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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(To Mrs. F. H. Leggett,¹ at Switzerland)

C/o E. T. STURDY, ESQ.,
High View, Caversham,
Reading, England.
(October 1895)

DEAR MOTHER,

You have not forgotten your son. Where are you now? And Tante and the babies? What about our saintly worshipper at your shrine? Joe Joe² is not entering ‘Nirvāṇa’ so soon but her deep silence almost seems to be a big ‘Samādhi’.

Are you on the move? I am enjoying England very much. I am living with my friend on *philosophy*. . . . We are getting nothing else but dualism and monism and all the rest of them. . . .

The Englishmen here are very friendly. Except a few Anglo-Indians, they do not hate black men at all. Not even do they hoot at me in the streets. Sometimes I wonder whether my face has turned white but the mirror tells the truth. Yet they are all so friendly here.

Again the English men and women who love India are more Hindu than the Hindus *themselves*. I am getting plenty of vegetables cooked, you will be surprised to hear, *à la Indienne* perfectly. When an Englishman takes up a thing he goes to its very depths. Yesterday I met a Prof. Fraser, a high official here. He has been half his life in India and he has lived so much in ancient thought and wisdom that he does not care a fig for

¹ Mrs. Francis H. Leggett of New York, who, together with her husband, became an ardent disciple of Swami Vivekananda and helped him in various ways.

² Miss Josephine MacLeod, one of the foremost American disciples of Swami Vivekananda.

anything out of India! You will be astonished to hear that many of the thoughtful English men and women think that the Hindu caste is the only solution of the social problem. With that idea in their head you may imagine how they hate the socialists and other social democrats! Again, here the men are most highly educated and take the greatest interest in Indian thought and very few women. The woman's sphere is narrower here than in America. So far everything is going very well with me. I will let you know any further developments. . . .

Ever yours with love and blessings,
VIVEKANANDA

* * *

(To Miss Josephine MacLeod)

The Math, Belur,
Howrah, Bengal.
and February 1899

My dear Joe,

You must have reached New York by this time and in the midst of your own after a long absence. Fortune has favoured you at every step this journey—even the sea was smooth and calm and the ship nearly empty of undesirable company. Well, with me it is going otherwise. I am almost desperate I could not accompany you, neither did the change at Vaidyanath³ do me any good. I nearly died there, was suffocating for eight days and nights! I was brought back to Calcutta more dead than alive and here I am struggling to get back to life again. Mother knows best.

Dr. Sirkar is treating me now.

I am not so despondent now as I was. I am reconciled to my fate. This year seems to be very hard for us. Yogananda⁴ who used to live in Mother's⁵ house is suffering for the last month and every day is at death's door. Mother knows best. I am roused to work again, though not personally; but am sending the boys all over India to make a stir once more. Above all . . . the chief difficulty is of funds. Now you are in America Joe, try to raise some funds for our work over here.

I hope to rally again by March and by April I start for Europe. Again Mother knows best.

I have suffered mentally and physically all my life, but Mother's kindness has been immense. The joy and blessings I had are infinitely more than I deserve. And I am struggling not to fail Mother but that she will always find me fighting and my last breath will be on the battle-fields.

My best love and blessings for you ever and ever.

Ever yours in the Truth,
VIVEKANANDA

³ A holy place and also a health-resort in Bihar.

⁴ Swami Yogananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

⁵ Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother.

REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

BY KUMUD BANDHU SEN

Shortly after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, accompanied by Swami Yogananda¹ and some devotees and disciples of the Master, went to Vrindaban on pilgrimage. She reached there sometime in the early part of September 1886 and stayed on for nearly a year. Eleven years later, sometime in the year 1898, the Mother was staying at her Calcutta residence, where Swami Yogananda also used to stay. I used to go to the Holy Mother quite often and meet also Swami Yogananda and other direct disciples and devotees of the Master in her Calcutta residence. I was present on one occasion when Swami Yogananda was in conversation with Girish Chandra Ghosh,² Master Mahashay,³ and some others. Referring to the period of the Holy Mother's stay at Vrindaban, Swami Yogananda said:

'No words of consolation could soothe the Holy Mother, who was overwhelmed with grief at the Master's passing away. We too keenly felt the pangs of separation from the Master. The Master appeared to the Mother in a vision and consoled her, saying, "Why are you weeping so much? Here I am. Where have I, after all, gone? Only from one room to another".'

Hearing this, Girish Ghosh remarked: 'Yes, God incarnates in this world and then goes back to His primal place. He is the Master of this universe and His descent and birth in a human form on earth is like changing from one place to another. The whole universe is His abode and the different worlds are as so many rooms in His mansion'.

¹ A direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who acted as attendant and guardian to the Holy Mother for over twelve years.

² The renowned actor-dramatist of Bengal and a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

³ Mahendranath Gupta (or 'M'), the illustrious recorder of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Swami Yogananda: 'I interpret it in a different way. He is really infinite, eternal, and without form. He is impersonal as well as personal, formless as well as with form, as our Master used to say. God sports with the devotees and in His infinite mercy takes on the human form and subjects Himself, just like any other mortal, to the sorrows and sufferings of life. But, at the same time, the Avatāra (Incarnation) is, in His actions and behaviour and in His exalted state of realization, far above all mortals. For, He is born with a special mission to ameliorate the condition of suffering humanity. He becomes a refuge and a source of strength to the helpless and the weak. He is the beacon-light of grace and mercy that guides devotees tossed about on the turbulent waters of the ocean of Samsāra. This is one aspect of God. In another aspect, He is far beyond the range of human understanding. He is beyond form, beyond word and thought, beyond the universe, beyond light and darkness. He is beyond all the conceptions of the intellect and unfathomable by imagination. These two aspects are like the two rooms of His mansion. In His case these two do not refer to this world and the other after death. The Master's Divinity, through his eternal identification with the Godhead and through changing forms, in different times and climes, brought solace to the Mother.

'At Vrindaban the Holy Mother had many spiritual experiences. One day the lady companions found her absorbed in deep Samādhi. They uttered the name of the Lord in her ears and tried to bring her mind down. I then repeated the name of Sri Ramakrishna with all my might and strength of voice and then the Mother seemed to come down to the ordinary sense-plane. During such periods of ecstasy, the Mother's manner of speech,

her voice, her way of taking food, her mode of walking, and her general behaviour were exactly like those of the Master. We have heard that in deep meditation the worshipper and the worshipped become one. The scriptures mention a spiritual state known as *tādātmya-bhāva*, being at one with God. We have read in the *Bhāgavata* how the Gopis, unable to bear the separation from Krishna, became so deeply absorbed in thought of Him that they forgot for the moment their own individualities and behaved as if each of them were a Krishna by herself. In the same manner, the Mother too forgot her own separate existence and acted just like the Master, feeling her oneness with him. When I put to her some intricate questions about spiritual matters, shortly after her states of Samadhi, she replied in a God-intoxicated mood, very much like Sri Ramakrishna, that is, in the same manner characteristic of the Master, using even the same easy style of expression with metaphors and parables.

'We all were surprised to see the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna unified with her. It was unique. We realized that the Master and the Mother were one in essence, though appearing in separate forms. Is it not said in the scriptures, "Lord, thou art man, thou art woman" (*tvam strī tvam pumān-asi*)? The Master told me many times that there was no difference between his body and that of the Mother'.

Girish Ghosh: 'How long was Mother in that state?'

Swami Yogananda: 'Nearly two days passed in that superconscious state. A great transformation came over the Mother after that experience. Thenceforward she was seen to remain always immersed in bliss. All her sorrow and grief and her feeling of separation from the Master vanished. A serene, blissful mood took their place. She sometimes behaved like a simple, innocent girl of young age. Sometimes she would be eager to go to the various temples of Vrindaban for *darśan* or to visit holy spots on the banks of the Jumna associated with the divine sport

of Krishna and the Gopis. She was then in such a blissful state of mind that at times her yearning for Krishna's presence and her utterance of His name with intense love reminded us of Radha. I have heard from Golāp-Mā and Yogin-Mā⁴ that the Mother at times frankly spoke of herself, expressing the view that she was Radha. She passed her time in constant meditation and Japa and would often go into ecstasy, remaining self-forgetful for hours together.

'We accompanied Mother to Hardwar. There her mood was quite different. Like an ordinary pilgrim she offered worship at all the temples on the banks of the Ganges. But at the sight of the Himalayas she stood speechless. She liked Vrindaban more and returned there soon.

'While at Vrindaban, by the grace of the Mother I could understand and appreciate the divine *līlā* (disport) of Krishna'. As he said these concluding words, Swami Yogananda was smiling with great exultation at heart.

Golap-Ma now came and called us for going up to have *darśan* of the Mother. I went up to the Mother's room with two other devotees. Girish Ghosh and Master Mahashay did not get up but were seen to be in a deep and serious mood.

When I made *pranām* to the Holy Mother, she asked me tenderly how I was doing and whether I continued to meditate twice daily. I told Mother, 'Yes. I do it mechanically; but I do not feel the joy of progress. When I come to you, Mother, I feel something wonderfully great which I am unable to express and I get complete peace of mind which I do not at the time of meditation and Japa'. Mother said softly, with a smile, 'My boy, the peace of mind you get when you come here is the result of your Japa—which makes you pure by cleansing your heart of all impurities. Repeat the name of God always and from the innermost core of your heart, and in all sincerity take refuge under

⁴ Two intimate lady companions of the Holy Mother, both of whom were disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.

the Master. Don't bother to know how your mind is reacting to things around. And don't waste time in calculating and worrying over whether or not you are progressing in the path of spirituality. That is not your lookout. It is *ahamkāra* (vanity) to judge progress for oneself. Rely on us; have faith in the grace of your Guru and *Ista* (chosen

deity for meditation). Your only duty is to repeat His Name earnestly and in all sincerity. You must have true faith in and devotion for the Master who is your only guide, help, and shelter. Don't forget this even for a moment'.

As I found many persons waiting outside for the Mother's *darśan*, I took leave of her for that day after making my *pranām*.

RELIGION—THE MANIFESTATION OF THE DIVINITY ALREADY IN MAN

BY THE EDITOR

Sixty years ago, on Monday, September 11, 1893, there stood before a large and distinguished congregation of able representatives of the religions of the world, a young, not so well-known, and yet powerful Hindu monk, whose genius and intuitive insight revealed to mankind the universal significance of the divinity of the soul, the unity of the Godhead, the oneness of existence, and the harmony of faiths and creeds. Six decades have passed away since Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the most outstanding Hindu Sannyasin who had ever touched the shores of the New Continent, attended the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago, the third largest city of the United States of America, as an Oriental delegate, representing Hinduism. This great Parliament of Religions had been held as an adjunct of the World's Columbian Exposition, which had been organized to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. Representing the most ancient, yet most modern, order of Sannyasins, Swami Vivekananda exercised a wonderful influence over the august assembly of his applauding auditors by himself becoming the meeting-point not only of the East and the West but also of the past and the future. 'These, then, were the two mind-floods,' wrote Sister Nivedita, 'two

immense rivers of thought as it were, Eastern and Western, of which the yellow-clad wanderer on the platform of the Parliament of Religions formed for the moment the point of confluence'.

At a time when physical science and technology were occupying the attention of the educated minority and dogmatic, intolerant priestcraft was influencing the minds of the uneducated majority, it was not without much significance that a Parliament of Religions came to be organized in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition. Religion, which forms a vital factor in human culture, could not have reasonably been left out of consideration in an Exposition, one of whose main objectives was to disseminate knowledge of the progress of man's pursuit of truth and acquisition of enlightenment. This Parliament of Religions was undoubtedly one of the great events in the history of the world, marking an era in the history of religions, especially of Hinduism. It was not merely a Parliament of Religions, but a Parliament of Humanity, whose universal significance will be felt more and more prominently as the years roll by. It did far more than merely affording a meeting-ground for the various religious ideas and creeds. Many great philosophers of the world, in addition to scholars, men of letters, and ecclesiastical dignitaries, were in daily attendance, and more than a thousand papers were read.

Religion, at once broad and intense, was not without its true votaries, though few in number. Any convention of men interested in human progress as a whole, let alone the World's Exposition, could hardly succeed in its objectives without yielding a prominent place to the discussion of the well-known truths and teachings that have originated from the established religions. 'Since faith in a Divine Power, to whom men believe they owe service and worship,' wrote Dr. J. H. Barrows, the President of the Parliament of Religions, 'has been, like the sun, a life-giving and fructifying potency in man's intellectual and moral development; since Religion lies back of Hindu literature with its marvellous and mystic developments; of the European Art, whether in the form of Grecian statues, or Gothic cathedrals; and of American liberty and the recent uprisings of men in behalf of a juster social condition; and since it is as clear as the light that the Religion of Christ has led to many of the chief and noblest developments of our modern civilization, it did not appear that Religion, any more than Education, Art, or Electricity, should be excluded from the Columbian Exposition'. The appropriateness of this observation becomes even more evident today than when it was made in view of the chaos and tragedy in individual and collective life consequential to a secular, hedonistic way of life replacing the more enduring and less sensate way of the spirit. While religion has been accused of having disunited men and engendered inequalities, Swami Vivekananda was never in sympathy with such wild accusations. He always held that religion was not at fault but the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who filled the earth with violence and made a travesty of religious truths.

In India religious life is a spiritual evolution, the story of the soul's journey to the Infinite through the highways of the spirit. It is no formal frame of faith and does not call for assent to one particular school of thought or set of doctrines and dissent from all others. Hinduism is the great mother-bird, under whose outspread wings have been

sheltered and reared the various systems—philosophical and spiritual—each of which has addressed itself to the task of freeing the individual from the restraints of too utilitarian a civilization that is bound to be competitive and cruel. In his famous Addresses at the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda 'repeated with new arguments but with the same force of conviction his thesis of a universal religion without limit of time or space'. To the Swami, religion signified the direct and immediate manifestation of the divinity already in man. The key-note of his short but warm-hearted opening speech, delivered in response to welcome, was struck by the two verses he quoted from the Hindu scriptural compositions, viz.: 'As the different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee' (*Śiva-mahimnah Stotra*). 'Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me' (*Gita*). And he concluded, with prophetic fervour: 'I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal'.

Sectarianism, bigotry, and fanaticism, born of insularity of religious outlook, are too well known to need any elaboration. Illustrating, with a fable, the vast variance among men of different religions, Swami Vivekananda pointed out, in his Address delivered on September 15, 1893, how men of dissimilar religious persuasions disagree, like 'frogs in the well'. The Hindu, the Christian, and the Mohammedan,—each is sitting in his own little well and thinking that the whole world is but his little well. 'Man has an idea that there can be only one religion,' says the Swami, 'that there can be only one Prophet, and that there can be only one Incarnation; but that idea is not

true. By studying the lives of all these great messengers, we find that each, as it were, was destined to play a part, and a part only; that the harmony consists in the sum total, and not in one note'. Hence the Swami was never tired of emphasizing universal tolerance and acceptance. He declared that he accepted all the religions that were in the past and worshipped the God of every one of them, in whatever form they worshipped Him. 'I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan,' the Swami said, exemplifying what and how very liberal a truly religious attitude should be, 'I shall enter the Christian church and kneel before the Crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhist temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of everyone. Not only shall I do these things, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future'.

The Parliament of Religions offered Swami Vivekananda the most appropriate opportunity to present before the chosen representatives of the religious and cultural movements in the Western hemisphere the eternal and universal truths of ancient Indian spirituality. He had not a word of criticism or condemnation for any faith, however irrational or unorthodox. He had learnt from Sri Ramakrishna that all religious paths were equally effective in leading their respective devotees to the cherished goals, the ultimate goal of perfection being the same. When there are many doors to a mansion—in front, at the back, and on the sides, persons wishing to enter the mansion by the front-door need not criticize those who may choose to enter the same mansion by the back-door or side-door, for, each person chooses a particular 'door' in accordance with his individual tastes and temperament. Doctrinal differences apart, the Swami made it convincingly clear to all his hearers, even to those who seemed too obstinately dogmatic to relish his bold, liberal utterances, that India was not a land of many religions and that one, infinite Religion (Sanātana Dharma) had existed all through

eternity, expressing itself in various forms at different times but always encompassing every one from the lowest to the highest. He presented Hinduism as the mother of religions, which absorbed and assimilated into its immense body every other sect that chose to assail it or accommodate itself with it.

On September 19, 1893, Swami Vivekananda read his celebrated paper on 'Hinduism', at the Parliament of Religions, superbly summarizing the religious and philosophical ideas of the Hindus. Giving short shrift to all forms of mystery-mongering in religion, the Swami unfolded the spiritual treasure of the Upanishadic religion in a scientific and rational manner. Expounding the doctrines of Vedanta philosophy, he defined religion as 'a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal'. The seers of India have always taught that the soul is divine, though apparently held in bondage, and that perfection will be attained when this bondage falls off, or, in other words, freedom from the bonds of imperfection is what is aimed at, for, the soul is ever perfect. Man becomes divine by realizing the divine (*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati*). The realization of the Oneness of the Self (Advaita) forms the bed-rock of the religion of Vedanta. As the Swami declared at the Parliament: 'Thus the whole object . . . is by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God; and this reaching God; seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus'.

The failure of any religion to appeal to the hearts of men may be attributed more to its lack of spiritual sustenance than to its theological and speculative content. Man cannot and does not want to live upon words and theories. His spiritual hunger is not satisfied by being asked to believe in a certain set of dogmas and doctrines or worship some particular idol or form. For, as Sri Ramakrishna has clearly stated, 'None can say with finality that He is "this" and "nothing else"'. He is

formless and again He is with forms. For a devotee he assumes forms. He is formless to the Jnāni who, following the path of discrimination, has experienced in his inner being the nothingness of his ego and of the world of appearance'. In realizing God in the intimacy of one's heart, in being and becoming, therefore, lies the secret of success in religious life, nay, in life itself. The very becoming of Divinity, the perception of Oneness (*samadarsitvam*) inevitably leads to the seeing of the divinity manifest everywhere and in every being.

In answer to the question, 'Can one see God and if so by what means?'—Sri Ramakrishna has given a positive assurance that God can be realized, with or without form as one wishes, if one contemplates on Him with intense devotion and longs for Him with a yearning heart. Like a child which cries for its mother, after throwing aside the toys that had kept its mind away from all thought of her, the ardent devotee renounces the trumpety joys of sensate life and turns his attention to the attainment of that universal consciousness whereby he can enjoy eternal bliss and eliminate the little, egoistical self. By ceasing from the things that are 'I' and 'mine', one gains victory over all the ills of life. This in effect amounts to victory over life itself, the conquest of Nature and its host of laws and limitations. 'If it is happiness to enjoy the consciousness of this small body, it must be greater happiness to enjoy the consciousness of two bodies, the measure of happiness increasing with the consciousness of an increasing number of bodies, the aim, the ultimate happiness being reached when it would become a universal consciousness'. In these and in the following words, the Swami touched upon the core of Vedantic ethics. 'And what becomes of a man when he attains perfection? He lives a life of bliss infinite. He enjoys infinite and perfect bliss, having obtained the only thing in which man ought to have pleasure, namely God, and enjoys the bliss with God'.

It used to be, and perhaps still is in some

quarters, the fashion to ridicule the ultimate, transcendental realization of Advaita Vedanta as bereft of human love and humanitarian service, because, according to these ignorant critics, the transcendental nature of the Vedantic realization of the Absolute seeks to deprive man of his individuality and make him like an unfeeling stock or stone, with no more incentive to do good or to eschew evil. 'I tell you, it is nothing of the kind', said the Swami and elaborated on this theme, drawing an apt parallel from the field of natural science:

'Therefore, to gain this infinite universal individuality, this miserable little prison-individuality must go. Then alone can death cease when I am one with life; then alone can misery cease when I am one with happiness itself; then alone can errors cease when I am one with knowledge itself; and this is the necessary scientific conclusion. Science has proved to me that physical individuality is a delusion, that really my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken ocean of matter, and Advaita (unity) is the necessary conclusion with my other counterpart, Soul'.

The goal of all science, as of religion, is the finding of unity underlying and inter-relating the countless manifestations of Nature. Through multiplicity to duality, and finally to ultimate unity, the soul proceeds in its onward, upward journey. 'Manifestation', said the Swami, 'and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light from the latest conclusions of science'. The true Vedantic spirit of religion possesses absolute liberty and unrivalled courage and invests the great march towards freedom with a vital force that evolves a God out of the base, material man. The realization of the integral man, uniting the human spiritual movements everywhere, 'from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmations of modern science', constitutes the goal of religion. It was (and still is) the need of the hour when Swami Vivekananda gave his message to the world from the platform of the Parliament of Religions.

The Swami's clarion call for food to the hungry and help to the afflicted in preference to the churches and sermons lavishly bestowed on the people by Christian missionaries in Oriental countries, more especially in India, was uttered in the course of his short address on September 20, 1893. He reminded the West that the East was not in urgent need of any alien religious doctrines. Speaking of Buddha and Buddhism, on September 26, 1893, Swami Vivekananda referred to Buddhism as the fulfilment of Hinduism and stated that the two religions should live and thrive cheek by jowl, combining, for the benefit of either, the wonderful intellect of the ideal Brahmin and the noble heart of the ideal Buddhist. Swami Vivekananda's address at the final session of the Parliament of Religions, on September 27, 1893, was full of mighty and thought-provoking sentiments, whose effect was immense. His concluding sentence is as memorable as it is pregnant with meaning even to this day and will be so for generations to

come: 'If anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance: "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension".'

The great and glorious message of Vedanta, delivered to the world by Swami Vivekananda, at the Parliament of Religions, forms an epoch-making event in the history of humanity. Referring to the Swami's success at synthesizing the variety of religious experience and making religion more dynamic and more life-transforming, Romain Rolland observes: 'He harmonized them into a magnificent synthesis, which, far from extinguishing the hope of a single one, helped all hopes to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature. There was to be no other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution'.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THE APOSTLE OF UNITY

BY BATUKNATH BHATTACHARYA

The birthday of Swami Vivekananda as it comes round in the year may fitly be a jubilee of thoughts that make for world unity. In his lecture on 'Unity in Diversity' Vivekananda set out his vision of world harmony thus: 'Each individual is like a bubble, and the nations resemble many bubbles. Gradually these nations are joining, and I am sure the day will come when separation will vanish and that Oneness to which we are all going will become manifest. . . . A tremendous stream is flowing towards the ocean carrying us all along with it; and though like straws and scraps of paper we may, at times, float aimlessly about, in the long run we are

sure to join the Ocean of Life and Bliss'. Swami Vivekananda appeared in an age of warring creeds, exclusive nation-States, and ruthless exploitation. Ten years hence and his centenary will be observed. This stirring century stands out for the birth and growth of the ideas and activities tending to human solidarity which distinguish the present age. Nations and cultures have come closer together. An atmosphere of mutual understanding and helpfulness marks their relations today. In this context the part that the Swami played as the bearer of India's age-old message of world peace and human fellowship merits recall to memory.

Of him as of his Master his words are true: 'He is a power, living even now in his disciples and working in the world. He is still growing'. Around us we catch the echoes of the notes of universalism he sounded in his outbursts of sacred eloquence. He was not a politician, and on one occasion indignantly repudiated such an imputation. He was backed by the power of no State. He represented a race that had little recognition in the world's counsels. His message has gained sway by 'the silent mesmerism of Indian thought'. 'As the gentle falling of the dews at night brings support to all vegetable life, so, slowly and imperceptibly', as he said at the Boston Twentieth Century Club, 'this divine philosophy has been spread through the world for the good of mankind'.

THE MORALIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

'My interests are international and not Indian alone', he wrote in 1896 from London. The change in the mental climate of the world since has been the product of Marxism, two World Wars and the spread of Indian thought. Among these the vital significance of the Swami's teachings is the moralization of international relations. Speaking on 'The Mission of the Vedanta' he declared: 'No amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. It is a change of the soul itself for the better that alone will cure the evils of life'. And the appropriation of this master idea by humanity as the days pass proves that his thought flowed by anticipation with the main current of life and ideas of our epoch. In the words of Sister Nivedita, 'India may accept as a working hypothesis that sociology is the synthesis of sciences but her own conviction is that psychology occupies this place'.

THE MIND IS SUPREME

With Upanishadic clearness of insight he read the malaise of the age and in accents of compelling power told the as yet inattentive

world that the good and evil of human destiny were, before and above all, the creation of the mind. 'It is the mind that causes man's bondage and liberation'—is the Upanishadic dictum. Equipped with the wonders of science, the advanced thought of the present is being led to the truth that the conquest of the powers of Nature without control of the impulses of the self cannot solve the problems staring us in the face. Bertrand Russell, in his latest book, *New Hopes for a Changing World*, thus diagnoses the ailments of the race:

'The soul which is not at peace with itself cannot be at peace with the world, and external wars have to continue in order to hide from individual men that the real war is within'.

Man is enmeshed in a threefold conflict with Nature, with self, and with his kind. But the major struggle is within the mind—it is psychical and ethical. And the secrets of nuclear fission or fusion by which man hopes to exploit the earth and to smash all his enemies can yield him good only within the security of a sane mind and a balanced social existence.

Human welfare hangs precariously today by a slender thread poised between hope and fear. With the perfection of atomic weapons the potential tragedy inherent in mechanical progress is becoming more and more obvious. 'Man is ethically unprepared for so great a bounty', said Sir Alfred Ewing in 1932 as President of the British Association. 'The command of Nature has been put into his hands before he knows how to command himself'.

THE VISTA OF MATERIAL PROSPERITY

Before him open boundless prospects of material prosperity—the banishment of starvation, disease, and ignorance. Despite the explosive rate of increase in population he feels sure of nourishment for all. Facts of Nature which were once inexorable are now opportunities. Deserts are a challenge. Inconvenient parts of mountain ranges may be abolished. Australian rivers may be trained

to reverse their courses. Polar ice may be melted by radio-activity. Amazonia with its untapped resources—woods and oil, rubber and manganese, and stretches of virgin soil which may burst into orchards and fertile fields—might accommodate a thousand million people, half the population of the globe, and produce more food than the rest of the world. As Willard Price said in *The Amazing Amazon*, 'It may some day be the chief hope of a plundered planet'. Even if the earth's capital of sources of power be used up in modern industry, accessible oil exhausted, the geological deposits of ages consumed in brief frivolous blazes, and arable land turned into dust bowls, as in many parts of the United States, man will not lose heart, for an inexhaustible reservoir of power in the sleepless oceans and the ever burning sun will be open to his technical skill.

In the meantime self-impulses in individuals and nations shall yield to herd impulses, and existing techniques shall be made most of. The husbandry of raw produce and available materials is to run on certain principles of co-operation. Bertrand Russell formulates these in his *New Hopes for a Changing World*.

LIMITATIONS AND UPSETS

But plans for world welfare have their snags, and their framers their misgivings. The recent cracks in the august edifice of the United Nations prove that 'the larger organizations somehow fail to flourish'. Man may coax Nature into satisfying his wishes. 'He may', as Russell says, 'push back the limits of his power', but he is not omnipotent. Nature will not change its ways or reverse its processes. As modern industry uses up the carelessly scattered sources of energy, more laborious processes will have to be invented and this will tend to lower the standard of living. Great floods of radio-activity being let loose, Einstein opines, all life on our planet may be extinct. The greater leisure given by the use of atomic energy in industry may liberate combative impulses for mutual destruc-

tion. But as Dr. Alexis Carrel said in *Man the Unknown*, 'The aim of civilization is the progress not of science and machinery, but of mankind'.

WORLD DEMOCRACY

Bertrand Russell grounds his hope on the economic equality which Britain has achieved in recent years such as the French and Russian revolutions did not achieve in spite of rivers of blood, and he proposes a world democracy based on consent in some regions and conquest in others. Such a democracy may not 'vote to end the white man's monopoly of certain prosperous parts of the earth', or interfere with immigration laws, or alter frontiers without the consent of the populations concerned. Nations with higher and lower standards of life will thus be kept apart except where already intermixed. The chance of war will not be altogether eliminated, however, where there is a genuine clash of interests, as, for example, over the difficulties of the new nations of Asia and Africa.

All schemes of one world, however broadly conceived and ingeniously fitted, thus reveal an unresolved contradiction of thought. They split over the problem of fair distribution of the world's abundance by international co-operation. The sunken rock of desire, 'the ego-centripetal, self-assertive, self-regarding force' thus wrecks the best laid plans of men. And the dualism pointed out by Vivekananda in his lecture on 'The Real and the Apparent Man' is illustrated. 'All the world is my country, the whole universe is mine, because I have clothed myself with it as my body. Yet we see that there are people in this world who are ready to assert these doctrines, and at the same time do things which we should call filthy; and if we ask them why they do so, they tell us that it is our delusion and they can do nothing wrong'. Bertrand Russell himself instances this incongruity in regard to nationalism. Nationalism today, he says, 'is the chief force making for the extermination of the human race. Everybody is agreed that the nationalism of other countries is

absurd, but the nationalism of one's own country is noble and splendid'.

But not in a cavilling spirit do we mark the chimeras of confused political thought. With a sad wistfulness we look out on the long, arduous journey which is to take the pilgrim of eternity from the vale of the imperfect present to the shining heights of the future. And we realize that the conflicts among men over nationalism, culture, and economic standards cannot be mediated so long as a genuine rebirth into James's 'cosmic emotion' and 'enthusiasm of humanity' does not transfigure a large section of the peoples of the world.

For even the most advanced and progressive civilization contains an overwhelming mass of primitive humanity. And administrators of States exhibit a double standard, two opposite patterns of behaviour, one towards members of their own nation, the other towards outsiders. The root of racialism is fear of the strange and its products, malice, hatred, and cruelty which poison racial relations. Under a philosophy which holds, as Russell says, that 'men's political opinions express the economic interests of their class' and that all would be 'rich if only the rich are liquidated, hatred is erected into a cosmic principle and preached as the source of all progress'. The result is political fanaticism and its brood of fears, furies, and complexes. The recipe for the cure of fanaticism is, according to Russell, 'security, prosperity, and a liberal education'. Hence, he adds, 'fear morality' is to be cured by 'hope morality' which does not seek merely to avoid disaster but to create something good and delightful.

A NEW MORALITY

By means of education from childhood tempered with discipline in the code of social behaviour, the free, happy mind is to be formed which alone can usher in a new epoch in human relations. Bondage to Nature being minimized and the struggle for life eliminated, traditional beliefs and passions would no longer hold man in thrall; and the

individual, freed from the restraints of a totalitarian State, would enter upon a new phase of existence. The conflict of man with man, as Russell says, will then become an anachronism, co-operation will replace competition and, the walls of the ego receding, the particular life would tend to merge in the universal life. Whatever makes for social dynamism, enlarges human power, and extends physical well-being is a positive good. And Swami Vivekananda was most emphatic on the prime necessity of the material basis of human progress. But plans for regulating the world and its economy while there is conflict within the soul are like coercing the laws of Nature and may amount sometimes to a form of megalomania. 'The notion that we can always grasp a little more is a delusion. Our arms are still our arms', Charles Baudouin says in his *Myth of Modernity*.

The real obstacles to world-wide social cohesion are the passions and egoisms—personal or national. And so long as the struggle for life and the disparities in living standards between nation and nation remain, it is not easy to see how human nature born of flesh and blood can lay aside these shackles of the spirit. A philosophy of other values than those generally accepted can alone enable man so far to surpass himself. And so Vivekananda said: 'Man is not to regard Nature as his goal, but something higher. Man is man so long as he is struggling to rise above Nature, and this Nature is both internal and external'. Elsewhere he says: 'That the evils are being eliminated may be true, but if so the good also must be dying out. But are not evils multiplying fast and good diminishing . . .? If good increases in arithmetical progression, evil increases in geometrical progression'. Does not a hydrogen bomb, a hundred times deadlier than an atom bomb, released on the millions of a civil population, outweigh the excellences of ameliorative technique and the agencies for world co-operation?

'Machines', in the Swami's words, 'do not solve the poverty question, they simply make men struggle the more'. And again, 'Your

Parliament, your Senate, your vote, majority, ballot—it is the same thing everywhere. The powerful men in every country are moving society whatever way they like and the rest are only a flock of sheep'. Pandit Nehru himself recently said of the crowd at the top—the politicians and statesmen—that all their talk of peace is but manoeuvring for position.

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

While homage to the ideal of one world echoes the world over from these men of power, the immediate prospect is a grapple between communism and social democracy, between technique and numbers, between Euro-America and the Soviet bloc wooing the dark races. Either side seeks scope and power to remove the other from the path and to effect world good by its own programme and ideology. In this tug-of-war, 'the right of each other to exist', in Dr. Malan's latest phrase, the principle of 'live and let live' has yet to be recognized in the Charter of Human Rights. For that alone can check all attempts to force the other side into one's embrace by propaganda or superior armaments. This is the truth for which India has stood through the ages—unity in diversity.

Says Vivekananda: 'It is not that we ought to learn everything from the West, or that they have to learn everything from us, but each will have to supply and hand down to future generations what it has for the future accomplishment of that dream of ages, the harmony of nations, an ideal world. . . . Education has yet to be in the world, and civilization—civilization has begun nowhere yet, ninety-nine decimal nine per cent of the human race are more or less savages, even now. . . . The one great lesson therefore that the world wants most, that the world has yet to learn from India, is the idea not only of toleration, but of sympathy'.

The cultural colonialism, which created Greater India was a triumph of the pursuit of this cardinal principle of peace. Politicians, thinking in terms of treaties and power blocs,

balances of military strength and offensive-defensive alliances, pass by this glorious episode. But the peoples of South-east Asia, spiritual nurslings of Indian culture, still turn with grateful and affectionate yearning to their Alma Mater with which their visible links snapped centuries ago.

Vivekananda said, 'Each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his own individuality and grow according to his own law of growth. . . . The whole universe is a play of unity in variety, and of variety in unity; . . . a play of differentiation and oneness. We cannot take the one without granting the other'.

'The enjoyment of advantage over another is privilege'—the enjoyment of the advantage of intelligence, strength, or wealth over another—'and throughout the ages the aim of morality has been its destruction. This is the work which tends towards sameness, towards unity, without destroying variety', said Vivekananda at the Sesame Club, London, in his address on 'Privilege'. This morality he raised to a spiritual level when he declared that 'it is the duty of every aristocracy to dig its own grave' and gave a nobler aspect to the strife of the haves and have-nots, which causes the tensions within and between nations.

In his book *The East and the West* he wrote, 'Every nation has a corresponding national idea. This idea is working for the world and is necessary for its preservation. India is still living because she has her own quota yet to give to the general store of the world's civilization'. 'Different nations have different kinds of merits', says Russell in echoing accents, 'and it is not to be wished that all the world should be alike, but there is no reason why cultural diversity should imply political enmity'.

ABSOLUTE EQUALITY—A CHIMERA

Vivekananda said that this state of unity was not to be attained by the complete elimination of all inequalities. 'Absolute equality, that which means a perfect balance of all the

struggling forces in all the planes, can never be in this world. Before you attain that state, the world will have become quite unfit for any kind of life, and no one will be there'. And he added, 'Variety is the very soul of life. When it dies out entirely, creation will die'.

Goethe said that the effort of religion is to reconcile man to the inevitable. This cult of inevitable diversity is mankind's sorest need today. And that religion is not played out which reconciles man to this basic truth on which alone the temple of peace can be reared. The tensions of politics arise from a desire to mould after a single socio-economic-cultural pattern the peoples that make up the two hundred and twenty crores of the earth's children. 'Inequality is the very basis of creation', Vivekananda says. 'At the same time the forces struggling to obtain equality are as much a necessity of creation as those which destroy it'.

The man-made ills of the world today are due to the profession of equality and the practical ignoring of the unity that underlies all. From his historic speech of 1893 onwards Vivekananda's mission was to awaken a vivid sense of this unity which is the grand central truth of Vedantism. 'The first step in wisdom as well as in morality', says our modern philosopher Russell, 'is to open the windows of the ego as wide as possible. No man's ego should be enclosed in granite walls; its boundaries should be translucent'.

FREEDOM AND FEARLESSNESS

Freedom and fearlessness are to regenerate man and to give him the new attitude which will create the happy world. This modern discovery of the Western mind merely endorses the realization of the seers of old. 'The only religion that ought to be taught', said the Swami, 'is the religion of fearlessness. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? It is ignorance of our own nature'. The Upanishads are, he says, 'the only literature in the world where you find the word *abhīh*, fearless, used again and again; in no other scrip-

tures in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man. . . . For no other scripture upholds the absolute oneness of being. Its supreme logic is—fear is born where there is a second. . . . We are absolutely one, we are physically one, we are mentally one and, as a spirit, it goes without saying, we are one, if we believe in spirit at all. Happiness belongs to him who knows this oneness, who knows he is one with the universe. The sage sees the Lord present everywhere, he does not hurt the self by the self, and so attains the highest goal'. Again, 'The Upanishads are the great mine of strength; therein lies strength to invigorate the whole world. . . . They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads'.

MANKIND AT THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE

Armed with cosmic secrets man stands today perilously at the edge of an abyss into which he may precipitate himself and his civilization. It has even been suggested that in planning to send rockets to the moon his object is to seize uranium deposits and to secure a vantage-ground in space from which to hurl atomic weapons at the nether sphere. At no time before did he need more to search his heart, to examine his ends and motives, and to maintain the integrity of his soul. He suffers from the effects of a split personality—divided into watertight compartments, each closed to each. He is a political creature or an economic unit, a voter, a wage earner, or a patriotic soldier, but never a whole man, thinking and feeling on his own account. He is an automaton at the mercy of slogans and catchwords, dieting himself on ready-made thought. He is taught to distrust his heart from which come the great inspirations and the joys and virtues that give light and sweetness to life. He is to abnegate his high privileges and to surrender his initiative to a

totalitarian State. Says Vivekananda, 'The knowledge of man, his powers of perception, of reasoning and intellect and heart, all are busy churning the milk of the world. Out of long churning comes butter, and this butter is God. Men of heart get the "butter", and the "buttermilk" is left for the intellectual'.

DEMONIAC JOYS

'What philosophy insists on', said the Swami, 'is not to give up joys, but to know what joy really is'. True joy is not that of the Norse gods who sit eternally before Woden carousing after a wild boar hunt in which they fight, slay each other, and are healed again, and the boar takes form afresh and the hunt begins again followed by feast and carousal as before. The demoniac soul says unto itself, 'This much is my gain for the day, this desire also shall I attain. . . . This enemy have I slain today, others also shall I kill tomorrow' (*Bhagavad Gita*, XVI, 13-14). This pagan joy of fresh gains and new overthrows obsesses our minds. It is a contrast to the sovereign, autonomous soul, the lamp and the law unto itself, self-communing, self-delighted, self-secure, self-contented, which is the boon of the Upanishads. 'Civilization', said Vivekananda, 'is the manifestation of the divinity which is in man. . . . I can only lay before you what the Vedanta seeks to teach, and that is the deification of the world. . . . Deify it, it is God alone. "Whatever exists in this universe is to be covered with the Lord".' As Trine puts it: 'To recognize our own divinity, and our intimate relation to the Universal, is to attach the belts of our machinery to the power-house of the Universe' (*In Tune with the Infinite*).

THE SOUL UNIVERSAL

The child lives, it has been said, in the minute, the boy in the day, the man imbued with history lives in the epoch. Spinoza would have us live in eternity. Vivekananda wanted to lift the narrow soul, sunk in the partisanships of the present parochial interests and passions inherited from ages of warfare,

to a serene contemplation in the heart of the universal. 'I am untouched by the senses, I am neither *mukti* nor knowable. I am without form, without limit, beyond space and time, I am in everything, I am the basis of the universe, everywhere am I. I am existence absolute, knowledge absolute, bliss absolute. I am He, I am He'. This concept of the soul may appear too remote and unreal for the prevailing philosophy of good living and paramountcy of economic success. From the time of the gymnosophist who defied Alexander the Great to kill him by hurting his body to this day examples are, however, met with, here and elsewhere, of this ideal of emancipation in the flesh and independence of circumstances, of a selfless life of privation and service, of sacrifice even unto death. A too practical view of life and care for physical well-being, on the other hand, have also their dangers. They breed the anxieties and the uncertainties about the destiny of man which are uttered by the harrowed thinkers of our day. A sense of the immensities of our background and of the majesty of the soul may counteract the hurry and impatience and the fiery zeal with which great nations, anxious to impose their will on all, rush to the fray, multiply misery, and halt progress.

THE HARMONY OF FAITHS

A like charge, we know, has been laid to the account of religion. It is not, however, religion but its abuse that has been at fault. Religion's basenesses, says William James, are chargeable to the spirit of corporate dominion, and its bigotries to a spirit of dogmatic dominion—secular passions both, which often intrude upon alien sanctities. Whatever the past records of persecuting religions, the healing touch to the discord of faiths, as well as to the more imminent clash of political fanaticisms and economic bigotries, may be found in the gospel of harmony of which Swami Vivekananda was the evangelist. His sermons on this theme have today become commonplaces for platform quotations. They

have been sharpened to a spear-point by Sister Nivedita thus: 'Man proceeds from truth to truth and not from error to truth. . . . The supreme crime for the follower of any Indian sect shall be the criticism of any other as if it were without the bounds of "the Eternal Faith".' 'That which exists is One; the sages call It variously'. But Vivekananda's message is one of fulfilment. He sounds, again and again, a call to the keepers of all religious truths to pool their riches, so that the inessentials which disunite may settle down like silt at the bottom, and the essentials which unite may sparkle forth on the surface of time's great flood.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

And so the claim may be enforced on behalf of the modern spirit that it consists in

'an overwhelming appreciation of spiritual content'. 'Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on?' said Vivekananda. All the sacred books 'are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. . . . Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!' And finally—'Religion is realization; not talk, not doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion'. Of this religion the living exemplar was Sri Ramakrishna, its apostle Swami Vivekananda. So, shining in the spiritual sky, may these two luminaries pour for all time their benign influence on this distracted globe!

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE AND DEATH

BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

THE PROBLEM OF PROBLEMS

'Of the many riddles that have perplexed the intellect of man in all climes and times, the most intricate is himself. Of the myriad mysteries that have called forth his energies to struggle for solution, from the very dawn of history, the most mysterious is his own nature. It is at once the most insoluble enigma and the problem of all problems. As the starting-point and the repository of all we know and feel and do, there never has been, nor will be, a time when man's own nature will cease to demand his best and foremost attention'. So says Swami Vivekananda at the beginning of his lecture on 'Reincarnation'.

Each generation passes on this problem of life and death to the next, but fortunately there are always a few intrepid and earnest souls who try to unravel the mystery and find

a solution through self-realization. Let us make an effort, then, to follow in the footsteps of these great ones. If we try hard enough and persistently enough, we may solve the problem for ourselves.

In the remarkable book *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, the little girl Topsy is asked: 'Do you know who made you?' 'Nobody, as I knows on', says the child, with a short laugh, and adds, 'I s'pec' I jes' grow'd. Don't think nobody never made me'. Do any one of us think like that? There are many grown-ups in this strange world of ours who are not at all interested in this problem. But there are also some who cannot help asking the question: Where do we come from? Have we been created like the things we see around us? Did we exist before our birth into this world and shall we continue to exist after death? Such questions have been asked

again and again, down the ages. In the words of Walt Whitman,

'The two old, simple problems ever intertwined
Close home, elusive, present, baffled, grappled,
By each successive age insoluble, pass'd on
To ours today—and we pass on the same'.

THE BIOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

Western biologists divide the life-cycle of an individual multicellular organism,—be it a fly, a bird, a beast, or a man,—into five different phases: (1) the formation of the individual by the process called 'fertilization'; (2) the period of development; (3) the period of adult stability; (4) senescence; and (5) death, the terminal event of the cycle. According to most biologists, the organism comes into being, with all its characteristics, through the process of hereditary transmission. There is no place for individual or personal immortality in their scheme. The only kind of immortality which the organism may attain is through its progeny or descendants. Those organisms which do not reproduce their species ultimately cease to exist.

THE HINDU CONCEPTION OF IMMORTALITY

Quite distinct from this theory is another, presented to us by the Hindu spiritual teachers, since most ancient times. They tell us that the physical life of every being passes through a cycle of six changes: (1) birth; (2) continuation of existence for some time; (3) undergoing many changes; (4) growing old; (5) decay; and (6) death. By death is meant that the being ceases to exist physically, but does not cease to be; its life continues on a subtler plane, closer to the Source.

From personal, direct experience, teachers of Vedanta tell us that the soul or spiritual entity, which passes through the various physical changes, is immortal in itself. It existed before its 'birth' and will continue to live eternally, even though it may pass through a series of 'births' and 'deaths'. The Seers of the Upanishads declare: 'The spirit is neither feminine nor masculine, nor neuter, although it appears to be identified with the body it takes until Illumination is attained'.

To use a modern analogy—like the spectrum which is not merely the visible band of light but also that which extends beyond the violet and the red rays,—the soul has an infinite past and also an infinite future. The spirit of man is part of an infinite existence which connects the past, present, and future, and transcends both time and space.

PRE-EXISTENCE AND REINCARNATION OF THE SOUL ACCEPTED BY GREAT THINKERS

Swami Vivekananda observes: 'Of all the theories that have been held by man about himself, that of a soul entity, separate from the body and immortal, has been the most wide-spread; and among those that held the belief in such a soul, the majority of the thoughtful had always believed also in its pre-existence'.

Plato declared:

'Individual souls are eternal, having existed before they came into bodies which are like prisons. Self-knowledge alone can make the soul free. This knowledge is not a new thing. It is a recall, a remembrance of what has been forgotten'.

The pre-existence and immortality of the soul is a fundamental doctrine, not only of Plato, but of many other great thinkers of ancient days, such as Pythagoras who preceded Plato, and Plotinus, the father of Christian mysticism and the founder of Neo-Platonism.

Plotinus (205-270 A.D.) held that the human soul is part of the world soul. It turned towards matter and fell from the spiritual state. It must struggle to free itself from the bondage of matter. If it fails, it enters other bodies after death. It passes through a series of births and deaths until it is entirely freed of all material impurity. When purification is attained through various forms of discipline, the soul unites with the world-soul, and ultimately with the Godhead.

FUTILE EFFORTS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO DESTROY THE BELIEF

Within the Christian Church, some of the Gnostic sects, Manicheans and others, believed

in the pre-existence of the soul as much as in its existence after death. Origen (185-251 A.D.), one of the greatest Christian scholars, teachers, and thinkers of all time, declared: 'The human mind is influenced now by good, now by evil. The causes of this I suspect to be more ancient than the corporeal birth'. But this idea is certainly against the doctrine of orthodox Christianity, and has been firmly suppressed by the Christian Church through many centuries. In 538 A.D., the Council of Constantinople declared: 'Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the pre-existence of the soul and the consequent wonderful opinion of its return, let him be anathema'. But in spite of the efforts of the organized Church, the doctrine, which existed before Christ and which continued to live in other countries besides Christian lands and in many mystical sects, could by no means be destroyed. During the Renaissance (1548-1600 A.D.) the doctrine was upheld by the Italian monk and philosopher Giordano Bruno, who believed in Divine Immanence and the Immortality of the human soul. He was imprisoned, tortured, and burned at the stake. He died, but he helped to free philosophy from the bondage of theology.

Such was its power, however, that the doctrine of reincarnation could, at best, be only driven underground. It continued to influence the thought of many through all the centuries, although people were afraid to speak of it openly. With the end of the Inquisition, therefore, thinkers, poets, and philosophers began to express their ideas more freely. That is why we find Fichte, the German philosopher of the last century, claiming that post-mortem existence of the soul necessarily implies its pre-existence.

Thomas Huxley, the great follower of Darwin, believed in the theory of reincarnation and he was bold enough to state: 'Every sentient being is reaping as it has sown, if not in this life, then in one or other of the infinite series of antecedent existences, of which it is the latest term'. To him, a scientist, nothing could happen without a cause.

IT BECOMES THE THEME OF PHILOSOPHERS AND POETS

Emerson and some of his New England contemporaries thought along the same lines. Emerson was influenced by the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita, and he was brave enough to say: 'There are stairs below us which we have ascended; there are stairs above us, many a one, which continue upward, out of sight'.

Poets live closer to the spirit, and, in their own inimitable ways, give expression to what they believe to be the truth. Thus Wordsworth says:

'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar'.

Tennyson speaks of lower lives through which the soul has come without remembrance:

'If through lower lives I came
I might forget my weaker lot
For is not our first year forgot?'

Walt Whitman, in his brave way, gave expression to the same thought, though we do not know from whom he got these ideas:

'As to you, life, I reckon you are the
leavings of many deaths ;
No doubt I have died myself ten thousand
times before'.

A strange idea, but one shared by many. A growing number of people are finding the idea of reincarnation very logical.

GREAT TEACHERS HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF PAST LIVES

Patanjali, the great teacher of Yoga, says: 'When freedom from avarice becomes confirmed'—i.e. when the mind becomes pure—'the knowledge of the how and wherefore of his previous births comes to the Yogi. By perceiving the impressions of his own mind, the Yogi comes to have a knowledge of his past life.

By meditating on our tendencies, with a very pure mind, we get at least a glimpse of the past, which can help us to understand the

present, and to train for the future. Some of the greatest teachers of the world knew of their own past lives, and spoke of them to their disciples. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna: 'Many a birth have I passed through, and so have you. I know them all but you know them not'. Christ says: 'Before Abraham was, I am'. The Divine Incarnation speaks in this way. He is born with an infinite consciousness that remembers the past. That is why he is able to play his part so well.

Buddha never claimed to be a Divine Incarnation, but later on, his followers came to regard him as such. He does speak, however, of having passed through many forms of purification in his series of births, until the time came when he attained Nirvāna or enlightenment.

He was the son of a king and renounced the world in quest of Truth. After attaining Illumination, he wanted to share his experience with everyone around him. With begging bowl in hand he went from house to house. His royal father was mortified and remonstrated with his son saying, 'A member of our great family should not be begging his food from door to door'. But Buddha could not be deflected from his course. His reply was: 'King, you claim descent from kings,—but my descent is quite different. I am born of the race of Buddhas, and as they have done, begging their food from the charitable, so do I—and it cannot be otherwise'.

His consciousness was different from the ordinary. How often do we make too much of the family tree, forgetting that the soul is older than any family tree!

TESTIMONY FROM THE LIVES OF RAMAKRISHNA AND VIVEKANANDA

Ramakrishna once said: 'I have seen Sat-Chit-Ānanda come out of this sheath (meaning his body) and say: "I incarnate myself in every age".' A couple of days before his passing, his greatest disciple Vivekananda was with him. He had heard the Master say that the Supreme Spirit was manifest in him.

But Vivekananda was not the man to accept anything without first testing it. A rather curious thought flashed across his mind: 'If now, when his body is about to drop off, I can hear him say that the Divine is born in him, then I would believe that he is truly God Incarnate'. No sooner this thought came to him than the Master turned towards him and said very distinctly, 'Still not convinced? He who was Rama and He who was Krishna is now born as Ramakrishna in this body'. Vivekananda felt ashamed of himself for his not believing in the words of his Master earlier.

When Vivekananda came to Ramakrishna for the first time—he was then Narendra, the brilliant, polished college student—the Master told him: 'I know you are one of the ancient sages, born on earth to remove the misery of mankind'. Young Narendra thought, 'My father lives in Calcutta; I know myself to be such and such a person; yet he says I am an ancient sage!' and concluded that the Master must be mad! The next time Narendra visited him, however, the Master put him into a spiritual trance in which all outward consciousness was lost, and obtained the information he wanted about the disciple. Of this he spoke later: 'I asked him about his antecedents and whereabouts, his mission in this world, and the duration of his mortal life. He dived deep into himself and gave fitting answers. They confirmed what I had seen and felt about him. These things should be kept secret, but I came to know that he was a sage who had attained perfection, that he was a past master in meditation, and that the day he learned of his real nature he would give up the body by an act of will, through Yoga'.

Vivekananda lived a life of intense activity for the sake of promoting the welfare of humanity, a life so intense that his body could not bear it. A few days before his death—he passed away before he had completed his fortieth year—some of his brother disciples asked him casually: 'Do you know yet who you are?' Gravely, he replied:

'Yes, I know now'. There was a grim silence; the brother monks were afraid.

A short time later, just three days before his passing, the Swami pointed to a particular spot on the banks of the Gangā, close to the monastery, and said, 'When I give up my body, cremate it there'. It was just opposite to the place where Ramakrishna's body had been cremated.

Several of the brother disciples were warned by the Swami: 'I am preparing for death'. On the day of his passing, he practised meditation for three hours, all alone in the chapel. He then took a class in Sanskrit, sometimes talking with his disciples and illustrating his teaching with witty stories. Later he went for a long walk and on his return talked for a while with the monks. As evening drew near, the Swami's mind became more and more indrawn. He retired to his room and sat in meditation, facing the Gangā. He had left word that no one was to disturb him. An hour later, he called one of the members of the monastery and requested him to fan him. He then lay down on his bed. His hands trembled a little and breathing became deep. His eyes became fixed, his face assumed a divine expression,—and all was over. The spirit had left the body. Was that death?

In Sanskrit, this is not called death, but Mahā-Samādhi. In ordinary Samadhi the soul returns to the world of sense, but in the Maha or Supreme Samadhi, having at last attained the superconscious plane, the soul has no further need of the body, which then falls off. From the physical point of view, there is the appearance of death, but actually the soul is set free to dwell in the superconscious.

At the time of the Swami's Maha-Samadhi, his brother disciple Ramakrishnananda—known as 'Sasi' in his premonastic days—was carrying on the great teacher's work in Madras. A little while after the Swami's passing, as Ramakrishnananda sat in meditation, he heard some one calling to him: 'Sasi, Sasi, I have spat out my body';—it was

a familiar voice, and he instantly recognized it to be that of Vivekananda.

WE ARE ALL IMMORTAL BUT DO NOT KNOW IT

One might ask: 'Granting that some of these highly illumined souls have existed before their birth into this world, what of us, ordinary human beings?' The answer of Vedanta is that the spirit in every one of us is beyond all birth and death, but, owing to ignorance and the thralldom of desires born of ignorance the soul becomes identified with the body for the satisfaction of the desires. In the case of the un-illumined, when life is cut short, the body dies, but the soul is brought back to other bodies again and again until the precious experience of dispassion—the forerunner of the illumination which takes one beyond the cycle of birth and death—is gained.

Our teachers tell us that human birth is a rare privilege. In this life we are given the opportunity of attaining the highest perfection and truth. For, not only the divine incarnations and great illumined teachers, but we, the ordinary human beings, also are the manifestations of the same Divinity. There are, no doubt, differences in manifestation but the essence of Divinity is the same. We are given the analogy of the ocean, the waves, and the bubbles—all of the same substance, different only in manifestation. Vivekananda has declared over and over again: 'Each soul is potentially divine, and the goal of human birth is to manifest this divine nature within'.

Of this divinity within, the Swami says elsewhere: 'There is something in us which is free and permanent. But it is not the body; neither is it the mind. The body is dying every minute. The mind is constantly changing. The body is a combination, and so is the mind; and as such can never reach to a state beyond all change. But beyond this momentary sheathing of gross matter, beyond even the finer covering of the mind is the Atman, the true Self of man, the Permanent, the Ever Free. It is His free-

dom that is percolating through layers of thought and matter, and in spite of the colourings of name and form, is ever asserting its unshackled existence. It is His deathlessness, His bliss, His peace, His divinity, that shines out and makes itself felt in spite of the thickest layers of ignorance. He is the real Man, the fearless One, the deathless One, the Free. . . . This Being, this Atman, this real Self of man, the Free, the Unchangeable, is beyond all conditions and as such, it has neither birth nor death. Without birth or death, eternal, ever existing is this Soul of Man'.

THE MYSTERY UNRAVELLED BY
DIVINE REALIZATION

This Atman is to be realized through faith, devotion, and meditation. It is the

same Atman that shines in our souls, that also shines in all souls. We all reflect the same Light. It is the one Infinite Spirit which manifests itself through all individual souls. Self-knowledge is the realization that the individual self is a part of the All-pervading Spirit. Attaining it, all ignorance is dispelled. The distractions of ignorance and desire, even in the subtle form, disappear. Let us then follow in the footsteps of the illumined ones, realize the divine within and so unravel the mystery of life and death. There will then be no more fear of death. It may even be that after illumination we shall be enabled to return to this world for helping others to attain something of this divine knowledge, this spiritual consciousness, this realization of the God in man.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY MASSIMO SCALIGERO

Some authorities on Indian metaphysical tradition allege that there are serious reasons to charge Swami Vivekananda with having compromised the orthodoxy and purity of tradition in his attempt to divulge Hindu doctrines in America and the Western world.

This might be made to seem a plausible criticism on the ground that the great metaphysics stemming from the ancient Rishi and expounded in the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the *Gita* cannot be made comprehensible to readers representing a much later and very different civilization, unless the risk is taken of altering their original meaning. It may, however, be contended that the present-day Western public are too much permeated with positivism and the rationalistic, materialistic spirit to be able to appreciate in its original form an essentially spiritual doctrine every

word of which is mysteriously identified with inexpressible values not to be reconciled with the prevailing trends of modern Western thought.

Hence the necessity of interpreting and translating into modern terms a teaching which had hitherto remained beyond the understanding of Western scholars, its splendid isolation secure behind an impenetrable rampart of symbols, myths, and secret doctrines. To span the chasm of so deep an antithesis was a singularly audacious undertaking, the accomplishment of which must be acknowledged as a most advantageous contribution to modern culture, proving the unchanging meaning and power of tradition. Tradition, in fact, does not belong to the past, the present, or the future; it possesses an ageless driving power, capable of exerting its in-

fluence in all periods of time by assuming in every succeeding period a formal garb suited to contemporary cultural trends.

As we shall see in the course of the brief remarks that follow, the truth is that Vivekananda was able to look beyond the formal limits of tradition because he had mastered its deepest meaning. This gave him a wider and more universal outlook, to which he boldly adapted the old mode of expression, that same mode which fanatical zealots of all schools and sects would have wished to remain for ever frozen in an unyielding mould.

He was, thus, successful in bridging the chasm between East and West by making available to the Western world, and in the language best suited to its mechanistic and rationalistic mentality, the earliest doctrinal revelations of Oriental wisdom.

One cannot, therefore, agree with the view that Vivekananda has misrepresented the principles of Aryo-Vedic tradition merely because he poured them into the mould of modern dialectics and modern language. Those who have acquired a spiritual as well as a school-book knowledge of those principles can easily identify them in their modern version. The original, perennial spirit of the work has suffered no alteration. The great Hindu ascetic, far from venturing into a mere modern interpretation of Hindu doctrine, has brought the message of that doctrine straight to the mind and soul of the contemporary reader who has thus been prompted to explore the depths of a doctrine which no dialectics can ever fully convey to those who are not spiritually qualified to apprehend it.

The innermost secret of that doctrine cannot be grasped through teaching and scholarship alone, for it lies beyond the boundaries of the human world. Metaphysical truth, pure wisdom, and the Yoga, must be felt before they can be comprehended. One may hold philosophical discourses on the mystery of the Purusha and the Atman, but that mystery will never be fathomed by those who do not feel it welling up from out of their very soul as something self-revealed

apart from and far above all efforts to understand it by ordinary mental processes.

We may conclude that Vivekananda's work, giving a powerful stimulus to the study of Hindu ascetic tradition, while pointing to the various aspects of Yoga, was not intended to impart school knowledge, its main object consisting in opening out new avenues to the power of the human spirit over brute matter. A most valuable contribution has thus been offered to that world-wide fusion of cultural, traditional, and civilizing values which seems to be the ultimate goal aimed at by the modern world even though by differing means and through many tragical misunderstandings and conflicts.

Vivekananda is one of the leading personalities of India's spiritual revival. A member of the Kayastha caste (of warriors), he calls to mind, by virtue of his many-sided personality, some of the great figures of Western history, such as Plato, Leonardo, and Goethe. There is in his nature, together with the finest mystical sensitiveness, all the inspired skill peculiar to a pure Jñāni; he is indeed a poet of Nature and of mankind while he remains at the same time a silent prober of the mystery of Brahman.

Of athletic stature and a fine gymnast, he is an exceptionally well-read man, whose wide and deep knowledge enriches an extremely versatile mind, skilled in exploring every branch of both modern knowledge and ancient tradition. A virile self-reliance and an affable manner, a metaphysical disposition and a discreet humility towards his fellow-men, are different facets of his well-balanced character. Both the ancient and the modern world are as open books to him. No man is endowed with a fuller and more devoted appreciation of Christ's divine love, but he is at the same time a believer in the use of force when necessary, refusing to allow materialists and atheists the exclusive right to resort to strong measures. 'Be virile, be strong!' is his advice to his disciples . . . 'I can respect even a wicked man', he adds, 'as long as he proves himself to be strong and manly, for

his inner strength will one day lead him to renounce his wickedness and his self-seeking schemes in order to discover Truth'.

Vivekananda is the organizer, the defender, and the apostle of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's metaphysically conceived amalgamation of all mystical ideals on a basis of human charity and fellowship supported by divine grace. While Ramakrishna first delivered his universal mystical message, it is owing to Vivekananda that that message has been divulged to the world. It was Vivekananda who took upon himself the task of conveying in terms of practical worldly wisdom the message revealed by Ramakrishna to his own disciples. It is still Ramakrishna who speaks and teaches, but it is owing to Vivekananda's work that his teaching comes to life and is understood by people in every country. It is Vivekananda's voice that spreads far and wide the language of the ancient Aryan wisdom, enfolding within its reach the creative principles of present-day Western thought. Vigorous action and contemplative thought are closely allied within the mind of this remarkable warrior-prophet. Through him a synthesis has been achieved which had been lost for centuries.

He was successful in drawing world-wide attention to the Indian nation. He went to America in 1893, an utterly unknown, resourceless stranger, but well resolved to utter to the world the supreme words of Wisdom. He was one of the speakers at the World Congress of Religions held in Chicago in that year, and was listened to with wonder and admiration by hundreds of representatives of every creed. Then, having visited the main centres of American culture, he came to Europe, carrying everywhere the message of India, a country and a people well able to bestow upon the modern world a vitally necessary knowledge, but also a nation whose teeming millions are running adrift on a tragic tide of social and economic ills. His political message was delivered with irresistible power, while his exposition of the original Yoga attracted general interest.

Asceticism does not divert his attention from the world of men; on the contrary, it is aimed at urging mankind to probe to the utmost the problems of the Spirit. Rāja Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga are the complementary aspects of the original Yoga he intended to expound in terms easily understood by scholars of every race and country. And when his work was completed, 'If I have accomplished anything at all', he said, 'by word of mouth or by actual action, if some man has been helped on his way by some of the words I have spoken, I deserve no praise for it; the merit belongs entirely to Ramakrishna. Mine are the imperfections; whatever is strong, sound, life-giving in my utterance is all his own'. One must not forget, in this connection, that Ramakrishna was wont to point to Vivekananda as the best of his disciples, and the man who would one day carry out in the world of men the mission he himself had looked forward to only as a great hope.

As the young ascetic uttered his message to the modern world, thousands of proselytes from both America and Europe came forward, ready to follow and support him in his double task of spiritualizing Western materialism and working at the same time for the moral and material redemption of the peoples of India.

But a very few only were deemed worthy to work with him. This man, inflexibly attached to his ideal principles, disdained the help of the rich who would willingly have supplied him with dollars and sterling. Among Oriental thinkers, he was first in opposing plutocracy and its pretentious belief in money as the healer of all worldly ills.

With regard to his own country, he contends that India's redemption can only be achieved through self-aware heroism and self-denial. India, he says, does not require dollars or pounds which are only symbols of the materialism and the frantic sensualism characterizing the so-called 'modern' civilization. As the inventor and the trustee of the loftiest religious doctrines and the upholder of

a metaphysical tradition of paramount value, India can be regenerated both socially and materially by a thorough revival of those doctrines and that tradition.

Ramakrishna's mystical wisdom thus becomes a working social force, thanks to Vivekananda's efforts. The Ramakrishna Mission, founded by him, is a cultural-religious organization whose object consists in assisting the humble whose poverty and meekness are the living and suffering expression of the divine will. This Mission soon became the embodiment of the Master's doctrine, i.e. the instrument by means of which a universal ideal embracing all religions was applied to practical purposes. Gradually the Ramakrishna Mission came to act as a healing force in India, offering to conflicting religious beliefs a common ground for that understanding and brotherly reconciliation which is the ultimate goal aimed at by Vivekananda. It is indeed his fervent hope to see regenerated India turning into 'an Islamic body with a Vedantic brain'.

His spiritual charity naturally rekindles his love for the peoples of India and their motherland. Margaret Noble,¹ one of his faithful disciples, known under the Indian name of Nivedita, once asked him what she might do to make herself more useful to the cause. 'Love India', was Vivekananda's curt reply. This is, in fact, the ruling principle he is constantly instilling into his followers' minds. In order faithfully to serve the cause of such a people as the Indian, he teaches, one must renounce every personal interest and ambition; metaphysical knowledge and the practice of Yoga and its beneficent effects must be valued only in accordance with the indirect benefit accruing to the community from the increased usefulness of the social worker. No worse mistake can be conceived than the practice of mysticism as an end unto itself, namely, as a form of exoteric individualism, totally divorced from the interests and vicissitudes of living men. It is only among the

humble poor and the sinners that ignorance and error can be overcome by the ascetic, whose spiritual insight must be pressed into service as a metaphysical contribution to the good of humanity at large. India can be saved only by the revival of original tradition even though that tradition has been all but lost in a maze of sectarian mysticisms and cultural forms. It is Vivekananda's prevailing belief that 'India must be regenerated by the thundering rhythm of the Vedas'. The ancient Aryan spirit relives in him. The Brahmanic and the heroic principles, constituting the very essence of Hindu spirituality, blend into a universal synthesis in this man's mind, as a result of his social as well as of his metaphysical experiences. Well he knows that the divorce of the Indian priesthood from the life of the people was a fatal error of decadent India. Those mysticists and philosophers who thought they would best find their way to heaven by setting themselves apart from the living world and their motherland have long since forfeited their title to eternal bliss. The ancient synthesis must now be reintegrated. 'You should endeavour', says Vivekananda to his disciples, 'to turn your active life into a blend of broad idealism and practical sense. You must at all times be ready to sit in deep meditation and rise from it to go to the field and till the soil; you must be prepared to explain the subtleties of the Shastras and then run to the market to sell the fruit of your labour. . . . Religious seclusion is intended to add to your practical usefulness as men of the world. . . . A real man is one who is as strong as strength itself and yet has the heart of a woman'.

A constant effort to spiritualize everyday human life, by applying to the world of reality the force arising from the mystery of the spirit, is the motive power of all Vivekananda's work. 'Some people say', he writes, 'that religions are falling into decay while spiritual ideas are fading out of the world of men. On the contrary, it seems to me that religions are now entering the path that will lead them to their final fulfilment. . . . As

¹ It was Miss Josephine MacLeod, not Margaret Noble.—*Editor, P.B.*

long as religion is in the hands of an elite of priests it will remain confined within the narrow boundaries of a temple, a church, a book of prayers, a ritual and a formulary. But let its reach be extended and its ritualism purified, let it be permeated throughout by the spirit of the universal brotherhood of man; it will then be a live force once again influencing every aspect of community life and the life of the individual; and an infinitely more efficient dispenser of good than it has ever been'.

An ability to understand our fellow-men, to serve society, to help our neighbour, is, to Vivekananda, the clearest proof of a man's spiritual progress and the true measure of God's active presence among his living creatures; for it is the ability to cherish and serve our neighbour that proclaims man's victory over his own egotism while tangibly attesting his subservience to the divine will.

Everything one possesses must be given up to one's needy neighbour, since a man's possessions are not given him for his own selfish enjoyment but to enable him 'to play God's game'.

At a time when the Ramakrishna Mission was in the throes of a serious financial crisis during one of those epidemics so sadly frequent in India, Vivekananda ordered his followers 'to sell everything if necessary'. 'We are Sannyasins', he added, 'and must be ready at any moment to sleep beneath a tree and live on alms'.

At bottom, his concept of action as the means to link the idea of Divinity to all aspects of human life, including instinctive forces of Rajas and Tamas, is a modern version of the Vedantic expression 'I am He' or 'In very truth all exterior reality, including Māyā, is Brahman and Brahman is the Ego'. It is, in fact, the acknowledgement of the divine quality as the secret core of all that exists (not, however, in a pantheistic or theosophic but, rather, in a transcendent sense). The great motive power is One, and the object to be achieved is implicit in It. Thus the universal force underlying every action is

the divine force, just as the spiritual impulse driving us to action is also divine, and whatever we are offered is only one of the numberless possible manifestations of Divinity. The giver of alms may be the divine spirit himself, and every action is but a visible token of the divine presence at work, while the object aimed at by the alms-giver is itself divine.

This is, of course, the ultimate significance of the 'Advaitistic' formula in the Vedanta, now revived and divulged as a doctrine of social regeneration by Vivekananda. To a man who has acquired this universal form of religious awareness (the word 'knowledge' carries the meaning of 'interior realization' to the traditional Hindu mind), no action exists, apart from its spiritual motive power, or can be claimed by the Ego as its own exclusive creation. The divine Purusha alone exists, secure against the influence of Prakriti and the sole inspirer of Prakriti activities under the divine direction which is inherent in it as the immediate expression of the Eternal.

This is, again, the ultimate meaning of the well-known comment to Patanjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* now adopted by Vivekananda as a complement to his Raja Yoga. Metaphysical vision practically inspires Yoga in all its forms as well as all spiritual life, so that every action and every inclination of man becomes a pathway to the fulfilment of the Yoga, allowing the full knowledge and practice of the materialities of life to be constantly illumined by the highest spirituality. Since every faculty is called forth to accomplish this task, the vital force which produces action may become an instrument for the purposes of Karma Yoga; and emotional or passionate impulses may open a way to Bhakti Yoga, while human thought acquires through Jnana Yoga an essentially creative quality, leading to the full comprehension and expression of transcendent Truth.

Jnana Yoga should equip man to acquire knowledge through his own reasoning power restored to its original, self-reliant freedom; and this is the reason for Vivekananda's con-

tention that 'what we work for is the improvement of man'. 'No theoretical teaching', he goes on to say, 'has ever made a man better. Our possibilities of self-improvement lie within our own selves. We must learn to "realize" the truth, and this can only be done by the power of thought. Let man think! . . . His thinking power is the glory of man. . . . I am a believer in the power of reason, and it is on my reason that I rely, having been born in a country where one soon learns to know the perils of following the dictates of authority'.

As we have seen, Vivekananda's teaching leads on to a praxis of universal reach, his fundamental idea being that every individual action or thought must be 'lived through' as a function of the divine Whole of which it is an expression; and that this constant reference of the finite to the Infinite, of what is mortal to the Immortal, of the individual to the universal, in everyday life as well as in the secluded realms of thought, is the necessary premiss to the spiritual serenity and the social peace of the individual.

The *Ecclesia Magna* of Western tradition, conceived as the aggregate expression of every man's longing towards divinity, corresponds by close analogy to Vivekananda's idea of a universal religion conceived as an essential aspect of the lives of all peoples on earth, irrespective of nationalistic bias. This is, after all, a present-day interpretation of the Devayāna, the 'path to the gods', which lies, according to Vedic tradition, in the hearts of men. The Master's thought is perfectly clear in this connection too: 'I accept', he says, 'all the religions of the past and the present, and am content to worship God in any Church, whatever its ritual. I go to the Moslem mosque, I enter Christian churches and kneel at the feet of the Crucifix, I attend Buddhist temples and seek shelter in the shadow of Buddha and His law. I go into the forest and sit beneath a tree, losing

myself in meditation next to the Hindu who is striving to perceive the light of divine grace burning in our hearts'.

To find the pathway to Universalism really is a secret desire, even though unconscious, of every living man. All that is suffered on this earth is intended to open out a passage, through man's conscious mind and his natural inclinations, to the concept of the universality of mankind under God. It is the only idea that, being a direct revelation of the divine power, can offer a solution of every problem confronting mankind, whether in the moral and political or in the social and scientific spheres.

The man who more strenuously opposes the fulfilment of the divine design that lives within his breast will undergo the greater sufferings and misfortunes, from which, however, he will draw an increasingly clear awareness of himself as well as of the Supreme Truth—an awareness that will eventually effect his final liberation.

The present confusion and the hardships it inflicts on mankind will be followed by wonderful events.

Unknown to most people, many a long step is being taken towards the reconciliation of men to men and the peaceful unification of all mankind. We see how science is tending to become an instrument of Truth, while the horizon of knowledge widens out, and tradition opens the minds of men to a better understanding of the spiritual world. What is most important of all is the avoidance of self-contained formulas and systems, within whose coils men are bound and imprisoned.

'The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all the other Shāstras consist of a great number of pages many of which, none can tell how many, have still to be properly understood and assimilated. I wish all those pages were always available to everybody, for we who live in the present must find our way to the timeless future'.

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS: WHAT IT HAS TAUGHT THE WORLD

BY SWAMI ANANYANANDA

It was September 1893,—sixty years ago. An event of great moment in the history of world religions was about to take place in the American city of Chicago—the Parliament of Religions. A strange looking and quaintly dressed young man had strayed into the streets of that great metropolis. He was handsome and majestic in his demeanour. He was there in the New World quite unsought for and uninvited; and yet when, a few days later, —on Monday September 11, to be precise,— he appeared at the Parliament of Religions and addressed its various sessions, he made history. The resounding success he achieved there marked a new era in the religions history of mankind. This hitherto unknown new-comer leapt from obscurity to fame overnight. It is reported that life-size portraits of him were posted up in the streets of Chicago with the words 'The Monk Vivekananda' written beneath. Passers-by would stop before them with bowed heads to show him reverence. When once his fame had spread, invitations began pouring in from different parts of America, and hundreds of hospitable doors were thrown open to do him honour.

At the Parliament had assembled, as delegates, great dignitaries of the Church, eminent men of science, and learned scholars, both from the Orient and the Occident, representing their respective schools of thought. But Swami Vivekananda stood on his own feet, with none, no established school of thought or organized Society, to sponsor him. He had nothing in particular to represent either; for, when he rose to address the opening session of the Parliament, it was not to represent this faith or that, but to speak in the name of Religion; not of the many sects and sectarian beliefs, but of the Religion

which is universal in character and application—the Eternal Religion.

Imbued with this spirit of universality were those first few memorable words with which the Swami addressed his audience—*Sisters and Brothers of America!* Never before had they heard such a sentiment expressed regarding them; they were overwhelmed. The whole Parliament was caught up by an irresistible wave of enthusiasm. Hundreds of men and women rose to their feet instantly and gave him a loud applause, they had gone mad! Vivekananda was astounded. It took full two minutes before he could resume his speech. In that short speech that followed, the Swami thanked 'the youngest of nations in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world, the Vedic Order of Sannyasins', and introduced Hinduism as 'the Mother of Religions, a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance'. Hinduism to him was coextensive with universal religion. He deprecated 'sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism' which had filled the earth with violence and drenched it with human blood, and he hoped that the Parliament would inaugurate a new era of free association among the nations of the world so that each could make some distinctive contribution to the general progress of man and his civilization.

Such was the burden of the Swami's other speeches too, delivered at the subsequent sessions of the Parliament. It was always 'the religious consciousness of India that spoke through Him,' writes Sister Nivedita, giving the general import of the Swami's Addresses, 'the message of his whole people, as determined by their whole past'.

In the *Paper on Hinduism*, which he

read at the Parliament on September 19, 1893, Vivekananda made a masterly survey of the entire field of the religion of the Hindus and touched upon its essential characteristics and fundamental beliefs. He spoke of the dignity of man and the latent divinity of the soul, of the majesty of the Atman—the true Self of man, and of its eternal purity and freedom. He spoke there of the internal strength of Hinduism, which had withstood the vicissitudes of history down the centuries, its spirit of absorption and assimilation, and its common basis upon which rest the numerous, apparently contradictory sects and their beliefs. Religious bigotry and ‘insularism’ have no scope in the Hindu mind.

To the Hindu, the fundamental element of faith in religion is the potential divinity of the embodied soul, and the goal of religious aspiration is the fullest expression and unfoldment of that essential divinity. All else, like temples and churches, scriptures and speculations, doctrines and dogmas, are only of secondary importance. Wherever this element is found, under whatever name it may appear, it will be appreciated, accepted, and followed in India. To the Hindu, all religions are only as many effective paths, and the goal sought to be attained by all these was one and the same. ‘As many views, so many paths’. So no particular faith or sect could or need claim any exclusiveness or superiority over others in religious matters; for, each one of them is but an attempt at understanding the Truth which is One and universal. To the Hindu, religion, again, does not consist in mere empty words; it is a pathway and must lead to realization. Perfection, unity,—that is the goal of religion.

Throughout the different Addresses delivered by the Swami, not a word of denunciation of any faith ever rose from his lips. His words always breathed a remarkable spirit of universalism. Describing this in a touching manner, the great French savant, Romain Rolland, writes: ‘Each time he repeated with new arguments but with the same force of conviction his thesis of a

universal religion without limit of time or space, uniting the whole *Credo* of the human spirit, from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmations of modern science. He harmonized them into a magnificent synthesis, which, far from extinguishing the hope of a single one, helped all hopes to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature. There was to be no other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution’. What he did deprecate in no uncertain terms were the religious fanaticism and bigotry on the part of some and their claim to superiority over other faiths.

To India, Vivekananda’s appearance at the Parliament of Religions was of great historic significance. In those days when India was not an independent nation, the Swami raised his powerful voice in the name of her Eternal Religion and revealed to the world at large that she contained the seeds of humanity’s religion of the future, which would be universal in outlook and all-comprehensive in understanding. After the Parliament was over, he was eagerly sought after by thinking men all over America. They were anxious to learn from him more of his country and his countrymen. In what followed after the conclusion of the Parliament of Religions, during his wide travels and extensive lecturing campaign, finding new friends and followers for his ideas and founding Societies for their propagation, we can well discern the beginnings of a new chapter in the history of India and her contact with the Western world. Vivekananda thus put India once more on the map of the world.

It was not perhaps unlikely, one may presume from the way Vivekananda was treated by a small section of persons, that some people at least desired to utilize the Parliament and its deliberations for their own ends. They might have thought that the venue would provide an opportunity to proclaim the superiority of Christianity over the other religions of the world. But the tables were turned! From the unparalleled success

Vivekananda achieved in the Parliament, it looks as if Destiny had its own plan and set the stage for him to give him an opportunity to present the Eternal Religion of the Hindus before that august assemblage of the representatives of the great religions of the world. Says Sister Nivedita, 'When he began to speak it was of the religious ideas of the Hindus, but when he ended, Hinduism had been created'. Of the effect the Parliament as a whole produced, Merwin-Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament (which the Swami addressed a number of times), said, 'One of its chief advantages has been in the great lesson which it has taught the Christian World, especially to the people of the United States, namely, that there are other religions more venerable than Christianity, which surpass it in philosophical depth, in spiritual intensity, in independent vigour of thought, and in breadth and sincerity of human sympathy, while not yielding to it a single hair's breadth in ethical beauty and efficiency'.

Yet in another respect, too, Vivekananda's Addresses at the Parliament have been hailed as having been of immense significance; they have been described as a 'Charter of Emfranchisement'. Expounding his thesis on the all-inclusive character of the Sanatana Dharma, the Swami says, 'From the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion'. It may be added that the followers of Christ and Mohammed also have a legitimate place in the land of the Hindus. For, Hinduism does not exclude any in matters religious, but accepts all and assimilates every noble sentiment wherever it may spring from. Commenting on the spirit of universalism that issued forth from the words of Vivekananda *The New York Herald*, one of the then leading papers of America, said,

'After hearing him we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation'.

In this context one cannot help making a digression. The point of reference taken up below is of utmost importance and directly concerns the future of religions in India. There is a great deal of suspicion about the motives with which foreign Christian missionary work is carried on in this country, notwithstanding the very noble humanitarian activities undertaken by the missionaries for the good of the people. Recently it was also reported that some undesirable, antinational political activity was espoused or encouraged by some foreigners who called themselves preachers and missionaries. This has naturally aroused further suspicions in this regard. Every true Christian who loves India as his motherland should have no hesitation in saying that the sooner such unhelpful evangelists mend their ways the better it would be for the future of Christianity in particular and religious harmony in general.

Let no one misunderstand this. Christianity is no stranger to India. It has been on the soil of India for nearly nineteen centuries. India gave shelter to early Christians—the Syrian Christians, who are today an inseparable part of our national polity. Religious fanaticism and bigotry are alien to the soil of India. She will always accept and has accepted, everything that is genuinely religious, under whatever nomenclature it may originate. But she will not tolerate, much less associate herself with, anything that is insular and dogmatic in religion. When zealous—and some, perhaps, well-meaning—evangelists, while haranguing to unlettered masses on the latter's need for embracing Christianity, start denouncing the indigenous faiths and gods in an unchristian manner, one can only recall the words of Swami Vivekananda when he declared, in his Address at the final Session of the Parliament of Religions: 'The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and

yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth'. None need labour hard to carry to the Hindu mind the glorious life and teachings of Jesus. The Hindu view of Christ is as laudable and sincerely religious as any Christian's. The Hindus accept Christ, but what they are seen to reject is dogmatic churchiness.

Indian Christianity is a part and parcel of our national life and it will play its rightful role in independent India. Its future is perfectly assured, nay, is bound to be more glorious than heretofore, provided it naturally allows itself to be woven into the vast fabric of the religious life of the nation. Such has been the past history of the other older religions in India. It cannot be different now. It will be so with respect to Islam too. S. K. George, a nationalist and liberal-minded Christian, in his book *Gandhi's Challenge to Christianity*, has bestowed much thought on this problem and discussed it in the proper perspective. He draws pointed attention to what is an essential feature of Hinduism, the Sanatana Dharma of India. He writes:

'Hinduism is a term of foreign coinage and is not really expressive of the genius of a religion that claims no single founder and enforces no single creed or cult upon its votaries. That genius is one of genuine synthesis, of active assimilation, of the diverse elements that have gone into the making of Indian Dharma... Christianity (in India) may indeed have to go down the throat of Hinduism and get digested within, so that it may be thoroughly assimilated into the life-blood of Hindu Dharma, in order to produce the fruits of the spirit that its Master intended it to produce in all mankind... Indian Christianity, if it is at all alive to the situation, at all sensitive to the signs of the times, has to rethink itself, reorient itself to the new India, rediscover its basic substance and interpret that in terms acceptable to the Indian mind and genius... Christianity will have to allow itself to be swallowed by the religion of India, to die in order to find a larger and fuller life in Indian Dharma'.

By and large this ought to be the true position of Christianity in India, both at present and in future, viewed against the background of our national tradition and genius.

As already observed, the Parliament of

Religions at Chicago, held just sixty years ago, was full of great significance to India and the world in more senses than one. It opened up new vistas of contact between the East and the West. It provided a fresh outlook in international relationships. Rightly has it been called 'a parliament of humanity'. It unified the religious consciousness of man, irrespective of race or nationality, so that a freer flow of thoughts and ideals between the nations of the world has become a marked phenomenon since then. The West has become more intimately aware of the East, together with its culture and civilization, and has begun to understand and appreciate them. This undoubtedly is of the greatest value in our modern context, when the world is shrinking day by day with the advance of science and technology and there is growing a feeling among the peoples of the world to come together and live as members of one great human family. The East and the West have met and joined hands in the common cause of all humanity. The amity and understanding that are indispensable for the betterment of man are strengthened by mutual cultural exchanges between nations, each endeavouring to take from and also give to the others.

This process of coming closer, revived once more at the Parliament, has been continuing ever since. With the passage of time greater expressions of this rapprochement are sure to manifest themselves, yielding better benefits to man and making his life happy and worth while. To accelerate this process and to remove impediments, nations must meet together on the one common platform of humanity, breaking the barriers of passions and prejudices,—national, racial, political, and social. No individual or group can reasonably claim undue privilege or priority, to the exclusion of others, by denouncing or destroying the faith and purpose of the latter. This is the message that the Parliament of Religions has delivered unto mankind.

In conclusion, one cannot but ponder over the concluding and now memorable words of

Swami Vivekananda, uttered at the end of his Address at the Final Session of the Parliament of Religions: 'If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.

In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of their resistance: "Help and not fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction," "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension." "

MEMORIES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

I

It was given to me to meet Swami Vivekananda and spend many days with him at Trivandrum towards the close of 1892 before he went to Chicago to represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions there in September 1893 and also at Madras after he returned from Chicago and landed at Colombo on 15th January 1897 and reached Madras a few days later. My entire life was transformed by those memorable and holy contacts. I shall briefly record my impressions here to the best of my memory.

Bhagavan Ramakrishna Paramahansa attained Mahāsamādhi in 1886. Swami Vivekananda left Calcutta in 1888 and wandered in North India and later on alone in the Himalayas whose majesty and message passed into his mind and heart and shone in his face from that time onwards. In 1891 he began his wanderings in West and South India. He travelled all over India and had a direct personal knowledge of India the motherland and of his countrymen by direct contact. He constantly kept two books with him, viz. the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Imitation of Christ*. He filled his spirit with their message and yearned to give that message to all humanity.

He felt acutely the poverty, squalor, and misery of the Indian masses and admired their contentment and spirituality.

During the aforesaid itinerary he went to Alwar (February-March 1891), Jaipur, Khetri, Ahmedabad, Kathiawar (September 1891), Junagad, Gujerat, Porbandar, Dwaraka, Palitana, Baroda, Khandwa, Bombay, Poona, Belgaum, Bangalore, and from there to Trichur in Cochin. From Cochin he came to Trivandrum where my father (Prof. K. Sundararama Iyer) and I were at that time. He brought with him a letter of introduction from Cochin to my father at Trivandrum. My father was then the tutor to Prince Mārtānda Varma of Travancore at Trivandrum. My father's services had been lent by the Madras Government to the Travancore Government. I passed my Matriculation in 1892 and joined the Maharaja's College, Trivandrum, for the Intermediate class. It was at this juncture, towards the end of 1892, that fate threw me into Swamiji's holy company.

Swamiji was then unknown to fame but felt a great urge to spread Hinduism and spirituality all over the world. One morning while I was in my house he came unexpectedly. I found a person with a beam-

ing face and a tall, commanding figure. He had an orange-coloured turban on his head and wore a flowing orange-coloured coat which reached down to his feet and round which he wore a girdle at the waist.

Swamiji asked me: 'Is Professor Sundaraman here? I have brought a letter to be delivered to him'. His voice was rich and full and sounded like a bell. Well does Romain Rolland say about that voice: 'He had a beautiful voice like a violoncello, grave without violent contrasts, but with deep vibrations that filled both hall and hearts. Once his audience was held he could make it sink to an intense *piano* piercing his hearers to the soul'. I looked up and saw him and somehow in my boyishness and innocence (I was only fourteen years old at that time) I felt that he was a Maharaja. I took the letter which he gave and ran up to my father who was upstairs and told him: 'A Maharaja is come and is waiting below. He gave this letter to be given to you'. My father laughed and said: 'Ramaswami! What a naive simple soul you are! Maharajas will not come to houses like ours'. I replied: 'Please come. I have no doubt that he is a Maharaja'. My father came down, saluted Swamiji, and took him upstairs. After a pretty long conversation with Swamiji, my father came down and said to me: 'He is no doubt a Maharaja, but not a king over a small extent or area of territory. He is a king of the boundless and supreme domain of the soul'.

Swamiji stayed in our house for nine days at that time. My father has described his impressions of that period in an article entitled 'My first Navarātri with Swami Vivekananda'. I shall set down here briefly the indelible impression left on my mind by Swamiji's words to me during that memorable visit of his to our house at Trivandrum.

One morning as I was reading Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*, which was one of my text-books in Sanskrit, Swamiji came in. He asked: 'What is that book you are studying?' I replied: 'It is *Kumārasambhava*,

Canto I'. He asked: 'Can you repeat the great poet's description of the Himalayas?' I repeated, in the usual musical mode current in South India, the beautiful and sonorous verses which constitute Kalidasa's description of the Himalayas. Swamiji smiled and looked pleased. He said: 'Do you know that I am coming after a long stay amidst the sublimity of the Himalayan scenes and sights?' I felt elated and interested. He asked me to repeat again the opening stanza. I did so. He asked: 'Do you know its meaning? Tell me'. I did so. He said: 'That is good, but not enough'. He then repeated the stanza in his marvellous, musical, measured tones:

अस्त्युत्तरस्यां दिशि देवतात्मा

हिमालयो नाम नगाधिराजः ।

पूर्वापरौ तोयनिधी वगाह्य

स्थितः पृथिव्या इव मानदंडः ॥

He said: 'The important words in this verse are *devatātmā* (ensouled by Divinity) and *mānadaṇḍa* (measuring-rod). The poet implies and suggests that the Himalaya is not a mere wall accidentally constructed by Nature. It is ensouled by Divinity and is the protector of India and her civilization not only from the chill icy blasts blowing from the arctic region but also from the deadly and destructive incursions of invaders. The Himalaya further protects India by sending the great rivers Sindhu, Ganga, and Brahmaputra perennially fed by melted ice irrespective of the monsoon rains. *Mānadaṇḍa* implies that the poet affirms that the Indian civilization is the best of all human civilizations and forms the standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present, and future, must be tested. Such was the poet's lofty conception of patriotism'. I felt thrilled by his words. I treasure them even to this day and they shine in my heart even now with an undimmed and undiminished splendour.

On another of the nine days, he said to me and my father: 'Practical patriotism means not a mere sentiment or even emotion of love of the motherland but a passion to serve

our fellow-countrymen. I have gone all over India on foot and have seen with my own eyes the ignorance, misery, and squalor of our people. My whole soul is afire and I am burning with a fierce desire to change such evil conditions. Let no one talk of Karma. If it was their Karma to suffer, it is our Karma to relieve the suffering. If you want to find God, serve Man. To reach Narayana you must serve the Daridra Narayanas—the starving millions of India'. That was the root from which came the great tree of the Ramakrishna Mission later on. His words melted our hearts and kindled in our souls the flame of social service. Thus service was as dear to him as spirituality. In his later life, in a memorable letter¹ he exclaimed: 'May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls,—and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship'. We seem to hear in these passionate words the voice of Rantideva himself.

On yet another day Swamiji told me: 'You are still a young boy. I hope and wish that some day you will reverentially study the Upanishads, the *Brahma-Sūtras*, and the *Bhagavad Gita* which are known as the Prasthāna-traya (the three supreme sources of Truth), as also the Itihāsas, the Purānas, and the Āgamas. You will not find the like of all these anywhere else in the world. Man alone, out of all living beings, has a hunger in his heart to know the whence and whither, the whys and wherefores of things. There are four key words which you must remember, viz. Abhaya (fearlessness), Ahimsā (non-injury), Asanga (non-attachment), and Ānanda (bliss). These words really sum up the essence of all our sacred books. Remember them. Their implications will become clear to you later on'. I was too young then to grasp all these ideas

¹ To Mary Hale (Letter from Almora, dated 9th July 1897).

in full. But I gladly laid those lessons to my heart and have tried all my life since then to learn them in their fulness.

During the nine days (in 1892) when Swamiji was in our house, I was near him often as he was gracious to me and also because something in him, like a magnet, drew me towards him. My father had many a discussion with Swamiji on recondite questions of philosophy and religion which were above and beyond my comprehension. But Swamiji's eyes were so magnetic—though full of kindness and love, his voice had such an unusual combination of sweetness and strength, and his gait was so majestic, that it was a great joy to me to be in his presence and bask in the sunshine of his smiles. He told me many other things, briefly, now and then. But at this distance of time—over sixty years since that event—the memorable utterances narrated above are the ones which stand out most prominently from among the memory-pictures of the past.

It is strange that one who was afterwards hailed in America as 'an orator by divine right' and to hear whose discourses men and women thronged in tens of thousands after he won fame at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and became a world figure in less than a year from then was never estimated at his true worth while yet he was but a wandering monk. Trivandrum stood aloof from him at that time though the whole world lay at his feet soon afterwards.

Swami Vivekananda went from Trivandrum to Kanyā-kumāri (Cape Comorin) towards the close of 1892. Kanya-kumari is the 'Land's End' of India. At a short distance from it was a rock beaten by surf but lovely to behold. He wanted to cross over there and meditate on Bhārata-Mātā crowned with the Himalayas and her feet laved by the blue waves of the Indian ocean. The sea was infested by sharks. The boatman asked for an anna to row him over to the rock. But Swamiji had no money. And so he swam boldly across the sea to the rock and spent the whole night on the rock in joyous meditation on the Divine Mother

Kanya-kumari and in deep contemplation on the motherland Bharata-Mata. It was only after sunrise that he returned to the mainland.

From Cape Comorin Swamiji went walking to Ramnad and thence to Pondicherry and finally reached Madras. Many admirers in Madras, including the Raja of Ramnad, collected funds to enable him to proceed to Chicago and represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions there in September 1893. He wrote to the Holy Mother (Saradamani Devi, wife of Sri Ramakrishna) and sought and got her blessings. He went to Khetri. The Maharaja of Khetri sent his Private Secretary to escort Swamiji to Bombay where

he embarked for America. It was about that time that he assumed the name of Swami Vivekananda which was destined to shine in the pages of world history. He became a universally distinguished figure from the moment of his first Address to the Parliament of Religions on 11th September 1893. The American press and public hailed him as being 'undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions'.

I shall describe in a later article my second contact with Swami Vivekananda, which took place at Madras, when he was given a peerless reception by his grateful fellow-countrymen in February 1897.

A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH THE HIMALAYAS

BY SWAMI APURVANANDA

(Continued from the August issue)

SVARGĀROHAN

At the glimmer of dawn, we—the modern 'cave-dwellers' of the high Himalayas,—heaved a sigh of great relief as our dreadful experience of a sleepless night, in rain and bitter cold, terminated. As the morning advanced and the sun lay quite invisible, far behind thick layers of clouds, the rain continued off and on. After some discussion and hesitation we decided to proceed further on towards our chosen destination—Satopanth and Svargārohan. There was no distinctly visible track and bare rocks lay all over the place, making it unsafe to move freely. Moreover, due to rain the surface of the rocks was becoming more and more slippery. We followed the track up and along the river to its source, for that was where we intended going. Rain continued unabated and the cold was quite severe, as heaps of snow covered the river-bed. Almost crawling on

all fours, we gradually moved forward, over big smooth boulders and in pouring rain, covering a narrow track over a steep ridge at a speed of not more than a half mile per hour.

When the mist cleared up after a couple of hours and it stopped raining, our joy was immense. We could see in the distance the great Satopanth glacier and the awe-inspiring snow-steps of Svargārohan by which, if tradition is to be believed, the ancients ascended to heaven. Standing where we were and looking up this celestial flight of stairs, we could feel the thrill of their beauty and massiveness and wondered at the mystery of their existence and what lay at the top where they ended, though to our eyes it appeared as though the vertical row of steps rose higher and higher, endlessly, piercing the blue sky. Our canine guide and companion, gleefully wagging its tail and occasionally barking at

us to draw our attention and hurry us on, led the way.

When we were within a short distance of Satopanth we had a pleasant surprise. We could hardly believe our eyes when we saw a human figure moving in the distance. Elated and excited at the most unexpected prospect of meeting a human being even at a far away place like Satopanth, we started running towards the spot where we had seen the figure. As we drew near, not one only but three human beings became clearly visible. The three persons, who were Sadhus practising austerities at Satopanth, also gazed at us eagerly and with much surprise. We soon met the Sadhus and entered into intimate conversation with them.

It was past noon. The Sadhus informed us that the Satopanth glacier was still about a mile or so up from there. Hence we decided to have some rest and start after lunch. The Sadhus were kind and hospitable, notwithstanding their hard life, meagre resources, and need for solitude. They were full of joy, determined to face all difficulties and dangers of the place. They gave us thrilling accounts of many daring Sadhus who had in the past attempted to stay at Satopanth through the severe Himalayan winter and some of whom had perished under tragic circumstances from cold and hunger.

That afternoon, all four of us—myself, Mahatma, and the two Bhotia guides—set out for Satopanth. As far as eyes could see, it was all rocky, with masses of snow everywhere. The Satopanth glacier was about eight square miles in extent. On our way, we came across two lakes of clear, blue, icy waters—Sūryakūṇḍa and Chandra-kūṇḍa,—in both of which I and Mahatma took our bath, in spite of the extreme cold. The silence and solitude of these snow-regions, as I have stated more than once before, are something uniquely remarkable, though palpably oppressive on occasions, and strike one with wonder as well as terror.

When we were actually on the glacier at Satopanth, whence the Alakananda takes its birth, the sky was less clouded than in the

morning and the golden glow of the descending sun, reflected on the vast sheets of pure white snow, created a marvellous scenic effect—a sight for the angels to gaze upon. We pushed further on towards the place from where the 'steps' of the Svargarohan commenced. It was an indescribable immensity of high-altitude grandeur, an imposing handiwork of Nature. Speechless with wonder, we stood in front of this ages-old Svargarohan of mythological fame. Our weary feet, after trudging over heaps of snow, had a different tale to tell. We sat down on a big boulder and fixed our gaze on the Svargarohan steps. The mind was growing calm and restful and we remained there for quite a time, in a half-indrawn mood, oblivious of the outer world.

There was not a sound, nor stir, and the wind, too, was hushed. Suddenly, to our consternation, we were shaken out of our reverie by a weird and frightfully terrific sound, like that of a great thunder-clap or a number of heavy cannons fired simultaneously. It was an avalanche, evidently not very far from where we were, as we continuously heard the receding tremor of the sound and its echo raised in the silent glacial air by the slipping mass of ice and snow. We stared into one another's eyes, not knowing what to say or do. As we looked up and around the snow-capped mountains on three sides, we caught sight of the huge mass of moving snow on our right. In volume and effect the avalanche was most terrifying and destructive. Moreover, evening was fast approaching. Under the circumstances none of our party dared to take the risk of life by attempting to climb Svargarohan.

THE RETURN JOURNEY

It was almost dark by the time we returned to the place where the three Sadhus of Satopanth were staying. They were full of kindness as before and put us up for the night. The next day we stayed on till noon, wandering hither and thither over the Satopanth glacier and bathing in the different Kundas (lakes) of ice-cold water. As the hour

of our departure drew near, my thoughts constantly dwelt on the great renunciation and deep spiritual yearning of the three Sadhus who had chosen to stay on in an utterly secluded and severely cold place like Satopanth. Finally we took leave of the Sadhus and started back towards Badrinath. Our faithful dog was still with us. That night we slept in the same cave we were in on the up journey. Next day, when we neared Basudhara, the dog, which had been following us all along, disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared at about the same place three days back. I distinctly felt that there was some truth in Mahatma's assertion that the Lord had mercifully sent us this dog as a help and had let it remain with us so long as that help was necessary. We were back at Badrinath before dusk.

Next day, as we left Badrinath on our downward journey towards Hardwar, our original starting-point, it was not easy for me to contain the upsurge of feeling within,—for, parting from the Himalayas and from that great and holy shrine of Badrinarayan was a great wrench, especially after having done over seven hundred miles of my pilgrimage through these hoary mountains. It could not be helped, as I had to come down to the plains and return to my place of work. It is so true in life that one is invariably denied what one likes most. Or, perhaps it is Nature's law that none can expect to have too much of a good thing, while things not good are showered on man in torrents! And so we wended our way back to Hardwar, following the regular pilgrim route and passing through such well-known Himalayan holy places as Nandaprayāg, Karnaprayag, Rudraprayag, Devaprayag, and Rishikesh,—of which the four 'Prayags' are also confluences of rivers and combine natural beauty with spiritual sublimity.

Thus did I fulfil, through the grace of the Almighty, my long-cherished desire for 'A Pilgrimage through the Himalayas'. I can now say with conviction that a pilgrimage, *undertaken in the proper spirit, affords the*

pilgrim every opportunity for spiritual development, intellectual stimulation, and great adventure. To the aesthete, nay, to every sincere soul yearning for intuitive experience of the 'Peace that passeth understanding', a pilgrimage through the Himalayas holds immense possibilities in every respect. Happy and vivid recollections of everything I saw, heard, and felt throughout the pilgrimage have remained my priceless possession to this day. And I am almost certain it has been so in the case of every Himalayan pilgrim. To the devout Hindu, in particular, the Himalayas are sacred and adorable, for they are the abode of the great gods and goddesses and the retreat of the saints and seers. The Himalayas have stood as sentinels over this Pūṇya-bhūmi, Bhārata, not only in a geographical but also a cultural sense.

'If any man doubts that Hinduism is the romance of India,' writes Sister Nivedita, 'let him make pilgrimage to the Himalayas and judge for himself. The famous shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinarayan are like the cathedral cities of two remote northern diocese upon which has broken for the last two thousand years the tidal wave of every great spiritual movement in Indian history. . . . Neither is primitive. Neither has been accidental. Each in its turn has been a great emotional revival, calling men to return to the memory of an older and purer faith than they saw about them'.

After all is said and done, a sincere but hard-boiled sceptic may yet demand to know what one would gain by undertaking such an arduous and long-drawn-out pilgrimage. Is it worth the trouble and the time spent on it? Well, perhaps the sceptic has reason to doubt the utility of a pilgrimage because he is unable to understand and appreciate the spiritual or religious benefits that accrue from a pilgrimage. Today when the highest peak of the Himalayas has been climbed and expeditions are attempting conquest of other peaks, I need not be at pains to convince such a sceptic. To the question, 'Why did you take the trouble of climbing high mountain-peaks?', a mountaineer was reported to have answered, 'Because they are there'. People of every religion have their particular places of pilgrimage. *The Hindus have to their credit*

the largest number of holy places—from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin (Kanyā-kumāri). A place of pilgrimage acts as an ideal, common meeting-ground of people from different parts of the country, fostering cultural integrity and national solidarity.

I conclude this travelogue by reiterating the fact that the essential part of a pilgrimage is the silent but steady deepening of the spiritual consciousness of the pilgrim. Obviously no outward spectacular achievement is

to be expected. The workings of the law of spiritual transformation are slow and subtle, but sure. After they had returned from a pilgrimage, Swami Vivekananda told one of his disciples who had accompanied him and who had a doubt if she had gained anything worth-while from the pilgrimage, 'You do not now understand. But you have made the pilgrimage, and it will go on working. Causes must bring their effects. You will understand afterwards. The effects will come'.

(Concluded)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

This month (September 1953) marks the Sixtieth Anniversary ('Diamond Jubilee') of the advent of Swami Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in September 1893. In view of this, some articles relating to Swami Vivekananda and the Parliament of Religions at Chicago are presented in this number. . . .

One of the essential teachings of Swami Vivekananda is that there is divinity within each soul and that the goal of *Religion is the Manifestation of the Divinity already in Man*. His genius was revealed to the world at large in the Parliament of Religions, which he first attended as an 'unknown' delegate but which he soon impressed and influenced in such great measure as no other delegate did. A brief re-survey of the message of Swami Vivekananda, contained in the Addresses delivered by him at the Parliament of Religions, forms the theme of the editorial article. . . .

Swami Vivekananda: The Apostle of Unity by Sri Batuknath Bhattacharya, M.A., B.L., is based on an illuminating lecture delivered by him at the Ramakrishna Mission

Institute of Culture, Calcutta, and is reproduced from the monthly *Bulletin* (for March 1953) of the Institute. . . .

Swami Yatiswarananda, a learned senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, who had been in Europe and America for many years, carrying on Vedanta work, lucidly unravels *The Mystery of Life and Death*. . . .

Swami Vivekananda by Massimo Scaligero is a short but thought-provoking study of the life and work of the Swami from the pen of an Italian writer and scholar. It is reproduced from the *East and West*, the Quarterly Review of the Italian Institute for the Middle and Far East (*Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente*) of Rome. . . .

Presenting his *Memories of Swami Vivekananda*, for the benefit of our readers, Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, well-known scholar and writer of South India, observes that though he was just in his early teens when he met the great Swami, the forceful and magnetic personality of the Swami was so deeply imprinted on his heart that he has been cherishing vivid memories of his meeting with Swami Vivekananda even to this day. The learned writer's father, Professor K. Sundararama

Iyer, with whom Swami Vivekananda stayed, referring to this occasion in the course of an article, wrote: 'My sons were frequently in his (meaning Swami Vivekananda's) company and one of them (meaning Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastri) still swears by him and has the most vivid and endearing recollections of his visit and of his striking personality'. Another instalment of Sri Sastri's 'Memories of Swami Vivekananda' will be appearing in our next. . . .

The long and interesting narrative of *A Pilgrimage through the Himalayas*, by Swami Apurvananda, is brought to a close with the present instalment.

CAN VEDANTA HAVE A PLACE IN THE MODERN MAN'S LIFE?

Speaking on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York City, Sri G. L. Mehta, India's Ambassador to the United States, referred to the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and described the latter as a spiritual ambassador of India to the West, in the tradition of the great Buddhist monks who went to distant lands carrying the message of goodwill and brotherhood. Referring to Swami Vivekananda as one of the great pioneers of India's awakening, Sri Mehta observed: 'Vivekananda was our first cultural ambassador to this country. In 1893, he visited the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and left an indelible impression on the minds of the people. He was, indeed, a spiritual ambassador in the tradition of the great Buddhist Bhikkus or monks who went to distant lands carrying the message of goodwill and love and brotherhood. These men went not to conquer lands but to win hearts; they did not go with fire and sword nor with a cry of conversion or death; they went to expound the basic principles of the great Master—to heal, to comfort, and to uplift. And so in modern days, Vivekananda came here and expounded the truths of Vedanta

and Hinduism. Modern Indian renaissance became conscious in Vivekananda'.

The modern man's life is overfull with scientific and political interests. Everything necessary to create sensational excitement is there around him. He oscillates between excessive distraction and listless boredom. The soothing salve of a contemplative interlude in between spells of hectic activity would go a long way in enabling man maintain an equanimous and contented mind. But can religion, which gives a faith for spiritual sustenance and balanced living, find a welcome place in the never-ceasing round of mundane affairs?

Yes, says the Vedantic seer, it is possible to combine action with contemplation, religion with science, avoiding thereby the Scylla of secularism and the Charybdis of bigotry. Vedanta can have a place in the modern man's life because it does not merely 'preach' religion but exemplifies it. Swami Vivekananda gave to the world the essence of the age-old Vedantic religion, based not on rituals and ceremonies, but on deep faith and dedicated service. 'To Vivekananda, religion was a spiritual quest as well as a social gospel. Hinduism is often accused of being an exercise in metaphysical ingenuity, too obscure, too subtle and inchoate, and other-worldly. In its search for Nirvāna or Heaven hereafter, it does not, according to some critics, emphasize our immediate tasks and our mundane obligations. This is hardly the occasion to examine this charge were I even competent to do so. And yet let me say this as a layman: Vedanta teaches the very opposite of negation and passivity; it teaches not merely that every action but every word and, indeed, every thought, has consequence and is answerable in this life or hereafter. Buddha sought and preached not a permanent abode in the High Regions above but "an ending of sorrow" here and now. Vivekananda said, again and again, that religion must be translated into our daily life and practices, that it should remove tyrannies and privileges and barriers. Well might he have said with Bernard Shaw, "Beware of the man whose

God is in the skies!" Vivekananda firmly believed that the noblest way to serve God was through service of man, that temples should not become ivory-towers. The term *Daridra-Nārāyaṇa* which Gandhiji popularized was originally Swami Vivekananda's expression; it embodied his faith in and compassion for the weak, the humble, and the lowly. The most practical form which Vedanta should take, said Vivekananda, was the uplift of the mass of people. In this he was truly the forerunner of Gandhiji. "An empty stomach", he once remarked, "is no good for religion". It was he, too, who observed that "God comes to the poor in the form of Bread". We should constantly remind ourselves of this, when most of us are apt to become impatient about the demands of the "have-nots" for a better life. Their souls are in revolt because their bodies are not fed. And the bread they ask for is both material and spiritual'.

Speaking of Swami Vivekananda's Master, Sri Mehta said:

'Sri Ramakrishna was one of the greatest saints and mystics of India. He was a symbol of the India which values the things of the Spirit, the India which you see on the banks of the Ganges and the Jumna in the chilly morning of a wintry day when countless men and women bathe and worship, the India which through the ages is immortal precisely because its best men and women have realized the transitoriness of all beings'.

The modern man is sick of religious differences and dissensions. He is even prepared to throw the baby with the bath-water. Hence, as the learned Ambassador aptly observed, 'Vivekananda laid stress on the tolerance, the essential rationality, and self-reliance of Hindu religion. India has looked upon religion not as a revelation to be attained by some supernatural faith but as a matter of deep, personal experience and of worthy actions. It is because of this that Hinduism does not bar any one from following his own faith nor does it believe in coercion for increasing its own fold. It believes that each man has his own way of realizing his own God. "He is One but the sages describe Him differently". As Poet Tagore said, "The roads are many but the Light is One". This should teach us humility and tolerance. Since divinity dwells in all men, they can follow their own paths; and yet this should also give us inner strength and deeper confidence in ourselves'.

It is gratifying to find that Ministers of the Church are also veering round to this liberal and synthetic view. Speaking on the need of a spiritual revival, Rev. Wendell Phillips, Rector of Christ's Church, Rye, N.Y., U.S.A., who also spoke at the above-mentioned anniversary function, pointed out the utility of carrying out one's beliefs in one's everyday life and deplored the indifference with which most people viewed the prevailing world chaos in manners, morals, and mutual accord.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

A WORLD EXPECTANT. BY SHRI KUMARASWAMIJI. Published by V. R. Koppal, Navakalyana Math, Bhusapeti, Dharwar, Bombay State. Pages 301. Price Rs. 6.

This book is a keen and critical survey of the world forces and world movements of today and

is inspired by a genuine passion for social betterment and world reconstruction. Professor F.O. Schrader of Kiel says well in his preface to the work that it is 'quite interesting and full of good and original ideas'. The author says in his introduction that 'it is only in a peaceful condition that

the cultural values can survive and thrive'. He pleads for 'the creation and preservation of peace and cultural values'.

The author deals first with Homo sapiens because the most urgent and basic need is to elevate Homo stultissimus into Homo sapiens. Homo sapiens may have derived his physical structure from animal ancestors, but by reason of living the life of the intellect as opposed to the mere life of instincts and also by reason of his power of ratiocination and speech, he is far above the animal level and becomes a younger brother of the angels instead of being an elder brother of the animals. Human societies must be formed on an organic and teleological life-basis. The real superman is not a satyr but a saint.

In the next chapter, entitled 'Restoration', the author says: 'The new possibilities which the scientific revolution holds out for mankind may be summed up in three words: power, plenty, and interdependence. And this interdependence contributed greatly to the development of the international idea' (p. 71). He says further: 'If the divorce between culture and economics disfigures the earlier civilization, the cleavage between culture and ethics derogates the contemporary one' (p. 81). 'Our social order, as it exists now, has eliminated culture both from economics and ethics'

(p. 84). We must, therefore, aim at a just and equitable distribution of material goods and of cultural benefits.

The next chapter, called 'Sanity', dissects with a keen and merciless knife both capitalism and communism. The author says: 'As a result of capitalism this interrelation of ethics and economics was loosened' (p. 110). Communism, he observes, is disguised class-war and the materialistic interpretation of history and the ruthless regimentation of life.

In the next chapter, called 'Progress at the Parting of the Ways', the author dissects the modern illusory idea of progress. Our political, social, and economic wisdom lags far behind our mechanical skill and scientific knowledge. We have failed to distinguish between intrinsic progress and environmental progress.

In the last two chapters, viz. 'Living at One's Highest' and 'The Awaited Ideal', the author tries to feel his way towards the desirable goal. He courageously takes his stand on Brahmacharya and Yoga. He says that there is gap between the animal and man, and between man and the mystic or superman'. Yoga enables us to bridge this gulf. Only then will 'the world expectant' have its expectations fulfilled.

K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

(CEYLON BRANCH)

OPENING OF MADAM (DHARMASHALA) AT
KATARAGAMA (CEYLON)

On 12th July 1953, Mr. Dudley Senanayake, Prime Minister of Ceylon, declared open the Ramakrishna Mission Madam (pilgrim's rest-house) at the holy and famous place of pilgrimage, Kataragama, in South Ceylon, 185 miles from Colombo. There was a large and respectable gathering including Ceylonese Cabinet Ministers, high officials of the Government, and the High Commissioner for India in Ceylon. The President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, sent a hearty message on the occasion, in which he said he was glad that 'the Ramakrishna Mission, which stands

for unity and harmony, is establishing a Madam there which will serve as a centre of culture and learning apart from giving accommodation to pilgrims visiting the place'. Among the speakers were two Cabinet Ministers and the Indian High Commissioner Sri C. C. Desai.

Kataragama (or Kārtikeya-grāma) is a household word in Ceylon and is a cosmopolitan pilgrim-centre, visited every year by thousands of devotees—Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims—from all over the Island and from India too. The temple is dedicated to Kārtikeya (or Skanda), also known as 'Subrahmanya' in the South, and is considered as holy as the great temples of Puri and Banaras. The Madam (or Chatram) consists of two large buildings, situated close to the temple and constructed by the Colombo Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission, at a cost of Rs. 4,00,000.
