VOL. 88 DECEMBER 1983

Prabuddha Bharata

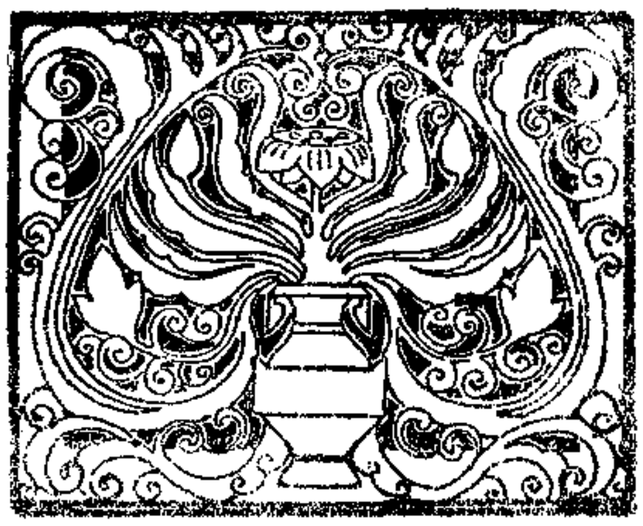
OR

AWAKENED INDIA

By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

ADVAITA ASHRAMA

MAYAVATI, HIMALAYAS



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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 88 DECEMBER 1983 No. 12

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'

इति वा इति मे मनो गामश्वं सनुयामिति ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

1. Thus, indeed, thus my mind [resolved] : 'I will give cows and horses [to my worshippers]', for I have drunk the Soma in abundance.[1]

Rg-Veda 10.119.1

प्र वाता इव दोधत उन्मा पीता अयंसत ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

2. Like the winds violently shaking [trees, etc.] the drink [of Soma] has lifted me up, for I have drunk the Soma in abundance.

Rg-Veda 10.119.2

उन्मा पीता अयंसत रथमश्वा इवाशवः ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

3. The drinking of Soma has lifted me up like swift horses [drawing] a chariot, for I have drunk the Soma in abundance.

Rg-Veda 10.119.3

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* Known as the *Iti-vā-iti Sūktam,* this hymn is often chanted on sacred occasions. The Ṛṣi or seer is Indra (lord of the gods and prototype of the Avatāra of later Hinduism) in the form of Lava. He describes his experiences after drinking the Soma juice. The real meaning of the hymn cannot be understood unless the exact nature of Soma is determined. If Soma were a hallucinogenic plant like marijuana or mescal, the experiences given in the hymn could not be anything more than the ravings of a hippie. As a matter of fact, that is how Western scholars interpret it. But according to Hindu tradition, this hymn expresses the sense of triumph and bliss experienced by a person who has had a direct experience of the transcendent Reality.

1. *Kuvit* is interpreted by Sāyaṇa as 'very often' (*bahuvāram*). Griffith translates it as 'have I not ?'.

ABOUT THIS NUMBER

This month's EDITORIAL attempts to place in perspective the two ideals of Indian womanhood, Sita Devi and Sarada Devi.

Swami Chetanananda, spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, concludes his short biography of RANI RASMANI who built the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar where Sri Ramakrishna spent the major part of his life.

Dr. Donald Szantho Harrington, Emeritus Senior Minister of the Community Church of New York, presents an illuminating study of the human aspect of Jesus and its significance to mankind in the article THE HUMAN CHRIST, originally delivered as an Easter sermon on 15 April, 1979.

In THE QUEST FOR THE ULTIMATE BUILDING BLOCK OF THE UNIVERSE Swami Jitatmananda of Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad, gives a lucid summary of the latest views of Quantum physicists, and shows how these converge on the Vedantic concept of Being.

Every schoolboy knows Joseph Priestley as the discoverer of oxygen, but few people know more about him or about his liberal religious views. As a 250th anniversary tribute to his memory we are presenting the profile JOSEPH PRIESTLEY : RELIGIOUS REBEL AND SCIENTIST. It is based on three articles which appeared in the *Unitarian Universalist World*, and we are grateful to its editor-in-cheif David B. Parke for permitting us to draw material for the profile from these articles.

THE TWO IDEALS OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD

(EDITORIAL)

Power of the ideal

The word 'ideal' may refer to either an abstract concept or to a human or divine being who embodies in himself or herself certain higher values and virtues. In both cases, however, it implies perfection as a goal to be attained by others. Most people have at least a vague notion of perfection, but to understand it and attain it they need a human model who 'reflects' perfection. This idea is conveyed by the word *ādarśa,* which literally means a mirror but is widely used in classical Sanskrit and modern Indian languages to refer to the ideal.

Without his notice every person's life is to a great extent shaped by some human ideal or other. A child needs a human model to pattern his own life, to develop his own personality. He therefore idealizes a living or mythological person whose image he internalizes. Buried deep down in his unconscious, this internalized image shapes his attitudes, relationships and behaviour. As he grows, older ideas may be discarded and newer ones may be taken up, and this process goes on until he discovers his true Self.

What takes place in the individual is only a part of a widespread social phenomenon. The collective unconscious of every society is dominated by the archetypal image of some human being, mythological or historical, regarded as its ideal. At certain critical periods in history great men are born who tower over others and imprint their images upon the minds of millions of people. It is not so much their teachings

as the charismatic powers of their images that change society, for their basic teachings are the same and universally known. What really created the societies of Buddhists, Christians and Muslims was the energization of certain universal principles by the actual lives of their founder-prophets and by the power of their image to perpetuate moral dynamism in the collective unconscious.

Women's ideal

Considering the power of the human ideal to influence individual and collective lives, it is surprising that the image of the male human being as an ideal has almost completely dominated culture and civilization all through history. Though women constitute nearly half of the world's population, they never had for themselves an independent ideal with the same degree of universality and moral imperativeness as that possessed by the male ideal. All the great founders of religions and reformers of society were men, and the values and norms they set up were meant for men. Buddha was a monk, and it is well known that he was at first reluctant to admit women into his monastic order. Christ was unmarried, and his teachings presupposed the subordinate position of women prevalent in the Jewish society of his time. Mohammed was married, but made male dominance the foundation of Islamic society. None of these great ones, of course, shunned or ignored women, but they did not feel the need to raise a female counterpart to the status of an independent ideal for women.

The reason for the neglect of a separate self-sufficient ideal for women is not far to seek. Until modern times women never enjoyed the freedom to live as independent members of the society and follow their own vocations and interests. At all stages of her life a woman was dependent on man. The ancient law-giver Manu decreed : 'Day and night women must be kept dependent upon the male members of the family. A woman is (to be) protected in childhood by her father, in youth by her husband, and in old age by her son. She is never fit to be independent.'[1] Law-givers in other religious traditions were not more liberal than Manu regarding the position of women in society. The prevalence of frequent wars and the insecure social and economic conditions in those days had perhaps made this dependence of women unavoidable.

It should, however, be remembered that just as adverse circumstances cannot prevent a truly great man from achieving greatness, so also Draconian laws cannot prevent a truly great woman from achieving greatness. A great feminine ideal can be set up only by a great woman whose spirit has triumphed over her natural limitations and social restrictions. Laws and customs can bind only the body, not the spirit. This is true not only of individuals but also of society. A culture fails to produce a great ideal when its spiritual foundations are not strong. If there is no universally accepted spiritual ideal for women in Western culture it is because the Judeo-Christian tradition which forms its foundation, failed to provide one. The few women who figure in the Old Testament, like Esther and Ruth, lack universal dimension. This is also true of New Testament women like the three Marys (the mother of Jesus, the sister of Martha and Mary Magdalene), Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist) and others.

Indian ideal shaped by its value system

It is the Indo-Aryan culture that has given the world the highest ideals of womanhood. The nature of a culture is deter-

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1. पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।
रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥
Manu-Samhitā 9:3

mined by its value system. The Indian system of values is based on three fundamental principles : the potential divinity of the soul, the law of Karma, and Self-realization regarded as the goal of life. In other cultures power, wealth and freedom are considered the criteria and means of attaining happiness, success and greatness. It is for the acquisition of these advantages that men and women compete with each other and among themselves. But in India acquisition of wealth and sense enjoyment are regarded as only concessions to weaker minds. The ultimate goal of life is Self-realization. The realization of the Ātman does not depend upon what one has or does, but on what one is. The worth of a man is judged by his intrinsic qualities, by the degree of Self-realization he has attained. This is true of a woman also. She is judged not by her social position and living conditions, but by the degree of spiritual perfection she has attained. The problem of the social position of women is similar to the problem of caste. Birth in a particular caste, family and body is determined by one's past Karma. Life is accepted not only as it is, but also for what it can do to enable a person to attain Self-realization. As a means to the ultimate goal, every way of life is a blessing. No man or woman has any right or need to complain about life.

The importance of this value system is that it makes the greatness of a person dependent not on external circumstances but on his or her own intrinsic worth and effort. All the great men and women that India produced found their way up through this value system and by dint of their intrinsic worth. The position of women in Indian society is to be judged by the Indian system of values, and not by the Western value system. Judged by the Indian standard, the condition of women in this country has not been inferior to that of men, some of the inane pronouncements of Manu notwithstanding. And, even when judged by universal standards, it will be found that the women of India have always enjoyed a greater degree of fulfilment, happiness and honour than their sisters belonging to other cultures.

The preservation of the spiritual ideal and Dharma in their pristine glory through the centuries has been made possible in India mainly because of two factors : transmission through the Guru-disciple chain, and the loyalty and devotion of the women of the country. Two more points are to be kept in mind in this context. One is that it is the Divine who sets the ideal for women, as He does for men. All the Avatars have their divine consorts, and while the Avatar serves as the ideal for men, his spouse serves as the ideal for women. Secondly, the ideal for women is determined, as it is for men, by the zeitgeist, the spirit of the time, and has changed and evolved through centuries.

Evolution of the feminine ideal in India

The history of India began with the Vedic period. Any one who studies that period cannot fail to notice the high degree of freedom and culture that women then had. Girls were initiated into Vedic studies and had the freedom to choose their partners in life. Among the seers and authors of the hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda* more than twenty are women. The Upaniṣads make it clear that there were many enlightened women philosophers known as *brahmavādinīs* who took part in metaphysical discussions at the courts of kings and the assemblies of scholars.

At the end of the Vedic period women were barred from studying the Vedas. This was one of the greatest mistakes that Hindu society ever committed. Nevertheless, women were not denied education and freedom and, as is clear from the epics, Purāṇas and classical literature, the society continued to produce great women right up to the

Middle Ages. But a great change took place in the ideal of womanhood. The Vedic ideal of *brahmavādinī* gave place to the ideal of *pativratā,* the woman with single-minded devotion to her husband. This is, of course, a universal ideal for women, and no civilized society is without it. But in India it became a self-sufficient, self-luminous ideal expressing the dignity, sanctity, intrinsic worth and power of womanhood. It became an end in itself, independent of social necessity and legal authority. Nay, more : it became a unique means to the attainment of liberation, an independent spiritual discipline, a yoga. It was practised, tested and perfected in every walk of life and under the most trying situations, until it got sublimated into a pure spiritual ideal. The history of Indian womanhood from the end of the Vedic period to the beginning of the modern era may be said to be the history of the *pativratā* ideal. A number of great women sacrificed their all for the establishment of this ideal in the collective consciousness of India. The foremost and greatest of them was *Sītā,* the divine consort of Śrī Rāma.

The Sītā ideal

At a particular time in ancient history Sītā entered the racial consciousness of India. She has ever since remained there shining like the pole star, serving as the unchallenged ideal of Indian wamanhood. About her role as the ideal Swami Vivekananda says :

> There is no other Paurāṇika story that has so permeated the whole nation, so entered into its very life, and has so tingled in every drop of blood of the race, as this ideal of Sītā. Sītā is the name in India for everything that is good, pure and holy—everything that in woman we call womanly. If a priest has to bless a woman he says, 'Be Sītā!'.[2]

Sītā has not merely remained as an ideal for women but has vitally influenced Indian culture in diverse ways. About the tremendous impact that the image of Sītā has made on the Indian mind Swami Vivekananda says :

> Sītā is unique ; that character was depicted once for all. There may have been several Rāmas, perhaps, but never more than one Sītā ! She is the very type of the true Indian woman, for all the Indian ideals of a perfected woman have grown out of that one life of Sītā ; and here she stands these thousands of years, commanding the worship of every man, woman and child throughout the length and breadth of the land of Aryāvarta. There she will always be, this glorious Sītā, purer than purity itself, all patience, all suffering. She who suffered the life of suffering without a murmur, she the ever-chaste and ever-pure wife, she the ideal of the people, the ideal of the gods, the great Sītā, our national God she must always remain.[3]

As an ideal that has been deeply impressed on the social mind, the archetypal image of Sītā has great power. It can transform the debased, console the sorrowing, inspire the frustrated, guide the perplexed, lead the enlightened. To obliterate this archetypal image from the collective consciousness of the race is impossible. Any attempt to do that would be a waste of time and energy. Women of India have to shape their destiny in the modern world by reviving their racial ideal and by following the natural trend of their nation's collective consciousness. This was what Swami Vivekananda wanted them to do. He emphatically stated: Any attempt to modernize our women, if it tries to take our women away from the ideal of Sītā, is immediately a failure, as we see every day. The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sītā, and that is the only way.[4]

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2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978) vol 4, p. 76.

3. *Complete Works* (1973) vol 3, Pp. 255-56.

4. *Complete Works* vol 3, p. 256.

The seven maidens

Indeed, this is what Indian women have always attempted to do. Sītā does not stand alone. Down the centuries countless women have followed in her footsteps. Indian epics and mythology glorify the names of a number of great women who were embodiments of the Sītā ideal. Just as every Hindu man is expected to remember every day the seven sages (*sapta ṛṣis*), so every Hindu woman is expected to remember every day the seven chaste women (*sapta kanyāḥ*). Who are the seven chaste women? A popular verse says: 'Daily remembrance of the five maidens, Ahalyā, Draupadī, Sītā, Tārā and Mandodarī, destroys even the greatest sin.'[5] To this list of five are usually added the names Sāvitrī and Anasūyā.

Why were these women chosen as ideals? Because they had passed the test of truth by maintaining the sanctity of the vow of *pātivratya* (chastity) even under the most difficult circumstances. Among them Ahalyā alone had a fall, but this only accentuated her devotion to her sagely husband Gautama. Draupadī was humiliated in a king's court more than once, and had to live in exile with her five husbands for twelve years. Sītā was abducted by a wicked man; and what greater calamity could befall a woman? Tārā, the wedded wife of Sugrīva, was forced to live for a time as the wife of his brother Vāli; and Mandodarī had to put up with the depravity of her demoniacal husband Rāvaṇa. Sāvitrī won back the soul of her dead husband from the hands of the king of death. By the power of her chastity Anasūyā, the wife of the sage Atri, converted into babes the three gods Brahmā, Visnu and Śiva who had gone to test her.

The Christian Church too venerates as saints several women who maintained their purity even at the cost of life. Whereas the Christian tradition idealizes the virgin, the Hindu tradition idealizes the married woman. It is, however, interesting to note that the seven women mentioned above are referred to as *kanyā* (*maiden*) perhaps to emphasize the equal sanctity of virginity and marital fidelity. Life is not a bed of roses. Every man and woman has to face suffering, sorrow, misfortune, humiliation and other trials and tribulations in life. Those who remain steadfast in their devotion to their ideals even under the most trying situations achieve greatness. Ideals become part of a tradition or culture not merely because a Manu or Moses had enjoined them, but mainly because their authenticity has been proved in the fiery ordeals of great men and women.

The pativratā ideal—its three aspects

Three aspects of the *pativratā* ideal deserve attention in view of the fact that some modern educated women tend to regard it as a form of bondage. It is of course true that marriage was, and it still is, forced upon women in India by parental authority. But at least a few Kṣatriya princess had the freedom to choose their partners in life through the *svayaṁvara* ceremony. And even in other cases women often had the option to remain uninvolved in their husbands' difficulties. Sītā, for instance, could have avoided her calamity if she had remained at Ayodhyā. Neither Śrī Rāma nor any of the elders in the palace liked her following her husband to the forest. Her decision to accompany her husband was purely voluntary and self-imposed. Why did she do that? The call of love had roused the spirit of sacrifice in her. The test of love is sacrifice. Where there is true love the spirit of sacrifice rises spontaneously The reverse of this is also

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5. अहल्या द्रौपदी सीता तारा मन्दोदरी तथा ।
पंच कन्याः स्मरेन्नित्यं महापातकनाशिनी ॥

equally true : sacrifice generates love. It is self-sacrifice that conquers human hearts and not protestations of love. The *pativratā* ideal is based on the law of sacrifice.

Sacrifice is necessary for all. For through sacrifice alone can man overcome selfishness, greed, hatred and other limitations. What is life without sacrifice ? Nothing worth having in life can be got without sacrifice. If you want to become a successful businessman, a scientist or a musician, you have to sacrifice laziness and work hard. If you want to control your mind you must sacrifice sense pleasure. If you want to be loved you have to sacrifice selfishness and vanity. Similarly, harmony, peace and fulfilment in marital life can be attained by women only through self-sacrifice imposed by the *pativratā* ideal. Thus this ideal is a pragmatic discipline for women.

Secondly, it is a moral discipline or *tapas*. The Vedas repeatedly declare that through moral purity men acquire a special form of spiritual lustre known as *brahmavarcas*. This endows them with a higher dignity, power to influence others and strength to realize God. Hindu tradition holds that women too acquire a similar aura by remaining steadfast to the *pativratā* ideal. Hindu epics and puranas contain stories of several women who were able to protect themselves with the help of such a power. These accounts, though exaggerated, contain a basic truth. Men and women who wish to influence others through teaching, preaching or social service must first of all acquire moral power by cultivating unflinching devotion to the moral ideal.

Thirdly, the *pativratā* ideal is a form of spiritual discipline or yoga. It is the path of Karma Yoga for married women. Karma Yoga can be practised in all walks of life. The central point in Karma Yoga is detachment. Detachment depends not upon what you do but how you do. A Karma Yogī does not choose between one work and another. Every work is a spiritual discipline to him, and trains him in detaching his will. For a woman household duties offer a splendid opportunity for the practice of Karma Yoga. By performing the simple household duties in a spirit of service she gradually learns to free herself from the bondage of the world and advances in the spiritual path.

There is a great deal of talk about freedom and liberation nowadays. But where is freedom in society ? Who is really free ? What is true freedom ? The Gurkha is considered the bravest soldier in the world but he obeys implicitly the orders of his commander. Even the supreme commander of the armed forces, the chief justice or the prime minister of a country has no real freedom. All worldly people are bound—externally by social laws, and internally by instincts and passions. Spiritual freedom is the only true freedom. God, the Supreme Self, alone is eternally free and, since the Atman or individual Self is a part of the Supreme Self, every man and woman holds within him or her the potentiality of true freedom. By doing the duties of one's life in a spirit of service and worship the divinity of the soul manifests itself progressively and one attains more and more spiritual freedom. Obedience to superiors or elders or to one's husband is not slavery if it leads one to spiritual freedom ; performance of household chores is not drudgery if it serves to liberate the spirit.

Need for a new ideal

It is, however, to be admitted that modern society is changing rapidly and present-day social conditions are vastly different from those of ancient and medieval times. Women's world is expanding, and their interests, life-styles and activities are getting more diversified. All vocations are open to them, and they are called upon to play a greater role in all departments of national life and social welfare. Modern women are

in search of a new ideal which will guide them in facing the new challenges. What they need now is an ideal which will enable them to attain greater integration of individual life with social life and at the same time will lead to the liberation of the spirit.

The ancient Sītā ideal is still valid and needed, as will for ever be, but is inadequate to cover the widening horizons of modern womanhood. There is now the need to revive the ancient *brahmavādinī* ideal and to integrate into Hindu society the Christian experience of coenobitic monasticism in order to meet the needs of those women who want to dedicate their life to the service of God unencumbered by the ties of wedlock and family. Then there are the working women, married and unmarried. Altered social conditions and economic necessity are forcing a large number of women to work as doctors, teachers, secretaries, clerks, administrative officers, etc. They need a new ideal to guide them in spiritualizing their secular activities. Karma Yoga which was practised under the security of the home has now to be worked out under the uncertain and difficult conditions of the wide world.

Wife, nun, working woman—these roles do not exhaust the possibilities of womanhood. Women have a greater, more important, more constructive role to play in modern society. What distinguishes modern society from the ancient one is not merely its complexity but also the inter-relatedness of its members. Men and women, castes and classes, communities and nations are all being drawn closer together by cultural, technological and economic forces. Humanity as a whole is undergoing a global process of reconstruction and integration. No other force is now more needed than the power of love, and no other ideal can generate such a force more than the ideal of the Mother. The integrating power of the Mother ideal in social dynamics was pointed by the German sociologist J. J. Bachofen more than a century ago, and was recognized by Karl Marx and Engels, though they failed to fit it properly in their blueprint for social change.[6] Understood in this context, Sri Ramakrishna's worship and preaching of the Divine Mother assume great social and global significance. To conceive humanity in terms of a global matriarchate may sound utopian. But history has shown that patriarchal attitudes and methods have generated nothing but hostility and disintegration. Only the ideal of universal motherhood could possibly unite, and inspire fraternal love and cooperation among, the people of a country or the peoples of the world. It is by embodying and demonstrating the unifying constructive power of the Mother ideal that enlightened women could play a significant role in modern society. It was evidently the prophetic understanding of this possibility that made Swami Vivekananda declare: 'At the present time God should be worshipped as Mother, the Infinite Energy... The new cycle must see the masses living Vedanta, and this will have to come *through women*.'[7]

The composite ideal

It is now clear that what is needed for modern women is a composite ideal: the ideal of the wife, of the nun, of the working woman, of the social worker, of the spiritual teacher—all these ideals united and powered by the *śakti* of spiritual motherhood. Sri Sarada Devi, the consort of Sri Ramakrishna, was the manifestation of such

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6. For a perspective study of the theory of Bachofen and its influence on Karl Marx see, Eric Fromm, *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis* (London: Penguin Books, 1971) Pp. 111-149. A fuller treatment of Bachofen's views and the Mother ideal will be attempted in a future editorial.

7. *Complete Works* (1972) vol 7, p. 95.

a universal ideal. How far women of other cultures and countries will be able to understand and accept her is for future history to decide. But Indian womanhood is sure to find in the life and message of Sri Sarada Devi the ideal and power needed for its awakening, transformation and ultimate fulfilment.

They Lived with God

RANI RASMANI

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Rasmani was always ready to help the poor and the persecuted. At one time the government imposed a tax on the fishermen who made their meagre living by fishing in the Ganga. The fishermen requested various prominent people to help them, but no one would come forward to their defence. At last they went to Rani Rasmani and she promised to do something. Paying ten thousand rupees to the government, she discreetly took the lease of the fishing rights of the Ganga, from Ghusuri to Metiaburz. She then asked the fishermen to barricade that area of the Ganga, from shore to shore, with bamboo poles and catch fish there without paying any tax. (According to the book *Shri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, the barricade was made with chains.) As a result the water traffic was stopped and commercial boats could not reach their ports. A 'Show Cause' summons came from the government along with an order to remove the barricades. Rasmani replied that the big steamboats frightened the fish, causing them to run to and fro, and this made it difficult for them to lay their eggs. The poor fishermen were therefore not able to catch many fish, which was their only source of income. Furthermore, she replied, that with a view to protecting the fishermen she had paid the government a large amount of money, and legally she had every right to put up a barricade in her own area. At last the British Government settled the case with Rasmani by returning her money for the lease of the land and rescinding the tax from the fishermen.

Rasmani always fought for a just cause. It was not her intention to embarrass or challenge the government unnecessarily. As a matter of fact, during the critical time of the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857, she helped the government by providing food, livestock, and other necessities. This benevolent action was much appreciated by the British Government.

Some of the soldiers, however, were not so appreciative. There was a British army barracks near Rasmani's home. Some of these soldiers often robbed and persecuted passers-by and looted neighbouring shops. One day a few drunken soldiers were molesting a person on the street. Rasmani's sons-in-law noticed it from their roof and they could not bear it. They ordered their guards to drive the drunken soldiers away,

and in the process one of the soldiers was wounded. The soldiers returned to their barracks and reported the incident to their friends. Immediately a group of angry soldiers ran out and attacked Rasmani's palace. Her guards tried to resist them but they failed, as the soldiers were well armed and they outnumbered them. Some of the guards were wounded and others ran away. Rasmani ordered all of her relatives to flee through a back door but did not try to save her own life. With an open sword in hand, she stood guard at the door of the shrine. Fortunately the soldiers did not come to that part of the house. They ransacked most of the palace, destroying expensive chandeliers, furniture, pictures, paintings, windows, and musical instruments. They mercilessly killed Rasmani's pet peacock and other birds and animals. The vandalism continued until ten o'clock at night. Mathur was not at home during the attack. When he returned and discovered what was going on inside the palace, he immediately went to the barracks and met the commanding officer, who rushed to the palace with Mathur and sounded a bugle. The soldiers then returned to their barracks. After the terrible incident, Rasmani appointed twelve trustworthy English soldiers to protect her palace for two years. She also collected compensation from the British Government for the damage to her property.

In 1850 Rasmani went on a pilgrimage to Puri to visit Lord Jagannath. In those days there was no train or good road to Puri from Calcutta. If pilgrims could afford it, they could travel by boat down the Ganga and then cross the Bay of Bengal. Rasmani started her journey with a large convoy of relatives, friends, guards, servants, food, and other necessities, in many boats. It was a long journey. As they reached the Bay of Bengal they were suddenly hit by a cyclone that scattered the boats in different directions. Night came and the sea was still very rough. Rasmani ordered her sailors to anchor their boat near the shore, and then she disembarked with a woman attendant and started looking for some shelter. Seeing a light at a distance, they went toward it and found a tiny cottage belonging to a poor brahmin family. Rasmani did not tell them who she was, but they graciously allowed the two women to pass the stormy night with them. The next morning she gave the family one hundred rupees. In the meantime the convoy had been reunited, and Rasmani resumed her journey.

On their way Rani Rasmani noticed that the road to Puri, beyond the Suvarnarekha river, was in very bad condition. She later paid for its repair for the convenience of the pilgrims. At Puri she offered three diamond-studded crowns costing Rs. 60,000 to Lord Jagannāth, Balarām, and Subhadrā, the deities of the main temple. She also gave food and money to the temple priests and the poor.

The next year Rasmani went on a pilgrimage to Gangāsāgar (the confluence of the Ganga and the sea), Triveṇī, and Navadvīp (the birthplace of Chaitanya). On the way back, near Chandannagore, her boat was attacked by robbers. Rasmani's guards exchanged fire with them and one robber was wounded. She then ordered both groups to cease firing and asked to speak with the robber chief.

The robber said to her : 'Mother, we want money. If you do not fulfil our demand there will be terrible bloodshed.'

Rasmani : 'How much money do you want ? How many are there in your group ?'

Robber: 'There are twelve of us.'

Rasmani : 'I don't have any cash right now. Tomorrow evening I shall send twelve thousand rupees to you. If you are unwilling to accept this offer, then take my gold necklace and these few silver vessels.'

Robber : 'We accept your offer. If we do not get the money by tomorrow evening, your journey will be stopped.'

Rasmani was true to her word. The next evening she sent the robbers twelve thousand rupees through a messenger.

Pilgrims, through their love and devotion, tears and prayers, make a place holy. Their austerities and their longing for God create such an intense spiritual atmosphere that whoever comes to the place where they worship will feel it. Varanasi, the city of light, is one such holy place in India. In 1847 Rasmani had a desire to visit Lord Viśveśvara Śiva and the Divine Mother Annapūrṇā of Varanasi. As there was no train between Calcutta and Varanasi, she decided to go by boat. Her convoy of twenty-five boats got ready with provisions for six months. There were seven boats for food and other supplies, one for herself, three for other three daughters and their families, two for the guards, two for the servants, four for other relatives and friends, two for her estate officials, one for the washerman, one for four cows, and one for fodder.

On the night befor Rasmani's departure, the Divine Mother appeared to her in a dream and said: 'You need not go to Varanasi. Install my image on a beautiful spot along the bank of the Ganga and arrange for my worship and offerings there. In this image I shall be constantly present and shall ever accept your worship.' (In another version of this incident, it is said that Rasmani started her journey, and on the first night they halted near Dakshineswar, where she had that dream.) Rasmani immediately cancelled her pilgrimage. The articles procured for the journey were distributed among the brahmins and the poor, and the money allotted for the pilgrimage was set aside for purchasing land.

There is a saying, 'The western bank of the Ganga is as holy as Varanasi'. Rasmani first tried to buy some land in the Bali and Uttarpara areas, across the river from Dakshineswar. She offered enormous amounts of money but the landlords of those places, out of petty jealousy, would not sell any land to her. At last she bought a piece of land, measuring about twenty acres, at Dakshineswar, on the eastern bank of the Ganga, a few miles north of Calcutta. A part of this land, with a bungalow, had belonged to an Englishman, and the other part was an abandoned Muslim graveyard where a Muslim holy man had been buried. The plot of land was in the shape of a tortoise shell, high in the centre and low around the edge, which, according to the Tantras, is auspicious for a place of Śakti worship.

The construction of the temple complex began in 1847, and it took more than eight years to complete it. Besides the main temple, dedicated to the Divine Mother Kālī, there was also to be a temple dedicated to Kṛṣṇa and twelve small temples dedicated to Śiva. Rasmani spent Rs. 50,000 for the land Rs. 160,000 for building an embankment along the river, and Rs. 900,000 for the temple complex. In addition, she spent Rs. 226,000 for some property which was meant to be used as an endowment for the maintenance of the temple.

It was Rasmani's earnest desire to have cooked food offered daily in the temple which she herself had built, and to have holy men come and partake of the offered food. But according to the caste rules, only a Brahmin can offer cooked food to a deity in a temple. As Rasmani was not a Brahmin, she was excluded from offering this service to God and holy people. She began to wonder if perhaps all her money and effort had been spent in vain. Desperately, she sent out letters to pandits who were expert in the interpretation of the scriptures dealing with the proper procedures for ritualistic worship. She hoped that they could somehow find a way for her around the rigid and complex rules of the caste system.

Rasmani received all unfavourable answers except one, which came from Ramkumar Chatterjee, the elder brother of

Sri Ramakrishna. Ramkumar was then conducting a Sanskrit school in Calcutta, and Sri Ramakrishna was living with him. His suggestion was: 'Let the Rani make a formal gift of the temple property to a Brahmin. Let this Brahmin arrange for the installation of the image of Kālī in the shrine and for the cooking of the food that is to be offered to Her. It will not be any violation of the injunction of the scriptures, and other Brahmins will be able to take *prasād* (offered food) at the temple without losing their social status.'

Rasmani was delighted, and she immediately acted upon Ramkumar's advice. Transferring the temple property to her family guru, she retained only the right to act as his representative in its managerial activities.

Although the temple construction had not yet been completed, Rasmani suddenly felt compelled to dedicate the temple as soon as possible. Sri Ramakrishna told the following story:

'The Rani practised severe austerities according to the scriptures from the day on which the making of the image began. She bathed three times a day, took simple vegetarian food, slept on the floor, and practised japam, worship, and prayer according to her capacity.... [In the meantime] the image was kept packed in a box lest it should be damaged. Rani got the command in a dream: "How long will you keep me confined this way? I feel suffocated! Install me as soon as possible." No sooner had she got that instruction than Rani became flurried and had the almanac consulted to find an auspicious day. As no such day could be found before the Snāna-yātrā [the bathing festival of the Lord Jagannāth], she resolved to perform the installation on that day.'

It was May 31, 1855. Ramkumar, at the request of Rani Rasmani, had agreed to officiate at the installation and also to continue as priest of the Kālī temple until a successor could be found for him. The ceremony was performed with great solemnity and princely splendour. The temples were decorated lavishly and brilliantly illuminated. Recitation of mantras, devotional singing, and the sounds of conchs and bells reverberated throughout the temple compound. Pandits from all over India came to grace the occasion and were given silk clothes, gold coins, and other lavish gifts, and thousands of people partook of the offered food. Rasmani spent Rs. 20,000 for the dedication ceremonies. It was certainly the greatest achievement of her life.

Sri Ramakrishna, who was then just nineteen years old, was present at the dedication ceremony, but did not eat any of the offered food. Instead, he bought some puffed rice from a market and ate it before walking back to Calcutta to sleep. The next day, when Sri Ramakrishna returned to Dakshineswar, Ramkumar asked him to stay but he refused. He again went back to Calcutta, expecting his brother also to return shortly. After a week Ramkumar still had not returned, so Sri Ramakrishna went to Dakshineswar. This time Ramkumar told him that he had accepted, at the request of Rasmani, the post of the priest of Kālī, and that he would close his school. Sri Ramakrishna at last agreed to stay at Dakshineswar with Ramkumar, but he continued to cook his own food with Ganga water. He followed his caste rules firmly and with great faith at the beginning of his sādhanā.

Gradually Rasmani and Mathur came to know and admire Sri Ramakrishna, and they wanted to engage him in priestly duties. But Sri Ramakrishna avoided meeting them, as he neither wanted to take service nor did he like to hurt them by refusing their request. At last one day Mathur asked him to dress the image of Kālī, and Sri Ramakrishna agreed on the condition that his nephew Hriday should take care of the Mother's jewelry.

Three months after the ceremonial opening of the temples an accident took place in the Kṛṣṇa temple. Kshetranath, the priest, slipped and fell while carrying the image of Kṛṣṇa from the altar to the bedchamber, and as a result, one leg of the image was broken. This accident caused quite a commotion, as it was considered to be an inauspicious omen. The priest was immediately dismissed, and pandits were called together to give their opinions as to what should be done about the image. They unanimously agreed that a broken image could not be worshipped. Another image should be installed and the old one immersed in the Ganga.

This decision made Rasmani very despondent. She did not want to throw away the image which she had worshipped with love and devotion. At Mathur's suggestion she consulted Sri Ramakrishna, and he answered in an ecstatic mood: 'If any one of the Rani's sons-in-law were to break a leg, would she forsake him and put someone else in his place? Wouldn't she rather have him cured by a doctor? Let it be the same in this case. Mend the image and worship it as before.' This simple, satisfying, and logical answer surprised the pandits, but the Rani and Mathur were delighted. Sri Ramakrishna himself skilfully mended the image. At the request of Rasmani and Mathur, Sri Ramakrishna then agreed to become the priest of the Kṛṣṇa temple.

,Ramkumar's health was now beginning to fail. With Rasmani's approval, he began to teach Sri Ramakrishna the worship in the Kālī temple, a more responsible and more difficult duty, while he himself took charge of the Kṛṣṇa temple. But within a year Ramkumar died suddenly while away on business for a few days. This unexpected turn of events was a great shock to Sri Ramakrishna. Ramkumar had been like a father to him, for he had been only seven years old when their father had died. Sri Ramakrishna continued to perform the worship of the Divine Mother in the temple, but gradually a mood of God-intoxication possessed him. He felt the transitoriness of the world, and his sole desire was to have the vision of the Divine Mother. His unusual behaviour and strange manner of worship were soon noticed by the temple staff. They were convinced that Sri Ramakrishna had become mad and that he should be removed from his duties. A message to that effect was sent to Rasmani and Mathur.

One day Mathur paid an unexpected visit to the temple and secretly observed Sri Ramakrishna's method of worship. He saw how Sri Ramakrishna decorated the Divine Mother, talked to Her, fed Her, and fanned Her as if She were a living person. Mathur was very much impressed, and ordered the temple officials not to disturb or interfere with Sri Ramakrishna's worship in any way. He then reported to Rasmani: 'We have got an extraordinary worshipper. It seems the Goddess will be awakened soon.'

The love and respect which Rani Rasmani and Mathur had for Sri Ramakrishna and the support they gave him were quite amazing when one realizes how strange his behaviour was at that time, and how much criticism about him came to them from other temple officials. Once, for example, Rani Rasmani came to Dakshineswar and, after bathing in the Ganga, entered the shrine of the Divine Mother for *japa* and meditation. Sri Ramakrishna was also there at that time. Rasmani had heard his devotional singing many times and was very fond of it, so she requested him to sing. Sri Ramakrishna began singing, but soon noticed that Rasmani's mind had drifted to worldly thoughts. All of a sudden he stopped and turned toward Rasmani, exclaiming, 'What! Even here you think such thoughts!' Saying this, he struck the Rani with the palm of his hand.

Immediately there was a commotion in

the temple. The women attendants of Rasmani began to scream, and the temple guards and officials rushed to the shrine to drag Sri Ramakrishna out of the temple. They hesitated, waiting only for the Rani's order. But Rasmani was sitting calmly in an introspective mood. Instead of listening to the song, she had been thinking about a lawsuit. She marvelled at how Sri Ramakrishna had known what she had been thinking. When she became aware of her surroundings she noticed that people were standing around them, ready to punish Sri Ramakrishna, who was sitting quietly and smiling. Rasmani then ordered: 'The young priest is not to blame. Do not take any action against him.'

Rasmani retired to her room. When her attendants complained about Sri Ramakrishna's insolent behaviour toward her, she replied: 'You do not understand it. The Divine Mother Herself punished me and thus illumined my heart.' Because of her own highly pure nature, Rasmani was immediately able to understand, accept, and benefit from Sri Ramakrishna's harsh action.

After the dedication of the temple at Dakshineswar, Rani Rasmani began to spend more and more time in spiritual disciplines. She loved to come to Dakshineswar and talk about God with Sri Ramakrishna and to hear him sing devotional songs. But gradually the time came for her departure from Sri Ramakrishna's divine drama. In the early part of 1861 Rasmani became ill with a fever and severe dysentery. The best doctors of Calcutta tried their utmost to cure her but at last gave up hope. They then suggested that she be moved to a healthier place. It was Rasmani's desire to go to her garden house at Kalighat, in South Calcutta, which was on the bank of the Ādi Ganga, a small stream flowing into the Ganga.

Rasmani knew that her death was imminent and there was one task which she had left unfinished. The property which she had bought in Dinajpur (now in Bangladesh) as an endowment for the maintenance of the Dakshineswar temple was still not transferred to the temple trust. She executed the deed of endowment on February 18, 1861 and died the next day (February 19).

Shortly before her passing away she was brought to the bank of the Ganga. Seeing some lamps lighted in front of her, she exclaimed: 'Remove, remove these lights. I don't care for this artificial illumination anymore. Now my Mother has come and the brilliance of Her form has illumined the whole place.'* After a short pause she passed away, saying: 'Mother, you have come!'

(*Concluded*)

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* In another version of Rasmani's death it is said that just before she passed away all the lights of the Kālighāt temple were blown out by a strong gust of wind, and then the Divine Mother appeared to her.

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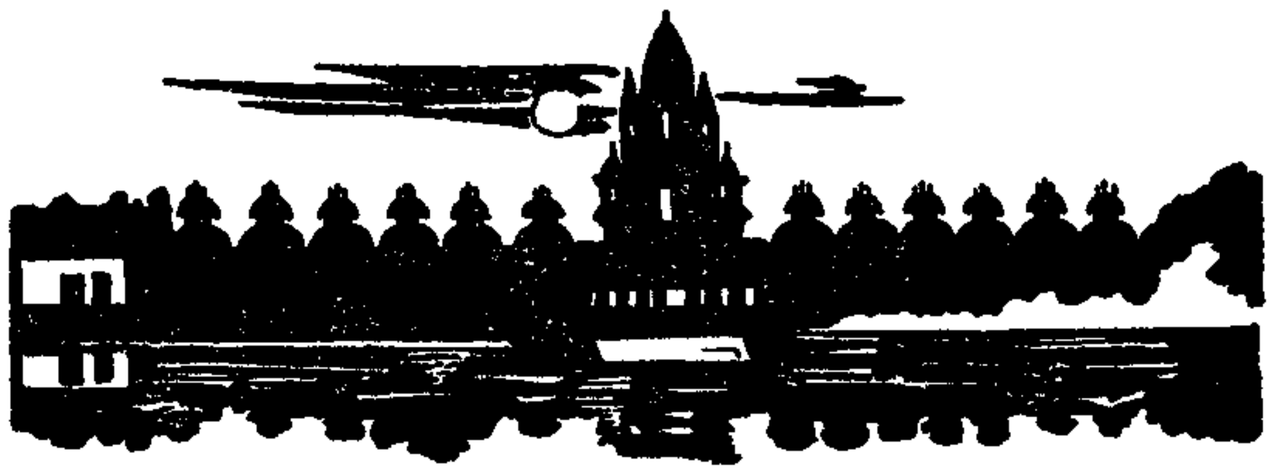

THE HUMAN CHRIST

DR. DONALD SZANTHO HARRINGTON

The return of the Passover and Easter each year brings back to our minds many old paradoxes and questions. What is the relationship, if any, between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Easter? Which is the real Jesus, the human, historical Jewish Rabbi, or the metaphysical, mythological divine Christ? And why was the Christian festival of Jesus' resurrection named after a pagan goddess of Spring, the Norse Goddess Eustre?

The answer to the last of these three questions is easiest. When the Anglo-Saxons and other northern peoples were converted to Christianity, they found that their nature festival at the time of the Spring equinox coincided with the Christian resurrection festival both in season and in sentiment and spirit. What could be easier or more effective in winning the common people over to the new religion than to retain the ancient pagan name for the new festival, but add Christian substance to its existent content. This is what is known in theological circles as 'syncretism', the borrowing between religious faiths whose adherents are mingling and merging with one another to make something new and richer than before. Here the Christian Resurrection celebration, the most important holy day in the Christian calendar, took the name of the Norsemen's pagan Goddess of Spring and the rebirth of nature, Eustre, or Easter.

Even more interesting are the steps by which the Jewish Passover became transformed into the holiest rite of the Christian Church, the solemn, high mass.

The Passover, of course, began, and got its name from the days of the Exodus when, to make the Egyptian Pharaoh free his Jewish slaves, the avenging angel of the Lord is supposed to have swept over the land of Egypt killing all the first born, but 'passed over' the houses of the Jews whose lintels were marked with the blood of the Lamb. Thereafter, the Lord's Passover was celebrated each year by faithful Jews, symbolic of their passing over from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land.

The Rabbi Jesus' last meal on this earth was when he celebrated Passover with his disciples the evening before his crucifixion. The meal was properly prepared with the killing of the Paschal lamb, but in the ritual Jesus added a thought. As he broke the unleavened bread and poured out the wine he said to his disciples: 'This bread is like my body, which is to be broken for you, and this wine is like my blood which shall be shed for you and all mankind. When you celebrate your Passover in the future, remember me.' There-

after, for his disciples, the Passover was a time of remembrance of his having given his life for their redemption.

Paul, the greatest of the Christian missionaries said, 'Christ is our Passover,' our guarantor of salvation, our guide to goodness, our redeemer from sin. And finally the Catholic Church designed the Mass, the symbolic breaking of unleavened bread and drinking of paschal wine, the pass over from sin to salvation and from earth to heaven.

This is another illustration of the syncretic process by which the rituals and forms, and even the phrases—like the Evangelical 'saved by the Blood of the Lamb'—have been adapted, reworked and reinterpreted from one religion to another, in this case from Judaism to Christianity. Truly, dear friends, we are all one people, bound together by countless invisible ties, and there is nothing new under the sun, though particulars are always new.

But let us turn to the third question that comes to our minds each year at this Passover-Easter time : which is the *real* Jesus, the true Jesus—the human, historical, gentle, Jewish teacher who walked the hills and valleys and by the Lake of Galilee, who knew intimately, the streets of Jerusalem ; or the metaphysical, mystical, mythological Christ of the Fourth Gospel and the Christian creeds, the holy one of God, who having sacrificed himself for us saves us miraculously by having atoned for our sins.

It is not an easy question to answer, partly because the human, historical, Jesus is very hard to find. He left no books or writings of his own at all, no letters like those of his missionary, Paul of Tarsus, who was a younger contemporary, but who never met or knew him personally. The earliest gospel, the Gospel of Mark, appeared some forty years after Jesus had died ; it appeared in Alexandria in Egypt in the small, struggling Christian Community there. Forty years is a long time for accurate memory. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke came later still, and the Gospel of John a generation later than these.

None of the Gospels is a historical study, or makes any pretense of objectivity. They are 'Gospels', proclaimers of a 'good news', a missionary message. They are propaganda tracts for the then new Christian Church. They are interpretations of events that had happened long before, designed to sell the new movement to different groups. Perhaps that is why Mark, the earliest gospel writer, tells no story of Jesus' birth. Not that it wasn't important. He just didn't know any. Matthew and Luke tell vivid, but wholly different birth stories. And by the time the Gospel of John was written, the birth stories must have been deemed unimportant, for they were known but omitted.

The Gospels, also, undoubtedly were coloured, perhaps even prompted, by the cataclysmic events that immediately preceded their appearance. In 70 A.D. the holy city of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by the Romans. The Temple was levelled to the ground, with nothing remaining but the huge, foundationstones (which today are the famous 'Wailing Wall'.) The people were driven into exile and scattered out to the far ends of the Roman World. It is by no means a coincidence that precisely then the gospels appeared. One can imagine that much of the anti-Jewish tone of the Gospels is derived from a not altogather heroic effort on the part of the young Jewish-Christian sect to distinguish and separate itself from the savage 70 A.D. Roman attack upon Judaism.

In any case the gospels are not reliable histories, and if we want to get close to the historical Jews, we must employ other methods than historical research.

The great authority in this area was Albert Schweitzer, who wrote the story of his research in a definitive book which appeared at the turn of the century, some

seventy-five years ago, entitled *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. In this great work, he tells us, in essence, that the historical Jesus is discoverable only in mystical imagination, and then only by our putting ourselves first back into the mind-set of his time, so as to commune with him mystically. Jesus, he reminds us, was not the simple, social justice advocate liberals tried to make him. He believed along with John the Baptist and the Essenes, that the End of Days was imminent. At any moment, God Almighty would come bringing the Kingdom of Heaven, and would superimpose that holy, supernatural world upon this sinful, natural world of ours. Men were to repent and return to righteousness, not so much because it would make them happier in this world as because they were about to stand face to face with Almighty God, who would judge them all, the quick and the dead, by His Standards of Perfect Righteousness. What man or woman in his right mind would want to face God immersed in every day's small selfishness and petty sins! But where there was repentance, God would forgive, just as the father of the Prodigal Son welcomed back his repentant, wayward boy. There was this hope. Well, the End of Days did not come after Jesus' death. The early church pushed it into the future. Christ would return someday bringing the End of Days. When *that* day did not come, the Medieval Church pushed it into the next world, heaven and hell in a life after death. The mythological, metaphysical Christ took over, the Christ of the creeds, who sits in Heaven at the right hand of the Father in judgement upon the natural world. But today *that* Christ too seems distant and unreachable, beyond any meaningful contemporary belief. So once again man is desperately engaged in the search of this strange, hypnotic being who pursues him across the centuries.

Let me share with you some of Albert Schweitzer's thinking on this, as culled from *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*:

> It is only at first sight that the absolute indifference of early Christianity towards the life of the historical Jesus is disconcerting. When Paul, representing those who recognized the signs of the times, did not desire to know Christ after the flesh, that was the first expression of the impulse of self preservation by which Christianity continued to be guided for centuries. It felt that with the introduction of the historic Jesus into its faith, there would arise something new, something which had not been foreseen in the thoughts of the Master Himself, and that thereby a contradiction would be brought to light, the solution of which would constitute one of the great problems of the world.
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> Primitive Christianity was therefore right to live wholly in the future with the Christ who was to come, and to preserve of the historic Jesus only detached sayings, a few miracles, His death and resurrection.....
>
> The problem of the life of Jesus has no analogue in the field of history. No historical school has ever laid down canons for the investigation of this problem, no professional historian has ever lent his aid to theology in dealing with it. Every ordinary method of historical investigation proves inadequate to the complexity of the conditions. The standards of ordinary historical science are here inadequate, its method is not immediately applicable. The historical study of the life of Jesus has had to create its own methods for itself.....
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> The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb.
>
> The study of the Life of Jesus has had a curious history. It set out in quest of the historical Jesus, believing that when it had found Him it could bring Him straight into our time as a Preacher and Saviour. It loosed the bands by which He had been riveted for centuries to the stony rocks of ecclesiastical doctrine, and rejoiced to see life and movement coming into the figure once more, and a historical Jesus advancing, as it seemed, to meet it. But He does not stay; He passes by our time and returns to His own. What surprised and dismayed the theology of the last forty years was that, despite all forced and arbitrary interpretations it could

not keep Him in our time, but had to let Him go. He returned to His own time, not owing to the application of any historical ingenuity, but by the same inevitable necessity by which the liberated pendulum returns to its original position.....

We are experiencing what Paul experienced. In the very moment when we were coming nearer to the historical Jesus than man had ever come before, and were already stretching out our hands to draw Him into our own time, we have been obliged to give up the attempt and acknowledge our failure in that paradoxical saying: 'If we have known Christ after the flesh yet henceforth know we Him no more.' And further we must be prepared to find that the historical knowledge of the personality and life of Jesus will not be a help, but perhaps even an offence to religion.

But the truth is it is not Jesus as historically known, but Jesus as spiritually arisen in men, who is significant for our time and can help it. Not the historical Jesus, but the spirit which goes forth from Him and in the spirits of men strives for new influence and rule, is that which overcomes the world.

World—and life—negation is found in the thought of Jesus in so far as He did not assume that the Kingdom of God would be realized in this natural world. He expected that this natural world would very speedily come to an end and be superseded by a supernatural world in which all that is imperfect and evil would be overcome by the power of God.....

Jesus as a concrete historical personality remains a stranger to our time, but His spirit which lies hidden in His words, is known in simplicity, and its influence is direct. Every saying contains in its own way the whole Jesus. The very strangeness and unconditionness in which He stands before us makes it easier for individuals to find their own personal standpoint in reagard to Him....

In reality that which is eternal in the words of Jesus is due to the very fact that they are based on an eschatological world-view, and contain the expression of a mind for which the contemporary world, with its historical and social circumstances, no longer had any existence. They are appropriate, therefore, to any world, for in every world they raise the man who dares to meet their challenge, and does not turn and twist them into meaninglessness, above his own world and in his own time, a simple channel of the power of Jesus....

He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!' and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.

It seems to me that what we really need today is a combination of the two concepts of Jesus, the man and the saviour. Despite the lack of adequate historical sources, we need to go back and try to recapture and recreate the Jesus of his history out of what we know about that Jewish world, and its ideas and beliefs that existed two thousand years ago. We Unitarian Universalists are bound neither to the historical Jesus nor the theological Jesus. We are free to acknowledge what he meant to that milieu, and then ask how we can translate that meaning into our time and our milieu and rise ourselves to meet its contemporary challenge. We are free to try to find the *Human Christ*—the Human-Divine Messenger who is as capable of speaking to us in terms of our time as it was of speaking to him in the terms of his and to all times in between and who still can come through with the innate authority and moral power capable of commanding our minds and transforming our hearts.

This is a human Christ, the son of Joseph and Mary, convert of John the Baptist, rabbi and minister, missionary and teacher of righteousness who moved among a lost and distracted, oppressed and preyed-upon people with words of comfort and compassion, of counsel and command, a man who spoke out of a tremendous, inner, spiritual authority, and apocalyptic urgency: Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is about to break in upon this natural world, and you must be ready. No supernatural

incursion was about to, or did, take place. The church has been puzzled and confused and dismayed at this inconsistency, and has, as a result, totally distorted his Teaching, centring its attention on his nature and the nature of his witness as a salvatory miracle, rather than upon the miracle of truth within his teaching and its power to transform and redeem our human lives and history. The miracle is there, but not where the Christian Church thought it to be, in the deity of his person, and the miracle of his resurrection, but rather in the divine power of his truth, teaching and example. It is to that which we must now return, looking upon it, as a divine command--not something that might be pleasant and nice, but something that is absolutely necessary for our salvation from selfishness, violence and unending cruelty and war.

Long ago, the Jewish philosopher, Spinoza, stumbled upon this. He wrote:

'It is not in the least needful for salvation to know Christ according to the flesh; but concerning that so-called eternal Son of God (de aeterno illo Dei filio), that is, God's eternal wisdom, which is manifested in all things, and chiefly in the mind of man, and most particularly in Christ Jesus, the case is far otherwise. For without this no man can arrive at a state of blessedness, inasmuch as nothing else can teach him what is true or false, what is good or evil.'

You see, Spinoza, too, saw the need for a mystical, spiritual encounter with the eternal truth in Christ.

So it is the eternal Son of God *in* the historical Jesus that speaks to us mystically with such transforming authority, telling us what is true and false, good and evil. He tells us to love until we can love like him, and to do justly and love mercy, and forgive seventy times seven times, and if, at the very altar of God, we should remember that we have wronged any brother or sister, we must first go and make it right with him, and then come and offer our gift. This is how things were to be in the Kingdom of God, and therefore, these are commands from the Father through the Son which sooner or later all must obey.

Jesus believed that we should do these things because the end of the world was at hand, and at any moment we must be ready to meet our God, face to face, and to live in His Kingdom of Heaven, supernaturally and miraculously given us.

Though the end of that world did not happen as he expected and prophesied (the End of Days did not come in his time, nor has he returned to earth bringing it with him) nevertheless, there is a sense in which each one of us, and every human being who has ever lived, is confronted by an imminent end of the world, of his world, of the world for him--Death, omnipresent, universal death, which comes to all, and can come at any moment.

Though the end of that world did not the uncertainties of our human existence, we should live each day as if it were to be our last. We should ask ourselves each morning if we have thus far made of our lives all we wished and dreamed. so that if we are this day called to account we would not die ashamed. We should reckon up our debts, count over those we may have wronged and not repented, seek out those with whom we remain unreconciled, and try again to renew the bonds of love and mutual forgiveness. For this day, this hour each one of us could die.

My beloved teacher and predecessor John Haynes Holmes used to say that we should never take anyone or anything for granted, that each morning, when we go to the day's work and kiss our loved ones goodbye, we should say all the nice things we feel about them, for one such morning's kiss may be, will be, the last--forever.

Do you see how the existential psychology which Jesus invoked in his expectation of God's intervention to miraculously

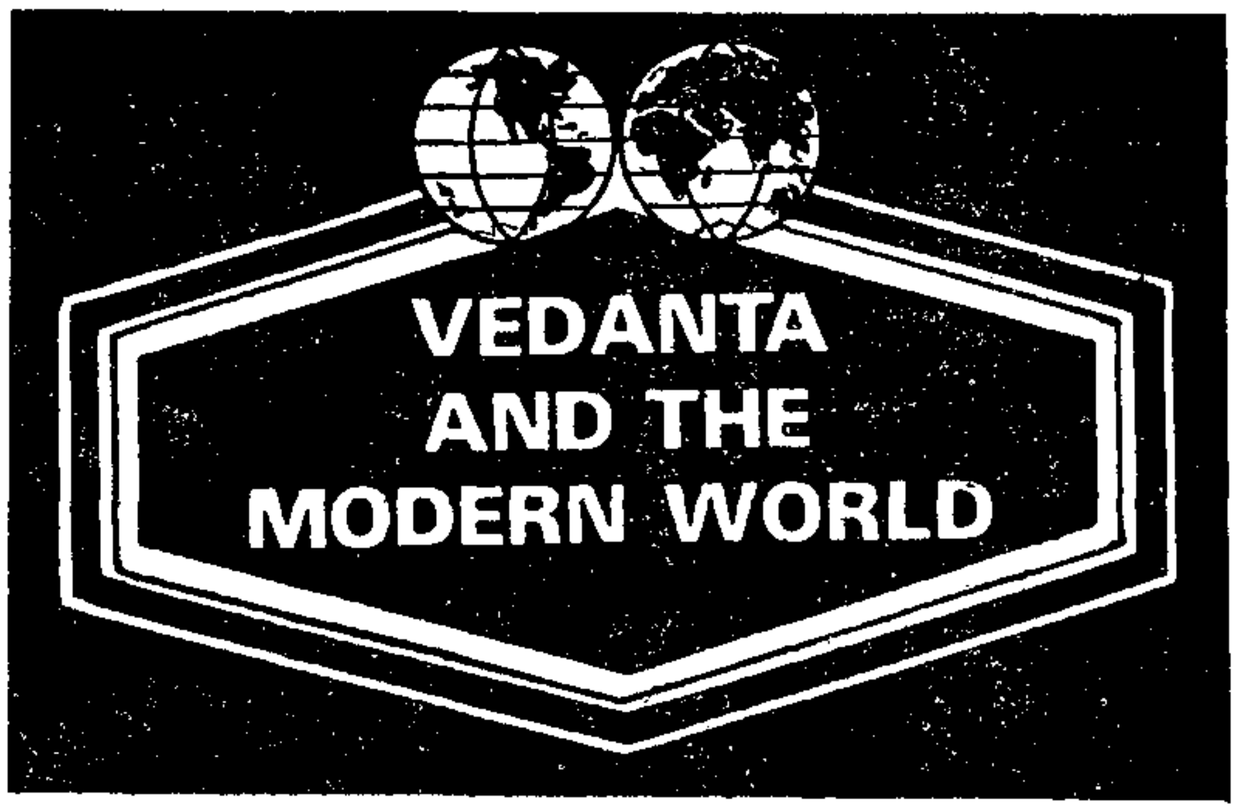
superimpose His Kingdom of Heaven upon this world is sound. The psychology is sound in a wholly different, and perfectly natural sense, in the sense that Death stands always at our elbow, and any great creative gift we have to give, or any good we have to do for any fellow creature, we had better do it now—for we shall not pass this way again. And this is why his ancient cry, Repent, repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand has retained its authenticity and its power across twenty centuries. For individual human beings the Kingdom of Heaven is always at our elbow.

There is another sense in which this is true. The very qualities of human life and behaviour that Jesus invoked because he thought God would give His Kingdom supernaturally—that is, loving God with all one's being, striving to be perfect as our father in heaven is perfect, and loving our neighbours and caring for them as if they were ourselves, our own,—these are the qualities which, spreading by contagion from one human being to another, would create the kingdom of heaven, of love and forgiveness, of caring and reconciliation, *naturally*, right here upon this earth, with no need for any one to wait around for any supernatural End of Days. You can start living in God's Kingdom of Heaven, my friends, right now. You can start realizing it in society and our social institutions today. Jesus himself seemed to suggest this when someone asked him once where he should look to see the Kingdom coming. Jesus replied, 'Don't look for the Kingdom of Heaven saying, "Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" The Kingdom of Heaven is within you and will arise up around and among you.'

This is more than just a very great truth. It is *the* central truth of life. It is the source of all salvation. It is the love of God come down to earth to lead us into love and thus into God. This was Jesus' greatest gift, infinitely dramatized for us in his gift of himself upon the cross, and his being lifted up thereby into an immortal light and beacon unto men across all centuries and millennia.

Throughout the history of the world, you find great men make great sacrifices and the mass of mankind enjoy the benefit. If you want to give up everything for your own salvation, it is nothing. Do you want to forgo even your own salvation for the good of the world? You are God, think of that.

Swami Vivekananda



THE QUEST FOR THE ULTIMATE BUILDING BLOCK OF THE UNIVERSE

SWAMI JITATMANANDA

The word 'physics' is derived from the Greek *physis* meaning 'nature'; that is to say, physics is knowledge of the real nature of the physical universe. Its Sanskrit equivalent would be *ādhibhautika vidyā,* objective knowledge, in contradistinction to *ādhyātmika vidyā,* self-knowledge. In Indian thought a material 'thing' is regarded only as an object of knowledge. Knowledge is primary and the object is secondary. Kaṇāda, the father of Indian atomism, calls an object *padārtha*—the referent or 'meaning' (*artha*) of a word (*pada*).

The chief concern of Newtonian physics was the properties of matter. The basic question, 'what is the reality behind matter?' was thought to be too metaphysical or unnecessary to the nineteenth century physicists. But beginning from the end of the nineteenth century, fundamental questions regardig nature of matter began to be raised. The electron was discovered by J. J. Thomson in 1897 and the proton in 1919, by Rutherford. In 1900 Max Planck made the epoch-making discovery that heat is absorbed or emitted in definite quanta or packets. In 1905 Philipp Lenard discovered the photoelectric effect, the emission of electron from a metal when light strikes it. Einstein combined the ideas of Planck and Lenard and propounded the photon theory which applied the quantum concept to all forms of electromagnetic radiation.

In 1911 Rutherford first suggested the planetary model of the atom, with electrons orbiting around a nucleus consisting of protons (and also neutrons which were actually discovered by James Chadwick in 1938). The Danish physicist Niels Bohr in 1913 applied the quantum theory to atomic structure by regarding the electron's orbits or shells as representing definite levels of quantum energy. Finally Wolfgang Pauli, through his 'exclusion principle', gave to every electron a unique place in the orbit. The result was a neat-looking, clearly visualizable conceptual model of the atom. It looked as though modern physics had settled down to a clear-cut understanding of the ultimate building block of the universe, like that provided by the atomic models of Democritus and Dalton. The criterion for the validity of any new theory in physics is not only that the theory should give a correct picture or interpretation of the previous observations, but that it should also *predict* things which could be later confirmed by direct experiment. In this respect Bohr's theory of atomic structure was eminently successful.

Nevertheless, there were two points in Bohr's concept which made physicists uneasy. One was that the electrons orbiting along the shells against the pull of the central nucleus should, according to the known laws of electrodynamics, gradually

lose their energy. But Bohr's theory did not admit this.

The second objection came from a different source. To account for the discrete nature of Bohr's orbits, the French physicist Louis de Broglie tried to draw an analogy between the set of discrete energy levels inside the atom and the discrete sets of mechanical vibrations that are observed in the case of violin strings. In 1924 he formulated a simple equation which showed for the first time that not only waves behave as particles (as the 'photon' theory of Einstein showed) but particles also behave as waves. Broglie's equation determined the wave lengths for all the forms of matter like atoms, molecules, electrons, even baseballs and automobiles. The smaller the mass, the greater the wave length of a particle, and vice versa. That is why the wave lengths of baseballs or automobiles are not noticeable, while the wave length of the electron, which has got an incredibly small mass, is. Broglie's idea was verified experimentally in 1927 by two Americans, Clinton Davisson and Lester Germer. Davisson's experiment showed that when a beam of electron is sent through a very tiny opening, the beam of electron diffracts just as a beam of light does. And diffraction is a typical phenomenon of light behaving as a wave.

Broglie's discovery melted the hard particle, the electron revolving round its nucleus, into a fuzzy non-material wave thrumming around the nucleus. Scientists were at dismay. What is the electron then ? How to resolve the contradictions in Bohr's picture of the atom ? These questions acted as a great ferment, and atomic physics entered the most creative period in its history. There followed an intense effort to solve the riddle of the atom along two lines. Werner Heisenberg with the help of mathematics of matrices pictured electrons to be like chessmen moving on the chessboard, and argued that the existence of minimum portions of energy (quanta) prevents us from describing the motion of atomic particles in the conventional way by giving their successive positions and velocities, for the very attempt to determine either of these values with measuring instruments would disturb the motion of electrons. This is the celebrated Uncertainty Principle which Heisenberg mathematically formulated in 1927.

The second line of enquiry was conducted by Erwin Schrödinger. He hypothesized in about 1925 that the waves of 'electrons' could also be quantized. And Schrödinger's wave-equation which won him noble prize in 1926, was in fact the big bridge between the contradictory views regarding sub-atomic phenomena: the particle nature (of light) and the wave nature (of electrons). Schrödinger's discovery was hailed as a great peace-maker. But the wave-particle duality of matter continued to trouble scientists. At this point came another German physicist Max Born who almost completed the abstract picture of the electron-wave. He hypothesized that electrons are not 'real' things. It is neither possible nor necessary to visualize these waves, as they are 'probability waves'. According to him the entire electron picture is 'a purely abstract... mathematical concept... into which we cannot enter'.[1]

Yet the drive to unravel the mystery of the material electron and other sub-atomic particles continued. It led to two important consequences. One was the attempt to apply the Theory of Relativity to quantum phenomena, first attempted by Paul Dirac who formulated the field concept of elec-

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1. Quoted by Gary Zukav in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (An overview of the New Physics), (New York: Morrow Hill Paperbacks, 1979) p. 728.

tron. The other was the birth of another new branch of physics known as Particle Physics. Scientists found that the mass of each electron varies with its velocity. They have hypothetically calculated the rest mass of an electron. As the electron speeds on, its mass increases from 100 times to as much as 11,800 times its rest mass, as happens in accelerators.

Particle physicists have divided all sub-atomic particles, in order of their masses from the lightest to the heaviest, into three categories: Leptons or light-weight particles, Mesons or medium-weight particles and Baryons or heavy-weight particles. A few particles do not belong to this lepton-meson-baryon framework. Some of them are well known like photons, whereas the others have been theorized about but not discovered yet (like the gravitons). These are massless particles.

What is a massless particle? It has zero rest mass. When a photon is created it immediately moves with the speed of light. A massless particle is hypothetically possible, but, in reality, it is just an impossibility. No one has seen or felt the existence of a 'rest mass' since, in the sub-atomic world, particles are always moving incredibly fast. The mass of the sub-atomic particles which the scientists find is always the relativistic mass. And this relativistic mass depends upon its velocity. For example, at 99% of the speed of light a particle has got a mass which is seven times larger than its rest mass. The rest mass is just a mathematical calculation. A photon which has all the mass due to motion has been arbitrarily described as a 'massless particle' in English language.

The mass of a sub-atomic particle is always presented in particle physics in terms of a unit of energy known as the electron-volt. The rest mass of an electron is 0.51 million electron-volts. Or in other words, a proton has got nearly 2000 times the mass of an electron. 'Picture a massless particle' would say a particle physicist to his student. And the student will have no way but dive deep into a world of pure imagination.

But the search for the ultimate building block of the universe has continued until now when physicists have started facing the stark reality that this search might end up in a wild goose chase. And this is, in short, the history of the modern particle physics. In the world of sub-atomic physics, physicists have come to conjecturing the existence of some 200 particles until today, and the number is obviously on the increase. Most of these particles have got an incredibly short life and size. A positive electron lasts only 10^{-8} second. A neutral pi-meson (called 'pion') lasts no longer than 10^{-14} second.[2] In the period between the two World Wars physicists had invented two names for designating the atoms of time and space. The atom for time is termed 'Chronon' which is of the order of 10^{-21} second according to J. H. Thomson. 'Hodon', the atom for space has a radius of 10^{-23} cm. In the latest experiments of high-energy particle physics physicists have met with particles which live only a few particle-second (a particle-second is 10^{-23} second or 0.00000 00000 00000 00000 0000 second). And then they change into other particles. The most short-lived particle has been termed 'Resonance'. A Resonance is a particle, but not an object. It is better described as an event, an occurrence, or a happening, says Prof. Capra.[3] New particles are created only when known particles collide with an unimaginably high velocity, sometimes nearing that of light. Every sub-

2. Milic Capek, *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics*, (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1961) p. 259.

3. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, (Berkeley: Shambhala, 1973), p. 284.

atomic interaction consists of the annihilation of the original particles and the creation of new sub-atomic particles, as is shown clearly in the famous Feynmann's diagrams. This energy dance, this endless process of destruction-creation of sub-atomic particles, is going on at this outer space. Professor Fritjof Capra has ingeniously and logically compared this eternal and cosmic dance in the outer space of our earth to the mystic dance of the great God Natarāja Śiva. Śiva, the protector of Umā (which means our earth) is saving her and all the creatures (Śiva is the father of all creation—Bhūtanātha) with his four hands.

The right upper hand holds a drum to symbolize the primary sound of creation in the universe.
The left upper hand bears a tongue of flame symbolizing the destruction of harmful cosmic particle from outer space.
The right lower hand is raised in the sign of—'Do not be afraid. I am protecting you all.'
The left lower hand points down to the 'uplifted foot' which symbolizes surrender at the feet of Siva—the protector.[4]

But the question about the ultimate building block remains unanswered. What is it that collides ? Energy or mass ? What is this mass composed of ? What is the smallest particle composed of ? Particle physics and quantum physics have no answer. Says Heisenberg, 'In the light of the quantum theory... elementary particles are no longer real in the sense as objects of daily life, trees or stones.'[5]

Today physicists are divided into two schools. One school, still seeking a material substratum of the universe, is directing its search towards a hypothetical object called 'quark'. 'Quark' is a term which scientists have taken from James Joyce's book *Finnegans Wake* where Joyce says, 'Three Quarks for Muster Mark'. It was first used for these particles by the American physicist Murray Gellmann. This school of physicists believes that all the known particles are composed of a few different types of particles called quarks. But no one has found a quark yet. These strange 'particles' (all hypothetical) are supposed to have 1/3 unit of electrical charge. Until now no particle is found to have a charge other than a whole unit. The search for quarks is still continuing. But many scientists today believe that it may end in the paradox: which is earlier, the egg or the hen ? Or in other words, there will remain the unanswered question—What are these quarks made of ? 'Not only can a microphysical particle not be observed twice, as Schrödinger asserted, but not even once, as the consistent application of Heisenberg's uncertainty principle asserts.'[6]

The other school of physicists who have abandoned this way of finding the 'ultimate building block of the universe' in what Kenneth Ford called the 'Particle Zoo', are following the S. Matrix theory or the Scattering-Matrix theory originally proposed by Heisenberg. This has now been developed into another theory called the bootstrap theory of which the most powerful exponent is Geoffrey Chew, chairman of the physics department, Berkeley. Both these new theories have finally abandoned the ultimate-particle search. Their adherents are trying to show, and have to a large extent succeeded in doing so, that in the sub-atomic world no particle is an independent entity. In fact these are not things but 'events' interconnected with others. In the words of Fritjof Capra, a sub-atomic particle is an entity, but is neither a particle nor an object. It is just a 'dynamic pattern of interconnected energy'. 'Events and not

4. *The Tao of Physics,* p. 244.
5. Quoted in *The Dancing Wu Li Masters,* p. 216.
6. Quoted in *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics,* p. 389.

particles constitute the objective reality' was the conclusion of Sir James Jeans.[7] The bootstrap theory, by its very name, suggests that one end of the bootstrap is inextricably connected with the other end, however intricate and complicated the connection may be.

Geoffrey Chew's bootstrap theory is slowly gaining acceptance among a larger number of physicists today. One of the factors that is being slowly felt as an indispensable necessity in this theory is the inclusion of consciousness in determining external reality. Physicist Fritjof Capra in his latest book *The Turning Point* upholds the consciousness factor in the bootstrap theory: 'Increased use of the bootstrap approach opens up the unprecedented possibility of being forced to include the study of human consciousness explicitly in the future theories of matter... Some physicists argue that consciousness may be an essential aspect of the universe, and that we may be blocked from further understanding of natural phenomena if we insist on excluding it.'[8]

Arthur Koestler coined a word, 'holon', to describe the sub-atomic particle, since each of them is inextricably connected with the rest of the universe. Each particle reflects the 'whole', as it were.[9] Physicist David Bohm has used this concept of holon in his new theory of matter which he calls—an 'Implicate order'. The movement of a single particle, according to this theory, is connected with the movement of the entire universe. Therefore it is not the movement of the individual particle but 'holo-movement'. To establish his theory, says Fritjof Capra, Bohm has found it necessary to regard consciousness as an essential feature of the holo-movement and to take it into account explicitly in his theory.[10]

Physicist John Wheeler speaks of the entire material universe as a 'Quantum foam' in which every particle is linked with every other particle in what he terms 'quantum interconnectedness'. Wheeler also offers the idea of 'Super-Space' in which everything is interconnected in a deeper way. As early as 1876 W. K. Clifford theorized that matter is nothing more than empty, curved space. Wheeler has developed this idea further and writes, 'There is nothing in the world but empty curved space. Matter, charge, electromagnetism and other fields are only manifestations of the bending of space. *Physics is Geometry.*'[11] For Einstein empty space is a participant in the cosmic drama, its geometry having effect on events. For Wheeler, 'the vacuum is a froth of particles and fields. 'Space', says Wheeler, 'is foamlike'.[12] Wheeler goes further and explains his concept of 'quantum foam'—'The space of quantum geometro-dynamics can be compared to a carpet of foam spread over a slowly undulating landscape... The continual microscopic changes in the carpet of foam as new bubbles appear and old ones disappear symbolize the quantum fluctuations in geometry.'[13]

We are reading just a translation into a language of modern physics what the millennium-old Vedantic text *Dṛg-Dṛśya-Viveka* has mentioned, 'The manifestation of all names and forms in the entity called Brahman, which is Existence-Consciousness-

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7. Quoted in *The Philosophical Impact of Contemporary Physics,* p. 391.
8. Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point,* (New York: Simon and Scherster, 1982), p. 95.
9. *The Turning Point,* p. 43.
10. *The Turning Point,* p. 96.
11. Quoted by Michael Talbot in *Mysticism and the New Physics,* (New York: Bantam edition), p. 77.
12. *The New York Times Magazine,* 26 September 1982, p. 69.
13. Quoted in *Mysticism and the New Physics,* p. 77.

The philosophical foundation

Aldous Huxley has said,

> Men live in accordance with their philosophy of life, their conception of the world. This is true even of the most thoughtless. It is impossible to live without a metaphysic. The choice that is given us is not between some kind of metaphysic and no metaphysic; it is always between a good metaphysic and a bad metaphysic.[8]

Hence as education is the art of preparing for life, it cannot be divorced from the philosophy of life. As Professor Dewey puts it,

> If we are willing to conceive education as the process of forming fundamental dispositions, intellectual and emotional, toward nature and fellowmen, philosophy may be defined as the general theory of education or education in its more general term or generalized theory of education.[9]

If we read the history of educational movement in Europe from the eighteenth century we shall find that the educational theories of Rousseau, Kant, Herbart, Spencer and Froebel are based on the particular brand of philosophy they adhered to. For instance, Rousseau wrote: 'whatever comes from the hand of the author of nature is good and everything gets defiled in contact with man'.[10] For Rousseau the state of nature is the ideal state, and so in education he disapproved interference with nature and advocated individualism. Hegel in his philosophy of absolute idealism held that everyone existed for the State. So, according to him the State has the absolute right to determine who should be taught, how they should be taught and what they should be taught. When we take up the education system of Granville Stanley Hall and John Dewey we find that 'The starting point of their educational thought is the doctrine of evolution as applied in child-study and the philosophy of both men is, broadly speaking, pragmatic in its insistence on the subordination of intellect to practical ends'.[11] But Western philosophy, as it is not based on the experiential verifiability of its doctrines, has always been unequal to the task of solving life's problems. In contrast, Indian philosophy has always been rooted in the direct experience or realization of the verities that it propounds. A philosophical truth incapable of verification through *anubhūti* (experience) has always been held to be inconsequential and inane. That is why Western philosophy and educational theories based on them are never related to life. They are subservient to political, social and economic values and conditions. Western education wavers between the individualism of democratic countries and the absolutistic indoctrination of the socialistic bloc. So thinkers like Aldous Huxley say: 'The time has now come when we must ask in what precisely a good education consist'.[12]

Regarding this Swami Vivekananda says, 'The use of higher education is to find out how to solve the problems of life', and he goes on to add, 'and this is what is engaging the profound thought of the modern civilized world, but it was solved in our country thousands of years ago'.[13] It could be solved because in India that fundamental philosophical truth, which solves all problems of life, had been realized in life.

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8. Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers. 1937), p. 291
9. W. H. Kilpatrick, *Source-Book in the Philosophy of Education*, Chapter 1.
10. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* Book 1.
11. William Boyd, *History of Western Education*, p. 394
12. *Ends and Means*, p. 207
13. *Complete Works*, 5:368

everyday clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life within its scope.'[19]

The Theory of Relativity has proved the relative nature of all matter. Quantum physics has shown that matter has no purely objective reality. Particle physics has shown that the concept of a separate, individual, isolated piece of matter does not exist. What we see as isolated matter is deeply and intrinsically interconnected with the whole universe. David Bohm, the London physicist experimenting on Bell's Theorem (to be discussed in a later chapter), claims that the whole universe of space-time is connected at a deeper and fundamental level. Twentieth-century physics has already stepped into the domain of metaphysics. Swami Vivekananda pointed out this culmination of Western physics in Vedanta as early as 1895 when the new physics of this century had not even been dreamt of. At the Thousand Island Park in New York State he said:

Modern science has really made the foundations of religion strong. That the whole universe is one is scientifically demonstrable. What the metaphysicians call 'being', the physicist call 'matter', but there is no real fight between the two, for both are one. Though an atom is invisible, unthinkable, yet in it are the real power and potency of the universe. That is what the Vedantist says of Atman.'[20]

That physics is connected with metaphysics, that all matter is connected with mind, is one of the basic Vedantic truths. Vivekananda expresses it almost in the language of today's physics:

Physics is bounded on both sides by metaphysics. So it is with reason—it starts form non-reason and ends with non-reason. If we push inquiry far enough in the world of perception, we must reach a plane beyond perception. Reason is really stored up and classified perception, preserved by memory. We can never imagine or reason beyond our perceptions.....

Religion is the science which learns the transcendental in nature through the transcendental in man. We know as yet little of man, consequently but little of the universe. When we know more of man, we shall probably know more of the universe. Man is the epitome of all things and all knowledge is in him. Only for the infinitesimal portion of the universe, which comes into some perception, are we able to find a reason; never can we give the reason for any fundamental principle.[21]

In these prophetic passages Vivekananda anticipated the holistic and mystical approach that modern physics has been compelled to accept today. Nearly a century after Vivekananda, we hear the bold confirmation of his ideas in the words of physicist Fritjof Capra:

'Scientists will not need to be reluctant to adopt a holistic framework, as they are often today, for fear of being unscientific. Modern physics will have shown them that such a framework would be not only scientific; it would be consistent with the most advanced scientific theories of physical reality.'[22]

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19. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) vol. 3, p. 269.
20. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972) vol. 7, p. 50.
21. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977) vol. 8, p. 20-21.
22. *The Schumacher Lectures,* Ed. by Satish Kumar, (London: Abacus Edn., Sphere Books Ltd., 1982) p. 135.

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY: RELIGIOUS REBEL AND SCIENTIST*

As a free thinker

The 250th birthday of Joseph Priestley was celebrated in March this year.

Joseph Priestley was a man of many parts. Minister, scientific experimenter, educator, he wrote also on theology and history, government and politics, liberty in all its forms, rudiments of English grammar, and oratory and criticism.

Though some critics denigrate Priestley (1733-1804) as a 'dabbler' in science, the motive for his abundantly productive avocation of experimenting was religious—a theological passion for understanding the works of creation.

He rejected the Genesis story of 'original creation' as unhistorical and wanted to know how the system of the universe operated, how everything was connected to everything else.

As a Yorkshireman, Priestley inherited an independent and dissenting turn of mind that led him to creative inquiry in both religion and science. The people of Yorkshire, centre of the Industrial Revolution, were traditionally independent and anti-establishment, 'dissenters' in religion and in politics supporters of the 1688 Revolution in England that established a constitutional monarchy. He was free of cant and prejudices.

Priestley had as good an education in 'experimental philosophy' at the college in Daventry as was available in any college in England, and had introduced scientific experiments in the private school he organized to augment his income from his second church.

However, he did not seriously turn his attention to the scientific way of knowing until he was thirty-three, married, and evolved into a leading and successful Unitarian minister.

He is a model of the beginning of empirical science when the philosopher rolled up his sleeves, mixing 'action with speculation' by 'giving some employment to hand and arms, as well as to the head,' and contributing to human welfare.

He was born March 13, 1733 in Birstal Fieldhead, Yorkshire, England. An eldest child, Priestley was raised from the age of six by his Aunt Sarah, following the death of his mother after bearing her sixth child in seven years.

His aunt as well as his parents belonged to a Presbyterian Dissenting Chapel. She was devout but open-minded, providing

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* Compiled from three articles by Rev. John Ruskin Clark, Marguerite V. Pohek and Robert Siegfried which appeared in the February, 1983 issue of The U. U. WORLD (Vol. 14 No. 2), the journal of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, U.S.A.

hospitality to Dissenting ministers of all persuations, including heretics.

'Thus', says Priestley in his *Memoirs*, 'I was brought up with sentiments of piety, but without bigotry, and having from earliest years given much attention to the subject of religion, I was as much confirmed as I well could be in the principles of Calvinism.'

His formal education was interrupted by ill health for theree years, and during his independent study he became an 'Arminian,' rejecting predestination and affirming human freedom to accept or reject salvation.

Before leaving home to study at the Daventry Dissenting Academy for his ministry, he wished to join the church in which he had been raised.

The elders of the church refused him after they had questioned him on original sin and found him 'to be not quite orthodox, not thinking that all the human race... were liable to the wrath of God and the pains of hell on account of that sin only.'

Priestley devoted the rest of his life to justifying and evolving, on historical grounds, his interpretation of 'pure Christianity—which he defined as 'unitarian'.

At nineteen he entered Daventry Academy. At Daventry Academy all sides of a question were discussed and Priestley, along with most of the student body, became an 'Arian', denying that Christ was part of the Trinity but retaining belief in the pre-existence of his soul.

By 1758 he rejected the doctrine of atonement, of the divine inspiration of the Biblical writers whose reliability as historians of events could be judged, and ten years later was convinced of the simple humanity of Jesus, becoming a Socinian.

Then he adopted Francis David's Unitarian view that Jesus was not to be worshipped, though he was divinely commissioned to teach the moral truths necessary to salvation on Resurrection Day.

Throughout this religious development, his pious confidence in a benevolent Creator who was the first cause of the system and whose providence governed all life for ultimate good and happiness made him serene in the troubles and sorrows of his own life and optimistic about the steady improvement of the conditions of all life on earth.

As a theologian

After three years as minister in Needham Market, he went to a parish in Nantwich where he set up a school to supplement his small income.

His reputation quickly spread and in 1761 he was called to the famous Warrington Academy. He immediately distinguished himself as an educator by initiating small classes, seminar-type discussions, learning through teaching, demonstration, and visual media

He related class instruction to daily life and made significant curriculum innovations decades ahead of his time. In 1764 the University of Edinburgh honoured him with an LLD. In 1766, with the encouragement of Benjamin Franklin and John Canton, he wrote a definitive 'History of Electricity' and that year was made a Fellow of the Royal Society.

In 1767 he went to Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds.

At the urging of his friend, Richard Price, he became literary companion to Lord Shelburne in 1773. He continued scientific experimentation and widened his acquaintance with the leading scientific, political, and literary figures of the day.

One of his controversial works, the 'Disquisitions...' brought forth a torrent of abuse in high ecclesiastical and political circles. He helped his friend Theophilus Lindsey establish the first Unitarian Chapel in London in 1774.

In 1780, he became co-minister of the New Meeting in Birmingham. A leader in the renowned Lunar Society, in addition to his scientific experiments he published some of his most significant works, particularly the 'Histories... of the Corruptions of Christianity' in 1782, of the 'Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ' in 1786, and of the 'Christian Church' in 1790. He was elected Fellow of the American Philosophical Society in 1785.

Many of his views became unpopular. He viewed public officials as 'servants of the people and accountable to the people'. He inveighed against the slave trade and against war. He bravely championed civil, political and religious liberty, and the separation of church and state. He sympathized with the American and the earlier phases of the French Revolutions, thus shattering his friendship with Edmund Burke.

Members of Parliament, high-church ecclesiastics, and even King George III attacked him. He was the chief target of the infamous Church-King riots that began in Birmingham on July 14, 1791. His church and home were burned; his library, laboratory, and manuscripts were destroyed, and he and his family barely escaped. Yet several weeks later, from London, he preached a powerful sermon on the forgiveness of injuries. In 1791 he succeeded to Richard Price's London pulpit.

Altogether he had served twenty-six full years in the parish ministry—'an office in which', he said, 'it is a man's duty to teach the importance of truth, the necessity of inquiry for the discovery of truth, and the obligation of sincerity in the profession of it'. Religious truth 'cannot be communicated from the pulpit alone.'

The Priestleys emigrated to the United States in 1794. In both New York and Philadelphia Dr. Priestley was enthusiastically welcomed by many scientific, political and educational persons. They decided, however, to settle in Northumberland, Pennsylvania, near their sons.

In 1796 Priestley was invited to occupy, but declined, the chair of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania. He spent varying periods of time in Philadelphia and it was here that he was in large part responsible for the establishment of the first avowedly Unitarian church in America on June 12, 1796.

During his last years his life seemed to fall apart. In one year, his beloved wife and youngest son, who he had hoped would succeed him, died. His friendship with Jefferson and his espousal of the republican cause hastened a break with Adams, and the powerful Federalists were roused against him. Yet amidst the shipwreck of his life, he wrote to his closest friend, Theophilus Lindsey, 'It is nothing but a firm faith in a good Providence that is my support at present, but it is an effective one.'

Desperately weak and ill on the morning of February 6, 1804, he revised some manuscripts and when these were read back he said, 'That is right. I have now done.' Less than an hour later he died.

As a scientist

Priestley believed the Genesis theory that Adam came alive when God breathed the breath of life into him; so air, not the soul, activated life.

In experiments he had seen that mice sealed in a bottle were asphyxiated. He precipitated a storm of controversy, even among Unitarians, when he renounced belief in the immortal soul as a spiritual substance, holding that the soul or mind was a function of the organization of matter in the brain. Not even Jesus had a soul to pre-exist or post-exist.

Since continued breathing and combustion

vitiated air and yet common air was still no less fit for respiration, he wondered how the Creator restored it. 'There must be some provision in nature,' he thought, for refreshing the breath of life.

Instead of speculation, he had learned that scientific experiments served 'to explain some of the most striking phenomena in nature, respecting the general plan and constitution of the system, and the relation that one part bears to another'.

He noticed that the purity of air bubbling in the water of a local reservoir depended on the presence of a 'green substance' growing on its sides. He did a series of experiments by sealing various plants in bottles of noxious air and found that the air was purified, thus discovering photosynthesis and the fact that it depended on sunlight.

He wrote his close friend Benjamin Franklin, then in London, in 1772: 'I have fully satisfied myself that air rendered noxious by breathing is restored by sprigs of mint growing in it.'

In August, 1774 Joseph Priestley first isolated the gas now known as oxygen and identified it as distinct from the air of the atmosphere. This discovery eventually led to a revolution in chemical thought which, ironically, Priestley resisted all his life.

But even hundred years later the importance of that discovery and the greatness of its discoverer were celebrated, in 1874, by a gathering of American chemists who held a commemorative meeting at Priestley's home in Northumberland, Pennsylvania.

That meeting soon led to the creation of the American Chemical Society, since become one of the largest and most important of modern scientific societies. Appropriately that society sponsored another celebration at Priestley's home for the 200th anniversary of the discovery of oxygen.

The importance of Priestley's many discoveries in pneumatic chemistry between 1770 and 1790 can be fully appreciated only by recognizing that when he began his investigations only two gases had been clearly identified as different from atmospheric air itself, and these only very recently.

From the time of Robert Boyle a century earlier, it had been generally accepted that common air had no chemical properties of its own; those that it seemed to have, its ability to support combustion, for example, were thought to be owing to the more or less accidental smokes, vapours and effluvia that are constantly entering it from all the many sources around the globe.

Joseph Black, about 1750, had distinguished 'fixed air' (carbon dioxide) as having properties quite different from the air, for it extinguished flame rather than support it and more recently, 1766, Henry Cavendish had similarly distinguished 'inflammable air' (hydrogen).

Thus about 1770 pneumatic chemistry was a new and largely unexplored field offering the promise of fame and reputation for a man with Priestley's energy, ingenuity, and curiosity.

Even before his arrival in Leeds in 1767 to take up a new pulpit, Priestley had determined on the investigation of gases. Fortuitously his first residence there lay beside a brewery providing an unexpectedly easy supply of the 'fixed air' emitted from the fermenting vats.

With this he quickly gained the skills in the few techniques already developed by previous workers, and with the ingenuity required of those with more curiosity than money, Priestley began to create serviceable apparatus from commonly available materials and perfected that simplicity of design that became his experimental hallmark.

Sir Humphry Davy in 1810, said that Priestley's 'most expensive instrument was

a gun-barrel' used whenever an intense heat was required. 'He used phials and bent tubes for retorts ; a wash-hand basin often served him for a pneumatic trough, and instead of porcelain tubes he employed tobacco pipes ; and with this simple machinery he discovered a greater number of new substances than any philosopher of the last century.'

In his early experiments on air and its role in combustion and respiration, Priestley devised a method for measuring the 'goodness' of air for respiration, and the apparatus for systematically making that measurement.

He discovered the ability of growing plants to restore the goodness of air previously vitiated by the breathing of animals or by the burning of candles. He isolated and characterized a dozen new airs. Those that were soluble in water and could not be collected over that fluid, he collected over mercury ; thus, ammonia and hydrogen chloride.

Priestley's progress in the discovery of new gases and the reporting of their properties and chemical relationship was so rapid that Sir John Pringle, president of the Royal Society, suggested that his results should be reported in book form rather than exhaust the space in the annual volumes of the Society's 'Transaction.'

Six volumes of Priestley's 'Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air' appeared between 1772 and 1786. These volumes contain detailed accounts of his experiments and their results, reported in direct descriptive language, little distorted by theoretical accommodations.

The wealth of factual information in those works was such that Davy twenty years later could observe that he 'knew no book so likely to lead a student into the path of descovery as Dr. Priestley's six volumes upon air,' and he likened Priestley to the miner 'who discovers hidden riches, and furnishes them in the unwrought state to the cunning artist ; the ore that he brought to light was crude, but it was precious and useful.'

The continuous flow of new knowledge that his ingenious experimental abilities produced Priestley invariably interpreted within the infinitely flexible phlogiston theory, and challenged the new oxygen-centred system of Antoine Lavoisier.

The latter's views eventually achieved a 'chemical revolution' and phlogiston was seen as an imaginary concept for a non-existent substance, though Priestley remained unconvinced to the end.

Asking fundamental questions motivated Priestley in his avocation of experimenting and made him one of the most creative scientists of his generation. Priestley was asking questions no one else was asking from a religious perspective not widely shared. His theological curiosity about how the world worked helps us understand why he continued to defend his discovery of 'dephlogisticated air' long after Lavoisier had renamed it 'oxygen' and built a new science of chemistry on it.

While Lavoisier was interested in the relations of chemicals and in their quantification, Priestley was interested in the causes of the laws of nature and in the methods of nature's Creator.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

A STUDY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF VIVEKANANDA: By Tapash Sankar Dutta. Published by Sribhumi Publishing Company, 79 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta 700 009. 1982. Pp. 8 + 314 + ii. Rs. 50.

The book under review is, as its author submits in the preface, 'more or less the reproduction of a thesis for the doctorate degree in philosophy.' In recent times other similar books on Swami Vivekananda have been published. Many scholars in India and other countries, including the communist countries like China and Russia, are engaged in research work on Swamiji.

The topic of the present book is obviously a tough one. It requires not only a sound understanding of the main ideas of Swamiji, but of the principal philosophical systems of India as well as of the West. Swamiji himself was well versed in the philosophical literature of the East and West. The effect of that thorough acquaintance pervades his writings, speeches and conversations. The author of the present book has done well to depend 'mostly and pre-eminently on the original writings of Swamiji.' This of course he was expected to do as a research scholar.

The book, divided into twelve chapters, tries to present the key features of Advaita Vedanta, the cardinal principles of Buddhism, the essential points of Marxian philosophy, and finally, the salient aspects of the philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and its uniqueness. Chapter VIII, entitled 'Vivekananda's Philosophic Thought' represents the central thesis of the author. There he tries to show that Swamiji's method was to combine the four yogas—Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti, and Rāja Yogas. Swamiji knew that 'harmony of the four yogas' was the ideal for this age.

Swamiji's philosophy is distinct from the traditional Vedanta of Śamkara. Śamkara preached non-dualism by denying and refuting the agruments of the dualists. Swamiji, on the contrary, reconciles Advaita with dualism as well as other schools of Vedanta. Following his great preceptor, Sri Ramakrishna, he holds that dualism, qualified non-dualism, etc., 'all necessitate each other, all fulfil each other, and one, as it were, is the stepping stone to the other, until the goal, the Advaita, the *Tat Tvam Asi,* is reached'. This is the reason why Swamiji's Vedanta is often called 'Neo-Vedanta'. Another contribution of Swamiji is that he was in favour of evolving a philosophy of head and heart; that is to say, he wanted to unite the intellect of Samkara with the heart of Buddha. That is why Swamiji's Vedanta has been described as 'Synthetic Vedanta'. The author has taken great pains to deal with these things and many more in his book.

One defect in the book is that some passages are attributed to some authorities, but their sources have not been indicated. This is not proper in a research publication. There is yet another defect which is more or less of a similar nature, but much more serious. There is at least one chapter in the book (Chapter X) which reproduces many passages, ideas, and even quotations, almost verbatim, from an article serialized in the *Prabuddha Bharata* (1976-77). But this has not been properly acknowledged.

The paper, printing, and the over-all production of the book are good.

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SANSKRIT—ENGLISH

VISVA-BHANUH—The Universal Light: by Dr. P. K. Narayana Pillai. Published by the author, Jai Vihar, Jagathy, Trivandrum-14. Distributed by College Book House, M. G. Road, Trivandrum. 1979. Pp. 191. Rs. 75.

This is a poem in Sanskrit on the life of Swami Vivekananda with the author's own English translation. The universal Light is that 'provided by the Almighty for the destruction of the darkness of ignorance' (V/2), and that light shone forth through Swami Vivekananda 'for the well-being of the whole world'. (XVI/48-50).

The poem has five hundred and fifty-five *slokas* divided into twenty-one cantos. The first five cantos describe, beginning with Sri Ramakrishna's vision of the child and the sage, the ancestry and the early life of Swami Vivekananda. Cantos VI-VIII narrate how Swamiji meets the Master and is moulded by him. In cantos IX-XIV we see the wandering monk in the various parts of the country. The next three cantos narrate the work of Swamiji in America and the Western world. Cantos XVIII-XX deal with the return of Swamiji and the consolidation of his work with the establishment of the Ramakrishna

Mission. The concluding canto describes his last few days culminating in his mahāsamādhi. The book is enriched by a critical introduction by Swami Vimalananda of Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, Trivandrum.

The life of Swami Vivekananda is so variegated, vast and deep that to attempt any depiction of it in Sanskrit verse is an act of considerable courage. The mastery over language and metre with which Dr. Pillai accomplishes the task would astound the reader. Yet the poem is far from a mere product of scholastic artisanship. Evidence of the poetic talent of the author is present all through the poem. In particular, parts of canto VI where the meeting of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji is described, of cantos X and XII where the meditation on the rock at Kanyakumari is portrayed, are exquisite in their poetic excellence. The Sanskrit rendering of the famous *bhajan* of the dancing girl at Jaipur (Canto XV) also bears testimony to the powers of the poet. Similarly, the narration of the approaching *mahāsamādhi* in canto XXI leaves a lasting impression on the mind of the reader. Many other instances could be cited. Indeed, there is no denying the fact that the poetic genius of the author time and again reached great heights in the poem matching the loftiness of the theme.

Having said the above, one must mention a few points to which attention should have been given. Firstly, the description of events in the latter part of Swamiji's life seems to be disproportionately condensed; the matter squeezed into the single canto XX certainly deserves a much fuller treatment. Secondly, the reviewer has some reservations about the author's rather liberal use of quotation marks. In writing about a recent personality whose life is well-documented, one should as a rule, quote only recorded sayings and thoughts true to the context. The author has not observed this rule everywhere. For instance, in the opening canto too much use of quotation marks in the description of the mystic vision of Sri Ramakrishna leads to over-elaboration. Similarly, the presentation of Swamiji's address at the Parliament of Religions in canto XVI is not very happy as gleanings from several different speeches are put together creating the impression of a single speech. Thirdly, a little more restraint in the use of poetic exaggeration and fantasy would have been proper in a writing like this. Such devices as putting a speech into a parrot's mouth (canto XI) look somewhat out of place in the poem. There are a few minor factual aberrations. Thus, leaving aside those corrected in the errata, one may note, in particular the following: the story of Durgacharan's visit to his family as presented is not confirmed by known facts; in canto VIII there is no mention of Cossipore garden house where the incidents of the latter part took place; in canto XVIII, verse 23 (English translation) 'Baranagore Math' should be 'Alambazar Math'; in XX/15-16 the use of the word 'temple' is misleading—Belur temple came much later. All these, of course, can be taken care of in the next edition of the book.

To comprehend the greatness of Swamiji better, one requires to look at and think of his life from various angles and in various forms. The merit of a beautiful poem like this lies in its being able to attract and captivate the minds of people having some modest acquaintance with Sanskrit. The lasting charm of the great life then works on its own.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

(FROM APRIL 1981 TO MARCH 1982)

(We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in June 1983 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, Dist. Howrah, West Bengal 711 202, India.—*Ed.*)

Though Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to welfare service of various kinds. This distinction should be borne in mind, though 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to Ramakrishna Math or to Ramakrishna Mission.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social welfare activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

Summary of Activities

In spite of some obstacles, hindrances, and intimidations faced by the organization, the following notable developments took place during the year under report:—

A Physiotherapy Department in the Hospital at Bombay and an Allopathic Section in the Dispensary at Kishanpur were declared open. A new Building for Blind Boys' Academy at Narendrapur and a newly-built Doctors' Quarters at Varanasi were inaugurated. A new Primary School at Cherrapunji was declared open. 30 Non-formal Schools at Kamarpukur were started.

Two images (statues) of Sri Ramakrishna—one at Purulia and another at Mauritius—were installed.

Foundation was laid for Primary School Building at Madras (Griffith Road).

In the other wing of the Organization, the Ramakrishna Math, the following developments took place:

A Mobile Medical Van of Madras Math (as Mobile Dispensary) started functioning based at Nattarampalli and covering surrounding villages. The Vedanta Society of Western Washington, Seattle, acquired a large mansion which is being used as its monastery.

An image (statue) of Sri Ramakrishna was installed at Kankhal. Foundation was laid for the Ramakrishna Math Centre at Lucknow.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1982, 118 branch centres in all, of which 52 were Mission centres, 22 combined Math and Mission centres, and 44 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows: two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America, and the remaining 45 Mission centres, 17 combined Math and Mission centres and 26 Math centres (88 in all) in India. The Indian centres were distributed as follows: 28

in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 11 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, six in Kerala, four in Karnataka, three each in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh, two each in Maharashtra and Meghalaya, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Types of Work

Medical Service: The Math and the Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Prominent of these are the indoor hospital in Calcutta, Kankhal, Lucknow, New Itanagar, Ranchi, Trivandrum, Varanasi and Vrindaban. In 1981-82 there were altogether 14 Indoor Hospitals with 1,758 beds which accommodated 50,666 patients, 80 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 46,83,282 cases including the old ones and 12 Mobile Dispensaries treated 3,68,617 cases in Urban, but mostly in Rural and Tribal areas. Besides some centres had provision for emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Sevashrama treated 142 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T.B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. At Trivandrum there was also a department of Psychiatry. Research on different branches of Medical Science as also Postgraduate training in degree and diploma courses were conducted at Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta.

Educational Work: The twin organizations ran, during the year, five Degree Colleges, of general education at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Coimbatore, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (24 Parganas) with 4,155 students on their rolls. The last two were wholly residential, and the colleges at Madras and Coimbatore had attached hostels for residing students. In addition, there were three B.Ed. Colleges at Belur, Coimbatore and Mysore with 320 students; one Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 26 students; one Postgraduate Basis Training College at Rahara with 100 students; three Junior Basic Training Institutes at Sarisha and Sargachhi with 2,059 students; a College for Physical Education, and a School of Agriculture with 96 and 49 students respectively at Coimbatore; four Polytechnics at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,551 students; 9 Junior Technical Industrial Schools with 759 boys; 11 Vocational Training Centres with 470 students; 92 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 11,006 boys and 1,316 girls; 42 Higher Secondary, Secondary and High Schools with 22,312 boys and 10,295 girls; 25 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,804 boys and 3,064 girls; 44 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 6,627 boys and 3,668 girls; and 386 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 17,374 boys and 4,315 girls; 80 Adult Education and Community Centres with 2,393 students; an Institute of Medical Sciences with 37 students, was conducted by the Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta. Training of Nurses and Midwives was undertaken by Seva Patishthan of Calcutta and also Math Hospital at Trivandrum, the total number of trainees being 346, and a new School of Nursing was started at Vrindaban. Two Schools of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages—one with 2,275 students by Institute of Culture, Calcutta and another with 275 students by Hyderabad—were conducted. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 152, 190 and 1,654 students respectively. The centre at Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a training centre in farming (Divyayan) with 521 (271 in campus) students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 36 students. Thus there were altogether 75,026 boys and 25,428 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius.

Recreational Activities: Some of the Math and the Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities for youngsters at stated periods outside their school hours. The *Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the youth section of the *Janashiksha Mandir*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities. Hyderabad Centre also started similar activities for boys on Sundays.

Work for Women: The organization has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are

the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the women's sections of the Hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban; the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha and the two Training Schools for nurses in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Moreover, there are separate arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools, and some institutions are conducted only for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes: The twin organizations have all along tried their best to serve the unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. These services are done in three ways: (a) By bringing them from rural areas to our Urban Centres; (b) By sending our dedicated workers in rural areas; (c) Through Centres located in rural areas. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Chandipur, Sargachhi, Along, Narottam Nagar, New Itanagar, Coimbatore, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Trichur, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a farming centre at Ranchi, specially meant for Adivasis and Scheduled Castes. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Nagas, Kukis and Mizos etc. by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational, medical, and cultural activities in Arunachal Pradesh are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organizations ran in the rural and backward areas 19 Secondary or High Schools, 48 Senior Basic, Junior Basic, M.E. and U.P Schools, 53 Primary Schools, 5 Night Schools, 11 Vocational Training Centres, a Rural Librarianship Training Centre, a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre, a School of Agriculture, 34 Adult Education and Community Centres and an Institute for training village youths in farming—with a total of 27,902 students. The organizations also conducted 37 Outdoor Dispensaries treating 9,09,056 patients and 7 Mobile Dispensaries serving 1,61,961 patients, besides running 143 Milk-distribution centres and a number of libraries with 4 mobile units all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities, preaching and educative tours, screening movie-films and slides and such other efforts were also undertaken frequently. For the poor and labouring classes in the rural and industrial areas, the organizations conducted several night schools, community centres, etc.

Pallimangal (*Integrated Rural Development Programme*): The Math and the Mission Headquarters directly conducted Pallimangal activities in 17 villages in and around Kamarpukur, Jayrambati and Bali-Dewanganj. The day to day field works of Pallimangal are being conducted with the 20 unemployed trained young men as Pallimangal cadre under the supervision of the monks. The following programmes were implemented during the year 1981-82:

(1) Agriculture: Fertilizers, seeds and pesticides, worth Rs. 80,334/-, were given on credit to 261 farmers, covering an area of 155.67 acres of land. Bullocks, worth Rs. 25,373/-, were distributed among 42 farmers for cultivation.

(2) Pisciculture: Demonstration of scientific fish-culture was conducted in 2 ponds and composite fish-culture was done by 22 farmers under our guidance, with appreciable results.

(3) Dairy: (i) one A.I. Centre was established in November 1981, at Kamarpukur: cases served 33; (ii) Veterinary: cases treated 1,290; (iii) Milch cows and heifers, worth Rs. 7,399/-, were distributed among 14 villagers.

(4) Goat Rearing: Goats, worth Rs. 5,063/-, were distributed among 39 villagers.

(5) Poultry: The work of Poultry-keeping by one person, who was given Rs. 2,000/-, was yielding good results.

(6) Small Business: An amount of Rs. 46,130/-, was given as Loan to 68 persons for various kinds of small business like running of smithy, dealing in stationery, dealing in rice, transportation service by means of bullock-carts, ricksaws, load-cycles etc.

(7) Cottage Industry: 78 persons were trained and employed in cottage industries like manufacture of dhup (incense sticks), fancy jute products, coir products, knit-wear, hobby-loom products, tailored products, *genjis* (vests), bakery products and chalk.

(8) Education: 2 Adult Education Centres were conducted by Pallimangal cadre boys, the average attendance being 42. Besides this, the

cadre boys supervised 30 Non-formal Schools run by Kamarpukur Mission Branch.

(9) Mobile Medical Service: Cases treated 43,975 in and around Kamarpukur and Jayrambati. During the year Pallimangal spent Rs. 4,26,383/-, on the whole project.

By the Branch Centres: 3 Mobile Dispensaries were run by the Mission Centres at Bombay (49,194 cases treated in 40 villages), Kankhal (74,696 cases treated in 90 villages) and Raipur (32,610 cases treated in 65 villages). One Mobile Dispensary run by Madras Math through Nattarampalli: cases treated 6,181 in 125 villages.

Mass Contact: From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organization's activities are not confined or concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. The message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where lakhs of people get free medicines and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also a considerable number of poor students get free education, board, or lodging. The organization is also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The publication centres, sometimes, sell booklets at nominal price to suit the pocket of the masses.

Spiritual and Cultural Work: Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The centres established real points of contact among people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. More than 115 Libraries containing vast number of books and journals were conducted by them. Attached to the libraries Reading Rooms were maintained in many places. One Sanskrit Chatushpathi too was run. At least ten centres published books on religious subjects and 12 journals in different languages. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has published *The Cultural Heritage of India* (5 Volumes so far) and which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihsreyasananda in Africa (Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, 35-37 Rhodes Avenue, Box 1096, Harare/formerly Salisbury, Zimbabwe/formerly Rhodesia).

Relief and Rehabilitation Work: As usual the Mission undertook relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some works were also conducted by the branch centres themselves.

1. The following Relief Works were conducted in India:

(A) *Flood Relief*: At Jaipur, Chaksu and Lalsot Tehsils, in Rajasthan, through New Delhi Khetri and Vrindaban Centres.

(B) *Cyclone Relief*: (i) At Gangapur, Achintyanagar, Harekrishnapur, Mahendranagar, Govindapur, Kshetramohanpur, Kishorinagar, Kamdevnagar, Gopalnagar, Indrapur, Brajaballavpur, Daspur, Baradapur, Lakshmi Janardanpur, and 16 other villages of 24 Parganas (West Bengal) by the Headquarters; (ii) At Mitrabagi, Parasmoni, Chargheri, Anandapur, Luxbagan, Pakhirala, Emlibari, Mahabatnagar, Jagnath Chak, Madhusudan Chak, Kashiabad, Gangadharpur, Durbachati, and 2 more villages of 24 Parganas (West Bengal) through Narendrapur Centre.

(C) *Distress Relief*: At Kanaipur, Lakshmipur, Bali, Fatehpur, Krishnaballavpur, and a number of other villages, in Bali-Dewanganj in Hooghly District of West Bengal by the Headquarters.

(D) *Fire Relief*: At Ngenu, Nogna, Chinhan and Dadam in Arunachal Pradesh through Narottam Nagar Centre.

(E) *Tornado Relief*: At Saharpada and Patna in Keonjhar District in Orissa through Bhubaneswar Centre.

(F) *Winter Relief*: At Khetri, Jasrapur and Baghor in Rajasthan through Khetri Centre.

(G) *Drought Relief*: At Nattarampalli in Tamil Nadu through Nattarampalli Centre.

(H) *Riot Relief*: At Bihar-Shariff in Bihar through Patna Centre.

(I) *Ardha Kumbha Mela Relief*: Primary

Relief and Medical Relief at Ardha Kumbha Mela through Allahabad Centre.

(J) *Medical Relief*: Ganga Sagar Mela (and Chemaguri) through Seva Pratishthan, Manasadwip and Sarisha Centres.

2. The following Rehabilitation Works were conducted:

(A) *By the Headquarters*: (i) Construction of Saradamani Balika Vidyalaya and Sitala Temple at Bali-Dewanganj in Hooghly District of West Bengal, was completed and handed over to the beneficiaries; (ii) 1,000 houses were built with the help of beneficiaries in Kaliachak Block of Malda District in West Bengal, (iii) Construction of 246 pucca houses at Gunupur in Orissa was in progress.

(B) *By the Branch Centres*: (i) Construction of 111 houses, being the balance of the total project of 433 houses, and construction of two School buildings, at Morvi (Gujarat) through Rajkot Math Centre, were completed and handed over to the beneficiaries; (ii) Construction of 200 pucca houses at Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh through Rajahmundry Centre was nearing completion.

Annual Celebrations: Most of the Math and the Mission centres appropriately observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami Vivekananda are: Special worship, *Homa* (making offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, *Bhajan* and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures by eminent speakers, including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and the Mission. In cooperation with the local public, a few centres celebrate some of the more popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

RAMAKRISHNA MATH CHARITABLE DISPENSARY, MYLAPORE, MADRAS—600 004.

REPORT FOR 1982-83.

Started in 1925 by the Ramakrishna Math with the help of a few retired medical practitioners, the dispensary has been very useful to the people of the area, which is evident from the fact that the number of patients treated here rose from 970 in the first year of its existence to 1,09,430 during 1982-83. The breakdown figures for the total number of patients treated in the different departments during the year are: (1) Eye dept: 7,254; (2) E.N.T. dept: 7,924; (3) X-Ray dept: 1,457; (4) Dental dept: 5,029; (5) Laboratory: specimens examined 1,925; (6) T.B. Clinic 158 patients under treatment; (7) Diabetic Clinic: 573 cases treated; (8) Surgical dept: 751 minor operations; (9) Homoeopathic dept: 2,816. The following activities are also associated with the dispensary: (1) Distribution of milk: 120 childreu given milk daily; (2) Reference library; (3) Rural Medical Service on wheels: In collaboration with Ramakrishna Math, Nattarampalli, North Arcot dist., a mobile medical service has been launched to cover 150 villages with 75,000 people. 21,854 patients were treated in 1982-83.

Besides Rs. 34,818 received as grants from two government agencies, Rs. 54,692 came from public donations during the year, the deficit for the year being Rs. 77,965. There is provision for fixing memorial tablets on the dispensary walls for endowments received towards maintenance of the dispensary. Interested parties may communicate with the President, Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-600 004.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Education in the U.S.—a Lesson for India

An article published in the *Hindu* of 2 Jnly 1983 contains certain revelations about the current crisis of education in the United States that should serve as an eye-opener to those responsible for planning and education in India. Mr. Ronald Reagan came to office with the pledge that, as a part of his political philosophy to have minimum government, he would abolish the Education Department in Federal Government as education was largely the responsibility of the States. As a first step to carrying out his plan, the President appointed The National Commission on Excellence in Education on August 26, 1981 to report on the quality of education in America. But instead of recommending the abolition of the Education Department, the Commission assigned greater responsibility and involvement in educational matters to the Federal Government.

The Commission's verdict on the current state of education in the U.S. was expressed thus: 'Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world.' The 65-page report, described as an 'open letter to the American people', says that the risk faced by the U.S. is not only that the Japanese make more efficient automobiles than the Americans or that the South Koreans build better steel mills and the Germans are producing mnch better machine tools than Americans, but much deeper than these. 'Learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the "information age" we are entering'. After giving the data on international comparisons of student achievement, lower educational standards, and widespread fnnctional illiteracy (some 23 million American adults are believed to be fnnctionally illiterate), the Commission has made extensive recommendations. These include longer school terms and hours—at least seven hours a day at school and 200 to 220 school days per year as against the present six hours and 180 school days—more homework and better paid and better qualified teachers.

The publication of the report has led to a search for the causes of educational decline in the U.S. The lowering of teaching standards, decreased federal funding, inhospitable home environment and lack of parental care, unrestricted television viewing, etc. have been suggested as possible causes. Among these the home factor deserves special attention.

According to Victor R. Fuchs, Professor of Economics at Stanford University, the investment parents make in their children and the values they instil in them are major determinants of how the children will fare in schools. 'The success of children of Asian background in U.S. public schools provides a vivid testimony that study, hard work, respect for teachers and heavy parental involvement in the educational progress of children still pay off', says Prof. Fuchs. 'Many of these children come from low-income families and many from families in which English is the second language or not spoken at all, but their educational achievements are extraordinary. On average, Asian-American students score higher than any other group on standardized tests. They are winning top honours at high schools across the country and are being admitted to the leading universities far out of proportion to their presence in population... This extraordinary success is undoubtedly related to the high value placed on scholarship in Asian societies and to a strong family structure that transmits this value'.

Prof. Fuch's statement may be true of Indians settled in the U.S. but not of the majority of Indians in their own country. In fact, the main cause for the slow progress of education in India is parental neglect and ignorance.