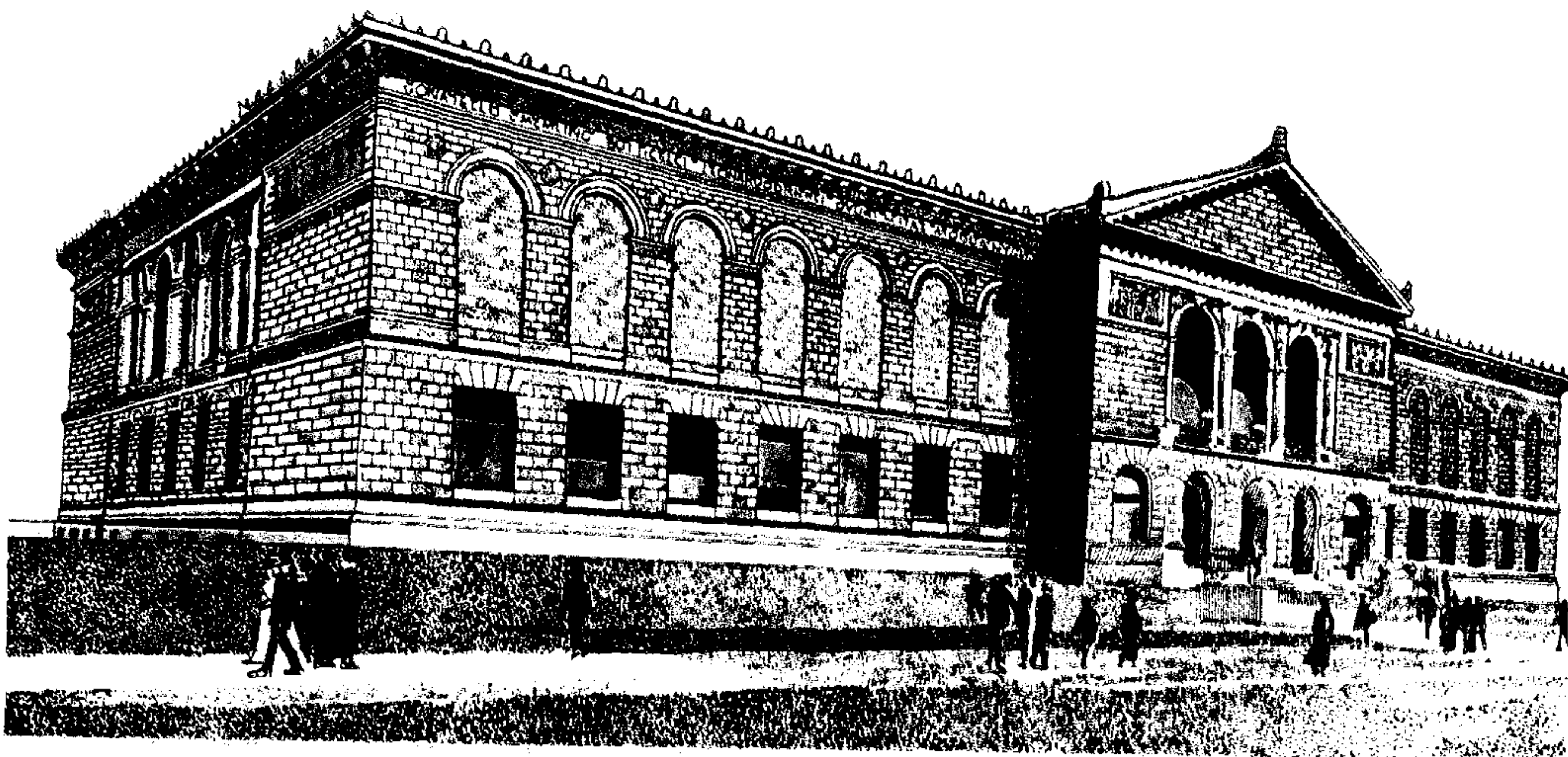




# Prabuddha Bharata

## or Awakened India



*"Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance:  
'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,'  
'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.'"*

*Closing Address by Swami Vivekananda,  
Chicago Parliament of Religions, September 1893*



# Prabuddha Bharata

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

# Prabuddha Bharata

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## Divine Wisdom

यथाग्निः सुसमृद्धाग्निः करोत्येधांसि भस्मसात् ।  
तथा मद्विषया भक्तिरुद्धवैनांसि कृत्स्नशः ॥

As fire kindled into a blaze burns the faggots to ashes, so, O Uddhava, devotion to Me totally destroys all sins.

न साधयत मां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म उद्धव ।  
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्ममोजिता ॥

O Uddhava, neither Yoga, nor knowledge, nor piety, nor study, nor austerity, nor renunciation captivates Me so much as a heightened devotion to Me.

विषयान्ध्यायतश्चित्तं विषयेषु विषज्जते ।  
मामनुस्मरतश्चित्तं मय्येव प्रविलीयते ॥

The mind of a man who thinks of sense-objects is attached to them, but the mind of one who remembers Me is merged in Me alone.

तस्मादसदभिध्यानं यथा स्वप्नमनोरथम् ।  
हित्वा मयि समाधत्स्व मनो मद्भावाभावितम् ॥

Therefore giving up the dwelling on unreal things, which are no better than dreams or fancies, concentrate the mind, clarified by devotion to Me, on Me.

from *The Last Message of Sri Krishna*



## Let Peace Begin with Me

In turmoil-ridden life the words Peace and *Sānti* sound very pleasing. but the thing which they signify is ever elusive. No doubt, in the stressful race for survival there is momentary respite, temporary relief, and a fleeting sense of unburdening of something heavy. But such feelings of peace are not long lasting and once again the mind falls into throes of distress and disquiet. Agitation and disturbance seem to be a permanent feature of our earthly existence. Save children, all grown up persons repeat, "We have no peace of mind, we have no peace of mind." Children are blessed in that they have neither the problems of peace nor disturbance; they neither pursue the one nor shun the other. They have less concern with themselves. Moreover they are so busy they have no time to worry about peace of mind. A grown up person is too much self-centred and excessively concerned about the state of his mind or self-image. Being self-conscious, or mind-conscious all the time, is nothing but torturous. Seldom we forget ourselves. We have a blueprint and follow it—of predetermined conceptions that such and such things and situations will make us happy. Therefore we are afraid of the unknown. We vainly expect things or events to happen according to our preconceived desires and such things will never happen. As a result, the slightest change or a ripple is enough to throw us off our balance.

Our peace of mind is so tenuous that even a passing breath of air shatters it. Though beset with anxieties, fears, insecur-

ity and worries, yet we talk of global peace and happiness. Any attempt is praiseworthy, but the outcome is not always encouraging. Global peace, like peace in personal life, has become a chimera. The more we try, the more we seem bogged down inextricably in worldly relations. Our hands seem always to be full of problems, and never empty. Our situation is like that of the 'fleas on the hot griddle'—the fleas who fall must jump and the fleas who jump must fall. The urge to have a peaceful mind is right, but the means we use to secure it are disruptive of true calmness.

When we watch closely we notice that little things make us distraught and lives go haywire when we fall into unpleasant situations. Everyday we unwittingly become terribly upset over insignificant incidents. Newspapers, long queues, traffic jams, delayed trains or flights, erratic supply of water and electricity, whimsical behaviour of friends and relatives, vagaries of nature, deafening traffic noise, personal ill-health, and above all, observing the explosive spectre of social unrest everywhere in the world. These and many more cause us to be irritable and gloomy. In an angry mood we get up in the morning and at night go to bed depressed. We hope the next day will bring us a little calm and quietude. And that hoped-for tomorrow never arrives. We continue fretting and fuming. Our peace of mind depends on the external conditions and circumstances of the world around us. We go on anticipating in the near future external circumstances will become favourable and

we will be able to enjoy quiet and undisturbed life. But we are like the man sitting on the seashore hoping the rolling waves will subside so he can take his bath in calm smooth waters. The world is a choppy sea. It never becomes calm and smooth. One who depends on external phenomena for his tranquillity, depends in vain. The world is not going to fulfil his desire. It is chaotic and in that chaos and unseen medley of causes and effects, there is no predictable order.

The world is a mixture of good and bad, virtue and sin, truth and falsehood, kindness and cruelty. The creation comes into existence, according to Sāṃkhya Philosophy, with the composition of three forces : *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*—inertia, activity, and calmness. What we witness in the world outside is the manifestation of these qualities acting through nature. In a person also these three *guṇās* work. When one *guṇa* is predominant, others are subdued. It is impossible to still the waves of the ocean. If the waves are absent the sea is also absent. We can only speak of relative calmness of the sea or its turbulence. Human society is a graded organization. Even if we wish we cannot run away from the chaotic world, because wherever we go we carry the world with us !

“This world is like a dog’s curly tail,” Vivekananda cautions us, “and people have been striving to straighten it out for hundreds of years ; but when they let it go, it has curled up again. How could it be otherwise ?...You need not worry or make yourself sleepless about the world ; it will go on without you....It is the level-headed man, the calm man, of good judgement and cool nerves, of great sympathy and love, who does good work and so does good to himself...We have to bear in mind that we are all

debtors to the world and the world does not owe us anything. It is a great privilege for all of us to be allowed to do anything for the world. In helping the world we really help ourselves.”<sup>1</sup>

In spite of disorder, social injustice, violence and wars, we must help to mitigate the sufferings of people. Good acts tend to make us pure and calm. Unselfish acts lessen the personal bitterness and expands our heart to see that there are human beings who suffer much more than we do. We realize that some of our sufferings are due to our imaginations.

We all know that we feel inwardly more and more serene when our overactive concern for ourselves, our worrying about ourselves, and our grumbling and complaining at everything becomes less and less. Do we not expect too much from this world ? We depend on it for our happiness and peace and get more disturbed and distressed. For our every discomfort and trouble we hurl abuses at it and burn with anger. There are people who try to please the world, there are others who try to squeeze pleasure out of it—but they cannot. Whether we praise or curse the world, it is indifferent to all our gimmicks. We only get tired and at last surrender. The world, in fact, is a moral gymnasium. It trains us to be stronger, it teaches us to be independent of it. We call such training “experience”. The less we are perturbed by the events of the world, the calmer we grow. Therefore peace begins with me and not with others. Ironically, an agitated mind expects others to become calm and quiet. The tendency with us is that we look to others to change first. Let

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 1, pp. 79-80.



others become good and moral, and then I will change. One argues; "If I alone become good, what about the others?—they will remain wicked." "I may become peaceful, but others will be noisy,"—if it is not perverted thinking, then what else is it? We forget that as one is inside, so is his world outside. We see outside what we have inside us.

Think of the moment when you were happy, totally satisfied. At that moment, to you the world was good. You did not have a single thought about the unkindness of the world. Remember the moment when you were at peace with yourself. The world with its noise and brutality did not create a ripple of disturbance in you. When you were crowned with success after success, your confidence in your ability and intellectual prowess reached new heights. Nothing in the world appeared impossible to you. With series of failures and disappointments, when your courage and confidence hit nadir, you found the world not a fit place to live in. Recapture that day when you were in a nasty mood and fuming flames—every sight and little noise—everything around you, in fact, inflamed your anger. Therefore the disturbing events of world unsettle the mind which is already in a state of unrest. Everything adds to its turmoil. Swamiji said, "Things are dead in themselves, only we give them life, and then like fools, we turn round and are afraid of them or enjoy them."<sup>2</sup> So when we are serene, when the mind is unruffled, the external things do not disturb us. The moment we give them importance and allow them exercise their power over us, we feel very disturbed and tormented.

Why should we be peaceful and good? Unless one is possessed of these virtues,

one cannot see them in others. To experience serenity in the tumultuous world, to see goodness in others one must have these qualities first. There is no other way. Gentleness and sweetness are not weaknesses. On the contrary, they are strengths. A rude person drops his impoliteness before another's gentleness. None can hate a face which is lit with a smile and beaming cheerfulness. People usually avoid those persons whose behaviour shows irritation, whose gestures indicate unfriendliness. People also keep away from those who constantly grumble and complain at everything and criticize everyone. When we find others do not like us, then there is something wrong with us. Instead of investigating our own behaviour and thoughts, we point accusing fingers at others. Love everyone and everyone loves you. It is not imagination, but a fact of life. Unfortunately, we seldom remember it. Peace brings clarity and strength; peace softens the heart. "...the calmer we are," observed Vivekananda, "and the less disturbed our nerves, the more shall we love, and the better will our work be."<sup>3</sup> Therefore let calmness begin with me and spread everywhere.

Haripada Mitra was Swamiji's disciple. He had a good position and drew a handsome salary. But he had a drawback. He used to get terribly upset when reprimanded at the office by his English superior officers. When Swamiji heard this, he advised his disciple:

"You have yourself taken service for the sake of money and are duly paid for it. Why should you trouble your mind about such small things and add to your miseries by continually thinking, 'Oh, in what bondage am I placed!?' No

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, page 30.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, page 80.

one is keeping you in bondage. You are quite at liberty to resign if you choose. Why should you constantly carp at your superiors? If you feel your present position helpless, do not blame them, blame yourself. Do you think they care a straw whether you resign or not? There are hundreds of others to take your place. Your business is to concern yourself solely with your duties and responsibilities. Be good yourself and the whole world appears good to you. You will then see only the good in others. We see in the external world the image we carry in our hearts. Give up the habit of fault finding, and you will be surprised to find how those against whom you have a grudge will gradually change their attitude towards you. All our mental states are reflected in the conduct of others towards us.”<sup>4</sup>

These words of wisdom went straight into the heart of the disciple and his life took a new turn. The Holy Mother’s famous last words were, “...But one thing I tell you, if you want peace, don’t find fault with others, but find fault rather with yourself. Learn to make the world your own. Nobody is a stranger, the world is your.”

Those who see only ugliness, cruelty and falsehood in the world and not beauty, goodness and truth, are crooked in their hearts. They would do better to search within themselves for the vices lurking, rather than projecting those on the world. It does not mean there are not wicked and dishonest people in the world. One has to be careful while dealing with them.

4. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by His Eastern. & Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), Vol. I, page 314.

But there are angels in human forms also. The glee with which films and newspapers dwell at length with only unscrupulous characters and sensational incidents is always in evidence. Naturally they create an impression that our world is inhabited by crooks only. But look at some of the voluntary organizations and individuals; what tremendous sacrifice they have been making to help their fellow human beings—even animals and the endangered environment. Their selfless service is awe-inspiring. Why do they sacrifice for others? Because everyone of them thinks that peace and goodness begins with him. They do not wait for others to come forward, but straightaway themselves plunge into action. Find out and highlight the good qualities in others, and see how splendidly they manifest them more and more. “A man first of all” said Sri Sarada Devi, “must make his own mind guilty, and then alone he can see another person’s guilt. Does anything happen to another if you enumerate his faults? It only injures you. This has been my attitude from my childhood. Hence I cannot see anybody’s faults. If a man does a trifle for me, I try to remember him even for that. Forgiveness is tapasya.”<sup>5</sup> Buddha succinctly describes man’s weakness with these words: “The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive. A man winnows his neighbour’s faults like chaff, but his own faults he hides, as a cheat hides the false die from the gambler.”

The following few incidents teach us how to live peacefully and contentedly, despite the inevitable pressures, anxieties and stressful situations of life.

5. *The Gospel of Holy Mother* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1984) page 136.



Mathur Babu devoted his life to serving Sri Ramakrishna in every way he could. He had a family priest. This man became terribly jealous of Sri Ramakrishna's influence on the wealthy landlord and of the attention he was receiving from him. This priest had been planning for a long time to exercise his influence on Mathur Babu and enjoy favours from him. Being low-minded and greedy himself, he thought of Sri Ramakrishna's guilelessness as a clever pose, and understood that he, too, was out to exploit the generosity of the wealthy man. One evening, Sri Ramakrishna was lying in a state of ecstasy in Mathur Babu's house. There was no one else in the room. The cunning priest took advantage of the opportunity. He began to shake Sri Ramakrishna, demanding, "what did you do to make Mathur Babu obey you? Don't pretend! How did you hypnotize him?" Sri Ramakrishna was silent and did not speak. This enraged the priest and he became violent. "So you won't tell me, you scoundrel," he cried, and kicked Sri Ramakrishna hard and left in disgust. Sri Ramakrishna did not say a word to anyone. But later on, when the priest had been dismissed for some other offence, he told Mathur Babu how the priest had kicked him. "If I had known that," said Mathur, "I should have killed him."

Trailokyanath, son of Mathur Babu, once flew into a rage due to a misdeed of Hriday, Sri Ramakrishna's attendant. He ordered Hriday to leave the temple precincts immediately. In that fit of anger he made some remark against Sri Ramakrishna, implying that he also would be asked to leave. Accordingly, one of the officials hurried to Sri Ramakrishna and asked him to leave at once. Without the least sign of resentment or dismay, the saint picked up his towel and left the room,

which had been his home for the past twenty-six years. He had almost reached the outer gate of the compound when Trailokyanath came running after him, "Sir, where are you going?" "But didn't you want me to go away?" Sri Ramakrishna asked him innocently. "No, the officials made a mistake. I request you to stay." At this request, Sri Ramakrishna smiled and went back to his room and continued his conversation with the devotees, as if nothing unusual had happened. Nothing could disturb the indescribable peace of the Great Master.

After Sri Ramakrishna's death, Sri Sarada Devi came to live at Kamarpukur. Our eyes moisten with tears when we think of her hard days, the abject poverty and physical suffering of this period. She had to live alone in the house and there was none to help her. She had to husk paddy, dig the earth with spade and grow vegetables. There were times when she boiled some rice and ate and had no wherewithal to purchase even salt. She spent her days wearing worn out cloth, tying in many knots. She bore all the privations and loneliness, never saying a word about her hardship to anyone. Her intense suffering did not leave the slightest bitterness in her heart. The feeling of constant peace within her heart was her sheet-anchor.

Later in life, she managed a large household of relatives and devotees, in which some were lunatics, and many were worldly and greedy. Some of her innumerable disciples were eccentric. She was constantly tortured and abused by her relatives. She did not have even a moment's respite from the troublesome, demanding and inconsiderate people. One wonders, how she, amidst these storms, thunders and whirlpools, could manage the thing with such extraordinary



**equipoise!** She was sweetness incarnate, a model of endurance and haven of everlasting peace and blessedness.

Swamiji too had to undergo endless suffering for the good of the world. In America he endured racial discrimination and slanderous Christian missionaries bent upon destroying him. In his own country he was the target of Hindu orthodoxy and jealous Indians. In the West he was betrayed by his friends and some of his disciples. He bore his cross like compassionate Christ, with a smile, and worked for the welfare of human beings till his last breath. He risked his broken health for the good of many, for the welfare of many. He was the personification of kindness and humility. To give an example of his humility: Once in Lahore he was discussing religious subjects with a gathering of two hundred residents. He was praising someone at length, when a member of the gathering objected—"But Swamiji, that gentleman has no respect for you!" Swamiji at once replied, "Is it necessary to respect me in order to become a good man?" The man was immediately silenced.<sup>6</sup> He wrote once, he stuck to the true Indian principle of looking subjectively for the cause of the objective. "I am sure the fault is mine, and mine only, for every wave of dislike and hatred I get. It could not be otherwise." Such was the matchless humility and love of this great person.

By observing the examples of these great lives, if we do not profit, surely we must have twisted hearts.

Here are some suggestions which may help us to reduce our stress, agony and bitterness, and bring peace to our minds.

6. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, page 288.

(1) "Do yourself what you wish others to do," said Sri Ramakrishna.<sup>7</sup> There are times we feel hurt by others' harsh words, rude remarks or intemperate behaviour. We feel aggrieved and think why do not people learn to be a little polite and courteous. Similarly, when they accuse us for the same reason, instead of mending our behaviour, we justify and defend our wrong actions. The wise attitude is: Let me first be polite and sweet, if others behave in another way, it is their choice. Reformation of others should not worry us. We have seen gentleness and affectionate gestures win everyone and none can resist their power.

(2) We have to remember what we see outside is the reflection of our minds. If people despise us, try to avoid us, it is the right time to look into ourselves and find out the negative qualities. It is an exercise in futility to shift the blame on others. It only destroys our peace. An affectionate and helpful person is always sought after.

(3) Avoid those things which disturb your peace. Gossiping, talking ill of others, having undue interest in others' affairs, considering small things too seriously, never forgetting our hurts and insults—these are some of the things that disturb the calm of our heart. The modern life is full of inevitable pressures and anxieties. Some of them are existential. However we try we cannot escape them. The *Bhāgavata* puts it beautifully: "Only two kinds of people are happy and free from anxieties and suffering, the utter fools, and those who have gone beyond their minds. All people in-between these two extremes are in varying stages of tension and sorrow."<sup>8</sup> But we can

7. *The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1971) page 327.

8. *The Bhāgavata*, Vol. III, 7, 17.

यश्च मूढतमो लोके यश्च बुद्धेः परं गतः ।

तावुभौ सुखमेधेते विलश्चत्यन्तरितो जनः ॥

reduce the sharpness of this tension. One has to take these stresses a little lightly and not very seriously. Humour and fun are the best ways to reduce the mounting pressures. Note down the things that irritate you and face them consciously, and watch your reactions with alertness. If irritation begins to surface, say to yourself: "Let peace begin with me and I will not allow myself to be disturbed by this simple thing."

(4) Stop monologue. Our monologue is the major factor of our mental disturbance. If someone insults or hurts us, we go on endlessly talking about it or planning retaliation in our minds. The noise in the head never seems to stop. The unimportant events, due to monologue, assume gigantic proportions. And we are unable to come out of this self-created trap. When we are caught in a traffic jam, when friends fail to keep their promises, when we face unpleasant situations, watch this monologue—the mind chattering to itself. The chattering creates hell within. We have to pay attention to what goes on inside us, rather than outside. When the inward noise stops there is peace. The mind should be trained to react less and less to the external phenomena.

(5) Remember the world is a dog's curly tail. It is a mixture of good and bad, violence and kindness. We cannot find peace in this tumultuous world. Give, and never expect any gratitude from it. When we are peaceful and happy we are better able to help others. Our family, our society, will benefit from our serene nature. As the vibrations of violence affect others, similarly, the vibrations of peace soothe the taut nerves of others. The only way is to let peace begin with me.

(6) Hiss you may, but bite you shall not, advised Sri Ramakrishna. We cannot deny the presence of wicked and dishonest persons who are bent on harming others. In them divinity is densely covered. How to deal with such persons? The same question was put to Sri Ramakrishna. He replied, "A man living in society should make a show of *tamas* to protect himself from evil-minded people. But he should not harm anybody in anticipation of harm likely to be done him." By way of illustration he told a significant story of a venomous snake and a brahmachari. The brahmachari instructed the poisonous snake to do no harm to anybody. When the cowherd boys of the village noticed that the snake would not bite they not only mistreated but nearly killed it. A year later the brahmachari came and saw the emaciated condition of the snake. The snake narrated everything to him. Then the brahmachari said, "You don't know how to protect yourself. I asked you not to bite, but I didn't forbid you to hiss. Why didn't you scare them by hissing?"<sup>9</sup> Show of anger or sternness is necessary. But real anger is dangerous. The sage Bhartrhari warns against it: "If a man has patience what need has he of an armour, if he has anger what other enemy need he fear."<sup>10</sup> Consumers' protection movement, peace movements against nuclear weapons, efforts to protect environment and wildlife, protests against pollution—some of such movements are peaceful means not only to protect our lives, but also our earth. With change in ourselves the world changes. Because we are that world.

9. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) page 86.

10. *Nitisataka*

शान्तिश्चेत्कवचने किं किमरिभिः क्रोधोऽस्ति चेद्देहिनां ।



# Further Wanderings in Argentina and Brazil

SWAMI BHAVYANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

Now I must tell you what is happening in Belo Horizonte. In the 1940's, a gentleman had a vision of Swami Brahmananda, who instructed him to look after the poor children of the locality. For the last fifty years, he has been building up this work. He is also propagating the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda, by publishing a four-page, monthly newspaper. I have acquired an authenticated, detailed story of the service that is being done by him, which is as follows:

"The Ramakrishna Mission had its beginning more than fifty years ago, in about 1942, in a work of total dedication by Mr. Arlindo Correa da Silva, who is our 'uncle', as everyone affectionately calls him.

"Arlindo Correa da Silva was born on 2nd June, 1910, in Campina Grande in Paraiba, a state in the north of Brazil. His parents were Jose Joaquim Correa and Josepha da Silva Correa. He lost his mother when he was seven years of age and studied in the Baptist College in Recife, which is a Protestant institution. He was trained as an accountant and became a journalist, when he began to struggle against social abuses and defend victims, being greatly motivated by his love for children. When he was twenty-two years old, he came south and after passing through various towns, settled in Belo Horizonte, in the central region of Brazil. He joined the spiritualist movement and founded a magazine called "*The Power*". One day, (he cannot say the exact date), in about 1942, he had a great surprise. He was bathing in a pool when a person rose up in front of him and began to speak to him. Faced

with this strange situation—after all, he was bathing—he did not immediately perceive who the person was. What did he want? Who was he? 'My name is Brahmananda, and I am a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.' Arlindo did not know what to say. At that time, as he was still a spiritualist, he was startled by this apparition and the words it spoke, which were more than these short sentences recorded here. He contacted a person who was interested in philosophy, named Francisco Xavier, who is now widely known as "Chico Xavier". The latter comforted him and said that in the *Gospels*, Jesus says: 'In my Father's house there are many mansions,' and that he must be going into another mansion. Arlindo took heart and ceased to be frightened, because he had never heard anything about these names and had never been interested in any other religion besides Christianity, and he decided to co-operate. The Swami Brahmananda began to appear to him frequently and guide him, even as to what books he should read. Even the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, a present from a friend, came into his hands. At that time he still had a job, but the Swami advised him to give up everything and devote himself solely to children. In view of this guidance he sold everything he had, and bought a piece of land in Betim. In that area, because there was no water, land was cheap and it was possible to buy a property. At that time, there were some friends with him: Jose Waldir Fonseca, Jose Joachim Costa, Antonio Luiz Araujo and Clemente. As he had no money, he could not manage to get a loan from the banks. Sri Ramakrishna then brought Rosalina Dutra Agricola, a woman of high standing in the

community, who had espoused the cause of needy children, and used her social position to obtain the loans from the banks as a guarantor and collaborator. In 1960, the Mission's first building was inaugurated, and in 1961, the second building. Life in the Mission was difficult and demanding. There was no household water supply, and the only well was a long way away. The solution was to go and fetch water twice a day. The children went along in single file, each carrying a small bucket of water. Arlindo drew from the well, and poured the water into the big barrel at the Mission. This was done morning and evening. Under the constant loving guidance of the Swami, all difficulties were solved, and the spirit of devotion grew in all of them. There was a boy in the Mission, named Sandro, who because he was older than the others, helped with the most difficult work. Sometimes he had to go back and draw water at night. It was all dark, and he told Arlindo that he was very frightened. 'Pray to the Little Mother to accompany you,' was the reply. In that pure little heart the good seed quickly germinated, and when later on he was asked about being afraid, the boy frankly revealed that a beautiful, blue light had lit his way to the well. This youngster, who is now married and has children, still visits the Mission. The magazine called "*The Power*" moved away from its old spiritualist line, and began to serve the Mission. Articles were published in it spreading the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Through the magazine Arlindo asked whether some firm could provide an artesian well for the Mission. A firm came and after making a few drill holes, stopped work, saying that conditions were not right there for a well, even an artesian well. In desperation, Arlindo turned to the Swami, who said that he should ask the engineer to drill another hole. When the engineer was called, he made another hole, and the

water gushed out in abundance for thirty years. The stone the drilling machine struck parted miraculously. When the children in the Mission were ill, Arlindo always chose unconventional methods of treatment. At one time there was an epidemic of measles in the town. In the Mission all the children slept in a large dormitory, and this made the danger of infection very real. By the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, only eight children caught the disease. The doctor in the small town of Betim saw what happened at the Mission, and considered it to be inexplicable according to natural laws. He began to get interested, and even now he provides the children with medical treatment, besides attending the Mission as a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. His name is Expedito Martins Chumbinho.

"As a result of the guidance he received, in about 1973, Arlindo opened a yoga school in Belo Horizonte, the State capital, not far from Betim. It was at that time that drugs were making their appearance, along with the hippy movements. As they knew that in this school "mantras" were chanted, many young people began to visit it. There were always between 150 and 200 persons there, and, in this way, through this work, which was also guided by the Swami, thousands of young people gave up using drugs. Many people began to ask Arlindo for spiritual guidance. He asked them to let him think about it, consulted the Swami and then gave the advice they had requested. Then, through the yoga school, a new group of collaborators made their appearance: Solange Boltaro, Lucas, Gil, Americo and Luiz. Former students visit the Mission, even today. Some of them are financially well off, others are living more modestly. There are ex-students who are now living in Germany and the United States. On the day I began writing this article, an ex-student, now a candidate in the local



elections, came to visit the Mission. Many of the ex-students, when they get married, name their children after Arlindo. A simple and affectionate way of thanking him for the good education they had received. They recall with affection the difficulties that were overcome, for instance in winter, when there were not enough blankets. Arlindo brought old newspapers and wrapped up the children before putting them to bed. However, during the night many of them wetted the bed, and in the cold morning hours, Arlindo and Jose Waldir Fonseca got up and changed the children's wet newspapers in an act of love and dedication.

"By means of the magazine *"The Power"*, the message of Sri Ramakrishna is made known all over Brazil. The magazine is, to use a Brazilian expression, the apple of the Swami's eye. He requested that some changes be made to the magazine for it to be more modern, and so appeal to a greater number of people. Seeing the difficulties in obtaining assistance, Arlindo opted for changing the Mission into a company. Besides increasing the income, in this way he also had a place for training the children. The little macaroni production facility thus came into being. The machine for making the macaroni was donated to the Mission by an elderly Italian gentleman named Toniolo, who passed away about a week ago, at the age of 100, and who on that occasion was staying at the Mission. A small workshop was opened for making wire netting. Wire netting is much used in the area for fencing pasture land, vegetable gardens, etc. Here, as with the macaroni production, a small group of children work. The machines were constructed in the Mission itself. Now some looms have been acquired for the children to learn weaving. As this is a craft product much in demand in the trade, the initiative is expected to have a

great success. However, there still remained the kitchen expenses, and so a small vegetable garden was cultivated. Nevertheless, some years ago, Arlindo received guidance to develop the agricultural side of the work, so as to make the Mission independent, because the country was passing through a crisis, and self-sufficiency would be important. A large vegetable garden was started. Another artesian well was needed. Once again, after several attempts at drilling, the machine hit against a large stone, and the engineer stopped work. The Swami's help was again sought. The next morning, when the children went off to school, they came back with shouts of joy, saying that the water from the well was flooding the garden. The stone had split "spontaneously". A beautiful pool containing 35,000 litres of water was made, and this eventually became a swimming pool for the children.

"Today, the garden has fruit trees and vegetables, which enrich the children's diet. There, also, the children learn how to deal with the soil, sow, plant and love the earth. In the Mission, there are thus various opportunities for training: in the macaroni plant, in the wire mesh workshop, in the weaving shop, in the kitchen and in agriculture. With regard to study, it was decided to opt for sending the children to local schools. In that way, they do not lose touch with the world, in which they will shortly have to live. The Mission has two teachers to help them with their school work, clear up any doubts and stimulate study.

"The atmosphere of love and understanding is important in the Mission. There are no bars on the windows or the doors. The children do not think of themselves as held against their will, and rarely leave the Mission. At 7 p.m. everyone goes to the

(Continued on page 334)

# Swami Vivekananda Inspires The Youth

R. N. LAKHOTIA

*Often wayward, modern youth will find everything that they need in Vivekananda to make their life sublime, puts forth forcefully the author. Mr. Lakhota of Delhi is a well known authority on Income Tax, and has written a number of books on religious subjects. . .*

The life and message of Swami Vivekananda is highly inspiring for the youth. His writings compiled in eight volumes of *The Complete Works* (CW), contain several articles with a universal and inspiring message for the youth. It is exactly a hundred years ago that Swami Vivekananda achieved world fame by his historic address at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago which began from 11 September, 1893. As a representative of the Hindu religion, he exhibited great self-confidence and faith in his own religion, which is to be emulated by all. The youth in particular, would be happy to know that in the afternoon of 11 September 1893, when the Chairman of the Parliament invited him to present his views and when he started his address with "Sisters and Brothers of America," it overtook the entire Parliament by a great storm of enthusiasm. Throughout the whole Assembly, there was a great thrill. Hundreds upon hundreds rose to their feet and sent up deafening notes of applause over and over again. He could not believe that it was he they were applauding. Swamiji attempted to speak for over two minutes but the great enthusiasm of the audience prevented him and when silence was restored, Swamiji began his address. He quoted two beautiful passages from the scriptures of Hinduism. His speech voiced the spirit of the Parliament. Swamiji presented his speech on Hinduism on 19 September and stirred all people by his self-confidence and mastery of the subject and by giving the universal message of Hinduism. This is a great lesson for the

youth who feel shy in feeling proud of their own religion. In fact, Swamiji said, "Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any Church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character". Thus, Swamiji gave the message of universal religion of Vedanta as the universal religion by giving the slogan: "Harmony and peace and not dissension".

## *Swamiji's Respect for Parents:*

Swamiji believed that the youth should have great respect for their parents and elders. He wanted the youth to show special regard to their mothers. In fact, he felt that the position of the mother is highest in the world as it is the one place in which one can learn to exercise the greatest unselfishness. His views on parents are particularly to be noted by the youth who unfortunately, are increasingly disobeying their parents. This is what Swamiji said:

*"Before parents one must not utter jokes, must not show restlessness, must not show anger or temper. Before mother or father, a child must bow down low, and stand up in their presence, and must not take a seat until they order him to sit".*  
(CW—1, 43)

## *Non-violence:*

It is often seen that youth in particular become violent at times. What is required is toleration and the practice of the principles of *Ahimsā* or non-injury to others. Swamiji's message to youth on *Ahimsā* is:



*"Never producing pain by thought, word, and deed, in any living being, is what is called Ahimsa, non-injury. There is no virtue higher than non-injury. There is no happiness higher than what a man obtains by this attitude of non-offensiveness, to all creation". (CW—1, 189)*

#### *Purity:*

It cannot be gainsaid that purity of character is one of the greatest virtues to be imbibed by all in general and the youth in particular. We should not see evil in others. It is said that we cannot see evil unless we see ourselves with an evil mind. Swamiji wanted the people to be chaste and pure and to do noble things. Here is the message of Swamiji:

*"Nothing is gained except by sacrifice... The holiest function of our human consciousness, the noblest, do not make it unclean! Do not degrade it to the level of the brutes... Make yourselves decent men! Be chaste and pure!" (CW—1, 520)*

#### *Pure Food:*

It is often found that increasingly more and more youth are turning away from pure and sãttvic food to impure and non-vegetarian food. It is contained in our scriptures that the nature of man is essentially vegetarian and the nature has made man essentially vegetarian. We should not kill or injure any animal for the sake of taste or gratification of the senses. If we want to be spiritual in the true sense and believe that God pervades in all beings and exists in all, then we have no right to injure any creature and hence, eggs and other non-vegetarian food should be avoided. This is what Swamiji said on the question of food habits:

*"All exciting food should be avoided, as meat, for instance; this should not be*

*taken because it is by its very nature impure. We can get it only by taking the life of another. We get pleasure for a moment, and another creature has to give up its life to give us that pleasure. Not only so, but we demoralise other human beings." (CW—4, 4)*

#### *Strength:*

The youth must pay attention to health and having strength of body, mind and character. In fact, religion comes afterwards. Swamiji always felt that the Gītā can be understood with our biceps and our muscles, a little stronger. He also said that the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Kṛṣṇa can be understood by us better with a little of strong blood in us. Therefore, he wanted the youth in particular to be strong. Quoting the Upaniṣads, he said that it was the only literature in the world where we could find the word "Abhīh" (fearlessness) used again and again. The following message of Swamiji must be imbibed by every young person in the country:

*"Make your nerves strong. What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping, but stand on your feet and be men. It is a man-making religion that we want. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want." (CW—3, 224)*

#### *Hindu Pride:*

Swamiji felt that the youth in particular should read the Gītā and other good works of Vedānta. In his opinion, the system of education was wrong, because the mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Besides, Swamiji was of the view that the foundation of the society lay in

renunciation. Therefore, he wanted the youth to renounce all temptations to take neighbour's property, to put hands upon neighbour, and the pleasure of cheating others by telling lies. These are the teachings of Hindu religion, and he wanted every Hindu to be proud of being a Hindu. But at the same time, he wanted that all people should respect other religions because these are different paths to God-realisation. He believed in universal religion, of seeing God in everyone and not having a narrow minded approach. A true Hindu will be an asset to society. He does not harm anyone. He respects others' religion, and therefore, he wanted every Hindu to be proud of his religion. This is what he said:

*"I am proud to call myself a Hindu, I am proud that I am one of your unworthy servants. I am proud that I am a countryman of yours, you the descendants of the sages, you the descendants of the most glorious Rishis the world ever saw. Therefore, have faith in yourselves, be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of them."* (CW—3, 381)

These are some of the views of Swami Vivekananda. If the modern youth imbibe the great virtues of self-confidence, renunciation, purity, non-violence and service to others as preached and exemplified by the glorious life of Swami Vivekananda, the life of the modern youth would be much better for themselves as also for society.

## FURTHER WANDERINGS IN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL

*(Continued from page 331)*

temple, where they sing little hymns in praise of Thakur, the Holy Mother, whom the children affectionately call "Little Mother", Swami Brahmananda, Sri Krishna, Jesus, etc. These hymns, "mantras" as the residents call them, were taught by Swami. On this point, there is an interesting story: when Swami Ritajananda visited the Mission in March, 1992, he was surprised to hear a hymn that is very well known in the South of India, but being of a regional kind, it is little known elsewhere. The children love to sing these hymns, and they often begin to sing spontaneously while they are doing their daily tasks, such as washing the dishes, sweeping the floor and even playing."

Miracles do happen, even these days. This gentleman (Professor Arlindo Correa) is popularly known as Lindananda.

The next few days I spent in the city of Curitiba, staying in a devotee's house, where we also had daily meetings in the evenings. Quite a few disciples of Swami Vijayananda are still alive, and they all came to see me. One evening, I was taken to a big indoor shopping precinct. It is really a world of illusion (*māyā*). It is too much for anyone to take in, all that confusion. It is all a display of *kāma-kāncana* (lust and gold). We live under the veil of *māyā* in this world, but here the veil is very thick.

Friday, 7th August, was the last day of my stay here. After breakfast, I took leave of the devotees and flew to Sao Paulo, where I spent the night and returned to England next day, arriving on the 9th morning. A fruitful though tiring trip indeed.

*(Concluded)*



# The Third Order of Vedānta\*

GARGI

*The rousing call of Swamiji has been setting afire the hearts of young men and women all over the world to renounce and serve God in man. Many become monks and nuns, and those who opt out for various reasons, form a 'new type', a third Order. The unique contributions of these new spiritual aspirants is highlighted in this absorbing paper. Sister Gargi of California is a famous authoress of many valuable books.*

The Western Vedānta movement is very young as religious movements go. One can say, I think, that it has been active for about one hundred years, and one hundred years is a short time for an ancient religion to find the right forms of expression in relation to the deep-flowing traditions and needs of an adopted culture. Yet nowadays nothing moves or develops slowly, and a century or so today is equivalent to many centuries in an earlier age; so there has been ample time for the Vedānta movement to have developed certain distinctive patterns and modes. I would not say that these patterns have become set or crystalized. Most of them are, perhaps, trends rather than patterns, but though they are still fluid, some of them seem destined for permanence. This paper is concerned with one of these more stable and definite trends—one which is, I believe, bound to become a vital, indeed an essential, characteristic of modern Vedānta. (I should say here that I do not think this trend is peculiar to the West; it will, I believe, become exceedingly important in India also. But in this article I shall concern myself only, or primarily, with its Western—and particularly its American aspect.)

What I have in mind is the emergence of a new type of spiritual aspirant—a type or class that constitutes what I would like to call the Third Order of Vedānta. Let me explain my use of this term. I have borrowed it from the Third Order that was established by Saint Francis of Assisi in the early part of the thirteenth century. In founding this Order, the great saint was responding to the pleas of a large group of men and women who longed to join one or the other of his monastic orders, either the First Order, that of monks (Friars), or the Second Order, that of nuns (Poor Clares). But it so happened that these people had work to do in the world—duties which, as St. Francis would have said, were God's will for them, or, as a Hindu might say, were their '*svadharma*' their true metier or calling in life, not easily, or properly, laid aside. He could not, on the one hand, allow them to abandon their genuine responsibilities; and, on the other hand, he could not, or would not, discourage their equally genuine spiritual fervour and desire to embrace a disciplined monastic life. The problem was real and perplexing. Saint Francis told his supplicants that he would give the matter thought. This he did, and out of that thought, which was prayerful and characteristically compassionate, was born the Third Order.

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\* We are grateful to our Vivekananda Vedanta Society, Chicago for permitting us to reprint this article.

A Rule was drawn up, according to

which the members of this order took vows to lead an ascetic and holy life, dedicated to religious pursuits and to helping the poor. They lived both in spirit and in fact like monks and nuns, with the exception that they continued to fulfill their obligations in the world and to work at their chosen trade or profession, giving in charity whatever money they did not use for their simple needs. It was these people—these holy men and women—whose lives inspired and gave meaning to the phrase “in the world but not of it.” If we think of such a way of life in connection with Vedānta, we find that the Third Order of Vedānta is actually, though not officially, existing. The Vedānta societies in America have many members who, though nominally in the world, live a life bordering on monasticism. Indeed this rapidly growing group of men and women seem to be not only members of a Third Order but—and this may be the same thing—examples of the “new type” of spiritual aspirant that was mentioned by Swami Vivekananda. One day one of Swamiji’s non-monastic disciples, Sharatchandra Chakravarty, had begged of him, “Bless me, sir, that I may attain to the knowledge of Brahman in this very life,” and Swamiji, placing his hand on the disciple’s head, replied, “Have no fear my son, you are not like ordinary worldly men—neither householders nor exactly Sannyasins—but quite a new type.”<sup>1</sup> I may add here, rather parenthetically, that when he was in America Swamiji gave the vows of brahmacharya to a number of men and women without expecting them to live in monastic communities, but, rather, to support themselves or, as in the case of Miss Sarah Ellen Waldo—Sister Yatimata—to live on a private income. Were not these

free-lance brahmacharins also a “new type”? And can we not say they were, in a sense, members of a Third Order?

At one time, and for lack of a better term, I thought one could call the intermediate class of spiritual aspirants who abound in Western Vedānta societies “semimonastics.” But many people, including myself, disliked that term, as the prefix “semi” has an implication of inferiority about it, a comparative tone. And that will never do: the very last thing semimonasticism is is a class better or worse than some other class. It is a class in itself, with its own standards and its own greatness, and it should not be compared to either monasticism or householdism. So the “semimonastic” needs a name of his own. After considerable thinking and consultation, the word *mahāvīr* was hit upon. As you know, Mahāvīr was one of Hanuman’s names, and it means “great hero.” I thought that was a fine appellation for the type we are considering, and so for the purpose of this paper, at least, I shall use it interchangeably with “semimonastic” and thereby hope to counteract that offensive “semi.”

Now, who is a *mahāvīr*? A Vedāntic *mahāvīr* is a man or woman who is unmarried, lives a life of strict brahmacharya, is an initiated disciple of a swami of the Ramakrishna Order, has renounced all worldly pursuits as such, cares nothing for worldly enjoyments or honours, lives simply, and has dedicated his energy, his time, and his heart to the realization of a spiritual ideal and, as well, to the welfare of his fellowmen.

In what respect then, is the *mahāvīr* not a monastic? In what respect is he (I shall often use the pronoun “he” throughout this paper, with the understanding that it means both “he” and “she”)—in what respect is he

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Birth Centenary Edition, 1963) (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama) Vol. 7, page 222.



a new type? In two respects: first, he does not live in a monastery, and second, he earns his own living, plans his own day. He is not, in other words, a cenobite—one who belongs to a monastic community and follows its routine.

To avoid confusion, I should perhaps point out here the fairly obvious fact that it is not possible in the West to live as do the wandering monks in India. The Western monastic must either live in a monastic community, earn his own living, or be arrested for vagrancy. There are no other practical choices. Further, in the Western Vedānta societies that are affiliated with the Ramakrishna Order, monastics are as a rule required to live in recognized monasteries or convents. Thus in these societies—and it is these societies that concern us here—the free-lance, informal renunciate is not officially recognized as a bona fide monastic.

In India the *mahāvīr* (though not so called) is, I understand, becoming a recognized, though perhaps not common, type. In an article that appeared in a 1973 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, Swami Budhananda wrote,

*"Hinduism does not look with much favour on anāśramis, those who neither enter the responsible householder's life through sacramental marriage nor renounce the world formally and become monks and nuns. But Hinduism sanctions what is known as naiṣṭhika-brahmacarya, or avowed celibacy while living in the world, for both men and women. On all hands it is acknowledged that their lives are even of a more difficult type than those of monks and nuns."*<sup>2</sup>

2. Swami Budhananda, "Worldly Duties and Spiritual Life," *Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1973, page 54.

As I say—such people are "great heroes"; and their lives are difficult indeed—and this the world over. Let us consider how, generally speaking, the American *mahāvīr* lives. As I have already mentioned, he will lead a life of total chastity—in thought, word, and deed. Yet, unlike the cenobitic monk, he is unshielded from temptation; his mind alone is his armour and his fortress. His work—in office, school, hospital, or wherever—throws him into unavoidable contact with the opposite sex. His protection is not ready-made for him; he must build his own walls and keep them in good repair and free of chinks. In this respect, he must be exceptionally vigilant and strong; he must have the strength to resist, the strength to stand on his own feet against the powerful current of the world, which includes, of course, the current of his own worldly tendencies, all ready at a moment's notice to take torrential form. On his own and exposed to danger, the young semimonastic must live a sort of island life in the midst of a raging sea. He will avoid worldly lures and worldly distractions, "innocent" though these may appear. Further, while he won't let himself be trampled on in his job or profession, he himself will trample on no one; he will have no worldly ambition whatsoever. The primary joys of his heart lie in the functions of the Vedanta Society to which he belongs—in the lectures, the classes, the talks with swamis, the pūjās, and the golden hours in which he meditates or is able directly to serve God by participating in the work of the society. But none of these joys can he so much as hint at to his fellow job-holders in the Western world; that world considers him peculiar enough as it is.

In addition to his efforts to live a chaste and restrained life, the semimonastic practises poverty. Not only does he live as

simply as possible, but, generally speaking, he has no economic security. Unless he works like everyone else, he will simply die of starvation, for if he is able-bodied, he cannot legally or in decency go on public welfare. But while he must earn his living in one way or another, at the same time—no matter how much he earns—he spends upon himself as little as possible, often living very austere indeed. The rest he gives to the service of God.

Obedience, or at least the strict observance of certain rules and disciplines, is the third condition of the semimonastic. Whom or what does he obey? What Rule does he observe? Since the Third Order of Vedanta has no organization, it has no official Rule, yet there is one person whom the semimonastic recognizes as being in a position to guide him and lay down the law for him—a law that he follows to the letter. This is his spiritual teacher, his guru. The guru's word is the semimonastic's Rule, and obedience to it is, of course, of the utmost importance in this difficult way of life, where the pitfalls are as numerous as craters on the moon, the road unmarked and rocky, the sidetracks many and alluring, and the scope for self-deception vast.

Now, a question arises at this point. If the *mahāvīr* has renounced the world, if he has dedicated his life to a spiritual ideal, if he is bent on practising chastity, poverty, and obedience, then why on earth does he not enter a monastery? Why does he undertake a more difficult kind of life in which his vows and commitments are exposed on every side to erosion and assault? This is, I believe, a very pertinent question, for in the answer to it lies the justification for, and meaning of, the Third Order of Vedanta.

There are, in fact, a number of answers. A young man or woman may, for instance,

be the sole support of his or her parents, or have other dependents who genuinely could not get along without financial help. If such a person should join a monastery or convent, it would cause true hardship to others—not just emotional upheavals, but true physical hardship. As is well known, Sri Ramakrishna was much opposed to anyone's renouncing an obligation (particularly to one's parents) before it had been fulfilled. One legitimate reason, then, for an unmarried spiritual aspirant not to join a monastic community is his duty to his dependents.

Another reason lies in the requirements of some monasteries themselves. The monasteries of the Ramakrishna Order (and, as I have said, it is these with which we are here concerned) can accept only those applicants who can meet certain qualifications of age, education, and health. If one is overage or if one's state of health would impose a burden on the monastic community, then it is better all around that one forget the whole idea of cenobitic life in Vedanta and go one's own way—"alone like the rhinoceros." Again, there is the rhinoceros temperament—a natural and intense aversion to the restrictions, tensions, and trials of continual group living, whatever one's age, education, or state of health.

But the most important reason of all for choosing a semimonastic life, is, I believe, an individual's drive to develop through unremitting, single-minded practice an exceptional talent or to follow a profession that demands intensive training and full-time attention. Such drives can be very strong indeed, amounting to inherent and very real obligations, and until they are fulfilled they will come in profound conflict with cenobitic monastic life. But while such persistent drives can be the bane of more or less cloistered monasticism, they



can be the *mahāvīr's* glory. Indeed, the life of one who develops an individual talent or special ability and who transforms the pursuit of that talent or ability into a spiritual practice, offering, for instance, its fruits to God, is in itself a life of unique importance. It reveals in its unfoldment its own justification and significance. Such a life cannot be characterized in negative terms—as, on the one hand, unmarried or, on the other hand, nonmonastic. No, the *mahāvīr* who is making his own unique contribution to the world, however slight, is, as I said earlier, a positive type in himself; he is undertaking his own form of hard spiritual discipline and following his own valid way to God.

Like the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, the *mahāvīr* has a great twofold purpose—to work for his own liberation and for the welfare of the world. But in some areas of service, the semimonastic is in a more advantageous position to fulfill the latter part of this injunction than is the monk or the nun who in many respects lives a restricted life. This is, I believe, particularly true in the present age and will be even more true in the age to come, for the varied, broad, and farflung service of the Vedantic *mahāvīr* is, and will be, imperative to the welfare, indeed the survival, of the world.

Let me try to say very briefly why I think this is so. It would seem that we are only just now entering the new order of civilization for which Swami Vivekananda came, and though the future keeps changing shape as we hurtle toward it, I think certain of its features are clear enough to warrant a few generalizations.

One may say quite boldly, for instance, that the twentieth century has marked the beginning of what can be called the Age of Man—the man, that is, who has no

special rank or privilege, who lives his life from beginning to end without making a ripple in the ocean of history and who dies without a headline. He is the man whose numbers compose the masses and who, throughout the entire history of civilization up until the present century, has never been considered a real person with legally assured economic, political, or social rights and liberties. I need not take time here to enumerate the many popular revolutions this century has seen. Throughout the world the common man has arisen in a body, the power of the privileged few has been lessened, colonial strangleholds have been broken, governments whose primary motive is the welfare of the people have been struggling into being everywhere. Poverty, oppression, exploitation—all these yokes, once taken for granted as the natural lot (or, in India, the *karma*) of the masses, are today looked upon by increasing numbers of people as ugly, inhuman, and above all, potentially dangerous blots on civilization.

This world, whose parts have become so tightly, intimately, and intricately interwoven, has become intensely sensitive to every cry of pain or hunger; any quiver of its delicately balanced mechanism might easily set off the ultimate explosion. Thus, if only for self-protection, many men have become acutely conscious of their responsibility to their fellowmen. But to be less cynical about it, I think a new and genuine sense of compassion also has entered the world, and as the common man reaches upward to freedom, many others out of justice and fellow-feeling want to help him. In any event, the upward movement of the common man characterizes the present age, and I do not believe there will be any stop to it until each individual is assured a decent, economically and politically free way of life—a life abounding with

opportunity for both work and play. There will be no stopping; but the way will be long, and even with our burgeoning miracles of technology, the task will be enormous. Further, when the desired result has been achieved, to maintain it will require constant and perpetual mutual help between nations and peoples—and this on a global scale.

The wave that has been set in motion will alter the face of civilization in ways we cannot even guess. But we can guess that it will, indeed must, alter man's attitude toward himself, his world, and his fellow-man; for its successful and relatively peaceful progress will require a new world outlook, a new psychology, a new religion.

As though by cosmic plan, this new religion has already entered the world along with the wave of popular revolution. If this is the Age of Man, it is also and, I believe, necessarily, the Age of Spirituality. Or, to put it more graphically, it is the age in which the whole world will be engulfed and swept upward by what Swami Vivekananda called "a huge spiritual tidal wave."

As Swamiji so often pointed out, there is no other way for mankind to find a measure of peace and freedom than for man to reconstruct his vision of man. There are two basic views of man: one, as a psycho-physical entity, the other, as Spirit. If man's freedom and dignity on every level are the goals of the present age, then it is essential that humanity learn to see itself as primarily spiritual. The oppression of the weak by the strong is an inexorable law on the biological and psychological levels; here there is no possibility of universal freedom. No matter how cleverly nations dream up and carry out well-intentioned political and economical systems, this fact remains: the strong body and mind

will always control and oppress the weak body and mind. As long as man thinks of himself as predominantly a psycho-physical being, his cultures will be governed by this law. It is the law of the jungle, and in the present age its working seems particularly ferocious.

On the one hand, the common man is pushing up from below with tremendous force, and though he is being pushed down from the top with an equally tremendous force. As Swamiji once prophesied, the resulting tumult is great and widespread. Nor have the implements of destruction ever been more sophisticated, subtle, and diabolical than they are today. And rapidly they are becoming more so. Moreover, the techniques that are being developed for keeping track of, influencing, and manipulating human beings are terrible in their possibilities. Indeed, the strong could acquire the power of gods, and when such power is combined with jungle morality, the result could only be wholesale disaster. It sometimes seems that large sections of human society are bent on achieving that end.

Swami Vivekananda's reiterated solution to this state of affairs is well known; over and over he insisted that man look upon himself and others as Spirit—as infinite and eternal Spirit. This outlook was, to his mind, the only basis for true brotherhood, true morality, true service—the only solid rationale for cooperation and mutual help rather than competition and struggle for dominance. Again and again he said that the teachings of Advaita Vedanta, spread far and wide and practised by men and women, even by children, were the only hope for the modern world. But let me quote from Swamiji himself. The following is from a lecture he gave in London in 1896:



*"Build up your character, and manifest your real nature, the Effulgent, the Resplendent, the Ever-pure, and call It up in everyone that you see. I wish that everyone of us had come to such a state that even in the vilest of human beings we could see the Real Self within, and instead of condemning them, say, 'Rise, thou effulgent one...and manifest thy true nature. These little manifestations do not befit thee.' This is the highest prayer that the Advaita teaches...All these ratiocinations of logic, all these bundles of metaphysics, all these theologies and ceremonies, may have been good in their own time, but let us try to make things simpler and bring about the golden days when every man will be a worshipper, and the Reality in every man will be the object of worship."*<sup>3</sup>

Here enters the *mahāvīr*. Living a pure life, imbued with the conviction, and perhaps in some cases with the realization, that man in all conditions, in all his ways of thought and action, is through and through Spirit, is God Himself playing the part of the great and the lowly, of the man who needs help and of the man who gives it—these semimonastics, like drops in that "huge spiritual tidal wave" will pour over the whole world. Dedicated to Swamiji's ideal of *karma yoga*, endlessly varied in ability, talent, and inclination, they will undertake all types of work, bringing the highest philosophy of Vedanta—the philosophy of the Upaniṣads—from the forest into the marketplace, just as Swami Vivekananda wanted. They will bring it into public and private schools, into universities, into libraries, into hospitals, into business, into law courts, into journalism, into all branches of the arts and every discipline of science, and they will bring it as well into

all departments of government, at home and abroad. Many fields of service, both in underdeveloped countries and in so-called developed but partly rotting countries, will be open for perhaps generations to come. Indeed, the opportunities for service are endless in number and variety because the need for mutual help among all the people of the world is a dominant characteristic of this Age of Man. Swami Ranganathananda expressed this peculiarity of the present age in one sentence: *"The only valid form of interhuman relationship today is service, and not exploitation."*<sup>4</sup>

Swami Vivekananda inaugurated a new type of monasticism in India whereby the monk, heretofore devoted solely to spiritual practice proper—that is, to practices such as meditation, japa, and formal worship—would plunge also into all kinds of humanitarian service, looking upon man as God. So, too, by his emphatic and universal teaching of *karma yoga* as a direct path to liberation Swamiji opened a way for his "new type" of spiritual aspirant. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, the semimonastic will in some respects be in a position to carry humanitarian activity even further than the monastic. For one thing, the number of semimonastics will be very large; whereas the flaming core of pure monasticism is, and perhaps should always be, relatively small. Moreover, the training of the semimonastic in his chosen field will generally have been prolonged and intensive; further, his independent way of life will enable him to permeate—one might say, infiltrate—society from top to bottom and in any capacity he chooses. He or she can go anywhere and do anything.

3. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 357-58.

4. Swami Ranganathananda, *The Need of the Hour—A Non-Sannyasi Order of Dedicated Workers* (Madras: Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1972) page 17.

Generally speaking, his influence will be more or less indirect; in some cases, however, he could work directly to spread the teachings of Vedanta. For instance, a swami who has worked in America suggested to me that in the present shortage of Indian swamis available for Western work, well-trained Western semimonastics could form and support new Vedanta study groups in cities and towns where there are no established Vedanta societies. But whether the semimonastic directly encourages and directs Vedantic study or not, wherever he lives, whatever he does, his influence will be bound to touch the lives of others. Cumulatively, that influence will lift the whole world into a higher level of thought—the only level from which it will be possible to solve the multifarious and all too inflammable problems of this age. “Perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will. Let only a handful of men work with these, and the whole world will be revolutionized.”<sup>5</sup> Thus Swami Vivekananda wrote, and his semimonastics—his *mahāvīrs*—as well as his monastics, are such men and such women.

He seems to have had both types in mind when he said in America,

*“The real Sannyasin lives in the world, but is not of it...Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action and reach the Centre. If you have found the Centre, you cannot be moved.”*<sup>6</sup>

I should perhaps say something here about householders, for I seem to have excluded them from the Third Order. Yes, if the Third Order consists of unmarried people, then it doesn't include householders. But householders, as I understand it,

constitute an order of their own, with unique responsibilities and duties that not only are essential to the welfare of society but are a form of yoga and a path to the highest realization. On the other hand, I do not think these categories of spiritual living can be rigid. If husband and wife can both dedicate themselves to a spiritually directed service of humanity, then they are Third Order people. I have in mind Captain and Mrs. Sevier, who cut all their ties and devoted themselves to Swamiji's work. They wanted, in fact, to take vows of *sannyāsa*. But generally speaking, the responsibilities of marriage constitute a different kind of austerity and way of spiritual life—not a superior or inferior way, just a different way—and that way is not what this paper is about.

There is a good deal more to say in regard to the Third Order—both as it is today and as it may become in the future. For instance, in this brief paper I have not touched at all upon Vivekananda-inspired organizations in India which are dedicated to the upliftment of the country. Such organizations provide marvellous opportunities for service, not only for householders but for *mahāvīrs*. Indeed the channels into which Third Order energies could be poured are worldwide and of all kinds and sizes. One might say, moreover, that many an altruistic organization would be benefited and made more effective by the spiritual ideals the Third Order would infuse into it. But I think I have said enough. I shall close by mentioning just very briefly the question of organization, which may have arisen in the minds of some of you. It is not a pressing question. Most of the semimonastics with whom I have discussed it have expressed a hearty, one might say passionate, dislike of organization in connection with their spiritual

5. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 8, page 335.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 6, page 84.

(Continued on page 351)



# The Fundamental Teachings of Vedanta

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

*Vedanta forms the essence of Indian philosophy. It is a vast literature, but its essential tenets are elucidated in this scholarly article. The Swami is the spiritual head of the Vedanta society of New York and contributes often to this journal.*

Down through the ages, India has been the eternal source of spiritual inspiration for humanity. "Evidently...India was the birthplace of the fundamental imaginings, the cradle of contemplative religion and the nobler philosophy."<sup>1</sup> This source has been authenticated, amplified, elucidated and rejuvenated by eminent mystics throughout the ages. The Indian mind, despite depressed situations in external life, kept this life-giving and sustaining philosophy and religion in its culture. "In all nations there are minds which incline to dwell in the conception of the fundamental Unity.... This tendency finds its highest expression in the religious writings of the East, and chiefly in the Indian Scriptures, in the Vedas, the Bhagavat Geeta, and the Vishnu Purana," declared Ralph Waldo Emerson.

In the Hindu view, philosophy and religion are not contradictory, but complementary. Religion is the practical side of philosophy. The Supreme Reality is at once the absolute of philosophy and the God of Religion. India's spiritual and cultural heritage dates back to time immemorial. The essential concepts of Hinduism regarding God, nature and the soul have been traced to the days of the Rg-Veda, the earliest of the four Vedas, the basic Hindu scripture. "What extracts from the Vedas I have read fall on me like

light of a higher and purer luminary... simple, universal," wrote Henry Thoreau. The timeless Reality in man and nature was discovered in the Vedic age. Absolute faith, based on verification with regard to fundamental and amazing flexibility in readjusting the external, has been a fact of the lifestyle through which the Hindu faith has survived and flourished throughout the ages. That is why it is said to be "ever-aging but never old." It may be remembered that Hinduism is older than any other religion of the world. Hinduism regards as its supreme authority the religious experience of the ancient Vedic sages. It has no single founder; the ancient seers acted as the various channels for transmitting to humanity the spiritual truths they experienced. Indian idealism "...marched out of her, but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it, and peace before it. We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live."<sup>2</sup> Again, Swami Vivekananda, the modern incarnation of the spirit of Vedanta, said, "Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world."<sup>3</sup>

This view of Swamiji was shared by Will Durant. "Perhaps in return for con-

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1. H. Stutfield, *Mysticism and Catholicism*, p. 31.

2. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. III, p. 106.

3. *Ibid.* Vol. III, p. 274.

quest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the calm mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living beings.”<sup>4</sup>

The dominant feature of Hinduism is her emphasis on the development of spiritual life, which finds fulfilment in seeking God within and without. Hence, Hinduism as a religion is both a way of understanding and a scheme for living. The goal of religion is the union with Divinity which is the “soul of Truth, the delight of life, and the bliss of mind, and the fullness of peace and eternity.”<sup>5</sup> This passion for divine life, this search for eternal life in divine excellences, in the midst of the evanescent joys of life, welling forth from the deepest recess of the Hindus, found its eloquent and sincere expression in one of their most familiar prayers: “Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from the darkness to Light, from death to Immortality.”<sup>6</sup> The great thinkers of the world speak eloquently about the glory of this message contained in Vedanta. The Spanish lover of Vedanta, J. Mascaro, described it as the “Himalayas of the Soul.” Upon reading the Latin translation of the Upaniṣads when it first appeared in the West, the German philosopher Schopenhauer made the significant remark that the Upaniṣads would be a great source of inspiration and enlightenment to the generations to come. He further said, “...in the whole world there is no study except that of the original (of the Upaniṣads) so beneficial, so elevating, ...it has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.” In the preface

to his book, *The World as Will and Idea*, he wrote, “I believe that the influence of the Sanskrit literature will penetrate no less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century.” He also made a prophecy: “They are destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people.” Max Mueller, who drank profusely the divine nectar gathered from Vedanta throughout his long life, remarked, “(Vedanta) is the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains, so simple and so true, if once understood.” Paul Deussen wrote, “On the tree of Indian wisdom there is no fairer flower than the Upanishads, and no finer fruit than the Vedanta philosophy....”

This philosophy of the Upaniṣads as a whole has made its impact on great minds. Its attraction on the Western mind is very deep and pervasive. It has exerted a permanent influence on Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Nietzsche, Paul Deussen, Max Mueller, W. B. Yeats, G. W. Russell, Romain Rolland, Horace Wilson, Sir Monier Williams, Louis Renou, Keyserling, Somerset Maugham, T.S. Elliot, and a host of others in Europe.

In the United States, we find its tremendous influence on the works of Emerson, Thoreau and Walt Whitman, Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, Christopher Isherwood, Marie Louise Burke, Huston Smith, and many others. The influence of Vedanta can be attested to by their writings coloured by Vedantic thought. Vedanta or the Upaniṣads occupy a unique place in the history of Indian philosophy. They constitute the concluding portion of Vedic literature and are, therefore, called Vedanta. In a deeper sense, they contain the very essence of the Vedas. They primarily refer to knowledge, and only secondarily to a

4. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization*. Vol. I. “Our Oriental Heritage” (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935), p. 33.

5. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 1:6.

6. *Bṛ Upaniṣad* 1-3.27.



book. Vedanta upholds the view that truth is not the monopoly of any race. It is a world literature, it is a universal phenomenon. It reveals the immanence of God in nature and the divinity of man. These may be regarded as the fundamentals of Vedanta which, for this reason, is also addressed as eternal religion (Sanātana-Dharma).

The scientists, through their painstaking and dedicated research “discover” certain laws of nature ; this knowledge is verifiable by others. In the same way Indian sages, ṛṣis, through their elevated minds discovered the spiritual truths extant in the Vedas. Only after attaining high spiritual eminence can the mystery of the inner world be discovered through intuitive knowledge. These laws or the facts of their discovery are not “created” by the sages. Vedanta, in this sense, is *apauruṣeya*, impersonal and thus universal and eternal. Vedanta philosophy exhorts us to verify these eternal truths of spiritual life through our personal endeavour geared to achieve final liberation from bondage.

Swami Vivekananda threw light on this point: “...by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and Soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them.

“The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that

some of the very greatest of them were women.”<sup>7</sup>

Unlike other world religions, Hinduism—rather, Sanatana Dharma—has no founder. It is not on the authority of a single individual, but on the intuitive knowledge of the host of mystics. These highly illumined souls do not give us a set of finished and final dogmas or conventional creeds which are to be accepted. Rather, Vedanta tells us repeatedly that experience is very vital in spiritual development; “Religion is realization,” as Swamiji said, and not a matter of blind faith to follow certain socio-religious practices, or external forms of religion. One of the most remarkable features of Vedanta is the intensity of emotion that it inculcates in the seeker of Truth. Therefore, it puts strenuous emphasis on practice to establish definite human relations with God. “Religion is a question of being and becoming, not of believing.”<sup>8</sup>

Truth of Vedanta being the fruits of discovery in the laboratories of our Soul, Vedanta keeps its mind open to accept the revelation of truth from other lands, genuine expressions of man’s highest spiritual experience. Vedanta claims to be as much of a revelation as the other religions of the world. It goes even a step further and contends that it is a continuous revelation. It does not believe in truth which has been revealed once and for all. Vedanta always encouraged freedom of thought. Infinite Truth has to express itself in infinite ways and in infinite time. It cannot be a sealed book. This catholic outlook and the scientific temper coupled with its sincere passion for various facets of truth has kept it as a living philosophy of life. It accepts

7. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I, pp. 2-4.

8. *Ibid.* Vol. IV, p. 216.

different types of mind and, therefore, does not prove itself oppressive and monotonous, static and insipid, by keeping everybody in the pigeonhole of a single creed. It recommends different disciplines for different persons which are helpful for their growth. Hence, wide latitude is granted to the people to have their personal religion. That is why within Hinduism we find the bewildering variety of its expression in its sects and rituals, in its beliefs and worship. This attitude of spiritual struggle to experience truth, as opposed to adopting some external format of religion, has saved Hinduism from the vice of elitism. "The emphasis on the goal of spiritual life bound together worshippers of many different types and saved the Hindus from spiritual snobbery"<sup>9</sup>

Another important feature of Vedanta which it has practised throughout its long career is its wide toleration. It is not a policy but an article of faith. Hence, harmony and positive fellowship based on understanding, sympathy, and reverence for the views of others is prevalent among Hindus. Vedanta is accommodative. Hinduism does not advocate the theory that acceptance of one faith is indispensable for salvation, and that the rejection thereof is an unpardonable sin. It teaches not only toleration but universal acceptance.

"Mark, the same earnest man who is kneeling before the idol tells you, 'Him, the sun cannot express, nor the moon, nor the star, the lightning cannot express Him, nor what we speak of as fire, through Him they shine.' But he does not abuse anyone's idol or call its worship sin. He recognizes in it a necessary stage of life. 'The child is father of the man.' Would it be right for

an old man to say that childhood is a sin or youth a sin?"

"If a man can realize his divine nature with the help of an image, would it be right to call that a sin? Nor even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error? To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him, all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress, and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength, till it reaches the Glorious Sun"<sup>10</sup>

Thus, rational in its outlook, accommodative in spirit, scientific in temperament, putting emphasis on intuitive experience, practising peaceful coexistence down through the ages, Vedanta has attracted the loving attention of the thinking mind of the world. It does not expect people to submit themselves to the authority of anybody—prophet or teacher.

One supreme reality is the sole support and substance of the manifold. This Reality is called the Brahman, out of which the world has originated. The Universe is sustained by Brahman and ultimately it is dissolved in Brahman; therefore, Vedanta does not accept the theory that the objective universe has emerged from dull, insentient matter, and that life and consciousness have originated out of matter devoid of consciousness. Brahman is the very essence of *Existence, Consciousness and Bliss*. It is by the light of Brahman's

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought* (George Allen and Unwin, London) p. 322

<sup>10</sup> Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* Vol. I, p. 15



consciousness that we become aware of everything.

The phenomenal existence is an appearance ; it disappears when the knowledge of Reality is gained. But the Vedanta does not essentially denounce the world. We are to see God in everything. This is deification of the world. "The whole world is full of the Lord." In this way, we can make spiritual progress.

Brahman is all-pervading and nothing can exist independent of it. While Brahman is immanent, it is also transcendent at the same time. When seen through time, space and causality, Brahman is immanent. Brahman is one undivided whole. Brahman is not confined to this universe, but is above and beyond it. It transcends the entire range of cause and effect. This is transcendental Brahman and it can be experienced only in deep Samadhi.

Non-dual Brahman cannot function as a world-cause. The totality of God's power is called maya. The term "maya" is applicable to God's creation, as well as His creative powers. Brahman is the material as well as the efficient cause of the universe. He is not only the Creator but also the created. In the Vedantic view, there cannot be creation out of nothing, for existence cannot come out of non-existence. There cannot be anything outside of God. According to Vedanta, an extracosmic God is a naive conception of God. Brahman associated with maya is the origin, support, and the goal of the Universe. This is called Saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes), who is immanent in the universe as the supreme Self and acts as God, the Almighty Lord of the Universe. He controls the universe from within. God is both personal and impersonal. The term "personal" is used to indicate that He has attributes ; it

does not mean that God has a form like a human being. Personal God, apart from maya, His limiting adjunct, is no other than impersonal God.

Swami Vivekananda said, "The very idea of causation exists only in the phenomenal world, and God as the cause of the universe must naturally be thought of as limited, and yet, He is the same impersonal God."<sup>11</sup>

Though the Hindu pantheon teems with millions of deities, God is one. Formless God assumes various forms by His maya. These forms are like different garments under which God is always the same. Since God and His glories are infinite, approaches to Him may be innumerable. "All these forms are of one God, for God is multi-form. He is formless and with form and many are His forms which no one knows."<sup>12</sup>

Vedanta is dominated by one supreme conception, which is that there is identity between individual and God, in their essential nature as Pure Consciousness. As long as the individual is under the spell of ignorance about his divinity, he is bound in every respect. Like the ocean and its waves, there is a difference between man and God. As pure and simple water the wave is identical to the ocean. The oneness of the individual and God is the most inspiring message of Vedanta. Atman (Self) and Brahman (Universal Self) are one. Man is divine, the divine spark within man is his self, is his real Soul. He is not a sinner, it is blasphemy to call him so. Evil is real to us but not to God as He is in Himself. Shri Ramakrishna once compared God to a snake and evil to its poison. What

11. *Ibid.* Vol. II, p. 336.

12. *The Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, (R. K. Math, Madras). p. 207.

we call poison is not poison to the serpent. Therefore, immutable God is not affected in any way by the evils of the world.

Vedanta exhorts us to accept the world as a battlefield where we are to struggle hard for our freedom from bondage. The story of evolution is the story of the manifestation of this inherent perfection through suitable change in the environment and the organism. The glorious future of this struggle culminates in our attainment of perfection. Religion at this stage becomes a spiritual adventure, and the seeker of truth enters into a world of higher life. He loses all his human weaknesses and enjoys the divine bliss. This is the acme of spiritual life. Spiritual unity, which transcends all worldly distinction, is the solid universal ground of human fraternity.

Vedanta is the religion of optimism. It constantly assures us of our final redemption through successive births. Divinity being our real nature, nobody is condemned forever. From this we get the idea that the goal of life is to attain perfection through the fullest manifestation of our innate divinity deeply imbedded within us, in character development, in the spiritual transformation of life, and in cultivating our divine consciousness. Vedanta accepts life as a whole. All aspects of life are given full scope for their development through its participation in socio-economic programmes. But, Vedanta does proclaim that the highest goal of life can be fulfilled only in spiritual consummation.

Religion is realization. Religious truth has to be experienced through *inner development*. It is to be noted that the purification of the mind and the intense longing for God are very essential. Religion is never for hugging mere dogma or creed, or having a faith in tradition. The divine

essence being our inherent property, we feel the compulsive urge from within to seek divine fulfillment through the development of moral and spiritual excellence. This feeling for divine life, this hunger and thirst for this compulsive urge for mystical experience is the beginning of religion. This idea of religion as a God-ward impulse is necessary to gain a foothold in the realm of divinity. To such persons, fully roused from the stagnation and resignation of a novitiate, religion becomes a great source of inspiration. Such persons transform dogma-ridden, primitive religion into a practical field to achieve the highest excellences of spiritual life through lifelong struggle. Swami Vivekananda's clarion call to mankind to realize the oneness of existence—of God, man and nature—through living spiritual idealism is the "new religion of the age." It has no church, no books, no founder, no creed, and no priest. The teaching of the Eternal Religion, the whole of Vedanta, has been expressed succinctly by Swami Vivekananda. "Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."<sup>13</sup>

God is the supreme Self, which brings forth all existence, conscious and unconscious, animate and inanimate, with the help of His maya, which belongs to God. God is the source of orderliness, as He is the greatest law-giver. He is not an extracosmic God, but an intracosmic one. This concept of Law, in Vedanta, is known as *Rta*, "the

13. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. I, p. 124.



fixed way or course.”<sup>14</sup> The doctrine of karma is the counterpart of this law of causation, and more precisely, an extension of the physical law of causation to the moral world. The law of karma is the direct corollary of Rta.

This law of karma is one of the most important contributions which India has made to the religious thought of the world. The doctrine of karma is the pivot on which the entire structure of Hindu philosophy and culture stand. It is the most original and important conception of Hinduism. It has a tremendous practical bearing on the individual and his destiny. The word “karma” means action. It also suggests the effects thereof. The doctrine of karma means that all actions are governed by a law. Vedanta proclaims that as we sow, so we reap. “A man becomes good by good action and bad by bad actions.”<sup>15</sup> This is a very logical and scientific theory. Newton’s third law of motion states, “To every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

The truth of this physical law is equally applicable in religious life, too. This theory of karma does not espouse fatalism, instead it stands for our freedom of will. We are the architects of our fate. Morally good actions have a spiritual impact on our mind, and morally degraded thoughts and actions have a weakening effect on our mind. This is not guided by any external and irrational agent, it is the effect of karma that visits us. “All that we are is the result of what we have thought,” said Swami Vivekananda. Hence, it is not a retributive or an inexorable law. Divine Grace does intervene and the effect of karma can be partially or wholly cancelled. Paul Deussen appreciated

this law as it took away the bitterness from life.

Karma affords us freedom and opportunity to come out of the vicious circle. Swami Vivekananda said, “The only way to come out of bondage is to go beyond the limitations of the law, to go beyond causation.”<sup>16</sup> Karma binds, but unselfish karma liberates us. This is karma-yoga.

Vedanta preaches the doctrine of non-duality and non-difference. Oneness of life and all existence is the message. Its assurance of joy, strength, faith and vision of life; its call for devotion, fellow-feeling and dedication, are of momentous importance today. Discrimination between person and persons originates from our “die-hard ignorance.” Our spiritual maturity makes us friends of humanity. It is our very spiritual impulse, if properly nurtured, that helps us to abide by ethical principles. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” said Jesus Christ.<sup>17</sup> Swami Vivekananda shone a floodlight on this point: “The rational West is earnestly bent upon seeking out the rationality. It is very practical as its central focus is on man who is the epitome of the universe. Man in Vedanta is divine. Self, Atman of Vedanta, is self-luminous, eternally pure and blissful. As the self is not a created entity, it is immutable and eternal. Some religions put emphasis on the weaknesses of man and demand the help of God who alone can redeem him. Vedanta emphatically extols the divinity of man. Vedanta recognizes the oneness of man and God, and thereby removes the deep-seated misconception of his weakness. Again, by declaring God as the innermost Self of each person, Atman,

14. *Rig Veda*, 1.1.8.

15. *Br. Upaniṣad*, III. 2.13.

16. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. I, p. 98.

17. Matthew 22:39. Mark 12:31.

it removes our die-hard ignorance of God, that He is extra-cosmic. Infinite God is within us and we all can feel the strength within.'

Swami Vivekananda preached untiringly this gospel of Atman and wanted to rouse people from their spiritual stupor to actualize the tremendous potentiality out of such awakening. "Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity."<sup>18</sup>

The goal of Vedanta is to attain "Mokṣa"—spiritual freedom—the masterword in Indian philosophy. This spiritual attitude, moulded by Vedanta, has saved India from destruction. Philosophy in India has its origin, not in wonder or inquisitiveness, but in practical need to enjoy everlasting life in divine bliss and, thereby, solve the existential problems of life. The occupation of mind with this practical question certainly provides much better incentive for such preoccupation than mere intellectual curiosity or removal of doubts. Hence, Vedanta is essentially a value-oriented "way of life and the view of life." Therefore, Vedanta gives us a blueprint of healthy values of living.

As opposed to Western thinkers, Vedanta does not treat the study of philosophy as merely an intellectual pastime. The problem of anxiety can never be forgotten by such diversions. Hence, Vedanta holds that the saving values of life—being conscious of our own divinity and constant meditation on Atman (Self)—are to be pursued seri-

ously. Constant meditation with deep conviction will transform our whole personality. "The earnestness of the search for truth is one of the delightful and commendable features of the Upanishads."<sup>19</sup>

Only the direct, immediate and intuitive experience of Atman can make us perfectly happy. This experience is, necessarily, the greatest value in life. This concept of Atman, the Self of man, the immortality of Soul, is one of the greatest contributions of Vedanta to humanity. Swamiji said, "No books, no scriptures, no science, can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist."<sup>20</sup> Vedanta is concerned with this value. Even for the intellectual, Vedanta is a great source of inspiration and enlightenment. Its fearless quest for Truth, its love of freedom in that pursuit, its boldness and sweep of thought, its dynamic outlook on life, are of momentous importance today. Its synthetic view of Unity in variety, its harmony of religions, its cosmology and, above all, its peaceful approach toward the goal of life, are the immortal themes. In religion, Vedantic attitude is the common basis of world religions. It expounds the essential Unity of all traditional faiths, recognizing that there are many paths to the temple of Truth.

In today's world, Indian wisdom is important for our very survival. Its quest for higher values of life, its emphasis on nonviolence, its love for the spiritual over the material, its affirmation and realization of the divinity inherent in man, and its comprehensive, synthetic philosophy of the

18. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. III, p. 193.

19. R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 36.

20. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Vol. II, p. 250.



harmony of religions, is universal, positive and humane. This spirit gives rise to those values of peace, tolerance and non-aggressiveness which will help to usher in a new climate of friendship and unity for mankind.

The modern relevance of the Indian spirit has been appreciated by many Western thinkers. We conclude with a quotation from one of them. Highlighting the need for the accommodative spirit of Hinduism, Toynbee said, "At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is the Indian way. The Emperor Asoka's and the Mahatma Gandhi's principle of nonviolence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single

family—and, in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.

"In the Atomic Age, the whole human race has a utilitarian motive for following this Indian way. No utilitarian motive could be stronger or more respectable in itself. The survival of the human race is at stake. Yet even the strongest and most respectable utilitarian motive is only a secondary reason for taking Ramakrishna's and Gandhi's and Asoka's teaching to heart and acting on it. The primary reason is that this teaching is right—and is right because it flows from a true vision of spiritual reality."<sup>21</sup>

12. Arnold J. Toynbee, "Forward." Swami Ghanananda, *Shri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message*, 3rd ed. (London: Ramakrishna-Vedanta Centre, 1970), pp. viii-ix.

## THE THIRD ORDER OF VEDANTA

(Continued from page 342)

life and their individual commitment to service. That dislike is, indeed, one reason many of them have chosen not to join a monastery or convent. Some do not, in fact, want to be labelled at all. Whether there is any practical need for semimonastics to form an organization or belong to one, I do not know. Perhaps there is: It is possible that the *mahāvīr*'s derring-do and independence, admirable though those qualities are, may be overconfident. Most, if not all, spiritual aspirants need support, encouragement, training, and guidance for a long time, and an organization headed by the Ramkrishna Order would serve that need, particularly when the going gets rough and the guru is no longer tangibly present.

But however that may be, organized or not, named or not, the new class of spiritual aspirants is not a dream or an idea for some future time; it is a present fact: its members are with us on all sides, and as though to meet a demand that is very great, very urgent, they are increasing in number all over the world. Hundreds of young men and women are hearing the call of Swami Vivekananda, hundreds are inspired to renounce worldly life and to serve man, each in his or her own unique and invaluable way. Thus, it seems beyond question that Swamiji's "new type" of spiritual aspirant is here not only to stay but to grow lustrous and strong, fulfilling a very vital function in a very needful world.

# Sri Ramakrishna's Worship of Mayurmukutdhari

SWAMI NIKHILESHWARANANDA

*Some Marwaris, representing the merchant community of Calcutta, held the Saint of Dakshineswar in high esteem. They often sought his extraordinary spiritual guidance. He too had great respect for these pious and devoted people. The author, Joint-editor of Ramakrishna Jyot, a Gujarati monthly of the Ramakrishna Order, recounts Sri Ramakrishna's participation in a Calcutta Festival to Sri Krishna in 1884.*

If you walked through the streets of Burrabazar, the most crowded locality of one of the most crowded cities—Calcutta, you could experience the mixed feelings of fun and fear with bullock carts and hand carts marching past you speedily and people of all sorts surrounding you from all sides in the jammed streets. The situation isn't much different now than in Sri Ramakrishna's time a century ago. We gather this from the vivid description of Sri Ramakrishna's visit to this locality given by 'M' in the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

It was October 20, 1884, two days after the worship of Mother Kali. The Marwari devotees of Burrabazar had invited Sri Ramakrishna to the celebration of the Annakuta festival connected with the worship of Mayurmukutdhari (Sri Krishna) at 12 Mallick Street. Sri Ramakrishna was coming to the place in a carriage which could hardly move because of the traffic jam. With great difficulty Sri Ramakrishna finally arrived at about 3 pm. After alighting from the carriage he proceeded with Baburam (Swami Premananda) on foot to the house of his host. 'M', the disciple, who had been waiting there for him a long time, led the way. The Marwari host greeted

the Master and led him to the third floor of the house. A painting of Kali hung on the wall. Sri Ramakrishna bowed before it. He sat down and became engaged in a conversation in Hindusthani with a Pandit and his son on spiritual topics—viz, the purpose of God's incarnation, meaning of Bhakti and Prema, types of Samādhi, futility of occult powers, futility of hatha yoga, necessity of studying Vedanta for understanding the *Bhāgavata*, etc.

Sri Ramakrishna was leaning against a big pillow and the devotees were sitting on the floor. Seated in that position Sri Ramakrishna began to sing the famous song of Mirabai—

Brother, joyfully cling to God ;  
Thus striving, some day you may attain Him.

The Marwari host, a pious man devoted to Sri Ramakrishna, entered the room. After saluting Sri Ramakrishna, he started conversing with him. After talking about the necessity of spiritual discipline, Sri Ramakrishna said, "Pray to Rama, meditate on Him. He will certainly provide you with everything." The host told Sri Ramakrishna, "You too are that same Rama." "For heaven's sake! Never say that." Uttering these words Sri Ramakrishna bowed down to the host and said with folded hands, "That Rama dwells in all

1. 'M', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1989) pp. 637-42.



beings; He exists everywhere in the universe. I am your servant. It is Rama Himself who has become all men, animals and other living beings." When the host said: "But Sir, we do not know that," Sri Ramakrishna remarked, "Whether you know it or not, you are Rama."

After this interesting conversation, at the request of the host, Sri Ramakrishna went to see the image of Mayurmukutdhari—Sri Krishna "wearing a peacock-feather crown". He was profoundly moved as he stood before the image after bowing down with folded hands. He said: "O Govinda, Thou art my soul! Thou art my life! Victory to Govinda! Hallowed be the name of Govinda! Thou art the Embodiment of Saccidānanda—Existence, Knowledge, Bliss! Oh, Krishna! Ah, Krishna! Krishna is knowledge. Krishna is mind. Krishna is life. Krishna is soul. Krishna is body. Krishna is caste. Krishna is family. O Govinda, my life and soul!" Uttering these words, Sri Ramakrishna went into samādhi. He remained standing. Sri Ram Chatterjee who had accompanied him, supported him.

After a long time Sri Ramakrishna regained consciousness of the world and joined the procession of devotees who were taking out the image of Mayurmukutdhari, because the offering was to take place outside the room. While the food was offered with waving of lights (*ārati*) and music, Sri Ramakrishna fanned the image. The ceremony of feeding the brāhmins began on the roof. Sri Ramakrishna also partook of the prasād and then took leave of his host. It was evening and the street was so much jammed as before with people and vehicles that Sri Ramakrishna proceeded on foot saying, "Let us get out of the carriage. It can go by a back street." When the carriage came up after making the detour, Sri Ramakrishna entered it with

Baburam, 'M', and Ram Chatterjee. The younger Gopal who had come with 'M', sat on the roof of the carriage. While driving to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna during conversation about the Annakuta festival of the Marwaris, said to the devotees: "Did you notice their joy when they carried the image in procession? They were happy to think that they bore the throne of God on their shoulders."

Then Sri Ramakrishna made a very significant remark, "The Hindu religion alone is the Sanatana Dharma. The various creeds you hear of nowadays have come into existence through the will of God and will disappear again through His will. They will not last forever. Therefore I say, 'I bow down at the feet of even the modern devotees.' The Hindu religion has always existed and will always exist."

## II

Who was this pious host so devoted to Sri Ramakrishna? Who was the learned Pandit with whom Sri Ramakrishna talked in Hindi? Does the temple of Mayurmukutdhari still exist? These questions naturally come into the mind of people as they read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. With a view to finding out some of the answers, the author went one evening (in 1987) to Mallick Street in the Burrabazar area of Calcutta. But alas, all the efforts to locate the house—No. 12, Mallick Street, visited by Sri Ramakrishna were in vain. Even the police station of the vicinity could not help in the matter. After a few days, we again went, determined to locate the place. To the enquiry as to whether any house in the locality was visited by Sri Ramakrishna a hundred years ago, the people in reply asked all sorts of funny questions—who was Sri Ramakrishna?, what business was he doing?, etc. Frustrated

with the ignorance of the business community of Calcutta about Sri Ramakrishna, the author now started asking whether there was any temple called Mayurmukutdhari on the third floor of any house. After a long search people pointed out a house known as Kali Godam. Climbing the staircase and reaching the top floor, the author was overjoyed to discover the temple of Mayurmukutdhari. Yes, there it was on the top floor of the house in a room built over a part of the terrace! On the western side of the room there was the shrine containing many idols. In the centre was the idol of Sri Krishna wearing the crown of peacock feathers. The *Pūjāri* of the temple (Sri Durga Dutt, who has been conducting the worship for fifteen years) informed that he had indeed heard from his predecessor that Sri Ramakrishna had visited this temple. Sri Chiranjilal Bhow Singhka, the Chief Manager of the firm M/s. Tarachand Ghanshyamdas, owning the house, told the author that the number of the house was changed from 12 to 18 many years ago.

M/s. Tarachand Ghanshyamdas was such a big firm about a century ago that Thomas A. Timberg wrote a separate chapter: "Tarachand Ghanshyamdas—A Great Marwari Firm" in the book, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*. According to him: "Right before the first World War, the Tarachand Ghanshyamdas Gaddi in Calcutta, at 18 Mallick Street, took up the entire third floor of Kali Godam, a building located near the old centre of the opium trade and apparently built in the late 1870's. This meant that the firm took up more than eight rooms opening in a balcony overlooking an open central courtyard."<sup>2</sup> However, according to

Sri Hanuman Prasad Poddar, one of the descendants of the Poddar family owning the firm, the house is about 200 years old and was taken over by M/s. Tarachand Ghanshyamdas about 150 years ago.<sup>3</sup>

The ancestors of the Poddar family owning this firm hailed from Churu (Bikaner, Rajasthan). There is an interesting story about how the family became rich. Sri Bhagotiram was an ordinary person living in Churu. One day some thieves took shelter in the town after stealing a great number of golden vessels from somewhere. Suddenly they fled from there, on being chased, leaving the stolen goods behind. Next day the articles were auctioned. None but Bhagotiram knew that among the goods were valuable gold vessels, so he could purchase all the goods in a lot, cheaply. He became rich overnight.

The eldest son of Bhagotiram was Chaturbhuj. The second son of Sri Chaturbhuj—Tarachand Poddar was enterprising and started business in various places. The grandson of Tarachand, Sri Ghanshyamdas (son of Gurusahaymal) was also industrious. And thus started the great Marwari firm Tarachand Ghanshyamdas. Ghanshyamdas had six sons, of whom one, Sri Murlidhar, became a monk. Another son, Sri Laxmi Narayan Poddar, was an extremely pious man who built a temple of Radhakrishna at Barasana, near Vrindavan, and spent the last part of his life in spiritual practices there till he died in 1890.

Another son of Sri Ghanshyamdas was Sri Radhakrishna Poddar, also a religious person, who went to Chitrakut and passed his later years living alone and occupied

2. Thomas A. Timberg, *The Indian Economic & Social History Review*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Sept. 1971, page 270.

3. Conversations by the author with Sri Hanuman Prasad Poddar at his residence in Calcutta on 27-11-87.



ing heavily from the mainstream concepts of Hindu philosophy, is two-fold. At one level, it *devalues* the scope of such an ego. 'These warriors,' Krishna tells Arjuna, 'will one day cease to exist *even without you*.' A man who, therefore, thinks that without him the world around him will collapse is deluded. In a transient and ephemeral world there is a finiteness to our preoccupations, and an even greater finiteness to our abilities in configuring them. As Krishna reiterates: 'When a man sees himself as the only agent, he cannot be said to see.' More importantly, our actions are in the normal course, far less autonomous than we would like to believe. 'There is no being on earth, or among the Gods in heaven, free from the triad of qualities that are born of nature, but deluded by individuality, the self thinks, "I am the actor."'

At another level, the Gita, as already stated earlier, *exalts* the ego by claiming that it too is a part of the infinite Atman, the supreme spirit. Once our individual self is assimilated in such an all-pervasive entity and elevated to such a transcendent pedestal, then the preoccupation with projecting our own little selves is logically diminished. The Upanishadic saying, *Tat Twam Asi*—That Thou Art—, becomes a three-word demolition squad against the normal expectation-ridden, ego-infested way of thinking.

\* \* \*

If there is one dominant attribute of the Gita, it is its advocacy of the harmonious life as an overriding goal, valid in itself. Here its analysis is both ruthless and precise. The onslaught of the senses is forever at war with a person in pursuit of wisdom and serenity. If the onslaught is not checked, attachment arises, and from attachment, desire; desire leads to anger, and anger to confusion; confusion causes distortions in memory, and such distortion in turn leads to loss of understanding. Once under-

standing is lost, all is lost. Attraction and repulsion, attachment and hatred, are inherent in any interaction with the phenomenal world, if the senses are not kept in control. To the Gita, desire is the root cause of the loss of serenity. The power of desire is not underestimated; at more than one place the Gita equates it with a voracious fire, capable of devouring the resolve of even the wisest of men. The renunciation of desire is, however, not stated as a religious dictum; its harmful impact is psychologically analysed and its consequences spelt out with clinical elaboration. The man in the grip of desire is bound by a hundred shackles of hope, forever confused by fanciful thoughts, and consumed by pride, anger and greed. In short, desire while initially seductive is in the long run enslaving, and non-conducive to the peaceful life. It must therefore be vanquished through a control of the senses. 'Great Warrior,' Krishna exhorts Arjuna, 'kill the enemy menacing you in the form of desire.'

In stark contrast to the discordance and inadequacy of the man without harmony is the serenity and composure of the *sthita-prajna*, the man who has seen the reality of the world around him and his own role within it, and has his faculties and senses firmly in control. The Gita is most persuasively evocative in portraying the qualities of such a person. He is impartial to joy and sorrow, gain or loss, victory or defeat, failure or success. He neither exults nor hates. He is unmoved in fortune or misfortune, honour or disgrace. He is calm, controlled and poised, and possessed of a quietness of mind. Forever content, he is autonomous in his source of delight which is his inner self. He is beyond fear and anger and envy and greed. He has conquered cravings and passion and is free of desires, expectations and vain hopes. At peace with himself, his detachment is imbued with a transparent tranquillity. Imperturbable,

# Child Krishna

V. GOPINATH

Child Krishna! Thou sweet smiling babe!  
Come Thou to me with your golden flute ;  
Play on Thy flute ditties of various melody,  
Causing delight to my ears and body as well.  
Please tarry not, my child, come soon to me!  
I shall give Thee butter in both your hands.  
Let my eyes drink in the beauty of Thy form.  
Let me give you a chain enhancing your beauty.  
O sweet child! How much I yearn  
To adorn Thy head with a peacock feather!  
My dear babe! In truth I fondly wish  
To kiss Thee and clasp Thee in my grasp.  
O Gopikrishna! Please bless me to breathe my last  
With Thy beautiful form ever in my view.  
How long have I been waiting for Thee,  
Please come to my succour, O yellow-garbed one!  
Didst Thou not give salvation to Nala and Koobara  
By dragging the pestle and felling the trees ?  
Why then hesitate, O blue-coloured boy!  
Am I not Thy loyal loving devotee ?  
O Balagopal! Please come to me soon  
And release me from the world's chains!

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# News and Reports

## *Report of Centre's activities during the year 1992 (January-December)*

Ramakrishna Ashrama, Buenos Aires, is the only accredited branch of the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, India, in South America. The Centre is situated about 35 km away from the main city (Buenos Aires).

The Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda, as also Sri Krishna, Jesus Christ, and festivals like Durga Puja and Kali Puja were celebrated.

Readings (in Spanish) from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, *Raja Yoga* and other holy texts were done regularly on Sundays in the Ashrama, conducted by the Swami. The programmes of the study-group in Buenos Aires City were also held time to time. Lectures were delivered by the Swami in Buenos Aires and other places.

The Book-Sales section continued to distribute the publications on RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA-VEDANTA literature, with the collaboration of Editorial Kier S.A., The publication department had 22 titles. The small library section continued its service.

We received guests and visitors from different places of Argentina, viz., Bahía Blanca, Bariloche, Cordoba, Mendoza, Rosario, etc. Also they came from Brazil, India and Uruguay. We had the privilege of having Swamis Ritajanandaji and Bhavyanandaji in our midst.

The Swami in-charge, Swami Pareshananda, visited Brazil, Uruguay and some places of Argentina and talked on religious subjects. Spiritual interviews were also given.

The number of the Associated Members was: (1) Adherents: 36, and (2) Sympathizers: 27.

The problem of inflation etc. in most of the countries in South America has become

almost chronic. Brazil is passing through a great economical crisis. The situations in Argentina are improving slowly, although there are nagging problems of monthly inflation, unemployment, etc. The galloping expenses for maintaining the regular activities of the Ashrama were covered by the sustaining helps received from the devotees and friends of Argentina.

## *Report of the Vedanta Society Activities: April 1992—March 1993*

This is the first Vedanta Centre in the United States of America, having been started by Swami Vivekananda in 1894. It is housed at 34 West 71st Street, New York, N. Y., 10023 (Phone: 212-877-9197). Swami Tathagatananda has been in charge of the Centre since 1977.

The swami conducted Sunday morning services; Tuesday evening classes on *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*; and Friday evening classes on *The Bhagavad Gita*. Group devotional singing, open to the public, was held every Saturday and Sunday evening.

Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Buddha and Sri Krishna were celebrated, as well as Easter, Durga Puja and Christmas. The annual Vivekananda Fourth of July Festival took place as usual at the country home of one of the members.

The swami gave a number of outside talks at schools, colleges, temples and other Vedanta Societies, and to groups of devotees, in different parts of the United States, Canada and Europe. Guest lectures were given by a visiting swami and a rabbi.

## *Shifting of Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Netherlands into its own premises*

The Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Netherlands, also known as Ramakrishna Vedanta Vereniging Nederland, moved into its own premises situated at De Vlaschaard 57, 1183 KM, AMSTELVEEN on the 18th

June 1993. The auspicious event was solemnized by Homa and puja in the morning hours. The Aratrikam was performed by Swami Bhavyananda. Bhajans and kirtans were also special features. Altogether six Swamis and more than a hundred devotees from U. K., Germany, Belgium, Sweden, and the Netherlands were present. Prasad was offered to all present at the ceremony. On this same day the European Vedanta Conference was inaugurated at Brabant, the Netherlands.

*European Vedanta Conference 1993 in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Parliament of Religions, Chicago*

The European Vedanta Conference was organized in 1993 to commemorate the centenary of the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. After deliberation it was decided to hold the conference in Holland. It was attended by seven swamis and about 150 devotees from U.K., France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland and Greece. The conference lasted three days beginning on Friday evening, 18 June and ending on Sunday, 20 June.

The conference began with an opening address by Swami Bhavyananda, who explained the purpose of the meeting. Swami Vidyatmananda then read out the address delivered by Swami Vivekananda to the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago on 11 September, 1893.

This was followed by talks given by Piet Van der Wulp, the Chairman of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in Holland, and Karina Martinelli, a devotee from Germany.

On Saturday, 19 June, Swami Vidyatmananda gave a talk on Swami Atulananda's reminiscences and the teachings of Swami

Vivekananda. This was followed by a talk by Swami Tripurananda on how to teach Vedanta in the West. Frank Zeising, a devotee from Germany, then talked about the prospects for Vedanta in Europe. Daphne Goodier, from England, also spoke about what Vedanta meant for her.

In the evening session Swami Chidbhasananda gave a talk about how Vedanta can arrest the rising wave of fundamentalism. He was followed by Elisabeth Oberli, a devotee from France, who spoke on the Universality of Vivekananda. Swami Veetamohananda then spoke of the Universal message of Swami Vivekananda. Finally, Frank Leemans gave an interesting talk on the role of Vedanta in Management.

On Sunday, 20 June, there was first of all a talk by Swami Amarananda on Religion in Europe and Vedanta. He was followed by Yves Baudron from France, who spoke on Swami Vivekananda. Swami Dayatmananda then spoke on Practical Vedanta, followed by Eric Williams from Wales on the meaning of Vedanta. Swami Vidyatmananda spoke about the inspiration he derived from his contact with swamis and devotees, one of whom had the good fortune of seeing the great Swami Vivekananda himself. The participants also had formed into 7 groups and discussed the talks given by the swamis as well as by the devotees. Besides, the conference gave an opportunity to the devotees coming from many countries to meet each other and exchange views.

Swami Bhavyananda gave the closing address and the conference ended with a short period of silence and meditation, and the singing of "Hari Om Ramakrishna." The participants returned to their respective countries after lunch.



## Review & Notices

**HINDU TEMPLES: WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM, Vol. II, THE ISLAMIC EVIDENCE**, by Sita Ram Goel, Voice of India, New Delhi. Pp. 464, (16 illustrations, Rs. 120/-).

The author of this book was motivated to write after an inconclusive debate in *The Times of India* about the veracity and relevance of some historical evidence relating to the discovery of two stones (by the Archaeological Survey of India) carrying defaced carvings of some Hindu deities built into a wall of the Qutab Minar with their faces turned inwards, and also regarding an Idgah constructed by Aurangzeb on the site of the Keshavadeva temple at Mathura.

The Marxist historians who had a last word in the controversy not only blamed *The Times of India* for giving a communal twist to "the evidence" but also launched a counter attack by saying: "Indeed what is required is an investigation into the theory that both the Dera Keshava Rai temple and the Idgah were built on the site of a Buddhist monastery which appears to have been destroyed." They further argued that the Hindus had demolished many Buddhist and Jaina temples and monasteries before the advent of Islam, and that even the historicity of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna was in doubt. As the paper declared the controversy closed without providing sufficient opportunity to "the other party" to reply to the accusations of Marxists, Sita Ram Goel planned to muster evidence to set the record straight, and he has amply succeeded in his objective.

Relying almost exclusively on the Muslim accounts both in Persian and Arabic, Goel has referred to the "buried temples," "smothered sculptures" and converted Hindu shrines during a period spanning about eleven hundred years, from the middle of the 7th century to the end of the 18th. The remnants of the destruction can be seen "from Sinkiang in the north to Tamil Nadu in the South, and from Seistan in the West to Assam in the East."

Goel feels that the leftists historians are trying to cover up the heinous deeds of invaders by concocting evidence to the contrary, by providing economic or political explanation for the destruction or desecration of temples, and by ignoring the Islamic theology of iconoclasm.

Apart from wading through the labyrinths of epigraphic material, Goel profusely quotes from such sources as *Futuhu 'L Buldan*, *Tarikh-i-Tabari*, *Tarikhu 'l-Hind*, *Kitabu'l-Yamini*, *Diwan-i-Salman*, *Chach-namah*, *Jamiu'l-Hikayat*, *Tarikh-i-Kamil*, and many other contemporary works. His account of the Keshavadeva temple based on relevant reports of the Archaeological Survey of India, is particularly gripping. He amply succeeds in deflating the argument that the Jat rebellion in the Mathura region was responsible for the destruction of the said temple. Likewise, he quotes from an encyclopaedia, compiled by Edward Balfour in nine volumes in 1858, to prove that a mosque was built over the *Rama-janma bhumi*. It is, however, not mentioned who built it and when.(?)

Goel has thrown a challenge to the Marxist professors to produce concrete epigraphic or literary evidence to prove the destruction of Buddhist, Jaina, or any other shrine by the Hindus, at any time. Any takers please!

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor  
Jalandhar City

**SACRED PATHS**, by Geory Feuerstein. A Larsen Publication for the Paul Brunton Philosophical Foundation, Burdett, N. Y. 14818, 1991. 272 pages; \$ 14.95.

Sacred Paths is a book of essays on the wisdom, love, mysticism and realization inspired and expounded in the holy scriptures of India. It covers Yoga and Yoga-sadhana, Vedanta theory and practice, application of the principles of Tantra philosophy, and a good deal more. Readers will find it an interesting introduction to Hindu spiritual thought.

Besides being a scholar well acquainted with the literature of East and West, the author appears to be a devotee of Sanskrit studies. Everywhere, he writes with reverence, warmth, and appreciation of the teachings of the Upanishads, Vedanta and the Yoga Sutras and the Tantras. The reviewer is led to surmise that if Thoreau and Emerson were somehow on the American scene, they would appreciate what the author has done.

Vivekananda, Abhedananda, Swami Rama Tirtha, Paramahansa Yogananda and all the other great spiritual ambassadors from India started a great movement and revolution in the Western mind. It is a happy thing to see that new light continues to pour in, preventing any kind of stagnation. *Sacred Paths* is an original piece of work in many respects and it shows some grasp of the Indian religious mind. Writing from

the heart, surely G. Feuerstein is helping to bring about a different spiritual climate in Western culture. If his book has a serious limitation, it must be that it aspires to do too much—both giving thorough information about India's religious ideals and showing how they can be put into practice—not just for the benefit of individuals, but for the welfare of the whole of human society, for the preservation of world-ecology and so on. Yet the reader may be cautioned that, as a book of essays, some wider range of treatment should not be unexpected.

Writing, printing, and binding (in paperback) are artful. Unfortunately the current rate of currency exchange will cause the book to be prohibitively expensive for many. Otherwise it is a commendable work.

Sivaprasadananda  
Mayavati

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S WORSHIP OF MAYURMUKUTDHARI

(Continued from page 355)

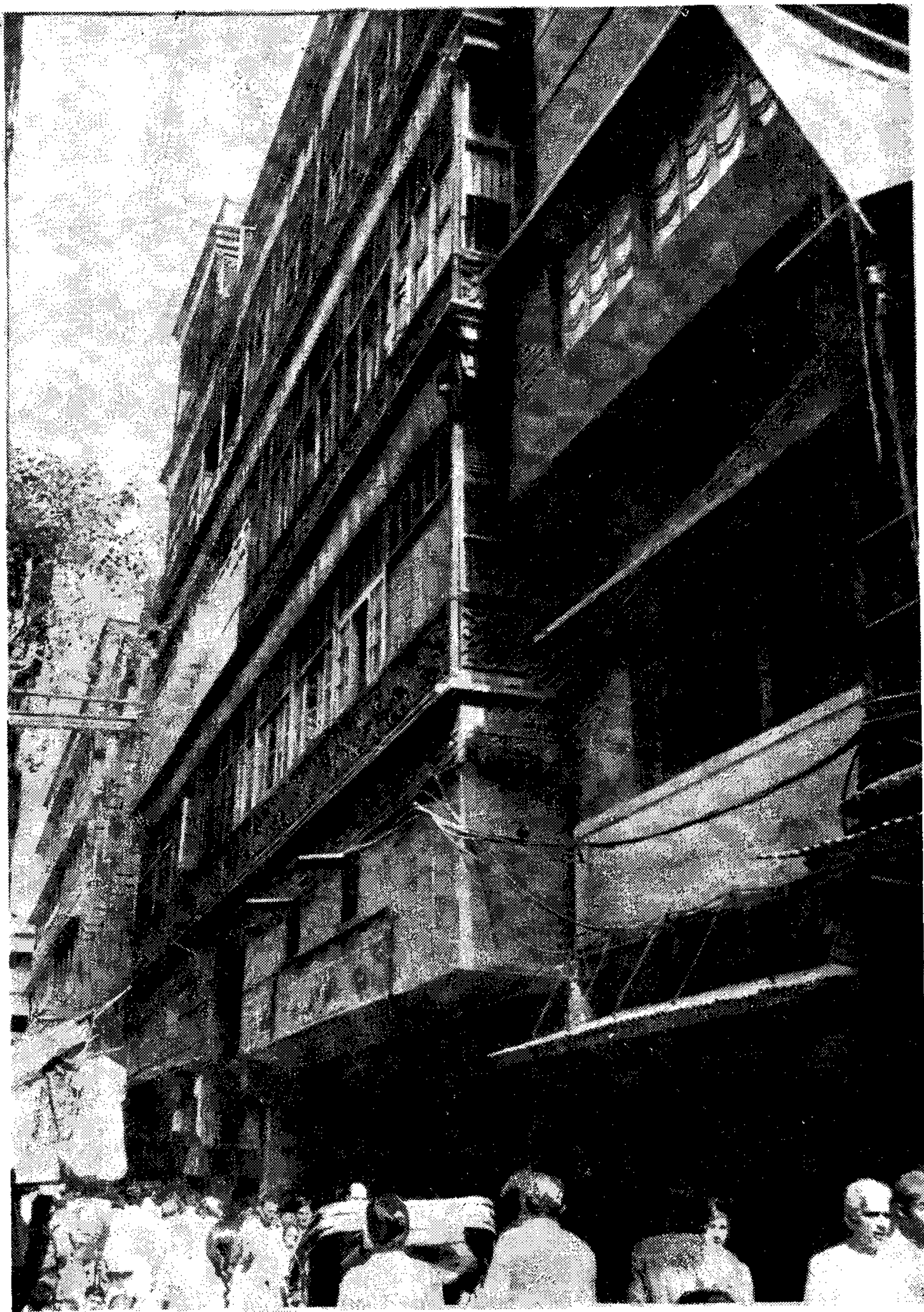
was one of them and might have gone to invite Sri Ramakrishna for the Annakuta festival. About these Marwari devotees, Sri Ramakrishna said, "Ah! they are ideal devotees of God. They visit temples sing hymns to God and eat prasad. And the gentleman whom they have made their priest this year is learned in the *Bhāgavata*."<sup>9</sup> Pandit Ramgopal Sharma, staying in one of the rooms of the building (Kali Godam) since 1951, during conversation with the author remarked that the Pandit with whom Sri Ramakrishna talked might have been Pandit Shivadatta Shastri or Pandit Balachand Shastri. Both of them were learned in Sanskrit as well as in the *Bhāgavata* and belonged to Ramagarh, the native place of

the owners of the building. But for want of documentary evidence again, it is not possible for us at present to find out conclusively about the Pandit who talked to Sri Ramakrishna.

The Annakuta festival of Mayurmukutdhari continues to be held every year. We wish more and more devotees may get inspiration from Sri Ramakrishna's historic visit to this place and the interesting conversation he had with the owner (Munim) of the building as well as the Pandit. It is not too important whether their identity is fully revealed.

9. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, page 583.





The present 18 Mallick Street house visited by Sri Ramakrishna.





Third floor Shrine Room of 18 Mallick Street visited by Sri Ramakrishna.