiji's statements, and has very skilfully shown how they can be reconciled in the light of Swami's other statements. She rightly says that Swami Vivekananda has

given a 'new' light to modern man. He has given 'a religion in which every man is as great as every other because every man is God, in which every man shall hear all the truth and choose how best he will realize it for himself, that is a religion "in tune with its time".'

The paper was read by the author in June 1977 at the Annual Reception given by the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, U.S.A., of which she is a member. Her special field of study and teaching has been in Philosophy of Religion, Comparative Religion, Indian Religion and Philosophy, Ancient Greek Philosophy, and Philosophy of Literature. She has also published several books of poetry.

Humanity in the Image of the Trinitarian God : In this learned article, Dr. Beatrice Bruteau, Director of the Philosopher's Exchange of Winston-Salem, N.C. (U.S.A.), has discussed the subject in the light of Vedantic as well as Christian concepts of the 'Trinitarian God'. God has three aspects—transcendent, cosmic and individual. It can be said that there is only one God having within Himself this interior complexity; or that He is three Persons in one Being. The author says : 'At first glance, the beings with whom we share our everyday life would seem to be formed on a very different pattern. Do they not repel one another by their electro-magnetic forces, by their sheer occupation of space, by their incompatible genotypes? Do not we ourselves hold aloof from one another according to our gender, race, nationality, culture, caste, or social class? And yet, even in the finite realm, where distinct acts support multiplicity and create unity, there are amazing features, imaging the indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity.'

A Pilgrimage to Kedar-Badri ; Kedarnath

and Badrinarayan—also called Badrinath—are two places of pilgrimage situated in the Himalayas. Many pious Hindus from all over India and abroad visit these places and thereby consider themselves blessed. Here is an account of pilgrimage as told by the late Swami Prabhavananda, former Minister in charge of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A. The Swami was then a Brahmacharin worker of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, and he accompanied an aged American Swami of the Ramakrishna Order

to Kedar-Badri. Everyone's account of pilgrimage is no doubt interesting and inspiring, but readers will find something special in this one.

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We regret to inform our readers that the translator's name, Sri Himangshu Bikash Ganguly, Attorney, Calcutta, of the article *Reminiscences of Swami Vijnanananda*, originally written in Bengali by Swami Jnanatmananda, was omitted in the January 1979 issue.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE UNKNOWN

(EDITORIAL)

The Timeless Adoration

When the sun sinks behind the western skyline, when shadows thicken and merge in the enveloping gloom, when from the horizon the carpet of stillness spreads across the twilit world, a simple ritual is performed in scores of Ashramas and in thousands of homes in adoration of a Being known to the world as Sri Ramakrishna. In a special room or corner of a room set apart for his unseen presence, incense is burnt and lights are waved, and often there is group singing of songs and hymns of praise and supplication.

A religious ritual is a sacrament. Behind it there is a sacralizing agent whose power sustains it for centuries. Through the ritual past events are recreated in the minds of devotees and they encounter divine phenomena afresh. When the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna do *pūjā* or *ārati* in their dwelling places, each place of worship becomes in a mystic sense his room at Dakshineswar temple garden. Time, as it were, stands still and history is transcended

when Sri Ramakrishna accepts, as his devotees believe, their worship day after day. For the time being, there then exists only an eternal now. Such is the miracle that faith works through religious rituals.

A ritual, however, is only a temporal expression of the timeless aspiration of the human soul. Birth after birth, through trackless centuries, man has been knowingly or unknowingly adoring the Divine in some form or other. It is in response to this timeless aspiration of the human soul that the Divine incarnates himself again and again on earth. The God-hungry soul seizes upon these manifestations and tries to derive new meaning and direction regarding its own progress in life. Every word that an Incarnation utters becomes a message of light, every gesture of his a promise of hope, every action a sacrament, and every place of his visit a centre of pilgrimage. This is true of all the great Incarnations of the past, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Christ, and has now come to be true in the case of Sri Ramakrishna.

Kasmai devāya haviṣā 'vidhema

Who is this Sri Ramakrishna to whom thousands of people now accord adoration? Who is Sri Ramakrishna whose deathless reality is now intimately connected with the lives and destinies of countless people all over the world? If this question is put to his devotees and followers, it is likely to embarrass a good number of them, while those who attempt to answer it soon find that they are failing to give clear expression to their deepest convictions about him. It is said that when Girishchandra Ghosh once requested Swami Vivekananda to write a life of Sri Ramakrishna, the great Swami hastily shrank back and told him, 'Ask me to dry up the ocean, I shall do that; ask me to pulverize the mountains, I shall do that; but please do not ask me to write the life of Sri Ramakrishna.'

If even a person of Swami Vivekananda's eminence felt so diffident about his understanding of his Master, one may not find it surprising that the ordinary devotees of Sri Ramakrishna fail to comprehend his real nature. But the truth is, more often than not, the acceptance of Sri Ramakrishna by his devotees is not the result of elaborate reasoning or deep cogitation. With many it is largely a case of divine invasion of the devotees' hearts, though they may attribute it to the reading of a book or a chance hearing of a talk or a casual visit to an Ashrama. And when this happens, they feel a compelling urge to accept and worship a phenomenon which they do not fully understand.

However, an unconscious acceptance of a spiritual ideal is often not strong enough to take the spiritual aspirant far in the spiritual path. Faith in God is too precious a thing to be allowed to remain in the dark subterranean chambers of the mind. Faith must be illumined by experience, and

devotion must become a fully conscious, self-directed approach.

The early Vedic Aryans worshipped several deities. Soon some enquiring minds among them began to ask themselves: 'Who is that Deity to whom we offer oblations?'¹ Questions of this kind urged them to undertake an investigation into the nature of the reality behind the phenomenal world, and in the Upanisads we find how this search culminated in the discovery of Brahman as the ultimate Truth. Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, or for that matter, devotees of any Personal God or Avatara, are sure to find the bounds of their understanding of their object of adoration expanding when they too undertake a similar enquiry.

'What Do You Think of Me?'

Sri Ramakrishna himself during his lifetime seemed to have encouraged such a spirit of enquiry among his intimate disciples. He used to ask them now and then what they thought about him. For instance, we find in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* the Master asking M., the author of the book, on the latter's third visit to him, 'Let me ask you something. What do you think of me? How many annas of knowledge of God have I?'²

There was a twofold purpose in asking this question. In the first place, the answer he got gave him an insight into the working of the disciple's mind and an understanding of the latter's belief pattern. Secondly, the question was calculated to stimulate the disciple's mind to make an effort to understand the person whom he adored, and keep his

1. कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम । *Rg-Veda*, 10.

121. Sāyana's interpretation of this line is, however different from the one given above.

2. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras : Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1974, (hereafter *Gospel*), p. 17.

relation with him an ever fresh and conscious experience. True love never becomes static, conditioned or stale. It is always a fresh and conscious experience involving the total personality. This becomes possible only when love is based on understanding, and the lover constantly encounters his beloved afresh.

The vast majority of people lose touch with Reality because they allow themselves to drift with the stream of life. A true spiritual man, on the contrary, encounters life and confronts Reality every moment of his life. Devotees often run the risk of taking their relationship with their Chosen Ideals for granted. They often remain satisfied with the thought that they already possess enough love for their Chosen Ideals. Similarly, meditation is often attempted with the assumption that the object of their meditation is known to them. If they know all about their objects of meditation, why should they meditate on them at all? This kind of presumption, which is born of ignorance, destroys the initiative for seeking the Truth, and blocks the path of progress. That is why the Upaniṣad teaches: 'Truth is known to him to whom It is unknown; he does not know to whom It is known. It is unknown to those who know well, and known to those who do not know.'³

Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'The devotees who come here may be divided into two groups. One group says, "O God, give me liberation." Another group, belonging to the inner circle, doesn't talk that way. They are satisfied if they can know two things: who I am [meaning himself]; second, who they are and what

their relationship to me is.'⁴ This is an important statement which comes to Swami Vivekananda's definition of true religion as 'the eternal relationship between the eternal soul and the eternal God'. The relationship between the devotee and his Chosen Ideal becomes eternal only when it is based on a true knowledge of the real nature of the worshipper and the object of worship.

Aura of Mystery

It is in the context of the above statement that we, as devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, have raised the question: who is Sri Ramakrishna? When we try to undertake such an enquiry, we come to the surprising discovery that, apart from some factual information about the external activities of Sri Ramakrishna during his brief life-span, he largely remains unknown. We do not really know the Being who lived on earth as Sri Ramakrishna. Even when we try to analyse the known facts of his life on earth, we come face to face with a mystery almost at every step.

An aura of mystery surrounds Sri Ramakrishna's life right from his birth. According to his biographers, before he was born his father had a dream at Gaya in which the deity Viṣṇu appeared before Khudiram and told him that he would soon be born as his son. Meanwhile Sri Ramakrishna's mother had a wonderful spiritual experience at her native village Kamarpukur. One day while standing before a temple of Lord Śiva, she saw a flood of celestial light issuing from the image and entering her person, and she soon began to feel that she was with child. Now, this raises the interesting question, whose manifestation Sri Ramakrishna really was—whether of Viṣṇu or of Śiva. Or, was it a case of religious harmony right in the mother's womb? The authorized

3. *Kena Upaniṣad*, II. 3 :

यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।

अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानताम् ॥

4. *Gospel*, p. 413.

biographies of Sri Ramakrishna do not attempt an explanation of this strange phenomenon.

His boyhood was full of mysterious experiences and events. Practically the whole of his youth was spent in spiritual practices the intensity, diversity and amplitude of which have no parallel in the history of hagiology. Those who came to teach him remained to adore him. The halo of divinity that he radiated was patent enough to even some of the great scholars of the day who openly declared him to be an Incarnation of God. He drew his disciples and devotees to him with an irresistible power, and to each of them he revealed himself in a different way. His patron Mathur Babu saw in him Śiva and Kālī. To his teacher Bhairavi Brahmani and some householder disciples he was Śrī Gaurāṅga. To the great lady devotee known as Gopal's Mother he was Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Swami Vivekananda saw in him the fulfilment of his highest ideals. Once he had an experience in which he saw Sri Ramakrishna as Gopī Rādhā, and this profoundly influenced his life. In the sacred shrine of Jagannath at Puri Swami Turiyananda had a vision of Sri Ramakrishna as that Deity. Swami Shivananda saw him as Śiva in a vision which he had at Benares. Swami Abhedananda had a wonderful spiritual experience in which he saw all the great Incarnations and deities merging in the person of Sri Ramakrishna.

This protean capacity to assume diverse divine forms is a special attribute of Sri Ramakrishna's being and marks him out from among other great Incarnations and prophets of the world. But this only thickens the mystery that envelops his real nature, and thwarts our attempts to categorize him according to known patterns of religious belief. He was unique and universal at the same time.

Temporal and Eternal Aspects

Sri Ramakrishna is now being accepted as an Incarnation of God not only by thousands of his followers, but also by a large number of other people in different parts of the world, among whom may be counted several eminent thinkers and famous men. A modern biographer of Sri Ramakrishna can now feel less hesitant and apologetic in discussing this aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's life than his early predecessors. That Sri Ramakrishna's life and experiences are extraordinary and extend beyond the bounds of ordinary sainthood is clear to all who care to study them. The main difficulty lies not in calling him an Incarnation of God but in what that term really means. And it is here that we meet Sri Ramakrishna the Unknown, for the mystery of the Incarnation has not so far lent itself to easy solution. A right understanding and evaluation of the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna should be based on the acceptance of the mystery of the Incarnation. The mystery that surrounds the real nature of Sri Ramakrishna is ultimately bound up with the mystery of the Incarnation.

The main function of an Incarnation is the redemption of mankind. The word redemption is, however, used here not in the narrow Christian sense of saving a man from original sin. It is used here only to indicate the superhuman capacity of a divine Person to cut the bonds and destroy the ignorance of millions of souls by infusing spiritual power and knowledge into them, and lift them to higher planes of existence where they enjoy supreme peace and bliss. The vast majority of ordinary mortals are unable to achieve all this by their own individual efforts. An Incarnation is a reservoir of great spiritual power, and he creates, with himself as the centre, a field of spiritual forces. Whoever is drawn

into this field by the irresistible will of the Incarnation spontaneously gets illumination and freedom. This is essentially how Swami Vivekananda explains the doctrines of Incarnation and Grace.⁵

The salvific work of an Incarnation begins on a colossal scale only after his withdrawal from his physical framework. The purpose of his embodiment is to reveal to humanity an adorable human form, to set up a new ideal of life, to deliver a new message of hope—all suited to the contemporary needs and temper of the people. But all these, however necessary they are, have only a limited value. They serve only to turn suffering men and women away from their futile worldly pursuits and draw them to a particular religious focus. The real work of an Incarnation begins only after people have been brought to his focus of influence. The earthly life of an Incarnation is only a guidepost pointing to his transcendental essence. This is what Sri Ramakrishna means when he says that the Incarnation is like a hole in a wall through which one can see the other side, which is otherwise inaccessible to one's vision.

To identify the reality of an Incarnation solely with his earthly life and activities and exclude his transcendental dimension is to mistake the gate for the mansion. This is the mistake that Protestant theologians have been committing with regard to the life of Jesus. By over-emphasizing the historicity of Jesus and restricting the significance of the Incarnation to certain incidents in his earthly life, some of the modern Protestant theologians have sought to deprive him of his mystical and spiritual dimensions.

The historical aspect of an Incarnation is only the temporal dimension of his eternal spiritual Reality. His mission on

earth derives its authority and significance from his transcendent power and purpose. This point should not be lost sight of when we study the life and mission of Sri Ramakrishna. His extreme renunciation of 'lust and gold', his superhuman spiritual struggles and experiences, and the depth and sweep of his message—all these were extraordinary and glorious indeed. But they only point out to his own transcendental glory which is hidden from our mortal eyes. What the famous *Puruṣa Sūkta* says may be said to be true in this case also, perhaps in a more restricted sense : 'All this (created universe) manifests only one-fourth of the glory of the Puruṣa ; the remaining three-fourths lies in the immortal celestial plane.'⁶

Embodiment of Infinite Spiritual Ideas

It takes centuries for mankind to comprehend an Incarnation. For centuries millions of people have been inspired by the lives and teachings of Buddha and Christ and hundreds of books have been written on them. Yet, they still continue to stimulate fresh studies, and new books are still being brought out throwing new lights on the contemporary relevance and significance of these old Masters. When a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna one day complained to Swami Vivekananda that his methods of preaching and social service were Western in type and incompatible with Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, Swamiji delivered himself with great fervour : 'The thing is this : Sri Ramakrishna is far greater than his disciples understand him to be. He is the embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas capable of development in infinite ways. Even if one can find a limit to the knowledge of Brahman, one cannot

5. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, VII, 1972, pp. 241-42.

6. *Rg-Veda*, 10. 90. 3:

एतावानस्य महिमास्तो ज्यायाँश्च पूरुषः ।

पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥

measure the unfathomable depth of our Master's mind."⁷

The Incarnation who is the 'embodiment of infinite spiritual ideas' takes centuries to work himself out. Through innumerable institutions and religious traditions, through the creative minds of saints and sages, artists, thinkers, philosophers and leaders of society, his ideas find expression for a very long period of time, inspiring, comforting and guiding suffering humanity until they all to the last man find themselves safe through the portals of immortality. In this sense the life and mission of Sri Ramakrishna may be said to have only just begun.

For a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna the most important problem of his life is the quest for the real Sri Ramakrishna. A true devotee of his does not remain satisfied with reading or hearing about his life and teachings. Making use of the knowledge thus gained, he tries to seek the Reality of which this knowledge is only a shadow. He soon finds that this mystic quest is leading him

on to the depth of his soul which is the gateway to the world of the Spirit. It is there that the real Ramakrishna is to be sought.

The real Sri Ramakrishna is unknown but *not* unknowable. He can be known only if he reveals himself. And he reveals himself to the sincere aspirant in the secret depths of his heart and fulfils the beginningless yearnings of his soul. Diverse and mysterious are the ways by which the Incarnation reveals himself to the blessed, and leads them from the unreal to Real, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality. What even these blessed souls feel about him has been expressed by Swami Abhedananda, who was certainly one among them, in the following verse: 'O Lord, I do not know your real nature. Whatever be the Truth you reveal yourself in, to That I offer my salutations again and again.'⁸

8. 'Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Guṇāmṛtam', 9; in Swami Abhedananda, *Songs Divine*, trans. P. Seshadri Aiyer, Calcutta: Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 1944, p. 58:

तत्त्वं देव न जानामि रामकृष्ण तव प्रभो ।

यादृशोऽसि कृपासिन्धो तादृशाय नमो नमः ॥

⁷ Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1974, p. 505.

A FRUITFUL SEARCH FOR GOD

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

Those who have been interested in seeking God are often baffled by different types of frustration, and they do not understand whether it is possible for their search to be fruitful. Often some seekers would complain, 'I have tried meditation. I have tried prayers and concentration for two years, three years or four years, but illumination has not come.' Others would complain that they have tried in different ways to meditate

on God and are confused about what really God is.

When we are interested in seeking God, we should first settle what God we are seeking, because in different religions different pictures of God are given, and even in the same religion different concepts of God are found. The emotional and intellectual constitution of each mind is different. It is only natural that different men will approach

God differently. If the seeker cannot decide by himself what particular idea of God he should try to meditate on among the innumerable concepts and notions of the Divine, he can seek the guidance of a competent teacher. If this question is not settled, it is bound to bring confusion in the spiritual life. Some persons like to think of God as an impersonal truth—infinite reality, infinite consciousness, infinite bliss. They should stick to this idea of Impersonal God. It can happen that a person whose basic aptitude is towards Impersonal God may, after reading several books on Bhakti, develop a curiosity for meditating on God with some form, such as Shiva or Krishna or Mother. He may continue for some time, but eventually may not find joy and peace. His contemplation will not be fruitful to that extent which he expects. On the other hand, consider the case of a person who is of an emotional nature and wants to love God tangibly, in a personal way. If, by reading different philosophical and metaphysical books, he tries to contemplate on God as the infinite principle, his meditation will not be interesting. There will be a frustration in his spiritual life. So, this is an important point to decide upon in the beginning of our search—what God is appealing to me and what God I should seek.

Then another trouble comes—our impatience. We begin with a certain notion of God and carry on for some time, and then we become restless. Not finding 'an instant illumination' we try another concept of God. Then another. We drift from point to point. This drifting is a great hindrance to effective search. After the Ishta (chosen Ideal) has been decided upon, one should give sufficient time for that contemplation to become effective. Sri Ramakrishna's parable of digging a well in one place is very instructive. If a person digs in one spot just ten feet or twenty feet and, not finding water, gives it up, and goes on

digging again from place to place but nowhere sufficiently deep, he is bound to be frustrated. If he had dug a little more, say thirty feet, he could have found the water. Sri Ramakrishna said that often in our religious life this impatience comes, and it is a great obstruction. Ishta-nistha (clinging faithfully to one's chosen Ideal) is extremely important. It, of course, may happen in the case of some spiritual aspirant that his Ishta reveals to him, at different stages of his spiritual life, various types of God-consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna began his search by worshipping God as Divine Mother, with the help of an image of Kali, but he had that spirit of absolute self-surrender, and a burning faith. Just as a child, having total faith in his mother, knows that whatever is necessary for him the mother will do, so, with that kind of faith, he carried on his Sadhana (spiritual practice). But it was not an easy path. If some worldly desire is not fulfilled we suffer greatly; for a spiritual seeker to be frustrated in the desire for God-vision, it is one-hundred times more painful. He has withdrawn his mind from many sense enjoyments, and has sacrificed many things for God. Now if God does not respond, an acute suffering overwhelms the aspirant's being. This happened to Sri Ramakrishna. He suffered days and months together, because Mother Kali remained a motionless stone. But he did not give up. His faith sustained him. Then one day a miracle happened. Mother responded. Beyond any doubt Sri Ramakrishna felt that Mother was formless, infinite consciousness. She was neither male nor female. Mother really had no form. This vision naturally brought great peace to his mind, but his dependence on the Mother continued. We can imagine his attitude by some such words: 'O Mother, I shall remain ever a child to you. You have blessed me with this vision, but I cannot say that

this is final, so I depend on you. Kindly hold my hand and carry me wherever it is necessary for the perfection of my spiritual life.' As a result of this self-surrender, wonderful things happened. The Mother began to bring him many other experiences. To Sri Ramakrishna, all these different visions of God, personal or impersonal, were just the different faces of his Ishta—the Divine Mother. At every step his search became fruitful.

If there is sincerity, the right attitude and patience, an aspirant's search for God will be fruitful, no matter with what notion of God he begins his search. By God's grace more and more of the truth of Godhead as also of his own true nature will be revealed to him. In our spiritual life there are two confusions. We do not know who or where God is, and we do not know who really we are. This ignorance regarding God, ourselves and our world is called Maya. A fruitful search for God enables man to cross Maya.

When man looks upon himself he seems to be very tiny compared to the outside universe which is so vast. Wherever he goes he is confronted by the duality of the little and the great. He goes to a library and sees on the shelves thousands of books relating to different subjects. How little his knowledge is compared to the storehouse of knowledge contained in those volumes! A sense of frustration and insignificance overwhelms him. He goes on a trip to a high range of mountains and finds that he can climb barely a few thousand feet, while the vast stretch of peaks all around mocks at his littleness. He is sitting in a restaurant where he is allowed to eat as much as he likes for a certain sum. Having paid the sum he begins eating, but soon his stomach refuses to accept any more. Again there is a sense of frustration—'I wish I could eat double this quantity, but I cannot.' This is our experience. And it is true in the

regions of love, wealth, happiness, friendship, honour and so on. The experience of the vast, and at the same time the little, go side by side. This conflict can only be resolved by spiritual wisdom. God-consciousness is a discovery on two levels. It is discovering my spiritual nature and discovering God, the Infinite, who is hidden by the glare of empirical existence. He is hidden by nature, he is hidden by life, by my mind, by all the sense experiences. He is the greatest—'Bhuma' as the *Chandogya Upanishad* says. So the spiritual search goes on simultaneously on two levels. As I grow spiritually, I discover God and I also discover myself. My physical and psychological entity may be limited, but my spiritual nature is not little. I am really spirit, and spirit is much more than nature, much more than mind, much more than life. In the process of this discovery my fears and doubts about myself slowly begin to disappear. In my True Self there cannot be any fear, any confusion, any doubt; so, spiritual progress means progress in my comprehension of my spiritual nature as also the comprehension of that infinite, changeless reality—God, who is at the back of things and happenings.

For a fruitful search for God, one point should be made clear—why am I searching for God? Many people seek God when they are in a crisis, a crisis of health, economic condition or some other worldly difficulty. They seek the help of God in that crisis. If God listens to their prayer they say, 'Oh, God is kind'. If their prayer is not responded to, they lose their faith. If, on the other hand, one is a man of true faith, one says, "Well, it is God's will; let His will be done." His faith is not shaken. In a spiritual search you are seeking God for peace and strength. You are not satisfied with this world as it is; it is continuously changing. You are not satisfied with this body; it is fast approaching to its seventieth

year, the deadline in your horoscope ! You are afraid, so you want to lift this fear. You seek something stable, a knowledge that will bring you the joy of totality. You are not satisfied with little knowledge, with little titbits of pleasure. Saints and seers tell us that a person who has realized God becomes free from all evil, from all passions, fear, and pettiness, from all ignorance. Even though living in the body, he feels this freedom. We read in the *Bhagavad-Gita* that the soul of man cannot be burnt by fire, killed by weapons, scorched by heat or withered by wind.¹ That is the true nature of man, the pure conscious principle within this transient body. In a genuine spiritual search, we seek God in order to discover that we really are parts of that Infinite, immortal Being. Our True Self shares the nature of God. If we can find God through our search, we shall simultaneously find our Self. We shall find ourselves eternally related to God ; our life will be grounded in that endless love directed to God. The fear of birth and death will vanish forever. When we have become conscious of God, we have no future, no past. We then live in an eternal present, which is timeless. We also rise above the fetters of space. The vast universe can no longer frighten us.

If my purpose is pure, if I seek God for God's sake, that is to say that if I seek God in order to be filled with God, I shall certainly be able to discover that God is my essential truth. The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (I.iv.7) says that God has entered into our body through the orifice of the head, and He has pervaded every pore of this body, as consciousness. It is very important to know where to seek God. Often we seek God outside, in heaven after our death. Great seers and teachers tell us that if you seriously are seeking God, try to see His presence first within yourself.

There are worshippers who have experienced this. They have felt that in this body and mind the real power is God. It is He who is enabling us to see, hear, smell and work. They always feel that it is God who is operating their life. So a feeling of self-surrender comes.

Swami Vivekananda wrote a wonderful hymn to Lord Shiva.² In one stanza he describes Lord Shiva as the infinite calm at the back of all the noise of this universe. In another verse he implies that our wild mind, with all its desires and distractions is, in fact, the dance of Shiva. If we can look upon our wild mind as the dance of Shiva, the wildness of the mind will disappear in two seconds ; that is the miraculous touch of God. If we can touch anything with the Divine, that thing is at once transformed. So, when we are seeking God, we should search within. If we are able to feel His presence in our body movement, in the movement of our mind, we become purified.

The practice of inner contemplation gradually enables us to see God's glory outside. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, in the tenth chapter (Vibhuti Yoga), prescribes the contemplation of God in nature. Wherever there is any manifestation of power or excellence, whether in a mountain or in a tree or in a man, the *Gita*, teaches us to see the presence of God in that object. So this could be another search, the search for God in nature. But it is better that this search is carried on after we have progressed a little in trying to experience God within ourselves.

At no time in our spiritual life should we give way to depression. There is nothing to be depressed about in our spiritual life, because we are seeking God, who is consciousness. He is not dumb and deaf. We

1. *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*, II. 23.

2. See 'A Hymn to Shiva', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, IV, 1972, pp. 501-04.

should retain our faith. We should not read too much nor allow our mind to be distracted in too many directions. God is simple and the search is also simple. The main factors necessary in this search are faith, self-surrender and sincerity. Sri Ramakrishna said that if you approach just one step towards God, God will come ten steps towards you. Somehow man has been imprisoned in this little life. If he can develop a desire for freedom, his search is bound to be fruitful.

We should remember that spiritual experience is a process. It is not that all of a sudden we find ourselves illumined. Illumination is happening every day. When you are sitting in contemplation even for fifteen minutes, feel that you are in the presence of God. You are repeating His holy name; that is communion, that is an experience of God. If God is the power in me, the love in me, then how can I miss Him? If the Vedantic definition of God as the totality is clear, we can find God every day. As our contemplation grows

deeper, the sense of God's presence becomes stronger and stronger. No, we cannot miss God. Of course when we are very busy with our secular activities and involvements, the mind is outward, but just as soon as we have found some time to close our eyes, we are bound to feel the presence of God. We can hear God's voice saying, 'I am with you, I am with you.' We should have a spirit of self-surrender. Let God drive this life. Surely, He is a responsible driver. He is my eternal friend, my eternal companion. As these experiences become clearer and clearer, our life becomes fearless, strong, detached. We then walk in this life with freedom; we are not afraid of anything—not even of death. Unnecessary desires do not crowd our mind any more, because we know that by experiencing God we experience everything. We enjoy everything through God. This is the real fruition of our spiritual life. Spiritual life is aimed at bringing us to that state where the little man disappears and a man of God appears. So, a fruitful search for God is possible.

SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—I

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S WORK IN THE WEST AS SEEN AGAINST THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY WORLD

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

1

As everyone who is at all familiar with the life of Swami Vivekananda knows, he opened his mission to the Western world by appearing at the renowned Parliament of Religions, which was held in Chicago in September of 1893. His entrance onto the scene of the West was dramatic and impressive. Through hindsight, it almost

seems to have been planned by a master Planner in response to the profound need of the age. The nineteenth century was an age without a name or *Weltanschauung*; its outlook had never stayed still long enough to be tagged, nor was it all in one piece at any one time. It was ever in a state of division and flux, turbulent with currents and cross-currents of thought, divided between confidence and doubt, hope and

despair. Indeed, the philosophical ground continually shifted as on some deep-lying fault line in the human psyche, and no edifice of thought could be constructed that did not soon crack, if not crumble. In the words of Alfred North Whitehead, 'The nineteenth century has been a perplexed century, in a sense which is not true of any of its predecessors of the modern period.... Each individual was divided against himself.... Some of the deeper thinkers among theologians and philosophers were muddled thinkers. Their assent was claimed by incompatible doctrines; and their efforts at reconciliation produced inevitable confusion.'¹

At the root of this perplexity and muddled thinking lay the contradiction between the new scientific view of the world and the traditional Christian view—the religious view; it was a split which, given certain fundamental assumptions of Western thought, was, in fact, irreconcilable. Yet neither view could be given up: both were essential to every aspect of modern civilization. Each had its ardent champion, and each its ardent opponent; but the main effort of the age was somehow to reconcile the two. That effort, as Whitehead pointed out, resulted in confusion, and by the end of the century, the scientific view, with its arsenal of material benefits to mankind, its marvels of knowledge and technology, was winning out. It was doing so at the cost of all that man, in his heart, had held most dear, primarily his hopeful reaching toward some meaning beyond this world. A year or so after the close of the century, in 1902 to be exact, Bertrand Russell could write in a passage that became famous, so well did it give voice to the underlying mood of the age:

Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.²

Courageous though the passage was, it bespoke a position untenable to the human mind. Yet this was where man's reason had led him, and there seemed no honourable response except to face his doom with dignity. But not everyone reacts to a void with moral courage, and if there was a time when *dharma* was on the decline, it was the end of the nineteenth century in the West. This is not to say that 'unrighteousness' in its obvious and full-blown forms was rampant. It is only to say that the ground in which moral disorder takes root and flourishes was prepared and fertile. Doubt had set in; morality had lost its divine sanction; purpose had become reduced to a short-term programme; immortality was doubtful; the search for ultimate meaning was looked upon by many as an absurdity. In short, religion as a living force was rapidly waning.

And was it not precisely for such a state of things that Sri Krishna had promised

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925, p. 119.

2. Bertrand Russell, 'A Free Man's Worship', in *Mysticism and Logic*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1957, p. 54.

He would manifest Himself? Did He not say, in effect, that when a people sought Him least and needed Him most, He would come? 'Whenever, O Descendent of Bharata, *dharma* declines and *adharma* prevails, I manifest Myself.'³ In the last decade of the nineteenth century *dharma* was on the decline indeed. And, indeed, the Lord manifested Himself.

He did so in the Western world with an appropriate flourish, setting the stage for His appearance there—or, more accurately, for the appearance of His Prophet—with a grand assembly of prelates from all corners of the earth. One story goes that when Swami Vivekananda was in Madras in the spring of 1893, uncertain whether or not to go to America, Sri Ramakrishna appeared to him again and again, urging him aloud to go, countering his protests. Reluctantly, the Swami told of these profoundly personal conversations to an important disciple, who had overheard the two voices. 'I had no desire to go to join the Parliament of Religions in Chicago,' the Swami recounted, 'but Sri Ramakrishna has come to me and insists that I go. He said, "You have come to do my work. You will have to go. Know for certain that the Parliament of Religions has been arranged for you."'⁴ This story was not recorded during the lifetime of anyone who could verify it; thus very probably it can qualify only as apocrypha. Yet did not Swami Vivekananda recount the same incident, or incidents, to his English disciple Sister Nivedita? In later years Nivedita, wanting never to leave India, wrote to a friend, "I think it must have been the

same feeling that made Him [Swami Vivekananda] so difficult to move when the time came for Him to go to America. He said that a Ghost constantly appeared to Him, and told Him, to leave. Evidently He fought against it."⁵ Indeed, Swami Vivekananda seems clearly to have known of a divine intent regarding his appearance at the Parliament of Religions. Shortly before leaving India for America, he said to one of his brother-disciples, Swami Turiyananda, whom he had met at Mount Abu, 'The Parliament of Religions is being organized for this [pointing to himself]. My mind tells me so. You will see it verified at no distant date.'⁶

The grand Parliament of Religions with its lengthy and elaborate preparations was all for a young and unknown Hindu sadhu? To anyone but the Swami's brother-monks and disciples the very idea would have seemed preposterous. But by the time the Parliament was over, it was clear to everyone that Swami Vivekananda, 'an orator by divine right', was the star of the show. And, indeed, there seems to have been very little lasting good accomplished by this vast assemblage of ecclesiastical personages except to introduce the Swami to the Western world.

Thenceforth, for the next three years or so, he proceeded to deliver a message to the American and English people that constituted a solution to the seemingly insoluble predicament in which Western thought had found itself. His concern was neither to refute nor to reinforce the various philosophies of his time; he was not in any sense a product of Western culture; although he was well-versed in Western philosophy, his thought had not been cast in its mould.

3. *Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita*, IV. 7.

4. This account was first published in *Sandipan* (magazine of the Shikshanamandira of the Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha at Belur Math) and more recently was recounted in 'Vivekananda from Bombay to Vancouver' by Swami Chetan-ananda, *Udbodhan* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, Durga Puja Special Number, 1973).

5. Sister Nivedita to Miss MacLeod, Wednesday in Easter Week, 1904.

6. *Spiritual Talks*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1955, p. 254.

He had been nurtured, rather, by a civilization that went back through millennia of tradition that the West barely knew and had never rightly understood. Despite the knowledge of Indian scriptures that had filtered down in fragments to the educated public through Sanskrit scholars and Orientalists, the Western people had but slight understanding of Hindu thought and culture. They were half repelled, half fascinated by it; but on the whole they were content to remain ignorant and wary. It was because of this faintly (or, in some instances, crudely) suspicious attitude toward India that the Swami's prestigious and widely known introduction through the Parliament of Religions had been necessary; without it he might have had to work long and hard for a hearing by the public. As it was, the American people, generally speaking, at once opened their doors to him and recognized that he had come to fill a spiritual need—and this precisely because he had come from another culture in which thought had long ago taken an inward turn.

It was not that on hearing the Swami the people of the West suddenly changed their outlook upon the world. Some did, it is true: a relatively small number of individuals underwent an intense and lasting conversion of innermost thought; a far larger group of men and women, numbering in the thousands, were also deeply moved by the grandeur and sublimity of the Swami's ideas, and as a result their own ideas were no doubt permanently modified, if not transformed. But while many were thus changed, it is not alone in the Swami's immediate impact upon the West that one should look for the power of his influence. Even though he unquestionably impressed leaders of contemporary Western thought, such as, for instance, William James, Edward Carpenter, Max Müller, Canon H. R. Haweis,

Moncure Conway, Canon Wilberforce, Reverend John Hopps, Lewis G. Janes, Leo Tolstoy (who had read his works), Josiah Royce, Charles Voysey—the list is long—even though both his thought and luminosity of character were deeply appreciated by men and women whose own thought was making its mark on the age, it is not evident that the Swami's revolutionary outlook significantly altered the basic philosophy or theology of the time. The mainstream of educated thought seemed to flow on as though no powerful infusion of spirituality had entered it.

In what, then, lay the Swami's influence? Before trying to answer this question, I should, I think, point out that his Western visit did indeed have one immediate and lasting effect upon the contemporary West. America's theretofore uninformed and prejudiced attitude toward India and Hinduism became transformed through his lectures. Throughout his lecture tours in the fall of 1893 and all of 1894, it was obvious to everyone with a mind even half open that a culture which could produce so great and noble a son as Swami Vivekananda must be a great and noble culture indeed. His lectures on the meaning of his country's religious and social customs, his fiery and convincing defence of India's spiritual and moral profundity, his lectures on religion itself—all had a far-reaching impact upon American attitudes. This alone was a great accomplishment. But there was much more.

As was said above, throughout his Western visit, and particularly in 1895 and 1896, he was giving to the modern West the solution to its complex problems of thought and life. As an essential part of this giving, was he not planting the living seeds of his ideas (or, as he would have said, of his Master's message) deep within the collective mind of Western man, there to germinate, to slowly rise to the surface

of consciousness and, in the fullness of time, as though in the natural course of events, to alter the world-view of the West? Witnessing today the widespread awakening of young men and women to the universal value of Eastern thought and ideals, seeing everywhere in the West a reaching toward India's ancient wisdom, one cannot but think that this was the case. The full impact of his influence is only today becoming evident.

But however that may be, the purpose of this article is to try to examine, at least to some slight extent, one aspect of the Swami's message—his solution to the tangle of thought in which Western culture was perilously enmeshed.

2

The story of the conflict between the two apparently irreconcilable world-views—scientific and religious—is a familiar one. But let us review it very briefly. It had all begun, as is well known (and if one may assign a beginning to anything), three hundred and fifty years earlier when, in 1543, Copernicus made the sun stand still and the earth revolve around it in a perfect circle, as befitted the movement of celestial bodies. Needless to say, this sudden movement—perfect or not—gave almost everyone on the long-stationary and centrally located earth a severe jolt. Still, the philosophical and theological implications of this rearrangement of the heavens were not immediately apparent to the medieval world.

It was Galileo who, in the first half of the seventeenth century, dealt the religious tradition of the Middle Ages its first really damaging blow. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) rejected the God-oriented teleology of the Christian Church and, though he may not have meant to do so, thereby laid the cornerstone of a heretical world-view.

Medieval science, following Aristotle, had explained things and events in terms of their purposes. That is to say, it asked: To what end are things moving? What is their use? Generally speaking, it was believed that their use and value lay entirely in their use and value to man's purpose, and man's purpose—the *why* of all human activities—was his salvation. In other words, everything in the universe (a small and tidy place) was explainable in terms of its role in a sublime drama in which man was the protagonist and his unalterable assignment to eternal life in heaven or in hell, the grand finale. The exact purpose of practically everything in the universe had been discerned by the Church Fathers and the Scholastics through Aristotelian logic and Scripture. They had felt no need to step outside their monasteries and libraries in order to understand the design of the Cosmos.

Galileo, on the other hand, had gone out of doors and with the aid of his telescope, together with a knowledge of Kepler's astronomical calculations, had put forward an entirely different explanation of cosmic events. He explained things not in terms of *why* they existed and moved, but of *how* they did so. It will be convenient and prudent here to quote from Edwin Arthur Burt:

In the metaphysics of Galileo . . . *the real world is the world of bodies in mathematically reducible motions, and this means that the real world is a world of bodies moving in space and time.*⁷ [The italics are Burt's.]

This meant also that in this real world of physical bodies moving in accordance with mathematical laws, there was no place

7. Edwin Arthur Burt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954, (hereafter *Physical Science*), p. 93.

for final causality or purpose whatsoever. To quote Burt again:

The real world [that is, the world of primary qualities] is simply a succession of atomic motions in mathematical continuity. Under these circumstances, causality could only be intelligibly lodged in the motions of the atoms themselves, everything that happens being regarded as the effect solely of mathematical changes in these material elements.⁸

Through logical steps that need not concern us here, this concept of mechanical, rather than teleological, causality led Galileo to the conclusion that there must be a physical force to start a body moving, and, likewise, a force to alter that motion. Later on, this hypothesis was precisely formulated by Newton as the First Law of Motion. But the important point to notice here is that when the explanation of things in terms of their purposes was replaced by a mechanical, mathematical explanation, God, as Final Cause, was no longer necessary to cosmic motion, or to any motion. Galileo, however, retained God as *First Cause*; it was He who set things moving with an initial push, after which matters took care of themselves, irrespective of human destiny or, for that matter, human existence. In the words of E. A. Burt: 'God thus ceases to be the Supreme Good in any important sense; he is a huge mechanical inventor, whose power is appealed to merely to account for the first appearance of the atoms.'⁹ This did not sit well with the ecclesiastical authorities. As is well known, Galileo was brought to trial.

Then came Isaac Newton, born in 1642, the year Galileo died. Standing, as he said, on the shoulders of his giant forerunners—men like Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes—Newton completed the foundations of modern science. With him, the scientific

outlook—the explanation of movement in terms of mechanical causes rather than of divine purposes—took hold of the Western mind and, despite vigorous protests and reactions, has never let go. The very idea of a divine world purpose toward which, and because of which, things moved and heavenly bodies revolved, ceased to operate.

It was not, perhaps, so much that the new scientific outlook created the modern time-spirit as that the spirit of the Western Renaissance, the expansion of the Western mind in all fields and in all directions, made a new way of looking at the world imperative. The closed, static universe of the Middle Ages could no longer contain the burgeoning human spirit. The new science seemed to make everything possible to man. Although the mechanical Newtonian universe removed the earth from its central position in the scheme of things, although man became a mere speck of dust in the vastness of infinite space, his rational powers were potentially able to comprehend all the intricate workings of nature, of which he was a part, and what was even more exhilarating, he could learn eventually to control them. It was a heady prospect.

The eighteenth century was so much of a piece in this world-view that it was easily given a name: the Age of Reason. There were, of course, all shades of opinion assembled under this broad classification, but generally speaking, the mood was rational, optimistic, and humanitarian. Not only the physical universe, but the social, economic, political, religious worlds, as well, were thought to be governed by mathematical laws that were perfectly comprehensible to and predictable by human reason. If uninterfered with, all things would work together for good, and a perfected human society would result. It was all as sane and pleasant as a minuet.

This is not the place to discuss the various philosophies that grew up in the

8. *Physical Science*, p. 99.

9. *Physical Science*, p. 99.

eighteenth century—some materialistic, some idealistic. It is sufficient to say here that as God's function was limited to that of First Cause, as the idea of divine purpose was dispensed with, and as, consequently, the conception of the world as a moral order became insupportable (for what is objective good and evil, if there is no final purpose to evaluate them by?)—as these fundamental changes took hold in Western thought, religion became less and less effective and meaningful in the affairs of men. In reaction, popular revivals of traditional religious doctrines flared up, as did also the unorthodox spirit of romanticism, which was to have its full bloom in the next century. But these reactions did not alter the basic outlook; the scientific world-view and its companion, rational religion (also known as Deism), prevailed. Revelation, miracles, and prophecy were shown to be irrational and unnecessary. Reason, God-given reason, was upheld as an adequate instrument by which man could prove God's existence and know His will. Belief in the supernatural was scorned as superstitious. In short, as Voltaire understood it, natural, or rational, religion consisted of 'the principles of morality common to the human race.'¹⁰ And that was the whole of it.

And then rational religion was itself demolished by Reason. Several philosophers contributed to this final wreckage, but it was Immanuel Kant who did the most thorough and relentless job in demonstrating that the three primary attempts to prove rationally the existence of God—the argument from design, the argument from a first cause, and the ontological argument—were invalid. 'I assert, then,' Kant wrote in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, 'that all the attempts at a mere speculative use of the reason in the field of theology are

entirely fruitless and in their very nature null and void.'¹¹ With the collapse of His rational supports, God lost prestige among the Enlightened. Thenceforth, agnosticism and atheism became fully consistent with a scientific and rational world-view.

Kant, however, had not said that God did not exist. His monumental philosophy was in part an attempt to re-establish *a priori* knowledge, which David Hume had rejected, and in part an attempt to establish a basis for religious knowledge other than reason, which he himself had rejected. These two aspects of his philosophy are inseparable, but it is the implications of the latter that took the nineteenth century by storm and with which we are presently concerned. As is well known, Kant found a place where man's religious instincts would have validity and meaning. To put his complex, all-encompassing philosophy very briefly: he divided the universe into two worlds. One was the world of time, space, and causation. This is the world as we know it and in which we function; it is created by the inherent and unalterable structure of the human mind, which can conceive and perceive *only* in the terms of space and time and the several categories (or general concepts) such as totality, plurality, causality, and so on. This human mind is like a spatial and temporal strainer through which the real world (the 'things in themselves') comes to us. The world as we know it, therefore, is a temporal-spatial world governed completely by the law the mind gives to it. It is determined throughout. God has no place in it; divine purpose cannot be applied to it; it is one-hundred per cent scientific and mechanical. There are no loopholes through which God can be introduced. The real world, on the other hand, the world which the senses can never perceive and of which

¹⁰. Voltaire, *Eléments de la Philosophie de Newton*, chap. 6.

¹¹. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, I.

the mind can form no conception, may be the world in which God operates and in which natural law has no say. But in what way can we know this real world? Kant held that through our still, small voice—our moral sense, our religious intuition—we could perhaps get some inkling of it. Thus he made it possible for God and the mechanical universe to co-exist.

Although Kant did not say that the real world shone through the time-space world like the bright light of Eternity through a dome of many-coloured glass, it was to that conclusion that the nineteenth-century mind jumped. The desert of agnosticism, with which the eighteenth century had ended, burst into a riot of romantic bloom. It was like a reprieve : if man could not know God through reason, he could at least once again have faith in His existence, 'believing where we cannot prove'.

Hungrily, the early nineteenth century embraced a religion of the heart. Following the Romantic movement, which had had its origin in Jean Jacques Rousseau in the previous century, the poets found God immanent in nature, feeling.

a sense sublime
Of something far more
deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light
of setting suns,
And the round ocean
and the living air...¹²

Idealistic philosophers, following the lead of Kant, outdid him in abstruseness, though not in logic. Hegel, for instance,

conceived of the Absolute as some kind of cosmic Reason which unfolds into the finite world, while the finite, in turn, evolves through a dialectical time-process into the Absolute. I am not, I am sure, doing justice to Hegel, whose immense system was so well thought of in his time, but we need not explore the speculations of the nineteenth-century idealists; for they have long since been laid aside. In their day, however, Fichte, Hegel, Spencer, Schelling, and Popularizers like Carlyle and Emerson were much in vogue, and it will not be beside our point to quote Swami Vivekananda's analysis and refutation of the premise many of them started from. In London in 1896 he said during the course of a lecture :

Attempts have been made in Germany to build a system of philosophy on the basis that the Infinite has become the finite. Such attempts are also made in England. And the analysis of the position of these philosophers is this, that that Infinite is trying to express itself in this universe and that there will come a time when the Infinite will succeed in doing so. It is all very well, and we have used the words *Infinite* and *manifestation* and *expression*, and so on, but philosophers naturally ask for a logical fundamental basis for the statement that the finite can fully express the Infinite. The Absolute and the Infinite can become this universe only by limitation. Everything must be limited that comes through the senses, or through the mind, or through the intellect, and for the limited to be the unlimited is simply absurd and can never be.¹³

(To be concluded)

¹². Wordsworth, *Lines Composed above Tintern Abbey*, lines 95-98.

¹³. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, 11, 1971, p. 99.

THE VEDANTIC CONCEPTION OF IMMORTALITY

PROF. LETA JANE LEWIS

In the *Katha Upanishad*, Nachiketa asks Yama, the King of Death, a crucial question: 'When a man dies, there is this doubt: Some say, he is; others say he is not. Taught by thee, I would know the Truth.'¹

Everyone loves life. Even hopelessly handicapped persons say that if they had had the opportunity to choose, they would have chosen to accept their miserably restricted existences rather than not to have lived at all.

The thought of permanently losing consciousness, of blacking out forever, frightens most people, but, on the other hand, no one would want to face an eternity of suffering. Friedrich Nietzsche spoke for almost everyone when he wrote: '*Weh spricht vergeh! doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit,—will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit*'², which, translated, means approximately this: 'Misery seeks annihilation, but all joy desires eternity, deep, deep eternity.' We love life and crave undying bliss. Happiness and eternity are the twin goals which motivate most of our activity. We buy homes, build hospitals, punch time clocks, invest in stocks and bonds, all with the hope of achieving lasting happiness. Hope springs eternal even during times of heartbreak and pain. Swami Prabhavananda³ once aptly observed that people in trouble usually expect to live happily ever after if they can just survive this one crisis satisfactorily. He commented

that most people think of death as something remote, something which happens to only a few people. They cannot conceive of it happening to them. The Swami was fond of quoting the passage of the *Mahabharata* in which King Yudhishthira, being asked, 'What is the most wonderful thing on earth?' replies, 'Every day people are dying around us and yet men think they will never die.'⁴

But however we may try to dismiss the thought of death, the fact remains that a drunken driver speeding through a red light can put a violent end to this life with all its hopes and expectations. As Shankara wrote in his poem *The Shattering of Illusion*:

Birth brings death,
death brings rebirth :
This evil needs no proof.
Where, then, O man,
is thy happiness?
This life trembles
in the balance
Like water on a lotus-leaf—
Thy son may bring
thee suffering,
Thy wealth is no
assurance of heaven :
Therefore be not vain
of thy wealth,
Or of thy family,
or of thy youth—
All are fleeting,
'all must change.'⁵

1. *The Upanishads*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester, New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. 1957, (hereafter *The Upanishads*), p. 15.

2. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Das trunkene Lied', *Samtliche Werke*, Vol. VIII, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner, 1964, p. 480.

3. The late Swami Prabhavananda was the Minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A.

4. Swami Prabhavananda's attention may have been directed to this passage by Swami Vivekananda. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*), II, 1971, p. 93.

5. Shankara, *Vivekachudamani* (*Crest-Jewel of Discrimination*), trans. and ed. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1947, pp. 2-3.

Life and death are like the two sides of a coin. Sometimes one side is up and sometimes it is down. We are here today and gone tomorrow.

Although the eventual death of the body is inevitable, most Westerners feel that the body and the mind, which they believe to be dependent upon the body, are all they have. They cannot conceive of consciousness apart from them. So they would like, somehow, to keep them after death. People everywhere hope to go to heaven, either in their old bodies, resurrected and renewed, or in refined, so-called spiritual bodies, in which they will enjoy pleasures far more intense and delightful than any earthly pleasures. Some people find comfort in the possibility of reincarnation, which would assure them of continuing consciousness in a series of human bodies. But the Hindus and Buddhists, who have taught reincarnation for several thousand years, have grave doubts about its benefits. For them, reincarnation compounds the problem of mortality, since the reincarnating individual is destined to face death, not just once but many times. Some people hope for continuation after death in astral and subtle bodies. Persons pronounced dead and then revived tell how they left their physical bodies, looked back and saw them lying there. Mystics explain that the astral body decomposes shortly after the death of the physical body, leaving the soul to go on in the fine body. The fine body lives from birth to birth carrying the memory and the subtle impressions which comprise the individual's tendencies and aspirations. But even this fine body eventually disintegrates. All bodies, all forms gross or subtle, are finite, material, and subject to change. They are composed of parts, whether molecules, atoms, or still smaller units, which change their relative positions and finally move away from each other to enter into new combinations and create new forms. There-

fore, the dissolution of all kinds of bodies is inevitable. If, by some miracle, the body were resurrected, it would soon meet the fate of all created things. It would die again !

Because he knows how short-lived the body and its pleasures are, Nachiketa is not deterred from his request to know what happens after death when Yama tempts him as follows :

Ask for sons and grandsons who shall live a hundred years. Ask for cattle, elephants, horses, gold. Choose for thyself a mighty kingdom. Or if thou canst imagine aught better, ask for that—not for sweet pleasures only but for the power, beyond all thought, to taste their sweetness. Yes, verily, the supreme enjoyer will I make thee of every good thing. Celestial maidens, beautiful to behold, such indeed as were not meant for mortals—even these, together with their bright chariots and their musical instruments, will I give unto thee, to serve thee. But for the secret of death, O Nachiketa, do not ask.

[But Nachiketa stood fast, and said :] These things endure only till the morrow, O destroyer of Life, and the pleasures they give wear out the senses. Keep thou therefore horses and chariots, keep dance and song, for thyself ! How shall he desire wealth, O Death, who once has seen thy face? Nay, only the boon that I have chosen—that only do I ask. Having found out the society of the imperishable and the immortal, as in knowing thee I have done, how shall I, subject to decay and death, and knowing well the vanity of the flesh—how shall I wish for long life?⁶

Very pleased with Nachiketa's wise choice, Yama instructs him about the Self and immortality :

The man who has learned that the Self is separate from the body, the senses, the mind, and has fully known him, the

⁶. *The Upanishads*, p. 16.

soul of truth, the subtle principle—such a man verily attains to him, and is exceeding glad, because he has found the source and dwelling place of all felicity.... The Self, whose symbol is OM... is unborn, imperishable, eternal; though the body is destroyed, he is not killed.... Formless is he, though inhabiting form. In the midst of the fleeting he abides forever. All-pervading and supreme is the Self. The wise man, knowing him in his true nature, transcends all grief.... Soundless, formless, intangible, undying, tasteless, odourless, without beginning, without end, eternal, immutable, beyond nature is the Self. Knowing him as such, one is freed from death.... He who knows that the individual soul, enjoyer of the fruits of action, is the Self—ever present within, lord of time, past and future—casts out all fear. For this Self is the immortal Self.⁷

Since the Self is not material, it is not composed of units which shift, fall apart, and cause decay. In the words of Swami Vivekananda: 'The Self of man... is not a compound, ... It will never die because death means going back to the component parts, and that which was never a compound can never die.'⁸ Dust thou art, to dust returneth was not spoken of the soul. Immortality is not everlasting life in time and space. On the contrary, the Self is immortal because it transcends time and space.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Lord Krishna explains how the true Self, the Atman, cannot be affected by conditions which threaten the body:

Know this Atman
Unborn, undying,
Never ceasing,
Never beginning,
Deathless, birthless,
Unchanging for ever
How can it die
The death of the body?

Knowing it birthless,
Knowing it deathless,
Knowing it endless,
For ever unchanging,
Dream not you do
The deed of the killer,
Dream not the power
Is yours to command it.

Worn-out garments
Are shed by the body;
Worn-out bodies
Are shed by the dweller
Within the body,
New bodies are donned
By the dweller, like garments.

Not wounded by weapons,
Not burned by fire,
Not dried by the wind,
Not wetted by water:
Such is the Atman.

Not dried, not wetted,
Not burned, not wounded,
Innermost element,
Everywhere, always,
Being of beings,
Changeless, eternal,
For ever and ever.⁹

The true Self, the Atman, is so far beyond ordinary human comprehension that words even fail illumined souls when they want to express it. The Self cannot be expressed in negative terms, because it is not negative, and it cannot be expressed in positive terms because it far transcends all positive things we know. Approximately speaking, the sages call the Atman 'Sachchidananda'; absolute consciousness, absolute existence, absolute wisdom, absolute bliss, and, in a certain sense, absolute love.

9. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc. 1972, pp. 37-38.

7. *The Upanishads*, pp. 18-21.

8. *Complete Works*, II, 1971, p. 234.

No changes can take place within the Atman. It cannot be born, and it cannot die. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'The Vedantist says that a man is neither born nor goes to heaven, and that reincarnation is really a myth with regard to the soul.... These births and deaths are changes in nature which we are mistaking for changes in us.'¹⁰ We are conscious of the body, the mind, and the senses, so we identify ourselves with them. We think *they* are conscious. But the consciousness which we attribute to them actually is not theirs. It belongs to the Atman. The Atman's light of consciousness, thrown on body and mind, makes it possible to know what is happening in them. This light of consciousness is external to body and mind; it is no more part of them than a lamp is part of a picture which it illumines. The Atman witnesses the activities of the body, the mind, and the senses, is separate from them and unaffected by them.

The ego, which seems to be born and to experience varying degrees of pleasure and pain, is the product of our erroneous identification with the mind/body complex. It might be compared to a circle drawn on the ocean of Sachchidananda, the real Self. Thinking that its entire existence is within the confines of that one circle, the ego refuses to expand beyond it. It is afraid that if it does, it will black out and lose consciousness, that it will be annihilated altogether. It does not realize that the surface consciousness to which it clings in desperation is only a pale ray of the Atman's infinite consciousness. If the confining circle were to disappear, if the limiting identification with the body and the personality were to be overcome, consciousness could not be lost. We would experience ourselves as absolute consciousness so much more intense, living and vivid than our

everyday consciousness that we would be compelled to call it by a different name.

It is reassuring to hear that the Atman is not only absolute consciousness, but also absolute bliss. No one has to face an eternity of suffering. At the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893, Swami Vivekananda made use of one of India's time-honoured epithets when he addressed the people gathered there as 'children of immortal bliss'.¹¹ He spoke of the Atman as 'bliss unspeakable, indestructible, beyond everything', and went on to say, 'What we call happiness and good here are but particles of that eternal bliss. And this eternal bliss is our goal.'¹² The Atman's very nature is perfection; lacking nothing, it is radiant with the peace that passeth understanding.

Swami Prabhavananda was fond of the story of the musk deer, which smells an enticing fragrance and, not knowing its source, runs frantically in search of it. It leaps about so wildly that it injures or even kills itself without ever learning that the perfume it sought was in its own navel. Like the musk deer, we human beings run hither and thither, often hurting ourselves, in search of the abiding bliss which is our birthright. We suffer misery, grief, and fear, although, if we only knew it, the happiness we crave has always been within us waiting for us to grasp it. As Goethe wrote, '*Lerne nur das Glück ergreifen, denn das Glück ist immer da*,'¹³ which means, 'Simply learn to grasp happiness, then happiness is always with you.'

It is comforting to think that we are completely safe even though the ego may be ruthlessly crushed and the body blown to bits. But how does one know that these teachings of Vedanta are actual fact and

10. *Complete Works*, V, 1973, p. 281.

11. *Complete Works*, I, 1972, p. 11.

12. *Complete Works*, III, 1973, p. 128.

13. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Erinnerung', *Werke*, ed. Robert Petsch, Vol. I, Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1926, p. 35.

not mere wishful thinking? We hear ghost stories now and then, but people who have given up the body permanently do not ordinarily return to assure us of our immortality. Science has never proved the immortality, or even the existence, of the spirit, and it is never likely to do so. According to Joseph Kaplan, for years chairman of the physics department at the University of California, Los Angeles, and one of the United States' foremost physicists:

One has to be extremely careful in these days of such continuous and strong impacts of science on society not to mistake quantity for quality. Physics gives the answers to how things happen, but not to why things occur or where they come from. There is no reason to believe that if physics has failed to answer these questions in its long search for the answers to questions about the inert universe, that it will succeed, or that biology will succeed, when it discusses life itself. In fact, it is highly unlikely that science will ever answer these questions.

Yet these are good questions, and they will be asked. Where will the answers come from? I feel that they will come from that part of man's experience which can be brought together under the word 'religion'.¹⁴

If reincarnation can be proved to be a fact rather than a theory, it will indicate the extended, though not necessarily the eternal, existence of the spirit. If consciousness continues unbroken from body to body, from life to life, it is obviously independent of the body and outlasts it. But the objection is made that nobody remembers his past lives. Swami Prabhavananda meets this objection in his commentary on the thirty-ninth aphorism of the second chapter of Patanjali's *Yoga Aphorisms*. The aphorism itself reads as follows: 'When a man becomes steadfast in his abstention from

greed, he gains knowledge of his past, present, and future existences,' and Swami Prabhavananda explains:

Attachment and the anxiety which accompanies attachment, are obstacles to knowledge. As long as you are clinging desperately to the face of a precipice (and thereby to your life) you are in no condition to survey the place you climbed up from or the place towards which you are climbing. So Patanjali tells us that freedom from attachment will result in knowledge of the whole course of our human journey, through past and future existences.¹⁵

We cannot think of two things at once. Because we are engrossed in our present personality's vital interests and problems, the memory of our past lives is obscured. But Vedanta tells of exceptional holy men and women who rose to great spiritual heights where their view of their past incarnations was unobstructed by body/personality identifications. In addition, the selfless guru is said to be able to see his disciple's past lives, the good and evil tendencies they have brought with them from those lives, and the course of their future spiritual development.

All this is very encouraging, but the fact remains that even the continuing existence of the spirit through many incarnations does not necessarily prove its immortality. The real proof of immortality is to be found in the lives of all the Christs, Buddhas, Krishnas, and Sri Ramakrishnas who ever lived. Jesus did not need to die to prove immortality. He proved it long before his death, and his proof had nothing to do with the body. He experienced our immortality in that divine consciousness which completely transcends the physical and finite. He could proclaim, 'Lo, I have overcome

¹⁴ Joseph Kaplan, 'What is Life?' in *Vedanta and the West*, Vol. IV, No. 6, November-December, 1952, p. 164.

¹⁵ *How to Know God: The Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953, p. 150.

the world,'¹⁶ because he had found the kingdom of heaven which is within and by knowing which everyone can overcome the joys and sorrows, the births and ultimate deaths, of this transient universe. He taught as one having authority, that is, as one who knows from experience, and not as the scribes, who know only the letter of the scriptures. He instructed his followers to renounce finite things which are subject to decay and seek the treasures of the spirit, which being impervious to temporal change, will last forever. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'¹⁷ He could have proclaimed with the Indian sage: 'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again.'¹⁸

According to Indian tradition, divine Incarnations like Jesus assume human bodies for the sake of humanity, which is suffering under the burden of an imagined psycho-physical identity. Unlike ordinary mortals, these sons of God are fully aware of the divinity of man. They are living dynamos of blissful power, which communicates itself easily to anyone who is open and ready to receive it. When such a receptive person comes into the presence of a Buddha, a Christ, or a Krishna, his spiritual consciousness is awakened. Although Jesus taught partly in words, he taught primarily by the force of divine grace. His wonderful grace enabled his fol-

lowers to grow spiritually until they experienced divine immortality beyond both life and death. One of Jesus' disciples might have addressed him as Uddhava addressed Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavata Purana*: 'When a man is visited by afflictions, blessed Lord, and is suffering torment in the labyrinthine ways of the world, I see no other refuge for him than the shelter of thy Feet, which shed blessed immortality.'¹⁹

But, of course, although the person who associates closely with or meditates upon Jesus Christ can experience the Christ consciousness, he can never become Jesus Christ the divine Incarnation. To think so would be insanity. Swami Vivekananda explains this clearly as follows:

As a manifested being you will never be Christ. Out of clay, manufacture a clay elephant, out of the same clay, manufacture a clay mouse. Soak them in water, they become one. As clay [that is, as divine spirit], they are eternally one; as fashioned things, they are eternally different. The Absolute [Brahman] is the material of both God and man. As Absolute Omnipresent Being, we are all one; and as personal beings, God is the eternal master, and we are eternal servants.²⁰

There is no better proof that a holy man knows and can teach immortality than the spiritual uplift one feels in his presence. But there are other ways to identify such a teacher. As Jesus said, 'By their fruits shall ye know them.'²¹ That is, those who have realized the divinity of man, consistently manifest it in their attitudes and actions. Illumined souls see no difference between themselves and others. They love their neighbours as themselves because they know

16. John 16:33.

17. Matthew 6:19-21.

18. *Complete Works*, I, 1972, p. 11.

19. *Srimad Bhagavatam, The Wisdom of God*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda, Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1942, p. 273.

20. *Complete Works*, VIII, 1971, p. 179.

21. Matthew 7:20.

that they and their neighbours are one in the higher consciousness. Their happiness and fulfilment are in the Atman, so they do not covet material possessions or reputation. They are not competitive. Since they have realized themselves as infinite, birthless, deathless consciousness, they do not fear the death of the body. Swami Vivekananda illustrates this point exceptionally well with the following anecdote about Alexander the Great :

There are two sorts of courage. One is the courage of facing the cannon. And the other is the courage of spiritual conviction. An Emperor who invaded India was told by his teacher to go and see some of the sages there. After a long search for one, he found a very old man sitting on a block of stone. The Emperor talked with him a little and became very much impressed by his wisdom. He asked the sage to go to his country with him. 'No,' said the sage, 'I am quite satisfied with my forest here.' Said the Emperor, 'I will give you money, position, wealth. I am the Emperor of the world.' 'No,' replied the man, 'I don't care for these things.' The Emperor replied, 'If you do not go, I will kill you.' The man smiled serenely and said, 'That is the most foolish thing you ever said, Emperor. You cannot kill me. Me the sun cannot dry, fire cannot burn, sword cannot kill, for I am the birthless, the deathless, the ever-living... Spirit.' This is spiritual boldness, while the other is the courage of the lion.²²

Socrates could not have drunk the hemlock with such equanimity if he had not previously discovered his immortality. When Sri Ramakrishna was dying of cancer, nothing could have been farther from his mind than the fear of death. He was, in a sense, already familiar with death for withdrawal from the body into the blissful pure consciousness was a daily occurrence with him. Death would only make that condition permanent.

Association with the holy provides convincing evidence that the scriptures are correct, that we are children of immortal bliss. In one sense, this evidence is all we need, and in another sense it is not. The fear of death is not completely overcome until one realizes the Self as pure consciousness and existence. But it is impossible to have this immediate Self-knowledge without being entirely free from egotism. In Jesus' paradoxical words : 'He that findeth his life shall lose it ; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.'²³ Or, in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy's forceful rewording, 'The kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead.'²⁴ In order to be ready for the ultimately spiritual awareness, we have to be willing to die, that is, to renounce all egotism including the instinctive clinging to life. Although this awareness is one of a greatly expanded consciousness in which nothing is lost, the Ego shrinks back from it in desperate fear of annihilation. Saint Teresa's inner voice (the expression of the superconscious of which we are ordinarily as unaware as we are of the subconscious) admonished her not to try to fight off high states of rapture. 'Her divine master ... taught her not to fear the mortal anguish which often precedes the approach of a great spiritual rapture, for then the soul is tried as gold is worked and refined in the crucible.'²⁵

In his book, *The Sermon on the Mount according to Vedanta*, Swami Prabhavananda relates how Swami Vivekananda, who later became the very embodiment of fearlessness, reacted when as a young man (he was

23. Matthew 10:39.

24. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, New York : Philosophical Library, 1943, p. 74.

25. Marcel Sauton, 'Teresa of Avila', *Women Saints of East and West*, ed. Swami Ghanananda and Sir John Stewart-Wallace, London: Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, 1955, p. 228.

22. *Complete Works*, II, pp. 84-85.

then in his teens) he almost went into Samadhi for the first time. Swami Prabhavananda writes :

Even if God were to offer us spiritual enlightenment this very moment, we would refuse to accept it. Even if we have been seeking God, we momentarily draw back in panic when we are about to have his vision. We instinctively cling to our surface life and consciousness, afraid to give up, even though doing so means passing into an infinite consciousness, compared to which our normal perceptions are, as the *Bhagavad-Gita* says, 'Like a thick night and a sleep'.

Swami Vivekananda, the apostle of Sri Ramakrishna, was from his boyhood a pure soul longing for God. Yet he experienced that fear. When he first came to his future master, Sri Ramakrishna gave him a touch and his spiritual vision began to open. Then Vivekananda cried out : 'What are you doing to me? I have my parents at home !' And Sri Ramakrishna said : 'Oh, you too !' He saw that this great soul was subject to the universal clinging to surface consciousness.²⁶

Association with Sri Ramakrishna gradually raised Swami Vivekananda's consciousness so high that entering into the super-consciousness of the Atman was a short step which he soon took without fear. His biographers relate that once some years later he picked up two pebbles in his hand and said, "Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that*"—and the stones struck one another in the hand—"for I have touched

the feet of God."²⁷ The illumined soul, who knows himself as infinite consciousness and bliss, looks back upon his former limited existence as a close approximation to death.

Thus, we must renounce our illusory identification with the body, the mind, and the senses, this mortal clinging to egotism, in order to experience everlasting life. Discriminating between what is transitory and what is permanent, that is, immortal, we are to renounce the transitory in order to gain the immortal. Renunciation may seem very negative—cold and forbidding—but there is nothing more positive than genuine renunciation which has spiritual realization as its goal. Far from being masochistic, it is the normal reaction of the person who intensely covets a pearl of great price and sells all that he has to buy it.

Renunciation comes most naturally when it is motivated by the most expansive of all emotions : love. As Swami Vivekananda pertinently wrote : 'Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, and hatred is death. . . . What is life but growth, i.e., expansion, i.e., love? Therefore all love is life, it is the only law of life, all selfishness is death, and this true here or hereafter. It is life to do good, it is death not to do good to others. . . .'²⁸ By 'life' Swami Vivekananda obviously meant the eternal life of which Jesus was speaking when he said, 'He who loseth his life shall find it.' Perfectly unselfish love, 'agape', and renunciation are the two sides of the sterling coin which is eternal life.

²⁶. Swami Prabhavananda, *The Sermon on the Mount According to Vedanta*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964, pp. 26-27.

²⁷. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1965, p. 588.

²⁸. *Complete Works*, IV, 1972, pp. 366-67.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION WORK AMONG THE TRIBAL PEOPLE OF INDIA*

SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA

The forests and mountains of India have always attracted the spiritual aspirants who wished to lead a life of meditation. The holy men were very kind to the ancestors of the tribal people of today, among whom they lived, creating an atmosphere of peace and love. Our mythological heroes never missed an opportunity to eulogize the goodness of the 'aboriginals'. In the Mahābhārata age the Kirāta hill tribals were looked upon with admiration and a spirit of worship. Arjuna, the great hero, worshipped Mahādeva as a golden Kirāta. There is a famous episode in which Śiva and Umā meet Arjuna as a Kirāta and Śabarī (a Kirāta woman). In modern times, the monks of the Ramakrishna Mission approach the tribal brethren with a feeling of love, admiration and service, and have all along tried their best to serve these

unfortunate countrymen, who have fallen back culturally or otherwise, by establishing educational institutions, carrying on cultural activities among them, and conducting several dispensaries. Thus they have succeeded in creating an atmosphere of peace and harmony, which is one of the greatest blessings that could be conferred on mankind.

With variable concentration in a few zones and divided in numerous groups, the tribal population of about three crores is distributed almost all over India. They have been living for ages in isolation, as if in a different world, being far away from the mainstream of the changing Indian societies and cultures. In most cases they groan under the grinding wheels of poverty and are sunk in deep ignorance and superstition. Adjusting with environmental changes, they live according to their own mode of life. Some anthropologists are of the opinion that the series of attacks on them by the more skilful and well-equipped invaders pushed them into inhospitable terrain littered with jungle and boulders. Such groups of oppressed people are designated as 'tribes'. This word, however, has a bad odour as it suggests the moderner's repugnance bordering on contempt. 'Ādivāsī' would be, in my opinion, more correct and a better term than any other, because they are presumed to form the oldest ethnological section of the population.

We are happy to observe that the Constitution of India has now assured the tribals certain safeguards. Addressing a meeting of the tribal welfare workers at the Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Prime Minister Morarji Desai called upon them to see that a large number of Ādivāsīs participated in

* References :

- (i) *The General Report of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission* (for April 1976—March 1977), Belur Math, Dist. Howrah : The General Secretary, 1978 ;
- (ii) *Annual Report of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunji*, Cherrapunji, Dist. East Khasi Hills, Meghalaya : Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 1978 ;
- (iii) *Report of Activities of Ramakrishna Mission, Along* (for the year 1977-78), Along, Dist. Siang, Arunachal Pradesh : Ramakrishna Mission, 1978 ;
- (iv) *The Ramakrishna Mission School, Narottam Nagar* (A Short Report for 1977-78), Narottam Nagar, Dist. Tirap, Arunachal Pradesh : Ramakrishna Mission, 1978 ;
- (v) *The Ramakrishna Mission (N.B.) School Souvenir*, Narottam Nagar, Dist. Tirap, Arunachal Pradesh : Ramakrishna Mission School, 1977 ;
- (vi) *Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama* (Report for the year 1977-78), Silchar, Assam : Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, 1978 ;
- (vii) *The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama* (Review of the Activities for the year 1977-78), Morabadi, Ranchi, Bihar : Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, 1978.

the development activities under the tribal area sub-plan.¹ Of late, an All-India Action Committee for safeguarding the rights of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes has been formed.

An attempt is made in this article to apprise the readers of the Ramakrishna Mission's work among the Indian tribals. Referring to the role of non-official agencies in tribal areas, the Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission records: 'Another All-India Organization that is doing commendable work is the Ramakrishna Mission with branches in Assam, Bihar and West Bengal. Its fundamental aim is character-building in the widest possible sense. Its institutions are maintaining successfully their traditions of service with special emphasis on character-building, and are free from all taints of proselytization.'²

MEGHALAYA

The State of Meghalaya, 'abode of clouds', with its Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts, is eighty per cent tribal in population, the dominant tribal groups being the Khasi, the Garo and the Pnar. These tribals possess a distinctive form of social organization, in which descent and inheritance are recognized through the women rather than the men. They are relatively more advanced and developed than other tribes.

The Khasi and Jaintia Hills abound in coal mines, the largest of which are found in Cherrapunji and Lakadong. In the southern part of the Khasi Hills exist vast deposits of limestone. Paddy is the chief crop grown in the whole of the plateau.

1. See *The Statesman*, Calcutta, Saturday, 14 October 1978.

2. *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika: Hill India*, ed. Ekanath Ranade, Triplicane, Madras, Vol. 1, No. 2, (hereafter *Hill India*), p. 129.

Terrace cultivation is widely practised in these areas, while crops, like maize, potato, sweet potato, millet, etc., are grown in the neighbourhood of the villages. In the areas bordering Bangladesh, various kinds of fruit, such as oranges, pineapples, lemons, litchis and others are grown. In addition, Areca-nut and betel leaves also grow in abundance. Prior to India's partition, the people of these regions could dispose of their produce in the flourishing markets of the erstwhile East Bengal.

It cannot be gainsaid that the Christian missionaries were the first to bring welfare programmes to the tribals of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. They were pioneers in the field of education. But it is indeed painful and surprising to observe that through the influence and propaganda of the missionaries, and through their insistence on proselytization, thousands of simple, poor, and ignorant Khasis have willy-nilly entered the Christian fold, adopting and professing everything alien as good. They have been taught to despise their own culture and religion, and feel ashamed at what their ancestors had been doing. Slowly and steadily, they have been alienated from the rest of India. And the non-converts, though maintaining their own religious traditions nominally, have been largely influenced by Christian dogmas and taboos.

Thus the foreign missionaries have done incalculable harm to these tribals from the nationalistic point of view. As a result, missionary activities have become repugnant to the Indian mind, and the necessity to preserve the tribal culture and religion was felt everywhere. The hill tribals need to be brought back to the consciousness that they are the inheritors of the past glorious Indian traditions, and that it is on them that the making of the future India depends to a great extent.

With these objects in view, and being inspired with the prophetic message of

Swami Vivekananda, 'Let new India ... emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains...'—a few monks of the Ramakrishna Mission started the work on a very modest scale in 1924 by opening an Ashrama and a free Primary School at Shella, a village about 20 km. south of Cherrapunji. This humble beginning has now developed in establishing many schools in the whole of the Khasi Hills with their headquarters at Cherrapunji, famous for its heavy rainfall. The institution has earned a name for efficient service rendered to the student community in particular. And now, when one finds a brilliant student in the Khasi Hills unable to pursue his studies for want of funds, someone invariably suggests, 'Why don't you apply for admission into the Ramakrishna Mission School?'

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Cherrapunji

At Cherrapunji, the Ashrama runs a High School which attracts students not only from all the parts of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, but also from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. The roll strength at present, including boys and girls, is about 600. The School building is spacious and beautiful. Since 1975, this school has been recognized by the Board of School Education, Meghalaya, as the centre for all public examinations in the South Khasi Hills.

Attached to the School is the Students' Home run under the supervision of monastic members of the Mission. It accommodates 150 tribal boys. From the very start, the aim has been to make the boys self-

reliant and helpful to one another on the lines prevailing in any home. For, in a home, each has a certain share of responsibility and work allotted according to his strength and capacity. In the same way in the Students' Home, almost all the work is done by the boys. Cleaning the premises, keeping the Home neat and tidy, cutting vegetables, serving the food, cleaning the dining hall, nursing the sick, conducting the Bhajans, settling any disputes that may arise through the Students' Cabinet—all these and many other functions connected with the administration of the Home are in the hands of the boys. This training has proved to be a great benefit to the boarders both while in the Home and in later life. It is heartening to note that some of the old students have distinguished themselves in public life as men of character and ability. G. G. Swell, India's Ambassador to Norway, B. B. Lyndoh, ex-Finance Minister of Meghalaya, Dilip Singh, I.A.S., Secretary, Government of Meghalaya, and G. Phredentis Wahlang, I.A.S., are noteworthy among them.

The Ashrama also conducts three Primary Schools and a Vocational School which provides training in weaving, tailoring, type-writing and carpentry. Each student has to attend one of these classes. This training is intended to give a vocational bias to the students. This section has been a great success. In the Showroom, chairs and tables, cushions and sofas, clothes of various kinds, bedsheets, embroidered linen and pillow-covers made by the students are kept. These articles are good in quality and reasonable in price; and therefore there is a great demand for them.

The School Library has over 4,000 books on various subjects, and a good number of magazines and newspapers in its Reading Room. All students are issued books from the Library in order to develop their reading-habits and general knowledge. In

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati : Advaita Ashrama, VII, 1972, p. 327.

addition, lectures, film-shows, and other functions are arranged in the Ashrama's Vivekananda Centenary Hall. Attached to the Vocational School building, there is a dispensary under the charge of a qualified Medical Officer. It administers to the need of the sick students as well as the local poor people.

The Ashrama has a beautiful shrine and a prayer room, where every Sunday classes are held in Khasi on the Khasi religion and culture. The average weekly attendance ranges from eighty to ninety. At the invitation of the local Khasi people, classes and discourses are conducted in khasi language occasionally at different places on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature and other scriptures. There is also a mobile audio-visual unit. The birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, and other religious festivals such as Doljatra, Christmas Eve, etc. are celebrated with great enthusiasm.

The spectacular half-a-mile long procession every year in connection with the Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration deserves special mention. This day is observed with an ever-increasing popularity among the people, irrespective of their religious belief. Thousands of Khasis, Garos, Pnars and Nagas, clad in their festive costumes, take part in that colourful procession, walking through the streets of Cherrapunji. It has become their community festival, an occasion for rejoicing. They sing and dance to the tune of drums and pipes. Tastefully decorated portraits of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Bhagavān Buddha, Jesus Christ, and various coloured banners, inscribed with maxims on the unity of religions, universal peace and harmony, are carried in the procession. The fascinating feature of this festival is the decoration of streets with gates, arches, flags, and festoons. After the procession, all the participants

are given a sumptuous feast. In a sense, the Ashrama has become a centre for cultural integration of the tribals.

The Ashrama has to its credit many publications in Khasi, including an abridged edition of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. This has opened an avenue for reaching a wider range of people. The Ashrama has many feeder institutions all over the Khasi-Jaintia Hills. For instance, there are twelve Middle English Schools and twenty-nine Primary Schools. The Ashrama runs two sub-centres : one at Sohbarpunji and another at Shella.

Sohbarpunji : This Ashrama, about 13 km. from Cherrapunji and perched on the southern slopes of the Khasi Hills overlooking the vast plains of Bangladesh, conducts a Primary School, a Middle English School, a Vocational Section, and two separate Students' Homes for twenty-five boys and forty girls. Fine handloom products are manufactured in the Vocational Section. This Centre has grown into one of the best all-round educational institutions of the Khasi Hills. Nothing is more significant of the high esteem this institution enjoys than the steady support that it is obtaining at the hands of all classes of people. Heads of educational institutions, officers of the State and the Central Governments, businessmen, poor people, and many others have paid and are paying visits to this institution, which bears eloquent testimony to its selfless work. The results in the public examinations are always good.

Shella : This Centre is situated in the foothills of the Khasi-Jaintia ranges. By it flows the Shella river whose limpid waters further on cascade into Bangladesh. It has a Primary School, a Middle English School, a Free Reading Room-cum-Library, and a spacious Community Hall. As told before, the Ashrama was started in 1924 with a free Primary School. The present imposing

temple was rebuilt in 1974, and is dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, and they are worshipped daily by the local devotees. Every year Śrī Durgā Pūjā is celebrated here with great enthusiasm, when the whole of Shella assumes a gala atmosphere. The tribal boys and girls wear new clothes on this occasion and are full of glee. It is heartening to see them making garlands, preparing sandalwood paste and offerings for the Deity. Mother Dūrgā becomes so close to these tribal children that on the Vijayā Daśamī Day, when She goes back to Her abode in the Himalayas, leaving behind the 'abode of clouds', they shed tears and sob bitterly as if parting with their own mother. Dramatic performances in Khasi and in archaic Bengali are held by local amateurs.

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Shillong

Shillong is the capital of Meghalaya. This Ashrama conducts a Hostel for twenty-six tribal boys. During my stay in Meghalaya, I came across many ex-students who with grateful remembrance and nostalgic feeling told me about the all-round training they had received in the Hostel. It has made them good citizens as well as good men. Besides this, the Centre conducts a Charitable Dispensary with pathology, X-ray and electrotherapy sections, as also a homoeopathic Department. Annually it serves about 37,105 patients who are mostly tribals. There is also a mobile dispensary covering forty-five neighbouring villages and serving about 18,000 patients every year. The Ashrama also has a publication section which publishes the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda and Vedanta literature in Assamese, Bengali, Garo and Khasi.

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

Arunachal Pradesh (formerly NEFA) consists of Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit,

and Tirap sub-divisions. Hindu mythology is replete with references to this fairyland of beauty and chivalry. Bhishmaknagar in the Lohit division is identified with the Capital of King Bhīṣmak, the father of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's wife Rukmiṇī. Rājā Bāṇa of epic fame is believed to have ruled from his hill fort of Bhalukpung, the ruins of which are found on the banks of Bhareli river in the Kameng division.

Arunachal Pradesh is administered by the President through his representative, a Lt. Governor, who is assisted by a Legislative and a Council of Ministers. It is a hilly area abounding in streams with flat lands in the riverine tracts. The northern regions are snowbound during the winter; otherwise the area is ever green. Its population is 3.5 lakhs, comprising about twenty-nine main tribes and forty-one sub-tribes, each of these having a dialect of its own.

'The tribal people of NEFA', Dr. Verrier Elwin, the great anthropologist says, 'offer us a very special challenge. Their courtesy and hospitality, discipline and self-reliance; their ability to work hard and co-operatively; their occasional bewilderment before the advance of an unfamiliar world, and yet their welcome and friendliness to that world; these things win the heart and call for the very best in those who try to serve them.'⁴

One thing that invariably strikes anyone who visits Arunachal Pradesh is the great change that has come over these people. A few years back, it was unthinkable for other Indian citizens to move among them so freely as they do now. The credit for this welcome change goes considerably to the Ramakrishna Mission, which has been working among these tribals since 1966 in a spirit of service, and allowing them to develop according to their own genius.

4. *Hill India*, p. 235.

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Along

In the District of Siang, Along is the first spot of Arunachal Pradesh where the Ramakrishna Mission started work in 1966 with a residential Primary School for tribal boys and girls. At present it has been raised to the status of a day-cum-residential co-educational School up to IX standard with its secondary section affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi; and the Primary-Middle Section recognized by the Directorate of Public Instruction, Arunachal Pradesh. The total enrolment of students is 341, all of whom are given their midday meal at the Ashrama. The overall progress is very encouraging. Two students have secured the fifth and the tenth positions at the Middle School Examination. One student stood first in the twenty-seventh All-India General Knowledge Test in the junior category in 1977. The Ashrama conducts a Hostel with 139 non-paying boys, and a Library and a Reading Room with 5,191 books and thirty-two journals.

A well-equipped Science Laboratory with Physics, Chemistry, Zoology, and Botany sections has been established recently. A dairy was started a few years ago which has at present four cross-bred cows, two cross-bred heifers, ten local-bred cows, and a good bull presented by the ex-Lt. Governor K. A. A. Raja. The poultry with 412 chicks provides 53,000 eggs every year, which are supplied to the hostel kitchen.

In 1978, a group of sixty students, escorted by the monastic members and teachers, visited Delhi, Mathura, Vrindavan, Agra and Varanasi. At Delhi they called on the President, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister.

The students play football, volleyball, badminton, table tennis as well as many indigenous games. They are occasionally shown feature films, documentaries, and

animated pictures, including cartoons of both educational and entertainment values. The Ashrama has a mobile dispensary for the local people. Attached with it is an audio-visual unit which screens films for the tribals.

The Ashrama celebrates the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda with characteristic gaiety. Christmas Eve is also observed with due solemnity and *éclat*. Sarasvatī Pūjā is performed by a tribal student in the traditional manner and other students join the prayer and recite Sanskrit hymns of devotion in adoration of the Deity. They also sing songs in the local tribal language.

During these twelve years since the inception of the School, education has become firmly established as a collective ideal among the local tribal community. A new literate generation has emerged, and some young boys and girls have gone beyond the secondary stage. This educational institution has thus become a factor to reckon with in paving the way for social change.

The Ramakrishna Mission Narottam Nagar

Narottam Nagar is the most important centre in the district of Tirap, and is peopled by Tangsa, Wancho and Nocte tribes. The Tangsas migrated from Burma centuries ago. Wanchos and Noctes are governed by tribal chiefs. They are fond of ivory, bone, horn, shell and bead ornaments; and do not wear much clothing. They tuck coloured feathers in their ears and hair. Both were head-hunters in former days. Hospitality is the hallmark of these people. They have class divisions among them, though not of caste.

Begun in 1972, the Ramakrishna Mission at Narottam Nagar runs a free residential Upper Primary School affiliated to the

Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi. The medium of instruction is English. The roll strength at present is about 250. The first batch of students will appear at the Final Examination in March 1979. Apart from the academic side, this School imparts to the boys training in modern agriculture, dairy, poultry, gardening, carpentry, tailoring, smithy, electric fitting, plumbing, clay modelling and also in music. These tribal boys are endowed with an incredible talent for music. It is a matter worthy of pride that Manwang Lowang, a student of this institution, received an award from the President of India on 6 December 1976 for his act of gallantry. He jumped into a fast-flowing river to rescue a boy from inevitable death.

Instructive and interesting films on health, hygiene, and higher values of life are screened regularly for the benefit of the students and the staff and occasionally in adjacent villages with the help of the audio-visual unit.

The poultry and the dairy also serve in catering to the needs of the Hostel boys. In order to attend to the sick students and the afflicted persons in the neighbouring villages, a mobile Dispensary has been started. Occasionally, blankets, foodstuff and multi-vitamin tablets are distributed to the needy. The Centre has an outdoor Dispensary which treats about 14,000 patients annually; and a Library and a Reading Room with 1,320 books and 17 journals respectively.

Prime Minister Morarji Desai paid a visit to this Centre on 4 November 1978, and inaugurated the new School building. He gave a short but fine speech. He appreciated the dedicated service that the Ramakrishna Mission rendered to the people of Arunachal Pradesh, and exhorted the students to follow the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, in order to become good citizens of the country.

The Centre also celebrates local and national festivals in which the tribal boys participate enthusiastically.

These two educational institutions have already become very popular, and have drawn the attention of the educationists, philanthropists, and authorities of Arunachal Pradesh. At the persistent request of the Arunachal Pradesh Government, the Ramakrishna Mission has complied with a welcome demand by the local tribal people for establishing a General Hospital in Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, despite the Mission's extreme dearth of monastic workers. The proposed Hospital building is under construction.

ASSAM

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama Silchar

Started in 1924, the Centre runs a Students' Home with seventy tribal boys. They come from various classes, namely, Mizo, Naga, Kuki, Reang, Kachari, Hunar, etc. The present Hostel building was opened in 1964. Boarding and other expenses of the tribal students are met by a Grant-in-aid from the Government of India, supplemented by other income from different sources, such as donations from public and charitable institutions. Besides free board and lodging, the students are supplied with free textbooks and given special coaching by private tutors. The sick-room was constructed in 1972 as an annexe to the existing Hostel building. The Centre undertakes tribal welfare programmes. There are about 25,000 tribals in the bordering hills of the Cachar district. The Centre supplies them seeds and agricultural implements, and renders financial assistance, depending upon the availability of contributions from the public and institutions. Social and cultural programmes are arranged for the

tribals during festivities and functions in the Sevashrama. This wears away their sense of aloofness and complexes and develops in them a feeling of oneness with the common cultural life of the country. The monks and workers of the Centre take every opportunity to visit tribal 'Punjis' (small villages) and mix with them, offering suggestions for their all-round development.

BIHAR

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama Morabadi, Ranchi

The Ashrama was established in 1927 with a small Homoeopathic Dispensary. At present, the Ashrama runs a free Homoeopathic Dispensary, Milk Distribution Centres, Adult Night Schools, Library, and Divyayan Training Centre.

Ranchi is at the centre of the tribal belt of Chotanagpur plateau in Bihar. About ten years back, the monks of this Ashrama felt that welfare programmes could be launched to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of this backward region. They observed that unless provision for food could be made, it was impossible for the hungry people to appreciate and adopt the higher values of life. Hence to show them new means of food production was the first and foremost duty of the Ashrama. With this aim in view, the management envisaged establishing an institute which could attract the rural youth in general and the Ādivāsīs in particular, and through a course of practical training inculcate in them a feeling of self-confidence. The institute called Divyayan, 'Way of God', was, therefore, set up on 16 March 1969. It gives us great pleasure to mention that Divyayan has been recognized by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research as a Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Farm Science Centre) since 1977.

To fulfil its objectives, Divyayan runs : (1) a six-week training programme for young Ādivāsī farmers. It has trained over 1,778 young farmers to date. Generally, farmers between the ages of sixteen and thirty, and educated up to the seventh class, are admitted. The institution is residential and free of charge. The medium of instruction is Hindi. The subjects of training include modern techniques of farming, horticulture, dairy, poultry, animal husbandry, bee-keeping, rural economics, firm finance, bank loan procedures, marketing, management of agricultural outputs and inputs, social science, Indian culture, history, geography and first aid. (2) A specialized three-month programme for selected trainees. So far, this programme has trained 232 farmers who have shown a special aptitude or interest for further specialization.

In addition to the formal training, Divyayan encourages community living and co-operation, increases self-confidence in the trainees, and promotes national integration. The stress is laid on the moral and spiritual development of these farmers.

Within Divyayan's 13,086 acres of land, there is a three-storeyed Hostel building accommodating 400 students round the year. Next to the Hostel building there is a single-storeyed building, housing the offices and the class-rooms. Eight acres of the land is used for agricultural demonstration-cum-production purposes, where crops, such as maize, wheat, paddy, sugarcane, brinjals, tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkins, onions, garlic, etc. are grown. The rest of the land is used for a poultry with 2,629 birds, and a dairy with eight cows, two dry cows, eight calves, five heifers and two bulls. Divyayan possesses a demonstration workshop which is well-equipped for all kinds of repairs and maintenance of farm machinery and implements. It has an audio-visual unit, which arranges film-

shows inside the campus and also goes to the villages in the region showing slides and films for promotional and publicity purposes.

Follow-up Programme: In order to ensure that the young farmers who pass out of Divyayan utilize their knowledge of improved cultivation and farming, a separate non-monastic society called Sri Ramakrishna Seva Kendra was established in 1969 for undertaking follow-up programmes for the benefit of the ex-trainees. It provides guidance on the utilization of loans, land management, and starting of enterprises on a co-operative basis. Branches of the Seva Kendra were started at Tatisilwai, Khunti, Tumbagutta, Baraghaghra, Bero, Jalpaiguri, and Purulia.

Professor Sudhir Kakar in his *An Evaluation Study of Divyayan*, sponsored by the Ford Foundation, remarks: 'Let me add that from my experience of other training programmes in management and industry, which are rarely evaluated as to their actual impact, Divyayan can be considered to be a successful institution which, considering its resources, is doing an excellent job in the socio-economic development of the Chotanagpur tribals, one of the most disadvantaged groups in the Indian social structure.'⁵

⁵ Sudhir Kakar, *Socio-Economic Development among the Tribals of Ranchi District: An Evaluation Study of Divyayan* (A Report for the Ford Foundation), 1977, p. 62.

OTHER CENTRES

The Ramakrishna Mission also runs Students' Homes at Kalady and Trichur (in Kerala), Narendrapur, Rahara, and Purulia (in West Bengal), and Puri (in Orissa), which accommodate about 250 tribal boys. All these institutions aim at fostering among the tribal students a democratic attitude, a sense of national integration, and a broad outlook in respect of religion. They give education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, intellect is sharpened, and by which the tribal boys can stand on their own feet in future.

The Ramakrishna Mission believes in the integration of the tribal people with the rest of India, without any disintegration of their special cultural pattern and the emotional background that characterize their life. Though politically integrated, the psychological, emotional, social and economic integration has yet to be achieved. The greatest problem of India today is not so much political but psychological integration and consolidation. The work of the Ramakrishna Mission Centres in tribal areas is comparatively much smaller than in other areas. The reason for this state of affairs is to be traced to several factors beyond the control and the capacity of the Mission. It is to be hoped, therefore, that a perusal of this account of the Mission's activities in the tribal areas will inspire other organizations to start similar institutions for the welfare of these so-called backward and tribal children of Mother India.

Where should you go to seek for God—are not the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods? Why not worship them first?

'LOOK TO SAINT CHRISTOPHER AND GO AHEAD REASSURED'

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

Most people, if you ask them who Saint Christopher is, will reply at once that he is the protector of automobilists; or the patron saint of voyagers. My interest in St. Christopher began when a devotee gave me a statuette of the saint, about three inches tall, having an adhesive base, suitable for affixing above the instrument panel of the Ashrama's car. I remembered, too, the St. Christopher medallions some auto owners attach to the ignition key as a kind of talisman meant to ward off accidents. In a village in Normandy called St. Christophe-le-Jajolet it is the custom on the Saint's feast day in July for drivers to line up their cars before the church so that the priest may bless the cars and owners, in order that no danger may befall them during the year to come.

Superstition? Incongruous foolishness in an age of atomic power plants and space stations? Perhaps. But let us see.

St. Christopher is represented as a man with a staff in his right hand or in both hands, sometimes shown traversing a stream of water, bearing the Baby Jesus on his shoulder. His worship began in the early days of Christianity, some say in the third century after Christ, and since that time he has come to be regarded as the protector of travellers. Throughout the Middle Ages his figure adorned church entrances and the exterior walls of inns, and boards set up at road crossings. The painters of the Italian Renaissance often depicted St. Christopher standing or kneeling with other favourite saints in the presence of the Virgin Mary. I have seen statues of St. Christopher, often sculpted in a primitive fashion and painted in naive colours, in old churches throughout France. And he is still there today despite the ban

imposed by the church in 1970 eliminating his name from the official church calendar, as being a saint altogether too legendary, his life too undocumented, to be suitable as an object of adoration by good Catholics.

But the cult of St. Christopher continues, and raises the question of whether a spiritual being must be real—that is to say, historic—in order to be an efficacious subject for our adoration. The Divine Mother is not real, in the sense that Durga, say, or Kali, was born in a certain place on earth at a certain date. Nor, for example, Shiva. But this does not reduce their reality. They are available and efficacious spiritual beings to those who choose to adore them. The ineffable Brahman made flesh in the Incarnation—although the Incarnation is real in the sense of being historic—is an equally 'impossible' concept.

At the present time, when psychologists try to account for everything in terms of logic and reason, many efforts have been made to give mythological material a rational explanation. A myth is a traditional story that usually occurs in a timeless past and involves supernatural elements. The philological studies of Max Müller mark the beginning of the serious study of the significance of myths. Sir James Frazer, Sigmund Freud, Claude Lévi-Straus, and others tried to account for the origin and meaning of myths and why there is a similarity between them even though coming from diverse cultures. Carl Jung put forth his idea of the collective unconscious—a kind of universal innate wisdom that tried to reconcile man and nature. Jung felt that psychological troubles may be produced by the dehumanization brought about by purely 'provable' knowledge.

Students of Indian spirituality may view the origin of legends in a different way. Swami Vivekananda suggests an explanation in his 'The Real and the Apparent Man' when he speaks of there being different levels of being, or universes, all existing concurrently, each visible only to those capable of tuning in, as we would say today, on its particular frequency. 'Between you and me', said Swamiji from his place as speaker that day in New York, February 16, 1896, separated but a short distance from his auditors, 'there may be millions of beings on different planes of existence. They will never see us, nor we them.... If the state of vibration which may be called the "man vibration" should be changed, no longer would men be seen here ... and instead of that other scenes would come before us, perhaps gods and the god-universe.'¹

Mother Kali and Lord Shiva become real, hence, in a different state of mind. How do we know about them, if we have not entered that state of mind? From the reports of spiritual explorers who have. Such explorers have 'leaked' to us what they have seen there. Indeed, we may redefine the holy scriptures as collections of inspired leaks. The phenomenon of the Incarnation is even more exciting. He is a traveller between two worlds—a science fiction being come true—who successfully leaps the gap from a state of vibration totally beyond our knowledge to the realm of man vibration.

It is not then inconceivable that the content of all mythology is true and pre-existent on a different level of thought, and merely discovered by man bit by bit as time goes by. It is customary to say that legends are invented and grow over centuries through a process of accretion. But could

it not be argued the other way round—that their contents are already self-contained in some other state of vibration and are simply discovered according to his needs by man?

Thus the legend of St. Christopher—all the legends that have come down to us from earlier cultures and civilizations—may be real or true according to some system of thought normally closed to us. In a sense they may be even more real, because pointing to inspired truths, than the prosaic outlook ordinarily available to us. There may be a vast plane of existence inhabited by saints called legendary. The gods of the Greeks and the Romans, the beings of Norse pantheons, and the Vedic deities may all be existent in some fashion we do not understand. Hence to discourage their adoration because they are pagan or un-historic is foolish and wrong. St. Christopher has given immense comfort to many over the centuries; doesn't that make him real, whether he is historic or not? Or rather, whatever Vatican pronouncements may say, more true than untrue? And suppressing him as being devoid of historic base is as foolish as it is impossible.

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From the standpoint of Vedanta the parable of St. Christopher may be seen as leaking to us very high truths. Let us look at the ideas that have accumulated around this beloved figure and see what they may mean to us.

Christopher, it is said, came from the land of Canaan (in modern Israel) and his original name was Offero. He was a strong, simple man—according to some accounts, a man of colossal stature. He resolved that he should serve the greatest and most powerful monarch that existed. So he travelled far and wide to seek out the greatest of kings; and at length he came to the court of a certain

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, II, 1971, p. 278.

monarch who was said to exceed in power and riches all the other kings of the earth, and he offered to serve him. And the king, seeing a willing and strong servant, readily engaged him.

How shall we interpret this opening phase in the legend of St. Christopher? As depicting the natural idealism of unspoiled youth, which wants to do something useful in life, with youth's typical self-assurance.

Now it happened one day, as Christopher stood by the king in his court, that there came a minstrel who sang before the king, and in his story there was frequent mention of the Devil; and every time the king heard the name of the Devil, he crossed himself. Christopher inquired into the reason for this gesture, but the king did not answer. Then said Christopher: 'If thou tellest me not, I leave thee.' So the king said, 'I make that sign to preserve me from the power of Satan, for I fear lest he overcome me and slay me.' Then said Christopher: 'If thou fearest Satan, then thou art not the most powerful prince in the world. I will go seek this Satan, and him I will serve, for he is mightier than thou.' So he departed, and he travelled far and wide; and as he crossed a desert plain he beheld a great crowd of armed men, and at their head there marched a terrible and frightful being, with the air of a conqueror. And he stopped Christopher on his path, saying: 'Man, where goest thou?' And Christopher answered, 'I go to find Satan, because he is the greatest prince in the world, and him would I serve.' Then the other replied, 'I am he. Seek no further.' Then Christopher bowed down and entered his service, and they travelled together.

The first king represents, let us say, the power of traditional virtue—serving one's

family, or one's church, or one's community in a conservative way; in short, following one's proper *dharma* (way of life). Such objectives have their attractions. But *samsara* (the world) offers a far more glittering service, symbolized by the second king. Of what is this comprised? The acquisition of power, the ruthless pursuit of money or sensual excess. Even the subtler attractions such as a dedication to scientific or political solutions to mankind's woes. This great king has been active since the days of Eden, and everybody has to reckon with his subtle power; his speciality is making the bad seem good. No wonder that one of Satan's epithets is The Tempter.

Now when they had journeyed a long, long way (note that: a long, long way), they came to a place where four roads met, and there was a cross by the way-side. When the Evil One saw the cross he was seized by fear, and trembled violently; and he turned back and made a great circuit to avoid it. When Christopher saw this he was astonished and enquired: 'Why hast thou done so?' And the Devil answered not. Then said Christopher, 'If thou tellest me not, I leave thee.' Being thus constrained, Satan replied, 'Upon that cross died Jesus Christ, and when I behold it I must tremble and fly, for I fear him.' And Christopher was more and more astonished, and he said, 'How then, this Jesus whom thou fearest must be more potent than thou art! I will go seek him, for him will I serve.'

Yes, unenlightened man is, as the saying goes, in league with the Devil, and travels with him a long, long way. But there comes then, if one is so lucky, a crossroads—some call it the crisis of reaching thirty years of age—or some painful but fortunate deception, and beside that crossroads occurs

our first glimpse of possible redemption, and here Everyman (as he is called in the famous medieval morality play) or Christian (as John Bunyan names him in *Pilgrim's Progress*) hears a divine call.

So he left the Devil and travelled far and wide, seeking Christ; and having sought him for many days, he came to the cell of a holy hermit, and desired of him that he would show him Christ.

Since he always sought the greatest king and was sincere, but was simply ignorant as to how to go about finding him, providence now provides Christopher with a guru.

Then the hermit began to instruct him diligently, and said: 'The king whom thou seekest is indeed the great king of heaven and earth. But if thou wouldst serve him, he imposes many and hard duties on thee. Thou must fast often.' And Christopher said, 'I will not fast, for surely if I would fast my strength would leave me.'

Obviously this would-be devotee is not attracted to the path of Raja-Yoga.

'And thou must pray,' added the hermit. Said Christopher: 'I know nothing of prayers and I will not be bound to such a service.'

It is equally clear that Bhakti-Yoga is not Christopher's path.

'Then,' said the hermit, 'knowest thou a certain river, stony and wide and deep, and often swelled by the rains, and wherein many people perish who attempt to pass over?' And he answered, 'I know it.' Then said the hermit: 'Since thou wilt neither fast nor pray, go to that river and use thy strength to aid and to save those who struggle with the stream, and those who

are about to perish. It may be that this good work shall prove acceptable to Jesus Christ whom thou desirest to serve, and that he may manifest himself to thee.' To which Christopher replied joyfully, 'This I can do. It is a service that pleaseth me well.'

Obviously, Christopher's is the path of Karma-Yoga. (The fourth yoga, Jnana-Yoga, does not figure in the story—for clearly if the point were non-dualism there could be no story at all and no St. Christopher!).

And so he went as the hermit had directed and he dwelt by the side of the river, and having rooted up a palm tree from the forest—so strong he was and tall—he used it as a staff to support and guide his steps, and he aided those who were about to sink, and the weak he carried on his shoulders across the stream. And by day and by night he was always ready for his task, and failed not, and was never wearied of helping those who needed help.

What can the living tree be but the living word, God's name, a sturdy staff for those who must cross the boiling waters of life? The qualities Christopher manifested were those recommended to everyone whose path is Karma-Yoga: readiness, perseverance.

So the thing that he did pleased Our Lord, who looked down upon him out of heaven, and said within himself: 'Behold this strong man who knoweth not yet the way to worship me, yet hath found the way to serve me.'

How can we doubt that this legend comes from a sphere of universal wisdom, when it contains an idea like that? Christ's toward Christopher is the same as Sri Krishna's attitude toward Arjuna, for in the

next paragraph we see that Christ recognized disinterested service as worship, and responded to it.

Now when Christopher had spent many days in this toil, it came to pass one night, as he rested himself in a hut he had constructed of boughs (that is to say, the one-pointedness he had built up), that he heard a voice which called him from the shore. It was the plaintive voice of a child, and it seemed to say, 'Christopher, come forth and carry me over.' And he rose forthwith and looked out, but saw nothing. Then he lay down again, but the voice called to him a second and a third time. (In Indian thought, to repeat something three times invests it with power and makes it true.) And the third time he sought around and about with a lantern (concentrated, intense longing) and at length he beheld a little child (the most powerful king in the world thus disguised) sitting on the bank, who entreated him, saying: 'Christopher, carry me over this night.' (Of course, night, for *shraddha* [faith] is blind.)

And Christopher lifted the child on his strong shoulders and took his staff and entered the stream. And the water rose higher and higher, and the waves roared and the winds blew (no use to comment on the significance of this!). And the infant on his shoulders became heavier and still heavier, till it seemed to him that he must sink under the excessive weight; and he began to fear, but nevertheless, taking courage, and staying his tottering steps with his palm staff (how apt), he at length reached the opposite bank. And when he had set down the child safely and gently, he looked upon him with astonishment and said, 'Who art, thou, child, that thou has

placed me in such extreme peril? Had I carried the whole world on my shoulders, the burden had not been heavier.'

And the child replied, 'Wonder not, Christopher, for thou has borne on thy shoulder him who made the world and who himself bears it always. I am in fact the Christ, thy master, he who thou servest in doing what thou art doing. I have accepted thy service, and in testimony that I have accepted thy service, and thee, plant thy staff in the ground, and it shall put forth leaves and fruit.' Christopher did so, and the dry staff flourished as a palm tree in the season, and was covered with clusters of dates, of which he did eat. And the miraculous child had vanished. And Christopher fell on his face in worship of his Lord, the greatest king.

What a wonderful story! Can there be any doubt that it is true, if not historically, then according to some system of divine thought, from which it has been leaked? The devotee who does his job of self-reformation and of charity to all, with courage and in high idealism, carries indeed the burden of the whole world on his back. But whose burden is it? Christ's. And what is he actually carrying when he carries that burden? Christ. Image having the Lord on one's shoulders! Thus, as Vedanta teaches, in the most literal sense, service becomes divinized, work becomes worship.

The hero of the story still had his old name of Offero up till this time. He became known as Christopher only after that night. The name of Christopher is derived from the Greek 'Christophorus'; meaning: He who bears the Christ, or Christ-bearer.

In the Middle Ages many of the statues and paintings of St. Christopher carried this Latin inscription:

Christophorum videas, postea tutus eas

We may translate it: 'Look to St. Christopher and go ahead reassured.'

* * *

That is what automobile drivers do, with their statuettes or their medallions of St. Christopher before them, as travellers have done in their various ways for centuries. The thought of St. Christopher is a thought of the Divine, and hence protective.

But for those of deeper comprehension,

the myth of St. Christopher opens up a larger truth than that of mere physical protection. It has to do with the itinerary taken by any person who seeks the greatest king, who is willing to serve him according to his capacities, and who bears the burdens which that service imposes, even if at times this seems to mean carrying the whole world. One day he will understand that bearing the world in that fashion is bearing the Lord, and bearing the Lord signifies acceptance by Him.

THE TAO OF PHYSICS

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE WORLD VIEWS OF PHYSICISTS AND MYSTICS

DR. FRITJOF CAPRA

Modern physics has had a profound influence on philosophical thought, because it has revealed an unsuspected limitation of classical ideas and has necessitated a radical revision of many of our basic concepts. These changes in our concepts of reality have been widely discussed by physicists and philosophers over the past decades, but very seldom has it been noticed that they all seem to lead in the same direction, towards a view of the world which is very similar to the views held in Eastern mysticism. By 'Eastern mysticism' I mean here the religious philosophies of the Far East such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Although these traditions differ in many aspects, the basic elements of their world-view are the same, and these elements are also the fundamental features of the world-view emerging from modern physics.

The world-view which was changed by the discoveries of modern physics had been based on Newton's mechanical model of

the universe in which the material world was seen as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine. The stage of the Newtonian universe was the three-dimensional, absolute space of Euclidean geometry. All changes in the physical world were described in terms of a separate dimension, called time. The elements which moved in this absolute space and absolute time were material particles; small, solid, and indestructible 'building blocks' out of which all matter was made.

Such a mechanistic conception of the world is useful for the description of most physical phenomena we encounter in our everyday life and thus appropriate for dealing with our daily environment, and it has proven extremely successful as a basis for classical science and technology. Beyond the dimensions of our everyday environment, however, the mechanistic concepts lose their validity and have to be replaced by concepts which turn out to be very

similar to those used in the mystical traditions of the East.

The world-view of the Eastern mystics may be characterized by the word 'organic', as it regards all phenomena in the universe as integral parts of an inseparable harmonious whole. In the Eastern view, the division of nature into separate objects is not fundamental, and any such objects have therefore a fluid and everchanging character. The Eastern world-view is thus intrinsically dynamic; it contains time and change as essential features. The cosmos is seen as a system of inseparable, interacting and ever-moving components of which the observer is, him- or herself, an integral part. I shall now show how the main features of this picture appear in modern physics.

At the turn of the century, the experimental investigation of atoms gave sensational and totally unexpected results. Far from being the hard and solid particles they were believed to be since antiquity, the atoms turned out to consist of vast regions of empty space in which extremely small particles—the electrons—moved around the nucleus. When quantum theory, the theoretical foundation of atomic physics, was worked out in the 1920s, it became clear that even the subatomic particles—that is, the electrons and the protons and neutrons in the nucleus—were nothing like the solid objects of classical physics. The subatomic units of matter are very abstract entities. Depending on how we look at them, they appear sometimes as particles, sometimes as waves. This dual aspect of matter was extremely puzzling. The picture of a wave which is always spread out in space is fundamentally different from the particle picture which implies a sharp location.

The apparent contradiction between the two pictures was finally solved in a completely unexpected way which gave a blow to the very foundation of the mechanistic world-view, to the concept of the reality of

matter. At the subatomic level, matter does not exist with certainty at definite places, but rather shows 'tendencies to exist'. These tendencies are expressed, in quantum theory, as probabilities and the corresponding mathematical quantities take the form of waves—that is, they are similar to the mathematical forms used to describe, say, a vibrating guitar string, or a sound wave. This is why particles can be waves at the same time. They are not 'real' three-dimensional waves like sound waves or water waves. They are 'probability waves', abstract mathematical quantities with all the characteristic properties of waves which are related to the probabilities of finding the particles at particular points in space and at particular times.

At the atomic level, then, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities. These patterns, furthermore, do not represent probabilities of things, but rather probabilities of interconnections. A careful analysis of the process of observation in atomic physics shows that the subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections between the preparation of an experiment and the subsequent measurement. Subatomic particles are not 'things' but interconnections between things, and these 'things' are interconnections between other things, and so on.

This is how quantum theory reveals a basic oneness of the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated basic building blocks, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole. In the words of Werner Heisenberg, one of the founders of quantum theory:

The world thus appears as a com-

plicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole.¹

This, however, is the way in which the Eastern mystics experience the world, and they often express their experience in words which are almost identical to the words used by atomic physicists. Take, for example, the following quotation from a Tibetan Buddhist, Lama Govinda:

The external world and his inner world are for [the Buddhist] only two sides of the same fabric, in which the threads of all forces and of all events, of all forms of consciousness and of their objects, are woven into an inseparable net of endless, mutually conditioned relations.²

These words by Lama Govinda bring out another feature which is of fundamental importance both in modern physics and in Eastern mysticism. The universal interconnectedness of nature always includes the human observer and his or her consciousness in an essential way. In quantum theory, the observed 'objects' can only be understood in terms of the interaction between the processes of preparation and measurement, and the end of this chain of processes lies always in the consciousness of the human observer. The crucial feature of quantum theory is that the human observer is not only necessary to observe the properties of an object, but is necessary even to bring about these properties. My conscious decision about how to observe, say, an electron—whether I decide to use my apparatus in one way or another—will determine the electron's properties to some extent. In other words, the electron does not have objective properties independent of my mind. In atomic

physics, the sharp Cartesian split between mind and matter, between the I and the world, is no longer valid. We can never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves. In the words of Heisenberg, 'Natural science does not simply describe and explain nature; it is a part of the interplay between nature and ourselves.'³

In modern physics, then, the scientist cannot play the role of a detached observer, but gets involved in the world he or she observes. John Wheeler sees this involvement of the observer as the most important feature of quantum theory, and he has therefore suggested to replace the word 'observer' by the word 'participator'. But this again, is an idea which is well known to any student of a mystical tradition. Mystical knowledge can never be obtained just by observation, but only by full participation with one's whole being. The notion of the participator is thus basic to the mystical traditions of the Far East.

The second basic theory of modern physics, relativity theory, has influenced our concepts about reality just as dramatically as the developments in atomic physics. It has shown that space is not three-dimensional and that time is not a separate entity. Both space and time are intimately and inseparably connected and form a four-dimensional continuum called 'space-time'. In relativity theory, therefore, we can never talk about space without talking about time and vice versa.

We have now been living with relativity theory for a long time, and we have become thoroughly familiar with its mathematical formalism. But this has not helped our intuition very much. We have no direct sensory experience of the four-dimensional space-time, and whenever this reality manifests itself we find it very hard to deal with

1. Quoted in Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, London: Fontana/Collins, 1976, (hereafter *Tao*), p. 143.

2. Quoted in *Tao*, p. 147.

3. Quoted in *Tao*, p. 144.

it at the level of intuition and ordinary language.

A similar situation seems to exist in mysticism. Mystics seem to be able to attain non-ordinary states of consciousness in which they transcend the three-dimensional world of everyday life to experience a higher, multidimensional reality; a reality which, like that of relativity theory, is impossible to describe in ordinary language. Lama Govinda talks about this experience when he writes :

An experience of higher dimensionality is achieved by integration of experiences of different centres and levels of consciousness. Hence the indescribability of certain experiences of meditation on the plane of three-dimensional consciousness.⁴

The dimensions of these states of consciousness may not be the same as the ones we are dealing with in relativity theory, but it is striking that they have led mystics towards notions of space and time which are very similar to those implied by relativity theory. Throughout Eastern mysticism, there seems to be a strong intuition for the 'space-time' character of reality. The fact that space and time are inseparably linked, which is so characteristic of relativistic physics, is stressed again and again. The Buddhist scholar D. T. Suzuki, for example, writes : 'As a fact of pure experience, there is no space without time, no time without space.'⁵

In physics, the concepts of space and time are so basic for the description of natural phenomena that their modification entails a modification of the whole framework we use to describe nature. The most important consequence of the new, 'relativistic' framework is the realization that mass is nothing but a form of energy; that

even an object at rest has energy stored in its mass.

These developments—the unification of space and time and the equivalence of mass and energy—have had a profound influence on our picture of matter and have forced us to modify our concept of a particle in an essential way. In modern physics, mass is no longer associated with a material substance, and hence particles are not seen as consisting of any basic 'stuff', but as bundles of energy. Energy, however, is associated with activity, with processes, and this implies that the nature of subatomic particles is intrinsically dynamic.

To understand this better, we must remember that these particles can only be pictured within a relativistic framework where space and time are fused into a four-dimensional continuum. In such a framework, the particles can no longer be pictured as static three-dimensional objects, like billiard balls or grains of sand but must be conceived as four-dimensional entities in space-time. Their forms have to be understood dynamically as forms in space and time. Subatomic particles are dynamic patterns, patterns of activity which have a space aspect and a time aspect. Their space aspect makes them appear as objects with a certain mass, their time aspect as processes involving the equivalent energy. Relativity theory thus gives the constituents of matter an intrinsically dynamic aspect. It shows that the existence of matter and its activity cannot be separated. They are but different aspects of the four-dimensional space-time reality.

The Eastern mystics have developed ways of experiencing the 'space-time' character of reality intuitively. Thus most of their concepts, images and myths contain time and change as essential elements; the world is conceived in terms of movement, flow and transformation. More than that, mystics also have developed the notion of a

4. Quoted in *Tao*, p. 154.

5. Quoted in *Tao*, p. 179.

'space-time' nature of material objects which is so typical of relativistic physics. Physicists have to take into account the unification of space and time when they study the subatomic world, and consequently they view the objects of this world—the particles—in terms of activity and processes. The Eastern mystics, in their non-ordinary states of consciousness, seem to be aware of the unity of space and time at a macroscopic level, and thus they see the macroscopic objects in a way which is very similar to the physicists' conception of subatomic particles. Suzuki, for example, writes in one of his books on Buddhism: 'Buddhists have conceived an object as an event and not as a thing or substance.'⁶

The two basic theories of modern physics thus exhibit all the main features of the Eastern world-view. Quantum theory has abolished the notion of fundamentally separated objects, has introduced the concept of the participator to replace that of the observer, and has come to see the universe as an interconnected web of relations whose parts are only defined through their connections to the whole. Relativity theory, so to speak, has made the cosmic web come alive by revealing its intrinsically dynamic character; by showing that its activity is the very essence of its being.

What, then, can we learn from the similarities between the world-views of physi-

cists and mystics? Is modern science, with all its sophisticated machinery, merely rediscovering ancient wisdom known to the Eastern sages for thousands of years? Should physicists, therefore, abandon the scientific method and begin to meditate? Or can there be a mutual influence between science and mysticism; perhaps even a synthesis?

I think all these questions have to be answered in the negative. I see science and mysticism as two complementary manifestations of the human mind; of its rational and intuitive faculties. The modern physicist experiences the world through an extreme specialization of the rational mind; the mystic through an extreme specialization of the intuitive mind. The two approaches are entirely different and involve far more than a certain view of the physical world. However, they are complementary, as we have learned to say in physics. Neither is comprehended in the other, nor can either of them be reduced to the other, but both of them are necessary, supplementing one another for a fuller understanding of the world. Science does not need mysticism and mysticism does not need science; but humanity needs both. Mystical experience is necessary to understand the deepest nature of things, and science is essential for modern life. What we need, therefore, is not a synthesis but a dynamic interplay between mystical intuition and scientific analysis.

6. Quoted in *Tao*, p. 216.

We find that, searching through the mind, we at last come to that Oneness, that universal One, the internal Soul of everything, the essence and reality of everything.... Through material science, we come to the same Oneness.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BLAISE PASCAL'S *LES PROVINCIALES*

DR. S. SUBHASH CHANDRA

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), the well-known French thinker, lived a short life marked by many inner crises and external upheavals. Recurrent and protracted maladies prevented him from imparting to his projected great work *Apologie de la religion chrétienne* any coherently worked-out expression. Indeed, he was constrained to bequeath unto posterity a mass of loose sheets of paper covered with hastily and even illegibly written thoughts. Aside from some other minor writings on mechanics and mathematics, the abiding fame of Pascal rests paradoxically enough upon a series of polemical letters *Les Provinciales*. It is my intention to provide a concise account of these historic letters that provoked such convulsive reactions that even three intervening centuries have failed to pacify.¹

Consisting of eighteen letters written in entirety and the unfinished nineteenth letter, *Les Provinciales* succeeded in drawing once and for all the attention of the vast mass of Catholic laity (and non-Catholic too) to a problem that has rent into two feuding segments the Roman Catholic tradition. Indeed, the clashing bipolarity has become so much the more formidable as it is retraced to two unrivalled summits of Catholic theology, namely St. Augustine (354-430) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-

1274). Notwithstanding their divergence concerning many doctrinal niceties, the two viewpoints seem to converge around two postulates, namely, the beliefs that God by His sole will has predestined the redemptions and the condemnations, and that there is an efficient grace that infallibly attains its aim, but does not thereby undo human freedom. It is in the context of these two postulates that St. Augustine has elaborated his philosophy of grace that seems to reduce to a bare minimum the role of human free will; St. Thomas Aquinas, on the other hand, is more accommodating as far as human freedom in the face of divine fiat is concerned. It seems that in the course of centuries of ecclesiastical debates the Augustinian interpretation was rather preferred to that of St. Thomas Aquinas.²

In 1588 Luis de Molina (1535-1600), a Spanish Jesuit, re-ignited the smouldering quarrel in that he maintained that the divine predestination foresees the merits and that, aside from efficient grace, there is a sufficient grace that makes room for free human decision. In a word, Molina becomes a votary of a neo-Thomistic doctrine that would make the divine fiat seem to be less arbitrary and would render human free will at least somewhat convincing. Molina's

1. Guittou (*Génie de Pascal*) Paris : Aubier/Montaigne, 1962, p. 167) refers to the 'natural' flow of Pascal's style; Vinet (*Etudes sur Blaise Pascal*, Lausanne : Payot, 1936, p. 274) compares the rhetorical effects of Pascal with those of Demosthenes and Moliere; Topliss (*The Rhetoric of Pascal*, Leicester : Leicester University Press, 1966, p. 309) refers to the poetic imagery that enlivens the prose of Pascal; and Bornhausen (*Die Ethik Pascals*, Giessen : Toepelmann, 1907, p. 94) alludes to the mathematical lucidity of Pascal in the clarification of religious concepts.

2. Gouhier (*Blaise Pascal : Commentaires*, Paris : Vrin, 1966, p. 317) insists that the Jesuits attacked indirectly St. Augustine. Stewart ('Pascal in Debate', *Seventeenth Century Studies*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1938, p. 258) mentions the 'flutter among the Jesuits' that Pascal caused. Strowski (*Pascal et son temps*, Paris : Plon, 1913, Vol. III, p. 137) holds that Pascal did not have a good knowledge of St. Thomas Aquinas. Bad health prevented Pascal from acquiring a systematic knowledge of many authors, and Michaut (*Les époques de la Pensée de Pascal*, Paris : Fontemoing, 1902, p. 24) cites many lacunae in Pascal's literary readings.

thesis provoked violent reactions from many theological faculties and, after a decade of animated controversies in Rome (1597-1607), the Vatican imposed in 1611 a formal prohibition of all renewed debate concerning these issues. However, the ban remained ineffective and many indeed were the theologians who indirectly returned to these burning issues in the form of commentaries upon the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas or upon those of St. Augustine.

Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), a professor at the University of Louvain and later on in 1636 the Bishop of Ypres, in his posthumously published monumental work in Latin *Augustinus* vigorously and even fanatically repudiates any concession to human free will that would circumscribe divine predestination. In response to numerous acrimonious protests, Pope Urbain VIII condemned, in general and without deigning to enter into details, the book of Jansen. However, this vague papal reprobation failed to silence Jansen's growing number of sympathizers. In France in particular a core of fanatic Jansenists began to manifest itself in and around the monastery of Port-Royal. A personal friend of Jansen, Father Saint-Cyran was then perhaps the most influential member of Port-Royal. Though Cardinal Richelieu had him confined in a prison, the haughty clergyman continued to influence many theologians from within his prison cell. Thanks to the behests of Saint-Cyran and encouraged by the demise of Richelieu, Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) published in 1644-45 his two *Apologies pour M. Jansénius*, which were crowned by an immediate success. It was but a matter of time that polemical refutations of Jansen were published by the Jesuit priests. Unfortunately Antoine Arnauld and other friends of Jansen tended early enough to move away from the primordial problem of the relationship between divine predestination and

human free will. It seems that sheer opportunism in controversy pushed Antoine Arnauld and his companions to attack what they preferred calling the 'probabilism' of the Jesuit ethics. In any case, this seems to have been the motivation behind the sixty-one page booklet of extracts *Théologie morale des jésuites extraite fidèlement de leurs livres* published in 1643 by Antoine Arnauld and his collaborators. In spite of its brevity, this collection of extracts became quite influential and was often cited even in the eighteenth century. Some of Pascal's embittered attacks against the ethical probabilism of the Jesuits were clearly inspired by this booklet.³

On 1 July 1649, Nicolas Cornet, then the head of the Sorbonne Faculty, requested that the theologians of this august institution condemn the following seven propositions that he seemed to have noticed in the dissertations of the graduate students:

1. Some behests of God are impossible (to be obeyed) by the just (men) who want and strive within the forces that are in them (to realize these behests); the grace that would render it possible for them (to obey these behests) lacks in them too.

2. In the state of the Natural Fall, one never resists the inner grace.

3. For deserving or not deserving (redemption or condemnation) in the state of Natural Fall, it is not necessary that there is in man a liberty that is free of

3. Brunschvig (*Blaise Pascal*, Paris: Vrin, 1953, p. 31) is emphatic that the religion of Pascal 'in its original purity and integrality' is inspired by Jansen. Cousin (*Etudes sur Pascal*, Paris: Didier, 1876, p. 68) maintains that Jansenism is an 'immoderate and intemperate Christianity', although its roots are linked to the Catholic Church. Laporte (*Le coeur et la raison selon Pascal*, Paris: Elzévir, 1950, p. 91) sees in Pascal the twofold impact of Descartes and Jansen. Mortimer (*Blaise Pascal*, London: Methuen, 1959, pp. 47, 56) pinpoints the role of Saint-Cyran in Port-Royal.

necessity; it suffices that there is a liberty that is free of constraint.

4. The semi-pelagians admitted the necessity of inner grace accompanying every action, even for the beginning of the faith; and they were heretics in that they wanted this grace to be such that the human will could resist or obey it.

5. It is a semi-pelagian sentiment to say that Jesus Christ died or has shed his blood for all men without excepting even a single one.

6. The deeds of the infidels are sins.

7. The sentiment of the Church once was that secret sacramental penitence does not suffice for the hidden sins.⁴

Soon, the last two propositions got detached from the five preceding ones and were practically forgotten. The first five propositions, however, assumed a historic significance and have continued to focus around themselves the attention of the theologians up to this day. These five propositions are manifestly ambiguous and I shall analyse them in the sequel.

But to continue with the account of the momentous developments that ensued hereupon, the Jansenists discerned that the condemnation of these five propositions would entail a sufficiently clear attack upon the doctrine of Jansen. Since Jansen pretended to have been nothing more than an interpreter of St. Augustine, his followers guided by the instinct of survival tried to prove that the condemnation of these five propositions would amount to an attack upon the hoary

teachings of St. Augustine. Thus, in his *Considérations sur l'entreprise faite par M. Nicolas Cornet*, Antoine Arnauld tries to prove that the first proposition is corroborated by many passages from the writings of St. Augustine and that the ambiguity of the other four propositions imparted unto them a capricious content. It was a clever move that impelled many distinguished Augustinians to oppose any hasty condemnation of Jansen by the Vatican that could hurt at the same time St. Augustine. Notwithstanding all these efforts, the papal bull *Cum occasione* issued by Innocent X on 31 May 1653 formally condemned the five propositions as heretical and even expressly assigned them to Jansen.⁵

It was a hard blow that obliged the Jansenists of Port-Royal to a sullen silence and an apparent submission to the papal verdict. However, their Jesuit antagonists—more so as they felt encouraged by the papal authority—unleashed sustained provocations in order to force the Jansenists to avow their ill-concealed resentment of the decision of Innocent X. In any case, the vehement attacks of Father Annat, the Royal Confessor, contained in his Latin tract *Cavilli jansenianorum*, published early in 1654, could not be ignored. According to Father Annat, the five condemned propositions were reprimanded by the Pope in the sense in which Jansen interpreted them and that they were

4. Louis Cognet (*Pascal: Les Provinciales*, Paris: Garnier, 1965, [hereafter *Les Provinciales*], pp. xii-xiii) provides verbatim the controversial propositions. The present article is based on this edition of Pascal's book. Bremond, (*Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France*, Paris: Bloud/Gay, 1920, Vol. IV, pp. 404-17) by his distinction between 'the Jansenist Pascal' and the 'better Pascal' would have us rather believe that Pascal was no thorough Jansenist. However, it is a futile attempt, for the Jansenist affiliations of Pascal are irrefutable.

5. Guitton (*Pascal et Leibniz*, Paris: Aubier, 1951, p. 118) avers that Pascal is an Augustinian Jansenist. Broome (*Pascal*, London: Edward Arnold, 1965, p. 109) thinks that Pascal was zealously defending a doctrine that he cherished and only thereafter the defence of the menaced theologians concerned him. Chevalier (*Pascal*, Paris: Flammarion, 1936, pp. 140-41) enlarges upon the 'hard, rigid and inhuman doctrine of Jansen' and regrets its obsessive hold upon Pascal. In my opinion, Chevalier errs here. Pascal was sincerely convinced that Jansen provided the truly correct interpretation of the Christian faith.

even verbally present in the notorious work *Augustinus*. We have here two controversial affirmations that remain disputed even today. For the sympathizers of Jansen have continued to maintain during the last three hundred years that Jansen understood the five propositions in a different sense than that ascribed to them by the Pope and that they are nowhere verbally present in the bulky *Augustinus*. Hence, the papal bull entails no real condemnation of Jansen. Further, Antoine Arnauld, the indefatigable advocate of Jansen, put into limited circulation a manuscript meant to prove that the Popes and the councils are fallible as regards facts. In order to put an end to all evasive and ambiguous submissions to the behest of the Pope, the Congregation of Bishops in France required in 1655 that all clergymen sign a declaration condemning the five propositions expressly in the sense in which Jansen understood them. Paucity of space prevents me from alluding to several intermediate diatribes. It would suffice to refer to the threat of a personal condemnation of Arnauld by the Sorbonne in January 1656 that engendered a sense of crisis among the Port-Royal votaries of Jansen.⁶

In January 1656, Blaise Pascal, then thirty-two years old, had just attained a deep spiritual certitude after over one year of inner doubts and anxieties. Thanks to the influence of his sister Jacqueline, a nun of Port-Royal, Pascal veered towards this institution just at the hour of crisis. Though

6. Pascal was even more lucid and courageous in opting for what he deemed the truth rather than submitting to the papal authority. Steinmann (*Pascal*, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1962, p. 196), rightly points out that, more than anybody else at Port-Royal, Pascal grasped that Jansen was espousing the true Christian doctrine and that the Pope and the entire Church were upholding the error. There is something of the undaunted rebel in Pascal; and Suares (*Trois hommes : Pascal, Ibsen, Dostoïevski*, Paris, Gallimard, 1935, p. 25) correctly pinpoints Pascal's total allegiance to Christ.

he belied the hopes of his sister Jacqueline and some others who would have loved to see him become a monk, Pascal soon assumed the role of a trustworthy friend and a staunch defender of the besieged monastery. Everybody realized then that the struggle in favour of Jansen had to be waged henceforth in a language understandable to the laity and that only the mass opinion could reverse the flow of onslaughts against Port-Royal and thwart a personal reprobation of Arnauld by the Sorbonne. According to an oft-cited account of Marguerite Perier, a niece of Pascal, Arnauld himself drafted a tract meant for the uninitiated public. However, when he read it to the friends gathered around him, everybody could see that the distinguished theologian was ill-suited to vindicate his viewpoint in a jargon other than that of the specialists. Arnauld, conscious of his lack of success, turned to Pascal: 'But you being young ought to do something.' Pascal applied himself to the task and wrote in an inspired mood the first *Lettre* 'written to somebody in Province by one of his friends on the subject of the present disputes at the Sorbonne'. An anonymous letter supposed to have been written by a fictitious Montalte, it elicited instantaneous admiration of everybody and was soon printed bearing the date 23 January 1656.⁷

Immediate success as it was, the momentous letter infuriated the antagonists of Jansen and virtually provoked—instead of preventing, as it was supposed to do—the condemnation of Arnauld by the Sorbonne on 29 January. As a rebuttal to the Sor-

7. Spoerri (*Der Verborgene Pascal*, Hamburg : Furche-Verlag, 1955, pp. 15, 150) reminds us of the impact of his sister Jacqueline upon Pascal when Port-Royal needed to be pulled out of its blind alley. More than anybody else, Mauriac ('Blaise Pascal et sa soeur Jacqueline', *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris : Fayard, 1952, Vol. VIII, pp. 151-259) has grasped the sustained influence of the sister upon her illustrious brother.

bonne, Port-Royal published on the same day the Second Letter of Pascal. Arnauld, Pascal and others were forced to go into hiding for fear of being thrown into the Bastille, and the subsequent letters were published in a clandestine manner with the printers condemned to a constant hide-and-seek with the police. The Second Letter reproaches the Dominicans for their betrayal of St. Augustine and thereby implicitly solicits their alliance in the strife against the Jesuits. The Third Letter, dated 9 February 1656, tries to belittle the Sorbonne condemnation by interpreting it as an act of personal animosity towards Arnauld. The Fourth Letter, written on 25 February, constitutes an explicit attack on the Jesuits and their understanding of the role of grace. It seems, however, that the widespread interest that these four letters awoke served only to render the cause of Jansen and Port-Royal more desperate than ever before. Hence, both the delay (testifying to the worsened anxiety) in the printing and the change of content of the Fifth Letter. In contradistinction to its four predecessors that dealt with the intricate and abiding problem of grace, the Fifth Letter contains sustained attacks against the ethical probabilism of the Jesuits. In my opinion, the Fifth Letter (and those that follow it up to the Sixteenth one) represents a negative trend, a turning-point that is to be regretted. The first four letters are invested with an impassive gravity: they are profound in content and well reasoned out; the Fifth Letter and the ones following it abound in sarcasm and personal jibes; they are full of raillery, biting irony and witty insinuations; there is less of logic and more of humour therein. This basic change of tone and texture from the Fifth Letter onward is indicative of Pascal fighting a war that is already lost. Whether he was aware of it or not, the theatrical attacks and the melodramatic exaggerations on which the

Fifth and the succeeding Letters thrive are but subterfuges that serve to veil the fundamental defeat. Hereafter Pascal resembles a general who, having lost the crucial battle, tries to win some spectacular successes on the far-flung flanks of the enemy in order to seem the winner in the eyes of the uninitiated laymen. To his credit it must be admitted that Pascal succeeds herein so well that his essential defeat remains scarcely at all noticed.⁸

The Seventeenth Letter (written on 23 January 1657) and the Eighteenth Letter (dated 24 March 1657) are characterized by a significant return to the original problem of grace. Since they are expressly addressed to Father Annat, the Royal Confessor, it is possible that this dignitary obliged Pascal to abandon his witty ironies and seriously return to the primeval question. It is likely that the unfinished Nineteenth Letter contains the key to Pascal's genuine appraisal of the situation. Meant anew for Father Annat, the incomplete letter is marked by pathetic undertones. Pascal would like the Royal Confessor to believe that the Port-Royal sympathizers of

8. Guitton (*Profils paralleles*, Paris: Fayard, 1970, pp. 94-95) thinks that Pascal could not pardon the Jesuits their betrayal of the spirit of Christianity under the mask of obedience to the Church. Valensin (*Regards*, Paris: Aubier/Montaigne, 1955, Vol. I, p. 258) is furious at Pascal for having 'besmirched a religious order' (the Jesuits) and having provided a 'dictionary of slander'. Giraud (*Pascal*, Paris: Bonne Presse, 1949, Vol. I, p. 133) draws our attention to Pascal having created the image of the cunning and unscrupulous Jesuit and having thereby inspired similar caricatures in the works of Eugene Sue and Voltaire. Krailsheimer (*Studies in Self-Interest from Descartes to La Bruyere*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, p. 127): '... the *Provinciales* did substantial damage, not only to the Jesuits, ... and to the Jansenists, ... but to the Catholic Church and the Christian cause in general.' It must be conceded that polemical considerations impelled Pascal to many biased attacks upon the Jesuits.

Jansen were imbued with 'Christian piety', 'the zeal for truth', and the hope that the 'grace of Jesus Christ' shall be 'their light and their force'. He alludes to the 'day of judgement' that shall be the final referee.⁹ It is this pathetic rhetoric that betrays Pascal and proves that this unfinished last letter was in truth a desperate plea for an honourable cease-fire. That the letter remained unfinished and was never published during Pascal's lifetime could only mean that it was already too late for an honourable draw. The subsequent destruction of the Port-Royal monastery and the relentless persecution of the Jansenists confirms the impression that Pascal had wedded a forlorn cause.

I would now like to provide an analytical gist of Pascal's vindication of Jansenism in terms of the historic Five Propositions that I have already elucidated. As I have pointed out, Arnauld and other defenders of Port-Royal were quite adamant that these Five Propositions and the meaning ascribed to them by Innocent X are nowhere present in the *magnum opus* of Jansen. On the other hand, the Jesuit opponents are no less vehement in their belief that the disputed propositions are contained in the book of Jansen. It is noteworthy that neither of the clashing sides ventures to offer the paginations in Jansen's treatise that would settle the dispute. That we have here a meaningful prevarication shall be revealed in the sequel. In any case, Pascal supplies us a clue by his insistent request that the Five Propositions be shown to be present *word by word* (*mot à mot*) in Jansen's work.¹⁰ Reasonable though it seems to be, such a request may well rest upon some minor word or words of the Five Propositions being absent in the original of Jansen. Since Pascal provides nowhere his own text of the Five Propositions as they are pre-

sent in Jansen's *Augustinus*, it is not possible to determine wherein the two texts are incongruent nor assess the importance of their discrepancy. I hope to show later on that we are confronted here with a meaningful evasiveness on the part of the two sides involved in the feud.

But let us now analyse each of the crucial Five Propositions. The First Proposition has the singular merit that it is expressly accepted by the Jansenists who cite the authority of St. Augustine in its favour: "Some behests of God are impossible (to be obeyed) by the just (men) who want and strive within the forces that are in them (to realize these behests); the grace that would render it possible for them (to obey these behests) lacks in them too." The proposition is ambiguous in that it is vague about the number and the nature of the behests ('some behests') that are impossible: it could signify few, many or very many behests and even contains the loophole for almost all behests. Further, it says nothing about the nature of these behests: good, bad or indifferent ones? However, since these behests are admittedly impossible for the just, it is logical to surmise that we have here unjust commandments. Further, the second half of the First Proposition renders the obedience of these behests dependent upon grace and at the same time denies this same grace to the just. In other words, it is not possible to comply with the divine behests without grace; however, this grace remains denied to the

11. Pascal cites St. Augustine (Epistola CCXVII, *Ad Vitalem*, § 16): 'We know that grace is not given to all men.' This statement is ambiguous in that it does not specify how many are excluded by 'not ... to all men.' It could signify just a handful of unfortunate beings; however, in the light of one Adam having caused the fall of all human beings, the Jansenists are wont to see herein an exclusion of the overwhelming majority of human beings. *Les Provinciales*, pp. 9, 19.

9. See *Les Provinciales*, pp. 381-83.

10. See *Les Provinciales*, pp. 337-38, 368-69.

just. It is obvious that this assertion reduces to sheer farce the human free will. Courageous in his convictions as he is, Pascal pinpoints the trenchant paradox: just men have the power to pray, but for this they need efficient grace (*grâce efficace*), which God does not always give to the just. Aside from the ambiguous 'not always' (it is a loophole wherein one could fit in 'sometime', 'often', 'very often'), this statement amounts to a virtual denial of even the power to pray and, by implication, even more so abjures the capacity for some other action. Moreover, in that even the freedom to pray is denied to the just (thereby even more so to the unjust), this basic slavery represents no chastisement for any sin: it is just the divine fiat.¹¹

It seems that many theologians and more particularly the Jesuits sought to soften the unlimited tyranny of divine grace and render it more accommodating towards human freedom. It is in this context that the Jesuits, inspired by the reflections of Molina, introduced the notions of the proximate power (*pouvoir prochain*) and the sufficient grace (*grâce suffisante*). Pascal devotes the entire first *Provinciales* to a sustained criticism of the theory of proximate power, which, according to him, either makes no sense or, if it means something, it would signify that the just men are capable of doing something without needing any further grace of God. But in that case the so-called proximate power would circumscribe the sway of efficient grace and become thereby a heretical concept. It is in his second *Provinciales* that Pascal denounces the notion of sufficient grace. If it is really sufficient, then it renders the efficient grace redundant, which is a manifest heresy. If it is not sufficient, then it becomes a contradiction in terms. In a word, as far as Pascal is concerned, the necessity of efficient grace is an article of faith. Hence, both proximate power and

sufficient grace—if they are not nonsense—are heretical negations of efficient grace.¹²

The Second Proposition is more succinct but not less problematic than the First one: 'In the state of the Natural Fall, one never resists the inner grace.' The concluding term 'inner grace' is a novelty that became perhaps one of the loopholes that enabled the Jansenists to decry that the condemned propositions are not *word by word* present in the work of Jansen. It would suffice to replace 'inner' by 'efficient' that the loophole would get plugged. Since Adam's Original Sin we are supposed to be in the state of Fall, thrown to the brink of eternal hell. The inner grace represents the divine authority that brooks no resistance. The utter negation of all freedom is articulated by the total impossibility of all resistance. One is so thoroughly deprived of all freedom that even exceptional or momentary resistance is impossible. Since the Original Sin itself incarnates injustice, this 'inner grace,' in that it renders even the least resistance impossible, becomes the embodiment of tyranny.¹³

12. See *Les Provinciales*, pp. 3-20, 21-35. It is in his *Pensées* (Brunschvicg Edition) § 233 that Pascal avers: '... (my) hands are tied and mouth dumb; ... I have no freedom.' Pascal is speculating in terms of the jealous God of the Old Testament intolerant of the least contravention of His behests. Indeed, He is so jealous that He renders all freedom impossible by the refusal of His omnipotent efficient grace to the just even for praying to Him. Mesnard (*Pascal, L'homme et l'oeuvre*, Paris: Hatier-Boivin, 1956, p. 155) holds that the love of God entails the hatred of the human free will. Though Tourneur (*Une vie avec Blaise Pascal*, Paris; Vrin, 1943, p. 103) sees in Pascal's God a strange coalescence of 'light and shadow, brilliance and obscurity', an Indian interpreter cannot avoid being startled by a God who paralyses the just and the unjust alike by the arbitrary denial of His grace.

13. Not unlike many Christians, Pascal was tormented by the injustice that the doctrine of Original Sin represents. And not unlike many Christians, he sought in unquestioning submission

The Third Proposition tries to salvage some personal accountability that would make reward or punishment seem just in the state of Fall. It is in terms of the distinction between necessity and constraint that some semblance of justice is to be maintained. Quite apart from all liberty being impossible in the total absence of choice that the Original Sin entails, it is difficult to ascertain the real difference between necessity and constraint. On the one hand, efficient grace is supposed to infallibly, i.e. necessarily, attain its goal: all resistance here is necessarily impossible; hence, a liberty without necessity is implicitly reckoned to be futile. On the other hand, if one wants, one can refuse one's compliance: hence, there is no constraint. However, the efficient grace sees to it that one does not want to refuse to comply. It is a subtle juggling that gives with one hand the freedom not to comply, only to take it away with another hand by depriving one of the desire for any non-compliance: your hands are free to resist but your arms are so paralysed that your hands become incapable of resistance. Try what Pascal may, his pleading in favour of some semblance of freedom fails to convince.¹⁴

The Fourth Proposition is curiously ambiguous: it is supposed to be a criticism of the semi-pelagians; however, by its attribution to Jansen, it becomes a criticism by implication of Jansenism too. It is unquestionable that Pascal would agree with the first half of this proposition, namely, 'the necessity of inner grace accompanying every action, even for the beginning of faith....' It is the second half that em-

bodies the criticism: ... they were heretics in that they wanted this grace to be such that the human will could resist or obey it.' Now this implied criticism of Jansen is not without force. My own interpretation of the Third Proposition has shown that Pascal is struggling for some formula that would render unto the human will the possibility to obey or to resist. However, his Jansenist affiliations condemn him to espouse the infallible, that is the irresistible, power of efficient grace that is intolerant of all resistance. We have here an equivocal standpoint and perhaps this dichotomy would explain why the Jansenists could be only indirectly condemned under the ascribed denomination of the semi-pelagians.

The Fifth Proposition is invested with fearful possibilities that cause a shudder of dread to run through all Christians. Once more in the guise of the semi-pelagians the Jansenists are supposed to uphold the viewpoint that Christ did not die for all men, that there are some eternally damned ones that are not redeemed by his crucifixion. Pascal's reply hereto is at once ambiguous and indirectly affirmative. As far as the ambiguity is concerned, Pascal writes: '... it is wrong that he (Christ) did not die but for the predestined ones, which is condemned in the Fifth Proposition.'¹⁵ Now, as it is, the Fifth Proposition says nothing about the 'predestined ones'. Christ could have died for some unpredestined ones along with the predestined ones and yet this could let remain open a vast loophole for the damnation of some, many or even a great number of unpredestined ones. Besides, in the first *Provinciales*, Pascal himself postulates: '.... the grace is not given to all men.'¹⁶ Since redemption is

the solution of this mystery. See *Pensées*, § 434. However, such a submission becomes more of a flight than a solution. Rightly has Prudhomme (*La vraie religion selon Pascal*, Paris: Alcan, 1905, p. 81) grasped that Pascal is 'more perplexed and terrified'.

¹⁴. *Les Provinciales*, pp. 359-64, 79.

¹⁵. *Les Provinciales*, pp. 329-30 (italics are Pascal's).

¹⁶. *Les Provinciales*, p. 19. Eastwood (*The Revival of Pascal*, Oxford: Clarendon Press,

impossible without grace and in that the grace is avowedly not given to all men, some human beings remain damned in spite of the crucifixion of Christ. In his *Pensées*, Pascal refers to the 'selected ones' (*les élus*) predestined for redemption.¹⁷ It seems, therefore, that he after all indirectly assents to the Fifth Proposition.

Now we have here a doctrine that can be understood only in terms of the article of faith that the Original Sin represents. Due to His inscrutable jealousy, the God of the Old Testament condemns all succeeding generations of human beings to eternal hell. Again, it is His unfathomably jealous efficient grace that predestines some selected ones to redemption; the others remain condemned to eternal hell. The terrible question that needs answering is: how many remain excluded of redeeming grace? On the one extremity, we have the cruel conviction of Calvin (1509-1564) that only the predestined selected few have the hope (and no certitude!) of escaping the wrath of the boundless divine jealousy; the overwhelming majority of Christians as much as the non-Christians are doomed to eternal hell. On the other extremity, we have the official Catholic doctrine that most Catholics are redeemed (and perhaps—it is a very faint 'perhaps'—some non-Catholics too); however, even among Catholics there are some eternally damned ones. Pascal and the other Jansenists, despite their perceptible evasiveness, seem to have wedded a viewpoint similar to that of the Calvinists.

An Indian can scarcely imagine the profound dread that emanates out of this doctrine. It is only after many years of sojourn in Catholic countries that one comes to gradually understand and even feel by empathy the agonizing fear of the Cath-

olics: who knows, perhaps I am one of these eternally damned ones! It is in the context of this dread alone that one can grasp the fearful anxiety of the Catholic at the time of his death when he seizes the cross and receives the last absolution, verily like someone who is in danger of getting drowned in the abysmal waters of eternal hell, reaching out for the proverbial straw of hope. As if this were not enough, there is a widespread suspicion lurking among the Catholic laymen that the official doctrine is but a consoling half-truth. I have myself gained the impression that many Catholics in France, Germany and Austria have the disquieting feeling that the full truth rather tallies with the doctrine of Calvin and Jansen.¹⁸

And perhaps herein is to be traced the real reason for the reciprocal vagueness and evasiveness of the Jansenists and the Jesuits alike as regards the notorious Five Propositions. Couched in ambiguous terms as they are, neither of the feuding sides accepts to prove or to disprove the presence of these Five Propositions in the *Augustinus* of Jansen. Both sides are accusing each other of heresy and indulging in personal invectives. Thus, the Jansenists are branded as extravagant, opinionated, impious, foolhardy; not the writings but the personality of Antoine Arnauld becomes the target of the Jesuits.¹⁹ Perhaps these un-

18. Michaut (*Pascal, Moliere, Musset*, Paris: Alsatia, 1942, p. 27) alludes to 'the most tragic, the most lofty, the profound fears' elucidated by Pascal. Jovy (*Etudes pascaliennes*, Paris: Vrin, 1927, Vol. II, p. 38) sees in Pascal a dreadful confrontation with God and the abysmal nothing. Lafuma (*Controverses pascaliennes*, Paris: Ed. du Luxembourg, 1952, p. 7) recalls Pascal's sensitive analysis of the man in anxiety.

19. See *Les Provinciales*, pp. 27, 19, 4, 43, 51, 23. Hubert (*Pascal's Unfinished Apology*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, p. 34) believes rather in Pascal's partial conversion to Jansenism. Lefebvre (*Pascal*, Paris: Nagel, 1949, Vol. I, p. 71) is perhaps too sure when he opines that

1936, p. 150) refers to the 'impossibility of separating Augustinian and Jansenist doctrine' in the writings of Pascal.

17. See *Pensées*, § 575-78.

seemly personal diatribes contain the key to the real but unavowed apple of discord. It is possible that the real fault of the Jan-

Pascal did find the Five Propositions in the *Augustinus*, Guardini (*Pascal*, Paris, Seuil, 1951, pp. 104, 133) enlarges upon the pessimism of Pascal that had its roots in his God who is so high above the norms of human justice.

senists lies in their—not unlike Calvinists—having elaborated upon a doctrine that ought to have remained confined to the hardened clergymen. Unlike the prudent Jesuits, the Jansenists are the *enfants terribles* who have revealed a forbidden doctrine instead of carefully concealing it from the laymen.

DO WE UNDERSTAND THE RELIGION TAUGHT BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA?

DR. NANCY TILDEN

When I speak of 'the religion taught by Swami Vivekananda', I do not mean some one or another aspect, but his teaching taken as a whole. I do not doubt that we may each understand and practise one or even more than one aspect of his teaching. What I do doubt is whether we grasp the underlying and unifying stand taken by the Swami on what religion is and should be, and how best a spiritual aspirant can progress in this age. To understand this, at least in some degree, is essential, I believe, for us as followers of Swamiji. For it is in this unifying factor behind what at first—and second and third—glance appears a welter of conflicting sayings and instructions that the uniqueness of his vision of man and religion lies. Without an understanding of this underlying theme, one can scarcely claim to be a follower of Swami Vivekananda; one could as well be a follower of Shankara or Buddha, of Chaitanya or Lao-tse.

Some of you may respond, 'What does it matter whether we understand all that the Swami taught or how to integrate it? Can we not practise to our profit some greater or smaller aspect of it and leave the "understanding" and "unification" to the

delectation of the pundits?' I would answer, 'You are right, of course,' but then, 'You're quite wrong, too.' Yes, you can practise that portion of his teachings which appeals to you and progress spiritually and thank God it is so! But no, you are wrong if you think that by doing this alone (for example, by working for the temple religiously, or by performing worship and striving for love of God, or by meditating and practising Japa in solitude) you are doing *all* that Swami Vivekananda expected of you.

As I hope to show in the balance of this paper, there is a new, a vitally new and relevant aspect in the Swami's attitude toward and consequent adaptation of India's age-old religion, one which can only be apprehended fully by attempting to understand the Swami's widely varying statements, actions and instructions taken as a whole. It was this new attitude toward the old and its consequences for individual men, whether formally religious or active in the world, that the Swami himself saw as being his own. To these consequences he gave new names, calling his religion sometimes 'practical Vedanta', or 'Vedanta brought from the forest to the market-place', or

most directly, 'the religion of man-making'.

That the Swami felt we must think about our religious position is indicated by the following strongly worded command he has given us all:

Think some thought; it doesn't matter whether you are right or wrong. But think something!... The people who never think anything for themselves... have a mere jelly-fish existence. They will not think; they do not care for religion. But the disbeliever, the atheist, cares, and he is struggling. So think something! Struggle Godward!¹

I conclude that if we are to follow Swamiji truly, we *must* think about what he had to say, though not of course with the brain alone, as accountants or scientists or philosophers think, but with our heart and soul, with a yearning desire to penetrate beneath the surface and understand for ourselves and in our own terms. He, obviously, did not want us to accept answers on authority, whether his own or that of scripture, but to think things out for ourselves so that what we come to believe is deeply rooted in us, in both our reason and our heart. Otherwise, inevitably, what we 'understand' and 'practise' today we will abandon and dismiss tomorrow. Moreover, if we do not try to think through the Swami's message for ourselves, we run the risk of being, in his words, 'mere jelly-fish', lacking even the religion of a thinking atheist!

But given the vastness and complexity of the Swami's sayings and commands on the whole of religion, what can I hope to accomplish in one short paper? First, I hope to get you to think about the problem of understanding him as a whole by presenting four sets of apparently conflicting statements or conflicts between statement and

action.² (I do not intend anyone to understand that these conflicts are absolute, or even necessarily real; only that they appear so and may therefore trouble us.) Second, I should like to call attention to a certain way of looking at this diversity such that an underlying unity emerges beyond the apparent conflicts. Finally, I should like to relate this way of seeing the Swami's unifying position to what he himself claimed as his 'message'—that of practical Vedanta or the religion of man-making—explaining in just what sense his message, so understood, is uniquely relevant and vital to the spiritual life of our time.

First, the four sets of conflicting statements or conflicts of statement and action, and my reflections thereon:

I. On the subject of how best to proceed spiritually:

- a. As the motto of the Order, the Swami selected a quotation from the Upanishads: 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.'
- b. But in *Inspired Talks*, notes taken on his conversation with disciples at Thousand Island Park, he is recorded as saying: 'Do not seek for Him, but just see Him.'³

In what sense is there a conflict between these two commands? The motto of the Order at least appears to stress energetic effort; and the implication is that the goal is at a distance, since one must keep going without stop, while the instruction, 'Do not seek for him, but just see Him' appears to instruct us not to make any effort at seeking, precisely because the goal is *not* at a

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, (hereafter *Complete Works*), IV, 1972, p. 127.

2. In this connection we draw the attention of the interested readers to Swami Shuddhananda's article 'So Called Contradictions in Swami Vivekananda's Teachings', published in the January 1931 number (p. 15) of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.—Ed.

3. *Complete Works*, VII, 1972, p. 29.

distance but immediately before and within us.

II. On the subject of which path, that of Bhakti or of Jnana, has greater value and primacy in this age:

a. In *Karma-Yoga* the Swami says,

Let us stand aside and think that we are only servants obeying the Lord, our Master, and that every impulse for action comes from Him every moment.⁴

b. But in the lecture 'The Soul and God' he says,

Do not say 'God'. Do not say 'Thou'. Say 'I'.... Blessed am I that I know ... that I am worshipping only myself.... Think on it day and night: ... 'I am It. I am the Lord of the universe' I am all the God that ever existed!... Think of this, talk of this ...and give up all superstitions.⁵

These statements appear to conflict because one of them gives priority to resignation to a God external to oneself, and the other insists that there is no such God, that the only real God, the true Lord of the universe, is one's Self; one should therefore give up all superstitious talk of a 'Thou' as God and speak only of 'I' as God. Many have attempted to reconcile these apparently conflicting views—of which the above are but two drawn from many—by holding that Bhakti-Yoga is the path for the beginner and Jnana the path for the advanced. But is this what the Swami means, taking his message as a whole and over-all? If so, why does he say as he often does, 'In a conflict between the heart and the head always follow your heart'? And, should this not seem to give sufficient weight to the Bhakti approach as final, consider this passage from his 1896 letter to Francis Leggett:

They want explanations; but how can you explain Him? He is brainless

nor has he any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason but this time He won't find me napping. I have learnt a thing or two beyond reason and learning and talking is the feeling, the 'Love', the 'Beloved'. Aye, *saké!* fill up the cup and we will be mad.⁶

Yet though such passages, moving as they are, may momentarily convince one that Bhakti is the last word for Swamiji, consider the following remarks made by him in a seemingly calm and considering frame of mind at Ridgely Manor in 1899 and reported in a letter by Sister Nivedita. (The Swami was being teased about his sensitivity over his new-found interest in drawing to which Mrs. Ole Bull had compared her husband's sensitivity on the subject of road engineering.)

You see there is one thing called Love, and there is another called Union; and Union is greater than Love. I do not love religion, I have become identified with it. It is my life: So no man loves that thing in which his life has been spent, in which he really has accomplished something. That which we love is not yet oneself. Your husband did not love music for which he had always studied; he loved engineering, in which as yet he knew comparatively little. This is the difference between Bhakti and Jnana; and this is why Jnana is greater than Bhakti.⁷

What is one to say? Sometimes he seems with great fervour to favour Bhakti as the last word in religious experience; sometimes, with equal fervour (or greater calmness, depending) to favour Jnana as the greater and more ultimate. I find myself left with the 'feeling' that for Swamiji *both* paths are primary: as between Bhakti and Jnana, neither can be slighted or regarded

4. *Complete Works*, I, 1972, p. 102.

5. *Complete Works*, I, pp. 500-02,

6. *Complete Works*, VI, 1972, p. 367.

7. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda: His Second Visit to the West*, Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1974, (hereafter *Second Visit*), pp. 116-17,

as lesser in any way—or the ‘truest path’ will be missed altogether. But how *can* both be ‘primary’? That is the question which I leave you to ponder and for which I hope to find some answer in my conclusion.

III. On the necessity of a Prophet, God-man or Incarnation for man’s salvation or liberation, the Swami says both of the following :

a. Christs and Buddhas are simply occasions upon which we objectify our own human powers. We really answer our own prayers. It is blasphemy to think that if Jesus had never been born humanity would not have been saved. . . . We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which *I am*. Bow down to nothing but your own higher Self.⁸

b. As it has been said [by Christ], ‘No man hath seen God at any time, but through the Son.’ And that is true . . . The vibration of light is everywhere, omnipresent; but we have to strike the light of the lamp before we can see the light. The Omnipresent God of the universe cannot be seen until He is reflected by these giant lamps of the earth—the Prophets, the man-Gods, the Incarnations, the embodiments of God.⁹

Again, the conflict in advice, and in the presuppositions behind such advice, are self-evident. In the first, Christs and Buddhas should not be bowed down to, since they are but objectifications—projections, if you like—of man’s own true nature, his higher Self, which Self it would be blasphemy to suppose needed ‘saving’ by anyone at all. On the other hand, no man can see or contact God *except* through a human embodiment as in an Incarnation or God-man, and far from being wrong to bow down to and worship such, to do so is the only possible and positive way of worship.

IV. On the subject of temples and image-worship, the conflict is not between the Swami’s statements or advice, but between his advice and his own practice.

a. In ‘Is Vedanta the Future Religion?’ he says most forcefully :

If you take my advice, you will never enter any church. Come out and go and wash off. Wash yourself again and again until you are cleansed of all the superstitions that have clung to you through the ages. . . . There is but one temple—the body. It is the only temple that ever existed. In this body, He resides, the Lord of souls and the King of kings. We do not see that, so we make stone images of Him and build temples over them. . . . ‘The fool, dwelling on the bank of the Ganges, digs a well for water.’ Such are we! Living in the midst of God, we must go and make images. We project Him in the form of the image while all the time He exists in the temple of our body. We are lunatics. . . .¹⁰

b. But what did the Swami himself do? He founded the Ramakrishna Order, built a temple and installed an image of Ramakrishna there and worshipped it daily. He further established Vedanta Centres in America, as well as one in England; there also, through his brother-monks, built temples and set up images of Sri Ramakrishna to be worshipped daily.

Again the conflict is self-evident. If we ought to come out of all churches and temples and give up the worship of all man-made images, why did he himself build temples and worship images? And what are we, if we count ourselves true followers of Swamiji, doing in this temple, worshipping these images? Ought we not to leave immediately and wash ourselves off, cleansing ourselves of the superstition that there can be any temple but the human body, or any deity save he who resides in the heart of man? But if we did so, would we not

8. *Complete Works*, VII, p. 78.

9. *Complete Works*, IV, p. 139.

10. *Complete Works*, VIII, 1971, pp. 134-36.

fail to follow the example of his own actions and those of his brother-disciples? For clearly he himself did not follow, and we are not now following, the advice he gave in 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?'. Could such advice have been meant only for the West, where it was delivered, or did it represent only one mood over-enthusiastically expressed—to be contradicted by his own behaviour throughout life? That his advice was *not* meant only for the West is evidenced by his remarks to an Indian disciple and his subsequent underscoring of them:

After so much austerity I have understood this as the real truth. *God is present in every man. There is no other God besides that....* What I have told you today, inscribe in your heart. See that you do not forget it.¹¹

And that the 'never enter a church' advice was not simply the product of one temporary mood is indicated by his own self-reflective comment upon it in the same lecture, 'Is Vedanta the Future Religion?': 'Today I am preaching the thing I like. I wish I had been brought up entirely on that without all the dualistic superstitions.'¹² He appears, then, to have meant what he said and to have meant it not just on one day or for one culture or another. But how then are we to follow him? It seems we must both build temples and worship images in them, and not even enter temples or worship any image save that called the human body in which God truly and naturally resides. How can we do both? And yet, how can we fail to give equal weight to both?

These are some of the apparent conflicts in the position of Swami Vivekananda on religion, God, true religious practice, superstitious religious practice, and so on. It is these which I have hoped might cause

you to think, as he has asked that we do. For how can we maintain that the Swami had an integrated whole view of any kind and yet give equal weight to these seeming conflicts between his statements or his statements and his behaviour?

What have I to say by way of reconciliation of these apparent paradoxes? I cannot hope, of course, to wave a wand and dispel all difficulties in his works; to reconcile them all one would have to be oneself a Vivekananda. But I would like to offer a few quotations for your reflection, quotations through which I hope to suggest an underlying consistency of view and of attitude that does offer one way of resolving these apparent conflicts. I think it is just this new way of viewing, this deeper and more intense way of taking the old truths, that constitutes the vitality and relevance to our time of the Swami's 'message' to the world. Here are the quotations for your reflection, the first seeming to represent a new way of understanding what the religious consciousness is aiming at, the second and the third being ways of presenting what might be called the existential and individualistic character of his understanding of the way to achieve true religious awareness:

1. Our whole idea of God, our praying, our worshipping, all are vitiated by our ignorance, our foolish idea of ourselves as body.... *We must become thinkers.... We must get out of materialism....* This struggle is all the worship there is; all the rest is mere shadow.¹³

Try to be materialists no more! Throw away all matter! The conception of God must be truly spiritual. All the different ideas of God, which are more or less materialistic, must go.... In every country there have always been a few who have been strong enough to throw away all matter and stand out

11. *Complete Works*, VII, p. 247 (italics mine).

12. *Complete Works*, VIII, pp. 140-41.

13. *Complete Works*, VIII, p. 135 (italics mine).

in the shining light, worshipping the spirit by the spirit.¹⁴

2. We have seemingly been divided, limited because of our ignorance, and we have become as it were the little Mrs. So-and-so and Mr. So-and-so. But... the soul in its own majesty is rising up every moment and declaring its own intrinsic Divinity. This Vedanta is everywhere, *only you must become conscious of it.*¹⁵

3. Until we realize God for ourselves we can know nothing about Him I will go to God direct; let Him talk to me. I cannot take belief as a basis, that is atheism and blasphemy. If God spake to a man in the deserts of Arabia two thousand years ago He can also speak to me today, else how can I know that He has not died? *Come to God any way you can, only come.*¹⁶

In order to understand the first aspect of what I see as the Swami's two-phased integrative message, consider what he means by 'we must become thinkers' in the first quotation. He seems to *identify* 'becoming thinkers' with 'getting out of materialism' which is a struggle, a very great struggle indeed, but the very struggle which is 'all the worship there is', the rest (of religion) being 'mere shadow'. What is this kind of thinking in which we *must* engage else we are not really religious at all? He did not mean, as I have indicated before, that we must exercise our brain cells alone in some cold objective fashion. He meant rather that we must use our capacity for integrative heart-head reflection; and we must use it to move progressively away from awareness of ourselves, our world, our God, as in any sense material, determined, finite, dead, and toward the awareness of the One Limitless Absolute Spirit that is all that is. Thus 'thinking' meant for him much what the word *vichara* does in

Sanskrit, the discriminative reflection by which the real and valuable is separated from the unreal and valueless—and the latter discarded. This process of persevering reflection on Spirit as real and rejection of anything not Spirit as valueless and unreal is what the Swami means both by 'thinking' and by 'getting out of materialism'. It involves the constant examination of our own assumptions, attitudes and daily behaviour, in order, as far as possible and by whatever method suits us best, to root out of ourselves, of God, of the world, any sense of their being material, objective, non-conscious, confined.

So, as I see it, this kind of 'thinking' is based in the first, the most fundamental, of the two aspects of the Swami's integrated position: his overwhelming perception of the sole, absolute and unconditioned reality of the Spirit—whether called God, Brahman, Atman or Moksha. This Reality he not only knew, but directly perceived; that is he saw it, and saw it all the time, as ever real, absolute, full, perfect, unlimited, free. With such perception a constant, It and It alone is or can ever be for the Swami. This is how he sees religion: First, as the recognition of oneself, of God, of everyone and everything as That alone; second, as soon as possible and by whatever means appeal to the individual aspirant, the direct personal experience of this fact. It is in this aspect, which I have called the existential and individualistic aspect, of his underlying unified message that perhaps the Swami's uniqueness becomes most apparent. For unlike many, even most, religious teachers he does not prescribe any one way, or even different ways for different stages or roles in life or society, to achieve this perception. Rather, seeing each man as not just part of the one Spirit but as that infinite Spirit in his entirety, he only urges that each find his own individually 'right' way or combination of ways: that he

14. *Complete Works*, VIII, p. 139 (italics mine).

15. *Complete Works*, VIII, pp. 138-39 (italics mine).

16. *Complete Works*, VII, p. 97 (italics mine).

'come to God any way he can, only come'. For merely to say that Spirit is alone real, or to entertain the idea as a guest in the mind, is for the Swami no better (indeed if it be thoughtless, a good deal worse) than atheism or philosophic materialism. It is nothing to talk God, Spirit, Freedom, *unless* you are also working steadily, perseveringly, at achieving perception of that truth for yourself. That is why, in the language of contemporary philosophy, the Swami may be called a thorough-going existentialist in religion; the idea or essence is nothing, the direct experience by the individual subject all. He could never be satisfied with ideas, talk, argument however logical. He was eager ever and with a restless consuming energy to rouse us, each and every one of us, to *experience* ourselves as the Spirit—and that by whatever path each finds compatible and effective.

Thus as I see it, the two aspects of the underlying unity of the Swami's message consist of the following: (1) his ever present awareness of Spirit as alone real and (2) the consequent rousing of each man to think his way out of the ignorance and superstition about his nature and the nature of reality and of God into which he has fallen; that is to struggle, to 'dematerialize,' in order that each may become conscious of this Divinity that 'is everywhere, only we must become conscious of it'. In the quiet summarizing words he addressed to Miss Noble in a letter of June 7, 1896:

My ideas indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.¹⁷

But how do I see these two aspects of 'becoming thinkers' or 'dematerializing religion' as providing a reconciliation of the

apparent conflicts I have enumerated? Let us consider each in turn briefly:

First, with respect to the apparent conflict between 'not seeking, only seeing Him' and 'stopping not till the goal is reached': The necessity, in the Swami's view, that each of us actually experience ourselves as Spirit requires 'arising, awaking' and a long struggle in which we must not 'stop' anywhere short of that full experience. Thus each must be up and struggling if, when he opens his eyes, he is to see God and not matter. Though the goal is ever immediate and eternally co-present with our very existence, to come out of our hypnotization of ourselves, our delusion of material reality, will for most involve a long struggle. Yet once the goal is reached, it will be known as right here and now, never having needed any 'seeking'.

Second, it is Swamiji's emphasis upon the individual's greatness as truly Spirit and his equal certainty that the individual is fully able to find his own way that explain how Bhakti and Jnana can be at the same time 'the highest and best path', neither being contradicted by nor subsumed under the other. For Jnana is *the* way for a given individual at a given time, and Bhakti is *the* way for another individual at a given time; indeed, each may be *the* way for the same individual at different times and under different circumstances. There is no contradiction, or conflict, between finding Union the highest truth at one time or for one person, and Love the highest truth at another time or for another person. Indeed, for the Swami it is precisely the case that the more comprehensive the person spiritually, the more likely he is to find all paths 'the highest' and to practise all, in turn or in combination. Thus he observes of the Paramahansa symbol which he devised for the Ramakrishna Order:

The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma, the lotus of Bhakti,

¹⁷. *Complete Works*, VII, p. 501.

and the rising sun of Jnana. The encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the swan in the picture stands for the Paramatman. Therefore, the idea of the picture is that *by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti and Yoga the vision of the Paramatman is obtained*.¹⁸

Again, the existential emphasis upon 'Come to God any way you can, only come' reconciles two other seemingly irreconcilable pieces of advice given by the Swami: that advising one to regard Buddhas and Christs as but limited projections of one's own unlimited Spirit, and that in which he maintains that only in those human embodiments of Spirit can men make living contact with Spirit. How? On the one hand, for most of us the Spirit would be simply an imagination or a very blank abstraction; we need to see in a human and, to us, material form beings who have realized themselves and all else as Spirit. Only then is it practical, even possible, for those in the dark of material perception to experience what they have not yet known in themselves—that is, the quality, nature, behaviour, if you will, of the being that is Spirit. On the other hand, it is nonetheless true that such Buddhas and Christs and all the forms which God has had for men are projections of his own inner reality, Spirit, and if he can realize this directly by knowing and 'thinking upon it', he needs no 'real' external saviour—indeed cannot need a real external (in the sense of material) saviour, since there are none. Only the Spirit saves and he is, in his real nature, That. All that his projected gods or god-men can do is to help him to the direct perception of what is always there. But he may find such projections the only existentially possible way for him to perceive Spirit for a long—or short—time. They are projections of Spirit, and he himself is that Spirit, and his

goal is to perceive that fact for himself, whether through projected material forms of it or, more directly, in himself.

Fourth, the Swami's urgent command to 'come out of churches' can be reconciled with his own action of building churches and images and worshipping them, if one takes a similar view of 'church' and 'image' as of 'Buddhas and Christs'. That is, he is saying in the passage about 'coming out of the church and washing oneself off' much the same thing as he is saying when he urges us to 'think for ourselves' and to 'get out of materialism'. It is going to the material building called a church in a routine way, it is mere attendance at services or the thoughtless following of ritual activities therein that is 'materialism' in the name of religion. And as such it is like a Black Mass—worse than outright atheism or materialism deliberately and thoughtfully chosen. Nothing of an existential realization of Spirit can follow from the mere attendance at certain ceremonies in certain buildings. And that was what the Swami was urging us all to get out of: the sense that religion consists in certain external, material things and activities rather than in the effort to see through their apparent materiality to their reality as Spirit. Further, for the Swami, the most immediate and directly apprehensible form of Spirit for man is the body of man; in it he may most naturally worship the Spirit through the discipline of reverential service. This does not mean however that many do not need, or may not want, to proceed through other objectified material forms—such as churches and images. Indeed, these are the usually necessary kindergartens of religion, where man first begins to quiet the mind and to purify the heart so that perception of the Spirit becomes an initial possibility. Hence, for those who needed or wanted it, the Swami built temples and images of worship. For those who did not, he sought

18. *Complete Works*, VII, p. 204 (italics mine).

to rouse in them awareness of man as the 'other god'. He would have them worship the 'sum total of all souls' as, in his own words, 'the only God that exists, the only God I believe in'. It was, as he said, this god for whom he wished to be 'born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries that [he] might worship Him.'¹⁹ But the Swami did not forget that just as merely 'going to church' could not bring about the struggle for realization that is religion, neither could merely 'coming out of church and washing oneself off'. For many, he recognized, the 'kindergarten' of regular worship in a building set aside as sacred is the first effort to contact Spirit, to dematerialize, and struggle for direct experience. For such 'coming out of temples' and 'worshipping the real God, man' may mean no more than pious talk and doing 'good works' in the name of religion but in the reality of complacency and self-congratulation. The touchstone, the key, is which does what for whom. What works for the individual—to get him out of materialism, to make him a real 'thinker'—that is what he should do, whether that be coming out of temples or going into them.

Perhaps in this way many other apparent conflicts in the Swami's statements and actions can be reconciled. But I have promised more, namely, that in this unifying underlying emphasis the Swami presented something vitally new and relevant to our own age. But the combination of an emphasis upon the Spirit and the necessity of realizing rather than merely talking about it has ever been the hallmark of Indian religion from the Upanishads to Ramakrishna. What, then, is unique in the Swami's underlying and unifying position, if any thing? Certainly not the fact that Spirit (or Atman or Brahman) is alone real, nor the necessity of experiencing this oneself, nor yet their

conjunction with a variety of paths suited to a variety of temperaments and situations. All these have been the stated, restated, rerealized subject of the Hindu religion for millennia. What then is new? What specially relevant to our time?

What is new is the intensity and certainty of the Swami's awareness of the Spirit—not just when in meditation or a transcendent state, but in every ordinary being in the realm of so-called Maya. This intensity and certainty of awareness of the Spirit yielded a new attitude toward the Jiva, the living, seemingly limited individual soul. The Swami's attitude toward each individual man in *vyavaharika*²⁰ is the attitude of the devotee toward the Lord, or of the Jnani toward the Absolute. He reveres, nay, he worships man in his individual manifestation, precisely because he sees in him so clearly the Spirit that he truly is. Out of this attitude of reverence comes another—that of faith, faith in each man's infinite capacity: to save himself, to think, to realize, to know himself truly—once he is made aware of the truth about himself and made to feel, and act from, his own innate power. Such an attitude seems to Swami Vivekananda the *natural* one to take toward what is in fact—and in his own direct perception—Brahman. In other ages, only some men were deemed 'fit' to hear the full truth; the rest must wait until experience had made them 'ready'. Such has been the age-old tradition in India. For this reason, though all might have a way to progress toward realization of themselves and all else as Spirit, not all could go by the same path. As was a man's age, caste, sex, role in society—all, as it were, *external* determinants—so must he concentrate on Karma or Bhakti but not Jnana Yoga, or upon Jnana or Bhakti but not Karma Yoga.

The Swami could not see it that way,

19. *Complete Works*, V, 1973, p. 137.

20. Practical; relating to phenomenal existence.

simply because he saw in every individual only the Spirit, only God, with all the power, all the potential of God. He would first tell all the truth to all. God, after all, cannot be destroyed by hearing the whole truth! Secondly, each individual must be roused to struggle in whatever way he chooses to realize himself directly as Spirit. To take account of his age, caste, role in society to determine what path should best suit anyone, is to give too much weight to unreality. If the limitations are *not* real and Brahman alone is, then why cater to such limitations? Let each individual choose from the whole range of possible paths his own unique way. No one can tell what new way, what fresh approach, will arise out of the infinite potentiality that is Spirit manifesting itself. This is not to say that one does not need guides and models or that incarnations, Gurus, Prophets are of no value. No, they have just as much value as they have—for the individual, manifested Spirit in question. And *that*, in practice, is a very great—nay, even all-important—value in all but the minority of cases.

But nothing need be held back; nothing 'parcelled out'; there is no absolute necessity (though it may be practical for many) for the 'step-by-step' approach. One may leap to one's divinity; who knows?

This willingness to accept—or rather respect, to revere—individual capacity and individual difference in approach is well conveyed in a small incident recorded by Miss Josephine MacLeod. She spoke of Swamiji as 'coming out with some of his thoughts' one night at Ridgely Manor and of the conversation that followed:

...a lady said, 'Swami, I don't agree with you there.' 'No? then it is not for you,' he answered. Someone else said, 'Oh, but that is where I find you true.' 'Ah, then it was for you', he said.²¹

Such an attitude towards the individual manifestation of Spirit is indeed man-making; it is an attitude that naturally makes men aware of their powers by trusting to them and by the challenge of the full truth thrown open before them. Yes, this emphasis and this attitude is a man-making religion precisely because it sees men as the gods they were to the Swami's eye.

If encouraged, promoted, accepted, become natural, such an attitude must needs breed, in time, a new kind of man. Not the old type of religious devotee depending upon an external—and so material—image of God, fearing him or loving him, but ever dependent. No, a new kind of devotee at once fearless, self-reliant, full of the joy of his own being and at the same time worshipful of every other being as also Spirit; a devotee versed not in one path or one understanding of the Divine, but comprehensive in his religious discipline; not quarrelling over but glorying in the difference between paths and understandings of religion. Such men, not awed by authority, not clutching privilege to themselves, confident of their own greatness, ever honouring it in others, would indeed be what the Swami hoped: gods on earth.

Why would such an attitude be peculiarly relevant to the present age? Simply because it does enthrone as god every man—not the sun or moon, not the king or priest, not ritual or story. In other ages worship of the sun, the moon, the stars, worship of storm gods, of ritual or incantation, worship of king-gods or priests was natural for one or another society with its agricultural or monarchical way of thought and feeling. But in this, the age of the individual, of democracy, socialism and the common man, one could not naturally worship a king-god or priest-god. Nor could one in an age of science and technology return to the worship of sun, moon, ritual or recited creed. Nothing that has the least

21. *Second Visit*, p. 110.

taint of so-called 'elitism', of privilege, rank and rule of the few will sit well with the modern heart and mind. But a religion in which every man is as great as every other because every man is God, in which every man shall hear all the truth and choose how best he will realize it for himself, that is a religion 'in tune with its time'. Such is the religion issuing naturally from the unifying message of man's divinity and the need for existential realization of that divinity for each of us.

Never before in India's great spiritual history had a man stood so firmly on his vision of every being as the Spirit, every being as equal to every other in his capacity to find his own way to his true nature. The Upanishads were secret teachings, only for those who had demonstrated their state of preparedness. With perhaps the exceptions of Buddha and Ramanuja, throughout the history of Indian religion certain practices were prescribed for certain states and conditions of man: Karma and Bhakti but not Jnana for the householder; Jnana and/or Bhakti but not Karma-Yoga for the monk; and for whatever spiritual path, initiation required some form of demonstrated competence or *adhikara*. But, as a prophet, Swami Vivekananda understood his own time—and far beyond. He looked forward to the time when, whatever the position or role a man might seem to hold, he would in reality know himself as Spirit only, and see and serve all others as Spirit. The attitude of reverence usually reserved in religion for a transcendent deity the Swami naturally felt for the Spirit immanent in every man; it was this which made his Vedanta practical Vedanta and his religion a religion of man-making. Paradoxically, it is *new* precisely because it takes the *old*

more seriously, more fully and freely, than ever before.

One final question arises. Does such a religion, with its unifying principle of the sole reality of Spirit, the existential need for every man to realize it, and the infinite faith in every man, require that we must as followers of Vivekananda become ourselves Vivekanandas? I would say yes, and no. No, in the sense that we are not to become anyone other than our own selves—not Buddha, not Christ, not Vivekananda. But yes, in the sense that we are to achieve—beginning now from a standing start, so to speak, and each for ourselves in our own experience—what Vivekananda was and experienced himself as, constantly: the ever free, ever limitless Spirit. In his own words,

Will other and greater Prophets come? Certainly they will come in this world. But do not look forward to that. I should better like that each one of you became a Prophet of this real New Testament, which is made up of all the Old Testaments. Take all the old messages, supplement them with your own realizations and become a Prophet unto others. Each one of these Teachers has been great; each has left something for us; they have been our Gods. We salute them, we are their servants and, all the same, we salute ourselves; for if they have been Prophets and children of God, we also are the same. They reached their perfection, and we are going to attain ours now.... This very moment let everyone of us make a staunch resolution: 'I will become a Prophet, I will become a messenger of Light, I will become a child of God, may, I will become a God.'²²

22. *Complete Works*, IV, p. 134.

HUMANITY IN THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITARIAN GOD

DR. BEATRICE BRUTEAU

That God is both formless and possessing a multitude of blissful forms was a truth often on the lips of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Aurobindo, who had listened carefully to this teaching, put it in his own way, saying that the Absolute Being has three simultaneous poises, as transcendent, as cosmic, and as individual. But long before either of these teachers spoke, tradition had represented the Transcendent God as Shiva Nataraj, the Divine Dancer whose dance is the world, and as Kali, the Divine Mother, who, manifest as time, brings forth Her children, suckles them for a while, and eventually consumes them.

All these are ways of saying that when we have understood as much as we can of the fundamental mystery of the Many and the One, we will find the issue resolved in a way that is so subtle, so complex, so ambiguous and paradoxical, as to be almost unthinkable.¹

In the West, one way that this Mystery has been approached is through the notion of God as a Trinity. Ultimate Reality is said to reveal Itself to us as Three Persons in One Being. Not, perhaps, that there is anything special about *three*. But it is not the inarticulateness of *one*, nor the polarity of *two*. It represents the complex interrelationships of *several*, of *many*. And these many are co-equal in glory, despite their arising from their Source through an ordered procession. Distinct from one another by their relations to one another, they nevertheless are not many Gods, not several Beings. There is only One God, having within Itself this interior complexity.²

If we now add that the natural world and

the human race have been created in the image of this complexly unitary God, we may have a clue for understanding ourselves and our future.

Person As Spondic Energy

If we are to contemplate God as a complex of Persons united by their personal relations, how shall we think of person? How can we ever think of anything with respect to God except by delving as deeply as we can into our own experience? No doubt this is what the ancient sages did when, in both the East and the West, they went beyond saying that the basic reality is water, or air, earth, fire, or ether, and declared that it is *Nous*, intellectual consciousness, and *Atman*, transcendent selfhood.

When we seek the depths of ourselves now, we are guided by these earlier discoveries and can already identify the person as the spirit, that is, the intellect and free will, and as the pure 'I am', transcendent of all predicates. Sinking deeply into our subjectivity, we know that we are not the body, nor the emotions, nor our 'personality' or character, not our earthly history, not our accumulated factual knowledge, nor our opinions, fancies and theories. Whatever is finite, whatever can be identified by its repulsion from another, that we are not. We escape all such categories framed by mutual negation.

One who hears this description of the ascent above all forms into the formlessness of the Self may feel that what has been attained is a grand and lonely eminence, a static isolation that is akin to death. And indeed, perhaps not much has been said in our traditions to indicate that the Self is not static and not isolated. We have even

1. Cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I.ii.1ff. and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI.ii.1ff.

2. Cf. the Athanasian Creed,

stressed that it is the Immutable and the Alone. But that was said by way of *performing the act of ascent itself*, by way of denying to the Self the relativity and finitude that characterize the world of forms. The denial is not really a statement about what is found at the apex of the ascent; but the act of making the denial is part of the act of ascending.

Once we are intensely experiencing ourselves as pure spiritual selfhood, an 'I am' that transcends any particular way of being, we realize that we are the very reverse of static and isolated. As the restricting bonds of finite predication are stripped away from the vital centre of self-existence, we experience ourselves more and more as the act of being, as dynamic and as radiant, as the uttermost essence of Life itself. We realize ourselves as vibrant and as luminous. We are an intense energy that streams forth, that beams out being, that pours out itself, pours out the very existence that it is.

This is the *person* as *spondic energy*. 'Spondic' is taken from the Greek *spondē*, which means 'libation'. It is the act of 'pouring out' as an expression of reverence, of worship. But what is reverence and adoration in the worshipper has its analog as bliss and delight in God. Spondic energy in God must be a kind of joyous explosion of divine glory, an effulgence of self-giving in sheer beatitude. This is what is meant in the Western tradition when it is said that *theos estin agapē*, God is love. It is an answer to the question, How can we describe the Ultimate Reality? What is Brahman? Brahman is Atman. And what is Atman? Atman is Agapē.

Perichoresis : Trinitarian Life

In the *mythos* of the Trinity, God is said to be three Persons in one Being. And if a Person is a transcendent Self who radiates self-existence, who gives being, that is to say, who loves, then these three Persons

must love one another. Being infinite, each radiates infinitely, each gives totally. But the act of total giving, without holding back anything to preserve or sustain oneself, means that one actually indwells the beloved. And when each of these Three loves each of the others in this total way, each giving all of its energy of existence to each of the others, then each indwells the others, each pours being into the others, each one's act of being coincides with the act of loving, of giving being, and thus there is only one act of being shared among the Three. This is a human description drawn from human experience, attempting to say what some of us have found at the deepest level of reality we have been able to plumb.

In the Western tradition dealing with the Trinity, this act of pouring oneself into the others and thus indwelling them is called *perichoresis* (in Greek) or *circumincession* (in Latin). *Perichoreo* means to go around or to come to in succession, but it is very close to *perichoreuo*, meaning to dance around, which may remind us of Shiva's divine dance in the circle of fire, translating the bliss of transcendent unity into the joy of multiple manifestation and back again. Just so, the Trinitarian Persons proceed in order from a unitary Source which pours itself out into each of them, rejoice in their multiplicity which enables them to love one another, and realize their dynamic unity by the very act of love, of totally circulated spondic energy, that also sustains their multiplicity.

The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* article on 'Circumincession' explains the Greek conception of the Trinitarian Life this way :

For a Greek the primary datum is not nature but person, throbbing with life, communicable life. Each Divine Person is irresistibly drawn, by the very constitution of His being, to the other two. Branded in the very depths of each one of them is a necessary outward impulse, a centrifugal force, urging Him

to give Himself fully to the other two, to pour Himself out into the divine receptacle of the other two. It is a 'reciprocal irruption', or unceasing circulation of life. Thus, each person being necessarily in the other two, unity is achieved not so much on account of the unicity of a single passive nature but rather because of this irresistible impulse in each person, which mightily draws them to one another.³

We can evoke in ourselves the experience on which this description is based by recalling that when we speak directly to a person, when we say 'you', we are not addressing 'an instance of human nature', but one who says interiorly, even as we do, 'I am'. We are all familiar with the difference between the experience we have when we talk about someone who is absent, using the third person pronouns, and the experience we have when that individual comes into the room and we shift into second person. When we talk about the absent person, we feel that we are outside that being, as if looking at something that has a surface, that has objective characteristics that can be set up in categories and compared with others of similar kind.

But when the person whose abstract idea we have been discussing confronts us in living reality, we feel a bit of shock—a touch of guilt, even if we have said complimentary things, because something in us recognizes that any talking about a person is

a falsification. *Person* is not the kind of being that has an 'outside' that can be viewed from a discrete distance. Person is not an 'object', something thrown before us. When we address a person, we must enter right into the dynamic, outpouring subjectivity of that life: My 'I am' must flow into your 'I am' and permit your 'I am' to flow into mine. Only when I, as transcendent of all my predicates, converse with you, as transcendent of all your predicates, does person contact person.

The confluence of my spondic energy with your spondic energy leads us to the experience which sounds so paradoxical when expressed in our everyday language, namely, that the same dynamism that unites us also differentiates us; the same act establishes simultaneously unity and multiplicity. In our real experience of love this is obvious to all of us, and we do not find that there is any conflict or confusion or puzzle about it.

We know that we are our true self only at the transcendent level, beyond the personality and all other finitizing particulars. Therefore we know that the other person's true self is to be found at that same level. We also know from direct experience that the essential act of our true self is to communicate the being which we are. This is not an afterthought, something that we can do or not do. We *are* spondic energy; if we do not radiate, we are not.

Subjectively, we experience our spondic energy as a deliberate will that the other person should be and be abundantly, with all possible goodness. We will to give our own energy of existence into the other to augment and enhance the other's life. And the more we so will and so give, the more we are being our true self, that is, the more our true selfhood is realized. Nothing enables me to be the 'I' that I truly am so much as the act of giving all that I am to enable you to be you. And yet the more I

3. The article is by A. M. Bermejo (*The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967). 'Not nature but person' means 'not *what* the being is, what its characteristics and qualities are, what its essence is, but rather *who* is existing here in and through whatever nature it may be'. Emphasizing person rather than nature has the effect of 'starting with' the Three and achieving the Unity. All such descriptions have to be corrected, of course, by repeating that the Unity and the Multiplicity of the Trinity are given simultaneously and are of equal significance.

The expression 'reciprocal irruption' is from Cyril of Alexandria.

pour myself, my being, into you, the more I am united with you, the more we share one being. The act of deliberately, intentionally giving being to one another is the special act that has this unique quality, that it simultaneously creates both unity and multiplicity.

The most fundamental thing that we can say about Ultimate Reality, that it is both One and Many, is thus realized in the depths of our being in the act of mutual self-communication. This is the profound significance of the simple statement that 'God is love', which is represented in the *mythos* of the Trinitarian Life.

The Image of the Trinity

At first glance, the beings with whom we share our everyday life would seem to be formed on a very different pattern. Do they not repel one another by their electromagnetic forces, by their sheer occupation of space, by their incompatible genotypes? Do not we ourselves hold aloof from one another according to our gender, race, nationality, culture, caste, or social class? And yet, even in the finite realm, where distinct acts support multiplicity and create unity, there are amazing features, imaging the indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity.

Bacteria, for instance, live so interdependently that it is impossible to cultivate most of them in isolation. They not only feed one another and support the environment for one another, but they often live on each other and sometimes even inside each other. Complex modern cells, such as we have in our bodies, may have been built up in this fashion, by some simple cell absorbing other organisms which continued their proper lives within the host cell.

Living within each of our cells to this day are smaller bodies called mitochondria, which are separate creatures with their own DNA,⁴ quite different from ours. And our

lives depend upon them, for they perform the magical chemistry that provides us with the oxidative energy to power all our life processes. Centrioles, basal bodies, and other minute creatures also live inside our cells, both alien to us by their distinct genomes and essential to us by the biochemical functions they perform. What kind of unity are we? Are we not a collection, a college, a miniature ecosystem?

Consider the social insects. Perhaps there is no such thing as a 'single individual' among them. Isolate a bee or an ant or a termite from its companions and it will die. Even a group of three or four is not sufficient to organize the characteristic work of the whole colony. They will merely wander about in a random fashion. But once a certain 'critical mass' is present, sufficient numbers of these apparent 'individuals', then something like a collective intelligence and purpose appears. Buildings are erected with mathematical precision, food supplies are cultivated and garnered, young are nurtured, and the integrity of the home defended. What seemed by their spatial separation to be independent animals are now revealed by their interfunctioning to be organic components of the truly operative unity.⁵

The Anthill has for some time been held before us as the emblem of what we must strive to avoid. Community co-operation at the cost of individual freedom is the disvalue we have had in mind. But have we considered our own nature carefully

desoxyribonucleic acid. It is the hereditary material of life, found in chromosomes, in viruses, and in bacteria. The DNA molecule duplicates itself during cell division, thus forming the basis for the formation of hereditary material for the next generation.—Ed.

5. See Lewis Thomas, *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher* (New York and London: Bantam, 1974), for an enlightening discussion of these topics.

4. DNA means deoxyribonucleic acid or

enough? And might we not try to lift the analogy to a higher dimension in which it could represent a positive value?

The ants unite themselves functionally by constantly exchanging information and food. In this respects they are themselves a higher dimension version of the basic operations taking place within and among the microscopic cells of which each of them is composed. Exchange of meaning and energy is the general form of the act of living on every level.

We also engage in these same activities in our secular lives, continually passing information and energy around our steadily complexifying and unifying world. Our economic and cultural experiences are consequently becoming more and more intertwined. We all depend on one another, learn from one another, inherit one another's traditions as if they were our own, care about one another's welfare as if we were all members of one giant family. And, not surprisingly, we thus are coming to realize that such is precisely our relationship.

But the life within this great Family, its richness and beauty, demands protection and cultivation of the unique qualities of each of its members. The higher level unity is possible only if each component maintains its characteristic nature. The Human Family, seen as one integral Living Being, cannot possibly dispense with the personal uniqueness, liberty, and creativity of its constituents. Weaken any of these powers, and the Family will sicken; reduce them sufficiently, and it will perish. We need not fear that in conceiving of ourselves as all together composing a single Being we are in danger of forfeiting these virtues. Should we forfeit them, we would become a Heap of units, or at best a Machine. But we would not be a Living One.

In the Christian tradition this Living One is called the Mystical Body of Christ, and we are warned not to seek it among the

dead.⁶ Only the most truly living aspects of us enter into this higher dimensional unity. Especially insofar as we are Persons, transcendent spirits possessed of intellectual consciousness and the ability freely to love, do we form the Christ, the manifestation of the Trinitarian God.

Our innermost nature as sponadic energy draws us to realize ourselves in thus transcending what we had thought to be ourselves. Through the long processes of evolution, we have come to be self-conscious creatures. Our individual self-consciousness, by virtue of its reflexivity, has become capable of turning inward upon itself, centring itself in its own selfhood, until it realized itself as radically formless, not different from the Formless Being that is the Root of all.

And now, we are preparing to repeat the whole journey over again on a higher level of complexity. That very formless centre of absolute selfhood, the moment we had reached it, exploded in the effulgence of self-giving-imparting, communicating, sharing being. And so we found ourselves as a community of selves, beaming our radiant lives into one another. This sharing of meaning and energy, if the pattern we have so far discerned repeats itself, will enable us to become what the Christian tradition calls 'a new creature in Christ', having its own consciousness, its own reflexivity, its own selfhood, and its own self-realization as a transcendent being not different from the Supreme Many-One.

We are used to thinking that our selves as defined by our separation in space in distinct bodies are our basic beings, our fundamental identities. Community is something we make later by organizing these units in certain ways. But the ultimate selfhood we believe to be our individual selfhood. Even when we affirm

6. See Luke 24:5.

our union with the Supreme Self, it is the union of this individual self with the Supreme that we mean.

But one of the Psalms says to us : 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity... for *there* the Lord bestows the blessing : eternal life.'⁷ Perhaps *the* blessing, our destiny, is given only in community, a community of transcendent spirits in which life is so intimately and intensely shared that altogether they compose one Living Being whose essence it is to be alive and who can therefore never die. In another scripture the Christ is represented as speaking to the components of the Mystical Body, saying 'I am the Vine, you are the branches. ... Because I live, you will live also.'⁸ The

life of the Whole is the life of the participants in that Whole.

Perhaps eternal life, therefore true selfhood, is to be found in this transcendent Community. Perhaps we must shed one more inadequate conception of who we are, and continue to reach above ourselves to find ourselves. But if so, we cannot afford to lose any of our selves . Each one is necessary to us, for it is unique and cannot be replaced by another of the same type. With what care, then, must we love one another, as quite literally our 'self' ! Pouring our sponadic energy freely and fully into one another, lifting our consciousness to the level of the Whole, we may await a new plane of Self-realization in the image of what has been called the Trinity, wherein the One is Many and the Many are One.

7. Psalm 133, emphasis added.

8. John 15:5 ; 14:19.

A PILGRIMAGE TO KEDAR-BADRI

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

In 1915, Gurudas Maharaj (later Swami Atulananda) and I were both Brahmacharins in Mayavati.¹ Gurudas Maharaj, a Westerner, was about forty years old, and I was in my early twenties. He was very devoted to Swami Turiyananda, with whom he had done much travelling.

Gurudas Maharaj wanted me to make the pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinarayan with him. I gladly agreed. As he was crippled, he had to be carried the entire way in a dandy—a kind of chair carried by two people on each side.

At Kankhal we stayed in the Ashrama of the Ramakrishna Order. I walked faster than the people who carried the dandy and arrived at the next stop, Hardwar, before

Gurudas Maharaj. I thought, I would save him money by doing some cooking myself, so I got fuel and various kinds of foodstuff together. There was an inn where pilgrims could stay without paying. I tried to start a fire in one of the rooms, but the smoke was so thick that I had to keep running out of the room. An old widow, who was seated near by, was watching me. She said : 'Son, have you ever cooked before ?'

'No, Mother.'

'Do you mind if I prepare the food for you' ?

'Oh no, Mother, please go ahead !'

So she prepared the meal. First she fed Gurudas Maharaj and me, and then the people who carried the dandy. Afterwards she also ate.

1. Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.—Ed,

After this experience Gurudas Maharaj suggested : 'Let us hire a cook, and also someone to carry our bedding and other things.' That was done.

We crossed the bridge,² and after ten of fifteen miles we stopped at an inn for the night. I was not used to the altitude and the cold weather, and when I first tried to get up, I felt dizzy. But then I became acclimated, and we began our journey. We went about fifteen miles and then arrived at an inn.³ There we had every comfort, and we slept well.

First we made the trip to Kedarnath, which is at an altitude of 11, 753 feet. You cannot stay there overnight because it is so cold. There is eternal snow and ice ; and on our way we came upon a holy river which was covered with snow, so we could walk on it. The path up one steep mountainside was ten miles long. I went slowly, step by step. And I saw that many pilgrims were gasping for breath and had to sit down and rest.

At Kedarnath, Lord Shiva's temple, there is a wonderful atmosphere. We had no difficulty taking Gurudas Maharaj inside. As he was a Westerner, we had thought the priests might object. But we were told : 'No, there is no objection here.' So we went in and offered our worship.

Afterwards, a priest fried some puris for us and gave us molasses, as nothing could be boiled at such an altitude. That same day we came back about ten miles. There is a beautiful inn and also a small pool where hot and cold springs mix together.⁴ You can bathe there. And the water is so hot you can make a cup of tea, which we did. I bathed in the pool, and it took away all my aches and pains.

Then we went on our way to Badrinarayan.

2. Probably Lakshman Jhula at Hrishikesh—*Ed.*

3. Probably Mahadeo Chatty.—*Ed.*

4. Gaurikund.—*Ed.*

Coming up one mountainside, I recognized one of Maharaj's⁵ disciples. He was senior to me and later came with me to America, where he stayed only two years. His name was Sitapati Maharaj later Swami Ragha-vananda. He had come up the mountain from a hospital down below. He was very ill. A Brahmacharin by the name of Tarasar was with him, but when Sitapati Maharaj saw me, he embraced me and said : 'Brother, don't leave me here. Take me away from this place.' I told him : 'Don't you worry. We will make some arrangements.' Then Gurudas Maharaj's dandy came. We all went down the mountain and hired another dandy, for Sitapati Maharaj. So we began our pilgrimage with two and ended up with four.

Sitapati Maharaj was the son of a deputy magistrate. When we reached a certain place we met the deputy magistrate of that district. He invited Sitapati Maharaj to stay in his home, and we waited about a week until Sitapati Maharaj was completely cured before we continued the pilgrimage. In the meantime, as I recall, we climbed a mountain to see a monastery of Shankaracharya.

One day during that time, I went to the river. While I was washing myself, I saw a Swami from another Order. Suddenly he slipped and fell into the water. The current of the river was very strong. I threw the end of my wet cloth to him, but before he could grasp it he was smashed against the rocks and was gone. That was quite a shock for me.

We took the path to Badrinarayan, which is at an altitude of 10,244 feet. Sitapati Maharaj was able to walk now ; so the three of us walked, and Gurudas Maharaj was carried in a dandy.

A narrow path led up the mountain. Down below, the river was flowing with a very

5. That is, Swami Brahmananda's.—*Ed.*

strong current. I was walking in front and right behind me was Gurudas Maharaj, then Sitapati Maharaj, and behind him the other Brahmacharin. All of a sudden an avalanche came roaring down the mountain. We were all sure we were going to die. I looked back at Gurudas Maharaj. There was a beautiful smile on his face. That gave me such encouragement. The big rocks did not actually touch me, but I could feel the rush of air as they fell just past me. And then, through the Lord's grace, the avalanche suddenly stopped. All the pilgrims sat down and began to chant the Lord's praises.

Then we walked again. First we crossed a bridge. There were big mountains before us. The sun was rising. It was such a beautiful sight. All the pilgrims sat down and closed their eyes. Instead of seeing the beauty outside they thought of the even greater beauty within and began to meditate.

Again we went on. Finally we arrived at Badrinarayan. All the pilgrims sat down, waiting for the temple to open. We too were seated to one side.

A bright-looking young priest, about twenty to twenty-four years old, beckoned to me. He said: 'Ask your friends to come and follow me.' He took us to a side of the temple where it was not crowded. When he opened the temple door, some other pilgrims wanted to enter also, but he told them: 'No, it is not for you.' The four of us went in with him, and he closed the door behind us.

But here is the peculiar thing. Generally a priest stands to one side or in front, facing the deity. But this priest stood in line with the Deity, facing us, which is never done. We stayed and had our *darshan* (view of the Deity). After a few minutes the priest asked: 'Have you had enough *darshan*?' We came out, but the

priest did not leave the temple. He closed the door behind us.

Again we were seated with the pilgrims. Another man beckoned to me: 'Ask your friends to come with me. The head priest wants to see you.'

We went, and the head priest with great courtesy made us sit by him. He asked in Hindi about Gurudas Maharaj: 'To what race does this man belong?' I knew a little Hindi, and I answered: 'You have no right to inquire about the race or caste of a monstic.' The head priest replied: 'I know but does he not come from America?' He explained that he himself did not mind, but as Gurudas Maharaj looked white, other people would make trouble for him. If they saw him entering the temple, he would have to pay a large sum of money to have it purified. The head priest asked the three of us not to go into the temple either, as we ate with Gurudas Maharaj. But he was very kind to us. Every hour he would wave the Aratrika lights before the Deity and would let us watch from the open temple door; at that time he would not permit other pilgrims to enter the temple. After we had our *darshan* he would allow the other pilgrims to go inside. We never told him or anyone else there that we had already been inside the temple.

For three days and three nights the four of us were practically guests of the head priest. He arranged for our stay in a heated room and sent us the best temple *prasad* (consecrated food).

There were about seven or eight priests at Badrinarayan, and we met them all; but we never saw the young priest again who had conducted us into the temple when we first arrived.

From Badrinarayan, on the way back to Mayavati, Sitapati Maharaj, Gurudas Maharaj and I stopped at Almora, where Swami Turiyananda was then staying in the Ramakrishna Kutir. We did not know where in

Almora the Kutir was located. Although we had only been told that it was somewhere beside the road, we happened to come to just the right place. I had begun to call loudly, 'Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj, Swami Turiyanandaji Maharaj!' It was early in the morning. The Swami had been warming himself by a fire, dressed only in a *kaupin* (loincloth). As soon as he heard my voice, he came running outside into the cold to meet me. Think of his love! Then he took me by the hand and led me to the Kutir, and Gurudas Maharaj and Sitapati Maharaj also came. He gave us a warm room.

We stayed with Swami Turiyananda for three days, and we told him the story of our pilgrimage. When he heard about our first *darshan*⁶ at Badrinarayan, when the

young priest had taken us inside the temple, he became excited and exclaimed: 'You foolish boys, don't you realize that it was the Lord Himself who came in this garb and took you inside? Didn't you recognize Him?'

evening. After washing in the hot spring, we, together with many other pilgrims, waited in front of the temple door in expectation of *darshan* [the blessing of seeing the image, often termed deity]. Suddenly a priest opened the temple door, beckoned to me only, took me inside the temple, and closed the door. I was shown everything—the holy of holies, the deity. I came out satisfied. Afterwards I did not see the priest anymore. In the late evening the director of the temple sent a man to us bearing the message that he had heard that an American Swami had come and hoped to have the *darshan* of the deity. But as it was against the rules to allow a foreigner inside the temple, arrangements would be made so that the Swami could see the deity from outside. The door was opened, people were made to stand aside, and a light was shone on the deity, thus allowing me to have *darshan* from outside.

'We came back by way of Almora. Swami Turiyananda was staying there. When he heard about the incident, he said, "You know, it was Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] who appeared as the young priest to take you inside the temple."' *Atman Alone Abides*, recorded by Swami Dhiresananda, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1978, pp. 25-26.

⁶. On March 16, 1958, Swami Atulananda (Gurudas Maharaja) told about the 'first *darshan*' to Swami Dhiresananda of the Ramakrishna Order. Although it differs a little from Swami Prabhavananda's version, it is being given below for the information of the readers. The Swami said:

'Abani Maharaj [Swami Prabhavananda] and I went on pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinarayan. Being a "European", at Kedarnath, I was not allowed to enter the temple. I was disappointed. We reached Badrinarayan in the

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

RAMAKRISHNA—HIS LIFE AND SAYINGS: By F. MAX MUELLER, AND EDITED BY NANDA MOOKERJEE, Publishers: S. Gupta, and Brothers, 58 Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta-700 006, 1978, pp. xxx+169, Price: Rs. 25/-.

Professor Max Mueller, whose life was dedicated to the study of Indian thought, was the first Western writer who presented Sri Ramakrishna's life to the Western public in an article entitled 'A Real Mahatman', which appeared in the August 1896 number of the *Nineteenth Century*. As Swami Vivekananda said, 'The learned people of Europe and America read the article with great interest and many have been attracted

towards its subject, Sri Ramakrishna Deva, with the result that the wrong ideas of the civilized West about India ... began to be corrected' (p. 141).

But a bitter feeling of burning rancour made its appearance among the interested organized bodies of mischief-makers who so long kept the Western thinkers in the abyss of obscurity and error about the real India. From the sides of the Christian missionaries and a few Indians in particular, volleys of fierce attack were opened on the aged Professor's head, though that attempt was swept away 'like a straw before a tidal wave'.

'To stop the empty shouts of his inferior opponents,' Swami Vivekananda comments, 'he [Max Mueller] has published, by way of a warning to them, the book, *Ramakrishna : His Life and Sayings*, in which he has collected more complete information and given a fuller account of his life and utterances, so that the reading public may get a better knowledge of this great sage and his religious ideas—the sage, "who has lately obtained considerable celebrity, both in India and America where his disciples have been actively engaged in preaching his gospel and winning converts to his doctrines, even among Christian audiences"' (pp. 142-43).

At the outset Max Mueller discusses the meaning of Mahatman, the Four Stages of Life, the Life of the Sannyasi or Saint, Ascetic Exercises or Yoga. Then within a very short compass he mentions Dayananda Saraswati, Pavhari Baba, Debendranath Tagore, and Raj Shaligram Saheb Bahadur. Next he enters into Sri Ramakrishna's life, which is followed by a long discussion on the Vedanta philosophy. The greater portion of the book has been devoted to a collection of the Sayings of Ramakrishna.

In the course of his review of the original edition of this book Swami Vivekananda writes, 'Sri Ramakrishna's life is presented in the book in very brief and simple language. In this life, every word of the wary historian is weighed, as it were, before being put on paper.... The Professor's boat is here plying between the Scylla of the Christian missionaries on the one hand, and the Charybdis of the tumultuous Brahmos on the other.... It is a pleasure to observe that there is neither the attempt made here to retort on them, nor is there any display of meanness' (p. 144).

We are thankful to the editor of this book, Nanda Mookerjee, whose prodigious labour has produced this new edition. We are happy to note that Prof. Max Mueller's article, 'A Real Mahatman', has been incorporated in this edition. The Editor's fascinating and impressive Introduction, which dwells at length on the life of Max Mueller, has assuredly enhanced its value. He has given a graphic and moving account of the way in which Max Mueller's 'grave misconception' about India gradually 'developed into a genuine love towards India', and also how Max Mueller was praised and criticized by the great Indian thinkers of that time. He aptly quotes from the writings of Vivekananda, B. G. Tilak, Pratap Chandra Mazumdar, Bepin Chandra Pal, Bankim Chandra and Ramesh Chandra Dutt.

We live in an age when traditions are dis-

appearing, creeds are shaken and dogmas are questioned. The message of Sri Ramakrishna with its emphasis on the experience of Reality in diverse ways and the practice of love has an appeal to the modern mind. This book will enable the Occidental thinkers to catch the true inner spirit of Indian Religion and Culture. We hope that the book will have a large number of readers both in India and outside.

SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA
Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta

SAINT EKANATHA'S LIGHT FOR LIFE
DIVINE : BY M. S. DESHPANDE, Publishers :
Sri Ekanath Sanshodhan Mandir, Khadkeshwar,
Aurangabad, 1976, pp. xx + 222, Price: Rs. 20/-.

Sri Ekanatha (1533-99) was one of the great saints of Maharashtra, who wrote a magnificent commentary in Marathi on the Eleventh Skandha of the *Bhagavata*, which has become famous as *Ekanathi Bhagavata*. Besides this he wrote the *Bhavartha Ramayana* and composed a large number of devotional *abhangas* (a type of verse) in Marathi. He also edited the famous *Jnaneshvari* of Saint Jnaneshvar (thirteenth century). In the wake of other great saints of Maharashtra and true to the *Bhagavata* teaching, he reconciled Bhakti with Advaita, and showed the harmony of Saguna and Nirguna aspects of Brahman in his writings.

This book proposes to shed 'light for Life Divine', primarily based on the *Ekanathi Bhagavata*. Though the book is written well and with conviction to work out a case for the Life Divine, marshalling quotations and arguments from saints and savants, and from philosophers and scientists from East and West, as also from some scriptural texts, it seems to be disharmonious with its title. It appears largely as an independent work of the author in which Ekanatha is quoted to support his thesis, though the quotations from other sources far outnumber and are more apt than those taken from Ekanatha. Hence, if the words 'Saint Ekanatha's' are deleted from the title, the expectant reader will be spared disappointment and will be much benefited by the learned book in a general way.

Further, in such a work there is no need to plead the case for the Life Divine and each one of its steps. If the author had simply given beautiful and sublime passages from Ekanatha under suitable headings of spiritual life, with just a few words to connect them together, the book would have served a greater purpose. As it is, Ekanatha's teachings are lost in the maze of other quotations and the author's arguments.

The language also is not quite suitable for the subject. And a more detailed account of the Saint's wonderful life would have been very useful as a background to his teachings, instead of the scrappy one-page sketch. The binding and get-up are tolerably good, but the printing leaves much to be desired; there are a large number of mistakes; and there is no uniformity in the spelling of proper names, and in the transliteration of Sanskrit and other quotations. The Biblio-

graphy is defective and lacks details. The book seems to have been produced in a hurry. If the reader can put up with all these shortcomings and go through the work with patience, he will find it quite useful in some ways, with its large number of quotations, though not of Saint Ekanatha. The book is a good addition to religious literature, but should be improved.

SWAMI MUKHYANANDA
Ramakrishna Math, Belur, W.B.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION BHUBANESWAR

REPORT : APRIL 1975—MARCH 1978

Founded in 1919 by Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, the Centre conducts various spiritual, cultural, educational, and medical activities, serving thereby the needs of the local people. The Math also has a Publication Department for publishing the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in Oriya. The particulars of the activities are as follows :

Spiritual and Cultural : Daily worship, prayers, weekly classes, religious discourses and Bhajans were conducted in the Math temple. Besides these, regular classes were held in different parts of Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and the saints and prophets of different faiths, were celebrated at the Math. Night-long Kalipuja and Sivaratri were also observed.

Charitable Dispensary : The Charitable Dispensary is rendering medical service to the people of this locality right from the inception of the Math, when Swami Brahmananda and the sannyasis of the Math started giving medical aid to the poor villagers and the labourers engaged in the construction of the Math building. At present the Dispensary is housed in a separate building and is in charge of a qualified Medical Officer. The average yearly number of patients treated during 1975-77 was about 31,000.

Vivekananda M.E. School and Free Upper Primary School : Swami Brahmananda also started a small free school in the Math premises with seven poor children, which grew into a regular Free Primary School in 1933. A Middle English School was further added to it in the

year 1963. The School has its own double-storeyed building since 1966. During the period under review, the average number of boys and girls in the Free Upper Primary School was 155 and 130 respectively. And in the M.E. School the average number of boys was 85.

Vivekananda Library and Free Reading Room : A Public Library with a Free Reading Room was started in 1963, and was shifted to its own building in 1970. The Library maintains a separate Children's Section as well. The average attendance in the Reading Room was 80 ; and the total membership of the Library was 800. The Library contains 10,000 books in English, Oriya, Sanskrit, Bengali and other Indian languages. Eight dailies and 83 periodicals are received in the Reading Room.

The Publication Department : The Math has published so far about thirty books in Oriya. Swami Brahmananda had expressed a wish that the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature be published from this Math in that language. At present, the Math has undertaken the work of publishing the second edition of the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda in Oriya.

Needs : (1) For helping the poor and needy students a permanent fund of Rs. 1,00,000/- is necessary. (2) For purchasing books and preparing necessary furniture for the Library an amount of Rs. 50,000/- may be needed. (3) The Charitable Dispensary needs for its maintenance a permanent fund of Rs. 3,00,000/-. (4) For Publishing the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature in Oriya a fund of Rs. 2,00,000/- will be required. The benevolent public is, therefore, requested to contribute generously for the development of the Math and the Mission. All such donations, which are exempt from Income-tax, may be sent to : The Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Vivekananda Marg, Bhubaneswar-751 002, Orissa.



CHERRAPUNJI

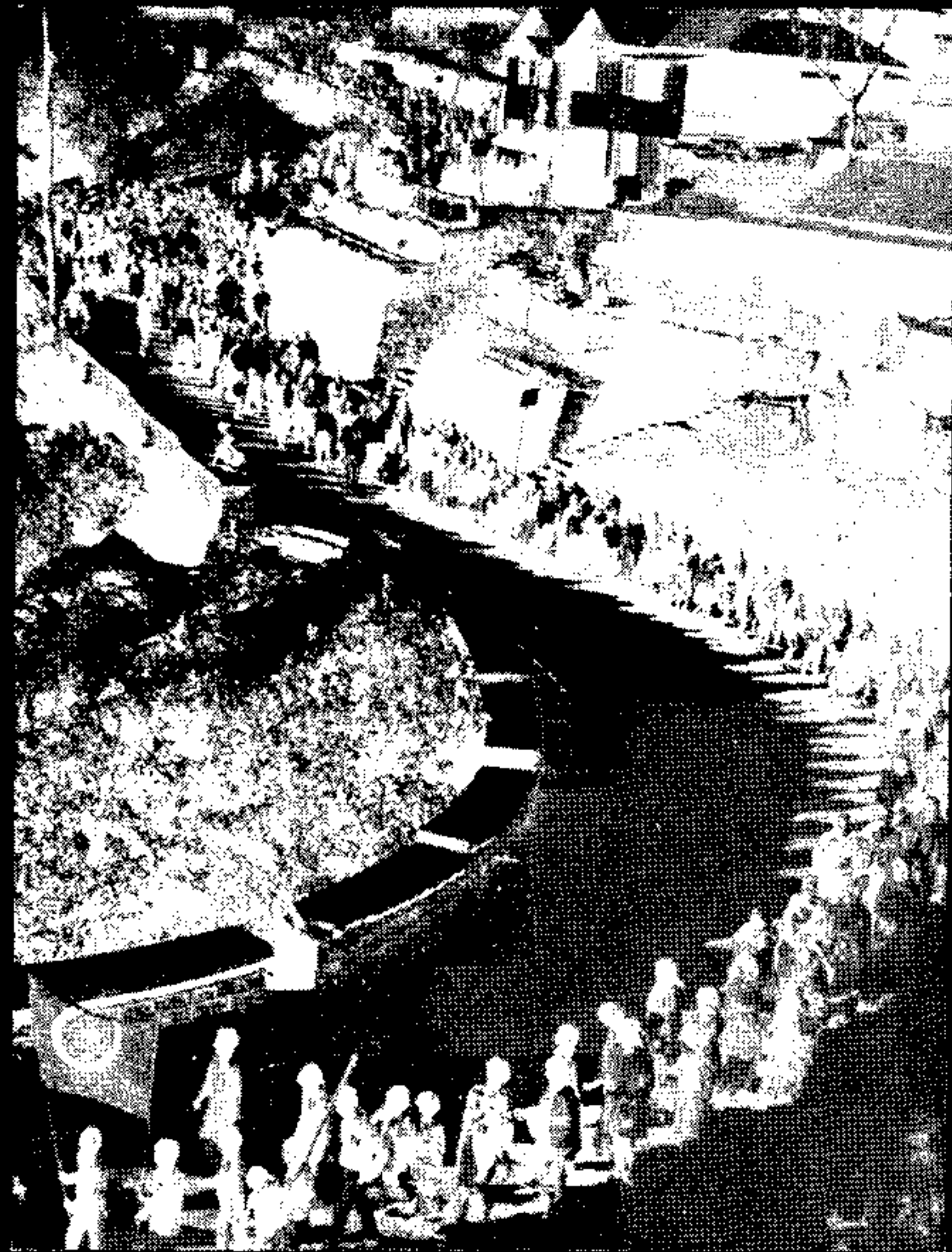
Technical Building



The President of the Ramakrishna Math & Mission with Tribal Devotees



Students at Belur Math with
Swami Abhayanandaji Maharaj



Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Procession



Students on Educational Tour at Bokajan (Nagaland)



Middle English School, Staff and Students,
Laitryngew



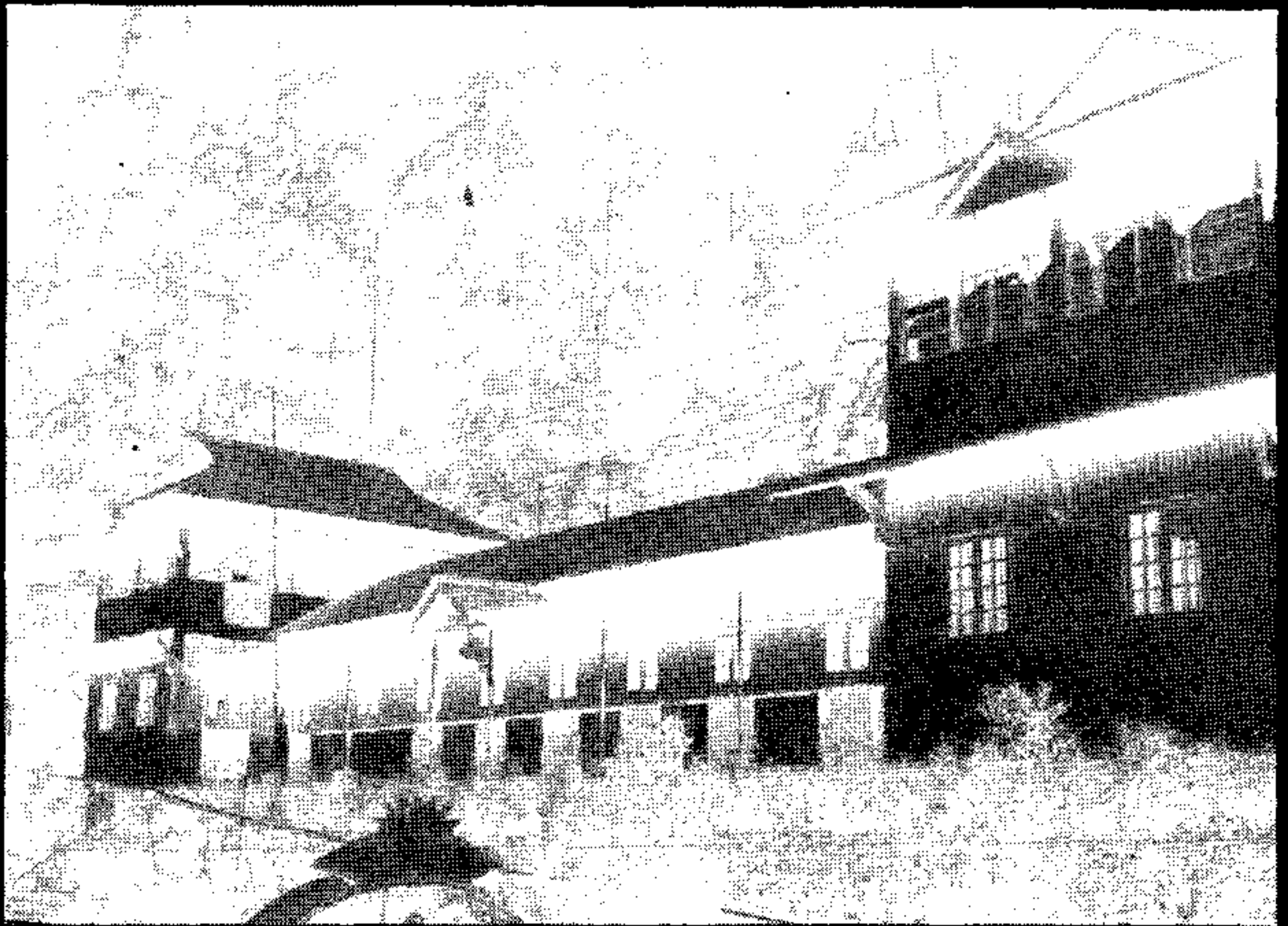
Tribal Students at Lunch

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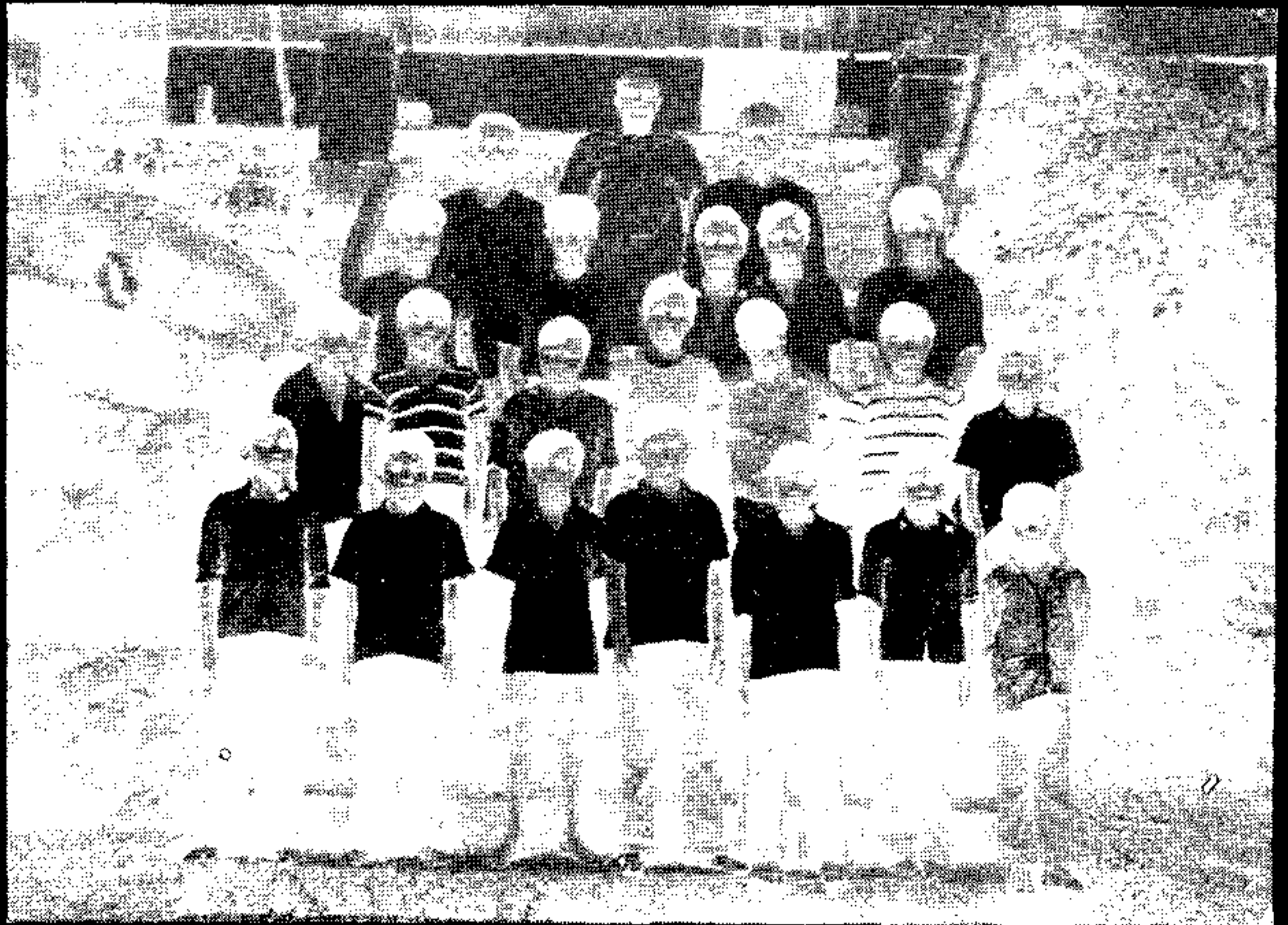


Mobile Dispensary

The School Building



Tribal Boys of the Hostel



Tribal Girls of the Hostel





Sri Ramakrishna Temple

Tribal Children Preparing
for the Puja



Mother Durga Being Carried by
Tribal Devotees

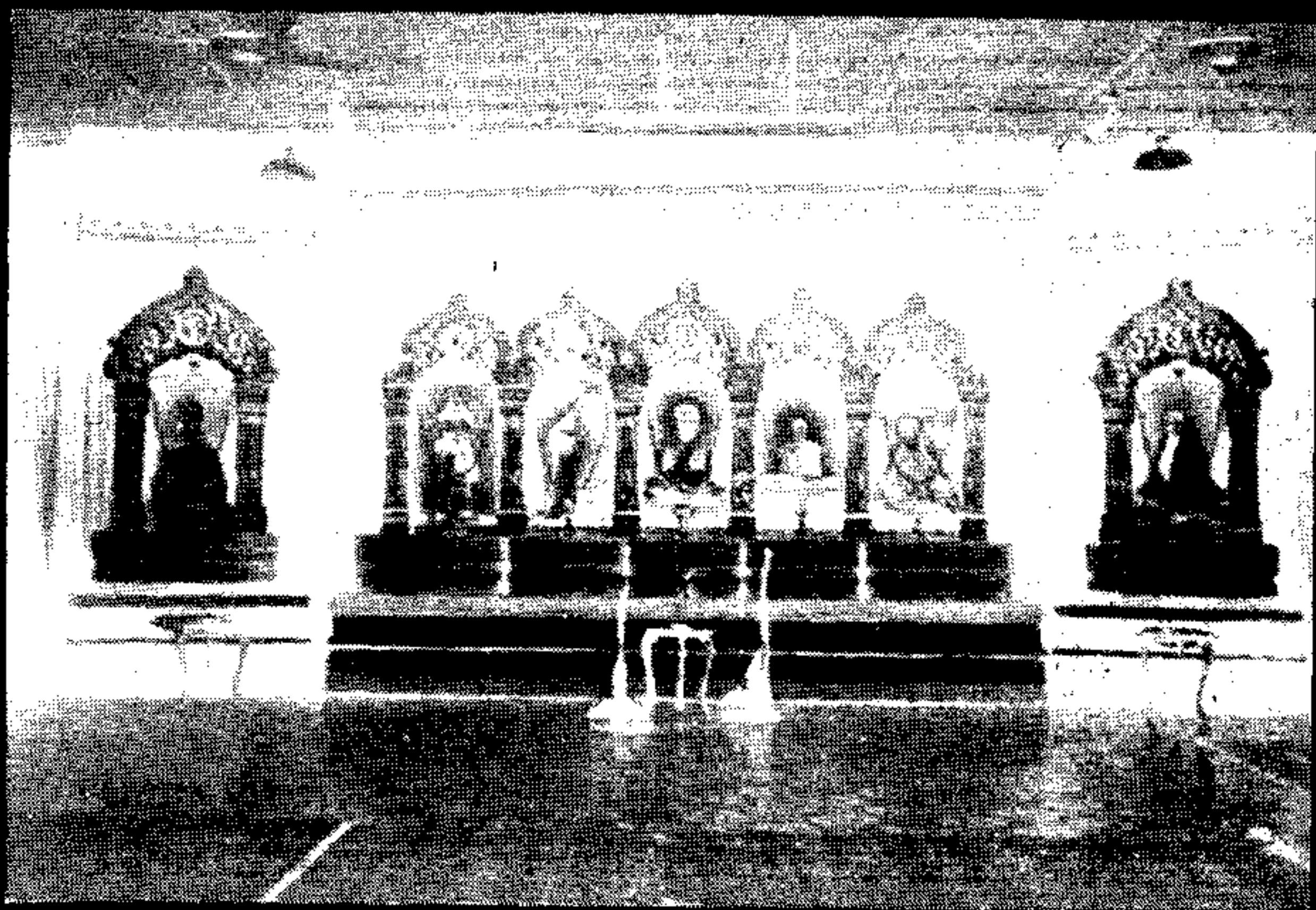


ALONG

A Panoramic View of the Institution



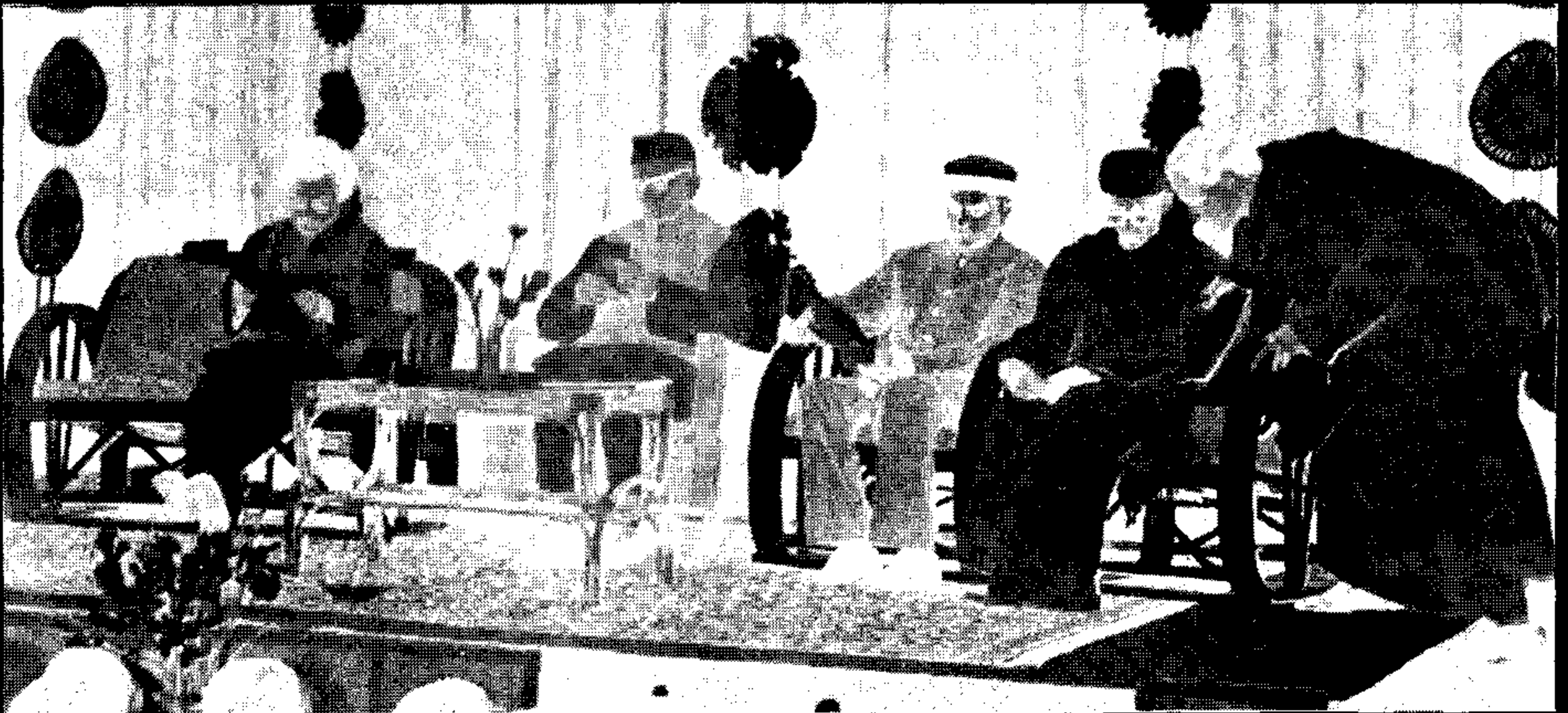
Altar Representing Diverse Religions



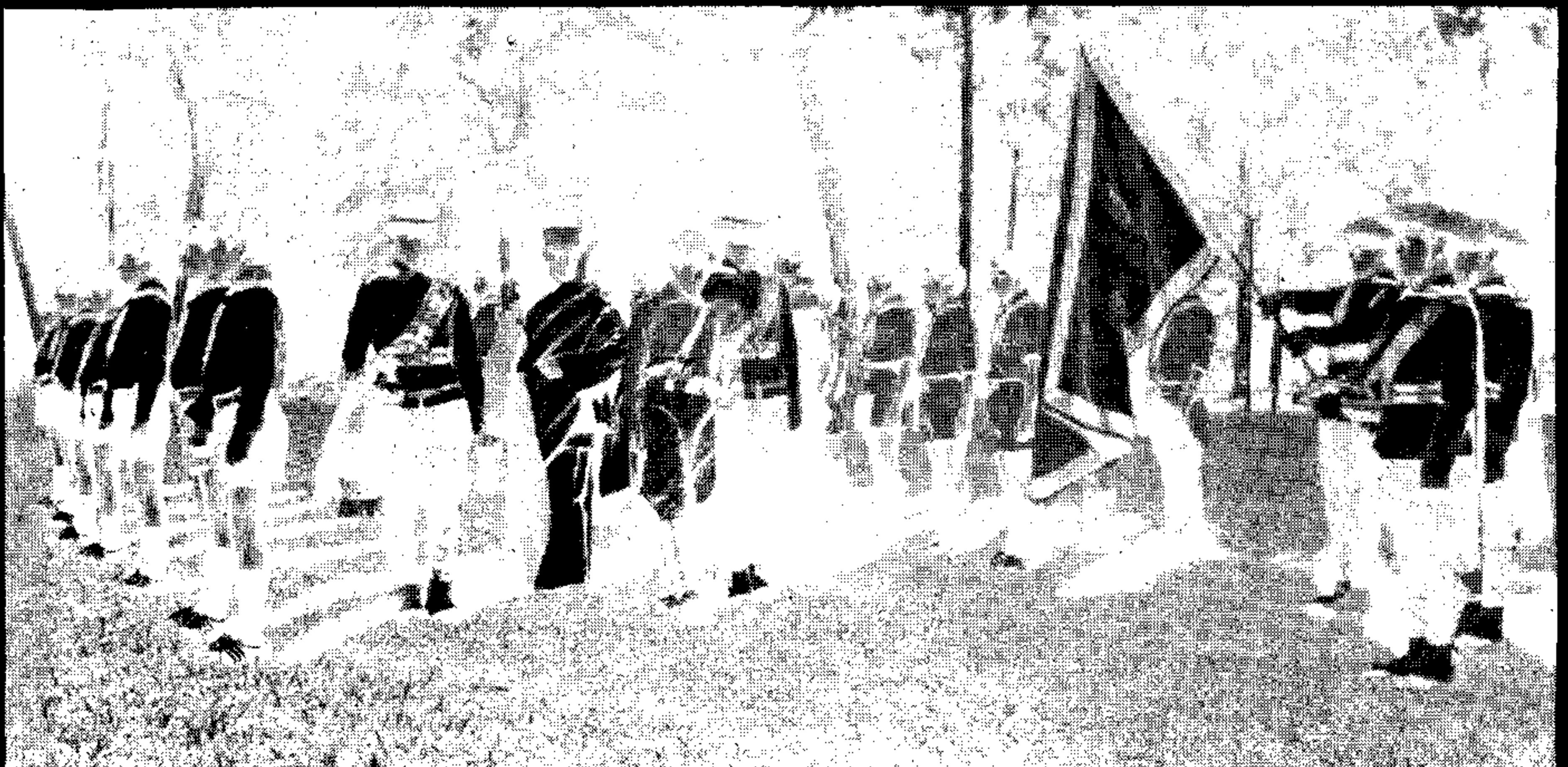
Children at Prayer



NAROTTAM NAGAR



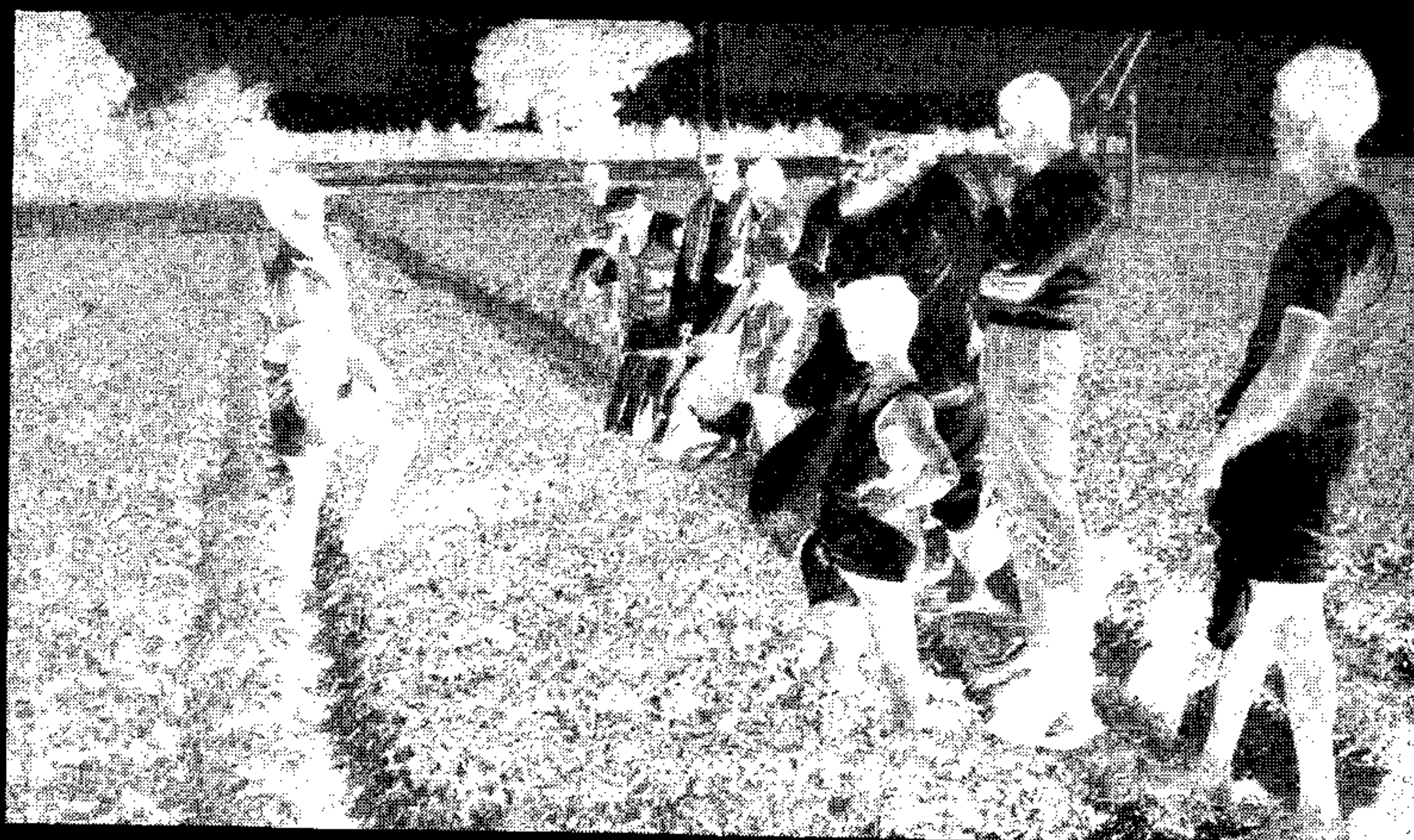
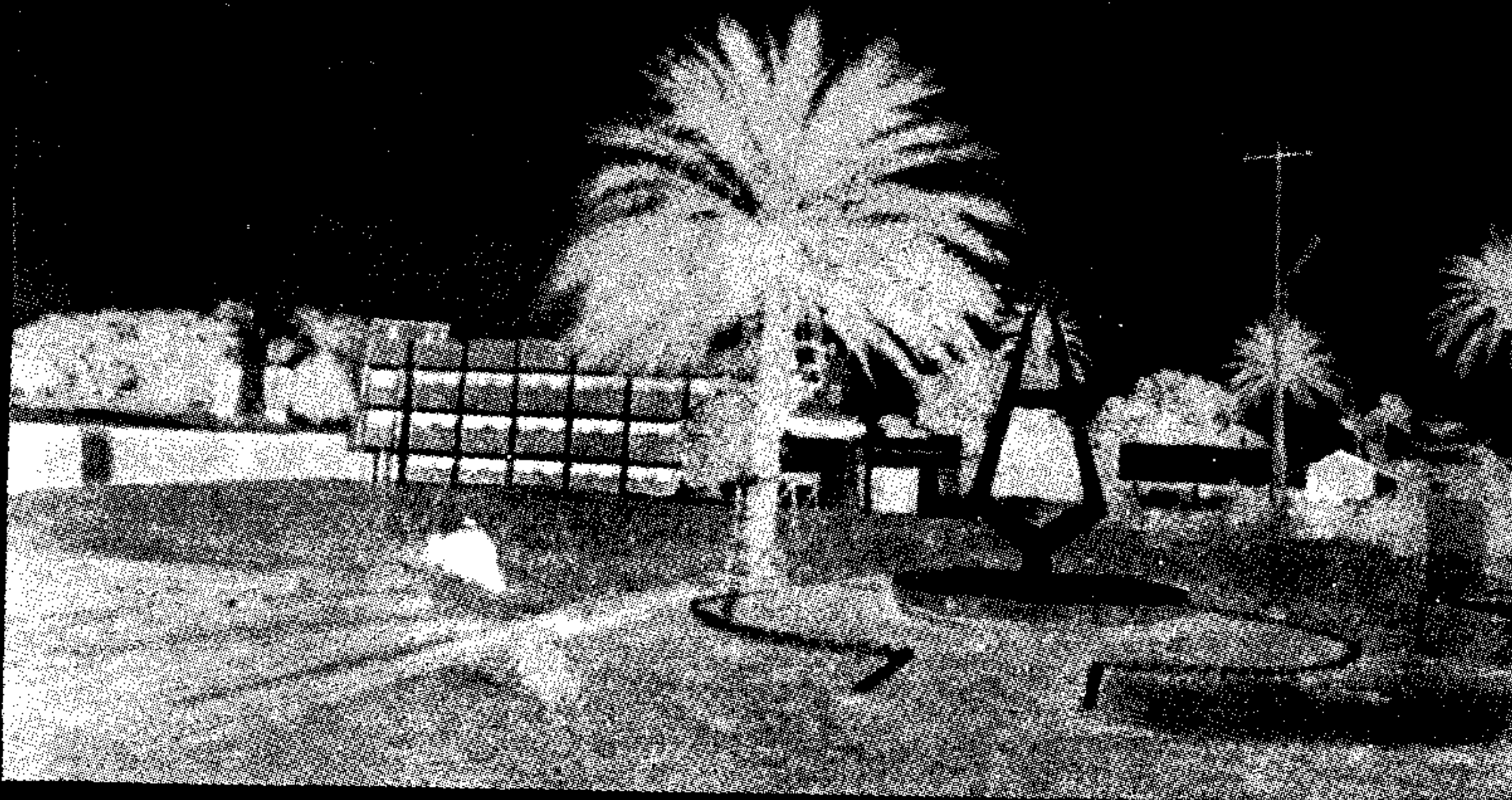
Visit of the Prime Minister, Sri Morarji Desai



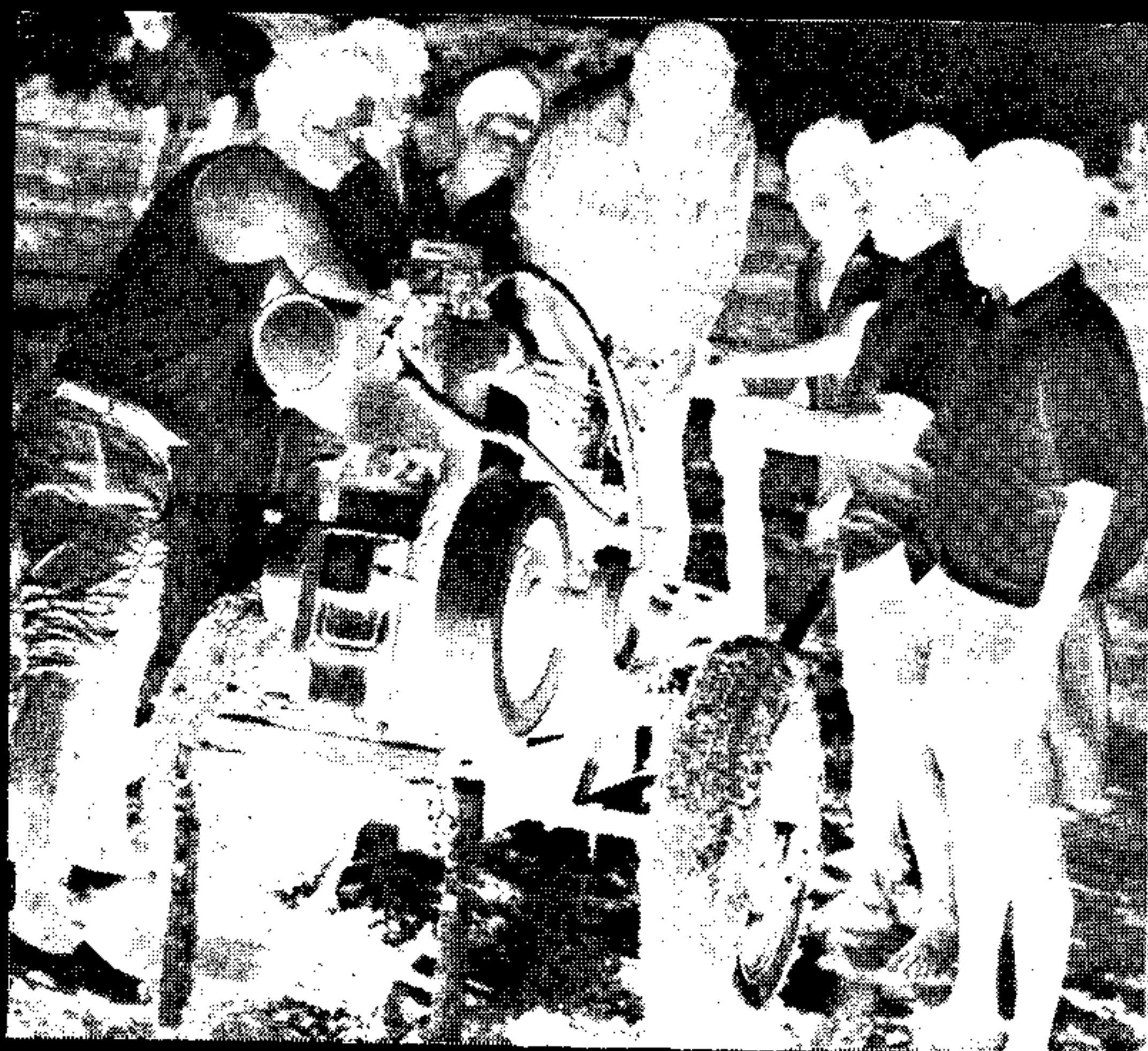
Republic Day Celebration

RANCHI

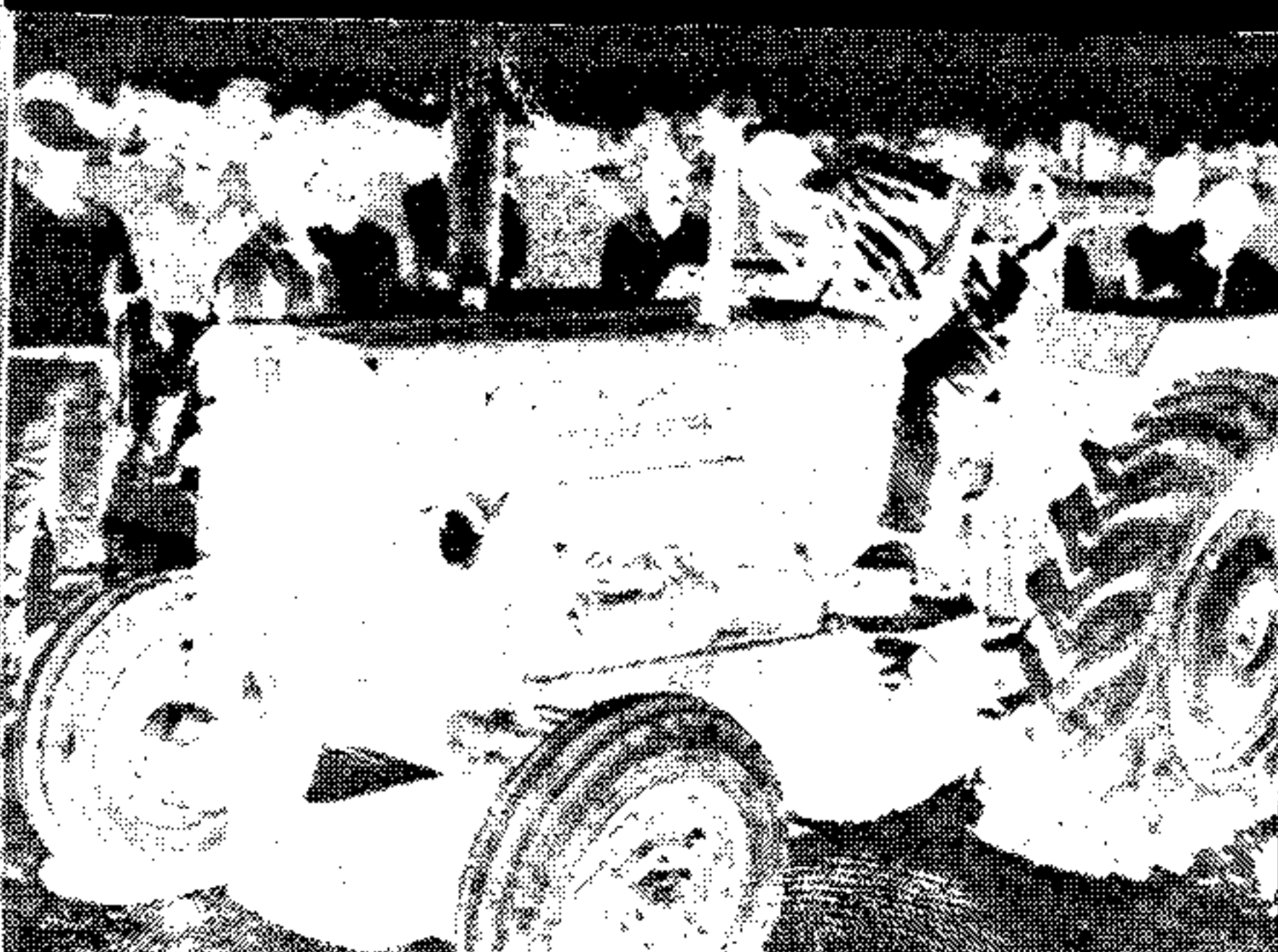
Divyayan



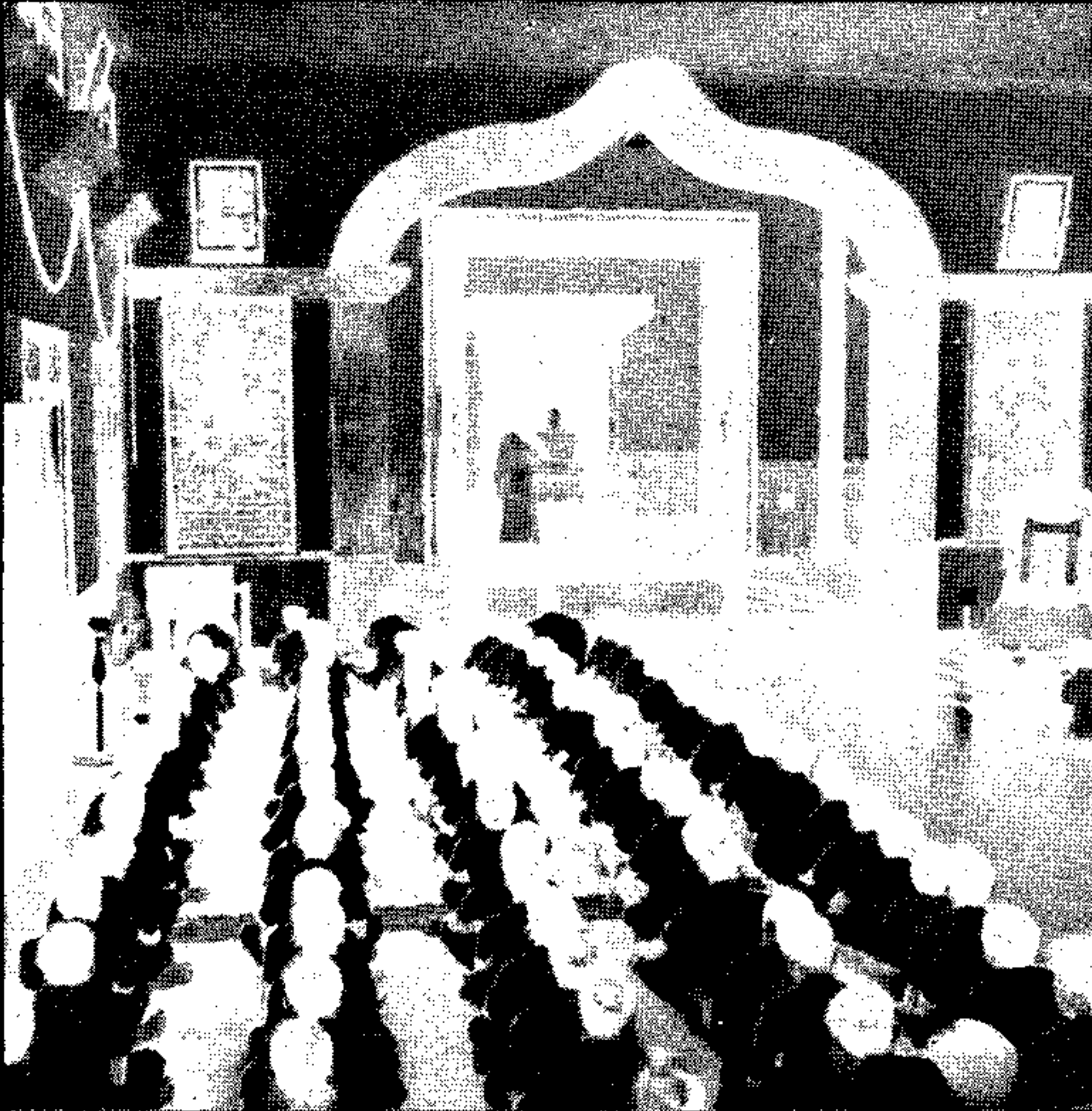
A Small Farm Conducted
by an Ex-trainee



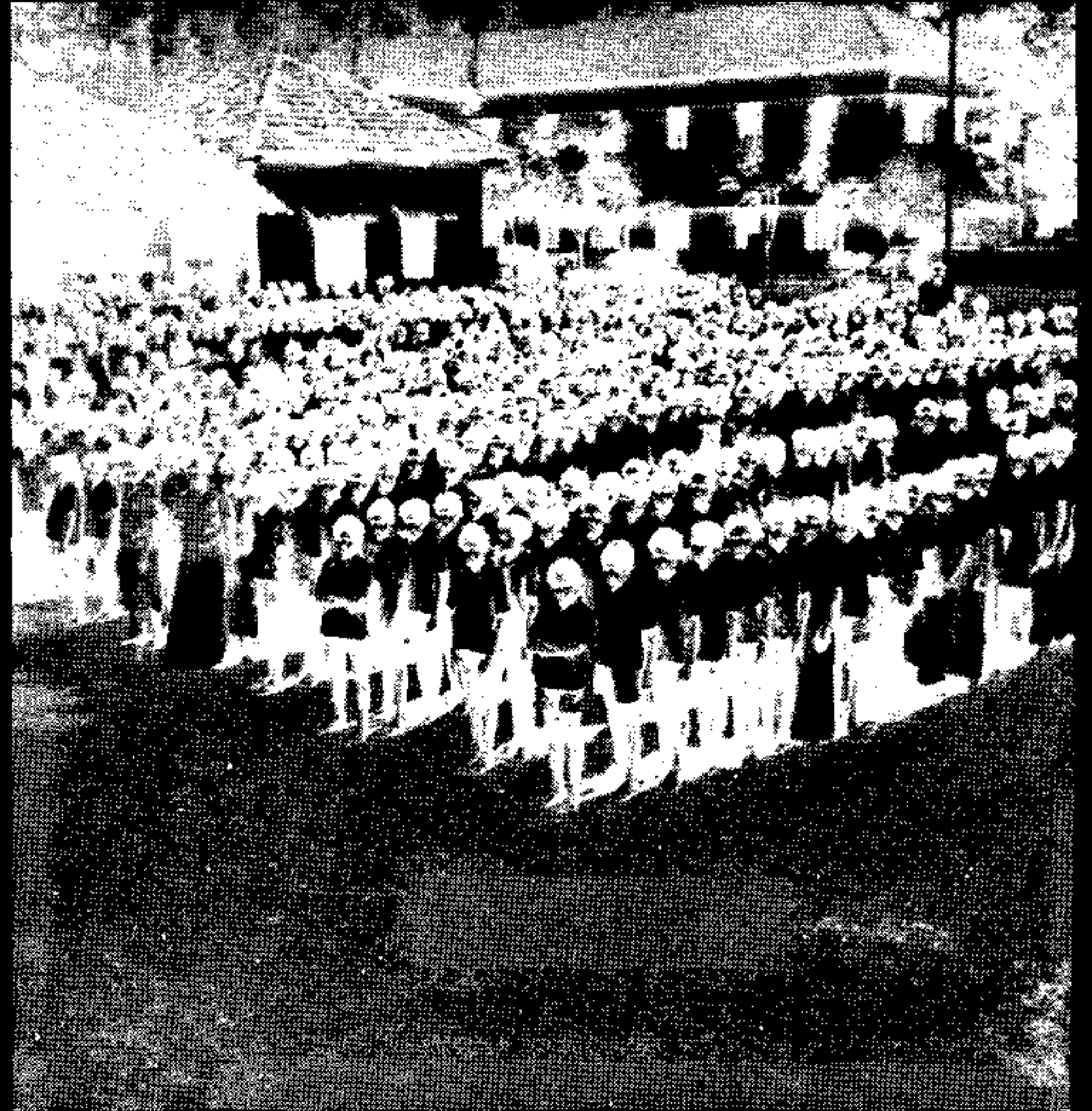
Trainees Handle Diesel Pump and Tractor



KALADY



Hostel Students at Prayer



Students' Assembly

SILCHAR



Swamis at a Tribal Village



Students' Home Boys Reap the Fruit of
Their Labour



Fifteenth-century carving of St. Christopher in oak, about six feet in height. The figure is from a church in Oud Zevenaar, a village in the province of Guelders, Holland. Strain and fatigue are evident in the saint's face and stance. The orb in the left hand of the divine child symbolizes sovereignty over the whole world. With his right hand he conveys blessings and protection. The figure is now in the State Museum for the History of Christianity, Utrecht, Holland.



Representation of St. Christopher by the German engraver,
Albrecht Dürer, 1471-1528