

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

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## TO THE DIVINE MOTHER

BY CECILLE POMERENE

Oft have I lain in the silence of night—  
Alone, bewildered, forlorn.  
O Mother, how can you treat your child thus?  
This separation is unbearable.

Were I a bit of thread, I could be woven into your garment  
And stay close to you.  
Were I a piece of leather, I could be made into sandals  
To protect your beloved feet.  
Were I a mango, you could eat me quickly—what joy!  
But alas! I am not one of these.

You graciously permit the sun to tint your velvet cheek.  
You laughingly allow the wind to ruffle up your hair.  
You let the gentle rain softly pat your hand in greeting.  
But alas! I am not one of these.

The evil winds blow strong and I am frail.  
The darkness closes in and I am terrified.  
Lonely and confused I stumble on the way.  
My cries pierce the night—but only stillness replies.  
Tell me, Mother, is a bit of thread really dearer to your heart  
than this child?

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# LIBERATION THROUGH REAL RENUNCIATION

*(Continued from the November issue)*

Sulabhā, unaffected by the caustic quality of the king's rebuke, replied with great calm and dignity. Her words befitted her queenly appearance and the order of mendicants to which she belonged.

'O king,' she said, 'your speech is ambiguous and unconvincing. You have established no premiss, come to no conclusion. Filled with pride in what you feel to be your invincible power, you let antagonism for me rule your discourse, and therefore it was filled with faults and contradictions and disclosed the emptiness of your understanding. Having heard it, I cannot but remember that those who are truly emancipated claim no merit.

'You say that renunciation resulting from knowledge is the way of liberation, yet you have all the forms of attachment that are usual to royalty. Freedom of the soul, O king, represents great peace and calmness of being. It is a state obtained only through intense struggle and should claim your entire attention, which is now divided among the thousand details of ruling a kingdom. To be emancipated while exercising sovereignty is not possible, for to continue to rule as you do means the relegation of spiritual struggles to the background of life. Is the peace of real liberation yours, when you fear that I represent a hostile king? Because of such fears and constant worries and conflicts regarding possessions, you are disquieted and tense. You represent a sorry state of attainment. From the empty condition of your mind, I am aware that you possess emancipation in theory only; you have yet to attain it in actuality.

'Because it is proper to answer you, I shall, O king, discuss true liberation. My words will be true, logical, without repetition. My discourse will not be prompted by desire, wrath, fear or any sense of shame, pride or pity. Though I shall take great care in my

choice of words, I shall at the same time be careful that they express my meaning, for if essential truth is disregarded even words that are excellent in sound and sense convey erroneous impressions.

'Listen with concentrated attention while I answer your queries regarding who I am, to whom I belong, and where I shall go upon finishing my business here. To reply intelligently I must first remind you of the fundamentals of what is called individual existence. The components of all existences are alike. Moreover, the same Supreme Consciousness pervades all these components.

'O king, thirty principles account for all existences. I shall now enumerate these principles. The bodily senses must, of course, be mentioned first. No one asks the senses what they are. Likewise, no particular sense has any knowledge of itself or of the others. The eye cannot see itself, the ear cannot hear itself, nor can the eye or ear discharge the functions of any of the other senses, for each sense functions only in its own field. Even functioning in combination, the senses do not know one another. In order to discharge its duty each sense must come in contact with objects external to itself. The eye, form, and light constitute the requirements for what is called seeing. The operation of each of the other senses has likewise its requirements.

'Between the functions of the senses, such as seeing, hearing, and so on, and the ideas that are their result, namely form, sound, and so on, there is an entity called the mind, which has a function of its own. With the help of the mind one distinguishes the existent from the non-existent in order to arrive at certainty about all ideas derived from the senses. With the five senses of knowledge and the five senses of action, the mind makes a total of eleven principles.

'The twelfth principle is understanding, by which, when doubt arises in respect to what is to be known, correct apprehension is gained. After it, comes the thirteenth principle, *sattva*, the quality of purity. Following *sattva* is self-consciousness, the fourteenth principle, through which one distinguishes the self from the not-self. Desire is the fifteenth principle; on it the whole universe rests. As long as desire exists, rebirth takes place. After desire comes the sixteenth principle, *avidyā* (ignorance), in which inhere the seventeenth and eighteenth principles, *māyā* (illusion) and *prakāśa* (manifestation), followed by the nineteenth, constituting the pairs of opposites: happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, and the like. Beyond the nineteenth principle is time, the twentieth, to the action of which the births and deaths of all beings are due. These twenty principles exist together.

'In addition, O king, there are five great primal elements—earth, water, fire, air, and ether—that with existence and non-existence bring the number of principles to twenty-seven. Then, to complete the total of thirty, there are *vidhi* (righteousness and its reverse, making up the seed of desire), *śukra* (which aids the seed of desire to grow), and *bala* (the exertion made to gratify desire).

'What is the source of the thirty principles? Some philosophers whose vision is limited declare the manifest (that is, atoms) to be their source. But those who are conversant with spiritual science say that Nature in its unmanifest state is the source of the thirty principles and therefore the fountain-head of all creation; for it is when unmanifest Nature becomes manifest that all creatures are brought forth. O monarch, myself, yourself, and all others who are clothed with a body have our source in unmanifest Nature, as far as our bodies are concerned.

'The form seen at birth has undergone many changes since the time of conception. It continues to change, gradually giving place to other forms. In turn, infancy, childhood, and youth are experienced, and following youth, maturity. Then, after successive

stages, comes old age. With each advance from one stage to another, the body presents an aspect different from the previous one. Moreover, at every moment the constituents of the body undergo change. This state of flux, occasioned by the birth of particles and their death, is imperceptible, even as the changes in the flame of a burning lamp are imperceptible.

'Since this is the state of the bodies of all creatures, since that which is called the body is changing incessantly even as the waters of a river, it is of no consequence whatever to know where any certain body came from, whose it is, or what it does. Can a connection be said to exist between souls and bodies? Creatures are generated from the combination of the thirty principles already named, in the same way that fire is produced when two sticks are rubbed together. Just as you look upon your own body as yours, so you should look upon other bodies as yours, for all bodies are essentially the same. To regard them as different indicates lack of vision.

'If you had truly realized the identity of yourself with others, you would not have needed to interrogate me. For to be free from the idea of duality, from that condition in which one says, "This is mine" and "This is not mine", means that such questions as you have asked are unnecessary. O king, you have given no sign of emancipation; your acts are like those of all others who dwell in the relative state. Can a ruler who in every way behaves as others do possess any indications of emancipation? Can one be emancipated who is concerned with so many distinctions? To the free, all things and all beings are perceived as one. You are unworthy of liberation, O monarch. Your counsellors should strip you of pretence to high attainment. You are full of faults and empty professions, and are bound with many and diverse attachments. The only permissible attachment is that for one's own soul, the shrine of the supreme Divinity.

'Further, hear my answer to your accusation that I have been guilty of unseemly con-

duct, that I have brought about an admixture of castes. How can I be said to have any contact with the body of another, when I have no real contact with my own body? Have you really assimilated the religion of emancipation as given in the discourses of Panchashikha, with all its methods, practices, and ideals? If you have cast off every bond and freed yourself truly from every attachment, why, may I ask, do you cling so unduly to royal prerogatives? I think you have heard the scriptures without benefit, or perhaps you have listened to treatises that only purported to be scriptures.

'It is plain that you are possessed only of mundane knowledge, that you are entangled in the illusions of the world, a slave to all that the world holds dear: the objects of the senses. Though you have no doubt cultivated a distaste for domestic living, emancipation, which is so difficult to attain, lies far beyond you. Remaining between bondage and emancipation, you pretend to have reached the goal. The contact between two free souls has no relation to the physical plane. If the truly emancipated state were yours, you would realize that no harm is done when, with my intellect, I enter your mind. What harm is done to whom?

'It is customary with mendicants to feel free to go into uninhabited places. As your mind is empty of real knowledge, should I hesitate to enter it? I have not touched you in any way. I am within you as a drop of water on a lotus leaf. Such a drop remains on the leaf without penetrating it; in the same way I am not touching you at all. If, in spite of this, you still think you feel my touch, how can it be possible that through the instructions of Panchashikha your knowledge has become dissociated from sense-objects?

'Truly speaking, even my understanding is not in you. Let us say that a hand holds a pot, the pot contains milk, and the milk, a gnat. Though the hand and the pot, the pot and the milk, the milk and the gnat, exist together, they are distinct from one

another. The hand does not partake of the nature of the pot, the pot does not partake of the nature of the milk, the milk does not partake of the nature of the gnat. The condition of each is dependent on itself and can never be altered simply because the other coexists with it temporarily. Similarly, no condition really attaches to him who is emancipated; the free soul is unaffected by passing relationships.

'I have pointed out your shortcomings in regard to spiritual attainment. Aside from these, O king, I am not superior to you. My lineage is the same as yours. I was born of a pure race, the daughter of the royal sage Pradhāna, of whom you have heard. My name is Sulabha. In the sacrifices performed by my ancestors, the foremost of the gods used to be present. Since I was born of such a race, no suitable husband could be found for me. Accordingly, I was instructed in the religion of emancipation, and I wander alone over the face of the earth. There is no hypocrisy in my life of renunciation; I observe all the disciplines of asceticism, and in keeping my vows I am firm and steady, nor do I confuse practices belonging to other orders with those of my own. No words of mine are said without reflection.

'I came to this court after long deliberation. So much had I heard of you, of your purity, and your state of liberation, that I desired to benefit from your great wisdom, without thought or wish to humiliate you or glorify myself. Whatever I have said has been sincere, for the free do not speak from any ulterior motive. Truly free is he who devotes himself to God alone, that sole source of tranquillity. Such a one practises complete renunciation'.

Listening to Sulabha, King Dharmadhvaja at last understood that true liberation is impossible so long as one continues in worldly modes of life. His reason accepted all her arguments as unanswerable. Therefore, when she finished speaking, he remained silent.

(Concluded)

# THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

BY THE EDITOR

'But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

'That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: . . .

'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect'.

—*St. Matthew*

Man is essentially a social being. No individual can live apart from or work independently of his immediate environment. Society is the sphere of action in which man lives, moves, and strives to realize his ethical and spiritual perfection. The nature and destiny of man is closely allied to the requirements that condition his physical, social, and psychological *milieu*. Men, whether in small groups or big, are ever interdependent and the nexus of human relations—in other words, the brotherhood of man—forms a very vital factor in the stabilization of the foundations whereon stands civilization. Contrariwise, the vast universe around us is intimately bound up with the fate of man and its mysteries have a bearing on the significance of the activities, forces, and influences that incessantly affect him for good or for ill. The understanding of the problem of life itself—a fundamental problem which every man has got to solve for himself some time somehow—unmistakably points to the existence of a directive or purposive agency in the universe. Having transcended the flesh and sublimated the passions and emotions, one discovers that the essence of the brotherhood of man derives its real force directly from the manifestation of the glories of the Kingdom of God.

The desire for peace and plenty, based on mutual understanding and co-operation between individual and individual as well as nation and nation, is universally to be met with. Men have always prayed to God for their daily bread and all other material kinds of prosperity. The achievement of the good and complete life, with or without God, has

been the goal of all ethical and social striving. In this respect, no prominent variation or basic cleavage is seen to exist between communities of people—rich or poor, ancient or modern. For, essentially, human nature exhibits same or similar characteristics in any part of the world. The surface differences and dissimilarities are all there and will be there without doubt. Yet, man believes in and seeks the unity underlying these superficial diversities incidental to relative existence within the limitations of space, time, and causation. Developments in the twentieth-century laboratory are arriving, through a detailed step-by-step process, at the tremendous fact of the unity of existence and confirm the validity of the Vedantic idea that there is one universal Consciousness—the 'non-material' content of *sac-cid-ānanda*—which forms the basis of our entire universe. The urge that impels man to love his neighbour as himself (as his own self) stems from this fact of oneness of humanity. Men are brothers and feel from the heart that they are really so in so far as they are the manifestations of the Divine, all children of Immortality and common heirs to the Kingdom of God. The Upanishads picture the Divine as 'willing to become' the Many: 'I shall become Many, I shall manifest myself in many forms'; 'He himself became the visible and the invisible universe'; 'As small sparks come forth from fire, thus do all bodies, all worlds, and all beings come forth from the One'.

Most people, who are naturally eager to live the good life in accordance with their own temperaments and aptitudes, spontaneously

and sincerely turn to the great teachers of creative spirituality, choosing the particular methods, ways, and techniques that suit them most. But these people, the majority of whom may be found to be devoutly religious at heart, are not a little perplexed at the statement of modern materialists that a good and perfect life, leading to the great brotherhood of man, is, nay, should be, possible without any relation to God or the ultimate principle of the Divinity. The modern man, in search of world understanding and world government, is frantically busy applying his mind to the investigation of ideological schemes and patterns with a view to discovering the most effective agency of altruism for the reconstruction and unification of humanity. The investigations have covered family, education, industry, politics, art, and religion, yielding results and leading to conclusions that have doubtless revolutionized individual as well as institutional relations. But the objective is far from being achieved. Even the most ardent and sincere votary of peace is aghast at the incompatibility of minds, howsoever culturally enlightened, and at the recklessness with which men are enslaved and exploited by fellow men. While the desire to be good and to do good is not lacking in general, the incentive to positive goodness is either absent or too feeble to resist the overwhelming forces of aggressive evil.

The brotherhood of man needs foundations that are stable and enduring, and the incontrovertible evidence furnished by history testifies to the fact that such lasting foundations have been seen to exist in the essential spiritual values that transcend the barriers of race, creed, or colour. Apart from food and shelter, from reasonable comforts and material advantages, men do need the active aspects of ultimate ends that give them a firmer basis of moral obligation than mere humanistic altruism. Utility-hunting and pleasure-seeking motives may take a man far in his search for happiness for himself, but not far enough to make him feel happy by seeking the happiness of his fellow men. To strive to live a

good life without God certainly appears modern. It is more easily said than done. Spirituality has never appeared as popular as materialism, and perhaps could never do so, owing to the difficulties and problems inherent in spirituality itself. It is not that men do not want to be spiritual. The hunger of the soul is more insistently immediate than any other hunger. But because it is so difficult to be spiritual, men easily succumb to the fascination of substitutes for spirituality.

It is common experience that the religion of merely visiting the temple or church is different from the religion of God-consciousness, and that the latter is more difficult. It is not anything extraordinary to see people going to the church or temple and take active part in the prayers and ceremonies held there in order to invoke divine blessings for a better life in the world. What is difficult is to carry from there the valuable treasure of the essentials of a good life and to exemplify them in daily behaviour. The importance of the relation between our daily life and the Kingdom of God lies here, in the imperative need to ensure the efficacy of the prescription for spiritualizing human life and human society. It is good advice to go out and tell people, young and old, to be nice to one another and be virtuous to the maximum possible extent. But never a word is implied even as to why any one should be nice or virtuous much beyond the minimum necessary to gain personal advantages. Mere good intentions to prepare the way for human unity and understanding through political, economic, or geographical bonds fail, as they have often failed in the past, because they are swept away by the gale of aggressive ideological movements and violent unregenerate passions. That which separates man from man increases or decreases in direct proportion to that which separates man from God.

The impact of science on society today is astoundingly forceful. Our civilization is termed a 'scientific' civilization and men are busy controlling the forces of external Nature. Nowadays one can boast of the various uses

to which science has been put and of the many fast-moving and quick-communicating devices that have incredibly reduced the difficulties due to time and distance. These devices have linked up the peoples of the world from one end to the other, giving mankind the benefit of closer and quicker interrelation. Men do not find themselves so few or far between as in ancient times. At the same time the perils and problems of suffering humanity have increased a hundredfold. Of all creatures on earth, man has suffered most, seized by nightmarish complexes, fears, and tensions. Science, by emphasizing reason and belittling intuition and revelation, has, while uniting hands and heads, failed to unite hearts. Mutual mistrust and growing racial and ideological prejudices are the chief causes of discord within the human family. Relics of barbarism are not wanting in the so-called civilized communities, though few would be willing to admit this fact. So long as such a state of things exists or is encouraged to continue to exist, no form of government, however well intentioned, would be able to knit diverse elements together.

God is inextricably bound up with man's personality. The *Gita* declares, 'In whatever way men worship me, in that very way do I fulfil their desires. It is my path, O Arjuna, that men travel in diverse ways'. By loving God we love ourselves as well as all others who are one with us in and through Him,—for, the Kingdom of God is within us. Jesus Christ clearly tells us, 'Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you'. To an expectant but ignorantly cruel world he says, 'The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation'. Engrossed in worldly objects and dedicating themselves to transitory values, people are often seen to take pride in not at all trying to approach God. There are many who not infrequently think that it is possible to use God as a ready and generous supplier of their earthly wants as well as their pleasures hereafter. To such as these, the following words of Jesus are unambiguously pertinent: 'If

any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' To work for the common and highest good of mankind, individuals and groups cannot do better than be inspired by and follow these great ideals of renunciation and realization. The man of God, by striving to 'see the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self', becomes enriched by the awareness of the oneness of humanity. Such men of spiritual vision set in motion potent forces that propel gigantic world movements for harmonious and corporate living.

The realization of the Kingdom of God on earth is not to be confused with any sort of apotheosized theological dogmatism or ethical humanism, however complete in itself, not to mention the popularly held idea of post-mortem and other-worldly excellence. Today, equally as in the days of Jesus Christ, persons of little or no faith—the 'Pharisees' and the 'Sadducees' of all ages—are perpetrating irreligious acts in the name of God and religion. Exclusive rights and privileges claimed by unethical and selfish persons associated with priestcraft have contributed not a little to the promotion of social disintegration and discord. The brotherhood of man will remain an unrealized dream so long as a privileged few keep a large number of ignorant and underprivileged people in a state of material degradation and spiritual penury. In the Kingdom of God that Jesus visualized there was no place for such exploitation or injustice. 'The Sermon on the Mount', says Swami Akhilaranda, in his well-known work *Hindu View of Christ*, 'gives no basis for the exploitation of others by selfish and designing persons. Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth". "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God". And He further stated: "And thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". Jesus never mentioned that only a selected few—Gentiles or Jews,

Europeans or Asiatics—would attain the Kingdom of God. There is no trace of any such differentiation in His teachings; they had universal implications. Christ Himself was universal. He meant His teachings to include all persons without distinction of creed, class, colour, or race. So when He said "love thy neighbour as thyself", He meant us to love all persons as veritable manifestations of God, the divine Self, with no distinction as to this or that type of person or this or that family'.

Life is essentially a process of assimilation from without and growth from within. Upon the smoothness and steadiness with which this process may continue to gain acceleration depends the degree of success in our efforts to make civilization the chief stabilizing factor of human unity. But this is not all and sufficient. What could make men turn from evil to good and remain virtuous even under irresistible temptation to indulge in vice? How best would it become possible for men and women of this momentous atomic age to discard envy, greed, and aggressive selfishness in order to live and let live in an environment of perfect harmony and co-operation? And in what direction might mankind turn its faltering footsteps and look for light and hope even under the most exacting conditions? In the words of J. T. Sunderland:

'There is no direction but one; in all the world's ten thousand years of search for help in her experiences of mightiest need, no at all adequate resource but one has ever been discovered. What is that? I need tell no one of you who has observed, no one of you who has read history, no one of you who has a human heart that that resource is religion,—the personal experience of religion in the soul,—the conscious, purposeful, earnest opening of the soul's doors to the incoming spirit of God, the power of God, the peace of God, the love of God, the life of God. The tides of life from above once set flowing through a man, then, but only then, there is hope for any human soul. And that is the reason why religion, particularly the religion of God's Fatherhood and unfailing Love to all His children has been able to reach, quicken, ennoble, sanctify, transform, and save men in every condition of life, as nothing else has ever done'.

There is not the least harm in men living together in groups and communities. In fact that is the best and safest way most men and women would choose to live and work in. What causes concern is the deplorable fact that the world is too much with us and that while the advance of modern civilization proceeds in arithmetical progression, modern wickedness is increasing in geometrical progression. The forces that make for disunity appear to be stronger and more powerful than those that make for unity. Not that the ultimate spiritual values are generally weaker and less useful than those disvalues that make for disunity, but that the constant and consistent denial of the higher values has resulted in weariness of the soul and spiritual inanity. The influences that divert man's attention from the solicitude for the welfare of all to that for the well-being of himself alone, or at best of his family and friends, even at the cost of commonweal, are by far the most detrimental to the growth of the brotherhood of man. 'Mankind lies groaning,' says Henri Bergson, in concluding one of his well-known works, 'half-crushed beneath the weight of its own progress. Men do not sufficiently realize that their future is in their own hands. Theirs is the task of determining first of all whether they want to go on living or not. Theirs the responsibility, then, for deciding if they want merely to live or intend to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods'.

The Kingdom of God and the brotherhood of man are as it were the obverse and reverse of the manifestation of the One Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Religion teaches that God, the giver of Supreme Bliss, both mundane and spiritual, lives not quite far away in the clouds of the high heavens, but close at hand in the heart and soul of man. Men of God become more and more like God himself; become divine by realizing the Divine. He is the centre and omphalos of the entire system of created worlds and men of every



sort learn to know and love one another in and through Him. The spiritual bond of unity is eternal and all-pervading; the material is obviously ephemeral, parochial, and superficial. The former is like a structure built on rock,—firm and unassailable, and the latter like one built on sands,—infirm, and unenduring. There is an utterance in the Psalms which says, 'Unless the Lord build the house, they who build it labour in vain'. For, 'That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit', says the Son of Man. Reiterating His teaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is possible to be re-established in every one of us, Jesus observes: 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; . . . If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love . . . These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my command-

ment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man may lay down his life for his friends, ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you'.

In a thorough-going spiritual regeneration of mankind lies the main hope—irrespective of races, regions, and religions—of bringing peace and understanding through brotherhood. Love and kindness generate love and kindness; selfishness breeds selfishness, leading to clash and conflict. The Rig-Vedic seer's integrated view of the whole of humanity as one family, finds vivid expression in his heartfelt benediction.

'Together walk ye, together speak ye, together know ye your minds; . . . common be your prayer, common be your end, common be your purpose, common be your deliberation; . . . common be your resolve; let your hearts be of one accord; unified be your intentions that your union (assembly) may be perfectly happy'.

## SRI SARADA DEVI

BY SWAMI VITASOKANANDA

The credential of Sri Sarada Devi to popular estimation is that she was the wife of Sri Ramakrishna. On the colourful canvas of Sri Ramakrishna's life she might appear as a speck which hardly deserves any notice. But to the discerning eye of an artist she is the background that adds to the grandeur and beauty of the picture. So complete was her self-effacement behind the great personality of Sri Ramakrishna that her existence as a separate entity perfectly merged into that of him. With the gradual unfoldment of the life-story of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi would be revealed as a living symbol of silence, sweetness, and purity. If Sri Ramakrishna's life was a historical necessity, Sarada Devi's life was a grand complement to it.

Like Sri Ramakrishna's Sri Sarada Devi's birth-place too was an obscure village. She

was born at Jayrambati, in the district of Bankura, West Bengal, on the 22nd December 1853. She was the eldest child of her parents. A turning-point was reached in her life when she was only a girl of five. Kamarpukur, where Sri Ramakrishna was born, is nearly four miles off from Jayrambati. There the relatives of Sri Ramakrishna felt distressed, mistaking his high state of God-intoxicated absorption at Dakshineswar for abnormality and madness. A life given to total contemplation and prayer, without the least interest in things mundane, was unimaginable to worldly people. His frantic efforts for immediate God-realization were interpreted as symptoms of insanity. Distorted news reached the ears of his widowed mother and his elder brother at Kamarpukur. Naturally they felt extremely worried and in

1858 Sri Ramakrishna was brought home.

An anxious mother would jump at any suggestion for the cure of her ailing son. Even an exorcist was brought for him. After a few days' stay at Kamarpukur, Sri Ramakrishna showed signs of normal behaviour. But still his divine restlessness continued unabated. Finally, it dawned upon the mind of his relations that marriage might be a surer remedy for him. But who would agree to establish matrimonial relation with a man of such abnormal behaviour? Emissaries were sent to find a suitable bride for Sri Ramakrishna. It was taken for granted that he would not agree to the marriage proposal. But to the surprise of all it was he who suggested the place where his chosen bride was waiting for him. How could one rely on the words of a madman? Still, out of curiosity, they took up the suggestion and went to Jayrambati and contacted Ramachandra, the father of Sri Sarada Devi. Arrangements were finalized and in May 1859 Sri Ramakrishna, then a young man of twenty-three, was married to Sri Sarada Devi, a girl of five. To a modern man this disparity in age between the bride and the bridegroom may seem preposterous and a violent transgression of social ethics. But it was a transfiguration of two kindred souls joined in a spiritual union. To the sense-bound mind this union is beyond the tether of its understanding. When, in March 1872, Sri Sarada Devi came to meet her husband at Dakshineswar and was asked by him whether she had come to distract him from his spiritual quest, immediate was her reply that her only ambition was to make herself perfect in the ideal which her husband had chosen. In her reply was to be found the best of the ideal of Hindu wifedom. According to Hindu conception, wifedom is a sacred vocation and is considered great 'in proportion to its giving, not to its receiving. Lifelong intimacy, to be beautiful, must boast of deeper foundations'. This wedlock opened a new chapter in the relation between man and wife.

The idea of the Motherhood of God is a

unique feature in Indian religious thought. The world is the playground of the Divine Mother. All the objects and our relation with them are but Her different manifestations. The realization of this great ideal in one's life is the journey's end of a man seeking after spiritual perfection. Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi triumphantly entered into the final act when, in May 1873, he placed her on the altar of the Deity and performed before her all the rites that were required for the ceremonial worship of the Divine Mother. The worshipper and the worshipped merged themselves into a beatific consciousness of the Mother. After the performance of this last act of worship of the Divine Mother in Sri Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna gave her a full share in his spiritual glory. Henceforward both looked upon each other throughout their life as being actuated by the same spirit of Kāli. Sarada Devi, one day, while massaging the feet of her husband, asked him, 'How do you look upon me?' Ramakrishna promptly replied, 'The same Divine Mother who is in the temple is now massaging my feet'. On the passing away of Ramakrishna in August 1886, addressing him she cried out, 'O Mother Kali, where hast Thou gone leaving me alone?'

One of the cardinal teachings of Sri Ramakrishna is universal acceptance. Never did he shirk any responsibility or escape from any call of duty. So he fully accepted his wife and no frigid reserve stood in the way of his treatment towards her. But their relationship was always on the spiritual plane. No worldly touch could soil it. Thus the roles of the husband and the wife were played in a way which has no parallel in history. Here, at Dakshineswar, began the period of her training under the affectionate care and vigilance of her husband. And the role of the wife, the disciple, the mother, and the future teacher came to be delicately interwoven in the web of her life. Thus she received instructions from Ramakrishna equally in spiritual and secular things. Sarada Devi was to be the supreme guide in the spread of the Master's message which was meant for the

Sannyasin and the householder as well. Sri Ramakrishna trained her in such a way that both of them would receive inspiration from her life and teachings and fashion their individual lives according to their respective ideals. Basically these ideals are not different. 'Purity in every one of its forms is the central pursuit of Indian life'. A householder or a Sannyasin, in order to make his life perfect, must have to be pure in thought and deed. What other greater ideal can a seeker find than the one in Sarada Devi who was herself an embodiment of purity? Hence in her subsequent life both the exalted and the fallen used to come to her, and her blessings were showered spontaneously on all of them.

Swami Vivekananda feelingly spoke about Sri Ramakrishna that he was 'LOVE personified'. The transformation, from Sarada Devi—the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, to Sarada Devi—the Holy Mother, was achieved by her loyal and practical recognition of and steadfast devotion to this unique fact of Ramakrishna's life. Her boundless piety and overflowing love for all knew no limits. Till the last day of her life (she passed away in July 1920) countless people approached her for spiritual succour. 'The sunny and the petulant, the obedient and the wilful'—all came to put their reliance on her. For, she was the mother to every one of them in the truest sense of the term. Sister Nivedita, in a letter to the Holy Mother, wrote, 'Dear Mother! You are full of love! And it is not a flushed and violent love, like ours, and like the world's, but a gentle peace that brings good to everyone and wishes ill to none. It is a golden radiance, full of play. . . . Dearest Mother—. . . Surely you are the most wonderful thing of God—Sri Ramakrishna's own chalice of His Love for the world'.

Spirituality and renunciation are the keynote of our national life. From the dawn of her history, India has singularly refrained from merely idolizing and adoring statesmen and captains of industry. Men and women who are heroes in spiritual life are the national idols of India. In the last century, due to

circumstances which are too well known to need mention here, this age-old ideal was about to be swept off. It was at this critical period of our national life that Sri Ramakrishna came and successfully resisted the challenge which vitally affected the life and thought not only of the men but also of the women of our country. Along with Sri Ramakrishna came Sri Sarada Devi to show to our women the correct path they should follow for ushering in a new era in the history of Indian womanhood. Speaking on the Holy Mother, Sister Nivedita wrote, 'To me, it has always appeared that she is Sri Ramakrishna's final word as to the ideal of Indian womanhood'. The process of reawakening Indian womanhood has already set in. While a mere unintelligent harking back to the past will be retrogressive, it will be equally negative to put our national foundation on the quicksands of exotic ideals. No one could deny the right of the Indian woman to participate freely in the larger spheres of life. But at the same time it will be tragic if they drift away from the great ideals of purity, humility, and self-sacrifice. Sister Nivedita's comparison is, therefore, significant. She writes: 'Woman in the West may thirst for the glory of love or the power of wealth; here (in India) her characteristic dreams are of perfection and purity of faith'. The life of the Holy Mother represents not only the best of the ancient ideals of Indian womanhood but sets forth new ones for the future too. In her the mother's heart is conjoined with the hero's will. 'The stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind are almost as wonderful as her sainthood'. Her life is 'a poem of the Indian soil, full of music'.

In this month falls the hundredth birthday of the Holy Mother. Next year this time we shall have the unique privilege of witnessing her Birth Centenary. She is the living epitome of truth, beauty, goodness, and holiness. By celebrating her Centenary in a befitting manner we exalt ourselves to the higher values of life, the current of which is unfortunately now at a very low ebb.

# SISTER NIVEDITA

BY KALPALATA MUNSHI

The act of plucking a flower for worship is lovely. With the tenderest care a fresh blossom is chosen from amongst budding and withering flowers. In its natural perfection it is then laid on the altar, at the feet of God. Nivedita—the Dedicated, chosen by her Master—Swami Vivekananda—to be offered at the altar of this country was such a flower of perfection.

Born in a far off land, brought up in European traditions, and educated and trained according to Western ideas, she was chosen as the transmitter of the Swami's ideals and dreams between him and his own people. In this selection the glory goes to the elect, but more to the Master. For Nivedita, when summoned to accept the onerous task of serving this land, was already a qualified and experienced teacher, a keen reader and thinker, proud, determined and self-possessed, a lover of her own country to the core, experimenting with her own ideas on education, and building up a mission in life. It is not by a magician's wand that overnight a Westerner forgot the memory of her own self and became a Hindu. It was a conscious and willing process of self-transformation, a conquering of life inch by inch, before Nivedita reached the ideal of being Nivedita, the Dedicated One.

It was in 1895 that Sister Nivedita, then Miss Margaret E. Noble (of Irish parentage and birth, born at Dungannon, Co. Tyrone in 1867) first met Swami Vivekananda in London. 'The time was a cold Sunday afternoon in November, and the place . . . a West End drawing-room'. The Sister, in her book *The Master as I saw Him*, describes her attitude and reaction after the first meeting. Confident not to be influenced by another person's ideas, prepared not to be convinced by another's propaganda, and watchful of guarding her own judgments, she, with the others, ex-

pressed her opinion that all these things that had been discussed had been said before and they were not new.

But the intellectual honesty of Sister Nivedita did not allow her to dismiss either the person or his message with indifference. As she pondered over his words she discovered a new and powerful thought-current flowing under the apparently common words. Three points struck her most: 'First, the breadth of his religious culture; second, the great intellectual newness and interest of the thought he had brought to us; and thirdly, the fact that his call was sounded in the name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man'.<sup>1</sup>

But it must be remembered that Swamiji's words alone did not act as a stimulus to invigorate her potential powers and make her accept his mastership. To speak in her own words: 'But it was his *character* to which I had thus done obeisance. As a religious teacher, I saw that although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere. And to that extent that this recognition implies, I became his disciple'.<sup>2</sup>

Her intellectual and ideological acceptance of her Master's teachings made her take the first step in the direction of her new life of adopting India as her motherland, offering her services in her cause. She writes: 'It was in the course of a conversation much more casual than this, that he turned to me and said, "I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me"—and I knew that I had heard a call which would change my life'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Master as I saw Him*, (6th Ed., 1948), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

More time and thought are usually expended in the attempt to take the initial step which changes one's life, but the irony of it is that the real struggle begins after that. For till there is identification between the ideals of the teacher and the taught peace is not found. Clash of wills and personalities, efforts at protecting one's own judgments and upholding of egoistic and assertive opinions cause much suffering before profound peace is found in resigning to the master's will without bitterness, and with fullness of faith. Sister Nivedita passed through this struggle and felt it very keenly as she unreservedly says: 'My relation to our Master at this time can only be described as one of clash and conflict. I can see now how much there was to learn, and how short was the time for learning to be and the first of lessons doubtless is the destroying of self-sufficiency in the mind of the taught. But I had been little prepared for that constant rebuke and attack upon all my most cherished prepossessions which was now my lot. Suffering is often illogical, and I cannot attempt to justify by reason the degree of unhappiness which I experienced at this time'.<sup>4</sup>

But due to the Master's love and grace she soon overcame the difficulty and once devoting herself with perfect passivity did no longer feel the strain of totally absorbing his ideas and working them out with a passion. It is noteworthy how the Sister grasped and unfolded the subtle paradox on the part of the taught in this case. The taught, the disciple, is passive—'serenely passive',—but under this attitude lies the greatest of creative acts a human being strives to accomplish, namely, complete dedication. This life-experience and experiment enabled her to speak forth in definite terms how after one meets a Guru perfection in education is reached. In her 'Paper on Education-II', she states the three elements necessary for a perfect education, and while discussing the third element she says: 'But when the *guru* comes, or the idea that is to dominate the life is appre-

hended, there may be a keen initial struggle, but after it there is a period of profound apparent quiet. To see the thing as it appears to the mind of the master, is the one necessity. To serve him, acting as his hands and feet, as it were, in order that one's mind and heart may be made one with his; to serve him silently, broodingly, with the constant attempt to assimilate his thought, this is the method. Throughout this period, there is no room for rebellion. Eventually the *guru* emancipates: he does not bind. It would be a poor service to him, if we felt compelled in his name to arrest the growth of an idea. Eventually we have to realize that the service to which he has called us is not his own, but that of Truth itself, and that this may take any form'.<sup>5</sup>

This is how, we find, Nivedita beautifully understood the lofty ideal of Guru-Shishya relationship and paddled her own canoe to the shores of perfection. Thus perfected as a dedicated worker, she gave propriety to her own name 'Nivedita'—given by the Master,—and became truly an altar-blossom. Her dedication and devotion cannot be measured. Only her life shines like a beacon-light for all dedicated workers and her words convey her heartfelt yearning for a life of perfection: 'Shall we grudge a life, with its hour of toil, that we may feast our eyes upon some symbol of perfection? Shall we measure the devotion that, given without stint, is to make of us the *puja* flowers laid before the feet of God? In a world of infinite variety the vision of Reality ends every road. Let us then push on with brave hearts, not fainting by the way. Whatever we have taken in hand to do, let us make the means our end. Let us pursue after the ideal for the ideal's own sake, and cease not, stop not, till we are called by the voice that cannot go unheeded to put away childish things and enter the city of the soul'.<sup>6</sup>

Before Sister Nivedita came to India, she

<sup>5</sup> *Hints on National Education in India*, (3rd Ed., 1923), pp. 17-18.

<sup>6</sup> *Religion and Dharma*, (1st Indian Ed., 1952), pp. 114-115.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

was already a professed educationalist. Having obtained a teacher's training, she gained practical experience as teacher in various schools in London. In 1892, she opened at Wimbledon a school of her own and strove to give expression to her ideals of girls' education with which she always came to be identified.

With this locus standi in the field of education, it was natural that she evinced interest in Swamiji's educational plans for Indian women and accepted his invitation to come to India. Early in 1898 she reached the shores of India. From May to October of the same year Sister Nivedita had the opportunity to travel with Swamiji in the North-West, Kumaon, and Kashmir regions of the country. These months of travel with her Master proved to be intensively formative in her training in discipleship. For, the close contact with the Master helped her to understand and evaluate the nation; to appreciate its culture and traditions; to judge its heights of greatness and gauge its abyss of weaknesses; and above all, to love it as her own motherland, loyally and passionately.

It was at the end of that summer,<sup>7</sup> that she discussed with Swamiji her plan of work. He was confident that he had laid the trust and responsibility of the work on capable shoulders and, therefore, gave her freedom to work out her own plans. When asked to criticize her plans, the Master quietly said, 'You ask me to criticize; but I cannot do that. For, I regard you as inspired, quite as much as I am'.

To make a beginning, the Sister had planned to open tentatively a girls' school in Calcutta—'To learn', as she says, 'what was wanted, to determine where I myself stood, to explore the very world of which my efforts were to become a part'. With this idea in view, a Girls' School (which it seems she proposed to name 'Ramakrishna School for Girls', but which, after her death, was named 'Sister Nivedita Girls' School')\* was formally

<sup>7</sup> On July 24, as she records it in her *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*, (3rd Ed., 1948), p. 113.

\* See *Notes and Comments*.

started in Baghbazar (in Calcutta) on the 12th November 1898, with the blessings of the Holy Mother and in the presence of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda. The School was founded on the kindergarten system and included the teaching of English and Bengali language and literature, some elementary science, and handicrafts. The aim of teaching these subjects was not for enforcing a disciplined training only but also enabling the pupil to bring out the best in her. In other words, it was not only to be informative but formative. Due to various difficulties the School stopped functioning after some months. Sister Nivedita went abroad to collect funds and popularize her ideas. It was at this time that she put on paper her 'Project of the Ramakrishna School for Girls' before the public in America. In 1902 she returned to India and was joined in her work by another ardent American disciple of Swamiji, Sister Christine. Together they reorganized the School.

Having obtained a sincere collaborator like Sister Christine, who looked after the organization of the School, Sister Nivedita was left free to widen the platform of her activities. She gave inspiring lectures to the student world and contributed a series of articles in the leading magazines of the day. Her lectures on education have now been compiled in the book entitled *Hints on National Education in India*. National education, which meant according to her, 'a training which has a strong colour of its own, and begins by relating the child to his home and country, through all that is familiar, but ends by making him *free of all*, that is true, cosmopolitan, and universal'.<sup>8</sup> Education, in its broadest sense, according to her, meant the scope or opportunity given to an individual to canalize and develop his parts. It was not to be a privilege of a few in society. It was a sacred duty of the learned to teach, it was as much a duty of the unlettered to learn. That is why she says, '... education, to be

<sup>8</sup> *Hints on National Education in India*, p. 29.

of any avail, must extend through all degrees, from its lowest and humblest applications, up to the highest and most disinterested grades. We must have technical education and we must have also higher research, . . . We must have education of women, as well as education of men. We must have secular education, as well as religious. And, almost more important than any of these, we must have education of the people, and for this, we must depend upon ourselves'.<sup>9</sup>

The Sister's ideas do not put forward any original system of training or schooling. She gives expression to familiar thoughts which have yet a dynamic force, as they carry with them the force of her conviction. They strike at the very fundamentals of our lives, gradually rising to higher and nobler sentiments. They reflect the purest thoughts on Vidyā that our ancient teachers held and yet abound in the modern ideas of the necessity of manual and technical training accompanied by higher researches. They aim at developing the personality of an individual and at the same time making him fully conscious of his duty towards his nation. But though the primary aim of such an education lies in making him stand on his own legs, the Sister never cherished the idea that acquisition of knowledge was for that end only. On the contrary she fiercely denounced it: 'There is nothing so belittling to the human soul as the acquisition of knowledge for the sake of worldly reward. There is nothing so degrading to a nation, as coming to look upon the life of the mind as a means to bread-winning. Unless we strive for truth because we love it, and must at any cost attain, unless we live the life of thought out of our own rejoicing in it, the great things of heart and intellect will close their doors to us'.<sup>10</sup>

Sister Nivedita touches upon two problems which are vexing our educationists even today, namely, the problem of the language and the place of foreign education, in a true scheme of education. With regard to the first ques-

tion, the Sister writes: 'Nor need we regret that we fall back, for this, upon our own strength. Education for the people is, in the first place, reading, writing, and arithmetic. As long as we carry the burden ourselves, there need be no juggling with the geographical distribution of languages. . . . We must do all we can for the simplification of the language-problem'.<sup>11</sup> Regarding the second point she opines that in a true education the place of foreign culture is never at the beginning. Beautifully she makes a difference between pure knowledge, which is science, and the emotional expression of talents, which is art. And she concedes that for the former there can be neither native nor foreign, while the latter is purely local.

These thoughts breathe life into the paralysed ideals of our nation, and even though written four decades ago are useful for our renascent national life. For this Sister Nivedita's name will always shine bright in the firmament of our national thinkers.

The greatest lesson that Sister Nivedita learnt from her Master was to understand the country which she was prepared to serve. In the heart of Swami Vivekananda raged, day and night, the fire of love for the country, and a spark of it was sufficient to inflame the noble soul of the Sister.

After coming to India with the spirit of service, her Master once asked her to which nation she belonged then. Candidly she spoke of her passionate loyalty to the English flag, 'giving to it much of the feeling that an Indian woman would give to her *Thākoor*'.<sup>12</sup> But gradually as she began to understand the Indian way of life she became inflamed with a burning love for the country, and as was characteristic of her, surrendered herself utterly to it. So much so that she used to tell the young girls, 'Take up the rosary and let the Mantra "Bhārata-varsha, Bhārata-varsha, Bhārata-varsha, Mā, Mā, Mā" be on your lips always', and she herself would do

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. I.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. II.

that. She saw through the significance of the rituals and customs—Dharma (National Righteousness, as she preferred to translate it)—and reinterpreting them, revitalizing them, inspired the youth of the day to follow them up. She defended the social customs of our country against the slanders of the missionaries,<sup>13</sup> upheld the national ideals, and translated them into modern equivalents.

Bearing in mind that Sister Nivedita did all this at a time when the Hindu mind had lost its balance of judgment between the orthodox and the Western influences pulling in opposite directions, it would be difficult to measure the immensity of the service rendered by her. With her incisive intellect, strengthened by a glowing faith, she attacked and at the same time built up all the fronts of life, political, social, literary, and artistic. Many great men of Bengal like Sri Aurobindo, Abanindranath Tagore, and J. C. Bose were, to some extent, influenced by and received encouragement and help from Sister Nivedita in their respective spheres of work.

Admiration of the country, however, did not blind her to the country's imperfections. Her diagnosis was correct when she said that 'the Indian people as a whole, for the last two generations, have been as men walking in a dream, without manhood, without power to react freely against conditions, without even common sense'.<sup>14</sup> And still India lives and hopes to rise again. Many have tried to find out the source of her revitalizing force. Is it her geographical position? Is it her huge sea of humanity? Is it her cultural heritage? Or is it her philosophy and religion? The critics who say that India today basks only in the sunlight of past glory and never thinks of the future and of marching forward with the other nations of the world are grossly mistaken. They lack a proper understanding of the country. Only a few like Swami Vivekananda, who held the pulse of the nation

in their hands, could understand India's potential powers. India has always built the future on the past. In darkness she has always thought of light and that is why she still lives.

With this eye of a historian, who visualizes the future prospects of a nation by the study of its past, Sister Nivedita expressed hopes in the rise of a New India: 'The mind of our civilization is awake once more, and we know that the long ages of theocratic development are perfected, while before us lies the task of actualizing those mighty ideals of the civic and national life by which the theocratic achievements of our fathers are to be protected and conserved. We are now to go out, as it were, into the waste spaces about our life, and build there these towers and bastions of self-organization and mutual aid, by which we are yet to become competent to deal with the modern world and all its forces of aggression. The bricks lie there, in abundance, for our work. The elements abound, in our history, our literature, our traditions, and our customs, by which we can make of ourselves a strong and coherent people. It needs only that we understand our own purpose, and the method of its accomplishment'.<sup>15</sup>

Almost all her writings echo the same sentiments of national renaissance. Her writings have been more or less compiled in different volumes of which the following are permeated with the thoughts of the country, namely, *The Web of Indian Life, Religion and Dharma, Footfalls of Indian History, The Studies from an Eastern Home, Civic and National Ideals*, and *Aggressive Hinduism*. These writings bring to our mind her complete identification with this country and it would not make us hesitate to call her 'the Daughter of Ind'.

Having thus served her country for fourteen years, Sister Nivedita lay down to eternal rest in the lap of her Motherland, on the 13th October 1911, only to inspire and arouse many of India's daughters to serve the country likewise.

<sup>13</sup> Vide, *Lambs among Wolves*, pp. 19-29.

<sup>14</sup> *Aggressive Hinduism*, (3rd Ed.), p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Civic and National Ideals*, (4th Ed.), p. 4-5.



# THE HOLY MOTHER

## GLIMPSES OF HER PERSONALITY

BY SWAMI ANANYANANDA

Exactly after an year from now will commence the celebration of the Birth Centenary<sup>1</sup> of Sri Sarada Devi, more popularly and affectionately known as the Holy Mother. She was the consort and first disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of modern India.

The Holy Mother may no doubt appear as one in the long line of the great women of India<sup>2</sup> who have shed lustre on Indian womanhood and illumined the pages of our history by their saintly life, pure character, great learning, and heroic deeds. Yet, to the modern Indian the Holy Mother's life represents something unique, something easily the highest and best in the Hindu ideal of womanhood, being as it was one of artless simplicity, piety, purity, and self-sacrifice. She stands out as having been at once a perfect wife, a perfect nun, a perfect mother, and a perfect teacher, discharging the various duties and functions in an accomplished manner, proving equal to the task of each role she was called upon to assume. All the same, the life that she lived from day to day was so silent and unostentatious that its very simplicity and uneventful character perplex us. Notwithstanding her rare spiritual attainments, she lived and worked like an ordinary woman, doing all the duties of a household. To the superficial eye, there was in her nothing conspicuously outstanding, but deep down her whole heart was fully awakened to the awareness of eternal divine consciousness.

Should one allow oneself to be guided by

<sup>1</sup> The Centenary celebrations will be observed during the period between December 1953 and December 1954.

<sup>2</sup> The Centenary Celebration Committee has planned to commemorate the occasion by bringing out the publication 'The Great Women of India', dealing with their lives and contributions in various spheres of life and different epochs of our history.

mere objective standards of an eventful life of thought and action, there would be every likelihood of one's missing the true perspective of the sublime life the Holy Mother lived. Greatness of the highest order is measured not in terms of political upheavals or social reforms or such other external manifestations but in terms of the spiritual potential which, by its own impact, awakens men to a sense of the higher values of life and fashions out of them perfect and exemplary characters. That is the sign of real spiritual greatness.

The Holy Mother, in this sense, amply justifies her title to the illustrious role she played as the spiritual guide to many a weary soul. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, the mantle of spiritual leadership descended on her. The Master (Sri Ramakrishna) had prepared her for this task. So it came to her naturally. From the very beginning of her association with him, by marriage, Sri Ramakrishna gave a powerful stimulus to her spiritual growth. This gradually brought about a great transformation in her,<sup>3</sup> making her a fit partner in the extraordinary life that he lived. Her own life, complementary to the great spiritual force that was Sri Ramakrishna, had a tremendous influence over the lives of hundreds of devoted aspirants.

The performance of the *ṣoḍaśī-pūjā*<sup>4</sup> by Sri Ramakrishna, as the culmination of all his spiritual Sādhanas, opens up before us an altogether new and significant aspect of the Mother's personality. The Master worshipped her as the Divine Mother and surrendered himself completely to her and offered her—the Deity in front of him—'the fruits of his

<sup>3</sup> *Sri Sarada Devi: The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras) (Second Edition), p. 44 et seqq.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41-45.

austerities, his rosary, himself, and everything that was his'.<sup>5</sup> This great event in her life made the Holy Mother not only a copartner in the spiritual glory and responsibility of the Master but also a vital instrument in the fulfilment of the Master's mission. All who felt orphaned by the passing away of the Master went to the Mother for spiritual solace and guidance.

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Purity in thought, word, and deed is the foundation of spiritual life. The Holy Mother was the very embodiment of purity. Referring to his own spiritual realizations, the Master used to say, 'The credit for this was no less due to her'. Her unsullied purity was his shield and armour. Was she not too pure and noble to drag her saintly husband to a life of worldliness? She told him that she had become his wife not to pull him down from his spiritual heights but only to help him in the attainment of his ideals and aspirations. If she desired to choose the worldly way of conjugal life, it was open to her. The Master gave her the choice. But she was constituted differently.<sup>6</sup> She, as the wife endued with purity and nobility of character, came to be united with him not for leading a worldly life but for becoming a real *sahadharmini* of her God-intoxicated husband. What she most cherished was the longing to live with him, to serve him, and to mould her own life after the pattern of the Master's.

We get a glimpse of this aspect of the Holy Mother's personality, viz. the degree of excellence her spotless character had reached, from her own words: 'On moonlit nights I would look at the moon and pray with folded hands, "May my heart be as pure as the rays of yonder moon!" or "O Lord, there is a stain even in the moon, but let there not be the least trace of stain in my mind!"'

\* \* \*

The Mother's life was not all smooth sailing. She had her own trials and tribulations

that normally is the lot of persons living in family surroundings. But she was able to overcome them all by her own resourceful nature and inner spiritual strength. There are many instances which indicate how in dealing with difficult situations she exhibited great presence of mind, extraordinary courage, and even physical strength. Sometimes she won others over through her innocence and guilelessness.

The incident of the 'dacoit father'<sup>8</sup> shows how by her innocent behaviour, gentle words, and perfect trust she brought about such a remarkable transformation in the evil intentions of even a dacoit that he felt paternal affection towards her, looked after her comforts, and escorted her for a long distance till she again met her companions.

Another remarkable incident that took place in Kamarpukur reveals the incredible courage and presence of mind the Holy Mother possessed. To relate it in her own words: 'Harish (who was a devotee of the Master and had turned insane) was then staying at Kamarpukur for a few days. One day, when I was entering the house after visiting a neighbour, he began to chase me. He was then in a distracted state of mind. He had lost his senses on account of his wife. There was then no one else in the house. I did not know where to go and ran quickly behind the barn. He would not, however, leave me. I ran and ran round it seven times till I got exhausted. Then my true self came out. I threw him to the ground, pressed my knee on his chest, drew out his tongue and slapped him hard on the cheeks until my fingers became red with slapping. He began to gasp for breath'.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, a worthy example of and an object-lesson in bold self-defence in a helpless situation a woman can possibly find herself in!

Her numerous other qualities of head and heart expressed themselves on many an occasion. But withal, her life was all through marked by extreme simplicity. Her saintly

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 210-211.

husband had demonstrated to her the joy and glory of a simple and unostentatious life. And she actually lived it.

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The unique relationship that existed between Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, even in their married life, was that between master and disciple. Yet the Mother was never oblivious of her duties as a devoted wife. From the time she began to stay permanently at Dakshineswar, she was always ready, any time of the day or night, to serve him and attend to his personal needs. During this period, one of her regular duties was to cook for the Master; the various dishes had to be carefully prepared in order to suit his special taste and delicate stomach. And those were also the years when she was practising severe austerities and spiritual Sadhanas under the direct guidance of the Master.

What strikes one most in the personality of the Holy Mother, is the *mother* in her. Motherhood is the highest ideal of Indian womanhood, and the Holy Mother was the veritable personification of that ideal. Hence has she been considered 'Sri Ramakrishna's last word on Indian womanhood'.<sup>10</sup> To every man, woman, and child who came to her, she was mother *par excellence*. The motherly love in her was always uppermost and her solicitude for all who sought refuge in her was unparalleled. This manifestation of her unbounded love was irresistible and it attracted devotees in large numbers, from far and near and even from beyond the seas. Whoever came to her felt that here was one, dearer and nearer than their own kith and kin, before whom they could unburden their minds and to whom they could confide their innermost thoughts. She, too, extended her love and grace to one and all, without any distinction of rank, race, caste, or creed.

A few instances from her life, which portray in bold relief these aspects of her magnanimity and universal love may be cited here:

Once the Holy Mother was requested not

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

to allow a certain young disciple to come to her presence on account of some misconduct on his part. She remarked tenderly, 'If my child gets covered with mud or dust, is it not my duty to cleanse him and take him on my lap?''<sup>11</sup>

When a woman who had not led a very chaste life went to her in a mood of sincere repentance and made an unreserved confession of her sins, the Mother embraced her with great warmth of feeling, uttering these words of assurance, 'Don't despair for whatever you have done. You will get over all your sinful tendencies'. She also gave initiation to that woman.<sup>12</sup>

When the Mother's house at Jayrambati was being built, a number of Muslims of a neighbouring village were employed as labourers. It was known that their previous record was not good as they had turned to predatory pursuits at times. There was naturally great consternation among the villagers when these men were employed. But the Mother was unperturbed. One day, one of these Muslim employees took some bananas to her and said, 'Mother, I have brought these for the Master. Would you accept them?' The Mother accepted the offering very gladly.<sup>13</sup>

On another occasion, the Mother took one of these Muslims (Amjed by name) into her house for a meal. After feeding him, the Mother herself washed the place where he had taken food. Seeing this, her orthodox niece, who was standing at a distance, exclaimed, 'O aunt, you are going to lose caste'. The Mother reproved her, saying, 'Keep quiet. Even this Amjed is my son exactly in the sense that Sarat (Swami Saradananda) is!'<sup>14</sup>

Once, during the time of the Durga Puja, she asked a disciple to purchase some cloth for the children of her brothers. The Swadeshi Movement was then in full swing. He purchased only cloth of Indian make,

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 196.

but the women of the family did not approve of it and made suggestions as to what they wanted. The disciple, out of patriotic feeling, replied in an excited voice, 'But what you want are all foreign cloth. How can I buy them?' The Holy Mother was present there. She said with a smile, 'My child, they (the Western people) too are my children. I must accommodate everyone. Can I ever be exclusive? Buy the things they want'.<sup>15</sup>

These instances,—only a few among scores of such in the Mother's life,—are not merely passing events but tangible pointers to the large-heartedness, tolerance, and all-comprehensive vision she possessed. One can appreciate the significance of these events all the more if one reminds oneself of the political, social, and historical circumstances of the times when the Mother lived and also of the conservative surroundings and orthodox traditions and prejudices in which she was brought up. The Holy Mother broke the hard shell of rigid orthodoxy, as it were, and it did call for enormous courage and forcefulness of personality on the part of any one, in those days, to dare to do such things.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

This was possible for the Holy Mother because she was fully conscious of the part she had to play in the fulfilment of the Master's mission. When Western disciples started coming to her, after Swami Vivekananda's successful mission in the West, she accepted them all naturally and spontaneously as her own, saying, 'Those people are also my children'.<sup>16</sup> She mixed with them freely and even ate and slept with them, looking upon them as belonging to the spiritual family of Sri Ramakrishna. She fully appreciated and whole-heartedly blessed the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement and its activities, realizing their usefulness and importance in the regeneration of our national life.

In short, it could be said that though the spirit of motherhood was dominant in the life of the Holy Mother, she also combined in herself the salient features of a perfect wife, a holy nun, and a spiritual teacher of a high order—all in one. Her own words, 'Sri Ramakrishna left me behind to manifest the motherhood of God to the world',<sup>17</sup> amply bear out the vivid and lofty appeal her life and teachings possess for us.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 199.

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## THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY

BY DR. P. S. SASTRI

(Continued from the November issue)

The source of all reflection and observation is life; and our problem is to understand life as such. But this understanding has two facets. On the one hand one can take an inordinate pleasure in theorizing and in mere speculation. Such are the hair-splitting discussions of the Sophists. But a theory to be a theory must be forced on us by the facts of life. These facts themselves enter into our

minds in our experiences. Here we should realize that it is an individual that has the experiences. And the individual is single and moves as a unity. All the experiences are related to him and harmonized in him. To these we bring certain presuppositions or some definite ideas. These ideas may or may not be relevant; but it is the duty of philosophy to enquire into the nature of these ideas.

These are popularly known as innate ideas, and we are all familiar with Locke's refutation of these. But with Kant we embark upon a new field known as the '*a priori*'. As long as we use these ideas, we need not consider the question of how we acquire them. We are only to ask, how these ideas are related to the conscious individual. Plato's doctrine of Reminiscence provides one explanation to this question. But that is an answer which most of us do believe, and belief is a thing which does not seem to carry much weight with the reason of man. Unless the nature of consciousness has some similarity with these ideas we cannot have them. Does it mean that the ideas we have of human values and the like represent the nature of consciousness?

At this stage some of us will begin wondering whether after all there is anything like consciousness. Considering an example, we can, with the help of the illustration, arrive at the meaning of consciousness, a meaning which will render a satisfactory account of matter. Let us take the sculptor working on a marble and giving us a beautiful statue. Who has given the statue? It is not the sculptor alone. The marble too was responsible in its own way. The potentiality of the statue lay hidden in the marble and the sculptor had the insight to feel it. The marble is the material copartner of the sculptor in the physical universe. Both the marble and the sculptor co-operated in this adventure. And with his superior intelligence the individual began controlling his object and laying bare its implicit capabilities. In the evolution of the work, both worked together in the sense that they were united harmoniously in this venture. The finished product represents the meaning or significance of that unity. In other words, in that peculiar unity of the sculptor and the marble, there was an idea struggling for expression, for life, for consciousness. And the statue is that piece or element of consciousness. That is, there is no pure matter devoid of conscious life and significance. All matter is potential mind. This

may appear to be a restatement of the old pantheism. But it is something that presses itself on our minds and we cannot brush it aside. Nature is potential mind or soul, while the individual soul turns out to be the transition between Nature and the Absolute Spirit. Hence it is that the individual is only a finite centre of experience, a self that is delimited or finitized. Any philosophical doctrine has to start from this position. For, the self is the first affirmation of any consistent metaphysic. Without the self there is no experience, and equally so without the object. These two taken in abstraction are two fleeting phantoms, the creations of a diseased mind. And every experience has a certain character, a certain unity. It is a character which does not belong to the various parts of this whole, taken severally.

To consider the statue once again. In estimating it we generally give out that impression which has struck our minds. It is in reality a faint reproduction of the impression we feel in an inarticulate way during the moments of the experience. Our experience of the statue is infinitely richer than the knowledge we have of it; and we often feel the loss of self-confidence in explaining or interpreting that which we have experienced intensely. Thus again I can have a clear knowledge of my friend's headache, and I can and do know the type of pain he must be having. Compare this with my experience of my own headache. My own is richer, intenser, and more profound. There is some inexplicable feeling, which is highly suggestive, at the very core of my experience. This happens because in experience we do not separate the various elements; we accept them as a totality, as a unity, as a system. But in knowledge, as we are familiar with the concept in our books on logic and elsewhere, we dissociate ourselves from the object; we pretend to have given up our organic connection with the object; and so we begin analysing the object in isolation. And in this violent isolation, the object has no real existence, no truth even. We effect a false severance in the knowledge

situation by transgressing the sanctity of unity that permeates the experience.

Our alleged knowledge, the knowledge which we describe as rational, is the first fruit of the transgression of the unity of experience. The more our knowledge approaches the unity of experience, the more will be its value for us. Thus on the one hand we have the knowledge of the object as in itself it really is; and on the other we endeavour to arrive at the knowledge of the object as an integral element of the experience situation. We have, therefore, two knowledges, the higher and the lower, or the transcendental and the empirical. As the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* declares, '*Dve vidye veditavye, ... parā caivāparā ca*' 'Two kinds of knowledge must be known, . . . they are the Higher Knowledge and the lower knowledge' (I.i.4). And also as the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* puts it, 'He who is aware that both knowledge and ignorance should be pursued together, overcomes death through ignorance and obtains immortality through knowledge' (II). The lower knowledge is 'Avidyā' and offers us a clue to comprehend finitude, while the higher knowledge gives us the realization of immortality itself, the experience of the everlasting yea. They are interrelated and one is not possible without the other.

The relation between these two is graphically interpreted in a triplet of the *Rg-Veda*, known as the Suparna triplet. It opens with the verse,

*'Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā,  
samānam vṛkṣam pariśasvajāte;  
Tayor-anyah pīppalam svādvatti,  
anaśnannanyo abhicākaṣṭi'*

'Two birds, united always and in close friendship, cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit; the other looks on without eating' (I.164.20).

There are two birds living as two close friends; both are on the same tree and they embrace it. One of them eats the sweet fruit thereof, while the other sits without eating. One has the higher knowledge, while the other

has only the lower. Yet both cling to the tree of life and are adventuring into the realm of the Spirit, but only one of them can enjoy the fruit thereof. Still the lower knowledge is an essential prerequisite of the higher. The neglect of the lower will bring about the pre-occupation with the barren forms of thought that are always in a world beyond. Philosophy has nothing to do with these, for it primarily concerns itself with the present, with the immediate. And such immediates are life, consciousness, and fact. These three are embodied to the finite mind by the finite mind in three great realms of life, viz. the realms of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. These three constitute the subject of philosophy.

That there is a close connection between these three supreme appearances of the finite life and the Absolute Reality is a doctrine rooted in the Upanishads, where we come across passages like, '*Satyam jñānam-anantam Brahma*' 'The Real, the Conscious, the Infinite, is Brahman', '*Vijñānam-ānandam Brahma*' 'Knowledge, Bliss, is Brahman'. These three appearances give us a clue to the nature and realization of Reality, for they manifest the principle of Reality in a way that revitalizes the individual self. But how is this connection known? The answer lies in the doctrine of the two knowledges. The higher knowledge is the knowledge of the nature of unity or system which experience gives. It is synthetic, while the other is only analytic. The latter can become true only if the spirit of the unity of experience breathes through it. Let us go back for a moment to the statue. The statue, say that of Venus of Milo, seems to suggest so many ideas and feelings that for a time we forget what we are. The very artistic expression seems to have this power. In other words, the very act of composing or creating a work of art implies the very inability of the creative artist to give a complete and perfect expression to his experience. This experience comprehends within itself the knowledge we express. This aspect of the problem throws light on a similar

aspect. No two experiences of the same object by the same individual are identical with each other. A third or fourth observation of the same statue sometimes modifies our knowledge to such an extent that there may not be any apparent connection between the two knowledges. We return to the classics willingly and many a time with greater vigour and greater enthusiasm. And every time, we derive something new, something fresh. But if it happens to be a text-book for some examination, no one can honestly say that he is reading for the fourth or fifth time with real enthusiasm. In the former case we expect Value and we do realize it. In the latter we derive utility. And utility is a thing which does not quieten the yearnings of the soul. The utility that an object gives is derived from the rational nature of that object; and by rational here we have to mean that which is within the bounds of common sense, that is, it involves the relational consciousness. But the Value of an object is not so derived from the relational nature. It involves the unity of the experience and reveals the nature of the object as an element in the whole, in the system.

This universe is so rich and varied and complex that it cannot be comprehended in a single moment of logical theory. Yet we experience the very nature of the object. This is the same as the significance or meaning it has for the experiencing mind. The significance it has for us, or the meaning it conveys to us, has a factor which is beyond the power of knowledge to reveal. And yet we cannot speak of it as irrational, for here we realize a supreme moment of our life where reason is highly articulated. Confucius discusses an important question which has a great bearing on our problem here. He asks: What is the duty of the son when the father has committed a crime? Likewise, what is the father's duty when the son has committed a crime? Elementary knowledge of the law and the sway of ordinary reason will tell us that the father should not spare his son, nor should the son keep quiet. But suppose for a

moment that we ourselves are directly involved in such a situation. Would we follow this procedure? Assuredly not. And Confucius tells us that the son has no right to expose his father, nor has the father an obligation to hand the son over to the iron hand of the law. Why? The reason is evident. Over and above the demands of ordinary reason there is a higher principle at work in human life. The relation of the father to the son, or of the son to the father is not governed by pure reason that dominates our conceptions of utility. There is an element higher than this. It is a spiritual relation that governs them. And if one were to answer that he sees no relations like these in the universe, he is untrue to the nature of his experiences. This bond of unity between the father and the son is more real than anything else in the universe. It is greater and more valuable than that which we generally call reason. For here alone we have an example of the real and true nature of reason. It is this supra-relational reason or consciousness that makes manifest a system or unity and enables us to have glimpses into the nature of Reality. There is thus a factor in life which appears to be irrational, but which in reality is the supreme embodiment of the real nature of thought or of the rational. It is the presence of this element and the insight into it that makes any object valuable to us, as distinct from utility.

The three supreme appearances mentioned above are the three great values of human life. Values get their significance from their teleological relation to life, and hence the significance of life itself is to be derived from the values which it embodies. As a consequence, Value turns out to be an indefinable and inexplicable concept, yet appearing as a function of the system or unity of experience. Values, therefore, are not subjective fictions. They exist and are real. They govern human life to a very great extent. They are operative and effective in and on human minds and in human action. They are embodied in the objective institutions of society, which,

therefore, become the subjects of philosophical enquiry. They determine the nature of the objects and as such are imbedded in the system of Reality. As such Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, which are characterized as the forms of the Absolute or Brahman, have a good deal to say regarding the nature of the universe and of Reality. In other words, it is these three values that determine the nature of the individual self, the nature of the finite mind. And any philosophy worth the name cannot afford to ignore these values and the study of these values; for it is in and through these values that an individual can become, in the words of Plato, 'the spectator of all time and of all existence'.

The study of philosophy, therefore, is an education in itself; and as in all true education, here too the individual must direct his mind to the proper objects. He must study the environment, the universe around him. But this study demands a close affinity between the nature of the finite mind and the nature of the object pursued. In other words, the values which determine the nature of the finite mind are to be developed by a study of the embodiments of the values concerned. It is only thus that we can enter into the meaning of the world; for the philosophic mind always yearns for the principles or laws or unities governing the diversities and pluralities of our experiences. And the philosophic nature involves a profound passion for Reality,

a passion that can be quietened only when we can get at Reality and be at one with it. This is the real human element. And the study of philosophy satisfies all the demands that are implicit in human nature. And yet the study of philosophy is not a thing of a short duration. It is coextensive with life, since all education means keeping the soul alive, and since a philosophical study of human life can never be divorced from experience proper. For this education we have a variety of things that help us immensely. They are those things which human nature has produced in the course of its long history. These are religion, science, art, literature, and the institutions of mankind. All these are united by a single thread and the duty of philosophy is the realization of the experiences which these generate and the interpretation of these experiences in the light of principles derived from the world of Reality. To this end philosophers of the past have made endeavours and it is our duty to imbibe all that tradition can offer us and, with the help and co-operation of this rich heritage, to embark on the great adventure called life, so that we too may hold for a while glimpses of that world of Reality and of

'The light that never was on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the poet's dream',  
—so that our souls may 'have sight of that  
immortal sea which brought us hither'.

(Concluded)

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'In Shankaracharya, we saw tremendous intellectual power, throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything. We want today that bright sun of intellectuality, joined with the heart of Buddha, the wonderful, infinite heart of love and mercy. This union will give us the highest philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples. . . . The Hindu nation proceeded through the study of the mind, through metaphysics and logic. The European nations start from external nature, and now they too are coming to the same results. We find that searching through the mind we at last come to that Oneness, that Universal One, the Internal Soul of everything, the Essence of Reality of everything, the Ever-Free, the Ever-Blissful, the Ever-Existing. Through material science we come to the same Oneness.'

—Swami Vivekananda



# THE HOLY MOTHER

## HER LIFE AND TEACHINGS

BY LALITA DEVI

Sri Sarada Devi, or the Holy Mother, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, was born in 1853 in a little village called Jayrambati, not far from Calcutta. As a small girl she helped her mother in the kitchen. She had very little schooling, but later on she learnt Bengali, reading with her friends and mostly by her own effort. Indian culture does not identify education with mere literacy. It is the training given to the head and heart to realize the highest ideals of our nation. The education in a village is different from that in a city. Education in the city is full of conflicting ideas, while that in the village consisted in attending temple festivals, religious dramas in which the epics are recited, devotional songs or *bhajan*—which build up the character of the youngsters. I have seen persons quoting poems and verses from the religious texts without knowing how to read or write. The Holy Mother also quoted verses that were imprinted on her memory in her early days by attending such functions. While little Sarada was helping her mother in her domestic duties, the great saint Sri Ramakrishna was passing through a remarkable period of his spiritual life. He was a priest at the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. He was experiencing an irresistible passion for the realization of the Goddess. He was seeking solitude for meditation. He was even forgetting to take his food, being unaware of the passing of day and night. Then he was gradually relieved of his worldly duties. Occasionally he cried or danced, addressing the Goddess, 'Mother, Mother'. The worldly people could not understand such unworldly things. They attributed this to a strange madness or to a spirit possessing him. Chandra Devi, mother of Sri Ramakrishna, had been advised by relatives and friends to get her son married. The services of a de-

voted wife and family responsibilities, might, they thought, make Sri Ramakrishna live a normal worldly life. But it was a problem to get a suitable bride for such a strangely behaving bridegroom. As the family was poor Chandra Devi silently wept.

Sri Ramakrishna, from whom they expected rebellious protests, readily agreed to this proposal and in an inspired mood he uttered, 'Vain is your search in this place; go to Jayrambati and there, in the house of Ramachandra Mukherji, you will find her who is marked out for me'.

They accordingly went to Jayrambati and to their utter astonishment Ramachandra Mukherji agreed to give his daughter, Sarada, just five years old, in marriage to Sri Ramakrishna, who was by then a youth of twenty-three. The marriage that followed was simple as both the families were poor. Time passes on in disregard of worldly occurrences. Little Sarada grew up to womanhood. She grew anxious about her husband when the idle villagers whispered about that her husband was going about naked, shouting the name of Hari. Sarada was now eighteen years of age. She was fourteen when she went to live with her husband. She had hardly spent three months with her husband when she had secured his respect and attention. But four years had since elapsed and if, as others reported, her husband had really gone mad, what was her duty now? She worked hard to avoid criticism. She did not go even to her neighbours' houses.

At this time an opportunity presented itself to her. Some of her friends were going to Calcutta to have a bath in the holy river Ganga, on an auspicious occasion. Young Sarada longed to meet her husband. So she expressed her desire to accompany her friends, who communicated this information to her

father. He was not slow to understand the real purpose of her visit to Calcutta and hence he himself escorted her. After a short but serious illness on the journey—as she was not accustomed to walk such long distances—during which Mother Kāli consoled her in a vision, she was able to reach Calcutta in a palanquin.

Her husband and her spiritual master cordially welcomed her saying, 'Ah, you are here! All right'. Months passed. Everyone pitied the Holy Mother for her life of virginhood even though married. Once her mother remarked in the hearing of Sri Ramakrishna that her daughter was married to a lunatic and that she would not get any children to call her 'mother'. Sri Ramakrishna replied that she had nothing to worry about it. Her daughter would have so many children that she would be tired of being called 'mother' day and night. Once he asked the Holy Mother, 'Do you want to drag me down into Māyā?' To this searching question she readily replied, 'Why should I do that?' A noble answer indeed! It was a spontaneous expression of a noble nature and lofty ideals. Sri Ramakrishna himself said to his disciples in his later days, 'Had she not been so pure, who knows whether I might not have lost my self-control from her inducements?' Once Sri Ramakrishna identified her with Mother Kali and actually worshipped her. The Holy Mother served the Master with all her love and devotion. One day, as she went into his room, along with a woman devotee, to serve his night meal, Sri Ramakrishna began to talk to her in a highly inspired mood. As he became absorbed, he lost the sense of time and talked away the whole night. The Holy Mother, charmed by the magic of his words, stood before him listening silently. When the day dawned she realized that she was there standing all the while. Once the manager of the Dakshineswar temple remarked, 'We have heard that she lives here, but we have never seen her!' She was so very self-effacing and modest.

She used to rise early (at 3 o'clock in the morning) and have her bath in the Ganga, before any other person was up, and then enter her room from which she seldom came out. At midday, when there would be nobody about the place, she would sit in the sun to dry her long hair. Her daily routine at Dakshineswar included cooking food for the Master and the disciples and devotees who used to take food with him. As the number increased, the Holy Mother had to bake bread from six to eight pounds of flour a day. She sat and slept with the baskets of vegetables and bags of rice and pulses about her. Sri Ramakrishna depended on her for his food because of his delicate digestion. She always personally served his food and used to stand by his side and engage him in light conversation so that he might not fall into meditation. Because of her loving care Sri Ramakrishna improved in health. He once remarked, 'Just see how I am growing fatter by taking the food cooked by you'. If there was no one by his side, she would massage his feet and body with oil. When the Master had finished his meal, she would take her breakfast and sit down to make betel-rolls. While engaged in this, she would be humming some devotional songs, taking care that none should be able to hear her. When everything was finished, she would take her midday meal at about 1 p.m.

The Holy Mother did everything she could to please her spiritual master and husband. She identified herself with him. He imparted to her all the holy Mantras which he had made dynamic by his austerities and devout contemplation and asked her to initiate fitting persons with them.

Once Hriday, Sri Ramakrishna's nephew, showed disrespect to the Holy Mother before the Master himself. She bore it calmly and left the room. The moment she left, the Master expressed his anxiety for Hriday's welfare and said, 'You often slight me, but do not do so in *her* case. If the Being that is in her is roused to anger then even the great gods will not be able to save you!'

This shows how much power she had, and yet she looked so simple when performing her household duties.

Once a rich merchant wanted to offer Rs. 10,000 to the Master for his personal use. The Master rejected this offer and told him to go to the Holy Mother so that if she had no objection she might accept it. But the Holy Mother, too, refused, saying if she accepted the money it would be as good as the Master accepting it.

When Sri Ramakrishna fell seriously ill towards the end, the Holy Mother decided to invoke divine aid. She lay prostrate before the deity for two days without food or drink. On the second night she heard a sound and awoke from her torpor, and an idea flashed in her mind. 'Who is husband and who is wife? Who is my relative in this world?' She was filled with utter renunciation and all attachment for the Master disappeared. When the Master saw her coming he asked her, 'Well, did you get anything? Well, everything is unreal. Is it not so?'

On a previous occasion the Holy Mother did the same thing as she was seriously suffering from eye trouble, following dysentery. Then the Goddess appeared to her in a vision and suggested remedies for her troubles.

After Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, the Holy Mother was removing her ornaments (as a Hindu widow does on her husband's death), when she had a vision of the Master. He said, 'What are you doing? I have not gone away. I have only passed from one room to another'. This vision restored her peace of mind.

The Master had once asked the Holy Mother to visit the places of pilgrimage he himself could not visit. Accordingly, in 1886, she, with a party of devotees, visited, among other places, Banaras, Ayodhya, and Vrindaban. At Vrindaban the Holy Mother stayed on for a year. There she constantly worshipped and meditated. She had many spiritual experiences during these days. Here for the first time she initiated a disciple under instructions from the Master.

When the Holy Mother returned to Kamarpukur, completing her pilgrimage, according to the instructions of Sri Ramakrishna, she had to face loneliness and poverty. The paltry sum of seven rupees that she was getting from the temple was discontinued. Sometimes she partook of only one meal and that too without any salt in it. Her dress had become poor like that of a beggar woman. There was an uproar of criticism among the women of the village because she, a widow, wore bracelets and put on a red-bordered saree. Several times she wanted to remove the bracelets, but Sri Ramakrishna appeared to her and asked her not to do so.

Though the Holy Mother was silent, yet the fact of her privations and straitened circumstances became known to others. The disciples of Sri Ramakrishna decided to bring her to Calcutta. After some hesitation she went to Calcutta. She was taken care of by the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Her family troubles increased. Her mother died; her youngest brother, who was qualified as a medical practitioner, died prematurely. The burden of looking after his wife, who had become insane, and daughter fell upon the Holy Mother. One day this favourite niece of hers—her deceased brother's daughter, who was always sick and was addicted to opium—threw a big egg-plant at the Holy Mother with great force. It hurt the Holy Mother seriously and swelling appeared on her back immediately. The ever forgiving Holy Mother looked at the photograph of the Master with folded hands and said, 'Lord, please forgive her misdemeanour, for she is senseless!'

The disciples of Sri Ramakrishna used to send people for initiation to the Holy Mother. Once Swami Premananda remarked, 'We are sending to the Holy Mother the poison we could not ourselves take'. (It is said that after giving initiation the Guru takes upon himself the sins of his disciples). Once the Holy Mother was seen washing her feet frequently in the holy waters of the Ganga. Being questioned by one of her disciples why

she did so, she replied that she was suffering from intense burning sensation in her feet and stomach because of the indiscriminate touch of the people. It was only the Ganga water that would relieve her a little. The touch of some people, she would say, refreshed her, while that of others irritated her body. But she did not allow the news to spread, lest her well-wishers should prevent people from touching her feet. Such was the magnanimous nature of the Holy Mother. She was the incarnation of compassion.

In her last days she seriously suffered. Her disciples remarked that this was due to the sins which she had taken upon herself from all sorts of people. The Holy Mother replied, 'We are born for this purpose. Do you think that the Master came only to take Rasagollas (a delicious kind of sweet)?' She used to wake up at 2 a.m. and do Japa. Being questioned, she replied that she was doing so for the sake of her disciples.

She was instrumental in transforming many evil-disposed persons by her spiritual power. One of her disciples, who was a drunkard, was cured of this bad habit of his. A young wife, who was trying to wreak vengeance on her husband who wanted to lead an exclusively religious life against her will, was converted. Later on she stopped such conversions saying that she had to spend on a few persons her store of merit which was meant for many. She appeared in the dreams of many of her disciples and gave them initiation and also helped them in their difficulties. When some of them actually took initiation later from her, they were surprised to find that the Mantra they had heard in their dreams was the same. She enquired into the religious traditions of the persons concerned and their nature and temperament and then initiated them accordingly, without creating any conflict of ideals in their minds, to each according to the needs of his case.

She did not encourage all types of people to renounce the world. To those to whom married life was suitable, she said, 'Do you not see everything in this world in couples,

two eyes, two ears, two hands, two feet, and so on? So also the male and female principles. Everything is in the mind. Don't you see that the master married me!' One day a lady devotee requested the Holy Mother to bid her daughter get married. To this the Holy Mother replied, 'Is it not a misery to remain in lifelong slavery to another and always dance to his tune?'

What is the message of the Holy Mother as a wife, nun, and mother—all in one? On the cult side of her message is her personality and on the cultural side of it are her teachings. The cult is the soul and the culture is the body. Culture without cult has no meaning. It only becomes a feeble twisting of the intellect. Cult without culture has no social significance. The Holy Mother is a unique example of these two aspects. She lived among her relatives and devotees. She shared their smiles and tears and at the same time her renunciation was wonderful. She wept bitterly when she heard that her nephew had died, but in the evening at Puja time she became serious and did the Puja as normally as ever.

The Holy Mother was of medium height, with quite a well-built body. One of her disciples remarked once, 'Mother, from where did you get such exquisite beauty and charm?' A monk who saw her at the age of forty described her as 'having the delicacy and tenderness of a maiden in her countenance'. Subtle grace, dignity, and compassion were always radiating from her face. One felt the utmost freedom in her company. Many people who came to her with lots of questions felt no inclination to ask them because their doubts were dissolved the moment they came into her exalted presence.

She retained the bashfulness of her maidenhood till the end of her life. She did not talk directly even to her male disciples excepting one or two. Whenever they came to prostrate before her, she drew her veil and covered her body with a sheet of cloth and she spoke in soft undertones, which, one of her lady disciples or companions (such as Golāp

Mā or Gauri Mā) would interpret to others. Even while going to take her bath in the Ganga, she would be accompanied by a companion.

One instance of her bashfulness is worth citing here. While at Dakshineswar, she occupied a very small room with a verandah which had bamboo-mat screen all round. In order to have a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna she made small holes in the screen. One day when Sri Ramakrishna remarked in fun that the holes were becoming larger, his nephew

replied saying that Sri Ramakrishna was the cause of it all. The Holy Mother said later on that she got rheumatic pain by constantly standing near the screen. The Mother's great modesty reminds one of the following verse in the *Durgā Saptasatī*. (V. 44):

मा देवी सबभूतेषु लज्जारूपेण संस्थिता ।

नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमस्तस्यै नमो नमः ॥

'Salutations to the Goddess who pervades all beings in the form of bashfulness'. Truly was the Holy Mother a manifestation of the Goddess in this form.

## REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

BY KUMUD BANDHU SEN

Once a profoundly significant discussion took place between Swami Yogananda<sup>1</sup> and Girish Chandra Ghosh<sup>2</sup> at the Calcutta residence of Balaram Bose.<sup>3</sup> It will not be out of place to present here the purport of this discussion, the contents of which are at once important and thought-provoking. It was about the middle of July 1897. Swami Yogananda had just returned to Calcutta from Almora whither he had accompanied Swami Vivekananda two months earlier. Though he had gone to Almora for a change of climate, Swami Yogananda had to leave that place after a short stay as it did not suit his health. Though outwardly not ill, he was not feeling quite fit. Swami Vivekananda was very anxious for and took all possible care of Swami Yogananda's health. As he told Girish Ghosh later, Swami Yogananda did not like to cause any worry to Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) on his account when Swamiji's own health was none too good.

In the course of his conversation with Girish Ghosh, Swami Yogananda said: 'Swamiji' wants to establish a monastery for

women Sannyasinis under the direct guidance of the Mother.<sup>4</sup> All the women disciples of the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) would be able to live together in the proposed Math for women, and other women, including those from the West even, who desire to lead a life of renunciation and meditation may come and live there and derive immense benefit by coming into intimate contact with the living ideals and hallowed associations of the women disciples. Those child-widows and aspiring spinsters who wish to dedicate their lives for the realization of the highest spiritual ideals and in the cause of the betterment of the condition of women all over the country will be eligible for membership of the women's Math. By the blessings of the Mother, who will be their guiding spirit, there will arise among them Brahmavadinis like Gargi and Maitreyi of old, and giant personalities even greater than the past heroines and Brahmavadinis described in our mythology and history. The Mother's glowing personal example of purity and character, her spiritual talks and teachings based on her own realizations and her ennobling love and care will inspire and elevate the inmates of the proposed Math, at the same time instilling into them a

<sup>1</sup> A Sannyasin disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

<sup>2</sup> The great actor-dramatist of Bengal and a staunch devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.

<sup>3</sup> A favourite householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

<sup>4</sup> The Holy Mother.

new force that will awaken their dormant energy. They will be transformed entirely and endowed with a new vision and realization of their own *śakti* so that they too can work fearlessly for the highest good of humanity.

'Swamiji told me with great emotion, "Our Mother is a vast reservoir of spiritual energy, though outwardly calm like the deep ocean. Her advent marks the beginning of a new era in the history of India. The ideals lived and taught by her would not only spiritualize the efforts for the emancipation of women in India but also influence and penetrate into the minds and hearts of women all the world over. Motherhood represented the highest expression of womanhood, especially in India. It is an innate instinct in every woman, the signs of which might be discovered even in a little girl".

'In the West the whole structure of society rested on the wifhood of woman. But motherhood was the true expression of divine love, sublime, noble, and broad as the sky. Various heterogeneous ideas and customs have been introduced into Indian society as a result of contacts with various alien races and cultures. This has vitiated the true ideal of motherhood that always obtained in our society and we have gradually drifted away from the moorings of our ancient ideal in individual as well as communal life. Sri Ramakrishna came amongst us in order to uphold and revivify this great ideal through his own life and realizations. Even in the midst of his varied and austere spiritual practices, in accordance with the injunctions of different religions, Sri Ramakrishna never swerved from the truly noble ideal of the Motherhood of the Divinity. He accepted the Brāmani<sup>5</sup> as his first guide and teacher. While taking to the life of complete renunciation, he never rejected his wife, whom he identified with the Divine

<sup>5</sup> Bhairavi Brahmani, a nun and an adept in the Tantrika and Vaishnava methods of worship, played an important part in Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual unfoldment and proclaimed openly that Sri Ramakrishna was an Incarnation of God.

Mother, as reflected in his own mother Chandra Devi. He saw clearly in her (the Holy Mother) the perfect manifestation of pure love and devotion. She was, to him, a living embodiment of the Divine Mother. This realization of his was no hallucination or idealization. It sprang from his own personal intuitive experiences in the highest state of spiritual beatitude and God-realization. The motherly affection and natural compassion and grace of the (Holy) Mother did not arise from any earth-bound relationship, but radiated spontaneously from the eternal source of love divine, so very characteristic of an Incarnation. Her life, dedicated to the service and welfare of all her children, irrespective of any earthly discriminations, truly indicated the ideal of motherhood. Her grace was not limited to her own relatives or devotees at home or in her native village. It was unrestricted and unbounded, and conferred on all persons who sought for it and came to her. Secular and spiritual duties blended into one homogeneous act of motherly love in her life. Swamiji always spoke highly of this ideal of motherhood, which he said would ennoble women in every country. The contemplated nunnery would be the central organization for disseminating this great ideal under the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Mother'.

In reply, Girish Ghosh said, 'It is an altogether new and bold idea of reforming our society and improving the lot of our women. Swamiji's will must be fulfilled and I have not the least hesitation in fully supporting this proposal. But it is an arduous task and undoubtedly hazardous in his (Swamiji's) present state of health when it is hardly advisable for him to undertake such a strenuous responsibility. We shall of course implicitly follow him in whatever he tells us to do. But his failing health is making all of us anxious and the doctors have strongly advised him to take complete rest'.

Swami Yogananda said, 'Bodily ill health or any other impediment from any source is not going to daunt or dissuade him from his determination to carry out his plans which he

firmly believes will benefit society and contribute to the well-being of mankind. He has no other thought even in the present state of his health. He only smiles at our anxiety for and worry over the condition of his health. After listening to all that he told me of his plan for starting a women's Math, I suggested to him, "Do whatever you think will be conducive to the good of society at large; but please do not bring Mother into public prominence now. Don't you remember the Master telling us that his body would not survive if we preached him before the public? The same may be said in respect of the Mother too. I do not allow all and sundry to meet the Mother or touch her feet while offering their salutations. I see that only sincere devotees of pure character have her *darśan*. Therefore, I humbly request you, brother, not to disturb the Mother at present. You may start the women's Math with the help and co-operation of women devotees of spotless character and spiritual realization, also possessing learning and skill in various branches of knowledge and work, who are capable of taking charge of this organization without any direct association with men as such, not to speak of our Sadhus". As soon as I finished saying this, Swamiji heartily thanked me and smilingly said, "Mantri,<sup>6</sup> you have given me a sound piece of advice and aptly reminded me of the Master's words in this respect. I shall not disturb Mother. Let her fulfil her mission according to her own will and in the manner she chooses. Who are we to dictate to her? Rather, we can accomplish everything with her blessings. I have personally seen and felt the power of her blessings, which can do miracles". So Swamiji will not disturb Mother by pursuing his plan to place her as the Head of the proposed Math for the new order of women Sannyasinis'.

Girish Ghose replied, 'Yogen Swami' you

have done yeoman's service indeed. Now I see why you accompanied Swamiji to Almora. Yes, Mother's blessings are always wonderful. Listen, Yogen Swami, I am myself a living example of the wonderful manifestation of Mother's blessings. Once I fell ill and my condition became serious, the doctors giving up all hopes of my recovery. I used to feel terribly restless owing to severe pain and other symptoms of my ailment. One night I had a strange dream. I saw a woman standing in front of me and with motherly affection assuring me of my early recovery from the illness and at the same time offering me a liquid medicine to drink. Then the dream ceased and I fell into deep sleep for a long time. Next morning, strange to say, I felt almost all right. My illness had subsided considerably and I was on the way to complete recovery. It was a mystery to me then, as I was still a stranger to such phenomena, having not yet had the privilege of meeting or receiving the blessings of the Master and the Mother. Later on, when I visited Jayrambati<sup>7</sup> and saw the Holy Mother, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the likeness of the Mother was exactly similar to that of the woman I had seen in my dream. I was wonder-struck when it became clear to me that the Mother's affectionate voice and countenance were the same as those of the dream-figure that had ministered to me and comforted me during my illness. Now I distinctly see that it was the Mother herself who offered me the medicine in the dream and cured me. It is her grace which brought me into close contact with the Master and thereby enabled me to find shelter at his feet. And it is through her blessings that I have been vouchsafed the privilege of intimate and hallowed association with her and with you all,—especially Swamiji,—who have renounced everything for Sri Guru Maharaj even at such a tender age'.

<sup>6</sup> Literally, 'counsellor' or 'minister'.

<sup>7</sup> Girish Ghosh used to call Swami Yogananda thus.

<sup>8</sup> The native village of the Holy Mother.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Sri Sarada Devi—the Holy Mother, the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, was born on the 22nd December 1853. Her Hundredth Birthday falls on the 8th of this month. Appropriate to the occasion, we present in this issue writings from different contributors on the life and teachings of the Holy Mother. The Holy Mother Birth Centenary which falls in December 1953, will be observed during the period between December 1953 and December 1954. . . .

Cecille Pomerene, with whose poem the issue opens, is an ardent student of Vedanta in New York. . . .

*Sister Nivedita*, the well-known Western disciple of Swami Vivekananda, needs no introduction to the readers of *Prabuddha Bharata*. Though much remains to be done by way of full recognition of her laudable services to India, the influence of her towering personality deeply stirred the creative endeavours of some of the master minds of her times and her talented intellect expressed itself in a number of important works she has left behind. Kalpalata Munshi, M.A., Ph.D., who is on the staff of the Nivedita School and has dedicated her life to the sacred and noble cause of women's education in India, contributes an illuminating article on this passionate lover and dedicated daughter of Mother India, on the happy occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Ramakrishna Mission Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta. (A 'Note' on the School's Jubilee celebrations appears elsewhere in these columns). . . .

J. Lalita Devi, a new and welcome contributor to *Prabuddha Bharata*, writing with commendable clarity and feeling, summarizes the *Life and Teachings of the Holy Mother*.

### PROPER UTILIZATION OF YOUTH'S TALENT

'It is essential that we must grow great men if our country is to become a great country', observed Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President of the Indian Republic, in the course of his Convocation Address to the students of the Kashmir University. 'We must not spoil', he continued, 'the hopes of the future with the hatred of the past. It is essential for us to overlook the past, look ahead to the future, and see to it that all people of communities, of races, and religions have a sense of goodwill, sense of confidence for one supreme vision to make the State worthy of the great future which they envisage. A great future which is not so much antagonistic to the past but which brings out the periods when the past itself was essentially great'.

Dr. Radhakrishnan's exhortation, in the spirit of our ancient seers, focusses attention on one of the most vital problems confronting our nation today. The need for social reconstruction and the demand for technological progress are compelling our temples of learning to function in an abstract atmosphere, divorced from the concrete influence of culture and of spiritual values. To mould the raw material of youth into great and selfless leaders of society, who will place the larger interests of mankind above the interests of their own selfish life, it is necessary to stress this important aspect of university education. Clarifying this point, he said:

'You must develop sufficient physical stamina among the youth and rise in the scale of nations. . . . I am anxious more and more attention should be paid to these sides also so that the youth of the country will develop physical strength which will produce in them moral courage also.

'The next important thing . . . is to supply you with technical personnel necessary for the



building up of your country. It must stimulate intellectual variety and impulse'.

'It is essential that your University must progress . . . to such an extent as to be able to supply all the needs which you have for the building up of your country. More than imparting of knowledge or the imparting of technical skill, than all that, is the need to foster independence of judgment, foster integrity of mind'.

The attainment of independence has stimulated a welcome interest in the material sciences in the mind of the youth of India. The mental forces of impetuosity and restless craving for radical social changes, so characteristic of youth, have to be tamed and canalized for the constructive upbuilding of our society so that it can truly reflect the noble qualities of head and heart.

'That is the quality of vision, a quality of sense of brotherhood and a buoyant hope for the future to get away from narrow loyalties and concentrate on the Supreme Unseen whose physical embodiment on earth is humanity. While a leader lacks in this quality of ambition, he lacks in leadership. Leadership is nothing more than this quality of vision. It is passing beyond the inanities of temporary life and trying to concentrate our vision on the greatness of the spirit, on the human sense of brotherhood, on a vision of the future which will get all people together'.

In the actual inculcation of the lofty ideals of our motherland, viz. the passion for spiritual perfection, our universities have undoubtedly a leading part to play. Are the universities keen on disciplining the life of the students? Is the multitude of students, who step out of the portals of the universities, imbued to an appreciable extent with the traditions of our cultural heritage? On the proper answer to these questions depends the assessment of the reorientation which our university education is urgently in need of. Rightly, therefore, has Dr. Radhakrishnan expressed his hope that the 'universities will not be content merely with giving adequate attention to physical efficiency and intellectual power but will also stand to realize that there is one Supreme under whose auspices the whole world will have to work as one single family

and that when our qualities are harnessed to wrong things they come and perish'.

So soon after the attainment of freedom, the youth of India appear to many to be either resting on their oars or feeling somewhat bewildered by the welter of slogans and ideologies. In despair, many are turning to quack nostrums, though with perfectly earnest intentions of endeavouring hard to find early solutions for our gigantic national problems. The corrective to this can be furnished best by our universities, through proper and complete education of their alumni. Delineating the spiritual world view of our national genius, Dr. Radhakrishnan said:

'We look upon the Divine as Truth. Our motto is Truth alone conquers, not untruth. We call the Supreme *satya nārāyaṇa*, *satya svarūpa*. We make Him the embodiment of Truth. If the Divine is Truth the response which is needed from us to that Divine is such an integrity of mind that will not accept your most cherished convictions if they happen to be untrue. In schools, colleges, and universities it must be your duty to develop what I would call independence of thinking'.

'The Real is one. It may be worshipped in many different ways. Kabir, a great fifteenth century apostle of Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, told us the Hindu thinks his God lives in Banaras, the Muslim thinks his God lives in Mecca but the true God does not live in a city made by human hands. He lives everywhere. He lives in the whole world. That was the message he gave to us. That is the message we have to proclaim to the world today when there are conflicting ideologies'.

The problem before the Indian universities, therefore, is to effect a harmonious synthesis of the scientific traditions of the West and the spiritual heritage of India. We can conquer our ills if we realize our soul. Swami Vivekananda, with the unerring vision of a seer, pointed out this spirit of synthesis. He said:

'I want the intensity of the fanatic plus the extensity of the materialist. Deep as the ocean, broad as the infinite skies, that is the sort of heart we want. Let us be as progressive as any nation that ever existed and at the same time as faithful and conservative towards our tradition as Hindus alone know how to be'.

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF  
THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION  
NIVEDITA GIRLS' SCHOOL

Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret E. Noble of Tyrone, North Ireland), one of the leading English disciples of Swami Vivekananda, met the Swami for the first time in 1896 in London. She soon completely identified herself with the great mission of the Swami—whom she accepted as her Master and Guru—and came to India in 1898 to join the rank of the Swami's workers. Swami Vivekananda gave her the name 'Nivedita', meaning 'the dedicated', which was so appropriate with her life and activities. Nivedita dedicated herself heart and soul to the cause of India and of Indian women, and undertook the task of founding an educational institution for girls based on the ideas and traditions of Indian womanhood.

The Nivedita Girls' School at Calcutta came into existence, in accordance with these ideals set before the Sister by Swami Vivekananda, in order to spread women's education in the country and thus ameliorate their condition. The opening ceremony was performed in November 1898 by the Holy Mother, in the presence of Swami Vivekananda. The Ramakrishna Mission took charge of the School in 1918. The Ramakrishna Mission Nivedita Girls' School has successfully completed fifty years of its useful existence. It is a matter for great joy that the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the School are going to be held in a befitting manner between the 11th and 19th of this month. It is indeed a memorable

occasion not only for legitimately proud satisfaction on the part of those dedicated workers who have silently but steadily carried on the work that was so dear to Swami Vivekananda, but also for paying our homage and rendering our heart-felt gratitude to the great founder—the illustrious Sister Nivedita, whose contribution to the cause of India's welfare and her struggle for the country's political freedom were immense. She adopted India as her motherland and sacrificed herself at her altar.

Apart from the functions of the Golden Jubilee Week in Calcutta, the occasion of the School's semi-centenary will be commemorated also by:

- (1) publishing an authentic biography of Sister Nivedita in English and Bengali and also publishing a short history of the School;
- (2) offering floral wreaths at the mausoleum of Sister Nivedita at the Darjeeling Crematorium;
- (3) inaugurating a Nivedita Lectureship at the Calcutta University; and
- (4) buying a plot of land to expand the arts and crafts department.

The School (now at No. 5, Nivedita Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta-3) provides general education from the Infant to the Matriculation class, following the syllabus of the Calcutta University in the Upper Classes and kindergarten and oral methods in the lower Classes. There is an Industrial Section where women are taught professional courses with the idea of making them self-supporting.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE LINGAYAT MOVEMENT—A SOCIAL REVOLUTION IN KARNATAK.** By S. M. HUNASHAL. *Published by Karnataka Sahitya Mandira, Dharwar. Pages xxii, 268. Price Rs. 5-8.*

This book attempts to give an account of Lingayatism, otherwise known as Veerashaivism, in its aspect of 'a social revolution'. The Lingayat movement, mostly confined to Karnataka, is little known

outside, especially because its founders, saints, and votaries all have used the Kannada language for their writings and teachings. The Lingayat saints have developed the art of giving in a few simple words great and abstruse truths to the people. The Kannada literature and culture have been greatly enriched by the followers of this movement.

The Introduction and the first two chapters give

a general background to the understanding of the Lingayat movement. They deal with Philosophy, Religion, and Science, their mutual relation and their relation to social sciences, and revolution and counter-revolution. The third gives an account of Buddhistic 'Revolution' and the fourth is devoted to the analysis of Shankara's Vedanta. In the next seven chapters is given an account of Lingayatism as a monotheistic religion, its philosophy, its ethics, the social revolution it effected, its socio-economics, its psychology, etc. The remaining fifteen chapters are devoted to a comparison of Lingayatism with various other religions and movements and schemes including Plato's Ideal State and Gandhism, and the future of Lingayatism.

The book is conceived well and the subject is dealt with comprehensively, which makes it an interesting reading. But regarding the treatment of the subject itself we have certain remarks to make. It is clear the author is highly prejudiced against 'Hinduism', its scriptures, philosophies, and culture. Throughout the book he has not one good word to say for them. On the other hand the whole book is full of disparagement of Hinduism, the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, the *shastras*, the *Gita*, and other Hindu scriptures. Their sublime teachings are twisted or misrepresented to suit the author's purpose. To give only an instance among many, the sublime idea of the *Gita* of 'work for work's sake without looking to the fruits thereof' is in the author's opinion designed to suppress the lower classes (p. 179).

This is an instance of his general attitude which makes him blind to everything connected with 'Hinduism', and his disparagement extends to Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Shivaji, Gandhiji, (even Plato has his share of ridicule for his ideas of society similar to those of the Hindus) and everyone considered great by the Hindus. The major portion of the book consists of quotations of passages selected with an eye to painting 'Hinduism' black. Probably, by this means he seeks to bring the Lingayat movement into bold relief.

The main authority on whom the author relies for an understanding of the teachings of Hinduism is Shri M. N. Roy and his Marxist books! And he has hunted out passages from other authors who have anything to say against Hinduism. More than half of the book consists of quotations. He has no use for hundreds of Indian and foreign scholars and spiritual men who have spoken about the real values of Hinduism. Hinduism never lacked reformers and 'revolutionists' within its own domain, even of a more thorough-going character and more bitterly critical than the Lingayats or the present author who considers Lingayatism outside the pale of Hinduism. But they had love in their hearts and did not sing a mere negative hymn of hate. And this book

smacking of a medieval attitude worthy of a fanatical missionary comes rather too late in the day. We regret to say the book goes beyond its scope indicated by the title.

Hinduism has enough vitality and has continued for thousands of years in the face of attacks and vicissitudes of a colossal nature. It is a mighty ocean giving rise to these various waves of 'revolution', whenever needed, to clear its surface of accretions, which come and pass into insignificance making noise for some time. Such waves will continue to rise and it is for the waves to identify themselves with the ocean when their task is done.

In our view the author has succeeded in doing a great harm to his own sect and the great saints which it has produced. The book is far removed from rationality and objectivity. The author would have done a service to the country if he had given the beautiful teachings of these saints about spiritual life rather than what he has chosen to do. 'Say what you have to say about yourself; the world has no time to hear what you think of others' is a maxim that is worth remembering. If nothing else, Hinduism has at least the virtue of finding a place in its bosom for every system of thought, even the most bitterly antagonistic to it. It is to this attitude that Lingayatism itself owes its origin and continued existence, for Hinduism is all-inclusive and not exclusive. The whole has no quarrel with the parts.

PHILOSOPHY AND LIFE AND OTHER PAPERS. By J. C. P. d'Andrade. *Published by Orient Longmans Ltd., 17, Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 13. Pages 279. Price Rs. 10.*

This is a volume of philosophical papers by the late Prof. J. C. P. d'Andrade of Elphinstone College, Bombay. The chief concern of the learned author, who was himself a seeker after truth, is to stimulate others to think for themselves. For it is this philosophical thinking that will help man in the attainment of blessedness, which is the end of life. The learned author observes that in our present generation and even in India, the land of spirituality *par excellence*, 'pure love of knowledge is at a discount, and people are hurrying madly forward in the pursuit of material prosperity. Our values have got confused, and it seems that we place the end of life in wealth and physical comfort. But though the pursuit of material interests may produce immediate prosperity, lasting good can be achieved only by building on sound spiritual foundations'.

The author further observes: 'It will be interesting to ask what ends are uppermost in men's minds today when philosophy is condemned as useless. The answer is writ large in the history of our age, it is writ in blood in the unprecedented happenings that are disgracing humanity today.'

'The pressing question today, therefore, is, "What are the ends worth pursuing if our life is not to suffer shipwreck?" That is the practical question *par excellence*. No other question can take precedence of it. And that question is essentially philosophical.

'Our nature has various ends and any one of these ends, so far as it is an end, is practical. Practical is that which is connected with our practical life, with our life in action, and our life in action is pursuit of ends, conscious or unconscious. To eat is one such end, and to philosophize is another, and there is no sense in calling the first practical and the second unpractical.

'To the ancients philosophy was a way of life, to the moderns it has been for the most part merely a way of thought'. Truth must find its expression not merely in words, but in life.

'Man may try to leave philosophy out of life, but philosophy will not leave itself out. If good philosophy is left out, bad philosophy will take its place; Nature abhors a philosophical vacuum'.

All the papers in the volume plead for a true philosophy, which is defended with the zeal of a crusader and the logic of a dialectician against economists, materialists, and logical positivists.

The papers in the volume have been arranged in four groups: The Value of Philosophy; Problems of Philosophy; Some Philosophers; and Miscellaneous Essays. The first gives the reader the best approach to the writer's thought and philosophy as a whole. The second group contains a discussion of several particular philosophic problems. The third section contains papers on a few philosophers. Spinoza and Bradley were his inspiration in philosophy. The last section includes papers and articles of a miscellaneous nature on a variety of subjects treated in a popular, though essentially philosophical, manner.

Prof. d'Andrade writes in a simple, forceful, and felicitous style. Each paper abounds with examples of illuminating thought.

The volume will stimulate any common reader to think for himself and will endear philosophy to his heart in a manner he has not suspected before. The writer has done a service that politicians and social reformers will not be able to do. According to Spinoza, freedom is knowledge, and, in the opinion of Plato, virtue is knowledge. The volume will form a very valuable addition to the department of philosophy in any college of India.

K. C. CHAKRAVARTI

IBSENISM IN THE LIGHT OF THE GITA.  
BY KAPILA. Available from H. Ramchandran,  
1022/9, VII Cross Road, Sri Ramapuram, Banga-  
lore 3 (Mysore State). Pages 20.

The title of this interesting monograph reveals

the theme. The author explains how the essential message of the *Gita*—'the performance of right action which is self-fulfilment'—is also the message of Ibsen's plays, 'every one of which is concerned with the tragedy of the non-self-fulfilment through egotism of the oppressing or the suppressed type'. He makes this clear, with the help of quotations from the *Gita* and by reference to the characters of and situations in the plays of Ibsen. He also proves that Ibsen is not a 'realist' in the ordinary sense of the word and that he is in fact a true idealist. The fervent plea for a posthumous award of the Nobel Prize to Ibsen on this ground may strike one as not quite relevant to the main thesis of the work, though no one would seriously object to such an award, for Ibsen is easily of the most significant of modern playwrights. It is, on the whole, an ably written monograph on an interesting aspect of Ibsen's dramas. It is unfortunate that there should be a dozen mis-spellings and three or four omissions in a work of this size.

A. V. RAO

WHO SHALL LEAD US NOW? BY VITHALDAS  
BODANI. Published by the Author, Pradyumna  
Nagar, Rajkot. Pages 31. Price As. 9.

It deals with the present political situation, and poses the common man's problems and offers solutions to those problems.

#### SANSKRIT-ENGLISH

ABHIDHARMA-SAMUCHCHAYA (OF ASANGA).  
BY PRAHLAD PRADHAN. To be had of The Visva-  
Bharati Publishing Department, 6/3 Dwarkanath  
Tagore Lane, Calcutta. Pages 143. Price Rs. 6.

This is a learned edition of a famous work by Asanga belonging to the school of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It was first discovered in a fragmentary form by Rāhula Sānkṛityāyana in Tibet. There are the Chinese and the Tibetan translations of the entire work. The missing portion of the text has now been retranslated into Sanskrit from the Chinese and the Tibetan translations and having regard to the Bhāshya on the text.

The work is in eight chapters, divided into two groups—Lakshana Samuchchaya (chapters 1 to 4) and Vinishchaya Samuchchaya (chapters 5 to 8). The first chapter deals with the five Skandhas, the eighteen Dhātus, and the twelve Āyatanas. The next three chapters deal with Sangraha (collection), Samprayoga (union), and Samanvāgama (accompaniment). The fifth to the eighth chapters deal with Vinishchaya (interpretation), including the topics of Satya, Dharma, Prāpti, and Sānkathya. Under the head 'Duhkha-Satya', in the fifth chapter, Anitya, Duhkha, Shunya, and Anātma are discussed. The other heads of Satya are Samudaya, Nirodha, and Mārga. The sixth chapter deals with

Dharma and exalts the Vaipulya Dharma, which is also called Vaikalya Dharma—as it destroys all enveloping errors, and Vaitulya Dharma—as it is peerless. Vaipulya means that it seeks the good of all and is sublime and profound. It refers also to Adbhuta Dharma and Upadesha Dharma. The seventh chapter discusses Prāpti (combination) under the heads of Pudgala and Abhisamaya. The eighth and last chapter deals with Sānkathya under seven heads.

The work is very brief and yet goes into innumerable ramifications. It seeks to exalt the Vaipulya Dharma of the Mahayana over the Shrāvākayāna and the Hinayāna.

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

THE MEGHADUTA OF KALIDASA. EDITED BY DR. J. B. CHAUDHURI. *Published by the Prachyavani Mandir, 3, Federation Street, Calcutta 9. Pages 212. Price Rs. 8.*

Lovers of Sanskrit learning will remain grateful to Dr. J. B. Chaudhuri for his masterly critical edition of the *Meghadūta* of Kalidasa, published as Volume II of the Prachyavani Mandira Dr. K. N. Katju Series. It is a storehouse of valuable materials, mostly collected from less known manuscript sources. It contains an edition of the Subodhā

commentary by Bharata Mallika, which has been critically edited for the first time by Dr. Chaudhuri. The editor makes a comparative study of this commentary with many published commentaries, as well as eight hitherto unpublished commentaries, and comes to the right conclusion that Bharata Mallika's is the best commentary on the *Meghadūta* hitherto known. The copious extracts from the commentaries of Kalyānamalla, Sanātana Gosvāmin, Hara-govinda Vāchaspati, Rāmanātha Tarkālankāra, Krishnadāsa Vidyāvāgisha, Sarasvati-tirtha, Shāshvata, and others on the *Meghadūta*, which are still unpublished, will be hailed by Sanskrit scholars all over the world.

The English and Bengali translations of the original, variant readings of the texts of the *Meghadūta* and the commentaries collected from multifarious sources, copious geographical and grammatical notes, glossary, and particularly the synoptical table of the verses of the *Meghadūta* based upon thirteen commentaries of the *Meghadūta*, mostly unpublished, have much enhanced the value of this edition.

The author and the publishers are to be heartily congratulated on the production of this monumental work in the field of Sanskrit scholarship.

DR. AMARESWAR THAKUR

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, SEATTLE REPORT FOR OCTOBER 1950-SEPTEMBER 1951

The following is a brief report of the activities of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., for the year under review:

As usual Swami Vividishananda, Head of the Centre, gave a public lecture every Sunday morning, discussing the theory and practice of Vedanta. At the beginning of the season the Swami discontinued the Tuesday night class for the public. The reason for this is that many found it difficult to attend two night classes a week, and the Swami felt that the elimination of this class would afford more time for studying and analysing the teachings of Vedanta at home. The Friday night class, for students and members only, continued as usual, taking up the study of the Aphorisms on Yoga by Patanjali.

In February 1951, the Swami was invited by the Whitman College, a residential educational institution in Walla Walla, Washington, to participate in its Campus Conference on Religion. He stayed in Walla Walla for about four days and had a crowded programme of lectures and discussions, along with four other speakers: a Jewish Rabbi from Seattle,

a Greek Orthodox Priest from Tacoma, a Dean of the State Business College in Oregon, and a Professor of Philosophy of the State College in Pullman, Washington. It was a remarkable experience on the part of the Swami. It gave him an inside glimpse into the inner life of an American College and the life of the boys and girls attending the college. The general theme for this conference—'Faith in the Fifties'—centres around the idea that through faith, faith in ourselves, in our neighbours, in God—we can build a more secure future for ourselves and our posterity. Because of the prevalent need for strengthening that faith, the Conference was designed to show just how it can and why it should be confirmed. Realizing that indifference or distrust may arise out of misunderstanding, these five men of diverse backgrounds, sects, and beliefs were invited to the Conference for the purpose of having them express their views on the necessity of maintaining faith. Through the medium of assemblies, discussions, seminars, and personal conferences, the visiting speakers attempted to show how religion fits in our lives and how religion today can lead to personal gains tomorrow. Among the various topics the Swami discussed, the following deserve mention:

'Underlying Beliefs common to all Faiths', 'What has Religion to offer Me towards arriving at a workable Philosophy of Life', 'Towards greater World Understanding' (What India thinks of the United States), 'Mysticism in Indian Poetry', 'The Yoga Philosophy', 'The Meaning and Purpose of Life', and 'Hindu Music'. The guest speakers, during their stay in Walla Walla, were invited by the local Chamber of Commerce to a luncheon, followed by brief talks and discussions by each of them.

In appreciation of the Swami's visit and services the President of the Whitman College, Mr. Chester C. Maxey, wrote: 'Permit me to express my personal thanks as well as the gratitude of the entire Whitman College community for your invaluable contribution to the programme of our recent Campus Conference on Religion. Although absence from the city during part of the Conference and time-absorbing duties while on the campus prevented me from attending the regular sessions of the Conference, I was present at the Chamber of Commerce Forum meeting. After that meeting I heard so many favourable comments that I am sure the Conference was an outstanding success. Your participation was an important factor in that result, and I am deeply grateful to you'. The Hospitality Chairman, Kay Shields, wrote: 'Your time and effort contributed a great deal in making our 1951 Campus Conference on Religion an outstanding success. So, on behalf of the C.C.O.R., and Whitman College I would like to extend our thanks for your enthusiastic contribution. All the comments concerning the recent conference have been extremely complimentary to you and the other guest speakers. Your background and knowledge concerning religious thought were indeed thought-provoking to me as well as the rest of the Whitman students who had opportunity to hear you'.

The usual celebrations were held throughout the year, the important ones being the worship of the Divine Mother Durga and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, and Lord Buddha, as well as the celebrations of Christmas and Easter. Swami Devatmananda of Portland came for the Ramakrishna birthday celebration and he spoke on Sunday on Sri Ramakrishna and his teachings. He also spoke at the special dinner held in connection with the celebration. Professor David, who teaches Romanic languages at the University of Washington, and Reverend Shorter, who is the Minister of the People's Church, were also guest speakers at this dinner.

During the year, in addition to Swami Devatmananda there were three other visiting Swamis. In July Swami Shantaswarupananda, who is assisting in the growing work of the Vedanta Societies of San Francisco and Berkeley, California, visited the Centre and stayed for about ten days. One Sunday

he spoke to the congregation, his subject being, 'Spiritual Confusion of Man today'. Swami Pavitranda, who has been in this country only shortly and has been placed in charge of the Vedanta Society of New York, visited the West Coast on his vacation and came to Seattle towards the end of August. He stayed at the Centre for two weeks. One Sunday he spoke to the congregation on 'Common Sense about Yoga'. It was the first visit to Seattle by both the Swamis. Swami Satprakashananda, the founder and leader of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, Missouri, visited this Centre towards the end of September and stayed for a week. He also spoke one Sunday to the congregation, his subject being, 'The Mind—Its Nature and Functions'. In connection with the Swami's visit, there was a very nice write up, with pictures of both Swami Vividishananda and Swami Satprakashananda, printed by the daily, *Seattle Times*. To quote from the write up:

'Two urbane, well dressed monks chatted yesterday in a handsome North Broadway residence, renewing a long established friendship and discussing one of the world's lesser known religions. The men were Swami Vividishananda, director of the Seattle Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, and Swami Satprakashananda, director of the Centre in St. Louis, Mo., who is making a survey of the Order's activities on the Pacific Coast. Vedanta, often called Hinduism, is based upon early Indian scriptures, the oldest religious writings in existence, known as the *Vedas*. A whole literature has stemmed from the writings, with new interpretations appearing often—two new interpretative books have been published this year. "Vedanta demonstrates the essential unity of all religions", the Seattle Swami explained. "It is a sort of philosophical algebra, in terms of which all religious truth can be explained. We accept all the great prophets and teachings. We accept all humanity, and we don't attempt to make converts. We seek only to clarify our thought, which is the acceptance of universal truth and that man's real nature is divine. We believe the aim of man's life on earth is to unfold and make manifest his divine nature". . . . The Ramakrishna Order has about a dozen Centres in this country, as well as two monasteries and a convent. The latter are in California. Women are comparatively new to the Order. India has about 100 Ramakrishna Centres. General Headquarters of the Order is at Belur, near Calcutta. The Seattle Centre, in a remodelled home at 2716 Broadway N., has a library, reception rooms, and a simple, flower-bedecked chapel with an altar dominated by a gold embossed plaque. "The plaque displays one word in Sanskrit", the Seattle Swami explained. "The word is OM—the sound symbol of the word 'God' in Sanskrit".'

During the year under report, the lending library has grown. Extensive improvements have

been made on the house. The entire main floor, including the chapel, library, and kitchen, as well as the second floor rooms, including the sun porch, have been redecorated. A new hot water tank has been purchased and installed. The house is in excellent shape now. The interest in Vedanta in Seattle, as well as in other cities seems to be growing and it is hoped that it will bring in a new influx of members so that many may learn the sublime and glorious truths of Vedanta and find refuge and comfort in these teachings:

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIDYALAYA,  
PERIANAIKENPALAYAM, COIMBATORE DT.

REPORT FOR 1951-52

The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Perianaikenpalayam, Coimbatore Dt., a highly advanced rural educational centre, has completed the twenty-first year of its successful working. The following is a brief report of its activities for the year 1951-52:

*High School:* Its strength was 155. All the 17 students, sent up for the S.S.L.C. Public Examination came out successful. Engineering was provided as a Bifurcated Course. In addition to various extra-curricular activities—like woodwork, gardening, etc. for Lower Form pupils,—as in previous years, citizenship camps were conducted for each of the classes. A batch of 10 students, with some members of the staff, went on an all-India tour. The Boys' Co-operative Stores and Bank, as well as their Ministry, Parliament, and Court worked well as usual and the hostel attached to the school continued to give to the boys good training in practical citizenship, team work, and organized life. The manuscript magazine and other hobbies such as clay-modelling, etc. helped the students' self-expression. Singing of devotional songs in chorus was taught to all, and special training in music was given to such of those as had aptitude for it.

*Basic Training School:* The Vidyalaya's Basic Training School—a pioneering institution of Basic Education in the Madras State—had 70 students on the rolls, 35 in the first year and 35 in the second year. It provided secondary grade training; weaving formed the main basic craft.

Under the auspices of the Vidyalaya, a Seminar, in Tamil, on Basic Education was organized for four days during May 1952.

It has been proposed to conduct a short re-training course in Basic Education during the summer vacation. The course will be for three months, and 40 students are to be taken in.

Village service was done by the students in the neighbouring villages.

*Teachers' College:* The number on the rolls was 42. The subjects provided were Mathematics,

Social Studies, Basic Education, Tamil, and English. A course of lectures on the contents and methods of Hindu religion formed a special feature.

The college library was enriched with new books received as gifts from the Universities of Ohio and Cornell, U.S.A.

A new hostel, accommodating 64 students, was put up for the use of the College.

Two members of the Vidyalaya staff were deputed to the Ohio and Iowa State Universities, U.S.A., for higher studies in education.

The U. S. Educational Foundation in India granted them Fulbright Travel Grants.

*Voluntary Education Centre:* One such centre has been established in the Vidyalaya under the auspices of the U.N.

*School of Engineering:* This was a new addition, during the year, to the educational activities of the Vidyalaya. It has its separate buildings adjacent to the Vidyalaya, and has been recognized by the Department of Industries, Government of Madras. There were 26 students on the rolls, everyone of whom received a stipend of Rs. 15.

The Industrial Section, now attached to the School of Engineering, also expanded in scope and extent, serving, at the same time, as the crafts section for the students of the first three Forms and as engineering workshop for High School classes.

*Kalānilayam:* It continued to be the model school for the Basic Training School. It has two sections—the Junior Basic School and the Basic Middle School. The former consisted of 157 students, of whom 48 were girls, and the latter 102 students, of whom 17 were girls.

*Rural Service:* In addition to the visits by students to villages, service in the field of sanitation and adult night-schools was organized on a regular basis by means of films, dramas, and celebration of national festivals, besides literary training. The adult night-school was attended by 65 persons. Another night-school, specially meant for mill labourers, was attended by 35 persons.

*Sports and Arts:* The Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Memorial Sports were held as usual, and 17 schools and 546 persons from surrounding areas took part.

The Arts Competition, consisting of essay writing, short stories, painting, music, etc., was held as usual, in which 145 boys and girls from 30 High Schools around took part.

*Rural College:* Primarily intended for the villagers of the surrounding rural area, it had 30 students, mainly drawn from the working classes. It imparted instruction in literature, science, history, geography, culture, economics, health, and sanitation, etc. through Tamil medium. English, mathematics, music, and Hindi were included in the curriculum during the year.

*Dispensary:* A total of 16,160 cases were

treated during the year. 78 cases of labour, in the near-by villages, were attended to by the mid-wife attached to the dispensary.

*Tirukkural Research:* The *Tirukkural* Research, on the great Tamil classic *Kural*, undertaken by the Vidyalaya in co-operation with the Tamil Academy, was inaugurated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, in April 1951. The work of collecting the various commentaries on and the passages of *Kural* was continued, with the co-operation of distinguished Tamil scholars.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA CENTRE,  
NEW YORK

REPORT FOR 1950-52

The following is a brief report of the activities of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York, N.Y., U.S.A., for the period 1950-52:

Weekly services were held by Swami Nikhilananda, the Head of the Centre, on Sunday mornings, and scripture classes on Friday evenings. The Centre observed the Durga Puja, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, and the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Buddha, with special devotional services. A commodious reading-room was provided for the use of the congregation, and a lending library made available to members. The Centre's active membership continued at the high level of recent years. The attendance at the services and classes was excellent.

In the year 1947 the Centre acquired the historic cottage at Thousand Island Park, New York, where Swami Vivekananda lived for seven weeks in 1895 and gave his 'Inspired Talks'. The building, carefully renovated so as to preserve the original rooms for future generations, is now known as 'Vivekananda Cottage'. It is used as a summer retreat for the Swamis.

On 14th June 1950, at a special ceremony in the chapel, a bronze portrait-statue of Swami Vivekananda in meditation, by the world-famous sculptor Malvina Hoffman, was unveiled by Srimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, then India's Ambassador to the U.S.A. The gathering on this occasion was perhaps the largest in the Centre's history. A similar function took place in the chapel on 10th January 1952, when an alabaster bust of Sri Ramakrishna, also executed by Malvina Hoffman, was unveiled by Swami Satprakashananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of Saint Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. Both pieces of sculpture, which have won the praise of competent critics, are permanently installed in the Centre's chapel and add appreciably to its atmosphere of sanctity.

Another noteworthy event at the Centre was the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Meeting, held on 16th December 1950, to pay tribute to the well-known religious teacher and patriot of India.

In June 1951, the Swami sailed for a six-week visit to Sweden, where he held informal talks with a number of people in and around Stockholm who are interested in Vedanta. In April 1952, at the earnest request of the enthusiastic group of Vedanta students in Miami, Florida, U.S.A., he made an extended trip to that city, where he delivered two public lectures—one at the University of Miami and another in a public hall—and renewed his contacts with the group.

During the period under review Swami Nikhilananda had been called on to lecture at a large number of religious, educational, and cultural organizations. Of particular interest is the frequency with which colleges and universities requested him to speak on Hindu philosophy and religion. A course of eight weekly lectures on 'The Wisdom of the East', embodying a survey of Hindu spiritual culture, was given by the Swami at Columbia University, in the city of New York, during February and March 1952. In addition, he has lectured recently at such outstanding institutions in the eastern United States as New York University, Amherst College (Massachusetts), the College of Wooster and Oberlin College (Ohio), the University of Miami (Florida), and Haverford College (Pennsylvania). At the time this report was written, he was also expected to speak at Sweet Briar College and the University of Virginia.

As a result of the increasing attendance at the lectures and classes during the past several years, the Centre plans to make extensive alterations on its chapel—including the construction of a large gallery—during the summer of 1952. When completed, the new chapel will hold comfortably over two hundred people.

The latest addition to the sizable list of the Swami's literary works is the second volume of his translation of the Upanishads, with notes based on Shankara's commentary, which was published by Harper & Brothers, New York, in April 1952. The first volume appeared in June 1949. The entire series is expected to run to four volumes. Among the Swami's other publications which have become well known throughout the United States are his translations of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, with notes based on Shankara. The latter is used as a text-book in several universities.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY

The Birthday of Swami Vivekananda falls on 7th January 1953.





The Holy Mother and Sister Nivedita