

VOL. 100 MARCH 1995

ISSN 0032 - 6178



Centenary of

100

Prabuddha Bharata
1896 - 1995



Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India





PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014

Phone (91)(33)244 0898
(91)(33)245 2383
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

Annual Life
(30 Years)

India	Rs.	30	Rs.	500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs.	120	Rs.	2000
U.S.A. & Canada				
<i>Air Mail</i>	\$	20	\$	300
Other Countries				
<i>Air Mail</i>	£	15	£	225

Cover: *Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati*
Inset: *Prabuddha Bharata Office*

MARCH 1995

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	465
Editorial	466
Glimpses of Swamiji's Life in New York <i>Swami Tathagatananda</i>	471
Vedanta: Its First Hundred Years in America <i>Swami Sarvatmananda</i>	478
Swami Vivekananda and <i>Prabuddha Bharata</i> <i>Dr. R.K. Dasgupta</i>	486
Swami Vivekananda: Spiritual Luminary Extraordinary <i>Dr. Anil Baran Ray</i>	491
News and Reports	504
Reviews and Notices	512
Letters <i>From Our Students</i>	503

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 100

MARCH 1995

No. 3

Divine Wisdom

THE SUPREME BEING

नाहं न यूयं यदृतां गतिं विदुर्न
वामदेवः किमुतापरे सुराः ।
तन्मायया मोहितबुद्धयस्त्विदं विनिर्मितं
चात्मसमं विचक्ष्महे ॥

Neither I, nor you, nor Śiva understands Him in His real nature. What to speak of other Devas! Infatuated by His Māyā, our understanding can grasp only this created universe, and even that according to the extent of our intelligence.

यस्यावतारकर्माणि गायन्ति ह्यस्मदादयः ।
न यं विन्दन्ति तत्त्वेन तस्मै भगवते नमः ॥

Though we people give descriptions of His activities in His incarnations, none of us know Him in truth and in reality. Salutations to Him!

स एष आद्यः पुरुषः कल्पे कल्पे सृजत्यजः ।
आत्माऽऽत्मन्यात्मनाऽऽत्मानं संयच्छति च
पाति च ॥

He is Pure Spirit, the Original and Unborn Being, and the creator of all that exists at the beginning of every cosmic cycle. He is the creator, the material of creation, the created world and the one in whom the creation subsists.

विशुद्धं केवलं ज्ञानं प्रत्यक्सम्यगवस्थितम् ।
सत्यं पूर्णमनाद्यन्तं निर्गुणं नित्यमद्वयम् ॥

He is Spirit, pure and transcendent, He is the innermost Essence, firm and unified. He is truth, complete and beginningless. He is non-dual, eternal and above the *gunas* (qualities).

ऋषे विन्दन्ति मुनयः प्रशान्तात्मेन्द्रियाशयाः ।
यदा तदेवासत्तर्केस्तिरोधीयेत विप्लुतम् ॥

The ṛṣis (sages) intuit Him when serenity reigns over their body, senses and mind, but He evades the mind agitated by vain argumentation.

From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

The Attainment of Knowledge Through Devotion

One day a young disciple named Hari (who later became Swami Turiyananda) asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'Why is there so much suffering in the world?' Sri Ramakrishna replied. 'This world is the *līlā* of God. It is like a game. In this game there are joy and sorrow, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil. The game cannot continue if sin and suffering are altogether eliminated from the creation....It is God's wish that the play should continue for some time.' Naturally Hari protested: 'But this play of God is our death.' Sri Ramakrishna answered: 'Please tell me who *you* are. God alone has become all this—*māyā*, the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. "As the snake I bite, and as the charmer I cure."'1

Almost every philosophy, Eastern or Western, has the same conclusion: know thyself. Why is there so much stress on a subject that often seems to be nothing more than an intellectual exercise? Because this knowledge is essential. 'It is a curious fact,' wrote Swami Satprakashananda, 'that man with all his pretensions to knowledge does not know himself. On the contrary, he has a mistaken notion of himself. Although an embodied being, he is not aware of the indwelling self, but is identified with the body, the dwelling. He thinks of himself and every other individual in terms of the physical tenement. It is not just a case of blissful

ignorance. Man pays heavily for his misconception of himself. All his bondages and sufferings stem from this.'2

But how do we get this knowledge without becoming dry philosophers? Sri Ramakrishna says in the *Gospel*:

One can attain everything through bhaktiyoga. I wept before the Mother and prayed, 'O Mother, please tell me, please reveal to me what the yogis have realized through yoga and the *jñānis* through discrimination.' And the Mother has revealed everything to me. She reveals everything if the devotee cries to her with a yearning heart. She has shown me everything that is in the Vedas, the Vedānta, the Purāṇas, and the Tantra.3

Through bhakti one spontaneously experiences kumbhaka. The nerve currents and breathing calm down when the mind is concentrated. Again, the mind is concentrated when the nerve currents and breathing calm down. Then the buddhi, the discriminating power, becomes steady.4

It is as if Sri Ramakrishna is giving here an explanation of the following verses of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (chapter ten, verses eight to

1. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1986), p. 436. [hereafter, *Gospel*]

2. Swami Satprakashananda, *The Goal and the Way* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, n.d.), p. 31.

3. *Gospel*, p. 579.

4. *Ibid.*

eleven). In these few verses Śrī Kṛṣṇa sets out a clear and simple devotional path to Self-knowledge:

8. I am the origin of all; everything moves on owing to Me. Realizing thus, the wise ones, filled with fervour, adore Me.

9. With minds fixed on Me, with lives dedicated to Me, enlightening each other, and always speaking of Me, they derive satisfaction and rejoice.

10. To them who are ever devoted and worship Me with love, I grant that possession of wisdom by which they reach Me.

11. Out of compassion for them alone, I, residing in their hearts, destroy the darkness born of ignorance with the luminous lamp of Knowledge.⁵

Though the state that is attained through this path is the pure light of Knowledge, these verses are highly devotional in character. As to be expected, Rāmānuja's and Śrīdhara Swāmī's commentaries follow the devotional tone. But what does the Advaitist Śaṅkara think of all this devotion? Turning to Śaṅkara's commentary, we find to our surprise that he not only retains the devotional spirit in these verses, but he also adds to it, especially in his sublime commentary on verse eleven.

(v. 8) 'I' here, according to Śaṅkara, is 'the Supreme Brahman called Vāsudeva'⁶ (i.e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa). 'Wise ones' does not refer to scholars. 'The wise', according to Śrīdhara, are 'the discriminative'.⁷ The discriminative

are those who yearn for knowledge. *Bhāva-samanvitāḥ*, according to Śaṅkara, means 'filled with fervour'. It is 'ardent longing for the Supreme Reality', Rāmānuja says: '*Bhāva* is a particular disposition, here a loving disposition, of the mind. The meaning is that they worship Me with intense yearning of the heart.'⁸ 'Adore Me.' How do we love God? By practising devotional disciplines. Through practice, the path becomes the goal and the goal becomes the path, because the path is actually an expression of that love which is the goal.

(v. 9) 'With minds fixed on Me, with lives dedicated to me.' When Sri Ramakrishna was engaged in spiritual practices, he would be immersed in a particular mood twenty-four hours a day. For instance, when he was practising *dāsya bhāva*, the attitude of a servant of the Lord, he would move, eat, sleep, and think as Hanuman, the devoted servant of Rāma. Again, when Sri Ramakrishna was practising *madhura bhāva*, the attitude of the lover to the beloved Lord, he became a woman in all respects. Āṇḍal, one of the great saints of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, used to imagine that she was a gopi in Vrindaban and that in the mornings she would go with the other gopis to waken Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

When Swami Vivekananda was travelling in the Himalayas, he heard of a monk who was constantly absorbed in the thought that he was one with the Supreme Reality. One day the monk was caught by a tiger, yet even as the tiger was carrying him away,

5. *Bhagavad-gītā*, with the Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya, translated by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1991), p. 404-07. [All subsequent quotations from the text of the *Gītā* will be from this edition. No further references will be given.]

6. *Ibid.*, p. 405 [All subsequent quotations from Śaṅkara's commentary will be from this edition. No further references will be given.]

7. *Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā*, with the Gloss of Śrīdhara Swami, translated by Swami Vireswarananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1991), p. 290.

8. *Śrī Rāmānuja Gītā-Bhāṣya*, translated by Swami Adidevananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1991), p. 332. [All subsequent quotations from Rāmānuja's commentary will be from this edition, p. 333. No further references will be given.]

people could still hear him repeating *Shivoham, Shivoham*, I am the Blessed One, I am the Blessed One.⁹

Śaṅkara says *madgataprāṇāḥ* (with lives dedicated to Me) could also mean that the sense organs are absorbed, or withdrawn, into Kṛṣṇa. Another great saint of Śrīvaiṣṇavism was Tiruppan Ālvār, who was born in a family of untouchable minstrels. Because of his social status he could not enter the temple of his Lord, Ranganath, so every day he would stand on the bank of the Kaveri, gazing at the temple tower and pouring out his heart in devotional songs to the Lord. One day when Tiruppan was in an ecstatic state, unconscious of the world, the priest of the temple came to the river to bathe. Not being able to get past the Ālvār, the priest threw a stone at him to waken him, and Tiruppan humbly moved away. Though Tiruppan was not offended, the Lord was. That night the priest had a dream in which the Lord commanded him to carry the Ālvār on his shoulders to the inner shrine of the temple. As Tiruppan stood before the Lord in a state of ecstasy, he sang a song, the last verse of which says:

He has stolen my heart
the Lord of azure hue
the cowherd boy!
the butter thief!
O leader of the *devas*
Lord of Srirangam
these blessed eyes of mine
have gazed upon
your beauteous form
Never again
may they look upon another!¹⁰

With his mind and senses totally absorbed in the Lord, Tiruppan, it is said,

disappeared into the image, leaving behind only his last song.

According to Rāmānuja: 'The meaning is that they are unable to sustain themselves without Me.' Sri Ramakrishna described his state of mind before his first vision of the Divine Mother thus:

There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart because I could not have Her vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water from it, I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was wringing them likewise. Greatly afflicted with the thought that I might never have Mother's vision, I was in great agony. I thought that there was no use in living such a life. My eyes suddenly fell upon the sword that was there in the Mother's temple. I made up my mind to put an end to my life with it that very moment. Like one mad, I ran and caught hold of it, when suddenly I had the wonderful vision of the Mother, and fell down unconscious.¹¹

'Enlightening each other and always speaking of Me'—Śaṅkara adds, 'as possessed of qualities like knowledge, strength, valour, etc.' Rāmānuja says, 'They inspire one another by speaking about My attributes which have been experienced by them and narrating My divine and adorable deeds.'

God saves many human beings during his earthly manifestation, but he also leaves behind the stories of his activities as well as his spiritual teachings suited to the new age. Hearing, reading, speaking, and thinking of these stories and teachings then becomes means for other human beings to attain salvation.

In some parts of India, *Rāmāyana*,

9. See, Swami Vivekananda, *Jnana Yoga* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), p. 207.

10. Vidya Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publ., 1988), p. 91.

11. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1991), vol. I, p. 162. [hereafter, *Great Master*]

Mahābhārata, and *Bhāgavata* recitals are still popular. *Rāmāyaṇa* recitations especially are thought to have such power that, if listened to properly, they will have a transforming effect on an individual. And to some listeners, the distinction between story and reality becomes blurred.¹² Once the South Indian king Kulaśekhara was listening to a *Rāmāyaṇa* recitation. When the reciter came to the part where Rāma was heading for Lanka with an army of monkeys and bears to rescue Sītā, Kulaśekhara immediately called out his own army and left with them to help Rāma fight Rāvaṇa. Only when Kulaśekhara's ministers came after them with the 'news' that the battle was over and Rāma had been victorious, would Kulaśekhara come back to his capital.

A similar story is told of Sri Ramakrishna's uncle, Kanairam:

Once he [Kanairam] went to a drama (Yatra) which portrayed the banishment of Sri Ramachandra to the forest. The performance became so realistic to him that he took Kaikeyi's secret plotting and scheming to be real and was on the point of striking the actor who played the part.¹³

'They derive satisfaction and rejoice.' Śaṅkara adds, they 'get happiness, as by coming in contact with a dear one.'

(v. 10) 'To them who are ever devoted and worship Me with love.' Śaṅkara says that they adore the Lord in the manner stated in the previous verse and are ever devoted, ever attached, and have become free from all external desires. Śaṅkara stresses that such

devotees are not worshipping the Lord out of a desire to gain something. They worship Him solely out of love. Sri Ramakrishna again and again emphasized that one should have pure, motiveless love for God. He sometimes gave the example of Nārada. When Rāma offered to grant him a boon, Nārada replied, 'O Rāma, may I have pure devotion to Your Lotus Feet, and may I not be deluded by Your world-bewitching māyā!' Rāma said, 'Be it so: ask for something else.' Nārada replied, 'No, Rāma, I do not want any other boon.'¹⁴

Sri Ramakrishna once said:

One must have for God the yearning of a child. The child sees nothing but confusion when his mother is away. You may try to cajole him by putting a sweetmeat in his hand; but he will not be fooled. He only says, 'No, I want to go to my mother.'...He to whom the enjoyment of worldly happiness appears tasteless, he who takes no delight in anything of the world—money, name, creature comforts, sense pleasure—, becomes sincerely grief-stricken for the vision of the Mother. And to him alone the Mother comes running, leaving all Her other duties.¹⁵

Another time he said: 'The way to realize God is through discrimination, renunciation, and yearning for Him. What kind of yearning? One should yearn for God as the cow, with yearning heart, runs after its calf....Add your tears to your yearning. And if you can renounce everything through discrimination and dispassion, then you will be able to see God. That yearning brings about God-intoxication, whether you follow the path of knowledge or the path of devotion.'¹⁶

12. See, A.K. Ramanujan, 'Three Hundred *Rāmāyaṇas*: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation', p. 46, in *Many Rāmāyaṇas*, edited by Paula Richman (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).

13. *Great Master*, vol. I, p. 31.

14. *Gospel*, p. 777.

15. *Gospel*, p. 673.

16. *Gospel*, p. 485.

'To them I grant that possession of wisdom by which they reach Me.' Śaṅkara says 'possession of wisdom' means 'full enlightenment with regard to My real nature'. By this 'they reach Me', the Supreme God who is their own Self.

(v. 11) 'Out of compassion for them alone'—for the Lord 'is anxious as to how they may have bliss', adds Śaṅkara. When the devotee has given up everything solely for love of God, then God must somehow or other find a way to fulfil the devotee's ardent desire. As Sri Ramakrishna says, 'God is under the control of His devotees.'¹⁷

'I, residing in their hearts, destroy the darkness born of ignorance.' Śaṅkara says it is 'the darkness of delusion known as false comprehension'. Our ignorance is that we do not know he is within us—nearer than the nearest. We are one with Him, yet we think we are separate and have to search for him. Nammālvār's great poem *Tiruvāymozhi* describes his great yearning for God, but it concludes with these words:

Encompassing, inside, filling, uplifting
everything, unlimited great Source;
encompassing that, still greater is the good
blossoming light;
encompassing that, still greater is radiant
joy of knowledge;
encompassing that, still greater is my
longing, but you end it, you encompass
me.¹⁸(verse 10.10.10)

'With the luminous lamp of Knowledge.' Śaṅkara describes this lamp thus:

[It is] fed by the oil of divine grace resulting from devotion, fanned by the wind of intensity of meditation on Me, having the

wick of the intellect imbued with the impressions arising from such disciplines as celibacy, etc., in the receptacle of the detached mind, placed in the windless shelter of the mind withdrawn from objects and untainted by likes and dislikes, and made luminous by full Illumination resulting from the practice of constant concentration and meditation.

Though Śaṅkara always maintains that Self-knowledge is possible only by realizing the identity of the Ātman with Brahman, and that this Knowledge is attained independent of any action, he does admit that devotional rites and rituals which are done without any desire for their result will lead to purification of the mind. And when the mind is pure, the Self reveals itself. Sri Ramakrishna would often say that the pure mind and the pure Self are one. He would also say that pure love and Knowledge are the same.

The *Kāṭha-Upaniṣad* says: 'This Self cannot be grasped by scholarship, by the power of the intellect, or by hearing about it from many sources. Only he whom it chooses can understand it. To him does it reveal its identity.'¹⁹ About this verse, one commentator says:

This experience comes to you as if someone were doing you a favour. Of course no one is doing you a favour. The Self was always within you, but now it has revealed itself to you. You see it now in its true grandeur. This revelation takes place automatically. It comes in a flash.²⁰

How does the Self choose us? Through love. □

17. *Gospel*, p. 792.

18. Francis X Clooney, S.J., 'Living for God: Nammālvār and the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India', p. 317–18, in *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, vol. XLIV, no. 10, October 1993.

19. *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, translated and with notes based on Śaṅkara's commentary by Swami Lokeshwarananda (Calcutta: Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1993), p. 84 [verse I.ii.23]

20. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Glimpses of Swamiji's Life in New York

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

The Vedanta Society of New York celebrated its centenary last year, a report of which was published in the January Special Number. In the following article the author has collected as many important facts as possible concerning the events that led up to the founding of the Society by Swamiji in 1894. We are pleased to publish it in the centenary year of the journal.

After the Parliament of World Religions, in October 1893, Swami Vivekananda started giving lectures in and around Chicago. At this time he signed a three-year contract with the Slayton Lyceum Lecture Bureau, and leaving Chicago on November 12, 1893, he began his 'arduous lecture tour' in midwest, southern and eastern states. He lectured in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Tennessee, Massachusetts, New York, Maine, Maryland and Pennsylvania. The Lecture Bureau embarrassed and cheated him shamelessly. On February 20, 1894, Swamiji wrote a letter to Mrs. Hale: 'I am thoroughly disgusted with this Slayton business and am trying hard to break loose. I have lost at least \$5,000 by joining this man....' Through the help of Mr. Palmer, '...[I] got the fraudulent contract annulled....' The Lecture Bureau compelled Swamiji to pay a heavy price for the cancellation. It is most probable that he was free by the 20th of March when he was in Detroit.¹ This freedom is an important event in his post-Parliament life in America.

From Detroit Swamiji came to New York around the first of April at the invitation of Mrs. Arthur Smith, Dr. and Mrs. Egbert Guernsey and Miss Helen Miller Gould, who were interested in Vedanta philosophy.

Swamiji wrote a letter to Mrs. Hale on April 2, 1894 while staying at the Guernsey's residence at 528 Fifth Avenue, between 43rd and 44th Streets. After giving a few 'parlour lectures' he delivered his first public lecture on 'India and Hinduism', at the Waldorf Hotel on April 24th. He gave his second lecture on May 2 at the residence of Miss Mary Phillips, 19 West 38th street. Miss Mary Phillips subsequently became one of his best friends and helped his work in every possible way. Her address was Swamiji's temporary headquarters for his work in New York. Of the many people who attended his first two lectures, the following persons were noteworthy, as they supported his work when later on the Vedanta Society was started: Miss Mary Phillips, Miss Emma Thursby—the celebrated singer, Mrs. Arthur Smith and Mr. Leon Landsberg, who later became Swamiji's right-hand man and one of Swamiji's first monastic disciples in the West, and Dr. and Mrs. Guernsey. Dr. Guernsey was one of the New York's chief physicians. Leon Landsberg was on the staff of the New York Tribune.

While in New York Swamiji spoke many times before clubs and in private homes, although information is unavailable about these talks. From the reminiscences of Mrs. Constance Towne—Miss Gibbons at that time, we get a picture of 'a dinner party of creeds' at the home of Dr. Guernsey. She

1. S.N. Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda* (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra, 1975), vol. 1, p. 580.

writes: 'A more broad-minded and tolerant man surely could not have been found anywhere in India to carry out the mission of founding Vedanta Centers in America.'²

The Greenacre Conference of 1894: A Significant Event

Sara Farmer, whom Swamiji met in New York, invited him to attend the Greenacre Conference in Maine. Swamiji probably went there on July 27th. Here he met some of his friends from New York, and here he also met Mrs. Ole Bull for the first time.³ Swamiji's meeting with her was a providential happening, culminating in a life-long mother-son relationship. Swamiji wrote her a letter on September 19, addressing her as 'Dear Mother Sara.'⁴ She proved herself to be a real mother, giving her wholehearted support as well as financial aid to the cause of Vedanta.

In this gathering of several hundred men and women—free-thinking intellectuals—Swamiji used to give talks 'on an average [of] seven or eight hours a day' for about two weeks. Here he enjoyed the full freedom of a Hindu monk. Sitting under a tree labelled 'Swami's Pine', surrounded by the devotees also seated on the grass, he would teach every morning.

Here 'he taught for the first time in America the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta to a group of eager listeners.'⁵ Here Swamiji again met Dr. Lewis G. Janes, President of

the Brooklyn Ethical Association and an old acquaintance from New York.⁶ They grew very close to each other. At this time Dr. Janes invited Swamiji to deliver a lecture on the Hindu Religion at the Brooklyn Ethical Association. This lecture was to make a very deep impact on the public.

At the Greenacre Conference, a few such as Mrs. Bull and Dr. Janes were inspired by the high quality of Swamiji's philosophy. They became his true friends throughout their lives and cooperated with Swamiji, and after his demise, they wholeheartedly supported his followers in spreading the message of Vedanta in America.

In conclusion, it may be said that Swamiji did not entirely approve of the Conference. But his association with it was a foreshadowing of what was to come—the beginning of a new method of work.

The Cambridge Conference

Between 12 August 1894, the day of Swamiji's departure from Greenacre, and his arrival in New York at the end of the first week of November, he visited many places. He stayed with Mrs. Bull at her residence in Cambridge from October 2 to October 10. She was a well-known figure in Cambridge and her residence was a famous meeting place for intellectual society and for leaders of great causes. Here she introduced Swamiji and his Vedanta philosophy to the celebrities. There were no regular classes—only one or two informal talks. It is quite likely that Swamiji became a close friend of Professor William James on that visit. It was perhaps at this time that Swamiji 'demonstrated...the mystery of divine communion for the noted philosopher by plunging, in his presence, into Samadhi.'⁷ In passing, it may be noted that Swamiji also stayed

2. Eastern and Western Admirers, *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1961), p.247

3. M.L. Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1984), Part II, p. 138.

4. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), vol. 6, p. 267.

5. M.L. Burke, Part I, p. 429.

6. M.L. Burke, Part II, p. 138.

7. *Ibid.*, Part II, p. 187.

at her house in December of 1894 for about three weeks (Dec. 5–27), when he conducted many classes; and again in March of 1896 for about a week, when he probably conducted only two classes.

Throughout this period of public addresses, Swamiji expressed his deep-seated feeling of disgust on many occasions. He literally cried like his Master to have a few earnest seekers. He wanted to teach 'a select—a very select—few' rather than lecture before a multitude: 'My idea of doing good is this: to evolve out a few giants, and not to strew pearls before swine, and so lose time, health, and energy.'⁸ On October 27 he wrote to Alasinga Perumal, 'I think I have worked enough, now I want to rest and to teach a little to those that have come to me from my Gurudeva...'⁹

After visiting Baltimore and Washington, Swamiji returned to New York unexpectedly, on November 7 or 8. In that fateful November of 1894, Swamiji organized the nucleus of a Vedanta Society. On November 30, Swamiji wrote to Alasinga, 'I have started (an organization) already in New York and the Vice President will soon write to you.'¹⁰ This indeed was of historic significance. 'Toward the end of 1894 he was also becoming keenly aware of America's need for the religion of India.'¹¹ The purpose was to create a centre from which the philosophy of Vedanta would be disseminated to the world, apart from collecting funds for the future educational projects of India. Swamiji had worked very hard as a cyclonic monk (sometimes giving twelve to fourteen or more lectures per week) to deliver his message. Now, for the

same purpose, he wanted to have a permanent centre for imparting intensive spiritual training to a few genuine seekers who would support the Vedanta Movement.

He remained in New York for the whole of November. Then he again visited Cambridge and stayed with Mrs. Bull from December 5 to December 27 of 1894, holding two classes daily and giving three formal talks. 'He plunged evidently at once, into the absorbed, uninterrupted delivery of two classes daily, again teaching Vedanta with the same unbroken intensity as at Greenacre.'¹² Having spent Christmas day at Mrs. Bull's home, Swamiji came to Brooklyn on December 28 to attend an evening reception arranged in his honour by Mr. Charles M. Higgins at his home. Mr. Higgins, an associate of the Brooklyn Ethical Cultural Society, judiciously brought out a ten-page pamphlet about Swamiji, which was circulated 'among those interested in the study of Oriental religions.' Incidentally, this pamphlet was very helpful later on to Dr. Janes, when he gave his reply to the charges made by the Ramabai Circle; it enabled him to substantiate his points with facts about Swamiji. On December 30 at the Pouch Mansion, under the auspices of the Ethical Association, Swamiji delivered his lecture, which was presided over by Dr. Janes. 'The rooms were crowded to suffocation,' with about 800 of the Brooklyn's elite attending.

From Miss Ellen Waldo's remarks¹³ it appears that after the astounding success of his lecture, there was insistent demand for regular classes in Brooklyn, and Swamiji graciously gave his consent. In this way, the series of Brooklyn lectures continued till

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 8, pp. 302-3.

9. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 50.

10. M.L. Burke, vol. 2, p. 226.

11. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p.227.

12. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 230.

13. 'Introductory Narrative' to *Inspired Talks* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1993).

April 1895. 'Between December 30, 1894 and April 8, 1895, he delivered only six public lectures in Brooklyn.'¹⁴ It may be mentioned that in his first lecture in Brooklyn, Swamiji first made his now famous statement: 'I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East.'¹⁵ This first lecture made a profound impression on the audience. How that talk made a deep impact on two reporters is given below:

As my companion and I wended our way homeward, the vast vault of the blue sky was studded with stars, and the blessed fragrance of Christmas still lingered in the streets of the great city. We thought of the old and beautiful legend of the Eastern Magi who followed the star which led them, with their homage of frankincense and myrrh, to the babe lying in the manger at Bethlehem. And he wondered if this Oriental wanderer was not one of the same high caste, who 1900 years later had come to our Western Continent to throw light upon the inner meaning of that pure gospel, which that noble soul had preached and illustrated.¹⁶

Swamiji's Remarks About New York

On different occasions Swamiji made certain remarks about New York. 'Here alone in New York I find more men interested in religion than in other cities...' 'New York is a grand and good place.' 'The New York people have a tenacity of purpose unknown in any other city.' New York, 'the head, hand, and purse of the country.' New York was chosen for its cosmopolitan character, its energetic people, and its liberalism.

Swamiji visited Chicago just after his lecture at Brooklyn and came back to New York

on the 18th of January 1895 (date uncertain). He took the initiative in organizing the Vedanta Society with the active cooperation of Leon Landsberg, who became Swamiji's right-hand man for a time. He shouldered the burden of the practical details and gave much relief to Swamiji. He also soon became a brahmacharin disciple of Swamiji. Landsberg rented two rooms at 54 West 33rd Street, which was not a good locality. Swamiji, along with Landsberg, moved into the new location on Sunday, January 27, 1895 and there established his headquarters, having previously stayed with the Guernsey's. Here, on January 28th, he started his classes on Vedanta and Yoga, 'beginning the second phase of his Western work, into which he was to pour his heart, mind and soul.' Thus, Swamiji's new phase of work began in a 'mean lodging.'

Swamiji had been inwardly feeling a great urge to train a band of selected persons by arousing their inner spiritual hunger and helping them to experience spiritual enlightenment through the practice of yoga. He was also possessed with the idea of enjoying once again the freedom of a Hindu monk. Both these urges got fulfilled in New York. He lived in a high state of spiritual consciousness. 'He literally radiated spirituality....An atmosphere of benediction, of peace, of power and of inexpressible luminosity was felt by one and all who came to his classes.'¹⁷

One sees him in his New York retreat...in the morning or the evening quiet, or at dead of night, meditating. Oftentimes, he was lost in meditation, his unconsciousness of the external betraying his complete absorption within. Even while holding a class he would plunge into profound contemplation. When the Swami emerged from such states...he

14. M.L. Burke, vol. 2, p. 330.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 261.

16. S.N. Dhar, vol. 1, p. 674.

17. M.L. Burke, vol. 3, p. 39.

would feel impatient with himself, for he desired that the Teacher should be uppermost in him, rather than the Yogi. In order to avoid repetitions of such occurrences, he instructed one or two how to bring him back by uttering a word or a Name, should he be carried by the force of meditation into Samadhi.¹⁸

In this connection we should mention the mood of Swamiji in which *Raja Yoga* was later composed. Sara Ellen Waldo has written:

It was inspiring to see the Swami as he dictated to me the contents of the work. In delivering his commentaries on the Sutras, he would leave me waiting while he entered deep states of meditation or self-contemplation, to emerge therefrom with some luminous interpretations. I had always to keep the pen dipped in ink. He might be absorbed for long periods of time and then suddenly his silence would be broken by some expression of some long deliberate teaching.¹⁹

He used to hold classes 'every morning from 11 till one o'clock and often till later.' Here he taught the four Yogas and the Gita. He gave classes in his room, 'free as air.' 'Long before [June],' Miss Waldo recorded, 'they had outgrown their small beginnings and had removed downstairs to occupy an entire parlour floor and extension.'²⁰

But in spite of the crowded classes, the collections and donations were too meagre to meet the expenses. She wrote:

The rent was paid by voluntary subscriptions and when these were found insufficient the Swami hired a hall and gave

secular lectures on India and devoted the proceeds to the maintenance of the classes. He said that Hindu teachers of religion felt it to be their duty to support their classes and the students too, if they were unable to care for themselves, and the teachers would willingly make any sacrifice they possibly could to assist a needy disciple.²¹

In spite of Swamiji's arduous labours in his Vedanta classes as well as in private homes and public places, the economic situation did not improve. In a letter to Mrs. Bull in May 1895, Swamiji wrote, 'The classes are going on; but I am sorry to say, though the attendance is larger, it does not even pay enough to cover the rent. I will try this week and then give up.'²² It may be interesting to note that a basket was hung near the door of the classroom to receive money for the work.²³ Swamiji could not change his residence to a better locality mainly due to economic reasons, and he had to work hard in his room, which was definitely very uncomfortable.

For lack of an extra room, cooking was done in the bedrooms with the help of a stove donated by a friend. Perhaps, sometimes Swamiji would cook meals in a community kitchen. After a class Swamiji and Landsberg often used to go to take a light supper at a cheap restaurant.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, Swamiji was immensely happy. He wrote to Mrs. Bull on February 14:

I am very happy now. Between Mr. Landsberg and me, we cook some rice and lentils or barley and quietly eat it,

18. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 39-40.

19. S.N. Dhar, vol. 1, p. 713.

20. M.L. Burke, vol. 3, pp. 44-5.

21. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 45.

22. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 6, p. 308.

23. M.L. Burke, vol. 3, p. 103.

and write something or read or receive visits from poor people who want to learn something, and thus I feel I am more a Sannyasin now than I ever was in America.²⁴

Swamiji's health was shattered due to the extraordinary load of work, so he took a ten-days vacation at Ridgely Manor. In spite of many good qualities, Landsberg was not happy there, and, on April 19th, during Swamiji's absence, he moved to a house at 228 West 39th Street. Swamiji came back to New York on April 23rd. He now had to do almost everything by himself to maintain his 'household.' On 22 June 1895, Swamiji wrote to Mary Hale, 'Landsberg has gone away...I am living mostly on nuts, fruits and milk...' His health was fast deteriorating. 'He began to feel himself wearing out...his nerves were racked, his brain tired, his whole body overtaxed...he longed for a brief period of rest and recuperation.'²⁵ Swamiji left New York on June 4th for Camp Percy for the much-coveted rest.

Some additional glimpses of Swamiji's life in the early days of New York are given below. Miss Waldo, a very well-read young woman, was one of the earliest workers of the Society. In 1906 she wrote an article in *Prabuddha Bharata*:

At this time the Swami was living very simple in New York; and his earliest classes were held in the small room he occupied, and in the beginning were attended by only three or four persons. They grew with astonishing rapidity, and, as the little room filled to overflowing, became very picturesque. The Swami himself always sat on the floor,

and most of his audience likewise. The marble-topped dresser, the arms of the sofa, and even the corner washstand helped to furnish seats for the constantly increasing numbers. The door was left open, and the overflow filled the hall and sat on the stairs. And those first classes! How intensely interesting they were! Who that was privileged to attend them can ever forget them? The Swami so dignified yet so simple, so gravely earnest, so eloquent, and the close ranks of students, forgetting all inconveniences, hanging breathless on his every word! It was a fit beginning for a movement that has since grown to such grand proportions. In this unpretentious way did Swami Vivekananda inaugurate the work of teaching Vedanta philosophy in New York.²⁶

From Miss Josephine MacLeod's reminiscences, we get another picture:

On the twenty-ninth of January 1895, I went with my sister to 54 West 33rd Street, New York, and heard the Swami Vivekananda in his sitting room where were assembled fifteen or twenty ladies and two or three gentlemen. The room was crowded. All the arm chairs were taken; so I sat on the floor in the front row. Swami stood in the corner. He said something, the particular words of which I do not remember, but instantly to me that was truth, and the second sentence he spoke was truth, and the third sentence was truth. And I listened to him for seven years and whatever he uttered was to me truth. From that moment life had a different import. It was as if he made you realize that you were in eternity. It never altered. It never grew. It was like the sun that you will never forget once you have seen...His

24. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 63.

25. *His Eastern and Western Disciples, Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1965), p. 19.

26. *Reminiscences*, p. 115.

power lay, perhaps, in the courage he gave others. He did not ever seem to be conscious of himself at all.²⁷

Miss Laura Glenn (later Sister Devamata) was familiar with the basic ideas and ideals of Hinduism. She had read the Gita, 'The Light of Asia' by Edwin Arnold, and Max Muller's English version of the Upanishads. Here is her impression:

I reached the hall twenty minutes before the hour. It was already over half full. It was not large, however...The hall was on the second storey and...(the flight of stairs at the back) gave the only way of access to it. By the time three o'clock arrived, hall, stairs, window-sills and railings, all were crowded to the utmost capacity. Many even were standing below, hoping to catch a faint echo of the words spoken in the hall above...A sudden hush, a quiet step on the stairs and Swami Vivekananda passed in stately erectness up the aisle to the platform. He began to speak; and memory, time, place, people, all melted away. Nothing was left but a voice ringing through the void. It was as if a gate had swung open and I had passed out on a road leading to limitless attainment. The end of it was not

visible; but the promise of what it would be shone through the thought and flashed through the personality of the one who gave it. He stood there—the prophet of infinitude...The silence of an empty hall recalled me to myself.²⁸

To make a deep impact on the people, to impart spiritual ideas and thought which were so alien to the American mind nurtured in an 'altogether different culture' was the task of the prophet. He wrote to Swami Ramakrishnananda, 'Wherever the seed of (Shri Ramakrishna's) power will find its way, there it will fructify—"be it to-day, or in a hundred years"'²⁹ 'Immense spiritual power, an almost impersonal force' did make an impact. Swamiji 'altered the course of deep-lying thought-currents in America.'³⁰ 'I have become one of their own teachers,' Swamiji wrote in October, 1894. 'But he was also Swamiji, intensely human, an adored son, and brother to many families in America, an infinitely compassionate, ever-approachable teacher to hundreds of his Western followers, a beloved and ever-sympathetic friend to countless men and women.'³¹ □

28. S.N. Dhar, vol. 1, p. 709.

29. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 6, p. 278.

30. M.L. Burke, vol. 3, p. 7.

31. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 9-10.

27. M.L. Burke, vol. 3, p. 25.

Yajnavalkya points out the dependence of Liberation on purification, and the means to it:

'Purification of the mind, being the source of the rise of Knowledge, it is to be practised...for bringing about Liberation. [The means are]: Adoration of the teacher, investigation of the import of the Vedic scriptures, performance of good deeds, company of virtuous people, pious talks; ceasing from looking at and touching women, seeing all beings as identical with oneself, non-acceptance of gifts, wearing ochre clothes (for the sannyasin).'

—Sri Sankaracharya in his *Introduction to Sve. Upanishad* quoting the *Linga Purana* (62)

Vedanta: Its First Hundred Years in America

SWAMI SARVATMANANDA

In the course of a century, Vedanta has quietly permeated the Western world to a considerable extent. This desire of Swami Vivekananda—to bring Vedanta to the West—is being fulfilled through our various Vedanta Societies in America and other countries. The following article briefly chronicles the work of these Societies during the last ten decades or so, and in a happy coincidence came to us as this journal was about to enter its 100th year! The author is the Assistant Minister of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston and the Vedanta Society, Providence.

After Swami Vivekananda's astounding success at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893, he travelled extensively over much of the eastern part of the United States spreading the message of Vedanta through his lectures and through his personal contacts with many people. Then in August 1895, he sailed for England where he continued his mission. Returning to America in December that year, he left again for England in April 1896.

In London he found his brother disciple Swami Saradananda, whom he had summoned from India, awaiting him. Swamiji gave him some training in public speaking and sent him to New York where he was to continue the Vedanta work.

Another brother disciple, Swami Abhedananda, whom too Swamiji had summoned from India, arrived soon after and was also given training in public speaking by Swamiji. Pleased with Swami Abhedananda's first attempts at lecturing, Swamiji gave him complete charge of the English Vedanta work, and returned to America, accompanied by J.J. Goodwin, his devoted disciple who was recording all his lectures.

Arriving in New York, Swamiji was very

pleased to see that Swami Saradananda through his lectures in various east-coast cities had become popular in America. Swamiji, thus assured of the continuity of the Vedanta work in America and England, started for India via Europe in the middle of December 1896, reaching Colombo in January 1897.

From Colombo to Almora, millions of people turned out to welcome him with grand receptions. He had now become greatly revered in his own country. He was very gratified to see this response of his countrymen, but even more gratified to see many young men of Madras and Calcutta, as well as his brother disciples, following his call to dedicate their lives to the service of mankind, with the motto: 'Service to Jiva is service to Shiva'.

To establish this spirit of service on a stable foundation, Swamiji founded the Ramakrishna Mission Association on 1 May 1897 at Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta, and called Swami Saradananda back to India to organize the Indian work.

Swami Abhedananda, who was to succeed him, arrived in New York in August after giving the responsibility of the London work to Swamiji's disciple, E.T. Sturdy. Within a short time, the message of Vedanta

was being disseminated in New York through the untiring and efficient effort of Swami Abhedananda. On some Sundays, more than one thousand people used to attend his lectures.

But due to Swamiji's strenuous work in India, his health gradually broke down. Thus, on the doctor's advice he sailed for America for the second time, taking with him his brother disciple Swami Turiyananda. (Sister Nivedita accompanied them part of the way.) Arriving in New York in August 1899, Swamiji was very pleased to see the development of the New York Society under the able guidance of Swami Abhedananda. With the intention of taking more rest this time, he went to the spacious country home, 'Ridgely Manor', of his ardent admirer and friend, Mr. Francis Leggett. Here Swamiji's health improved much under the loving care of Mr. and Mrs. Leggett.

Satisfied with the growth of the message of Vedanta on the east coast, Swamiji wanted to go to the west. Meanwhile a devotee from New York asked him to accept a 200 acre piece of land situated in the San Antone Valley of Northern California. Swamiji sent Swami Turiyananda there to establish an Ashrama. With the active help and participation of a few American devotees and through his own earnest efforts, Swami Turiyananda founded 'Shanti Ashrama'. He lived a very hard austere life here together with these earnest devotees, and helped them to mould their lives according to the principles of Vedanta. The Dutch immigrant who was to become Swami Atulananda was one of those devotees.

Swamiji himself came to California and started his lectures in Los Angeles in November 1899. The Mead sisters came in contact with him here, and cordially invited

him to stay with them at their Pasadena home. All three sisters were very devoted to Swamiji and did much for the propagation of Vedanta later on. After some time Swamiji visited San Francisco and delivered lectures there. Many were attracted to him and his message, and as a result, in about six months a permanent Vedanta Society was established in San Francisco.

Swamiji returned to New York in June 1900 and from there set out for India via Paris in the same month. Swami Turiyananda took over charge of the San Francisco Society, but after several years of unremitting, strenuous work, he became sick. Swamiji advised him to return to India, but Swami Turiyananda was never to see Swamiji again. When he reached Rangoon, he learnt that Swamiji had passed away at Belur Math on 4 July 1902. Swami Turiyananda was overwhelmed with grief at this news. He never returned to America.

The next year, in January 1903, Swami Trigunatitananda arrived in San Francisco and became head of the Centre. Now and then he would go to Los Angeles to deliver lectures. Through selfless endeavours, the first Hindu Temple in the West was constructed in San Francisco. This temple is standing erect in full glory even now in spite of earthquakes in the area from time to time. Swami Prakashananda came from India in 1906 as his Assistant. Unfortunately Swami Trigunatitananda died in January 1915 of injuries caused by a bomb which was thrown during one of his lectures by a mentally unbalanced student. Swami Prakashananda took over the responsibility of the San Francisco Centre after this and continued in his post until his passing away in 1927.

To assist in the activities of the New York Vedanta Society, two monks, Swami Bodhananda and Swami Paramananda,

came from India, one after another, in 1906. Both swamis worked for some time in New York as Assistants to Swami Abhedananda. After about a year, Swami Bodhananda started giving lectures in Pittsburgh and other places independently. Under the loving guidance of Swami Abhedananda, Swami Paramananda became a good speaker in course of time. He also wrote a number of books on Vedanta. In 1910 he went to Boston and started a new Vedanta Society there.

Swami Abhedananda established a Retreat Centre and Convent in the Berkshire Hills and made that his permanent residence. During 1920–21, he visited the west coast and after giving some lectures in Los Angeles and San Francisco, returned to India at the end of July. Swami Bodhananda became head of the New York Society in 1912, and remained there until his passing away in 1950. The present building of the Society was purchased in 1915 by the donation of one of his students. The activities of the New York Society continued smoothly under his able guidance. Swami Raghavananda came from India in 1923 as his Assistant, but returned to India after a few years because of poor health. In 1927 Swami Jnaneswarananda came to New York as his successor. Swami Prakashananda, while staying in San Francisco, delivered lectures in Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, and in different cities in the state of Washington. In 1923, Swami Prabhavananda was sent from India as his Assistant. After staying for some time at San Francisco, he was sent to Portland to continue the work there. He conducted the Vedanta classes very well and as a result, in 1925, a permanent Vedanta Society was established there. One of the Mead sisters, Mrs. Wycoff (Sister Lalita) was attracted by his lectures and requested him to come to Hollywood to establish the work there on a permanent basis. She donated her spacious home in Hollywood for this pur-

pose. With the able management of Swami Prabhavananda, the Hollywood Vedanta Society was permanently established in 1930. Several British intellectuals and writers of the time came in close contact with Swami Prabhavananda, attracted by his great message and charming personality. Famous writers such as Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, and Christopher Isherwood helped him enormously in spreading the message of Vedanta. In January 1949, an interesting and inspiring magazine entitled 'Vedanta and the West' was inaugurated by the Hollywood Vedanta Society and continued for about two decades, helping greatly in spreading the message of Vedanta in the West.

Swami Dayananda arrived in San Francisco in 1926 as Swami Prakashananda's Assistant. After the passing away of Swami Prakashananda the following year, Swami Madhavananda was sent from India to take charge of the Centre. Swami Dayananda continued as his Assistant. At the request of Belur Math authorities, Swami Madhavananda returned to India in 1929, and Swami Dayananda took over the leadership of the San Francisco Centre. Two years later, in 1931, he returned to India. Meanwhile, Swami Vividishananda had arrived in America in 1929 and become head of the Portland Society. Later, he took over the work of the San Francisco Centre. Swami Ashokananda came from India in 1931 as his Assistant, and the following year became head of that Centre. He continued in that position very successfully until his passing away in 1969.

Now let us come back again to the east coast of America. Under the intelligent and efficient management of Swami Paramananda, the Boston Vedanta Society flourished. Then in 1923 he established 'Ananda Ashrama' modelled on the ancient 'Gurukul' system of India, in the vast valley

of La Crescenta in Southern California. In 1929 another ashrama was founded by him at Cohasset, about 25 miles from Boston. He used to manage the affairs of all these three centres. In his absence, some of his disciples would continue the work.

Swami Akhilananda came from India in 1926 as an Assistant to Swami Paramananda. He established a separate Vedanta Society at Providence, Rhode Island in 1928. Two of his American disciples, Annapurna (Mrs. Anna Worcester) and Bhakti (Miss Helen Rubel), helped him much in spreading the message of Vedanta. (The construction of the Sri Ramakrishna Temple at Belur Math was made possible through the monetary help of Bhakti.)

The third decade of this century is very important in the history of the Vedanta movement in America because during this period a number of new Vedanta Societies were established here. Swami Jnaneswarananda, after working as an Assistant to Swami Bodhananda in New York for several years, founded a Vedanta Society in Chicago in 1930. Because of his untiring efforts, the Society showed much promise within a short time. But unfortunately his health broke down, and in 1937 he passed away at the age of only 44. The next year, Swami Vishwananda came from India as his successor and continued rendering his services to the Chicago Centre until his passing away in 1965.

Swami Devatmananda came to New York in 1930 as an Assistant to Swami Bodhananda. After serving the Society there for about two years, he took up the responsibility of the Portland Society. The Society prospered under his efficient management. A Retreat Centre came up in the vast forestland of Scappoose, and a temple was built there in 1954. More small temples were added later on. Swami Devatmananda

returned to India in 1955 because of ill health. Swami Aseshananda then became head of the Portland Centre. He had come to America in 1947 as an Assistant to Swami Nikhilananda; he had also served as Assistant at the Boston and Hollywood Centres. An initiated disciple of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, the Swami is now, in 1994, the oldest monk in this country and is dear to all. He has never returned to India since coming here. Two separate houses have been added to the Portland Society for the use of dedicated women devotees. In 1991 Swami Shantarupananda came as his Assistant.

Swami Nikhilananda came to New York in 1931 as an Assistant to Swami Bodhananda. After two years, in 1933, he founded a new Centre in New York called the 'Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center'. He wrote a number of books, among them the English translations of the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads with their commentaries, and the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda. His pre-eminent work is the translation of the entire Bengali *Kathamrita* into English, entitled *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. He continued the leadership of this Centre until his passing away in 1973. In 1947 he had purchased the house at Thousand Island Park where Swamiji lived during the summer of 1895. This memorable house, called 'Vivekananda Cottage', is now used as a Retreat Centre every year for two months during the summer. Swami Adiswarananda came to New York in 1969 as Assistant to Swami Nikhilananda and after his passing away, became head of the Centre.

Swami Satprakashananda came to Boston in 1936 as Assistant to Swami Akhilananda, and went to St. Louis a year later. Through his untiring efforts, a Vedanta Society was established in St. Louis in 1938. He had to struggle hard to acquire

the present building of the Society, which is situated in a line of churches. He also wrote a number of books. He continued serving the Society until his passing away in 1979. His Assistant, Swami Chetanananda, then became head of the Centre. Swami Chetanananda had come to America in 1971 as Assistant at the Hollywood Centre. A number of books written by Swami Chetanananda and published by the St. Louis Vedanta Society have already become popular. With the help of the Society, a Vedanta group has been formed in Kansas City, where Swami Chetanananda goes every month to speak.

Swami Vividishananda, being free from the responsibilities of the Portland and San Francisco Centres, delivered lectures in Washington and Denver, Colorado. Then in 1938 he founded the 'Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre' in Seattle, Washington. Later, a Vedanta group was formed in the Hawaiian islands at Honolulu with his blessings. Swami Vividishananda passed away in 1980, and Swami Bhaskarananda, who had come to America in 1974 as his Assistant, became head of the Society. The present name of the Centre is the 'Vedanta Society of Western Washington'. A separate building just opposite the old building of the Society has been acquired and is being used as a monastery. The Society now also owns a Retreat Centre named 'Tapovan' situated about 45 miles from Seattle. Meditation and scripture classes for the devotees are being conducted there regularly once a month. Recently a beautiful Temple was built there. With the help of the Society and the active participation of devotees, a Vedanta Centre (Vivekananda Vedanta Society of British Columbia) has been formed at Vancouver, Canada. Swami Bhaskarananda goes there once a month to speak.

Swami Paramananda passed away in the middle of 1939. Subsequently, the Centres

founded by him at Boston, Cohasset and La Crescenta severed their connections with the headquarters at Belur Math. Devotees of these centres took charge of the management. The Boston Centre was later closed. At the request of devotees from Boston, Swami Akhilananda founded a new Vedanta Society there in 1941. The present spacious building of the Society located by the side of the Charles River was purchased in 1942 with the monetary help of a generous devotee. Swami Akhilananda managed the affairs of the Centres at Providence and Boston until his passing away in 1962. He wrote books on Hinduism, Mental Health and Psychology. He was invited to speak at many local colleges and universities and thus became acquainted with many intellectuals and cultured people. He used to invite them all to a banquet during the festivals and celebrations of the Society.

Swami Sarvagatananda, who came in 1954 as his Assistant, became head in 1962 and has since been conducting the services of the Centres in Boston and Providence. Besides the regular work of the Societies, he is connected with two prestigious institutions, Harvard and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), as a religious teacher and counsellor. He gives a regular class on the Bhagavad Gita once a week in the MIT chapel. Swami Sarvatmananda came to America in 1985 as his Assistant. The Society also owns a Summer Retreat Centre at Marshfield Hills on the Atlantic coast, about 35 miles from Boston. Purchased in 1946, this Centre is named 'Sarada Ashrama'. During the summer, the Society conducts a week-long spiritual Retreat for the devotees, and two camps—one for children and one for teenagers. Sri Krishna Janmashtami and other celebrations are observed here.

Swami Ashokananda's skillful management brought much growth to the San Fran-

cisco Society. In 1938 a Retreat Centre was founded at Lake Tahoe, and in 1939 a permanent Vedanta Society was established in Berkeley. Swami Shantaswarupananda, who came to America as his Assistant, was given charge of the Berkeley Society in 1948. A two thousand acre plot of forest land at Olema was purchased by the San Francisco Society in 1946 and gradually became a permanent Retreat Centre. (Undoubtedly this is the biggest landed property of Sri Ramakrishna, the Emperor of Renunciation!) A branch Centre was opened at Sacramento in 1949. Then in 1959 a spacious new Temple was dedicated in San Francisco, and a Convent was opened in a separate building.

Swami Shraddhananda came to America in 1957 and Swami Swahananda in 1968 as Assistants to Swami Ashokananda. After the passing away of Swami Ashokananda in 1969, Swami Shantaswarupananda took over the responsibility for all three Centres of Northern California temporarily. Due to his illness, he returned to India the next year. After this, Swami Shraddhananda became head of the Sacramento Society, and Swami Swahananda of the Berkeley Society. Swami Prabuddhananda was sent from India to take charge of the San Francisco Society. At present he is the Minister-in-Charge of this Society.

In Southern California also, there was much growth in the Hollywood Centre. With the inspiring influence of Swami Prabhavananda, more Centres were established there, one after another. Some American young men and women, after coming in contact with the Swami, wanted to renounce the world permanently. Subsequently, a Convent was opened at Hollywood and a monastery at Trabuco. In addition, another Convent was opened at Santa Barbara and a beautiful temple was dedicated there in 1956. The Mead sisters' house at Pasadena where Swamiji stayed in

1900 is now part of the Hollywood Centre. Swamiji's room is being maintained as a Shrine. Meditation and religious discourses are conducted regularly in this house. A permanent Society has been established at San Diego. A good number of books have been published by the 'Vedanta Press', run by the Hollywood Centre. Swami Prabhavananda conducted the activities of this Vedanta Society for a long 46 years until his passing away in 1976. Swami Swahananda succeeded him. The ashramas and convents of the Society are under his control. Swami Sarvadevananda came as his Assistant in 1993.

During World War II, Swami Yatiswarananda came to America after closing down his preaching work in Germany. He visited different Centres in America before founding an Ashrama in Philadelphia where he started giving lectures and classes. He had to go back to India in 1947 as his service was very much needed there, and as a result the Philadelphia Ashrama was closed.

After the passing away of Swami Bodhananda in 1950, Swami Pavitrananda was sent from India to be head of the New York Vedanta Society. He continued as such until his demise in 1977. Swami Tathagatananda, who had come to America as his Assistant, is at present the Minister-in-Charge of the Society. Besides conducting the regular activities of the society, Swami Tathagatananda speaks at different colleges and universities on invitation. He has written a few books, and also writes regularly for the monthly journals of the Order.

After the passing away of Swami Vishwananda in 1965, Swami Bhashyananda became head of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society in Chicago. He had come to America earlier in 1962 as an Assistant to Swami Nikhilananda. The present spacious building of the Chicago Society was pur-

chased by him. An adjacent house is also owned by the society. Moreover, a beautiful Retreat Centre named 'Vivekananda Monastery and Retreat' has been established at Ganges Township in Michigan on a vast plot of land covering more than one hundred acres on the eastern shore of Lake Michigan. Swami Chidananda came to America in 1991 as an Assistant to Swami Bhashyananda. Due to the prolonged illness of Swami Bhashyananda, Swami Chidananda took over charge of the Society in 1993.

Swami Swananda was sent from India in 1977 to take up the responsibility of the Berkeley Society. When he returned to India in 1985 Swami Aparananda succeeded him. He had come to America earlier, in 1978, as Assistant at the Hollywood Society. At present he is the Minister-in-Charge of the Society. The Society has a retreat Centre at San Jose which the Swami visits regularly twice a month to conduct meditation and scripture classes for the devotees.

There has been much growth in the Sacramento Society under the leadership and able guidance of Swami Shraddhananda. A beautiful Ashrama atmosphere has been created in this Capital City of California on a spacious plot of land surrounded by green trees. The row of tall Magnolia trees full of flowers by the side of the lawn in front of the Ashrama attracts everybody's attention. There is a beautiful garden called 'Santodyan' at the rear of the Ashrama on a five acre plot of land. The devotees like its calm and quiet atmosphere. Swami Prapannananda came to America in 1989 as Assistant to Swami Shraddhananda.

'Ramakrishna Ashrama' was founded at Buenos Aires in Argentina (South America) in 1933 by Swami Vijayananda. The present head of this Ashrama is Swami Pareshananda. In addition to conducting regular

classes and discourses in the Ashrama, the Swami is often invited to Sao Paulo, Brazil, and other places to speak.

In 1989 a permanent Vedanta Society was founded in Toronto, Canada, with the help of our Swamis in America and with the active participation and long-time efforts of a few devotees there. Swami Pramathananda, who is head of this Society, came to America earlier in 1982 as an Assistant to Swami Shraddhananda.

Besides the Swamis mentioned above, there are others who came to America at different times as Assistants at different Centres, and went back to India again for some reason. Many of them were influential in spreading the message of Vedanta in America. They are Swamis Vandanananda, Budhananada, Sastrananda, Asaktananda, and Ritajananda (who went to France from America). Moreover, a few senior Swamis of the Order visited America at different times either for preaching work or for some other reason. They are: Swamis Ranganathananda, Gambhirananda, Nityaswarupananda, Hiranmayananda, Lokeswarananda, and Gahanananda. Swami Ranganathananda came to this country almost every year from 1968 to 1987. The present President of the Order, Swami Bhuteshanandaji, visited all the Centres in America in 1988. These visits have helped greatly in spreading the message of Vedanta in America. The Centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the 1893 Parliament of Religions that were observed in all the Centres of this country and for which Swami Gahanananda came to America at the invitation of the Parliament Committee, gave a boost to the Vedanta movement.

Some young men and women of America have embraced the monastic life, being influenced by the ideals of Vedanta.

But their number is not sufficient for conducting the various activities of our Centres. However, without the active service of these dedicated monks and nuns and sincere lay devotees of this country, it would be impossible to manage the Vedanta work here. It is a matter of regret that some of our Centres have not a single monastic member originally from America. At present, although a few dedicated women are joining our Convents as nuns, hardly any young men are drawn to the monastic life. In fact, as in Swamiji's time, the participation of women of this country is predominant in all our activities. The tradition is continuing!

The main work of the Swamis here is to give lectures at their Societies regularly every Sunday, and conduct two weekly evening classes for the devotees. Generally books such as the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Upanishads, the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and the different Yogas are read out and explained in those classes. Another evening may feature meditation and devotional singing. In some Centres, Rama-nam is sung regularly. Moreover, our monks attend Conferences and speak in different educational institutions occasionally.

Beside the monks of our Order, a good number of Hindu yogis, sannyasis, gurus, etc. have come to this country for preaching Hinduism during the past few decades. Their presence became noticeable after the Vietnam War when the natural social life in America was disrupted. In some places, temples of different Hindu gods and goddesses have been built, and Yoga-teaching institutes have been opened. It is noteworthy that some people are becoming interested in practising Yoga and meditation, having lost faith in stereotyped religious formalities.

The impact of lectures delivered in London by Swami Vivekananda is still felt.

Permanent Vedanta Societies are now established in different places of Europe—France, Switzerland, and Holland—as well as in London. But this is not the subject-matter of this article.

The seed of the Eternal Tree of Vedanta which was sown by Swami Vivekananda a hundred years ago in America during the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in September 1893 produced a few saplings in course of time. Swamiji himself planted one of them after preparing the ground on the east coast of America (New York) and another on the west coast (San Francisco). Slowly they have grown into young plants through the loving care and protection of several of his brother disciples. Afterwards some dedicated monks of the Order founded by him came to America, one after another, in order to keep them alive. Subsequently ten more young saplings were planted in different parts of America. These saplings grew into plants and these plants have grown into full-fledged trees bearing fruits and flowers. Spreading their branches far and wide, they are distributing sweet fragrance throughout the entire land of America. □

Sources

1. A booklet entitled 'Hinduism comes to America' published from the Chicago Society in 1933.
2. The General Report of the Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission issued from the Headquarters.
3. Written notes of Swami Shraddhananda and Swami Bhaktimayananda of the Sacramento Society.

'My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said, "Here art Thou!"'

—Rabindranath Tagore

Swami Vivekananda and *Prabuddha Bharata*

DR. R.K. DASGUPTA

The following is the text of the talk delivered at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, on Saturday, 7 January 1995, on the occasion of the release of this journal's special centenary number by Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Mission

I thank the Advaita Ashrama for its asking me to speak at this function which is being held to mark the hundredth year of the *Prabuddha Bharata* founded by Swami Vivekananda. I really do not know how I deserve this singular honour. It is, however, a pleasure and a privilege for me to speak on the glorious history of a paper which has made an outstanding contribution to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement initiated by Swami Vivekananda a century ago.

Great events in the spiritual and moral history of modern India took place in the nineties of the last century. We may mention many such events in this connection. Since this evening I am speaking particularly on the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement I may mention four, first, Swami Vivekananda's participation in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, second, the foundation of the *Prabuddha Bharata* in July 1896, then the foundation of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission on 9 December 1898, and of the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati on 19 March 1899. If you ask me why have I mentioned a journal along with two institutions like Belur Math and Advaita Ashrama, I may say that the noble voice that Vivekananda raised at the Chicago Parliament on the eleventh of September 1893 began to be worthily echoed in the pages of the *Prabuddha Bharata* which assumed an active role in the dissemination of the ideals of Ramakrishna and his disciple

Vivekananda throughout the world.

The history of the *Prabuddha Bharata* has been very ably told by Professor Shankariprasad Basu in a well-documented 16-page section in the twentieth chapter of the fifth volume of his seven-volume monumental Bengali work *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha* first published in 1981. I am afraid I cannot bring to you any detail about the foundation and early years of the magazine which you will not find in this valuable work. I can only re-emphasize, on an occasion like this, the very significant contribution of the *Prabuddha Bharata* to the flowering of what we may now call a Vedantic Renaissance in modern religious thought.

When Vivekananda, then just Narendra, urged his Master Ramakrishna to teach him to attain *samadhi*, that is, a state of oneness with the Supreme Reality, he was rebuked by his Master who said, 'What a small mind you have! Go beyond *samadhi*. *Samadhi* is a very trifling thing.' This is a very significant episode in the life of Swami Vivekananda and it marks the beginning of his work as an apostle of his Master's teaching. I think it is not possible to say when actually this happened. We can only be sure that it took place when Ramakrishna was staying at the Cossipore Gardenhouse in the last eight months of his life on earth, that is, between 11 December 1885 when he came to this place and 16 August 1886 when he passed

away. The dialogue is not reported in the *Ramakrishnakathamrita* directly by Mahendranath Gupta: the Master's words to his disciple Vivekananda are reported by Vivekananda himself in the course of a conversation between him and Mahendranath in a rented house at Baranagar on Saturday, 9 April 1887. The conversation is to be found on pages 1230 and 1231 of the Udbodhan edition of *Ramakrishnakathamrita* published in 1986 and page 982 of the English edition of the work, Swami Nikhilananda's *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* first published in New York in 1942. I am drawing your attention to this dialogue between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda because it is the background of Vivekananda's decision to turn away from the idea of a personal salvation and to do what his Master had urged him to do—work for the good of his people and the people of the world, to live the life of a dedicated *karmayogi* and as such to preach the teachings of his Master.

Vivekananda said in the course of the conversation I have just mentioned that at Cossipore he (Ramakrishna) 'transmitted his power to me.' Hearing this Mahendranath said: 'There is a special purpose in his transmission of power to you. He will accomplish much work through you', and added that 'one day the Master wrote on a piece of paper, "Naren will teach people".' Unfortunately, this piece of paper on which Ramakrishna wrote 'Naren siksha dibe' has not survived. This was Ramakrishna's historic charge to his disciple to be the apostle of an awakening India. From what Ramakrishna said about Naren on different occasions, we see how he had measured his high potentialities. Ramakrishna realized that Naren had reached the highest altitude of spirituality, that he was disarmingly logical in his argument, and extraordinarily eloquent as a speaker. For this he said Narendra 'will teach people'.

Vivekananda, too, soon reflected on his responsibilities as a teacher and drew up his plans for that great role. He first thought of bringing together his associates in a monastery which was to be the instrument of the education to be imparted to the country. This led to the establishment of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Order on 9 December 1898, and of the Advaita Ashrama on 19 March 1899. This also led to the commencement of his apostolate as a speaker at the Parliament of Religions on 11 September 1893. It was his experience as a speaker in the United States and the tremendous response to his addresses from different platforms that gave him the impression that if spoken words were so effective written words too should be valued as a means of the dissemination of the ideas he was preaching in a foreign country. He thought that he must do something to spread his new ideas, his new exposition of Vedantic teachings in his homeland through a journal, and with this intention he took the initiative in founding a journal in Madras in 1895. This was his idea of a Sangha, an order and its organ. The Sangha was only in the making, its nucleus being his associates in the United States. But a journal could do through press what he was already doing through platform. Vivekananda wrote to Alasinga Perumal Iyengar, and the *Brahmavadin* was founded as a fortnightly paper for the dissemination of Vedanta philosophy on 14 September 1895.

What prompted Swami Vivekananda to found another paper, the *Prabuddha Bharata*, when there was already a paper devoted to his cause? In the Prospectus of the *Brahmavadin* as it was published in *The Indian Mirror* on 27 July 1895 it was said that the 'main object of the journal is to propagate the principles of the Vedantic religion of India, and to work towards the improvement of the social and moral conditions of man by

steadily holding aloft the sublime and universal ideal of Hinduism.' And this was what Swami Vivekananda contemplated to be the objective of his paper. But Vivekananda had his reasons for planning a new journal. He was not happy about the style of the *Brahmavadin*, the kind of language in which its articles were written. In a letter to Alasinga dated 23 March 1896, he expressed his disapproval of learned articles written in Sanskrit, which he said would be useless for the foreign readers of the paper. He made a plea for articles written in a simple and lucid style. In a letter dated 23 January 1896 Vivekananda asked Alasinga—'Are you going to be Theosophists?' and added that 'any connection with the Theosophists will spoil my work both in America and in England.' In a letter dated March 1896 Vivekananda told Alasinga that the *Brahmavadin* was 'too technical to find any subscriber here', that is, in the West. Vivekananda also felt that the *Brahmavadin* often exhibited a tendency to exaggerate its case and he thought this would only weaken it. In the same letter he said: 'Every word of special pleading should be eliminated from the editorials, and you must always remember that you are addressing the whole world, not India alone'.

These remarks show that Vivekananda was contemplating a journal the mood and style of which would come close to the mood and style of his addresses in the United States. During the two years of his apostolic work with the American people, he knew how the message of the Vedanta was to be presented to the world at large. He wanted the message of the new paper to be the message of an Awakened India, and with this idea he chose *Prabuddha Bharata* as its name. And from his letter dated 14 July 1896 it appears that he found the first issue of it 'satisfactory'. The office of the paper was in Madras and its editor was B.R. Rajam Iyer, who was initiated in Vedantism by

Vivekananda and whose learning in Vedanta philosophy is embodied in his work, *Rambles in Vedanta*. The manager of the paper was another disciple of Vivekananda, P. Singaravelu Mudaliar. That Rajam conducted the paper with ability and in accordance with the ideas of its founder is confirmed in the obituary of its editor published in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of June 1898: 'To those who could read between the lines it must have been evident that the *Prabuddha Bharata* presented a peculiar interpretation of Vedanta, and in this sense the journal had a marked individuality or personality, that of its editor or of the sage, his guru.'

Rajam died at the young age of twenty-six in May 1898, and the paper ceased publication after the issue of June. But Vivekananda was determined to continue the paper and he asked Captain Sevier to shift its office to Almora and resume publication as soon as possible. In his letter to Sevier he wrote that the paper, then having a circulation of three thousand copies per month, had become 'a notable instrument for the dissemination of Vedantic knowledge.' Vivekananda appointed Swami Swarupananda as its editor, who set up its office in a rented house, called Thompson House, at Almora. The paper resumed publication in August 1898.

Let us remember that although the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission was founded on 9 December 1898, the Ramakrishna Order had practically come into existence when Vivekananda and other disciples of Ramakrishna came together at the Baranagar Math. We have enough recorded evidence to show that since then Vivekananda had been contemplating both a Sangha and a journal as its organ. While it is true that the Advaita Ashrama was consecrated about fourteen weeks after the consecration of the Rama-

krishna Math at Belur, the *Prabuddha Bharata* of August 1898 was published as an organ of the Ramakrishna Order from the Himalayas. Soon after, Swami Swarupananda selected the present premises of the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, fifty miles east of the district town Almora and the office and the printing press of the *Prabuddha Bharata* were shifted there. This beautiful spot on the Himalayas became the headquarters of the magazine. Vivekananda was happy about the work of Swarupananda as the editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. In a letter to a Brahmachari of the Advaita Ashrama he wrote: 'Tell Swarup that I am very much pleased with his conducting of the paper. He is doing splendid work.'

Swami Swarupananda passed away on 27 June 1906 at the age of thirty-eight. His work as editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, which he made 'the most widely circulated among the educated portion of the nation', (*Brahmavadin* of April 1900) was appreciated in glowing terms in his obituary published in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, which said: 'What he sought were the attainment of high ideals which emanated from the greatest and purest aspirations and an inextinguishable belief in the truth of Advaita.'

Later editors of the paper, who were some of the senior and learned monks of the Ramakrishna Order, preserved the high standard and made it a powerful instrument of the dissemination of the great ideals of the Order. What the paper did by way of supporting the work of Swami Vivekananda during his lifetime we can see from the compilations of extracts from it covering the period between 1896 and 1902 included in Sankariprasad Basu's *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers* published in 1969. The later achievement of the paper has received profound appreciation from all who are interested in the Ramakrishna-

Vivekananda Movement in our country and abroad. Actually the history of that movement is reflected in the old files of the *Prabuddha Bharata* in its most significant details in contributions from Indians and foreigners. The *Brahmavadin* ceased publication in 1913. *Vedanta Kesari* is eighteen years younger than the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Amongst American papers devoted to Vedantic studies, *The Message of the East*, Boston, *Vedanta and the West*, Los Angeles, and *Voice of Freedom*, San Francisco, are no longer in existence. *Vedanta for East and West*, London, is more than half a century younger than the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Today the *Prabuddha Bharata* contains the most important source material for all enquirers into the history of the Vedantic Movement in the modern world. In C.T. Jackson's 674-page thesis entitled *The Swami in America: A History of the Ramakrishna Movement in America*, on the merit of which the University of California gave its author, Dr. C.T. Jackson, its degree of Doctor of Philosophy, there are as many as thirty references to the *Prabuddha Bharata*, and in the same scholar's book, *Vedanta for the West*, published by the Indiana University Press a few months ago, there is again an acknowledgement of a large debt to the journal. And seventy years ago Western scholars working on the religious movement in India were obliged to handle this journal as is evident from J.N. Farquhar's references to it in his *Modern Religious Movements in India* (1915).

Today, on the occasion of the centenary of Vivekananda's appearance at the Chicago Parliament and of the establishment of the *Prabuddha Bharata*, we may turn to the achievement of this paper as a few years later we may remember Swamiji's work for the Bengali journal *Udbodhan* which he founded on 14 January 1899. Historically the *Prabuddha Bharata* is intimately associated with the apostolate of Swami Vivekananda,

because when it began to be issued from the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati he composed the poem, 'To the Awakened India', which was addressed to the paper. Some words of the poem still ring in our ears: 'Be bold, and face the Truth.' Since then the *Prabuddha Bharata* has been the voice of an awakened India, and its present editor Revered Swami Atmaramananda has kept alive the ideal of the paper which was the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna as he gave it to his disciple Swami Vivekananda, the ideal of a universal religion as it is sustained by Advaita

Vedanta. Perhaps it is now important to see that though Advaita is the highest altitude of spiritual experience in the religious philosophy of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the *Prabuddha Bharata* also presents the other elements of the Vedanta which according to Vivekananda are the steps towards Advaita. For the last hundred years the *Prabuddha Bharata* has presented to the country and the world at large this large comprehensive philosophy of the Vedanta. □



Sister Gargi, Dr. R.K. Dasgupta and Swami Atmasthananda on the occasion of the release of this journal's centenary number

Swami Vivekananda: Spiritual Luminary Extraordinary

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

Based on Swami Vivekananda: A Hundred Years Since Chicago, published by the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, Belur, West Bengal, 1994; xxxii + 955; Rs. 400/-

This nearly 1000-page volume consisting of learned articles by seventy internationally known scholars including some of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission's own monks and devotees, who represent diverse disciplines such as history, philosophy, political science, religion, literature and science and come from various parts of the globe, is a store-house, a treasury, one can very well say, of Swami Vivekananda's ideas on all aspects of life. The volume is a testimony to the power of Swami Vivekananda's message, a proof indeed that the soul-stirring quality of the ideas of this prophet of humanity (whom the Harvard Professor J.H. Wright described as 'more learned than all our learned professors put together') have continued to inspire mankind for decades after he left this world. That the Ramakrishna Math and the Mission could bring together such an international panel of essayists and make this exquisitely printed, cloth-bound volume, embellished with as many as fortyone illustrations, available to the general public at an affordable price of Rs. 400/- in these days of soaring production costs of publications proves at once the great vitality and the people-orientedness of an organization which Swami Vivekananda left behind as the finest specimen of his organized spiritual legacy to mankind. Except for certain minor mistakes like printing wrong page numbers for certain illustrations on pp. xiv-xv (instead of 434 and 435 they should have been 300 and

301) and printing the bottom line of the text on p. 628 at the footnote section of the same page, this is a marvellously produced volume.

Professor R.K. Dasgupta, the General Editor of the Volume, has done a competent job of classifying the essays into seven sections. The ideas presented in the essays have nevertheless overlapped and in the interest of avoiding the repetitiveness I should like to distill the essence of these essays and present them thematically through certain questions rather than discuss them one-by-one according to the order in which they appear in the volume.

I

Why did Swami Vivekananda attend the Parliament of Religions at Chicago? What made him do so? What was his purpose?

Sumitora Noma thinks that Swamiji's purpose was to explain to the West the true meaning of India's spiritual heritage (p. 3). Swami Chetanananda agrees and believes that what Swamiji had given the West was enough to sustain it for fifteen hundred years (p. 8). Swami Tyagananda thinks that Swamiji had gone to Chicago to perform the 'work' that had been bequeathed to him by Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna reaffirmed through his life the ancient truth that religion was 'realization', not merely a matter of faith and that there was a basic harmony underlying all creation. He left it to his beloved Naren to proclaim this truth

to the world. The Parliament of Religions was the springboard from which Swamiji launched into this 'work' which henceforth constituted his world-mission (p. 29–30).

Swami Mumukshananda concurs. The mission was entrusted to Swami Vivekananda by Sri Ramakrishna himself. 'Naren shall teach [mankind]'. It was a written mandate from the Master, which proves that 'Sri Ramakrishna bade Narendra to teach mankind.' (p. 43). Apart from the written mandate of the Master, there were two other incidents which determined for ever Swami Vivekananda's mission in life. He remembered his Master's rebuke when he pestered him for *nirvikalpa samādhi*: 'Shame on you and on such lowly thoughts! I thought you would be a big banyan tree that would give refuge to the afflicted, and you think of your own petty salvation!' The quest for personal *mukti* was not for Naren. The Master ordained a higher purpose in life for him. The other incident pertained to what the Master said in a trance in course of a talk on Vaishnavism in 1884: 'not pity, but service to Jīva, knowing him to be Śiva'. These words of Sri Ramakrishna left Naren in no doubt as to what was to be his mission in life. As he said, 'What wonderful light these words of Thakur throw! How he reconciled the dry knowledge of the Vedanta with *bhakti*! What he said in a trance convinces me that the Vedanta of the forests can be brought home ... And as long as you do not see god in all creatures, you won't attain real *bhakti* either. Even those who have been proceeding by way of karma-yoga or rāja-yoga, can find enlightenment in this. Anyway, if the Divine Lord ever grants me an opportunity, I'll proclaim everywhere in the world this wonderful truth I have heard today. I shall preach this truth to the learned and the ignorant, to the rich and the poor, to the Brahmana and Chandala'

Sri Ramakrishna's words about the identity of the Jīva and Śiva as well as his injunction regarding the service of mankind as the

mission of his life was constantly before Swami Vivekananda's mind when, in the years following his Master's *mahāsamādhi* in 1886 he undertook *Bhārat Parikramā*. The harrowing experiences of these years (1891–93), the starvation, degradation and misery that he witnessed all over the length and breadth of India convinced him that his mission must include not only the spread of Indian spiritual thoughts all over the world but also the regeneration of his Motherland. 'Spirituality has fallen to a low ebb and starvation stalks the land. India must become dynamic and effect the conquest of the world through her spirituality.' And if, in exchange for India's spiritual values that the West needed so much to cure herself of the canker of materialism, he could get the money and technology from the West to work for the regeneration of India, it was as much for the benefit of India as for the good of the West. Service to God-in-humanity must include the humanity in India, more so, because the humanity in India, deprived and degraded, was so much in need of help. Thus, Vivekananda's sojourn in the West, as Amales Tripathi puts it, was a two-way mission (p. 643). It was as much a world-mission as it was an India-mission.

In a way Swamiji's *Bharat Parikrama* launched him on the way to his *Viśva Parikramā* (the wanderings over the globe). In identifying himself with the miseries, hopes and frustrations of a people who had once proclaimed the message of the Immortality of the Self at the dawn of civilization, he became a 'condensed India', well set on the road to proclaiming before the august assembly of representatives of the religions of the world at Chicago with his living voice (Visvanath Chatterjee, p. 86) and 'electrifying language' that the perversion of religion in the form of sectarianism, dogmatism, bigotry and fanaticism was at the root of the degradation of life and that in the light of the ideal of universal religion, as contained in the ancient Vedanta of India and as now

re-stated by him, the world would find ways and means of getting over all fanaticism and persecutions, ushering in a new era of help, assimilation, harmony and peace in place of fight, destruction and dissension: 'I fervently hope', to quote from Swamiji's *Chicago Addresses*, '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, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal...and...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".'

behaves to all mankind as one's own soul'. Through the articulation that he made of his practical Advaitism, he gave mankind to understand that 'religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best'.

And if each may choose the path that suits him best, where was the scope for dissension? The pluralist in Vivekananda comes out very clearly through this statement: '*Yato mat, tata path*'. He imbibed the teaching of his Master and broadcast it to the world. With his reformulation of a universal principle like Advaita which only helps one to perceive other religions in a positive light he could not be, as K.P. Aleaz correctly

Swamiji gave the West, indeed, the humanity at large a new view of life based on the ancient Vedantic dictum of 'God everywhere, and in everything'. He re-created Vedanta...first, by releasing Vedanta from the clutches of a handful of recluses and scholars and by bringing it to the door of vast mass of mankind, and secondly, by proclaiming to them all that they were all gods. The goal of life (and indeed, of religion which sustained it) was to manifest the divinity in every movement of life in the form of service to God-in-humanity.

Swamiji gave the West, indeed, the humanity at large a new view of life based on the ancient Vedantic dictum of 'God everywhere, and in everything'. He re-created Vedanta, as Swami Lokeshwarananda very pertinently points out in his *Introduction* to the volume, setting the tone of discussions in the rest of this Volume, *first*, by releasing Vedanta from the clutches of a handful of recluses and scholars and by bringing it to the door of vast mass of mankind, and *secondly*, by proclaiming to them all that they were all gods. The goal of life (and indeed, of religion which sustained it) was to manifest the divinity in every movement of life in the form of service to God-in-humanity. By re-creating Vedanta Swamiji gave to humanity his lasting contribution in the form of practical Advaitism, which, as he himself put it, 'looks upon and

points out (p. 239), an upholder of Inclusivism which finds the fulfilment of other religions only in one's own faith. All religions were true and each of them with its particular expertise had something special to contribute to the grand scheme of RELIGION which, in essence, was Oneness. 'Unity in variety', as he said, 'is the plan of creation'. In standing for the plurality of expression and unity (never uniformity) of essence, he did not negate the historical religions. Rather, he looked upon them as alternative ways for realization. As Nirod Baran Chakraborty puts it, 'Swamiji was not for any eclectic religion as propagated by Dara Shikoh in medieval India or by Ram-mohan and others in modern India. He was in favour of all religions as alternative ways for realization, knowing fully well that the diversity of religions has a unity in them in

the common goal of life divine' (p. 801). This means that Swamiji had a concept of universal religion, 'equally acceptable to all minds', as he put it, the ideal of which he found in the Vedantic Oneness. The beauty of Swamiji's concept of universal religion, as V.S. Naravane points out, lay in the fact that it perfectly enabled one 'to be a universalist in religion without ceasing to be a Hindu or a Muslim' or the professor of any other faith or creed (p. 808).

Vivekananda, too, readily responded to Christ, the most eloquent evidence of which is his Bengali translation of Thomas A. Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* in 1889' (p. 184). True that he made a criticism of the Christian doctrine of the Original Sin at the Parliament of Religions but that was only by way of giving to humanity his message that human beings were all divinities on earth and that they had to actualize this in their lives—a message which he offered, as

The beauty of Swamiji's concept of universal religion... lay in the fact that it perfectly enabled one 'to be a universalist in religion without ceasing to be a Hindu or a Muslim' or the professor of any other faith or creed.

II

The catholicity of Swamiji's approach can be seen very clearly with reference to his views on religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. When Swami Vivekananda asserted at the closing session of the Parliament of Religions, in consistence with his earlier presentation of each religion as true and equal, 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', he was opposing not Christianity as such but the claims of certain Christians towards superiority of Christianity over other religions. John Henry Barrows, the Chairman of the Parliament of Religions himself likened Christianity to 'solar orb' and the non-Christian religions to 'little tapers'. Swami Vivekananda was opposed to this sort of mentality. He was opposed to the imperialistic behaviour of Christian nations and to the aggressive proselytizing behaviour of Christian missionaries in Asia. And yet his admiration for Christ as a symbol of love and sacrifice was so much that he said that he would have liked to wash Christ's feet with his heart's blood. Sisir Kumar Das tells us that 'the poet in

Santwana Dasgupta rightly observes, 'as a solution to the problem of the modern man and the crisis of our civilization' (p. 169).

As for Buddhism, Swamiji always regarded it and Hinduism as complimentary to each other. In a lucid exposition of Swamiji's views on Buddhism, Swami Lokeshwarananda clearly shows that Swamiji regarded Buddha as the greatest character the world had ever seen and that his admiration for Buddha was unbounded because Buddha had the courage of conviction to rebel against Brahminical elitism and a heart to weep for the poor and miserable masses. Swamiji was also appreciative of the fact that Buddha rejected the non-essentials of ceremonialism (to which tyrannical Brahmins reduced religion in India) for the essentials of 'being good and doing good'. Observes Swami Lokeshwarananda, 'This is exactly what the Upanishads demanded of man. In this sense, Buddhism is nothing but Vedanta. To be more precise, it is practical Vedanta' (p. 787). Buddhism represented the heart of India and Hinduism its brain. Swamiji always wanted the judicious combination of these two—the 'heart' and the 'brain' in the India that he visualized.

As for Swamiji's attitude to Islam, the qualities that he appreciated most in Islam

were equality, brotherhood (Hossainur Rahman, p. 641) as well as the directness and simplicity of faith in Islam. 'No music, no paintings,...no priest, no bishop', as Swamiji would say, in expressing his admiration for the simplicity and directness of Islam. Swamiji took pride in the Indo-Islamic component of India's heritage and, as his letter to Mohammed Sarfaraz Hossain (10th June, 1898) clearly demonstrates, he visualized a future India with Vedanta brain and Islam body.

This survey at once proves two things. First, that in propagating his ideal of universal religion based on Vedantic oneness Swamiji did not make any exclusive claims. On the contrary, he was broad enough in acknowledging that:

Every religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion; but are they contradictory?...I believe that they 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.¹

In making a comparison between Christian Science and Vedanta as preached by Swami Vivekananda, William Buchanan reaches the same conclusion: 'Vedanta makes no exclusive claims: it is universal' (p. 783). Religion taken as a body of beliefs and rituals often becomes an instrument of strife, but taken in Swami Vivekananda's terms of oneness of microcosm and macrocosm it cannot but be a bond of peace, harmony and universality.

Secondly, this survey proves that Swami Vivekananda was truly inclusive in his

perception of Indian nationalism and India's future. He might have been a proclaimer of Hindu glory abroad, but he was far from being a leader of Hindu revivalism. As Tapan Raychaudhury points out, he rejected so much of Hindu social reality, both past and present, for example, caste system, upper caste oppression of masses, child-marriage, ritualism etc. that 'to label him a Hindu revivalist is almost certainly an anachronism' (p. 323). Like Ram-mohan, Bhudev and Rajnarayan before him but unlike Bankim, as Raychaudhury observes (p. 325), Swami Vivekananda rejoiced in the Islamic inheritance, indeed multiple inheritance of India. Mother India of Swami Vivekananda's conception suckled not only her Hindu children but also and equally her Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, Parsees and Jain children. As Ninian Smart sees it, 'While the nationalism of Lokamanya Tilak or the young Aurobindo could appeal to many, it could not embrace all. It was Vivekananda's transreligious nationalism which could attract the loyalty of the broadest spectrum' (p. 555). Swami Vivekananda's transreligious nationalism was only an offshoot of his *Advaita*. The way he expanded it 'could cover all religions: the higher level of truth went beyond the particularities of lower level piety. Beyond the God of the Vaishnava, of the Christian, of the Muslim and so on lay a higher Reality. So all religions ultimately point to the same truth. This was part of his great message in Chicago' (p. 554).

III

What was the impact of the Parliament at Chicago and the long-range significance of Swamiji's coming to America?

The most immediate impact of Swamiji's performance at Chicago was in terms of astounding the Western world with his knowledge of the philosophy and religion of Hinduism. The world came to know from him that far from being the crudest form of

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), vol. 2, p. 365.

heathen belief and fetish worship, Hinduism represented the accumulated cultural treasures of the East. Thus he raised the stock of India in the estimation of the West and boosted the morale of the nation giving it pride and self-respect.

The religious narrowness of the time and the materialistic bent of America (which Walt Whitman described as 'a vast and thoroughly appointed body left with little or no soul') being what it was on the eve of the holding of Parliament of Religions, it was not easy for Swami Vivekananda to earn his success in America. The fact that he defeated the ambition of Barrows and some of his

with vengeance' and paid him only grudging compliments in his two-volume account of the Parliament (p. 284).

Of course, Swamiji had his defenders as well. The broadminded among the Christian liberals greatly appreciated him. At the Parliament itself on the eleventh day of its sessions, with reference to Swamiji's assertion that Christian missionaries offered the Indians religious conversion while the thing that they needed most was food, Catholic Bishop John J. Keane said that he endorsed the criticism of Swami Vivekananda and believed that 'the pretended charity' of those who call them Christians brought

Indeed, there are signs everywhere in the Western world that men and women are reaching into their own depths to discover a higher level of consciousness where equality, freedom, and fulfilment are not mere ideals but experiential realities.

other organizing associates to prove the superiority of Christianity over all other religions and the fact that the national press of America sang his praise, and that some of them, for example, *The New York Herald* called him 'The greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions' raised the ire of the 'Christian fundamentalists' who directed their fire power against Swami Vivekananda, as Susan Walters points out 'from the very beginning' (p. 289). In the Parliament of Religions itself Rev. Joseph Cook criticized the Hindus and by proxy Swami Vivekananda by calling some aspects of their beliefs as 'unpardonable nonsense'. After the conclusion of the Parliament, when Swamiji was on a lecture tour to some American cities, Methodist Bishop W.X. Ninde of Detroit lambasted Swami Vivekananda for his 'audacity' of criticizing the morals of Christian nations and the 'marvellous' proselytizing work of Christian missionaries in India. According to Nemai Sadhan Bose, John Henry Barrows himself, unhappy at Vivekananda's 'hijacking the Parliament', sought to 'belittle him

shame and disgrace to all Christians. The Hon. Merwin-Marie Snell, the Chairman of the Parliament's Scientific Section, was so overwhelmed by the performance of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament that he paid an ungrudging tribute to Swami Vivekananda in the following terms:

No religious body made so profound an impression upon the Parliament and the American people at large as did Hinduism....And by far the most important and typical representative of Hinduism was Swami Vivekananda, who, in fact, was beyond question the most popular and influential man in the Parliament....He is indeed a prince among men!

This survey of the impact of Swamiji's Chicago Addresses on the American mind shows that despite her absorption in material things, there were many souls in the great population of America thirsting for spiritual nourishment and higher things of life which they got from Swami Vivek-

ananda. Despite the environment being not very sympathetic initially, it is this subliminal thirst factor which enabled Swami Vivekananda to be the man of the Parliament in 1893.

As for the long-range significance of Swami Vivekananda's coming to America and its impact on the American mind the best authority to quote is Marie Louise Burke (Sister Gargi) the author of the six-volume monumental work, *Swami Vivekananda, New Discoveries*:

To put it simply and as I understand it, the impact of the tremendous spiritual power of Swamiji's personality upon the American mind was much that it brought about a permanent shift in subliminal patterns of thought (p. 153)...His primary mission in America (as I understand it) was to spiritualize the deep mind-currents of the American people, to turn their freedom-loving, equality-asserting nature toward the Spirit....

Today we see the effects bubbling up. There is a surge of interest in metaphysical subjects, in individual spiritual practice, in 'going within' to seek divine reality; Ashramas, meditation groups, yoga classes are cropping up everywhere in America (and in the rest of the Western world as well);...Indeed, there are signs everywhere in the Western world that men and women are reaching into their own depths to discover a higher level of consciousness where equality, freedom, and fulfilment are not mere ideals but experiential realities. With full awareness, they are seeking to realize their ultimate meaning and to express the unitary love that is central to their very existence. A revolution in thought and modes of living is undoubtedly taking place; true, it has not yet affected the mainstream of Western culture, but it is a powerful undercurrent bound to surface (p. 159).

Susan Walters agrees with this assessment of Marie Louise Burke when she observes that:

The depth of thought, the fearless pursuit of absolute truth even beyond the ken of the five senses, the width of view making the entire universe an inter-related whole, and lending a matchless serenity to the mind of man—all these treasures, that we find in the ancient Indian culture which Swami Vivekananda brought to the West—may one day be part of the American heritage (p. 297).

Pravrajika Vrajaprana of Sarada Convent, Santa Barbara, concurs with the views of Marie Louise Burke and Susan Walters. She quotes from recently conducted Gallup polls and surveys to prove that effects of Swamiji's message are indeed bubbling up in America. America is changing slowly but surely. As Vrajaprana observes:

All true, permanent changes are made from the inside *out*. America is changing in precisely the same manner. Profound changes in the national consciousness regarding God and man have already taken place, and more changes will take place in the future. Such changes are frequently slow to manifest in the daily life of a society; it takes a long time for a seed to germinate and become a tree. But the seed has been sown, and the signs are already there that it has sprouted as well (p. 428).

Pravrajika Virajaprana of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, believes that Swamiji's influence is at work at the deeper layers of man's thought and being in America, as indeed, everywhere in the world (p. 448), while Jayanti (Pamela Hoye) of Vedanta Society of

Southern California holds that:

Vedanta offers no magic remedies. Absent are pleasant sounding platitudes which promise an instant transformation of society. Yet, Swamiji's imprint upon our nation has set the wheel turning. His power gave consummate momentum. Ours is to keep the expansion up (p. 461).

Noting how Swami Vivekananda's name became a 'household word' in the wake of his bold address proclaiming the truths of divinity, harmony, and universality at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, Pravrajika Brahma-prana of the Vedanta Society of Southern California observes revealingly:

Although in the course of the next half century, the name *Vivekananda* subsided from the nation's conscious mind, from 1893 onward, Eastern thought had begun to penetrate into the American consciousness. Finally, in the 1960s, those ideas—our innate divinity, self-realization, the unity of existence, and the harmony of religions—arose as a huge wave in America's surface mind to signal a revolution in its spiritual thought (p. 496-7).

Seeking to document Swami Vivekananda's lasting influence upon mystical thought in America, Pravrajika Prabuddha-prana of Sri Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, shows how die-hard idealist as well as the steadfast empiricist philosophers of Harvard, especially William James were attracted to Swami Vivekananda. 'A language of inner experience, a rigorous psychology of character formation and practical application to real-life problems were but a few of the advantages James saw in Vivekananda' (p. 137).

This survey of Swami Vivekananda's impact on the American's mind and thought

conclusively shows that Swami Vivekananda was a trend setter, the first ever 'torch-bearer' (Karan Sing, p. 520) of the great culture of India to the West. And the trend he set in America is continued even today not only by his very own Vedanta Societies in America but also by other brands of Indian spiritual organizations (such as Theosophy, Self-Realization, ISKCON etc.) which seek to emulate and carry on their modes of operation on the models of his Vedanta Societies. But then the characteristic difference lies, as Susan Walters very perceptibly phrases it, in the fact that 'while others have brought bits and pieces of the outer covering of Indian culture, Swamiji brought the very essence of Indian spirituality' (p. 297).

Swami Vivekananda gave America a glimpse of the Real and America can never be the same again. In the estimation of Brahma-prana, 'It is Vedanta's points of contact with American society—through its educationists and clergy, that would prove, in the next thirty years, to make the greatest inroads into American society' (p. 488).

IV

What was Swamiji's contribution to the Vedanta Philosophy?

Vedanta was always there confined to the forest retreats of the *rishis* of India and confined also to the obscure disputes of a handful of scholars. Swamiji brought it back from the forests to make it universally available to one and all, available as much to a brahmin as to a pariah, as much to an Indian as to a foreigner. And he told its ancient secrets with such modern clarity and incisiveness as to give the Vedantic truths their mutual coherence and unity. As Swami Smaranananda neatly puts it:

It is admitted by one and all that Swami Vivekananda's thought is rooted in the past and is yet modern. The past here is essentially the philosophy of the

Upanishads, as indicated in the spiritual practices and realizations of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. What is modern about it is that Swamiji has interpreted this philosophy in a scientific manner, through which the modern mind, trained in scientific reasoning can appreciate it' (p. 470).

Sometimes a misconceived statement is made to this effect that Swami Vivekananda's philosophy holds nothing new and that it is a mere restatement of Sankara. That such statement is not true is a point best made in the words of Sister Nivedita herself:

It must never be forgotten that it was Swami Vivekananda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita Philosophy, as including that experience in which all is one, without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dwaita, Vishistadwaita, and Advaita are but the three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last named constitutes the goal. This is part and parcel of the still greater and more simple doctrine that the many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes;...

It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed 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 realization.²

This means two things. First it shows that Swamiji made his *epistemological contribution*

to the Advaita Philosophy through his doctrine that 'Dwaita, Vishistadwaita and Advaita are but the three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last named constitutes the goal'. To this must be added Swamiji's epistemological contribution to *Māyāvād*, because without an explanation of *Māyāvād* there cannot really be an explanation of the *Advaitavād*. As R. Balasubramanian points out, Swamiji resolved the apparent contradiction between the world as God itself and the world as *māyā* by positing that the world is *really* God itself while the world as it *appears* to us is *māyā*. (p. 826). 'The maya of the Vedanta in its latest development', as Swamiji said, 'is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us'. Comments Sister Nivedita: 'In these two conceptions, placed side by side, we have the whole theology of Hinduism.' Secondly, it proves that Swamiji turned the abstract philosophy of Vedanta into a concrete philosophy of praxis (Satindranath Chakraborty, p. 543) by putting it to the practical task of revitalizing society not only of his beloved India but also of society everywhere in the world by telling *man* everywhere that he was as pure, free, active, and creative as God, in fact, he was God Himself and that it lay within his infinite possibilities not only to stage his own rise but also to bring about practical transformation of the society he lived in by manifesting his own true divine nature in every movement of his life.

This brings us to the question of Swamiji's social philosophy which is, to quote Swami Smaranananda, 'an extension of his Vedantic thought. The solutions he advocated for the problems of India and the world drew attention to the wiping out of differences, strengthening of the individual through self-reliance and self-confidence, and removal of privileges in society' (p. 469). As a critical theorist holding that 'the Vedantic idealism without social relevance

2. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), p. 9.

is empty, and the social life without Vedantic idealism is blind' (R. Balasubramanian, p. 830), Swamiji was seized of the theory-practice problem. Sankar never philosophized on society as such. Swamiji's thoughts on raising the masses by awakening their inherent spiritual power 'cannot be found at all', as Hiltrud Rustau points out, 'in Sankara's teaching; they are Swami Vivekananda's original contribution to Indian social philosophy' (p. 738).

Like social philosophy, moral philosophy, too, constituted an integral part of Swamiji's Vedantic thought. To put it in the terms of Professor J.N. Mohanty, 'The issue really is [that] there is a moral attitude fostered by a strong conviction in the oneness of all beings' (p. 843). Swami Bhajanananda shows how Swamiji laid the foundation of a universal system of ethics by deriving from his Vedantic world view certain basic tenets of the ontological ethics, namely, freedom, selflessness, love, equality, harmony, strength and higher fulfilment (p. 580). As for the practical utility of these tenets on the ontological ethics, the best authority to quote is Swamiji himself:

This practical side of Vedantic morality is necessary as much today as it ever was, more necessary perhaps, than it ever was, for all this privilege-claiming has become tremendously intensified with the extension of knowledge.³

V

As a believer in the science of religion, what did Swami Vivekananda think of the religion of the Vedanta? Was it capable of satisfying the demands of the scientific world? Swamiji's answer to this question was in the most emphatic affirmative.

The scientific world demands that the

principle of generalization be satisfied along with the principle of evolution. Swamiji showed in clear terms that the religion of the Vedanta satisfied both of these demands of the scientific world 'by referring to the highest generalization and the law of evolution'.⁴ The Brahman of the Vedanta satisfied the generalization principle in the fullest measure because 'Brahman is the last generalization to which we can come. It has no attributes but is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss—Absolute'.⁵ The fundamental idea of the principle of evolution is that the explanation of everything comes from within it. This principle too is completely satisfied by the Vedanta. 'The Brahman, the God of Vedanta, has nothing outside of Himself; nothing at all. All this indeed is He: He is in the Universe: He is the universe Himself'.⁶

This assertion of Swamiji in terms of correspondence between science and religion of Vedanta means several things: that creation means the projection of the Absolute into phenomenal form, that the effect, i.e., the manifested or the grosser state is the same as the cause, i.e., the finer state, that nothing can be evolved which is not already there, that there can be no evolution without involution (in the sense of going back to the point from which that evolution begins, as emphatically expressed in Swamiji's assertion that 'If the Buddha is evolved amoeba, the amoeba was the involved Buddha also'). All this shows that Swamiji's Vedantic vision encompassed the highest principles of science and that he saw no conflict between the two. As for a reasoned reconciliation between the world view of science and the Vedantic view of reality beyond the phenomenal world, Amalendu Das Gupta observes that:

3. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1992), vol. 1, p. 425.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 372.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

Apparently some of the findings of quantum and particle physics suggest that such a reconciliation might be both possible and necessary.

This is the result of a profound change in science's view of reality at the fundamental level that came about with the development of quantum mechanics.... And some of the tentative conclusions [of particle physics] appear to mark a progressive blurring of the distinction between science and metaphysics (pp. 606-7).

Referring to Swamiji's assertion at the Parliament of Religions that science too was bound to come in the long run to the same conclusion of the unity of existence as Advaita, the mathematician Joan Shack observes:

Swamiji was actually a century ahead of his time. Twentieth-century science has taken us right up to the door of Advaita, non-duality. At the beginning of this century, Newtonian physics viewed man as separate from this universe. Man was only an observer of his reality. One hundred years later, three revolutions in the physical sciences can be cited: the relativity theory, quantum mechanics, and Chaos. They altered the Newtonian view, unequivocally. They have asserted, respectively, that man influences his reality, that moreover, he creates his reality, and finally, that he is not different from his reality. As this century ends, the line between science and religion has indeed grown thin....

So if credit be given where credit is due, it is only a short time before Swami Vivekananda will be recognized as the first synthesizer of religion and modern science (p. 252).

Indeed, Swamiji's genius as a synthesizer can be seen in the way he re-adapted the

age-old Vedanta to the needs of the modern world. He reinterpreted the Vedantic ideal in such a way as to involve not a rejection of the relative world but the deification of it. We have to work in this world on the basis of our transformed attitude towards this world and use 'science as a major weapon in the fight against poverty, ignorance and fear' (p. 608). In the specific context of India this meant the combination of religion and science and this demonstrates his genius for uniting theory and practice, ideal and reality. As Swamiji said, 'What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta'. 'These simple words', to quote Amalendu

So if credit be given where credit is due, it is only a short time before Swami Vivekananda will be recognized as the first synthesizer of religion and modern science.

Das Gupta, 'tell us more about Swamiji's perspective on science than all the conceptual elaboration of his scientific ideas and of their interrelationship with philosophy and religion' (p. 608).

VI

What were the patterns and impact of Swamiji's relationship with his Western followers?

Swami Vivekananda brought about the Indianization of Sister Nivedita, 'the most loyal English woman' during the early part of her discipleship under him by protecting her from the blindness of her half-views and the partiality of her conception of life, thereby leading her from *self* to *selflessness*. As Anil Baran Ray points out, 'The new phase of consciousness to which Swami Vivekananda had initiated Nivedita through pain and suffering in the summer of 1898 was to be the most significant step not only in her Indianization but also in her resultant evolution as a Mother, Maid and Friend of India,

re-generating every aspect of the nation's life with Eternal Love and Service Free' (p. 634).

Linda Prugh dwells on the relationship between Swami Vivekananda and Miss Josephine MacLeod to prove that contrary to the popular notion of their relationship and even Miss MacLeod's own assertion that she was only a friend of Swami Vivekananda, she, as one receiving a *mantra* from Swamiji, was his disciple as well as his great friend (p. 685). Meeting Swamiji changed indeed the life of Josephine MacLeod. As she herself acknowledged: 'The thing that held me in Swamiji was his unlimitedness....It is the truth I saw in Swamiji that has set me free! It was to set me free that Swamiji came, that was as much part of his mission as it was to give renunciation to Nivedita or unity to Mrs. Sevier'.

Referring to Swamiji's relating to Sister Nivedita as a Guru and to Josephine MacLeod as a friend, Hal W. French observes that a study of such relationships could provide a much more intimate profile of Swami Vivekananda's human qualities than could be secured from macro focus on his public person (p. 721).

VII

What was Swamiji's formula for the regeneration of India and the solution of her mundane problems?

Swamiji's overall aim was to rejuvenate humanity all over the world, as much in East as in West through the life-giving principles of religion contained in the Vedanta. India was the queen of his adoration and his emphasis with regard to India was not so much on the superficial bits and pieces of reform but on the total reform, a revolution so to say, by giving back to the masses of people their power—the immense and infinite powers of *Atman* that lay hidden in them. 'We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses', as Swamiji would say,⁷ by awakening the dor-

mant *Atman* in them. No amount of external prop, no amount of structural change etc. could raise the masses, unless they are given the consciousness and the motivation to work towards their own elevation themselves. A spiritually charged scheme of education (N.V.C. Swami, p. 390) directed towards the achievement of such goal ('Life-building and man-making', as Swamiji would call it) could release the masses from their indolence and motivate as well the rich upper class people in India towards working for their fallen brethren, such working being in the last instance working for God-in-humanity.

Those who criticize Swami Vivekananda for suggesting spiritual solution to even socio-political problems should know that in the 'universal heart of Swami Vivekananda' (Pravrajika Virajaprana, p. 435) everything was spiritual. All spheres of life and all modes of life are spiritual. The only thing necessary for *man* everywhere is to make this perspective actual in his everyday life. Whatever be the station of one's life, one can turn it into a spiritual discipline by looking at the duties of one's station in life from a selfless motive and by performing the same as worship to the *Atman* in *man*. Such a view of life, along with Swamiji's doctrine of service (Swami Prabhananda, pp. 391–417), as reflected in a nutshell in the motto given to the Ramakrishna Math and the Mission by Swamiji—*Ātmano Mokṣārtham Jagaddhitāya ca* (Personal salvation in the good of mankind)—'if widely practised', as Professor Hiren Mukherjee rightly points out, 'could transform our world' (p. 585). The lack of comprehension, as Professor R.K. Dasgupta observes in the concluding essay of the Volume, by our younger generation (the 'Me-generation of today', as Jati K. Sengupta calls it, p. 268) has made them unable to appreciate Swamiji's ideas as to the

7. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama), pp. 81–2.

primacy of religion in nation-building as well as his thought that a spiritual and moral awakening must precede any form of national awakening. Swamiji was a radical of radicals and his radicalism meant, as Professor Dasgupta very perceptibly points out, 'going to the roots of national and human problems and finding their solution in a discovery of the human soul, the *Atman* which alone could bring about individual, and national and world regeneration' (p. 884).

VIII

In a word, this Volume is 'condensed

Vivekananda'. The Ramakrishna Math and the Mission has indeed done a service to humanity by bringing out the Volume. Let it be a prized possession of every soul on the globe. Let everyone drink at the fountain of the life-giving spiritual waters provided by Swami Vivekananda, the spiritual luminary extraordinary and be fulfilled in the eternal Self. As we read this Volume let us all say with Swami Vivekananda that *man* can transcend the limitations of the senses and become God Himself.

Let the God-in-*man* triumph everywhere. □

India I Would Like to Live In

V. BALASUNDARAM
III B.A. English Lit.

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore

Peace in a country is the prerequisite of a strong nation. But the law and order situation in India is not very happy. There has been communal trouble which is many times the result of deliberate effort to disturb peace. In future I would like to live in a peaceful and pleasant India. Many parties and organizations spread communal virus and other types of poison in our society. If militant rule has come to an end in some of the states, it has become more powerful in other states. I pray to God for mitigating that. Innocent lives are lost, property is destroyed, and ill-will is generated. This type of situation within the country will not allow political stability to come, or economic betterment. If there is an atmosphere of suspicion, distrust, fear and aggressiveness, it is not possible to think of constructive progress. Only one section of the people should not be taken care of; interests of all the sections must be kept in mind. All the religions should flourish and all the languages should be encouraged. I very much like and welcome that all the languages should be encouraged.

The prices of commodities are so abnormally high that it is not possible for a common man to meet his expenses. If the Government is unable to provide essential commodities it will not be possible for the people to remain satisfied. I would like to live in an India where the Government should control the prices of essential

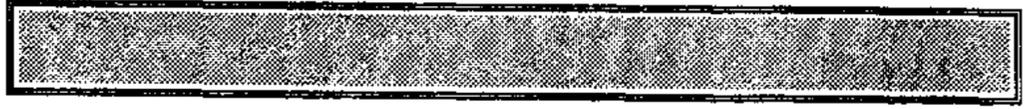
commodities.

The Green Revolution increased production of food grains to some extent, but the gain was neutralized by increasing population. I would like the Government to continue making every effort to increase the supply of those commodities which are likely to be scarce in the market, which yet the traders from time to time make artificially scarce.

No doubt the world is moving more towards cooperation and understanding, but some problems are threatening India. We believed that democracy in Pakistan would result in better relations between the two countries. Potentially this is probably true, but until some time in the future when this promise is fulfilled India will have to maintain her strength and preparedness for anything which may happen. I hope to see peace and harmony everywhere in my lifetime.

The problem of poverty and unemployment is one which at some stage may threaten even our democracy. Till there is peace in the country, it is not possible to make India politically strong, economically better off, and socially united. In order to make India strong we will have to fight on all fronts. □

News and Reports



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CHICAGO ADDRESSES: CONCLUDING CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS 14th, 15th, 17th, 18th and 20th November 1994

I

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

BELUR MATH

14th and 15th November

'Hearty welcome!' Swamiji's large image with outstretched hands over the inner entrance invited everyone to Belur Math. The purpose of the invitation was clearly revealed by the main arch at the entrance near Grand Trunk Road. It 'rang the bell' of religious harmony. The two-day religious parliament about to be inaugurated on the morning of 14 November had been organized at Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, to conclude the year-long centenary celebration of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago addresses.

Belur Math: 'The blazing light of universal harmony that will emanate from here will flood the whole world,' Swami Vivekananda had prophesied in 1898 while installing Sri Ramakrishna here. Down the years, the prophecy has been proving to be true in various ways. The two-day parliament showed unequivocally the earnestness of religions to understand each other, broaden and grow—thanks to Swamiji's grand initiative which set in motion this new thought-current in the world. The two-day parliament was so arranged that all the delegates could understand the basic precepts of almost all religions. An important feature of this parliament was that the speeches were immediately summarized in either Hindi or Bengali for the benefit of non-English speaking delegates.

'Unprecedented!' was the response of many of those attending. Preparations had been long and painstaking. It was the able leadership of Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj, the convener of the conference, which helped translate the grand idea into a reality. It is no easy task to accommodate at least 6,000 delegates hailing from various parts of the country and abroad, in the city of Calcutta. The upper limit of 10,000

delegates notwithstanding, the number swelled to over 12,000 and many had to return disappointed. Delegates not residing in Calcutta were brought to Belur Math from their camps in over 80 buses. The college grounds adjacent to the Math became a huge parking lot.

The inaugural session, which began at 9 o'clock in the morning, was presided over by Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. It began with Vedic chanting by the boys of the Veda Vidyalaya of Belur Math, yet another of Swamiji's dreams come true. In his welcome address, the General Secretary, Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj stressed the utility of religion. Today a comprehensive view of life and Reality is needed that will convert all humanity into a mutually sharing global family, and each person will be enabled to develop his potentialities fully for self-realization as well as for benefiting the world, he said. This, Swami Atmasthanandaji added, could be accomplished by religion alone. Hinting at the way the parliament would proceed, he said that there would be stress on two things: (1) the common ground of all religions, and (2) finding ways of removing conflicts.

In his inaugural address, Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj pointed out the difference between a mere seminar and a conference of this type. Drawing attention to the importance of a religious parliament, he said: Religions have a joint responsibility to work against the moral and spiritual bankruptcy of the world; to serve the poor and suffering; to help seekers of the ultimate goal, and also to help end religious conflicts. Revered Maharaj said that between the two aspects of religion, the transcendental and the cultural, Sri Ramakrishna discovered that there is unity



The inner entrance to the venue of the Parliament of Religions at Belur Math



Srimat Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj arriving at the venue to inaugurate the Parliament proceedings

at the transcendental level; this was his great contribution to world history.

Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, one of the Vice Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, in his keynote address said that, because of religious conflicts many people want to avoid religion, but the world is psychically disturbed and the blessings of religion alone can save it. This has been amply endorsed by psychologists of repute. The Swami also gave the historical background of the great idea of universal harmony which India has fostered. The convener of the parliament, Swami Lokeswaranandaji, delivered the vote of thanks, during which he said that today's trouble was not due to the *ideal* of religion; rather, the *practice* of religion was faulty, and thus was the cause religious conflicts.

After a break of about half-an-hour in which tea was served, the session on Buddhism began. It was chaired by the high priest of the Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhgaya, Venerable Chandra Ratna. The first speaker, Venerable Ngawang Samten spoke on the northern school of Buddhism. Samten stated that the term 'northern Buddhism' for Mahayana was a misnomer. Without renunciation, he continued, the practice of Mahayana was not possible. To become a Mahayanist, one has to have a *Bodhicitta* (a mind seeking enlightenment), which is the gateway to the path of *Bodhisattva*, that is, the attainment of enlightenment for the benefit of many. By following the instructions of the Buddha one can develop a *Bodhicitta*, he added. Sri W. Nayaka Thero spoke next on Theravada Buddhism. Speaking on his subject rather tangentially, Nayaka Thero eulogized Buddha's qualities of tolerance, abhorrence of argument, not condemning others, etc. Buddhism has no controversy with anyone but it has been subject to much persecution, he said sadly. However, the speaker was glad that Buddhists never retaliated—not once.

Swami Brahmeshananda of the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Varanasi, spoke next on 'Swami Vivekananda's Views on Buddhism'. He showed through various references that Swamiji adored the great Buddha and his religion. The basic tenets of Buddhism according to Swamiji, are self-reliance, lack of argument, love for humanity and samesightedness.

Concluding the session, Dr. Chandra Ratna told a story of the Buddha as a wandering monk. When Buddha visited Kapilavastu, everyone thought that he would be the honoured guest of King Suddhodana, and hence no one invited him for lunch. Suddhodana's offer was rejected by the Buddha, who then started begging alms from the houses of the outcastes. When his father tried to stop him, Buddha gave this teaching to him: 'Wake up! Do not waste any more time. Follow the Dhamma—the noble path. One who practices Dhamma rests well both here and hereafter.' This in fact was the message of the Chairman to everyone present.

The post-lunch session was on Christianity. After a short prayer from students of the Morning Star College, Barrackpore, the Chairman of this session, Reverend Paulos Mar Gregarious, Metropolitan of the Delhi Orthodox Centre, gave a beautiful introduction to the session with a prayer to the Eternal One. The first speaker, Reverend Father Deva Sahayam John Ramos spoke on Christianity according to the Roman Catholic approach. He said that both multi-religious dialogue and multi-religious conflicts are continuing. It needs great courage to accept the incompleteness in each of our religious traditions. Father Ramos pointed out that harmony is also the Biblical mission—to be a true Christian, one has to be in harmony with God, with oneself, with others, and with creation. The speaker stated that Christianity is not a religion which can exist in isolation, in competition or in hostility with other religions. Rt. Rev. D. C. Gorai, Calcutta, spoke next about the Protestant approach, and said that we are one—the children of one Father. The speaker then compared Swami Vivekananda's words with those of Christ and said that both preached service and love. The Bible teaches that one must love others along with one's love for the Divine.

Swami Atmaramananda spoke next. His subject was 'Swamiji's Views on Christianity'. Speaking about the inclusivistic approach of the generality of Christians towards other faiths, the speaker wished that the pluralistic approach propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji would soon appeal to everyone so that there may be harmony in the religious field. Swamiji's concept of accepting other religions as true means the acceptance of them as they are, in toto.

Concluding the session, the Chairman, Reverend Gregarious, spoke interestingly. Calling himself a lover of the *Anekāntavāda* of the Jains and an Advaitist of the Christian type, he said that nothing must be made absolute. He also said that religions have a broad area of mutual understanding and a small area of individuality. A united, single religion for the whole world is absurd. The areas in which all religions agree are: (1) The idea of a Creator and His creation. That which is manifest has come from the Unmanifest and depends on the Unmanifest, which is transcendent. (2) All humanity is one, and all religious persons must be loving towards others without setting any limits. And, (3) our secular civilization has lost sight of spiritual discipline. The disciplines of prayer, meditation, of controlling passions and emotions, of making oneself an instrument in the hands of God are found in all religions. The need of social and individual discipline was also stressed by Reverend Gregarious.

The last session of the first day, on Hinduism, was chaired by Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, head of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras. The first speaker, Sri Sitanath Goswami, spoke on the basic tenets of Hinduism: Hinduism has no beginning; through all the various gods and goddesses, the Supreme Being alone is worshipped; every jiva has innate divinity and hence one has to love all beings as God. Universality and acceptance of every other approach as true is also a basic tenet of the great religion. Prof. Nirod Baran Chakraborty spoke next on nondualism as the ultimate goal of all aspects of Hinduism. He said that Hindus have various paths and ways according to individual tastes. But, as Swamiji said, man travels from truth to truth. There is no polytheism in India, the speaker said, but only the worship of the Infinite through the finite. Whether a Hindu belongs to the Shakta, Shaiva, Vaishnava, or any other group, his ultimate goal is the experience of Advaita.

Swami Sureshanandaji of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore, then spoke on Swamiji's ideas on Hinduism. He said that the post-Ramakrishna era has seen people becoming more interested in practising true spirituality than in doctrines and dogmas. Swamiji was eager to give a rational foundation to religion by cleansing it of ephemeral sentimentality.

The chairman, Swami Smaranananda, in the concluding speech, said that every religion has three aspects: philosophy, mythology and mysticism. The Vedas have raised the basic questions about existence, the universe etc. Mystics experienced and found answers to these questions which they recorded. The ideal of realization is the main theme everywhere in Hinduism, and Swamiji, too, stressed this. Since man cannot always remain or engage himself in abstruse philosophy, mythology has a place. Experience, however, is the fundamental thing. Along with this, we must create a society in which the highest truths of Hinduism can become practicable. By removing 'cobwebs' in Hinduism and following the ideals of Swamiji, we can become noble and great, he said. With this, the first day of the parliament of religions came to an end.

The second day of the Parliament of religions had as the first item on its agenda a session on Islam, the Chairman of which was Prof. S. A. Ali, Director of the Hamdard Archives and Research Centre, New Delhi. The first speaker, Dr. Murzat Ali, a lecturer in the Bangavasi College of Calcutta, spoke on the practices of Islam. He gave a beautiful picture of the many holy acts of Muslims, elucidating the significance of each of them rather than stressing the outer rituals. He told how the Prophet forgave his great enemies, who had troubled him for over 30 years. The Prophet's compassion, love and mercy are to be emulated. When there is a proper understanding between religions, he added, there will be love and peace between them, and not discord.

Mr. Mir Mustafa Ali, Founder-Chairman of the Universal Welfare Foundation, New Delhi, said that Islam means 'abode of peace and brotherhood'. Speaking from the historical perspective, Mr. Ali drew attention to the works of many prophets before Islam and showed that they all declared the same message of love, universal brotherhood and harmony. Every Indian saint also spoke in the same way. He added that the teachings of the Prophet of Islam are to be found in the teachings of all the prophets. Wars were waged only to destroy evil forces for a greater good. Lord Muhammed himself led a very simple and austere life. The prophet's liberalism, tolerance, etc. were highlighted by the speaker.

Swami Amritanandaji's topic was 'Swami Vivekananda's Ideas on Islam'. Islam is a world religion and its prophet, a world teacher. As Edwin Arnold said: 'The soul of Islam is the unity of God and its heart is resignation to His will.' We must look into the ideas of the votaries of any religion first. Sri Ramakrishna's practice of Islam was therefore important.

Swami Amritanandaji mentioned many points regarding the greatness of Islam as envisaged by Swamiji. For instance, he spoke of the idea of learning which, while denounced by Christianity for fear of religious difficulties, had been boldly encouraged by Islam throughout its history. All the great thinkers, scientists, etc. were sheltered by Islam. The love for man was nowhere preached and practised to the fullest extent as it has been in Islam. Service of mankind was paramount in Islam and this was what Swamiji wanted others to emulate. The speaker quoted extensively from one Mohammedananda of the 1890's who was an admirer of Swami Vivekananda as well as a Muslim. Though Islam does not encourage monasticism, he said, its Prophet was *tyāgi* always frugal and austere. Prof. Hussainur Rahaman then spoke. According to him, Islam means submission, salutation and sacrifice. Islam stresses Man and Swamiji too did the same.

The chairman, Prof. Ali, in his concluding address said that Islam is an Indian religion. There are millions of Muslims here. At the political level there is much disturbance. Conflict for power is going on everywhere. Today, 'Nation' is the new God. Religion, as it is, is simple. It gets complicated, he said, because people create various 'approaches' to it. The goal of Islam, is faith in the Creator and in humanity. What is needed now is an increase in social action to alleviate human suffering. Such action can lead to universal brotherhood.

The sixth session of the Parliament, chaired by Swami Gokulananda of the New Delhi Ramakrishna Mission, was devoted to two religions: Jainism and Judaism. Speaking on Jainism, Sri Sasikant Mehta of Rajkot said at the outset that all non-practising philosophers in religion should be honoured with voluntary retirement! The Jain faith agrees with Vedanta in regard to the divinity of man and the interconnec-

tedness of all life. To be nonviolent and compassionate toward all life is the aim of a Jain. To be friendly in social relationships, to be detached, to be ethical in economic life and to be loyal to one's culture are the core points of the Jain faith. To do good to all and to wish well for all are its two pillars.

Mr. E. I. Malekar, Honorary Secretary of the Judah Hyam Synagogue, New Delhi, spoke on Judaism. He began with a melodious prayer. He said that Jews had been living in India for the last 2,000 years in peace. The fundamental principle of Judaism is the belief in the unity and oneness of the Creator as exemplified in, *shema Israel, aduna clohenu, aduna ekar*, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord God is one.' There are 613 precepts in Judaism: the ten commandments plus all the important teachings of the various prophets collected together. At the age of 13, a boy gets initiated into reading the Torah and wears a shawl containing 613 threads. The shawl is named *Sisit* in Hebrew. The Torah in one sentence is: 'What is hurtful to yourself, do not do to your fellowmen.' Judaism stresses the importance of moral life. It emphasizes one's duties towards God, one's fellowmen, the Law, and oneself. The chairman, Swami Gokulananda aptly summarized the two speeches.

The seventh session was devoted to Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. The session began with a *Gurbāni*, sung by Sri Narendra Singh. Sardar Saran Singh gave a grand picture of the Sikh faith, of course with a sad note in the beginning: He said that though Sikhism is a bhakti movement with a very coherent philosophy, this bhakti element is generally neglected. Guru Nanak was born at a critical juncture of history. He assessed the socio-cultural and religious scene of India during his wide travels. Nanak preached the proper and true understanding of the basic precepts. He refused to wear the sacred thread during his boyhood and mixed with men of every religion freely. 'I am the lowliest of the low born', he would say. Guru Nanak always stressed the positive role of man.

The next speaker, Ms. Tina Mehta of Calcutta, spoke on the essentials of Zoroastrianism. Giving the fundamentals of the religion in the light of modern approaches, she said that Parashurama of Hindu mythology is in all probability the Zarathustra of her religion.

Mr. A.M. Sethna spoke along similar lines. He said that a Parsee is an Indian of Iranian origin, professing the Zoroastrian faith. 'Zarathustra' was the honorific title given when the prophet was accepted as the messenger of Ahura Mazda. The meaning of the term is 'One with the Radiant Light'. Mr. Sethna said that according to history, Zoroastrians were spread all over Europe and Asia and that at one time they could be found in an area extending from west of the Caspian sea to the Indus. Refugees who came to India when persecution began brought the sacred fire with them by boat. The religion is based on three fundamental precepts: *Humata* (good thoughts), *Hukatha* (Good words) and *Huvaristha* (good deeds). God is realized through service to humanity by active promotion of the well-being of the whole world. All things and beings have come from Him and have a place on earth. Zoroastrianism is the first ecological religion of the world, the speaker said. The worship of fire is symbolic—fire signifies the fire of the heart as well as of the hearth. Through this fire, the eternal Light is worshipped.

Concluding this session, Swami Pitambaranandaji of the Ramakrishna Mission, Chandigarh, gave a personal touch to the two religions, saying that both religions were very dear to the Ramakrishna Mission. Sorab Modi, a famous Parsee, was a disciple of the Holy Mother and Jamshedji Tata's getting inspiration from Swamiji is legendary. Sikhs have been all along in close touch with the Ramakrishna Movement.

The final session of the parliament on the 'Harmony of Religions,' was chaired by Swami Swahanandaji of the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Speaking first, Swami Sridharanandaji of the Ramakrishna Math, Lucknow, said that harmony is being treated as if it is something external to us. Let us for a moment not think of religions but of their founders. They were all unique messengers of the divine. A human being is the centre of everything, and hence he has to change in order that society can change. What is the goal of almost all religions? It is *ātyantika dukkha nivritti* and *parama sukha prāpti*. This means, the removal of the cause of suffering and attaining supreme happiness. With this as the goal, all faiths can come together.

Swami Mumukshanandaji of Advaita Ashrama

then spoke in Bengali. He said that a universal religion cannot be formed by taking some points from all religions. Vedanta is the hope for harmony in the future. He then defined the word *Vedanta*: it simply means 'Religion', and not some particular religion. He explained Swamiji's famous words about how one can achieve the goal through work, or devotion, or meditation, or yoga through one or all of these; that is what religion or Vedanta is.

Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, one of the Vice Presidents of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, then gave the valedictory address. He spoke of the three approaches to religion—exclusivistic, inclusivistic and pluralistic. The root cause of conflict is ignorance of the spiritual dimensions of religion. He said that this parliament has revealed that every religion has a universal dimension. The exclusive attitude of religions prevalent a hundred years ago is gone now. All religions are the manifestation of the one Eternal Religion. There are various types of difficulties common to almost every religion. Hence collaboration is essential among the religions to overcome those difficulties. Swami Swahanandaji concluded the session by saying that when the subject of comparative religion was mooted a few decades ago, it was found that all religions put forth the same sort of teachings. There were two groups: one said that we must give up religion. Communism did so and now, after a few decades, it has changed. Even a man like Stalin could not but open the doors of churches to devotees in his nation. So religion is absolutely needed. But the quarrel has to end with proper understanding. The problem is with the names of religion; the various 'isms' to which we adhere. They are what create conflicts. A nameless religion is preferred to all the religions with names.

Thus the parliament came to a grand end. Swami Gautamanandaji of Saradapitha, Belur Math, who thanked everyone responsible for making this event a success, said that it had been a sumptuous two-day feast of religious ideas and spiritual teachings. This was indeed true.

*Report prepared by Swami Sunirmalananda,
Belur Math*

RELEASE OF THE CENTENARY NUMBER OF THE *PRABUDDHA BHARATA*

The centenary year of India's oldest religio-cultural monthly in circulation, the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*, was celebrated on 7 January 1995 at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, from where the journal is published.

The simple but impressive function, attended by about 50 monastics and 300 invitees, began at 4:30 p.m. with the sonorous chanting of Vedic mantras by some monastic members. This was followed by a welcome address by Swami Mumukshananda, President of the Advaita Ashrama. After expressing his joy that so many eminent persons closely connected with the Ramakrishna movement had come to participate in the celebration, he proceeded to present briefly the message of Advaita Swamiji wished to propagate through the Advaita Ashrama and its journal. Another point he made with reference to the name of the journal was that Swamiji wanted to awaken India as a first step towards awakening the whole human race.

Next, Swami Atmasthananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presiding over the meeting, invited Dr. R.K. Dasgupta to speak, the text of whose talk appears in this issue. Dr. Dasgupta, formerly Director, National Library, Calcutta, and currently holding the Vivekananda Chair of Indological Studies in the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, declared that the noble voice that was raised by Swami Vivekananda still 'echoed in the pages of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.' 'The significant contribution of the journal led to the flowering of Vedantic renaissance', he added. This talk was followed by that of Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu, winner of Sahitya Academy Award and Swami Vivekananda Award for his voluminous research work on Swamiji. He bestowed high honours and respects to the editors for keeping *Prabuddha Bharata* on the ideal laid down by its founder—'Be bold and face the Truth.' He further remarked that the original tone of addressing the world

has always been maintained by the *Prabuddha Bharata* through its lucid and simple style.

Speaking next, Sister Gargi (Marie Louise Burke), renowned for her scholarship and the research work—*Swami Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries*—reflected that the world was undergoing a change, specially at the level of its metaphysical thoughts. As a consequence numerous questions regarding life, consciousness, creation, etc. have arisen seeking fresh answers. *Prabuddha Bharata* has an important role to play in providing these, she added.

Swami Bhajanananda, a former joint editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and now one of the Assistant Secretaries at the Headquarters, Belur Math, was the next speaker. One of the important points he made was that the journal has now to fulfil Swamiji's dream of awakening the masses and propagating the Vedantic view of values to check their erosion in society.

The high point of the evening was, of course, the next event—the release by Swami Atmasthananda of the centenary number of the *Prabuddha Bharata* specially got up for the historic occasion. After this followed his presidential address, in which he said that Sri Ramakrishna's advent was for Man, and Swamiji too worked for all humanity irrespective of caste, creed, nationality, etc. To him Man was God in human form—'Man not an object of pity, but an object of worship'. He also pointed out that *Prabuddha Bharata* has from the very start propagated these universal teachings in a manner suited to the reason-based scientific outlook of modern man.

The memorable occasion was drawn to a close with a vote of thanks offered by the present editor, Swami Atmaramananda, and chanting of Vedic hymns once again by a member of the Ashrama. □



Swami Mumukshananda delivering his address of welcome



Swami Atmasthananda speaking after formally releasing the centenary issue

Reviews & Notices

A NEW EDUCATION FOR A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS: Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education; Pub. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry; First Edition 1992; pp. 230; Rs. 100/-

This is an unusual book on education aiming at the total transformation of a human being. It presupposes the dynamic working of the supra-consciousness. This supra-consciousness is bound to change the modes of our perceptions and, with them, the realm of our knowledge. Why, this change in perceptions is bound to transform our bodies also, to meet the requirements of the new age. Sri Aurobindo believed that every human being has the capacity to awaken himself or herself to the enlivening influence of the supra-consciousness and thus to raise oneself to great spiritual heights. This capacity is, however, throttled under the present system of education, in spite of great advancement in techniques.

The book is compiled out of the scattered writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on education. The arrangement spells out both a theory and a practice of the new education for a new consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo believed in the ascending evolution of life, and he also believed that present man is the most evolved form of life. This ascent on the evolutionary scale is not yet over. Man has to evolve himself still more to manage this vast expanding universe. He will hereafter have to manage the economy that will function on a planetary scale. The future holds still bigger challenges and promises, and man will have to cope with them. These new prospects call for a new system of education, the framework of which is indicated in these pages. The text is arranged in seven parts, viz. (1) The Perfection of the Body, (2) The Conversion of the Vital, (3) The True Role of

the Mind, (4) To Be a Teacher, (5) The Awakening of the Psychic, (6) The Conscious Seeking of the One, and (7) The Promise of the New World.

The new education demands a healthy and cultured physique so as to be capable of absorbing supramental consciousness. The human body will have to be perfected and will have to be more receptive. For this matter, the vital sheath, viz. the physical body, will have to be converted into an all powerful receiving station. This presupposes the development of artistic faculties also. The mind will need a training to become more supple and rich and receptive to deep silence.

A teacher in the new scheme of education must know that nothing can be taught, and that the first duty of the teacher is to help the child to know itself; and that freedom is necessary for the self-flowering of the child. Science, art, philosophy, history are but the means to discover the divine working through nature and life. The fundamental purpose of psychic education is to help the child to solve the problem of the true motive of his existence.

The new system of supramental education will help the ascent of man on the evolutionary scale, and will ultimately lead to the emergence of a divine race upon the earth.

The book contains toward the end an appendix and a glossary of the terms used in the text. The reader will do well to scan these before he embarks on the study of this work. This will make his journey through these pages easy and smooth.

The book deserves a wide circulation among the present day teaching community at all levels. This is bound to transform the current system of education, and would favourably affect its content. The get-up is simple, and the paper and printing excellent.

*Dr. Narendranath B. Patil,
Bombay*