

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

Awakened India



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4.

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प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. iii. 4

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

—Swami Vivekananda.

VOL. XXIV]

JANUARY 1919

[No. 270

CONVERSATIONS AND DIALOGUES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

(RECORDED BY A DISCIPLE.)

XX.

[Place—*The rented Math at Belur.* Year—1899.

Subjects—*The starting of the 'Udbodhan.'*—*How Swami Trigunatita underwent infinite pains and sacrifice for the magazine.*—*The publication of magazines etc. is solely for the good of the householders.*—*How the Udbodhan is to be conducted.*—*No one should be hated or intimidated. India's lethargy has come through that alone.*—*Make the physique strong.*]

Shortly after the Math had been removed from Alambazar to Nilambar Babu's garden at Belur, Swamiji proposed to his brother-disciples that a Bengali magazine be started to spread the ideas of Sri Ramakrishna among the public. Swamiji at first proposed a daily paper. But it being too costly, the idea of starting a fortnightly magazine was unanimously agreed upon, and Swami Trigunatita was entrusted with its management. Swamiji had a thousand rupees with him, and a householder disciple* of Sri Ramakrishna gave another thousand on loan, and the work was started with this sum as

capital. A printing Press† was purchased and established at the house of Sj. Girindranath Basak, in Ramchandra Maitra's Lane, Shambazar, Calcutta. Swami Trigunatita, in his new capacity, published the first number of the magazine on the 1st of Māgh, 1305, Bengali Era (Middle of January, 1899). Swamiji selected the name of Udbodhan (the Awakener) for the magazine, and gave Swami Trigunatita hearty blessings for its success. The pains which the indefatigable Swami took, under Swamiji's orders, for its printing and circulation, scarcely find a parallel. He

* The late Haranohan Mitra.

† The Press had to be disposed of for certain reasons even during the life-time of Swamiji.

would beg his food from householders of a devotional turn, or sometimes go without food, and would march ten miles on foot, on business relating to the Press and the magazine. In short, Swami Trigunatita made himself ready to lay down his life for the success and circulation of the magazine. There was no means at that time of employing a clerk and Swamiji had given strict orders not to spend a farthing out of the magazine fund for any other purpose than the interests of the magazine itself. And Swami Trigunatita carried out the order to the letter, maintaining himself from *bhiksha* at the houses of Bhaktas or by other means.

Swamiji himself wrote out the Introduction to the magazine, and it was proposed that only the Sannyasin and householder disciples of Sri Ramakrishna would write in this paper. Swamiji also warned the authorities against obscene advertisements being published in it. The members of the Ramakrishna Association, then an organised body, were called upon by Swamiji to contribute articles to the magazine, and spread the religious views of Sri Ramakrishna through this paper among the general public. After the first number had been out, the disciple came to the Math one day. When he took his seat after saluting Swamiji, the latter opened the following conversation with him about the Udbodhan—

Swamiji.— (Humorously caricaturing the name of the magazine) Have you seen the *Udbandhan**?

Disciple.— Yes, Sir; it is a good number.

Swamiji.— We must mould the ideas, language, and everything of this magazine in a new fashion.

Disciple.— How?

Swamiji.— Not only we must give out Sri Ramakrishna's ideas to all, but we must also introduce a new vigour into the Bengali language. For instance, the frequent use of verbs diminishes the force of a language. We must restrict the use of verbs by the use of adjectives. Begin to write articles in that way, and show them to me before you give them to print in the Udbodhan.

Disciple.— Sir, the way that Swami Trigunatita is labouring for this magazine, it is impossible for any other man to do.

Swamiji.— Do you think these Sannyasin children of Sri Ramakrishna are born simply to sit under trees, lighting *dhuni*-fires? Whenever any of them will take up some work, people will be wonder-struck to see their energy. Learn from them how to work. Here, for instance, Swami Trigunatita has given up his spiritual practices, his meditation and everything, to carry out my orders, and has set himself to work. Is this a matter of small sacrifice?—What an amount of love for me is at the back of this spirit of work, do you see? He will not stop short of success! Have you householders such determination?

Disciple.— But, Sir, it looks rather odd in our eyes that Sannyasins in ochre robe should go from door to door as the Swami is doing.

Swamiji.— Why? The circulation of the magazine is only for the good of householders. By the spread of new ideas within the country the public at large will be benefited. Do you think this unselfish work is any way inferior to devotional practices? Our object is to do good to humanity. We have no idea of making money from the income of this paper. We have renounced everything, and have no

* The word means 'suicide by hanging.'

wives or children to provide for after our death. If the paper be a success, the whole of its income will be spent in the service of humanity. Its surplus money will be profitably spent in the opening of monasteries and homes of service in different places, and all sorts of work of public utility. We are not certainly working like householders with the plan of filling our own pockets. Know for certain that all our movements are for the good of others.

Disciple.— Even then, all will not be able to appreciate this spirit.

Swamiji.— What if they cannot? It neither adds nor takes away anything from us. We do not take up any work with an eye to criticism.

Disciple.— Sir, this magazine will be a fortnightly. We would like it to be a weekly.

Swamiji.— Yes, but where are the funds? If through the grace of Sri Ramakrishna funds are raised, it can be made into a daily even, in future. A hundred thousand copies may be struck off and distributed free in every street and lane of Calcutta, every day.

Disciple.— This idea of yours a capital one.

Swamiji.— I have a mind to make the paper self-supporting first, and then set you up as its editor. You have not yet got the capacity to make any enterprise stand on its legs. That is reserved only for these all-renouncing Sannyasins to do. They will work themselves to death, but never yield. Whereas, a little resistance, or just a trifle of criticism is bewildering to you.

Disciple.— Sir, the other day I saw Swami Trigunatita worshipped the photo of Sri Ramakrishna in the Press before opening the work, and asked for your blessings for the success of the work.

Swamiji.— Well, Sri Ramakrishna is our centre. Each one of us is a ray of that light-centre. He worshipped Sri Ramakrishna before opening the work, did he? It was excellently done. But he told me nothing of it.

Disciple.— Sir, he fears you, and yesterday he told me to come to you and ask your opinion of the first issue of the magazine, after which, he said, he would see you.

Swamiji.— Tell him when you go that I am exceedingly delighted with his work. Give him my loving blessings. And all of you help him as far as you can. You will be doing Sri Ramakrishna's work by that.

Immediately after saying these words Swamiji called Swami Brahmanandaji to him and directed him to give Swami Trigunatita more money for the Udbodhan, if it was needed.

The same evening, after supper, Swamiji again referred to the topic of Udbodhan in the following words :—

“In the Udbodhan we must give the public only positive ideals. Negative thoughts weaken men. Do you not find that where parents are constantly taxing their sons to read and write, telling them they will never learn anything, and calling them fools and so forth, the latter do actually turn out to be so in many cases. If you speak kind words to boys, and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time. What holds good of children, also holds good of children in the region of higher thoughts. If you can give them positive ideas, people will grow up to be men and learn to stand on their own legs. In language and literature, in poetry and the arts, in everything we must point out not the mistakes that people are making in their thoughts and actions, but the way in which they will gradually

be able to do these things better. Pointing out mistakes wounds a man's feelings. Of Sri Ramakrishna we have seen how he would encourage even those whom we considered as worthless, and change the very course of their lives! His very method of teaching was a unique phenomenon!"

Saying these, Swamiji took a short pause, after which he continued, "Never take the preaching of religion to mean the turning up of one's nose at everything and at everybody. In matters physical, mental and spiritual, in everything we must give men positive ideas,—and never hate anybody. It is your hatred of one another that has brought on your degradation. Now we shall have to raise men by scattering broadcast only positive thoughts. First we must raise the whole Hindu race in this way, and then the whole world. That is why Sri Ramakrishna was incarnated. He never destroyed a single man's special inclinations. He gave words of hope and encouragement even to the most degraded of persons and lifted them up. We too must follow in his footsteps and lift all up, and rouse them. Do you follow me?"

"Your history, literature, mythology and all other Shastras are simply frightening people. They are only telling them,

'You will go to hell, you are doomed!' Therefore has this lethargy crept into the very vitals of India. We must therefore explain to men in simple words the highest ideas of the Vedas and the Vedanta. Through the imparting of moral principles, good behaviour, and education we must make the Chandála come up to the level of the Brahmana. Come, write out all these things in the Udbodhan and awaken everyone, young and old, man and woman. Then only shall I know that your study of the Vedas and Vedanta has been a success. What do you say? Will you be able to do this?"

Disciple.— Through your blessings and command I think I shall succeed in everything.

Swamiji.— Another thing. You must learn to make the physique very strong, and teach the same to others. Don't you find me exercising everyday with dumbbells even now? Walk on mornings and evenings, and do physical labour. Body and mind must run parallel. It won't do to depend on others in everything. When the necessity of strengthening the physique is brought home to people, they will of themselves exert in that. It is to make them feel this need that education is necessary at the present moment.

OCCASIONAL NOTES.

THE Prabuddha Bharata enters on the twenty-fourth year of its existence in circumstances of happy augury. The war that was raging for over four years in the West has by the grace of God been brought to a peaceful termination. The war essentially was an war of ideas, the issues involved were of great magni-

tude and importance, to determine which of the theories of life was to survive and guide the future destiny of mankind. The future is big with potentialities, for the deliberations of the best thinkers in coming to a right conclusion and principles, and the future working out of the principles will determine whether a new world

will rise up renovated from the ashes of the old, purged of the hateful excrescences and strike out "bold paths and ventures new" in answer to the broader and more humane and just conceptions of life opening out before the gaze of man. Justice between man and man, between nation and nation, and the free and unobstructed right of nations and individuals to express the Divine within and to realise their destiny, are some of the mighty principles which have triumphed in this world-war.

India also has to realise that she has a destiny to fulfil in the general march of the world's progress. In her present state she is likely to forget that she has a message of her own which she must hold on to and realise in its fulness and purity, and be ready to contribute her quota to the world-thought. There are elements of strength, nobility, and truth in the Indian culture which are of paramount and abiding importance and which must form part of the world-civilisation and order which is yet to be. It is for this reason that the Indian culture has survived to the present day and is yet a living force in the world-economy and has to be reckoned with. That is why we find Indian thought coming into sharp contrast with the existing thought-systems of the world and forming the subject of adverse criticism and demolishing arguments by representatives and apologists of culture who think themselves placed in sharp antagonism with it. It is just because it is a living force which has to be reckoned with and either absorbed or demolished, that it presents such a target of attack; nobody thinks of attacking the dead ghosts of past civilisation.

For after all, behind the clash of physical forces it is ideas that are warring. The power of thought, though not so grossly perceived in their effects as the mighty and immediate operator of physical forces, is yet a tangible and real one, which triumphs over physical forces and establishes itself. It is thought that rules over this universe of ours, though not so easily perceived by gross perception.

The underlying principles of Indian philosophy and religion have yet to be worked out in the social and practical life of humanity. Its possibilities of bringing about a better ordering of human life, and making for the welfare of humanity, establishing both the motive and the goal of human endeavours and strivings are yet unsounded. The practical consequences of such Indian ideals as the glorious evangel of the Atman, the Divine Self of man, the consecration of work as worship, but chastened by a spiritual end, the wonderful synthesis of the temporal and spiritual interests of man in their different phases will, we believe, lead to new conceptions of civic duty, the evolution of the true Civic Ideal. It will enable us to sound the experience of civic and social life to its depths most fruitfully, with the least friction and manifestation of destructive energy, and yet subordinated to and harmonised with the eternal interests of man.

We are suffering, the world over, from the absence of an all-comprehensive and inclusive Ideal which will harmonise all the aspirations of man and point out the goal to which all human endeavours in the social or civic life will tend. Theories of life prevailing in the West have been either one-sided, or half-way houses, which

have stopped short of the Ultimate. The West has evolved the mechanism of life to a wonderful degree, and has been trying hard, by the external manipulation of human conditions, to establish a mechanism by which the peace, well-being and well-ordered progress of life can be achieved. But having no distant vision, and no ideal sufficiently inclusive and in harmony with the eternal interests of man, covering the whole of his nature, the process of time has only brought out the insufficiency of its ideals to harmonise and guide to their true goal all the aspirations of man.

The Vedanta, with the practical working out of its consequences in life, furnishes an ideal enlivened with the glow of a great religion, which we believe will harmonise all the social and civic aspirations of the modern man, and succeed in chastening his inner impulses so as to guide human activities to the true haven of Peace on earth and good-will to man. The glorious truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Supreme Self of man, the Birthless, the Deathless, the All-powerful, will work out the amelioration and elevation of the human race here as elsewhere. It will democratise all our aspirations, ideals, and institutions, as is the cry of the day, and make for material harmony and good-will by showing the essential and basic solidarity of man. We need not enter into all the changes, social and civic, which will flow from it; that is only for the process of time to work. But the mighty urge of a Great Ideal, clearly visualised and apprehended with all the enthusiasm of an evangelic message and percolating through all the layers of human society, is undeniable. The great effect of the doctrine of the brotherhood of man which Christianity brought to the then society

in the Western world is testified to by history. The great doctrine of Selfhood of man, omnipresent, all-powerful and equally present in all, and based not on the authority of a Personality however great and glorious, but upon everlasting and eternal principles, will produce more wonderful changes in human society.

The Vedanta, then, as a factor of civilisation has to us a most assured and commanding place. Its ideals must form part of the thought of the world before the future world-civilisation will be born. That man of prophetic vision and boldness, Swami Vivekananda, held such a vision and as a sincere believer dedicated his life to explaining and propagating it the world over, "for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many," believing that in the grand themes of the Indian ideals entering the pores of human society is centred the salvation of humanity. The time has come when all sincere believers in Indian culture as a beneficent factor of civilisation should actively engage in its propagation. We cannot suffer attacks on Indian ideals prompted by gross ignorance, or obstinate perversity, to pass by unnoticed but must actively engage in their defence and diffusion. The Prabuddha Bharata in its pages sets upon itself no less a task than this, that following the footsteps of its illustrious founder it will seek to illustrate, amplify, explain, defend and propagate Indian ideals in their purified and universal forms, and asks others to do the same.

Indian thought does not require and has never required material weapons for its propagation. It has never been followed by phalanxed armies and embattled cohorts, but has always flown on the wings

of love, peace and benediction. It depends for its triumph not on any material victory but on the strength of the truth of the principles it has been preaching. In that lies the potency of Indian ideals to triumph in the world of thought. Therefore, believing in the ultimate triumph of truth and the vindication of the broad and human conception of life which Indian ideals represent, we have to take up the cross for it.

Probably under divine providence, in order to raise us from our lethargy, the example in defending and propagating our own ideals is being set by some true friends of India who, though born of a different race, yet have so entered into the

soul of Indian thought and life and felt such fascination for it that solicitous about its preservation and propagation for the welfare for future humanity, they have taken up the gauntlet on its behalf. A recent book, "Is India Civilised?" by Sir John Woodroffe, written in refutation of wild destructive criticism of Indian civilisation, so ably vindicates its basic principles and repudiates the baseless charges with such commendable enthusiasm and righteous indignation as would have befitted one who by birth has inherited the culture. The book deserves study by every sincere believer in Indian thought and life and the example set by the writer to be followed by many who belong by birth to the civilisation vindicated.

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF INDIA.

(An unpublished writing of the Swami Vivekananda.)

[Concluded.]

THE great epic Mahabharata tells us of the war of the Kurus and Panchalas for supremacy over the nation, in which they destroyed each other. The spiritual supremacy veered round and centred in the East among the Magadhas and Maithilas, and after the Kuru-Panchala war a sort of supremacy was obtained by the kings of Magadha.

The Buddhist reformation and its chief field of activity was also the same eastern region; and when the Maurya kings forced possibly by the bar sinister to their escutcheon, patronised and led the new movement, the new priest power joined hands with the political power of the empire of Pataliputra. The popularity of Buddhism and its fresh vigour made the Maurya

kings the greatest emperors that India ever had. The power of the Maurya sovereigns made Buddhism that world-wide religion that we see even to-day.

The exclusiveness of the old form of Vedic religions debarred it from taking ready help from outside. At the same time it kept it free and pure from many debasing elements which Buddhism in its propagandist zeal was forced to assimilate.

This extreme adaptability in the long run made Indian Buddhism lose almost all its individuality, and extreme desire to be of the people made it unfit to cope with the intellectual forces of the mother religion in a few centuries. The Vedic party in the meanwhile got rid of a good deal of its most objectionable features, as

animal sacrifice, and took lessons from the rival daughter in the judicious use of images, temple processions, and other impressive performances and stood ready to take within her fold the whole empire of Indian Buddhism already tottering to its fall.

And the crash came, with the Scythian invasions and the total destruction of the empire of Pataliputra.

The invaders already incensed at the invasion of their central Asiatic home by the preachers of Buddhism, found in the sun-worship of the Brahmanas a great sympathy with their own solar religion,—and when the Brahmanist party were ready to adapt and spiritualise many of the customs of the new comers, the invaders threw themselves heart and soul into the Brahmanic cause.

Then there is a veil of darkness and shifting shadows, there are tumults of war, rumours of massacres, and the next scene rises upon a new phase of things.

The empire of Magadha was gone. Most part of Northern India was under the rule of petty chiefs always at war with one another. Buddhism was almost extinct, except in some eastern and Himalayan provinces and in the extreme south; and the nation after centuries of struggle against the power of a hereditary priest awoke to find itself in the clutches of a double priesthood of hereditary Brahmanas and as exclusive monks of the new regime, with all the powers of the Buddhistic organisation and without their sympathy for the people.

A renaissance India bought by the valour and blood of the heroic Rajputs, defined by the merciless intellect of a Brahmana from the same historical thought-centre of Mithila, led by a new philosophical im-

pulse organised by Sankara and his bands of Sannyasins and beautified by the arts and literature of the courts of Malava—arose on the ruins of the old.

The task before it was profound, problems vaster than what their ancestors ever faced. A comparatively small and compact race, of the same blood and speech and the same social and religious aspiration, saving its unity by unscalable walls around itself has grown huge by multiplication and addition during the Buddhistic supremacy and divided by race, colour, speech, spiritual instinct, and social ambitions into hopelessly jarring factions. And this has to be unified and welded into one gigantic nation. This task Buddhism had come also to solve, and had taken it up when the proportions were not so vast.

So long it was a question of Aryanising the other types that were pressing for admission, and thus out of different elements making a huge Aryan body. In spite of concessions and compromises Buddhism was eminently successful and remained the national religion of India. But the time came when the allurements of sensual forms of worship indiscriminately taken in along with various low races, were too dangerous for the central Aryan core, and a longer contact would certainly have destroyed the civilisation of the Aryans. Then came a natural reaction for self-preservation, and Buddhism as a separate sect ceased to live in most parts of its land of birth.

The reaction-movement led in close succession by Kumarilla in the North and Sankara and Ramanuja in the South has become the last embodiment of that vast accumulation of sects and doctrines and rituals called Hinduism. For the last thousand years or more, its great task has been assimilation, with now and then an

outburst of reformation. This reaction first wanted to revive the rituals of the Vedas,—failing which, it made the Upanishads or the philosophic portions of the Vedas as its basis. It brought Vyasa's systems of Mimamsa philosophy and Krishna's sermon, the Gita, to the forefront, and all succeeding movements have followed the same. The movement of Sankara forced its way through its high intellectuality but it could be of little service to the masses, owing to its adherence to strict caste-laws, very little scope for ordinary emotion, and making Sanskrit the only vehicle of communication. Ramanuja on the other hand, with a most practical philosophy, a great appeal to the emotions, an entire denial of birthrights before spiritual attainments and appeals through the popular tongue, completely succeeded in bringing the masses back to the Vedic religion.

The northern reaction of ritualism was followed by the fitful glory of the Malava empire. With the destruction of that in a short time, northern India went to sleep, as it were, for a long period, to be rudely awakened by the thundering onrush of Mahomedan cavalry across the passes of Afghanistan. In the south, however, the spiritual upheaval of Sankara and Ramanuja was followed by the usual Indian sequence of united races and powerful empires. It was the home of refuge of Indian religion and civilisation, when northern India from sea to sea lay bound at the feet of Central Asiatic conquerors. The Mahomedans tried for centuries to subjugate the south, but can scarcely be said to have got even a strong foothold; and when the strong and united empire of the Moguls was very near completing its conquest, the hills and plateaus of the south poured in their bands of fighting

peasant horsemen, determined to die for the religion which Ramdas preached and Tuka sang and in a short time the gigantic empire of the Moguls was only a name.

The movements in northern India during the Mahomedan period are characterised by their uniform attempt of holding the masses back from joining the religion of the conquerors,—which brought in its train social and spiritual equality for all.

The friars of the orders founded by Ramananda, Kabir, Dadu, Chaitanya or Nanak were all agreed in preaching the equality of Man, however differing from each other in philosophy. Their energy was for the most part spent in checking the rapid conquest of Islam among the masses and they had very little left to give birth to new thoughts and aspirations. Though evidently successful in their purpose of keeping the masses within the folds of the old religion, and tempering the fanaticism of the Mahomedans, they were mere apologists, struggling to obtain permission to live.

One great prophet, however, arose in the north, Govind Singh, the last Guru of the Sikhs, with creative genius, and the result of his spiritual work was followed by the well-known political organisation of the Sikhs. We have seen throughout the history of India, a spiritual upheaval is almost always succeeded by a political unity extending over more or less area of the continent, which in its turn helps to strengthen the spiritual aspiration that brings it to being. But the spiritual aspirations that preceded the rise of the Mahratta or the Sikh empire was entirely reactionary. We seek in vain to find in the court of Poona or Lahore even a ray of reflection of that intellectual glory which surrounded the courts of the Moguls.

much less the brilliance of Malava or Vijayanagar. It was intellectually the darkest period of Indian history, and both these meteoric empires representing the upheaval of mass-fanaticism and hating culture with all their hearts, lost all their motive power as soon as they had succeeded in destroying the rule of the hated Mahomedans.

Then there came again a period of confusion. Friends and foes, the Mogul empire and its destroyers, and the till then peaceful foreign traders, French and English, all joined in a *melée* of fight. For more than half a century there was nothing but war and pillage and destruction, and when the smoke and dust cleared, England was stalking victoriously over the rest. There has been half a century of peace, and law and order under the sway of Britain. Time alone will prove if it is the order of progress or not.

There have been a few religious movements amongst the Indian people during

the British rule, following the same line as was taken up by northern Indian sects during the sway of the empire of Delhi. They are the voices of the dead or the dying—the feeble tones of a terrorised people, pleading for permission to live. They are ever eager to adjust their spiritual or social surroundings according to the tastes of the conquerors—if they are only left the right to live, especially with the sects under the English domination, when social differences with the conquering race are more glaring than the spiritual. The Hindu sects of the century seemed to have set one ideal of truth before them—the approval of their English masters. No wonder that these sects have mushroom lives to live. The vast body of the Indian people religiously hold aloof from them and the only popular recognition they get is the jubilation of the people when they die.

But possibly for sometime yet it cannot be otherwise.



HINDU CONCEPTION OF THE ABSOLUTE.

ALL human thoughts and their conclusions are fraught with the same limitations and imperfections from which human nature itself suffers. Consequently one man's conclusion in certain matters is as good as another's. If that is true of individuals it must be true of races. One race may be different from another but both of them are equally right in certain things, especially if those things are of the nature of the mysterious and unseen.

Let us for instance take up the Hindu and the Western conceptions of the Absolute. If we leave out the claim of superiority of the one over the other, we will find that both of them are equally right in the sense that to each its own particular conception is an

elaborated and highly convincing truth.

The Western Absolute is logical in the sense that it is the notion or Idea that includes all reality. On the contrary, the Hindu Absolute is a substance that pervades and constitutes all Reality. In other words the Western (the Hegelian) Absolute is the name given to all Reality. And by Reality is meant that wholeness of experience which suffers no contradictions for It resolves all contradictions into a grand synthesis—the Idea.

The Hindu conception, on the other hand, gives us another Absolute. Our (the Hindu) Absolute or Brahman suffers no contradiction: It resolves none of the contradictions into a dialectical synthesis, for It transcends

all. The Absolute is a Substance that runs like "a golden thread of continuity" through all that is apparent and contradictory. In the West—to find a parallel—we have some assertions of Plato and Plotinus, a great deal of Bergson's philosophy and all of Spinoza's. In the main however, the Hindu conception of the Absolute differs from even that of Spinoza in this: to Spinoza his Substance, the entire statement (*sub specie eternitatis*) is logical and geometrical and not fully experiential. Compare with that the assertion on realisation by Sankara: Shivoham, Shivoham! Sankara's conception, which is fully representative of the whole Hindu race, is a conception born of experience. After he had in his conscious experience become one with the Absolute, he proclaims to the world, "I am He," or, "That art Thou."

To recapitulate, we must observe here that to the Hindu the Absolute is an all-pervasive, real Substance, infinite and eternal—Ananta-Sanatana. And the Hindu further holds that man not only can logically talk about the Absolute as Hegel does, but he insists that He must be lived, realised and experienced to the extent that the so-called finite man can and does become identical with Him. In a few words: The Hindu Absolute that we come across in Hindu philosophy is the same as the Absolute of Hindu religion. We know Him by becoming one with Him. He being a Substance running through us as much as through the rest of the universe, we can know Him if we only know ourselves. "He and I are one!" is no vain exclamation

but a mighty truth, and only those who believe in living and realising Truth are the ones that can grasp and love it.

One might ask how you experience the Absolute in that fashion. In answer I recommend him to the treatises of Swami Vivekananda who points out the way of such realisation with the certainty and simplicity of a Master.

As we said in the beginning, one man's view of certain things is just as good as another's. Similarly the views of two races may be of the same consequence. We do not say that the Western Absolute compares unfavourably with ours, but we do say very emphatically that our Absolute is the only Absolute that is good for us. Judge by results! In our history we find many men who through realisation became the Absolute,—Buddha, the Sages of the Upanishads, the great Sankara, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and others. Compare with those the one Jesus (who was an Easterner), Socrates, and St. Francis of the West. Here then is the field where India remains unmatched. And since our speciality as a race is to realise God-consciousness and since we produce God-conscious men "by the bushel" (as said Arthur Ryder) even in these days, we have nothing to blush for. And judged by results, the Hindu conception of the Absolute is a majestic success. For does not the Eastern God of the West, Jesus Christ, say, "By their fruits ye shall know them"?

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA, THE WORLD-TEACHER.

SRI Ramakrishna is the unique spiritual character of modern India. His whole life is a life of burning renunciation and austere penances, a life full of inspiration and with the prophetic vision of the glorious future of our motherland. He is a beacon-light as it

were to the millions of souls who are groping their way in the wilderness of the world. From his very boyhood he was conscious of the Divinity within himself and knew what part he had to play in the drama of life. The Divine message he delivered to the

world has indeed struck mankind with wonder. He explored the realm of spirituality, brought out thence the precious gems, as the result of his life-long spiritual Sadhanas and threw them before the thirsty souls seeking to know of God and Religion. In fact, his life is a revelation to us! He began his life as a devotee of the Divine Mother, a temple-priest, worshipping Her with intense faith and fervent devotion. The story of the great Bhakta Ramprasad having intimately realised the Divine Mother impelled him further to realise Her in this very life and in a short time Sri Ramakrishna transcended the limits of Vaidhi or formal Bhakti and stepped into the region of Râgânugâ or Supreme Bhakti, in which the passionate longings of the pure heart are alone the highest urge and the truest guide in the spiritual path. He began to meditate deeply, prayed to the Mother incessantly, calling upon Her to manifest Herself before him. He would sing devotional songs of Ramprasad, bathed in tears, and would wave lights before the Goddess by the hour. Soon he soared high on the wings of *tapasya*—spiritual practices—and as the fruition of his heart's mad longings saw the Divine Mother.

Having been blessed with the Vision Beatific, and drinking deep of the bliss of ecstasy, Sri Ramakrishna set himself to practise all the most difficult Sadhanas of the Tantras with the help of a Brahmin lady who, as was ordained by the Lord, came to the temple-garden to initiate him. This lady became struck with awe seeing the marvellous progress of her disciple in the course of his spiritual practices. As soon as he attempted to perform a particular Sadhana of the Tantra as instructed by this lady, he would be seen losing himself completely in Samadhi. Thus he finished in no time the whole course of Tantrik Sadhanas.

Sri Ramakrishna, having finished practices of the Tantra, thought of practising the Vaishnava tenets and he took up accordingly

Sri Ramachandra, the ideal hero who renounced the throne and the kingdom for saving His father from incurring the sin of untruth. Sri Ramachandra is worshipped as God-Incarnate throughout the length and breadth of India. Mahavira, the monkey-God, was the ideal devotee of Sri Ramachandra—a faithful servant who served Him whole-heartedly during His exile. He surpassed all other devotees of God in point of his burning faith, intense devotion and loving services to his master, Sri Ramachandra. Now, Sri Ramakrishna held Mahavira, the Prince of Bhaktas, as his ideal and began his Sadhana. Sadhana means to wholly saturate the mind with the thoughts and ideas of a particular object of worship. Sri Ramakrishna set himself to this spiritual practice with all his heart and soul and strove hard to see Sri Ramachandra. He behaved himself like Mahavira in all his actions, lived in the grove of Panchavati,—a cluster of five trees—as the place of his Sadhana at Dakshineswar was called. His mind was occupied with no other thoughts than those of Sri Ramachandra and he spent days and nights in earnestly calling upon Him, so much so that he entirely forgot himself and his whole mind became riveted as it were on Him. He was at last blessed with the vision of Sri Rama and his heart was filled with the Divine ecstasy. Sometime after he had realised this a Sadhu came in the course of his travels to the temple-garden at Dakshineswar. He had a small image of Sri Ramachandra whom he addressed as Ramlala—a pet name of the boy Ramachandra,—‘Lala’ meaning boy. He worshipped the image as his Ishtam (the chosen Ideal) and fondled and caressed it as if it were as dear to him as life itself. He was so intensely devoted to this image of Sri Rama that he could not part with it even for his life. Sri Ramakrishna found the image *living* and not a mere image, as others saw it, and also noticed that through the Sadhu's burning devotion, it actually talked, played and accepted offerings

from him. (This may sound ludicrous to many a reader but when the mind attains the highest spiritual states, the world no longer appears as we see it, but becomes transfigured, and the Spirit communes with the Spirit. Sri Ramakrishna himself told many of his disciples and the visitors who used to go to him about this Sadhu and his *living* image. Hence we cannot deny it. The Sadhu stayed some time with Sri Ramakrishna and was immensely benefited in spirituality by coming in contact with his sublime personality. He found also that Ramlala, his beloved Ishtam, became more and more attached to Sri Ramakrishna and would be always with him and would very seldom come to himself. Sri Ramakrishna, whose whole mind was intent on Sri Rama, saw Ramlala following him wherever he went, sometimes talking and sometimes playing with him. It was no hallucination of his brain, he actually saw these things with his Divine vision. Sometimes he would take Ramlala to the Ganges to bathe and when he would become turbulent and play and jump in the water, Sri Ramakrishna would forcibly drag him out of the water and take him to task for his childish pranks. One day Sri Ramakrishna was talking with the Sadhu about Sri Rama and His heroic exploits, when the Sadhu said, "I see Ramlala is not so much attached to me as before. He is always with you and hardly comes to me, and I find he feels himself much happier in your company now. Let him live with you. I implore you to take care of him and also to bless me so that whenever I desire to see him, I may see him manifested on the lotus of my heart." So saying, the Sadhu took leave of him and left the temple-garden. The image of Ramlala is still to be found in the temple of Dakshineswar. Sri Ramakrishna saw both Sita and Rama in his spiritual vision and thus his desire was fulfilled.

Later on he desired to *realise* Sri Krishna who is regarded as great an Incarnation of God as Sri Rama. Both these God-men are

worshipped all over India by their numerous devotees, and it is the innate belief of almost every Hindu that they are the greatest Incarnations of God, born to lead man steeped in ignorance across the ocean of Samsara. Sri Ramakrishna's whole mind became possessed, as it were, with the thoughts of Sri Krishna,—how He was intensely loved by the Gopis (cowmaids) of Brindaban, and specially by Sri Radha, the chief of the Gopis, and how they gave up all to become His favourites. Sri Radha's love and devotion to Sri Krishna were indeed marvellous. None can understand her yearnings and deep emotional feelings toward Sri Krishna unless he is freed from carnality. Sri Ramakrishna thought that he could quickly realise Him if he behaved himself as Sri Radha did and no sooner had he thought of it than his mind became filled with the burning devotion for Sri Krishna. We are told that during this time, he dressed himself in female attire, put on ornaments and thought himself to be a maid of Sri Radha. He began to cry unto the Lord, incessantly calling upon Him, and became extremely restless, unable to bear the pangs of separation from Him. Thus he spent a few days in this Sadhana and was at last blessed with the vision of the Lord Sri Krishna.

Having finished the foregoing Sadhanas, Sri Ramakrishna made himself ready for the highest state—the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, a state in which the worshipper and the worshipped become one. None but a few privileged souls can attain to this blissful state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi and when they are once blessed with it, they become lost forever in Brahman and do not return any more to the plane of relativity. We have it in Sri Ramakrishna's parable that a salt-doll desiring to measure the depth of the ocean, stepped into it, melted and became one with it. How could it come back to tell us of the depth of the ocean? It had entirely lost itself in the ocean. So among thousands of souls strug-

gling to attain to this Nirvikalpa Samadhi, a few only can reach it and they, like the salt-doll, become merged in the Absolute Brahman. What then becomes of their gross physical body? It endures only for a short period and then falls off as a dry leaf. But such souls as are marked out by the Almighty Providence to help mankind to tear off the veil of ignorance, come back from the blissful state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi to this world of ours and live amongst us as God-intoxicated men. They open our eyes to spirituality and lead us on to the far-off Land that flows with milk and honey!

As preordained by the Divine Mother, a Sadhu, by name Tota Puri, came to the temple-garden at Dakshineswar where Sri Ramakrishna made his abode, and found in him all the requisite qualities to become a true student of the Vedanta. It is indispensably necessary for a neophyte to seek the aid of a teacher to guide him in the path of religion and unless he is backed by such a man, he can make no progress. We know that to learn the alphabet even, we need the help of a teacher and it is much more so in the case of spirituality. Gurus or spiritual guides are the persons who bring men and God together. Like all men, Sri Ramakrishna also stood in need of a teacher to lead him to the highest realisation of the Vedanta, namely Tat-tvam-asi—Thou art That. Tota Puri expressed his desire to initiate him into the mysteries of the Vedanta. Sri Ramakrishna understood that the Divine Mother willed that he should undergo this Sadhana now and he being an instrument in Her hands consented accordingly. He practised it only for three days and attained to the Nirvikalpa Samadhi. His Guru, Tota Puri, could not believe his eyes and became struck with wonder when he saw him realise the highest state of the Vedanta within three short days. Now, to attain to the state of Tat-tvam-asi, the highest ideal of the Vedanta, to realise the universe as Brahman, and to know Brahman as the One

Reality underlying this phenomenal world, are the most difficult of all spiritual practices. Even men of sharp intellect and bold understanding can hardly comprehend it, much less realise it. But to those blessed souls who realise absolute identity of the individual soul and Brahman, the world of senses vanishes altogether and they find instead the Brahman, the only Reality without name and form, the One without a second, pervading the universe. So long as we have the body-consciousness in us, we are far from this ideal of the Vedanta. We are in reality the Brahman, says the Vedanta, but this real man is caught in the meshes of intellect by becoming identified with the body and mind, and is subject to the ills that flesh is heir to. This identification takes place through the inscrutable power of Brahman known as Maya, which cannot exist independently of Brahman. But so long as we are under the clutches of this Maya, the universe appears real to us. Maya has produced this universe with its multifarious names and forms and has drawn a veil, as it were, over the Reality behind the phenomenal world. When we are able to tear off this veil of Maya, the real man will manifest himself and then we shall realise our true nature, viz. Brahman. When we see the world through the senses, it appears to us as the world of names and forms, and the same world is transformed into the world of ideas when we see it through the mind. And when we see it as Brahman, then we become conscious of our real being. Hence the Vedanta urges us to discover the 'Tat'—the Ideal—in us and identify ourselves with It. To become Brahman is the highest ideal of the Vedanta.

Tota Puri had practised this Sadhana for a period of forty years with unabated zeal and perseverance and was at last able to reach it. So he could hardly believe his eyes when he saw his disciple had reached the goal so soon. About a year after this incident, Sri Ramakrishna again entered into this blissful state

of Samadhi and remained in it for about six months, totally unconscious of his body and surroundings. He did not know how the days and nights came and passed away. Like the salt-doll he completely lost himself in Brahman. But as he was commissioned by the Divine Mother as a spiritual teacher of mankind to lead Her children to spirituality, he was not allowed to be thus lost in Samadhi. A Sannyasin who happened to come at that time to the temple-garden lived with him for sometime to look after his physical body. He preserved it with great care by forcing some food down his throat every day and sometimes he would have recourse to beating him severely with a stick in order to bring him back to the plane of consciousness a little, and then feed him. Gradually he returned to the plane of relativity. Now everything in the universe appeared to him as wrapped up in the effulgent light of Brahman. He saw the universe transformed into the One Reality and himself as one with It and had no idea whatever of this world of names and forms. In a word, everything changed into the one indestructible Reality, Brahman, for him. During this time he could not pluck flowers or leaves from the trees, nor could he bear the sight of people walking over the green grass. Once it came to pass that two boatmen were quarrelling with each other in their boat and the stronger man, wild with anger, gave a slap on the back of the weaker person. Now, Sri Ramakrishna saw this incident from his room and became suddenly restless with pain, when his nephew came in and enquired into its cause. Sri Ramakrishna told him that he felt himself beaten by one of the boatmen and narrated the event. His nephew found to his great surprise the marks of fingers on his back! The consciousness of having a body of his own had entirely disappeared from him and it had become one with the universal consciousness.

Tota Puri was an out and out Advaitist

and he regarded Sakti or the Power of Brahman as illusory. To him the universe and everything was Maya and he had attained to the Nirvikalpa Samadhi by altogether denying it. "This universe," he used to say, "is in a state of flux, unstable and hence unreal. Brahman, the underlying Reality, is alone true." Sri Ramakrishna pointed out to him that Sakti and Brahman are non-separate. Brahman has manifested Itself as the universe through Sakti, in other words, the universe is Brahman Itself. As we cannot think of the fire apart from its burning power, the milk from its whiteness, so we cannot think of the Brahman apart from Its Sakti; when we take the one we must take the other also. Hence the Sakti is Brahman Itself and is to be regarded as co-existent with It. This Sakti is represented as the Divine Mother and is worshipped by Her devotees. It is She who creates, preserves and destroys the universe. If Brahman is alone taken as the only Reality, *minus* the Universe, It will weigh less, so to speak. So the Brahman *plus* the universe in all its totality should be taken together as Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna thus opened the eyes of his Guru, Tota Puri, who lived with him about a year and went away illumined.

Sri Ramakrishna thought also of practising the ideals of Mahomedanism and Christianity in order to see if there was any truth in them. He was not the man to accept anything on trust until he saw it for himself. Whenever he was bent upon doing anything, he would strain all his nerves to accomplish it, no matter what happened. He brought his mind under his control in such a way that he could apply it fully to any work he would take up and finish it within the least possible time. When he thought of practising Mahomedanism a Mahomedan convert came to the temple-garden, who initiated him into the secret Sadhana of Mahomet. He followed his instructions to the very letter and wholly applied himself to this method of Sadhana. It is

said that during this time he could not enter the temple of any Hindu deities, nor could he even utter their names. Thus he realised Allah in three days and reached the goal. He practised Christianity also and saw the beautiful form of Jesus Christ in his vision. He afterwards gave a description to his disciples about Jesus, saying that he was of a fair complexion, tall and that his nose was a little flat and in order to verify his vision asked them if they had come across any passage in the Bible where such a description of his appearance was given. His vision of the Christ was found to be a real one.

The Divine Mother helped Sri Ramakrishna to undergo all the spiritual practices of the various sects in and outside India and made him see face to face the truths in them. It is the Divine Mother Herself who made Her child go through all this wonderful Sadhana to make him a fit instrument for harmonising the diverse views of the multifarious sects and establishing the Ideal of the Universal Religion which the Vedic Rishis had realised ages ago, viz. That which exists is one, it is called by various names. In other words, it is Sri Ramakrishna who was commissioned by the Divine Mother to hold this grand Ideal before mankind and preach it all over the world through his illustrious disciple, Swami Vivekananda. He realised through his life-long Sadhana that the Almighty God is One and that He is called by various names in different countries. Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mahomet are but the different manifestations of God. All religions are true and they are but the different paths leading to Him. And whoever is true to his own religion will ultimately reach Him. Sri Krishna also says, "Whoever seeks to realise Me in any manner he likes, I enable him to realise Me in that manner." Thus Sri Ramakrishna has harmonised all the conflicting opinions of the different religions.

India is the motherland of spirituality and her glory consists in realising this supreme Ideal; and so long as we cannot grasp the

true spirit of it, we are not worthy to be called the children of the ancient Vedic Rishis. It is through religion that we can establish our friendly relations with the followers of the other sects, thinking that we are all the children of one Almighty God. The message of Sri Ramakrishna is indeed wonderful. Men of different sects used to visit him at Dakshineswar and were charmed by his broad and catholic views of Religion, and he was the last man to discard any. His teachings are inspiring and suit people of all sects. Each sect thinks that Sri Ramakrishna belonged to his own fold and draws in the nectar from this fountainhead of spirituality. What was the necessity for him to undergo all the spiritual practices of different sects? It was because he had to establish the Ideal of Universal Religion and show mankind the One Truth underlying all religions. Such a man can indeed be accepted as a world-teacher and we cannot help praying to him to bless us so that we may follow his Ideal, live with one another as brethren and strive to solve the problem of life, by attaining its Goal, which is Brahman.

SWAMI VISHUDDHANANDA.

EPISTLES OF
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

CXLV.

[*Extracts from a letter to an English disciple.*]

Switzerland, 1896.

The whole world is child's play, preaching, teaching and all included. "Know him to be the Sannyasin who neither hates nor desires." What is to be desired in this little mud-puddle of an earth with its ever-recurring misery, disease and death? "He who has given up all desires, he alone is happy."

In this beautiful spot, in this rest and eternal peacefulness, I am now catching a glimpse of it. * * Even of those that are struggling hard, few ever reach the goal, for the senses are powerful: they drag him down. * * "A good world!" "A happy world!" "Social progress," are equally intelligible with "hot ice," "dark light," etc. If it were good it would not be the world. The soul foolishly thinks of manifesting the Infinite in finite matter—the intelligence in gross particles, and at last finds out its error and tries to escape. This going back is the beginning of religion and its method, destruction of self—that is, love. Not love for wife or child, or anybody else, but love for everything else except the little self.

Never be deluded by the foolish talk of which you will hear a lot in the world, about "human progress" and such stuff. There is no progress, if not digression. In our society there are one set of evils, in some other,—another. So with periods of history. In the middle ages there were more robbers, now, more cheats: at one period there is less idea of married life, in another more prostitution: in one, more physical agony, in another, a thousand-fold more mental.

So with knowledge! Did not gravitation and all the "ologies" and "isms" exist already in Nature? What difference does it make to know that they exist? Are you happier than the Red Indians? The only knowledge to have is to know that it is all humbug—but few, very few will ever know that! "Know the Atman alone and give up all other vain words." This is the only knowledge we gain after this knowledge about the Universe—this is the only work,—to call upon mankind to "Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached." It is renunciation that is meant by religion, nothing else! Tyaga!

Swami Vivekananda.

CXLVI.

(Translated from Bengali.)

1895.

My dear —,

The books that S— sent have arrived. I forgot to mention this. Please inform him about it.

Let me write down something for you all:

1. Know partiality to be the chief cause of all evil. That is to say, if you show towards any more love than somebody else, rest assured, you will be sowing the seeds of future troubles.

2. If anybody comes to you to speak ill of any of his brothers, refuse to listen to him *in toto*. It is a great sin to listen even. In that lies the germ for future troubles.

3. Moreover, bear with everyone's shortcomings. Forgive offences by the million. And if you love all unselfishly, all will by degrees come to love one another. As soon as they fully understand that the interests of one depend upon those of others, everyone of them will give up jealousy. To do something conjointly is not in our very national character. Therefore you must try to inaugurate that spirit with the utmost care, and wait patiently. To tell you the truth, I do not find among you any distinction of great or small: everyone has the capacity to manifest, in times of need, the highest energy. I see it. Look for instance how S— will remain always constant to his spot; his steadfastness is a great foundation rock. How successfully K— and J— brought about the Town Hall meeting; it was indeed a momentous task! N— has done much work in Ceylon and elsewhere. How extensively has T— travelled and sown seeds of gigantic future works! Whenever I think of the wonderful renunciation of H—, about his steadiness of intellect and forbearance,—I get a new access of strength! In T—, G—, B—, S—, to mention a few, in every one of you there is tremendous energy. If you still entertain any doubt as to Sri Ramakrishna's being a jewel-expert, what then is the difference between you and a mad man! Behold hundreds of men and women of this country are beginning to worship our Lord as the greatest of all Avatars! Steady! Every great work is done slowly. * *

He is at the helm, what fear! You are all of infinite strength—how long does it take you to keep off petty jealousy, or egoistic ideas! The moment such propensity comes, resign yourselves to the Lord! Just make over your body and mind to His work, and all troubles will be at an end forever.

There will not be room enough, I see, in the house where you are at present living. A commodious building is needed. That is

to say, you need not huddle together in one room. If possible, not more than two should live in the same room. There should be a big hall, where to keep the books.

Every morning there should be a little reading from the Scriptures, which K— and others may superintend by turns. In the evening there should be another class, with a little practice in meditation, and Sankirtanas etc. You may divide the work, and set apart one day for Yoga, a day for Bhakti, another for Jnana and so forth. It will be excellent if you fix a routine like this, so that outside people also may join in the evening classes. And every Sunday, from ten in the morning up till night, there should be a continuous succession of classes and Sankirtanas etc. That is for the public. If you take the trouble to continue this kind of routine-work for some time, it will gradually make itself easy and smooth. There should be no smoking in that hall, for which another place must be set apart. If you can take the trouble to bring about this state of things by degrees, I shall think a great advance is made.

What about a certain magazine that H— was trying to publish? If you can manage to start one, it will indeed be nice.

Yours affectionately,

Vivekananda.

WITH THE SWAMIS IN AMERICA.

IV.

ONE thing was clear. Swami Turiyananda did not care much for public work, organisation and all that. He was for the few, not for big crowds. His work was with the individual,—character-building. He seemed to be of the opinion that with organisation the spiritual work is apt to suffer. "Lectures," he used to say, "are to reach the public, but the real work can be done only through close personal contact. Both are necessary. And every one has his own way of working. We must each follow our own way. Swami Abhedananda will reach many people through his lectures. But that is not my way. And I have special instructions from Swamiji. He does not want me to lecture much. Swamiji asked me

before he sent me here: 'Can you lecture like I have done?' I said: 'Of course not, Swamiji, what are you saying?' 'Well then,' he said, 'do not trouble yourself about lecturing. You just live the life. Be an example to them. Let them see how Samyasin live!' So, you see, I am only obeying Swamiji."

Still, the Swami could not avoid lecturing altogether, for he was in full charge of the New York work when Swami Abhedananda was absent. His lectures were usually short. As they were given at the Vedanta Home, before small audiences, he could follow his own method. First he would ask the audience to meditate for a few minutes and then he would begin his talk,—interesting, instructive talks, always pointing out the practical side of religion and illustrating his points with stories from the Puranas and other scriptures. These talks were very helpful and they were much appreciated. The questions and answers following these talks were also most interesting.

But as said before, the real life-building work was done with the individual. As a sculptor takes and fashions the clay into shape, so the Swami Turiyananda took his students and worked and chiseled away at them. With steady hand and aim he fashioned the character of his students. It was done through close, personal contact. And he threw his whole heart into his work. He did it with a purpose; he did it with intensity. But it was all done in such a natural way that one never had the idea of being taught. He simply lived with us and that perennial spring of spirituality that was somewhere hidden within him, followed its free and natural course. It was inexhaustible. When sitting together, when walking, when taking our food, the stream flowed on without interruption. I could not understand how the Swami could always find some topic of spiritual conversation. I asked him once: "Swami, how is it possible always to speak of holy subjects; are you never getting exhausted?" He replied: "You see, I have lived this life from my youth, it has become part and parcel of me. And Mother keeps the supply filled up. Her store can never be exhausted. What goes out, She at once fills up again." I could only marvel and be silent.

I have never been a good conversationalist myself, but I have always been a good listener. So

when the Swami and I went out for long walks together, he would do almost all the talking. And I was so happy to listen to him, I would feel so inspired. He talked with fire and enthusiasm and he would lose himself entirely in his subject, forgetting everything else for the time being. He impressed every one who heard him and all classes of people felt attracted towards him.

How precious the Swami's company was to me! How I enjoyed these long walks with him, nay, every moment that I was in his presence!

Let me give just one rather amusing example of the nature of these talks and how the Swami threw himself heart and soul into his conversation, oblivious of time or surroundings.

Once the Swami and I were walking together in one of the most fashionable avenues of New York. The more interested he became in his subject the faster he began to walk and the louder his voice became. This in itself was enough to attract the attention of passers-by. But you can imagine the surprise of the fashionable New York people when suddenly the Swami halted in the street and with one arm raised in the air, said to me, almost shouting: "Be a lion, be a lion, break the cage and be free! Take one big jump and the work is done."

How many stories the Swami told us to illustrate what he was saying. "There is a species of snake that lays its eggs and then coils around them. As soon as an egg hatches, the mother snake swallows the little one. But some of these newly hatched babies are so quick and clever that they at once jump outside the mother coil and so escape their dire fate. And so," the Swami said, "it is with those that are born free. From their birth they are free and mother Maya can get no hold on them."

As I was then about to take a serious step which was likely to affect the career of my entire life, the Swami cautioned me so that I might not act on the impulse of the moment, but first consider well what I was going to do. "There was a hunter," he said, "who had been walking all day in the forest but had not been able to get any quarry. Dejected and tired he rested under a tree. His hunting companion, a hawk, was sitting close beside him. The hunter was very thirsty but no water could be found. Then he noticed that

water was slowly dripping down from the tree. Delighted, he put down his cup to catch the precious water. Dip, dip, it fell down into the cup, drop by drop. At last the cup was filled and greedily the hunter stretched out his hand to take it. But just before his hand reached the cup, the hawk with a swift movement upset it. The water was lost. The hunter terribly annoyed scolded the hawk and replaced the cup. Again the cup was slowly filling up and when it was filled, the hunter, happy to get a drink of fresh water at last, once more stretched out his hand to take it. But the hawk upset the cup as before. The hunter was now beside himself with rage and he killed his hawk with one terrible blow. He placed the cup again, certain of getting water this time. And while he was waiting for the cup to fill up he looked up to see where the water came from. And what did he see? A large snake was hanging down from a branch high up in the tree. Its mouth was wide open and from its mouth drop by drop poison was falling into the cup. This was what he had taken to be water. The hawk had twice saved his life. And he had killed her. With unspeakable regret the hunter buried his old friend who had served him many years and at last had saved his life. So you see," the Swami said, "do not throw away what may be your best friend. Consider carefully."

Need I say that such stories made me pause and think?

And then there were many little incidents that impressed me. One evening I came to the Vedanta home and said: "Swami, there is a very fine concert to-night. It is an oratorio and you will like it. You have never heard our Western music, let us go!"

"But why should you care for those things?" the Swami said, "you have had enough of that now. Let us stay here and read something nice and have good talk. These amusements we must give up now, if we want Mother."

"Of course, Swami," I said, "I shall be very glad to stay here with you. I thought that perhaps you would like it." And we spent a delightful evening together. But I thought: How genuine is the Swami's renunciation! Here he is in a new country and even then he does not care for sight-seeing and all those things. He has no curiosity for new things, he is perfectly happy and contented

within himself and by talking of Mother. Where shall we find another man like him?

The Swami impressed people in his own, simple way. We used to go to a little vegetarian restaurant together. It was a quiet place and very few people went there, so we could take our meal and talk freely together. A young woman was in charge of the dining room and she served the few guests that frequented the place. She was a happy, simple, country girl, always ready with a smile and a kind remark. The Swami liked her, she was so open and free, but perfectly modest. Once the Swami asked her: "What is your name?" "My name is Mary," she replied. "Oh, how beautiful," said the Swami. "Mary was the mother of Jesus." The girl was awfully pleased. "Well, now, Swamiji," she said, "I never had thought of it in that way. It does seem like a connecting link, does it not? How nice of you to remind me." "Oh, yes," the Swami said, "I shall now always think of you as the mother of the Lord Jesus. Be sure of that! I love Jesus, he also was a Sannyasin and he gave his life for others." The girl became devoted to him and she was so happy when she would see the Swami come. Somehow or other, the Swami always left a lasting impression.

It was not often that the Swami spoke about his own life and experiences. It was mostly about his Master and Swamiji. His love, devotion and admiration for Swamiji knew no bounds. But now and then a story about himself would leak out when I was with him alone.

One day he was impressing on my mind the necessity of practising what I was learning. "Be always sincere," he said, "and be yourself. Be true! Have no axe to grind, go always straight for the goal and be strong. When I was a young man I was reading and practising Vedanta. I tried always to remember that I was the Atman and not this body. I was in the habit of taking my bath in the early morning. One day I went to take my bath as usual and I was just about to enter the river, when, to my horror, I saw a crocodile not far away. I drew back. But then it flashed on my mind: What are you doing? You are repeating day and night, Soham, 'I am He,' and now, all of a sudden, you forget your ideal and you think that you are this body! Shame on you! I thought, Siva, Siva, that is true. And at once I entered the

river. The crocodile was there but did not move. I bathed as usual, but I noticed that I was hurrying up to get through with my bath quickly. Then I said to myself: No, I shall not hurry, I shall take my bath as usual. And so I did. The crocodile disappeared without paying the least attention to me."

All this may lose a great deal by writing it down. The point is that Swami's words acted like medicine administered in the right dose at the right time. It came so appropriate, just when needed. This made it so helpful. And it was all so spontaneous.

Once I felt a little dejected and the Swami noticing it said: When we were living at the old Math, now many years ago, it happened once that I was very sad. I could not make any progress for some time and everything looked dark to me. I was walking up and down on the flat roof of the Math. It was evening and the moon was hidden by clouds. Sleep was impossible for me, I was so unhappy. Then suddenly from behind the clouds the moon emerged and everything looked bright and beautiful. As soon as I saw this, I thought, See, the moon was there all the time but I could not see her. So the Atman is also ever present, shining in its own glory, but I did not see it. The cloud of ignorance stood between the Atman and my intellect overshadowing my mind. And at once I felt strong again, my doubts all gone.

On another occasion the Swami told me how, many years ago when he was travelling on foot as a Sannyasin, in India, the thought was tormenting him, that he was living a useless, vagabond life. "Every one is doing something in this world, but what am I doing?" he thought. "It became very painful," the Swami said, "and I could not shake off this thought. I thought of myself as a little, insignificant, useless creature. I was utterly dejected and threw myself down under a tree. There I fell asleep and I had a dream. I saw myself lying on the ground and then to my surprise I saw that my body began to expand in all directions. It went on expanding and expanding, there was no end to it. At last it seemed to cover the whole world. Then it occurred to me: 'See how great you are, you are covering the whole world. Why do you think your life is useless? A grain of Truth will cover a whole world of delusion. Get

up, be strong and realise the Truth. That is the greatest life.' I awoke and jumped up and all my doubts had vanished."

The Swami was always encouraging us. "Keep at it, keep at it," he would say. "Clench your fists and say: I shall conquer! Now or never,—make that your motto. Even in this life I must see God. That is the only way. Never postpone. What you know to be right, do that and do it at once, do not let any chance go by. The way to failure is paved with good intentions. That will not do. Remember, this life is for the strong, the persevering; the weak go to the wall. And always be on your guard. Never give in. Do you know what Jesus said? 'He who endureth until the last shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Never think that you are safe; temptations come as long as we live." And then the Swami told the following story.

In India there was an old Sannyasin. He lived in the forest near a village. He never went far away from his little hut and very few persons came his way. The villagers would come now and then to be instructed by him and as they came they would bring a little grain as an offering to the holy man. On this the Sannyasin subsisted. One day, when he was seated in his hut, he heard the sound of tinkling anklets, as are used by women in India. Before he realised what he was doing, he was up and about to leave his cabin to have a look at the woman. He had not seen a woman's face for thirty years. Then he suddenly halted. What am I doing? he thought. For thirty years I have avoided women and now in my old age I am tempted and run out like a dog to look at a woman's face? Oh, wretched legs that took me so far, I shall punish you, never shall you carry this body again. He sat down on the spot. And the story goes, that he never moved from there, dying a few years later without having moved an inch from that place. Such dangers there are, concluded the Swami, but also such perseverance and will-power.

The Swami often spoke of Jesus. Once in the Shanti Ashrama, at the breakfast table, one of us spilled a little salt, and we joked about it, as in America we say that spilling salt brings a quarrel. The quarrel is avoided by taking a little of the salt that is spilt and by throwing it over the left shoulder. So the culprit did this and we all joined

in the fun. The Swami himself was fond of a joke. But after we had quieted down he seemed to become thoughtful. Then he said in a low voice, as if speaking to himself: "Ye are the salt of the earth." Then he mused a moment and said again as if speaking to himself: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Again a short pause: Then,—"I that speak unto thee am he." The Swami drew a deep breath. Then in a loud and intense voice he addressed us: "Can you feel the conviction, the realisation back of these sayings, the authority? Yes, truly, Jesus was the Son of God. What an inspiration these lives are! We should think about these great souls. No wonder his teachings survived through all these centuries. And then our Master came," the Swami continued in a soft voice, "he came to give new life and interpretation to the old teaching. He was the embodiment of all that came before him and then he added something. He taught that all religions when sincerely followed lead to one and the same goal. And he had realised everything that he taught. That was a wonderful life. It will take the world a long time to understand and appreciate him. He never took any credit to himself. It was always: 'I know nothing, my Divine Mother knows everything.' He was all humility and at the same time he was all strength. We have travelled almost over the whole of India, but never have we seen another like him."

A BRAHMACHARIN.

VIVEKACHUDAMANI.

स्वस्य इन्द्रुर्निर्गुणस्याक्रियस्य

प्रत्यम्बोभानन्दरूपस्य बुद्धेः ।

ज्ञान्त्या प्राप्तो जीवभावो न सत्यो

मोहापाये नास्त्यवस्तुस्वभावात् ॥१६६॥

196. The Jivahood of the Atman, the Witness, which is beyond qualities and beyond activity, and which is realised within as Knowledge and Bliss Absolute—has been superimposed by the delusion of the Buddhi, and is not real. And because it

is by nature an unreality, it ceases to exist when the delusion is gone.

As Knowledge and Bliss Absolute—These are its essence, and therefore can never depart from It, as heat from fire.]

यावद्भ्रान्तिस्तावदेवास्य सत्ता

मिथ्याज्ञानोज्जृम्भितस्य प्रमादात् ।

रज्ज्वां सर्पो भ्रान्तिकालीन एव

भ्रान्तेर्नाशे नैव सर्पोऽपि तद्वत् ॥१६७॥

197. It exists only so long as the delusion lasts, being caused by indiscrimina- tion due to delusion. The snake exists in the rope only so long as the mistake lasts, and there is no more snake when the delusion has vanished. Similar is the case here.

अनादित्वमविद्यायाः कार्यस्यापि तथेष्यते ।

उत्पन्नायां तु विद्यायामविद्यकमनाद्यपि ॥१६८॥

प्रबोधे स्वप्नवत्सर्वे सहमूलं विनश्यति ।

अनाद्यपीदं नो नित्यं प्रागभागे इव स्फुटम् ॥१६९॥

198-9. *Avidyá* or Nescience and its effects are likewise considered as beginning- less. But with the rise of *Vidya* or Realisa- tion, the entire effects of *Avidyá*, even though beginningless, are destroyed to- gether with their root—like dreams on waking up from sleep. It is clear that the phenomenal universe, even though begin- ningless, is not eternal,—like previous non-existence.

[*Their root*—i. e. *Avidya*.

Previous non-existence—*Prágabháva*—a term of Hindu logic. When we say a thing comes into being at a definite point of time, we imply also that there was non-existence of that particular thing prior to the moment of its birth. And this 'non- existence' is obviously beginningless. But it ceases as soon as the thing comes into being. Similarly, *Avidya* which means absence of *Vidya* or knowl- edge, even though beginningless, disappears when realisation comes.]

अनादेरपि विध्वंसः प्रागभावस्य वीक्षितः ।

यद्बुद्ध्यापाधिसम्बन्धात्परिकल्पितमात्मनि ॥२००॥

जीवत्वं न ततोऽन्यन्तु स्वप्नवत्सु विवक्षयाः ।

सम्बन्धत्वात्मनो बुद्ध्यामिथ्याज्ञानपुरःसरः ॥२०१॥

200-1. A previous non-existence, even though beginningless, is observed to have an end. So the Jivahood, which is imagined to be in the Atman through its relation with superimposed attributes such as the Buddhi, is not real; whereas the other (the Atman) is essentially different from it. The relation between the Atman and Buddhi is due to a false knowledge.

[*Superimposed attributes*: Just as a crystal placed near a red flower seems to appear as red. Or when we look at a thing behind a curtain through an aperture, as the aperture becomes bigger and bigger we see more and more of the thing behind; but we erroneously think that the thing is growing, whereas, in reality all the change takes place in the curtain only. Similarly we see the Atman through the covering of Prakriti or Nature of which Buddhi etc. are manifestations, and Nature which is continually changing, leads us to think that the Atman back of it is changing too, which is a mistake.]

विनिवृत्तिर्भवेत्तस्य सम्यग्ज्ञानेन नान्यथा ।

ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वविज्ञानं सम्यग्ज्ञानं श्रुतेर्मतम् ॥२०२॥

202. The cessation of that superimposi- tion takes place through perfect knowl- edge, and by no other means. Perfect knowledge, according to the Srutis, con- sists in the realisation of the identity of the individual Soul and Brahman.

तदात्मानात्मनोः सम्यग्बिभेकेनैव सिध्यति ।

ततो विवेकः कर्तव्यः प्रत्यक्षात्मसदात्मनोः ॥२०३॥

203. This realisation is attained by a perfect discrimination between the Self and non-Self. Therefore one must strive for the discrimination between the indivi- dual Soul and the eternal Self.

जलं पद्भ्रुवदत्यन्तं पद्भ्रुपाथे जलं स्फुटम् ।

यथा भाति तथात्मापि दीपाभावे स्फुटप्रभः ॥२०४॥

204. Just as the water which is very muddy again appears as transparent water,

when the mud is removed, so the Atman also manifests Its undimmed lustre when the taint has been removed.

[Water is naturally pure, but it is polluted by foreign substances mixing with it. These impurities can be removed by filtration, distillation etc. So the fancied impurity of the Soul can be removed by discrimination, which shows that it is Nescience that hides the real nature of the Self.]

असन्नितृप्तौ तु सदात्मना स्फुटं

प्रतीतिरेतस्य भवेत्प्रतीचः ।

ततो निरासः करणीय एव

सदात्मनः साध्वहमादिवस्तुनः ॥२०५॥

205. When the unreal ceases to exist, this very individual Soul is definitely realised as the eternal Self. Therefore one must make it a point to completely remove things like egoism etc. from the eternal Self.

[*Things*—which are in reality superimpositions.]

अतो नायं परात्मा स्याद्विज्ञानमयशब्दभाक् ।

विकारित्वाज्जडत्वाच्च परिच्छिन्नत्वहेतुतः ।

दृश्यत्वाद्ब्यभिचारित्वान्नानित्यो नित्य इष्यते ॥२०६॥

206. This Knowledge Sheath (Vijnanamaya) that we have been speaking of, cannot be the Supreme Self for the following reasons—because it is subject to change, because it is insentient, is a limited thing, an object of the senses, and is not constantly present: An unreal thing cannot indeed be taken for the real Atman.

[*Subject to change.*—Whereas the Atman is changeless, Knowledge Absolute, unlimited, the eternal Subject, and the universal substratum of all things. Just as the rope is the only reality with regard to the mistaken snake-idea etc.]

आनन्दप्रतिबिम्बचुम्बिततनुर्दृष्टिस्तमोजृम्भिता

स्यादानन्दमयः प्रियादिगुणकः स्नेहार्थलाभोदयः ।

पुण्यस्यानुभवे विभाति कृतिनामानन्दरूपः स्वयं

सर्वो नन्दति यत्र साधु तनुभृन्मात्रः प्रयत्नं विना ॥

207. The Blissful Sheath (Anandamaya) is that modification of Nescience which

manifests itself catching a reflection of the Atman which is Bliss absolute; whose attributes are pleasure and the rest; which appears in view when some object agreeable to oneself presents itself. It makes itself spontaneously felt to the fortunate during the fruition of their virtuous deeds; from which every corporeal being derives great joy without the least effort.

[*Modification of Nescience*—The experience of the Sushupti state will be spoken in the next Sloka to be the typical enjoyment of the Anandamaya kosha. And deep sleep is always a state of intense ignorance. Hence this Sheath must be a modification of Nescience.

[*Pleasure and the rest*—The reference is to the Taittiriya Upa. II. v., where *Priya*, *Moda* and *Pramoda* (various degrees of enjoyment) are said to be the attributes of the Anandamaya kosha.]

आनन्दमयकोशस्य सुषुप्तौ स्फूर्तिरुत्कटा ।

स्वप्नजागरयोरीषदिष्टसंदर्शनादिना ॥२०८॥

208. The Blissful Sheath has its fullest play during profound sleep, while in the dreaming and wakeful states it has only a partial manifestation, occasioned by the sight of agreeable objects and so forth.

[*Sight.....so forth*—actual sense perception (in the waking state) or memory-impressions (in dream).]

नैवायमानन्दमयः परात्मा

सोपाधिकत्वात् प्रकृतेर्विकारात् ।

कार्यत्वहेतोः सुकृतक्रियाया

विकारसङ्गतसमाहितत्वात् ॥२०९॥

209. Nor is the Blissful Sheath the Supreme Self, because it is endowed with changeable attributes, because it is a modification of Prakriti, is the effect of past good deeds, and imbedded in the other Sheaths which are modifications.

[*Imbedded in the other Sheaths*—The reference is again to the Taittiriya Upa., 2nd Chapter, where the five Koshas are spoken of as being similar in shape and one inside the other, the Annamaya or Material Sheath being the outermost and Anandamaya the innermost.] (To be continued.)

NEWS AND NOTES.

As already announced, the 57th Birthday Anniversary of the Swami Vivekananda comes off on the 26th January, 1919. Reports of the celebrations may be kindly sent as early as possible for inclusion in the P. B.

On the 12th Dec. 1918 the birthday anniversary of the Swami Premananda was celebrated with becoming solemnity at the Belur Math. Special Puja, Homa and offerings were made to Sri Ramakrishna on the occasion and the assembled Bhaktas performed Bhajan and Sankirtan before a tastefully decorated picture of the Swami. This was the first anniversary of the Swami since his passing away, and the occasion roused unforgettable memories in all hearts, for the Swami Premananda was really Love personified.

A correspondent writes:—An association by the name of 'Sri Ramakrishna Samaj' was started at Salem on 14th Dec., 1918. Representatives of the different religions were present. Selections were recited and read from the Isavasya Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita, Bible and Light of Asia by the popular and learned Principal of the local College, Mr. S. K. Yegna Narayana M. A., who presided on the occasion. A short discourse on the Life and Mission of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was given by Mr. Gopala Chettiar of Shevapet Vivekananda Ashrama. The local Moulvi Sahab, a learned Mahomedan gentleman, kept the audience spell-bound by apt quotations from the Koran. The President then exhorted the audience to act up to the noble teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. It has been arranged to hold every Sunday morning reading classes. Arrangements are also being made to conduct a night school under the auspices of the Samaj. A site of 1½ acres has been acquired to put up a permanent building for the Samaj and when everything is ready the building will be handed over to the Ramakrishna Math. The absence of a branch of Sri Ramakrishna Mission is a great desideratum and it is hoped that with the blessings of Guru Maharaj the whole movement will be crowned with success.

THE following is the summary of the report published on Dec. 1, 1918 by Sj. Kiranchandra Dutt, Hony. Secy., Calcutta Vivekananda Society (78/1 Cornwallis Street) of the relief work done by the Society in the district of Rajshahi in North Bengal, during the recent floods:—Two centres were started at Bandaikhara and Panjarbhanga in Thana Nandanali, opened respectively on 19th and 23rd Sept. 1918 and closed on 10th Oct. and 30th Sept. respectively. The total distribution of rice was 98 mds. 7 srs. amongst 684 people of 80 villages. The total amount received for the above work from donations was Rs. 631-3-6, from which was spent Rs. 625-11-3. The balance is Rs. 5-8-3. In this work, we have received help from Brahmachari Muktichaitanya of the R. K. Mission, who was in charge of these two centres. He was assisted by Swami Chidananda and others of the Sree Gouranga Sevashrama of Kokilamukh, Brother Sachindra Mohan Raut, one of our members, and Dr. Ghanada Nath Adhikary of Bandaikhara, to all of whom the Society offers its grateful thanks.

THE serious outbreak of Influenza in villages round about Noakhali has necessitated the opening of relief work there by the Ramakrishna Mission. A similar work has been undertaken by the Ramakrishna Home of Service, Luxa, Benares City for relieving distress prevailing in the neighbourhood of Benares. Medicines, diet and clothing are being distributed to the needy.

UNDER the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission, Mylapore, Madras, relief work on a small scale has been started since the 12th Sept., 1918 out of the proceeds of door-to-door collection. Rice is being distributed among the needy poor in the locality and adjoining quarters where the pinch of scarcity is keenly felt, and the outbreak of Influenza has made things much worse. The Mission collected up to 9th Nov. 144 measures of rice and Rs. 132-12, from which 329 measures of rice have been distributed. It has been decided to increase the scope of the work.