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JANUARY 1994

	NU.	IEN	13	10				
Divine Wisdom	55.5		-	-		-		1
Swami Vivekana	nda o	n						
The Need of the I	Hour		100					2
To Our Readers	715.0	10 110	100	,,,	***	***		2
Motherhood of G	od							
Editorial			***	177	777	177		3
Madhusudana Se	rasw	ati or	th					
Bhagavad Gita								
Stoami Gambhiran	umuu	***	***	***	***	***	***	8
Parliament of R Benedictory Add		ons,	Cal	cut	ta:			
Stoami Bhuteshani	mda .					jai		12
Parliament of R Swami Vivekana Strumi Gaharana	nda's	Mes	sag	e to	the	We		15
		100						
Exhibition and Se Federico Mayor						***		21
Sri Ramakrishna	's Tea	ching	is to	D	ivol	tees		
Stoami Blasteshara	mda .			***				22
Swami Vivekana	nda A	ind ti	he					
Harmony of Relig	gions							

Swami Tothogatananda

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वराद्मिबोधत

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISEI AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED.

VOL. 99

IANUARY 1994

No. 1

Divine Wisdom

तस्य हेतुरविद्या।

Ignorance is its cause.

Through ignorance we have joined ourselves with a particular body, and thus opened ourselves to misery. This idea of body is a simple superstition. It is superstition that makes us happy or unhappy. It is superstition caused by ignorance that makes us feel heat and cold, pain and pleasure. It is our business to rise above this superstition, and the Yogi shows us how we can do this. It has been demonstrated that, under certain mental conditions, a man may be burned, yet he will feel no pain. The difficulty is that this sudden upheaval of the mind comes like a whirlwind one minute, and goes away the next. If, however, we gain it through Yoga. we shall permanently attain to the separation of Self from the body.

तदभावात् सयोगाभावो हानं तद्दृशे: कैवल्यम्।

There being absence of that (ignorance) there is absence of junction, which is the thing-to-be-avoided; that is the independence of the seer.

According to Yoga philosophy, it is through ignorance that the soul has been joined with nature. The aim is to get rid of nature's control over us. That is the goal of all religions. 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, by psychic control or philosophy-by one or more 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. The Yogi tries to reach this goal through psychical control. Until we can free ourselves from nature, we are slaves; as she dictates so we must go. The Yogi claims that he who controls mind controls matter also. The internal nature is much higher than the external nature and much more difficult to grapple with, much more difficult to control. Therefore he who has conquered the internal nature controls the whole universe; it becomes his servant. Raja-Yoga propounds the methods of gaining this control. Forces higher than we know in physical nature will have to be subdued. This body is just the external crust of the mind. They are not two different things; they are just as the oyster and its

(Continued on page 11)

Swami Vivekananda on the Need of the Hour

There are many things to be done, but means are wanting in this country. We have brains, but no hands. We have the doctrine of Vedinta, but no hands. We have the power to reduce it into practice. In our books, three is most the doctrine of universal equality, but in work we make great distinctions. It was in Irdia that unselfish, and disinterested work of the most exalted type was preached, but in practice ne are merfully creak, avefully bearfless—unable to think of anything bearfless—unable to think of anything bearfless—unable to think of anything besides our now mass-of-flesh budies.

I too believe that India will awake again, if anyone could love with all heart the people of the country.... Then early will india awake, when hundreds of large-hearted men and women, giving up all desires of enjoying the luxuries of life, will long and exert themselves to their utmost for the well-being of the millions of their countrymen.

Give and take is the law; and if India wards to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the rations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life, and harted is death.

Work out the salvation of this land and of the whole world, each of you thinking that the entire burden is on your shoulders. Carry the light and the life of Vedänta to every door, and rouse up the divinity that is hidden within every soul.

Work unto death—I am with you, and when I am gone, my spirit will work with you. This life comes and goes—wealth, fame, enjoyments are only of a few days. It is better, far better to die on the field of duty, preaching the truth than to die like a workly worm. Advance!

To Our Readers

Prahuddlu Bharata, India's oldest monthly Journal in circulation, is about to enter into its 99th year of publication.

This first issue of 1994 comes as a special illustrated number for which we are thankful to all the able contributors, both in and outside India. Other interesting issues will follow month by month with articles by authors, scholars, lovers of Vedanta, and writers with a wide range of interests.

Prabuddha Bharata hopes to be able to continue improving the standard of the journal both physically and in quality of content. We invite all to send us articles, essays, documented reports and other prose or positic contributions on subjects bearing on human upfild and the spread of entiglistence l'edigion, information, and estigate, and estigate estigate, and estigate estigate, and estigate estigate, and estigate estigate estigate, and estigate es

On behalf of all our staff and associates, we send out best wishes to our readers, advertisers and interested admirers for a happy, peaceful, and prosperous New Year.

Motherhood of God

God the Father

We are familiar with the belief in God the Father, or the Fatherhood of God. Christianity, Islam and a good number of older religions, which are professed by a majority of mankind today, hold this as central to their faiths. The word God somehow evokes in the human mind a male form or a masculine principle. They speak of God as 'He' but never as 'She', much less as 'It', even though they say that God is pure omnipresent Spirit without form. God as Mother, or the Motherhood of God, is an entirely incongruous idea for them His compassion, love, forgiveness, etc., which in a lesser degree we all see in our mothers, are considered to be aspects of His Fatherhood, not of His Motherhood. It seems that only patriarchal and male-dominated societies have this onesided view of God.

What or who this God is, and what this relationship between mankind and God as Father really means in the experience of those who are striving to commune with Him and those who have already done so, is a different matter. As for the rest, the majority, psychology limits them to imagining God as Father, possessing in the utmost degree all the qualities of a powerful noble male.

Concept of God

From primitive levels of brutality and animality mankind has come to have some degree of civilization and culture only because of its accepting God and religion. However, man's understanding of God has evolved parallelly with his mental and social evolution. From viewing God as a tribal Chief, as a Patriarch, as a mostly angry King, as a just King, as an

omnipotent Ruler of creation, the human mind has come a long way to a point of feeling closer to God as Father. Since mankind has felt God to be responsive, it has by the standards of its mentality been capable of relating with Him in human terms only. A male-dominated society or a masculinity-dominated mind naturally looks upon Him as an Ideal Male. And He is called Father because people feel that He is not only a Ruler or a watchful Supervisor but also the Originator of all creation. He is the one who breathes life into His creatures and gives them individuality, who like a human father supplies them their needs, protects them, holds them together by Law, and so on. Also, perhaps people sense a conditionality in His love, forgiveness, etc., just as they do in their fathers.

Eruption of Masculinity The consequences of this partial comprehension of God have been disastrous for the world at all levels-individual, familial, social, national, international and environmental. It is not correct to think that religious views should not be held responsible for the travails and turmoils in today's Godless, religionless, materialistic world, The fact is that people professing some religion or other are in the majority. Though they appear to be floating along with the vociferous Godless minority, it is their basic feelings and actions which largely affect the social milieu. For, religious beliefs and sentiments are very deep-seated subtly powerful forces that do sway people's overall behaviour also.

So, though God is looked upon as Father, it is His supposed masculinity that has chiefly reinforced and impelled human masculine attitudes and activities. These, again, have perseverated through individuals and familier. Children too have grown to feel that their father's masculine qualities are more important and worthy of emulation.

That 'male-ness' implicit in the generally accepted "Father' concept appears to have given some kind of divine searction to have given some kind of divine searction to male-domination. Masculinity has appropriated respectability exclusively. Remember, God is said to have created Eve from a rhy, a small rh, of Adam! Thais also of what ever happened to the worship of the Mother Goddess known to have been prevalent in many parts of the ancient world.

Families have been letting loose into our world boys, girls, men and women with a surfeit of obnoxious machismo. Mankind is: smarting from the symptomatic effects of untamed masculinity-intolerance, assertiveness, fortified individuality, dominance and exploitation. The principal characteristic of masculinity, viz assertive individuality, has offted individuals against individuals, husbands against wives, children against parents, nations against nations, and man, as though in a deathwish, against nature. Just look around at the mushrooming 'individualities' around the world-pugnacious groups formed on the basis of dialect, language, tribal origin, race, religious sect. class, colour, culture, nationality, and so on. In a world shrunk rapidly by science, the power to harmonize all these 'individualities' into a family of mankind is missing. That motherly power is missing. People, men and women, have become terribly masculine, sometimes in an ordinary human way, sometimes swearing to be fighting for equal rights, and sometimes, sadly, in the name of religion.

We have seen several strategies

employed to bring about enduring integration, harmony, unity and peace amongst diverse people. Not one of them-neither kingship nor dictatorship, neither communism nor capitalism, neither imperialism nor socialism-has succeeded. Today we are trying democracy. Will it succeed? No, not by itself as a political ideology. For, though it focuses on the individual, his freedom, rights and duties, it leaves plenty of room for discrimination on the basis of race, colour, culture, etc. Have longstanding democracies really been able to bring a genuine equality and harmony among its citizens, particularly when they are of diverse origins? Aren't democratic nations confronting other democratic nations on specious issues in the name of national interest and sovereignty? Often democracy is a deceptive mask over ruthless and unbridled capitalism.

After all democracy is not a machine, it is an attitude of mind. It involves people, individuals like you and me, our convictions and attitudes. Unless individuals, at least a majority of them, have a primary and dominant conviction about the fundamental oneness of mankind in spite of all its diversity, they cannot achieve harmony. Harmony cannot come without the spirit of acceptance towards diversity. Whenever and wherever democracy has faltered, there it has tried to work as a political ideology only, forgetting its source in God. The first principles of democracy are: '...that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creater with inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.... (Italics ours.)

So, democracy is, rather should be, rooted in God so as to be able to instill into rooted in God so as to be able to instill into people a sense of deep togetherness and harmony in relation to the whole of mankind, in relation to all life. However, what when the traditional social environ-

ment of a people trying to apply democratic principles is make-dominated? What if women are given equal political rights tonly, but are oppressed and exploited in day-to-day life? Such a situation has actualby prevailed so long. That is why women have not been able to esercise their full powers and capabilities, specifically their power of motherhood or motherliness. But that is where the power to harmonize diversity comes front? I'll recently women have been confined to the role of fernales, and motherhood has been understood menely in a biological serve.

Neglect of Motherhood

We are paying the price for misunderstanding and neglecting motherbood. Survey history and see the present. All these past several centuries women in the male-centred majority of mankind have been deprived of their due freedom. By and large, women were and are being left with nothing to do but, first, keep their tensialty in top trim, and, second, ensure inheritors. Men, and somen too, have understood motherhood in the physical series only, ignoring the tremendous power hidden in it.

Haven't you come across people who in their formative years had come under the dominant influence of their fathers only? Their mothers too ineffective or themselves more 'masculine' than motherly? Didn't you notice something lacking in them? A person, man or woman, oriented mostly by his or her father tends to be usually highly individualistic, unable to relate harmoniously with other people. That is because that person unfortunately did not come under the special power of motherhood, viz the power to integrate, harmonize, love and accept. It has been said that so far as the majority of people are concerned, religious beliefs do accomplish some formal external harmony. But at the

level of practical life of individuals and families, the picture is different. A noble woman may domesticate a man, a wife may, to some extent, mellow a dominant husband, but it is only the mother who, transcending physical motherhood, can integrate the family. And that in spite of each of its members having individualistic tendencies derived from the father. Motherhood has got this innate power of bringing harmony, a deep feeling of togetherness and oneness. She does it not by destroying the individualities of the family members but by injecting into them her own spontaneous capacity to love, forgive and accept others as they are. The mother-power can destroy the assertive and divisive streaks in 'individuality', fostering only its healthier aspects necessary for her children to grow into distinct but harmonious parts of the family.

5

The coming change

People are today realizing that women too have much more to contribute for the health of mankind. There is a noticeable change in the social environment of many countries. Education has given women the courage to fight for and win their rights. In the beginning this wave of assertion peaked by wanting to be more like men-in dress, gestures, postures, profession, etc. That wave is subsiding, giving birth to a second wave of women's ascension. This one appears to be powered by an urge to be themselves. Women are now struggling to actualize in full their own potential. That will be achieved when women, in addition to their natural grace, modesty, purity and beauty, will discover within themselves their prerogative to motherhood. True motherhood radiates unconditional love. acceptance, forgiveness and sacrifice, and it harmonizes and integrates.

Think of the greatness of the woman who from the maturity of her potentialities is feminine as a wife, and who from the fullness of her motherhood has, by her example, infused into each of her family a sense of fundamental togetherness-'All these members, with their distinct individualities and in spite of their idiosyncrasies, are my very own.' How much greater is that mother whose feeling of 'My very own' embraces not only her family but also whoever happens to come to her. Her children would be a joy to their neighbourhood and society, because her harmonizing energy would be flowing through her children too. A nobler mother would be capable of going a step further, enabling her children to interact with the whole world in a spirit of amity, irrespective of race, colour or language. The greatest and the noblest is she indeed who bestows a consciousness of oneness with all created thines. Such a mother will be like God, almost. Then mankind will wonder, How much greater must be the motherhood of God who has infused women with such a power!' It may be able to hear what God has always been affectionately saving: 'My child, nobody is a stranger. Learn to make the whole world your own."

The future

In that evolved state of mind and culture harsh macculinity and exploited feminity would have matured into noble fatherhood and exalted motherhood. Children would receive from their father physical strength, individuality and independence, and from their mother that urique gift of harmsony. We can hope to see in future more and more people with 'a hero's will and a mother's heart."

What clse? People may then be able to glimpse in their parents the embodiment of God's Fatherhood and Motherhood. Human fatherhood and motherhood may uman to the felt as the involvement of God in His creation. Possibly, we earnestly hope, more and more people will be drawn to God, now that the fear-awe-obediencecreating musculinity of God the Father would have got complemented by His profound Motherliness. We anticipate a great religious awakening in mankind. Like children inheriting their parents' characteristics, mankind too may become capable of imbibing the qualities of God as Father and Mother. Imagine the state of mind of a person whose exclusive individuality derived from the father has become transformed into an all-inclusive one through an extraordinary mother-power, a person who is experiencing a sense of 'My own' in relation to the whole of creation. Well, that is as good as feeling the power of God flow through oneself! Think of the universal religious leaders, their allembracing love and forgiveness, and their power to give peace. Don't you see there the Motherhood of God?

January

A deep feeling of oneness of humanity and religious assokaring are not the only rewards from averend motherhood. A spiritual awakening will be the highest separation of the highest separation of 40% own with respect to all living things, we will find that its realization does not come so long as we have the least sense of identity with our bodies and mines, and the things will be sense of identity with our bodies and mines, in other words, one who succeeds in parfecting this universal attitude is certain to know conself to be a genderies so spiritual entity. He or she is destined to realize one's spiritual entity. He coresses with Cod the accural pure Spirit.

An example

Since the quality of human motherhood holds the key to mankind's evolution into future stages of universal harmony and religious and spiritual awakening, two questions arise. Will society give women their rightful place? Will women be able to rise to such heights and give their utmost as mothers?

The first question stands answered already by the irreversible changes sweeping an increasing number of countries in the matter of women's rights. Women themselves have hastened the process. As for the second. Western countries and those that they have influenced too deeply will be hard out to find amongst themselves a woman who could be held up as an example. The thoughts of the Darwins, the Freuds, and the Russels, the Nietzsches and the like, and the tradition of male-domination still hangs heavily on them. The answer from the Vedantic tradition, on the other hand, is an unhesitant 'yes', Examples from the past will naturally appear hazy. Fortunately mankind has been provided with a very recent example answering affirmatively the second question. That is Sri Sarada Devi (1853-1920). The 7th of this month is her birthday. Lakhs of people. literally, will be worshipping her on this day as the Holy Mother.

She is the paragon for women of today. and she will be so for many centuries to come. Her biographers have recorded her life in faithful detail, compelling our attention to something extraordinary in her that made her an ideal daughter, an ideal wife, an unusual 'mother', and, above all, a giver of the highest spiritual knowledge. Mankind should study her life and teachings to get some understanding as to how these different roles can be perfected and blended one personality, 'motherhood' particularly, with which we are concerned here, is certainly indicative of the type of women the world will see in time. Though married to Sri Ramakrishna,

she had no children of her own in the current sense. And yet, she could not help the power of her innate motherliness overflowing her being to embrace one and all who came to her. And also even those who had never seen her, for there are any number of instances of strangers whispering 'Mother' on seeing just her photograph! So irresistible was, and is, the power of her universal motherhood. It is before such power of the women of coming decades that crass masculinity and individuality will humble themselves to become transformed, and mankind will learn to live in universal harmony on this vast planet Earth.

Her ultimate gift

Universal motherhood and world harmony are but temporal. Mother has given us much more. She has made us feel so sweetly closer to God by embodying in herself the Motherhood of God. On her own admission, Sri Ramakrishna (1836-86) 'has left me behind to demonstrate to the world the Motherhood of God.' So, finally, it is she who gives meaning and direction to our desired harmonious lives on this tiny speck called Earth. Feeling close to God is only the beginning of one's spiritual life. But, no matter how much that life is known to choo about as one struggles to progress, she is certain to help every sincere spiritual seeker to attain the ultimate goal of that lifeexperience of his or her essential oneness with God who is pure Spirit. For, her assurance is there for all of us: 'Whenever you are in trouble, know that you have a Mother'

"Whenever the mind goes after anything other than God, consider that as transient and surrender the mind at the sacred feet of the Lord."

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad Gita

I Among the many explanations of the Gills, Mallusculant's Annotation, called the Gilffarthe-digits, is an outstanding on. We see in its los original insights as devotee and an Advoitin. Second Gambbirnandaji, the late President of the Ramskrishna Order, well known also for his faithful translations of Sri Sashara's Commentary on the Hollman-sitters, the Eight Lyunzialus and the Bhagama-Gill had completed the translation of this Annotation a fey months before his densite in 1988. Its revision by Sound Medichalandaji, Achary, Probalesport' Training Costre, Beler Math, is nearing completion. In the meanwhile extracts from the work will appear from time to time.]

The Annotator's Innocation and Introduction
Om Salvatations to Rümacandra possessed of divine qualities, the nectar—in the
form of Consciousness—issuing from
whose lotus-feet is enjoyed by the monks of
the highest classifyanima-hanisa), and who
resides in the minds of devotees.

- After having assiduously deliberated on the meaning of the Commentary of the Venerable One(Sonikariūirae). I write this elucidation, called Gidhirthadipikā (Exposition of the Suthtle Meanings), of almost every word of the Gibi.
- It has been said that the purpose of the scripture Gilii is absolute Liberation, which consists in the complete cessation of transmigration together with its causes.
- That is the supreme State of Visqui which is identical with absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, for the attainment of which the Vedas, consisting of three parts, have commenced.
- The three parts successively stand for rites, meditation and enlightenment. In conformity with them, the Chill, consisting of eighteen chapters, has three sections.
 Here (in the Chill) each section of
- six (chapters) should be understood as referring to one part (of the Vedas). Steadfastness in Action(rites and duties) and steadfastness in Knowledge are taught in the first and last (sections).
 - Since the two cannot be combined

because of their extreme opposition, therefore Steadfastness in Devotion to the Lord has been told in the middle.

- As that devotion is inherent in both of them, therefore it removes all obstacles. That (devotion) is of three kinds mixed with rites, pure, and mixed with Knowledge.
- There again, in the first section the pure Self meant by the word 'thou' (in 'Thou art That') is ascertained rationally through the Path of Action and its renunciation.
- In the second (section), by way of describing Steadfastness in Devotion to God, is ascertained the meaning of the word 'That' as the Lord who is supreme Bliss.
- 10. And in the third is presented clearly the meaning of the sentence(viz 'Thou art That') as the identity of the two. Thus, here (in the GBB) also there is an interconnection among the (three) sections.
- 11. The speciality of each chapter, however, will be spoken of in the respective chapters themselves. These (following) steps in the disciplines for Liberation are being presented as the purpose of the Scripture (Catta).
- 12. (The first step is) the performance of selfless work by rejecting rites and duties meant for personal gain (kimpa-karma) and the prohibited actions (nisidiha-karma). There again, the highest merit lies in repeating the name of and praising (the Lord) Hari.
 - 13. When after the dissipation of sins

from the mind it becomes fit for discrimination, then there arises a firm discrimination between the permanent and the transient.

- 14. Gradually follows detachment from things here or hereafter, called untilizing (complete control over the mind and the organs). Then, through the perfection of suma (curbing of the mind)² etc., renunciation becomes fully established.³
- 15. Thus, from the renunciation of all things springs the firm hankering for Liberation. From the follows approaching a teacher, and from that the receiving of instructions.
- Thereafter follows śrawaja (hearing and understanding of Vedănta) etc. for the elimination of doubt. In this matter the whole of the Uttara-mīmārisā (Vedānta) scripture becomes useful.
- Thereafter, through the perfection of that follows nididln@sana (profound meditation). The whole of the Yoga scripture, indeed, gets its purpose fulfilled at this stage.
- 18. As a result, when the mind becomes freed from all defects there arises the Knowledge of Reality from (hearing) the (Upanişadic) sentence ('Thou art That'). From the word (of the Upanişad) itself springs the Unlitve Vision (i.e., immediate
- Vainīgya, detachment is of two kinds, parā (superior) and aparā (lower). The latier is classified under four heads—yatamāna, syatireka, ekenāriya and rašīkām. See under 6.35 here; also see Glossarv.
- 2. Some (curbing of the mind), dama (testralning the sense-organs from their respective objects), upuntif (not allowing these restrained organs from drifting back to their objects), tribig (endurance), studied (sizish), armaldinas (concentration of mind), and mamuksutes (yearning for Liberation). See Jama in Glossary.
- A different reading is savnyëse nisthite blavet: one should become fully established in renunciation.

Knowledge of the identity of Brahman and the Selfi.

- As for the complete eradication of nescience, that occurs on the rise of the knowledge of Reality. Then, when the severing is removed, error and doubt become disnelled.
- 20. Trough the power of the Knowledge of Reality the results of actions (done in past lives) that have not commenced bearing fruit (aniinbilita or suicita) get wholly destroyed, to be sure, and the results of actions (done in the present life after the dawn of Knowledge) that are to bear fruit in the future (Agiminsi do not accuse.⁴
- 21. But, because of the disturbance created by the results of actions that have started bearing fruit (prämbdla), päämä (past impression) does not get destroyed. That is eliminated through sumama, the strongest of all (the discribines).
- The five disciplines, viz yama (restraint) etc. (P.Y. Su. 2.29), practised earlier become conducive to that samquana which is a triad consisting of dhāmajā (concentration), dryāna (meditation) and samādhi (absorption). (See P.Y. Su. 3.1-4).
- However, absorption is quickly accomplished through special devotion to Cod⁹. From that follows ramonizis (elimination of the modifications of the mind) and visual-ksusu (dissipation of past impressions).⁶
- Knowledge of Reality, elimination of the modifications of the mind, as also the
- 4 Seficie-larms(platile) results of actions done in post lives, which are destined to fructify in future lives; prinabiles larms(platile) results of past actions that have set up the present life of a person and have begun yielding their fruits; @glminii-larms(platile) results of actions performed in the present life, which will fructify in future lives.
- See under 6.28.
 See Chapter 6 for a full discussion of this subject.

- dissipation of past impressions-when these three are practised together. Liberation even while still living in the body (finanmukti) becomes firm.
- Total renunciation as a result of 25 enlightenment (pidnot-sormäss) is mentioned in the Upanisads for this purpose that there may be effort for completing that very part (among these three) which remained incomplete earlier.
- When the mind is first held back fully from fluctuations by means of savikalpa-samildhi, there occurs in it the nirvikalno-saniidhis, which has three levels.
- In the first place, the person awakes (from nirvikalpa-samiidhi) by himself, (and) in the second, he is awakened by others. In the last, he does not awake at all: he remains ever absorbed in it.
- He who has become such a Brähmana (knower of Brahman) is the foremost among the expounders of Vedanta. He is spoken of as having gone beyond the gusus, a man of steady Wisdom, and a devotee of Visnu.
- (He is) also (called) a transcender of the castes and stages of life, one who is Liberated even while still living in the body (iinnmakis), and a delighter (only) in the Self. The Scriptures keep away from such a person because of his being self-fulfilled.

29.

- 30-31. On the authority Upanisadic text. He who has supreme devotion to the Deity, and as much of it to the guru as to the Deity, to him, indeed, to the great-souled one, these subject-matters that have been spoken of become revealed' (So. 6.23) etc., it follows that devotion to God with body, mind and speech, under all con-
- A kind of spiritual absorption of the mind in which persists the awareness of the distinction among the knower, knowledge and the known.
- 8. Another kind of sountual absorption in which the awareness of the above distinction is obliterated.

- ditions, becomes useful in this context
- The devotion cultivated in the earlier stace leads to the next stage. Otherwise, attainment of success is very difficult owing to the abundance of obstacles.
- And there are the words of Hari: 'Verily, by that past habit itself he is carried forward, even in spite of himself!'. ._ attaining perfection through many births, (thereby achieves the highest Goal)' (6.44, 45)
- 34-35, If, however, owing to the unpredictability of the impressions acquired (in past lives), someone becomes self-fulfilled in the beginning itself--like the dropping of a fruit from the sky-, then the scriptures cannot be accepted as having been promulgated for him, because they have already served their purpose. The grace of God that descends as a consequence of persistence in the disciplines that were perfected in earlier lives is inscrutable!
- 146 Although the earlier stage is thus acquired, devotion to God should still be cultivated for attaining the later stages. They cannot be attained without that (devotion).

But in the state of being Liberated

- even while still in the body (iftvormukti), no 'result of devotion' is to be imagined: Adoring Hari is rutural to them. like their being devoid of hate etc.
- Such is the greatest of Hari (Visnu) that, though free from bondage, the sages, who delight (only) in the Self, render spontaneous devotion to Visnu (Bh. 1.7.10). According to the sentence, 'Of
- them the man of Knowledge, endowed with constant steadfastness and one pointed devotion excels', etc. (7.17), this one, who is full of loving devotion, is declared to be the highest.
- 40. All this has been revealed by the Lord in the scripture Giti. Therefore my mind is intensely eager to explain this (scripture).
- 41-42 Performance of selfless work is declared to be the root cause of Liberation.

and the hindrances to it are the demoniacal sins like sorrow etc. from which follow deviation from one's natural duty, recourse to what is prohibited, or action performed with selfish motive or crotism.

- 43. Being thus ever under the influence of the demoniacal sins, a person becomes unfit for gaining the human Goal and suffers a series of afflictions.
- Pain is naturally repulsive to all living beings in this world. Therefore sor-

row, delusion, etc., which are its (pain's)

45-46. The Lord has uttered this most esteemed Scripture with a view to enlightening a person who, being filled with this desire to know the means of ernadicating sorrow, delusion, etc., which are inherent in the beginningless chain of mundane existence, and which are the causes of affliction and difficult to be got rid of, has become eager to attain the highest human Goal.

Divine Wisdom

(Continued from page 1)

shell. They are but two aspects of one thing; the internal substance of the oyster takes up matter from outside, and meanfactures the shell. In the same way the internal fine forces which are called mind take up gross matter from outside, and from that manufactures this external shell, the body. If, then, we have control of the internal, it is very easy to have control of the internal, it is not that some forces are physical, and some mental; the physical forces are but the gross manifestation of the fine forces, just as the physical world is but the gross manifestation of the fine of the fine world.

विवेकस्यातिरविप्लवा हानोपायः।

The means of destruction of ignorance is unbroken practice of discrimination.

This is the real goal of practice—

This is the real goal of practice—
discrimination between the real and the
unreal, knowing that the Puruga is not
nature, that it is neither matter nor mind,
and that because it is not nature, it cannot
possibly change. It is only nature which
changes, combining and re-combining,
dissolving continually. When through
constant practice we begin to discriminate,
ignorance will vanish, and the Puruga will
begin to shine in its real nature—
omniscient, commiscent, commiscent,
commiscent, commiscent,
omniscent, commiscent,
omniscent,
omnis

—Swami Vivekananda in Raja-Yoga, The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page 257.

The only definition that can be given of morality is this: That which is selfish is immoral and that which is unselfish is moral.

-The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page 110.

CALCUTTA

Benedictory Address

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

The Centenary of Suama Visedamanda's participation at the World's Puritament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 was celebrated in India at the Netuji Indoor Stadium, Calcutta. The Benedictory address given by Reverd Srienat Soumi Bhuteshanandidi, Maharaj, President of the Ramabrishna Math and Ramabrishna Mission on September 11, 1993 by given below.

Rajyapal Sri Raghunath Reddy, Sri Arjun Singh, Dear Monks, Nuns and Friends,

I am extremely happy that the Centerary of Swami Vieckanandr's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 is being celebrated in Calcutta, the birthplace of Swami Vivekananda, under the auspices of the Remarkrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. It is a joy to see such a vast concurse of mean and women from different parts of the world unified by the common bond of love for Swamiji.

The meeting has been described as a Parliament of Religions. It is only in the fitness of things that such a Parliament is being held in this city of Calcuta, in the proximity of Dalokhineswar where Sri Ramakrishna lived and taught he doctrine of harmony of religions. It was this doctrine of his master that Swami Vivekananda proclaimed to humanity at the World's Parliament of Religions.

Swamiji's appearance in that world forum took place at a critical juncture in the history of mankind. Previous to that event, civilizations had grown almost independently in different parts of the globe. There was some interaction among them, no doubt, but it did not interfere with the distinct characteristic of each civilization. But with the advancement of science and improvements in the mode of transport and communication, races, cultures and national wave beginning to come closer together and to intends with one another more effective duting for the evolution of the composite civilization, in which the component cultures contribute to the welfare of all mankind, was being laid. The world was in meed of a great teacher to galde humanity in evolving this composite civilization. It was in fulfillment of this historical need that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda appeared on the world some.

During the hundred years after the first in the intellectual, social and political spheres of human life. One of the moint important of these is the change in modern man's attitude towards religion. Awareness of the limitations of science and the dangers of unrestrained technological development have made educated people in the West turn towards oriental religions. On the other hand, Eastern people are turning to Western science and technology for their own economic betterment.

Secondly, mass media have created a kind of global thinking and have made distant nations our next door neighbours. What the world now requires is a total vision of life and reality and a universal principle of unity for mankind. Swami Vrekcananda has fulfilled this need through his doctrine of Universal Religion.

At the 1893 Parliament itself Swamiii presented this ideal of universal religion to the world. He said: ' ... if there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time: which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, and saints and sinners alike: which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development....It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognise divinity in every man and woman and whose whole scope, whose sole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature."

Here by 'Universal Religion' Swamiji meant not the creation of a new religion but the culmination of the existing religions, the ultimate form that the religions of the world will or should assume. The first step in the attainment of this goal is the establishment of harmony or unity among religions.

The main reason why religion, which is meant to unite people, becomes the cause of disunity and conflict is that the true nature of religion is not properly understood. Swami Vivekananda has shown that religions of the world have two aspects a spiritual aspect and a socio-cultural aspect. The spiritual aspect deals with the eternal truths of religions such as the nature of the Ultimate Reality and the relationship of the human soul with it. It is by realization of these eternal truths that man can free himself from ignorance, bondage and suffering and attain everlasting peace.

Sri Ramakrishna followed the spiritual disciplines of different religions and through them all, attained the same Ultimate Reality. From these experiences he came to the conclusion that realization of the Ultimate Reality, known as God, is the real end and purpose of all religions. Furthermore, Sir Bamakriahna showed that the Ultimate Reality is one but known by different names in different religions. More than three thousand years ago, the Vedic sages had declared. Elam said, ripin lobulad undont, 'Truth is one, sages call it by different names'. In modern times Sri Ramakrichna re-established this truth in the context of world religions.

Swami Vivekananda made this trush available to all people. He showed that the capacity for God realization is inherent in all souls. As he put it, 'Each soul is potentially divine; the goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal.' According to Swamiji, it is this manifestation of inherent divinity that is the real essence of religion. Thus, at the deeper level of the spirit, religious of the world show a fundamental unity.

But religion has also a socio-cultural aspect. Mythology, dogma, rituals, and various customs and festivals come under this category. These vary from religion to religion and give rise to all the rich diversity that religions possess. The vast majority of people identify religion solely with these external forms of religion. Unfortunately, these external differences have been a major source of conflict among the followers of different religions. But Swamiit has shown that diversity need not necessarily mean contradiction or conflict. On the contrary, the cultural diversities of religion are complimentary to one another. Every religion has made some unique contribution to world culture. To quote Swamiji's own words: Religions are not contradictory; they are supplementary. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth. It is therefore addition, not exclusion.'

Another doctrine of Swami Vividannada regarding religious harmony is that it is not enough to tolerate other religions. It is also necessary to accept and integrate the good points of other religions into one's own religious life. This idea of acceptance was pointed out by Swamiji at the Chicago Parlament of Religions itself. He said: 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhiat, no a Hindu or a Buddhiat to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.'

It is now clear that, if understood and applied properly, religion is a tremendous force to do good to humanity. It is unjust to blame religion for the evils committed by ignorant people in the name of religion. In our scriptures the primary aim of religion is stated to be eradication of suffering, atumtika duhkha-nivrtti. Suffering knows no barriers of creed, caste or race. Religions of the world have a common commitment in the alleviation of suffering. In the field of doing good to humanity let there be no barriers of religion. Instead of dwelling on the negative side of religion, let us increase its power of doing good. This was what Swami Vivekananda did. He was one of the first among the religious leaders of modern India to harness the power of religion along socially useful channels by organizing social service on a larger scale without distinctions of religious or sect or caste.

Great personages like Swami Vivekananda cannot be confined within the limits of a single religion or nationality. They belong to all humanity. Swamiji's heart went out to suffering people wherever they were. The nine years that he lived on earth after he appeared at the Chicago Parliament of Religions were spent in working incessantly for the welfare of humanity in the West as well as in the East. He himself said that even after discarding his body, he would not cease to work. I believe his spirit is still working for the good of men and women all over the world. The celebration of the centenary of Swamiji's participation at the Parliament of Religions has now afforded us an opportunity to pay homage to his hallowed living presence and express our gratitude for the great sacrifices he underwent for the welfare of humanity.

I would like to conclude this talk by invoking the blessings of Sr. Ramakishna, Holy Mother and Swamiji on this Parliament. By their grace, may this Parliament become succonstul in awakening the minds of large numbers of people to Swami Vivekananda's message of universal harmony, and may our deliberations conduce to the welfare and poace of humanity!

[&]quot;As a lamp brought into a room that has been dark for a thousand years illumines it immediately, the light of Jnäna illumines the Jiva, and dispels his agelong ignorance."

[—]Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math), page 250.

Swami Vivekananda's Message to the West

SWAMI GAHANANANDA

A Parliament of World's Religious met at Chicago between August 28 and September 4, 1983. Revered Seumi Gahanarandaji Mahanaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Mahl and Ramairishna Mission participated in the Parliament and gave presentations on several occusions. We give below the Kepnote address delivered by him on August 31, 1993.

Distinguished Participants, Brother Monks and Friends,

Among the voices of the prophets that continue to reverberate in the corridors of time, there is none which is more meaningful to modern man, or carries more power to the modern mind, than that of Swami Vivekanands. That voice burst upon the western world like a thunder clap in the world's Parliamen of Religions in this city of Chicago a hundred years ago. The powerful waves that it then generated have been influencing the thought-currents of the world directly or indirectly ever since.

Swami Vivekananda felt a deep sense of commitment to the West which he expressed on several occasions. He stated more than once: "I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East." Vivekananda's sense of commitment came from his great love for mankind. This, combined with his transparent sincerity and shining purity, made him immediately acceptable to people wherever he went. He never felt himself a stranger anywhere. In America many homes were open to him, and he could live among the hosts freely as if he were a close relative. More than his handsome appearance and intellectual brilliance, it was his transparent purity and unself Eh love that drew people to him like a magnet. Explaining the tremendous influence that Vivekananda exercised over his audience at the Parliament of Religions, the lase Christopher Isherwood wrote: "No doubt the vast majority of those present hardly knew why they had been so powerfully moved. The appearance, even the voice, of Vivelananda cannot fully explain. It A large gathering has its own telepathy, and this one must have been somehow aware that it was of that most unusual of all beings, aman whose words express exactly what he is. When Vivelananda said 'Suitera and Brothers', he actually meant that he regarded the American women and men before him as his sisters and brothers; the well-known oratorical phrase became simple truth."

Swami Vivekananda wanted to be a voice without a form. But we should know something about the form which gave rise to that voice. Vivekananda was born in January, 1863 in the city of Calcutta, the then capitol of British India, in an aristocratic family. A precocious boy, he acquired a vast amount of knowledge even before he took his degree from Calcutta University. In 1881 he met Sri Ramakrishna, that great saint who lived at the temple garden of Dakshineswar near Calcutta. That brought about a great change in his life. He practised intense spiritual disciplines under the Master and attained the highest spiritual illumination. After Sri Ramakrishna's passing in 1886, he organized the disciples of the Master into a monastic brotherhood known as the Ramakrishna Order, After travelling all over India as an itinerant monk for a few years. Vivelcananda left for America to attend the World's Parliament of Religious held in Chicago in September, 1893, After the Parliament, he stayed on in America and Europe for about four years spreading the message of Vedanta, the ancient spiritual wisdom of India. He returned to India in 1897. Then he travelled all over India to awaken the people and established an association for social service known as the Ramakrishna Mission. Once more in the summer of 1899 he came to America and continued his work of teaching and planting the seeds of Vedanta in the West. In December 1900 he again returned to India. Incessant work affected his health and before his fortieth year, he passed away on the 4th of July, 1902 - significantly America's Independence Day.

Swami Vivekananda attended the Parlament of Religions not as the delegate of any particular organization but as the representative of the common people of India. He looked upon the Parliament orly as a door to a larger field of work in the West. He believed India had a mission to fulfil in the commonwealth of nations and that he had been chosen as its messenger to the West. We have to keep in mind that, whatever else he might have been, Vivekananda was a spiritual luminary of a very high order. Persons like him are born only once in a few centuries at the beginning of certain epochs in the history of mankind.

Vivekananda never claimed that he was teaching something completely new. The eternal truths and laws of spiritual life had been discovered at least two and a half thousand years before in India and constituted a system of thought known as the Vedanta. But this had remained in the hands of a few privileged people. Vivekananda made Vedanta available to the common masses. When Vivekananda said, "I have a mesage to the West", what he meant was that he was the messenger of the eternal truths of Vedanta to the West. These truths had already been taught in the East by the Vediesers. The Swam swarted to spread them in the West, because he felt that the people in the West needed them. His main function was to reinterpret Vedanta in the light of modern western thought and help the people there in solving the problems of human life.

Now, problems of life are of two kinds: socio-economic and existential. Through education, organized effort and advancements in science and technology people in the West have solved socio-economic problems to a great extent. But this has been achieved at the cost of spirituality. As a result, existential problems have come to dominate the human mind. Existential problems are problems concerning man's existence as an individual. Free from economic problems, man has become a problem to himself. Inner emptiness, loneliness, and anxiety characterize his life. Compartmentalization in knowledge and its divorce from values have undermined the unity of personality and the solidarity of social life. It should be mentioned here that, at the time of Vivekananda's visit, these existential problems had not become so acute as they are now. Yet he could sense them beneath the economic prosperity and fashionable social life

He observed that in spite of advanced rational thought and highly developed schools of philosophy, in western culture there was no clear conception of the spiritual dimension of man or of the ultimate Reality. The materialistic orientation of life gave primacy to pleasure seek-ultimate the properties of the propertie

and had reduced him to the position of a machine. The cumulative effect of all these might erupt in the form of social unrest, organized violence and wars. "Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism," observed Swami Vivekananda.

According to Vedanta, man's true essence is the Spirit, and, until he realizes it, he can never have true fulfilment or peace. In the western thought "spirit" and "soul" are identified with the mind. It was only in ancient India that a correct understanding of the true Self of man as pure consciousness, different from the mind, was gained. The Vedic sages called it the Atman. It is the source of man's ceaseless quest for true happiness, perfection, freedom and immortality. Further inquiry into the nature of the Atman led to the discovery that the individual Self is only a reflection of the infinite Supreme Self, which the Vedic sages called Brahman. The equation Atmon is Brahman is one of the most significant insights mankind had ever attained.

If the soul has a higher dimension known as the Atman, why is it that all people do not experience it as such? The reason, according to Vedanta, is that gignorance eclipses the Atman and makes it ignorance eclipses the Atman and makes it opporar as the ego, or lower self. In other words, the awareness of the divinity of the soul is only potentially present in us. Vivekananda has expressed the whole concept through a simple axiom: "Each soul is opportentially divine; the goal is to manifest this divinity within."

It is the alienation of our life from the divine centre in us, which is our true Self, that is the cause of various existential problems such as loneliness, anguish, unfulfilment, meaninglessness and bordorn, which have become so common in modern society. These problems get solved as soon as a person realizes the Atman. The realization of this Atman is the real spiritual dimension of man, and unless he realizes it, be cannot be regarded as having attained full humanity, or manhood. The development of the physical, mental and spiritual dimension of man is what Swami Vivekananda termed "man-making".

Another problem that Vivekananda noticed in western society was the loss of faith in traditional religious doctrines. The foundations of faith had already been undermined by the so-called Enlightenment, the rise of philosophical schools, the degradation of religious institutions, and finally by the triumph of science. In order to meet these challenges of rational thought and science, religion must have two supports: first, a higher view of Reality which is in harmony with the discoveries of modern science; and second, a principle of verifiability with regard to religious beliefs. Vivekananda showed that the ancient system of Vedanta was in a position to satisfy both these demands of science. He believed that if religion is based on eternal truths, it has nothing to fear from science. In a lecture delivered in London, Vivekananda said, "Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of the opinion that the sooner it is done, the better."

As regards the verifiability principle, it is provided by the principle of aparoks, or direct experience, which is the very foundation on which Vedanta stands. Truths about the soul, God and the mental universe were discovered by the ancient sages through direct experience. Like scientific experiments, these are repeatable experiences.

anybody, by following the appropriate techniques and fulfilling certain inner conditions, can have these experiences.

It is true, of course, that this kind of direct experience was known to the mystics of other religions also, but in those traditions it was never regarded as the central principle of religion. Nor did it develop into a science of consciousness. It was only in ancient India that the proper techniques for the direct perception of spiritual truths were developed systematically to give rise to a science of consciousness known as Yoga, Swami Vivekananda's exposition of the four yogas, Inana Yoga or the path of knowledge. Bhakti Yoga or the path of devotion, Raja Yoga or the path of meditation, and Karma Yoga or the path of action. has contributed a great deal to the presentday understanding and popularity of Yoga.

Another problem plaguing western society was the erosion of the basis of morality. Industrialization and urbanization were creating new social conditions and ways of living for which traditional ethical norms were found to be inadequate.

Swami Vivekananda saw that the Vedantic principle of the unity of all selves in the ultimate non-dual Reality known as Brahman could alone provide a satisfactory basis for ethical life. It provides the only rationale for the Judeo-Christian moral rational precept. "Love thy neighbour as thysel?" It should leve my neighbour as myself because I and my neighbour are one in essence.

Most religious and secular institutions enforce morality through compulsion or fear of retribution. One of the most significant contributions made by Vivek-ananda to world thought was the development of a new theory of ethics which is free from compulsion, fear and mythological

beliefs. Basing his view on the doctrine of the potential divinity of the soul, he held that we should act morally because of the intrinsic good in us. Our real nature being the pure Atman, to act immorally would be to go against our own true nature.

Vedanta does not condemn man as a bom sinner. The best way to solve the problem of sin and evil is to assert the intrinsic purity and divinity of the soul. At the 1893 Parliament of Religions, Vivelananda declared: "Ye are the children of Cod, the sharers of immortal blus, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—atmers! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a saturding lifed on human nature. The sount replaced the purpose of the property of the sound of the signorance. "We have no theory of evil," be seld. "We call it error." Man actis immorally owing to ignorance of his true divine nature.

Yet another problem of western culture that Vivekananda observed was the absence of a tradition of toleration and harmony. Even at the end of the nineteenth century, the basic attitude of the people was one of intolerance towards other faiths and conflict and exclusion in the name of religion, race and colour. By contrast, harmony has been the keynote of Indian culture from very ancient times. Indian culture has developed through constructive dialogue and integration of diversities. It has rejected no religion, no race, no system of thought that originated in the country or was introduced into it from outside, but has welded them all into a mosaic which is the distinctive character of Indian civilization.

But the harmony thus attained was an unconscious social process. It was Vivekananda's great teacher, Sci Ramakrishna, who developed the harmony of religions into a distinct philosophy and conscious attitude. He actually practised the discipline of different religions of the world and came to the following three important conclusions: one, direct realization of the ultimate Reality, or God, is the central principle in all religions; two, the ultimate Reality is One but is known by different names; and three, religions of the world have equal validity in so far as they lead to the realization of the same ultimate Reality. Virekannala understood the immense practical significance of these conclusions.

Vivekananda seldom spoke of Sri Ramakrishna in public, Instead, he worked for the principles for which his Master stood. In the field of religious harmony Vivekananda's work was three-fold. First. he spoke against religious bigotry and exclusiveness. Second, he opened the door to inter-religious dialogue and sharing. Before him, toleration was all that was expected of a liberal minded person. The swami introduced the idea of integrating the best elements of other religions into one's own religion. He said, "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth."

The third work in the field of religious harmony that Vivelananda accomplished was to show that the religious of the world were only different manifestations of more elemal Universal Religion. In his paper on Hinduism read at the Parliament of Religious on September 19, 1893, the swami has given this inspiring description of that Universal Religion." If there is ever to be a Universal Religion." If there is ever to be a Universal Religion." If there is ever to be now which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saiths and sinners alike, which will not be

Brahminic, Buddhistic, Christian Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature." It is the final merger of all religions into such a Universal Religion that will be the humanity's next great achievement, and in this task we all have a big part to play.

A new image of man as potentially divine, a new conception of religion as realization, a new moral philosophy, a new concept of religious harmony-these are the main elements of Swami Vivekananda's message to the West, Swamiii's message aimed not merely at solving the problems of life. The main thrust of his message was to provide a unifying vision of the immense possibilities inherent in the human soul. Swami Vivekananda had great faith in the potentialities of man. And, like the great American poet, Walt Whitman, Vivekananda looked upon America as offering limitless opportunities for the actualization of human potentialities. Freed of colonial rule and endowed with a secular constitution. the United States of America has been a land of freedom and democracy from the beginning of its history. It has been a melting pot of cultures and races, and therefore provides a favourable ground for universal ideas. Vivekananda had great hopes for the future of America.

Many changes have taken place in western society during the last hundred years. Enormous power is now at the disposal of man, and his future depends upon how he utilizes this power. The social upheaval of the 1960's exposed the inadequacies of materialistic culture and the growing distillusionment with the promises of science and technology. It opened the floodestes of oriental influence, and western society was inundated with oriental ideas of innumerable types. Now much of the flood has ebbed way, leaving a sediment of new ideas, ideals and attitudes. People are now settling down to a more serious pursuit of higher values. Many universities now offer courses on religious studies. especially Indology. religious institutions have become liberal in their attitude towards other institutions. Some of them even organize interfaith dialogues and prayer meetings. These changes have been greatly facilitated by the recent developments in modern physics and psychology. The antagonism between science and religion is being replaced with the recognition of their convergence on the ultimate questions about the nature of reality.

The influence of western thought and its way of life on oriental societies has been equally great. In fact, the distinctions between the East and the West have considerably dwindled, and the world has become a "global village" to use McLuhan's familiar term. There is no doubt that humanity is now poised for a great leap into the twenty-first century.

The time has now come for us to study the message of Swami Vivekananda in the light of all these recent changes and to understand its great importance in regulating the ongoing intellectual and social processes. The time has come for us to utilize the insights provided by Swami Vivekananda for the development of a new world, a new global society, which will provide intellectual enlighterment, spiritual fulfilment, social harmony and unity for all people irrespective of race, nationality or creed. The Vedanta Centres of the Ramakrishna Order in the West are playing a vital role in ushering in a new era of interfaith understanding and world unity by disseminating the universal message of Vedanta as proclaimed by Swami Vivekananda, I believe the present Seminar will also help to fulfil this need to a great extent.

Thave great pleasure in inviting the disinguished participants of this Seminar to discuss the different aspects of the message of Swami Vivekananda in the context of the present day world. May our discussions become fruitful and beneficial to all who are present here! I congratulate the organizers of this Seminar for the excellent arrangements they have made and thank them hearitly for giving me the opportunity to participate in this Seminar. Thank you.

"The end and aim of all science is to find the unity, the One, out of which the manifold is being manufactured, that One existing as many. Raja Yoga proposes to start from the internal world, to study internal nature, and through that, control the whole—both internal and external."

> —Swami Vivekanananda, What Religion Is (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), page 153.

Exhibition and Seminar at UNESCO

FEDERICO MAYOR

(Reproduced below is the address by Mr. Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO, when he inaugurated the function held on October 8, 1993, in commemoration of the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the Parliament of Relivious Chicago, 1893.)

Excellencies, Swamis, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to UNESCO on the occasion of the exhibition and seminar devoted to Swami Vivekananda.

There are many aspects of Swami Vivekananda's thought, his ideals and his social message which make UNESCO a very good setting for this celebration in France of the centenary of his participation in the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago one hundred years ago.

First, his commitment towards universalism and tolerance, his active identification with humanity as a whole. He said from the tribune of the Parliament of Religions, and I quote: "I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen." I am sure all of us present here today would strongly identify with this aspiration. since the struggle against exclusiveness is one that must be perpetually renewed. I am pleased to note the theme and spirit of universalism permeates all the events of today's programme: the exhibition, the lectures and the music recital.

Second, his concern for the poor and the destitute. The mission he established in lndia, and which has now spread all over the world, is working to reduce poverty and eliminate discrimination among the different segments of society. There is no more important challenge for us all than this—striving to overcome these problems at their roots; and it is one that I believe the United Nations, working with all possible NGO partners, must take its absolute priority in the years to come.

Third, his preoccupation with human development and his vision of education, science and culture as the essential instruments for such development. The convergence with UNESCO's concerns will be obvious to all.

I am indeed struck by the similarity of the constitution of the Ramakrishna Mission which Vivekananda established as early as 1897 with that of UNISCO drawn up in 1945. Both place the human being at the contract of their feriors aimed at development, or the contract of their feriors aimed at development, or the contract of their variety of the contract of their variety of human cultures and societies as an essential aspect of the common heritage.

The world today is going through a challenging period of transition. We see many evils like racism and inter-ethnic and religious conflict returning among us with renewed force. Celebrations like this today are a source of renewed strength and encouragement to fight against these evils.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I have much pleasure in inaugurating this commemorative evening, which begins with a tour around the exhibition on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda.

Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings to Devotees

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

In this practical down-to-earth look into Sri Ramakrishnu's teachings to the devotess in general, the recored President of the Ramakrishnu Math and Mission points and the spiritual aspirant's longing to realize God in his or her life is the most important thing. This is based on a talk Revered Maharaj gave at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mosoro, in 1981.

Sri Ramakrishna is an embodiment of innumerable spiritual aspects. He was a devotee amongst devotees, a yogi amongst yogis, a jinkii amongst jinkii amongst jinkii amongst karmayogin amongst people who had faith in that path. All these and many more aspects were fully represented in his life, and we can draw inspiration and light from any of these through his life and teachings and he benefited thereby.

Sri Ramakrishna usually addressed devotees who were mainly householders; therefore, he often talked about what should be the way for them to reach God. Householders are preoccupied with their household duties. How are they to follow their path of spirituality without getting caught in the mire of worldliness? Sri Ramakrishna was often asked by devotees as to what would be the fate of a person who is already immersed in his household duties. He never spoke anything by way of discouragement. Sri Ramakrishna was the most optimistic person, who always had great faith in the potential of everyone to reach God

Sri Ramakrishna has described human beings as belonging to four classes: those bound by the fetters of the world, the seekers after liberation, the liberated, and the ever-free. The haddin, or bound soul is one who is in bondage, but does not realize that he is in it. He lives a life with all sorts of complications, thinking all the same that be is safe, that he is enjoying life and that that is all he is expected to do. The mumuksus are those who are trying for liberation. They are aware of their state of bondage, and being dissatisfied with that state, they are struggling to get free from that. To the third category belong those who have managed to escape from the spell of mivi-the liberated souls. Finally, to the last category belong those who never fall into the net of miluli. To describe them, Sri Ramakrishna gave the example of the home bird, the bird which is born in the sky. The egg is laid and it starts falling. Gradually it hatches. The hird comes out, develops the capacity to fly and then looks at the earth below. Realizing that a touch of the earth will be its death, it at once turns away and flies up to the mother bird above. That is the state of men who are eternally free. These are the four categories.

When Set Ramakrishna describes the people of the first group, we can see that this is the condition of most of us. We are in the net of mishball, but we do not realize that we are being destroyed, like the fish caught in the rate of height groups of the water. We are not aware of this, and moreover we feel happy here. Set Ramakrishna says that the condition of the man in bondage is such that he reveals in the state of degradation and remains happy there. He gives the hards examined to worm born in fillin which feels comfortable in that condition if it is even to accommendation of the condition of the condition

live, because it is not accustomed to live in that state. That is the condition of people who are in deep bondage but do not care for higher life.

A devotee questions Sri Ramakrishna: "Sir, is there no hope for such people then?" Sri Ramakrishna reassures that everyone can certainly get out of bondage. When the devotee asks how, he gives simple remedies. Sri Ramakrishna says, "Take the name of God and sing His glories. Keep the company of holy men. At times go away from your usual surroundings; go into solitude and think of God." He adds that away from the worldly atmosphere around, one should practise introspection in loneliness, think over the present state of affairs. and try to find out how one can get out of it. Unless we practise self-analysis, unless we try to ascertain the condition we are in, it is very difficult to be awakened from the spell of worldliness and to strive for a higher condition or improvement in our spiritual state. Sri Ramakrishna has not prescribed any particular path for all to follow. He simply gives a few ideas which can be applied by all people: Pray to God, sing His glories, repeat His name, keep holy company, and so on. Such is his broadest form of advice which can benefit everybody.

Suppose we are thinking of our present condition or trying to find out a path that will be good for our improvement in spiritual life. What do we usually de? We read certain books—porhaps the scripture (saltras) and try to understand the various teachings in them. Then we get bogged down to the controversial problems and questions that inevitably arise for any reader of scriptures. Sei Ramakrishna says acriptures are anisture of 'sman das ugazi'. We have to take what is 'sugazi', that is, what is helpful for us. We must see what will help us go beyond the state of bondage, and that requires a careful mind. We

generally talk about scriptures and swear by them. But then, when we try to understand them we get confused. For, when we read commentaties, to understand the import of the sistras, we find that one commentator explains a passage in one way and another in another way. Therefore Sri Ramakrishna insists that mere intellectual reading will not do. One may certainly try to understand the scriptures, but such an effort must be backed up by a keen deaire to improve oneself and to realize God, which is the ultimate goal. Self Ramakrishna insists on that one thing. He says that he knows only one thine, and that is God.

Why are we born here? We are born here so that we can attain the highest goal in life -God-realization. That alone gives meaning to our existence. Otherwise, with all our prosperity, with all our knowledge, with everything that we think we have, we are disappointed. Our satisfaction does not come from these. We may have wealth, but wealth does not satisfy us. We may have great scholarship, but scholarship does not satisfy us. Sri Ramakrishna gives an example: One may be a pundit, with vast scriptural knowledge; but what is his condition? His condition is like that of a vulture. The vulture soars high, but its attention is riveted on carrion below. So, what is necessary is not scholarship so much as vively and vairilgys, discrimination and the spirit of renunciation. Scholarship may improve our intellectual capacity to understand things, but that capacity does not serve its purpose because our mind is soiled by desires. Desires cloud our judgement with the result that we become vain scholars, unable to apply our knowledge to bring about our own salvation. Attempts at scholarship may bring us renown, but will not help us in solving our problems. A great scholar and I were once travelling together by train. He was reputed to be a gifted speaker on spiritual matters. While conversing with him, he confessed that with all his learning and eloquence in public speaking, he was not tree from doubts. The Brhadiranyala Upunipal says, "Do not read many scriptures, because that will only confuse your mind."

A sharp intellect is rot necessarily a pure mind. Sit Ramakrishna says a man need not be a great pundît. If his mind is pure he can attain God-esilation. Not through his scholarship, but through the blessings of God be can attain God. Sit Ramakrishna said that one receds a sword and shield to kill others; but to kill enseal!, a needle or nail-knile suffices. So to work com or's own salvation it is not at all necessary that one be versed in all the scriptures that come to the surface of the control Learning may be uneful only to the extent clearing the intellect and raising the mind to a higher level.

There is the illustration of a great pundit who used to explain the Bhilgsputs to a king. Each day after his exposition the pundit would ask the king: "Sir, have you understood?" The king would reply: "You please understand first." The next day he would make a greater preparation and explain the text in greater detail. He would again ask the king if the latter had understood. The king would reply in the same manner. This set the pundit thinking: "Why does the king repeatedly ask me to understand? Have I not explained very carefully and explicitly?" Later the pundit understood that he was trying to explain spiritual matters to others while he himself had not been able to follow the teachings of the scripture. Therefore he renounced the world, sending a message to the king that now he understood.

न्तर्थायाद बहुन् सन्दान् वाची

विस्तापनं हि तद्। 4.1V.21

The question is, is God really the most important thing to us? For many of us God is only a superfluity. Everything that we need is only to satisfy our flesh and our intellect. Have we real craving for God? If we have not, all that we do, even our socalled spiritual practices, are only vain attempts at reaching something which is beyond our grasp. So long as we do our spiritual practices only superficially we have not yet become real devotees. There is a beautiful passage attributed to Tulsidas. the great poet-saint. Tulsidas says, "Whatever you are doing, your japa and meditation, is like a doll's play. When there is real union with the Beloved, all this will be locked up in a box as it were." That is to say, such exercises are of no use; the real life with God will begin then. The criterion of a man's being really religious is that he will love God above everything else. God is such that he cannot bear a rival in our heart. The whole mind has to be given to Him.

Even during sathani the mind wavers and thinks of other things while you try to concentrate on God. Devotees often complain that they are trying, but they cannot advance in spiritual life because their mind wanders. What do we generally do? We give freedom to the mind to think whatever it likes to: it goes on wandering and when we try to concentrate on God we find that there is no hold on our mind. Should we not become aware that the moments that we waste in other things gradually get us into the habit of thinking things other than God? When our condition is like this, still we go on to say that our religion is true and others's religion is not! We are not even sure of our own path, but we comment about the paths of others. So we have all these quarrels between peoples of different

कुलसी जपट्य करिये सब गुजिया का खेल। प्रियत्ने कब मिलन से तो शत पेटारी मैला।

faiths. That has nothing to do with real spiritual life. If we are really earnest about God we shall have no time to waste in such talk.

God has infinite aspects. Infinite are the ways through which He can be realized. We know about only some of the forms of God: therefore, we cannot say that God is only 'this much' and nothing more. The chameleon changes its colours. One man who has seen it in one colour thinks that the chameleon is of that shade only. Another man thinks differently, since he has seen it when it was a different colour whereas a man who sits under the tree where the chameleon lives, knows how many colours it can assume. Similarly, God's infinite varieties and infinite possibilities have not been exhausted at all, Swami Vivekananda says that each one sees God according to his own nature. He again says that every religion is an expression, a language, to express the same truth, and we must speak to each in his own language. God can never be limited by our intellect.

It was not only Sri Ramakrishna, but other saints have said, and in our scriptures too we find sufficient hints to the truth that all religions lead to the same goal. However in the history of the world there has not been another instance where someone faithfully followed different paths and came to realize that the different roads led to the same goal. That is the great contribution of Sri Ramakrishna. He says that God has infinite aspects and facets and they have never been exhausted. Even the scriptures have, to this day, described His nature only partly. He can never be stated in final terms. The ultimate Reality ever remains beyond our thought and words. But as we proceed, our mind will gradually change its condition, and when the mind is absolutely pure we shall realize God, which is purity Itself. The Upanisads clearly say that God is beyond our mind's grasp. But at the same time the Upanisad also say, 'If can be realized through the mind alone." 3 Sri Ramakrishna clears this contradiction by saying that the pure buildly fintellect) and pure Seif are one and the same. He say, "Clear your mind, free it of all impurities. Such a pure mind will reveal the inner reality." When we have fully purified ourselves, there will be nothing to separate us from the Infinite.

A clear drop of water falls into a vast mass of clear water. What happens to that drop? It merges into that vast mass of water. The individual existence of that drop does not reinain. It is just like that salt doil which went to measure the depth of the coean. It got melted into it and there was none who could come and describe the depth of the ocean.

In the Bilgonate, three criteria are mentioned to estimate our spiritual progress. These are Balati, Viralti, and Bilgonatprobeding Balati is devoltion, our yearning. For Him. Then Viralti or detachment, dispassion towards everything other than Oct; and then Bilgoughrabalis, conviction about the Reality of God. These three things come to a person gradually as he progresses towards the Reality. As we grow spiritualje, our devotion increases, dispossion intensifies, and God will become the only Reality.

May the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna help us to have that yearning which he so often described as the one thing that gives God-vision.

मनसैवैदम् आप्तस्यम्।

Swami Vivekananda And the Harmony of Religions

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

Humanity thirsts to recover the lost knowledge of its smalte sportsal dirinity. All religious are true as they are the different expressions of this deep souted human longing. The author, a mork of the Ramakriobna Order and Spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society of New York City, points out some of the salient thoughts and utterances of Social Virokananda.

In all religious, the mystics realized God in the deepest recess of their hearts. Their own illuminated lives testified to the sincerity of their inner convictions. Hence, genuine religious life is always held in high esteem.

What is religion? Down the ages in all countries we find people—maybe an insignificant minority—search for something which alone can provide them with total fulfillment. We are basically weak and feel impelled to overcome our limitations. The search to attain spiritual rapport with the Divine Infinity is always within us. Religion, with its emphasis upon this communion with reality, points the way to fulfillment.

Religion, truly observed, should involve our whole being in the search of that identity. Spiritual consciousness changes our life. Spiritual manifestation of the divine potentiality in human personality is the essence of religion. When divine spirit dominates our life, we always stand wholly chastened. We become divine.

Indian mystics discovered two basic universal spiritual principles: the spiritual oneness of all things, and the divine nature of man. The conception of the unity of existence behind the multiplicity not only resolves all seeming contradictions and differences, it also enriches life in ever way. The conception of the divinity of ma... led to the conviction that the goal of life was spiritual experience through the purification of mind. The central principle of the microcosm is not different from the central principle of the macrocosm. The everchanging world is held by one eternal, selfexistent, self-manifest reality, popularly addressed as God. "That science is the greatest which makes us know Him who never changes. No search has been dearer to this human heart than that which brings to us light from God," said Swami Vivekananda.1 This search for God is religion. "If conformity is the law of the universe, every part of the universe must have been built on the same plan as the whole. So we naturally think that behind the gross material from which we call this universe of ours, there must be a universe of finer matter, which we call thought, and behind that, there must be a Soul, which makes all this thought possible, which commands, which is the enthroned king of this universe. That soul which is behind each mind and each body is called Pratuagatman, the individual Atman, and that Soul which is behind the universe as its guide, ruler,

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 2, page 357.

and governor, is God."2

He also said, "From whom all beings are projected, in whom all live and unto whom they return; that is God." "The sum total of this Universe is God Himself. Is God the matter? No, certainly not, for matter is that God perceived by the five senses; that God as perceived through the intellect is mind, and when the spirit sees, He is seen as spirit, He is not matter, but whatever is real in matter is He."

In the evolution of spiritual life, the concept of God also undergoes change. Weak persons cannot grasp the concept of transcendental and invisible God. In the primitive stage, God is conceived as extracosmic, living outside the world, in the faraway regions, who governs the affairs of the world. In this way, gradually the idea comes of a personal God. This cannot be the most satisfying concept for advanced thinkers and the idea of an Impersonal God dawns upon them. Devotion finds its fulfillment in a Personal God. Seekers of truth following the path of knowledge find an Impersonal God. God in Hinduism has two aspects, personal and impersonal. But the distinction between them does not mean a difference. The personal and impersonal are the same Being, in the same way as milk and its whiteness, or the diamond and its lustre are inseparable in our thought. It is impossible to conceive of the one without the other. To the Hindu, though God is one, He or She has various manifestations in many gods and goddesses. God is infinite, so are the infinite expressions of Him or Her. "We have seen that it began with the personal, the extra-cosmic God. It went from the external to the internal cosmic body, God immanent in the Universe, and

But an intellectual approach, however satisfying it may be, alone can never give us that satisfaction. The Soul of religion is practice. Swamiji said, "Religion is realization; not fals, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing nor acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes."⁶

Religion is the manifestation of the drivinly already in man," and Swamjii. This spark within us compels us to seek the drivine and, therefore, its compulsive urge can never be totally ignored. It does give us impiration, and metivation for spiritual struggle. It is a real source of inspiration and that is why the religions of the world have tramendous vitality and dynamism. As Swamjii forcefully remarked. "Not one of the great religions of the world has died; not only so, each of them is progressive."

The truth of religion is verifiable. It culminates in that plenary experience which enriches life, broadens our views, and purifies our vision. When we become inversal, our thoughts and actions are in tune with Divinity. Then we truly exploy and and can radiate peace and joy unto others. Swamiji said, "This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ."

Though different in names and forms, religions have certain ideals and hope in

^{2.} Ibid., Vol. 2, page 425.

^{3.} Ibid., Vol. 1, page 416.

^{4.} Ibid., Vol. 1, page 375.

ended in identifying the Soul itself with that God, and making one Soul, a unit of all these various manifestation in the universe.*5

^{5.} Ibid., Vol. 2, page 252

^{6.} Ibid., Vol. 2, page 396.

^{7.} Ibid., Vol. 7, page 361.

^{8.} Ibid., Vol. 6, page 81.

Only with the realization of spiritual conenses can universal love and sympathy develop. The spiritual conenses of humanity is the source of ethics, too. Swamaji remarked, "The infinite conenses of the Soul is the eternal sanction of all morality; that you and I are not only brothers—every literature voicing man's struggle towards freedom has preached that for you—but that you and I are really one. This is the dictate of Indian philosophy. This oneness is the rational of all ethics and spirituality," if

"We have always heard it preached, 'Love one another' ... Why should I love my brother? Because he and I are one. There is this oneness, this solidarity of the whole universe....That universal sympathy. universal love, universal bliss, that never changes, raises man above everything."12 Essentially, the goal of all religions is of the same nature. Through all religions, people have been searching for this "real" in the midst of temporal things. "This has been the search throughout the history of the human mind. In the very oldest times, we often find glimpses of light coming into men's minds. We find man, even then, going a step beyond this body, finding something complex which is not this external body, although very much like it, much more complete, much more perfect, and which remains even when this body is dissolved." It is a significant fact that all religious, without one ocception, hold that man is a degeneration of what he was," said Swamjii.

Our spiritual hunger stems from our divine heritage. Perfection is our real nature-our soul; we aspire to this quality. This alone provides the clue to the real strength behind our weak and fragile bodymind complex. Indian philosophy extols the beauty of our divinity, which animates, sustains and enlivens the psycho-physical organism. This point has been beautifully dealt with in Swamiji's illuminating discourse on "The Real and the Apparent Man" in his Inima Yoga. This spiritual "warfare" to attain perfection and complete freedom from bondage of life is a common phenomenon in all religious, and Swamiji mentioned it as the first impulse toward becoming religious. "In spite of the almost hopeless contradictions of the different systems, we find the golden thread of unity running through them all, and in this philosophy this golden thread has been traced, revealed little by little to our view, and the first step to this revelation is the common ground that all are advancing toward freedom."14 This urge to attain freedom is the only hope for human progress. Had there been no such impulsion toward freedom, toward divine, toward eternal, we would be lost in the desert of life. This is a basic urge. "This idea of freedom you cannot relinguish. Your actions, your very lives will be lost without it. Every moment nature is proving us to be slaves and not free. Yet, simultaneously rises the other idea, that still we are free. At every step we are knocked down, as it were,

13. Ibid., Vol. 2, page 72.

Ibid., Vol. 4, page 180.
 Ibid., Vol. 2, page 62.

Ibid., Vol. 2, page 62.
 Ibid., Vol. 3, page 189.

^{12.} Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 414-15.

o. 414-15. 14. Ibid., Vol. 2, page 125.

and yet at the same moment, together with this blow, together with this feeling that we are bound, comes the other feeling that we are free. Some inner voice tells us that we are free. The his battle of life, a few fortunate souls are winners who command our respect and worship. This tradition of showing honour to these God-men is a common characteristic of all religions.

by Maya, and shown that we are bound;

Spiritual life is like travelling in an unknown land; at every step we require the helpful guidance of those who had gone there. We cannot form any idea of an Omnipotent God and, therefore, we are told by the experts to resort to forms (material images) of divinity. Ritual, repetition of holy names, faith in the sacred word, etc., are also advocated by them. Symbols are used by all traditions to express the invisible by the help of concrete representations. Swamiii said. "From time immemorial symbols have been used by all kinds of religions. In one sense we cannot think but in symbols; the whole universe is a symbol and God is the essence behind." Again, we find through observation and study that these methods are also common in other traditions, "So we find, that in almost every religion, these are the three primary things which we have in the worship of God-forms or symbols, names, God-men. "16

The experience of the illuminated sculs codified in holy books are respected in all religions. These sacred scriptures are very helpful in all faiths. Having found many similarities in the practice of religion in diferent religions, Swamiji remarked, "Between all great religions of the world there are many points of similarity; and so startling is this likeness, at lense, set to sug"This act of imitation has been laid at the door of different religions; but that it is a superficial charge is evident from the following facts:

"Religion is fundamental in the very soul of humanity; and as all life is the evolution of that which is within, it, of necessity, expresses itself through various peoples and nations.

The language of the soul is one, the languages of nations are many; their customs and methods of life are widely different Religion is of the soul and finds expression through various nations, languages, and customs. Hence it follows that the difference between the religions of the world is one of expression and not of the world is one of expression and not of methods are also as a superior of the control of the control of language of the soul is one, in whatever peoples and under whatever circumstances it manifests itself. The same sweet harmony is vibrant there also, as it is on many and diverse instruments. ⁵⁷

In each religion we find there are three divisions; namely. Holy Books containing philosophy, mythology and ritual. Swamiji gave a masterly exposition of it in his "The Ideal of a Universal Religion." He said, "First, there is the philosophy which represents the whole scope of that religion. Setting forth its basic principles, the goal and the means of reaching it. The second part is mythology, which is philosophy made concrete. It consists of legends relating to the lives of men, or of supernatural beings, and so forth. It is the abstraction of philosophy concretised in the more or less

gest the idea that in many particulars the different religions have copied from one another.

^{15.} Ibid., Vol. 2, page 125. 16. Ibid., Vol. 2, page 42.

imaginary lives of men and supernatural beings. The third part is the ristual. This is still more concrete and is made up of forms and ceremonies, various physical attitudes, flowers and incense, and many other things that appeal to the senses. In these consists the ristual, You will find that all recognized religious have these three elements. Some lay more stress on one, some on another. "Be

A distinctive trait of Vivekananda's teachings is the comprehensiveness of his idealism. He vividly saw the divine image in human beings. In his charter of Universalism there was no cleavage between faith and reason, between action and contemplation. He was a loving friend to all. "Take man where he stands and from there give him a lift." "Our duty is to encourage every one in his struggle to live up to his own highest ideal, and strive at the same time to make the ideal as near as possible to the truth."19 "All the men and the women, in any society, are not of the same mind, capacity, or of the same power to do things: they must have different ideals, and we have no right to sneer at any ideal."20

Swamji experienced spiritual unity as the religion has been searching to reach this goal through divergent forms and methods. Swamjis aid, "If you go believe the surface, you find that Unity between man and methods between races and races, high and low, rich and poor, gods and men, and men and animals. If you go deep enough, all will be seen as only variations of the Cne, and he who has attained to this conception of Oneness has no more delusion. What can deduce him? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything, Where is there any more misery, for him: what does there are more misery, for him: what does

Unity in variety and not uniformity being the pattern for world culture, one expression of life does not militate against the other as long as the main idealism is not abandoned. Swamiii visualized the future trend of the world situation and boldly gave his message of universalism. "One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay the whole of life, within its scope. "25

Modern trends of lifestyle testify to this truth told to us a long time ago. "We want today that bright sun of intellectuality joined with the heart of Buddha, the wonderful infinite heart of love and mercy. This union will give us the highest

21. Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 153-54.

he desire? He has traced the reality of everything to the Lord, the Centre, the Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Existence, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Bliss. "21

To his penetrating insight there was no sharp division in fundamental points between one segment of humanity and another. Romain Rolland very beautifully articulated this point of his universal spirit thus: "His intuition of unity of the human race did not stop at the arbitrary divisions of zaces and nations."²²

^{18.} Ibid., Vol. 2, page 377.

^{19.} Ibid., Vol. 1, page 41.

^{20.} Ibid., Vol. 1, page 41.

Romain Rolland, The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) page 150, footnote.

^{23.} The Complete Works, Vol. 3, page 269.

philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples."24

"Just as a physicist, when he pushes his knowledge to its limits, finds it melting away into metaphysics, so a metaphysician will find that what he calls mind and matter are but apparent distinctions, the reality being One."

"The more advanced a society is in spirituality, the more is that society or nation civilized. No nation can be said to have become civilised only because it has succeeded in increasing the comforts of material life by bringing into use lots of machinery and things of that sort. The present-day civilisation of the West is multiplying day by day only the wants and distresses of men. On the other hand, the ancient Indian civilisation, by showing people the way to spiritual advancement, doubtless succeeded, if not in removing once for all, at least in lessening, in a great measure, the material needs of men. In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilisations that Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna was born. In this age, as on the one hand people have to be intensely practical, so on the other hand they have to acquire deep spiritual knowledge.*25

Religion is not other-worldly; it is allinclusive. It touches upon every aspect of life. Modern man is alienated from himself, divided from his fellow beings, and separated from his Maker-God. Religion. as Swamiji explained, can heal the wounds of life. Even secular scholars like Dr. C. G. Jung, in his work, Modern Man in Search of a

Soul, expressed his view in these terms: "It is safe to say that every one of them (patients) fell ill because he had lost that which the living religion of every age had given to their followers and none of them had really healed who did not regain a religious outlook." Hence, secular scholars are convinced that real religion does play a vital role to make us mentally healthy. Religion is revelation. It is spiritual experience that elevates our life, broadens our outlook, gives strength to our character. It demands nothing less than the ultimate unification of life under its own supreme control.

Its primary aim is all-inclusive and co-extensive with the whole of life. Whatever brings "real" significance, the only life divine that can attain real celebrity and glory in our life is religion. It includes and covers morality, art, science and philosophy, but transcends them all. Religious experience, if genuine, will grant us synthetic vision. This type of vision gave a peculiar glow to Swamiji's life. Being endowed with it, he was elevated far above others and was able to declare to humanity ideals of religious harmony which were bequeathed to him as a sacred legacy by Sri Ramakrishna. Harmony of religion is indispensable. It is very vital for peaceful coexistence. All narrowness and prejudice stem from the puerile attitude toward religion. Spiritual values of religion are the saving values of life.

"No civilisation can grow, unless fanaticism, bloodshed and brutality stop. No civilisation can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another; and the first step towards that muchneeded charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious convictions of others. Nay more, to understand that, not only should we be charitable, but positively helpful to each other, however different our

^{24.} Ibid., Vol. 2, page 140. 25. Ibid., Vol. 6, pp. 462-63.

religious ideas and convictions may be. And that is exactly what we do in India as I have just related to you. It is here in India that Hindus have built and are still building churches for Christians and mosques for Mohammedans. That is the thing to do. In spite of their hatred, and in spite of their brutality, in spite of their cruelty, in spite of their tyranny, and in spite of the vile language they are given to uttering, we will and must go on building churches for the Christians and mosques for the Mohammedans until we conquer through love. until we have demonstrated to the world that love alone is the fittest thing to survive and not hatred, that it is gentleness that has the strength to live on and to fructify, and not mere brutality and physical force."26

"Religion is the greatest motive power for realising that infinite energy which is the birthright and nature of every man. In building up character, in making for everything that is good and great, in bringing peace to others and peace to one's own solf, religion is the highest motive power and, therefore, ought to be studied from that standpoint. Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly.

"As the human mind broadens, its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when a man cannot record a thought without its reaching to all corners of the earth; by merely physical means, we have come into touch with the whole world; so the future religions of the world have to become as universal, as wide.

"The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world and is good and great, and, at the same time, have infinite scope for future development. All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors must be kept open for future additions to the already existing store. Religious must also be inclusive, and not look down with contempt upon one another, because their particular ideals of God are different.

"The power of religion, broadened and purified, is going to penetrate every part of human life. So long as religion was in the hands of a chosen few or of a body of priests, it was in temples, churches, books, dogmas, ceremonials, forms, and rituals. But when we come to the real, spiritual, universal concept, then, and then alone, religion will become real and living; it will come into our very nature. live in our every movement, penetrate every pore of our movement, penetrate every pore of our good than it has ever been before," said Swanijs. "2"

Synthesis or harmony is the distinguishing feature of Swamiji's philosophy of religion. Swamiji, like his teacher, Srl Ramakrishna, not merely expounded the theory of the harmony of religions, but lived it. Their lives also represented a Parliament of Religions. Nowhere have we seen such harmonious blending of plurality of religions. Before the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, the religious climate was full of tension. The followers of different faiths in India and abroad were at loggerheads with one another. Sri Ramakrishna made experiments with many different religions. He emphatically declared, "To realise God is the Goal of human life."

Sri Ramakriahna also said, "Bach religion is a pathway to God." Amplifying, he said further, "So many religions are so many paths to the temple of God. Let all men and women sincerely follow their own religions as true, but never think that only their religions are true and all others are

false. All religions are true, they lead to the same God." Thus Sri Ramakrishna laid the foundation of harmony of religions. About this prophet of the harmony of religions. one venerable monk remarked, "In his life one finds an unsurpassed record of Godintoxication, spotless purity and sureing love for humanity. And then with his mind broad as the sky, strong as adamant and pure as crystal, he plumbed the depths of spirituality, collected the treasures of the entire wisdom of the past, tested their worth and reinvested them with a fresh hall-mark of truth. From his lips the world hears the voice of the ancient prophets, in his life it discovers the meaning of the scriptures. Through his life and teachings man has got an opportunity of learning the old lessons afresh.

"By his deep and extensive spiritual experience of the entire range of Upanisadic truths. Ramakrishna surely heralded an epoch making Hindu renaissance, which is expected to bring in its train a general spiritual upheaval all over the world. He discovered the wonderful spirit Catholicism within the sealed bosom of Hinduism and released it through his own realisations to spread all over the globe and liberalise all communal and sectarian views. His advent marks a new era in the evolution of religion, when all sects and all communities, keeping intact the individual characteristics of their faiths, will transcend the limitation of narrow and sectarian outlook and thus pave the path for a universal Brotherhood *25

We are all at different stages of evolution and, therefore, our mental constitution is bound to vary. Accepting this fact of variation, Swamiji said, "You cannot make all conforms to the same ideas: that is a fact, and I thank God that it is so...Now, if we all thought alike, we would be like Egyptian mummies....Variation is the sign of life and it must be there "29

Swamiii himself had spelled out his idea of Universal Religion when he said, "What then do I mean by the ideal of a universal religion? I do not mean any one universal philosophy, or any one universal mythology, or any one universal ritual held alike by all: for I know that this world must go on working, wheel within wheel, this intricate mass of machinery, most complex, most wonderful. What can we do then? We can make it run smoothly, we can lessen the friction, we can grease the wheels, as it were. How? By recognising the natural necessity of variation. Just as we have recognised unity by our very nature, so we must also recognise variation."30

Sri Ramakrishna's thesis that, "As many faiths, so many paths," is likely to be misunderstood unless we accept one God as the sole support and substance of the manifold. Swamiji said in clarification of that great idea of Sri Ramakrishna. "We must learn that truth may be expressed in a hundred thousand ways, and that each of these ways is true as far as it goes. We must learn that the same thing can be viewed from a hundred different standpoints, and yet be the same thing. Take for instance the sun. Suppose a man standing on the earth looks at the sun when it rises in the morning; he sees a big ball. Suppose he starts on a journey towards the sun and takes a camera with him, taking photographs at every stage of his journey, until he reaches the sun. The photographs of each stage will be seen to be different from those of the

Swami Nirvedananda, Shri Ramshrishus and Spiritual Rensissence (Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1940) pp. 169-70.

The Complete Works, Vol. 2, pp. 363-4.
 Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 382-83.

other stages; in fact, when he gets back, he brings with him so many photographs of so many different suns, as it would appear: and yet we know that the same sun was photographed by the man at the different stages of his progress. Even so is it with the Lord. Through high philosophy or low. through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward, towards God; every vision of truth that man has is a vision of Him and of none also Suppose we all go with vessels in our hands to fetch water from a lake. One has a cun. another a jar, another a bucket, and so forth, and we all fill our vessels. The water in each case naturally takes the form of the vessel carried by each of us. He who brought the cup has the water in the form of a cup; he who brought the jar-his water is in the shape of a jar, and so forth; but, in every case, water, and nothing but water, is in the vessel. So it is in the case religion; our minds are like these vessels, and each one of us is trying to arrive at the realisation of God, God is like that water filling these different vessels, and in each vessel the vision of God comes in the form of the vessel. Yet He is One. He is God in every case. This is the only recognition of universality that we can get. "31

According to Swamiji's interpretation, Vedanta "alone can become the universal religion of man and no other is fitted for the trole." Vedanta suphoids the Unity of existence, oneness of God, and identity of man with the Divine. It is raticosal, universal and also practical. "One infinite religion existed all through eternity and will ever exist, and this religion is expressing itself in various countries in various ways." This ternal religion is the subject matter of Vedanta and it has, necessarily, no founder and, therefore, is timeless. The conception of Absolute Thought and Being, popularly Known as God, is not an empty logical abstraction. Mystics experienced the Truth and broadcast it. Human mind can develop a suprassensess and suprastional faculty, intuition, which is far superior to intellect and can unraved the facts otherwise inaccessible to mere intellect. Ramarkirshnavilvekaranda are the latest mystics in modern times to suphenticate the Truth.

Another speciality of Vedanta is that it endorses various courses, grades, according to the mental constitution of the seeker and his situation in life. Another important feature of Vedanta is its comprehensiveness. It accepts life as a whole. There is no inherent dichotomy between secular and spiritual, reason and faith, science and religion. Swamiii had the firm conviction that Advaita Vedanta was the most invigourating, most rational, and totally in conformity with modern science. Unity in variety, not dull uniformity, is the pattern of world culture. All facets of life have a place in the economy of spiritual growth. Swamiji advocated toleration, liberalism and rational temper to work out a peaceful coexistence of various religions.

Swamiji, being an Advaitin (monist), developed a unitary vision which enabled him to see the expression of One in and through many. Hence, synthesis or harmony is the special characteristic of his view. "Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them."

"Religions do not come from without but from within." "As long as man thinks, this struggle must go on, and so long man must have some form of religion. Thus we

The Vedanta Society of Portland

SWAMI SHANTARUPANANDA

With the passing of the older generation the history and facts of the Society's growth and development begin to ususe in memory. Societism Saumir apparament, Assistant Society of the Vedanta Society of Portland. Oragon recapitulates some of the interesting past.

The year Sept. 1993 to Sept. 1994 is the contensity year of Swemi Vivorkanandar's coming to America as a representative of lindulum at the World's Parliament of Religious held in Chicago. The year 1893 is a significant landmark in the history of America. That was when, on the 400th anniversary celebration of the discovery of America in search of India, the Spiritual will will contain the search of India was discovered and spread broadcast by Swemi Vivekananda all over the world in and through America. Until then, India had remained a land of dark mysteries to the western world.

Swami Vivekananda stopped at Heng Kong and Ispan en route From India to America. At Yokobama the Swami boarded the ship Empress of India on July 14 and disembarked at Vancouver, in British Columbia, on the evening of July 25. Then he roched Chicago by train, probably on July 30, passing through the scenic Canadian Rockies to Winnipeg and Wisconsin.

The Parliament of Religions opened on the morning of September II in the Hall of Columbus, at the Art Institute on Chicago's Michigan Avenue The first day was devoted to speeches of welcome from the officials and reply by the delagents. About his feeling at the time, the Swami wrote later, "My beart was fluttering, and my tongue nearly dried up." Indeed, the sight of six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of America might have given even an accomplished speaker stage fright. Several times he had been called upon to speak, but he had said, "No, not now." At last the Swami "bowed down to Devi Saraswati," the Goddess of learning, and stepped to the rostrum. Dr. Barrows introduced him. Then the Swami started with "Sisters and Brothers of America."2 At once hundreds rose to their feet with shouts of applause. It was the inspiration, the feeling he conveyed, that touched their hearts. When the audience settled down he gave a short speech and concluded saying, "...the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.*3

On Soptember 15 the Swami gave a short lecture on "Why We Disagree." He read a paper on "Hinduism" on Soptember 19. On the following day he gave a short speech on "Religion Not the Crying Need of India." On September 26 he delivered a short address entitled "Buddhism, the Fulliment of Hinduism." On the last day, September 27, the Swami delivered his "Address of the Final Session." He

 The Complete Works of Susani Viockananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1986) Vol. 1, page 4.

The Life of Suomi Vipekununda, by His Eastern & Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 1, page 416.

Ibid., page 417.

declared, "...upon the banner of every established in Portland until 1925. religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction, 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'. "5

Swami Vivekananda became so popular that after the Parliament of Religions he had to undertake whirlwind lecture tours throughout the length and breadth of the United States preaching the ancient wisdom of the sages of India. In 1894 he established the Vedanta Society of New York-the first permanent Vedanta Centre in the West.5

Swamiji went back to India in 1897. During his second visit to America he established the Vedanta Society in San Francisco in 1900-the second Vedanta Society in the U.S.A.6

Though references are made that Swami Trigunatitananda's (Head of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco from January 2. 1903 to January 10, 1915) "...field of action was extended even to the state of Oregon".7 that Swami Prakashananda (Head of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco from the beginning of 1916 to February 13, 1927) "...made a successful lecturing tour of six weeks through Oregon and the State of Washington",8 that Swami Paramananda made a "...brief visit to friends in Portland,"9 no permanent Centre was

- Ibid., page 24.
- 5. The History of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983), page 72.
- 6. Ibid., page 113.
- 7. Swami Atulananda, With the Swamis in America and India (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1988) page 87.
- 8. The History of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, page 197.
- 9. Vedanta Monthly-The Message of the East

At the invitation of some interested persons in Portland, Swami Prabhavananda came from San Francisco and gave public lectures which eventually prepared the ground for a permanent Centre. Swami Prabhavananda had come to the United States in 1923 in order to assist Swami Prakashananda in San Francisco. With the active encouragement of Swami Prakashananda the Vedanta Society of Portland was established in November, 1925 under the care of Swami Prabhayananda. 10 But there was no permanent place for the Society. Lectures and meetings were held variously in the Portland Hotel (in downtown, corner of S. W. Broadway and Alder, now known as Pioneer Square), in Mr. Child's (the first President of the Society) residence, in the chapel at 616 Kraemer Building (corner of S.W. 2nd and Washington, changed later to 206 S. W. Washington in the present numbering system), in the Dekum Building, in the Studio Building on Taylor Street and the so-called "German Hall" above Olds and King Store on Morrison Street (now the Galleria). The Vedanta Society of Portland was officially incorporated on October 4, 1928 by Hal G. Child-President, R. C. Soule-Secretary, and Lottie 1. Scott-Treasurer.

Swami Vivekananda stayed at 309 Monterey Road, South Pasadena, for six weeks as a guest of the three Mead sisters during his visit to Southern California in 1900. It was one of the sisters, Mrs. Carrie Mead Wyckoff (known later as Sister Lalita) who came to Portland toward the end of 1928 to help Swami Prabhavananda, A

⁽Boston: Boston Vedanta Centre, Swami Paramananda, 1920) Vol. IX, page 192.

^{10.} The History of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission, page 209.

place near the City (ten acres of land in Lake Cewego, Clackamas County) was selected for purchase, but to show how difficult things were in those days for a new Religious Movement, the Vedanta Society was not welcome in this suburb.

Theresa Olson is one of those who helped Swami Prabhavananda in his pioneering work of establishing a Vedanta Society in Portland. She was the treasurer of the Society for 35 years. "Through the Grace of the Lord," recalls Theresa Olson, "I was born to good Christian parents, and at my Mother's feet learned a prayer remembered throughout the years. In my Sunday-school days I used to receive as gifts books of people in foreign lands, and I enjoyed reading them and thought that some day I would even see these people. Destiny brought our family to this beautiful city of Portland, and it was here after a few years that I found my wish answered. I did not have to go to a foreign land, it came to me right here.

"At the time I was entertaining a friend who had been ill, and one evening looking over the paper for some place to go, I saw a picture of a face that I seemed almost to recognize, and said, This is where we will go! It was to be a meeting in the lobely of the famous Portland Hotel, and there I sat on the front seat with my friend before a person from a foreign land. It was in the year 1925 that Swami Prabhavanaha of India came to Portland, and it was before him that I sat on this covasion.

"A musician had played on a harp, and when the Swami began to speak, it was as if a new heaven and a new earth was opened for me, and I said to myself, 'Is it possible that this is happening?', but I knew it was and that it was very real because in my very inmost heart I answered 'Yes, yes' to every word he said. It was as if I was sitting under

a huge fountain of Divine Perfection and Bliss and cleansed of all doubts and fears and born anew, and that Bliss is still mine.

"Once, Swami Prabhavananda gathered the few of us and gave us our names. Mine is Hari Priya (dear to the Lord), and I still feel the blossing and Divine protection of that occasion."

However, after four years of fruitful service to the Portland Centre, Swarp Prabhavananda moved to Hollywood in 1929, at the invitation of Mrs. Wyckoff, who donated her house at 1946 Ivar Avenue (later named Vedanta Place) to start the Vedanta Society there.¹¹

Swami Vividishananda was sent from India in 1929 to take charge of the Portland Centre. The Society still had no place of its own, and he too lived in a modest apartment at the Wheeldon. Sometimes they screened his bed off with a cutrial and held meetings in the balance of the same room. Unfortunately after a year of service he went to San Francisco on account of ill health.

There was no resident Swami in Portland from 1929 until Swami Devatmananda's arrival on February 11, 1932. But the devotees used to meet Tuesday evenings in the house of Theresa Olson and would read from the Complete Works of Sound Vicebundanda. Swami Preshavananda used to come to Portland during vacation time.

Swami Devatmananda, who was in the New York Vedanta Society at the time, was asked to take charge of the Portland Centre. Accordingly, he came to Portland in 1932¹² and started his mission of service while the

^{11.} Ibid., page 310. 12. Ibid., page 257.

entire country was steeped in the depth of depression. It is well known amongst the old members and friends of the Society that the Swami, when he started his work in Fortland, had not enough money even to pay his milk bill. But the Lord's work has been going on ever since. At a later time, seeing that no collection plate was passed after the service, one person asked, "How does the Society manage to continue?"

"So many people ask that," Swami Devatunananda smiled, "and I really don't know. The Lord provides. When I first arrived in Pottland, there was not even money to pay the milk bill. And yet we have managed. Our needs are very little."

"Members' devotion to the Society seems to be the answer," someone present remarked ¹³

The Society rented a house at 721 N. E. Halsey Street, rear N. E. Bradways in March 1932 for the accommodation of the Swami and to hold regular meetings and classes. Soon after, the Society rented a hall downtown in the Dekum Building and had Sunday morning services and Tuseday morning services and Tuseday morning services and Tuseday moved to a house at 1816-5. E. 32nd Placebes the second location of the Society. The Sunday evening service at this time was held in the Mason Temple downtown.

In 1934, When many non-profit religious institutions had to close on account of financial difficulties, the Society purchased a substantial house at 1260 k. W. 25th. Avenue—the first permanent home of the Vedanta Society of Portland. Two years late, in 1936, on the occasion of the 100th birthday anniversary of 5rs Enankrishna, the Society purchased on February 27th a

 Oregon Journal, Magazine, Sunday, July 16, 1980. tract of 120 acres of wooded land near Scappoose, 20 miles away from Portland, overlooking the Columbia River Valley. This acreage was to be used by interested members of the Society as a Retreat for meditation and contemplation. There was a log cabin (not existing now) with a kitchen and quite a large living room, as also a tool house and a small shed (the latter later on being rebuilt as a small meditation hall). In 1938 a small cabin for the Swami was built. Later, in 1941, on Easter morning, the members laid the foundation for a ladies' cottage, which was built in memory of Mary Olson. The building is a two-storeyed structure with good sized porches.

"Persons who worship Me in all beings, to them I carry what they lack and preserve what they already have," says Lord Krishna in the Blagmad Gilla. (D. 22) Theresa Olson relates how it happened in their lives too:

"Swami Devatrananada said [in 1934] we must try to buy a place of our own, and after a picnic day in Laurelhurst Park a meeting was set for this purpose, and at this meeting our President said we would look into this matter. We tried for one of the old houses on S. W. Park Avenue, but found the price too high for us. Then we secured a very nice and substantial house on N. W. Northrup and 25th Avenue.

The company who had this place for sale appointed a salealady to deal with us. At the age of four she had met the great Sound Vivek-annade in her Moher's home back east, where Swami was being entertained, and she remembered that he had patied her on the head. The price for this place was \$3,500. For some time we made monthly payments, and then we were to raise \$200 and secure the deed, giving a mortgage for the balance.

"When I came to the meeting the day,

before we were to make the payment, I told Swami that we lacked about \$51, but he did not seem disturbed. But I was surely disturbed. Everybody had done what he could. As we were sitting for meditation that evening, the front door flew open with a force, and I remembered something from my childhood, and I said 'Come in'. A beautiful form of the Divine Mother came in and walked up the sisle past where I was sitting and stood at Swami's right; and I knew that all was well.

"After the close of the evening, we had the full \$200 to make the payment meet day. One member, whose work had been scarce, and who had already centributed, came and said, 1 will bring \$510 to you at your office tomorrow, even if I starve." She came, and it was hard for me to take that \$50, but I prayed to our Master to help her find work. I watched and saw her work increasing, and to this day she has never lacked for work."

In 1943, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the advent of the Vedanta Movement in America, the Society acquired a house at 1877 S. W. Park Avenue. Subsequently the Society moved from 1206 N. W. 25th Avenue to this site on June 30. 1943. Henceforth all the activities of the Society, including Sunday services, were held at the new home of the Society. In the same year, on October 6, 7, and 8, a special worship of the Divine Mother was performed. During this time Swami Ashokananda of San Francisco, Swami Vishwananda of Chicago, and Swami Vividishananda of Seattle were present in addition to Swami Devatmananda. On the evening of October 8, the dedication of the Chapel in the new home of the Society was conducted. The following day, Saturday, October 9 the foundation stone for the future Temple at the Retreat was laid.

To commemorate the Silver Jubilee

Celebration of the founding of the Portland Centre, the bronze life-size aculpture of Swami Vivekananda was dedicated at the Society on November 11, 1951. It was designed and executed by Miss Malvina Hofiman of New York, who had met Swami Vivekananda when she was a gilt. The bronze was cast at a foundry in New York.

On the occasion of the 100th birthday of the Holy Mother, the construction work of the New Temple at the Retreat began in 1953. Subsequently the Temple was dedicated on August 1, 1954 in the presence of Swami Prabhavananda of Hollywood, Swami Pavitrananda of New York, and Swami Devatmananda. Exterior and interior of the outer walls of this octagonshaped edifice are done in knotty pine. topped by a gold dome. The sacred word 'our' is above the entrance. Altar decorations included a bronze head of Sri Ramakrishna (also by Malvina Hoffman) and photographs of Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. A social hall is in the basement. Seating is provided for 200 persons in the Chapel. This is the first Hindu Temple of its kind in the Northwest 14

Because of his prolonged ill-health, Swami Devatmananda was urged by the Headquariers of the Ramakrishna Order to return to India for rest and treatment. Accordingly, he left Portland on Saturday December 11, 1954 for Behur Math, where he passed away on August 8, 1958.

Swami Devarmananda worked very hard for the development of the Portland Centre. He worked with great love and zeal. To all the members he was their friend, philosopher and guide. In the course of his stay in Portland he won the esteem and

Ibid., Saturday, July 31, 1954; and The Oregonius, Monday, August 2, 1954.

administration of many. ³⁸ Even now the side devotees remember their days of body association with him. A special mention may be made in this connection about the Centenary Celebrations of Sei Ramakirshan in 1936. There was a banquet at the Masonic Temple, 100 guests were present. A play "The Light from the Beyond," was staged in the auditorium of the Masonic Temple on four religions—Hindrium, Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism, under the guidance of Swami Devotamanada. The audience and the devotees called it 'ac classic', ³⁶

Succeeding Swami Devatmananda at Portland came Swami Aseshananda. Swami Aseshananda was initiated by Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, in 1917. He joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1921 and was initiated into Brahmacarya by Swami Brahmananda in 1922. Subsequently he took his final yow of sannyasa from Swami Saradananda in 1923. He had the good fortune of serving Swami Saradananda as his private secretary from 1921 to 1927 in Udbodhan, popularly known as 'Holy Mother's House' in Calcutta. Over and above, he came in contact with many other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, including Swami Shivananda, Swami Turiyananda, and Swami Premananda. Swami Aseshananda arrived in Portland on February 5, 1955 from Hollywood where he had been assisting Swami Prabhavananda. Following a precept of Swami Brahmananda-the Spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna-that work and worship must go together, Swami Aseshananda introduced morning meditation, noon worship and evening vespers for the devotees as an essential complement to the daily work of the Centre. During the first years at Portland, two mendevotees lived with him.

An important addition to the Society was the finishing of the basenemt of the Temple at the Retreat, and turning it into a kitchen and social hall. The dedication ceremony was held on May 16, 1599 with a special worship and Homa-fire ceremony. The hall was named Swam Brahmanand Hall," and a picture of Swami Brahmananda was installed.

Portland State University took over the Vedanta Society's property at 1877 S. W. Park Avenue on March 15, 1966 for their new library site. Then Swami Aseshananda and Mr. Stuart Bush (President of the Vedanta Society) moved to Apartment 4 at 1120 N. W. 25th Avenue. At that time Sunday morning services were held at the Retreat Temple. All other services were held at the Y.W.C.A. at 1111 S. W. 10th Avenue. Meetings were held in the Swami's apartment. Repeated searches for a new site for the Society were made, and finally the present property, approximately one acre, at 1157 S. E. 55th Avenue, was purchased on January 8, 1968. The existing building had to be remodelled to a great extent. The Swami moved to the new Temple near the end of July. On September 29, 1968 (Durga Puia), the new Temple was dedicated. Since then all the classes, Sunday services, and meetings have been held in the new Temple.

Swami Aseshanarda was invited by a number of institutions to give lectures on Vedanta and allied subjects. He spoke at Lewis and Clark Collage, Red Collage, St. Helen's Hall (Episcopal), Oregon State University, Fortland, Clackman High School and Pacific University. As ensire most Swami ensire most Swami of the Vedanta Societies in America, he gained the respect of other religious leaders, even conservative.

Hindrism Comes to America (Chicago: The Vedanta Society, 1933), page 50.
 The Oregonian, March 25, 1936.

Christians.

Many Oregonians, hearing the term 'Curry', immediately think of the Rajneeshes and their Ilhagwan. But Hideo Hashimoto, a Medical minister and a former professor of religious studies at Lewis and Clark College, says that view is too narrow and ought to be redefined,—"Swami! Assessmands has an entirely different approach to reality and life He's the genuine article."⁴⁷

In 1973 the Buddha Shrine was built and dedicated in the yard of the Portland Centre. In the same year a 'School of Inter-Religious Understanding' was started with lectures and classes at 7:30 p.m., but later on it was discontinued.

Some outdoor meditation-shrines were built in different areas of the Retreat property to be used for public worship: Sri Ramakrishna and Holy Mother Strines in 1974, the Buddha, Christian and Swami Virekaranda Strines in 1975, the Islamic Strine in 1976, and the American Indian Strine in 1979.

Todd Thomas, a devout member of the Vedanta Society, gives a moving account of how Sri Ramakrishna helped him in finding out his spiritual teacher and eventually made him an instrument in acquiring the present property of the Society:

"I was doing some studying," Todd Thoman narrates, "and in my study the name of 'Guru' came into the picture. Then I realized that I needed a seacher. One day when I was in a quiet time, something prompted me to look into the phone book, and I looked under "Swamis'; and there was Swami Aseshanarda's name. I called the Vedanta Society and found that they had services. On Study I came to the Society

and heard Swami Aseshananda give his talk. And that was it. He was my Guru at that point. I knew it. Subsequently, in 1960 during the Durga Puja I was initiated by Swami Aseshananda."

One day Swami Aseshananda mentioned in a group meeting that Portland State University was supposed to take over our property, so we should find out some suitable place for the Society. And, surprisingly, he mentioned Mt. Tabor. That kept ringing in my mind all the time. About September, 1965. we made a trip to Hollywood Vedanta Society. At Santa Barbara we had dinner with Swami Prabhavananda, During the course of the dinner Swami Prabhavananda referred to our searching for a new site. He turned towards me and said something to the effect that Swami Aseshananda needs help, 'Will you help him?" It was a shock to me-that he came at me so strong! I dropped my head and turned within. Pretty soon he said, 'Well, you say something," Well, I'm thinking, Swami. We have been looking and don't know what we should do,' and finally I said, 'Yes, I will,'

"From that point on I spent every available spare time looking for property all over the city of Portland, any piece of property of 20 thousand square feet or more, because that was our requirement so that we could have off-street parking and all that. One morning after meditation in the small shrine of my apartment I was at a loss as to where I should look next! I prayed to Sri Ramakrishna, 'O Lord, I looked everywhere, but I don't know where to go now'; and in the twinkling of an eye the vision of this property came into my mind very clear. I knew where it was, what it exactly was. It was Sunday morning. After the Service I came up to this property and walked into the Centre; and I can't express the feeling that I felt. They sky was clear. It was nice warm day. It was a kind of heavenly feeling that I had about the

Northwest, The Sunday Oregonian Magazine, April 30, 1989, page 14.

property, and I thought, 'This is it.'

"Later on, Swami Aseshananda and the members of the Board went to the property. Within five weeks plans were drawn and approved by the Planning Commission. And subsequently we purchased the present property of approximately one acre in Mt. Tabor District on January 8, 1968."

Adjacent to the building there is a beautiful garden with apple, cherry, plum and pear trees. A variegated array of camelia and rhododendron shrubs, a profusion of crimson azaleus, delighthal roses, lixuriant marigald, and charming seasonal flowers such as daffold; fully, zinnia, aster, daisies, lilies, poppies, gladida, chrysanthemum and many others grown in the flower-garden, are a feast to the eye in the spring, summer and autuum.

For women devotees wishing to live a more guided spiritual life, two houses were purchased: Holy Mother's House at 720°S. E. Salmon Street on September 29, 1983, and Sri Salmon Street on September 29, 1983, and Sri Salmon Street on May 10, 1983. Some women devotees live in the two houses. Although they have not taken formal vowe, they lead a dedicated like and attend all of the various activities of the Society, including meditation, woeship, vespers, services and other celebrations. Their lives have long since taken on the seady rhythms of works and woeship:

Glimpses of a Great Soul—A Portrait of Swami Saradananda, by Swami Aseshananda, was published in 1982.

Since 1925 this Centre has been spreading the eternal. Iiie-giving message of Vedanta, the message of the unity of existence and the divinity of man, preached by Swami Vivekananda. Evidently during this long period, its life-current has not flowed in a uniformly even stream; there has been the ebb and flow. The present activities of the Sunday services, evening classes on scriptures, evening classes on scriptures, adult worthly and meditation and evening adult worthly and evening the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Buddha, Jesus, and a five religious festivals like Durga Puja, Bibrary and bookstore and the Retreat Programme once amouth.

In June, 1990, Swami Aseshananda, who is now ninety-five, became III. Swami Shan-tarupananda came from India in July, 1991 to assist him. Through the grace of the Divine Mother, Swami's health has noticeably improved and still he is performing daily worship and evening vespers, taking keen interest in all the activities of the Society.

By the Will O' Providence the work that was set in motion by Sward Vivekananda 100 years ago is still on the march. He burst forth on the World Stage in 1890 and now he is working as a spirit—' as a voice without a form.' At present there are twelve Vedanta Centres in America with fifteen sub-Centres and Rotreats. All these Centres accept three cardinal principles: First, that mar's real nature is divine; second, that the aim of human life is to realize with bit Vivine nature; third, that all religions are essentially in agreement.

On this memorable occasion of the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's visit to America let us remember his inspiring message: "Arise, awake, and stop not till the Goal is reached."

May He who taught such grand ideas help us to get strength to carry on the service of the Lord!

 Vedanta for the Western World, Editor, Christopher Isherwood, Hollywood, 1946, page 1.

Holy Mother in Universal Perspective

SWAMI SWAHANANDA

How can one explain the sweet influence over our lives and society that Sri Sarada Devi, the Hoby Mother, exerts? The author's observations effer rich food for thought. Swami Swahamada is a senior monk of the Ramakrishnu Order and is the spiritual leader of the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Holywood, U.S.A.

> Om. Mahüvidyärüpüm devim pürnajhünavalim sailm Rümakrıyapriyam vande süradam süradamanim.

Swamı Vivekananda said that Sri Ramakrishna lived the life, we are to interpret it. Every deed or virtue of an Apullina has a deeper meaning and a social application. The life and teachines of the Holy Mother are already familiar to us. I take for granted that almost all of you know most of the incidents of the Holy Mother's life and most of her teachings. The Holy Mother is expected to arouse a tremendous power/inspiration in us, for she is Mahišakti, the great power, Swami Vivekananda wrote-"...of Ramakrishna. you may aver, my brother, that he was an Incarnation or whatever else you may like, but fie on him who has no devotion for the Mother..."1 Swami Saradananda when speaking to a lady who had faith in Sri Ramakrishna as an Avatara, but could not realize the Mother's divinity said: "Do you think that an Avatāra has married just an ordinary woman?" Sri Ramakrishna himself told bor. "What have I done? You will have to do much more for the people, specially in Calcutta. "2 Sister Nivedita said about her. "To me it has always appeared that she is Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of

Now these are various encomiums which have been made about the Holy Mother. If we accept Holy Mother as an Avaära, God descended on earth for the people, we take for granted that some special power has been released. Swami Vivekanarda believed that with Sri Ramakrishra's advent, Bralymalungdalini (papritual power) has been awakersed. That manus a total awakersing will come everywhere.

A Movement takes times to sprout and to manifest its power. I remember Arnold Toynbee, who in one context was interviewed in 1963, in Japan. He was asked: "What is the most important influence on the world in 1963?" The great British historian said. "It is science and technology." Then he added, "In 2063 if you ask me this question as a historian, we shall also say, it is science and technology. But if you ask us in 3063 we shall say, the influence in 1963 were the eastern ideas; and if you ask in 4063, then we would say it was the Indian spiritual ideas." In one place he wrote: "In the 20th century the world will accept the idea of Asoka. Mahatma Gandhi and Sri

Indian womanhood. But is she the last of an old order, or the beginning of a new?"3

The Complete Works of Sustan Vinekananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 7, page 458.

Śwami Gembhiranarda, Holy Mother, Shri Sarada Devi (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapone, 1955) pp. 120-21.

The Complete Works of Sister Nivelita (Calcutta: Advasta Ashrama, 1982) Vol. 1, page 105.

44

Ramakrishna about the harmony of religious."

So these are the opinions of some of the intellectuals. Swami Vivekananda once said that, "from the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, Satyayaga (Golden Age) has started."4 If universal consciousness has awakened with the Holy Mother's coming. or if a new movement has come to awaken the people of the world, we must accept that this particular power has been infused into the society also. Seemingly she lived just a life of an ordinary woman. Still, tremendous power was there, as Swami Premananda and others said. With that tremendous divine power she could absorb the highest spiritual experiences and yet behave like an ordinary woman.5 Comparatively, Sri Ramakrishna could not contain his ecstasies, whereas the Holy Mother could, showing a greater power of restraint. What is the sign of greater power- allowing a horse to run or stopping a horse from running? She manifested tremendous power of control along with doing other duties of life.

Now, if the Holy Mother is the ideal, then we may examine some of the virtues that she manifested and see how those virtues can be useful to individuals, to society at large, and for attaining the ultimate goal of man. Any study should be analyzed from these three angles. First, whether it is individually beneficial. Second, whether it is socially useful. And third, whether it helps in the realization of the ultimate goal of like, if there is any. I shall discuss half a dozen virtues of the Holy Mother and analyze them in these three ways.

First her patience. She had tremendous

patience. She lived with a burch of half crazy people who were demanding and selfistle, but day after day she did live with them. It is said that she lived as an ideal for the householders, because they are beset with various problems. How to keep one's calm and one's spirit of service in such circumstances even—this is what Holy Mother manifested in her daily lived.

Now, in what way is patience going to help us? In the day-to-day life of an individual, half of the joys of life we lose by being impatient. We are impatient with ourselves and equally impatient with others. As a result, whatever joys we could get, by being impatient we lose them. By unoften grumbling and complaining, the little joys that were available could be utilized. There is a saving that two types of people can become the richest men of the world: The man who can acquire all the wealth of the world, and the man who can reduce his wants to the minimum. The beggar is poor, a monk is also poor. But the monk, because he is voluntarily poor, is not really poor. When you give up desire, really you are the master of everything. If I have patience, if I have self-control, I can control my reactions. That is the message of the Yogis. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Sa, şa śa," Forbear, Forbear, Forbear. Forbearance is the key of life. In day-to-day life so much patience is necessary to make life livable and also enjoyable. By a little tolerance, a little patience, much of the joys of life could be retained, and much of the bitterness of life can be lessened.

Now, to develop that patience one requires unselfashness. Often people say, "Oh, Siz, it is good to say, 'Be unselfash' But if you are unselfash, people will take advantage of you." It may be true, individually speaking, but it cannot be a social ideal. If every member of a society is selfash, if the father is selfash, the mother is

Swami Vivekananda, Complete Works, Vol. 6, pp. 318, 327-28.

^{5.} Holy Mother, Shri Sarada Devi, pp. 115-16.

selfish, the daughter is selfish, the son is selfish, there will be no cooking in the home at all. If all the members of a society are selfish, that society is going to deteriorate. So, some measure of unselfishness, some measure of idealism, some measure of even other-worldliness is necessary to maintain certain values in society. Unselfishness is one of the virtues which are essential for group living. One of the world problems is, how to make people live together in a family or a larger group. The most important factors affecting any type of interpersonal relationship are the amount of patience, understanding and acceptance. These are the basic virtues. The Holy Mother, by her own practice, has shown us that it can be practised in our daily living.

A five days ago I was speaking to a friend of mine. I learned he had reired. His two sons are in his house, both are married, but they have three separate kitchers. That shows that there is no use putting all the blame on the government or the soon in climate or even enconneir conditions for our miseries. It is we who create our unhappiness. So, unless and until the individual accepts this idea that if we have to live together we must practise patience, tolerance, acceptance and unselfishness, misery will continue unabated.

Now that is an important idea the Holy Mother has demonstrated. All this levie is to the practised. She asked us not to be critical. Her last messige, "Find out your own. Don't faults; the whole world is your own. Don't find fault with others", reminds us that half at the troubles of life are from finding faults with others. We are always judgmental, we are always critical. That was one of the beauties of the Holy Mother. She could not see the defective side of persons. Somebody complained to her, "Mother, we are telling soo many things against such and such person but you don't see his faults." Mother

said, "Yes, I cannot see faults of other people." We know that in her younger days she prayed, "O Lord, there is a stain even in the moon, but let there not be the least trace of stain in my mind." Evidently God heard her and she could not see the defective side of people.

By decrying a person you cannot bring out his qualities, but only by encouraging him. That is what Swamiji wanted to evoke by making people aware of their spiritual potentiality, and that is what Holy Mother stressed by her teachings and character. Don't see other people's faults; see your own fault.

When Sister Nivedita and others came to the Holy Mother they found that she was innately courteous. She was also so liberal in her views and in her actions. This was demonstrated again and again. As a widow in the last century coming from a small village of Bengal, the Holy Mother was able to accept two foreign ladies, and accept them as her own, so much so that Sister Nivedita felt so close to her that she would behave like a little child and always sit near her feet. This spirit of acceptance and liberalism, that all types of people can be accommodated, can be accepted as one's own, was characteristic of the Holy Mother. She was not anxious to change people. She was willing to fully accept Amiad, the dacoit, as also the saintly Saradananda. In one sense, she looked upon them equally.7 She accepted people as they were. Not to become judgemental is one of her greatest teachines.

Another characteristic of the Holy Mother that we can learn from seeing her life is how to accommodate ourselves to different conditions. When Sri Rama-

^{6.} Ibid., page 47.

^{7.} Ibid., page 194.

krathna was moving away from Dakshinenwar to another location in Calcutta the devotees were anxious where the Holy Mother would stay. She had never before lived under public gaze, even when the devotees went to Dakshineswar they did not know that she lived there, except the initimate devotees. How could she manage? But the Holy Mother was ready. When she was asked she immediately agreed and adjusted to the situation. Now this spirit of accommodation, the idea of accepting unfamiliar situations and people, shows her agirt of Dibertalism.

We have to call out these virtues from thely Mother's unique life and see whether these virtues are useful to us and then practise them in our own livus. Swami Vivekananda often spoke about practical Vedanta. Vedanta represents certain ideas. These ideas when put into practice in life become practical This is practical spirituality, practical Vedanta. The virtues of the proper of the practical virtue is practical when the property of the practice is our coornilated to the property of the practice is our coornilated to the property of the practice is our coornilated to the property of the practice is our coornilated to the property of the practice is our coornilated to the property of the practice of the property of the printial.

Another quality I would like to refer to is that the life the Holy Mother lived was primarily an internal, quiet life, full of calmness and sererity. These qualities are praised in our scriptures. The Chlindogus Upanisad says: "Be tranquil and meditate"-Stinta and Uptistita, that is for spiritual practice. But what about calmness in our day-today life? Again I shall bring out the same argument. If I want to enjoy, I must be prepared to become calm. Bertrand Russell wrote an interesting article on happiness. He said: "After studying the great literatures of the world and the lives of great men we know that the major part of their life was uninteresting or monotonous." So he suggested that even children should be taught to bear with boredom in life. The major complaint in America, India and everywhere among the richer class of people, among their children, is boredom. Excitement is necessary because they have been taught that life consists of excitement. Our normal idea of life or enjoyment is excitement. But the moment you have excitement, let us say over the weekend. you will feel a reaction at the beginning of the next week. That means if a wave goes up, it will come down. So excitement cannot be the source of real enjoyment. Calmness and serenity are more important. The ideal we see manifested in Holy Mother's life is a calm, quiet life, just living the life. Of course, a majority of people are quiet, and they calmly go on with their life, deriving some amount of joy from it. The Holy Mother had tremendous power within, but still manifested calmness externally. That is a tremendous lesson to learn. If she wanted she could have changed situations. Swami Vivekananda used to say that the older we become the more we understand that it is by calmness and serenity that we accomplish more.

The Holy Mother had full mastery over her emotions; yet she behaved like a normal woman. When Maku's son Neda died, she was crying and weeping like others. Narayana Iyengar, who was a great devotee of those days, was a guest there. He approached the Holy Mother and said, 'Mother, how much sorrowfulness is around, let me go back home." Though the Mother was crying, weeping loudly like a village woman, still she answered, "That is a different affair; why should you leave? You please stay." The next moment she was talking in a very calm, serene way. That means the grief was there, at the same time she was detached. When an old Bagdi woman came, who had lost her son, the Mother could cry loudly, in sympathy with her. Yet the next moment she quietly went about doing her household work. This is the Yogi's ideal. Tremendous control over oreself, and at the same time, according to the need, showing emotions that other people appreciate or feel.

The final idea is the basic idea of spirituality. Holy Mother is primarily a spiritual personality. Has her spirituality any usefulness for our day-to-day living? Of course, the whole basis of spiritual training is that life is not complete without some sort of spiritual realization. Unless this spiritual basis is there, life cannot be satisfied, fulfilled. We have talked to many people who have acquired all the coveted things of life; husband, wife, children, success, and recognition in life; still, a part of their mind is not satisfied. Sometimes people come and ask us: What exactly is the reason we are not satisfied with the normal things which people covet? Our answer is based upon the teachings of the Uponisals: You cannot have satisfaction, full satisfaction, with something limited. That is the ideal the Holy Mother and all the great spiritual teachers have manifested, and that is what all individuals, some time or other, will have to imbibe. A man is not complete unless he has brought in this idea of spirituality.

The above points have been taken from the standpoint of the individual. Now let us see whether these values and virtues are useful in the social context. I am a member of a society. If I am patient, shall I more easily accrue the things of life? As I have argued, Tagore and others have said that if the majority of people are not patient, calm and serene, and they do not do their duty or follow social standards (i.e. play by the existing code of ethics, etc.), life would be intolerable. Some measure of patience in society is also necessary. If you want to change society, should you try to change it overnight, and create a tremendous upheaval as they did in Russia, China and many of the countries? The communistic system, after the acquisition of modern wealth and modern weapons, which destroyed a large number of people, was an 'overnight' change. But with how much result? Very little. I had the occasion to go to Russia a few years ago. Though they have brought about something in seventy years, most people are not satisfied. People require freedom to be happy. Many of the people are not willing to work. So life will always be a mixture. There must be patience, tolerance and acceptance, but some people should also be a little impatient to bring about change. Previously I always advocated patience. Now I feel there is provision for some impatience also. Then only changes will come. There should be some provision for rebels and rebellion; otherwise nothing new will appear in society. But, by and large, the majority in a society will have to be calm and serene. This is in the social context. Swami Vivekananda praised the mild Hindu, the tolerant Hindu. For generations they have practised tolerance, and he says it is yet to be decided whether aggressiveness. pays in the long run or serenity. Because all the nations which were aggressive are gone, but the mild Hindu nation still persists. So, after a long-range vision, patience is more beneficial.

As a result of patience, calmness should come. Now in the social contest how much calmness is necessary? Every government, every social organization wents a calm atmosphere. Unless the atmosphere is calm you cannet do anything. So the majority of people have to practise this calmness and seenily and not display restlessness all the time. Every government, every organization depends upon the tranquility of the majority of its members. There cannot be constructive work in a perpetually restlive atmosphere. The Holy Mother's advocacy not to hate but low everyhody is a tremen-

dous spiritual message, a needed dictation to the whole world. The world can be organized in two ways: by hate and by love. Communism and some other eroups try to organize society on the basis of hate. By hate you can organize quickly. Once you unleash hatred, it will go on disturbing the different limbs of society. The ultimate result is not good for the whole society. All the great teachers. like Buddha and others. have said: "You can change people by love. and not by hate." And that must be the basic principle. Society, to be better, does not move overnight. It moves very slowly. So patience and serenity are essential for social continuity and change.

The Holy Mother was a spiritual personality. In the social context, in what ways is spirituality going to be useful? How valuable are her spiritual teachings? Spiritual values must be imbibed into society. If all the members of a society are selfish, that society will not last long. People say, nowadays you cannot survive without telling lies. It may be true or it may not be true. But if all the members of a society are liars. that society will collapse. They say even rogues and criminals have some type of mutual consideration. The charge against patience, tolerance and acceptance is that it may bring in too much inaction, a certain measure of passivity, a certain measure of tamas, which Swami Vivekananda tried to remove by invoking tremendous raises. There cannot be an absolutely permanent solution for a situation, given the selfish nature of people. Everything will have to be observed from different angles. Any value may be introduced. But it may decline after 100 years, and another value will have to be brought in. About Buddha's grand ideal of Ahimsil which continues to impress the modern world. Swami Vivekananda pointed out that because of too much practice of Ahimsit, India was conquered by Muslims. So every great virtue may also have a very defective side which may manifest, socially speaking, in the passage of time. Correctives must be applied all the time. So alertness will be necessary through all these situations where spiritual values are misinterpreted or wrongly applied. As Sister Nivedita pointed out: When religion becomes love, and not chastising, and the evangelist's God of fury is replaced by the God of love, then the relationship is sweet. And Mother is the sweetest thing for the child. Because of this background it is easier in India to accept the Holy Mother as the Divine Mother incarnate. Sri Ramakrishna called her Kali, and in her turn she called Ramakrishna, Kali, She was Mother incarnate with a special manifestation of the sublime and divine qualities which are necessary for us. These virtues of patience, acceptance, calmness, serenity, tolerance, the spiritual ideal of life, a grip over ourselves, and above all, a deeper spirituality, are essential for the benefit of the individual, for society and for the ideal of realising one's spiritual nature, which is the ultimate goal of life.

"I am the mother of the wicked, as I am the mother of the virtuous. Never fear. Whenever you are in distress, just say to yourself, 'I have a mother.'"

> —In the Company of Holy Mother, By her direct disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960), page 33.

Visit to Java and Bali

SWAMI PARASHARANANDA

A monk of the Ramakrishna Order at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Varanasi, the author shares with us some of the picturesque scenes and glorious history of the ancient Hindu realms in the Indonesian islands which opened up for him on his recent visit.

Modern researchers prove that in ancient times India's cultural contacts and influence extended to a wide region all over Asia and many parts of the world. This stunendous achievement was not the roudt of military expeditions or of ruthless aggression. It was a spontaneous and peaceful process of sharing her spiritual wealth and attainments in the fields of commerce, art, architecture, literature, and culture with far and near neighbours. At no time in history India had a design to establish her political begemony over other religions, or to supplant her religion by destroying the existing ones. She never disturbed the established social order in any land nor wipe out the indigenous culture of people. In the course of ages, far off foreign lands slowly and naturally came under the spell of highly developed civilization of India. A Western historian has rightly observed: "It was one of the most civilizing movements of ancient times.... India can be justly proud to have spread the light of understanding over such distant lands. lands that without her might have remained in darkness." The spread of Indian culture in all its aspects started from the third century B.C. It was a unique conquest by means of peace, love and gooda gentle dew." will. "Like Vivekananda, "that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world." The writer had an opportunity to visit recently Indonesia and some of its islands.

India established trade relations with Indonesia in the early centuries of the Christian era. Ištaka and Jain stories tell us that Indian merchants sailed to Suvarnabhūmi (lit. 'the land of gold'), a territory stretching from Burma to Indonesia, from the ports on the eastern coast of India. The most important three of these Indian ports were Tamralipti (Tamluk), Gonalpur, and Masulipattam, Ksatrivas also went as immigrants and settled down in foreign lands, mixing freely with the local populations. There were also the Buddhist missionaries. And all of them, whether they were merchants or ksatriyas, or missionaries, became culture-bearers of ancient India, and wherever they went they introduced Indian customs and manners, religion and philosophy, art, and literature. The introduction of the Indian cultural tradition into foreign lands was thus a long and gradual process.

From the 7th century AD. the Sailburdins (Lords of the Mountains) ruled Sumatra and the Java islands. They had their roots in India. The Sailburdins kings were followers of Mohijains Buddhism and were inlinemented by the culture existing at that time in Bengal. Their role was remarkable in the cultural development of Suranyadifyin. The Sailendras had a great naval power and frequest contact with India. An Indian named Kumaraghosa was a royal preceptor to some of the kings of this dynasty. Balaputnadeva, a king of Suvarmadvipa, built a monastery at Niklanda, a celebrated

convinced that Mira has some far beyond accounts of her spiritual experiences, of her disciplines, being totally absorbed in God, "encounters" with the Lord, which are She sees the world as a divine "sport" and conveyed in a voluntuous language involving delights in the bond of true love that she erotic images, both touch our hearts and has forged with Him. She does not recognize illuminate our minds, as do Mira's pure any other relationship than that she bears descripted sones. St. Teresa and St. John with Krsns: mere to sirdhar sonola dano na koi. She calls him "cahir yambhira." (Profound and wist), which easily supposts that she is a thank in her own right Logical disputation and philosophical analysis have they will continue to inspire and inflame no relevance for her. Leaving them far the hearts of God-lovers in our country. behind her, she knows the Lord as much Lal Ded, too, has passed on a rich legacy as she loves Him.

supreme devotion to the Beloved her love Deva and Abbinavanueta, have handed of Lord Jesus Christ, which she cherished intensely throughout her cloistered life as a on Self-knowledge, nun of the Spanish church in the sixteenth century. Like Mira, she also thought of

learning or philosophical concepts, one is herself as the Bride of the Lord. The of the Cross are known to have enriched Christian mystical literature in a significant way. Mira's bhajarus constitute a valuable part of the Makti literature in India today : to us in the shape of the väkhs, an invaluable addition in the Kashmiri language, to St. Teresa's also is a classic example of the 'riches' her great predecessors. Utpala down to us through their scholarly works

(concluded)

ON PRACTICALITY AND PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

(Continued from page 19)

some of the wine of his nectoring words Read at least the first 250 pages of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, and then look around you. You will see that your outlook towards life has changed. The Gospel is poetry, beautiful and elevating. Sri Ramakrishna loved to sing this song-

Sura pan kori na ami, Sudhā khôi, kev kāli bole. Mon mätäle mätäl kore. Mad mātāle mātāl hole

'I do not drink ordinary wine, I enjoy divine nectar singing victory to Mother Kali -

but unlike the ordinary wine which renders one insensible

the mind is lifted to a high plane of bliss when the mind is intoxicated with the Name of Mother Kali.

He pointed at one of us smilingly and told my commanion, 'She has tasted some of this wine. Take some from her.'

Then he said, 'I must go now, the barber is waiting for me.' After exchanging a few words with us he stood up. We howed in pranam before him; he blessed us again. We took leave feeling absolutely light, drained of all tensions and conflicting thoughts.

tion of the Indonesian islands dates from the fifth century A.D. It consists of a number of huge boulders inscribed with the name of a king Piranavaman, who ruled over a kingdom named Taruma. In Taruma two stone statues representing the Hindu God Vignu were found. The larger one of these is closely related in style to a fragmentary sculpture found near Kotakpaur on the island of Bangka. It is carved in a provincial style, examples of which are found, with all kinds of local variations, in widely separated parts of South East Assets.

Icons in bronze, representing the figures of the Buddhist pantheno, were often imported to Indonesia by merchants and missionaries and pilgrims returning from India. Most of these statues, which served as examples for Icola artists, have periabed. However, on most of the Indonesian islands to which Hindu-Javanese influence spread, a few of these imported statues have been found. The most famous example is the magnificent Buddha in Indian Gutua stevé found at Kalimantan.

During the 8th, 9th, and in the early years of the 10th century the Javanese displayed a feverish activity in the field of temple building. Hundreds of temples were built, mainly in the vicinity of the village of Prambanan. Both the Hindu and the Buddhist temples existed side by side in central Java.

A visit to most of the great monuments of Hindu-Javanes temple architecture in central Java is facilitated by the fact that practically all of the sites of major importance are close to the city of jogiskarta. The later temples of Eastern Java, on the other hand, are dispersed over a much wider area and are much less easily accessible. So it is fortunate that the Jakarta museum possesses a rich and varied collection of the stone statues and architectural fragments taken

from Eastern Javanese temple sites.

According to historians, the eastern Javanese island was ruled over by the kings of the three dynasties. The kings of Keliri ruled over Java from the 10th century to 1222 A.D. They were succeeded by the dynasty of Sineasari (1222-1293), which was then replaced by the kings of Majapahit (1293- to early 16th century). In the course of the 15th and 16th centuries Islam penetrated deeply into the Indonesian archipelago. Wherever it gained a foot hold it eventually succeeded in replacing the ancient Indian religions. Acceptance of the tenets of Islam invariably signified the end of many traditional artistic concepts. Only Bali was able to withstand this onslaught and people have been thus able to maintain their traditional culture till the present day.

Indonesia is the largest archipelago of the world, with 15,000 islands cattered widely in the sea. At Taman one finds represented a miniature Indonesia—the art, the culture, the life-style, and flora and fauna of some 25 prominent islands depicted in models within an area of about 6 ag, kms. It is really a unique showpiece for all tourists to see Store and plaster models of figures, attractive fountains, green soft lawns, and varieties of flower beds are all around. A film show on Indonesia is an added attraction.

Mini Disneyland is just outside the city of a real Induslok for the kids. All sorts of funny and exciting things are packed in an area of 8 sq. kms. Boys and girls are very busy to prove their skills in every individual competition.

Săfări is some 60 kms. away from the city. Full of hills and forests, the unspoiled land of Săfări measures some 20 kms. in length and the same in breadth. Wild animals move freely in this vast area just as movement has kept them healthy and lively

Another place of importance, only one hour from lakarta, is logiskarta. There one sees the Prambanan group of temples, eight temples in all, the three largest of them dedicated to Brahma, Visnu and Siva. The important central temple of Siva is surrounded by the temples of Agastya, Durga, and Ganesa. There is also a temple of Nandi. These Hindu temples were partially damaged during the Muslim invasion but are now renaired and restored by the Archaeological Department. The stone images of Brahmä, Siva and Agastva are majestic. Standing in front of these magnificent and imposing deities, visitors become silent with awe and reverence.

The whole story of Rimitums is depicted in 72 sculptured relief works on the walls of the Brahma and Siva temples. A few relief works on the walls of the Visnu temple depict the childhood and boyhood days of Krishna and Balarama. The big images of the Dwiinspälakas and the tigers in front of the temples are great art works in stone. These temples were built during the 9th and early 10th centuries.

Borobodur, a stupa complex, is only 40 kms. from the city of Jogiakarta. For hundreds of years this Buddhist sanctuary existed unnoticed. Only about a hundred years ago a lavanese pobleman rediscovered the temple and he was soon followed by others. The enormous dimensions as well as its variegated symbolism make Borobodur the largest and most interesting temple in the world. On account of its technical, architectural and symbolic display, it is closely related to the Buddhist temples of Cambodia and India. Modern measuring and drilling techniques and aerial photography with the latest photo-technology

they do naturally in a forest. This free have helped unravel much, which was not possible a few years ago.

> The Buddhist ruler in the Sailendra Dynasty had started, in the beginning of the 8th century, the construction of the colossal monument-the largest in the world he knew of-in honour of Buddha. Thousands of skilled and unskilled workmen toiled to build the massive structure. The huge quantity of stone (approx. 55,000 cubic metres) was taken from the nearby mountains. The construction work went on for more than 100 years.

> At first glance, Chandi Borobodur consists of nine superimposed terraces, one on top of the other, gradually diminishing in size—a symbol of nine levels of the Holy Mount Meru. These terraces again differ from each other in that they belong to three spiritual phases, symbolizing the stages of human life. The Buddhist religion divides temporal existence and also spiritual enlightenment into three spheres. The lowest sphere, Kilmadhitu, represents the transitoriness of life. Rüpulhiitu, the second sphere denotes the renouncement of human desires, and yet the earthly forms continue. Artipadhitu, the highest sphere, represents Nirpina, which state transcends all names and forms.

> Kämadhätu, represented by the base of Borobodur, is accessible at four places only. A huge protecting wall, 6 metres thick and 3 metres high, of about 12,000 square metres covers most of the reliefs and has preserved them in a largely undamaged state. A series of reliefs on the walls of the base illustrates the effects of good and bad deeds done in life. Events in the life of the Buddha and scenes from the Jataka tales form the second stage, Ripadhitu.

> Ascending another flight of steps, the visitor comes to the upper terraces. The

reliefs here are a continuation of the stories of the Buddha. The Buddhas belong to the 'Dhgin'' group, the meditative Buddhas. The Dhyain Buddhas indicate different things according to the direction they face. Those facing east call the earth as witness; those facing north symbolize fearliesmess; buddhas facing west are lost in meditation, and those on the south symbolize charity and mercy. Some reliefs also illustrate philosophical themes, taken from the Buddhist scriptures.

Only a few of the Borobodur Buddhas still have their original heads. Over the past decades museums, art galleries, and especially private collectors all over the world have made them the treasured objects of trade. It is hoped that plaster casts of the broken surfaces would help in fitting the damaged parts together.

Before reaching the top circular terraces, or the highest sphere, Ariginalitin, the visitor enters an open and unwalled area. The belustrade holding of 1 Diyaria Buddhas still maintains the square shape of the lower terraces. This open area represents the transition from the sphere of Form into the sphere of Form int

The view of the wast landscape from the top of the temple, unobstructed by reliefs or balustrades, is spectacular. With such a fascinating sight before the eyes and the massive stone sculptures of the Borobodyur, and standing among 72 Dhyani Buddhas on the same platform, the mind of every visitor is filled with a feeling of serenity and peace. The highest and overtowering main

stupa in the middle of the summit symbolizes the eternal peace after deliverance. This is Nirvāṇa. Inside this stupa there is nothing—only an empty space.

There are in all 504 Buddhas in magnificent stone sculpture in the temple comprised of the terraces of Rūpadhātu and Arūpadhātu. The huge temple is square at the base, each side measuring 123 metres. The original height was 42 metres, but is now only 31.5 metres due to settling.

We spent the whole morning in Borocholur and after taking some snacks in a shop in the temple area we returned to the city. On our way we saw an active volcano from a distance. Twenty years ago it erupted, when tiles of lava did extensive damage to the surrounding area. We did not drive our car right up to the mouth of the volcano, but saw smoke constantly billowing out of the huge crater.

Food in Indonessia is a real problem for a vegetatian. As the people eat too much of meat, eggs and fish, normally no vegetatian dishes sar available in the hotels. Only one nothing more than a plate of boiled vegetables. A Hindu vegetatian may often effe that it is where to have one's meal only of bread, biscuits or fruits, lest the be served prototo-chips fried in bee's fill foll yave to a is really superh. Its colour, flavour and taste area escellent.

From Jogjakarta to Ball a domestic airline flight takes only 90 minutes. The scenic beauty of the whole area through the plane window is really fascinating. Mountains are covered with canopies of green forest all around, interspersed with sea channels and estuaries at different points. All is enchanting.

Bali is the second most populous island

of Indonesia with a total population of 2.5 million. A mountainous ridge of volcanic origin crosses the island from east to west. In the north there is a sharp drop to the narrow strip of fertile land, while to the south is a gentle decline towards the Indian Cocan. It is on these fertile southern slopes that the culture and art of Ball flowered. Most of the island is extremely fertile. Too, coccust, sugarcone, coffee, tobacco, indigo, and peanuts grow abundantly. The staple food is rice, grown in the terraced fields which look like the terraced fields of the Himalayan region.

People of Bali feel that they are being deprived and exploited in every way by the Indanesian Government, because no big industry exists here. All the large investments of the Government are made across the sea, in Java and Java only. In Bali people are comparatively simple, poor and jovial, and they depend more on agriculture and farming.

Religion is inseparable from the everyday life of Bali's people. From simple day to day rituals to lavish six temple festivals-six monthly-no opportunity is lost to worship God in an unending series of ceremonials that stretch from birth into the after-life. Bali's form of Hinduism is unique in the world. It is a special blend of Hinduism, Buddhism and ancestor worship, developed over the centuries. Indians came by sea routes to Bali, mainly from Tamluk in West Bengal and Gopalpur in Orissa, and thus the influence of Bengal and Orissa is conspicuous in everything here, I saw a few clay images of Devi Saraswati with two arms, holding the traditional musical instrument Vina. The beautiful round-faced, long-eyed goddess reminds one at once of the typical Saraswati of Bengal. And again, the ritualistic observance at the small temples during più and the distribution of prasada to the devotees in palm-leaf containers reminds one of Orissa and Bengal.

In Ball we can see the signs of Hindu influences from the 8th century onward. It established direct and independent contact with India and was not influenced by Indolavanese culture. The oldest inscriptions discovered so far are of the ninth century, written in ancient Balinese interlarded with Sanskrit. In the 11th century the old Javanese words appear to have crept into their vocabulary. This shows the beginning of a gradual cultural and religious penetration. About 1350 A.D., the island became politically dependent on the lavanese realm of Majapulit, the last Indianized kingdom of Indonesia. The ruling and upper classes of society adopted the Hindu-Javanese way of life and inherited many Indian traditions. They began to study and preserve the ancient lavanese literature and carried on the production of literary works in the traditional style. The influx of Islam did not touch Bali. As a result this island has remained a preserver of Hindu-Javanese culture and literary treasures.

The people in Bali memoraze hymns to the gods and goddesees and teach them to their children. These hymns are mainly in Sanskrift, but sometimes one or two Indonesian words are found. The belief is in one Supreme God who has three marifestations (Triskrift)—Brahmä, the Creator, Vişnu, the Preserver; and Siva, the delay who dissolves the material universe and returns all things to their basic elements at the end of each cycle of creation.

Sun worship already existed in Bali before the widespread influence of Hinduism in the islands. Later Siva and Sürya have been kientlified and sometimes are worshipped as a unity-in-duality. The details of the daily piji are quite similar to those in India. Visqu and Siva are equally

important. But in the studie or lymns they are praised together. Jagarantiba, Seva, vigou,—all these names are often used to denote Mahishait. In some poji manuscripts the Vigou-mantus is written as one from item vigourously manuscripts the Vigou-mantus is written as Om Kammasus minim Jagornatha. The Vaispava kings considered themselves incarnations of Vigou. It is known that arcient Javanose and Balinese rulers thought of themselves and were seen by others as manifestations of Vigou.

The mountain village of Chintamani is about 5,500 feet above sea level. Its climate is cool and suited to the growing of oranges and passion fruits. On both sides of the road leading to Chintamani, clove trees are grown abundantly and the sweet and pungent fragrance of the flowers is very marked as one arrives by car. Cloves are dried and then exported to all parts of the world. Special cigarettes are prepared with the essence of the cloves, and this brand has a great demand in many countries. Chintamani is famous for its Vispu temple. The temperature difference between the city and this mountain village is just as between Dehradun and Mussourie. The main temple of Visnu is only a cottage. The idol inside the temple suggests that it could be of either Visnu or Buddha or the Devi. Just by the side of the temple there is a nine-storeyed chālā, or cottage structure, which looks like a pagoda from a distance. This type of structure is common in the temple premises of Bali. It is said to symbolize the spiritual evolution of a human being-the lowest level indicates a man very much engrossed in worldliness, and the top level, that of a perfected man with divinity fully manifested in him. The other levels denote different stages of evolution. There is a lake near Cintamani, very beautiful as it lies placidly at the foot of the mountain range. This place is considered one of the best spots in the whole island.

Besakih is the holiest temple here. The Gunung Agung mountain is looked upon by the Balinese people as sacred as the Himalayas. On the slopes of this great mountain Besakih stands amongst a complex of 30 temples. During the annual festival days, people from all parts of the island, dressed in their finest batiks and brocades flock here, and the month-long carnival continues with singing, folk dancing, shopping and so on with gaiety. The main temple here is Pura Panataran Agung, which has a large three-seated shrine with Brahmä, Visnu and Siva, the holy trinity, in the main courtyard. There are no idols, but only the vertical stone slabs kept in the open courtyard representing the deities.

Dance plays a very important role in the life of a Balinese. All the little girls between the age of five and six are taught the art of dancing by their grandmothers. Different types of dances which depict episodes from the great epics are performed in public shows. The Ramiyana Ballets, Barong, and Rangda performances are popular. The battle between good and evil is the central theme of the Barone and Rangda dancedramas. The most exquisite of Balinese dances is the classical Legone Keraton. Dressed from head to ankle in handpainted gold brocades, with glittering headdresses, the dancers glide and sway very delicately. Their movements and eye-expressions remind one of Tagore's dance-dramas. It is believed that Tagore was greatly influenced by the Balinese dance and incorporated many fine touches in his own dance-drama performances.

Art in Bali originally had a religiodecorative function. Temple hangings, shrine and temple walls all show the same basic motifs of the timeless Rāmāyaru in the traditional Wayang style. Frescoes and

(Continued on page 68)

The Parliament of Religions and Swamiji's Vision of a New World

SANTWANA DASGUPTA

In yet mother perspective on the World Parliament of Roligious of 1883, Professor (Smt.) Dosgopal posits out that through Souand Verbananda a grap poure for spiritual spifft was focused into our world of strife and turbulence. His life and work are creatin to felf-changes in time for the bettermost of Innans condition. The author is a former head of the Department of Economies, Bethaus College, Calcutta, and is the author of the Borgoli Work. "Visconander Somp-Jersham".

- 1

Swami Viveknaranda's message at the Parliament of Religions held in 1890 was historic and epoch-making, since it pointed to a new world based on universal brotherhood, amity, peace and co-operation for the progress of the humanity as a whole A new society based on the great traths of Vedanta, viz. divinity of man and essential spirituality of life, and the possibility of society promising total emancipation of men from servitude and exploitation—was the kervante of these lectures.

Basically, however, these were not lectures merely, these were, in truth, the outpourings of the inspired soul of a prophet—a prophet of human emancipation—eternal truths uttered by a 'tongue of flame.'

A young man of hardly thirty at the time, with a superhuman intellect and scholarship, and a living embodiment of blazing spirituality. Vivekananda stood there like Buddha, to bring enlightenment to the world. And like Buddha also, he stood there to champion the cause of the dispossessed, the oppressed, and the outcast all over the world.

"Ye Divinities on earth!"—was the way he addressed the gathering, pointing to the potential divinity of man. It was, in truth, a fiery revolutionary message since it was key to the solution of the problem of social injustice and inequalities. For, if there is the identical One latent divinity in all men, in all beings, in all that exist, as Vedanta claims, then everyone strong or weak. rich or poor, high or low has the same potential to become great and good. Hence no one could demand or command all privilege and everyone is entitled to enjoy the same basic human rights. It means that every state, every society, every religion should be based on the recognition of the all powerful Presence latent in man and all human interests should be guided and controlled according to the need for human spiritual development.

Underlying the Chicago lectures of Swami Vivekananda, there was thus the vision of a new world order based on equality and freedom and justice for mankind as a whole.

п

When Swami Vivekananda came to attend the Chicago Parliament of Religions, there were with him not only his direct spiritual experiences, but also the direct experiences of his motherland and her people, from the highest to the lowest, from the princes to the simple peasants, from the

high caste to the outcaste alike. He had attained these experiences during his days of wanderings through the length and breadth of India as a roaming monk, learning from all, teaching all, living with all and sharing with the common people their privations, hunger, and the insults that were noured on them by their exploiters. These experiences set aftire his soul and be was determined to dedicate himself to the task of uplifting these people. He realized also, as Romain Rolland states in his Biography of Vivekananda: that from North to South, the ancient land of India was full of gods, yet the unbroken chain of their countless arms formed only one God. He realized their unity of flesh and spirit. He realised it in communion with the living of all castes and outside castes.1 It was one of Vivekananda's crowning experiences and since then the magic word with him was unity. The unity of all men and women, as Romain Rolland points out again, and "world unity as well; and unity of action and reason, love and work, unity of hundred races of India with their hundred different tongues and hundred thousand Gods, springing from the same religious centre, the core of the present and future reconstruction. Unity of thousand sects of Hinduism, Unity within the vast ocean of all religious thought and all rivers past and present, western and eastern."2

At last, by the time his long pilgrimage of India ended at Kanyakumari, he himself had become 'the conscience of India', the embodiment of its unity and the unity of mankind. The world witnessed all these in him at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893. 111

If we try today, a century after, to probe into the events of the Parliament of Religions, if becomes clear how the historical forces must have been working behind the scenes to bring about the inauguration of a new world era.

The Parliament of Religions was actually a part of the world's Columbian Exposition bedd at Chicago to observe the fourth contenary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. The Exposition sought to highlight the material activesments of the West, attained through the progress of science and technology, alongside, focussing on the backwardness of the East. But silently, historical forces brought the East to the forefront, where were unfolded its eternal glory in the field of spiritual achievements.

As parts of the Exposition, twenty different congresses covering the different branches of human thought and endeavour such as "Coverment", Law Reform', "Music", "Medictine and Surgery', "Public Press', "Memen's Frogress", Teiligloin Congress evolted universal interest from its very inception". This was surprising since it was the beyday of triumphing materialism, the such produced only the produced of the Besides in those days discoveries of science were shattering many of the theological doctrines of Christianity.

Historically, however, below the surface, the time was ripe for the meeting of science and religion, since centuries of development had already brought them at the cross-road, science already declaring convertibility of matter into energy.

Romain Rolland, The Life and Gospel of Vitokawards (Calcutta: Advasta Ashrama, 1979) page 27.

^{2.} Ibid., page 287.

Marie Louise Burko, Stonni Vivekananda in the West—New Discoveries, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) Part 1, page 66.

Actually, America and the whole West were at the time in two minds. Behind the general agnosticism there was, as quoted by Mrs. Burke in her memorable wohumes on Vivekananda, "an open minded search for the spiritual truth and an eagement to welcome it wherever it might be found." In spike of their surface agnosticism, in their beart of hearts the Americans were expecting something momentous to happen at the Parliament of Belgions, something that would bring greater fulfilment to their lives and change the course of history.

But the challenge that science posed for religion was not accepted by the representatives of religion in the West. It was left for the young representative of the most ancient religion of the hoary land of India to accept it and show to the world that they were not incompatible. Hence Vivekananda's appearance at the Parliament of Religions was not accidental, it was the outcome of the working of the deep historical forces behind the scene. He made a tremendous impact, since, as Marie Louise Burke has pointed out never before had the people of America seen such a one in whom the spiritual truths had been realised.5 Of course, it was not that the ordinary people could consciously recognize his towering spiritual eminence, but it is clear when at the Parliament people waited for lone hours to have a few words from him at the end of a day-long session, they recognized him unerringly, as if through some inner sense, for what he truly was.

The Parliament of Religion was a great dream of the liberal minded President of the Assembly, Charles Carrol Bonney. He wanted to bring together the different religions of the world on a common platfrom to find out (1) "what light has each religion afforded or can afford to other religions" (2) "what light has milgion thrown on the great problems of the present age"; and (3) "to bring the nations on earth into a more friendly bellowship in the hope of securing permanent international peace."

However, the Christian dergy, along with Rev. J. H. Barrows, President of the organizing committee, expected Christianity to emerge as the superior religion, everybody agreeing to accept it. But what came out trumphant were the historical forces and that which formed the essence of every religion, via: Entigent, living and blazing spirituality, exemplified by Vivekaranda alone.

Thus the historical forces led to the fulfilment of the great objectives of the Parliament. It was very significant that no sectarian religion came out triumphant. It indicated that the days of the sectarian religions were over and a new era of universal religion for mankind as a whole was dawning.

Thus Swami Vivekananda was, in fact, an instrument of Providence or History, as one may chose to call it, and he had a personation about his own great historic mission. According to his biographers, when he came to know of the Parliament for the first time he told a brother disciple, as if looking into the depth of the future, that "the Parliament of Religions is being cognised for this fopinising to himself). My mind tells me so, You will see it verified at no distant date."

Ibid., page 74—quoted from an editorial of the Chicago Epening Post.

^{5:} Ibid., pp. 49-50.

Stoumi Vivekananda, New Discoveries, Part 1, pp. 69-70.

Spiritual Talks of the First Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna (1965) quoted by Marie Louise Burke in Susmi Vivolumanda, New Discoveries, Part 1, page 67.

Propelled by the inspiration of a prophet, a maker of history, Vivekananda arrived at Chicago, through no intimation had been given to the organizers, and he had no letters of introduction or credential from any organized body. It seems today that it must have been the will off the possession of credentials representing a sectarian religion, since he was chosen by fate to be the representative and exponent of the Universal Religion, the future religion of mankind as a whole.

A tool in the hands of the Providence, neither he nor his admirers who took the initiative in sending him to the Parliament. did bother about credential or other such preparations—as if his arrival at the world forum was the only important thing. What followed on Swamiji's coming thus unprepared to Chicago seems to us today like a piece of exciting fiction or a saga of adventure. Naturally, without credentials, and arriving long after the last date of entry as a delegate, he was at first refused a place. Undaunted, he lingered at Chicago visiting the Exposition and admiring the exhibits showing the marvels of science and technology. But soon Swamiji realized that his meagre financial resources were fast being depleted in expensive Chicago, so in search of a cheaper place to live until the Parliament would open in the autumn, he boarded an east-bound Boston train. A chance meeting (Was it really a chance?) with a lady, Miss Sanborne, in the train changed the whole course of events in his favour. This lady was instrumental in bringing him to J. H. Wright, an outstanding scholar and professor at Harvard University. Professor Wright could recognize Swamiji for his real worth and gave him the much needed credentials in a letter of introduction, in which he wrote: "Here is a man who is more learned than all our

Propelled by the inspiration of a learned professors put together."8

Swamin's ordeal was not over however. Returning to Chicago, he found that he had lost the address of the Parliament where he was to go. He tried to make enquiries about the location of the place, but finding that the people spoke only German in that neighbourhood around the railway station, and it being late in the day, he was compelled to spend the night sleeping in an empty box-car (goods wagon). In the morning he roamed about here and there in search of his destination. At last, being exhausted with hunger and anxiety he sat down on the wayside repeating the name of the Lord, when a door of a nearby house opened and a lady came out and greeted him. This lady, Mrs. George W. Hale, was to be his god-mother in America and she took him to the Parliament Office and secured his admission as a delegate.

IV

Vivekaranda's address at the inaugural session of the Parliament delivered on the afternoon of September 11, Response to Welcome', was of three minutes duration only. Yet it made a tremendous impact. Unlike other delegates, Swamiji spoke not from a prepared paper but spontaneously, as the spirit moved him. When his deep musical voice rang out with the message that "We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true,"9 the immortal words of Lord Krishna in the Gita quoted by him became vibrant with a wonderful sense of universalism: "Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever form, I reach him. All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me." 10

^{8.} Ibid., p. 20.

The Complete Works of Suumi Vivekananda, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 1, page 3.

^{10.} Ibid., page 4.

Thus was laid the foundation of a new Universal Religion, "trond as the heaven above and embracing the best in all religions." Il Harriet Munroe, as eminent poet and a journalist, who regarded herself as greatly privileged to attend the Partisment, wrote in her autobiography. "...tt seemed a great moment in history, prophetic of the promised new era of tolerance and peace." I'l These words were very significant, no doubt.

Swamiji's closing words—immortal words which will surely echo through the halls of time were indeed prophetic:

"Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed the beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilisations and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these terrible demons, human society would have been far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come: and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of the convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism. of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."13

Here was a radiant vision of a new society free from the evils of intolerance, dogmatism, bicotry and fanaticism.

matism, bigotry and fanaticism.

All the workings of forces not visible were to fulfill the need of the hour. Sister

Nivedita threw light on this, in historical

11. Stoami Vivekananda, New Discoveries Part 1, page 89.

perspective, with a penetrating analysis. She wrote:

Out of this confluence was to emerge a new civilization, composed of the wisdom of the East and the scientific knowledge of the West, bringing into its fold every shred of constructive throught that had evolved throughout the ages in the different corners of the earth. It was therefore a great historical moment when a new era was ushered in. 15

The West opened its doors to the East and, as pointed out by Nivedia. "It was the religious consciousness of India that spoke through him, the message of his whole people as determined by their whole past." His wice rang with the immoveration constraint of the past of t

14. Ibid., Vol. 1, page x.

 Alfred Momeri, a liberal clergy said that "it [the Parliament of Religions] was the greatest event in the religious history of mankind"— Marie Louise Burke, New Discoveries, Part 1, page 126.

 The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page x.

^{12.} Ibid., page 85.

The Complete Works of Swami Vitekananda, Vol. 1, page 4.

defusion and knowing Him ye also shall be saved from death. "I? These were the flaming words of a revealer of truth which naturally set ablaze the souls of those who had the rare privilege of listering to him.

But Vivekananda was not a mere revealer of the ancient Indian visident, he himself having contributed to its enrichment through harmonization of the three apparently incompatible schools of thought viv. Dinkin, Adviside and Visigathesian te. dualism, movium and qualified mention, the three different stages of the same following his master, Set Ramachathan, as the three different stages of the same the three different stages of the same

This harmonization has thoroughly revolutionized the realm of thought. First of all, as pointed out by Nivedita, it implies that "the many and the Ose are the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and attitudes." Now, this is full of social significance:

- 1. It means, as stated by Sci Ramscrishus, "God is with form and without form and He is that which includes both form and form-lessness." 19 Civicusly, this settles the controversy over the question of whether God is limited, and whether it is ever justifiable for any one religion to set itself to breakdown the worshipful forms and forms of worship of any other religionsurely a great social problem in today's word as it has been for agos.
 2. It means also that the humanity
- appearing as diverse is actually one. Hence the East and the West, past and present, form one composite whole. To Vivekananda, therefore, history was a single story of man's march through different routes to

the same goal viz. Unity and Freedom. And be himself was an epitorie of that unity between the East and the West, between the past and the present.

Next, as Sister Nivedita very ably put it "...if the many and the One be the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realisation." Hence there is no actual distinction between "the sacred and the secular" and "life itself is religion."20 This means that the present day controversy over secularism vs religion is entirely irrelevant. And as stated by Nivedita again "The workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple, "21

The important social implication of this doctrine is that neither the temples, idols, rites and rituals, nor the ministration by the priest, is essential for religion. Hence no one, not examine the priest, ora justify demanding spiritual or mundane privileges.

This bold philosophy of Vivokananda turther implies that there is no difference between "the service of man and worship of God, between maliness and faith, between true tightousness and spirituality." Here we have the fundamentals of a new revolutionary social code for a new world.

Most revolutionary, however, was the declaration of Swamiji, which came from his own Advaita realization that "art, science and religion, are but three different ways of expressing a single truth." ²³

^{17.} Ibid., page xiii. 18. Ibid., page xv.

^{19.} Rvid., page xv.

^{20.} Ibid., page xv.

^{21.} Ibid., page xv. 22. Ibid., page xvi.

^{23.} Bul., page xvi.

Human beings do not live, move and work in watertight compartments. The world is a unified whole and all modes of thought and activity and work are related; a new attitude of live and let live—rather help and not fight, is incumbent upon all for the general welfare.

It may be noted that the religious experiences of the sages of India as recorded in the sacred books were not just stumbled upon or written down as literature. They were rather the outcome of rigorous reason and scientific spirit of enquiry. This is often forgotten in debates on religion. Again, just like science, religion demands verification. Vivekananda found this verification in direct experience, and pointed out that it is open to every one to find without sacrificing truth at any point. All this direct knowledge of Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna was revealed in the lectures at the Parliament for a brave new world to follow up.

However, since the first speech of Swamiji was a direct hit on the bigots, some of the missionaries who hoped the Parliament of Religions would prove the superiority of their own sects were not happy and they did not hide their feelings in their expositions.

On the afternoot of September 15, commenting on the cause of dissension among religious groups, Swamiji delivered his second talk: "Why We Dissegne." He started with a fable about two frogs and ended with good humour and the appliance of the audience as he said.

"...and that has been the difficulty with us all the while. I am a Hindu, I am sitting in my little well and thinking that the whole world is in my little well. The Christian sits in his little well and thinks that the whole world is his well. The Mohammedan sits in his little well and thinks that is the whole world."24

On subsequent days there were a few attacking papers from infortisted missionaries. In one such paper, Rev. Slater said, criticking like Vedas, the sacred books of the Hindus. "We fail to find a single text that purports to be a Divine arrower to prayer." "The Bible," he further claimed, "is the endy book of Divine Promise." In another such paper Rev. Cook, who had been in India ten years entiler, made such uncharitable remarks about other religions that a newspaper commented on his speeches "that the Reverent made the platform tremble with three hundred pounds of orthodoxy."

On September 19, as Vivekananda was about to deliver his historic address on Hinduism, a similar attack came, to which he replied sharply. We who have come from the East have been told in a patronizing way that we ought to accept Christianity because Christian nations are the most prosperous. We look about us and see England, the most prosperous Christian nation...with her foot on the neck of 250,000,000 Asiatics.... Christianity wins its prosperity by cutting the throat of its fellow men. At such a price a Hindu will never have prospering." ⁵⁰

Here we find his lone voice protesting against the organised exploitation of the Eastern countries by the Western imperialistic nations and their allies, the missionaries. Clearly he wanted a better new world in which one nation would not

^{24.} Ibid., page 5.

Marie Louise Bunke, New Discouries, Part 1, page 107.

^{26.} Ibid., page 107.

^{26.} Ibid., page 107. 27. Ibid., page 108.

^{28.} Ibid., page 112.

have prosperity at the cost of the others.

However, the most fitting reply to the ligots and rank materialists was his paper on "Hinduism," in which he "not only opalained the teachings of his own faith, but made them come alive as eternal truths pertinent to all people everywhere." As Remain Rolland has aptly portised out, "Each of the other crators had spoken of his God, the God of his own sect, he alone spoke of all their gods and embraced them all in the Universal Being." 30

As his ringing voice declared, "Ye divinities on earth! Sinners? It is a sin to call a man so, it is a standing libel on buman nature,"31 those parrow-minded ones who clung to old dogmas were shocked, but the liberals realised what a revolutionary and good idea it was. Professor Binov Kumar Sarkar, the eminent Indian sociologist observed: "On the astonished world the little five word formula fell like a bombshell,"32 Explaining be further stated, "The first four words summoned into being the eospel of joy, hope, virility, energy and freedom for the races of men. And with the next word he demolished this whole structure of soul-degenerating cowardicepromoting, negative. pessimistic thought, "33

According to Sister Nivedita, "when he began to speak, it was of 'the religious ideas of the Hindus', but when he ended Hinduism had been created." "4 Commenting,

29. Romain Rolland, page 38.

30. Ibid., page 38.

Marie Louise Burke observes "...perhaps in that moment not only was Hinduism created but a new religion for the world. was given its first enunciation."35 Actually. in recreating Hinduism he created the Universal Religion, making it extremely inspiring, "...a living religion springing from the very soul of humanity itself. "36 It was a grand symphony of all the existing religions that he expounded that evening In his own immortal and inimitable words: "From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy of which the latest discoveries of sciences seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all has a place in the Hindu's religion."37 It was a stunning revelation to many who had very different ideas about Hinduism.

Then through words illuminating and first pe brought revelation after revelation about the eternal and universal religion that had so long come to be known as Hinduism. Following are a few such fiery statements:

"The Hindu Religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe in certransparent of dogmas but in realising, not in believing but in being and becoming." (38)

"Thus the whole object of their [the Hindus'] system is by constant struggle to become divine."³⁹

^{31.} The Complete Works of Sunna Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page 11.

The Might of Man in the Social Philosophy of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, page 41.

^{33.} Ibid., page 41.

The Complete Works of Swami Vivekamanda, Vol. 1, page x.

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Marie Louise Burke, New Discoveries, Vol. 1, page 115.

^{36.} Ibid., page 115.

The Complete Works of Swams Vivekenanda, Vol 1, page 6.

^{38.} Ibid., page 13.

^{39.} Ibid., page 13.

"Man is to become divine by realising the divine, idols and temples or churches or books are only the supports or helps of his spiritual childhood: but on and on he must progress." 40

Religious differences centre round such aids as images and idob at the kindergarten stage, and as man soans high and higher in this spiritual life these aids become irrelevant, and with their disappearance all religious differences disappear. Religion is in this sense extremely dynamic, since it means constant struggie, constant awakening of the sould and constant/journey towards the goal. Hence true religion is never an opiate.

The most striking feature of Vivedananda's paper on "Bindroism" is that all along he demonstrates the parallel between religion and science. This harmonization between science and religion was also epoch-making since the future world would require both to form its foundation.

Vivekananda showed clearly that the goal of the two was the same viz. the finding of unity.

"Chemistry could not progress farther," be stated, "when it would discover the one element out of which all the others could be made. Physics would stop when it would be able to fulfil its service in discovering one energy of which all the others are but manifestations, and the science of religion would be perfect when it would discover Him, who is one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, One who is the only Sould of which all souls are but the dedusive manifestations. . . This is the goal of all science." To the utter astonishment of those who ad come to believe that science had shattered religion with its discoveries. Vivel-ananda made the very bold and attuning declaration that 'the Hindu is only too glad that what he had been cherishing in her bosons for ages is going to be taught in a more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusion of science, "E—a bold and revolutionary observation, no doubt.

Thus Hinduism in his paper emerged as a positive science depending on the results of direct experimentation. "The Hindu does not want," he said, "to live by words and theories. If there are existences beyond the continuary sensuous existence, he wants to come face to face with them. If there is a Soul in him which is not matter, if there is an all mexicial Soul he will go to Him direct."⁴⁰

According to Vivekananda, coming face to face with Reality is the goal of all religions. "Then along can death cease," he says, "when I am one with life, then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself, then alone can errors cease when I am one with knowledge itself."

In the said paper, Vivekananda also clearly identified the aim of religion. The aim of every religion, he says, "is only evolving a God out of a man" or as one may say "bumanizing the animal man." 45 This is very significant since no good society could

To Vivekananda therefore, religion also was a science, since science and religion both have a common rigorous spirit of enquiry and goal

^{40.} Ibid., page 16.

^{41.} Ibid., pp. 14,15.

^{42.} Ibid., page 15. 43. Ibid., page 13.

^{44.} Ibid., page 14.

^{45.} Ibid., page 18.

society, aspiring to be a good society, could afford to neglect religion.

Finally, what makes this paper a Charter of Enfranchisement for every man and woman is that it has clearly defined the universal religion that sanctions infinite freedom to each individual to grow in his own way and reach the goal. Here are Swamiii's immortal words in this connections

"...if there is to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location. in place or time: which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Krishna and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brahminic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite scope for development: which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from brute, to the highest man towering by virtues of his bead or heart almost above humanity. making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature.*46

He has also defined here the nature of the polity that would emerge from this Universal Religion. It will be a polity in which there will be no place for persecution or intolerance, "which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole...force will be...in aiding humanity to realise its own true, divine nature *67

He ended his illuminating paper on Hinduism, full of revelations, with a fitting

be formed without good men. Hence no prayer in tune with his Universal Religion:

"May He who is the Ahura Mazda of the Zomastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jebovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you, to carry out your noble ideat that is to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion.

Referring to this paper on Hinduism, William Ernest Hawkins, later a philosopher, who attended the Parliament on that day, rightly observed that "what he said would have to be taken into account in any final world-view. "49

Swamiji's next lecture was not religion at all, as is suggested from its title "Religion not the Crying Need of India." It was delivered as a comment on two attacking papers presented by two Christian missionaries, viz- "The Restoration of the Sinful Man Through Christ" and "The Religion at Peking," These comments were not fully recorded in the Parliament proceedings. Marie Louise Burke has, however, collected a fuller account from the newspaper reports. In the delivery he sharply observed-"Christian brethren of America, you are so fond of sending the missionaries to the East to save the souls of the heathens. I will ask you what have you done to save their bodies from starvation? ... you erect churches all through India, but the crying evil in the East is nor religionthey have religion enough, but it is bread that the suffering millions cry out for with parched throat. They want bread but they are offered stone."50

^{46.} Ibid., page 19. 47. Ibid., page 19.

^{48.} Ibid., pp. 19-20. 49. New Discoveries, Part 1, page 118.

^{50.} The Complete Works of Susani Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page 20.

Here we find Vivekananda giving priority to the solution of the problem of poverty and hunger above preaching religion. He declared, "...it is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion, an insult to a suffering man dying of hunger to preach him metaphysics, "51 His mentor, Sri Ramakrishna also had said "Religion is not for the empty stomach."

66

Vivekananda in his speech made it clear that the prosperous nations of the West had definite responsibilities in the matter of removing poverty from the backward countries of the East, since the prosperity of the former was acquired, as he had shown elsewhere, through the exploitation of the lattor

His next lecture was on Buddhism. delivered by way of a comment on the papers presented by the Buddhists who had invited him to criticize. Instead of criticizing, Swamiji paid glowing tributes to Buddha. "If China and Japan or Cevlon," he said, "follow the teachings of the Great Master, India worships Him as God incarnate on earth."52 In his opinion, "Sakyamuni came not to destroy, ...he was the fulfilment, the logical conclusion, the logical development of the religion of the Hindus."53 According to him, further, "...the great glory of the Master lay in his wonderful sympathy for everybody, especially for the ignorant and the poor. "54

Besides the speeches delivered at the regular sessions, Vivekananda delivered a few others at the Scientific Section and at the side meetings of the Parliament, either unrecorded or not recorded fully. On September 14, he gave a talk on the "Condition of Women in India" at a reception held at the Woman's Building by the lady managers of the Exposition. There was a repeat performance on September 22, at a special session of the Parliament convened at the request of Mrs Potter Palmer, President of the Lady Managers of the Exposition. In his speech Vivekananda made a very significant statement viz. that "The ideal of perfect womanhood is perfect independence.*55 Here in a single sentence Vivekananda had presented an invincible argument in favour of the total emancipation of women.

Vivekananda's address at the final session of the Parliament was as enlightening. as sensational, as his opening speech, and it was also a bombshell on the citadel of bigotry and fanaticism. He firmly stated, referring to religious unity:

"...But if any one here hopes that this unity will come by the triumph of any one of the religions and the destruction of the others, to him I say, 'Brother, yours is an impossible hope.' Do I wish that a Christian would become a Hindu...or a Buddhist? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or the Buddhist would become a Christian? God forbid. "56

And he made it clear that.

"The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. "57

^{51.} Ibid., page 20.

^{52.} The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page 21.

^{53.} Ibid., page 22. 54. Ibid., page 22.

^{55.} New Discoveries, page 98.

^{56.} The Complete Works of Swami Vipekananda. Vol. 1, page 24.

^{57.} Ibid., page 24.

It is clear, according to Vivekananda, unity does not mean uniformity, it means "a unity in diversity." The diverse religions will not cease to exist but each will assimilate the spirit of the others in honour and respect and together they will form a unity.

Swamiji's final words were prophetic and indicative of the fulfilment of the purpose of the Parliament:

"If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that 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. In the face of this evidence if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that 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, ~58

37

Giving a total assessment of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago lectures, Romain Rolland observes:

"He spoke at the Parliament ten or twelve times. Eacht time he repeated with new arguments but with the same force of conviction his thesis of universal religion without limit of time or space, uniting the whole Credo of the human spirit, from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmation of modern science. He harmonized them into a magnificent thesis, which, far from extinguishing the hope of a single one, helped all to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature. There was to be no other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for infinite evolution."59

The last sentence is socially very significant. Since future society will give no quarter to any sectarian dogma, the only doctrine that has any hope of being accepted in the future is this one only viz. the divinity of man and his potentiality for infinite evolution. For the formation of such a society, spiritual awakening of a large section of the population is needed. And Vivekananda brought it wherever he went. Pointing to this matter, Marie Louise Burke observes, "It is undeniable that the American people had not been merely intellectually impressed by the nobility and the wisdom of the eastern doctrines, but had been touched by and had responded to the tremendous power of living spirituality that Swamiji embodied. "(6) That such spiritual touch can change the course of history is evident from the tremendous impact on world history made by Buddha. Christ and Mohammed

It must be remembered also, as Marie Louise Burke points out, that "the spiritual status of Vivekananda was such that he could not live among men without altering, enriching and libuminating the very texture of world thought." And surely when a revolution takes place in the realm of thought, revolutionizing of the society cannot be far off:

Today, a century after Vivekananda delivered his historic message at the Parliament of Religions, everything seems to be

Romain Rolland, pp. 38-39.
 New Discoveries, page 134.
 Ibid., Second Visit.

in the melting pot and there is today the worst kind of conflict and violent strife among the different taces, communities and religious sects. But we should not forget, as Mrs. Butsle points out that "when a prophet of the stature of Vivekananda inaugurates a work on the visible level, a tremendous cruative current is set in motion at a deeper and more subtle levels which nothing can stop from becoming a historic force."

VI

The great vision of Swami Vivekananda about the future new world based on his

62. Ibid.

coccept of Universal Religion, and on the recognition of the divinity of man and amn's potentiality for infinite development, free from privileges, persecutions, violence and hatred, dogmatism, bigetry and fanaticism, exploitation and oppression, ervisaged in his Chicago lectures, was the vision of a true revolutionary and a prophet combined. In giving out this vision to the world he was an instrument in the hands of historical forces. These forces are still working at deeper levels, putting the surface in turnois and indicating that a root and branch change for a better new world is in the offine.

Visit to Java and Bali

(Continued from page 55)

reliefs are in abundancis null temples, baths, and palace walls throughout the island. The Balinese are famous for their stone and woodcarvings. Source of the most laterated woodcarvers on the island live in Mas. In the workshops of this place one can see many experienced skilled artisans busy along with their young assistants chiefling at semi-formed figures or working on wooden panels. Weaving is a cottage inclustry, and finely woven Balinese sarongs can be seen on display at numerous places along the

Ubud Roud. Klungkung is the home of exotic broades that are woven in silk with threads of gold and silver forming designs. For the people of Ball every day is a life of creativity and artistic activity. But now, in the 20th century, values are changing and people are showing definite signs of Western inflamen. Indonesia has registered fast economic growth in recent years. Economic prosperity is also bringing about change in the social life of the country.

"It never occured to me that he [Sri Hamskrishna] practised all the religions with the express mothre of preaching the idea of spiritual harmony. He was always in his mood of divine ecitacy. He practised all the methods through which the Christians, Mohammedans, Vaishnawas, and others weedspic Occad and realize truth, and thereby he tasted God's disports in diverse ways... But what you should note, my dear, is that remunicishin is his special mensage in this age... As for the harmony of religions you speak of, that also is true. In previous incarnations, some one of the attitudes was manified at the cost of all oftens."

> —In the Company of Holy Mother, By her disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1980), page 356.

Rambagan Slum Re-housing Project

S. S. CHAKRABORTY

Government efters tries to improve social and living conditions for the people. Sometimes, due to the overwhelming complexities of the problem of obstructions that arise, the results fall below expectations. In Rambagos a different type of Government intervention for sham improvement was tried, with wenderful results, reported by Sri Chabraborts of the Rambarishous thisision Lokushiba Purishad.

Biodyround of Rumbagan Slam
Calcutta (sit) is considered to be the fifth
largest city of the world in terms of population as per cerusus of 1991. The city has a
population of 44 million of which about 1.5
million people reside in the slams. The
population mentioned here refers to
Calcutta Municipal Corporation area. The
slum population is distributed in as many
as 3,000 slums of the city. One such is called
Bambagan, located in North Calcutta
beside Central Avenue and behind
Rabindra Kanan.

There are three categories of slums in Calcutta:

- Slums where dwellers have been living for generations, in some cases even before the city was established. These areas were in fact scattered villages of yesteryears and gradually turned into urban slums as the city developed around them.
- Slums grown up owing to industrialization; economically weaker sections from neighbouring States as well as from villages of West Bengal migrated in groups and settled in chesp hutments constructed by Thila tenants.
- Slums where refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan formed their colonies to rehabilitate themselves after the partition of the country in 1947.

Rambagan slum comes under category one and is located in North Calcutta and is

primarily inhabited by poor artisan families well up in traditional handicrafts of bamboo, cane and paper. They have also reputation as professional painters and musicians. They have been residing in this area for nearly 300 years. They belong to the 'Harijan' community called DOM and were looked down upon as untouchables. This untouchability might be the cause of their isolation from the richer sections of the city. The total area of the sum is 3,562 sq. m. having a population of 2,156 (male 1,117 and female 1,039), more than 60 per cent of whom, for their hand to mouth existence, depend on cane and bamboo craft. The rest are either small traders or day labourers. Ninety-one per cent of the dwelling units are mud houses. Only 9 per cent have some kind of pucca tenements which are also unhygienic and ill planned. Ninety per cent of families (each having 6 to 8 members) are in possession of a single room of less than 5 sq. m. with a small window in each room for lighting and ventilation.

Government intervention in Stam improvement

Over the years, particularly alter independence, due to migration of people from estwhile East Pakistan conditions of the slums further deteriorated and hence Government intervention in the situation became absolutely necessary. The Government interventions were of the following nature:

- In 1958 Calcutta Slum Clearance and Rehabilitation of Shum Dwellers Act was passed by the State of West Bengal. "The model adopted was to rehabilitate the slum dwellers of the target slum area at one go, in better housing in a planned environment, and to take possession of the land and huts comprised in the slum area thus vacated for being utilised for similar or other public purposes. This was attempted for several slum areas by the State Housing Department. But in actual practice, neither the slum dwellers of the designated slums moved into the rehabilitation dwellings, nor as a corollary, could the land comprised in the respective slum areas be taken possession of by the state. The Calcutta Improvement Trust, while carrying out city improvements, was also involved in the rehabilitation of slum dwellers where the slums were acquired for the purpose of improvement works. Even in large cases the target group did not move to the designated rehabilitation dwellings. The rejection of the model of rehabilitation by the slum dwellers was due not only to their unaffordability but also due to their apathy towards the apartment-type living and adaptability-lag to an urban life style. Moreover, the 'Thika tenants', who thrive on rents from hutments, form an interest-group opposing slum clearance.
- ii) The first attempt at slum clearance being rejected both by the slum dwellers and being rejected both by the slum dwellers and by the Thika tenants, the next approach attempted by the Government was what is called 'sensitisation model'—the improvement of sanisation environment of the slums by constructing sanitary latrines, improvement of roads and pathways, construction of drains, sewers, water points, street lights, and so on.
- iii) Subsequent to the sensitisation model under IDA Phase-II and Phase-II programmes, the emphasis was laid on the improvement of health sector of the people by way of providing medical facilities to the

- slum dwellers. Under these programmes additional beds were created in Calcutta hospitals, Urban Community Health Centres were opened for the benefit of the slum dwellers, intensive immunization drive was taken up for the slum areas, and improvement of primary education was also attempted.
- iv) Under Calcuts Urban Development Programme Phase-III, in addition to the above programme, employment generation programme for the slum dwelters was taken up and decentralization of programme implementation was attempted by entrusting the responsibilities to the local Municipal bodies as well as to various voluntary organizations located in the slum areas.
- v) At present under the 'Urban Basic Services for the Poor', since late 80's, following programmes have been initiated; preschool education, provision of supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health programme for the mothers and children, promotion of healthy environment by way of constructing vats, provision of drinking water tube-wells, smokeless ovens, nonformal education, and education for vocational upgradation etc. In the Eighth Five Year Plan these programmes have been further strengthened by organizing the Neighbourhood groups, Bustee Committees and such other organizations for the involvement of people.

Thus, if we analyse the programme content of slam improvement in Calcutta, it will be seen to have shifted from the earlier plan of a slum clearance to an emphasis at present on slum improvement not only in terms of physical environment but also in terms of Human Resource Development. In fact, this is now not a policy adopted only for Calcutts slums but is also the national policy so far as the slum improvement programme is concerned.

Ashrama and Rambagan Link

Ramakrishna Mission, in its own way, has been serving Calculta slums from as early as Swami Vivekananda's time, starting with plague relief work in 1899. Over the pre- and post- Independence decades, the Mission has organized relief works in different slums of the city during famine, communal troubles, refugee influx etc. But sum development work in a sustained manner was formally initiated by Ramarkishan Mission Ashrama, Narendragur, at Pathuriaghata in Calcutta in the early 1960's.

Prior to 1956-57, the Ashrama used to run a Students' Home near Rambagan. The then Secretary of the Ashrama, Swami Lokeswarananda, being approached by the slum dwellers, requested some senior students of the Home to initiate welfare programme on voluntary basis to fight poverty and social vices like prostitution, gambling, drinking and illiteracy. In May 1952, an adult education centre was started and the Ramakrishna Mission people started visiting the slum regularly. Eventually a comprehensive social welfare centre called 'Vivekananda Social Welfare Centre', was established with different kinds of welfare and economic programmes for the slum dwellers. Presently the following programmes are being conducted there:

- Adult Education Centre: This was the initial activity started by the Mission. During the course of the last four decades illiteracy has been totally eracitosed. Still, the adult education programme is continued with a view to promoting broadbased citizenship education in the area. Because of this programme various social evils which were prevalent in this slum have almost disaspecared.
- Vivekananda Pre-basic (Nursery) School for age group of three to six years,

- established in 1955, has 80 students on the roll and the education imparted here is free.
- Charitable Dispensary: Started in 1955, the dispensary is now working in shifts catering to the medical needs of 80-90 people on an average every day. Medicines and in some cases diet are distributed free of charge.
- Vivokumanda Junior Basic School has 522 students on the roll. All education and extra-curricular action programmes (e.g., games, sports, drama, dance, music, painting and drawing, social services) are free. The school started functioning from 1957.
- Cane and bamboo crafts training centre (for bous): The major section of the slum dwellers are involved in cane and bamboo crafts work. But they used to follow the traditional type of work without new designing and innovations. Besides, due to the availability of cheap plastic materials, the cane and bamboo trade of the slum people received a severe jolt. Thirdly, the trade was also utterly disorganised. To protect this craft the Mission started this training centre with new designing and various other innovations. Besides, to prevent the younger children from giving up the trade, training was started for young boys while they were in school. The centre was started in 1960. Thirty boys regularly attend this programme.
- 6. Weaving/Tailoring Training Centre (for Women): This offers 3-year stipendiary training course to 20 Harjan ladies per batch. The production unit of the centre offers to pass-outs work on piecerate basis and thus helps the families in earning regular additional income. The centre was established in 1962.
- Stipendiary 3-year training course in painting is organised for 15 persons per session every year. Rambagan people are adept in painting also. To keep up the tradition, painting classes for children are organised.
- Social Education Centre for Ladies:
 About 20 girl students from Weaving and

Tailoring Centre attend this education centre under a trained teacher every year.

- Tutorial classes are conducted daily. Thirty to forty students of different standards from different schools take this advantage under the guidance of four leachers.
- Special Nutrition Programmes:
 Through three distribution outlets 300 children are daily given milk and bread.
- 11. Commorcial Painting Centre (for tops): Besides the children's painting section, another training programme on commercial painting is also organised for the advanced group of boys. Every year 15 subm boys attend this programme. On completion of the training the students either set up their own until or get absorbed in various commercial firms engaged in commercial painting. Many of the cinema boardings in the city time the products of Banabagan cut the products of Banabagan centre has been functioning since 1860.
- 12. Family Helper Project: This project was initiated in 1985 involving 341 children. It provides educational and nutritional support to the children till the age of 18 and sees that they are properly rehabilitated. Besides the children, their parents are also supported for improving their earning capacity either with the advancement of their vocational skills or by providing loans for their specific trade.
- Creche: As the mothers in the slum are mostly involved in some kind of earning activities a creche centre was started in 1987 with 50 children on the roll.
- 14. Light Engineering (Lathe Training) for buy was started in 1988. With be gradual change in the industrial activities of the city. He Mission authorities felt that the occupation pattern of the slum people should also undergo some change. Hence, this training centre was established to promote job opportunities in the field of industrial workshops.
 - 15. Library services are also readily

- available to the students, adults, and others. The library has 2,000 books. Besides, the mobile library of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, also adds to its strength periodically with supply of books.
- 16. For enotional development of the slum children important national celebrations like independence Day, Republic Day, Birthdays of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Netaji, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and many such other occasions are observed with gaiety and solemnity.
- 17. Load Landership: For integrated development in Rambagan, the youth of the slum formed their own organisation known as Janakalyan Samity! Presently this Samity is putting its shoulder together with Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, to solve one of their higgest problems—the inhuman housing condition.

Need for a Housing Scheme As a result of the various welfare and

educational activities there has been a significant impact on the physical quality of life of the slum dwellers. The literacy rate went up to 80%; every child of school-going age now attends school; child mortality has come down to as low as 14%. Besides, the employment opportunities for the slum dwellers increased considerably. After having achieved this much the Mission felt that to make all its development programmes sustainable, the physical environment of the slum including the housing situation needed to be radically changed. Sometime in 1983-84 workers of the Mission as well as the representatives of the slum dwellers had a series of meetings and discussed the possible ways and means to meet this challenge. Ultimately a consensus was arrived at that the participation of a number of agencies working in unison could alone solve this gigantic problem. It was proposed to meet the challenge in the following manner:

- The Government of West Bengal was to be approached for legal possession of the land as the slum land was vested with the Government as per the Tenant Act of 1981
- 2. It was resolved that the hut owners would have to be paid a compensation in a manner which would not deprive them of the income they were getting as rent from the slum dwellers. In this connection it was also resolved that this compensation money would have to be paid by way of small contribution over a period of time by the slum dwellers themselves.
- While designing the building st was decided that it would have to be multistoreyed as there would be space constraint, but it would have to be at the same time planned so that it would become less costly.
- Calcutta Municipal Corporation was to be approached to get the building plan sanctioned, relaxing some of the very rigid rules and regulations for building construction in the city.
- For construction of the buildings fund would have to be raised both from within and outside the country.
- As the construction would have to be undertaken as and when funds would flow in, it was decided that the construction programmes would be taken up in at least three phases.
- It was estimated that in all 352 flats would have to constructed to accommodate all the families, and that each family would be given a two-room dwelling unit having 255 sq. ft. floor area.
- 8. It was also resolved that during the phase of construction the slum dwellers of the specified area would be accommodated within the slum itself where temporary huts would be constructed for the purpose.
- Another important resolution taken was that no contractor would be engaged for the purpose of construction.
 The representatives of the slum dwellers

would directly supervise the construction and Ramakrishna Mission would arrange for funds, supply of materials and meeting, the cost of labour; that is to say, the slum dwellers' participation in the construction process was ensured.

Dreams Take Shane After having resolved thus, all-out efforts were made from 1983-84 to meet the Government officials, the Municipal Corporation and various agencies who might provide funds, so as to give shape to the dream of the people. The slum dwellers contributed 50 palse to Re. 1/- per family every day and by early 1986 they had collected Rs. 1.26 lakhs to be paid to the hut owners for compensation during the first phase of the work. For the second phase also the slum dwellers paid the compensation money to the hut owners to the tune of Rs. 1.45 lakhs, which they gave out of the profit earned while participating in the India Festival in U.S.S.R. by way of constructing and decorating the exhibition sites, pandals, etc. in Moscow. For the third phase of construction the slum dwellers again contributed Rs. 1.35 lakhs which they had earned by participating in the production of various cane and bamboo materials for the cultural festival in the U.S.A. Thus, in all, the slum dwellers contributed Rs. 4.06 lakhs towards compensating Thika tenants, which is unique of its kind in the history of slum development in India. In fact, the compensation was to be paid by the Government, but this responsibility was taken over by the slum dwellers. In the meanwhile the Thika tenants surrendered their rights to the Government without asking for any compensation! This is another of the unique features of the slum development programme at Rambagan.

Meanwhile, the Land Revenue Department of the Government of West Bengal was approached by the Ramakrishna Mission to have possession of the land as custodian for construction of the required buildings. As this was a very special situation it took long one year for the Mission to get the possession. And it was possible only due to the keen interest taken by Hon'ble Minister Sri Benov Krishna Chowdbury. in-charge of Land and Land Reforms Department and Sri Prasanta Sur, Hon'ble Minister in-charge of Health Department. Ultimately an agreement was signed by the Deputy Secretary of the Government in the Department of Land and Land Revenue and the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, on 13th August. 1985, which enabled the Mission to under-

Total land area of the slum was one acre. For the development purposes the entire slum was divided into 8 sectors. Construction work was undertaken in sectors 1 and 2 in the first phase, 3,4, and 7 in the second phase, and the rest in the third.

take this unique project.

There are 16 dwelling units in each apartment block. Each unit has a gross covered area of 27.42 sq. m. (295 sft.) which is 5.42 sq. m. more than the national norm for housing of EWS. The area offers 2 rooms (8.28 sq. m. and 8.13 sq. m.), bath, W.C. and a small balcony. Besides, there is a common deck or social space (7.92 sq. m.) which is shared by 4 flats in each floor. Being devoid of an-access corridor each unit has total privacy and the possibility of cross ventilation if the inter-room doors are kept open. Though space has been fully utilised by placing the units in rows, the privacy of each unit and the possibility of cross ventilation have been very carefully maintained. The block of 4 floor walk-up is the maximum permissible under local building rules. To achieve the maximum economy out of the structure, a composite type is designed with 250 mm thick loadbearing curcuss wall in all the floors as per

the norm of Sult Lake Housing Laws, the most up-to-date by-law in West Bengal. Twenty-two blocks comprising 382 dwelling units are planned to be erected covering all the three phases of the project work. The units are planned to be flexible for partitioning or combining according to family size.

As the building plan had some special feature it was not a very easy process to get the plan sanctioned. Due to the intervention of Dr. Purmendu Jha, Member, Mayor-in-Council and in-charge of Bustee Improvement Programme, finally we could get the approval of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation.

In vsew of all the economic measures taken for designing and planning, the first phase of construction involved an expenditure of Rs. 1.275/- per sq. metre: thus the cost of each unit came to Rs. 35,372/- and the entire block consisting of 16 flats involved an expenditure of Rs. 5,66,000/- in the first phase. In the second phase the cost escalated to Rs. 7 lakhs per block due to increase in the prices of various building materials. In the third phase of construction the cost per block has been more than Rs. 8 lakhs due to the same reason. Already 18 blocks of houses have been completed, and now the last part of the work is going on which we hope to complete within 1993-94.

Raising Funds for the Construction

After the initial preparations the next important task was to asis funds for the building construction. For this purpose we approached various rational and international agencies to conflute towards this immovative housing project. Through our fund raising drive it was possible to raise Rs. 56,6544/- from four international fund-giving agencies from Germany, Australia and Hong, Kong for the first phase. On completion of the first phase of

construction, effort was made to raise funds for the second phase of construction from within the country as well as from the ex-students of Ramakrishna Mission. Narendrapur. In fact, the construction cost of one block was contributed by the exstudents who have settled in the U.S.A. The cost of the remaining 5 blocks in the second phase was raised from within the country from various industrial houses and through individual donation, and even a few school students in the city of Calcutta contributed money from their tiffin allowances in response to our appeal. This experience has raised our hope that if the cause is genuine and innovative, public response is bound to be very positive. For the third phase construction of 10 blocks we have got funds both from India as well as from abroad.

Foundation Laying Ceremony

On 5th February, 1986 at 8:15 am. Revered Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, the then Vice-President and present President of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, accompanied by a large number of monts, lay devotees and above all the happy slum dwellers, laid the foundation amidst cheers of joy.

Swami Bhuteshanandaji said on the occasion, "During these long years of my life this is for the first time that this joint venture by Ramakrishan Mission, Covernment of Wrest Bengal, Calcutta Municipal Corporation and above all the slum dwellers will usher in a very bright future for the city of Calcutta. This is the first ever venture in which the distressed people have been involved right from the earliest stage of planning to implementation. I loope this will lead to many such new projects."

Mr. Benoy Krishna Chowdhury, Minister-in-charge, Land and Land Reform Department, Government of West Bengal, while speaking as the Chief Guest of the celebration commented, "Ramakrishna Mission has taken up a very good and noble project of bringing about qualitative change in the life of the slum dweller by providing them with good houses, light, water, etc. We also want slum development, but there are many bottleneks. This project will serve as a successful example for what we want to do. On behalf of the Government of West Bengal, I thank the Ramakrishna Mission.

Mr. Kamal Basu, Mayor, Calcutta Municipal Corporation, who was present on the occasion as the Guest of Honour, said, "I do not know whether such a joint project was ever implemented in Calcutta or anywhere else. Calcutta is a city which grew up without any definite planning. Every Calcuttan now believes that Calcutta can really be beautiful with the help of such projects. Those who are living in slums of Calcutta have every right to participate in development programmes. Ramakrishna Mission has involved these slum dwellers in this unique development programme which, I am sure, will lead to positive social change. Ramakrishna Mission has faith in man and above all in the ideal of service. I am confident this project will be thoroughly successful".

Dr. Purmendu Jha, Member, Mayuvaicouncil (Shun Development), Calcutta Municipal Corporation, while speaking on the eccasion said that he associated himself with the project being pricked by his conceince. He manted, "This is a project for those people who were exploited and forced to live in stame, Ramaderishna Mission had helped them with education, health, and in other areas earlier, and now they are helping them for their complete rehabilitation. The active involvement of the common people is the most unique feature of the project. I hope the Ramakrishna Mission will Corne forward to help the people of other slums in Calcutta in this way".

Lessons from this Endeapour From the review of the action

- programmes of the Covernment as well as the experience of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, it will be seen that though housing is a major problem, to solve the same problem the first priority is education and human resource development. Swami Vivekananda in his analysis of the problem of India observed that the downfall of India started from the time the masses were neglected. And he suggested that education of the people was the panacea for all the ills. In the process of development of Rambagan slum it will be seen that it started with literacy programme and gradually took the shape of a comprehensive human resource development programme by way of children's education, vocational training. health care and nutrition, and subsequently employment generation. Because of all these developments the employment situation in Rambagan is much better compared to other slums in the city. On completion of such education programmes housing was taken up as the last phase. It is felt that housing is not merely construction of physical structures, but it is a process of human resource development. Now even at the all-India level this approach has been accepted by the National Government as well as by the various State Governments in the country.
- 2. While undertaking not only housing programme but all kind of programmes of development in a slum, local people should be involved at all stages. In the case of Rambagan the catalyst was not only the expressed needs of the people for housing but their participation in various stages of development including the housing design. The local organisation, Janukalyan Samity, took active part in these various tasks including raising compensation money to be paid to the Thika tenants.

- 3. Solution to all the problems of rebousing in Calcutts requires the collaborative effort of the slum dwellers, the Government, national and international aid-giving agencies as well as voluntary organisations. Because of such a collaborative effort it has become possible to embark upon this kind of a housing programme in the city.
- 4. As far as possible the alum whether should be rehabilitated on the same site where they have lived for decades or centuries. Not only should they be rehabilitated on the same site but even during the phases of construction they should be given temporary shelter near the site of construction. This makes it possible for the people to participate as well as oversee the construction two, and have a feeling that they are building their own houses.
- 5. Slum rebisioning requires huge funds. For the Rambagan rebousing scheme contributions from various sources to the base of Rs. 130 lakhs have already been received. But this money came from diverse sources—from national and international agencies as well as from individual donors and even school children.
- 6. Last, but not the least, Government agencies and Municipal Corporations also must adopt a flexible policy with regard to the implementation of programmes of this nature. In fact, it would not have been possible for the Ramakrishna Mission to complete the project had the Land and Land Reform Department of the Covernment Reform Department of the Covernment This does not mean that relocation of rules would encourage how qualify construction.

Often we are asked a question from various quarters whether Rambagan model is replicable. We have a feeling that it may not be replicable in toto, but it will be replicable in terms of the major principle: As for example, the emphasis on human resource development should precede the physical improvement of the slum. It is now the adopted policy of our State Government as well as the National Government to initiate various types of educational programmes in the slum areas with involvement of slum dwellers themselves. If we can create a situation for public participation, it will create the healthy environment for undertaking physical improvement of the slum as well. Secondly, we have experienced that with proper motivation money from even within the country may be available for the ourpose of slum development. In fact, as we progressed in our work in Rambagan slum, many slum groups approached us asking whether we could help them in re-building their slums. We had an initial discussion with such groups. We found many of them were even prepared to partially bear the cost of construction. If HUDCO could come forward with some loan and the Government could provide some amount of subside, we are convinced that if not all the slums, many more slums can be rebuilt on the model of Rambagan. We strongly hope that the Rambagan experiment will be replicate in other parts of the city of Calcut-

Shelter programme of CMDA in the Calcutta Metropolitan Area, CMDA, page 7.

Swami Vivekananda And the Harmony of Religions

(Continued from page 34)

the symbols, the 'illustrations'."33

see various forms of religion in the world. It is a bewildering study; but it is not, as many of us think, a vain speculation. Amidst this chaos there is harmony, throughout these discordant sounds there is a note of concord: and he who is prepared to listen to it will catch the tone." Hence Swamiii said. "Real religion is one; all quarrel is with the forms.

To a monist, toleration and sympathy are a religion in themselves. Endowed with such a width of vision and depth of understanding, a universalist like Swamiji alone could articulate, "I accept all religions that were in the past...will come in the future *34

33. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekanananda Vol. 7, page 20. 34. Ibid., Vol. 2, page 374.

32 Ibid., Vol. 3, page 1.

great sympathy and love, who does good work and so does good to himself."

"It is the level-headed man, the calm man, of good judgement and cool nerves, of

-The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, page 79.

Review & Notices

 THE SUN MY HEART, by Thich Nhat Hahn, Rider, Random Century House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW IV 25A, U.K., 1992; 139 pages; £6.99

 BEING PEACE, by Thich Nhat Hahr, Publishers same as above, 1992;
 pages, £6.99

 BREATHE YOU ARE ALIVE, by Thich Nhat Hahn, Publishers same as above. 1992; 68 pages, £ 5.99

The author is a famous Zen teacher. Some of his books have become popular in the West. His language is simple but insights are deep. He speaks and writes from his own spiritual experience. In the first book he draws from his vast knowledge of Buddhist psychology, epistemology and contemporary physics, and offers useful practical steps to help one to reach deep truths of like.

The second book is a compilation of the author's locture. He discusses on a wide untor's locture. He discusses on a wide mage of subjects that touch everyday life of man, With simplicity and clarify born out of his own life-long practice, the Buddhist his own life-long practice, the Buddhist based on the base of pace in personal as well as the collective life of bumankind. He gives simple suggestions about how to spawn this peace in stressful tension-ridden modern life of man modern life of man.

The third book contains an English translation of Buddha's teachings presented in Anunussati Sutta. The Sutta explains the practice of 16 different methods of conscious breathing and offers exercises for practising them today. The author's build commentary throws much light on the teachings of the Sutta.

The above three books help the reader to explore the hidden depths of his mind and spiritually blossom. VEDANTA-KATNAKARA of Swami Vishnudevananda Giri in Sanakrit. English translation by Swami Nibshreyasananda Puri. Published by Dr. Debendranath Mitra, Haribar Ashram, Mayapur, Kharagpur 721306 (W.B.). Ist Ed. June 1992; 272 pages plus xx. Frirce (raperback) Rs. 50/-510.00

Vedinte Ratnikara, a scholarly work in Sanskrit in 109 verses was composed by the learned Swami Vishnudevänanda Giri, one of the Mahā-mandaleshwars of the Kailas Ashrama, Rishikesh, and was published by the Kailas Ashrama in the early decades of this century. Its importance was recognized by scholars of Sanskrit, but to make it popular, some time later, Swami Vishnudevanandaji's disciple, Swami Chaitanya Ciri, translated it into Hindi with a commentary. Now, for the benefit of the English reading public in India and abroad, who do not know Hindi, Swami Nihshrevasananda Puri, a disciple of Swami Haribara Tirtha of the Kailas Ashrama, has translated the work into facile English with the original Sanskrit text in Devanagari, adding profuse Notes and Comments to expound the implied profound philosophical and spiritual ideas in the Sanskrit verses.

The translation is not given separately, but is conjoined with explanations giving the rationale and connecting link between the different dease and the following verse. Apart from this there are copious footnotes awell. The original work does not expound the doctrines of Vedanta, but deals with the practical application of Advaits Vedantic ideas in spiritual life, giving very homely and simple illustrations to impress on the mind of the Stäfluka theintermal and external obstacles one faces in the path of Self-

realization and how to overcome them.

After the translation of the work, the translator gives in about 120 pages the doctrines and spiritual tenets of the Advaita Vedants under the title: "A Few Words on Non-dualistic Vedanta". He compares the Vedantic ideas at places with the views of the modern scientists as to the ultimate Reality. Swami Nihshrevasanandaji was in association with the monks of the Ramakrishna Order in his pre-monastic days, and is well versed with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. He quotes often from Swamis Vivekananda, Abhedananda, and others in his exposition. He gives a modern touch to his treatment of the subject, while retaining the traditional points of view. The publisher has given a brief

biographical sketch of Swami Nihehreyasananda in his Note at the beginning, and in the Foreword, the Swamig igves glimpses of the Kailes Ashrama at Rishikesh, which has been upholding the spirituo-philosophical tradition of the Advaits Vedanta, and the background to his undertaking the translation into Enelish of this work.

There are coloured pictures of some of the Will known scholarly heads of the Kalias Ashumas, such as those of Swami Dhanrig Girl, the Founder, Swami Ushariged, Girl, the Founder, Swami Chaitzeys Girl, the Founder, Swami Chaitzeys Girl, (8th), the tandator in Hindi, Swami Vidyānanda Girl (10th), the tanslator's Guru, Swami Harthara Tirtha, and of the translator himself, who is also well known as Bhikhu Black and white pictures of Swami Bhicku Black and white pictures of Swami Wivelananda are also included. To all these the translator has made reference in his Foreword as inspirers.

This work is a good addition to the spituo-philosophic literature of Vedants and is a beneficial reading. The printing and paper are good, the price very moderate, but only the binding has to be better one for such a valuable book.

Swami Mukhyanandaji Belur Math. SRI MOCKAMBIKA—THE RADIANT GRACE, by Srikant. Published by Integral Books, "Ayodhya", Payyanur, Kerala 670 307. Revised Ed., April 1992. 72 pages; Price Rs. 30/-

This is a nice introductory booklet very useful for those who wish to make a gightimage to the holy Mookambia Temple at Kollur, about 140 km. from Mangadore via Vandae, 18 km. from Kollur, where there is an ancient shrine at Miranhatte in which the SEI CHARRA, the great mystic symbol of the Divine Mother, the Divine Creative Energy, is worshipped. "Encircled by the mountains rich in lush tropical forests, the ancient temple of Mookambia is located by the greatly flowing river with the charming name Soupermilla."

The author gives the mythological background of the temple and how the Delty Mahalakshmi came to be known as Mookambika at that place. He also gives descriptions of other associated nearby strines to be visited. Information is provided of different routes, distances, places of pilgrim accommodation, etc. A good number of illustrations also are included of the beautiful scenes and survounding places, besides a very serenely smiling, beautiful picture of the Divine Mother Mookambika on the cover incolour.

A brief explanation of the symbolism of the Sri Chakra is also given along with diagram(Yantra). Reference should have been given as to where the detailed explanation is available.

For those who are of intellectual type, some background is provided basing on modern science and psychology and Indian spiritual thought.

At the end, the hymn "Sri Mahālakshmi Ashtakam" in Sanskrit from the Skunda Purlips, in adoration of Devi Mookambika, is given with English translation, in which the Devi is referred to as Kolūpureshi the Supreme One of Kohquas, the modern Kollur. It may be interesting to recall that in Kolhāpur in Maharashtra also there is a famous Mahalakshmi temple, big in size and architecturally beautiful.

80

The book is very attractively got up and the paper and printing also are commendable.

> Swami Mukhyanandaji Belur Math

SRI LALITĂ SAHASRANĂMA STOTRAM, by Swami Gabbirarunda. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Puranattukara, Trichur, Kerala 680 551 1st Ed., Dec. 1991 116 pages; Price Rs. 15/-.

This Stottem or Hymn occurs in the Brahmünda Puriliya and is very well known among the different Saharsuninu (Thousand Names) Stottas in Sanskrit literature. It is recited by numerous devotees of the Devi both for secular welfare as well as ribualistic worship and spiritual advancement, according to their needs.

There have been several translations of the Lalita-Solvaniane both in English and other regional languages, besides commerciates in Snoschi. Here the author has translated the text, given in Devanagari script, into English verse by verse, "morganizing it into a prayer addressed to Sri Lalitaneblik or Sri Tripura-sundari, the "Lovely Mother" of all, who bestows Her beauty and strengthon every thing and being in the universe."

In the Preface the author explains the nature of this Stotra and its importance and its association with the Shakit cult and the Kunghilini, and its relationship to Activa Art Schankara's Sandarga Liduri Stotra. At the erd useful Notes are provided explaining the significance of the different Names and Egithets used in the Sahasaranama for the Devi. In Appendix I, Sri Ramakrishna's ideas on Shakit or Divine Mother are given, and in Appendix II, the Niamivali or the Thousand Names are given individually for the sake of Archaus or ritualistic worship, prefixing OM to every Name and adding Namala at its ext.

This is a handy and useful book for the devotees of the Divine Mother of the Universe in their religio-spiritual life.

The hyperbolic eulogy of the author in the Foreword written by his admirers should not have been repeated on the jacket, especially omitting words by using dots, in the last sentence, which shifts the eulogy from "Such translations as these" in the Foreword to the author as one who 'can save us from the greatest of disasters for our culture'. This is pointed out because this is a religious book which seeks to turn attention to the Divine Mother of the Universe, and is better deleted from the lacket at least. The Foreword itself is out of tune with the book being mostly personal in character, the writer pleading his unworthiness for the task

> Swami Mukkyanandaji Belur Math.

Know that Self alone that is one without a second, on which are strung heaven, the earth and the inter-space, the mind and the vital forces together with all the other organs; and give up all other vain talks. This is the bridge leading to immortality.

-Mundaka Upanisad, ILii.5



Side-view of the Partland Vedanta Society

Clarin





Swami Ranganathananda (left), and Swami Aseshananda in the Chapel of the Vedanta Society



Retreat Temple at Scapposse



Vivekananda Temple at the Retreat



Three vertical stone slabs represent the Holy Trinity



Mandi in the Courtyard



Stone image of Ganeša



Buddha in Borobodur Temple



Barong and Rangda dance-drama



Borobodur Stupa Complex



Chintamani the famous Visnu Temple



Ornate gateway to the Basakih Temple



C Advanta Asteriora



Rambagan Slum the narrow and dingy cells of the old inhabitants of Calcutta

Another view of the slum as it existed





Vocational Training for slum dwellers by Ramakrishna Mission



Vocational Training for women

Training in painting and drawing for the slum children





Formal Education for the slum children



Dream of new houses come true at Rambagan now rechristened Visekananda Palli

New blocks of houses at Vivekananda Palli the pride of Calcutta





Dedication of the new houses by Revered President Maharaj