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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।”

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

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI SHIVANANDA

BELUR MATH, 1922

It was October 1922. The evening services in the shrine had just ended. Silence reigned all around. It struck one from outside as though the monastery had no living soul within. The *sannyāsins* and *brahmachârins* were all meditating or telling beads.

The Mahapurusha (i.e., Swami Shivanandaji), too, sat in meditation on a bed in his own room. The dim light heightened the serenity of his face and made it brighter. Some time passed by in this way, when the Mahapurusha began intoning sweetly the *Shivamahimnah-stotra* (hymn to the greatness of Shiva) in a low tone. His mind was still merged in bliss, when a devotee from Calcutta came slowly from the shrine, saluted the Mahapurusha with reverence, and sat on the floor. The devotee was intimately connected with the monastery and was a well-known figure there. After a while the Mahapurusha himself asked affectionately, ‘Who is that? Is it K.? When did you come?’ The devotee respectfully took the dust of his feet and said, ‘Yes, sir, I came during the evening services.’

‘You must have been in the shrine so long?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Well, why do you look so depressed and worried? I hope everything is well with your family.’

‘By your blessing, sir, everything is well with the family; but for some days a question has been weighing on my mind, and hence this depression. I have come today to the monastery with a view to placing the whole thing before you. I shall begin if I am permitted.’

‘Very well, do so.’

The devotee then began with great feeling : ‘Sir, the whole country is now swayed by the non-co-operation movement of Mahatmaji. Hundreds of men and women are rotting in jails, and many are dying. The Mahatma himself is in the thick of the fight. But why is the Ramakrishna Mission quite unresponsive to this tremendous and country-wide movement? Have you nothing to contribute to this? All the people of our country are silently wondering as to what the Ramakrishna Mission is up to. Has it no part to play in the fight for the country’s freedom?’ And he concluded in a tone of complaint, ‘Do not your hearts cry even a little for the country? Have you no power to do anything?’

The calm countenance of the Mahapurusha became calmer still. He kept silent for a while and then began slowly: 'Mark it, K., the work of an incarnation who moulds an age, is beyond human conception. How can you, or for that matter the whole country, comprehend the trend of his mission? When the Lord comes down in human form, He does not come for any particular country or selected people—He comes for the good of the whole world. This time there has been a manifestation of the supreme spiritual powers of the Lord. Shri Ramakrishna as an incarnation was the full embodiment of purity. Although he had in him all the six godly qualities,<sup>1</sup> he relied, during this human incarnation, on the pure spiritual qualities. Mark, for instance, how he spent his life by the Ganges in a temple compound. How can you comprehend the deep significance of such things? He brought with him such a great powerful medium as Swamiji (i.e., Swami Vivekananda) to assist him in spreading those pure and spiritual ideas. Could not have Swamiji, if he had so willed, created a great political revolution in India? Who can stand comparison with him in his patriotism? How many hearts did weep for the poor and the miserable like his? But, as a matter of fact, he did not do so. If India could really benefit thereby, he would certainly have done so. Or leave alone Swamiji, if you will; by the Master's grace there is in us such power that we, too, can create a commotion in the country if we have a mind to. But the Master will not have us do so. He brought us as helpers in his cause, and is guiding us to do such things as will be of lasting benefit to the country and its people. And we, too, are toeing the line. We have no other desire except that of the general welfare. We cannot express to you in words how deeply our hearts are moved by the misery of the world. That is known only to the indwelling God.

'When the Master ended his sport as a human being, he bequeathed all his power and programme to Swamiji. And Swamiji, too, after travelling over this world from end to end and making close scrutiny, established

<sup>1</sup> A fullness of splendour, righteousness, glory, beauty, knowledge, and non-attachment,

this monastery and this Mission for the good of the world and especially of India; and he made us join this work one by one. Would it have been impossible for us to spend our lives in religious practices in hills and forests? That was what we had been actually doing. Almost all of us had roamed out of the Math at will for religious practices and penances. But it was Swamiji who called all back and put them to these works—to the works of serving human beings considered as Nârâyana. We are carrying it on even in this old age.'

Devotee: 'Do you then, sir, mean to say that national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi are not serving the country properly? One cannot surely ignore their wonderful sacrifice, suffering, and service to the country. What violence and persecution have they not suffered for their country's sake!'

Mahapurusha: 'Why should I say so? Their sacrifice, suffering, and service to the country, etc., are really very praiseworthy. Their lives, too, are really noble and ideal. Besides, they have done quite a lot for the country. None the less, our mode of work is different. They have been doing sincerely what has appeared to them good and what they have thought beneficial to the country. Do you know what we think of this? They have been doing these works under the inspiration of some of the ideals which the Master and Swamiji represented. And there can be little doubt that Mahatma Gandhi is really a great dynamic personality. It is also true that in him has found special expression an aspect of that Primal Energy which is the Mother of the Universe. Addressing Arjuna the Lord said in the Gita, "Whatever specially gifted beings there be, know them to have originated from a part of my energy," etc. It is an incontrovertible truth that wherever there is a striking manifestation of dynamism, or whoever is sought after and respected by many people, there or in him has Divine power found a special expression. That very power of the Mother of the Universe which has been awakened by the Master, is working diversely through diverse mediums. Swamiji has indicated in innumerable passages as to how the real good of India will be accomplished. What he said about the good of the country some twenty-five or thirty years ago—for instance, the elimination of untouchability,

uplift of the backward classes, spread of education among the masses, etc.,—those very ideas are now being preached by Mahatma Gandhi. It is certain that the country will derive real benefit thereby. As for ourselves, we do not make much propaganda through newspapers, but show these through actual work. To be sure, we do not do so as part of a political movement, whereas the Mahatma does so as a part of a political programme. We not only crave for the good of India, but want also the real good of other countries and other peoples. We work for the good of other countries in other places, just as we do so here for India. But, of course, our programmes differ according to circumstances. And in this monastery established by Swamiji, every monastic disciple is working for his own salvation as well as for the good of all—‘आत्मनो मोक्षार्थं जगद्धिताय च ।’

Devotee: ‘But, sir, if the Ramakrishna Mission co-operated for the awakening in the whole country which the Mahatma has brought about through the non-co-operation movement, the country’s progress would have been greatly accelerated. This is not merely my personal opinion, but is the opinion of many great thinkers of the country. Why do you not co-operate with the Mahatma?’

Mahapurusha: ‘Well, I have already told you that we are working according to our own ideal. And this ideal has been left by

that prophetic seer, Swamiji. Before his prophetic vision rose the picture of the future millenniums, not of India alone, but of the whole world. With that clear vision of everything and with perfect consciousness as to what he was doing, he chalked out a programme: this was not like throwing a stone in the dark. He could peer into the distant future and see everything clearly. Moreover, there had not been in the preceding hundreds of years any manifestation of Divine power like the one that incarnated as Shri Ramakrishna. The spiritual wave will progress in the world unhampered for a long time. This is just a beginning, a foretaste. All the world will be flooded by the pure light of the sun that has appeared on the Indian horizon. It is, therefore, that Swamiji said, “The centre this time is India.” That spiritual energy will emanate from India as its centre. Who can possibly block the way of that spiritual power? India’s awakening is a certainty. India will advance so much in education, training, activity, ability, knowledge, intelligence, and all other fields, that the world will be struck with wonder. The future of India will be so glorious that the glory of the past will pale before it. Then will you realize what the Master and Swamiji came for and what they did for India. How much of their mission can a petty human intellect comprehend? They awakened, in sooth, the national *Kundalini Shakti* of India—can you not so much as conceive that?’

## READING AND REALIZATION

BY SWAMI TURIYANANDA

The Upanishads, the Gita, and Shankara’s commentary on the *Vyâsa-sutras* are the three authoritative works on the Vedanta. One should be specially acquainted with these; for this reason books on them are many. It is difficult to look into all the works. *Panchadashi*, *Yogavâshishta*, *Vivekachudâmani*, etc., are also famous books. If one studies *Panchadashi* carefully one gets a fair knowledge of the essentials of the Vedanta. Above all, spiritual practices are

specially required. Realization is the chief thing in Vedanta, and it depends on spiritual practices. Study is only an aid to it.

Doubts do not entirely vanish until *samâdhi*. One cannot really be free from doubts by just studying or listening, without direct realization. But then much can be known by discrimination. Study of scriptures with faith is of great help. The value of holy company hardly needs any saying.

# RELIGION AND ITS PLACE IN OUR LIFE

BY THE EDITOR

In the Infinite, the unlimited, alone is Bliss. All limitation is misery. (Chhândogya, VII. 23).

## I

From the earliest times of man's history, we find him coming under the spell of the lure of the Infinite. Himself finite, limited, weak, man has felt instinctively the need for a source of infinite strength, knowledge and love, from which he can draw sustenance and joy, and thereby overcome, in the first instance, the dangers and miseries that beset him in this world, and, secondly, insure if possible a comfortable berth somewhere after death—that obvious and inevitable end to all earthly existence. The existence of this infinite power, or God as we call it, has been believed in on the testimony of saints and prophets or on revelations handed down from prehistoric times. If powerful human beings when praised and worshipped are gracious unto the worshipper, how much more so must be the reward that God will give to his worshipper! Acting on such motives, men, both savage and civilized, have tried to please God by various acts of worship, praise and prayer. But as infinite or supernatural power seems to be manifest in the sun, nature, fetishes, ghosts, Zeus, Jove, Jehovah, the Christian Father in Heaven, the Muhammadan Allah, or in God-men like Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mahomet, and a host of other saints and prophets and Avatars, all such things and persons, both mythological and historical, have been objects of worship of some group or other of human beings. Some groups have often succeeded in converting to their particular form of belief and worship large numbers of men, and these forms of belief have been called the major religions of the world. The ordinary man finds religious gratification in the exercise of his natural senses in worship, in singing, dancing, feasting, or drinking. The man of great intelligence and intellect finds more religious satisfaction in learned philosophies or in ecstatic contemplation, and to some mystics nothing is too mean that they cannot see the power and glory of God in it. But the religious impulses, whether that of the savage or the saint, are all but expres-

sions of that inner urge to expand, to be completely free from all limitation, bondage and misery, and to enter into a state of perfect peace, love, knowledge, and bliss. Each in his own way and with his own symbols has tried to worship the Infinite and thereby enter into eternal life.

## II

But religions in their zeal to foster this innate striving of man towards the Infinite have, because of narrowness of heart and vision, also largely been the means for misdirecting this powerful human impulse for perfect freedom by forging fetters of doctrinal darkness and inhuman cruelty; so much so that to many educated people nowadays religion is often a by-word for learned ignorance, bigotry and inhuman hatred of brother man. The story of what some of the religions have done to bring into contempt, if not to destroy altogether, the true spirit of religion is one which can be read in the history of the Crusades and other religious wars. Instead of the humble attitude of the seeker after Truth, pride and arrogance entered the hearts of professed representatives of religions; love and charity were replaced by malice and hatred, and the Semitic religions especially, instead of becoming forces for unity among mankind became warring sects insisting upon a dead uniformity of unscientific belief and insincere worship.

In Europe there has been a great development of the domains of science and knowledge, which has tended not only to destroy the shibboleths of religion, but even the necessity for religion itself. Man wishes to live, whether well or ill; and when well-off he not only wants to live, but to live and lord it over others. With the tremendous powers for lordship which the pursuit of science has placed in the hands of Europeans and arguing on the principle that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, they organized themselves to produce more wealth and enjoy the pleasures this world will give. They saw that the padres and priests, though

preaching of great happiness in heaven were not themselves very eager or in great haste to go there, and were not much averse to the good things of the world, from which they wanted their flocks to abstain in order to win the kingdom of heaven. 'He who in the present state vanquishes as much as possible a corporeal life, through the cathartic virtues, passes in reality into the fortunate Isles of the soul', so said the Churchmen. But to resign 'the glittering goods of the outer and passing world', to seek peace by the denial and abandonment of earthly things and their futile values is, to modern minds, to follow the equally futile though well-worn path of the ascetics.

The truth is that Christianity did not, as is commonly supposed, convert Europe. On the contrary Europe transformed Christianity. It was an Eastern and ascetic creed, a creed of withdrawal from life rather than of participation in its fierce conflicts and competitions and was so understood in the early centuries. But the Western races were not prepared to abandon the world. Their energies were too great, the natural man in them unsubduable. . . . For the souls afraid, mortally afraid, of life—and how many they be and have reason to be—Christianity came with healing in its wings. But to the lover of life and the world, fascinated by the wide range of its vital and vivid interests, its sunlit landscape, the brave show of its human figures and enterprises, Christianity had no clear message. 'One world at a time,' men said, 'and the present is the present.' (*Gifford Lectures*, W. M. Dixon).

Side by side with the development of this critical spirit there arose the achievement of physical science with its non-creational theory of the origin of the universe and the evolution of man. Science seemed to offer a new highway for the fulfilment of human aspirations. It dispensed with the necessity of belief in a Hebrew God who sweated for six days in creating the world and had to take rest on the seventh after his strenuous labours. The ultimate materials out of which science recreates the universe, our own earth included, are the electron, the proton, and radiation.

Space-time could be conceived as empty of matter but containing travelling radiation—light, cosmic rays etc. Then the radiation might for some reason congeal itself into parcels of equal quantities of protons and electrons. Such a universe would know at first only these two substances, familiar to us as the nuclei of hydrogen atoms and free electrons. (*An Outline of the Universe* by J. G. Growther).

In short the whole universe, organic and inorganic, is the result of an unexplained,

and perhaps inexplicable, concatenation of these 'wavicles' of radiation.

As the process of nature evolves from energy into protons and electrons, and from these into atoms and molecules, and from these into colloidal particles, the approach to the complication of life is evident. The colloids are the root from which living processes have grown.

The exact steps of evolution from colloid to living particles, are not yet known as the evolution from proton and electron to colloid is known, and the evolution from simple living cell to man is surmised. (*Ibid.*)

What do we learn as a result of the new scientific view of the universe?

The modern man understands at least that wealth rather than magical ideas is connected with the fuller life. In the vanity of his mind man has always tended to magnify the distinction of his spirit. Consequently improvements in civilization have usually been accompanied by an apparent decline in the quality of the human spirit. The declining nation often pretends to exceptional spirituality; while the rising nation with closer knowledge of reality has a humbler opinion of itself and the nature of the source of its improvement. . . . The chief condition of a fuller life is that every man should do his job and increase the wealth available for distribution. . . . (*Ibid.*)

Assertions about the seen are more dangerous than those about the unseen, because it is possible to verify the truth of the assertions about the seen, and thus test the intelligence and character of the seer. (*Ibid.*)

. . . The revolutionary, hard and brilliant intellects of Heisenberg and Dirac do not yield mysticism; that is a spurious growth stimulated in uncreative by creative minds. Mysticism is the product of those who fail to understand, the substitute for comprehension and the margarine of philosophy. (Note, *Ibid.*)

These quotations are typical of the attitude of the educated young men of today in Europe and America, and in India even. Reeling under such sledge-hammer blows of science, Christianity in its various traditional forms has been losing hold on the convictions of its professed adherents.

God and the soul are ignored as outworn superstitions. The denial of any future life saps the foundation of Christianity and other purely theistic religions. Christianity or what is left of it is fast changing into a sentimental humanitarianism.

What is now left of the old theology (Christian) in the circles of the educated and the intelligent? What do we now hear of the fall of man, the plan of salvation, the sacrifice of Christ, the redemption of the world through the shedding of blood, of predestination, of the blessings in store for the believer, the torments that await the

infidel? Who now believes, as did St. Augustine, in the damnation of unbaptised infants, or that a man's actions in time determine his destiny throughout eternity? (*Gifford Lectures*, W. M. Dixon).

Thus modern enlightenment makes out belief in and adoration of God to be incompatible with scientific ways of thinking, and that religion is merely a curious survival of primitive superstition. Science is considered as the latest flowering of the cultures, and to prove that it is also the best many leaders of science are pointing triumphantly to the splendid achievements of modern science in putting under man's control tremendous powers to be used for the advancement of the comfort and happiness of mankind.

### III

There is no denying the successes of science, and one cannot sufficiently admire the scientific achievements of our day. As days pass on, science is adding fresh laurels to its crown. So far, so good. But scientists have been running like horses with blinkers, along the road just under their noses only. At present some of them are also guilty of the same narrowness of vision and intellect which is so characteristic a feature of Western religious sects. Science, by insisting on a theory of strict determination excludes the obvious facts of creativeness and volition. But at its best the theory of determinism is but a methodological assumption. The theories of evolution, though in themselves inadequate to explain the phenomena of evolution, arrogantly deny the possibility of all other agencies other than the mechanical. Science can as yet offer no satisfactory explanation of the great facts of evolution, reproduction, development, heredity, fixity of type, memory, purposive self-direction, learning or profiting by experience, or intelligent adaptation. Science is guilty of denying the truths of things which it has not studied at all or only inadequately.

After all, the modern scientific approach to the problems of life and the universe is but one of several. The artistic and the religious, each employing its own unique methods and technique of introspection and intuition are equally valid, equally instructive to mankind, equally venerable, equally a part of the racial experience. Science studies successfully the 'measurable' and the 'observable', *ergo*, all things 'unmeasurable'

and 'unobservable' are unscientific,—such an attitude is far from scientific.

Luckily the tide of scientific bigotry also is turning. The naive materialism of the nineteenth century has gone the way of exploded dogmas. The notion of 'substance' has been replaced by the notion of the fundamental intangible electron and the 'behaviour' of interacting quanta. In other words, matter is now the result of mysterious, intangible phenomena whose elusive activity is beyond our observation. Science is beginning to realize that like all men's thinking, it itself is and must be anthropomorphic, and that all our theories and the facts on which we build our theories are conditioned by our nature, by our human needs. Progressive leaders in the various branches of science no longer maintain that scientific knowledge is the only valid form of knowledge. Science has become conscious of its limitations. The time is coming when our religious and aesthetic experiences will be taken seriously and accepted widely, when they will not be dismissed as illusions, as the merely accidental and meaningless result of the make-up of our brain and body. That we can experience reality under aspects other than those discussed by science is more and more being recognized. Religion, Art, and Science must all play their part to make the life of humanity, fuller and richer.

### IV

The search for God or Truth has always been one of man's chief concerns. The race has known that there were some things which it could find out only by scientific observation; others, like poetry and art, which can be discovered only by creative activity; and still others—and these the deepest and most subtle—to be mastered by seeking of ultimate reality in personal terms, which is religion. In and for itself nature is manifestly nothing. Take away the actor and where is the play? Take away the scientist and where is his science? Without a perceiving mind, there can be neither science, nor art, nor religion. Religion therefore insists that the spiritual ideals of man have causal efficacy, and have the power to mould and alter both man and his surroundings, and that the spirit of man partakes of the essence of, or is identical with, the infinite spirit that moves all nature, animate and inani-

mate, and makes possible all phenomena, physical and metaphysical. It may or may not turn out to be true that the ultimate postulates of the modern physicist may obey the laws of a strict determinism. But the activities of men, on the contrary, are purposive and prompted and sustained by spiritual ideals, by aspirations towards higher and better things. Religion asserts that man is not a fortuitous concatenation of protons and electrons, but is a conscious centre of creative activity towards the attainment of ever-increasing spiritual harmony between himself and the rest of the universe. Life, thus conceived, is the adventure of the individual human soul aspiring towards the Infinite, the Perfect, in which it may lose all sense of limitation and want.

But the critical attitude engendered by science has made man rely primarily upon his reason and has done good to the religions in one sense. It has destroyed those theologies and those particular brands of religion which have been persisting in refusing to admit the validity of scientific knowledge. Science cannot, however, destroy religion, for that is the outcome of the religious spirit; and the religious spirit is as innate as the scientific. Mythologies, doctrines, and dogmas have lost their previous hold on people, unless these are symbolic or representative of any universal spiritual experience. For example, the Christian Churches have been forced

to lighten the ship by throwing over many antiquated traditions, and the educated Christian has accepted Copernicus and Galileo, and Newton; he has accepted Darwin; he has accepted Jeans and Eddington; he is prepared to accept Einstein if he could understand him. He has surrendered the geographical heaven and hell, perhaps without fully realizing all that implies. He accepts the ascent of man from lower forms; the immense age of the earth; the even more amazing vista which astronomers allow us to contemplate in the future. . . . (*Science and Religion*, Gerald Howrad.)

## V

If life is to be lived worthily, the religious spirit must pervade all our activities. Religion must become living, directing as well as inspiring men's actions, both individual and collective. This does not mean that religions should lay down what we should do from our cradle to our grave. But it should provide us with a touchstone, a way of looking at nature, the world and ourselves, which

harmonizes our ideas and meets our daily requirements.

And what spiritual principle can possibly provide men with this necessary sustenance for the soul's advance in the universe?

Leaving aside theologies and traditions, the only place where we can look for it is in ourselves, in the conscious assertion of our essential spiritual nature in the same way as the great saints and prophets of all times and places have done on the basis of their own personal experience. Revelation and reason may help us, but without personal experience ideas never become life-giving, satisfying. This is true not only of the religious, but of all other spheres of human knowledge.

Einstein, reputedly the greatest scientific genius living, after a reference to the anthropomorphic character of the idea of God common to most religions, writes :

Only exceptionally gifted individuals or especially noble communities rise above this level; in these there is found a third level of religious experience, even if it is seldom found in a pure form. I will call it the cosmic religious sense. This is hard to make clear to those who do not experience it, since it does not involve an anthropomorphic idea of God. The individual feels the vanity of human desires and aims, and the nobility and marvellous order which are revealed in nature and the world of thought. He feels the individual destiny as an imprisonment and seeks to experience the totality of existence as a unity full of significance. . . . The religious geniuses of all times have been distinguished by this cosmic religious sense, which recognizes neither dogmas nor God made in man's image. . . . How can this cosmic religious experience be communicated from man to man, if it cannot lead to a definite conception of God or to a theology? *It seems to me that the most important function of art and of science is to arouse and keep alive this feeling in those who are receptive. (Italics ours.)* It is quite natural that the churches have always fought against science and persecuted its supporters. But on the other hand, I assert that the cosmic religious experience is the strongest and noblest driving force behind scientific research. (Quoted in *Outlines of Modern Science*.)

It is such cosmic religious experience of unity that the Upanishads proclaim again and again in no uncertain terms. To quote one example :—

तदेतदिति मन्यन्तेऽनिर्देश्यं परमं सुखम् ।  
 कथं नु तद्विजानीयां किमु भाति विभाति वा ॥  
 न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं  
 नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः ।  
 तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं  
 तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥

(*Katha*, V. 14, 15)

'That indefinable infinite Bliss people conceive as this (in various objective forms). But really how are we to realize whether it shines and becomes an object of our perception or not? For there (in that undefinable infinite Bliss) none of these—the sun, the moon, the myriad stars or the lightning flashes,—not to speak of the ordinary flame of fire—is able to shine (i.e. have no separate visible existence). All these but shine deriving their light from that.'

न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य  
न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।  
हृदा मनीषा मनसाभिव्यक्तो  
यत्र तद्विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥

(Katha, VI. 9)

His nature is not limited by any forms, so human eye can see Him. Those brave men who realize His true nature by purified inner vision become free from the fear of limited existence.'

How to achieve this saving vision of the Infinite? By Yoga, by stilling the activities of the senses and the mind completely, by the inhibition of all experience, physical and mental, resulting in self-absorption in the Infinite.

यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह ।  
बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमांगतिम् ॥

(Katha, VI. 10)

'The wise call that the highest stage when a person's mind and the senses of perception cease being active and no more conceptive activities arise in his intellect.' The perceptions of the outside world give rise to conceptions in us, while our innate conceptions determine the nature of our perceptions. Because of this ceaseless flow, in and out, we are unable to experience ultimate Reality. The way lies by getting beyond both.

## VI

The discerning reader will at this point raise the plausible objection that we began earlier with finding out a spiritual principle which harmonizes our ideas and meets our daily requirements; and that now we are advocating the time-honoured and apparently defeatist method of running away from the joys of the world as well as its sorrows, by plunging into a life of negative contempla-

tion. If inhibition of all our activities be the only road to God, then the remedy seems to be worse than the disease; it is like cutting off the head of a man to cure his headache. This is the most common, and seemingly the most formidable objection that is raised against the religious life, that, by holding up as the ideal means the method of contemplation and withdrawal from the world's activities, religion has taken away from men all initiative and incentive for betterment of their world and their fellow-men.

But such objections are superficial and are not valid because they judge religion from the point of view of man's immediate necessity for bread, butter, and wine, sexual satisfaction and children, and all the paraphernalia that contribute towards ensuring the pleasures of life. But the religious spirit implies that we should seek the kingdom of God first, that we should become established in the knowledge that we are immortal spirits, partaking of the essence of the Infinite, and not mere ephemeral, physical and psychic phenomena, not will-o-the-wisps wafted hither and thither in an aimless fashion. *God realization is the ultimate goal of religion.* Only then do we seem to arrive at a complete solution of all our difficulties.

Only those who are fed up with the tantalizing joys and sorrows of this existence will try to find out and follow this path. The more refined and intellectual the individual, the more fitted he is for the path of contemplation, for at every step he realizes the futility of tinkering with the problem of complete freedom by trying to seek it in the activities of a world, which by its very constitution, is a world of bondage and limitation for him in some form or other. That is why all the great religions have emphasized that if we are to be perfect even as 'our Father in heaven' is perfect, we should seek this perfection in eternal things.

It is true that all persons have not reached that stage that has marked true religious geniuses like Krishna and Buddha and others like them. To such people, the lovers of life, inclined to activity and enjoyment, to whom the 'observable' world is more intensely real and lovable than the world of religion, religion points out a way without lowering or giving up the Truth it stands for, for reaching the ultimate goal even while participating in all activities and joys and



sorrows of this world. This is the lesson that Krishna taught to Arjuna in the Gita. It is the lesson of 'Karma-Yoga'. Work in the world, experience all its joys and sorrows, but develop and maintain the attitude of a witness, a spectator; be detached, understand that the gifts of your body and mind are but instruments at your disposal. Be not affected by the nature and state of your instruments. Use them and improve them for getting all the experience you can out of them. If they become beyond repair, throw them away and get new ones, and go on with the process, till you find more joy in yourself than in these instruments. If you believe in God, do all your work 'for the glory of God' as the Christians say, or because it is 'the will of Allah'. Also do not desire for yourself the fruits of the work you have done. Ordinarily like coolies we want our wages for every bit of work we do. But the hero of action who wants to reach God must not care whether the benefit of the work he does he himself gets or somebody else. He works because his whole being delights in work, and personal loss or gain do not enter into his calculations. He works solely with a view to benefit others. Soon he begins to work in the feeling that the humblest, the easiest and the readiest of

duties is to lay down one's life for the ignorant, the ill-behaved, the unkind, nay, for every soul that is weary and heavy-laden. For are not all these but the forms in which the Infinite appears? The man inclined to action should therefore learn to work in a detached way, calm and self-poised, knowing that the hidden hand of God is everywhere, and that it is God himself who is fulfilling himself in the world in various ways.

People who are attracted by the joys and prizes which physical and mental activities in connection with the outside world hold up before them must remember that it is only by giving up the attraction, the fascinating hold, of lesser things that we are enabled to rise to higher things. Those to whom the joys of the things of the spirit are not of higher value will certainly get caught in the attraction of the world which is so much with us. By insulating your body, you can touch a live electric wire, and not be harmed. Similarly insulate yourself with the covering of non-attachment, with the idea that all is God's in this world, that you are only a beneficiary, and you can live and manipulate the 'live' wires of the world's activities without coming to any personal harm.

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## THE SPIRIT OF ASIA\*

BY DR. DHIRENDRA NATH ROY, M.A., PH.D.

How long still the present world war will continue to suck the life-blood of nations is a question uppermost perhaps in all of us today. Directly or indirectly we all have been terribly involved in this total war and have been witnessing its blood-curdling episodes here and there and almost everywhere in this unhappy eastern hemisphere of ours, not as silent spectators but as co-sufferers with those of nations' precious youths who have been immolating themselves at the call of civilization to save it from the brute violence of Axis barbarism. Our enemy, who fights for a losing cause and has long begun to taste of the bitter reverses of war, shows no desire to submit. On the contrary, like a hydra-headed monster he

seems to possess some strength still to survive the numerous fatal blows from the Herculean hands of the Allies. There is no doubt that he will be sagging soon before our ever-growing forces and will accept his ultimate defeat as the inevitable decree of destiny, a just retribution for the sordid lust for power which has plunged the world into an abyss of unspeakable misery, death, and devastation. But how soon he will do so no one can predict. Indeed none but an amateur statesman or a professional astrologer can hazard his scientific surmise upon it. In the midst of this protracted uncertainty as to the

\* Address delivered at a joint assembly of the Associated South-West University and the University of Yunnan, Kunming, in April, 1944.

time limit of achieving our ultimate victory our sufferings have been going on in such an ever-increasing magnitude that the golden rays of our positive optimism can hardly pierce through the dense gloom of the prevailing pessimism caused by the woeful spectacles of the war and its dire effects upon mankind. A bright and glorious future which promises to be our lot does not seem enough to console us out of the dismal present in which we live.

Indeed, the grim reality of the present which seeks to absorb us in the depth of pessimism seems to touch the core of our philosophic mood with its all-inclusive tragicity. Philosophy characterizes man's reflective condition. And man reflects when he faces a problem affecting his normal course of life. In this total war which has affected the normal course of life of almost every individual by its incessant call for undergoing sufferings and sacrifices in order that the forces of evil may not triumph and thus destroy all that is most worthwhile and noble in man and in his world, our philosophic mood is most profoundly touched to open our vision to the sad spectacles of universal sufferings. For a time we are not excited with a passion to do nothing but to strike and kill our enemies; we are rather weighed down by the thought of these sufferings that have overtaken not only all of us of the Allied Nations but also millions of innocent people who dwell in the land of the Axis aggressors. And when we consider the flowers of humanity, the youths of all nations, both the Allied and the Axis,—those blooming souls who alone make this world, through their spirit of selflessness, service and sacrifice, a better place for man and yet who are now being killed in their thousands almost everyday, should a man be condemned outright if he cannot help brooding over all these tragic phenomena of our world today and being overwhelmed by higher sentiments to pause and wonder and do almost nothing else?

Perhaps he does not deserve to be condemned, for his feeling is undoubtedly sincere and noble. But he must think more over the stern facts that confront us and not allow himself to be swayed by pious emotion at this critical time when all that is best in human life and civilization is seriously in jeopardy. With adequate calmness of his

spirit which has been ruffled and overwhelmed by the sorrows and sufferings of the day he may be able to perceive that his pessimism with all its appealing qualities is after all a mere philosophic gossamer dissolving itself before what we may call the fourth dimensional reality of the war. The spatial character of the reality with which we are so vitally concerned today makes it appear very tragic indeed, but it is a reality seen only in part as long as its fourth dimension, that is, the time factor is not fully considered. The sufferings and sacrifices of all the nations engaged in the present world war cannot be considered as the whole reality apart from its ultimate result which time will surely bring to us. This ultimate result is the supreme goal which enthralls us to plunge into the fiery ordeal of war and enables us to bear it patiently. To all of us of the Allied Nations this goal is 'Victory', yes, victory at all cost, victory over the forces of evil that have been let loose by an exotic gang of neurotics violently intoxicated with the vodka of Nietzschean philosophy. It is no time to mourn over the terrible cost which involves our determination to win victory, for otherwise we are doomed—nay, the whole civilized mankind is doomed to an irrevocable state of sufferings and disgrace with which our present sufferings can hardly stand any comparison. It would be a most tragic myopia on our part if we see the cost of the present war isolated from that glorious thing called victory for which we have been paying so heavily all this time. Let not pessimism blur our vision to the whole reality of the war which concerns not only our own fate but also the fate of our children and our children's children.

Moreover, for us of the Allied Nations in China and India this war is not simply a tale of unmixed sufferings and sacrifices. It is something more than that,—it is an opportunity, perhaps a blessed opportunity. Sufferings and sacrifices have been our lot even in the pre-war situations of Asia. That these have fallen on us for no real fault of ours has not been fully grasped by others. For a long long time since the Crusaders made Europe develop a new kind of interest in Asia our unhappy days began. Those days gradually brought in their trail only darker and denser nights of sufferings and humiliations for us. In vain we raised our choked

voice to tell our tale of woe that it might reach the masses of Europe, those whose heart could not but be good and responsive to the call of the crying heart of Asia. The resounding voice of organized propaganda by those who have been unkind to us, has been rather too strong in its effect upon Europe to let our feeble voice be heard. Our long continued fate of suffering gave it the appearance of a just recompense and we almost accepted it as not without some tinge of truth.

Let no one understand here that we have in mind any particular nation of Europe when we speak of this long story of our misfortune. There are good and noble people in every nation,—people who are refined and cultured enough to discountenance and condemn all exhibition of racial egotism, of vulgar habits and cruel exploitations. What nation in Europe or anywhere else has become great without some such people therein maintaining a higher manhood in them? It is, therefore, not any particular nation of Europe but a particular type of people coming from the various parts of Europe of whom alone we think as we dwell upon the facts of our pre-war misfortunes.

The present war has given us an opportunity which never before we had in all our past relation with the people of the West. It is an opportunity of the people from the masses of Europe coming to meet the masses of Asia with a common purpose and ideal to extirpate the enemies of higher manhood, of culture and civilization. A common misfortune for all of us of the civilized mankind has made possible what has hitherto been considered impossible, that is, the elimination of the social line of the so-called East and West and the formation of a new great society of Allied Nations belonging to all the continents of our world. Inspired by a common cause against the menace of resurgent barbarism threatening us from both the East and the West the people from the masses of Europe and America, of Australia and South Africa, have come in our midst for joint deliberation, decision and action. This has indirectly served to replace the old nasty feeling of racial exclusivism and prejudice by a new wholesome feeling of sympathy and fellowship.

In this refreshing atmosphere of mutual sympathy it is no longer difficult for our Allies from other lands to see and under-

stand our problems and sufferings of the past as we see and understand them. The opportunity has thus arisen to make a frank expression of these to them without being misunderstood any more. It would be a tragic folly on our part not to do so while they are here personally seeing our things and conditions and no longer relying upon fabricated impressions of narrow and bigoted minds. For, when again after the war shall we find them in our midst in such highly representative numbers with a genuine attitude of understanding and sympathy for us? Those who would like to say that this is no time to raise such matters when we are so deeply plunged in a world crisis do not understand the whole problem confronting our world today. By making a free and frank expression of our past grievances in thinking of the real cause of which we cannot help thinking also of some type of Western people, we only seek to clear our conscience and lighten our heart to our Allies whom we welcome as our friends and whom we expect to regard us as their friends. It is the sincerity of the heart that makes friendship genuine and lasting. What has long been rankling in our heart may appear to be like a complaint to them against those some of whom may be even their own fellow-countrymen. Should it still be allowed to remain in a suppressed condition in us? Can we know one another intimately in that condition? Can we make our friendship genuine and lasting? If we do not try to know one another now, we may not have a second opportunity.

And this is fraught with a possibility which is certainly ominous by its very nature. We are, of course, confident that this war will end in the victory for the Allied Nations. We can hardly think otherwise. Accepting that as a settled fact, we may feel jubilant in anticipation. That is quite a healthy step to stimulate our jaded nerves and to overcome our present sufferings. But while it is all right to think from now as to how best we may celebrate our hard-earned victory when it is won, we should also have an occasion to consider what the defeat to our enemies, the Axis peoples, may lead them to be. While we may not have any strong reason to be concerned about the Hitlerite Germany which is farther from us in Asia than from our European Allies we cannot afford to be unconcerned about the post-war

temper and conduct of defeated Japan, our nearest Axis aggressor. The Allied Nations may, after the victory, adopt some strong measures and impose many disabilities upon the Axis Powers to prevent their rising to be a menace again. The hard lesson of the period between the end of the last world war and the beginning of the present one undoubtedly makes them wiser and more careful. But one can hardly help being sceptical about the net result of preventive measures, especially against the defeated Japanese people whose Asiatic environment is quite different from that of Germany. He has to recognize the fact that the Japanese people cannot be totally crushed by any measures however strong just as the German people were not crushed after their defeat in the last world war.<sup>1</sup> The Japanese are no less clever than the Germans. On the other hand, they have something to their advantage which the defeated Germans did not have in 1918. They are quite conscious of the various old grievances which their Asiatic environment harbours against some Western people. Indeed they are almost co-sufferers with the rest of Asia. When they are defeated and disabled by post-war measures they will certainly not resign to their well-deserved fate but will seek every possible means to utilize the aggrieved feeling of the Asian people. They will do everything to rouse this feeling to its bitterest form and then incite them all to rise in unity and be prepared for a racial war. There can be little doubt that the Japanese have already set themselves to this task of working upon the strained racial feeling in their conquered territories. If that feeling can be successfully worked upon everywhere in Asia and developed into a form of bitter race hatred against the West, the stage is then quite prepared for a far more disastrous war than

<sup>1</sup> This has been borne out by the famous British statesman Sir George Schuster, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., C.B.E., M.C., M.P. In an article published in the *Asiatic Review*, January 1944, he said, 'But perhaps some one will ask, "Why all this talk of security? . . . Will not Japan be crushed and powerless after the war?" My answer to such questions is that it was in just such a mood that we all faced the future after 1918. We thought Germany was for ever emasculated, and that Russia was in such chaos that she could not within any foreseeable time become a great military power to be taken into account among world forces. And now we know the realities. . . . That she (Japan) can be utterly crushed out is impossible (Vol. XL, No. 141, p. 54).

what has hitherto been witnessed. Japan has the necessary organizing capacity and war experience to instil hope and confidence in such terrible trial of powers. We shudder to think of such eventuality, for human society cannot stand a shock like it.

Let us, therefore, not be misunderstood if we take this opportunity to tell our allied friends from outside Asia of our past grievances against some of their own people and ask them to help us clear our old misunderstanding. Let them be good and liberal enough to understand our frank criticism of their ways of life and study their persistent problems anew. Let them appreciate our honest effort to make men develop a universal outlook of life and thus live in peace and harmony.

We do not want Japan to find an opportunity or excuse to stir up our war impulses and lead us into a third world war. It would mean the virtual repudiation of the very noble ideal for which we all of the Allied Nations are fighting. Japan today is a lost child of Asia having been spoiled by Western influences in gross material and military lines. If circumstances compel the ancient peoples of Asia to listen to Japan's alluring whispers and promises, they too will fall under the spell of the Axis cult of greed and power and eventually lose themselves in its dangerous holocaust.

That would mean the final exit of the noble spirit of culture and civilization for which the old countries of Asia, more especially China and India, have silently undergone sufferings and humiliations for so many ages of the past. That would mean Asia repudiating her own past stubborn and heroic adherence to things and ideals which her ancient wisdom conceived for the benefit of the whole mankind. That would mean Asia losing her own soul in the maelstrom of cant, swagger and cruelty.

What precisely is the nature of the spirit of culture and civilization which Asia represents? That is a question which at first may seem puzzling in view of the fact that Asia contains more than one distinct civilization, especially such as the civilizations of India and China. There is no doubt that each of these two great civilizations has its own peculiar character representing a peculiar type of people. But the peculiarity of each of these civilizations does not represent the

common spirit of Asia; what is common in them does. When we consider this point the answer no longer seems difficult. The spirit of Asia is the spirit of harmony and adjustment. This may be stated in other terms, such as, unity, sympathy, fellow-feeling, etc. but the substance of the underlying thought would not be very different from it. The great Vedic literature of our Aryan forefathers in India reveals to us the truth of it. It tells us about their ceaseless and heroic efforts to understand the mighty elements of nature and to be in fellowship with them. It tells us how wonderfully they solved the most difficult problem of cultural conflict arising from their coming into contact with the old Dravidian people of India, people who had already developed a distinct civilization of their own, by incorporating the latter's ideas and ideals in their own Vedic literature as we find in the somewhat weird contents of the Atharva Veda. The ancient literature of China which represents the ideal ways of Chinese life embodies the same spirit of harmony and adjustment. The Confucian doctrine of the *Jen* or universal love means it. True to the logic of life Confucius in his noble spirit of good-will could not but uphold the law of reciprocity stating that one really desiring to maintain himself must sustain others, one desiring to develop himself must develop others. In other words, the highest thing in life is, according to this great sage, to draw from one's own self a parallel for the treatment of others. The spirit of his splendid ethical philosophy is thus the spirit of harmony with all, especially in human society. Lao Tzu, the other master mind of China, sought to emphasize in his philosophy of the *Tao* the ideal to be in harmony with nature. Almost at the same time arose in India the great Buddha with a most strikingly impressive personality whose sublime thought profoundly influenced the life and the mind of the Indian people for several centuries. The basic spirit of his doctrine was to realize the essential harmony or unity of life and, therefore, love all life. Although his doctrine was in accord with the main ethical ideas of the Vedas, its supreme position in Indian spiritual life came to an end within a few centuries, nay, as a new system of faith it had virtually to disappear from India. This happened because it saw the discrepancy of the Vedic rite of animal sacrifice with a

strongly critical attitude and also because it did not concern itself much with reality in its mystical and transcendental aspect. The Indian mind is by nature very susceptible to mysticism. As the Vedas have enough of it, especially in such portions of them as are called the Upanishads they have served to inspire the Indian life far more than anything else. Lack of mysticism in the Buddhist faith caused its sublime ethical ideal to slowly fall from the height of glory it had attained in popular esteem yielding its place again to the Vedas. Since then Buddhism has never again been able to recapture its old position in the land of its origin. But that did not detract from the position of divinity or *avatar* which its originator the great Buddha held and is still holding in the heart of Hindusthan. The Hindu spirit of harmony was clearly manifest in the deification of the Buddha although there was some disagreement with his teachings. Buddhism, however, received a hearty welcome in all the surrounding countries of the north and the east of India. China with her wonderful practical mind gave it an imperial welcome inasmuch as it was quite in consonance with the natural spirit and ideal of her people. The moral code of Buddhism was to them like an amplified version of Confucianism. The acceptance of Buddhism by China showed the inherent spirit of unity between the two ancient countries of Asia. And these two countries, which have preserved their cultural spirit for the last forty centuries, can justly claim to represent the spirit of Asia.

This spirit of Asia, the spirit of harmony and adjustment, has made it possible for her to maintain in her bosom diverse forms of life even today, to allow diverse racial types to live and thrive in mutual recognition and appreciation of their differences. It has enabled her to be the proud mother of a rich variety of culture and civilization, the mother of all the living religions of the world. It has enabled her not only to tolerate and love variety but also to develop a strong dislike for uniformity. Indeed Asia maintains her variety to cultivate her spirit of unity. For her it is the highest art of life.

When others laugh at us Indians and Chinese because neither of us has yet been able to form a nation they do not seem to understand us. They do not try to see why India is still like an epitome of the world,

more like a continent than a country. They do not see why China is still like a 'sheet of loose sands'. They do not know what causes us to go slow in adopting the modern method of civilization and progress. They do not know because they have not read our cultural history or if they have read it they have not understood it.

The spirit of harmony and adjustment which permeated the cultural history of India made her go slowly in drawing within the ambit of her great civilization the various types of people representing various levels of life. It was clearly against this spirit to forcibly absorb them into her civilization. Instead of that she allowed all these types of people to live in their own atmosphere by the side of civilization coming whenever they liked in close contact with it and choosing whatever they liked of it to adopt in their own ways of life. Thus closer and closer contact and the consequent familiarity with the civilization enabled them to gradually assimilate its various elements in such a spontaneous and natural manner that they themselves did not know since when they belonged to it. In many cases our Aryan forefathers, who carried the torch of civilization, sought to show interest and even appreciation of some of the naive or crude customs of tribal faiths introducing in them high spiritual interpretations and then adjusting them with their civilization. This way many tribal people of India have been slowly initiated into the higher ideas of life,—attracted, won, and finally absorbed. The process is slow indeed, but it involved no cultural friction or maladjustment. There is no problem or misunderstanding in this method of cultural infiltration, for it is founded on the spirit of harmony and adjustment.

The Indian is by nature against any kind of cultural imposition. To him the very conception appears to be self-contradictory and degrading, since it is uncultural for a cultured man to impose his culture upon others. An act of imposition involves the application of force, and no cultured man can think of resorting to force in any of his social undertakings. This is why India could not tolerate or appreciate any foreign civilization which was sought to be imposed upon her. She knew quite well that there were good things in every civilization, but it could not be good if imposed upon her. Naturally whenever

there was a case of an alien civilization seeking to impose itself upon her she rejected it outright and was careful enough to see that no trace of it could remain in the land. That was why although Alexander succeeded in conquering some part of India he failed to implant the Greek civilization there. This has been admitted by all great historians. Here is what the reputed British historian V. A. Smith writes: "The campaign (of Alexander) although carefully designed to secure a permanent conquest, was in actual effect no more than a brilliantly successful raid on a gigantic scale, which left upon India no mark save the horrid scars of bloody war. India remained unchanged. The wounds of battle were quickly healed; the ravaged fields smiled again as the patient oxen and no less patient husbandmen resumed their interrupted labours; and the places of slain myriads were filled by the teeming swarms of a population . . . India was not hellenized. She continued to live her life of "splendid isolation", and soon forgot the passing of the Macedonian storm. No Indian author, Hindu, Buddhist or Jain, makes even the slightest allusion to Alexander or his deeds."<sup>2</sup> This fate of the Greek civilization in India was inevitable although undoubtedly it had many splendid things within it which have been a real inspiration to all civilized peoples of even today. There were Greek colonies in India left by Alexander, but these India took care to absorb and today we do not know even where these colonies were. Similar fate had met the other invading hordes and raiders like the Sakas, the Huns, and the Scythians. Having finished their devastating raids, carnage and rapine they finally chose to settle in the land. Instead of imposing their own ways and culture they all became absorbed. The same process of cultural absorption has worked upon the successive invading forces of Tartars, Mongols, Turko-Iranians, Afgans, and so on, who no longer retain their distinctive racial names and other differences but have come under the common name of Moslems to be soon united or adjusted with the people of the land and to be real Indians.

The history of the Chinese people, I believe, tells us the same truth. China, true to her spirit of the *Jen*, could not think of imposing

<sup>2</sup> *Early History of India*, p. 135.

her civilization upon the various backward and tribal groups of her people. They all have been, on the other hand, free to imbibe the civilization of the land by having every opportunity to come into closer contact and be familiar with it. It is the same cultural process of infiltration as in India which has been working in China all throughout her long history. That was how the desert nomads, the Mongols and the Manchus, who ruled over the destiny of China for a long period of time finally became Chinese. It is very doubtful if these fierce people can now be clearly distinguished from the pure Chinese type of people.<sup>3</sup> The absorption of several millions of Israelites in this great civilization is a striking fact having perhaps no parallel in world history. We all know how this chosen race of the Holy Bible have resolutely been resisting, for the last nearly two thousand years, every attempt of the European people to absorb them. The Jews in China, it is said, came originally from Persia about the second century B. C. They, of course, brought with them their characteristic race fertility, religious fidelity and cultural pride. Yet in the association of the Chinese people they lost themselves altogether. This has been stated by a popular Chinese writer although with an unnecessary air of self-exaltation. He seems to be quite sure that 'it was due entirely to the family system that the Chinese were able to absorb the Jews of Honan who today are so thoroughly sinolized that their Jewish tradition of not eating pork has become a mere memory. The race consciousness of the Jews can be shamed into oblivion only by the greater race consciousness of the family-minded Chinese, and it was no mean accomplishment in the ethnological field.'<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Lin Yutan, author of this statement, can certainly feel proud of this great accomplishment on the part of his people. But

<sup>3</sup> 'When the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty entered China, they not only failed to destroy the Chinese race but were absorbed by the Chinese. Chinese not only did not perish, but even assimilated their Mongol conquerors. The Manchus subjected China and ruled over her for more than two hundred and sixty years; they not only did not wipe out the Chinese race but were, on the contrary, absorbed by them, becoming fully Chinese.' (Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, *San Min Chu I*, translated by F. W. Price, p. 23).

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Lin Yutan, *My Country and My People*, p. 35.

those who actually won these stubborn Jews into the heart of their culture and society must have done it without any conscious feeling of it, for otherwise they could never think of socializing with them such hyper-conscious racialists. Only the spirit of harmony and adjustment could account for this cultural accomplishment.

This spirit has been working still in China to absorb her millions of tribal people in her south-western borders and interiors, such as the Hakkas, Miaos, Yaos, Lolos, Chungchias, and so on. Like India, China too has to take time to dispose of her problem of nation-building, for it is against her nature and tradition to use directly or indirectly any force to civilize them.

The peculiar spirit which we thus find so clearly vindicated in all the struggles of India and China did not fail to assert itself also in other parts of Asia, especially in her olden days. The Greek conquerors failed to impose their civilization upon the near-eastern countries almost as completely as they failed in India. Many Greek generals who succeeded Alexander in their campaign of conquest 'founded dynasty after dynasty within Asiatic limits'. But in the end practically no impression of these conquerors remained. Even the mighty Roman conquerors fared no better. We are told by a very distinguished British author that 'though he (the Roman) succeeded in southern Europe he failed in Asia as completely as in Britain. . . . He made the bold barbarians of Gaul, and of the more stubborn barbarians of Iberia, Romanized peoples, but of Asia he Romanized not one tribe. Something in them rejected him utterly, and survived him; and at this moment among the eight hundred millions of Asia, there are not twenty among whom can be traced by the most imaginative any lingering influence of Rome.'<sup>5</sup>

Yes, something in them rejected him utterly. What this something is does not have to be said any more. True Asia rejects all imposition of culture. She does it because it militates against her very ideal of culture.

Is it very hard still for our allied friends to understand why we should be so anxious to tell them of our past grievances at this time

<sup>5</sup> Meredith Townsend, *Asia and Europe*, pp. 23 and 24.

when we are so terribly involved in war against the Axis aggressors? In the common crisis which has overtaken the entire civilized humanity of today we have come together with a genuine feeling of mutual sympathy and fellowship. This is the psychological moment, the most opportune time for us to know each other thoroughly and intimately. This is the time when we can sow the seed for permanent international unity.

Never before in the history of international relationship have we heard the political leaders of Europe and America speak so sincerely and earnestly about the ideal of universal justice and fellowship as we hear today. The cult of power is fast losing its old fascination to them, perhaps through its dreadful exposure of bloody carnival that ultimately brings to itself a more dreadful

nemesis. In its place we hear now the talk of an Atlantic Charter, of the four freedoms, and so on. The wild cyclonic temper of the Atlantic seems to have been prevailed over, almost with the touch of a miracle, by a fresh soothing air arising from an alchemy of cruel facts. This air is now seeking every passage to transmit its lively ozone to the other ocean areas, more pronouncedly to the Pacific, and is thus giving signs of a new refreshing atmosphere that may revitalize the almost asphyxiated spirit of Asia and let it assert its supreme position this time over the entire globe, wiping out forever the narrow fictitious boundaries of the East and the West and thus heralding the dawn of a new era of peace and love and genuine fellowship for all.

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## WHAT DID SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TEACH IN AMERICA ?

BY SWAMI ATULANANDA

The story of the life of Swami Vivekananda is the story of the development of great ideas; it is the story of a soul groping, struggling for light and self-realization and finally of attainment. It is the story of the inner nature of man. First intellectual struggle, scepticism, and doubt; then, burning faith and illumination—these were the stages through which Swami Vivekananda passed before he became the great exponent of the Vedanta religion, the greatest of his time.

In the presence of Swami Vivekananda we stand in the presence of spirit self-revealed; we stand face to face with Reality. Listening to his voice we listen to a voice coming from afar, a voice reverberating through the ages, travelling in silence, recognized only by mystics and sages. Blessed are they who can hear that voice; twice blessed are those who came under the spell of that voice when made audible to mortal hearing.

When we study the life of Swami Vivekananda we study the book of life. For his was a life not only of divine revelations, but also of extraordinary human events.

Before his meeting with his divine Master, Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda was known as a restless youth with

keen intellect always in search of Truth. Steeped in Western culture, he was constantly analysing the religious and social conditions not only of his own, but also of foreign nations. But when he met his Master a new world opened up before him. For in the temple-garden of Dakshineswar, near Calcutta, he found a man, the living embodiment of ancient wisdom and the ancient culture of the East. Nay more! He found a man who could stand up and say, 'I have seen God'. It was the blending of these two lives, of the old sage at Dakshineswar and of the young college student known as Naren, that produced the personality revered by the world today as Swami Vivekananda. It was as the spokesman of his Master's message that we knew the Swami in America. We knew him as the young prophet burning with zeal and enthusiasm, a magnetic personality. At the very beginning of his public career in America, at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, the man stood revealed. At the very opening sentence of his short address, six thousand men and women rose to their feet applauding the foreign monk. The audience was touched as no preceding speaker had been able to touch them. The



Swami's masterly address on that occasion, alone, would have been sufficient to secure for him an exalted position in the American mind.

The Swami's genius expressed itself in various ways. In his lectures in America he threw a new light on the Vedanta philosophy; he breathed new life into the old doctrines; he made Vedanta a living practical power in the lives of the people.

Swami Vivekananda came to us without credentials. He came as he had wandered in India from village to village, and with American hospitality he was welcomed and accorded an opportunity to speak. And when he spoke it was of the religious ideas of the Hindus. What the Swami accomplished in his first address directed to the nations of the world at Chicago, was a marvellous disclosure of his genius.

Not only the different Christian churches were represented, but also eight great non-Christian religions. These were Hindnism, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Mohammedanism, and Mazdaism. Each representative of these great faiths spoke from his own limited standpoint.

When Swami Vivekananda spoke, a new atmosphere seemed to pour into the great Hall of Columbus. A new spirit took possession of the audience. Sectarianism, bigotry, superstition were swept aside to make room for the harmony of all religions. It was an overwhelming message of good will and brotherly love. After addressing his audience as Sisters, and Brothers of America, when at last the applause that greeted these words had subsided, the Swami began by thanking his audience for their cordial welcome. He thanked them in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; he thanked them in the name of the millions of Hindus of all classes and sects. 'I am proud', he said, 'to belong to a religion that has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance'. And he closed by expressing his hope that the bell that tolled that morning in honour of the Convention might be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecution, and of all uncharitable feeling.

Here the religious consciousness of India spoke through Swami Vivekananda addressing itself to the religious consciousness of the West. Behind Swami Vivekananda stretched

a world that dated from the Vedic period, long ages of spiritual development; facing him sat the new world, young, tumultuous, overflowing with energy and self-assurance, yet alert and inquisitive. Into the ears of the youngest among the nations he poured the wisdom of the ages. 'We Hindus', he once said, 'do not merely tolerate, we unite ourselves with every religion, praying in the mosque of the Mohammedan, worshipping before the fire of the Zoroastrian, and kneeling before the Cross of the Christian. We gather the flowers of all religions, and binding them together with the cord of love, make them into a beautiful bouquet of worship'. And with the insight of the prophet he declared: 'Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance, "Help, and not fight, assimilation and not destruction, harmony and peace, and not dissension"'

The Swami spoke of *mukti*, the doctrine that man becomes divine by realizing the Divine. 'Religion', he said, 'reaches its perfection in us only when it leads us to "Him who is the One Life in a universe of death, to Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, to Him who is the only Soul, of which all souls are but delusive manifestations"'. And when he spoke of the doctrine of the *Ishta-Devata*, the right of each soul to choose its own path, and to seek God in its own way, the West was startled by his catholicity, for such freedom in religion the West had not even dreamt of. For divided as the numerous Christian churches may be, they all agree on this one point that there is one path and one only, one Saviour, Jesus the Christ, and unless one believes in him there is no salvation.

But Swami Vivekananda pointed out that such a narrow conception of religion invariably leads to fanaticism. And in his own humorous way he told the story of the frog who thought that his little well was the universe. 'All *isms*', the Swami said, 'are little frogs hypnotized into the belief that their particular wells are the best and grandest. Fanatics refuse to listen to what other religions have to teach'. And he chanted, 'Hear ye children of immortal bliss, even ye that dwell in the highest spheres, for I have found the Eternal One, and knowing Him ye also shall be freed from death'. 'Then alone', he said, 'can misery

cease, when I am one with happiness; then alone can error cease, when I am one with wisdom; then alone can death cease, when I am one with life'.

The Swami had little patience with the constant harping on original sin, in the West. 'Why do you dwell on sin so much', he exclaimed, 'you are heirs of immortal bliss. We Hindus refuse to call you sinners! Ye are the children of God, holy and perfect beings. It is sin to call man a sinner, it is a libel on human nature'. And straightening himself to his full length he called out, 'Come, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal. In the heart of everyone of you the same Truth reigns'.

Thus the Swami cleared the theological atmosphere of the West. He sounded the trumpet call of glad tidings, of hope, of cheer, of salvation for all. And a new thought-wave swept over America. The Swami brought the Gospel of the Divinity of man.

At the Parliament of Religions Swami Vivekananda had suddenly become a world-figure. The newspapers acclaimed him the greatest figure at the Parliament, a noble, sincere man, learned beyond compare. *The New York Critique* spoke of him as an orator by Divine Right. The Hon'ble Mr. Snell wrote that on all occasions the Swami was received with greatest enthusiasm. People thronged about him wherever he went, and hung with eagerness on his every word. The more liberal Christians confessed that he was 'a prince among men'.

Thus through the newspapers the masses of America came to learn about the wonderful monk from India. Thus the Swami was introduced to the American nation, for every American (from the north to the south, from the east to the west), even in the smallest villages reads his daily paper.

Thousands of enlightened persons, Emersonians, Transcendentalists, Neo-Christians, Universalists, whether hearing him personally or reading about him, felt that the Swami was, indeed, an Oriental prophet come to them with a new message. And so meteoric was the transformation from obscurity to most exalted fame, that it can be truly said that the Swami 'awoke one morning to find himself famous'.

But to the Swami all this glorification was

as so much straw. It did not touch or elate him. He bowed down to that great, divine Power that stood behind him, that inspired him, that spoke and acted through him. He rather regretted that the joy of the free life of the unknown Sannyasin was at an end. There was no more quiet, no more the peace of retirement. His life was now for the public, strenuous, ceaseless labour, giving himself for the good of all.

Neither was his task always a pleasant one. Travelling from place to place, always lecturing, always teaching, suffering from the severe cold of the American winter taxed his strength to the utmost. Then, ignorant people plied him with stupid, irritating questions. Upon these he fell like a thunderbolt to defend his Faith, to uphold the prestige of his motherland. His replies came as flashes of lightning, and the venturesome questioner would find himself impaled on the lance of the Swami's keen intellect.

Swami Vivekananda had come to speak the truth, not to flatter the American nation to win their applause and sympathy. He had a great reverence for Christ and his teachings, but he saw the flaws in current Christianity. He pointed out the defects of so-called Christian civilization. And sometimes he had to deliver hard blows.

In Detroit, before a large audience he exclaimed, 'One thing I would tell you. You train and educate and pay men, to do what? To come over to our country and curse and abuse all my forefathers, my religion, everything we hold sacred. These men come to us and say, "You idolaters, you will go to hell." If all India stood up and threw at you all the mud of the Indian Ocean, we would not be doing the smallest part of what you are doing to us. And for what? Did we ever try to convert the West to our religion? Nay! We say to you, "Have your own religion and let us have ours." Neither have I come to make you Hindus. I have come to make you better Christians. Remember Christ's saying: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." Everything that has selfishness for its basis must perish. If you want to live, go back to Christ. Go back to him who had nowhere to rest his head. Go back to him, and give up your vain pursuits. Better live in rags with Christ than in palaces without him.'

It is no wonder that some of the Swami's

utterances gave rise to opposition. Some tried by all means to impair the Swami's reputation. But amidst all these distractions he kept his equanimity of mind, trusting in God, and consoling himself with the thought that the high-minded Christians were his avowed admirers. The Swami remained simple and pure as a child.

On one occasion he said, 'I am a plain-spoken man, but I mean well. I want to tell you the truth. You are my children. I want to show you the way to God by pointing out your errors. Therefore I do not flatter you, or always say fine things about your civilization. I point out to you what Christ taught.'

And when a distinguished clergyman asked the Swami how he could understand Christ so well, he replied, 'Why? Jesus was an Oriental. It is only natural for us Orientals to understand and love him.' And again, when he was asked if he did not resent the false reports circulated about him, he said very gently, 'Not at all; this is also the voice of the Beloved. My Master would never recognize personal abuse or malice; "Everything," he said, "comes from the Mother Divine."'

During his first period in America, the Swami found a life of constant change a great strain, mentally and physically. By nature he was meditative. His friends often found him wrapped in his own thoughts, hardly conscious of his surroundings. But the constant friction of alien thoughts, endless questioning, and the frequent clash of wits in the Western world, awoke in him a different spirit. He became as alert and wide-awake as the world in which he found himself. He began to study various problems. He compared Western and Eastern culture, and he investigated the industrial and economic systems of America, that he might apply these later to the wants of his own people. He visited museums, universities and art galleries. In short, he became a keen student of American life. As the result of these observations he later declared, 'As regards spirituality, the Americans are far inferior to us, but their society is superior to ours. We will teach them spirituality, and assimilate what is best in their society.'

The Swami was now admitted into all classes of society, even the most exclusive. Thus he met the most brilliant intellects of the country. The famous orator and agnostic, Ingersoll,

himself a man of bold and fearless speech, once told the Swami: 'If you had come forty years ago to preach in this country, the people would have hanged you or burned you alive. But now the nation is somewhat prepared to accept you. Your ideas are most enlightening.' And Mr. Fesla, the most distinguished scientist of his time, said, 'Swami, I appreciate your lectures so much because they are so scientific!'

But with it all the Swami felt somewhat disgusted with the fame he had acquired. He felt that the interest he had awakened was after all superficial. He desired earnest-minded disciples whom he could teach the deeper truths of Vedanta, who would follow his advice, and struggle for God-realization. He therefore began to hold private classes in New York City.

There, in his room, students came to him. They sat on the floor, in Indian fashion. As one of the students has expressed: 'How intensely interesting were these classes! Those who were privileged to attend them can never forget it. We seemed to live in a different world, to be transplanted to a higher sphere. And when we went home we seemed to walk on air. Swami was so dignified, still so simple, so earnest, so eloquent.'

In this humble way did Swami Vivekananda do his work in New York. Thus he taught wealthy Americans of high position in the fashion of the ancient Rishis. He felt that now he was carrying on his work, slowly but surely, on the right footing. He gave himself, all he had to give, in teaching and training these chosen followers. He taught them how to calm the restless mind, how to control the senses, how to lead the natural desires into spiritual channels. He taught them to meditate, and how to form the habit of thinking spiritual thoughts. He explained to his students that religion was not a question of belief, but of realization, and realization was the result of earnest practice.

Swami Vivekananda lived not for himself, he lived for others. 'I do not care a straw for your *bhakti* or *mukti*;' he exclaimed, 'may I be born again and again, and suffer a thousand miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, my God in the poor and ignorant of all races and all species. I would go through a thousand hells to do good to others. This is my Dharma.'

In America the Swami taught from the *Bhagavadgita* and the Upanishads. He taught the different systems of Yoga as so many means to realize God. He preached the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. His was a religion of strength and fearlessness.

Fear he declared to be the greatest sin. 'Man is born to conquer nature. Faith in ourselves, and faith in God, this is the secret of greatness. We are the Atman, deathless and free; pure by nature. Life is short, the vanities of the world are transient. Let us preach and live the Truth.'

And again he said, 'Desire nothing, look for no return. It is desirelessness that brings results. And remember, the stepping stone, the real centre, the real heart of all spiritual culture is Renunciation. Arise ! Awake ! and stop not till the goal is reached !'

On one occasion the Swami said, 'If I succeed in helping one single person to realize God, I shall feel that my labours have not been in vain; I shall consider my work a success.'

We tread here on sacred ground. We are not here at liberty to indulge in vain speculations. But, perhaps, I may be permitted to give it as my sincere conviction that this hope of Swami Vivekananda was more than fulfilled. Certain it is that the Swami has been a spiritual blessing in the lives of thousands of Americans.

Those of you who have watched the growth of the American mentality since the Swami's

advent in that country will agree with me that the Swami's work has not been in vain.

Today in magazine articles and other publications, today from platform and pulpit, ideas are promulgated akin to the teachings of Vedanta. For this broader outlook Swami Vivekananda laid the foundation. Today science with its wonderful progress is approaching the ancient Truth, taught by our Rishis ages ago, the truth that One Intelligence, One stable Consciousness is at the back of the ever-changing universe.

The American mind is in search of a final solution of the problem of life. This solution, so far as human speech can reveal it, has been placed before the congress of nations by Swami Vivekananda many years ago. Brother Sannyasins have followed the Swami in the field. And at present several trained Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Mission are in America, in different cities, preaching the life-giving truths of Vedanta.

America is a vast country. The number of workers is small; the demand is great. But I trust some day the Swami's vision will come true, and the West will be honeycombed with Sannyasins of our Mission. It is only the deeper truths of religion—as the Swami has pointed out—that can bring harmony and understanding between the nations of the world. This harmony, this understanding, based on the divinity inherent in man, is the message Swami Vivekananda brought to the West.

## UPANISHADIC MEDITATION\*

BY SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

### *The Meaning of Upâsanâ*

Thus far we have dealt with some *upâsanâs* which may be called practical Vedânta. But *upâsanâ* is a much more comprehensive term and covers not only a life of action but actionless life as well; and, as such, it was the concern of not only the Kshatriyas but of all, though the former were the discoverers of some of its most important methods.

Let us, then, first understand what the word *upâsanâ* exactly means. Literally it means sitting near, mentally approaching an ideal. In Vedantic literature we come across several

definitions of this term. In the *Vedântasâra* the definition runs thus: '*Upâsanâ* is a kind of mental process relating to the Qualified Brahman, such, for instance, as the *Shândilya-vidyâ*.' But this definition is not comprehensive enough. For in the Upanishads we have not only *Brahmopâsanâ* but also *abrahmopâsanâ*—it has as its object not only the Qualified Brahman, but much more that is not Brahman. Shankaracharya, accordingly, defines *upâsanâ* thus in the introduction to his commentary on the *Chhândogya Upanishad*:

\*Continued from the January issue.

'*Upâsanâ* means this, that, after accepting some object of meditation as set forth in the scriptures, one should have such a current of thought directed towards it that no other idea may arise to break the flow.' In the commentary on the *Brihadâraṇyaka* (I. iii. 9) he writes: '*Upâsanâ* is mentally approaching the form of the deity or the like as it is presented by the eulogistic portions of the Vedas relating to the objects of meditation, and concentrating on it, excluding conventional notions, till one is as completely identified with it, as with one's body, conventionally regarded as one's self.'

So, according to Shankara, the object of meditation may be any *shâstric* object, or any deity, or Brahman. Besides, it is essentially a mental process, and aims at a knowledge of the object through identification. But *upâsanâ* itself is not knowledge. This is a very important point to keep in mind. *Upâsanâ* may lead to realization through the purification of the mind, but by itself it falls far short of realization. The process of knowing and meditation are both mental processes to be sure, but knowledge of an object is not subject to the option of the knower, inasmuch as he cannot know it at will to be other than what it actually is. He knows the object as soon as his organs of knowledge begin to act with reference to the object. In meditation the meditator's will plays a prominent part. The meditator has full freedom to meditate or not or do it in the manner he best thinks fit. The *Panchadashi* (IX. 74-82) brings out this distinction very aptly: 'Knowledge is determined by the object, but *upâsanâ* is dependent on the subject.' The *Panchadashi* also emphasizes the element of faith in *upâsanâ*. One must have faith in the object and the process of meditation as taught by the scriptures and the *Guru*. Knowledge does not presuppose any such faith. A third point to note is that the objects of *upâsanâ* are not merely imaginary things or concepts,—nor need they be real in the ordinary sense of the term; but they are presented by the scriptures. Thus knowledge and meditation are entirely different. As such, if we are to divide the Vedas into two parts, we shall naturally place the part on meditation under *karma* rather than under *jñâna*. As Shankara remarks in his commentary on the *Brahma-sutras*,

That which is presented for performance irrespective of its nature and which is dependent on man's will, is called duty. As for instance the instruction, 'The sacrificer will meditate on the deity to whom he is to sacrifice,' or 'He will mentally meditate on *sandhyâ*'. Meditation implies thinking. Though it is mental like knowledge, a man may at will do it, not do it or do otherwise than instructed, since it is subject to option. But knowledge presupposes means of knowledge; and these means depend on the nature of objects. So knowledge cannot be done, not done, or otherwise done. It depends solely on the object and not on injunction or the subject's will. So, though knowledge is mental, it is entirely different from action. In such instructions of *upâsanâ* as 'O Gautama, think on the man as a sacrificial fire, think on the woman as a sacrificial fire,' the thinking of man and woman as fire is only a result of scriptural instruction and is dependent on the subject's will. But the knowledge of the real fire as fire is neither due to such an instruction nor to the subject's will. What is it then? It is knowledge determined by fire which is being perceived with the eyes; it is not action.

Thus far we are all agreed. Our next stumbling block is with regard to *nididhyâsana*, which term also is roughly translated as meditation. Some Vedantists, too, would think of *nididhyâsana* as meditation in the ordinary sense of the term. But Sureshvaracharya in his *Vârtika* is at pains to show that this can never be so. In the *Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad* Yâjñavalkya says to Maitreyi, his wife, 'The Self is to be seen, to be heard of, to be thought of, and to be made an object of *nididhyâsana*. Everything is known when the Self is seen through hearing, thinking, and *vijnâna*.'<sup>1</sup> Commenting on this Sureshvara says that the use of the word *vijnâna* in the second sentence in place of *nididhyâsana* in the first, shows that *nididhyâsana* is not ordinary meditation, but a meditation of a higher order in which there is no sense of exertion of will, no conscious employment of the thinking process, no intellection whatsoever. It is constant presence of a conviction of the form 'I am Brahman', and yet it falls just short of *aparokshânubhuti* or the direct realization of the Self.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यो मैत्रेयि ; आत्मनो वा अरे दर्शनेन श्रवणेन मत्या विज्ञानेनेदं सर्वं विदितम् (II. iv. 5). *Vijnâna* literally means special knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> अनुवादे यथोक्तानां प्रकान्ते दर्शनादिषु ।  
विज्ञानेनेत्यथ कथं निदिध्यासनमुच्यते ॥  
ध्यानाशंका निवृत्त्यर्थं विज्ञानेनेति भण्यते ।  
निदिध्यासनशब्देन ध्यानमाशंक्यते यतः ॥  
अपरायत्तो बोधोऽत्र निदिध्यासनमुच्यते ॥

### Aims and Methods

We have thus distinguished *upâsanâ* from *karma* on the one hand and *jnâna* and *nididhyâsana* on the other. We have seen that its proper function is to prepare the mind for the final realization, the intuition or revelation of Ultimate Reality. It takes hold of the man as a whole. It deepens his emotion, strengthens his will, and expands his intellect. The Upanishads do not stop simply by saying 'मनसैवानुद्द्रष्टव्यः—the Self is to be intuited by the mind,'<sup>3</sup> they also show the technique through which the requisite power of intuition is to be developed. For in Vedanta, we must remember that, we have not to reach God or to obtain Him as we obtain things. On the contrary, we have merely to unfold our own latent infinitude and gradually grow till we reach the highest expansion. The highest realization comes as a sudden and spontaneous opening of insight; all that *upâsanâ* can do is to free the mind from all impurities and worldly distraction, and concentrate it on Brahman so that light may descend unimpeded. The highest immediate knowledge or intuition in which the subject and object become absolutely identified comes after a long process of preparation; and *upâsanâ* helps greatly in these preliminary stages. Let us take some examples.

Pravâhana Jaivali, of whom we have already spoken, taught some Brahmins an *upâsanâ* in which the imagination is guided to higher and higher strata till it loses itself in the highest thing which is Brahman. Thus *sâmans* are shown to be resting on voice (वाक्), which is dependent on vitality (प्राण), which again is sustained by food (अन्न) produced with the help of water. Water comes from the upper atmosphere. This rests on solid earth. This earth is dependent on the subtlest of all things which is Brahman. Thus if we push our chain of dependence to the farthest limit, we cannot escape being in the presence of the Highest Cause. This is a meditation based on the ascending order of things.

In another *upâsanâ* this ascent is combined with gradual expansion. We cannot possibly give all the details, but present only the bare outlines. First, we are asked to medi-

tate on such words as *hâoo*, *hâee*, *atha*, etc., which meaningless words are added in *sâma* songs for making a tune full. We have to consider *hâoo* as the earth, *hâee* as air, *atha* as moon and so on. Then we come to the *sâma* song as a whole divided into five parts which are thought of differently as identical with different things in the universe, till at the end of this section of the *upâsanâ* we have almost exhausted everything gross and subtle including the mind, the vital force, the organ of speech, etc. The next stage leads us to a higher synthesis where a bigger *sâman* having seven parts is taken up as a symbol for all conceivable things. In the fourth stage different kinds of *sâmans* bearing different names are used as symbols. The climax is reached in the last stage, when, by the widest sweep, the whole universe is imposed on all the *sâmans* conceived as a unified entity. All the three worlds, all the three Vedas, all the gross stellar bodies, and all living beings as well as all subtle things are thought of as identical with *sâman*, and the Upanishad concludes the *upâsanâ* by saying, 'He who meditates thus becomes identified with all'.<sup>5</sup>

But if the Upanishads taught the *upâsanâs* of infinite expansion outwardly, they were careful to prescribe meditations for probing into the subtlest of all subtle things. Thus we are told that the earth is the essence of all elements, since it is their highest creation. Water is the essence of earth since it is water that makes the particles of earth a compact whole. Herbs, that is to say, the juices of the herbs, are the essence of water since they maintain life. Man is the essence of these juices since they impart strength. Speech is the essence of a man since speech distinguishes him from animals. *Rik* mantras are the essence of speech. The *sâmans* are the essence of the *riks* since music is the highest achievement of voice. And *Om* is the essence of all *sâmans*.<sup>6</sup> This *Om* is the name and symbol of Brahman—'Omiti Brahman'.<sup>7</sup> Through this process of searching for the essences of things we reach Brahman. Again we are to deduce everything from that *Om*, for everything is from *Om*—'Omiti idam

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I. xiii-xxi.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I. i. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Taittiriya Upanishad*, II. viii.

<sup>3</sup> *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad*, IV. iv. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *Chhândogya Upanishad*, I. viii-ix.

ओंकार एवेदं सर्वं—*Chhândogya Upanishad*, II. xxiii. 3.

*sarvam*,’ and everything is penetrated through and through by *Om*; *Om* is everything. This double process of induction and deduction carries us to the centre of things and gives us a universal view.

The Upanishads were, however, careful not to carry all and sundry to the highest meditation irrespective of their mental progress. Various *upâsanâs* of various degrees and subtlety were prescribed for people in various stages of life. ‘From the familiar to the unfamiliar’ was their motto, as it was also ‘from the concrete to the abstract’. It is a mistake to think that the *upâsanâ-kânda* was meant only for those who retired from life, the *vânaprasthas*. The students, too, had their *upâsanâs*, as we have already shown in connection with *samhitopanishat*. The householders had theirs, as for instance the *panchâgni-vidyâ*. The priests engaged in sacrifices—the chanters of hymns, the pourers

of oblation, the singers of *sâmans*—had their adequate *upâsanâs*. And so also had those who led a retired life, or were otherwise debarred from undertaking the costly and prolonged ceremonials. And as a usual rule they started from the most familiar things—the students from letters, the ordinary people from acts, the thinkers from concepts, and the meditators from lower meditations. And the whole process aimed at a grand synthesis in which the gross and subtle, the microcosm and the macrocosm, the transcendental and the immanent lost their separate existence. Thus at every turn we are reminded of the identity of the *adhibhuta*, the *adhidaiva*, and the *adhyâtma*—the natural, the supernatural, and the personal. In fact, the *upâsanâs* aimed not only at intellectual grasp but also at spiritual identification.

(To be Concluded)

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Among our new contributors to this issue is Dr. Dharendra Nath Roy, M.A., Ph.D., who was visiting Professor in the National Yunnan University, and Professor in the National College of Oriental Studies, Chungking, China. He gives a brilliant exposition of what Asia Stands for. . . . Swami Atulananda is an American Sannyasin of the Ramakrishna Mission, who is almost an octogenarian now, and is spending his time in the Himalayas. Here he gives us a graphic and authentic account of the impression made by Swami Vivekananda on thinking Americans of his time.

### ROMAIN ROLLAND

According to the Paris Radio, Romain Rolland, the famous French author and literary genius, has passed away, at the age of 79, at Vezelay in the Yonne Department. In October 1943, the German Radio had announced his death which later proved to be incorrect. In the death of M. Romain Rolland the world has lost a noble soul, and India a sincere friend who truly understood and appreciated her cultural greatness, and her spiritual personalities. He was one of

the greatest writers of the modern age who combined erudition with a rare catholicity of vision. Being a true well-wisher of humanity, and a passionate lover of peace, he deeply felt the anguish of soul seeing the horrors of war and the tragedy of modern civilization. Disillusioned in the West by the happenings of the last war, he turned to India for inner light and spiritual strength for the fulfilment of his cherished dream. In his search for the verities of human life, he came into intimate touch with Indian philosophic thought, and was greatly influenced by it. Romain Rolland’s monumental works on the lives of Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi, are an expression of his profound admiration for and indebtedness to such spiritual giants of India. In them he found the fulfilment of his own ideals of universal harmony and spiritual dynamism. Through these biographies he not only acquainted Europe with the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, but also presented the lacerated soul of the war-weary West with the balm of spiritual healing. He was a philosopher, poet, and mystic in one. He dedicated his life for the cause of world peace and the brotherhood of mankind. We hope the efforts of

this great savant will not fail to bear fruit. May his soul rest in peace.

#### MEDICAL MEN AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Prof. H. E. Sigerist of the Foreign Experts Medical Mission has drawn the attention of medical men in this country to the need for utilizing technical advance in medicine to the promotion of social welfare. In his Address delivered at the Madras Medical College he stressed the importance of sociology of medicine in the training of doctors who should be

not only men trained in the science of medicine, but social workers, educators, friends and helpers of their fellowmen, leading them to a healthier and happier life.

Medical education in India suffers from the same drawbacks as does general education with respect to ideals and training. Medical graduates passing out of the Universities find it difficult to earn a decent living outside the cities owing to the poverty in the villages. Hence little or no medical relief is available in the majority of villages. Besides, there is a great paucity of medical workers compared with the vast field to be served in India. It is necessary that the system of medical education should be suited to meeting the basic needs of the people at large. Hence Prof. Sigerist suggests that doctors should not rest content with curing diseases only, but that they should become active social workers, paying attention to prevention, sanitation, and the spreading of general health education.

Medical education would hereafter have to emphasize the preventive side. Preventive medicine must permeate the entire teaching of medicine, and new text books and laboratories would have to be devised in this behalf. . . . We must introduce sociological training in the curriculum. We must develop a sociology of medicine. . . . sociology of medicine taught through actual field work, students under training being put for a few months each year to work among the people.

Our doctors should be encouraged to become not only better physicians, but better and useful citizens. The learned Professor said that in Russia and Yugoslavia much advance had been made in training medical men in medico-social work, and in helping the people to know how to prevent disease and promote health. Such a task will prove undoubtedly more difficult in India where the majority of people in the villages are unable to read or write. Hence a greater responsibility rests on the few educated persons.

They have to work for the regeneration of India by becoming familiar with the social and economic conditions of the vast masses and by educating them and raising their standards of life by living and working in their midst.

#### A TIRADE AGAINST HINDUISM

Hinduism has allowed a great amount of liberty in religious and spiritual matters. Hindus have shown infinite tolerance towards other religions and faiths. But yet attempts are made to discredit Hinduism and Hindu scriptures, wrongly attributing to them the onus for social or sectarian prejudices. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, explaining his stand against the Vedas and the Gita at a party, is reported to have held that these books which showered insults on the 'depressed classes' and had thrown them into such a humiliating plight would never be held by them as their sacred and holy books. In his opinion the Bhagavadgita was a 'political' book, whose purpose was to raise Brahminism to a supreme position. It is unfortunate that a person like Dr. Ambedkar, occupying an eminent position today, is pleased to express himself in such words against the Hindu scriptures. We understand and sympathize with the feeling of utter dissatisfaction which has given rise to such expression. But unmerited condemnation of the scriptures is certainly not the way to get a wrong righted. The institution of caste, however irrational it may appear to many today, had its own good purpose to serve in the past; though in modern times it may have lost its noble aim of conserving and developing the best in every social group in harmony with national ideals. No Hindu scripture ever upheld caste derived from mere birth *only*. A man's caste was determined by his inherent *guna* and *karma*, viz, by the temperament and tendencies predominant in him, mainly derived from past births. The Bhagavadgita makes this point explicit, and does not support the claims of any one caste as against the others.

All men are not of the same nature, and all are not equally endowed with gifts of head and heart. Hence distinctions of a discriminatory nature between man and man, whether based on caste or wealth, exist in every society in some form or other. That part of the Vedas which embodies the spiri-



tual teachings of the ancient seers, viz, the Upanishads, has been cited as the highest authority by all Hindu teachers. Hinduism never recognized any caste or privilege in religion and spirituality. Any local custom or convention, prevailing in a section of Hindu society, is not Hinduism, and has not the sanction of the scriptures. The Upanishads have, in proclaiming the Vedantic truth of the existence of the same divinity in all beings, stood for the elimination of privilege. Hindu scriptures have unequivocally declared that all knowledge, all perfection is in every soul, irrespective of caste, creed, or colour. And the Bhagavadgita says,

He who looks upon the learned Brâhmana, or the outcaste, upon the cow, the elephant, or the dog, with the same eye (of equality), he indeed is the sage, he is the wise man.

It is not the Hindu scriptures or their teachings that are responsible for provoking unfavourable criticism. But such practices as untouchability, privilege-claiming, and social persecution in the name of religion have been the causes of much of the insult that is showered on Hinduism. It is no doubt regrettable that even today the blot of untouchability is not completely removed from Hindu society. No true Hindu can honestly associate himself with such iniquity. No true Hindu scripture sanctions it. As a leader of his community, Dr. Ambedkar is quite right in voicing his grievances. But he should try his best to raise his community by improving their standard of education, and by raising their economic status. Automatically their position in the social and

body politic will be raised. But denunciation and destructive criticism will not prove helpful in achieving his object. Many caste Hindus, including well-known personalities, have been working for the upliftment of the Harijans, along constructive lines. Their experience, however, is encouraging. The President of the Harijan Sewak Sangh, Allahabad, writing in the *Indian Review* (November 1944) says,

A caste Hindu is prepared to listen to you provided you do not rub him the wrong way. . . . In the vast majority of cases we have succeeded in convincing them (caste Hindus) that untouchability is a stigma on Hindu society and we should try to remove it as speedily as possible. Invariably they have agreed. . . . You cannot convert anybody to your view either by riding a high horse or by wounding his deep-rooted susceptibilities. An average village Hindu is open to reason, and it depends on the tact and good sense of the speaker whether he will succeed in winning his sympathy. Our experience is extremely encouraging.

The Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita contain the sublimest teachings of the world. The Gita has a message even to the modern world. It is a message of harmony and peace, and not dissension which is the way of present-day ideologies. Decrying these teachings which are sacred to all classes of Hindus will not serve to bridge the gulf of social inequality. A wrong procedure may tend to take us away from the goal. In their own interest, and in the interest of the country as a whole, the higher classes will have to help the lower classes to get their legitimate rights. Only then will Hindus become strong in unity. The teachings of the scriptures will have to become a living force in our daily life.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM.** By D. S. SARMA. Published by the Hindu University, Benares. Pp. 680. Price Rs. 15 or 21 s.

This is an excellent publication of the Benares Hindu University in the Pratap Singh Gaekwad Library of Indian Philosophy and Religion series. The author deserves to be warmly congratulated for the success he has attained in giving a clear exposition and describing in simple language the Renaissance of Hinduism beginning from Ram Mohan Roy and progressing onwards.

The writer originally intended the book 'to form a companion volume' to his 'What is Hinduism?' but when he proceeded with the work he found

that 'the material for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was so abundant and interesting' that he thought it best to make this period the main theme of this volume and it was good that he did so.

The book starts with a careful and able Historical Introduction dealing with the various phases of Hinduism and dating from the Vedic period down to 1940 A.D.

Describing the period before coming into being of the Renaissance, the learned author says: 'The British supremacy was established over the whole of India after the subjugation of the Mahrattas and Sikhs and the government was transferred

from the East India Company to the Crown after the Mutiny'. India 'was at this time brought into the current of Modern European civilization and culture' when 'her own civilization and culture had been at the lowest ebb for over a hundred years, from about the middle of the eighteenth century. In that dark period, there was no new development in Hinduism and almost all indigenous arts languished and died. . . . The inrush of a totally different civilization put an end to all creative work for a time and an uncritical admiration for all things Western took possession of the mind of the educated classes coupled with contempt for things of native origin. . . . The zealous Christian Missionaries who never failed to point out their finger of scorn at our religious and social institutions were educators as well as crusaders.' They opened schools where they imparted the new secular knowledge, but they also poured contempt at our religion and taught of Christianity as the only true religion.

Such a state of affairs could not go on indefinitely if Hinduism was not to die a natural death. The soul of the country was aroused from its deep slumber and Hinduism rose to its feet. 'The innate vitality of that religion with its great and glorious past asserted itself. At first the revived faith was at its defence, rather cautious and timid in maintaining its position and inclined to compromise with the enemy. But soon it took the offensive, marched forward, even entered the hostile camp and asserted in ringing tones its right to live as one of the civilizing influences of mankind.' There arose in this period a number of saints and scholars who 'purified Hinduism by denouncing some of its later accretions, separated its essentials from its non-essentials, confirmed its ancient truths by their own experience and even carried its message to Europe and America'.

The pioneer of Modern Hindu Renaissance was Raja Ram Mohan Roy who like other prophets or teachers who followed him (viz., Justice Ranade, Swami Dayananda, Mrs. Annie Besant, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, and Prof. Radhakrishnan, and all of whom are faithfully described in this volume), 'was a zealous Hindu, proud of India's past, proud of the achievements of his race and eager to conserve all that was good and great in his ancestral religion. He struck a note of universalism which we hear again and again in the teachings of the prophets of the new age,' and it is a note which was more particularly emphasised by Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his great disciple Swami Vivekananda. The learned author is right when he says that this note of universalism is 'the most distinguishing note of the Hindu Renaissance of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is the fulfilment and realization of the universalism of the Upanishads.'

The author lucidly describes the various movements connected with the various prophets or teachers such as Brâhma Samaj with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Prârthana Samaj with Justice Ranade, Arya Samaj with Swami Dayananda, Theosophical Society with Mrs. Annie Besant, Rama-

krishna movement with Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, and lastly the Satyagraha movement with Mahatma Gandhi. It would not be possible in this short review to deal exhaustively with each movement and it can be said to the credit of the learned author that he has dealt with the various movements in a very able manner and has drawn conclusions which cannot be refuted. He gives a truthful account and a clear picture.

He has rightly pointed out that the leaders of this Renaissance were 'able to view their religion apart from the mythological, ritualistic and sociological forms in which it was embedded.' The success of Swami Vivekananda, and later of Prof. Radhakrishnan, in carrying the message of Hinduism to the Western nations 'was primarily due to their ability to interpret Vedanta as a religious philosophy independent of the Indian caste-system or mythology or rites and ceremonies'. . . . Social reform formed a large part of the present Renaissance. It started with it and has made great strides in this field although much remains to be done. But in the words of the author 'the ice has been broken, and the water has begun to flow' and further progress is only a question of time.

He has also made very sensible and pertinent observations about the future of the movement in the concluding portion of his book and they deserve careful attention. Speaking of the attitude of Hinduism towards Islam and Christianity he says that our policy towards them 'should be not one of absorption but of fraternization.' If these religions insist on conversion, as they must, we must, of course, claim the same right.

Lastly the author lays great emphasis on unity as the crying need of the hour. 'Lack of unity among Hindus' says he, 'has been the cause of all their misfortunes from time immemorial, and 'they should realize that not even a thousand Renaissances of Hinduism would help them, if they did not learn to unite and act as one unit.'

The book deserves to be widely read by all Hindus who are proud of their culture and the contributions that it has made and will yet make for the progress and the good of mankind.

D. D. PUNETHA

### BENGALI

PARAMÂRTHA-PRASANGA. BY SWAMI VIRAJANANDA. Pp. viii+168. *Udbodhan Kâryâlaya, Baghbazar, Calcutta. Price (board) Re. 1-12 As. (cloth) Rs. 2-4 As.*

Spiritual knowledge is imparted in the manner of one torch enkindling another. That is, only a man of light can illumine another man. Anyone short of that is not only incapable of doing it but may, as it often happens, instead of helping the progress of those who seek his help, rather thwart it. For, in his case, it is like 'a blind man leading another blind man', as the Upanishads say. He is, according to Shri Ramakrishna's forceful, though rather quaint, metaphor, like a weak non-poisonous snake trying to swallow a frog,

which involves both the creatures in a long agonising process. A really competent teacher is, on the other hand, like a cobra which makes a quick and an almost comfortable job of it, both to itself and the frog.

Swami Virajananda, author of the book, is a teacher of the second kind. In addition to the special and the most-coveted advantage that he is a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, he is a rare veteran in the spiritual field, inasmuch as he has been in it for more than half a century. If anyone, it is he and men like him, who are competent to teach spiritual matters. And that he has been prevailed upon to let his thoughts, which are the outcome of his long and fruitful experience of spiritual life, appear in print, is a great achievement on which the publisher ought to be congratulated.

As the publisher points out in the preface, the book is rather esoteric, being specially meant for those who look up to him for spiritual guidance. But it can—undoubtedly will—prove immensely helpful also to those outside that circle, for it is, after all, a common goal that all spiritual aspirants seek and methods of reaching that goal, too, are necessarily similar. There are no idle and academical dissertations in the book; there

are only practical hints such as will help to guide the steps of an aspirant through the mazes of spiritual life. Indeed, it is the practical value of the book that readily strikes a reader. Almost every difficulty that confronts one on the spiritual path has been anticipated and a practical as well as practicable solution has been offered as to how to circumvent it. Within the narrow compass of one hundred and sixty-eight pages is compressed such a treasure of spiritual information as only a very judicious and voluminous reading of books on spiritual subjects may yield.

One other merit of the book is that even a man ordinarily indifferent and callous to religion will, while going through it, feel tempted to begin the practice of religion rightaway, seeing how easy it is and how rich a harvest he may reap by it. This is because throughout the book there is a note of hope and good cheer as there ought to be. Unlike most other books of the kind it does not exaggerate difficulties that stand in the way of an aspirant. If it exaggerates anything at all, which of course it does not, it exaggerates the powers that lie hidden in him.

The book is really a wonderful guide in spiritual life, next only to a truly illumined teacher in the flesh.

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### PRESIDENT'S TOUR

Srimat Swami Virajananda, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, was receiving, for some time past, earnest requests from numerous devotees and admirers to pay a visit to North and East Bengal and Assam. But he could not comply with their requests in consideration of his ill health. Latterly the invitations became so pressing that the Swamiji could not refuse them any longer and in spite of his indifferent health consented to undertake a tour of some of the branch centres of the Mission in those parts. Accordingly, on 29th November 1944, he started from the Ashrama at Shyamlatol in the Himalayas, where he usually spends the larger part of the year. He halted for two days at Lucknow and then proceeded first to Katihar and from there to Dinajpur. To the great joy of the devotees he stayed at the latter place for over a week and then started for Gauhati in Assam. This was the first time that the Swami came to this province. He spent two very joyful days at Gauhati and saw the famous temple of the great Goddess Kamakhya, situated on a hill at a short distance from the town. Shillong was the next destination where he was very enthusiastically received by the devotees. After spending eight days at this capital town of Assam he left for Sylhet where people were eagerly awaiting his

arrival. The enthusiasm of the people reached its height when they saw the Swami and they did their best to make his stay comfortable there and also to benefit by his holy presence. The Swami stayed there for fifteen memorable days which were days of veritable spiritual feasts for the devotees. It was a sight to be seen when earnest seekers after truth came from long distances, all the way on foot, and with presents of fruits and other eatables on their head, to have a darshana of the Swami and be blessed by him.

The next place of visit was Dacca where the stay was the longest—for sixteen days. In 1899 the Swami paid his first visit to this place when he was sent by his great master, Swami Vivekananda, to preach the message of Vedanta here. His mission was a success. The Swami was thus, in his younger days, one of the pioneer workers at Dacca, who paved the way for a spiritual reawakening there. Now he is seventy-three and was glad to see the fruitful effects of that initial labour. He was highly pleased to recognize among the numerous visitors who came to see him some of the old friends and devotees whom he met at that time. All these sixteen days the Dacca Math presented an extremely lively sight and an exalting atmosphere.

The Swami was highly impressed in all the above places by the unbounded enthusiasm of the

people and their earnest hankering for a spiritual life. He was struck with wonder to witness how deep the message of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda has gone into the heart of the people and how silently but surely it has been bringing about a new transformation in their life. In all the places people, not only local but from neighbouring places too, were pouring in from morning till night to pay their respectful homage to the august visitor and have his blessings. The Swami also received them kindly, listened to them patiently and enlightened their hearts by solving the problems of their spiritual life through suitable instructions and teachings. About 1,500 hankering souls, both man and women, and from all strata of society, were blessed with initiation by him.

In some places the public were very eager to present the Swami with civic receptions, but he dissuaded them on the ground of his ill health. Many a invitation to address gatherings or bless other public functions by his presence had to be refused on the same ground. But though the Swami himself did not address any public meeting he asked the other monks, who accompanied him in his tour, to hold classes and deliver discourses on religious topics. They were glad to obey his bidding. There were some good musicians also in the party and Bhajanas were held. Thus wherever the Swamiji went he created an atmosphere around him which was at once joyous and uplifting. People were greatly attracted by it.

Devotees from other places, namely, Silchar, Habiganj, Comilla, Mymensingh, Noakhali, Barisal, etc., were sending their earnest entreaties to the Swami to visit those places, but the condition of his health did not allow him to accept those invitations and prolong his journey further. He left Dacca for Narayanganj where he stayed for

over a day and then started for Belur Math and reached there on the 26th January. Thanks to the efforts of some earnest devotees and admirers because of which his journey was quite comfortable. He will stay now for some time at the Belur Math.

#### SWAMI PAVITRANANDA IN SOUTH INDIA

Swami Pavitrananda, President, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, is in South India, visiting places of interest and branch centres of the Math and Mission there. He left Calcutta at the end of November last and reached Madras in the middle of December, visiting Waltair, Rajahmundry, and Tonuka en route. Leaving Madras soon after, he visited Nattarampalli, Bangalore, Mysore, places in Coorg, Ootacamund, Coimbatore, Trichur, Kaladi, Ernakulam, Alleppy, Quilon, Trivandrum, Cape Comorin, Madura, Rameswaram and Dhanushkoti, and arrived in Ceylon towards the end of January. He is expected to return to Calcutta by the middle of February.

#### REPORTS PUBLISHED

The following branches of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission have sent us their reports for the periods noted against each :

Ramakrishna Mission Students'		
Home, Madras ... ..		1944
Ramakrishna Mission Sevash-		
rama, Silchar ... ..		1940-43
Ramakrishna Ashrama,		
Ootacamund ... ..		1944
Ramakrishna Ashrama,		
Trivandrum ... ..		Aug. 1943-Aug. 41

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#### SHRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The Birthday Anniversary of Shri Ramakrishna falls on the 14th February, 1945.

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