

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

Katha Upa. I. 41. 14.

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

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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[No. 2

TALKS WITH SWAMI TURIYANANDA AT BENARES

12th February, 1921 (continued)

The Swami said : “The Jnani who has realised the Advaita, behaves in the world in the same way as when we happen to bite our tongue—we are not angry with the teeth. As Swamiji said about the mirage, so long as we do not know its real nature, we are deceived by it. But knowing it, we are no longer taken in, though we see it again and again. Thus does the Jnani find the world and is not deluded by it.

“The difference between the Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa Samadhi is one of the degree of bliss, not of kind. For in both of them, the soul revels in God. The Nirvikalpa Samadhi is full of the infinite joy of Self-knowledge. It is not a barren vacuity, or the wall itself may be considered to be in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

“Sri Ramakrishna did not accord the highest place to Nirvana. When I once told him that Nirvana was my ideal, he reproved me for having such a low ideal. He said : ‘The ordinary man yearns for Nirvana. Have you not seen how

cautiously a novice in a game of dice moves his pieces, keeping them in pairs for fear of their being taken, and how anxious he is to reach the centre? But the expert takes no caution. He turns down his pieces deliberately even when the goal was almost reached, that the play may be prolonged. And the dice become so attuned in his hand that he can cast them in any pattern he likes. The 'expert' remains in the world and yet enjoys the fun.'

"When one has attained Liberation, one realises the pure 'motiveless' love. It is a love devoid of every thought of the power and glory of the Beloved. It is a love such as the Gopis bore to the child Krishna.

"The *Adhikârîka Purusha*, the prophets and Incarnations that are born to uplift the world, have not to suffer the bondage of Karma. Their incarnation is not due to their past actions but to the will of God that thereby they may serve mankind. Indra and other gods are lords of 'spheres of enjoyment' and they have their fall. But the Jivan-muktas, the 'living-free', are all-powerful. It is true the *Brahma-Sutras* have stipulated that they cannot create or destroy the world, these functions being special to God. But it is not that they *lack* the power to create etc., they simply do not want to create. Possession of *all* powers is a sine qua non of the true realisation of Mukti.

"Sri Ramakrishna said that Shiva had taken one sip from the Ocean of Brahman, Shuka had touched it and Narada had only seen it.

"Some one has written expressing his disapproval of the constant festivity that has characterised the stay of M — here. But how can it be otherwise? The Bhagavatam says: 'Those who realise the eternal presence of the Lord in their heart, are endowed with perpetual good and beauty, and their life is imbued with an eternal festive joy.'

"Ramanuja came to where Surdas lived, and found Surdas daily complaining to the Lord of his sufferings and sorrows. He said: 'Why, O Surdas, do you thus complain of your sorrow to God? Sing His glory.' That is how Surdas came to compose his hundred thousand verses in praise of the Lord. Surdas who had been blind regained his eye-sight afterwards.

"It is God who does everything. Well says Tulsidas that profit and loss, life and death, fame and slander, all are His gifts. Yes, He is the only doer. But the plan of the world is

not all for Mukti, but also for *bhoga*, enjoyment. Thus people plod on through joy and sorrow till they 'wake up' and are emancipated. God is the motive power of both virtue and vice. And behind *all* of these is His beneficent will. Every action thus tends to an Ultimate Good.

"I had once a long discussion with L — at Dakshineswar. I argued hard to prove that God was not really partial. He at last said: 'You are nice! You seem to look upon God as a little child requiring to be mothered and looked after by you!' I greatly appreciated the remark. You see, he was reared by Sri Ramakrishna himself."

7th March, 1921

In the afternoon of the *Shiva-ratri* day, the Swami said: "I can scarcely bear any criticism of Sankara. What are the credentials of the critics? Mere intellect? But Sankara was the very personification of the Knowledge Divine. If the preceding teachers have no weight with the critics, well, then they themselves will have no weight with posterity."

10th March, 1921

The Swami's conversation was very spirited and inspiring to-day. He dwelt with great fervour on Sannyasa.

"The world," he said, "is full of bewildering variety and extremely complex. All phenomena are the effect of *triguna*. But there is a higher state beyond them, which has been realised by Paramahansas. Whoever sees the underlying unity amidst these varieties has peace eternal. For then there is neither loss nor profit nor good nor evil. We have been reading these few days of the selfish prayers in the *Rudrâdhyâya*: 'Do not destroy my cows. Ever turn thy benignant face on me. Come putting aside thy bow and arrows. And humble my enemies and chastise them.' Well, such prayers come out of selfishness. But when one is rid of body-consciousness, one does not feel these desires. The highest conception is to think that everything is He. Failing that, it is best to think that He is the real agent behind all actions and He is causing us to act."

THE ORIGIN OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S DOCTRINE OF SERVICE

BY THE EDITOR.

It is characteristic of Hindu thought that every stage of its evolution has been marked by a conflict between Jnana and Karma and their subsequent reconciliation. The scheme of life formulated by Hinduism is based on a consideration of the *totality* of life and experience, no aspects of them having been left out. Jnana and Karma represent the two hemispheres of life's rounded whole. Whereas Karma stands for the manifold experience and efforts at attaining the objects of varied desires, Jnana stands for the complete denial of life, activity and desire. In the one, we view life and reality as through a haze, which constantly changes and eludes the firm grasp of our mind. In the other, we stand face to face with the Real shining in its pristine effulgence and divested of all illusive investments, and know ourselves as one with it. Jnana and Karma thus stand for the two halves of existence, and neither can be ignored in a scheme for life's fulfilment and realisation, especially in its collective aspect. The problem in every age of Hindu history has therefore been how to reconcile them, how to conceive and guide the life of Karma so as to make it eventually lead to the supreme realisation, that thus a most comprehensive and synthetic view of life and experience can be arrived at.

From the ancient Vedic age down to the present day, this problem has recrudesced periodically in new forms, impelled by the changing circumstances of the evolving time. In the Vedic age, the conflict arose between sacrificial rites and spiritual wisdom, the Atma-vidya of the Upanishads. The problem of the rishis was how to reconcile them. The traces of the clash and its solution are found scattered all over the Upanishads. We see therein how the Vedic gods are being idealised into the supreme Brahman and the Vedic ceremonies into meditations preliminary to the realisation of Brahman. In the age of Krishna, of the Mahabharata, we find the conflict re-appearing in a slightly modified form. Here the attempt is

at reconciling not merely Vedic rituals, but all work, ritualistic or secular, with the highest spiritual knowledge through the doctrine of Karma Yoga. We have also the famous story of Dharmavyadha, the pious butcher, who, possessed of the highest spirituality, had for the apparent means of its acquisition nothing but the faithful performance of his domestic and social duties. The Gautama Buddha faced the same conflict between rites and knowledge, but cut the Gordian knot by a total rejection of Karma. He did not try to harmonise them, but gave extreme predominance to Jnana. This is perhaps one of the reasons why his religion was finally banished from the land of its birth. Sankara also had to fight hard against the predominance of ritualism, as is remarkably evidenced by the rise of Kumarila, Mandana Misra and other advocates of ritualistic Karma, some of whom later on acknowledged the supremacy of Sankara's philosophy. Sankara's commentaries are loud with the din of the sturdy fight of the contending parties.

The fight till the time of Sankara was mostly between ritualism and self-knowledge. By then the superiority of Jnana or Bhakti was generally accepted and ritualism accorded a subordinate position. But we have seen that along with this, there was the further problem, as in the Gita, whether the performance of secular duties and works prompted by healthy desires leads to the realisation of life's highest ideal, though it is true it did not then assume the importance it has done in the present age. The true worth of ritualism, however, has been determined once for all. But the question of the value of secular work has been brought to the fore-front by the tremendous organisational activity and multifarious calls on individual attention and service, domestic, social, national, international, political, economical, etc., of the present day, none of which can be avoided with ease or without serious detriment to oneself. How should these be performed in order to be pathways to the realisation of God,—this is the all-important question. This question Swami Vivekananda laid on himself to answer.

His answer was the famous doctrine of the worship of the Divine in men. But it has not gone unchallenged, and the conflict is considered yet unsolved. For it has appeared in a different guise in a supposed contradiction between Sri Rama-

krishna and Swami Vivekananda. It is argued that Sri Ramakrishna who represents the fulness and perfection of Jnana and Bhakti, has spoken disparagingly of Karma and discouraged it. How is Swami Vivekananda to be reconciled with Sri Ramakrishna? Did not Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly warn some of his disciples against what they termed 'doing good to the world'? He retorted to Babu Kristodas Pal when the latter remarked that doing good to the country was their principal duty: "God alone can look after the world. Let man first realise God. Let him get Divine authority and be endowed with His power; then and then alone he can think of doing good to others." To another who wanted to build hospitals, etc., for the poor, he said: "When God appears before you, would you seek schools and hospitals of Him, or beg for Bhakti, Jnana, etc? Then give up all these thoughts of hospital-building and think of the Lord alone." Therefore it is argued that Karma, even selfless Karma, must be minimised as far as possible, and thought and energy should be devoted essentially to prescribed spiritual practices, and that if work is to be done at all, it must be done after God-realisation.

Behind this doubt and protest, there is more than the supposed disparity between Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. It is the lingering trail of the historic quarrel between Jnana and Karma emerging in a new form. If Swami Vivekananda had not been a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, it is doubtful if his synthesis of Karma and Jnana would have been questioned thus, confirmed as it is by no less authorities than the Gita and the practice of many eminent saints. But Swamiji has taught nothing which is not of his Master. And we hold that his doctrine of service is as much a teaching of Sri Ramakrishna as the doctrine of the harmony of religions. We maintain that the doctrine of service is only another version of the doctrine of the harmony of religions and that the one cannot be without the other.

It is not always the words of the mouth that truly and completely reveal the spirit behind. The seeker of truth must search below the surface. He must search in the realm of spirit and not of word and form. It may be Sri Ramakrishna sometimes spoke against Karma; may be he wanted us to think more of God than of men. Quite possibly these had reference to special cases only. But is there nothing in

his practice and teachings to indicate that the doctrine of service is an essential part of them?

Various attempts have been made to trace it to Sri Ramakrishna. There is, for example, an occasion reported of the Master's life, when in a transcendental mood, he refuted the idea of *jivé dayâ*, of compassion to men, as a presumption on the part of a mortal, and emphasised instead the idea of service to God in men. It is said that Swamiji who was present on the occasion, was deeply impressed with the Master's words and felt a wide vista of thought open before him. He found that if work was exalted to the service of God, then every work, domestic or philanthropic, could be transmuted into an extremely potent method of God-realisation. It cannot be denied that this episode as well as the Master's great solicitude for the poor and miserable, manifest on many occasions, made some impression on the Swamiji's mind. But, as against this, it may be contended with justification that the Master has not otherwise preached the doctrine of service and that this incident forms but an insignificant detail of the Master's life, whereas the doctrine of service forms a very important, if not the central, part of Swamiji's teachings. Can we not derive this Swamiji's essential teaching from an equally essential teaching of Sri Ramakrishna?

The most unique of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, it must be admitted, is the harmony of religions. What does it signify? Commonly understood, it is the admission of the approximately equal validity and worth of all existing religions, a belief that all religions are equally effective in guiding men to the Truth. But what are religions? Are they merely the well-known *isms*, Hinduism, Buddhism, Muhammadanism, Christianity, etc., and their different creeds? This is only a superficial view of the meaning of religion. Religion is the process of spiritual unfoldment in men. In the widest and the truest sense, the evolution of life and its struggle upwards to the light and reality of God, the entire process from the beginning to the end, is religion. Religion is not that part of life only, which is concerned with temple-going or hymn-singing. The whole of life, its every thought and action is religion. "Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man"—thus did Swami Vivekananda define religion. If it is so, then is not every life a religion, since it is from the start a process of mani-

festation, conscious or unconscious, of the inherent Divinity? Therefore every life is a new religion, for every life differs from the others in the nature of that manifestation, in its temperament and outlook.

Every life a religion!—It means that every life is Divine, in whatever stage of evolution it may be. We easily concede that life or religion is Divine when it has reached the highest degree of development. But that state is only the culmination of a process which began with the first stirring of life. God does not enter a man's life only when he has become a saint. God was in it from the beginning. God was slowly asserting Himself through his joys and sorrows, good and evil, errors and truths, till at last His glory shone in untrammelled effulgence. Man does not travel from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher truth. To one who has realised this truth, no man is human, but Divine. Harmony of religions is not therefore a harmony of the formal creeds merely, but of all life, of all human lives especially. It is to look upon and realise all men as the Divine in the process of various manifestation and self-fulfilment. This is the deeper significance of the doctrine of religious harmony. And therefore to perceive it truly we must learn previously to view every man as Divine. Without the vision of the Divine in man, it is vain to talk of religious harmony

How to get that vision? Not merely through imagination can we get it. A fundamental change in our life is imperative. Not only should our *ideas* about men change, but also *behaviour*. Not merely in thought, but also in action and practice, must there be a profound transformation. A close analysis will reveal that our conception of our fellow-men is essentially related with our conception of life and reality. In order to bring about a change in the former, tremendous effort is therefore necessary. We have accustomed ourselves to think one way of men and things from our very birth, nay, for millions of previous births. Therefore a mere pious iteration of the idea of the Divinity of men will avail little. It must throb in every moment of our day—even the sub-conscious thought must be moulded accordingly. And above all it must transform and inspire our *actions*. For actions influence us more than thoughts. Therefore it must be *practised* assiduously. We must behave with men as we would with God if

He were to live with us in the flesh. We must worship men. We must dedicate all the love of our heart, all the intensity of our thought, and all our powers of action to their service. This is harmony of religions made real and practical. How can one perceive religious harmony unless one has learnt to serve men as God?

This is the deep psychological truth on which the twin doctrines of religious harmony and service are based. Swamiji felt their fundamental unity and therefore as the means to their realisation of religious harmony, he propounded the doctrine of service. Without the spirit of worshipful service, we cannot see the vision of the Divine in men. And without that vision we cannot perceive every life as the unfolding of the Divine, which is religion. This fact, we think, more than anything else, impelled Swamiji to preach the worship of men.

We find this conclusion confirmed by the practice of Sri Ramakrishna himself. It is well-known how, true to his own doctrine of the harmony of religions, he would teach every aspirant that came to him in conformity with the aspirant's spiritual temperament and outlook. He would make himself one with the disciple. He would visualise the ideal that inspired the disciple and the obstacles that impeded his progress, and help him onwards in his chosen path. But along with this, we find him practising the ideal of service as well. His practice was equally true to the twin ideals of religious harmony and service. Of course with him service took the form of *lila* or play. Service with the ordinary man begins as charity or compassion which serves to purify his mind. He then begins to catch occasional glimpses of the hidden Divinity in the objects of his service. This is the second stage. Service gradually deepens into worship. But when worship becomes profound and all-absorbing,—that is the third or the last stage—the revelation of the Divine in men becomes clearer and clearer, and service becomes *lila* or play with the Lord. With Sri Ramakrishna service was therefore *lila*. Every man had a place with him, none were refused. And he himself said that the realisation of *nara-lila*, that is to say, of the vision of the Divine in men, was the pinnacle of spiritual knowledge.

It was in the beginning of 1884 that Sri Ramakrishna, while in a trance, fell down and broke his arm. It took some time to cure. A profound spiritual fact lay behind the

incident, which he revealed more than a year after to some of his intimate disciples. He said: I am telling you a secret. Do you know why I love Purna, Narendra and others so dearly? I had once a vision of Jagannatha, and as I went to embrace him, I fell down and broke my arm. And it was revealed to me that now that I was born as a man, I must love the Lord in men." A few days after the incident he had said: "I now find that my spiritual outlook is undergoing a change. Long ago Vaishnavcharan told me that the highest spiritual wisdom was the vision of the Divine in men. I now really find that it is the Lord who is moving about in the forms of men, sometimes a saint, sometimes a fraud, at other times a knave. But all of them are God and none but God. So I say, God in the form of saint, God in the form of knave, God in the form of libertine I now often think how I can feed and entertain all these devotees. I feel it earnestly. That is why I ask one at a time to live with me that I may entertain him." Is this not the full realisation of Swamiji's doctrine of service? And do we not see that this service of the disciples was only an integral part of his practice of religious harmony?

A consideration of these facts leads us to the inevitable conclusion that Swamiji's doctrine of service did not originate with him, but was an interpretation of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual teachings and outlook. It is vain to hope to be a true follower of Sri Ramakrishna and of his principal doctrine of the harmony of religions without learning through worshipful service to perceive the inherent Divinity in every man. Verily Swamiji is the way, the infinite vista of spiritual progress, at the end of which shines the ineffable light of Sri Ramakrishna, and there is no easier and surer way to reach that Divine light than through him.

THE NATURE OF THE ATMAN

BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA

The conclusion at which the Advaitins have arrived regarding the nature of the Subject or the Atman or Brahman is that it is, looked at from the view-point of the Object or the universe, its creator, preserver and destroyer ;—“(Brahman is that) from which the origin, etc., of this (world proceed),” as the second aphorism of the Brahma-Sutras says ; but that in itself, it is ineffable and devoid of all determining qualities. It is the material and efficient cause of the universe. Without it, nothing can exist. But nothing of this universe as it is, is Brahman. It is just as is declared by that famous verse of the Katha Upanishad : “The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightnings, and much less this fire. He shining, everything shines after him, by his light all this is lighted.”

According to the Advaita philosophy, the Atman which is the Subject is the only substance. From it the universe has originated. The Mundaka Upanishad after describing the “lower knowledge” as the Vedas and the Vedangas, says, “But the higher knowledge is that through which that Imperishable is known : The invisible, intangible, unoriginated, colourless, without eyes or ears, without hands or feet, the eternal, all-pervading, all-present, very subtle, this is the Unchanging which the wise know as the womb of beings. As the spider puts forth (the threads) and draws them back again, as herbs grow upon the earth, as from a living man hair comes out on the head and body, so from this Imperishable arises all the world.”

From this and similar passages of the Sruti it becomes clear that neither the primordial matter of the materialist nor the individual soul of the solipsist is to be considered as the origin of the universe. The Sruti declares that an Intelligent Being is the cause of the universe. And that it is not an individual soul can be concluded from the following passage of the same scripture :

“This is the truth : As from a well-lit fire, sparks, of the same nature to it, arise thousand-fold, so, dear one, from the

Imperishable go forth manifold beings, and return into it again. For divine is the Spirit (Purusha), the formless, who is within and without, unborn, breathless, wishless, pure, yet higher than the highest Imperishable. From him arises breath, the understanding with all the senses, from him arise ether, wind, and fire, water and earth, the support of all."

Such majesty cannot belong to any individual soul, far less to matter.

The universe is guided by fixed laws and is instinct with a purposiveness. There must therefore be an omnipotent, omniscient Being behind it. That Being is the Atman.

"At the bidding of this Imperishable, O Gârgi, sun and moon are kept asunder from each other, at the bidding of this Imperishable, O Gârgi, heaven and earth are kept asunder from each other, at the bidding of this Imperishable, O Gârgi, the minutes and the hours, the days and nights, the half-months, the months, the seasons and the years are kept asunder. At the bidding of this Imperishable, O Gârgi, the streams run downward from the snowy mountains, some to the east, some to the west, each in its course ; at the bidding of this Imperishable, O Gârgi, men praise the generous men, gods depend on the sacrifices, the fathers on the offerings for the dead. Verily, O Gârgi, he who knows not this Imperishable, though in this world he offers and has offerings made, though he suffers penance many a thousand years, gains only a limited (reward) ; he who knows not that Imperishable, O Gârgi, and departs from this world, he, indeed, is miserable ; but he who, O Gârgi, knowing this Imperishable, departs from this world, he, indeed, is a Brâhmana. Verily, O Gârgi, this Imperishable is seeing, not seen, hearing, not heard, understanding, not understood, knowing, not known. For outside him there is no seer, outside him there is no hearer, outside him there is none with understanding, outside him there is none with knowledge. In this Imperishable, verily, O Gârgi, is the ether woven and interwoven."

How is this Imperishable (Brahman) related to the Jiva? The Chhandogya Upanishad beautifully says in the chapter of Svetaketu :

"As the bees, my son, make honey by collecting the juices of distant trees, and reduce them into one form ; and as

the juices have no discrimination so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that, in the same manner, my son, all these creatures, when they have become merged in the True, know not that they are merged in the True. Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion, or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again. Now that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, Svetaketu, art it."

The identity of the individual soul (Jiva) and the Supreme Self (Brahman) is again and again indicated by the examples of rivers mingling their waters with the sea, seeds of the *nyagrodha* tree, withering of the branches of the plant, saline water, the ailing person, etc. And every example ends with the exhortation: "Now that which is that subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it."

Thus that which is permanent and essential in the Jiva is one and identical with Brahman, the creator of the universe, the Subject. And the essence of the Vedanta is thus summed up in the following words: "In half a verse I shall tell you what has been taught in thousands of volumes: Brahman is true, the world is false; the Jiva is Brahman and nothing else."

But the conception of Brahman as the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe is not the highest and the last conclusion. He is beyond all these. The Advaitin who describes the Self as all-powerful God also describes him as *pure* consciousness. He asserts that to look upon Brahman as the creator is not to see his *real* nature. His nature transcends all determination and has therefore been indicated as *Neti Neti*, 'Not this,' 'Not this.'

"Brahman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinity." This is how the Sruti describes the Self. But this is also a negative description. When Brahman is called Truth, it is meant that he is not illusory or unreal. Brahman is Knowledge, that is, he is not unconscious or insentient. He is Infinity, that is, he is not limited by time, space or causation. Brahman is bliss, that is to say, he is other than misery or affliction.

That which is insentient cannot illumine other things. Darkness cannot illumine objects but is itself illumined by light. The universe is insentient, it cannot illumine. It

appears illumined through the reflected light of Brahman. Brahman is light itself or something else would have been needed to illumine Brahman. He is the Primordial Light. It is no material light however. It is that of which the Chhandogya Upanishad says: "Light is his form, truth his resolve." All that is perceived is perceived through the light of Atman, but the Atman is perceived through no other light, because his own being is self-shining, and the sun etc., shine in and through him.

"That pure Brahman is the enlightener of (apparently) enlightened substances ; only those who have realised the Self can know him." Thus declares the Sruti. He is ever unknowable, for he cannot be pointed out as 'this' or 'that.' He is not to be *known*, for he is Knowledge itself. But he is also more than known. For he is the Self of our self and we are never more conscious of anything else than our own self. The Kena Upanishad says: "He is distinct from the known and above the unknown." Thus the unknown Brahman is not the "unknown" of the agnostics.

The root itself from which the word *Brahman* is derived suggests that Brahman is beyond all limitations. The root *brinha* means 'to increase or enlarge.' There is nothing which can limit his expansion or enlargement. Brahman is not limited by any adjuncts and hence he is called Infinity. Time, space and causality are, absolutely speaking, unreal. These are mere superimpositions on Brahman caused by ignorance and cannot affect Brahman. He cannot be realised in his pure aspect unless all ideas of duality vanish away from the mind of the aspirant.

Worldly bliss is by nature fugitive, a pale reflection of the ineffable bliss of Brahman. All pleasant objects are such because they reflect the bliss of Brahman. "Verily, a husband is not dear that you may love the husband ; but that you may love the Self, therefore is the husband dear." Thus runs the exhortation of Yâjnavalkya to his wife, Maitreyi. And this is true of wife, sons, wealth, the various castes, the world, the devas and all other created beings. "This Atman is more blissful than the sun, the riches, and even than all the dear objects of the world." "The other creatures only know a fraction of the immortal bliss of Brahman." Such is the Atman or Brahman, such the real nature of the Subject.

Though as the creator of the world, he is omnipresent, omniscient and endowed with infinite other qualities, in his transcendental aspect, he is beyond all attributes and can be designated only by the well-known Vedic formula of *Neti Neti Atma*.

It may be argued that it is useless to admit the existence of an entity which we do not know, nor understand, nor can even prove. The Buddhist would say that if there really exists such an entity it is better to call it void. But the Advaitins refuse to call it so. For that would amount to its denial. He is very positive about the existence of Atman or Brahman. In fact he is more sure of the existence of Atman than of anything else. Without the Atman the whole universe would become nothing. "He verily becomes non-existent who knows Brahman as non-existent. He who knows Brahman as existent, becomes himself thereby existent." "The Atman exists," the Vedantin says, "but words fail to describe him." "I do not think I know Brahman well nor do I know that I do not know him. He among us knows Brahman who knows him to be. I cannot say that Brahman is known nor can I say that he is unknown." Thus does the Sruti refer to the knowledge of Brahman. It adds: "It is known to him to whom it is unknown ; he knows it not to whom it is known. It is unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know."

This is the mystic description of the nature of that supreme realisation. How can one describe the nature of Brahman who transcends speech and mind? If a salt doll seeks to measure the depth of the ocean, it melts away as soon as it touches the water. Even so is the human mind engulfed in the infinitude of Brahman in trying to know it.

Simply because we cannot explain him, it does not follow that he does not exist. We cannot explain even ordinary things sometimes. That does not make them non-existent. Whenever an unfamiliar object is sought to be explained, the help of analogy is taken. But analogy has no scope in the case of One who is the only existence, who is without a second. A man who has not realised Brahman cannot understand his nature. "He alone knows who knows." "He exists"—only this can be said of him. "The ultimate truth is revealed to him alone who realises that the Atman exists."

Knowledge means objectification, limitation by the mind. That which is beyond the mind is not known. If the absolute Brahman becomes known, he does not remain absolute. Therefore it is absurd to try to *know* the absolute Brahman. We can only become one with him. The best definition of Brahman as given in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad runs thus: "It is that, O Gârgi, which the Brahmanas call the Imperishable. It is neither gross nor fine nor short nor long, nor red (like fire) nor adhering (like water), nor shady nor dark, nor wind nor ether, not sticky (like gum), without taste, without smell, without eye or ear, without voice, without understanding, without vital force, and without breath, without mouth and without measure, without inner or outer; nothing whatsoever does it consume, nor is it consumed by any." Again, "The fourth is neither that which is conscious of the subjective, nor that which is conscious of the objective, nor that which is conscious of both, nor that which is simple consciousness, nor that which is a mass of all sentiency, nor that which is all unconsciousness. It is unseen, transcendent, unapprehensible, uninferable, unthinkable, indescribable, the essence of the consciousness of Self, the negative of all illusion, the ever-peaceful, all-bliss, the one unit;—this indeed, is the Atman, it should be known."

Such being the true nature of the Subject, the Atman, the Brahman, it is ever unknown and unknowable, but more than known and knowable.

A BLIND MOVEMENT

BY ONE WHO WAS A NON-BRAHMIN.

The collapse of non-Brahminism in the last general elections has its lessons beyond its merely political consequences. It has demonstrated not only the political futility of its ideals and methods, but also how shallow, insignificant and naive is its underlying philosophy. The philosophy of anything is not quite tangible to the common mind. But it constitutes all the same a very potent part of it. And no considerable movement can win success, unless it is grounded on and backed by a sound philosophic consciousness. The immediate cause of the fall of political non-Brahminism is itself significant. Here the conflict was between the narrow prospects of communalism and the larger freedom of the national life. Non-Brahminism had failed to recognise the fact that in the present age and

stage of mental evolution, no soul can find rest in the cramping atmosphere of communalism. It must pant and pine for the emancipating atmosphere of the wider and deeper life of the nation. Not always is earthly profit sought by the human mind. Sacrifice of lower interests is sweeter and more delectable to it if thereby it can be reborn into a truer freedom.

A day will come—and that soon—when the call of the Sanatana Dharma and Samaj will claim as insistently as that of the nation's politics to-day the devoted homage of the non-Brahmins. They prefer now to place themselves in resentful opposition against the Brahmins, as if in such angry distinction lies the fulfilment of their final destiny. They would fain rid themselves of all contact with the Brahmins, social, religious, political or cultural. This attitude is doomed to fail as surely as Justice politics. For the causes in both cases are identical. No community to-day can thrive in an atmosphere of dissension. It cannot deny, even if it so desires, the imperious demands of the larger life of the Samaj. We are apt to belittle the importance of the social implications of the national struggle under the overbearing stress of the unduly magnified importance of our political problems. But the Samaj is not dead, and signs are already patent to those who have eyes to see, of purely social problems becoming as important, if not more, as the political. And on the day of reckoning, the social philosophy of non-Brahminism will collapse like the proverbial house of cards.

Yet, non-Brahminism is real. It is not provoked by imaginary grievances. The smouldering fire in its heart is nursed by genuine fuel, and its groans, though not properly articulate, rise out of deep-seated wounds. Much has to be done by non-Brahmins. Only their present methods are unfortunate. And there must be a change of outlook. Their philosophy must become deeper and more comprehensive. And above all, their struggle must become impersonal and not resentful against any men or community. We may almost lay down a rule for all social reform: Never make grievance against persons or communities, but struggle on impersonal basis. In all matters relating to the collective life, the problems are more often than not the result of certain forces of which both parties, the oppressor and the oppressed, are victims. They are victims of the system. It is no use destroying the persons who happen to be the instrument of that system. For when they are destroyed, the system will seek other agencies. The fight must be against the forces themselves. To that end, we must make a deep study of their nature and workings and avail ourselves of that knowledge to break our fetters. Our struggle otherwise will be superficial, create new problems at every turn and act disruptively on ourselves as well as on the entire Samaj.

The non-Brahmin movement unfortunately has been reactionary from the beginning. It is, we repeat, always suicidal for a section of the

Samaj to rise fighting against another section, especially so in the Hindu Samaj. A little penetration will show that if there are ugly defects in the present caste system, they are not due to any particular caste, but the entire Samaj itself. And there are only two ways in which those defects can be remedied; either by rejecting the entire social system and establishing a new one, or by understanding its laws and ways and utilising them. The first remedy is beyond the power of any individual community or all communities together. The second is therefore the only possible course. But the non-Brahmins did not unfortunately use it. They made their struggle a class-war, a war against the Brahmins.

But the Brahmins are no more responsible for their sufferings than they themselves are for those of the pariahs. The one apparently great fault of the Brahmin community, of the south especially, is their strict conservatism. They are not flexible and mobile enough. But is that a *fault* after all? Only the ignorance of the history of Hindu social evolution can call it such. Whenever a society becomes rich in culture, it evolves a section to conserve and retain it intact as a trust for the whole. The more refined a culture, the greater is the need of such conservatism. A spiritual culture specially requires to be most carefully tended and protected. The safest way then is a jealous maintenance of the religious and cultural traditions. The Hindu Samaj felt this need keenly and found its fulfilment in the Brahmin community. It is true that conservatism is not all good, as nothing in the world is, for that spirit worked even in those spheres where one could easily be liberal. But it is a defect inherent in all institutions. Every society develops through the interaction of liberal and conservative forces. In the Hindu Samaj, the Brahmins represent the conservative element, holding sacred and inviolable every tradition and custom, keeping wakeful watch on the interior and the frontiers of its dominions against unwarranted entrances and exits and transgressions of its laws, and handing down the wisdom of our fathers, seasoned and chastened by the experience of every passing generation, to the generations of posterity. The liberal element was typified by the Kshatriyas who unfortunately are not now existent, and is perhaps functioning through other communities. It inaugurated reforms and propagated new ideas, but was always respectfully submissive to the veto of the conservative Brahmins. Between them was held steady the helm of the social bark. Neither of them can be allowed to hold unchecked sovereign sway or eliminated without great peril to the Samaj. It does not matter which communities represent them,—but they must function in the Samaj. It is extreme ignorance to accuse a particular class for having discharged what is after all a national function. It is simply enacting the ludicrous fable of the stomach and the limbs. As it is, the task of the Brahmins is a thankless one. But when the extreme liberalism of the Buddhistic reform forced the portals of the mother-church wide open for all sorts of civilised, semi-

civilised and savage races and their indigenous customs and traditions to enter in, had there not been the steadying and controlling influences of conservatism as represented by the Brahmins, Hinduism would have been nowhere to-day, and India's culture and civilisation would have become the pet study of a few Indologists. Indeed without the conservative Brahmins, the Vedic religion would have wholly disappeared.

Therefore it was a little thoughtless and ungrateful of the non-Brahmins to have made their uplift movement a revolt against the Brahmins. Little do they perceive that even their present level of culture is largely owing to this much-maligned Brahmins! Do they remind themselves that many of their ancestors were superstitious Buddhists and Jains and that it is the Brahmins that made them Hindus again? Should the non-Brahmins ponder over these facts, they would not be so eager to eat up the Brahmins; they would be grateful to them and not hate them.

We have doubts whether the non-Brahmins realise the implication of this hatred. Hatred always divides and separates. Do the non-Brahmins desire to cut themselves off from the higher sections of the Hindu Samaj and all the wealth of culture that they conserve? It will be an evil day indeed for themselves and the Hindu Samaj when such a project will be seriously harboured by them. But we are sure the non-Brahmins will feel indignant if such a desire is imputed to them. Yet their actions are contrary. Nearly thirty years ago when the non-Brahmin movement was in its infancy, Swami Vivekananda presaged the dangerous possibility of the non-Brahmins setting themselves against and separating entirely from the Brahmins, degrading thereby the entire Hindu culture and civilisation. This was no vain imagination. Looking beneath the surface, we do perceive destructive forces working towards that doom. The Sermadevi Gurukula controversy brought them startlingly on the surface. But the non-Brahmins unfortunately scarcely feel how disruptively their policy and mentality are working on the Samaj.

For what do we find? They are trying to prove that they owe nothing to the Brahminical, that is to say, Sanskritic culture. In two respects especially, this spirit of alienation is working, in religion and literature. The Shaiva Siddhantism which is the creed of a large majority of the non-Brahmins, is being shown to be of independent origin and growth. The Tamil language is similarly quite independent of Sanskrit, and there is, so far as we know, a tendency among them to eliminate even those words which have been incorporated into it from Sanskrit. And only recently in its Madura conference, the Justice party passed a resolution on instituting a system of non-Brahmin priests to officiate at the religious ceremonies and rites of the non-Brahmin classes. Is Swamiji's foreboding going to be fulfilled? The writer well remembers how one, a very influential gentleman in that community, once asked him about the relation of the Bengali

language with Sanskrit. Was not Bengali an indigenous language? Why did it then ally itself with Sanskrit? It was quite a surprise to him to be told that Sanskrit—either language or culture—was impersonal and inter-communal, a device for synthetising the divergent elements of literature, culture, social economy and religion, that have entered the fold of Hinduism, and that therefore no individual community need consider it a foreign tyrant or the Brahmins' personal property. By imbibing the Sanskrit culture the different communities gain in refinement. Even the Brahmins did not all have Sanskrit as their dialect, though it is true that as the community specially entrusted with the preservation of the finest culture of the Samaj they had to cultivate it more deeply and intensively than the other communities. Sanskrit, in its literary aspect, refined the intellect; in its socio-economic aspect which is the caste system, purified and regulated conduct; and in its spiritual aspect, it taught the highest and the unifying wisdom. The Sanskrit culture is a mould for unifying and regulating the multifarious elements of the Samaj.

It may be true that Shaiva Siddhanta is of independent origin. This claim is not special. All Pauranika creeds have such indigenous origin. But if Shaiva Siddhanta should remain an integral part of Hinduism, it must unite with the Vedic philosophy. It is not that thereby it will be altered in any essential degree, but it will certainly be more perfect and richer and its votaries will win a wider field of intercourse. Human nature abhors segregation, it delights and flourishes in the realisation of unity. The communities do require for their own benefit to establish deeper relations with each other on the basis of a common plan of conduct, common outlook on life and unifying ideals of philosophy and religion.

The separatist tendencies of the non-Brahmins therefore can do no good to themselves. United we grow, divided we perish. The non-Brahmins should not lay arrogant emphasis on the independence of their literature or religion, but should rather realise their similarity and fundamental unity with those of the other sections, especially the higher sections, of the Samaj and gain through it greater social prestige by means of greater and greater assimilation of the Sanskrit culture. Therefore it was that Swami Vivekananda, speaking on the non-Brahmin problem (then in its incipient stage) at Madras after his first return from the West, thus exhorted them: "The only safety, I tell you men who belong to the lower castes, the only way to raise your condition is to study Sanskrit, and this fighting and writing and frothing against the higher castes is in vain, it does no good, and it creates fight and quarrel, and this race, unfortunately already divided, is going to be divided more and more. The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education which is the strength of the higher castes." "To the non-Brahmin castes I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every oppor-

tunity of fighting the Brahmin, because you are suffering from your own fault. Who told you to neglect spirituality and Sanskrit learning?* What have you been doing all this time? Why have you been indifferent? Why do you now fret and fume because somebody else had more brains, more energy, more pluck and go, than you? Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, instead of fighting and quarrelling in your own homes,—which is sinful,—use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brahmin has, and the thing is done. Why do you not spend millions to bring Sanskrit education to all the castes of India? The moment you do these things, you are equal to the Brahmin. That is the secret of power in India.”

Surely those who can read the signs of the times will appreciate the supreme value of Swami Vivekananda's prescription.

It is interesting to speculate about the future of the non-Brahmin movement. We ourselves will regret its death. For the non-Brahmins undoubtedly require uplifting. Great things are in store for them. The higher castes have played themselves out; their powers are exhausted. The energy that now lies dormant in the non-Brahmin community, must become dynamic. But not in the way the prelude has shown. The platform on which great sages and prophets have acted cannot be allowed to be desecrated by buffoonish pantomimes. The non-Brahmins must be deeper, wiser, more thoughtful and patient. Slowly they must learn their lessons and wisely act. Let them imbibe the Sanskrit culture more and more in all its aspects. In this also lies the great opportunity of the Brahmins to perform the last, and perhaps the noblest, sacrifice of their life. For the Brahmin community is destined to die. Its play is over. All efforts at revivifying it will be futile. Let it then gloriously make its exit, by bequeathing in the most generous spirit the treasures it has accumulated through millenniums to the less fortunate communities. This act of generosity will heal once for all the wounds rankling in the heart of the non-Brahmin communities.

Many Brahmins fondly hope that their ancient glory will come back again. Strange, they do not see that the altered conditions make it absolutely impossible! There has been a slow but steady change in the scheme of the Varnashrama Dharma from the days of Buddha. The Brahmins had been the special custodians of spiritual knowledge and social integrity. But even in the pre-Buddhistic age there was a revolt against this idea. And slowly the duty and function of preserving spiritual culture began to be transferred from them to a class of men who were outside the Samaj,—the monastics. And to-day the Sannyasins have almost taken the place of the Brahmins and the Brahmins are totally

* How spirituality and Sanskrit learning at once raise a community in social estimation is evidenced by the signally successful work of Sri Narayana Guru Swami of the Thiya community of Malabar.—*Editor, P. B.*

secularised. In very ancient times, the monks were *aranyakas*, forest-dwellers. It was the married rishis that ministered to the spiritual wants of the people. But as days wore on, monks approached the householders more and more till to-day they not only look to their spiritual welfare but also to their physical and intellectual needs. The monks having taken the duties of the Brahmins on themselves, the Brahmins are superfluous and can but take to less important occupations. And this as a matter of fact they have done. Except in some very insignificant caste regulations, the difference between them and the higher non-Brahmin castes is almost nil. It behoves them therefore to prepare for the inevitable and rather help than retard by reactionary movements the evolution of the Samaj. But perhaps it does not much matter whether the Brahmins are liberally disposed towards them or not, except that their indifference or hostility will react adversely on themselves. It is necessary however that the present leaders and trustees of the Hindu spiritual culture, the monks, should properly realise their responsibilities towards the culturally backward communities. And we may say that they are responding quite bravely and generously to these new requirements.

An individual or a community has far larger interests now than the purely communal ones. The claims of the country, for example, even if they conflict with the claims of the community, must have the right of precedence. The claim of Truth is yet more urgent. And all these higher ideals are calling more and more urgently at the present time than at any time before. Every man is feeling secretly drawn towards the noblest ideals. Any movement, therefore, that seeks of its followers a denial of those higher ideals, is doomed to die. It is paradoxical that in spite of the most sordid manifestations of individual, communal or racial greed, the present age is yet the strongest in its desire for the realisation of the highest ideals of humanity. The greedy perish. But those that listen to the call of the Ideal are saved and prosper. In India at least it is assuredly true that without being based on the most catholic principles and aspiring after the highest, no reform or struggle shall achieve any permanent success. The failure of non-Brahminism in the last elections points to that. Its narrow and greedy communalism jarred on the nobler spirits of its own community. The needs of the nation loomed larger than those of the community before their emancipated vision. Besides, only the call of the highest draws out the best in men. The day of reckoning is not yet come. Politically it came and decided against non-Brahminism. But culturally, spiritually, socially, it is yet to come. We watch for redeeming signs, but see them nowhere. Only an ignorant self-sufficiency and exultation, but no purposive struggle. Only anger, jealousy and hatred, but no illuminating knowledge of facts, historical consciousness or understanding of the underlying social laws. Can anything be more pathetic?

REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(From old letters written at Thousand Island Park, New York,
in the summer of 1895.)

BY MRS. MARY C. FUNKE.

July 19. Dearest M., C. and I are well and happy and we certainly do appreciate the whole-hearted welcome we have received from all the members of the household at Miss Dutcher's cottage.

Such a beautiful spot! There is a large class room and a kitchen on the ground floor and a number of bedrooms on the second floor. The Swami has a private suite with a separate entrance by an outside stairway. There is a small veranda attached to his room to which he invites us every evening. The view is lovely, as we are higher up than any of the other cottages. We gaze over the tree-tops and for miles the beautiful St. Lawrence River winds its way.

We are deeply touched by the very cordial reception given to us who were strangers. Even the Swami had never met us, personally, although we had attended all his lectures given in Detroit during the winter of 1894. The joy of it to be so sweetly received by him!

We were merely frightened to death when we finally reached the cottage, for neither the Swami nor his followers at Thousand Island Park had the remotest idea of our existence, and it seemed rather an impertinent thing for us to do, to travel seven hundred miles, follow him up, as it were, and ask him to accept us. But he did accept us—he did—the Blessed One!

It was a dark rainy night but we could not wait. Every moment was precious and our imagination was stirred up to the nth degree. We did not know a soul in the place but finally we hit upon the plan of making inquiries at the various shops and thus find out where Miss Dutcher lived. At one place we were told that there was a cottage occupied by a Miss Dutcher and that a "foreign looking man who dressed queerly" was staying there.

Then we knew our quest was ended and we found a man with a lantern who went ahead of us.

Up, up the wet and slippery path! It seemed as if we were taking one step up and two back, it was so slippery. The first thing we heard when we reached the house was the rich, beautiful voice of the Swami who was talking to those who had gathered on his porch. Our heart-beats could have been *heard*, I truly believe. His hostess asked him to come downstairs to see us as "two ladies from Detroit" and he greeted us so sweetly! It was like a benediction. "I like Detroit," he said. "I have many friends there, isn't it?" And what do you think? Instead of our staying at a hotel or boarding house, as we had expected, those dear people insisted upon our becoming members of the household. Our hearts sang pæans of praise.

So here we are—in the very house with *Vivekananda*, listening to him from 8 o'clock in the morning until late at night. Even in my wildest dreams I could not imagine anything so wonderful, so perfect. To be with *Vivekananda*! To be accepted by him! Surely we shall wake up and find it all a dream. For in our *dreams* we have sought the Swami, now, Reality! *Are* we "such stuff as dreams are made of?"

Oh, the sublime teaching of *Vivekananda*! No nonsense, no talk of "astrals," "imps," etc., but God, Jesus, Buddha. I feel that I shall never be quite the same again for I have caught a glimpse of the Real.

Just think what it means to listen to a *Vivekananda* at every meal, lessons each morning and the nights on the porch, the eternal stars shining like "patines of bright gold"! In the afternoon, we take long walks and the Swami literally, and so simply, finds "books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good (God) in everything." And this same Swami is so merry and fun-loving. We just go *mad* at times.

Later. We have been soaring on the Heights, since I last wrote you. Swami tells us to forget that there is any Detroit for the present—that is, to allow no personal thoughts to occupy our minds while taking this instruction. We are taught to see God in *everything* from the blade of grass to man—"even in the diabolical man".

Really, it is almost impossible to find time to write here. We put up with some inconveniences as it is so crowded. There

is no time to relax, to rest, for we feel the time is all too short as the Swami leaves soon for England. We scarcely take time to array ourselves properly, so afraid are we of losing some of the precious Jewels. His words *are* like jewels and all that he says fits together like a wonderfully beautiful mosaic. In his talks he may go ever so far afield but always he comes back to the one fundamental, vital thing—"Find God! Nothing else matters."

I especially like Miss Waldo and Miss Ellis, although the whole household is interesting. Some unique characters. One, a Dr. Wright of Cambridge, a very cultured man, creates much merriment at times. He becomes so absorbed in the teaching that he, invariably, at the end of each discourse ends up with asking Swamiji, "Well, Swami, it all amounts to this in the end, doesn't it? I *am* Brahman, I *am* the Absolute." If you could only see Swami's indulgent smile and hear him answer so gently, "Yes, Dokie, you are Brahman, you are the Absolute, in the real essence of your being." Later, when the learned doctor comes to the table a trifle late, Swami, with the utmost gravity but with a merry twinkle in his eyes, will say, "Here comes Brahman" or "Here is the Absolute."

Swamiji's fun-making is of the merry type. Sometimes he will say, "Now I am going to cook for you!" He is a wonderful cook and delights in serving the "brithrin." The food he prepares is delicious but for 'yours truly' too hot with various spices; but I made up my mind to eat it if it strangled me, which it nearly did. If a *Vivekananda* can cook for me, I guess the least I can do is to eat it. Bless him!

At such times we have a whirlwind of fun. Swamiji will stand on the floor with a white napkin draped over his arm, *a la* the waiters on the dining cars, and will intone in perfect imitation their call for dinner,—“Last call fo' the dining cah. Dinner served.”—Irresistibly funny. And then, at table, such gales of laughter over some quip or jest, for he unfailingly discovers the little idiosyncrasies of each one—but never sarcasm or malice—just fun.

Since my last letter to you when I told you of Swamiji's capacity for merriment, so many little things have occurred to make one see how varied are the aspects of Vivekananda. We are trying to take notes of all that he says but I find myself

lost in listening and forget the notes. His *voice* is wondrously beautiful. One might well lose oneself in its divine music. However, dear Miss Waldo is taking very full notes of the lessons and in that way they will be preserved.

Some good fairy must have presided at our birth—C.'s and mine. We do not, as yet, know much of Karma and Reincarnation but we are beginning to see that both are involved in our being brought into touch with Swamiji.

Sometimes I ask him rather daring questions, for I am so anxious to know just how he would react under certain conditions. He takes it so kindly when I in my impulsive way sometimes "rush in where angels fear to tread." Once he said to some one, "Mrs. Funke rests me, she is so naive." Wasn't that dear of him?

One evening, when it was raining and we were all sitting in the living room, the Swami was talking about pure womanhood and told us the story of Sita. *How* he can tell a story! You *see* it and all the characters become real. I found myself wondering just how some of the beautiful society queens of the west would appear to him—especially those versed in the art of allurements—and before I took time to think, out popped the question and immediately I was covered with confusion. The Swami, however, looked at me calmly with his big, serious eyes and gravely replied, "If the most beautiful woman in the world were to look at me in an immodest or unwomanly way, she would immediately turn into a hideous, green frog, and one does not, of course, admire frogs!"

Apropos of my name something so funny happened. One day, we all walked down to the village and passed a glass-blower's tent. Swami was much interested in this and held a whispered conversation with the glass-blower. Then he asked us to take a walk through the main street of the village and upon our return the glass-blower handed him sundry mysterious packages which proved to contain a gift for each of us, a large crystal ball, each one different with our names blown in the glass "With the love of Vivekananda." Upon reaching the house, we opened our packages. *My* name was spelled "Phunkey." We were convulsed with laughter but not where *he* could hear us. He never having seen my name written, "Phunkey" was the result.

And he was so sweet, so gentle and benign all that evening,

just like an indulgent father who had given his children beautiful gifts, although many of us were much older than he.

The Swami has accepted C. as one fitted for his work in India. She is so happy. I was very disappointed because he would not encourage me to go to India. I had a vague idea that to live in a cave and wear a yellow robe would be the proper thing to do if one wished to develop spiritually. How foolish of me and how wise Swamiji was! He said, "You are a householder. Go back to Detroit, find God in your husband and family. *That* is your path at present."

Later. This morning we went to the village and Swami had tin-types taken of himself at our request. He was so full of fun, so merry. I am trying to write you in class as there is literally no other time. I am sitting near the Swami and he is saying these very words, "The Guru is like a crystal. He reflects perfectly the consciousness of all who come to him. He thus understands how and in what way to help." He means by this that a Guru must be able to see what each person needs and he must meet them on their own place of consciousness.

Now he has closed the class for the morning and he has turned to me, "Mrs. Funke, tell me a funny story. We are going to part soon and we must talk funny things, isn't it?" Alas, he leaves on Monday.

We take long walks every afternoon and our favorite walk is back of the cottage down a hill and then a rustic path to the river. One day there was olfactory evidence of a pole-cat in the vicinity and ever since Swami will say, "Shall we walk down Skunk Avenue?"

Sometimes we stop several times and sit around on the grass and listen to Swami's wonderful talks. A bird, a flower, a butterfly, will start him off and he will tell us stories from the Vedas or recite Indian poetry. I recall that one poem started with the line, "Her eyes are like the black bee on the lotus." He considered most of our poetry to be obvious, banal, without the delicacy of that of his own country.

Monday, August 12th. Alas, he has departed! Swamiji left this evening at 9 o'clock on the steamer for Clayton where

he will take the train for New York and from there sail for England.

The last day has been a very wonderful and precious one. This morning there was no class. He asked C. and me to take a walk as he wished to be alone with us. (The others had been with him all summer and he felt we should have a last talk.) We went up a hill about half a mile away. All was woods and solitude. Finally he selected a low-branched tree and we sat under the low-spreading branches. Instead of the expected talk, he suddenly said, "Now we will meditate. We shall be like Buddha under the Bo Tree." He seemed to turn to bronze, so still was he. Then a thunder-storm came up, and it poured. He never noticed it. I raised my umbrella and protected him as much as possible. Completely absorbed in his meditation, he was oblivious of everything. Soon we heard shouts in the distance. The others had come out after us with raincoats and umbrellas. Swamiji looked around regretfully, for we *had* to go, and said, "Once more am I in Calcutta in the rains."

He was so tender and sweet all this last day. As the steamer rounded the bend in the river, he boyishly and joyously waved his hat to us in farewell and he had departed indeed.

As I finish these brief reminiscences, the calendar tells me that it is February 14th, 1925—just thirty one years almost to the very hour I first saw and heard Swamiji at the Unitarian Church.

Ah, those blessed, halcyon days at Thousand Island Park! The nights all glowing with the soft mystery of moonlight or golden starlight. And yet the Swami's arrival amongst us held no mystery, apparently. He came in simple guise.

We found later that anything which smacked of the mystery-monger was abhorrent to him. He came to make manifest the Glory and Radiance of the Self. Man's limitations are of his own making. "Thine only is the hand that holds the rope that drags thee on." This was the motif running through the Swami's teaching.

With infinite pains he tried to show us the path he himself had trod. After thirtyone years Swamiji stands out in my consciousness a colossal figure—a cleaver of bondage, knowing

when and where not to spare. With his two-edged flaming sword came this Man "out of the East"—this Man of Fire and Flame and some there were who received him and to those who received him he gave Power.

Such was Vivekananda!

THE IDEALS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION

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Rajendra College, Faridpur, Bengal

(Continued from page 19)

The Ramkrishna Mission was founded by Swami Vivekananda in the year 1897. The success that has attended its endeavours within the last thirty years fills one with hope and joy. That what has been done is very creditable goes without saying. Still a great deal more has to be done. The whole country must be dotted over with the institutions of the Ramkrishna Mission. Besides it is a fact that there are repeated calls from Europe and America for more preachers, but the Mission is unable to meet the demand for paucity of workers. So what is wanted now is more men and more money—but men above all. The whole world must be deluged with the spirituality of India. The trumpet of Vedanta must be sounded in all quarters of the globe. The aim of Swami Vivekananda was nothing short of this. Hinduism means nothing but Vedanta and the living commentaries on Vedanta were Ramkrishna and Vivekananda. About the previous *avatars* some doubt is inevitable. The question is naturally raised as to how far they are historical and how far legendary but no such question can possibly arise over Ramkrishna and Vivekananda, for their disciples are still in our midst. *As Buddhism means the imitation of Buddha and Christianity means the imitation of Christ, so Hinduism is another name for the imitation of our rishis and avatars;—and*

because there cannot be any doubt whatever as to the historicity of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda, therefore it follows that the Hinduism of those drawing their inspiration from these great souls must be more living, vital and dynamic than the Hinduism of others. Like the past prophets and avatars of India they delivered the message of Vedanta once more at a very critical stage of our national life when Hinduism was fast declining. Whatever may be the sect of a Hindu—be he a dualist, qualified non-dualist or a non-dualist pure and simple—be he a Vaishnava, Shakta or Shaiva—it is on one of the commentaries of Vedanta that his sect is founded. In the teachings of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda we see that which we do not see anywhere else—I mean, the wonderful harmony of all the conflicting schools and sects; and yet it is not merely the religion of learning, the religion of theories but the religion of life, practice (*Sadhana*) and realisation (*Siddhi*). A man's *Ishtam* (object of worship) will not only remain unimpaired but he will be all the more devoted to his *Ishtam* for his reverence for Ramkrishna and Vivekananda and for contemplating his *Ishtam* in the light of their lives. It is not only the Hindus who will be better Hindus but Christians and Mussalmans also will be better Christians and better Moslems if they cherish reverence for Ramkrishna and Vivekananda. The lives and teachings of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda are the sure solvents of the intolerance associated with the Semitic group of religions, viz., Judaism, Christianity and Islam. All the religions of the world are bound to come under some school or other of Vedanta.

As for the Hindu, he is very tolerant no doubt in matters of doctrines, dogmas and modes of worship, but as he is very narrow in social matters, his social ideas cannot but be liberalised if he once comes under the influence of Ramkrishna and Vivekananda. This is the true character of Hinduism and this alone can justly claim to be the Religion Universal. *Universal Religion has nothing to do with eclecticism and syncretism. It is the underlying principle of all the religions of the world. Hinduism, rightly understood, is not a religion among religions but religion itself—the absolute religion. The full manifestation of Hinduism in the present age we see in Ramkrishna and Vivekananda alone. To follow them is the same thing as to follow Universal Religion. Man pants for Man and it is through the God-Man that he ultimately arrives at*

the Truth. *This is the psychology of avatar-worship, prophet-worship and hero-worship.* It is not external worship merely that will suffice. External worship has its place but *what is needed above all is inward method and worship in spirit; or in other words, the most important thing is the formation of one's character after the example of the Hero, for the Hero is the ideal incarnate.* The genius of Hinduism or Universal Religion in the present age was manifested in the person of Ramkrishna Paramhansa. The champion of Hinduism in the present age was Swami Vivekananda, the ochre-clad generalissimo of his God-intoxicated Master. They have infused a new spirit into the dead bones of our religion and have made the much abused Hindu bold, strong and self-confident. What he wants now is that boldness and enthusiasm which was the marked feature of the early Buddhist, the early Christian and the early Moslem. It is not by the sword but by the power of the spirit that the Hindu seeks to conquer the world. It is the business of the Ramkrishna Mission to arouse the dormant spirit of the Hindu. It is the business of the Mission to remove the poverty of our soul. It is the business of the Mission to convince the Hindu that he is a veritable lion and not a bleating lamb. That he takes himself for a lamb is due to the obstruction caused by Maya. The veil of this Maya must be rent asunder with a ruthless hand. It is the business of the Mission to remove all the evils the Hindu is heir to. Economic evils, social evils, civic evils—in short, there is nothing that does not come within the scope of the Ramkrishna Mission; yet the method of the so-called social reformer and political agitator it wholly rejects. It is the aim of the Mission to train the Hindu in his national culture and make him a Hindu in the true sense of the term so that he may be strong, self-determining and have confidence in himself.

The fundamental principle of the Mission, however, is not political and social reform, though it knows very well that all the departments of life are inter-related and inter-dependent. The Mission goes to the root of the matter. If the nation wants to rise once more it must rise through the principle of Dharma. This was the conclusion reached by Swami Vivekananda, the founder of the Mission, with the deep insight of a *rishi*. It is not for nothing that he saw the vision of Awakened India

in his hours of meditation. The believers in Ramkrishna-Vivekananda must have faith in this vision and the Mission is strong in this faith.

What short-sighted social reformers and political agitators are doing in our country the man who runs may read. Now we hear so much about constructive work, village organisation and all that sort of thing. If success attend these endeavours none will be more gratified than we ; but because the underlying principle of all these activities is political, therefore it is very doubtful how they will all end. The aim of the Mission is different altogether. The foundation of true constructive work was laid by Swami Vivekananda about thirty years ago. The Mission is loyally treading in his steps, it is silently carrying the colours of its Master and is slowly but surely extending its operations. May God help the Mission to forge further ahead! The slogan of the Mission is *Individual Reform* or what the Swamiji called his man-making work. Let individual character be first formed on the basis of Dharma and social, political and economic reforms must come themselves. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

The object of the Ramkrishna Mission is best represented by the symbol conceived by the genius of its founder as its characteristic mark and seal. It is the symbol of harmony—the harmony of Jnana, Bhakti, Karma and Yoga. What the Swamiji has called Practical Vedanta is boldly inscribed on the banner of the Mission. The Vedanta of the forest and the mountain-cave is to be brought to bear on our daily life. That is why a new order of monks has come into existence. For parallels we have to go back to the Buddhistic age of India and the history of Mediæval Europe. The immense benefit conferred on man by Buddha's *bhikshus* and the Catholic monks is known to every student of the world's civilisation. That philanthropy which is not based on renunciation inspired by spirituality but on the profit-and-loss philosophy of the utilitarian school is philanthropy without sense. It is purely mechanical, and as a machine is lifeless, no real good can be expected from it. Even the word "pity" has not been used by the founder of the Mission. His motto is Renunciation and Service—the service of Narayana in man. It is an ideal not to be

found in Buddhist India for the Buddhist ethics does not rise higher than the ethics of pity. Nor is it to be found in Mediæval Europe for the Christianity of the Church never rose above dualism proper. The home of this ideal is India no doubt. The source of this ideal is India's Upanishads. But the ideal was never applied to life as it should have been. It is the large-hearted Swami who has done this for the first time in the history of Hindustan or for that matter, in the history of the world. No dedication, no true service is possible without absolute renunciation. That is why the helmsmen of the Mission are all Sannyasins. Their high philosophy of work may be beyond the comprehension of the majority of men. Still the noble example set by them is well calculated to inspire all to go forth and do likewise. It is through *nishkama karma* (work without the desire for external result) that purity of the heart will be attained and it is through the pure heart that Jnana (wisdom), Bhakti (devotion) and Prema (love) will shine forth in their glory and lead men ultimately to the goal of Mukti (liberation). However we may talk, we can but do good to ourselves by trying to do good to others. The real effect of all true work is nothing but internal. This thought will save us from vanity and make us heartily grateful to the poor, the ignorant, the heavy-laden and the weary, for God has given us an opportunity to serve Him by serving the needy since He is everywhere and He is all. We should always remember that it is Narayana who comes to us disguised as the forlorn and the helpless. How beautifully and feelingly has Swami Vivekananda expressed this idea in the well-known lines of his famous Bengali song! The English rendering is this:

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom,
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love ;
Friend, offer mind, soul, body at their feet.
These are His manifold forms before thee,
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings, without distinction,
He indeed is worshipping best his God.

(To be concluded)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Swami Shraddhananda

The death of Swami Shraddhananda—which we regret we could not notice in our last issue owing to unavoidable circumstances—in the afternoon of the 23rd December, at the hands, as alleged, of a Muhammadan fanatic has left a melancholy gap in the public life of India. The Swami at the time of his death was seventy-one years old and was still in his bed after a severe illness. The brutality of the murder could not be exceeded. The Swami was a strong and virile man, strong in all fields of his action. He was a great educational reformer, having the Kangri Gurukula to his everlasting credit. He was also one of the first organisers of the Shuddhi and Sangathan movements. And his love for his religion knew no bounds. He did much while living and his tragic death will, we are confident, achieve more. Those Muhammadan leaders who in their excessive communal zeal, have often observed reticence at acts of crime committed by members of their community when the victims were Hindus, cannot surely absolve themselves absolutely of the indirect responsibility of this murder. Their reticence has encouraged the mentality which lay behind this cruel assassination. We are convinced that until Hindus have united themselves into a compact body, filled with the true spirit of their religion and culture, Hindu-Moslem unity cannot be seriously thought of. Let us hope that the martyrdom of Swami Shraddhananda will accelerate the realisation of Hindu and Hindu-Moslem unity.

The Indian National Congress

The most distinctive feature of the last session of the Indian National Congress at Gauhati in Assam was the able speech of the president, Mr. S. Srinivasa Iyengar, which was well-reasoned and lucid. We do not think that the Congress has really succeeded in finding a solution of the present tangle of the public life. The points that have interested us most in the presidential address are, firstly, the president's illuminating remarks on communalism which we quote here partly :

“No community can, in these days, really progress in secular affairs unless the nation as a whole advances, unless, in other words, the other communities either acquiesce in the rise of one community or make equal progress. The best way of advancing politically in one's own community is, therefore, to raise the status of all the communities as a whole. For, if you seek to advance your own community, all the other communities band themselves together against yours. Communalism is not so much a positive idea of benefiting one's own community as a destructive desire to obtain advantages at the expense of the other communities. And how, one may well ask, is a community benefited

by one of its members securing a post in Government service or succeeding in an election? If he conducts himself justly and honestly as a member of the public service, members of his community can share only in the general good and can gain no undue advantage. If, on the other hand, he favours them at the expense of others, he will become unjust and corrupt."

Secondly, his observations on the relations of politics and religion with which we find ourselves in complete agreement. He says rightly that "the intrusion into politics of religion, and very often of dogmatic religion, must be resisted as a primitive or mediæval idea,.....disastrous alike to religion and to politics." He gives a place to religion "far, far above Swaraj which is not comparable to them." But we are afraid, Mr. Iyengar has not properly thought of the implications of this assumption. If politics is dissociated from religion, politics will immediately lose its present importance. For religion is the central motive of every Indian life, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, and to it is devoted its best attention and energies. Religion necessarily is the primal concern of the collective life as well. That is why all our recent political movements have trailed in the end into sorts of religious cults. It is our opinion, therefore, that just as religion should be on the one hand purged of its credal aspects and fanaticism and made non-sectarian and fundamental, so also politics on the other hand must be relegated to its legitimate, subordinate position in the scheme of collective life. The latter can be best accomplished by separating the different collective functions—social, religious, economical, educational etc.—from the amorphous and hybrid body of our present politics. Then politics will be true politics and flourish better. Nationalism and politics are not identical. In India nationalism cannot but be predominantly religious. In seeking to identify politics with nationalism, by trying to organise the nation on the political basis, we are repeatedly creating religious conflict. A change in the angle of vision is the greatest want of the hour.

We would like to make a suggestion, though it does not fall quite within our scope. A good part of the present confusion, and waste of money and energy can be saved, we think, by the Congress formulating a fixed policy of its own. It may be said that in the constantly changing circumstances of the country, the Congress cannot have a fixed policy. But if the Congress is for the realisation of self-government in India, then surely its first duty is to formulate a scheme of self-government, a truly Indian constitution, in conformity with the history and genius of the Indian people. The Congress should therefore appoint a commission to that end, consisting of the best men available in India or abroad for that purpose. And when the constitution as framed by them will be approved by the country, the Congress can settle down to its realisation through all adequate means. And then much of the present unseemly party-quarrels will be mitigated; for it will not matter much what means the different parties adopted to realise the goal which was the same for all, so long

as they were honest. There will be greater catholicity and tolerance and confidence. We do not know whether this lay opinion of ours has any value in the expert eye.

▲ Great Bengali Vedantin

Little is generally known of the great monk and Vedantin, Madhusudana Saraswati, the renowned author of *Advaita-Siddhi*. The following short sketch, for which we are indebted to an article by Pralhad C. Divanji, M.A., LL.M. in the last issue of *Annals of the Bhandarkar Institute*, will, we hope, be found interesting. The writer himself derives his information mainly from a Preface in Sanskrit written by Pandit Iswar Chandra to the *Harililâ Vyâkhyâ*. Iswar Chandra's authority is an ancient Mss. named *Vaidikavâda Mimânsâ* found with an old Brahmin family of E. Bengal.

Madhusudana was one of the four sons of one Purandarâchârya, a direct descendant of Râma Misra who had migrated from Kanauj and settled at Nadia. On the death of his father, Purandara was once invited by Mâdhava Pâsâ, a Hindu king (?) of Vanga to his capital. On his way back, he saw the suburb of Kotalipada, settled at its hamlet named Usasuja, built a house which he named Purandara-Vâtikâ and a temple for the goddess Sri-Dakshinâ-murti Kâlikâ, which are still said to exist. He had four sons named Srinâtha, Yâdavânanda, Madhusudana and Vâgishachandra. The last died at a very young age but the first three became famous later on as Srinâtha Chudâmani, Yâdavânanda Nyâyâchârya and Madhusudana Saraswati. Madhusudana is considered to have flourished in the latter half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th century.

Once upon a time, the story runs, Purandara went with his two sons Yâdava and Madhusudana to the court of Mâdhava Pâsâ and showed to him how brilliant and learned the latter was and at the end of the interview expressed a desire for a grant of the land on which he had built his hermitage. The king, though struck with Madhusudana's ability, was not disposed to make the grant. This exasperated Madhusudana more than his father and so much filled him with a sense of remorse that he begged permission of his father to turn a recluse which the latter granted. He thereupon became a Dandi Sannyasin and proceeded to Benares.

Connected with the journey there is a legend current in that province that Madhusudana, finding on his way the river near Yasohara overflowed, camped on its bank and prayed to God Varuna to give him a passage through the river, and got an inspiration in a dream that he would not find any obstruction. On waking up he proceeded to cross the river on foot and did so without difficulty. The people therefore named the river after him.

At Benares, he got himself formally initiated into the *Brahmavidyâ* by Vishweshwara Saraswati and soon became widely known in the learned circles there and began to be admired and respected on account of

His observance of strict penances and the practice of Yoga. It was there that he composed *Advaita-Siddhi*, his masterpiece on the Vedanta philosophy. It is said that the poet Tulasidasa was his contemporary and lived at Benares. They having come to know each other, the latter sent his *Râma-Charita-Mânasa* for the former's perusal. Another legend that is current about him is that the Emperor Akbar having heard of his learning, once invited him for a discourse with the savants of his court and that they were so struck with his mastery over the Sanskrit language that they paid him very high encomium. He is believed to have gone to reside at Hardwar in the latter part of his life and passed into *Samâdhi* at the advanced age of 107 years.

THE ESSENCE OF VEDANTA

[VEDANTASARA]

(Continued from page 34)

अधिकारी तु विधिवत् अधीतवेदवेदाङ्गत्वेन आपाततः अधिगता-
खिलवेदार्थः अस्मिन् जन्मनि जन्मान्तरे वा काम्यनिषिद्धवर्जनपुरःसरं
नित्य-नैमित्तिक-प्रायश्चित्तोपासनानुष्ठानेन निर्गतनिखिलकल्मषतया
नितान्त-निर्मल-स्वान्तः साधन-चतुष्टयसम्पन्नः प्रमाता । ६

6. He is the only competent student¹ who, by studying in accordance with the prescribed² method the Vedas and the Vedangas³ (the books auxiliary to the Vedas), has obtained a general⁴ comprehension of the entire Vedas, who, being absolved from all sins in this or in a previous⁵ birth by the avoidance of the actions known as *Kâmya* and those forbidden in the scriptures and by the performance of actions called *Nitya* (daily obligatory rites) and *Naimittika* (obligatory on special occasions) as well as by penance and devotion, has become entirely pure in mind, and who has adopted the four *Sâdhanas* or means for the attainment of spiritual knowledge.

[1 *Student*—It is connected with '*Pramâtâ*,' the last word of the text. By *Pramâtâ* is meant the man who is infallible in scriptural or worldly conduct. Or it may mean pure Consciousness as reflected in the mind. Or again, according to another commentator, it signifies the pupil of pure conduct of any of the three higher castes.

[2 *Prescribed method*—By practising *Brahmacharya* and other austerities of the student life.

[3 *Vedangas*—These are six in number:—(a) *Shikshâ* (The science

of proper articulation and pronunciation), (b) *Kalpah* (Rituals or ceremonies), (c) *Vyākaranam* (Grammar), (d) *Niruktam* (Etymological explanation of difficult Vedic words), (e) *Chhandas* (The science of prosody), (f) *Jyotisham* (Astronomy).

4 *General etc.*—Otherwise there will be no necessity for his further study of the scriptures.

5 *Previous etc.*—This is in explanation of the cases of Vidura and other sages who, though not endowed with scriptural knowledge etc., were yet said to have attained the highest realisation. These sages were born with purity and other requisites of realisation as a result of their studying scriptures etc. in a previous birth.]

काम्यानि—स्वर्गादीष्टसाधनानि ज्योतिष्टोमादीनि । ७

7. The sacrifices such as *Jyotishtoma*¹ etc. which enable their performers to get the desired fruits such as living in heaven etc., are known as *Kamya*² Karma.

[1 *Jyotishtoma*—Comp. the scriptural passage, “ज्योतिष्टोमेन स्वर्गकामो यजेत” —“With a view to go to heaven perform the Jyotishtoma sacrifice.”

2 *Kamya etc.*—Those ceremonies which are performed with a definite motive are called *Kamya* Karma.]

निषिद्धानि—नरकाद्यनिष्टसाधनानि ब्राह्मणहननादीनि । ८

8. Forbidden acts, such as slaying¹ the Brahmin etc., are those which bring about undesired results as going² to hell etc.

[1 *Slaying etc.*—Drinking and other vices are included.

2 *Going etc.*—Additional punishments include worldly afflictions etc.]

नित्यानि—अकरणे प्रत्यवायसाधनानि सन्ध्यावन्दनादीनि । ९

9. Daily rites such as *Sandhyâ*¹ etc., the non-performance of which causes harm are called *Nitya* Karma.

[1 *Sandhya etc.*—The morning, noon and evening prayers of the people of the three higher castes.

Pancha Mahâyajna or the five daily obligatory sacrifices of a householder are also included.]

नैमित्तिकानि—पुत्रजन्माद्यनुबन्धीनि जातेष्ट्यादीनि । १०

10. *Jâteshti*¹ sacrifices etc., which are performed subsequent to the birth of a son etc., are called the *Naimittika*² Karma or rites observed on special occasions.

[1 *Jâteshti*—Comp. Tait. Samh. 2. 2. 5. 3. “वैश्वानरं द्वादशकपालं निवपेत् पुत्रे जाते ।”

2 *Naimittika etc.*—The rites whose performance are obligatory on a householder on special occasions.]

प्रायश्चित्तानि—पापक्षय(मात्र)साधनानि चान्द्रायणादीनि । ११

11. The penances such as *Chândrâyana*¹ etc., are rites which are instrumental in the expiation of sin.

[1 *Chândrâyana etc.*—Regarding the four varieties of penances see Manu XI. 217—220. The *Krichchhras* or other austerities are also included. Comp. Manu XI. 209—216.]

उपासनानि—सगुणब्रह्मविषय(क)मानसव्यापाररूपाणि शान्दिल्य-विद्यादीनि । १२

12. The *Upâsanas* or devotions such as are described in the *Shândilya Vidyâ*¹ are mental² activities relating to the *Saguna*³ Brahman.

[1 *Shândilya etc.*—This is the famous chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad beginning with “सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म”—“All this is verily Brahman etc.” (3. 14. 1). *Dahara Vidyâ* etc. (Chh. Upa. 8. 1) are also included.

2 *Mental etc.*—as distinguished from real knowledge. The *Upasana* is distinct from *Jnanam* or Knowledge as in the latter case all differences between the meditator and the object of meditation are obliterated.

3 *Saguna etc.*—Brahman with attributes such as power of creation etc. The word *Saguna* is used to make a distinction between mental activities and complete absorption in the Highest Self in which case all ideas of the object are entirely effaced.]

(To be continued)

HINDU PEACE AND CHRISTIAN POWER

BY JANE ALDEN.

(Continued from page 44)

“But,” said the missionary, “what about Nirvana and all that negative philosophy?”

“It was not the Buddha who made it negative. Doubtless he and the Christ, too, would be surprised at many of the doctrines of their ‘followers.’ The Buddha said: ‘Let him cultivate the good will without measure towards the whole world, above, below, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of making distinctions or showing preferences. This state of heart is best in the world. It is Nirvana.’”

"And any one who thinks he preached a negative doctrine or a life of apathetic meditation should listen to this," I said, as I whipped out a little note-book I had been using for specially interesting quotations: "'A life of indolence is an abomination, and lack of energy is to be despised.....The teaching of the Buddha does not require men to go into homelessness or to resign the world.....but whatever men do, whether they remain in the world as artisans, merchants, and officers of the king, or retire from the world and devote themselves to a life of religion, let them put their whole heart into their task, let them be diligent and energetic.....and if they live in the world not a life of self but a life of truth—then surely joy, peace and bliss will reign in their minds.'"

Miss Shearer also had produced a note-book.

"Where did you find all that?"

"In Paul Carus's version of the gospel of Buddha. I wish that every Westerner would read it and that great Hindu classic, the *Bhagavad Gita*, or 'Song Celestial.' We pass ignorant generalizations from mouth to mouth about the 'negative philosophy' of the Indians—and what Occidental in a million has ever studied the Hindu scriptures?"

"He will do well if he studies his own!" The missionary returned to her guns. "Any one who really knows and follows the gospel of Christ—"

"But that's just the point: no one can really know and follow the gospel of Christ without following—whether he knows it or not—the gospel of these others. Every one of the great world-teachers taught the same thing. All taught that this same one Truth they preach *will* deliver. All taught the laying down of the life of the limited self. All emphasized the spirit and not the letter. All said, 'Be in the world, but not of it'—you have only to go through the several scriptures to be struck with the similarities on every page."

"Well, my dear," interrupted Miss Shearer, "the proof of the pudding is supposed to be in the living. If Indian religious teachings are so uplifting, how do you account for the misery and degradation among the Indian people?"

"Every one knows that India's great weakness is social exclusiveness, which grew out of keeping the highest knowledge in possession of the 'twice-born' castes and away from the masses. India, which is paying dearly for that exclusiveness today has waked up to that fact that she will never be anything until she repairs her fault and patiently educates those whom she has neglected."

"Ah!" said Miss Shearer triumphantly, "so you admit—"

"But on the other hand"—I looked into her face as into that of the whole western world—"our own great weakness is spiritual exclusiveness and arrogance and the assumption that our prophet and our doctrine alone can save mankind. As an Indian gentleman said to me yesterday, 'The Christians fondly believe that the Lord is their private discovery!' Don't you truly think that the Hindu idea of all the great religious teachers as saviors and divine incarnations is more beautiful and tolerant, and more really Christian, than ours?"

“There was but one divine incarnation!” flamed Miss Shearer. “Jesus Christ is the only son of God. We’re told that in the Bible, over and over.”

“And their Bible—the *Mahabharata*, which in its oldest form antedates the Christian era by several centuries—tells them, ‘Whenever there is a decline of religion and virtue, and whenever there is an ascendancy of vice, I incarnate myself for the establishment of *Dharma*, of righteousness, and for the destruction of the wicked.’ And again, ‘Whatever path a man may choose according to his own inclination and inborn tendencies, I reveal myself through that path.’ ‘He the Lord is One, Truth is One,’ says the *Rigveda*, ‘but men call It by various names.’ ”

Which is the finer ideal—the bigger and more inspiring point of view? Shall we have one single manifestation of divine goodness, one single, inspired book, to guide us through human history, or shall we have all the divine men and the sacred books that our brothers of every time and clime have contributed to the rich storehouse of the ages? Is it to impress our will and our way on the world that the Christian Church exists? Or should it be to present our way, modestly among other ways, for men to choose of their own accord, if our lives make it seem irresistibly attractive?

Miss Shearer and the missionaries gave me up; and I went from the intense physical activity and intellectual narrowness of the missionary compound to the spiritual breadth and peace of the Hindu monastery.

This group of dignified terraced buildings on the Ganges, above Calcutta, was founded by the famous Swami Vivekananda, who became so well-known a figure at the Chicago Parliament of Religions. On the death of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna—a great Hindu saint of the last century—he rallied and held together the handful of young men who had been the sage’s closest disciples. The little band lived for years in great poverty, in the ruins of an old garden near the place of their Master’s cremation. But, though their bodies were frequently near starvation, their minds and spirits soared high—in the long days and nights of continuous prayer and meditation.

Such lives of devotion could not remain forever hidden in a garden. The monks went on pilgrimages and became known throughout for their character and learning. Their combination of the orthodox Vedic principles with a broader-than-orthodox application of these in the solving of Indian social problems won the best elements in all grades of Hindu society. Then came the enthusiastic reception of Swami Vivekananda in America and the subsequent impetus to the consolidation of the work at home. Today the Order of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda numbers some three hundred of the most intelligent and best trained men in India, with hundreds of others constantly applying for admission. From the head monastery at Calcutta, they have established branch monasteries, hospitals, dispensaries, schools, orphanages, and now women’s religious houses also, throughout the length and breadth of the country. Their influence, since they are working in harmony

with India's own cultural tradition, is probably greater than that of any other modern Hindu religious movement. They have taken as their motto *Siva-Sheva*—"God and Service." Thus to the old ideal of the Indian monk as an isolated wanderer,* absorbed in contemplation of the Divine, they have added the ideal of worshipping God in acts of service to man. Much of their time is spent in nursing, caring for and educating the poor. In this Order there is of course no caste, and the highest Brahman serves the lowliest beggar, often going specially to the great *melas*, popular festivals and other gatherings where fever and disease are prevalent, in order to perform this service. The night I arrived at the monastery, a band of some half-dozen of the younger monks and novices had just returned from such an expedition.

The next day two of them set forth on pilgrimage, one to the Himalaya and the other to a great shrine in the South. For months they would be plunged in the silence of their own "withdrawn" communion with the Universal Spirit that they had also been serving in their pariahs at the mela. Not only are they no whit behind the missionaries with the pariah, but they are gradually bringing other Hindus to their broader conception. In their wise alternation between the life of action and the life of contemplation—making the one feed the other—they seem to me to go beyond our western idea of purely social service with no nourishing inspiration from periods of quiet withdrawal.

Meanwhile in the guest-house on the Ganges, the English lady and I began our studies. The Hindus believe that for each of us there is a natural temperamental path of approach to Truth. Hence the first thing a Hindu teacher does, is to find out what his pupil's natural path is. At first this waiting attitude was a bit disconcerting to us, used as we were to the western preacher-debater's dynamic plunge into the midst of things. Our lessons were given, not in a seminary lecture-room or a crowded corner of a busy minister's office, but under a tree in the garden, by the broad-flowing Ganges; and instead of the western ministerial "live wire" there was our venerable *Swami*, coming down the path from the monastery gate, in his yellow robe and peaked cap, with a rose in his hand for each of us!

He would settle himself in a corner under the big *banian*, where the village children came shyly to "take the dust" from the holy man's feet, and the cows, like spoiled children also, muzzled into his arm for the bits of fresh green he never failed to have for them. Other animals wandered about peacefully; over on one side of the garden the young dispensary *swami* served his patients—villagers in their green shawls and blue-and-orange mantles, picturesque groups against the white plaster house; farther on the *sadhus* came and went about the tasks of the day—gardening, drying grains, culling flowers, preparing rice for the poor. Great barges of golden hay drifted past us down the river to the musical chanting and rhythmic bending of the

* The old ideal of Sannyasa was not mere self-isolation and wandering, but also the preaching of the spiritual truths—*Editor, P. B.*

lithe brown bodies of the rowers. And in the midst of all this tranquil life we sat with our swami under the big tree.

With Hindus it is always individual teaching; so we came one by one and took our seats beside him. He spread his shawl for us over the hard knobs, smiled upon us and said nothing. In consequence we did just what was expected of us: opened the over-crammed closets of our minds and hearts and let the whole *mélange* of mixed thoughts and worries and ideas roll out before him. Like all modern Westerners we were full of "problems." All my first questions were about social and economic conditions in my country.

He listened. I am sure he had never heard such a mental uproar.

"Is there *nothing* one can do?" I asked finally.

"Yes, there is something. You can forget, forget your country, forget all these troubles and perplexities and work on yourself."

"But isn't that selfish?"

"No. It is never selfish to seek the higher self, to seek wisdom. For, when you have found it, it will be for all. And until you have found it, what can you contribute that is worth anything? All this running about in an attempt to settle this and that external problem is like so much repairing of the roof in one corner while a fresh leak is breaking out in another."

"Then we are not to try to help the world at all?"

He shook his head with gentle obstinacy. "The only way to help the world, to purify society, is to purify the individual. You Westerners have the unshakable conviction that some day all the evil of the world will be disposed of by reforms and philanthropic organizations and that then will come the millennium. But we Hindus say that logically no such thing can happen. For what is this world, all this appearance, or *maya* as we call it, but the playground of two forces—attraction and repulsion, or, in ethical language, good and evil? How can you have life without these two? No—this world is simply a grand moral gymnasium, in which souls may gain strength and insight through various tests and experiences—and so ultimately God-realization and liberation. We believe in progressive unfoldment, from lower to higher states of consciousness—from the lowest animal to the highest god—and in the action and reaction, the sowing and reaping, incident upon successive phases of development.

"But," he continued, "Hindu philosophy says that you cannot be lugged into paradise on the shoulders of some one else's suffering. You must struggle, and never cease struggle, in order to attain the consciousness of that supreme life—knowledge—bliss that is our idea of heaven—happiness. For to us God is not a person, favourable to some and unfavourable to others—who have not been lucky enough to hear about him through one special religious system that he approves of. He is Immanent Spirit, pervading every atom of this universe, nearer than the near, the very breath and life and heart of every being. And by quieting restless thoughts and drawing in the scattered senses from those outer objects that divert us, we may gradually purify and clear

the mind till we do behold the Lord himself—not far off, not separate from ourselves, but here and now, shining effulgent within us!”

Such peace and beauty had come into the strong old face that I was moved to say, “You have known that experience—of God-realization—yourself?”

“It is the joy and dayspring of my life! And you too will know it,” he assured me with quiet conviction. “Every soul in the universe will finally know it—as surely as there is within every soul the principle of expansion, intelligence, growth, that will not stop until the very outermost limit has been reached. But our system for accelerating this process of soul-expansion we call *Yoga*; and, when a person has found that particular *Yoga*-path that is the right path for him, he can go much faster.

“You have doubtless heard a lot of pseudo-oriental nonsense about this *Yoga*,” he went on, “from clever charlatans seeking to exploit their psychic powers. But in reality there is nothing mysterious or ‘occult’ about it. *Yoga* is a straightforward science, with certain specific rules, which, if faithfully followed, produce certain specific results. A man may be an atheist, and, if he follows the rules, he will arrive at the same results as the most ardent devotee. There is a *Yoga* for every temperament and every station in life: for the man of action in the thick of the world; for the man of emotion, who needs images and symbols and ceremonies to help him realize; for the experimental man, of scientific and agnostic tendency; for the philosophic and analytic man, who likes to reason and come to the end by sheer force of logic.

“This last *Yoga*, *Jnana-Yoga*, is, I think, your natural path of development,” he added. “And I want you to go to Benares and have instruction from a much more learned swami there, who can explain to you the subtleties of the Hindu philosophy—our theory of involution and evolution, *Karma*, reincarnation and the great corner-stone of ethics and the Hindu social system, *dharma*. We are not seeking converts or church-members! Let a thousand Ramakrishna-Vivekananda organizations come and go. Try to realize the highest Truth; practise it in any way you can, through any form of work or worship that is natural to you. Allegiance to the principle is all we ask of you.”

“That is very different from the idea held by the Christian missionaries!”

“God bless them,” he said gently; “they are following their conviction. To us it seems odd that the West claims itself as a ‘Christian’ civilization, with a ‘Christian’ church. Christ was an oriental ascetic, preaching the doctrines of non-resistance, renunciation, taking no care for the morrow.

“Excuse me,” he apologized; “I am speaking of your countrymen. But I am not unappreciative of the real gifts of the Christian missionaries nor of their very real service—of education and social betterment—to India. They came and waked us Hindus to a tardy sense of our own duty. We were too introspective, too unsocial;

we carried our spiritual preoccupation to an extreme. There is much that we would gladly learn from the missionaries—we, the educated classes, as well as our pariahs. But will the day ever come when missionaries will go to a country and ask its people to tell them how to be of help? If missionaries did that, all India will be converted to Christianity overnight! We are about the only practising Christians in the world, anyhow," he added, with a mischievous twinkle.

I laughed with him. "But aren't all the cock-sureness and superiority of the West just signs of extreme youth?" I suggested.

"Surely—surely," said the swami serenely. "For nations as for individuals there are two great rhythmic twin aspects of life: appropriation—renunciation. As we say, *pravritti dharma*, *nivritti dharma*—the path to power and the path to peace. And men must go through the one before they are ready for, or can understand, the other. What meaning has renunciation for your peasant immigrant or for our pariah? First acquire and enjoy, know power, the Hindu scriptures teach, and then and then only will you know the nothingness of power and be ready, nay eager, to renounce it. So these two systems, the oriental and the occidental, are exactly fitted to deal with the two complementary phases of human experience. We should value them for what they are instead of decrying. And now we go to the temple—gongs are sounding for vespers."

Just to enter that temple at the monastery was to be blessed. One put the shoes from off one's feet, spiritually as well as physically, and came in hushed, to take one's place among the motionless figures of the Brothers—each seated in fine aloofness upon his own prayer-mat on the white marble floor.

In the inner temple, beyond the dusk of the outer room, was the altar, a glowing jewel—pale flowers, archaic gold, the priest with his waving lights and gongs and conchs. And then of a sudden, unexpectedly, from those statuesque silent figures—the sonorous burst of a great chant, like a Gregorian plain-song. It gathered volume and power as each additional phrase increased its ardor. The room was charged with the passion of devotion and aspiration that swept from the exultant stanzas.

Silence then the more complete for this tremendous outburst of song. The lights are dimmed, the priest withdraws and the worshiper is left alone with his own meditation. Some of the Brothers go out; others remain, shrouding themselves in their draperies, like marble figures in their remote immobility.

Then—I never knew how long we stayed there, sometimes for minutes, sometimes for hours—each, as the spirit moved him, made his salutation, took his prayer-mat, put on his shoes and went out again into the world of duties.

For the Brothers, back to the monastery and their evening studies. For us, back to the guest-house under the stars. The Turner magic

of the now misty gray river—points of flame here and there through its gossamer curtain. Supper, quiet talk on the veranda, and sleep—to the songs of boatmen and the minor sweetness of a flute afar off.*

NEWS AND REPORTS

Birthday Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna

The birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna falls this year on Saturday, the 5th March. Public celebrations will come off on either next day or on the 13th March. We shall be glad to receive reports of celebrations.

Kumbha Mela at Brindaban, —an Appeal

Sri Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram, Brindaban sends out its appeal for contributions in cash or kind in order that it may discharge its self-imposed duties of properly serving the diseased. The Sevashram has at present provision for thirteen indoor patients. It specially requires 13 mosquito nets, 13 quilts and 13 warm coats or sweaters, instruments for saline injection, Allopathic and Homeopathic medicines for pneumonia and cholera and at least Rs. 1,000 for diet etc. The requirements want to be fulfilled immediately in view of the coming Kumbha Mela at Brindaban. It is hoped that the readers of the Prabuddha Bharata are aware of the ensuing Kumbha Mela at Hardwar. It is the custom of the Vaishnavas however to assemble at Brindaban during the month of Magha (January-February) and spend the whole month on the sands of the Jumna, before leaving for Hardwar. It is expected that this year also there will be a large assemblage of them; and there will therefore be many cases of illness which the Sevashram will have to attend to. Will our kind readers and their friends come forward with unstinted help? All contributions may be sent to "Swami Girijananda, Secy., Sri Ramakrishna Mission Sevashram, Brindaban, Muttra."

Another Ashrama at Malabar

Swami Nirmalananda, president of the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Bangalore, opened another centre of the Ramakrishna Order on the 10th Dec. last, in South Malabar at a short distance from the Ottapalam railway station. The Ashrama has been named the Niranjana Ashrama after a prominent disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Niranjanananda. It is situated on a beautiful site on the river Bhârata. The site was

* From ASIA, New York.

a free gift of a Nambudiri Brahman family. On the opening day, devotees and Sannyasins from the other centres of Malabar assembled at the new Ashrama. There was *puja* and *bhajana* and distribution of *prasada*. In the evening Swami Nirmalananda discoursed to all present on the Divinity of man and the problems confronting the modern world, on the part which Indians, and especially Hindus, have to play therein, and on the necessity of everyone becoming a hero by calling out the latest Divinity within and the futility of trying short-cuts and the trgent need of patient and hard work. May the Ashrama be a source of ever increasing good to mankind!

At the Ananda-Ashrama, California

With Swami Paramananda's return from Boston on July 30th, summer activities commenced at the Ananda-Ashrama. Classes were held under the trees, all sitting on the grass around the Swami. At eight in the morning when the whole Ashrama sparkles with new life and everything is fresh and fragrant, the Swami held the morning meditation. At noon, tasks were laid aside, whether of the desk or of the field, and the workers were again brought into contact with the inner source of things through the Swami's interpretation of the teachings of the Buddha as contained in the "Dhammapada." At four in the afternoon the Swami spoke on the "Bhagavad-Gita." Business men and women who came to spend their vacation at the Ashrama were profoundly affected by the spirit and power of this school and went back to their work refreshed and restored.

On August 22nd, the Swami spoke for the Pasadena Forum at a meeting held in Library Park, Pasadena, at an early hour in the morning.

The Liberal Catholic Church of St. Albans in Hollywood, where Swami spoke three years ago, again claimed him for its Vesper Service of August 29th. A large congregation was present and deep interest shown in the Swami's address which had as its theme, "Yoga and Mysticism." He also spoke at La Canyada's new Community Church, on Sunday morning, September 19th, on "Harmony of Life." In addition to these activities, the Swami has been giving a series of lectures on Friday evenings during August and September, at the Divine Science Church at Los Angeles, and during the month of September has spoken on Wednesday evenings in Alhambra at the home of two old students.

On October 25th the Swami left California for Boston after three months spent at the Ananda-Ashrama. During these months and before, the work of the Boston Centre has been ably carried by Sister Satya-Prana and Miss Philadelphus who conducted the classes and the services. September saw the termination of the Swami's lecture courses in cities near by the Ananda-Ashrama, so that the month of October was devoted almost exclusively to the Ashrama. The great religious festival, Durga Puja, which lasts for three days, was celebrated by the members of the Ashrama household even as it is in India.

After the Swami's departure all services and classes at the Ashrama were conducted by Swami Akhīlananda.

R. K. Mission Sevashram and the Kumbha Mela at Hardwar

We beg to announce to the public that the "Purna Kumbha Mela" will come off at Hardwar in March-April next after a lapse of twelve years. The Mission Sevashram will then have to strain every nerve to alleviate the sufferings of the sick, helpless pilgrims, both high and low, in all possible ways. In order to meet the exigency properly and successfully, pre-arrangement is imperatively necessary. The Sevashram's work will comprise the following items :

(i) Permanent Hospital Relief Section.—This will contain 1 Doctor, 2 Compounders, 1 Dresser and several Nurses. They will be in charge of the Permanent Hospital, both indoor and outdoor, except the Cholera Section.

(ii) Temporary Relief Section.—This section will have 1 Doctor, 1 Compounder and 2 Nurses, who will go round every day from camp to camp to find out patients who are unable to come to the Sevashram, and treat them there. They will also inform the Headquarters, if they find any case requiring to be removed to the Hospital.

(iii) Special Cholera Relief Section.—This department will consist of several groups of volunteers. (a) One party of the volunteers will be in charge of the nursing department of cholera patients in a Special Ward, throughout day and night. (b) The duty of another batch of workers will be to bring in cholera patients on Ambulance Cars and to cremate the dead ones. (c) And the third party will contain 4 workers who will disinfect the places from where cholera patients will be brought.

(iv) Kitchen Section.—The workers of this section will take charge of the Kitchen and Stores Department and prepare food for the patients, workers and guests.

But to carry out the plan successfully, about Rs. 10,000 will be required at the lowest estimate. The Sevashram hopes that this help will be readily forthcoming from the charitable public. Contributions, in cash or kind, may be sent to (1) Swami Kalyanananda, Hony. Secy., R. K. Mission Sevashram, P. O. Karkhal, Dt. Saharanpur, U. P.; or (2) The Manager, Udbodhan Office, 1, Mukherji Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta; or (3) The President, R. K. Mission, P. O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, Bengal.