

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. LIX

AUGUST 1954



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

*To Miss Alberta Sturgis<sup>1</sup>*

R.M.S. 'Brittanic'  
Thursday [1895]<sup>2</sup>

Dear Alberta,

Received your nice letter last evening. Very kind of you to remember me. I am going soon to see the 'Heavenly pair'.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Leggett is a saint as I have told you already and your Mother is a born empress, every inch of her, with a saint's heart inside.

I am so glad you are enjoying the Alps so much. They must be wonderful. It is always in such places that the human soul aspires for freedom. Even if the nation is spiritually poor it aspires for physical freedom if mountainous. I met a young Swiss in London. He used to come to my classes. I was very successful in London and though I did not care for the noisy city I was very much pleased with the people. In your country [America], Alberta, the Vedantic thought was introduced in the beginning by ignorant 'cranks' and one has to work his way through the difficulties created by such introductions. You may have noticed that only a few men or women of the upper classes ever joined my classes in America. Again in America the upper classes being the rich, their whole time is spent in enjoying their wealth and imitating (aping?) [sic] the Europeans. On the other hand, in England, the Vedantic ideas have been introduced by

<sup>1</sup> She was the daughter of Mrs. Leggett. By marriage she became the First Countess of Sandwich.

<sup>2</sup> Towards end of November (28th) or beginning of December (5th).

<sup>3</sup> 'Heavenly pair': the Swami is referring to Mr. and Mrs. Francis H. Leggett, well-known society family of New York, both of whom became his ardent disciples and helped him in many ways.

the most learned men in the country and there are a large number among the upper classes in England who are very thoughtful—so you will be astonished to hear that I found my grounds all prepared and I am convinced that my work will have more hold on England than America. Add to this the tremendous tenacity of the English character and judge for yourself. By this you will find that I have changed a good deal of my opinion about England and I am glad to confess it. I am perfectly sure that we will do still better in Germany. I am coming back to England next summer. In the meanwhile my work is in very able hands. Joe Joe<sup>4</sup> has been the same kind, good, pure friend to me here as in America and my debt to your family is simply immense. My love and blessings to Holister [sic]<sup>5</sup> and you. The steamer is standing at anchor on account of fog. The purser has very kindly given me a whole cabin by myself. Every Hindu is a Raja they think and are very polite—the charm will break of course when they find that the Raja is penniless!!

Yours with love and blessings,  
VIVEKANANDA

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*To Mrs. Francis Leggett*

6, Place des Etats Unis,  
Paris.

3rd September 1900

Dear Mother,

We had a congress of cranks here in this house.

The representatives came from various countries, from India in the South, to Scotland in the North, with England and America buttressing the sides.

We were having great difficulty in electing a president, for though Dr. James [Professor William James] was there, he was rather more mindful of the blisters raised on him by Mrs. Melton [probably a magnetic healer] than solution of world problems.

I proposed Joe [Josephine MacLeod], but she refused on the ground of non-arrival of her new gown—and went to a corner to watch the scene, from a coign of vantage.

Mrs. [Ole] Bull<sup>6</sup> was ready, but Margot [Sister Nivedita] objected to this meeting being reduced to a comparative philosophy class.

When we were thus in a fix—up sprung a short, squat, almost round figure from a corner—and without any ceremony—declared—that all difficulties will be solved, not only of electing a president but of life itself, if we all took to worshipping the Sun God and Moon God. He delivered his speech in five minutes, but it took his disciple, who was present, fully three-quarters of an hour to translate. In the meanwhile, the Master began to draw the rugs in your parlour up in a heap, with the intention, as he said, of giving us an ocular demonstration of the power of 'Fire God', then and there.

<sup>4</sup> Miss Josephine MacLeod of New York, one of the foremost American disciples of Swami Vivekananda. The Swami sometimes used to address her familiarly as 'Joe' or 'Joe Joe'.

<sup>5</sup> Hollister Sturgis.

<sup>6</sup> Wife of the celebrated violinist and Norwegian nationalist. She became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

At this juncture Joe interposed and insisted that she did not want a fire sacrifice in her parlour; whereupon the Indian saint looked daggers at Joe, entirely disgusted at the behaviour of one he confidently believed to be a perfect convert to fire worship.

Then Dr. James snatched a minute from nursing his blisters and declared he would have something very interesting to speak upon Fire God and his brethren, if he were not entirely occupied with the evolution of Meltonian blisters. Moreover his great Master, Herbert Spencer, not having investigated the subject before him, he would stick to Golden Silence.

'Chutney is the thing', said a voice near the door. We all looked back and saw Margot. 'It is chutney', she said, 'chutney and Kāli, that will remove all difficulties of life, and make it easy for us to swallow all the evils, and relish what is good'. But she stopped all of a sudden and vehemently asserted that she was not going to speak any further, as she has been obstructed by a certain male animal in the audience in her speech. She was sure one man in the audience had his head turned towards the window and was not paying the attention proper to a lady, and though as to herself she believed in the equality of the sexes, yet she wanted to know the reason why of that disgusting man's want of due respect for women. Then one and all declared that they have been giving her the most undivided attention, and all above the equal right, her due, but to no purpose. Margot would have nothing to do with that horrible crowd and sat down.

Then Mrs. Bull of Boston took the floor and began to explain how all the difficulties of the world were from not understanding the true relation between the sexes. She said that the 'only panacea was a right understanding of the proper persons, and then to find liberty in love and freedom in liberty and motherhood, brotherhood, fatherhood, Godhood, love in freedom and freedom in love, in the right holding up of the true ideal in sex'.

To this the Scotch delegate vehemently objected and said that as the hunter chased the goatherd, the goatherd the shepherd, the shepherd the peasant, and the peasant drove the fisher into the sea, now we wanted to fish out of the deep the fisher and let him fall upon the peasant, the peasant upon the shepherd, and so on and the web of life will be completed and we will be all happy—he was not allowed to continue his driving business long. In a second everyone was on his feet and we could only hear a confusion of voices—'Sun God and Moon God', 'chutney and Kali', 'freedom holding up right understanding, sex, motherhood', 'Never, the fisherman must go back to the shore' etc. Whereupon Joe declared that she was yearning to be the hunter for the time and chase them all out of the house if they did not stop their nonsense.

Then was peace and calm restored, and I hasten to write you about it.

Yours affly.,

VIVEKANANDA

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'Despondency is not religion, whatever else it may be. By being pleasant always, and smiling, it takes you nearer to God, nearer than any prayer'.

—*Swami Vivekananda*

# MEMORIES OF SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

BY C. RAMANUJACHARI

(Continued from the July issue)

Swami Ramakrishnananda (familiarily known as Śaśi Maharaj) was meticulously careful about every detail of worship. Lest there be some neglect, he would himself attend to everything. One day when he found a small stone in the rice that was offered, he felt so vexed that from the next day onwards he took upon himself the duty of cleansing the rice before cooking it.

Sasi Maharaj laid down the rules and procedure for ritual worship and for the initiation of Brahmacharya and Sannyāsa Ashramas and compiled suitable Mantras from the scriptures therefor. He had no easy job in instituting the ritual worship, but he was undaunted and carried things through. In addition he also created a tradition in the matter of the conduct of monasteries by the Mission. The creation of a serene atmosphere in the monasteries compatible with its sanctity was his sedulous endeavour. He would not allow any secular or irreligious talk in the precincts. Women should not handle or touch the garment or the bed of a monk. Sister Devamata, who once in good faith tidied up the bed of Sasi Maharaj during his absence from Madras and naturally expected an appreciation for it, received the scolding of the Swami.

Personally he would not take anything which was not offered in Puja, which he used to call Yavanānnam or Rākṣhasānnam. For his diabetic condition, the doctor prescribed that he should take wheat. He refused to offer wheat to Guru Maharaj (Sri Ramakrishna), saying, 'Why should Guru Maharaj be put on diet for my illness?' Nor would he do anything which Guru Maharaj did not do. Typical of this attitude was his strong determination not to touch coins. He would

rather allow others to tie the money in his cloth when he had to carry them than take them in hand. He had not the inclination to question why Guru Maharaj did a particular thing or why he did not do a particular thing. Unhesitatingly adopting his ways was his rule of life.

'Do not consider this as a mere picture (in the shrine) of the Master (Sri Ramakrishna). He is actually present here. Try to feel his living presence and serve him accordingly'. Such was the injunction he gave to his disciples. This belief was based upon the authoritative pronouncement of the Master who said once, in an ecstatic mood, that he would be present in his spiritual body wherever his disciples should instal him. Sasi Maharaj considered the Master as God Himself, the living embodiment of all Gods and Goddesses. With this as his strong living faith, we can easily find justification for his unique action in rushing to the shrine and fanning the Master during parts of the day when the heat was unbearable and in holding the umbrella over the bed of the Master to protect him against rains in the dead of night, unwilling to disturb him in his sleep by lifting his cot. All these evidenced his solicitude, love, and devotion to the Master. When he was once accosted with the remark that Hindus are idolators, he sharply replied, 'If idolatry can make one a Paramahansa, I should prefer to be one'.

Though monistic realization was easy and possible for a Sādhu like Sasi Maharaj, he preferred 'to taste sugar than be sugar'. He used very often to say that that Bhakti which arises *after* monistic realization is the highest form and is Parā-Bhakti. Man loves himself

best; and when he sees himself in others, he would love them most.

Surrender, when it is perfect, merges the devotee in the Lord and leaves, in the ultimate, a monistic realization. The Bhakti that subsists after such realization, he always considered as the perfection. Nobody can be entirely monistic or dualistic. These experiences come to the same individual at suitable moments. The man who says that he is an 'Advaitin' is no Advaitin. There is 'Advaita' and not 'Advaitin'. Guru Maharaj used to say, 'If you close your eyes, it is one; and if you open them, it is two'. As one begins to speak of Advaita, it ceases to be such. It is a realization; it is an experience; of it no description by word of mouth is possible, nor any expression.

Surrender meant to Sasi Maharaj the culminating triumph of all spiritual efforts. Devotion to Guru was the strength of the Swami's spiritual life.

His love and reverence for his Gurubhais and co-disciples were unique; and he always believed that the Master actually lived in his disciples.

Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) had a special affection for Sasi Maharaj. In 1899, when Swamiji went to America for the second time, the steamer called at the Madras harbour, but Swamiji was not allowed to land on account of quarantine restrictions. Sasi Maharaj and myself went to the steamer out in the sea in a boat; and they conversed with each other, Swamiji standing on the deck, and Sasi Maharaj down below in the boat. Though the conversation had necessarily to be short, the meeting of the two spiritual brothers and the genuine affection and depth of feeling that flowed from one to the other struck everybody as a remarkable sight.

To the Holy Mother he showed the same veneration and devotion as to the Master. We had observed with what anxiety and concern Sasi Maharaj was attending to all details when Holy Mother came down to Madras in 1910. He often observed that the

Master and the Holy Mother were identical, like fire and its burning power.

For Swami Brahmananda, the Raja Maharaj of the Order, the spiritual son of Guru Maharaj, a unique place of reverence and devotion was reserved by Sasi Maharaj, who used to tell us: 'If you see Maharajji (meaning Swami Brahmananda) you will have a glimpse of Sri Guru Maharaj'. Maharajji had come to Madras thrice. In 1908, when he came first, Sasi Maharaj went to Puri to meet and welcome him. The elaborate arrangements which he made for his reception and stay, though they were not of great value judged only by the amount of expenditure incurred on them, yet were superbly noteworthy on account of the attention and concern which Sasi Maharaj bestowed on them. Every detail was thought out by him. He took him to Bangalore to open the new Ashrama there. On the evening of his arrival, the leading men of Madras, including Krishnaswami Aiyar and Sundaram Aiyar, met him and paid their respects. They asked Sasi Maharaj whether Maharajji could lecture. Promptly and significantly Sasi Maharaj replied: 'Maharajji does not lecture, but we who fight under his banner take one or two words that fall from his lips and spin them into lectures. Men such as he can impart religion by a mere look or a touch'. We used to see a regular chase in the Math immediately after the Ārātrikam. It was the usual practice for the junior Swamis to prostrate before the senior Swamis; and Sasi Maharaj would try to do it and touch the feet of Maharajji. To avoid Sasi touching his feet, Maharajji would go inside his room and would lock himself up. But undaunted, Sasi would prostrate before the threshold from outside.

Sasi Maharaj took Maharajji for a pilgrimage to Rameswaram. During that time, a visit to the temple at Madura and worship of Meenakshi Devi created a great spiritual atmosphere. Maharajji had the vision of the living image of the Goddess moving towards

him. Sasi had to hold him for nearly an hour.

Maharajji's regard and love for Sasi will be clear from the following words that fell from the lips of Maharajji. To a newcomer, Maharajji said, 'Here you will be in the company of a saint. Serve him, and you will attain everything'. To another he said: 'Stay with Swami Ramakrishnananda for three years, and everything will be achieved. Your character will be well formed. Nothing more will be necessary'.

By the middle of 1910, shortly after the Holy Mother's departure from Madras, Sasi Maharaj was taken seriously ill. His robust constitution gave way. Fourteen years of strenuous toil that he had to undergo as the pioneer of the Ramakrishna Order in the South, undermined his constitution. Diabetes had already crept in and galloping phthisis also now caught him. He, with glee, said, 'My work is over. It was no credit of mine; but the Master's grace and Swamiji's command are mainly responsible for the success of the work in the South'. He had to overwork himself, and his health thereby got neglected. Absence of physical comforts and strenuous work from the beginning of the advent to Madras made him a victim to these fell diseases. After a short stay at Bangalore for a change, he was taken to Calcutta for treatment. In a message he said: 'I had dedicated my body, life, and mind at the lotus feet of the Master. . . . Lord's will be done. . . . When I speak of the Lord, all pain leaves me. I forget the body'. On the last day, for the last three hours he remained absorbed in the supreme state of Samādhi and he entered Mahāsamādhi on the 21st August 1911.

He was a typical Sadhu and a monk of the highest order. His realization was profound and perfect, and his concept of God was all-embracing and catholic. His reconciliation of the various systems of philosophy was a heritage of his Master. His renunciation was undivided and whole-hearted. There was no element of reluctance or sacrifice in it. He

was serene and serious, always absorbed with no other thought day and night but that of the Master. He had a light in his vision, but was humble and simple like a child. In Bhakti his personality would melt like ice and he would say, 'That is what the spirit craves'. In thinking of Him, he would find his highest satisfaction here and hereafter. He always felt that the Divine Mother would not call him Her 'servant' but Her 'child'. Devotion reached the deepest roots of his being. Surrender and trust were so complete that he was able to exclaim that 'I am all full of God and I do not need anybody's help'. He worshipped at all shrines and would bow down in reverence at every wayside small temple. He was an original thinker and was a great Sanskrit scholar, even capable of holding discussions in Sanskrit with Pandits and scholars. He was a good student of the Bible.

When asked as to what was the peculiarity of the Master's teachings, he said:

'He (Sri Ramakrishna) realized and preached the harmony of religions, while the other great world teachers proclaimed that the religion taught by each of them is the only way to salvation. The difference between Sri Ramakrishna and the other Prophets is that he himself preached no new religion, but practised all religions in his life and experienced the universal truth underlying them all. His message could be summed up in the words: "As many ways of life, so many paths to God"'. No teacher has laid so much emphasis on the infinity of forms and aspects of the Divine. He was the perfect example of renunciation; and understanding that immortality cannot be obtained without renunciation, he never touched woman or wealth in his life. He looked upon his wife as a living form of the Divine Mother and worshipped her as he would worship the Goddess Kāli. *Perhaps he is the only instance of unbroken continence in the conjugal life in the whole world.* He had renounced gold so completely from his mind that if he laid his hands even unconsciously on coins, they would become contorted as though stung by scorpion and his breathing would stop. God is realizable; He is truly realizable through all religions. So long as the creation is there, there must be its Creator—there cannot be any doubt about it'.

Sasi Maharaj threw a flood of light on

many orthodox practices and revealed the deep meaning and value of holy religious traditions. I may mention here a few:

He would tell us that Śhrāddha (death anniversary) is a homage paid to the unselfish love of the parent.

'Amṛita Upastaraṇam' and 'Amṛita Apidhānam'—sipping of water before and after meals—signified the encasing of the food by our Upastaraṇam and Apidhānam of Amṛita, so that the whole food thus encased became Amṛita.

His explanation of the thirty-three crores of Hindu gods was at once original and helpful—the five Karmendriyas, the five Jnānendriyas, and the mind, making altogether eleven, associated with the three variegated Guṇas, becoming thirty-three; and desires of man are classifiable among these thirty-three heads. It is the belief of the Hindu that the fulfilment of each desire is possible only through the propitiation of the presiding deity. Man's desires are infinite and things beyond count are generally indicated in terms of crores. Crudely, desires are taken to be thirty-three crores and gods to grant them are also taken to be thirty-three crores.

The choice of the Gerua (ochre) colour for the garment of the Sannyāsin was due to its being the colour of twilight, which is the blending of day and night. It was also mentioned by him that Gerua cloth was never used to be given to Guru Maharaj, as, if given, he would at once go into Samadhi to fulfil the union of the Soul with the Paramātman, of which the Gerua was an indication.

His teachings to the young men that gathered round him were deep-rooted and broadbased. The first lesson in meditation he gave was to think about the truth—'Naked have I come from my mother's womb, and naked will I have to go'.

He used to ask us to think of the exact *present* and point out its baffling characteristics. For, as you begin to think, it becomes past. It has no real existence. It is like Euclid's point, without magnitude.

In order to comprehend the glory of the Lord, he would ask us to compare ourselves in height with a hillock, and conceive of our getting our size diminished. The more we belittle ourselves, the more will we be able to realize the greatness and glory of the Lord, which remains ever constant.

He would ask us to shake off wrong notions about 'sacrifice'. He would impress upon us that if one throws away a ten-rupee note in hand in order to have a hundred rupees in its place,—the throwing away of the ten rupees is no loss or 'sacrifice'. People are scared by the use of the word 'sacrifice', and are made to think that we are to lose something which we possess, while that little that we surrender enables us to get very much more. When one gives up the sense-world, it means one has something better.

'Ego is what the Westerners call Devil. Bring God within yourselves. Ego will disappear. Selfishness will go and you will be lost in the infinite glory of the Lord'.

'God's will is the only will in the whole universe. He is the only Puruṣha. Devotion to Him can accomplish anything. Realize God in your heart'.

As regards the connection of science and religion, he would say, 'Science is the struggle of man in the outer world, and religion is the struggle of man in the inner world. Religion begins where science ends. Science deals with finite bodies, and the methods adopted are observation and experiment based on the sense, while religion deals with the Infinite. A study of astronomy will give you a concept of the farthest reach of Vastness (Akhaṇḍam)'.

When questioned as to what was the connection between religion and politics, he promptly said: One wants freedom *from* the senses and the other freedom *for* the senses, as the watchword of politics is comfort and convenience.

There was no mystery in religion. When a man is physically weak, he takes to cunning. When he is spiritually weak, he takes to mystery.

He used to say that congregational worship is a contradiction in terms.

To a man full of plans for reforming temples, Maths, etc. he would say, 'I wonder what God did before you were born', thereby driving home the lesson that God alone works.

He used to say, 'Words are mere flowers, and deeds are the fruits'.

In religion, he advised us to prefer Bhakti to Jnāna. For, while the Jnani had to go about in search of God, by his own unaided power, the Bhakta had only to love God, and God, conquered by his love, would appear, of His own accord to the Bhakta. 'Love and serve God' was his prescription; and profound thought, introspective researches, and interior seeking are the ways for real spiritual progress.

'Do not make too much of this little life

between two deaths. This body belongs to God. He created it. Let him do with it as he likes'.

Reverence to the old—he used to demand. He used to emphasize that all the Purāṇas are true. The authors are great seers and people of realization. Untruth they will never utter. Only our capacity to comprehend has deteriorated.

Vedic chanting in the South should be preserved. It exists nowhere else.

His lectures, varied as they were and brimming with Vedantic truths, have been preserved to posterity in the form of books. His *Life of Rāmānuja*, which he wrote in Bengali, was written while he was in the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home.

(Concluded)

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## SOME FEATURES OF THE INDIAN WAY OF LIFE

BY THE EDITOR

India has a long past. She stands out among the nations of the world, maintaining a real continuity of her original civilization in spite of all changes, battles, and invasions. The march of social, political, or economic events, which have changed the face of society in other parts of the earth, have left unbroken the thread of India's ancient culture and way of life. This shows her vitality and her capacity and disposition to adapt herself to the needs of the time. This unique quality of the Indian people, especially of the Hindus, to synthesize every race, class, and religious idea, into a harmonious 'unity in variety' has drawn the admiration of the world. As Sister Nivedita strikingly puts it, in her inimitable language,

'The absorptive power of Hinduism as a reli-

gion, coupled with its resistant power as a civilization, furnishes one of the most startling paradoxes in the history of man. Derived originally from a veritable network of religions, in which the co-ordinating element was the philosophy now known as Vedanta, it has thrown out reforming sects in the Mohammedan period, and thrown out reforming sects in the Christian period, each of these being in fact the expression of its admiration for the new ideal of which it has caught a glimpse'.

Thus, the Vedantic civilization,—which the Hindus aptly termed their 'Sanātana Dharma', being eternal and undying,—together with the spirit of the Vedic religion which is seen, even to this day, to permeate and sustain Indian customs, institutions, and ways of living, form the grand spiritual expression of mankind's historic progression towards its destined goal. The Indian way of life is, in other words, the



saga of man's quest after reality, peace, and universal brotherhood.

Comparing conditions prevailing in India today with those that obtained during the age of the Upanishads or the epics, one cannot but find it a delicate and difficult task to define or delineate precisely the characteristically typical Indian way of life. It is not unnatural to see that the history and culture of the Indian people is multiple and complex in character. Yet, to a discerning observer, with ingenuous intentions, it does not take long to understand the fact that the central principles of the Indian view and way of life are saturated through and through with the essence of Hindu religion and philosophy. Though Hinduism and Hindu Dharma may popularly mean a restricted adherence to and observance of codes of social and ethical conduct based on traditions and scriptural texts originating from within the country, ancient Hindu civilization has always represented something distinctly human and world-wide in value. Now that we know the peculiarly arbitrary origin and usage of the word 'Hindu', which was intended to include all those who lived on this side of the Indus, there is no ground for any apprehension as to the narrowing down of the significance of the Indian way of life by its being designated as the Hindu way or as the ideal mode of life and thought that has sprung from the spirit of Hinduism. Comprising as it does different types of religious experience and philosophical thought, Hinduism has been living and moving with the movement of life itself. Its variety of shades and colours, to the making of which every racial and religious type has distinctly contributed, does not blot out the undercurrent of unity and harmony, without which the diversities of ways of living and forms of thinking would be no better than a medley of rituals and a museum of beliefs. The various other systems of religion, ethics, and rites that have evolved on the soil of India are more or less influenced by the all-pervading and most enduring aspects of Hindu religion and culture.

The cultural life of the Hindus, even from

the earliest times, reveals such a vast and varied pattern of genius, power, and skill that it is not possible to make even a cursory survey of all its aspects. Hence we shall confine ourselves here to a backward glance at some of the salient features of the ancient Hindu ideas and ideals of individual, social, and national life. It is not necessary to talk of the ancient Indian ways of living, manners, and traditions in an apologetic tone. If India is misunderstood or misrepresented today it is due more to the world's ignorance of her past greatness and present achievements than to any seriously perturbing inherent drawbacks. On the other hand, from very early times, when the civilizing influence of India was felt in every part of the old world, the social institutions, religious ideals, and political and economic conditions of the Indian sub-continent drew the attention of other countries.

'For, it is a matter of ceaseless wonder', writes the author of *Everyday Life in Ancient India*, 'that while, thousands of years ago, our forefathers were a great conquering race, yet, despite their power and skill in warfare and their extensive knowledge, they set an example to all mankind in generous ways of living, in hospitality, kindness, and courtesy, in reverence to their elders and respect for women, in love for children and regard for animals, in education and in art, in the chastity and devotion of their women, and in humility and simplicity. In short, India is a treasure-house not only of great deeds but of manners and etiquette, of an ideal mode of living and of a simple pattern of human existence which it is hard to find in these chaotic days of world wars'.

While looking at the Hindu view of life one cannot miss noticing the strong bias towards religion and spirituality. A singular feature of ancient Indian civilization is that it has been moulded and sustained more by religion than by politics, economics, or anything else. Spirituality is seen to dominate every sphere of national life in those times. Hence India has always placed spiritual values higher than others. It is not the value that changes but the ways and means of expressing or enjoying it. As such, everyday life is so fashioned and regulated that in each and every act, physical and mental, the in-

dividual is called upon to resolve his ignorance of truth and rediscover his soul. The reality of the one supreme universal spirit, the Atman or Brahman, the essential nature of which is generally hidden from the ordinary surface-consciousness, can no more be doubted or denied by the Hindu than he could his very existence and personality. To most of us with a twentieth-century frame of mind it may not be easy to evaluate the deeply spiritual side of ancient Hindu culture and civilization. But it has to be admitted that it was this spiritual value which was indissolubly bound up with every phase of the ancient Indian way of life. The great ideal of liberation from relative phenomenal existence that is ridden with dualities and imperfections, in order to gain perfect peace, bliss, and equanimity even here and now, is made the supreme end of life. Naturally, the ways of life and thought are so shaped as to subserve the accomplishment of this ultimate end of Moksha.

The concept of Dharma—a wide and comprehensive concept—has influenced and determined, to a very great extent, the manners, customs, and institutions of the people. Dharma, which includes religion, virtue, duty, injunctions and prohibitions, and much more, is regarded as eternal (*sanātana*) and revealing the Divine Will. Dharma not only sanctions and authorizes the validity of forms and activities which shape and sustain human life but also rouses the consciousness of man to a fuller recognition of spiritual verities. In accordance with the well-known four ends or ideals of life, the world is not to be shunned as evil or negated as unreal. Dharma, which is the law of growth and the basis of the main-spring of human action, acts as a controlling and guiding force over the two goals of Artha (pursuit of wealth) and Kāma (pursuit of pleasures). The Indian way of life neither positively affirms nor categorically denies the validity of the sense-perceived world of Artha and Kama. These two values—legitimate acquisition of wealth and proper enjoyment

of pleasures (sensuous and aesthetic)—have their relatively significant place in life. But they have to be pursued according to the tenets of Dharma so that the pursuer may not run the risk of falling into hedonistic materialism. Instead of binding man down to earth for ever, wealth and pleasures, when righteously sought after and enjoyed, become fit instruments for the individual's attainment of the ultimate value of superconscious realization which is the coping-stone of human life.

Every man has his own Dharma by fulfilling which he can best achieve the progress he longs for. Neither individual nor collective Dharma is to be looked upon as a duty imposed from outside by scheming persons of influence or authority. If it were so, Dharma would then be opposed or unhelpful to the pursuit of the values of Artha and Kama, which definitely it is not. In the Upanishads Dharma denotes the duties of the stage of life to which one belongs. The Purva Mimāṃsā says that Dharma is 'a desirable object defined by a direction' (*chodanā-lakṣhaṇārthaḥ*). According to Vaiśeṣhika Sutras Dharma is said to be that from which both worldly happiness and the Highest Spiritual Good result. The *Gita* and other epic literature insist on the performance by the individual of his or her allotted Dharma so much so that even death resulting from following one's own Dharma, however imperfect, is good, whereas taking to another's Dharma, however well performed, is fraught with danger. There is nothing extraordinary or illogical in this view, as the Dharma of a person determines what is most natural and easy for him to pursue in keeping with his inborn aptitudes and tendencies. Modern societies and Governments are also seen to restrict persons to avocations and pursuits for which they are known through standard tests to be best fitted. The ancient Hindu idea of the present birth being determined by man's past actions (*Samskāras*) supports the further view that man's innate

faculties (*guṇa*) and character (*svabhāva*) determined his Dharma.

Nowhere is the distinctive spiritual emphasis of the Indian way of life more manifest than in the sphere of Varna-Āshrama Dharma. The division of society into Varna or caste, determined mainly by the virtues (*guṇa*) and actions (*karma*) with which each individual is predominantly endowed (and this was accepted as being determined by birth, i.e. inherited from the family into which one is born, though this rule was never rigid, but has had its numerous and well-merited exceptions) seems to have existed from very early times. There is an unambiguous reference to the four castes of Hindu India in the Purusha-Sukta of the *Rig-Veda*. More direct references to the castes and their different duties are to be found in the epics, including the *Gita*, the Purānas, and the later Smritis and Dharma-Shāstras. Whatever the merits or defects of this system of caste, there can be no doubt as to the intentions and purposes of its originators. According to its ancient tradition the caste system did recognize a hierarchy based on spiritual qualities such as purity, renunciation, hankering for the higher values of life, and conquest of the instinctual urges. All these qualities were expected of every man, whatever his caste, and the ultimate goal was to unite society into a harmonious whole, founded on co-operation rather than competition. The supercilious exclusiveness of some members of the higher castes, where found, cannot but be an unfortunate outcome of recent origin.

The *Gita* mentions the duties of the four castes as follows:

'Control of the mind, control of the senses, austerity, cleanliness, forbearance, and uprightness, as also knowledge, realization, and faith—these are the duties of a Brahmin, born of his own nature'. 'Heroism, high spirit, firmness, resourcefulness, dauntlessness in battle, generosity, and sovereignty—these are the duties of a Kṣatriya, born of his own nature'. 'Agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade are the duties of a Vaiśhya, born of his own nature. And the duty of a Śhūdra, born of his own nature, is action consisting of service'.

These duties, however unequal, never created any disharmony or maladjustment in the social structure of the ancient Hindus. The reason is obvious: Caste did not stand in the way of any person's material and spiritual progress. Rise and fall in caste (*jātyutkarṣha* and *jātyapakarṣha*) were recognized and given effect to. Cases where individuals and groups changed their social status from higher to lower caste or *vice versa* are more than evident from the writings of the more liberal law-givers. Caste in some form or other is universally to be found in all societies and Hindu society sought to secure its internal cohesion and integrity through the caste system of yore.

'The system was designed to unite,' observes Dr. Radhakrishnan (in *Religion and Society*), 'first the heterogeneous population of India, and then of the whole world, in one common economic, social, cultural, and spiritual bond. By assigning definite functions and duties, and according rights and privileges, the different classes were expected to work in co-operation and to achieve racial harmony. It is a mould into which all human beings can be poured, according to their vocational aptitude and temperament. The basis of the Varna Dharmā is that every human being must try to fulfil the law of his development'.

The fundamentally spiritual and creative outlook which makes the Hindu view of life what it is manifests itself in the racial, biological, and psychological elements of the individual. The racial element finds its necessary place in the duties and ways of living that devolve on a man in accordance with his Varna or Jāti (caste). The biological and psychological elements are sought to be canalized in the Ashrama Dharma or the elaborate duties and functions of man in accordance with his stage in life. Life is regarded more an austere and adventurous journey to the goal of spiritual perfection than as the unmitigated pursuit of the hedonistic pleasure-principle. The lifetime of the individual is divided broadly into four stages (called *Āśhramas*), viz. Brahmacharya (period as a student), Gārhasthya (period as a householder), Vānaprastha (period as a forest-dweller), and Sannyāsa (period as an

all-renouncing monk). The basic concepts of this scheme of life form the foundation of the Indian social system. Through these four stages, which in a way correspond to the stages of development in life through which everyone has to pass, the individual is gradually and unfalteringly led up the ladder of secular and spiritual advancement.

The first stage, Brahmacharya, covers the period of study and mental training absolutely necessary for the young boy, in his formative period as a celibate pupil or acolyte. For twelve or more years the ardent, strong, and pure-hearted youth has to dwell in the house of his teacher (Gurukula), giving himself up to chastity, moderation in everything and obedient study and service under the directions of the Guru. As Gandhiji once wrote,

'Brahmacharya does not mean mere physical self-control. It means much more. It means complete control over all the senses. Thus an impure thought is a breach of Brahmacharya ; so is anger'.

The Upanishad compares the possessor of concentration of mind and self-control to an able charioteer who has his spiritual steeds under complete control. Upanayana or the ceremony of leading the boy near his teacher, marked the beginning of the Brahmacharya Ashrama. Even here the individual's ultimate duty and goal of attaining God-consciousness is kept perfectly in view by the teacher and the parents.

Education in ancient India was such as to serve the spiritual realization of Truth. The study of the different arts and sciences were by no means neglected. But the individual's supreme duty of achieving self-expansion and self-fulfilment was given a higher place than acquisition of mere objective knowledge or mastery over texts.

After completing his studies, the Brahmacharin, who has grown up to marriageable age, takes leave of the teacher, who, by way of final benediction, tells the young man to speak the truth, follow Dharma, respect the parents, be courteous to guests, and always cultivate the basic virtues of good conduct.

During the second stage, the Brahmacharin enters family life by marrying according to traditional usage and settling down as an honest, upright, and self-sacrificing householder (*grihastha*). Here, too, the ideals of renunciation, self-control, and spiritual striving are never to be lost sight of. The importance of marriage as a universal obligation was well recognized and the position of the woman as wife (*sahadharmini*) and later as mother was made unassailably lofty and secure. The institution of marriage was held sacred and beyond the realm of mere sensual gratification. It became, to both man and wife, an Ashrama or religious order of life in which each looked upon the other as an equal and legitimate partner in a corporate and co-operative endeavour to work out their salvation together. The householder's duties were many, including the five great sacrifices which concerned the individual's obligations to himself and to others within and without the family.

The first two stages may be said to complete the path of activity (*Pravṛitti-mārga*). Secular duties cannot keep one bound for long and man feels from within the urge for spiritual peace and contentment. As he advances in age and realizes the ultimate insufficiency of desire and enjoyment in affording him the means of liberation, man enters the path of renunciation and detachment (*Nivṛitti-mārga*). He then takes to the third stage of life, as a Vanaprastha and retires to the forest. Living away from home, relatives, and the concerns of workaday world, the forest-dweller pursues a more rigidly mental and less ritualistic code of discipline than the householder. Though technically a married man, the Vanaprastha is expected to prepare himself gradually for the final stage of life, viz. Sannyasa.

It is in the fitness of things that the all-renouncing Sannyasin's or ascetic's life should constitute the last stage of the Indian scheme of an individual's span of earthly existence. The Sannyasa Ashrama marks the culmination of life-endeavour, exemplifying complete

renunciation and perfect freedom in the spiritual sense of the word. Living and moving alone by himself, 'like the rhinoceros', the Hindu Sannyasin devotes his whole time and energy to God-realization. Not unoften he acts as friend, philosopher, and guide to those in the other three stages. He is detached from all narrow or selfish ends such as the desire for wife, children, community, and even country. Renouncing everything for the sake of the soul, the Sannyasin lives 'like a servant of humanity' and yet above and beyond all duties and obligations. As the *Gita* says, he is truly a Sannyasin and a Yogi who performs actions free from desire for fruits—not he who externally discards the prescribed sacrifices, rites, and obligations.

Perhaps one can never be sure if these stages of life and their enjoined duties can still be enforced today as the best solution for India's social problems. Whatever the defects of the older system and whatever the needs of the present-day Indian way of life, one thing is certain that without this excellent organization of life and society, India could

hardly have attained to the degree of spiritual culture and religious harmony that are still evoking the unstinted admiration of the countries of the world. The decline of her material prosperity in more recent centuries is due not to her religious and spiritual preoccupations but to their abuse and misapplication. Material and spiritual values were equally to be pursued by the householder at the Garhasthya stage. It is a wrong study of history to impute the charge that India neglected secular matters in preference to religion and spirituality. The emphasis was no doubt on the latter in preference to the former. It would not be far wrong, on the other hand, if one should say that the pursuit of real religion yielded place to a narrow socialized, ritualistic, and communal form of it owing to the disintegration of the Varna-Ashrama Dharma and the gradual disappearance of the latter two stages of Vana-prastha and Sannyasa. Now that Indian history is being re-written in independent India, it may not be long before the myths of foreign misrepresentation are exploded and the essential grandeur of the Indian way of life re-established.

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## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON INDIA'S MESSAGE OF PEACE

BY SWAMI TEJASANANDA

It is a truism that a nation like an individual does not live by bread alone. That India has once again leaped into the full flame of life and has wrested from the hands of Destiny her long-lost freedom after centuries of political servitude and economic exploitation, is a clear testimony to the fact that a nation can never die and its culture can never be annihilated if it be loyal to its spiritual traditions. 'Everywhere (in the East and the West)', Swami Vivekananda said, 'I find among nations one great ideal

which forms the backbone so to speak of that race. With some it is politics, with others it is social culture; others again may have intellectual culture, and so on, for their national background. But this, our motherland, has religion and religion alone for its basis, for its backbone, for the bed-rock upon which the whole building of its life has been based. . . . This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India.—to follow the track of religion'. That this nation lives,—the *raison*

*d'être*—is because it still holds on to the Supersensuous. Romain Rolland, the illustrious litterateur of the West, strikes the very same note in his celebrated work entitled *Life of Ramakrishna* when he says,

'The age-long history of the spirit of India is the history of a countless throng marching ever to the conquest of Supreme Reality. All the great peoples of the world, willingly or unwillingly, have the same fundamental aim; they belong to the conquerors who age by age go up to assault the Reality of which they form a part, and which lures them on to strive and climb. But each one does not see the same face of Reality. It is like a great fortified city, beleaguered on different sides by different armies, who are not in alliance. Each army has its tactics and weapons to solve its own problems of attack and assault. Our Western races storm the bastions, the outer works. They desire to overcome the physical forces of Nature, to make her laws their own so that they may construct weapons therefrom for gaining the inner citadel, and forcing the whole citadel to capitulate. India proceeds along different lines. She goes straight to the centre, to the Commander-in-chief of the unseen General Headquarters; for the Reality she seeks is transcendental'.

In fact this has been the immortal theme of Indian life—the message of her culture, and this has enabled India to stick to her ideal of peace and goodwill and to triumph over the brutal onslaughts of the forces of materialism on the citadel of her life from age to age. Swami Vivekananda was fully conscious that no lasting peace could ever be established on earth through the mere fanfaronade of politico-economic principles of a few politically obsessed people of the world, who, immured in the prison-house of their own passions and prejudices, could hardly get above their personal predilections and sordid self-interests, political or other, and dictate real peace to humanity. It is only God-men who have felt peace, lived in peace, and diffused peace all around, that can transcend all limitations, geographical or other, and claim that sacred privilege of being the real peacemakers in the world. Swami Vivekananda belongs to the category of those dynamic spiritual personalities whose lives and contributions are for all time the

inestimable possession not only of India but also of entire mankind. It is worth while to know how this cyclonic monk of modern India put himself into the treadmill of austere discipline to acquire that priceless wealth of peace and wisdom within himself and how he gave it out in full to the world for the benefit of humanity. He himself unfolds the secrets of his life 'To a Friend',<sup>1</sup> in the following words:

'Friendless, clad in rags, with no  
possession,  
Feeding from door to door on what chance  
would bring,  
The frame broken under Tapasya's weight;  
What riches, ask thou, have I earned  
in life?  
Listen, friend, I will speak my heart  
to Thee,  
I have found in my life this Truth  
Supreme,—  
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,  
There's one ferry that takes across the  
sea,—

'Formulas of worship, control of breath,  
Science, philosophy, systems varied,  
Relinquishment, possession, and the like,  
All these are but delusions of the mind;—  
Love, Love,—that's the one thing, the  
sole treasure' . . .

'From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,  
And the very minutest atom,  
Everywhere is the same God, the All-love;  
Friend, offer mind, soul, body,  
at their feet'.

Thus equipped, the great Swami 'wandered free from plan, caste, home, constantly alone with God. And there was no single hour of his life when he was not brought into contact with the sorrows, the desires, the abuses, the misery, and the feverishness of living men, rich and poor, in town and field; he became one with their lives'. 'The great Book of Life', says Romain Rolland, 'revealed to him what all the books in the libraries could not have done . . . the tragic face of the present day, . . . the cry of the peoples of India and of the world for help, and the heroic duty of

<sup>1</sup> Title of poem by Swami Vivekananda, originally in Bengali.

the new Oedipus, whose task it was to deliver Thebes from the talons of the Sphinx or to perish with Thebes'. The Swami, with the boldness of a seer, threw the gauntlet of challenge to warring humanity and said,

'The question has yet to be decided whether peace will survive or war; . . . whether goodness will survive or wickedness; whether muscle will survive or brain; whether worldliness will survive or spirituality. We have solved our problem ages ago and held on to it through good or evil fortune, and mean to hold on to it till the end of time. Our solution is unworldliness,—Renunciation. This is the theme of Indian life-work, the burden of her eternal songs, the backbone of her existence, . . . the spiritualization of the human race'.

Did not the old Rishis of India sing to the same tune? Did not Buddha and Shankara, Nanak and Ramanuja, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna deliver the same message to the world? Did not even Jesus the Christ—the great prophet of Asia—boldly sound the tocsin of alarm in his immortal utterance, 'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword'? Indeed a true prophet of peace would welcome death on the Cross rather than sell the self for pelf or conquer the world with the sword. For, as Prof. Toynbee, the author of *The Study of History*, has rightly observed,

'The truth seems to be that the sword which has once drunk blood cannot be permanently restrained from drinking blood again any more than a tiger which has once tasted human flesh can be prevented from becoming a man-eater doomed to death. . . . So it is with the society which has sought salvation through the sword'.

The trend of events in the world shows that modern civilization has brought in its trail death and destruction more than anything else. The inhuman atrocities that are being perpetrated in the sacred name of peace and culture, the violence and oppression that blacken the annals of every great nation of the world from day to day, set us seriously athinking as to whether or not mankind is once again running along the downward curve of evolution. As a matter of fact, violence can never be overcome by violence. Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism. It aggravates desires,

and multiplies wants and miseries, clash and conflict, in life and society. Armies, when they attempt to conquer armies, only multiply and make brutes of humanity. More than half a century back Swami Vivekananda, with his forecasting vision of possibilities, pointed out,

'The whole of Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. You will find that the very centre from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very first centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upanishads'.

The world is painfully aware how his prophetic words are being fulfilled today before its very eyes. Therefore it is that the great Swami has come forward today, following in the footsteps of his spiritual forbears, with his message of peace,—a universal specific without which the wounds and ills of human life can never be cured. It is time for the great leaders of thought to rise equal to the occasion and to do the behest of these great master minds so as to swing the pendulum of human thought from the noisy violence of war to the silence of the soul.

It cannot be denied that there is something hidden in the inmost depths of the heart which wants to break through all physical barriers and human limitations to visualize the Supreme Source of Peace—the Eternal Reality. The realization of this highest Truth is the true measure of greatness in the life of an individual or of a race. For greatness is not a thing of kilometres or an extent in space. The true wealth of a man or a nation is the spiritual genius that shines and radiates, and unless and until this light of wisdom, the realization of the oneness of all being, is kindled in the human heart and transfigures the entire personality, it would be vain to expect a healthy revolution in the existing relation between man and man, between nation and nation. In fact the warring instincts of mankind cannot be set at rest without a universal seeping of these spiritual ideas into men's minds and hearts. And this mankind must learn from the immortal teach-

ings of the Vedanta—the treasure-house of the accumulated wisdom and experiences of the ancient seers of India. As already pointed out, every nation has got its distinctive culture, its peculiar traits,—its own line of growth and development. And this variety in the phenomena of life almost baffles the scrutiny of even the boldest of intellects, and as such any attempt to find out a golden link of unity in this world of diversity appears to be as unprofitable as a blind pursuit after the *ignis fatuus* of a marshy land. But still to the enlightened vision of seers, this world of multiplicity has yielded all its secrets. They have visualized that there is one persistent Reality,—an abiding substratum on which the cosmic dance of phenomena has been going on from eternity. They have realized that from the highest to the lowest, from Brahmā down to the minutest particle of dust, there is but one pervasive Reality, ‘through whose fear all elements function,—the fire burns, the sun gives light unto the universe, the moon sheds its lustre, the air blows, and Death does its own duty’. It has also been their experience that this world, bereft of its names and forms, is one with Brahman, and that every individual, organic or inorganic, is in essence the same,—the apparent differences being due to human ignorance which brings about a dichotomy in what is otherwise a homogeneous entity. The finding out of such a broad background of unity in the domain of apparently conflicting and heterogeneous thoughts and beliefs of mankind, a basis on which all men and women, irrespective of caste, creed, and colour, can stand in mutual love and admiration, the identity of the individual with the universal,—is one of the boldest pronouncements of the Vedanta. ‘The modern researches of the West’, says Swami Vivekananda, ‘have demonstrated through physical means the oneness and the solidarity of the whole universe; how, physically speaking, you and I, the sun, moon and stars, are but little waves or wavelets in the ocean of matter, the Samashti, and how, going one step further, it is also shown in the Vedanta that behind

that idea of the unity of the whole show, the real soul is one. There is but one soul throughout the universe, all is but one existence’. Humanity is seeking this impulse of thought as the universal spiritual pabulum to satisfy the hunger of its soul. The religion of India is thus a clarion call to rise to the radiance of the spirit, and her science and economics, arts and literature, have the same upward look. This urge toward the Eternal and the fidelity to her ideal of renunciation and service, universal brotherhood and goodwill, based on the recognition of the fundamental oneness of being, constitute the real Magna Charta of peace which bewildered humanity needs today. And it is India that should deliver once again this message to the war-weary world. So did the great Swami declare,

‘Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West, North or South, and hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilization of the world’.

It is a tragic phenomenon that there is a sinister attempt on the part of some war-mongers to drown the voice of the Rishis of India in the clang and clatter of their arms, and fresh fetters are also being forged from day to day to enslave human thought and action in the sacred name of freedom and peace. Rightly did Dr. Radhakrishnan remark in a spirit of indignation,

‘Integrity is lost and truth-seeking has become the handmaid of state policy. In the belligerent countries of the present day, the intellectuals must think, if they think at all, in one particular way. If they show any independence, they do so at the risk of their lives or their freedom of action. There is no use making any profession of impartiality. We must think to order . . . Before our eyes we see how intellect has become the servant of diplomacy . . . spiritual powers are being exploited for temporal purposes. Religion is made to turn the mills of state authority’.

‘Men are suffering’, he further adds, ‘from the fever of violent motion and they make philosophy out of it . . . Pure contemplation,



aesthetic ecstasy or reflection on the end of life, is dismissed as mystic raving or poetic dreaming'. No truer picture of the prostitution of human intellect can be so realistically drawn, as has been done by this great oriental thinker.

No doubt various 'isms' have of late sprung into life and have already secured a firm foothold in the citadel of human thought and action in many a country of the world to solve the hydra-headed problems of mankind. But in the opinion of the great Swami, the solution does not lie merely in the fantastic formulation of theories, or in the balancing of political powers, or in the evolution of artificial equilibrium of economic forces. The real remedy lies, he emphatically declares, at the hands of those powerful personalities—both men and women—who have gained the vision of spiritual unity and are imbued with the spirit of sacrifice and service, freedom and courage. They must go forth as cultural ambassadors to the farthest corners of the world for the dissemination of the universal and most democratic principles of Vedanta which proclaims the fundamental equality of all on the spiritual plane. Persons whose lives are moulded in the light of such a lofty idealism, are the real peacemakers of the world and the true lovers of mankind. They entertain the deepest regard for every faith, for every individual, and feel no scruple in going to the mosque of a Mohammedan or the church of a Christian. They will delight in taking refuge in the Buddha and his Law and sit in meditation with the Hindu in the forest or in the temple. To them the Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, the Avesta, the Holy Granth, and all other sacred books are so many pages, and infinite number of pages yet remain to be unfolded. This catholicity of outlook is what the world needs today, and nothing fulfils so beautifully the manifold requirements of mankind as this universal gospel of Vedanta. It stands as a living faith embodying the varied aspirations of humanity and furnishes the much-needed forum where all faiths and thoughts of humanity can meet

and shake hands with one another in a spirit of love and fellowship. It is however a hopeful sign of the times that this great principle has already begun to form the basis of all the latest political and social aspirations that are coming up in the various countries of Europe and America. And time is not far when there will be a happy synthesis of the cultural forces of the East and the West as embodied in the Vedanta of the East and the Science of the West to evolve a new civilization in which the various types of cultures will be harmoniously blended, but at the same time shall still have adequate scope for full play and development. 'Let us hope', said the Swami, 'that the East and the West may make their full contribution to the perfection of humanity, and the last civilization of the world, like her first, may be a civilization not of struggle and warfare, but of peace and sympathy, charity and harmonious co-operation to a great end'.

It augurs well that great geniuses shining on the intellectual horizon of the West, have also begun to dream nobler dreams of a New Faith that would usher in a period of universal peace in the world. 'Out of the trouble and tragedy of these times and confusion before us,' said the celebrated historian, H. G. Wells, 'there may emerge a moral and intellectual revival, a religious revival, of a simplicity and scope to draw together men of alien races and new discrete traditions, into one common and sustained way of living for the world's service. The beginning of such things are never conspicuous. Great movements of the racial soul come at first "like a thief in the night"', and then suddenly are discovered to be powerful and world-wide. Religious emotion—stripped of corruptions and freed from its last priestly entanglements—may presently blow through life again like a great wind, bursting the doors and flinging open shutters of the individual life and making many things possible and easy that in these days of exhaustion seem almost difficult to desire'. Moreover, he 'finds today spreading over the hillsides upon a windy day in spring,

the idea that there is a happiness in self-devotion greater than any personal gratification or triumph, and a life of mankind greater and more important than the sum of all the individual lives within it'.

Swami Vivekananda, with his characteristic insight into the future, proclaimed many years ago that from India such a tidal wave would rise and sweep over the whole world. It would be a spiritual revival, he said, which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true divine nature.

'Up, India,' exhorted the great Swami, 'and conquer the world with your spirituality. . . . The only condition of national life, of awakened and vigorous national life, is the conquest of the world by Indian thought'.

'I am waiting for the day when mighty minds will go from India to the ends of the world to teach spirituality and renunciation—those ideas which have come from the forest of India and belong to the Indian soil alone'.

Let us shake off the fetters of intellectual or spiritual slavery and respond to the call of the great monk of India and make a vigorous effort to usher in a new era of lasting peace and goodwill in this war-torn world of ours.

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## THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

BY G. L. MEHTA

After three thousand years and more of recorded history, India survives, India endures. She has had a civilization which goes back to centuries, contemporaneous with the earliest civilizations of China and Egypt, preceding the civilizations of Greece and Rome. This civilization still survives in India, as one can see any morning, even on a wintry day,—thousands of men and women, poorly clad in tattered garments, going for a bath in a holy river. I remember one occasion on which I saw women, barefooted, of course, with not even a woollen shawl over them, going with a little brass utensil in their hand for a bath in the holy Ganges. And I said to myself, this is real India; not the people whom you see in cocktail parties in Bombay, Calcutta, and Delhi, not the people whom you see in fashionable clubs and hotels, but these people who are simple, humble people, and about whose spirit I hope to say something.

This India survives in its temples, in its

architecture, and sculptures, in its epics and its lores. One of the great epics of India is *Rāmāyana*, the story of King Rama, an incarnation of God Vishnu, who conquered evil and destroyed a demon. The original text of *Rāmāyana* is in Sanskrit, our ancient language, but it has been translated in Hindi, our national language, by a poet called Tulsi Das; and although the story is known to everyone from his childhood, its recitation still fills one with some kind of deep ecstasy. Indeed, this is one of the stories, one of the epics, which mothers tell their children, and those children, even if they do not know how to read or write, know these epics, and the earlier generations knew them by heart.

This India, with its great religious and cultural heritage, is still there, while other civilizations have perished, and modern civilizations have come into being. And one asks, are there some enduring values in this India? And has that India got something to contri-

bute to the world, in the realm of thought, in the realm of contemplation?

Now, when one speaks about the spirit of a country, one is apt to be somewhat superficial in generalizing; one is apt even to take up an attitude akin to that of national arrogance or racial pride. It is often said that each nation has some peculiar characteristic; some nation is proficient in music, some in poetry, some in philosophy, and so on. But I believe that one should be very careful in making such generalizations, or even in speaking about 'the spirit' of a country. First, because no culture grows in isolation; throughout ages, countries have borrowed from other lands and their cultures have assimilated and adapted things from other countries. Again, the evolution of a nation itself is a long-time process; it is a process in which so many strands are there, so many strands of race and culture, and also of environment, of geography, of material conditions. Therefore, I think we must be cautious in speaking about the spirit of a country.

And, again, when we speak of the spirit of a country, we must not forget the fact that frequently the spirit of a country is very different from its actual practices. We are all prone to compare the best in our own religion or the best in our own nation—what is preached, the spiritual teachings may be, the inspiring messages of our prophets—with what is worst in the practices of other peoples, or in the practices of other religions. We think of a fine saying of our prophet, and we quote it and say, well, this is Hinduism, or this is Christianity, or this is Islam. But, on the other hand, we forget that these messages of the prophets are translated day by day in practice by ordinary men and women, and we must not forget that even in this translation they lose something of their pristine purity.

Material conditions, again, affect these spiritual yearnings, ambitions, and aspirations. And, therefore, I want to say at the start that what I am going to say about the spirit of India should not be construed as

presenting a glowing picture only. And yet the spirit of a country, even if it frequently eludes us, is always superior to its own institutions. Somehow or other it so happens that when men try to translate their spirit into institutions, customs, and practices, some imponderable value is lost; and, therefore, one will always find, whether in religion or in any cultural sphere, that the spirit is higher than the institution. Consequently, some of the finest manifestations of a people are not in its military arts, not even in its social institutions, certainly not in its political conflicts, but in its art and its philosophy, in its religion and its scientific pursuits.

At the outset, one may ask, then, is there something like a unity of India? It may sound an extraordinary question, but for years when we were under foreign rule, we were told that there was really nothing like 'India', that India was simply 'a geographical expression'; and that there was no inherent spiritual or cultural unity of India. But a British historian, Vincent Smith, says, India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity, far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by political superiority. That unity transcends the innumerable diversities of community, colour, language, dress, manners, and sect. It is not necessary to stress this point any further.

But if there is this unity of India, what are its main attributes,—attributes at their best,—and what is the vital contribution that she has made through centuries? I suggest that India's contribution has been principally in the realm of spiritual thought, of religion and philosophy. Ignorant as an illiterate Indian may appear by modern standards, he has deep down in his being something which we might call religious consciousness.

In India, there are many sects even in Hinduism, and there have been reformist movements which have preached against idol worship. Indeed, one characteristic of Indian reformist movements has been that they themselves have been religious in outlook and

approach. Some of them have harked back to the ancient Vedas and urged that all the gloss of subsequent rituals and doctrines should be removed, and that we should go back to our ancient lore. Other movements contended that idol worship is not something that is in consonance with the essence of Hindu religion. Some of these movements were, no doubt, influenced by other religions. But I am reminded of the story of a man who belonged to that movement, Brahma Samaj as it is called, concentrated mainly in Bengal, though it spread to some other parts of the country. A Brahma believes that God is formless, and that any kind of temple where an image or idol is worshipped does not express the essence of Hinduism. A person who believed in this cult, who was a highly cultured man, deeply read in Western philosophy, went to the temple in Banaras, our holy city, and saw a poor woman coming out of the temple, tears flowing from her eyes, tears of joy at having at last visited the temple and bowed before the shrine of God Shiva. And this man said to my father, 'I do not believe in idol worship, but at least this woman had seen *her* God in that temple!'

And I remember another incident in which one of the well-known amateur musicians of India, Dilip Kumar Roy, sang a beautiful song in Bengali and the words of that song were somewhat like this: 'Those who do not know Him cannot understand, but I know You and, therefore, I believe in You, for I have seen You in the innermost recesses of my heart'. It was a moving line though it loses its effect in translation. And I remember that when he sang it once in Calcutta, at least half-a-dozen women who were there burst into tears; may be, someone had suffered, someone had lost her dear one, someone had a sense of deep devotion. I mention these stray incidents only to show that deep down in the consciousness of the ordinary, unsophisticated Indian man or woman is a feeling which one can only describe as a kind of yearning of the spirit.

An important characteristic of the heritage of India is its synthetic outlook. India, in many respects, is like a vast ocean in which many streams of race and religion have flown since times immemorial, and India has had the capacity of absorbing these varied strands, of assimilating them, instead of rejecting them. This has been so throughout the ages. And if I may add in parenthesis here, even centuries ago, people who were persecuted in other lands because of their religion, came over to India, and India gave them refuge. But it is not only a question of a refuge. Systems of eclectic thought developed in India; systems of religion developed there which tried to harmonize various creeds, which tried to distil the essence of religion from the mass of doctrines and from the gamut of rituals and ceremonies. And many of those people who came from abroad lost some of their fanatical zest, their zeal for conversion. They also settled down in India and imbibed something of that spirit of tolerance which is the essence of Hinduism at its best. Indeed, so eclectic has Hinduism become that it is often difficult to define it or even to understand its essence. It has had so many sects, it has had so many deities that some people think it is a kind of polytheism full of superstitions and crude rituals. And yet it encompasses some of the most abstruse thought that the human mind has ever been capable of. All religions have their ceremonies and rituals which may appear irrational to others, but a spiritual religion has a deeper meaning and significance. And in Hinduism, religion and philosophy coexist.

Many illustrations can be given of this synthetic spirit. Sufism was influenced by this philosophy. One of the great sages of the Middle Ages, Kabir, preached and practised a religion which tried to combine the spirit of both Hinduism and Islam, and the great Muslim emperor, Akbar, himself tried to evolve a religion in which he wanted to combine the best of several religions—he had even a Christian priest near him. And this Din-i-Ilahi, as it was called, was again a

characteristic example of the climate of India, influencing even kings.

At the root of this outlook is a belief—and I hope I am not overstating it—in the supremacy of the spirit over matter. Such a thesis, no doubt, is liable to be misconstrued. But I shall cite here not the teachings of the sages, or what is stated in the scriptures, but the attitude of the common man in the country. Even an ordinary illiterate peasant has almost a philosophical attitude about the transitoriness of life, about the reality of another world hereafter, about good deeds bearing their fruits in an after-life, and even a certain spirit of resignation and, if I may use that word, of renunciation. If an ordinary Indian (uneducated maybe,—he in many respects probably represents the spirit of India better than we educated people) loses some dear one, say his only child, no doubt he will mourn and be sad, but still he will say 'it is God's will'. This spirit of resignation may appear at times something that leads to paralysis; if you have a flood, or a famine, and you say, 'well, that is God's will', and will not take steps to see that you have better irrigation or dams, or do not take steps for conservation of soil, then that is not really 'spiritual'; it is pathetic contentment, born of indolence and stagnation. But, granted that this sort of complete resignation is not desirable, we see that the idea of the omnipotence of man, the idea that man can do anything in this world, is also something that leaves some truth unsaid, something that needs to be qualified. Because, after all, there are things in life which not even the most powerful can control. One of the most materialistic philosophers I have known, Bertrand Russell, says in one of his profound essays, 'A Free Man's Worship', that sooner or later in life, there comes the great renunciation, the knowledge that the world was not made for us, and that however desirable the things may be that we might crave for, ultimately we cannot have them. Difficult as it is to realize in our egoism that the world is not made for us, still, I think, sooner or

later we have to recognize that the world existed long before we were born and will continue long after we pass away. And, therefore, I think that a certain spirit of renunciation is not only wise but is conducive to happiness, happiness born of inner harmony, not happiness which is simply based on material comforts.

And, because of this renunciation, there is this emphasis in Hindu thought, as in other religions, on sacrifice, on what we call *tyāga*. Our scriptures say, 'Renounce the world in order to enjoy it'. And, again and again, we find this is a wise precept, that he who renounces all eventually wins all. This means that one must embrace poverty or must give up all worldly possessions. But surely, even after having some worldly possessions, this constant yearning, this feverish activity, for something more, something newer, something bigger, has its limitations so far as the human mind is concerned. Because, I think, we find in life, each one of us, that, in the ultimate analysis, real happiness comes from within, not from without. And that, I think, is the innermost thought in Hinduism. There is a verse which says, 'Not by wealth, not by progeny, but by renunciation alone is immortality attained'.

There is a very beautiful story of this *tyāga*, this sacrifice, in one of the legends of Buddha. One of the well-known disciples of Buddha, Anathpindad, went to the town of Shravastipur, from one end of the city to the other, saying: 'Give me some gift today for Lord Buddha; I want to carry it to him'. Rich people came down from their palatial buildings and gave him jewels, women gave him ornaments, others gave money, but he was not satisfied; he would not take anything. And he went on, from one end of the town to the other. Eventually, when he came to the poor quarters of the town, he saw a woman who had only one cloth on her which she was wearing, and who hid herself behind a big tree, took off that cloth and gave it to this man. And the disciple said, 'This is the greatest gift because this was the only thing

this woman had. Even her shame she hid behind a tree, and gave this gift. And that gift my Master will prize as a boon'. And he said, 'As are the clouds, which destroy themselves in order to give life-giving rain to the world, so is sacrifice, because eventually out of this sacrifice is the world continuously remade'.

The other great attribute of the spirit of India is compassion, what we call *karuṇā*, compassion for all creatures, compassion for those afflicted in any way. Buddha, in his injunction to the disciples, said: 'O disciples, I teach you only two things: sorrow, and the relief from sorrow'. Most of us are aware of the early life of Buddha, he who was the son of a king,—the young prince Siddhārtha. Because of the prophecy that he might renounce the world, his father had kept him away from any sight of illness, old age, disease, and death; and yet, when Buddha was very young and went out one day, he saw an old man and a dead body. Buddha asked: 'What is this?' He was told about old age and death and he was grieved. He wondered and pondered: 'Why, why should man suffer?' Eventually, he was restless and wanted to know the cause of human sorrow. He renounced his palace, left his wife and daughter, and went in search of truth, in search of some remedy for the sorrows of life. There is a moving story about his search for the cause of sorrow. After his enlightenment, when he was once going about with his disciples, a young woman, Kisagotami, came to him in tears and said: 'O Lord, people say that you have mastered the secret of sorrow. I want back my only child who died yesterday. Can you not revive it?' She had brought the body of the little child with her. And Buddha said, 'All that I can tell you just now is, you go and get some small grain from this village where you are living. But there is one condition, that you must get that grain from a household that has not suffered any grief or sorrow. You get it from someone who has not lost his dear one'. And Kisagotami, this young woman, went from

door to door begging. People were prepared to give her as much grain as she wanted, if that would revive her child, but when she told them of this condition, someone said, 'I have lost my father', another, 'I have lost my only son' or 'I have lost my husband'. And so, Kisagotami came back to Buddha and said, 'My Lord, I cannot find anyone who has not suffered in this village'. And so Buddha said, 'That is just what I wanted to tell you. Your sorrow is the world's sorrow, and that is what I am trying to find out—why men should suffer, and why there should be sorrow in this life. I have not yet discovered the way, but when I have discovered, that way will be open for men'.

And in a very beautiful verse, one of the most beautiful verses in one of our ancient religious books, *Bhāgavata*, there is a disciple who prays to God by saying: 'I beg not for kingdom, nor for paradise, nor immortality, but for the ability to assuage the sorrows of the afflicted ones of this world'. This, I think, is the very high-water mark of the spiritual longing of a man.

The other characteristic of this spirit of India, and I say it in all humility, is tolerance. This does not mean that as individuals we are not intolerant, or even collectively we may not be sometimes intolerant. But I do venture to suggest that the best among us, from Buddha to Gandhi, have not only preached but have practised this virtue of tolerance. The Hindu thinker readily admits points of view other than his own and considers them worthy of attention. 'He is only one, but sages describe Him in various ways'. This is the essence of the spirit of India. Our poet Tagore has said, 'The roads are many, but the Light is one'. And Hindus believe this sincerely. Indeed, so far as I know, there is no doctrine and no practice of conversion in Hinduism. A Hindu believes that every one who is following his own religious beliefs, who is following his own Dharma, is treading the right path, because no one is superior enough to show him a better way. All religions are paths to truth. There is only one

false religion, and that is the religion of the hypocrite and the charlatan. For, whatever the religious way may be, it is arrived at by a certain process of evolution, evolution both of man and of religion itself. Indeed, Hinduism accepts even the principle of the evolution of the idea of God. There is no one uniform standard for the human race; one worships in a temple, or a tabernacle, or a church, or a mosque, but provided he does it sincerely, provided he does it with humility and reverence, there is no reason why other people should try to deflect him from his course and try and teach him something else.

For, there is evolution, according to Hinduism, in the stages of man, even in his belief in God. In one of our scriptures it has been said that there is a kind of, shall I say, priority or hierarchy, in this knowledge of God and there are ways of advancing of our perception of Him. It has been said:

The worshippers of the Absolute are the highest in rank. Second to them are the worshippers of the Personal God; then come the worshippers of the incarnation, like Rama, Krishna, Buddha. Below them are those who worship ancestors, deities, and sages; and least of all are the worshippers of the petty forces and spirits. And the deities of some men are in water, those of the more advanced are in the heavens. Those who are immature in religion use images, but the sage finds his God in his deepest Self.

The so-called pantheism of Hinduism is, therefore, an outer, exterior feature. Fundamentally, it emphasizes the essence of one God.

Because of this tolerance, because of this concept and faith that each man has to work out his own way for his own salvation, there are people who think that Hinduism has no absolute values, it is indeterminate, it is

chaotic; nothing is farther from the truth. Hinduism has some very absolute values, but it does not think that those values can be imposed on others; I do not mean imposed simply in the sense of coercion, but imposed even in the sense of teaching. For, whoever accepts his own God must not be interfered with. In regard to this notion that Hinduism has no definitiveness or coherence, let me quote from a book recently published, *South-East Asia in the Coming World* by Philip W. Thayer:

'At the back of the ancient system of Hindu law, whether regarded on a national, or international basis, was an ethical concept, known as Dharma. This was a concept which was just as binding upon states in their relations with each other as it was upon individuals, and it meant in the final analysis that one must do the right thing, simply because it was the right thing. Sanction lay in the source of the concept as being in the nature of a divine command which could not be ignored. This concept of Dharma, deeply rooted in the very foundations of Hindu law, exerted a profound influence on all its branches. In transplanting and absorption of some phases of the law in Burma and Indonesia, Dharma, with its emphasis on ethical values, played an important part'. This illustrates that point which I have expressed.

The great message of India throughout the ages has been the emphasis on and yearning for peace and harmony. All our ceremonies end with *Om! śhāntih, śhāntih, śhāntih*. That means peace, and one of the significant verses says: 'Let all creatures, all human beings, be happy'. Happy, not in the sense of having only worldly possessions, but happy in the sense of having an inner radiance born of a realization of one's limited self and limitless horizons before us.

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'Therefore utter no words of condemnation. Close your lips and let your hearts open. Work out the salvation of this land and of the whole world, each of you thinking that the entire burden is on your shoulders. Carry the light and the life of the Vedanta to every door, and rouse up the divinity that is hidden within every soul'.

—Swami Vivekananda

## THREE DAYS AT JAYRAMBATI

BY SAILA KUMAR MUKHERJI

Amongst the various items of programme of celebrations, being held throughout the centenary year, adopted by the Holy Mother Centenary Committee of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, were included the installation ceremony of the marble statue of the Holy Mother in the temple at Jayrambati, together with the opening of the newly-built Nāṭ-*mandir* of this temple, on the 8th April 1954, and a connected centenary celebration for three days at Jayrambati, the birth-place of the Holy Mother, and Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Sri Ramakrishna. As a member of the Centenary Committee, I was greatly interested in joining the said celebrations, but it was doubtful whether I could do so in view of the sitting of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly, which was in session about that time and whether it would be possible for me, as Speaker, to leave it in the midst of the session. But by strange coincidence of circumstances it so happened that the last session of the Assembly was prorogued just on the afternoon of the 6th April to my great relief and on that very night I started by the special train from Calcutta, for Jayrambati, via Vishnupur, with my wife. Vishnupur is in the district of Bankura and this is the only convenient railroad for Jayrambati from Calcutta. From this railway station one has to travel by road a distance of about 30 miles to Jayrambati village which is situated in the eastern end of the district. Kamarpukur, which is about 3 miles from Jayrambati, is in the western end of the district of Hooghly in the sub-division of Arambagh. There is another route, by road, direct from Calcutta to Kamarpukur and Jayrambati, via Burdwan and through Arambagh; this is the main road-route from Calcutta. At the instance of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and with the co-operation of the West Bengal Govern-

ment the 70-mile road from Vishnupur to Burdwan via Jayrambati and Kamarpukur was taken up in the Road Development Programme of the State Government and has been thoroughly repaired and rebuilt in the course of the last two years. This has added greatly to the convenience of the large number of devotees visiting these sacred places. But I heard from those who came from Calcutta by motor through the road-route from Burdwan that in between Arambagh and Kamarpukur-Jayrambati there are about 10 miles of *katcha* road, which is still in a deplorable condition owing to two or three bridges on small rivers having not yet been constructed. It is hoped that these two important places of pilgrimage in West Bengal, which will attract pilgrims in future years from not only different parts of this country but also other countries of the world, would attract the attention of the authorities and the bridge construction and further improvement of the road would be speeded up.

At Vishnupur station, when the special train arrived early morning, both the Ramakrishna Mission and the district authorities made elaborate arrangements for transport to Jayrambati. Everyone was found busy arranging for himself a seat in the buses, which were amply provided for. The Ramakrishna Mission authorities, volunteers, and the police authorities made excellent arrangements at the station and nobody was in difficulty. Sri M.A.T. Iyengar, the District Magistrate, himself a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, was there personally to supervise the arrangements. A jeep was provided for me by the Mission authorities. I, with three ladies of my party, arrived in Koalpārā at the residence of Sri Jagannath Koley, a Member of Parliament. At this beautiful village-home, the President and the General



Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, as also five other Swamis of the Order were accommodated for three days. Through the hospitality of Sri Koley and through the enjoyable holy company of the Swamis these three days were made all the more attractive to us.

The village of Koalpara has also a charm of its own as it was associated with many reminiscences of the Holy Mother. She used to take rest for a few days in this village on her way to Vishnupur from Jayrambati. Occasionally she stayed here for some days. She would say, 'Koalpara is my Baithakkhānā (parlour)'. The villagers of Koalpara were very proud to state before us that Koalpara was the 'parlour' of the Holy Mother. The two Ashramas, Yogashrama and Jagadambā Ashrama in that little village still carry reminiscences of the Holy Mother. An old lady, a relation of the Holy Mother, showed us, with extreme devotion, from her trinket, the tuft of hair, the nails, and footprints of the Mother, which she has carefully preserved all these years. We also saw pictures of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, placed by herself; here, along with the portrait of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother also worshipped her own portrait.

After finishing our morning ablutions we reached Jayrambati at about 9 a.m., covering only a distance of about 3 miles from Koalpara. From the main road from Vishnupur to Jayrambati the temple of the Holy Mother is seen close by at a little distance. For this ceremony and celebration a 100 ft. wide road was constructed from the main road to the temple, over the fields and meadows voluntarily released by the villagers for the occasion of the Centenary. The road was also constructed with their co-operation. On the two sides of the main road leading to the temple temporary structures were erected for shops and canteens and for various village industries and crafts and other nick-nacks. At the end of the rows of shops one noticed, on one side of the road, temporary thatched camps where women devotees were lodged, and on the other side temporary camps were

provided for the men devotees. Arrangements were made by the Ramakrishna Mission for the board and lodging of about 4,000 pilgrims from outside. Besides, the villagers of Jayrambati gave shelter to a large number of pilgrims, enabling them to remain in their cottages as guests. At times the villagers themselves stayed in the open or even in cow-sheds, thus making room for the guests. The women devotees' conference, which was held in Calcutta in connection with the Centenary Celebrations, also attracted various delegates from different parts of India, many of whom came to this place. They too took shelter in the little homes of the village. After leaving the rows of shops and camps, one noticed the volunteers' camps, the offices of the Ramakrishna Mission, camps for kitchen, dining-places, and stalls for exhibition. There was excellent arrangement for drinking-water by sinking tube-wells at various places in the Mela area and arrangement was also made for plentiful supply of water for washing, etc. by drawing from the near-by river, Āmodar, by electrically driven pumps and by erecting water-tanks and sheds at various places. The electrification of the entire area by means of temporary equipment made this place in the interior of the village look gay and joyous throughout.

On the first day, 7th April 1954, in the morning, everyone was busy paying a visit to the various places in the locality that were associated with the Holy Mother. Some were found sitting in meditation in the thatched room which was used by the Holy Mother for nearly four years during the last stages of her life in her own cottage. Some were seen in a similar position in a room, at a distance, in the hamlet, near a tank, where too she had stayed for a short time. Some stood near the courtyard where Mother had served food to a Muslim villager, Amjad, and had herself cleaned the place. Some were seen in meditation before Mother's paternal home in the hamlet where she had spent most of her village life. Some were listening with

rapt attention to the talks of those who had the unique opportunity of serving the Mother during her last days and knowing the various little incidents of her domestic life in and through which she set up an ideal motherly attitude towards her worldly life. Others in batches were rushing towards Simhavāhini temple where the deity revealed Herself to the Holy Mother, and is still being worshipped with devotion by the heirs of the Sevaitis of the Goddess.

The morning of the 7th April looked as if the entire village,—its every lane and alley, its every home and cottage, its trees and shrubs, and its tanks and surroundings,—was surcharged with the sacred spirit of the Holy Mother and as if the whole country-side was in ecstasy over the touch of the Holy Mother's sacred feet. It was as if everybody was seeing the Mother and feeling the presence of the Mother at every turn.

The temple remained closed up to the evening because arrangements were being made inside by the priests and Swamis for the sacred installation ceremony on the next day, to be held according to Shāstric rites. And they were all busy decorating the marble deity and the surroundings with many kinds of flowers, dress, and ornaments. Immediately after the evening, as the lights were on, the temple doors were opened to the satisfaction of all—who had a glimpse of the Holy Mother's white marble statue, she—dressed like a queen, and the devotees and visitors—with rapt attention and steadfast gaze—looked at the Mother, to whom Sri Ramakrishna himself, in reply to her question, said, 'You are the same Divine Mother of eternal bliss whom I see in the temple'. Having seen in the marble statue the Holy Mother, as Goddess, in the identical place where she was born hundred years ago, many devotees prayed for her blessings, thought deeply of the significance of the ceremony, and also wished for the good of the country and of humanity. Under the direction of the volunteers, in the not too spacious courtyard of the temple, which was thronged with

innumerable visitors, everybody had to satisfy himself with just a look at the deity, for a few minutes, in the evening prior to the day of installation.

The programme of the celebration at Jayrambati on the 7th April consisted of a whole-day function commencing with Rudrahoma early in the morning. Close to the temple a large space was enclosed and canopied, within which an altar was erected where, according to Vedic rites, the sacrificial Homa was performed by the Swamis and the priests (brought from Banaras). The devotees sat under the canopy as long as they could and were deeply interested in this special worship and Homa ceremony. When the Rudrahoma was finished in the afternoon, the priests and Swamis got busy in making preliminary arrangements for the next day's installation. The devotees in batches assembled in the temple courtyard to have a glimpse of the Holy Mother immediately the door would be opened for public view. The eager devotees, young or old were filled with joy at the sight of the Mother. In the evening the entire village of Jayrambati wore a joyous look and the coloured electric lights and other decorations in the temple had been an added attraction. The exhibition pandal where the Holy Mother's life was portrayed with earthen dolls and figures made by the famous artisans of Krishnagar, drew a large number of visitors. The busy kitchen revealed preparations for the next day's feeding of the devotees, and here the ladies showed lively enthusiasm. The Mission authorities made arrangements for distributing Prasāda to twenty thousand people.

The greatest attraction that evening was the exhibition of important events from the Holy Mother's life by means of dolls. The exquisite scene, showing the mother of the Holy Mother, Shyāmāsundari, having the vision of a divine child in the village of Shihar, before the birth of the Holy Mother, and that depicting the Shodāshi Puja or the

worship of Sarada Devi, as Goddess, by Sri Ramakrishna, drew the attention of every visitor. The evening was also delightfully spent in amusements such as folk-songs, Yātra (drama) performances, etc.

The second and important day, 8th April, opened with joyous shouts and crackerbursts proclaiming to the entire rural area the commencement of the celebration of the Centenary of the Holy Mother. From very early morning, villagers, in batches, flocked on the village roads and alleys, and the visiting people, in lines, marched along the roads. The wide roads leading from Bankura, Vishnupur, and Arambagh were full of buses and other conveyances bringing pilgrims to the holy place. The longing in everybody's heart was to have the *darshan* of the deity installed in the temple. The people moved about the whole day, in the village of Jayrambati, and took Prasada in the afternoon. In the evening they attended the grand Ārati (temple service), saw the exhibition, heard lantern-lectures on the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, enjoyed the fireworks, and witnessed theatrical performances. A huge procession half-a-mile long, started early in the morning, carrying the portraits of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother. It showed the vibration of life which the celebration had brought into being in the villages as evidenced in the ecstatic folk-dances, folk-songs, and Kirtans. It seemed the entire village had forgotten everything else except the reappearance of the Holy Mother. After the Kirtans an old peasant, with tearful eyes, came and said, 'The Holy Mother has come to our village again after hundred years in order to forgive sinners like us and wash our sins away'. This showed the spontaneous feeling of all the villagers. The Puja, with elaborate Shastric rituals, continued in the temple throughout the day.

On the third day, 9th April, from the morning the crowd began to thin and those who had spent the previous night seeing the theatrical performance and resting under tree-

shade were gradually returning in batches. Those who came from long distances were going back in buses and trucks. Many devotees were busy that day visiting Kamarpukur, the birth-place of Sri Ramakrishna. There was special Centenary Celebration at Kamarpukur also and worship and Prasada distribution were arranged for. Even when transport was not available for some reason or other, the devotees, young and old, men and women, started on foot from Jayrambati to Kamarpukur in long lines along roads and through meadows. This is quite in keeping with the age-old tradition of devout Hindus who, for journeys to inaccessible and distant places of pilgrimage all over India, have not taken any notice of the physical strain and troubles involved in the journeys. Their mental vigour has always carried them forward to the goal.

Those who are familiar with Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature will get wonderful inspiration from the different places hallowed by the sacred memory of Sri Ramakrishna. Various places at Kamarpukur associated with the divine life of Sri Ramakrishna, brought peace and bliss in everybody's mind. They visited the famous banian tree by the side of Bhutirkhal where the Master used to sit occasionally and play, the tank Haldarpukur, the thatched cottage which was the bedroom of Sri Ramakrishna, the temple of Raghuvir which is still there, and the Pāthashālā structure where he had his first lessons. Laha Babu's house in ruins, the room of midwife Dhani Kāmārnī, the newly-built temple on the spot where Sri Ramakrishna was born,—all combined to invest Kamarpukur with the sanctity of a 'place of pilgrimage'. We spent about two hours there, visited different places, and returned to Koalpara for our journey to Bankura that very day, via Vishnupur. At Vishnupur we rested for about half an hour at the house of Sri Radhagovinda Roy, West Bengal's Minister for Tribal Welfare. From there we went to Bankura by car where our three days' trip ended.

I believe these two temples at Kamar-

pukur and Jayrambati, situated at the junction of the districts of Hooghly and Bankura, will in future attract people not only of India but of the world as places of pilgrimage. It is indeed a happy coincidence that after our newly attained freedom, when the State and

its leaders are planning to revive the rural life of India, neglected for centuries, these two temples should spring up in the interior of West Bengal where the whole country pours forth its heart's devotion to this divine couple.

## HISTORICITY OF SOME PLACES MENTIONED IN THE RĀMĀYANA

BY V. B. ATHAVALE

In this short article an attempt is made to show how places like Panchavaṭi, Dandakāraṇya, Kiṣkindha, Lanka, etc., where incidents occurred in the Rāma period, can be located without ambiguity by tracing the way in which these places were visited by persons in the Pāṇḍava period.

Though Dāśharathi Rama is generally accepted by scholars to be a historical personality, yet his story, which is given in Vālmiki *Rāmāyana*, is not considered to be a historical document which can be testified to by external evidence. The obvious reason is that we cannot ascertain when the epic was composed by Valmiki. Another reason is that names like Jaṭāyu Gṛidhra, Sugriva and Hanumān Vānara, Daśhamukha Rāvaṇa are interpreted to be a vulture, monkeys, and ten-headed demon. The whole story has thus become a mythology bereft of any historical interpretation.

If names like Gṛidhra, Rikṣha, Vānara, Rāvaṇa, etc. can be shown to be family names of men who were contemporaries of Rama of Ayodhya and Sita from the Mithila territory, just in the same way as we have at present family names like Kavale, Kolhe, and Landge which are not interpreted as crows, foxes, and wolves, this mythological aspect disappears at once. Here is the evidence from the Valmiki *Rāmāyana* as well as the Jain *Rāmāyana* (Haḷa Kannada).

Madras edition of *Rāmāyana*, Aranya-kāṇḍa, Ch. 14, tells that Jaṭāyu Gṛidhra was a brahmin staying near Panchavaṭi and he was a friend of Daśharatha. Ayodhya, Ch. 11, verses 11-15 tell how Daśharatha got acquainted with Jaṭāyu. 'Daśharatha had to fight with an Asura in Dandakāraṇya, who had the emblem of Timi (shark) on his banner. Kaikeyi was with Dasharatha in this campaign. Daśharatha was wounded in this fight and Kaikeyi attended to the wounds. Daśharatha got acquainted with Jaṭāyu at this time. When Rama went to Panchavaṭi, it is natural that he got acquainted with Jaṭāyu. When Sita was carried away by Daśhagriva (an individual name) from Janasthāna Panchavaṭi, it was Jaṭāyu who tried to oppose Rāvaṇa. The story of Kaikeyi making use of a promise by Daśharatha to exile Rama in Dandakāraṇya gets also corroborated.

The ancient Jain *Rāmāyana* gives the following interesting account of the ancestors of Vānaras, Rākṣhasas, Vidyādhars, and Asuras prior to the Rama period and also the territories in which they lived:

(1) Rākṣhasas were dominant in the south with their headquarters at Lanka in Ceylon and their influence extended from Trichanapally in the east to Gokarna in the west.

(2) The Vānara kingdom was north and west of Mysore (Maḥiṣmati), their chief city

being Kishkindha near the village of Hampi on Tungabhadra.

(3) The empire of the Vidyādhara was apparently more to the north and their principal seat was at Ratnapur-Chakravalpur. The Shilaharas of Karhataka near Kolhapur were known as Vidyādhara.

(4) Asuras had colonies in the Gulf of Cutch and Khambayat. Guhāsura stayed at Harihar, Mahishāsura was near Mysore, Hidimbāsura (not of the Pāṇḍava period) at Chitaldurg, and Bakāsura (not of the Pāṇḍava period) at Rahamangadh.

Kishkindha was an ancestor of Vāli and Sugriva. He had two sons: (1) Rikshaja, (2) Suryaja. Sukeśha was an ancestor of Rāvana. Sukeśha had three sons: Māli, Sumāli, and Mālyavanta. The three sons regained the Lanka kingdom when they attained manhood. The Vidyādhara kingdom was in charge of a person called Indra. The three princes at Lanka attacked the Vidyādhara kingdom with the help of Rikshaja and Suryaja, but they were defeated and lost their kingdom and retired to Pātāla Lanka. Sumāli had a son called Ratnaśhrava, whose son was Rāvana. Rāvana regained his Lanka kingdom and restored Kishkindha to Rikshaja and Suryaja. Suryaja had two sons, Vāli and Sugriva. Rāvana demanded their sister in marriage, but Vāli being opposed to it had to abdicate and Sugriva got the kingdom.

On one occasion, Sugriva, owing to some dispute with his wife Sutārā, stayed away from the capital. During his absence, a double of Sugriva, who closely resembled him, usurped his wife and the ministers. The real Sugriva got into a fix and resorted to his friend Hanumān, son of Pavanajaya, a king of Hanuvara-dvipa. When Hanumān heard about Rama, he met him at Pātāla Lanka and undertook to recover Sita, if he would restore his Kishkindha kingdom. Accordingly Rama attacked Kishkindha and killed the double of Sugriva. Hanumān set out from Mahendra Parvata and Dadhimukha Parvata and brought back a token from Sita. Forces

were then mustered for Sita's recovery. The army marched first to Velandhapura, ruled by the king called Samudra, to Suvelachala ruled by Suvela, and lastly to Hamsa-dvipa, whose king was Dvipardana.

The greatest difficulty is about the location of places where these incidents occurred. For, some scholars have recently announced that Panchavati of Rama was near Rajamahendri, the mouth of the Godavari, and not near Nasik, the source of Godavari, as is commonly supposed. The argument for this conclusion is that one of the manuscripts describes that elephants were playing in the Godavari river near the Ashrama of Rama. The second argument is that *Rāmāyana* does not mention the crossing of the Narmada river before reaching Godavari.

*Rāmāyana* tells that the Ashrama of the sage Sutikṣhṇa was north of the Ashrama of the sage Agasti and at a distance of five Yojanas (23 miles) from it. The Ashrama of Rama was near that of Agasti and Rama visited the Ashrama of Sutikṣhṇa twice during his ten-year stay at Panchavati. Mr. Monier Williams has located the Ashrama of Sutikṣhṇa to be the Ramtek hill near Nagpur.

Sardar Kibe of Indore locates Lanka to be the Amarakantak region near the source of Narmada. Mr. P. S. Iyer, Justice of Bangalore, has identified Lanka, Pampa, Rishyamuk of Sugriva, etc. in the Jabalpur district. Tradition places Lanka in Ceylon and Kishkindha near Hampi. This diversity of opinion about the location of the most important places throws the historicity of the events in the Rama period into a confused condition.

If it is possible to identify geographically all the important places without ambiguity, then only the historicity of the events would be established on a firm basis.

It is well known that the Rama period was prior to the Pāṇḍava period. The story of Rama is directly given in *Mahābhārata* at three places: (1) Vana. 149, (2) Vana. 273-290, (3) Drona. 59. (1) *Vāyu* Ch. 88, (2) *Bhāg.* X. 10-11, (3) *Padma* VI. 269-271,

are the three places where the Rama story is repeated. *Adi.* 217 tells that Arjuna had visited Rameshvara and Gokarna after his marriage with Chitrāngada, the daughter of a Pandya king. In the Rama story, in *Vana.* 277, we are told that Rāvaṇa went from Lanka to Gokarna to secure the help of Mārīcha to abduct Sita from Panchavaṭi. At Rameshvara Arjuna had a mystic vision of Hanumān building a bridge for Rama.

*Sabha.* 31.17-18 tells that Sahadeva visited Kīshkindha after crossing Tungabhadra and fought with the descendants of the Vānaras for seven days and secured ransom for the Rājasuya sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhira. With regard to Lanka, *Sabha.* (Bh. Ed.) p. 149 tells that Ghaṭotkacha was sent to Simhala-dvipa to secure Upahāra from the descendants of Vibhiṣhaṇa. P. 377 tells that Sahadeva had asked Ghaṭotkacha to go to Lanka, while p. 383 tells that it was Krishna who had asked the Rākṣhasa Ghaṭotkacha to go to Lanka to secure ransom from the Rākshasas there. *Sabha.* 52.36 tells that men from Simhala-dvipa had gone to Indraprastha with their Upahāra.

*Vana.* 277.39-42 tells that Rama left his brother Bharata at Nandigrāma and then went to the Ashrama of Sharabhangā in Daṇḍakāraṇya. From that place he went to Godavari river, where the sage Agasti was staying. Then Rama settled to stay at Panchavaṭi. The fight of Rama with Khara, etc. took place at Panchavaṭi. Rāvaṇa carried away Sita. Jaṭāyu Gṛidhra was mortally wounded while trying to rescue Sita from Rāvaṇa. When Rama returned he met Jaṭāyu in a dying condition. Rama then went to Kīshkindha, where he met Aṅgada and Sugriva.

It is easy to identify these places, because *Vana.* 85 tells that Yudhiṣṭhira had visited these places in the following order. Pāṇḍavas crossed Payoṣṇi (Tapi) river and then reached the Sharabhangāshrama in Daṇḍakāraṇya. From there they went to Sapta Godavari, where they visited the Agasti Ashrama. The Pāṇḍavas then went to Shur-

pāraka, the place of Paraśhurāma. The reference to the Tapi river shows that the route must be across Godavari at Nasik. The expression Sapta Godavari shows explicitly that it must be the source of Godavari at Trim-bakeshvar and not near Rajamahendri. The Ashrama of Agasti is 25 miles south-east of Nasik and it is still visited by pilgrims. The place of the cremation of Jaṭāyu is also known as Sarva-tirtha and it is near the village Taked, 30 miles south of Nasik. The Ashrama of Sutikṣhṇa is also north of Agasti Ashrama mentioned above. It cannot be Ramtek near Nagpur.

The importance of the *Mahabhārata* evidence lies in the fact that the Bhandarkar edition does not give any variant readings for all the references quoted above. It means that there are no interpolations in the account and the question of the authorship of the verses becomes insignificant.

It is practically impossible at present to determine the time interval which elapsed from the Rama period up to now, from some unique astronomical observation belonging to the Rama period. It is, however, possible to obtain a tolerably accurate estimate of the relative time intervals between the Rama period, Janaka-Yajnavalkya period, and the Pandava period by determining the contemporary geneological descendants of the Kosala family at Ayodhya, the Bharata-Ajamidha-Kuru family at Hastinapura, the Janaka family in the Mithila territory, and the Vasu Chaidya family in the Magadha territory. This can be corroborated by collating the account of the various incidents given in the Vedic and Pauranic literature. This collated evidence will automatically eliminate the highly controversial questions about the period of the composition and the authorship of this vast ancient literature.

Three Puranas (*Vāyu*, *Matsya*, and *Brahmāṇḍa*) tell that Adhisāmakrishna, the 7th descendant of Arjuna at Hastinapura, Divākara Kosala (a descendant of Brihad-bala Kosala who was killed by Abhimanyu) of Ayodhya, and Senājit, a 7th descendant

of Jarāsandha (Magadha) were contemporaries. During the reign of Nichakṣhu, the son of Adhisakṛishna, Hastinapura was flooded by the river Ganga and hence the capital was shifted to Kaushambi. Janamejaya II (the grandson of Abhimanyu) obtained a victory over Takshaka Nāga, who had killed Parikshit by administering poison, when Janamejaya was a young boy (age 7). The place where Parikshit was poisoned is still known by tradition as Parikshitgadh, some 20 miles south of Hastinapura. The campaign with Takshaka took place at Takshashilā (Punjab) and Janamejaya II performed an Aśhvamedha at Hastinapura to commemorate this victory. These details of Parikshit and Janamejaya are given in order to distinguish him from another Parikshit and his son Janamejaya I, who were the ancestors of the Pandavas. *Vāyu Purana* tells that Yajnavalkya was a preceptor of Janamejaya II and Devamitra Śhākalya was a tutor of Śhatānika, the son of Janamejaya II. *Vayu* tells that Sumitra was the 25th descendant of Divakara Kosala of Ayodhya. This shows clearly that the author of this statement can at the most be a contemporary of Sumitra.

Bahulasva Janaka was a contemporary of the Pandavas and he stayed at Janakpur in Champāranya, while Siradhvaja Janaka, the father of Sita, stayed at Janakpur, 50 miles north of the Darbhanga town.

Now we can turn to Parikshit, Janamejaya I, Yajnavalkya Vājasaneyā and their contemporaries, who are mentioned in the Vedic literature as well as *Mahābhārata*. *Sh. Br.*, 13.5.4.1, tells that Janamejaya Pārikshit had performed an Aśhvamedha to get rid of the Brahmahatyā sin, which he had unwittingly committed and Indrota Śhaunaka was the priest. Bhiṣma refers to this incident, in *Shānti*. ch. 150, as a past incident. *Ait. Br.*, 8.21, refers to another Aśhvamedha of Janamejaya Pārikshit, a great-grandson of Kuru, and Tura Kāvaśheya performed the Aindrābhiṣheka ceremony. *Matsya Purana*, ch. 50, refers to these two sacrifices of the ancestor of the Pandavas in order to distin-

guish him from the descendant who had performed only one Aśhvamedha, as shown before.

The relative position of Janamejaya and the Janaka-Yajnavalkya pair which is famous in the Vedic literature can be ascertained as follows. *Sh. Br.*, 11.6.2.1, tells that when Yajnavalkya Vājasaneyā went to the king Janaka of the Mithila territory, (who lived at Janakpur on the Sadānirā river i.e. the confluence of Sadānirā and Gaṇḍaki rivers), he was accompanied by Śhvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka Āruṇi, and Somaśhuṣhma, the son of Satyayajna. *Sh. Br.*, 10.6.5.9, tells that Somaśhuṣhma was the 3rd descendant (disciple) of Indrota Śhaunaka. [Indrota → (Dṛiti-Pulusha) → (Sātyayajna-Somashushma)]. But we know that Indrota was a contemporary of Pārikshit Janamejaya, because he had redeemed the Brahmahatyā sin of the king. If 30 years are taken as an average per generation, we can say that Yajnavalkya Vājasaneyā was 60 years later than the king Janamejaya. This fact can be corroborated as follows: In the court of Janaka, Bhujyu had asked Yajnavalkya about the fate of the sons of Parikshit. Yajnavalkya replied that they must have gone to the heavens, because their sins were redeemed by the Aśhvamedha.

We shall now try to determine the relation between Hiranyanābha Kosala and Yajnavalkya. The Vedic literature refers to him as a king of the Kosala territory, who had a great liking for mystic experiences. He had once asked a Brahmin if he knew about a Puruṣha having 16 phases. The Puranas tell that he was the 15th descendant of Dāśharathi Rama. *Mbh.*, 3, (Paṣhya-parva), tells an incident about Paṣhya (Dhruvasandhi) who was a grandson of Hiranyanābha.

Paṣhya and Janamejaya were great friends. Both of them had appointed a Brahmin called Veda as their common Purohit. Upamanyu, Veda, and Uddalaka Aruni were, in their boyhood, the disciples of the sage Dhaumya and the young Aruni got the name Uddalaka because he remained holding fast to a crumbling bund and prevented the leak-

ing of the water. *Sh. Br.*, 14.9.3.15, tells that this Uddalaka Aruni taught the Mantra-vidyā to Yajnavalkya Vajasaneya. This means that Janamejaya, Pauṣhya, Veda, and Uddalaka were contemporaries. The Puranas tell that Brihadbala Kosala, who was killed by Abhimanyu, was the 15th descendant from Hiranyanabha and 29th from Rama. *Drona.*, 47, also tells that Brihadbala Kosala was 29th descendant of Rama. *Ananda Rāmāyana*, 9.6, tells that Ajamidha was ruling at Hastinapura when Rama left his mortal coil. *Vālmīki Rāmāyana* 7.108, tells that Yudhājit Kekaya, maternal uncle of Rama, asked Rama to send his brother Bharata to conquer the Gāndhāra territory. Accordingly, Bharata took his two sons, Takṣhaka and Puṣhkarā, and fought with the Gandhāras for 7 days and occupied the territory. The town Takshashila was founded by the son of Bharata.

Two important conclusions can be drawn from this concordance of the sequence of the events in these different periods.

(1) Yajnavalkya Vajasaneya was the first to start the Śhukla (white) branch of *Yajur-Veda* and hence this branch became known as Vajasaneyi Śhākha. We know that he was a contemporary of Uddalaka and Veda and flourished in the court of Janaka, some 60 years after Janamejaya, the great-grandson of Kuru and some 13 generations (400 years) prior to Krishna Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, who was the Kula Guru and a contemporary of Bhīṣhma and the Pandavas. It means that the Vedic literature was divided into 4 parts (*ṛic, yajuh, sāma, atharva*) prior to Yajnavalkya. Hence, Pārāśhara Vyāsa, who is known to have made these divisions, cannot be identical with the Vyasa of the Pandava period.

(2) The composition of the *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* could never have taken place prior to the Yajnavalkya period. The upper and the lower limit of the date of the composition of the *Sh. Br.* can be determined as follows: It says that the Kṛittikas are never swerving from due east. The late astronomer Sri Dixit writes, 'The celestial point, which is due east at present, makes an angle of 70 degrees with the Krittika star cluster (pleiads). The rate of this backward shift is 72 years per degree. Hence,  $70 \times 72 = 5040$  years is the upper limit. To the naked eye, the same star cluster can appear due east for 900 years. Thus the upper and lower limits are 3100 B.C. and 2200 B.C.' *Sh. Br.*, 12.9.3.3, refers to the king Pratipa as a descendant of Kuru. (*Pratipah Kauravyo Rāja*). But it does not mention Shantanu, Bhīṣhma, or the Pandavas. It means that *Shatapatha* was composed after Pratipa but prior to the Pandavas.

We shall now try to determine the Pandava period. Bhīṣhma-parva, ch. 3, tells that Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn were simultaneously retrograding near Magha, Śhravaṇa, and Purva-phalguni respectively. Sri Kannu Pillay writes in his Ephemeris that this event could have taken place either in 3065 B.C. or 720 B.C. This means that the Pandava period can be 3000 B.C. Pratipa was the grandfather of Bhīṣhma and Yajnavalkya was 400 years prior to the Pandavas, i.e. it can be 3400 B.C. We can thus say with certainty that *Shatapatha* was composed prior to the Pandava period, i.e. 3100 B.C.

As the Rama period was some 30 generations prior to the Pandava period, we can for the present assume that the period of Rama was 3900 B.C.

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'Even if the historicity of the whole thing (Puranas) is proved to be absolutely false today, it will not in the least be any loss to us. Then what is the use of so much historical research, you may ask. It has its use, because we have to get at the truth; it will not do for us to remain bound by wrong ideas due to ignorance'.

—Swami Vivekananda



# SRI-BHASHYA

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

(Continued from the July issue)

## CHAPTER I

### SECTION I

*Topic 6: CONCERNING 'THE SELF  
CONSISTING OF BLISS'*

**आनन्दमयः, अभ्यासात् ॥ १३ ॥**

13. The self consisting of bliss (is Brahman and not the individual soul) on account of the repetition (of bliss).

In the last topic it has been shown that Brahman which is to be inquired into is different from the inert Pradhana consisting of the three Gunas, which is the object of enjoyment for the individual soul (Jiva). In the present topic it is shown that this Brahman is also different from the individual soul (Jiva), whether in its bound or its freed state, and is full of bliss.

In the beginning of the Ananda Valli of the Taittiriya Upanishad we find, 'From that Self sprang ether' etc. (2.1), and later the text says, 'Different from this self which consists of understanding (Vijnanamaya) is the inner Self that consists of bliss' (2.5). A doubt arises as to whether 'the Self consisting of bliss' refers to the individual soul (Jiva) or the supreme Self (Brahman).

*Objection:* 'The Self consisting of bliss' is the individual soul because the text later says, 'The Self embodied in that one i.e., the self consisting of understanding, is this Self consisting of bliss' etc. (2.6), which declares its relation to a body, and this can indicate the individual soul and not Brahman, and as the individual soul is an intelligent being, creation preceded by thought is possible for it. So 'the Self consisting of bliss' is the individual soul (Jiva).

*Answer:* 'The Self consisting of bliss here, refers to Brahman on account of the repetition of the word 'bliss'. The text begins with, 'Now this is an examination of bliss', and finally says, 'From where speech (the senses) together with the mind turns away unable to reach It. Knowing the bliss of that Brahman he fears nothing' (Taitt. 2.8), and this indicates supreme Bliss, which cannot be surpassed by any other bliss like the earlier ones described in the section. Such infinite bliss can be true only of the supreme Self, which is opposed to all evil and is of an unmixed blissful nature and not of the individual self, which enjoys a particle of that bliss mixed with endless pain and grief. Therefore, 'the Self consisting of bliss' is the supreme Self.

**विकारशब्दान्नेति चेन्न, प्राचुर्यात् ॥ १४ ॥**

14. If it be said (Brahman is not referred to in the passage) on account of (the suffix 'mayat') denoting modification, (we reply) not so, because it (the suffix 'mayat') denotes abundance (of bliss).

*Objection:* The suffix 'mayat' is indicative of a modification, and so Anandamaya cannot refer to Brahman, which is not an effect. Earlier in the section this suffix 'mayat' has been used to indicate an effect, as in 'the self consisting of food', 'the self consisting of Prana' etc., and so here, in the expression 'the Self consisting of bliss', it also denotes a modification and so refers to the individual soul and not Brahman; for the soul, which is of the nature of bliss, can, in the condition of bondage in Samsara, be said to be a modification of bliss.

*Answer:* Though the suffix 'mayat' has been used earlier to indicate modification yet in the expression 'the Self consisting of bliss' it cannot refer to the individual soul, for even with regard to that all changes are denied in many texts like, 'It is neither born nor does it die' etc. (*Katha*, 1.2.18). So the 'mayat' indicates abundance of bliss, in which sense also this suffix is often used. This abundance of bliss is possible in Brahman alone and not in the individual soul. Therefore 'the Self consisting of bliss' is Brahman and not the individual soul.

Again it is also not possible for the individual soul to become a modification in the sense a lump of clay becomes a pot, for it is against all scriptural teaching and logic. In the state of Samsara its knowledge and bliss are only in contracted condition due to Karma.

### तद्धेतुव्यपदेशाच्च ॥ १५ ॥

15. And because It is declared to be the cause of the bliss of the individual soul (even).

The supreme Self is said to be the cause of the bliss of others in the text, 'Who could move, who could live, if that bliss did not exist in ether (Brahman)? For It alone causes bliss' (*Taitt.* 2.7). That which causes bliss to others cannot but have bliss in abundance, and so 'the Self consisting of bliss' can refer only to Brahman and not to the individual soul. Further, that which imparts bliss to others, the individual souls, is different from them, and so can only be the supreme Self. That 'the Self consisting of bliss' is referred to by 'bliss' in the passage, will be stated in Sutra 20.

### मान्त्रवर्णिकमेव च गीयते ॥ १६ ॥

16. Moreover, that very (Brahman) which has been referred to in the Mantra portion is sung (in this passage as 'the Self consisting of bliss').

The second chapter of the Taittiriya Upanishad begins, 'He who knows Brahman attains the Highest . . . Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity'. This very Brah-

man is finally declared in Taittiriya Upanishad 2.5 as 'the Self consisting of bliss'. This Brahman, however, is different from the individual soul, inasmuch as It is declared to be the object to be attained by the soul—'The knower of Brahman attains the Highest'—and is therefore necessarily different from it. The same is made clear in all the subsequent passages, 'From that Self sprang ether' etc. Therefore 'the Self consisting of bliss' is different from the individual soul and refers to Brahman.

### नेतरः, अनुपपत्तेः ॥ १७ ॥

17. (Brahman and) not the other (the individual soul), (is meant here) on account of the impossibility (of that assumption).

*Objection:* No doubt That which is to be attained is different from the Jiva that attains It, yet it must be said that the Brahman declared here is not altogether different from the soul (Jiva), for It is the essential nature of the worshipper (the soul), which is non-differentiated intelligence devoid of all attributes, and free from all ignorance. This non-differentiated nature of the soul is declared by the text, 'Truth, Knowledge, Infinity is Brahman', and the text 'From where speech (the organs), together with the mind returns, unable to reach It' (2.9) also refers to this soul as devoid of attributes in its essential nature. It is this to which the Mantra refers, therefore 'the Self consisting of bliss' is identical with this essential nature of the individual soul.

*Answer:* What is referred to in the Mantra cannot be the individual soul either in its bound or its freed state, for this is impossible, inasmuch as the soul cannot possess unconditioned omniscience as is mentioned in texts like, 'It thought, "may I grow forth"' etc. Unconditioned omniscience means the power to realize all one's purposes. Though a realized soul may be omniscient, yet it cannot be unconditioned omniscience, for in the state of Samsara it is limited in power. Sutra 4.4.17 denies the power of creation to the freed souls. Again, if the

soul in its freed state be pure, non-differentiated intelligence, it cannot see different things, and so cannot possess unconditioned omniscience. Hence the impossibility referred to in the Sutra. It has already been proved that there can be no non-differentiated or attributeless thing. If the text, 'From where speech (the organs) together with the mind turns away, unable to reach It' (*Taitt.* 2.8), means that mind and speech (the organs) return from Brahman, it cannot thereby prove that Brahman is non-differentiated or attributeless. Rather it would mean that speech and mind are no means to prove Brahman, and that would make It a mere nothing. But in the Scriptures beginning with, 'He who knows Brahman attains the Highest' it is mentioned that Brahman is omniscient, the creator of the world, the abode of bliss and knowledge, infinite bliss, etc., and so after having said all this it is idle to say that there are no means of knowing Brahman because speech and mind are no means to it. In the text, 'From where speech together with the mind turns away' etc., the words 'From where' refer to the bliss of Brahman referred to in the text, 'He who knows the bliss of Brahman' (*Taitt.* 2.9). Again the words 'Bliss of Brahman' show clearly that the bliss belongs to Brahman. After having thus qualified Brahman as possessing bliss etc., if it is sought to prove that Brahman is attributeless, being beyond speech and mind, it would be meaningless prattle. So we have to understand that the bliss of Brahman being infinite and measureless, it cannot be fathomed by speech and mind. That is what the text 'From where' etc. tries to teach. A person who knows this infinite measureless bliss of Brahman becomes fearless. Moreover, that the omniscient Being declared in this Mantra is different from the individual soul is made clear by texts declaring that It created the world through Its mere volition, that it is the Inner-Self of everything, and so on.

भेदव्यपदेशाच्च ॥ १८ ॥

18. And on account of the declaration of difference (between 'the Self consisting of bliss' and the individual soul), (the latter cannot be the one referred to in the passage).

Beginning with the words, 'From that Self sprang ether' etc. (*Taitt.* 2.1), which give the nature of Brahman referred to in the Mantra, the text declares Its nature as different from that of the Jiva in 'Different from this self consisting of understanding (the soul) is the inner Self consisting of bliss'. Therefore 'the Self consisting of bliss' is not the soul but Brahman, which is different from it.

कामाच्च नानुमानापेक्षा ॥ १९ ॥

19. And on account of (Its) desire (being the sole cause of creation), there is no need of that which is inferred (i.e. the Pradhana).

The text, 'It desired, "may I be many, may I be born"'. . . 'It sent forth all this—whatever there is', (*Taitt.* 2.6) shows that everything was created by this 'Self consisting of bliss' without the aid of non-sentient matter or Pradhana (which is inferred). But the individual soul, which is subject to Nescience, cannot create anything without the aid of a material thing. Hence 'the Self consisting of bliss' is other than the individual soul.

अस्मिन्नस्य च तद्योगं शास्ति ॥ २० ॥

20. And the Scriptures declare the union of this (the individual soul) with that (bliss) in that (Self consisting of bliss).

'It (the Self consisting of bliss) is indeed the essence (of existence); only by attaining this essence does the soul become blissful' (*Taitt.* 2.7), where it is clearly stated that the individual soul becomes blissful after attaining 'the Self consisting of bliss'. Therefore this 'Self consisting of bliss' which is attained by the soul is different from it and is the supreme Self or Brahman.

Hence it is established that the supreme Self or Brahman, which is different from the Pradhana as declared in the last topic, is also different from the individual soul.

(To be continued)

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

The two *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, hitherto unpublished in India, are reproduced from *Vedanta and the West* (for November-December 1953), the bimonthly organ of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, where they appeared in the body of a collection of rare and valuable material entitled 'Vivekananda: Some New Findings'. The first Letter was written by the Swami from on board the steamer by which he was returning to the U. S. after his first visit to England. The second Letter, written to Mrs. Leggett (then in Germany),—whose guest he was in Paris,—reveals the Swami's keen sense of humour when he describes, in a facetious vein, one of the parties he attended at Mrs. Leggett's Paris home. . . .

Swami Tejasananda, Principal of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, forcefully presents the dynamic message of Swami Vivekananda, bringing home the fact,—often missed by most,—that the great Swami, who repeatedly reminded India of her destined role as the spiritual guardian of world peace, has made inestimable contributions for the regeneration not only of India but of entire mankind. Against the background of present-day world events, the article is of topical and timely interest. . . .

*The Spirit of India* forms the substance of an illuminating talk given at the Vedanta

Society of New York, in January last, by Sri G. L. Mehta, Ambassador of India to the United States and Mexico. . . .

Recording the impressions of his stay for *Three Days at Jayrambati*, Sri Saila Kumar Mukherji, Speaker, West Bengal Legislative Assembly, gives a brief but lucid description of the functions held at Jayrambati—the birth-place of the Holy Mother,—in May last, in connection with the Holy Mother Birth Centenary celebrations and the consecration of the marble statue of the Holy Mother. . . .

The thought-provoking contribution from the pen of Prof. V. B. Athavale, M.Sc., F.R.G.S., whose research work in several fields of classical and modern subjects has gained wide recognition in circles that count, will, we hope, stimulate curious and critical interest in the scholar as well as the general reader.

### BASIC IDEALS OF HINDUISM

Since the earliest stirrings of human thought the Indian mind has sought freely to explore all the avenues of religious and philosophical understanding. Thus was opened up for man's intellect many possible vistas and perspectives of introspective reflection, unfettered by any rigid dogma or creed. Indian philosophy, therefore, exhibits an uncommon richness and variety, representing almost all shades of philosophical speculation, orthodox and unorthodox. While such systems as the Sāṅkhya, the Vaiśeṣika, and the Mimāṃsa sought to explain the vast panorama of the cosmos in terms of the law of causation (Karma) operating in the material as well as the moral sphere, other systems like the Nyāya and the Yoga based themselves on a theistic principle. And the crowning glory of Indian philosophic thought was attained in the Advaita Vedanta, wherein was propounded, as the culmination of all philosophical systems, that Supreme Identity or Divine

Ground of existence, in which all apparent pluralities became resolved. It was the philosophy of Advaita that gave a tremendous impetus to the spiritual and cultural life of the nation. The vast storehouse of Hindu religion and philosophy contains most of the germinal ideas around which the philosophical systems of the world have grown up and crystallized.

Swami Nikhilananda, Head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York, U.S.A., delivering the Sudhindra Bose Memo-

rial Lecture (in January 1954) at the State University of Iowa, U.S.A., made a concise but highly illuminating exposition of the 'Basic Ideals of Hindu Religion and Philosophy'. The text of this thought-provoking address was published as an article in a recent issue of *The Modern Review*. 'The spirit of India', observes Swami Nikhilananda, 'was born of its religion and philosophy. Besides influencing the life and thought of countless millions of people on the Indian sub-continent for the past five thousand years, it has left its impression on the Asian culture in general'. The hoary antiquity of India's Sanatana Dharma is now recognized as such by all. 'Hindu philosophy', says the Swami, 'not only originated but in a certain sense attained its maturity, in the prehistoric age. The hymns of the *Rig-Veda*, for instance, which contain both the germs and some of the conclusions of the Hindu philosophical speculations, were composed at least thirty centuries before the birth of Christ. The concept of the unity of existence, beyond which human thinking cannot possibly penetrate, is described in the Vedas. Hindu philosophy, which continued to develop till two hundred years ago uninterrupted by foreign thought, has produced two world religions, namely, Hinduism and Buddhism, and also provided the foundation for several indigenous philosophical systems'.

One of the significant characteristics of Hindu philosophy and religion, as distinguished from other non-Hindu Indian systems, is the acceptance of the supreme authority of the Vedas as a criterion of valid knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*). To a modern mind, dependent on the weapon of reason alone as the sole arbiter of truth, the Vedantic insistence on the synthesizing and harmonizing of reason with experience (one's own as well as those of others) cannot but make a profound appeal. Pointing out the basic Hindu attitude in this respect, the Swami observes:

'The Hindu methods of philosophical investigation consist in the study of Vedic evidence (*śruti*), in reasoning (*yukti*), and in experience (*anubhava*). Ultimate Reality being supramental, the Vedas

supply the student with a kind of working hypothesis, which, however, must be tested by reason and realized through inner experience. Sole reliance upon scriptural authority, without rational investigation, tends to make a philosophical or religious system dogmatic, authoritarian, and exclusive. Mere reasoning may be the rationalization of desire; it may also be a tool of emotion. Experience by itself, unsupported by reason and scriptural evidence (the latter being merely the recorded experience of the illumined seers of the past), may be the projection of one's sub-conscious thought. But when these three—scriptural evidence, reason, and experience—point to one and the same conclusion, a man can be sure of having arrived at truth'.

Hindu thought fully and freely accepts the importance of science or systematized knowledge in addition to or in combination with religion and philosophy. The knowledge of the Ultimate Reality, in the Hindu view, includes and transcends all other (secular and ethical) knowledge. Elaborating on this, the Swami points out that there has never been, in well-informed circles, any conflict between religion and science:

'According to the Hindu view, there does not exist any unbridgeable gulf between mind and matter, human and non-human beings. One fundamental law governs the universe of matter and spirit. In the physical world it operates as scientific law and in the spiritual world as religious law. Scientific law is discovered through reason, and spiritual law through introspection. There is no gulf between God and man. If any exists, it can be crossed by personal evolution. Even an ant will some day realize its potential divine nature'.

That the student of Hindu philosophy is called upon to possess not only an intellectual curiosity for enquiry but also spiritual earnestness and moral fervour to live the realized truth is not often properly understood. As Swami Nikhilananda has aptly expressed,

'Hindu philosophers put the utmost emphasis on experience. The Sanskrit word for philosophy, *darśhana*, means *seeing*, not discussion aiming at intellectual knowledge. To know is to become. Thus philosophy is more a way of life than a way of thinking'.

The synthesis of philosophy and religion is one of the unique features of Hinduism. The goal of philosophy, according to the Hindu tradition, is the transformation of life

through a correct grasp and application of philosophical principles. Hence has it often been rightly held that religion begins where philosophy ends. Philosophy is thus inalienably connected with spiritual discipline. They represent varying aspects of the same Reality. They are different and yet not utterly disparate.

'Though religion and philosophy have developed in India along independent lines, yet they are not divorced. They cross each other's path at many points. The common goal of both religion and philosophy is the discovery and knowledge of reality and the application of this knowledge to man's daily life . . .'

'Religion emphasizes the role of feeling and faith in the attainment of the Highest Good, whereas science lays stress on reason and intellect. But all these are different functions of the mind, and their harmonious functioning is necessary for the apprehending of Reality. Faith without reason

leads the aspirant into a blind alley, and reason itself ends in doubt. The intellect points out the obstacles and barriers to spiritual growth, while emotion gives the urge to move forward'.

The spirit of intellectual open-mindedness in Hindu philosophy has, as its counterpart, the idea of the harmony of religions at the spiritual level. Hinduism reveals a rare unity in variety and aspirants are free to choose their individually satisfying forms of worship and discipline, according to temperament and taste. In emphasizing the sole reality of the Spirit it *ipso facto* denies the ultimate reality of the phenomenal world. But there is no lack of emphasis on the relative reality of the world when man concerns himself with material values. It is therefore wrong to characterize Hindu religion and philosophy as pessimistic or world-negating.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

LOGIC FOR LIVING BY H. H. WILLIAMS  
Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th  
Street, New York 16, N.Y., U.S.A. Pages 281.  
Price \$ 3.75

Professor Henry Horace Williams is a well-known educationist to whom the University of North Carolina owes a great deal. In a country where James taught pragmatism, Royce preached loyalty, and Dewey conducted instrumentalism, it is very refreshing to find a strict Hegelian with a genuine touch of mysticism. Prof. Williams offers in this work a clear and lucid statement of the Hegelian (objective idealistic) logic, and at every step applies it to the problems of action in the modern world. His method is the good old Socratic method of eliciting answers through questions. Every follower and adapter of this method will be deeply impressed by the way in which Prof. Williams unravels the subtle mysteries of Hegelian logic, avoiding all its abstractions. The spirit of Hegel's logic comes alive in these lectures delivered during 1921-22.

All genuine education is 'the conscious effort of the organism to find itself in its type'. Logic is devoted to this task whence it becomes 'the process of tracing the identity of essence through the

appearances that look to be utterly different'. That is, thinking, which is a process, is not formal; it is a process of unification and its goal is freedom which is the same as the Spirit. Logic, then, deals with the self-unfolding of the Spirit through Nature, History, and Religion. After outlining this task in the first two parts, the author analyses in the third part how man thinks. This is the major part of the text and takes us through the dialectic of quality, quantity, and relation. The dialectic is the process of unifying opposites.

Quality begins with differentiation and we get at the individual in action. Action expresses the unity of the individual. From the positive nature of the individual we deduce that he is the infinite which is in the finite. That is, when the infinite becomes quantity it becomes finite; and yet the quality of the finite object is infinite, for the finite is but a moment in and of the infinite. Consequently every individual embodies the unity of the static and the dynamic aspects. 'In the dynamic process the concept of the one emerges. A one is something that maintains itself under varying circumstances. The very essence of the one is action'. The one is the same as unity, whence arises an enquiry into the nature of the many.

When we enquire the meaning of quantity, we come across the idea of limit. The knowledge of the limit suppresses the limit and it thus takes us back to a more concrete quality which is self-complete. Thus arises the problem of relating the many; and Reality, though it transcends all relations, appears as a relational synthesis. In the spirit of Hegel and Green, Prof. Williams offers an account of relation which is real in spite of all that Bradley has said. Internal relations alone are vital; and the third form of this relation, which is termed 'the relation of co-operation', embodies the nature of Reality.

This great enquiry is then developed in the fourth part with reference to the achievements of thinking. The Hegelian principle is not only applied to, but deduced from Institutions, Law, and Religion. From religion we deduce the nature of the standard. The various appearances endeavour to approximate to and reveal the reality of the Spirit. Truth, then, is the unity of the Spirit and its manifestation; it is *the Universal, the Principle*. 'We call a principle in intelligence—*truth*; in emotion it is *beauty*; in action we call it *righteousness*. Those three make up logic, as I see it. The individual studies in order to know; he acts; and he falls in love with beauty'. Logic, then, is the creative and constructive awareness of the Spirit in and through the whole of life as the complete Reality.

The main argument of the book is so consistent and comprehensive that it does not invite any objections. It embodies the larger truth of all Idealism. In modern times, when all types of philosophical schools are cropping up and are seeking to sever the intimate connection between logic and metaphysics, this valuable work provides a good corrective. Scepticism, positivism, and agnosticism are all rightly rejected by Prof. Williams as pseudo-logical theories and fissiparous tendencies.

However, there are three points which deserve critical notice. Prof. Williams maintains that Hegelian philosophy is nothing but a translation of Jesus' life into thought (p. 228). This is the spirit running throughout the text. This is making too much of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion, and forgetting that the God of religion cannot be the Absolute of philosophy. It is the age-old difference between Saguna- and Nirguna-Brahman. In the second place, Prof. Williams does not seem to remember the degrees of truth and reality when he eulogizes the categorical imperative as providing an inviolable rule of conduct. Too close an adherence to Hegel has cost the author much. He is led to deny the objective beauty of Nature. Yet he could say: 'What cracked that rock? There was a little bit of life there, and when that life started out to assert itself, the rock had to give way' (p. 71).

Quoting the famous 'Flower in the Crannied wall', he writes: 'If you knew that inch of space, root and all, all in all, would there be anything about space, that you do not know? I do not think so' (p. 75).

P. S. SASTRI.

SOVIET CIVILIZATION. By CORLISS LAMONT. Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, N.Y., U.S.A. Pages 451. Price \$ 5.00.

Soviet Russia remains a baffling enigma because most of the available information thereon is self-contradictory. An all-inclusive and reliable picture has therefore yet to emerge. This book, however, is a masterly synthesis which is unique in a work of this nature. The author has produced a well-balanced survey by steering a middle course between uncritical adulation and hasty disparagement. His presentation must be warmly commended for its judicious detachment no less than its overall sense of perspective and proportion.

The author is one of those rare individuals who have devoted their time to a dispassionate study of Soviet affairs. He not only taught, lectured, and wrote about them for twenty years, but visited Russia twice to make a first-hand appraisal of the facts. The author may not be always right about the Soviet Union, but he has made a real effort to be objective. He is neither a Russophobe nor a Russophil. Soviet Russia, he holds, is neither a heaven nor a hell. He refuses to think of that country in terms of either all black or all white, for Russia is, like any other great country, a mixture of good and bad, of grand achievements no less than dismal failures.

Though the author has not slurred over the fact that civil liberties and political democracy in Soviet Russia do not measure up to democratic standards elsewhere, he has done well in stating that one-party rule does not necessarily prevent true democracy. Again, even though Soviet socialism may not be perfect, Soviet ethnic democracy is an unqualified success. In a world torn by race prejudice, the Soviet example of more than 170 different ethnic groups working in harmony has profound implications in regard to international and interracial relationships.

The author's exposition of Soviet religion and culture stimulates searching thought. He has emphasized what we usually ignore that the Russian Church, working hand in hand generation after generation with the cruel czarist autocracy, had sunk morally to the lowest level in the history of Christendom. That explains the early excesses against the hated and corrupt Church authorities. These excesses, however, were soon brought to an end. However implacably the Soviets may have

opposed Christian theology and other doctrines of Christianity, they endeavoured to put into effect some of the finest precepts of Christian ethics. In place of the dualistic concept of human nature supported by Christianity, the Soviet conception of religion upholds the monistic psychology which considers man as an interfunctioning unity of personality. So, today, all religions in the U.S.S.R. are on an equal basis financially and legally, and there is freedom of conscience for both believers and unbelievers. And, so far as culture is concerned, there is no sharp separation between material and spiritual values since these facts of civilization must go hand in hand. In the fields of education and learning, as in planned economic reconstruction, the Soviet Union has been forging ahead in a truly spectacular fashion, even though one would not justify the over-zealous imposition of official doctrine in all matters of art and culture.

As for Soviet foreign policy, the author exposes the manner in which it is generally misrepresented. The author is convinced that the Soviets are desirous

of world peace. If there is talk of war, such talk is indulged in as much by anti-Soviet critics as by the Soviet propagandists. But, the fact remains that the Soviets do not clearly distinguish between military and ideological aggression, and so there is a good deal of misunderstanding over this. Those, however, who talk of knocking out Russia in a quick atom bomb war do not know the facts, and they also forget that a third World War would be a catastrophe for mankind as a whole. The author's thesis is that peace lies in the direction of coexistence, rather than in co-destruction. Whether the thesis is accepted or not, the truth is that war and violence have always been the worst ways of settling problems between countries and governments.

The book is provocative and makes fascinating reading. It will in any case kindle a desire for a deeper study of Soviet ideas and institutions which truly characterize a great new civilization of high promise. As such, the book fills a real need.

DR. NANDALAL CHATTERJI

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## NEWS AND REPORTS

### VEDANTA SOCIETY, PROVIDENCE

#### HOLY MOTHER BIRTH CENTENARY

The centenary birthday of the Holy Mother was observed in the chapel of the Vedanta Society of Providence, R.I., U.S.A., on 27th December 1953. Many devotees and friends were present and received Prasād. A special service was held on 3rd January 1954, in the chapel. Swami Akhilananda, Head of the Society, spoke on 'Divine Mother'. He gave many incidents from the life of the Holy Mother and described her contribution to India and the world. Prasad was taken by all after the service.

The Vedanta Society of Providence publicly observed the centenary of Sri Sarada Devi at a dinner held in the Wayland Manor of Providence on 10th May 1954. Outstanding leaders of the community—including clergymen, physicians, and scholars, as well as students and devotees—were present. Among the guests were President and Mrs. Wriston of Brown University and leaders of the Rhode Island Council of Churches.

Swami Akhilananda and Sri G. L. Mehta, Ambassador of India to the U.S., were the principal speakers. As Mrs. Mehta was unable to attend the function, the Ambassador read from Mrs. Mehta's

paper, in which she paid homage to the Holy Mother as one who had unconditionally surrendered herself to God and who represented the true ideal of Indian womanhood in her spirit of humility. Ambassador Sri Mehta told the audience of the universality of both Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother.

Swami Akhilananda described the spiritual greatness of the Holy Mother.

### RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA, MYMENSINGH

#### HOLY MOTHER BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATION

The Birth Centenary of the Holy Mother was celebrated at the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mymensingh (East Pakistan), for four days commencing from the 13th April 1954. On the inaugural day of the celebration Dr. M. S. Mehta, High Commissioner of India in Pakistan, accompanied by the Deputy High Commissioner of India in Pakistan and local district officials, visited the Ashrama and delivered a lecture in Hindi. The celebration included a procession with the decorated portraits of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, special Pujas, physical feats, religious discourses, and feeding of Daridranarayanans.

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