

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Number*

Vol. LXVIII

MAY 1963

No. 5



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:0:—

## A HYMN TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

मूर्तमहेश्वरमुज्ज्वलभास्करमिष्टममरनरवन्द्यम् ।  
वन्दे वेदतनुमुज्जितगर्हितकाञ्चनकामिनीबन्धम् ॥  
कोटिभानुकरदीप्तसिंहमहो कटितटकौपीनवन्तम् ।  
अभीरभीहंकारनादितदिङ्मुखप्रचण्डताण्डवनृत्यम् ॥  
भुक्तिमुक्तिकृपाकटाक्षाप्रेक्षणमघदलविदलनदक्षम् ।  
बालचन्द्रधरमिन्दुवन्द्यमिह नौमि गुरुविवेकानन्दम् ॥

I bow to Vivekananda, my spiritual guide, my object of worship, who is Lord Śiva incarnate, resplendent like the bright sun, adored (alike) by men and gods, the embodiment of the Vedas, who has completely overcome the bondage of the much-censured lust and gold, the lion (among men), brilliant with the rays of a million suns, who has nothing but the (*sannyāsin's*) loin-cloth on, who is dancing the violent dance (of Śiva), reverberating the quarters with the impassioned cry of 'fear not, fear not', a mere glance of whose eyes is enough to impart both enjoyment and liberation, who tramples with ease the myriad hordes of vice, who is the veritable Śiva with the crescent moon on the forehead, and who is worshipped by Indu.\*

\* A pseudonym assumed by the composer, Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarti.

# FIVE VERSES TO VIVEKANANDA

BY SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA

अनित्यदृश्येषु विविच्य नित्यं तस्मिन् समाधत्त इह स्म लीलया ।  
विवेकवैराग्यविशुद्धचित्तं योऽसौ विवेकी तमहं नमामि ॥ १ ॥

1. To him who, sifting out the Eternal from the transitory phenomena of this world, made it his sport to concentrate thereon his mind, purified by discrimination and renunciation—to that discriminating soul I salute.

विवेकजानन्दनिमग्नचित्तं विवेकदानैकविनोदशीलम् ।  
विवेकभासा कमनीयकान्तिं विवेकिनं तं सततं नमामि ॥ २ ॥

2. To him whose mind was immersed in the bliss that comes of discrimination, whose nature delighted solely in kindling discrimination (in others), and whose beauty was made winsome by the glow of discrimination—to that discriminating soul my salutations ever go.

ऋतञ्च विज्ञानमधिभ्रयत् यत् निरन्तरं चादिमध्यान्तहीनम् ।  
सुखं सुरूपं प्रकरोति यस्य आनन्दमूर्तिं तमहं नमामि ॥ ३ ॥

3. Whose graceful form truth and knowledge have made their abode, and which imparts a joy incessant without beginning or end—to that embodiment of bliss I salute.

सूर्यो यथान्धं हि तमो निहन्ति विष्णुयथा दुष्टजनान् छिनत्ति ।  
तथैव यस्याखिलनेत्रलोभं रूपं त्रितापं विमुखीकरोति ॥ ४ ॥

4. Verily, as the sun dispels the intense darkness, as the Lord Viṣṇu destroys the wicked ones, in exactly the same manner, whose handsome appearance, the cynosure of all eyes, drives away the threefold misery of life.

तं देशिकेन्द्रं परमं पवित्रं विश्वस्य पालं मधुरं यतीन्द्रम् ।  
हिताय नृणां नरमूर्तिमन्तं 'विवेक-आनन्द' महं नमामि ॥ ५ ॥

5. To that teacher of teachers, supremely pure, the guardian of the world, the sweet one, the prince of *yogins*, who took up the human form for the good of mankind—to that Vivekananda I prostrate myself.

नमः श्रीयतिराजाय विवेकानन्दसूरये ।  
सच्चित्सुखस्वरूपाय स्वामिने तापहारिणे ॥

Salutation to that king of renouncers and controllers of passions, the sage Vivekananda, who is Sat-Cit-Ānanda (Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss Absolute) Itself, the spiritual preceptor, the remover of distress!

## THE VISION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

[This passage (translated from the original Bengali) is from *Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Līlā-prasaṅga* of Swami Saradananda. In this connection, the Swami says: 'The Master described this vision to us in his extraordinary simple language. ... Asking him about the Child of his vision, one day we came to know that the Master himself assumed the form of that Child.']

'One day I saw that, through *samādhi*, my mind was soaring high by a luminous path. Going beyond the gross world studded with sun, moon, and stars, it entered into the subtle world of ideas. As it ascended higher and higher, I found on both sides of the way ideal forms of gods and goddesses. It came gradually to the last extremity of that region. There, a luminous barrier separated the sphere of relative existence from that of the Absolute. Leaping over that fence, the mind entered by degrees the realm of the Absolute. I saw that there was no person or thing having a form. As if afraid to enter there, even the gods and goddesses, possessing heavenly bodies, exercised their authority over realms far below. But the very next moment I saw seven wise *ṛṣis* (sages), having bodies of divine light, seated there in *samādhi*. I felt that, in virtue and knowledge, love and renunciation, they had excelled even the gods and goddesses, what to speak of human beings. Lost in admiration, I was reflecting on their greatness, when I saw a portion of that undifferentiated luminous region condense into the form of a divine Child. Coming down to one of those *ṛṣis* and throwing Its soft and delicate arms round his neck, It embraced him and, afterwards, calling him with Its ambrosial words, sweeter than the music of the *vīṇā*, made great efforts to wake him up from *samādhi*. The *ṛṣi* woke from *samādhi* at the delicate and loving touch and looked on at that wonderful Child with half-shut eyes, free from winking. Seeing his bright face, full of delight, I thought that the Child was the treasure of his heart—their familiarity was of eternity. The extraordinary divine Child then expressed infinite joy and said to him: 'I am going; you, too, must come with me.' The *ṛṣi* said nothing at that request, but his loving eyes expressed his hearty assent. Afterwards, looking on the Child with loving eyes for some time, he entered again into *samādhi*. Astonished, then, I saw a fragment of his body and mind come down to the earth along the reverse path. Hardly had I seen Narendra for the first time, when I knew that he was that *ṛṣi*.'

---



# AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

*(Translated from the original Bengali)*

[ This letter was written to late Sri Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya, the then Deputy Accountant General, Madras. He was Swamiji's schoolmate, and the two were good friends. Swamiji also stayed with the late Sri Bhattacharya at times, while touring the country. This explains the intensely personal tone of the letter. We are thankful to Sri Mohit Kumar Bhattacharya, the late Sri Bhattacharya's son, for releasing this letter to us for publication.]

5th September 1894  
America

Dear Mr. Bhattacharya,

I was much pleased to read your affectionate letter. I shall make inquiries about the weaving machine as soon as I can and let you know. Now I am resting at Annisquam, a village on the sea coast; soon I shall go to the city and attend to the matter of the machine. These seaside places are filled with people during the summer; some come to bathe in the sea, some to take rest, and some to catch husbands.

There is a strong sense of decorum in this country. You have to always keep yourself covered from neck to foot in the presence of women. You cannot so much as mention the normal functions of the body: nobody knows when anyone goes to the toilet—one has to live so circumspectly. In this country, you can blow your nose a thousand times into your handkerchief—there is no harm in that; but it is highly uncivilized to belch. Women sometimes are not embarrassed to expose their bodies above the waist—you must have seen the kind of low-cut gown they wear—but they say that to go bare-foot is as bad as being naked. Just as we always dwell on the soul, so they take care of the body, and there is no end to the cleaning and the embellishing of it. One who fails to do this has no place in society.

Our method of cooking with cow dung fuel and eating on the floor they consider as eating like pigs: they say that the Hindus have no sense of disgust and that, like pigs, they eat cow dung. The word 'cow dung' is taboo in English. On the other hand, numbers of people will drink water with the same glass without thinking of washing it, and they rarely observe the rule that things must be washed before cooking. But should the clothes of the cook be a little soiled, they will throw her out. The table-ware is all spick and span. They are the richest people on earth; their enjoyments and luxuries beggar description.

In Rajputana they imitate the Mohanmedans in their mode of dining, which is, on the whole, good. They sit on a low seat and place their plate of rice on a low table. This is much better than spreading a banana leaf on the earthen floor plastered with cow dung and filth. And how disastrous if the leaf gets torn! The Hindus did not know much about clothes or food. Moreover, whatever Hindu civilization there was existed in the Punjab and the north-west provinces. . . .



Our women lose caste if they put on shoes, but the Rajput women lose their caste if they don't put on shoes! Says Manu: 'One shall always wear shoes.' There is no denying that people should have a decent enough standard of living. I say they should be neat and clean even though not luxurious. . . . I say, why do we have to be Englishmen? It is enough for the present if we imitate our brothers of the western provinces. If group after group of Indians travel all over the world and back for some years, the face of India will be changed within twenty years by that alone; nothing else need be done. But how will anything happen if the people of one village do not visit the next? However, everything will take place by and by. By and by, the stubborn Bengali boys will awaken the country. But, Manmatha Babu, you will have to stop this shameful business of marrying off nine-year-old girls. That is the root of all sins. It is a very great sin, my boy. Consider further what a terrible thing it was that when the Government wanted to pass a law stopping early marriage, our worthless people raised a tremendous howl! If we don't stop it ourselves, the Government will naturally intervene, and that is just what it wants to do. All the world cries fie upon us. You remain shut up in your homes, but the people outside spit upon you. How far can I quarrel with them? What a horror—even a father and mother allow their ten-year-old daughter to be given in marriage to a full-grown fat husband! O Lord, is there any punishment unless there has been a sin? It is all the fruit of *karma*. If ours were not a terribly sinful nation, then why should it have been booted and beaten for seven hundred years?

Now, just as in our country the parents suffer a lot to have their daughters married, here in the same way the girls suffer—the parents only a little—it is the job of the girls to capture husbands. I am now closely associated with them in all their affairs; I am, as it were, a woman amongst women. Therefore I have seen, and am seeing, all their play. To give dinners, to dance, to go to musical parties, to go to the watering places—all that is all right. But all the while the young women are scheming within themselves how to capture husbands. They hang around the boys. The boys, on the other hand, are so cautious that, though they mingle with the girls and flirt with them all the time, when it is time to surrender they run away. The boys place the girls above themselves; they show them respect and slave for them; but the moment the girls stretch their hands to catch them, they run away beyond their reach. After many efforts of this kind, a girl succeeds in capturing a boy. If the girl has money, then many a boy dances attendance upon her, but the poor have great difficulty. If a poor girl is exceedingly beautiful, she can marry quickly; otherwise, she has to wait all her life. Just as in our country, so here, one marriage in a thousand takes place through love and courtship; the rest are based on money. After that, quarrel, and then, 'Get out!'—divorce. We do not have this; the only way out is to hang oneself. It is the same in all countries. Only, here the girls take matters into their own hands; and in our country, we get the help of the parents to give their married life a decent appearance. The result is the same in either case.

Nowadays, however, American girls don't want to marry. During the Civil War a large number of men were killed and women began to do all kinds of work. Since then, they have not wanted to give up the rights they have acquired. They earn their own living, and therefore they say: 'There is no use in marrying. If we truly fall in love, then we shall marry; otherwise, we shall earn and meet our own expenses.' Even if the father is a millionaire, the son has to earn enough before he marries. One may not marry depending on an allowance from the father. The girls also want the same thing now. When a son marries he becomes like a stranger to his own family, but when a girl marries she brings her husband, as it were, into her parents' home. Men will visit their wives' parents ten times, but rarely go to their own parents. Yet they are very much afraid of having their mothers-in-law on their neck.

In this country, there are rivers of wealth and waves of beauty, and an abundance of knowledge everywhere. The country is very healthy; they know how to enjoy this earth. . . . When the princes of Europe become poor they come to marry here. The average American doesn't like this; but some rich, beautiful women fall for the titles. Yet it is very difficult for American women to live in Europe. The husbands of this country are slaves of their wives; but the European wives are slaves to their husbands—this the American women don't like. In everything, the men here have to say, 'Yes, dear'; otherwise the wives lose face before people.

The women in America are very sentimental and have a mania for romance. I am, however, a strange sort of animal who hasn't any romantic feeling, and therefore they could not sustain any such feeling toward me and they show me great respect. I make all of them call me 'father' or 'brother'. I don't allow them to come near me with any other feeling, and gradually they have all been straightened out. . . .

The ministers in this country . . . are eager to throw sinners into hell. A few of them are very good, however. . . . I have a great reputation among the women in this country. I have not as yet seen a single unchaste girl among the unmarried. It is either a widow or a married woman who turns unchaste. The unmarried girls are exceedingly good, because their future is bright. . . .

Those emaciated Western women, looking like old dried-up fruit, whom you see in India, are English, and the English are an ugly race amongst the Europeans. In America, the best blood strains of Europe have blended, and therefore, the American women are very beautiful. And how they take care of their beauty! Can a woman retain her beauty if she gives birth to children . . . every hour from her tenth year on? Damn nonsense! What a terrible sin! Even the most beautiful woman of our country will look like a black owl here. Yet it must be admitted that the women of the Punjab have very well-drawn features. Many of the American women are very well educated and put many a learned professor to shame; nor do they care for anyone's opinion. And as regards their virtues: what kindness, what noble thought and action! Just think, if a man of this country were to visit India, nobody would even touch him; yet here I am allowed to do as I please



in the houses of the best families—like their own son! I am like a child; their women shop for me, run errands for me. For example: I have just written to a girl for information about the machine, which she will gather carefully and send on to me. Again, a phonograph was sent to the Maharajah of Khetri: the girls managed the whole affair very well. Lord! Lord! It is the difference between heaven and hell! “They are the goddess Lakṣmī in beauty and the goddess Sarasvatī in talents and accomplishments.’ This cannot be achieved through the study of books. I say, can you send out some men and women to see the world? Only then will the country wake up—not through the reading of books. The men here are very clever in earning wealth. Where others do not see even dust, there they see gold.

Whoever will leave India and visit another country will earn great merit. \* Keeping aloof from the community of nations is the only cause for the downfall of India. Since the English came, they have been forcing you back into communion with other nations, and you are visibly rising again. Everyone that comes out of the country confers a benefit on the whole nation; for it is by doing that alone that your horizon will expand. And as women cannot avail themselves of this advantage, they have made almost no progress in India. There is no station of rest; either you progress upwards or you go back and die out. The only sign of life is going outward and forward and expansion. Contraction is death. Why should you do good to others? Because that is the only condition of life; thereby you expand beyond your little self; you live and grow. All narrowness, all contraction, all selfishness is simply slow suicide, and when a nation commits the fatal mistake of contracting itself and of thus cutting off all expansion and life, it must die. Women similarly must go forward or become idiots and soulless tools in the hands of their tyrannical lords. The children are the result of the combination of the tyrant and the idiot, and they are *slaves*. And this is the whole history of modern India. Oh, who would break this horrible crystallization of death? Lord help us!\* Gradually, all this will come about; ‘One should cross a road slowly and cautiously; one should patch a quilt carefully and cautiously; so should one be slow and cautious in crossing a mountain’.

The papers have arrived duly and in good shape; there has not been any difficulty about that. The enemy has been silenced. Consider this: they have allowed me, an unknown young man, to live among their grown-up young daughters, and when my own countryman, Mazoomdar, says I am a rogue, they don’t pay any attention! How noble they are, and how kind! I shall not be able to repay this debt even in a hundred lives. I am like a foster son to the American women; they are really my mother. If they don’t flourish in every way, who would?

A while back several hundred intellectual men and women were gathered in a place called Greenacre, and I was there for nearly two months. Every day I would sit in our Hindu fashion under a tree, and my followers and disciples would sit on the grass all around me. Every morning I would instruct them, and how earnest they were!

---

\* The passage between this asterisk and the next is original English.

The whole country now knows me. The ministers are very angry; but, naturally, not all of them. There are many followers of mine amongst the learned ministers of this country. The ignorant and the stubborn amongst them don't understand anything but only make trouble, and thereby they only hurt themselves. By abusing me, Mazoomdar has lost three-fourths of what little popularity he had in this country. I have been adopted by them. When anyone abuses me he is condemned everywhere by the women.

I cannot say when I shall return to India, possibly next winter. There I shall have to wander, and here also I do the same.

There is nothing more to add. Please don't make this letter public. You understand, I have to be careful about every word I say—I am now a public man. Everybody is watching, particularly the clergy.

Yours faithfully,  
Vivekananda

---

Now and then, at long intervals of time, a being finds his way to this planet who is unquestionably a wanderer from another sphere; who brings with him to this sorrowful world some of the glory, the power, the radiance of the far distant region from which he came. He walks among men, but he is not at home here. He is a pilgrim, a stranger, he tarries but a night.

He shares the life of those about him, enters into their joys and sorrows, rejoices with them, mourns with them, but through it all, he never forgets who he is, whence he came, or what the purpose of his coming. He never forgets his divinity. He remembers that he is the great, the glorious, the majestic Self. He knows that he came from that ineffable, supernal region which has no need of the sun or moon, for it is illumined by the Light of lights. He knows that he *was*, long before the time when 'all the sons of God sang together for joy'. . . .

A saint is more holy, more pure, more single-minded than ordinary men. But with Swami Vivekananda, there could be no comparison. He was in a class by himself. He belonged to another order. He was not of this world. He was a radiant being who had descended from another, a higher sphere for a definite purpose. One might have known that he would not stay long.

Is it to be wondered at that nature itself rejoices in such a birth, that the heavens open and angels sing paeans of praise?

Blessed is the country in which he was born, blessed are they who lived on this earth at the same time, and blessed, thrice blessed are the few who sat at his feet.

SISTER CHRISTINE



## OUR SUBMISSION

[EDITORIAL]

We have great pleasure in placing in the hands of our readers this special number of *Prabuddha Bharata*, our humble token effort to commemorate the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda, with whose sacred blessings this journal started its march in the year 1896. With regard to the conduct of the journal he wrote: 'Be obedient and faithful to the cause of Truth, humanity, and your country, and you will move the world.'

How far *Prabuddha Bharata* has been able to stand by the command of its leader and what it has accomplished and what it has failed to achieve during its long existence for nearly seven decades we would rather leave to our friends and critics to determine. But this much we may claim that we have made sincere efforts to be faithful to our leader and stand for what India was, is, and will be. 'The national ideals of India', the Swami declared, 'are renunciation and service.' In her art and science, in her commerce and industry, in her social organization and administrative set-up, India has never overlooked this basic concept of life. Maybe, the results of this outlook have not always been as common estimates would have them be. The nation has seen several vicissitudes during her long course of life. But this fact cannot be gainsaid that it is this spiritual outlook that has kept the life-blood of the nation still flowing vigorously, and has enabled her to withstand 'the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs'. Not only this. 'India is still living, because she has her own quota yet to give to the general store of the world's civilization.'

We believe that this quota is nothing short of 'the spiritualization of the human race'. The world, not excluding ourselves, must be reminded time and again that man is divine and that his salvation lies in the manifestation of this Divinity. We must never forget that real happiness and progress in human

society are to be brought about 'not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love'. This is what *Prabuddha Bharata* has always sought to tell its numerous readers in different parts of the world.

On this auspicious occasion which commemorates the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda, who, as Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said the other day, 'embodied the spirit of this country' and 'was a symbol of her spiritual aspirations and fulfilment', let us once again earnestly strive to understand what Swamiji stood for and what he expected of us. Let us partake of his deep faith in the divine nature of man and let us imbibe, to the best of our capacity, at least a bit of his spirit of love and unity, of service and sacrifice, of fearlessness and courage. Let us understand afresh the import of his message—the message of strength. Strength of soul, strength of mind, strength of body—bereft of all pettiness of purpose and narrowness of thought—that is what the Swami wanted us to cultivate. And his message was not for one time, but for all times; not for a people, but for all peoples; not for the achievement of an ephemeral earthly end and stop at that, but for an all-out effort for the attainment of the supreme realization of the oneness of all souls—the grand unity which is the quintessence of Vedānta. 'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached' was his clarion call.

*Prabuddha Bharata*, on its part, while paying its respectful tribute to the memory of its illustrious leader, rededicates itself to the service of India and the world, and pledges itself anew to carry fearlessly the message of Swami Vivekananda—the eternal voice of immortal India—to the four corners of our planet and help lay to rest the spectres of ignorance, greed, jealousy, and distrust, which threaten to make a hell of this, our fair earth.

## HOMAGE TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I have come here (Belur Math) to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated today (1923). I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died.

MAHATMA GANDHI

\* \* \*

The going forth of Vivekananda marked out by the Master (meaning Sri Ramakrishna) as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake, not only to survive but to conquer.

Swami Vivekananda was a soul of puissance, if ever there was one, a very lion among men. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving, that has entered the soul of India, and we say, Behold! Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother, and in the Soul of her children.

SRI AUROBINDO

\* \* \*

Vivekananda has said that there is the power of Brahman in every human being; also that it is through the poor and the dispossessed that Nārāyaṇa seeks and awaits our service. What a grand message! It lights up for man's consciousness the path to limitless liberation from the trammels and limitations of his self. This is not ethical injunction laying down any specific rule of conduct, no narrow commandment for the regulation of our behaviour. Opposition to untouchability is inherent in the Message—opposition not on any ground of political expediency, but because the Message is incompatible with insult to the humanity of Man, for untouchability is a self-inflicted insult to everyone of us.

And because the Message of Vivekananda is a call of awakening to the totality of our Manhood, that it has set so many of our youths on diverse paths to freedom through Work and through Renunciation and Sacrifice.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

\* \* \*

A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and fast—such was my first impression



of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Monk, they called him, not unwarrantably, but warrior-monk was he, and the first impression was of the warrior rather than of the monk, for he was off the platform, and his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race—the representative of the oldest of living religions, surrounded by curious gazers of nearly the youngest, and by no means inclined to give step, as though the hoary faith he embodied was in aught inferior to the noblest there. India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her envoy and her son. He brought her message, he spoke in her name, and the herald remembered the dignity of the royal land whence he came. Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

On the platform another side came out. The dignity and the inborn sense of worth and power still were there, but all was subdued to the exquisite beauty of the spiritual message which he had brought, to the sublimity of the matchless evangel of the East which is the heart, the life of India, the wondrous teaching of the Self. Enraptured, the huge multitude hung upon his words; not a syllable must be lost, not a cadence missed! 'That man a heathen!' said one, as he came out of the great hall, 'and we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us.'

ANNIE BESANT

\* \* \*

Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present. . . . He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time, full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward.

Vivekananda came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past. He started new movements of thought. While he drank from the rich streams of English literature, his mind was full of ancient sages and heroes of India, his thoughts and deeds and the myths and traditions which he had imbibed from his childhood. . . .

He gave us something which brings us, if I may use the word, a certain pride in our inheritance. He did not spare us. He talked of our weaknesses and our failings, too. He did not wish to hide anything. Indeed, he should not. Because we have to correct those failings, he deals with those failings also. Sometimes he strikes hard at us, but sometimes points out the great things for which India stood and which, even in the days of India's downfall, made her, in some measure, continue to be great.

So what Swamiji has written and said is of interest and must interest us and is likely to influence us for a long time to come. He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great

founders—if you like, you may use any other word—of the national modern movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement in a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly, he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of spirit and fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

\* \* \*

I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few, indeed, could comprehend or fathom him—even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound, and complex, and it was this personality—as distinct from his teachings and writings—which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen. Swami Vivekananda, reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks, but yet simple as a child—he was a rare personality in this world of ours.

Swamiji was a full-blooded masculine personality—and a fighter to the core of his being. He was consequently a worshipper of Śakti and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedānta for the uplift of his countrymen. ‘Strength, strength is what the Upaniṣads say’—that was a frequent cry of his. He laid the greatest stress on character-building.

I can go on for hours and yet fail to do the slightest justice to that great man. He was so great, so profound, so complex. A Yogi of the highest spiritual level in direct communion with the Truth, who had, for the time being, consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and of humanity, that is how I would describe him. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet. Modern India is his creation—if I err not.

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

\* \* \*

Vivekananda not only made us conscious of our strength, he also pointed out our defects and drawbacks. . . . India was then steeped in *tamas* (ignorance and unwisdom) and mistook weakness for non-attachment and peace. That is why Vivekananda went so far as to say that criminality was preferable to lethargy and indolence. He made people conscious of the *tāmasika* state they were in, of the need to break out of it and stand erect so that they might realize in their own lives the power of the Vedānta. Speaking of those who enjoyed the luxury of studying philosophy and the scriptures in the smugness of their retired life, he said football-playing was better than that type of indulgence. Through a series of *obiter dicta*, he rehabilitated the prestige of India’s soul force and pointed out to the *tamoguna* (unwisdom) that had eclipsed her. He taught us: ‘The same



Soul resides in each and all. If you are convinced of this, it is your duty to treat all as brothers and serve mankind.' People were inclined to hold that, though all had equal right to the *tattva-jñāna* (knowledge of the Spirit), the difference of high and low should be maintained in the day-to-day dealings and relations. Swamiji made us see the truth that *tattva-jñāna*, which had no place in our everyday relationship with our fellow beings, and in our activities was useless and inane. He, therefore, advised us to dedicate ourselves to the service of 'Daridranārāyaṇa' (God manifested in the hungry, destitute millions) to their upliftment and edification. The word 'Daridranārāyaṇa' was coined by Vivekananda and popularized by Gandhiji.

ACHARYA VINOBA BHAVE

\* \* \*

Vivekananda saved Hinduism in India and that was why he was born in the nineteenth century and shaped by Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. I was a law student living in Castle Kernan on the Madras Beach, when Swami Vivekananda arrived back from Chicago in 1896, after becoming world-famous by then. He stayed for about a month in Castle Kernan then, and I look back to those days with pride and joy. *Prabuddha Bharata* was started then and Madras was thrilled by Swamiji's lectures. Hinduism arose from the grave as Jesus did.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

\* \* \*

In the two words, equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit; the four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth, and he travelled towards Unity along them all simultaneously. He was the personification of the harmony of all human Energy.

But the formula could not have been discovered by the brilliant intellect of the 'Discriminator', if his own eyes had not seen its realization in the harmonious personality of Ramakrishna. The angelic Master had instinctively resolved all the dissonances of life into a Mozartian harmony, as rich and sweet as the Music of the Spheres. And hence the work and the thought of the great disciple was all carried out under the sign of Ramakrishna. . . .

Vivekananda wished this harmony, that had come to fruition in one privileged being and had been enjoyed by a few select souls, to be extended to the whole of India and the world. Therein lies his courage and originality. He may not have produced one single fresh idea; he was essentially the offspring of the womb of India, one of the many eggs laid by that indefatigable queen and throughout the course of ages. . . . But all her different ants never combined into an ant-hill. Their separate thoughts seemed to be

incompatible, until they appeared in Ramakrishna as a symphony. The secret of their divine order was thus revealed to Vivekananda, and he set out to build the City—*Civitas Dei*—the City of Mankind on the foundation of this golden concrete. But he had not only to build the city, but the souls of its inhabitants as well. . . .

Brief though his life, the architect had accomplished his work. He had inserted in the massive block of India 'a lever for the good of humanity which no power can drive back'.

Sixteen years passed between Ramakrishna's death and that of his great disciple . . . years of conflagration. . . . He (Vivekananda) was less than forty years of age when the athlete lay stretched upon the pyre. But the flame of that pyre is still alight today. From his ashes, like those of the Phoenix of old, has sprung anew the conscience of India—the magic bird—faith in her unity and in the Great Message, brooded over from Vedic times by the dreaming spirit of his ancient race—the message for which it must render account to the rest of mankind.

ROMAIN ROLLAND

\* \* \*

Many are the moments of sadness since the Swamijee has gone away. It seems that all the gods had left us, for his divine presence spread peace and tranquillity wherever he went; the tumult of uncertainty departed from my soul at the sound of his magic voice. His very form and every mood were those of tender compassion and sympathy. None knew him but to love him; those of us who have had the royal good fortune to have met him in the flesh will some day realize that we have met the true incarnation of the divine One.

To me he is 'The Christ', than whom a greater one has never come; his great and liberal soul outshines all other things; his mighty spirit was as free and liberal as the great sun, or the air of heaven.

No being lived so mean or low, be it a man or a beast, that he would not salute. His was not only an appeal to the poor and lowly but to kings and princes and mighty rulers of the earth, to grand masters of learning, of finances, of art, and of the sciences, to leaders of thought and of creeds, to mighty intellects, philosophers, and poets. Vivekananda shook the world of thought on all its higher lines. Great teachers bowed reverently at his feet, the humble followed reverently to kiss the hem of his garments; no other single human being was revered more during his life than was Vivekananda.

In the few short weeks that I was with him, few could know him better than I. At first I attended him through a severe spell of sickness, then he sat with me partly through a paralytic stroke; he would charm me to sleep and enchant me awake. So passed the sublimest part of my life, and now that sweet memory lingers and sustains me ever and always.

DR. M. H. LOGAN



# TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(ON HIS HUNDREDTH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY)

BY AN AMERICAN DEVOTEE

[ 'An American Devotee' is connected with the Vedanta Center of St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. Her poem is a tribute of her deep respect to Swami Vivekananda on his hundredth birth anniversary. ]

Salutations to Thee,  
O Knower of God, Messenger from God.  
The rising sun heralded Thy birth,  
In the holy land of India,  
As the longest night was ending,  
And the East awaited a new day.  
Salutations to Thee,  
O Being of Light,  
Beyond the *gunas*, ever-perfect,  
Ever-free.  
We bow down to Thee in adoration,  
And humbly lay our offering,  
Of love and gratitude,  
At Thy blessed feet,  
On this hundredth anniversary  
Of Thy auspicious birth,  
Ordained by our Lord and Master,  
Sri Ramakrishna,  
For the fulfilment  
Of His spiritual mission,  
To humanity.  
Salutations to Thee,  
O Radiant One.  
The majesty and beauty,  
Of Thy saintly presence,  
And the charm and quality,  
Of Thy melodious voice,  
Have defied description.  
Though we no longer see Thee,  
With mortal eye,  
Yet, through Guru's grace,  
We feel Thy blessings in our hearts,  
And know Thou art still here.  
Though we no longer hear Thee,  
With mortal ear,  
Chanting the Sanskrit *ślokas*,

And affirming in song or sermon,  
The Vedic verities,  
That proclaim the divinity of man,  
Yet, Thy universal message is not lost.  
Great teachers following after Thee,  
Have carried it to the farthest  
Parts of our globe,  
And Thy eloquent words,  
Still have power.  
Heard from pulpit,  
Or leaping like tongues of flame,  
From printed page,  
They kindle anew the fire of devotion,  
Within our hearts,  
And burn away the dross of ignorance,  
Within our minds.  
O Thou, the Bestower of Knowledge,  
Born to remove the miseries of mankind,  
Thy greatness and glory are beyond  
Our ken.  
No act of ours can add or detract,  
No tribute of ours is worthy.  
Rather, out of our great need,  
We come humbly asking of Thee,  
And seeking Thy grace,  
In supplication and self-surrender.  
Be merciful unto us, O Merciful One,  
And grant us this boon : We pray,  
That Thou wilt increase our strength,  
And devotion ;  
That Thou wilt shine the light  
Of Thy knowledge within us ;  
And draw us ever nearer to Him,  
Who out of His infinite love for all,  
Brought Thee to earth,  
On this blessed day.

# THE WORKS OF MY MASTER

BY SISTER NIVEDITA

[ Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret E. Noble) was one of the rare souls who, at the instance of Swami Vivekananda laid down her life to the service of our motherland, and her valuable contribution to the regeneration of Indian art, culture, and nationalism is yet to be properly assessed. Her devotion to her Guru was unique and, among other books, her *'The Master as I Saw Him'* is a magnificent tribute of her deep devotion to Swami Vivekananda. The following excerpt is from her Introduction to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda.* ]

The Swami Vivekananda would have been less than he was, had anything in this Evangel of Hinduism been his own. Like the Kṛṣṇa of the *Gītā*, like Buddha, like Śaṅkarācārya, like every great teacher that Indian thought has known, his sentences are laden with quotations from the Vedas and Upaniṣads. He stands merely as the Revealer, the Interpreter to India of the treasures that she herself possesses in herself. The truths he preaches would have been as true, had he never been born. Nay more, they would have been equally authentic. The difference would have lain in their difficulty of access, in their want of modern clearness and incisiveness of statement, and in their loss of mutual coherence and unity. Had he not lived, texts that today will carry the bread of life to thousands might have remained the obscure disputes of scholars. He taught with authority, and not as one of the pundits. For he himself had plunged to the depths of the realization which he preached, and he came back like Rāmānuja, only to tell its secrets to the pariah, the outcast, and the foreigner.

And yet this statement, that his teaching holds nothing new, is not absolutely true. It must never be forgotten that it was the Swami Vivekananda who, while proclaiming the sovereignty of the Advaita philosophy, as including that experience in which all is one, without a second, also added to Hinduism the doctrine that Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita are but three phases or stages in a single development, of which the last-named constitutes the goal. This is part and parcel

of the still greater and more simple doctrine that the many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes.

It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting-point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be, indeed, the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.

This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of *karma*, not as divorced from, but as expressing *jñāna* and *bhakti*. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard and the field, are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man, as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no difference between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction. 'Art, science, and religion', he said once, 'are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But, in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita.'

The formative influence that went to the determining of his vision may, perhaps, be



regarded as threefold. There was, first, his literary education in Sanskrit and English. The contrast between the two worlds thus opened to him carried with it a strong impression of that particular experience which formed the theme of the Indian sacred books. . . .

In his Master, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, living and teaching in the temple-garden of Dakshineswar the Swami Vivekananda—'Naren', as he then was—found that verification of the ancient texts which his heart and his reason demanded. Here was the reality which the books only brokenly described. Here was one to whom *samādhi* was a constant mode of knowledge. . . . In his Guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda found the key to life.

Even now, however, the preparation for his own task was not complete. He had yet to wander throughout the length and breadth of India, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, mixing with saints and scholars and simple souls alike, learning from all, teaching to all, and living with all, seeing India as she was and is, and so grasping in its comprehensiveness that vast whole, of which his Master's life and personality had been a brief and intense epitome.

These, then—the Śāstras, the Guru, and the Motherland—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda. These are the treasure which it is his to offer. These furnish him with the ingredients whereof he compounds the world's heal-all of his spiritual bounty. These are the three lights burning within that single lamp which India, by his hand, lighted and set up, for guidance of her own children and of the world in the few years of work between

September 19, 1893, and July 4, 1902. And some of us there are, who, for the sake of that lighting, and of this record that he has left behind him, bless the land that bore him and the hands of those who sent him forth, and believe that not even yet has it been given to us to understand the vastness and significance of the message that he spoke. . . .

In the works of the Swami Vivekananda . . . we have what is not only a gospel to the world at large, but also to its own children, the Charter of the Hindu Faith. What Hinduism needed, amidst the general disintegration of the modern era, was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognize her self. And this was given to her in these words and writings of the Swami Vivekananda.

For the first time in history, as has been said elsewhere, Hinduism itself forms here the subject of generalization of a Hindu mind of the highest order. For ages to come the Hindu man who would verify, the Hindu mother who would teach her children, what was the faith of their ancestors will turn to the pages of these books for assurance and light. Long after the English language has disappeared from India, the gift that has here been made, through that language to the world, will remain and bear its fruit in East and West alike. What Hinduism had needed was the organizing and consolidating of its own idea. What the world had needed was a faith that had no fear of truth. Both these are found here. Nor could any greater proof have been given of the eternal vigour of the Sanātana Dharma, of the fact that India is as great in the present as ever in the past, than this rise of the individual who, at the critical moment, gathers up and voices the communal consciousness.

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

BY SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

[ Srimat Swami Madhavanandaji Maharaj is the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. In this short sketch, he beautifully portrays the personality of Swamiji and tells the message of the great Swami. ]

Hundred years ago, in a respectable Hindu home of Calcutta, was born a child who was destined to revolutionize the thought-current of the world. This was Narendranath Datta, afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda. Under the liberal education of his parents, the boy grew into a strong-built youth whose intellectual powers were matched by his moral and aesthetic qualities, all of which made him the idol of his fellows. Gifted from an early age with a high degree of concentration, he showed a marked predilection for religion even while he was in his teens, and was a member of the Brahma Samaj, the Protestant wing of Hinduism. His favourite question during his college days to anyone credited with particular religious attainments was, 'Sir, have you seen God?' He was long disappointed in his quest, till one day in 1881, he put the same question to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Saint of Dakshineswar—a place four miles to the north of Calcutta—and was amazed to get the reply: 'Yes, I see him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.' That was the turning point in Narendranath's life.

He began to visit Dakshineswar and was more and more struck by the Saint's extraordinary spiritual powers, his frequent complete absorption in God—or *samādhi*, as it is called—his childlike purity, his absolute non-attachment to wealth or possession, his wonderful catholicity of view and capacity of expounding the most abstruse truths in the simplest way, his power of reading a person's mind through and through, and, above all, his superhuman love and compassion. At his touch, Narendra one day almost lost his body consciousness and begged to be restored to the normal state for the sake of his parents, a

request which the Saint granted with a smile. No wonder that Narendranath gradually surrendered himself to Sri Ramakrishna.

The Master, as was his wont, fathomed the rare potentialities of his disciple from the very beginning, and accordingly, trained him along the line of least resistance for the highest form of truth, the Advaita, or the absolute oneness of Existence. Narendra, at first, ridiculed the idea of everything being of the essence of God, but he soon came to grasp the truth of this ancient teaching of the Vedas through personal experience. Thus, under the watchful and loving guidance of Sri Ramakrishna, he understood the full import of the teachings of the Hindu scriptures, and accepted all forms of discipline prescribed in them as helpful to particular types of aspirants. Getting over his earlier beliefs as a Brahma, he realized that God could be with form as well as without form, nay He was unconditioned as well as conditioned.

His tutelage lasted till August 1886, when Sri Ramakrishna after a protracted illness gave up his mortal body. The last two years of this period were years of great struggle for him; for shortly before he got his B.A. degree, he suddenly lost his father who died of a heart attack, which left the family in dire poverty. He had to maintain his mother and brothers and sisters, and at the same time, to allay his burning thirst for God-realization. Particularly, during the last year, Sri Ramakrishna's illness required his constant attendance as a nurse. Yet, so great was his spirit of renunciation that he failed to beg material things of the Divine Mother, although he was thrice sent to the Kālī temple for this purpose by the Master.



On Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, Narendranath with his brother disciples moved to a dilapidated house at Baranagore, near Calcutta, which was the first monastery of the Ramakrishna Order, founded by him to carry out in everyday life the teachings of the Master. Here, inspired by Narendranath—now a *sannyāsin* under the name of Swami Vivekananda—the monks led a life of great asceticism, combined with a supreme effort for realization. Within two years, he left the monastery to lead a wandering monk's life, which he continued till destiny beckoned him to the distant shores of America in 1893. The intimate knowledge which these five years of travel from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari gave him of the conditions obtaining in the different strata of Indian life, stood him in good stead when, later, he started the work of regeneration for his motherland.

At the request of some enthusiastic admirers, Swami Vivekananda took upon himself the task of representing Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, held in connection with the World's Fair at Chicago, U.S.A. Although not equipped with the necessary credentials, he providentially got an opportunity to deliver his message. The ovation which greeted him when he addressed that vast gathering as 'Sisters and Brothers of America', is a matter of common knowledge now. Suffice it to say that this unknown man from India made history for his country that day. There was something in his very appearance that had captivated the audience. His speeches on this occasion touched the inmost core of their hearts by their freshness of approach to the problems of life. During the three years of his stay in that country, he lectured continually from one place to another, and was uniformly appreciated. All homes were thrown open to him. He made numerous friends in respectable circles and had many disciples. His two visits to England were also a great success. In both countries, it was the loftiness of his message, combined with the manner of its presentation,

as also his unsullied life, that produced this effect. Although beauty and wealth vied with each other to lure him, he was proof against both, the true child of Sri Ramakrishna that he was. Was it for nothing that the Saint would often go into *samādhi* at the very sight of him?

In the West, Swami Vivekananda preached only those great, life-giving, unifying principles for which Hinduism ever stands. The majesty of the Ātman—the real Self of man—Its transcendence of the chain of birth and death, Its infinite power, Its eternal purity and freedom—these were his themes. Of his great Teacher he spoke only once in public. He did not believe in conversion; he would only ask a Christian to be a better Christian, a Mohammedan to be a better Mohammedan, and so on; for, to him, each great faith was a path unto one and the same God—all roads led to Rome. He never imposed his own will on his listeners, although he felt that he had the power to alter their thoughts if he liked. He wanted everyone to develop along his or her particular line, which was the natural way of growth.

While in America, he kept up correspondence with his Indian disciples and admirers, and encouraged them to work for the uplift of their country. The appalling poverty and ignorance, under which these countless millions of Indians laboured, drew blood from his tender heart. He was determined to do something for them. In fact, this was one of his main reasons for going to America—to get some funds for the Indian work. The first famine relief work of the Ramakrishna Mission, in Rajputana, was initiated at his instance in 1894. Feeling the need of his presence in India, he returned home early in 1897, leaving two of his brother disciples to look after the Vedānta work in the West.

The news of his success as a preacher in America and England having long preceded him, the nation rose as one man to do him honour. From Colombo, where he landed, to Almora in the Himalayas, he received in-



numerable addresses of welcome, and his replies thereto comprise one of his marvellous series of lectures. Through these, he sought to rouse his countrymen from their age-long lethargy, telling them again and again that the country was living, that spirituality was its soul, and that they must shake off their self-hypnosis to realize the immortal truths which their forefathers had left for them and share them with the rest of the world. This last was India's special mission, and once again, she must carry it out to save the world from the poison of materialism. His prophecy that the whole of the Western world was on a volcano which might burst any day and break it to pieces, has already come true. To save itself, the West, he said, must reconstruct its life on a spiritual foundation, taking a cue from India.

While praising his countrymen for their innate spiritual bent, he called upon them to get rid of their *tamas* or inertia, which they in their ignorance were mistaking for *sattva* or serenity. The two, he said, were as the poles asunder, like pitch darkness and dazzling light, which are similar in their blinding effect. The way to reach *sattva* was through *rajas* or activity. He exhorted all to have burning faith in themselves and struggle for the emancipation of the masses, to give them back their lost individuality. Realizing that the abject poverty and ignorance of the people were mainly responsible for their degraded condition, he tried to set up an organization that would work whole-heartedly in a spirit of service to eradicate them. This was the origin of the Ramakrishna Mission, pledged to carry out the national ideals of renunciation and service. To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, treat the sick, educate the illiterate, comfort the afflicted, in short, in every possible way to help people to help themselves—this was the great task before the country. It was not to be mere social service: it was to be a regular worship of God in the many, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. 'The poor, the illiterate,

the downtrodden—let these be your God', he cried. That the country has taken up the idea is a patent fact today. Many organizations have sprung up in India, which are trying to work on similar lines.

The Swami lived only five more years. Incessant labour had undermined his health, and his second trip to the West in 1899, which lasted for a year and a half, failed to restore it. In the course of this, also, he continued his beneficent work of ministration on a somewhat modified scale. Finally, after a short tour in East Bengal and Assam, and further efforts for the consolidation of his work, he burst the bonds of his body at the Belur Math, the headquarters of his organization, on the 4th July 1902. It was the anniversary of the American Independence Day—a day which he loved so much and had even commemorated in a poem. He was barely thirty-nine years of age.

But his life-work is not to be measured by the number of years he lived. His was a dynamic personality, which chafed at the very idea of rest. 'It is better to wear out than rust out', he often said. His desire was to die in the field of battle like a hero, and this he did. On the last day, after meditating in the chapel—behind closed doors, which was an unusual occurrence—for three hours in the morning, he explained a verse from the *Śukla Yajur-Veda* in his original way, and took a class on Pāṇini's Sanskrit grammar for his monks, for about three hours in the afternoon. Sixteen years ago, after he had tasted the bliss of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, the highest state of mergence in the Supreme Brahman, his Master had said to him: 'Now you know what you are. But the key to this shall be with me, and only when you have finished the Divine Mother's work, will you have it.' Evidently, that condition was fulfilled that evening.

Swami Vivekananda's contribution in the domain of religion was immeasurable. He rejuvenated Hinduism, or Vedānta, as he preferred to call it. Through the help of his



Master, he saw perfect order in the apparent wilderness of its scriptures. 'To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer, startling psychology a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it', he wrote in 1890 to a disciple, and this is just what he accomplished to perfection. He found that, in Hinduism, the approach to the highest truth was psychological. In other words, the different philosophies, such as Dualism, Qualified Monism, and Monism, are presentations of the same truth looked at from different angles according to the temperament and capacity of the aspirant. There is no contradiction among them, just as there is none among the different stages of a man's life. To vary the metaphor, each religion is a language to express the highest truth. We travel not from error to truth, but from truth to truth—at best from lower truth to higher truth. So there is absolutely no need for fanatical quarrels over religion. They are all due to ignorance, and must be treated as a disease. This harmony of all religions was the central theme of his teachings.

The Swami may well be called the maker of modern India. At his galvanic touch the moribund nation has grown self-conscious. The ill effects of centuries of neglect and oppression cannot be removed in a day. But the process of reconstruction has begun, and it is up to the Indians themselves to quicken its pace. The Swami repudiated negative ideas. His was a message of hope and strength. He would not entertain the idea of sin, but call it an error of judgement. Man's potentiality is infinite. A cow never steals nor does a wall tell a lie, but they remain a cow and a wall; man, on the contrary, behaves like a beast or a devil, but he can also realize God if he wants to. All that is necessary for him is to have a sincere determination to reach the goal, no matter what it

costs. To hear the Swami proclaim the divinity of man with his characteristic fire was an unforgettable experience. It would resuscitate a dead man!

He believed in giving equal opportunities to all. Or, if there must be difference, let the weaker person have more than the stronger. If a Brāhmaṇa child needed one teacher, let the pariah child have four, for that was equity. He did not denounce hereditary caste. He knew that divisions in society were natural and inevitable. Only they changed forms in different countries. The caste system in India was introduced mainly to keep out competition, and it was never altogether rigid. Rather our forefathers aimed at levelling up—raising all by slow stages to the status of a Brāhmaṇa, who was the custodian of the national culture. According to the Swami, this has again to be done, under the guidance of new *ṛsis* or seers of truth, who would be born from time to time and produce new *Smṛtis* or law-codes. In India, it is the *Śrutis* or *Upaniṣads* which are held to be unchanging, but not the *Smṛtis*, which are adaptations of the principles of the *Upaniṣads* to the changing conditions of particular ages. That Swami Vivekananda himself was such a *ṛṣi*, we may conclude, not on the authority of his great Teacher alone, but also in view of the Swami's deep insight into the heart of things and his all-comprehensive vision extending far into the future.

Unlike Kipling, the Swami visualized a much-needed union between the East and the West, to be effected by a judicious exchange of Indian spirituality with Western materialistic knowledge. Mere material greatness without a fundamental spiritual outlook that would comprehend the entire human race as one brotherhood, is bound to lead to wars even worse than the last one. Similarly, the spiritual greatness of only a handful of persons to the exclusion of countless millions who are grovelling in misery, cannot but spell disaster for any country. Indians should first and foremost try to be truly religious, not

simply by observing certain rituals nor by giving intellectual assent to certain dogmas, but by realizing the great truths of their scriptures—by actually being and becoming. Keeping this as their ideal, they should, as a step to it, supply those vital needs of the body and mind without which spiritual progress is impossible for the general mass of people. It may take time to do this, but it must be done with all earnestness, through an intelligent organized effort in a spirit of mutual helpfulness and utter absence of jealousy.

The Swami was an advocate of the enfranchisement of Indian women, and regarded the downfall of the country as partly due to their degraded position in society. Citing Manu's well-known dictum, 'The gods are pleased where the women are happy', he strongly pleaded for their equal partnership with men. A bird with only one wing cannot fly, he used to say. But this uplift must be on strictly national lines, after the model of Sitā and Sāvitrī, and not in imitation of Western standards, for it would be suicidal. Maintaining their traditional purity to the full, Indian women must acquire practicality in the different fields of life. The Swami was an ardent believer in the magical power of education of the right type. It was, in a sense, his panacea for most of the evils of society. Given proper education, Indian women would solve their own problems.

Swami Vivekananda was an embodiment of the Advaita philosophy that he preached. He was a breaker of bondage *par excellence*. Believing in the omnipotence of the Spirit, he wanted to see it applied in every sphere of life, so that an all-round development might result. All that was necessary was to supply the deficiencies, and the best way to do this was

by removing the barriers. Then the infinite potentialities of the Soul would automatically manifest themselves. He was a living example of the multi-sided development to which a man could aspire. The readers of his works cannot fail to be struck by his scholarship and depth of thought, his synthetic vision, his aesthetic sense and humour, his eloquence and power of expression both as a speaker and a writer, his glowing patriotism and love of humanity at large, and, above all, his saintliness and hold on the Reality. He was also a skilled musician with a magnificent voice, whose devotional songs repeatedly threw Sri Ramakrishna into states of *samādhi*. No wonder that people adored him in both hemispheres. But, in spite of superhuman honours bestowed on him by thousands of men and women, he was unassuming as a child, and sincerely attributed whatever virtues he possessed to the unbounded grace of his Master. He wanted to be just 'a voice without a form'. Here truly was a case of '*āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā*—Wonderful is the expounder of truth and talented its recipient'.

In his life as well as works, we have an endless storehouse of materials to enlighten and uplift us. Let us delve into them again and again, and assimilate what comes to our hands, with purity, patience, and perseverance. Our labours will not go unrewarded. I conclude this short sketch with the Swami's beautiful summing up of what religion means: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.'



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND YOUNG INDIA

BY DR. SARVEPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

[The present article, reproduced from an earlier issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, is from the reports of a speech delivered by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, at a public meeting in Calcutta, in the early forties. What he said about twenty years ago holds good even today. His sane advice deserves our serious contemplation and calls for a re-orientation of our outlook on life.]

When I was a student in the early years of this century, a student in high school and college classes, we used to read Swami Vivekananda's speeches and letters which were then passing from hand to hand in manuscript form, and they used to stir us a great deal and make us feel proud of our ancient culture. Though our externals were broken down, the spirit of our country is there and is everlastingly real—that was the message which we gathered from his speeches and writings when I was a young student.

But today we can see a growing tendency among our young men and women to think that all those things are out of date, that they have betrayed us, and that we should turn to copying another kind of civilization. We may possess Indian bodies, but we must borrow other souls to inhabit them. I should like to ask you whether you are so much satisfied with the high-pressure machine civilization that has led us to this appalling tragedy in which we are today. I am asking you to consider whether a civilization such as ours today has not outreached itself; whether a civilization like this where man is able to ride the air and swim the seas but has to cover his face and hide underground, a civilization where young people from the beginning, from their nurseries and kindergarten, are taught to develop a spirit of hatred, whether a civilization where women cry out from the depth of their hearts, 'Blessed is the womb that is bare and blessed the breast which never gave a suck', whether a civilization that has landed us in this kind of crisis and catastrophe can be regarded as fundamentally sound and worth copying by us. That is the question which I wish to put to you. I

want you to ask yourselves whether this civilization that has brought the world to the present position is fundamentally sound, propping itself on foundations which can be regarded as just and righteous. Whenever you talk of civilization, it is no use your talking of economic arrangements, political forms, scientific technique and equipment. Civilization is a movement of the spirit. And you ask what is the spiritual essence, what is the nerve principle, that vital spark which has made all this civilization thrive.

We have our political democracy, we have the appearances of great sportsmanship, we have also the appearances of being truly religious people. But it is a civilization which centres round banks, factories, corporations, companies, and enterprises of individual men who want to make themselves wealthy and luxurious at the expense and degradation of many people. That is what civilization actually stands for. We talk about religion. Well, I tell you that civilization, though it may be seemingly religious, is essentially a secular one, is essentially a materialistic one. So if this is civilization is secular, and its outlook ultimately materialistic, where man finds himself dressed with brief little authority, plays all these tricks which have brought us to this condition, you must ask whether it is not necessary to bring about a different kind of civilization which does not rest on mere secularism, which dethrones materialism and where profit motive gives place to what you consider service of fellow men.

The question is 'What is man?' Is he a crawling earthworm? Or, is he the most cunning of all animals, or is he an economic

being controlled by the laws of supply and demand, or is he, as Swami Vivekananda said, an 'Ātman,' a universal spirit? However dense, however obstinate, however depraved a human being may be, there is that essential divine spark in him that can never be surrendered. Are there not moments in each one of your lives which redeem you from the actual commonplace existence, moments when you feel you do not walk on solid earth but float in thin air, moments when life seems as still as death, moments when you are in communion with fundamental spiritual Reality, when, indeed, life and death seem merely but two shadows? Is it not a fact that each one of us is able at some time or other of his life to feel the triteness, the unworthy pettiness of the pleasures of life and possessions of the earth, and feel there are certain eternal values which are permanent, which cannot be superseded by the passing insanities of this world? If Swami Vivekananda stood out for such a kind of doctrine, if he has made an appeal to us to realize that a human being is not to be regarded as an earthworm, or an economic being, or a political creature, but that he has an inner citadel, a sanctuary of his soul which cannot be penetrated by anything external, and that inner sanctuary of his will have to be preserved against attacks of economics and politics, is he not standing up for spiritual equality for the whole of humanity? That is the gospel for which Swami Vivekananda stood and that has saved India until the present moment, and that is the gospel to which we have been disloyal. If we are where we are, it is not because we have clung to our ideals, but it is because we have not been sufficiently loyal to the great ideals which have come down to us.

There is nothing higher than humanity. But so far as we are concerned, a human individual is a lamp of Spirit on earth, the most concrete living embodiment of Spirit. We do not know the transcendental Spirit. If you

want to know, however, the Spirit incarnated, you have to meet a brother man, a man who requires most assistance from you, not the man who is hale and healthy, but one who is poor, who is afflicted, and who is in distressed circumstances. This is the appeal of every great saint so far as human service is concerned. That is the appeal which you have to stand for. There are people who say we are contemplative and that we are not sufficiently practical. But that must be regarded as something which is not corroborated by any of our great writings or lives of great personalities. You cannot think of more dynamic personalities in this country than those religious geniuses who have stirred us to incarnate the high ideals of spirit. Buddha, Śāṅkara, and the Gītācārya, all these are people who not only dwelt on mountain heights, but returned to the service of ordinary men, came back to the plane of history. If moments of contemplation are necessary to make us firm in this attitude, moments of action are equally necessary to put those ideals to practical service. By standing up for the great ideals of Hindu religion, the great ideals which alone can save humanity, by standing up for them, Swami Vivekananda tried to lead humanity to a nobler and better path than that which it found itself in.

Whatever may be your social programme, whatever revolutions you may bring about in the economic and political world, unless you have the dynamic inspiration of religion, you will never succeed in this enterprise. Even if you are radically minded, ask yourself the question whether you are going to reduce human beings to mere political or social creatures, or would you give him some inner sanctity which nothing outward can touch? If you really believe in the divine spark in man, do not for a moment hesitate to accept the great tradition which has come to us, of which Swami Vivekananda was the greatest exponent.



# VIVEKANANDA: UNIQUE SEER AND SAINT

BY DR. C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

[Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, renowned scholar and noted author of many valuable books, is at present the Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University. In this short and beautiful biographical sketch, he portrays the personality of Swami Vivekananda and tells about his valuable contributions.]

Narendranath Dutt, who became a world figure under his *sannyāsin* name of Swami Vivekananda, was endowed by nature with restless energy, and he had, as a young man, all the fiery passions that normally co-exist with bodily strength and determination. From his student days, Narendra personified the conflict of the past and the present, of the East and the West, and of dream and action. He was possessed by two apparently irreconcilable desires, one for conquest and the other for renunciation and compassion. Even before he came under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he strove to embody in his life the motto of Saint Augustine of Hippo, who asserted: 'If you want to find God, serve man.' After a period of varied study and of grappling with sceptic and agnostic trends of thought, Narendra had the good fortune of being marked out as the chosen *śiṣya* of the Paramahansa who brought the realization of *samādhi* to him and literally conquered him by spiritual force.

Very soon, the disciple appreciated the message of his Guru, namely, that of the universality of the Supreme, of the essential oneness of the various religions of the world, and of the duty to serve man in order to reach God.

After his novitiate, Swami Vivekananda travelled through the whole subcontinent of India as a *parivrājaka* and apprehended the spiritual unity of India. As an ardent and discerning student of Western classics and philosophy, he was filled with a desire to reconcile and to assimilate Hindu ideals with modern scientific processes and speculation.

Travelling incognito through India, he lived one day with a prince and another day with

a wandering beggar. He carried with him in his travels both Thomas A'Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* and the *Gītā*; and standing on the land's end at Kanya Kumari, he had the vision of the renaissance of India, of its uplift from misery and poverty, and of the need to reveal India to the West and the West to India. It was in April 1891, during a musical performance given by a dancer in the palace of the Raja of Khetri, that—in his own words—his spiritual pride was quelled when he desired to leave the place as a protest against the presence of a dancing girl who sang a devotional melody which conquered the Swamiji with its uplifting appeal. Thereafter, he made no difference between man and man, and lived with no difference, with nobleman as well as thieves and sweepers.

It was at Porbandar that the advice was given to him to visit the West; and when he swam to the Kanya Kumari rock from the mainland (he could not afford even the boat fare), he, after deep deliberation, was convinced of the need to go abroad. And it was as a person without any resources that he resolved to proceed to Chicago. Madras furnished his first group of disciples and his supporters, and it was due to some far-sighted philanthropists that it became possible for the Swamiji to sail for America. He decided, then and there, that the search for personal salvation was secondary and that his duty was to preach the spiritual unity of Asia and the message of Asian thought and philosophy to the world. September 1893 saw his spiritual conquest of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and he carried the whole Conference with him when he proudly affirmed the immemorial



teachings of the Upaniṣads and the place occupied by the *sannyāsin* and the monk in the spiritual and secular polity of Eastern countries.

The Swami's prolonged lecture tours in America and in England have been adequately described by his loving disciples. America eagerly accepted his teachings and, in a way, was prepared for them by the work of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. The message of identity had been preached by these American men of genius and Swami Vivekananda saw a fertile soil for his talks and writings. He enunciated the doctrine of social philanthropy and service to the low and he emphasized that India's doom was sealed when the word *mleccha* was invented.

Margaret Noble (who afterwards became Sister Nivedita), Sister Christine, and Sister Haridasi were among his early disciples, and the Swami dictated his *Raja Yoga* to Sister Haridasi; and later on, Mr. Goodwin became his secretary. For over a year, he travelled through many Western countries, stressing the need for tolerance and the religion of universality. He met in Europe the great savants, Max Müller and Paul Deussen, who became his fast friends and supporters. His visit to Switzerland gave him the idea of the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama, and his contact with Edward Carpenter and Frederick Myers made him acquainted with the newly arisen spiritual cravings of Europe.

Returning to India, Swami Vivekananda made up his mind not to have any political affiliations and he often repeated that he would unhesitatingly keep his movement pure and untouched by passing controversies. He made a memorable speech in Colombo, where he insisted that Śiva should be worshipped by service to the poor, to the diseased and the weak.

In Madras, he helped to start the *Brahma-vadin* and his Madras speeches were practically the summation of his fierce resistance to outworn caste prejudices and incrustations. He preached in his lecture on 'My Plan of

Campaign' that, whilst England had political vitality and power, and Italy and France were intrinsically artistic, in India, religious life is the centre of existence, but that, in order to realize that life, we must re-create for ourselves a man-making religion and a man-making education. He, thereafter, began to embody his ideals by founding various *āśramas* and *mathas* as well as educational institutions and hostels. In the midst of his incessant work, he was dictating his masterpieces on the four Yogas and on the teachings of the Upaniṣads, the Epics, and Purāṇas, and he composed hymns and significant poems like his 'Kali the Mother'. The Advaita Ashrama was founded at Mayavati, in Almora district, and the Belur Math was consecrated in 1898.

The Swami paid a second visit to the West, but by that time, his health had begun to fail. He rallied his powers and made a great speech in the Paris Congress of the History of Religions. But his second Western trip over-taxed his physical powers and he died in July 1902 while not yet 40 years of age.

Spiritual freedom and fearlessness, equilibrium and synthesis were the watchwords of his revelation to India, and to him, to know and to do were synonymous. Summing up Swami Vivekananda's contributions, they may be described as the organizing and the consolidation of Hindu ideals and the insistence that Hinduism had, and should have, no fear of the truth. There is, according to him, in reality, no difference between the sacred and the secular. Every aspect of life is and should be made a part of religion, and man becomes divine by realizing the divine in every aspect of the universe and of life's activities. Finally, like his Guru, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he constantly insisted that, by the expression 'Iṣṭadevatā' was meant that each man may seek God in his own way, provided he is sincere and tolerant.



# THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : A RETHINKING

BY SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

[Swami Pavitrananda, formerly an editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, is at present the head of the Vedanta Society of New York. In this learned and thought-provoking article, he has clearly brought out the message that Swami Vivekananda has left for his own countrymen and for humanity at large.]

It is one hundred years since Swami Vivekananda was born, and it is sixty-one years since he passed away, leaving behind a great message and the example of a great life. The Swami, affectionately known as Swamiji by thousands of devotees, was a manifold personality—a spiritual giant, who, not satisfied with his own unfoldment, intensely strove for the good of all. He had a very compassionate heart which keenly felt for the suffering of the whole of humanity. He was a great monk who renounced everything, but his love for his motherland, India, did not leave him at any time. As such, he spoke for the salvation of India, for the removal of the misery of the world, and above all, how every human being could get the knowledge of his divinity. Swamiji's message was, therefore, not for one time, but for all times—not for one country, but for all countries, not for one aspect of human life, but for all aspects of human existence.

It is doubtful whether the world has seen a second soul like him who felt, thought, and worked so hard for the good of humanity. Swamiji had this great advantage—he lived in modern times when the world is being more and more knit together, when no country, nation, or man can live in proud or despised isolation. The one sure mark of a spiritual man is that his love embraces all, irrespective of colour, creed, and geographical area. Being a highly developed spiritual soul, Swami Vivekananda became identified with the whole world.

In previous eras, one's conception of the 'whole world' was limited; knowledge of one country about another was not so great. With the progress of science, time and space

have shrunk, and the horizon of human knowledge has widened more and more. Though Swamiji lived in the last century (having touched only the fringe of the present century), he had a clear glimpse of what was ahead for the world, and therefore, his thoughts and feelings were in terms of the problems with which we are faced today and which we will be facing tomorrow. During his lifetime, the pressing problems were of one kind. Though fundamental problems are always the same, our immediate problems are of a different kind. On the occasion of the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda, we should attempt to discover how his living words relate to our present and future. In other words, we have to imagine what he would say to us today if we could hear his physical voice.

During his time, Swamiji found India under the yoke of foreign rule, a very sad victim of economic exploitation, losing faith in her own culture and civilization, her soul almost on the point of extinction, without any hope of regeneration, as it were. Nobody could imagine that India could ever be independent, even in the distant future. There was darkness all around. No ray of light was visible anywhere. Versed in Indian history and Sanskrit lore, three thousand years of India's past was with him a living reality before his very eyes, which could never be dimmed, though the existing condition of India was very abject. A man of God, religion with him was not a matter of aspiration or striving, but a realization, a direct experience. A disciple of Sri Ramakrishna who lived the harmony of all religions in his own life, it was spontaneous for Swamiji to see

the same basic truths in all religions. As a wandering monk he roamed over all India from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari and saw the people—the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the so-called educated and the supposedly illiterate; he realized their strength and knew their weakness, but, above all, he was sorely moved by the poverty and misery of the masses. His compassionate heart bled for them. For a time, this suffering of the masses in India was the foremost thought in his mind. It is hardly any exaggeration to say that nobody knew India in the way Swami Vivekananda did. He was frankly proud of India's glorious past, he was sure of India's bright future, but the present condition of India made him miserable. He writhed in agony at the sight of the miseries of the people of India. In such a mood, he told his countrymen in the year 1897: 'For the next fifty years, this alone shall be our key-note—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake. . . . All other gods are sleeping.'<sup>1</sup> Without depending on the foreign rulers, he exhorted the people to stir themselves to the task of removing poverty, spreading education, nullifying social injustices, and so on. Thus the patriot in Swami Vivekananda came out more prominent than the monk in him.

India was in an abject condition. When a country is in such misery, it becomes weak. Where could the needed strength be obtained? That was the crux of the problem. The solution only Swamiji could give. He said that the soul of India was religion, and if that could be touched, India would awaken. He made a clear distinction between social customs and real religion. Real religion is quite different from social usages and practices and malpractices. Make religion living, and India will rise—India that was like a sleeping leviathan will awaken. Religion is

in the very blood of the whole nation; everything should be done through the living inspiration of religion.

Later events have indicated how the great seer Swami Vivekananda was absolutely right. Within fifty years of his passing, India rose and shook off the foreign yoke, and in this matter religion played a great part. Truth and non-violence were the weapons with which Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of the political movement, fought. Achieving independence in this way is a landmark in the history of India and a great event in the history of the world.

As regards the relation between India and the world, Swami Vivekananda was of the opinion that India will supply spiritual sustenance to the whole world. 'Shall India die?' wrote the Swami from America after having some personal experience of conditions in the West, 'Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct, and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force, and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice.'<sup>2</sup> Swamiji was quite definite on this point. He himself answered the sceptics when he said that this was not merely 'a manifestation of patriotic impulses'. The trend of events supported this assertion.

In India, a large number of persons are drawn to Swamiji because of his great love for his country. He is called a 'patriot-saint'. To them, his lectures from Colombo to Almora and his fiery letters asking people to dedicate their lives to the cause of India contain the essence of his message. To them, he was more an awakener of India than an awakener of souls.

To the devotees, followers, and admirers of Swamiji who belong to the countries outside India, the story is different. To them his

<sup>1</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 4th edition, Vol. III, p. 300.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 294.



message to India, however significant, is only a fraction of his whole message contained in his quite voluminous speeches and writings. They love, admire, and worship this great soul because of his spiritual message. They love the Swami Vivekananda who declared in a trumpet voice: 'Ye divinities on earth, it is a sin to call man a sinner.' 'Each soul is divine.' 'Man, the infinite dreamer, dreaming finite dreams.' They admire and turn to Swamiji, because his spiritual message of strength, hope, and courage opens up new vistas to them.

When Swami Vivekananda came to America, he was extremely happy to see the material prosperity of the country brought about by scientific development, the power of organization, and great opportunities for growth available to the poorest and the lowliest. Coming from India, he was greatly impressed by the freedom of movement, thought, and activities which the American women enjoyed. He said that America was a land of opportunity; it was a country for women and the masses. He thought America and India could benefit much from each other—India's spiritual idealism and America's material achievements, combined, would bring about a new era in the world.

America represented the height of material achievement in the Western countries. What was true of America was true, more or less, of almost all Western countries and civilizations. But it was not long before he was disillusioned about the real worth of material prosperity bereft of high spiritual purpose. The social life in the West was a peal of laughter on the surface, but underneath it was a long-drawn wail. He was extremely pained at this situation. 'The world is burning with great misery,' he wrote to one of his Western disciples from America, 'can you sleep?' 'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunder-

bolt.'<sup>3</sup> At another time, he said: 'The whole of the Western world rests on a volcano which may burst at any moment and destroy the whole world.' He uttered these words toward the close of the last century. At the present time, to our great dismay, we see how right he was, how every syllable of what he said was true.

What is the remedy against this impending catastrophe? His idea was that, unless men are of a better type and unless their lives are rooted in spiritual idealism, no amount of material achievement will bring peace and happiness to mankind or make the world safe for human habitation.

The value and utility of religion have been repeated time and again from the pulpit and the press till words like 'religion' and 'God' have become meaningless to many. Some will not even care to listen to such words. Swami Vivekananda, however, gave a new meaning and interpretation to religion. Whatever makes you strong is religion and whatever makes you weak is irreligion. Whatever makes you bold and courageous is religion, whatever makes you fear is irreligion. If there is any sin, it is only to fear. To fear is a great sin. These were not merely words of exhortation by a mob orator. The great Swami uttered them from his deep spiritual experience. Real religion is the realization of the Divine within by every soul. That Divinity is latent within each one of us; religious practices only bring it to our conscious level. When one has realized one's Divinity as a direct experience one has no fear of anything, not even death itself. Such a man will not compromise with truth for any self-interest or from any kind of fear. Such a man will not have any hatred or ill-feeling against anyone. He will not have any competition with any of his neighbours. Such a man has solved all his personal problems, reached the goal of life, and will bring peace, happiness, and strength to others. A handful

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2nd edition, Vol. VII, p. 432.



of such persons are sufficient to change the face of the earth.

In a ringing voice Swamiji said in a lecture in London: 'What the world wants today is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God. . . . If this is true, what else could matter? If it is not true, what do our lives matter?'<sup>4</sup> In another context, he said: 'Let there be a dozen lion-souls in each country, lions who have broken their own bonds, who have touched the Infinite, whose soul is gone to Brahman, who care nothing for wealth, nor power, nor fame, and these will be enough to shake the world.'

Swamiji himself was a bright example of what he said. In the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, by one lecture he became world famous—literally overnight an unknown wandering monk became the man of the hour. What was it due to? It was neither his oft-mentioned prepossessing personal appearance, his admittedly great intellect and erudition, nor the combination of all these, which worked the miracle. It was his spiritual realization and knowledge of the Divine within which made him so powerful and irresistible.

'This infinite power of the Spirit, brought to bear upon matter, evolves material development; made to act upon thought, evolves intellectuality; and made to act upon Itself, makes of man a God', wrote the Swami in his reply to the Madras Address. He himself was the illustration of how one could become divine by knowing the Divine and wield overriding power and influence. His ideal was 'to preach unto mankind their divinity and teach them how to manifest that in every moment of their lives'. 'First let us be Gods and then help others to be Gods. "Be and make." Let this be our motto', he wrote. 'Say not man is a sinner. Tell him that he is a God. Even if there were a devil, it would be our duty to remember God always, and

not the devil. If the room is dark, the constant feeling and repeating of darkness will not take it away, but bring in the light. . . . Let us say, "We are" and "God is" and "We are God", "Śivo'ham, Śivo'ham", and march on. Not matter but Spirit. . . . This is the eternal truth the Śrutis preach. . . . Let the lion of Vedānta roar. . . . Throw the ideas broadcast, and let the result take care of itself.'<sup>5</sup>

Swami Vivekananda had the experience of what is called *samādhi* or the superconscious state. He had knowledge of the modern thoughts of the world. He translated the superconscious into the language of the moderns. As such, his words were both virile and modern. His rationalism was, at times, disturbing, if not frightening, to the orthodox and the conservative. But nobody could take offence at him. For he spoke the truth. No wonder he had a tremendous appeal to a large number of virile, thoughtful Western minds.

If Swamiji's words were fiery, his personality was almost overwhelming. Those who came into personal contact with him found in him a gentle soul whose calm influence soothed their lacerated hearts, brought peace to the chaotic condition of their minds, and gave strength to their drooping spirits. It seemed like magic, but he did not exercise any magic. He rejected psychic powers even when they were offered him by his own Master. He was so serene and had so much inner peace and strength that anybody coming within his orbit could not but feel their touch. Swami Vivekananda, who spoke of self-confidence as the first condition of growth in spiritual life, was a perfect example of self-effacement. One old lady who knew him, when asked what was her impression, said that she felt in his presence here was a man who had no self at all. Those who knew Swamiji invariably felt that he was much greater than his words,

<sup>4</sup> Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 4th edition, Vol. IV, p. 297.



however important and far-reaching in their influence they were.

This happened both in India and the West. Only in India, the immediate impact of his words and personality on large numbers of people was patriotic and humanitarian, bringing about a national awakening. His spiritual influence, though deeper and much more significant, intense, and concentrated, was limited to a fewer number of souls. In the West, however, his influence was purely spiritual. The actual needs in the two hemispheres were different.

In this nuclear era, when the very feeling of distance is fading away, an altogether new situation has arisen. A statement like 'India and Abroad' no longer holds true. No country is separate from another, however distant they were before. The time has, therefore, come when we should study the message of Swamiji not in terms of India and outside India, or the East and the West, but in relation to the world as a whole. The treasures of the East are the treasures of the West, the power of the West is the power of the East. It is not communism. It is common sense. We live together, or we die together, *literally*. No one can help it.

In the West, Swamiji spoke mainly of spiritual problems, whereas the same message in India was coloured with the thought of her practical needs. Nevertheless, his admirers and followers all the world over look to their counterparts in India for help and guidance, because the message originated in India, and they think the message in its pristine purity and strength will be found only in India. As such, it is a tremendous responsibility on his followers in India—monastic and lay. The message of a great spiritual soul like Swami Vivekananda works from within, because of its own innate power and strength. But still, from the human standpoint, future history will judge how those, in whose keeping that message was entrusted, acted, behaved, and dealt with that message. So, this is a tremendous responsibility, much more tremendous

than we can imagine.

Swamiji would say that we can render three kinds of help to people—material, intellectual, and spiritual. We can give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, medicine to the sick; that is material help. To solve the economic problems and arrange for the medical care of the people is of the first and foremost importance for a nation or a race to exist or live a life worth the name. Then comes the need for education. People must have good education. Without proper education or the capacity to think or develop the intellect, one cannot raise oneself above the animal level of existence. Animals cannot think, cannot distinguish between right and wrong, or direct their lives other than by instinct. Men can. That is what differentiates a man from an animal. So, after the problems of physical existence have been solved, for the survival of a nation, education of the people is supremely necessary. But, even with intellectual development, man rarely can follow what is right or what he knows to be right. Man, often helplessly, does what he knows to be wrong or cannot do what he knows to be right. That is why even highly distinguished scholars and philosophers sometimes live ignoble lives—lives not superior to those of lower beings. To be able to do what one knows to be right requires inner strength or spiritual development. Without spiritual development, a man's life is like a boat without any rudder. Such a man, often, wrecks his life, in spite of having much in the way of material possessions or intellectual acumen. The present world situation sadly indicates how dangerous man can be to himself, with great power in his possession but with no capacity to control that power. We live in a world where nations are behaving like frenzied creatures, engaged in acts of savagery, unknown even amongst animals. The alternatives now before the world are the complete destruction of the entire human race or the great powers coming to their senses. Nations behave madly be-

cause the people that comprise the nations have no spiritual strength. Their leaders fully know that they are leading the world to complete destruction, but they do not see any practical remedy. Blind to their own follies, they seek justification for inhuman deeds by blaming others for their own faults. That is a vicious circle, going round and round, and few are conscious of the fact that, at the centre of this circle, is the fundamental problem that man is not the master of his own mind. Man has a mind, but, instead of his controlling the mind, the mind controls him, like a wild horse driving his master, the rider. Man is helpless.

This is not a material problem, nor one which intellectual power can solve. It is, essentially, a spiritual problem—of knowing the mind or acquiring mastery over the mind. From this it can easily be seen that material help, however vital that may be, intellectual help, however important that is, are not by themselves panaceas for the ills of life. Without spiritual strength, life is not worth living, or as a practical proposition in the present age, life cannot go on. Hence Swamiji said that the solution of material as well as intellectual problems should be on a spiritual basis or with an eye to spiritual development. Otherwise, the solutions will defeat their own purposes. The present trend of affairs in the world is a stern reminder of this great truth.

Under foreign rule, India suffered from innumerable handicaps for free growth and expression. Now these handicaps are over. India is desperately trying to develop her material resources, remove poverty, spread education, and improve the health of the nation. Within a short time after independence, success in these efforts has been great and very encouraging. Nevertheless, this is just the time when India should be cautious that she does not ape and become a mere replica of the West. In that case, India will become false to herself and lose her soul. India now stands at the cross-roads. Now is the time to make a decision. A wrong

decision made now will spell disaster to future India. In this respect, the message of Swamiji will be of tremendous help.

It is not that India should be a theocratic state, or that religion should be forced on all and sundry. All do not need religion. Everyone does not have spiritual interest. Religion cannot be given in advance. Many want bread instead of religion. Give them bread. Many have their interest and delight in intellectual pursuits, they are completely satisfied with them. They have no hunger for spiritual verities. Give them directions suited to their situation. Raise them step by step to higher levels of understanding. But at the apex there must be the highest ideal—the knowledge of the meaning of life. In every country, there must be at least a few persons who have known and realized or who strive intensely for the highest ideal. Even a few such individuals will raise the level of thought and culture of that country. Their influence will filter down to the masses, and in a natural and spontaneous way, colour their outlook. The masses may not immediately live for the highest ideal, but they will have appreciation for it. That is not a small gain. Swami Vivekananda wanted the leaders of thought in India to be highly spiritual persons. But spiritual souls do not come out of the blue; they are the outcome of long and persistent efforts. Those on whom has fallen the task and burden of leading the country should remember this very strongly.

Swamiji's message was mainly spiritual. If he spoke of other things, they were simply as steps to the highest goal. The source of his strength was his spiritual realization, and the impulse of his intense activities came from his great compassion for the suffering. His mind soared to the highest, and his heart felt for the whole world.

'I am the servant of that God whom the ignorant call Man', he wrote in one of his letters. To him, every life was the mani-



festation of the Divine. If he strongly exhorted Indians and his followers everywhere to dedicate their lives for the welfare of others, it was because he saw, and therefore asked them to serve, God in man. That attitude is sure to purify all work, and make the workers unconsciously spiritual. And the result will be peace instead of conflict, joy in place of frustration.

To keep that attitude always in mind requires an iron will, a dogged determination, eternal vigilance, and great enthusiasm for the Ideal. This is a challenge which all lovers of Swami Vivekananda will have to take up not only for the sake of India, but for the survival of the human race.

---

The preachers of truth are very few, but their powers are felt by those who happen to come within the atmosphere of their divine personality. Such a preacher of truth occasionally appears like a gigantic comet above the horizon, dazzling the eyes and filling the hearts of ordinary mortals with wonder and admiration, and silently passes away into the invisible and unknown realms of the universe. The late Swami Vivekananda was one of those great comets who appeared in the spiritual firmament, once perhaps after several centuries. A well-known writer of this city wrote the other day: 'The passing of Swami Vivekananda was like the flashing mighty star upon our wondering eyes. For in truth, no greater, wiser, truer, holier soul has ever dwelt among us than this marvellous man who has recently gone into spirit life.' ...

No country has ever produced such a many-sided character harmoniously combined in one form as we have seen in the late Swami Vivekananda. ... Poverty, self-abnegation, self-renunciation, and disinterested love for humanity were the ornaments of this exemplary character. ... I had the honour of living with this great Swami in India, in England, and in this country (U.S.A.). I lived and travelled with this great spiritual brother of mine, saw him day after day and night after night and watched his character for nearly twenty years, and I stand here to assure you that I have not found another like him in these three continents, and that no one can take the place of this wonderful personage. As a man, his character was pure and spotless; as a philosopher, he was the greatest of all Eastern and Western philosophers. In him I found the ideal of *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, *rāja-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga*; he was like the living example of Vedānta in all its different branches. ...

Many have asked me why so great and good a man must die. I have said: Why should he not die? His task was finished. One ordinary human body was not enough, nor twenty, nor a hundred for such tremendous energy. Such an intense intellect and spirituality would soon dissolve the granite foundation stones.

Vivekananda is not dead, he is with us, now and for ever. He is my comfort and solace. He is the Senior Brother to the whole world.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY MRS. VIJAYA LAKSHMI PANDIT

[Srimati Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit is the Governor of Maharashtra. The following is the report of a speech she delivered at New York while she was the Ambassador of India in the United States.]

One of the makers of modern India, Vivekananda represented the finest flowering of the Indian renaissance movement which started with Ram Mohan Roy in early nineteenth century. The principal objectives of this movement were the spiritual and social regeneration of India. Centuries of political subjection had degraded Indian society. Religion had degenerated into dogmas and the practice of rituals. Social life had become stagnant. For a time, it appeared as if India had lost her soul. The leaders of Indian renaissance harked back to the rich ancient heritage of their culture. They drew their inspiration from the Vedānta. An old tradition was reborn, a new vigour imparted to the almost forgotten spiritual forces that had shaped India's destiny through the ages.

The aim of Vedānta is to reveal the underlying harmony of all religions and philosophies, all arts and sciences, as different approaches to the same Reality. Its message is impersonal, scientific, and non-sectarian. It proclaims that man, divine in his essential nature, is the master of himself and his destiny. This emphasis on the basic harmony of Indian culture and the underlying unity of the apparently diverse currents and forms of Indian social life spring from the fundamental teachings of Vedānta.

This humanistic tradition of Indian culture was once again emphasized by Vivekananda. To him there was no Hindu or Muslim, Brāhmaṇa or untouchable, rich or poor. In every human being he saw the divine and the service of God was identical in his eyes with service of man.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND MAHATMA GANDHI  
Vivekananda is, perhaps, the most powerful

single influence which prepared the ground for the movement led by Mahatma Gandhi for the liberation of India. There are many parallels between the teachings of Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, and some of them are almost identical even in their form of expression. The oneness of all religions leading to God, the supreme value of service to humanity rendered without selfish interest or hope of reward but only as service to God, fearless opposition to all forms of slavery and human bondage, love for everyone including one's own enemy, are only a few of the basic beliefs held in common by both the Swami and the Mahatma. Vivekananda's call for fearless and unselfish service consummated as it were in Mahatmaji's practice of Satyāgraha. Both were worshippers of the *Daridra-Nārāyaṇa*; they believed in serving God through serving their fellowmen; both fought religious bigotry and superstition, and both were intensely interested in awakening their countrymen to a sense of self-respect and a faith in their purposeful destiny.

I may, perhaps, mention in this connection that an American author, Vincent Shean, in his recent biography of Mahatma Gandhi entitled *Lead, Kindly Light*, has dealt with this subject in a convincing manner. Now, I do not want you to run away with the idea that Vivekananda's was the only influence which moulded Mahatmaji's spiritual and social ideas, much less his technique of political action, for Vivekananda did never directly participate in politics, but there is no doubt that the social content of Gandhiji's political ideas owed much, directly or indirectly, to the teachings and practical example of Swamiji. Under Mahatmaji's leader-



ship, the field of action became infinitely wider and absorbed numerous other forces aspiring after national liberation, but Gandhiji never failed to stress the importance of purity and love, in much the same way as Vivekananda did, amongst his disciples who were dedicated to the redemption of their fellow creatures, not merely in the narrow political field, but in all other spheres of life, material as well as spiritual.

#### VIVEKANANDA—THE INTERNATIONALIST

Vivekananda had a modern mind. Early enough in his life, he realized that the national decadence of India was primarily due to her cultural isolation from the rest of the progressive world. He exhorted the youth of India to go out into the wide world and see for themselves how other peoples lived and take lessons from this experience for the regeneration of their motherland. He deprecated the Indian habit of his days of running down Western materialism and, at the same time, condemned all superstitions and social tyranny perpetrated in the name of religion. Some of his famous utterances come to mind :

‘First bread, then religion.’

‘No man, no nation, can hate others and live.’

‘We talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour. I do not believe in a God who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven.’

‘We cannot do without the world outside India ; it was our foolishness that we thought we could ; we have paid the penalty ; let us do it no more.’

It was with this idea of breaking India’s crippling isolation that Swamiji undertook his journey to the United States in 1893 and delivered his famous speech at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in that year. Even in those days, when America seemed to be so far off from India and certainly not in the vortex of world affairs as she is today, Swamiji realized the spiritual kinship that

existed between these two countries and that evoked such extraordinary response among the people here to his interpretation of Vedānta and India’s true mission in the world. He had a vision of India’s national destiny. ‘The following words of Swami Vivekananda sound prophetic today : ‘The country has fallen, no doubt, but will as surely rise again, and that upheaval will astound the world.’

#### THE SPIRITUAL EMPIRE OF RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE MODERN WORLD

Although a visionary and an idealist, Swami Vivekananda was intensely practical. He recognized the value of organization. That is why he established a monastic order, with the twin ideals of renunciation and service, known as Ramakrishna Mission, after the name of his *guru*. Swamiji died early, at the age of 39, and he could barely get together a few earnest colleagues and disciples to form this Mission before he died. And yet, the Mission has grown from strength to strength during the last fifty years. Not only has the Mission established numerous branches all over India, but its activities have extended to a number of foreign countries in Asia, Europe, North and South America.

Now, why has this organization endured, and why have its activities expanded? Surely, there must have been some universal appeal in Vivekananda’s ideals and visions which inspired its establishment. He realized that science and technology, as developed in the West, would make it possible to give practical shape, through various social service activities, to such spiritual ideals as those of love of men and the divinity of the soul—ideas that lie at the very heart of Indian mysticism. Without the help of science, such ideals, in modern times, might very well remain mere abstractions. Therefore, he saw the imperative necessity of importing into India from the West the techniques of science for the improvement of the material conditions of the Indian masses. He, also, realized that science and technology, unless based upon

and inspired by spiritual idealism, beget lust for power and glory and become an engine of destruction. Thus he felt the supreme necessity of exporting from India to the West its ancient spiritual wisdom. Science and religion are two ways of realizing the same Truth, and they always act as correctives of each other's limitations and prejudices. The Ramakrishna Mission has been constantly working for achieving the unity of religion and science and has thus been fulfilling Vivekananda's ardent vision of the future world order. Today, when the world is standing at the cross-roads of doubt and despair, the teachings of Swami Vivekananda take on fresh significance, and the work of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Vedānta centres assumes an ever-increasing importance. The world would do well to ponder and heed the guiding principles which were formulated by this prophet of new India and of a new world.

---

On the twenty-ninth of January 1895, I went with my sister to 54 West 33rd Street, New York, and heard the Swami Vivekananda in his sitting room, where were assembled fifteen or twenty ladies and two or three gentlemen. The room was crowded. All the arm chairs were taken; so I sat on the floor in the front row. Swami stood in the corner. He said something, the particular words of which I do not remember, but instantly to me that was truth, and the second sentence he spoke was truth, and the third sentence was truth. And I listened to him for seven years and whatever he uttered was to me truth. From that moment life had a different import. It was as if he made you realize that you were in eternity. It never altered. It never grew. It was like the sun that you will never forget once you have seen. . . .

His power lay, perhaps, in the courage he gave others. He did not ever seem to be conscious of himself at all. It was the other man who interested him. 'When the book of life begins to open, then the fun begins', he would say. He used to make us realize there was nothing secular in life; it was all holy. 'Always remember, you are incidentally an American, and a woman, but always a child of God. Tell yourself day and night who you are. Never forget it.' That is what he used to tell us. His presence, you see, was dynamic. . . .

The thing that held me in Swamiji was his *unlimitedness*. I never could touch the bottom or top or sides. The amazing size of him! . . . It's the reaction on oneself that matters, really, isn't it? What one gets out of it. . . . It is the Truth I saw in Swamiji that has set me free. One's faults seem so insignificant, why remember them when one has the ocean of Truth to be our playground? . . .

I feel that Swamiji is a Rock for us to stand *upon*. That was his function in my life, not worship, nor glory, but a steadiness under one's feet for experiments.

JOSEPHINE MACLEOD



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

BY DR. R. C. MAJUMDAR

[Dr. R. C. Majumdar, M.A., Ph.D., formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Dacca University, is a noted historian. In this article, reproduced from an earlier issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, he says that the speciality of Swami Vivekananda lies in the fact that he brought his spiritual ideas 'to bear upon the common problems of life, and viewed them as parts of a great whole'.]

Men have a natural tendency to fix a label on all great men. Almost by instinct, we come to regard them as a spiritual leader, patriot, hero, poet, scientist, artist, etc. But one feels some difficulty in putting such a label against the name of Swami Vivekananda. A great spiritual leader and religious teacher he undoubtedly was, but somehow one feels that that does not seem to describe him correctly or fittingly. Most of us had not the privilege or good fortune to come into personal contact with him, and form our ideas about him only from his writings. As we go through his speeches, letters, and books, they conjure up before our vision different figures at different times. Sometimes we find before us a great religious teacher imbued with the highest spiritual force; sometimes, a great Indian patriot or social reformer, burning with a fervent desire to free the country from political bondage and shackles of superstition which are sapping the strength and the vitality of the nation; and sometimes he towers high as a superman above the narrow limitations of countries and peoples, a prophet of the brotherhood of man and international love and goodwill, the lack of which is, for the present, the greatest blight upon human civilization. Each of these visions, to which others may be added, is equally deep and impressive, and gains hold of us and crowds out others according to our own mood and the need of the moment and the particular message of the Swami which, for the time being, engages our attention.

India has produced numerous saints and religious teachers, but it would be difficult to detect in their messages an appreciation of the present-day problems of life and a heart

bleeding for the suffering millions of India such as we find throughout the writings and speeches of the Swami. Sometimes, he even goes to the length of subordinating religion to other interests of life. Take for example the following: 'At the present time there are men who give up the world to help their own salvation. Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others. . . . Give up this little life of yours. What matters if you die of starvation, you and I and thousands like us, so long as this nation lives? The nation is sinking, the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads . . . here is the greatest of all works, here are the sinking millions . . . first bread and then religion. We stuff them too much with religion, when the poor fellows have been starving.'

Like the most advanced political thinkers, he had no illusion of the past, but dreamt of a glorious future for his motherland.

'You, the upper classes of India . . . you are but mummies ten thousand years old . . . you merge yourselves in the void and disappear and let New India arise in your place. Let her arise—out of the peasant's cottage, out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper.'

Such passages, reflecting what we may call the most advanced views on the secular problems of life, may be quoted in any number.

This diversity in the personality of the Swami, at first, appears to be somewhat puzzling. But with the advance of years and a closer study of his teachings, one slowly realizes that this apparent plurality is the real key to the proper understanding of his personality. It becomes increasingly clear that

the great lesson which the Swami's teaching holds out before us is the indivisibility of a human being, in spite of the multiple manifestations of his emotion and intellect, and the consequent unity of the problem which faces society; for society is, after all, a mere aggregate of individuals and, therefore, partakes of their essential character. Let us examine this a little more closely.

Ordinarily, we are apt to look upon a human being as composed of so many watertight compartments, each unregulated by and independent of the other. Thus we conceive of him as religious, educated, wealthy, social, artistic, and so on; and we talk and behave as if these different aspects of men are not interdependent, but separate entities. Similarly, we look upon a society or community from different angles and consider separately its political, social, economic, or religious condition. The practical consequence of this process of thought is that our attempts at improvement or reform proceed upon compartmental basis and only one or another aspect, either of individual or of society, receives our attention at one and the same time. The same process of thought leads us to devote our attention exclusively to one section of humanity—mostly to the community or society to which we ourselves belong—and the rest does not appear to be of primary concern to us.

The whole life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda seem to be a crusade against this narrow conception of man and society. To him each individual human being is not a mere bundle of different intellectual and emotional attributes, but an organic entity whose diverse component elements are bound up together by one indivisible force. This constitutes the main spring which guides his life and actions, and so long as this is not brought under control, all attempts at reform are bound to prove futile. Religion, edaca-

tion, wealth, or social influence would not vitally change his outlook or character so long as this unifying vital force in him is not properly regulated. 'I do not believe in reform,' said he, 'I believe in growth.' That one sentence contains the gist of the teachings of the Swami. Individual as well as society must grow on proper lines. A plant will grow on a healthy soil, and spread its foliage and blossom into flowers under natural laws of growth; but you cannot add branches and flowers to the dead or diseased trunk of a tree.

The force that would renovate individual and society and make them grow must come from within. As Swami Vivekananda pointed out again and again, the root cause of all our evils and failure is the lack of faith and physical strength. 'Our young men must be strong first of all. Religion will come afterwards', said he. Again: 'You will understand the *Gītā* better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger.' With strength must grow faith—faith in our purity and ability to do great things and become great. This faith and strength must come from the Upaniṣads or Vedānta, the rich heritage of our ancient philosophy, which formed the basis of all religions that flourished in India. It is derived from the idea of the Ātman or the soul whom the sword cannot cut and the fire cannot burn. Each of us must believe that 'I am the soul' and that would give him strength and faith. The Swami brought this noble teaching of the Vedānta to bear upon everyday life. The Upaniṣadic teachings are not merely for a *sannyāsin*, but for every occupation of life.

'These conceptions of the Vedānta must come, must remain not only in the forest, they must not only go into the cave, but they must come to work out in the bar and the bench, in the pulpit, the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish and students that are studying.'



# NARENDRA ACCEPTS THE MOTHER

BY MR. CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

[ Mr. Christopher Isherwood is one of the first rank writers of America today and has a large number of well-known books to his credit. The following is the part of a chapter of the book on the life of Sri Ramakrishna, which Mr. Isherwood is, at present, engaged in writing. We are indebted to the editors of *Vedanta and the West*, the bimonthly organ of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, for their permission to reprint the following passage. It will be of interest to the readers to know that the book is appearing serially in the above journal.]

Early in 1884, Naren's (Vivekananda's) father Vishwanath died of a heart attack; he had been ailing for some time. When Vishwanath died, Naren was away from home at the house of some friends, and one of them had to break the news to him. Naren returned home at once and performed the customary rites. When the time came to look into Vishwanath's financial affairs, it was found that he had been spending more than he earned and had left nothing but debts. Some relatives even tried to get a share in the family home by means of a lawsuit. They lost the suit, but Naren was still faced by his duty, as the oldest male member of the family, to support his mother and brothers. He had never known poverty or adversity of any kind before.

'Even before the prescribed period of mourning was over,' he used to relate, 'I was running hither and thither in search of a job. Dizzy from lack of food, I had to go from office to office barefoot in the blazing sun, carrying my application papers. Everywhere I met with a refusal. From that first experience, I learned that unselfish sympathy is very rare in this world; there is no place here for the poor and the weak. Even those who, only a few weeks previously, would have regarded it as a piece of luck if they could do me a favour, now made wry reluctant faces, though they could easily have helped me if they had wished. One day, during that time, when I was walking around in the sun, the soles of my feet became blistered. I was completely exhausted and had to sit down in the shade of the

Ochterloney Monument on the Maidan. A friend who happened to be with me wanted to console me; so he sang:

Here blows the wind, the breath of

Brahman—

It is his grace we feel—

But when I heard that song, I felt as if he was beating me violently on the head. Thinking of the helplessness of my mother and my brothers, I was filled with resentment and despair. "Be quiet!" I told him. "That fanciful nonsense is all right for people living in the lap of luxury—people who have no idea what hunger is—people whose nearest and dearest aren't going in rags and starving. No doubt, it sounds true and beautiful to them—as it did to me, in the old days. But now I've seen what life is really like. That song is just a pack of lies."

'I dare say my friend was terribly hurt by my words. How could he understand the grinding poverty which had made me utter them? Some mornings, when I got up, I would find that there wasn't enough food for all of us, so I'd tell Mother, "a friend has invited me to lunch". On such days, I had nothing to eat, for I had no money in my pocket. I was too proud to say anything about this to anyone outside our family. Sometimes, rich men would invite me into their houses to sing and play at their parties, and I went, just as I had always done. Most of them never concerned themselves about how I was getting along. A very few used to ask, "why do you look so pale and sad today?" But only one of them ever

found out—and that wasn't through me—how things really were. He used to send money to my mother from time to time, anonymously. I am under an eternal debt to him.'

Despite what he had said to his friend on the Maidan, Naren still kept trying to reassure himself that God is good. He used to repeat the Lord's name as he got out of bed in the morning. One day his mother overheard him and said bitterly: 'What's the use of that? You've been repeating the name of the Lord since childhood, and what has He done for you?' Naren had always known his mother as the most pious of devotees. That despair could move her to speak like this shocked him deeply; and now he began seriously to doubt. How could God exist, he asked himself, if the most piteous prayers remained unanswered? How could He be benign, when His creation was so full of evil?

'It was against my nature', Naren's narrative continues, 'to do anything and conceal it from others. Even as a child, I had never been able to conceal my least thought or action, either from fear or any other motive. So it wasn't surprising that I now began to tell people aggressively that God did not exist; and that, even if He did exist, it was no use calling on Him, because it produced no results. Of course, the rumour soon spread around that I had become an atheist, and furthermore, that I was mixing with people of bad character and visiting houses of ill repute. Those lies only made me all the more aggressive. I now began telling everyone, even those who didn't ask my opinion, that I had no objection to anybody's drinking wine or going to a brothel if only this would help him to forget his hard lot in this world of pain. And I added that I would do these things myself, without the least regard for public opinion, if I could ever be convinced that they would make me happy, even for a single moment.'

(Naren was being unfair to himself in saying this. As a matter of fact, his determination

to preserve his sexual purity never wavered, even in the most trying days of his poverty and religious doubts. At this time, there were at least two women who offered him money to become their lover. He refused them with contempt.)

'Such news travels fast. It didn't take long for these words of mine, in a completely distorted version, to reach the ears of the Master, not to mention those of his devotees in Calcutta. Some of them came to visit me, to find out the truth, and they made it obvious that they believed at least part of what they had heard, if not all. I was bitterly wounded to realize that they could think so little of me. I told them that it was cowardice to believe in God merely from fear of hell. Quoting Hume, Mill, Bain, Comte, and other Western philosophers, I argued fiercely that there is no evidence of the existence of God. And so they went away, more than ever convinced, as I afterwards learned, of my downfall. In my defiant mood, this actually made me happy. Then the thought came to me that perhaps the Master now believed the same thing. As soon as I thought that, I felt terrible pain. But then I said to myself: "Let him believe it, then. If he does, I can't help it. People's good or bad opinions are worth nothing, anyhow." Later, I discovered that the Master *had* heard all of these lies about me. At first, he had made no comment. Then, when Bhavanath wept and said, "Sir, we never dreamed Naren would sink so low!" he had cried out excitedly: "Silence, you scoundrels! Mother has told me that he could never do such things. If you talk about this any more, I won't have you in the room!"

'But what was this atheism of mine? Nothing but egotism and pride. The experiences I had had from childhood and, most of all, since meeting the Master, rose vividly into my mind in the brightest colours and I said to myself: "God certainly does exist—otherwise, what is life for, what is it worth?"



The path to God has to be found, no matter how great the struggle."

'Summer had passed and the rainy season had begun. I went on looking for work, as before. One night, when I was drenched with rain and hadn't eaten all day, I was returning home with tired legs and a mind even more tired than my body. At length I was so exhausted that I couldn't go one single step further. I lay down like a log on the open veranda of a neighbouring house. Perhaps my external consciousness left me for a while. All kinds of thoughts and pictures went through my mind and I had no power to ignore any of them or concentrate upon certain ones. Then, suddenly, I felt as if screen after screen had been raised in my mind by the power of Providence, and now all the problems which had been tormenting me—where is the harmony between God's justice and his mercy, why does evil exist within a benign creation—all were solved. I was beside myself with joy. Afterwards, when I continued my walk home, I found that there wasn't one iota of fatigue in my body and that my mind was filled with infinite peace and strength. The day was just breaking.

'I now became absolutely indifferent to the praise or blame of the world. I was firmly convinced that I wasn't born to earn money, support a family, or seek worldly enjoyments. Secretly, I was preparing to renounce the world, as my grandfather had done. The day arrived on which I had decided to start life as a wandering monk—and then I heard that, on that very day, the Master was coming to the house of a devotee in Calcutta. I thought this was very fortunate: I should see my Guru before I left home forever. But, as soon as I met the Master, he told me imperiously: "You must come with me to Dakshineswar today." I offered various excuses, but he wouldn't take No for an answer. I had to drive back with him. In the carriage, we didn't speak much. When we got to Dakshineswar, I sat in his room for some time. Others were present. Then the

Master went into a state of ecstasy. He came over to me suddenly, took my hand in his, and sang, with tears pouring down his face:

I am afraid to speak,  
I am afraid not to speak,  
For the fear rises in my mind  
That I shall lose you—

All this time, I had fought back the strong emotion I was feeling; now I couldn't do so any longer, and my tears poured down like his. I felt sure that the Master knew all about my plans. The others were astonished to see us behave in this way. After the Master had returned to normal consciousness, one of them asked him what was the matter. He smiled and answered: "It's just something between the two of us." That night he sent the others away and called me to him and said: "I know you have come to the world to do Mother's work; you can never lead a worldly life. But, for my sake, stay with your family as long as I'm alive."

So Naren promised to do this. And now he set himself to find employment with renewed energy. He got a post in an attorney's office. He translated some books. But these were temporary jobs; they brought no real security to his mother and brothers. So now Naren decided to ask Ramakrishna to pray on his behalf that the family's money-troubles might be overcome. Ramakrishna answered that it was for Naren himself to pray. He must forget his earlier scruples, accept the existence of the Divine Mother, and pray to her for help. 'Today is Tuesday,' Ramakrishna added, 'a day specially sacred to Mother. Go to the temple tonight and pray. Mother will grant you whatever you ask for. I promise you that.'

Naren was now almost free of the prejudices he had acquired from the Brahma Samaj. Experience had taught him to have faith in Ramakrishna's words, and he was eager to do as he had been told. He waited impatiently for the night. At nine o'clock, Ramakrishna sent him to the temple. As

Naren was on his way there, a kind of drunkenness possessed him; he was reeling. And when he entered the temple, he saw at once that the Divine Mother was actually alive. Naren was overwhelmed and prostrated himself again and again before her shrine, exclaiming, 'Mother—grant me discrimination, grant me detachment, grant me divine knowledge and devotion, grant me that I may see you without obstruction, always!' His heart was filled with peace. The universe completely disappeared from his consciousness and Mother alone remained.

When Naren came back from the temple, Ramakrishna asked him if he had prayed for the relief of his family's wants. Naren was taken aback; he had forgotten to do so. Ramakrishna told him to return quickly and make the prayer. Naren obeyed, but again he became drunk with bliss, forgot his intention, and prayed only for detachment, devotion, and knowledge as before. 'Silly boy!' said Ramakrishna, when he returned and confessed this, 'couldn't you control yourself a little, and remember that prayer? Go back again and tell Mother what you want—be quick!' This time, Naren's experience was different. He did not forget the prayer. But when he came for the third time before the shrine, he felt a sense of deep shame; what he had been about to ask seemed miserably trivial and unworthy. 'It was', he said later, 'like being graciously received by a king and then asking him for gourds and pumpkins.' So, once more, he asked only for detachment, devotion, and knowledge. However, as he came out of the temple, he felt suddenly convinced that all this was a trick Ramakrishna

had played on him. 'It was certainly you', he told Ramakrishna, 'who made me intoxicated. Now you must at least say a prayer for me that my mother and brothers will never lack food and clothing.' 'My child,' Ramakrishna told him affectionately, 'you know I could never offer a prayer like that for anyone; the words wouldn't come out of my mouth. I told you that you'd get whatever you asked Mother for; but you couldn't ask that, either. It is not in you to ask for worldly benefits. What am I to do about it?' But Naren answered firmly: 'You must say the prayer, for my sake. I'm certain they'll be freed from want if only you'll say they will.' At length, Ramakrishna yielded to Naren's urging and said: 'All right—they will never lack plain food and clothing.' And this statement was proved true.

This acceptance by Naren of the worship of God with form was, of course, a most important event in his life. During his later years, he was accustomed to say: 'Ramakrishna was a *jñānin* (a man of intellectual discrimination) within and a *bhakta* (a man of devotion) without; but I am a *bhakta* within and a *jñānin* without.' In general, Naren's teaching as Vivekananda laid emphasis on discrimination rather than on devotion. He once wrote to an American lady, in that serio-comic style which was so characteristic of his mature personality, 'Kālī worship is my especial *fad*'. But he was experienced enough to know that the concept of Mother Kālī is one which the majority of potential devotees in the West will always find hard to accept; and he seldom mentioned her in his American and British lectures.



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MAGNA CARTA OF PEACE TO HUMANITY

BY SWAMI TEJASANANDA

[Swami Tejasananda, a former Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, is now the Principal of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math. In this thought-provoking article, he shows how, in the message of Swami Vivekananda, lie the ingredients for ushering in a new era of lasting peace and goodwill in this war-torn world of ours.]

## I. RELIGION—THE BACKBONE OF THE INDIAN RACE

Today, in the midst of the full blaze of our political independence, we recall with pride and reverence the hallowed memory of Swami Vivekananda who occupies a unique place in the great hierarchy of the illustrious patriots of modern India. At the clarion call of this heroic monk, the soul of India was stirred to its inmost depth, and the thought forces of the race compressed themselves, as it were, into the single organic life of that noble personality who set himself to the Herculean task of rebuilding the nation on the basis of a synthetic ideal, bearing in it the living strands of the cultural forces of the East and the West.

The importance of the manifold contributions of this patriot-saint of modern India can hardly be overestimated. India, after centuries of political servitude and economic exploitation at the hands of the alien powers, has once again leaped up into full flame of life and wrested from the hands of destiny her long lost freedom, thereby testifying 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,' said Swami Vivekananda, 'I find among nations one great ideal, which forms the backbone, so to speak, of that race. With some, it is politics, with the other, 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 de'tre* is because it still holds on to the Supersensuous. Romain Rolland, the illustrious litterateur of the West, strikes the very same note in the celebrated work entitled *The Life of Sri 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 people 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 problem 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 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.





Nazareth who first healed the wound which Peter's sword had inflicted, and then voluntarily delivered his own person up to suffer the last extremes of insult and torment. 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 Professor Toynbee, the author of the *A 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 the 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, degenerate, and crumble to pieces. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upaniṣads.' 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 footprints 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.

### III. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

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 the mankind must learn from the immortal teachings of Vedānta—the treasure-house of the accumulated wisdom and experiences of the ancient seers of India. They have visualized that there is one persistent Reality—and 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 Brāhman 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 the 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 Vedānta. 'The modern researches of the West', says Swami Vivekananda, 'have demonstrated through physical means the oneness and solidarity of the whole universe: how physically speaking, you and I, the sun, moon, and stars, are but little wavelets in the ocean of matter, the *samastī* and how, going one step further, it is also shown in the Vedānta 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.' The 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 literatures 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 Carta of peace which the 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.'

#### IV. NEED OF SPIRITUAL AMBASSADORS

It is a tragic phenomenon that there is a sinister attempt on the part of some war-mongers to drown the voice of the *ṛsis* 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. S. 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—now the President of the Republic of India.

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 Swami Vivekananda, 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 Vedānta 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 peace-makers of the world and 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 of the Book of God, 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 Vedānta. 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 Vedānta 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, still shall 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.'

#### V. RESPONSE TO THE CALL

Today, we hear even from the lips of the eminent statesmen of India this very same message of peace which has travelled down the centuries from time immemorial in this home of spirituality. It has come to us today in the shape of the five principles of co-existence—the Panchasila formulated by our beloved leader Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, which is gaining ground from day to day even when there is an ominous threat of destruction of mankind through atomic warfare. The saner section of humanity is listening today with great relief to this immortal voice of India which has an irresistible appeal of its own.

Madeleine R. Harding once rightly said: 'The thinkers of India have a deep-rooted conviction that India is a spiritual storehouse of the world, and it is an oft-repeated saying that India has a message definitely of her own to give to the world. This view is not held by Indians only, but also by Western students who have opened their minds to receive truth wherever found.'

It augurs well that great geniuses, shining on the intellectual horizon of the West have 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, Mr. 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'.

#### VI. AN ERA OF PEACE IN SIGHT

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.

Sometime back, Mr. Floyd H. Ross, Professor of World Religions in the University of South California in U.S.A., wrote in his thoughtful article on 'Vedānta and the West':

'One of the most vital contemporary religious and educational movements in India today is the Ramakrishna Movement. Under the leadership of men trained in the spirit of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, the Ramakrishna Centres are living examples of how the timeless truths of the past have value when they are continuously relived and re-interpreted in the present.' 'The Ramakrishna Centres in the West', he further said, 'are playing their own part quietly in helping to prepare the way for the united pilgrimage of mankind toward self-understanding and peace.' The learned Professor rightly concludes: 'The oneness of mankind is something which modern man everywhere needs to learn if he is to move creatively into one world where the richness of diversity does not mean an anarchy of foolish competition; but each person needs to find the meaning of that oneness in his own self-hood, before he can go far in helping to build one world.'

'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.





# A RADIANT GLANCE OF ŚIVA'

BY SRI M. P. PANDIT

[Sri M. P. Pandit is a deep scholar and is in charge of the publications of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. In this short but beautiful article, he tells about the 'contacts' that Sri Aurobindo had with Swami Vivekananda, even though the latter had then left his mortal frame.]

Not many are aware of the part played by Swami Vivekananda in the life and work of Sri Aurobindo. In fact, none at all knew of it till Sri Aurobindo himself revealed this part and its significance in a biographical note written during later years and in his talks with the disciples. Sri Aurobindo, it will be recalled, had no human *guru* as such, though he received important help from different sources on different occasions. And one of these was the unexpected guidance and direction received from Vivekananda under interesting circumstances, long after he left his body in 1902.

When Sri Aurobindo returned to India at the age of 21, after a stay of fourteen years in England, and took to study Indian culture and life, he came—like most educated people of the time—under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda through their sayings and writings.<sup>1</sup> And though the Advaita Vedānta expounded and popularized by them was not relevant to the turn of Sri Aurobindo's mind, he beheld and recognized the mighty spiritual afflatus embodied in the Master.

'What was Ramakrishna?' he asks, and answers: 'God manifest in a human being.'<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of their great role in the renaissance of India, he writes: 'It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and "mystic", without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him, that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake, not only to survive but to conquer' (*The Ideal of Karmayogin*).

<sup>2</sup> *Thoughts and Aphorisms*.

He was an *avatāra*, 'as much an *avatāra* as Christ or Caitanya'<sup>3</sup> who had a definite purpose to fulfil in the spiritual evolution of humanity, viz. to found and establish the Truth of the unity of all spiritual experience and realization. He was bound by no man-made rules, though he chose to manifest his divinity under human conditions. Says Sri Aurobindo: 'Ramakrishna, having attained by his own internal effort the central illumination, accepted several teachers in the different paths of Yoga, but always showed in the manner and swiftness of his realization that this acceptance was a concession to the general rule by which effective knowledge must be received as by a disciple from a *guru*.'<sup>4</sup>

Giving a considered estimate, Sri Aurobindo observes: 'In the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity first driving straight to the divine realization, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence and then seizing upon one yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realization and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge.'<sup>5</sup>

And, 'What was Vivekananda? A radiant glance from the eye of Śiva.'<sup>6</sup> We do not pause to dwell on the full import of this cryptic statement. It will need an exposition quite beyond the scope of this paper.

---

<sup>3</sup> *On Yoga (II)*.

<sup>4</sup> *On Yoga (I)*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Thoughts and Aphorisms*.

'Vivekananda was a soul of puissance, if ever there was one, a very lion among men. ... We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India, and we say, "Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children".'<sup>7</sup> Sri Aurobindo mentions of his *contact* with Vivekananda on two occasions. Note that there was no meeting between them at all during the life-time of Vivekananda. The first occasion was when Sri Aurobindo was practising *prāṇāyāma*, which started in 1904 and continued for some time. He says: 'I had ... direct experience of Vivekananda's presence when I was practising *hatha-yoga*. I felt his presence standing behind and watching over me. That exerted a great influence afterwards in my life.'<sup>8</sup>

The second was when Sri Aurobindo had been detained in the Alipore Jail (1908-1909). By that time, Sri Aurobindo had already attained the realization of the Silent, Spaceless, and Timeless Brahman—the state of *nirvāṇa*. Now, let him speak: 'From the beginning, I didn't feel *nirvāṇa* to be the highest spiritual achievement. Something in me always wanted to go on farther. But, even then, I didn't ask for this new experience. In fact, in *nirvāṇa*, with that peace, one does not ask for anything. But the truth of the Supermind<sup>9</sup> was put into me. I had no idea of the

Supermind when I started, and for long it was not clear to me.

'It was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the Supermind. This clue led me to see how the Truth-consciousness works in everything. ... He didn't say "Supermind". "Supermind" is my own word. He just said to me, "This is this, this is that" and so on. That was how he proceeded—by pointing and indicating. He visited me for fifteen days in Alipore jail and, until I could grasp the whole thing, he went on teaching me and impressed upon my mind the working of the Higher Consciousness—the Truth-Consciousness in general—which leads towards the Supermind. He would not leave me until he had put it all into my head.' 'I never expected him and yet he came to teach me. And he was very exact and precise even in the minutest details.'<sup>10</sup>

A host of questions arise. How is it that Vivekananda never spoke of these ranges of Consciousness leading to the Gnosis, during his life-time? Did he not withdraw into *nirvāṇa* or the one Self, after he 'spat out the body'? Did he, and does he, still continue to be in the earth-atmosphere for the benefit of humanity struggling towards Godhead? These are all pertinent questions, but they touch upon the occult side of manifestation which would require a separate treatment. We can only say there is more in creation than meets the human ken.

<sup>7</sup> *Bankim-Tilak-Dayananda*.

<sup>8</sup> *Mother India*, June 1962: 'Talks with Sri Aurobindo', by Nirodbaran.

<sup>9</sup> The 'Supermind' is the Principle of Truth-Consciousness in creation—the Rta-Cit of the Veda, the Vijnāna of the Upaniṣad, which holds the key for the

plenary emergence of the Divine in the manifestation. It forms the corner-stone in the arch of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of the Life Divine and his means to translate it into action, the 'Integral Yoga'.

<sup>10</sup> *Mother India*, July 1962: 'Talks with Sri Aurobindo', by Nirodbaran.



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE EMANCIPATION OF RELIGION

BY SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

[Swami Shraddhananda of The Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, U.S.A., in this article, says that, though many dark evils have been perpetrated in human society in the name of religion, true religion is really a source of light, strength, hope, and peace to mankind. And it was Swami Vivekananda's genius which presented religion to the modern world as a positive power of goodness and defined it as a liberating force.]

Swami Vivekananda's greatness as a religious preacher consisted as much in freely, but constructively, criticizing religion as in eloquently delineating its merits. He never refused to admit that, through the ages, dark evils have been perpetrated in human society in the name of religion. True, religion has been a source of light, strength, hope, and peace to mankind, but it is also an undeniable fact that, because of religion, millions of men and women have had to pass through unspeakable horrors, humiliation, and sufferings. How the same force can manifest these contradictory elements is, surely, an enigma. But in Swami Vivekananda's exposition of religion, we do find a solution of this riddle.

This great *sannyāsin*, whose dominating interest of life was man, liked to define religion as a liberating force for man in the highest sense of the term. Man, essentially, is a free spirit, and anything obstructing this freedom is sure to be challenged by him. Man's progress in civilization is only the story of his fight against, and victory over, various influences that served to limit his freedom. Science, art, literature, travel, technology, philosophy, and so on, are each a signpost of man's conquest of conditions in which his bodily powers, thoughts, hopes, and emotions worked within pitifully inadequate boundaries. Religion, too, is no exception. Its essential characteristic is an urge for freedom. While this is true also of other human attainments, the liberation sought by religion is more comprehensive than that which can be effected by other endeavours like science, art, and so on, because the impeding force in this case is colossal—*māyā*, *avidyā*, original sin,

and so on. The goal of religion is the achievement of complete emancipation for man, the return to that absolute independence of spirit which is man's birthright. Lesser disciplines are satisfied with lesser freedoms. Religion should have no quarrel with these disciplines because, from the point of view of this analysis, they, too, aspire to liberate man from bondage. They, however, stop halfway; religion has to go to the farthest goal.

Yet this great liberating force which is religion, sometimes through the irony of circumstances, becomes an agency of narrowness, hatred, and dissension. Like the sun hidden by clouds, it ceases to shed its light and warmth upon people who need them. Religion no longer possesses, then, the power to bring to its follower that great freedom which is also supreme knowledge and love. Religion, then, becomes itself enfeathered by man's foolishness and bigotry. In that state of enchainment, religion, probably, deserves to be castigated by many of the strong words of censure that are hurled against it by impatient pundits from time to time.

The emancipation of religion is, therefore, according to Swami Vivekananda, more important than a blind enthusiasm for religion. The world has rather too much of religion—enfettered religion—heaps of man-made sanctions and prohibitions, dogmas, obsessions, slogans, bigoted assertions. It would have been better for us if some of this stuff could be thrown away. On the other hand, the world is in dire need of emancipated religion—deep as the ocean, vast as the sky,



patient as the earth, sublime as the mountain, and shining as the light of the sun.

Let us not think that the bondage of religion results from primitive superstitions, idolatry, mythological beliefs, and incomprehensible rituals. Vivekananda would have been the last person to condemn these, even though they are not the highest expressions of the religious urge. According to him, they are necessary steps in the evolution of religion, and can be, even to this day, of great help to many earnest religious seekers. We have no right to criticize them. We should rather be grateful to them, for through centuries they have offered to thousands an easy way of comprehending supersensuous truths.

The real danger to the cause of religion has been brought about not by atheists, animists, or idolators, but by enlightened persons who claim to be faithful. Their faith, however, is less in God than in their own concepts of God. They contradict themselves by calling God great and compassionate and, at the same time, asking Him to curse and destroy those who do not conform to their dogmas. Their piety consists in the regimentation of certain formalities of worship. Their worship is superficial and vociferous, rarely leading to inwardness of mind and tranquillity. Their love is anchored in hate and the method of their unity is to enforce one creed on all by advertisement, allurements, threat, and even by fraud if necessary. The kingdom which they seek to establish on earth is not of God but of self-seeking, self-aggrandizing potentates, brandishing swords of authority and pomp. The mad man in Nietzsche's *The Joyful Wisdom* was probably right when he said: 'I seek God. ... Where is God gone? I mean to tell you! We have killed him—you and I.'

How can deliverance be brought to religion? The effective measures suggested by Swami Vivekananda can be briefly summarized here. First, we have to place religion on a broad foundation. The highest function of religion is not to offer reward for faith or to

forgive punishment in return for obedience, but to lead man to that infinite freedom which is God. God is not limited by time or space or the law of causation. He is changeless, eternal. 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God' (*Bible*, Psalm 90). The Upaniṣads declare: '*Satyam jñānam anantam Brahma*'—God is truth and knowledge infinite. In our common language, we say God is great. But what are the implications of God's greatness? This greatness must not be hampered by any kind of limitation. Yet how foolishly we tend to put restrictions on God! We assert that God cannot be this, He cannot be that. We love to think of God as the God of Israel, God of the Christians, God of the Hindus, and so on. We invoke the wrath of God on those who do not worship Him in a particular way. We declare that God can incarnate on earth only once, and His saving message is exhausted by a single sacred book. Let us mind the words of Vivekananda: 'Is God's Book finished? Or is revelation still going on? It is a marvellous Book—these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I shall leave my heart open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutation to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!' (*Jñāna-yoga: The Way to the Realization of the Universal Religion*).

Religion should lead us to a God who is really great—'*bhūmā*' in the language of the Upaniṣads. No human concept can claim to have represented God completely; no word is adequate to describe Him fully. God's majesty surpasses everything we can know or



imagine. He is the 'neti, neti' (not this, not this) of the Upaniṣads. Yet God is manifesting Himself through millions of forms and ideas in endless creative movements. Not a single 'point-event' in the universe can be dissociated from God. God is all. Anything that is in God. When such a God becomes the central pivot of religion, religion is bound to be broad. It cannot be dogmatic any more. It respects all creeds, all scriptures, all forms of worship. Says Vivekananda: 'All narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion have to go. All sectarian ideas and tribal or national ideas of religion must be given up. That each tribe or nation should have its own particular God and think that every other is wrong, is a superstition that should belong to the past. . . . All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors must be kept open for future additions to the already existing store. . . . The idea of the Personal God, the Impersonal, the Infinite, the Moral Law, the Ideal Man—these all have to come under the definition of religion. And when religions have become thus broadened, their power for good will have increased a hundredfold' (*Jñāna-yoga: The Necessity of Religion*).

We are sometimes led to think that religious broadness means adherence to some fundamental metaphysical principles which are more or less common in most religions, and rejection of those elements where there are points of discord. In our zeal for inter-religious amity we are prepared to shear religion of rituals, mythological beliefs, and many age-old practices which seem to us superstitious. Swami Vivekananda had some words of caution against such a brand of broadness:

'You cannot make all conform to the same ideas; that is a fact, and I thank God that it is so. I am not against any sect. I am glad that sects exist, and I only wish they may go on multiplying more and more. . . . If we all thought alike, we should be like Egyptian mummies in a museum, looking vacantly at

one another's faces—no more than that. . . . When religions are dead, there will be no more sects; it will be the perfect peace and harmony of the grave. But so long as mankind thinks, there will be sects. Variation is the sign of life, and it must be there. . . .

'My idea, therefore, is that all these religions are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind, and that not one can become dead, not one can be killed' (*Jñāna-yoga: The Way to the Realization of the Universal Religion*).

'Through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the grossest, through the most refined ritualism or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion, consciously or unconsciously, is struggling upward toward God; every vision of Truth that man has is a vision of Him and of none else' (*Jñāna-yoga: The Ideal of a Universal Religion*).

'In the first place I would ask mankind to recognize this maxim: "Do not destroy." Iconoclastic reformers do no good to the world. Break not, pull not anything down; but build. Help, if you can; if you cannot, fold your hands and stand by and see things go on. . . . Secondly, take a man where he stands, and from there give him a lift' (*ibid.*).

The second factor which Swami Vivekananda thought important toward redeeming religion was to know that religion had to be lived rather than talked about. Religious enthusiasm, unfortunately, is often directed to extensive scholastic studies, theological discussions, vain argumentation or rituals mechanically participated in. We fail to realize that religion is a tangible experience of spirit. It has to be gained from day to day, and for this, tremendous self-effort, earnestness, and sacrifice are necessary. The old man, enslaved by hundreds of passions and prejudices, must die. A new man with a transparent heart has to be born. The great transforming power of religion becomes mani-

fest only when one seriously takes it as a matter of daily practice.

'Show by your lives that religion does not mean words or names or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light' (Swami Vivekananda: *My Master*).

A candidly religious man is he who actually feels the presence of God within his heart at all times. Spiritual reality for him is no longer a matter for conjecture. His whole life is through and through permeated by that reality. As a consequence, he develops in his personality a wonderful love, knowledge, harmony, and peace. To him, the whole world appears to be radiating light and sweetness. No meanness, strife, selfishness, and hatred can abide in his heart. This is, indeed, the truest freedom, promised by religion. Its other name is perfection.

Swami Vivekananda would passionately talk about what he called a scientific outlook on religion. Religion aspires after a goal which is a positive attainment here and now. Man's true nature as free spirit, and God as infinite existence, consciousness, and love, are not myths or poetical fancies, but objects of effective search. Each science is an exploration of some mystery of nature. Reli-

gion is the quest for supreme Truth, the endeavour to solve the ultimate mystery of life. Religion can, and must, be tackled scientifically. Its methods should be brought on a par with those of science. Observation, experimentation, and verification should be its key-note, as with any other science.

As a science, religion is vitally linked with the well-being of man. It is unfair to say that religion is other-worldliness, escapism, or wish-fulfilment. If we can develop a positive attitude to religion, we shall find that it is a most interesting study. We shall then be able to discover the rationale of many beliefs and practices which apparently seem to be meaningless.

Let us conclude by quoting two passages from Swami Vivekananda with regard to the possibilities of emancipated religion:

'Truth is nobody's property; no race, no individual, can lay exclusive claim to it. Truth is the nature of all souls. But it has to be made practical, to be made simple, so that it may penetrate every pore of human society and become the property of the highest intellects and the commonest minds, of man, woman, and child at the same time' (*Jñāna-yoga*: Practical Vedanta IV).

'No longer will religion remain a bundle of ideas and theories or an intellectual assent; it will enter into our very self' (*Jñāna-yoga*: The Ideal of a Universal Religion).

---

My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.

This world is in chains of superstition. I pity the oppressed, whether man or woman, and I pity more the oppressors. . . .

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt. . . .

Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call. What more is in life? What greater work?

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



# ANTICIPATIONS OF NEO-VEDĀNTISM IN RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA

BY DR. S. C. CHATTERJEE

[Dr. S. C. Chatterjee, M.A., Ph.D., was formerly the Head of the Department of Philosophy of the Calcutta University. In this learned article, he shows how the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna contain the germs of a new Vedānta which is a synthesis and reconciliation of the conflicting traditional schools of Vedānta. Swami Vivekananda has developed this Neo-Vedānta, though more remains to be done in this direction, which work, he hopes, devoted scholars would take up.]

Three stages in the development of the Vedānta are generally distinguished by Indian scholars and writers on the subject. The word 'Vedānta' literally means 'the end of the Vedas', and it primarily stood for the Upaniṣads which form the concluding parts of the Vedas. But, subsequently, it has come to mean the whole range of philosophical thoughts which developed out of the Upaniṣads. In the light of this, three stages are generally distinguished in the development of Vedāntic thought in India. First, we have the creative stage represented by the revealed texts (Śruti) or the Vedic literature, chiefly consisting of the Upaniṣads. The second stage is that of systematization represented by the Brahma-Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa, which gather, arrange, harmonize, and justify the ideas of the Upaniṣads. The third stage is that of interpretation and elaboration represented by the different commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra* and other works on them in which the ideas and arguments contained in the *sūtras* are cast into proper philosophical forms and an attempt is made to justify the different interpretations, as much by appeal to earlier authority as by independent reasoning. The result was that there appeared a number of schools of the Vedānta which hold different and conflicting views regarding Brahman, self, and the world. These different schools not only disputed with one another, but entered into unmitigated quarrel and rivalry among themselves to denounce and demolish one another. In the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, we seem to reach a

fourth stage in the development of the Vedānta, namely, the stage of synthesis and reconciliation (*samanvaya*). It is a new type of Vedānta which reconciles not only the different systems of the Vedānta, but also different systems of philosophy and religion. In this sense it may be called Neo-Vedānta or the new Vedānta. Of course, Sri Ramakrishna only laid the basis and foundation for it, and it was left to Swami Vivekananda to build the superstructure of Neo-Vedānta on it. The object of this paper is just to bring to light some of the anticipations of Neo-Vedāntism in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings.

But before that, we should explain briefly the important points at issue among the main schools of the Vedānta. Of the many schools of the Vedānta, the Advaita of Śaṅkara is the most widely known in India and abroad. Next in point of popularity come the Viśiṣṭādvaita of Rāmānuja and the Dvaita of Madhvācārya. These are the main schools of the Vedānta. There are also other schools such as the Dvaitādvaita of Nimbārka, the Bhedābheda of Bhāskara and Caitanya, the Śuddhādvaita of Vallabha, and so on. But these are, more or less, a modification or combination of the first three mentioned here. So we shall confine ourselves to a brief statement of the different views which they hold with regard to Brahman and Māyā, the world and the individual self, and liberation and the path thereof.

In Śaṅkara's Advaita, Brahman is regarded as the only reality and as indeterminate and impersonal being without any quality or



character and distinction (*nirguṇa* and *nirviśeṣa*). Brahman, associated with Its power of Māyā is called Īśvara or God who is the object of our worship. The world is an illusory appearance caused by Brahman's power of Māyā. Māyā is the magical power of projecting the appearance of a world of many things and beings where there is really nothing but Brahman. Therefore, Brahman is the only reality, all other things including even Īśvara are only illusory appearances due to Brahman's Māyā. All this is Brahman and is really negated in Brahman. The self of man (*jīva*) is absolutely identical with Brahman. The liberation of the self from bondage to the body and the world is to be attained by the realization of its identity with Brahman. And this is to be achieved by means of knowledge of Brahman (*jñāna*), and not by devotion to God (*bhakti*), nor by religious works (*karma*).

As against Śaṅkara's Advaita, Rāmānuja in his Viśiṣṭādvaita holds that Brahman is a Personal Being and is possessed of innumerable auspicious qualities (*saguṇa* and *saviśeṣa*). Māyā is Brahman's wonderful but real power of creation of a real world, out of the unconscious matter which is a part of Brahman. The individual selves (*jīvas*) are also real parts of Brahman who is the whole. Being related to God as a part to the whole, the self is both different from and identical with God, since the whole is different from the part and yet is present in the part. The self is liberated from bondage to the body and the world, not by mere knowledge, nor by mere work, but by devotion and self-surrender to God and through God's grace. The liberated self becomes similar to God, but never identical with Him.

In Madhva's Dvaita, Brahman is a Personal Being, possessing to the full all kinds of good qualities. There is no Māyā as the illusion-producing power of God. God creates the world out of Prakṛti or the primal matter which is eternal and the material cause of the world. It is under God's control and

guidance that Prakṛti evolves the world of objects. Individual souls are real and eternal beings and are conscious and active subjects. So the world and selves are as real as God Himself. They are different from and dependent on God, and not identical with Him in any sense and at any time. The liberated self resembles God in respect of certain qualities, but never becomes identical with God in essence. Liberation from bondage is to be attained not by knowledge, but by devotion to and love of God, which win God's grace; and finally, it is God's grace that liberates man.

In the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, we find some fundamental philosophical thoughts, though expressed in ordinary language and through simple examples, out of which a new form of the Vedānta may be developed. Such a Vedānta can very well synthesize and reconcile Advaita, Dvaita, and Viśiṣṭādvaita. It may be called the synthetic (*samanvayī*) Vedānta or Neo-Vedānta, and it is anticipated in the following, among others, teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

First, Sri Ramakrishna teaches that Brahman and Śakti or Kālī (Māyā) are not two different realities unrelated to each other, nor are they different realities or existences inseparably related to each other as substance and quality. They are only two aspects of the same reality or two states of the same thing and, therefore, non-different (*abheda*). Just as the same water of the sea is sometimes moving and sometimes motionless, or the same serpent sometimes crawls and sometimes remains coiled up and motionless, so the same reality is called Kālī or Brahman, according as it does or does not create, maintain, and destroy the world. This implies that Brahman or the Absolute in one aspect is indeterminate and impersonal Being (*nirguṇa*) as the Advaitin holds, and in another, is determinate and personal God (*saguṇa*) as the Viśiṣṭādvaitin and Dvaitin affirm. It implies also that the Personal God is not an illusory appearance or a lower form of Brahman, the



Absolute, which is really indeterminate and qualityless, but only appears as determinate and qualified when associated with *Māyā* or covered by *avidyā* or ignorance.

Secondly, Sri Ramakrishna teaches that it is the same reality that is the nameless and formless Brahman for the *jñānin* or the man of philosophic insight, the *Ātman* or pure self for the *yogin* or the man absorbed in meditation, and Bhagavān or Personal God for the *bhakta* or the man of devotion. Just as the same water of the ocean is congealed into the form of ice by extreme cold and is dissolved into formless water by the heat of the sun, so reality takes on form and shape for the devotee, but is formless for the *jñānin* and the *yogin*. This means that the absolute Reality may be formless or it may have forms, so that the worship of the forms of God has not less value and validity than the worship of the formless Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna often used to illustrate the truth that God may be formless and yet may have forms by the story of the chameleon which wears different colours at different times, and sometimes, has no colour at all.

Thirdly, Sri Ramakrishna sometimes speaks of the six centres of the mind (*ṣaṭcalakra*) in the human body and the seven levels of consciousness connected with them. Here he teaches that, when the mind rises to the sixth level, we have the experience of the forms of God, but when it comes up to the seventh level, it is absorbed in *samādhi* and perceives no form, no object at all. It is a state of pure consciousness in which Brahman as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (Sat-Cit-Ānanda) is completely unified with Śakti or the divine power and nothing physical or mental exists. This implies that we get different revelations of reality from different levels of experience and that, at the highest level, there is a dissolution of the whole world of objects in one universal consciousness.

But then, he teaches that it is this universal consciousness that has become all this, it is Brahman that has become the twenty-four

principles from Prakṛti down to the physical elements. Just as we leave behind us all the steps of a stair in order to mount the roof of a building and, on reaching it, find that the stair is built of just the same material as the roof is made of, so we realize Brahman by following the negative path of withdrawal from the world (*neti, neti*), but on realization, find that Brahman is present everywhere in the world. So the negation of the world is followed by its affirmation in a new light in the life of the *vijñānin* or the perfectly wise saint, if not in that of the *jñānin* or the just wise man. This is Sri Ramakrishna's fine way of illustrating spiritual truths that baffle all attempts at a logical explanation.

Now, we are to say something about the living character and burning intensity of Sri Ramakrishna's realization of the truth that all this is Brahman. This will also give us a glimpse of the practical application of Vedānta in the life and conduct of Sri Ramakrishna. For him, it is Brahman as the Divine Mother that has become everything of the world. We have his own words when we say that, for him, the earth and the heaven, the sun and the moon, the temple and the garden, the jar and the pot, the bed and the bedstand, man and woman, the young and the old, birds and beasts, in a word, all are verily so many forms and manifestations of the Divine Mother, all are Brahman and beam with the effulgence of the Divine *cit* or consciousness. He would see the cat as a form of his Divine Mother and give it the offerings to Mother Kālī to eat, although that was against the conventional rules of sanctity that attaches to such things and was, therefore, reported against by the care-taker of the temple of Goddess Kālī. Sri Ramakrishna felt the presence of God even in the blades of grass, and at times, could not tread upon them and would be pained if they were trodden upon by others. The oneness of all existence was a living experience for him so much so that his body bore the marks of a slap given to a man in a boat on the river Gaṅgā, quite

at a distance from him. He realized the presence of God in the poor as much as in the rich and so taught that we are not to be *kind* to the poor, but *serve* the God that is in them or the God that they *are*, with due reverence. Such was the unique realization of Sri Ramakrishna that 'all this is Brahman' (*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*). It is not, as the Śāṅkarite would say, that there is no all, but only Brahman. For Sri Ramakrishna, all *are*, and are Brahman in different forms.

We may mention here what may be called Sri Ramakrishna's argument in support of the view that all *are* and are Brahman in different forms. Ramakrishna used to say that just as to find the total weight of a *bel*-fruit we have to put together its kernel, stones, and skin, so to know the Absolute fully and comprehensively, we have to admit its different revelations from different levels of consciousness, such as waking, dreaming, deep sleep, and *turīya* or the superconscious or transcendent. So he says: 'I admit all—Brahman, *Māyā*, *jīva* or self, and *jagat* or the world; otherwise, there will be something less than the total weight.' This implies that the absolute Reality is Brahman as qualified by, and inclusive of, the world of selves, living beings and non-living things. Here, Sri Ramakrishna metaphorically expresses an accepted principle of philosophy that reality includes all actual and possible objects of thought and experience.

Then Sri Ramakrishna teaches that just as the same person may be a father or brother or son in relation to different persons, so God in relation to the *jñānin* or man of philosophic insight, in whom the ego disappears, is non-different from the self, but in relation to the *bhakta* or devotee, in whom the ego persists, He is different from the self of man. But both these relations of difference and non-difference between self and God are true, the

one in the sphere of His sportive creative activity, (*līlā-rūpa*), the other in the sphere of His essential immutable being (*nitya-rūpa*). In His *līlā-rūpa*, He multiplies His joy in man and enjoys it as man's love for God. In his *nitya-rūpa*, He obliterates the distinction between man and God and abides as the one self in all.

Coming last to the paths of liberation, we see that Sri Ramakrishna reconciles *karma*, *jñāna*, *bhakti*, and *yoga*. He says that just as the temple of Kālī at Dakshineswar may be reached by boat or car or on foot, so the supreme Being may be experienced or realized by disinterested work or philosophic knowledge or sincere devotion or deep concentration. And with this, one attains liberation or freedom from sin and suffering, and experiences eternal peace and bliss. So, there need be no controversy and quarrel among the Advaitins, Dvaitins, and Viśiṣṭādvaitins with regard to the path of liberation. Any one or more or all of these paths, if followed sincerely and entirely, will lead to the same goal, namely, supreme felicity and blessedness. The only difference between the Advaitins and the other Vedāntins is that, while the former want to be one with, and absorbed in, Brahman as bliss or *ānanda*, the latter want to enjoy the bliss of communion with Brahman and not *be* Brahman, just as, says Sri Ramakrishna, some people may like *to be* sugar and others may like to taste sugar.

The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna thus contain the germs of a new Vedānta which may very well turn out to be a synthesis and reconciliation of the conflicting traditional schools of Vedānta. Swami Vivekananda has gone a great way in developing this Neo-Vedānta in his lectures and writings on the subject. But more remains to be done. It is only to be desired that other competent and devoted scholars should take up the task and go ahead in the same direction.



# THE KARMA-YOGA OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA

[Dr. Anima Sen Gupta, M.A., Ph.D., of Patna University, shows in her thoughtful article how Swami Vivekananda has emphasized the importance of selfless work, not only for the common good of the people, but also for one's own emancipation. When action is spiritualized, it ceases to be a bondage, and leads to the highest realization, where it is one with pure knowledge.]

Swami Vivekananda was a true seeker and lover of Brahman—the Bliss. In his opinion, *lokasaṅgraha*, the magnificent social expression of divine love, was an excellent form of worship of the Supreme. He believed that, through sheer selfless and disinterested humanitarian service, a person can reach the supreme goal coveted by the wise. Swami Vivekananda has wonderfully harmonized the path of selfless service with the path of knowledge. He has also offered us a unique interpretation of Advaita Vedānta, keeping in view both the fundamental position of the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara and the pressing demands of the new world. Such a work is only possible by a super-normal personality with a penetrating insight. For the first time, Swamiji gave us the idea that both spirituality and service are complementary ideals of the Vedānta, and that Advaita Vedānta is capable of bringing into harmony all religions, only when both spirituality and service are regarded as twin principles of this order.

## ADVAITA VEDĀNTA AS COMMONLY UNDERSTOOD

The general view regarding Advaita Vedānta is that, according to this school, knowledge alone constitutes the direct means to liberation. Selfless service simply purifies the soul and makes it fit for receiving spiritual knowledge. One who has entered into the stage of *sannyāsa* gives up all forms of actions, as actions are meaningless to him in the final stage. The results that issue forth from actions are non-eternal. The *sannyāsin*, who with a purified mind has engaged himself in the search for eternal Truth,

has naturally no need for various worldly things, including the results of actions (which are only transitory and non-eternal). Actions or fruits of actions can be of four forms: *utpādya*, *āpya*, *saṁskārya*, and *vikārya*.

In the case of *utpādya-karma*, the material stuff produces an effect without undergoing any change in its nature—as for example, cloth produced from threads. When the action does not produce any change in the object of the action, it is known as *āpya-karma*—as Devadatta's seeing the jar. When the action produces some *saṁskāra* or specific quality in the object of the action, it is called *saṁskārya-karma*. As for instance, in order to make the sacrificial cake, one has got to sprinkle water on the unhusked rice. In *vikārya-karma*, the material cause undergoes modification to produce the effect; for example, milk changing into curd.

But Brahman is uncaused, ever attained, eternal, pure, devoid of change, and imperfections. So, it cannot be regarded as any one of these four forms of action or fruits of actions; and if *Brahmaprāpti* is not the result of any kind of action, then why should one, seeking to attain the highest and the greatest only, desire to follow the path of action?

*Tasmāt na karmasādhyatvam  
Brahmano'sti kutaścana;  
Karmasādhyam tvanityam hi  
Brahmanityam Sanātanam*  
(*Śarva-Vedānta-Siddhānta-Sāra-Saṅgraha*).

Knowledge alone is the gateway to liberation and there is nothing else that can lead a man straightway to his desired goal.

*Jñānādeva tu kaivālyam  
Iti śrutyā nigadyate ; ...  
Mumukṣor yujyate tyāgah  
Katham vihitakarmanah ;  
Iti śaṅkā na kartavyā  
Mūdhavat paṇḍitottamaih (ibid.).*

This is how the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara is generally interpreted and understood by the teachers and the taught of Indian philosophy.

#### KARMA-YOGA AS INTERPRETED BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Now, let us see how the great Swami Vivekananda has interpreted *karma-yoga* so as to synthesize service with knowledge, both of which, in his opinion, are equally potent to lead a man to his desired goal (i.e. freedom of the soul or *mokṣa*). Swamiji has declared emphatically that the grandest idea of the Vedānta is its synthetic view so far as paths to liberation are concerned. 'The grandest idea in the religion of the Vedānta is that we may reach the same goal by different paths and these paths I have generalized into four—viz. those of work, love, psychology, and knowledge. Each blends into the other. These divisions are made according to the type or tendency that may be seen to prevail in a man. In the end, all these four paths converge and become one.' The general view of the Advaitins that knowledge and action cannot meet together (*jñāna-karmanoh sahayogah na ghaṭate*) has not found favour with this great *karmayogin* of India. On the other hand, Swamiji has taught us that action, understood in its proper spirit, can be synthesized very effectively with knowledge, and that there is no antagonism between the two. The only thing that is essential for us to do is to learn the secret of *karma-yoga*. Action in itself, is neither good nor bad. It has no inherent moral qualities. It becomes good or bad, efficacious for freedom or obstacle to freedom, only due to purity or impurity of motive from which it springs. If the motive behind an action is

selfish, it is bad ; if the motive is wholly unselfish, the action is both good and conducive to spiritual freedom. The secret of *karma-yoga* is nothing but spiritualization of service by cultivating the attitude of selfless devotion to life divine. The pursuit of *karma-yoga* lies in making actions free of all *rājasika* interests, and also, in shifting the motive from narrow egoism to the infinite bliss that supports the whole world. Action, performed in this attitude of humility, devotion, and selfless love for the whole universe, is nothing but a form of spiritual *sādhana* which is wholly beneficial to liberation. In his eagerness for proving the efficacy of *karma-yoga*, Swamiji has gone so far as to declare : 'The *karmayogin* need not believe in any doctrine whatsoever. He may not believe even in God, may not ask what his soul is, nor think of any metaphysical speculation. He has got his own special aim of realizing selflessness ; and he has to work it out himself. Every moment of his life must be realization, because he has to solve by mere work, without the help of doctrine or theory, the very same problem to which the *jñānin* applies his reason and inspiration and *bhakta* his love.'

If we reflect deeply on *karma-yoga* as interpreted by Vivekananda, and also by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, we find that selfless action is the dynamic side of spiritual freedom, which is already an accomplished fact. It is not a fact that spiritual freedom arises as an effect from selfless service. Unless one has made his soul wholly free from the distracting influences of egoism and narrow individuality, he is not to be called a perfect *karmayogin*. It is the sense of egoism (*ahaṅkāra* and *abhimāna*) that really constitutes the bondage of the soul. To remove this egoism, one has to have recourse to *karma-yoga*, which cleanses the soul of its defilement, and thereby, reveals its essentially free nature. So, in this case also, removal of the obscuring tendencies of *avidyā* by means of constant performance of selfless actions simply helps one to open the closely-tight cover of the golden pot in which the



nectar of immortality is to be found in abundance. The freedom of the soul is always present. It is not a thing to be acquired; it has only to be revealed by the practice of *karma-yoga*. As there is no cause-effect relationship between knowledge and spiritual freedom, so also there is no such relationship between *karma-yoga* and the freedom of the soul. Both knowledge and selfless service are capable of removing *avidyā* that hides the real nature of Ātman by covering it with the dark spell of egoism. Destruction of this egoism is *mokṣa*. *Avidyā* and egoism constitute two points of view from which the root cause of bondage can be visualized and verbalized.

Since destruction of egoism is necessary for the proper performance of selfless action, a *karmayogin*, too, is in a position to attain liberation by following the path of egoless actions. The Advaita Vedānta does not preach that action under all conditions is a snare and that the world is to be dismissed as an illusion. Action is not to be renounced totally; rather it is to be performed in the world with the inner life wholly dedicated to the eternal spirit.

#### ŚANKARA AND SELFLESS SERVICE

Śaṅkara's view on selfless action has been very aptly elucidated by him in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Inertia is not freedom, and freedom, also, does not logically lead to inertia and inactivity. Commenting on the second *śloka* of the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*, Śaṅkara has said: '*Asti paramārtha sannyāsenā sādṛśyam kartṛdvāraṅgam karma-yogasya.*' That is to say, there is similarity between *sannyāsa* and *karma-yoga* since, in both, the giving up of ego-sense is absolutely necessary. *Karma-yoga* can be linked with the stage of *sannyāsa* in which the wise sage will perform actions not for his own welfare (not even aiming at his own *cittaśuddhi* for liberation), but for the welfare of the whole of mankind. Just as a true *karmayogin* gives up the habit of doing

actions for his own self, rejecting completely the idea of his separate being, in the same manner, the enlightened person gives up the habit of doing such actions which result from the false identification of the soul with the limited body-mind system. Whenever Śaṅkara has described the relation between knowledge and action as one of opposition, he has considered action in the sense of deeds performed with the intention of enjoying pleasures and happiness of this world or of the other world. Total annihilation of the feeling of *sva* (mine) is absolutely necessary for spiritualization of service.

In fact, Śaṅkara has admitted that there is no objection to the performance of selfless action, even after the attainment of wisdom (see Śaṅkara commentary on the *Gītā*, III. 8, 20). In the stage of *sannyāsa*, the soul loses all ego-centric hankerings for worldly pleasures, and for that reason, the ordinary incentives to worldly actions no longer exist for him. He forsakes completely his habit of doing actions in the worldly-way, and hence he is a doer of action in name only. Truly speaking, the doer of action is one who thinks of himself as the sole agent and designer of the deed due to ignorance. When one is free from ignorance, his action assumes the form of *sādhanā* and ceases to be a source of bondage. To link one's life with the life of divinity is not only to lose one's existence as an individual, but also to regain one's reality as egoless spirituality. His psycho-physical frame, then, assumes for him the form of a spiritual lyre, each string of which is attuned to the great music of the world. Whatever he does, at once, changes into divine service performed through his mind-body system. Hence, there is no incompatibility between *māna-yoga* and *karma-yoga*, even though Vedānta declares that in the stage of *sannyāsa*, there is the destruction of *karma*, meaning thereby the destruction of all actions springing from the sense of individuality and egoism. This is, indeed, a stage when a person can be admitted as a non-doer even though he



performs humanitarian services. Separateness of the deed from the doer exists only so long as the sense of egoism persists. But when a person has no sense of I and mine, he has no sense of ownership of actions, and consequently, he has no feeling of separation between himself and his action. He is divine, his action is also divine, and there is nothing for him but Divinity manifesting itself through sights and sounds, love and hate, knowledge and services of the world.

In the *Naiṣkarmya-Siddhi*, it has been stated that, just as a lamb cannot stay in the same place with a lion without being devoured by it, in the same manner, knowledge and action cannot be linked together due to their incompatible nature.

Here, too, the author of the said text has meant by action only those which spring from a false sense of agency, due to beginningless ignorance. When an individual has made himself totally free from the sense of agency, he does nothing, even though he keeps himself engaged in disinterested social service. Social service, discharged in a spirit of detachment or divine service, can never be regarded as a snare, because this type of work is not prompted by the individual's desire for his own happiness (*svakalyāna buddhi*). Even God acts in this world for the sake of world maintenance and progress. Just as God never becomes bound by his actions, in the same manner, the *sannyāsin*, who has emptied himself of all egocentric desires, does not bind himself by his egoless actions. As he has no selfish motive, he lays claim to nothing and surrenders himself wholly to the supreme Being. Action, understood in this sense, has no antagonism with knowledge and is, therefore, not destructible by knowledge. In fact, such service is nothing but knowledge viewed from the dynamic aspect of life.

#### CONCLUSION

Thus, from the above discussion, it is clear that service can be synthesized with knowledge even from the Advaitic point of view,

if, by service, we mean only those actions which are done by the wise sage for *lokasaṅgraha*. Actions are not his duties in the sense that they are obligatory on him. On the other hand, any humanitarian service done by the wise is a spontaneous manifestation, in a dynamic form, of the nectar of wisdom that he has drunk. He becomes the master of all actions by cultivating detachment and faith in the Absolute. The freed soul works for the guidance of men who are still steeped in ignorance. He is the doer of work and is yet not the doer, because he has no sense of 'I' and 'mine'.

If the individual soul is Brahman (as has been asserted by the Advaita Vedānta), then service to individual soul (*jīva*) is service to Brahman. The individual soul is the symbol (*pratīka*) through which Brahman is worshipped. The individual soul is, however, associated with the body-mind organism, and so, this body-mind organism must be properly nursed and purified if any real service is to be rendered to the indwelling spirit. Keeping this in view, the wise sage works spontaneously for the betterment of all the living conditions of the *jīva*.

Hence, from this point of view, the humanitarian services performed by a *sannyāsin* are nothing but the spontaneous fulfilment of the divine purpose through a perfected personality. The secret of *karma-yoga* is the annihilation of *ahamkāra* and the attunement of one's being to the purpose of divine life. Service in a detached spirit is the outer side of spirituality and knowledge is the inner side. So, the two can go together as the outer and inner aspects of the same spiritual process. The very subtle metaphysical distinction between the self-effacement of *niṣkāma-karma* and the self-negation of *Brahma-jñāna* loses its meaning when viewed from the standpoint of psychology and practical life.

Even Śaṅkara had to work hard for reorganizing Hindu society on the new model of Advaita Vedānta, although he was a *jīvan-mukta puruṣa*. He had also founded *mathas*



in various places so as to facilitate propagation of his views among masses in different parts of India. When Śaṅkara himself did so much humanitarian service in his own life, how can it be proper for us to maintain that the stage of *sannyāsa* is a stage of perfect inactivity? Swami Vivekananda has rightly remarked: 'The Vedānta ... as a religion must be intensely practical. We must be able to carry it out in every part of our life. And not only this, the fictitious differentiation between religion and the life of the world must vanish, for the Vedānta teaches oneness of life throughout. The ideals of religion must cover the whole field of life, they must enter into our thoughts and more and more into practice.' When truth is fully realized, realization finds spontaneous expression through thought, feeling, and emotion of the perfected personality inspiring him to undertake magnificent services for human good.

Of course, it is true that a *jīvanmukta-puruṣa* does not consider himself either as a Brāhmaṇa or as a Kṣatriya; nor does he consider himself either as rich or poor. He is devoid of these sorts of *abhimāna*. Nevertheless, he retains one *abhimāna* which he is not able to get rid of, unless his *prārabdha karmas* are fully exhausted. This is his awareness of himself as a man (*naratvābhimāna*). It is because he is a perfected human being that all the excellences of mind befitting a man are freely manifested through all his truly humanitarian activities. He, then, becomes the most benevolent saviour of the suffering humanity. This is precisely the attitude adopted by the great Swami. He has rejected the idea of the selfish salvationism and quietism and has preached again and again that the ideal of a *sannyāsin* is 'service to humanity'. He himself has said that Śaṅkara has kept his Advaita confined to those *sannyāsins* who have decided to live out of the world, i.e. in caves and mountains. The principal duty and

mission of a *sannyāsin's* life is to sow the seeds of oneness of soul even in the soil of the life of the worldly people by teaching and preaching to them the secret of *karma-yoga*.

The discrepancy between knowledge and action arises only when action is not understood in its proper spirit. When action is spiritualized, it ceases to be an action in the ordinary sense and can very well be synthesized with wisdom or knowledge. Hence, in the opinion of Swami Vivekananda, one who is able to realize the *advaita-tattva*, feels an urge to make sincere endeavour, with a view to awakening that realization in others. It is only when the *sannyāsin* enters into the worldly stage, being equipped with *Brahma-jñāna* and *karma sādhanā*, that he gets full scope for realizing his oneness with the whole world. When the whole world is completely encompassed by his own being, he feels an intense urge to work for the welfare of all (just as in the bound state, one feels an intense longing for doing such actions as are conducive to one's own good). To realize the oneness of all souls through disinterested service to humanity is what Swamiji has called practical Vedānta. This practical Vedānta, indeed, is the only form in which the teachings of Śaṅkara can be moulded without contradiction, so as to become a world-religion, the saving knowledge of humanity for ages to come.

It is not possible to do full justice to the great life of Swami Vivekananda in a short article. Deeper than his genius, greater than his eloquence, even higher than his sacrifice is the character of the man, which at once excites our wonder and admiration, love and respect. That which made his character so great and noble was the belief that man was divine, and selfless service to him was the highest form of worship. To India, Swami Vivekananda has left a legacy which will sustain her for centuries.

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER OF MODERN INDIA

BY SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

[Swami Ranganathananda is the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. This article has been condensed out of a speech delivered at a public meeting held in Calcutta in observance of the Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda by the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee.]

Swami Vivekananda came in the unbroken line of spiritual teachers from the Vedic period to the modern age. It is they who imparted the energy and direction peculiar to Indian culture—its deep spirituality. It is because they came age after age that our nation is still alive, in spite of invasions, subjections, humiliations, and devastations, a fraction of which has destroyed many a nation and many a culture. But we still exist, not only exist, but are strong and vital, thanks to the periodic touch of these master-minds. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda brought youthfulness to the age-old Indian cultural experiment. By the end of the eighteenth century, India had become old and effete, broken and dispirited; but with the touch of Swami Vivekananda, old India became young once again. In the language of the late Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, 'India is ever-aging but never old'. At each critical period in our history, a great man has appeared and imparted a new energy and vigour to the nation, enabling it to become young again. This is the historic and cultural significance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement in the *Gītā*: '*Sambhāvāmi yuge yuge—I shall be born again and again.*' And this was what happened in India at the end of the last century. Through the touch of Swami Vivekananda, the Indian nation became youthful. And according to Indian philosophy, he who imparts youthfulness, vigour, and clarity of vision to a man or to a nation is the *guru* of that man or that nation. In this sense, the Swami was really the Rāṣṭraguru and also something more. He did the same service to the West as well. Through such service in both the hemispheres,

he united humanity through the thread of divinity within all men and women. And he achieved this stupendous task within a brief span of ten years in his short thirty-nine years, five months, and eighteen days of earthly life. He became a bridge between the East and the West, the old and the new.

Swami Vivekananda was, in every sense of the term, a world spiritual teacher. All his work in the East or the West was to summon men and women to their spiritual heritage. In line with the great sages and seers of this country, Swamiji taught men and women to realize the Divine that is embodied in man. All his activities in every part of the country and abroad have this one single objective. Whether he spoke of India's poverty, backwardness, untouchability, and the need for her industrial development, or whether he spoke in the West about the need to practise toleration in matters of religion, his primary object was to give to man the priceless gift of *ātma-jñāna*, Self-knowledge, to make men realize the Ātman, the Divine that is within. The way he developed a comprehensive spirituality out of this great Vedāntic idea is something unique.

Religion has come to mean something very narrow in recent times. But when we speak of religion in connection with Swami Vivekananda, there is nothing narrow or exclusive about it, nothing negative about it; it is pure spirituality. So far as India is concerned, this has been the teaching of her great masters, the sages of the Upaniṣads and the teacher of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. They taught us to view religion as a matter of *anubhava* or spiritual realization. 'Religion is being and becoming',



said Swami Vivekananda. It does not consist in doctrines and creeds, dogmas and churches and temples, but it consists in a struggle to realize the Divine within us. It is from this point of view that he defines religion as the 'manifestation of the divinity already in man'. According to him, the destruction of bondage, external as well as internal, constitutes the whole scope of religion, and he expounds this idea in all his lectures and discourses.

To bring humanity to an awareness of this great fact was the main work of Swami Vivekananda in the East and the West. This is the work of true religion. It was done by the great sages of the Upaniṣads, by Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by Buddha, by Śaṅkara, and by the large galaxy of reformers of the Middle Ages, in the past, and by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, in our time. It is this role of a spiritual teacher that shone through him when he addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893; he reminded that august audience that man is not a sinner, that he is not a creature of circumstances, but that he is a spark of the Divine. This is the saving message of Indian wisdom. And so, while addressing the whole of modern humanity through that Parliament, he said: 'Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss. Yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye, divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so: it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

Therefore, as already said, it was this work of awakening of the human spirit from the sleep of ignorance and delusion that Swamiji accomplished in the East and the West. But the method he adopted to achieve this end was different in the two hemispheres. In India, he saw that the work of awakening was needed

primarily in the socio-political field. He saw that the Indian man and woman had to be educated into the values of citizenship, of social awareness, into the capacities for practical efficiency and organized co-operative efforts. The creation of such free and self-disciplined citizens was the aim of his message of practical Vedānta. Virtues and graces so gained alone can become the basis of the highest spiritual development of man. Without this moral basis, religion becomes cheap, and spirituality a sham. So, when he spoke of religion in India, he used a beautiful expression to characterize its content; he called it 'man-making religion'. Similarly, he called his scheme of education for India 'man-making education'. He wanted to make men of us; he saw that the masses of India had not achieved the full glory of human beings; if the Indian people cannot co-operate with each other, if they cannot help each other, if they cannot try to bring out the best from each other, how can they achieve the glory of human existence? Manliness connotes the virtues of strength, freedom, mutual help and appreciation, and equality. Man-making education and man-making religion are meant to create a pattern of excellence in the society as well as within its individual members. The concept of man and of his excellence in Swami Vivekananda's thought is the most progressive among such concepts today.

This was a man-making message; it combines man-making religion with man-making education. The Swami called it 'Practical Vedānta'. Vedānta we have in our books; Vedānta we have seen in the lives of the great sages and saints of our country; but Vedānta as a sheet-anchor of nation-building, of a dynamic social policy, by which the masses become transformed into dynamic centres of all-round social development—this type of practical application of Vedānta we had never witnessed in our country. It was the supreme glory of Swami Vivekananda that he broadcasted the life-giving message of Vedānta to one and all.



'These conceptions of the Vedānta must come out,' he said, 'must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be. If the fisherman thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student; if the lawyer thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on. If you teach Vedānta to the fisherman, he will say, "I am as good a man as you, I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me, as you have in you". And that is what we want, no privilege for anyone, equal chances for all; let everyone be taught that the Divine is within, and everyone will work out his own salvation.'

This is the universal message of Vedānta which Swami Vivekananda proclaimed from the house-tops in the East and the West. In this great message, Swamiji emphasized two values, which he considered the central values of Indian culture and civilization. And they are *tyāga*, renunciation, and *sevā*, service. He gave a compressed statement of the central values of Indian culture when he said: 'Renunciation and service are the twin ideals of India. Intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself.'

For the past fifteen years, we have been enjoying political freedom. Can we say goodbye to these ideals today? Can the nation achieve greatness and glory without continuous inspiration provided by the values of renunciation and service? But it looks as if we as a people have begun to feel that renunciation and service were necessary only in the context of struggle for political freedom; but now that freedom is achieved, we can do without them. This grievously wrong con-

clusion is our biggest national problem today. If all the problems that have been accumulating around us for the last fifteen years are analysed closely, it will be revealed that the root of all our troubles is the fading of this spirit of renunciation and service in post-independence India. Today, we need to inspire ourselves with this ideal once again. We cannot build up this great country, we cannot destroy its backwardness, and make a truly progressive state, we cannot establish that hegemony of man over the environment, which is the meaning of freedom, until our people are once again inspired by this vision of renunciation and service. The best of human achievements proceed from us when we least think of ourselves. 'Not I but thou' is always the law of man's higher life. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it,' says Jesus, 'and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' This has been the teaching of the great masters, both in the East and the West. Today, the country needs the ministrations of the spirit of Swami Vivekananda. Our national development plans, our various community projects, our every department of national activity, needs men and women inspired by the vision, not of their own little selves, but of the larger self of society. We have to learn to live and act in a national development awareness and perspective.

Let the people of India today be inspired by this message of renunciation—renunciation of the little self, manifestation of the higher Self, and its positive expression of service. Renounce the *kaccā* ego, and manifest the *pukkā* ego, as Sri Ramakrishna expresses it. Then only can a man establish harmony with his fellowmen and with the rest of creation; it alone enables a man to co-operate with others and work for general welfare. This alone makes possible national solidarity and integration. National life, intensified by these two forces, will express the purest and the best in its heritage; and they will stand guarantee to the continued unity and strength of the nation.



# THE PLACE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

BY DR. ROMA CHAUDHURI

[ Dr. Roma Chaudhuri, M.A., D.Phil., the Principal of Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta, is a renowned writer on philosophical subjects. In this learned article, she shows through her scholarly analytical treatment that Swami Vivekananda's contribution to Vedānta philosophy is unique and he deserves a place of originality in it. ]

Swami Vivekananda, the herald of resurgent India, has truly said: 'Religion, and religion alone, is the life of India; and when that goes, India will die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of every one of her children.' And how repeatedly does he assert, with firm, unflinching faith, that India is the spiritual mother of the whole world, from time immemorial: 'Study the history of the whole world, and you will see that every high ideal you meet with anywhere had its origin in India. From time immemorial, India has been the mine of precious ideas to human society; giving birth to high ideas herself, she has freely distributed them broadcast over the whole world.' About the future destiny of India, the Swami says: 'This is the great ideal before us, and every one must be ready for it—the conquest of the whole world by India.' 'Up India,' he exhorts, 'and conquer the world with your spirituality.' But he also realized that before she could do that, she must herself 'gather her scattered spiritual forces'. So he devoted himself fervently to the task of revitalizing the age-old religion and philosophy of India.

The question naturally arises: What form of spiritualism did he teach? What system of philosophy, religion, and ethics? What, in short, is his place in Indian philosophy? All indications show that his leanings were towards the Advaita view. In fact, by the term 'Vedānta', he means the Advaita-Vedānta. Now, let us very briefly consider his views regarding Brahman, *jīva*, *jagat*, their relation, and *mokṣa* and *sādhana*.

## BRAHMAN

Brahman, according to Swamiji, is one.

But in what exact sense? According to all the schools of the Vedānta, the first and the foremost, the most fundamental and the most universal characteristic of Brahman is that He is '*ekamevādvitīyam*—one only without a second' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI.2.1.). In Monistic schools of the Vedānta, this celebrated *mantra* occupies the central place, naturally. But what about the other schools? How can these assert that *jīva-jagat*, are as real as Brahman, yet say, too, that Brahman is 'one only, without a second'? However, this is exactly what these schools do, and the explanation offered is that Brahman is, undoubtedly, 'one only, without a second', for neither *jīva*, nor *jagat* can ever be Brahman Himself—being only parts, attributes, powers of Brahman, and not Brahman Himself. Thus, oneness of Brahman may be taken from two standpoints—from the literal or primary sense, where 'oneness' means oneness of an abstract One, or one without *svagatabhedas*; again, from the figurative or secondary sense, when oneness means the oneness of a concrete one, or 'a whole comprising parts'. In this way, in Monistic Vedānta, Brahman is 'one', and not a whole which, necessarily, implies parts. But, according to the Monotheistic Vedānta, Brahman is a whole comprising parts or an organic whole, or a concrete unity.

According to Swamiji, Brahman is one in the most literal Monistic sense, and not a whole, in the secondary, Monotheistic sense. He, in fact, seems to accept the Māyāvāda of Monistic Vedānta. Compare the following: 'Brahman is one, but is, at the same time, appearing to us as many on the relative plane. Name and form are at the root of this relativity. For instance, what do you find when you abstract name and form from a jar?

Only earth, which is its essence. Similarly, through delusion, you are thinking of and seeing a jar, a cloth, a monastery, and so on. The phenomenal world depends on this nescience, which obstructs knowledge and which has no real existence. One sees variety, such as wife, children, body, mind—only in the world created by nescience, by means of name and form. As soon as this nescience is removed, the realization of Brahman which eternally exists is the result.' Again: 'There is only one Existence—Brahman. You are but seeing That under different forms and names, through the veil of name and form, which are unreal.' This is but the Advaita-Vedānta view of Vivartavāda or the Theory of Apparent Creation, and Māyāvāda or the Theory of Nescience.

Then, like an Advaitin, Swamiji says that Brahman is *nirguna*. 'Brahman is the last generalization to which we can come. It has no attributes, but is Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss.' Thus Brahman has only a *svarūpa* or essence of His own—i.e. He is *sat-cit-ānanda-svarūpa*, or, as mentioned above, Existence (Sat), Knowledge (Cit), and Bliss (Ānanda) in essence or nature.

In this connection, Swamiji says something new that is not found in the Advaita-Vedānta at all, viz. that 'Brahman is ānanda, i.e. bliss, which is the same thing as love' (V. 301).\*

Now, this concept of *love* is absolutely foreign to the very spirit of the Advaita-Vedānta. It is found only in the later Vaiṣṇava theories. So, not a single mention of the word 'love' (*prema* or *prīti*) is found in the Advaita-Vedānta. For, love is personal, love is dualistic, love is emotional; and all these, as is well known, are impossible here. 'Ānanda', here, is quite a different thing. It is taken to be absolutely impersonal, non-dualistic, and unemotional in nature by the Advaitavādins.

\* The bracketed references to quotations indicate the volume and the page number of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

However, this seems to be a mere difference in words. For Swamiji also, in common with the Advaitavādins, says: 'But no sooner is the essence of Cit realized, than the essence of Ānanda is also realized. Because what is Cit is, verily, the same as Ānanda' (V. 301).

This is exactly the Advaita-Vedānta view. For, in reply to the Sāṅkhya criticism that one and the same thing cannot have *three* essences, it is pointed out by the Vedāntists that Sat, Cit, Ānanda are, by no means, three different essences, rather, they are three aspects of the very same essence. Hence it is that Sat means Cit, Cit means Ānanda.

But, finally, Brahman is One 'from whom speech, along with the mind turns back, not getting Him at all—*yato vāco nivartante aprāpya manasā saha*' (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II.4). He can only be realized by the soul, but cannot be conceived of by the mind or described by speech. So Swamiji says: 'Any imagination, any concept is in vain. *Neti, neti* (not this, not this) is all that can be said, for even to think is to limit and so to lose' (VII. 72).

#### ĪŚVARA

Here, also, Swamiji's views tally perfectly with Advaita-Vedānta. For example: 'The Personal God is the same Absolute looked at through the haze of Māyā. When we approach Him with the five senses, we can see Him only as the Personal God. . . . The idea is that the Self cannot be objectified. How can the knower know itself? But it can cast a shadow, as it were, if that can be called objectification. So, the highest form of that shadow, that attempt at objectifying itself, is the Personal God' (V. 193).

To the question 'Does the Personal God belong to Māyā?' Swamiji's answer is: 'Yes, the Personal God is the same as the Absolute, seen through Māyā. The Absolute under the control of Nature is what is called the Īśvara or the Personal God' (V. 224).

As we know, according to the Advaita



Vedānta view, Īśvara or the Personal God of religion, the Creator God of cosmology, is Himself due to Māyā, in common with *jīva-jagat*; and so, from the *pāramārthika* or transcendental standpoint, Īśvara, *jīva*, and *jagat* are simultaneously negated as *mithyā* or false—Brahman, the impersonal Absolute alone remains as the final *satya* or Reality.

#### CREATION

Here, too, Swamiji seems to accept what he calls the Vedānta view of creation, viz. the Advaita-Vedānta view of apparent creation or Vivartavāda. According to this doctrine, the whole world is an illusion, just like the rope-snake illusion. Thus, when we mistake a rope for a snake, we apparently see a snake very clearly for the time being, but, really, the rope has not become transformed into a snake, even for a single moment; the rope is a rope always, whatever be our wrong perception. Thus, only apparently, the rope has become a snake, but really it is always a rope. In the very same manner, we mistake Brahman for the universe of souls and matter. But the unchangeable Brahman has never become actually transformed into the universe. So, here, there is only an apparent transformation, never a real one.

In the very same strain, Swamiji also says: 'A changeable God would be no God. To avoid this doctrine of Pantheism, there is a very bold theory of the Vedānta. It is that this universe as we know and think of does not exist, that the unchangeable has not changed, that the whole of this universe is a mere appearance, and not reality, that this idea of parts, and little beings, and differentiations, is only apparent, not the nature of the thing itself. God has not changed at all, and has not become the universe at all. We see God as the universe, because we have to look through time, space, and causation. It is time, space, and causation that make this differentiation apparently, but not really. This is a very bold theory, indeed' (I. 417).

#### JĪVA AND JAGAT

The question and answer quoted earlier (V. 224) will show that here, too, Swamiji subscribes to the Advaita-Vedānta view. Compare also the following: 'Paramātman, as ruling Māyā, is Īśvara; Paramātman, as under Māyā, is Jivātman. Māyā is the sum-total of manifestation, and will totally disappear. Tree-nature is Māyā, it is really God-nature which we see under the veil of Māyā. To ask why Māyā came is a useless question, because the answer can never be given in Māyā; and beyond Māyā, who will ask it? ... Ignorance, reflecting the light of God, is seen; but by itself it is zero. The cloud would not appear except as the sunlight falls on it.'

#### MĀYĀ AND MITHYĀ

These, as is well known, are the fundamental concepts of the Advaita-Vedānta. These practically mean the same thing. Māyā being the cause, *mithyā* is its effect. Now, what is the nature of Māyā or *mithyā*? According to Advaita-Vedānta, *mithyā* or 'false' is a peculiar something, for, it is neither *sat* or real, nor *asat* or unreal. *Sat* or real is something that is eternally existent and never negated, like Brahman. Again, *asat* or unreal is something that is never even perceived to be true, even for a single moment, like 'sky-flower'. But *mithyā* is something in-between. It is something that is perceived to be true for the time being, but later on negated on the rise of true knowledge regarding the thing in question, like the snake in snake-rope, and the world in world-Brahman illusion. Thus, the snake is perceived to be true at first, but later on negated when the rope is known as such. So the snake is '*mithyā*' or false. So is the world. Thus, '*mithyā*' is said to be '*sadasad-vilakṣaṇa anirvacanīya*', neither real, nor unreal, so indescribable. This is the meaning of phenomenal or empirical existence. So, according to Advaita-Vedānta, the universe of souls and matter is not totally unreal or non-existent,

but has no transcendental or absolute existence.

Swamiji also holds the very same view. 'The world has no existence. What is meant by that? It means that it has no absolute existence. It exists only in relation to my mind, to your mind, and to the mind of everyone else. We see this world with the five senses; but if we had another sense, we would see in it something more. If we had yet another sense, it would appear as something still different. It has, therefore, no real existence; it has no unchangeable, immovable, infinite existence. Nor can it be called non-existence seeing that it exists, and we have to work in and through it. It is a mixture of existence and non-existence' (II. 91).

That is, the world is empirically existent, but transcendently non-existent; so, it is 'mithyā', or false, in the technical language of Advaita-Vedānta.

#### MUKTI

In this connection, as elsewhere, Swamiji refers to 'two ideas of God that we find in our scriptures' and the consequent double conception of *mukti*. But that he himself accepts the Advaita-Vedānta doctrine is clear.

'And, what are our relations with this Impersonal Being? That we are He. We and He are one. Everyone is but a manifestation of the Impersonal, the basis of all being; and misery consists in thinking of ourselves as different from this Infinite, Impersonal Being; and liberation consists in knowing our unity with the wonderful Impersonality' (III. 129).

The Advaita-Vedānta admits *jīvan-mukti*, or the possibility of salvation here and now, which the Monotheistic schools do not.

Swamiji, too, admits the same doctrine. 'He is *jīvanmukta* who can live in this world without being attached. He is like the lotus-leaves in water, which are never wetted by the water. He is the highest of human beings, nay, the highest of all beings, for he has realized his identity with the Absolute,

he has realized that he is one with God. So long as you think you have the least difference from God, fear will seize you; but when you have known that you are He, all of Him, and the whole of Him, all fear ceases' (III. 11).

#### SĀDHANĀ

Here, Swamiji seems to have recommended *jñāna-mārga* and *bhakti-mārga*, the path of knowledge and the path of devotion, with equal vigour, and other *mārgas*, no less. So, what is his view in this regard? Let us turn to his answers to questions from a disciple.

'Disciple: Sir, now you are speaking of *jñāna*; sometimes, you proclaim the superiority of *bhakti*; sometimes of *karma*, and sometimes of *yoga*. This confuses our understanding.

'Swamiji: Well, the truth is this. The knowledge of Brahman is the ultimate goal—the highest destiny of man. But man cannot remain absorbed in Brahman all the time. When he comes out of It, he must have something to engage himself. At that time, he should do such work as will contribute to the real well-being of people. . . . The path of *bhakti* or devotion to God, is a slow process, but is easy to practise. . . . Only the path of *jñāna* is of quick fruition, and the rationale of all other creeds. But even in the path of discrimination, there is the chance of the mind getting struck in the interminable net of vain argumentations. Therefore, along with it, meditation should be practised. By reasons of discrimination and meditation, the goal, or Brahman, has to be reached' (VII. 195-196).

Here, 'meditation' evidently means, '*nididhyāsana*'. Here, too, there are three well-known stages—'*śravaṇa*' or provisional acceptance of a truth on grounds of authority; '*manana*' or final acceptance of it on logical grounds through independent reasoning; '*nididhyāsana*' or meditation on the truth accepted, in order to have its final realization (*upalabdhi*).



## SWAMIJI'S VIEW

(a) *In Theory: Divinity of Man*

Thus, Swamiji can be safely taken to be a staunch Advaita-Vedāntist in all respects. But to be a mere follower, a mere repeater, a mere imitator, a mere copyist, was totally foreign to his fiery nature. So, he was, no less, an original contributor to the history of Indian thought. In which particular respect? In respect of his celebrated doctrine of 'Practical Vedānta'. The main thing to consider here is the *spirit* or the *emphasis* which makes all the difference. Now, what is the real implication of the Advaita-Vedānta doctrine of '*mithyā*'?

According to the Advaita-Vedānta, as we have seen, the whole problem of world-creation is to be explained on the analogy of an ordinary illusion, like a rope-snake one. Now, what exactly is the status and value of the '*snake*' here? Strictly speaking, it is nothing, a mental something, a false perception, an illusion without any objective validity at all. And, strictly speaking, the universe of souls and matter should also be taken to be so. So, it has to be denied and rejected in any case. And there are two ways of doing so, from two sides, negative and positive: From that of Brahman negatively, and from that of the universe positively. Thus, either, we say negatively, from the side of Brahman, that the universe is nothing, so Brahman is the only Reality; or, we say positively, from the side of the universe, that the universe is Brahman, so Brahman is the only Reality. In this way, the absolute oneness of Brahman may be proved in two ways: Either by *falsifying* the universe, or by *deifying* it. Or the same thing—the absolute phenomenality of the universe, also, may be proved in two ways: Either by saying that it is not what it appears to be, so it is nothing; or by saying that it is not what it appears to be, so it is Brahman. That the universe of souls and matter is '*mithyā*', or in Western terminology, a mere '*phenomenon*', is univer-

sally admitted. That is, according to all, *it is not what it appears to be*. Then, what is it? Here, one may ignore it and leave it there. Or, one may take it seriously and take it as Brahman.

As a matter of fact, in the history of Advaita-Vedānta, both these kinds of outlook are found, corresponding to theoretical and practical tendencies. Really, most Advaitavādins have a purely theoretical tendency to remain in Brahman entirely, and practically ignore the universe of souls and matter. Of course, as Swamiji himself repeatedly points out, the Vedānta, in all its forms, is intensely practical. For do not the celebrated *mantras*, '*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III. 14.1), '*ayamatmā Brahma*' (*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, IV. 4.5) 'The world is Brahman', 'The Soul is Brahman' form the very basis of the Vedānta in all its forms? If that be so, from the practical standpoint, it is our bounden duty to look upon all, treat all, serve all as Brahman Himself.

But few Advaitins follow up the theoretical *Ekātmavāda* or doctrine of Oneness, to the practical *Sevāvāda* or ideal of love and service. Perhaps, *Māyāvāda* and *Vivartavāda*, the doctrines of Illusion and Delusion, take root in them in such a manner as to make them wholly uninterested in the external world, in their fellow beings. Rather, it is the Monotheistic Vedāntists—who take the world to be neither *māyā* nor *mithyā*, but a manifestation, an actual transformation of God—that joyfully propound the great ideals of *prīti* and *sevā*, love and service. In one sense, this is rather self-contradictory. For, according to the Monistic Vedānta only, every soul is identical with Brahman; while, according to the Monotheistic Vedānta, it is identical with Brahman, yet different from Him. Yet, the ideal of service of living Brahman is not given a central place in the Advaita-Vedānta.

And, herein lies the originality of Swamiji. For it is he, who, with his *guru*, Sri Rama-krishna, for the first time in the history of



Indian philosophy, combined the Monistic Vedāntic theory of oneness of Brahman with the Monotheistic Vedāntic practice of universal love and service.

We say here 'for the first time' purposely, for the ideal of service to humanity is nothing new in India. It has been preached and practised by Vedic seers, Jainas, Buddhists, Monotheistic Vedāntists, and many others. But none before preached the ideal of service of *man as God Himself*. For example, the Jainas and Buddhists propound the service of man as man, the Monotheistic Vedāntists the service of man as a mere manifestation of God, as a servant of God, as different and non-different from God, as *anu* or infinitely small—for such is their conception of man.

But it was Swamiji who, for the first time, preached the service of man, not as man, nor even as a mere manifestation of God, but *as God Himself*—not as His servant, not as different from Him, not as *anu* or infinitely small, but actually and literally as God Himself, as full God, as undivided God, as *bhūmā* or infinitely great.

In fact, in the whole history of mankind, none has proclaimed the glory and grandeur of man—his absolute divinity, infinite greatness, immeasurable dignity—in such a vehement manner as Swamiji. Nothing infuriated him so much as the common idea of the smallness and sinfulness of man, accepted as fundamental by many theological and philosophical theories of the world. Again and again, with firm faith, unfailing zeal, and ever-new hope, in all his fiery speeches, dialogues, and writings, he urged all to give up for ever this utterly wrong, sinful idea of smallness, sinfulness, separateness; and recognize themselves as what they really are, what they eternally are, what they fully are—viz. Brahman, and and none but Brahman Himself.

Compare, for example, his enthralling address at the Parliament of Religions (19.9.1893): 'Children of immortal bliss—what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs

of immortal bliss! Yea, the Hindus refuse to call you sinners! It is a sin to call a man so. Ye are the children of God, the shares of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call man so, it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, lions and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blest, and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

Again: 'Silly fools tell you that you are sinners, that you sit down in a corner and weep. It is foolishness, wickedness, downright rascality to say that you are sinners! You are all God. You are the soul of the universe. You are the sun, the moon, and the stars, it is you that are shining everywhere. The whole universe is you. Whom are you going to hate or fight? Know, then, thou art He, and model your whole life accordingly' (II.236).

#### (b) *In Practice: Service of Man as God*

What then is the practical way of achieving this consciousness? It is by reverentially serving all as God—nothing less.

'First let us be Gods, and then, help others to be Gods. Be and make—let this be our motto. Say not, man is a sinner. Tell him that he is God. Even if there were a devil, it would be our duty to remember God always and not the devil' (IV.297).

'If all be Gods, then, evidently the service of all is the worship of God.'

'Where should you go to seek for God—are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak Gods? Why not worship them first? Why go to dig a well on the shores of Ganges? Believe in the omnipotent power of love' (V. 39).

In this way, our service must be wholly humble. Ordinarily, we think that we are very kind, very gracious to those whom we help. But, according to Swamiji, the kindness is on their part, not ours; for, it is they



who very kindly allow us to serve them and be blessed.

'All the work you do, is done for your own salvation, is done for your own benefit. Cut out the word "help" from your mind. You cannot help—it is sheer blasphemy! You are here yourself at His pleasure. Do you mean to say you help Him? You worship. When you give a morsel of food to a dog, you worship the dog as God' (V. 172).

Can anything be more sublime?

(c) *Method: Unselfish, yet Loving Work*

Undoubtedly, our work should be absolutely unselfish—only *niṣkāma-karma* should be performed by us. Now, ordinarily, it is thought that such work done for the sake of duty only, is entirely dry, hard work, without any trace of feeling or softness whatsoever. But Swamiji's view is different. According to him, even *niṣkāma-karma* is loving work. For we serve others and worship them out of love, out of reverence, and not out of a dry sense of duty only.

Thus, the originality of Swamiji is that, though an Advaitavādin, he recognizes the absolute necessity of feeling in one's spiritual life.

'It is feeling that is the life, the strength, the vitality, without which no amount of intellectual activity can reach God' (II. 305).

Surely, a strict Advaitin would not admit that. But as surely, knowledge and feeling are by no means opposed; but are rather complementary—like the hard core and the soft petals of a flower, like the hard stalk and soft leaves of a lotus, like the hard crust and the soft kernel of a fruit. But all do not have the vision to see it.

(d) *Sādhanā: Jñāna, yet Bhakti*

The above clearly shows Swamiji's views with regard to it. Finally, *bhakti*, according to him, is love.

'*Bhakti-yoga* is a real, genuine search after the Lord, a search beginning, continuing, and ending in love' (III. 31).

But love is by no means dualistic. Rather, it leads from dualism to non-dualism.

'We all have to begin as dualists in the religion of love. . . . But, finally, man himself is transformed in the presence of this light of love, and he realizes at last the beautiful and the inspiring truth that love, the lover, and the Beloved are one' (III. 100).

Thus *jñāna* and *bhakti*, knowledge and love, are by no means opposed to each other, but are rather, two sides of the same thing, leading to the very same realization of oneness. But would a strict Advaitin admit it?

(e) *Swamiji's Standpoint: the vyāvahārika to be elevated to the pāramārthika*

In this connection, as shown above, Swamiji adopts the positive method referred to above. He elevates the '*vyāvahārika*' or the empirical to the '*pāramārthika*' or the transcendental, instead of denying the former. Only one example will suffice.

In an inspiring lecture (delivered in London on 27.10.1896), how beautifully does he bring out the real implications of the Vedānta philosophy of India!

'Here I can lay before you only what the Vedānta seeks to teach, and that is, the *deification* of the world. The Vedānta does not in reality denounce the world. The ideal of renunciation nowhere attains such a height as in the teachings of the Vedānta. But, at the same time, dry suicidal advice is not intended; it really means deification of the world—giving up of the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is. Deify it; it is God alone. . . . Thus we have to give up the world, and when the world is given up, what remains? God. What is meant? You can have your wife, but you are to see God in the wife. Give up your children. What does that mean? To turn them out of doors? Certainly not. But see God in your children. So, in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally

present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him. This is what Vedānta teaches. Give it up: the world we have been thinking of so long, the world to which we have been clinging so long, is a false world of our own creation. Give that up: open your eyes, and see that as such it never existed; it was a dream, *māyā*. What existed was the Lord Himself. It is He who is in the child, in the wife, and in the husband; it is He who is in the good and in the bad; He is in the sin and the sinner; He is in life and in death. A tremendous assertion, indeed! Yet that is the theme the Vedānta wants to demonstrate, to teach, and to preach. 'This is just the opening theme' (II. 146-47).

And, this may be taken as one of the best commentaries on the Vedānta. It synthe-

sizes in a simple, straight, and sweet manner all the previous ones, bringing out their infinite wealth, inner beauty, and inherent glory. Swamiji had the head of Śāṅkara and the heart of Śrī Caitanya; the eyes of a Monist and the hands of a Monotheist; the tenacity of a scholar and the tenderness of a lover: the devotion of a Theist and the spirit of service of a Humanist. We may call his interpretation of the Vedānta doctrine by a new name, 'Mānavādvaitavāda' or 'Humanistic Monism'. For who has sung '*mānavamahātmya*' or the glory of man in sweeter tunes than he? 'No books, no scriptures, no science can ever imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man—the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist!' (II. 250).

---

To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer, startling psychology a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering *yogi*-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work. The Lord only knows how far I shall succeed. It is hard work, my boy, hard work! . . .

Now I will tell you my discovery. All of religion is contained in the Vedānta, that is, in the three stages of the Vedānta philosophy—the Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita; one comes after the other. These are the three stages of spiritual growth in man. Each one is necessary. This is the essential of religion: the Vedānta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India is Hinduism. The first stage, i.e. Dvaita, applied to the ideas of the ethnic groups of Europe is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism. The Advaita as applied in its *yoga*-perception form is Buddhism etc. Now, by religion is meant the Vedānta; the applications must vary according to the different needs, surroundings, and other circumstances of different nations. You will find that, although the philosophy is the same, the Śāktas, Śaivas, etc. apply it each to their own special cult and forms.



## A LETTER OF SWAMI RAM TEERTHA\*

F. C. COLLEGE, LAHORE  
16TH NOVEMBER 1897

Jaya Mādhava Rādhāramaṅjī kī Jai

Shri Maharaj Ji,

Pranam. After ten days stay here, Swami Vivekanandaji left (for Dehra Dun) yesterday. Here three lectures were delivered (by him) in English. Swamiji was the guest of the Sanatan Dharma Sabha. He stayed at the Haveli of Raja Dhyān Singh. The first and the last lectures were delivered at the same place. ... Three *sannyāsins*, perhaps from Bengal, and three Englishmen, one of whom was a lady, accompanied him. One of these Englishmen was a reporter who took down his lectures as they were delivered and was sending despatches to the editors of *Brahmavadin* and other papers. This Englishman is most able and is deeply devoted to Swamiji. The other two Europeans are very rich and generally they bore all expenses of Swamiji. Both the first and the second lectures have already been published in *The Tribune*. It is likely that the third lecture may also be published in that paper. The subject of the first lecture was 'Principles Common to All Hindus'. ...

The second lecture was on 'Bhakti'. ... The third lecture was on 'Vedānta'. It lasted for full two and a half hours. The listeners were so deeply engrossed, and it created such an atmosphere, that all idea of time and space was lost. At times, one acquired absolute realization of oneness between oneself and the cosmic Ātman. It struck at the roots of ego and pride in self. In short, it was such a grand success as is seldom seen. Whoever heard this lecture (listeners were in large number), for all of them—whether Englishmen, Christians, or Muslims, or Arya Samajists, or Brahmo Samajists—it proved an eye-opener. The principal and other European professors of the Mission College were also highly benefited.

There were public lectures, no doubt, but Swamiji's knowledge is not reflected so truly in lectures as in his conversations. I listened to his talks with leaders of Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj in private. He answered their questions in such a devastating manner, and presented before them such a picture of their principles, that they returned completely downfaced. And the beauty lies in the fact that he never uttered a single word which could offend their feelings. In a very short time, he got them to admit the baselessness of their own principles. ... Swamiji supported well the Purāṇas, *śrāddha*, and *mūrti-pūjā* in public. Swamiji is a good *paṇḍita* also. He remembers a large number of Śrutis by heart. He has studied Śāṅkara-Bhāṣya, *Śrī-Bhāṣya*, and Mādhva-Bhāṣya on Śārīraka Sūtras. He is going to read the Aṅu-Bhāṣya of Vallabhācāryajī. He has a mastery over Sāṅkhya and Yoga. Of *Bhagavad-Gītā*, he is a great exponent. And he sings most melodiously. ...

(Your) servant  
'Ram'

\* Translation of an Urdu letter written to Pandit Din Dayal Vyakhyana Vachaspati.

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND INDIAN RENAISSANCE

BY SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

[Swami Tapasyananda is the Head of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trivandrum, Kerala. In this comprehensive article, he describes the condition in which India was at the time of Swami Vivekananda's advent and tells how his appearance made a vital contribution towards the national revival, which, as we see, is yet in progress and so still needs the inspiration of the Swami.]

In pre-independent days, the Indian mind was always accustomed to identify patriotism with political action. There was probably much justification for this identification at that time, as the struggle against British imperialism was considered to be the main patriotic duty of all Indians. The lingering memory of that tradition seems to be unconsciously persisting in the nation's mind even today, although the circumstances that justified this identification have passed. This apotheosis of politics has resulted, as its corollary, in an unconscious, and unhealthy, tendency to forget the need of the vitalizing influence of the patriotic sentiment in other fields of life. In fact, many of the national problems that face us today can be solved only when the nation recognizes that the leavening and stimulating influence of patriotism is no less needed in the educational, scientific, industrial, administrative, religious, and other fields of life than in the political field.

The special importance of Swami Vivekananda to the national life of India today lies in the fact that, in him, we find an ideal of patriotism of the highest order without any connection with political action or with political organizations. In fact, he lived at a time when political unrest and agitation had not started in this country. The national life of India was then dominated by a sense of dismay and inferiority arising from military defeat and political subjection by Western powers. Indians of that generation were therefore doubtful of the essential soundness of the very foundations of their ancient culture; for, if these were sound, why should the

structure of empires and social organizations based on them crumble to pieces so easily before the might of the young nations from far off West? This questioning led to a displacement of national pride and self-confidence by a base spirit of imitation of the West and an uncritical admiration for all that came from that quarter. From military and political suppression India was rapidly heading towards utter spiritual defeat and death. Swami Vivekananda was the mighty spirit that cried halt to this process of decline and degeneration, and by restoring self-confidence and generating a fresh hope and faith, started the country on a new career of resurgence that gradually culminated in the national movement and the attainment of political independence.

How did he achieve this? If we study his life, we find that the secret of his greatness lies in his uncompromising championship of the spiritual ideal of India and his fervent patriotism centering round this ideal. He was not a political leader with any party backing, but only a *parivrājaka*, a Hindu *sannyāsin* and ascetic. He was, no doubt, educated in a modern university and had imbibed deeply the scientific and critical spirit of the West. But his secular education was supplemented by his discipleship under his divine teacher, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who embodied in himself the whole of Indian spiritual tradition. Discipleship under him consisted in practising the spiritual disciplines developed by the sages of India for overcoming the barriers of the body and the mind, and attaining intuitive experience of the universal Spirit, which is the origin and



support of everything. The culture of India holds the development of this intuitive experience as the ultimate purpose of life and considers all other values as only subservient to it. As against the criticisms of Indian culture for all its failings at the social and political level that the Westernized intelligentsia of the time were making, the life of Ramakrishna stood as a silent but powerful rejoinder and as a vindication of the essential truth and soundness of the basic values of Indian culture mentioned above. Before he met his great Master, Swami Vivekananda, too, had in his early youth imbibed the Westernized outlook of the intelligentsia and developed into a powerful critic of Indian society and ways of life. But symbolic, as it were, of the future turn of thought, the impact of Ramakrishna on the mind of Vivekananda, the young talented representative of modern India, produced a complete revolution in the cultural outlook of the latter. Vivekananda realized that, in India's ideals of devotion, renunciation, knowledge, and realization, one found the high watermark of human culture and that these formed the only secure foundation of an enduring civilization. He recognized that, in so far as India still remained true to them and could produce men of the calibre of Ramakrishna even in the midst of her political and economic downfall, her soul must be intact and full of vigour and vitality, and that, so long as she remained spiritually undefeated, her revival and readjustment to the conditions of the modern scientific age were only a question of time and wise leadership. As a confirmation, as it were, of the lesson he learnt at the feet of his Master, came to him the intimate experience of the physical and mental life of India at all its social levels—from the peasants in the fields to the Maharajas in the palaces, from the wild tribes in hills to the sophisticated minds of Westernized Indian cities—during a decade of wandering from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari as a *parivrajaka*. These experiences of the spiritual India in

the Master, in the people, and in the intuition of his own soul, filled him with a passionate love for the land and its culture, with a conviction of its undying vitality and its important role in shaping the future of mankind.

It was thus, with his spirit expanded, intensified, and inspired by a burning faith in the past and future of India, with a Messianic fervour radiating from his transfigured personality, that Swami Vivekananda, the unknown monk, burst all of a sudden on the world platform when he appeared at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893.

The past generation of Indians, as also those of us who could recreate the history of those days in our minds, could feel the thrill of patriotic pride when this young Indian, standing unambiguously and uncompromisingly for the Indian outlook on life, received the ovation of the powerful and prosperous West at the very start of his memorable speech at the Parliament of Religions, wherein he addressed the audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. The triumph of the Swami at the Parliament of Religions and, in his subsequent life, as an interpreter of Indian thought to the West, was a landmark in the cultural history of this land. It demonstrated to the Indian of those times that the 4000 years of his national history was not a movement in the false direction, that his culture and institutions were not the lifeless fossils that they were interpreted to be by his foreign conquerors, and that, if these were expressed in life and properly expounded as the Swami did, they were vital enough to initiate a new renaissance in human society. Thus the Swami restored to India the faith that she had lost in herself and her destiny. From being a mere suppliant at the door of the great nations, he awakened her to a consciousness of her essential role in world history as the spiritual teacher of mankind. The sense of a national destiny and confidence in the power of a people and their tradition are the essential requisites of a national revival, and in so far as Swami Vivekananda's



appearance made a vital contribution in this direction, it was as important an event in the development of Indian nationalism as the Dandi March, the Quit India Campaign, and the achievement of Indian Independence.

The rest of his life was spent in interpreting the spiritual ideals of India in the context of modern life, and in inspiring his countrymen with that love of India of which he himself was an embodiment. From one end of the country to the other he travelled exhorting the people of India to a new gospel in which the traditional spiritual values of the land mingled with an intense patriotic spirit. 'For the next fifty years', he declared, 'this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Motherland, India. Let all other vain gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. . . . What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all around us, the Virāt? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods. . . . What is needed is *cittaśuddhi*, purification of the heart; and how does that come? Through worship. And the first of all worship is the worship of the Virāt—of all these around us.' Thus did he link worship, the central ideal of all religions, with his patriotic gospel.

The nationalism he preached was not, however, of the chauvinistic type which declares, 'My country right or wrong', but one which aims at the good of all through India's good. His study of world history had convinced him that each nation or culture had one theme, one central note, round which its life was organized and which formed its special contribution to the sum total of human culture and achievement. When any nation transgressed from its national ideal and ceased to fulfil any special purpose in the life of the world as a whole, it perished in course of time, and nature eliminated it from the face of the earth. That was what had

happened to all the ancient nations of the world except India where society has more than 4000 years of continuous history. And India has been an exception to this rule only because she has still the vitality to play her part in world history, that being the contribution of spiritual insight and guidance to mankind. According to him, the special genius of the Indian people lies in their aptitude to actualize the truth of God and Ātman and to order the physical life on the basis of this realization. All epochs of national revival and cultural expansion in India have been preceded or accompanied by the appearance of great spiritual personalities and a general rise in the standard of the spiritual life of the people, and the material developments were only the off-shoots of it. The Swami, therefore, emphasized always that, if India is really to rise to a high status among the nations of the world, it will not be sufficient for her to imitate and re-echo the political and economic ideologies of the English, the Americans, or the Russians. While we have to learn the material sciences and the principles of technology and organization from the nations of the West, we must continue to have a firm hold on the spiritual ideals inculcated in the *Gītā* and the Upaniṣads. The teachings contained in these great spiritual texts are the universal principles relating to the inner growth of man, and are thus to be distinguished from dogmatic theologies and creedal religions of organized churches and traditions. There is nothing incompatible in them with the teachings of science and with the modern ways of social and industrial organization. To lose sight of these spiritual values in the pursuit of wealth and material glories and to live in complete disregard of the spiritual foundations of life, will be the denial of India's past and the stepping stone to her destruction as a cultural entity.

The Swami's defence of India's past should not, however, be interpreted to mean that he had any sympathy for that mentality, born



of false pride, which indulges in boastful and sentimental claims of bygone glories as a compensation for present downfall and degradation. Thinking on the past is beneficial only as a spring-board for the future, never as an opiate for deadening higher aspirations and efforts. He recognized that man in the West has effected a revolution in life through the discoveries of science and its application to human well-being. In the attainment of power, in the creation of wealth, and in the amelioration of suffering, the contributions of modern science have to be reckoned as unparalleled. It is also science and its application to production and communication that have made the modern industrial civilization possible, giving a chance to the common man to assert his manhood and be something more than hewers of wood and drawers of water. These achievements of the modern spirit were given full recognition by Swami Vivekananda, and he wanted India of his times, just emerging from pre-scientific and medieval conditions of life, to participate fully in the achievements and aspirations of the new age. He even envisaged the idea of a monastic order devoted entirely to scientific research; he dreamed of a time when machines would take up all work involving tiring drudgery and leave man sufficient leisure for higher pursuits. So great was his faith in science and its possibilities. But he knew also the limitations of science—that it puts only power into the hands of man and not wisdom, that it imparts knowledge of nature, but not love for one's fellow beings, that it enlightens us on the mechanism of nature, but gives no insight into its mystery. He felt that spiritual insight alone could ennoble and expand the heart of man. It is only in the encounter with God that the noblest part in him is enkindled. Without this consciousness of the divine spark in him, the power which science has armed him with will only make him an exalted animal with unlimited powers of destruction. It was the conviction of Swami Vivekananda that the ancient heritage of

India could alone supplement the world civilization with what it is lacking in the spiritual field, and it was for this reason that he reminded Indians of that heritage of which they were the custodians. In his eyes, therefore, Indians would be but throwing away the baby with the bath, if they abandoned that part of the heritage, too, in an indiscriminate flair for modernity and in a rapid process of readjustment to the new situation brought about by the industrial age.

It was not only in the matter of pursuing science and applying it to life that the Swami was modern, but also in his sympathy for the social aspirations of the new age. He never exhorted his countrymen to go back to the Vedic times, but asked them to march in the vanguard of progress. Today, Indian leaders are speaking of the socialistic pattern of society. Swami Vivekananda spoke of it as the ideal for his country more than sixty years back. He declared he was a socialist, not because socialism was perfect, but because all other forms of social organizations had been tried and found miserably wanting, and it was therefore worthwhile trying the new social ideal. He felt that the weakness of India lay not in its want of talents, but in the terrible backwardness of its masses, and that, unless they were educated, enriched, and made self-conscious, the Indian nation cannot rise.

The Swami declared that his mission in life was to endeavour to restore what he called 'manhood' to the people of India. By this he meant that neither by mere indulgence in thoughts over past glories, nor by base imitation of the West and uncritical acceptance of all that came from that quarter, neither by a mere gospel of asceticism exalting poverty, nor by exclusive pursuit of material prosperity and an increasing standard of life, can the national life of India be resuscitated. India must grow strong, and real strength will come only when India becomes spiritually self-conscious while simultaneously improving her material condition by the application of science and modern technology.

# EDUCATIONAL IDEALS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY DR. B. KUPPUSWAMY

[ Dr. B. Kuppuswamy, M.A., Ph.D., is the Joint Director of the India International Centre, New Delhi. In this article, he analyses and discusses the thinking of Swami Vivekananda in regard to the problems of education in India as he saw them in the last decade of the nineteenth century. ]

While it is true that the great Swami Vivekananda never set out to write an elaborate discourse on education, the publication of Shri T. S. Avinashilingam has clearly shown that he was greatly concerned about education and spoke and wrote about it on many occasions. The compilation clearly shows the depth of insight, the vividness of feelings, and the vastness of the vision of Swamiji regarding education, its ideals, and their implementation. Most of the sentences compiled read as if they are aphorisms. An attempt is made in this paper to analyse and discuss the thinking of Swamiji with respect to the problems of education in India as he saw them in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

## AIMS OF EDUCATION

'The end of all education, all training, should be man-making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow' (7).<sup>\*</sup> Thus Vivekananda conceived of education neither as an ornament nor as an accomplishment but, essentially, as a means to make a man grow to his full stature to stimulate him to develop the best in him. According to him, 'Liberty is the first condition of growth' (5). He was convinced that individual as well as national growth depends upon *śraddhā*. In his own words: 'The idea of true *śraddhā* must be brought back once more to us. The faith in our own selves must be reawakened, and then only, all the problems which face our country will gradually be solved

by ourselves. What we want is this *śraddhā*' (13). Thus the aim of parents as well as the teacher should be to make the child and the student develop faith in himself, in his abilities, aptitudes, and talent.

'To preach the doctrine of *śraddhā* or genuine faith is the mission of my life. Let me repeat to you that this faith is one of the most potent of factors of humanity. First have faith in yourselves. Know that, though one may be a little bubble and another may be a mountain-high wave, yet behind both the bubble and the wave there is the infinite ocean' (14). We see here the reason for his personal success as a teacher of Vedānta as well as of national resurgence. It is because of this that he realized the value of encouragement, which is the most important thing in the parent-child relationship, teacher-student relationship, superior-subordinate relationship, and so on. He wrote: 'We should give positive ideas. Negative thoughts only weaken men. Do you not find that where parents are constantly taxing their sons to read and write, telling them that they will never learn anything, and calling them fools and so forth, the latter do actually turn out to be so in many cases? If you speak kind words to them and encourage them, they are bound to improve in time. If you can give them positive ideas, people will grow up to be men and learn to stand on their own legs' (4-5).

Another important aspect of education according to the Swami is its function in character formation: 'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own

<sup>\*</sup> The numbers within brackets refer to the pages of *Education*, by Swami Vivekananda, compiled and edited by T. S. Avinashilingam, Ramakrishna Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, 1958 (fifth edition).



feet.' Consequently, he condemned the equation of 'education' with 'information'. He wrote: 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. If education were identical with information, the libraries would be the greatest sages in the world and encyclopaedias the *gisis*' (6).

Thus we find that Swami Vivekananda's voice is even today authentic. We find that his statement on the aims of education and his condemnation of the practices of education of those times are valid even after sixty-five years.

#### EDUCATION AS MANIFESTATION VERSUS EDUCATION AS GROWTH

One of the most often quoted statements by Swamiji asserts: 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man. . . . Knowledge is inherent in man. No knowledge comes from outside; it is all inside' (1). This position was developed by him probably for two reasons: there is, first of all, the philosophical reason based on the Advaita position of the concept of *āvaraṇa*; secondly, he writes: 'A child educates itself, the teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching' (4). He draws the analogy of teaching a child and the growth of a plant. Just as a plant develops by itself, the child also teaches itself. The function of the parent and the teacher is limited to the removal of obstacles, like an horticulturist who loosens the soil, so that the seed can sprout easily and puts the hedge around it, so that no harm comes to it from outside. It is not necessary in this paper to discuss the validity of the philosophical doctrine. We can only point out that this idea that knowledge is all inside is not supported by Swamiji himself in other places. Elsewhere, he writes: 'Teach-

ing must be modified according to the needs of the taught' (5). This statement has the clear recognition of the individual differences among the children and the necessity on the part of the teacher to recognize these individual differences and plan his lessons in such a way that he is able to do his best for person or the group in his charge. Further, the Swami also writes, as we have noticed above: 'We should give positive ideas. Negative thoughts only weaken the man' (4). Here also, there is a clear recognition of the influence of the parents and the teacher on the growth of the individual. He recognizes that 'people will grow up to be men and learn to stand on their own legs, if they are given positive ideas' (5). Thus it looks as if Swamiji is contradicting himself. But from another point of view, it may be shown that there is really no contradiction. Achievement is dependent both on the abilities of the individual and the environmental opportunities he has. The existence of mere opportunities without ability will be useless. The rich man or the highly educated man whose child is feeble-minded feels terrible frustration. All his attempts to provide the best teachers and the best educational equipment lead the child nowhere, because the child has a low grade ability. On the other hand, millions of children in the rural areas and among the lower castes in India must have had very high grade ability, according to the expectations based on the normal probability curve. But they have not been able to grow up and realize their potentiality. So, from this point of view, we can see that Swamiji is trying to put the two ideas separately and this creates the impression that he is contradicting himself. This is due to the fact that Swamiji spoke and wrote occasionally in different circumstances so far as education was concerned; his field was philosophy and religion. It is for us to remove the apparent inconsistencies by putting together the ideas which he put forth on different occasions, each valid in itself.



### CONCENTRATION AS THE ESSENCE OF EDUCATION

Being a *yogin*, he has been able to show that 'from the lowest man to the highest *yogin*, all have to use the same method to attain knowledge'. 'There is only one method by which to attain knowledge, that which is called concentration. 'The very essence of education is concentration of mind' (9). He has tried to show that every human being engaged in any kind of occupation functions better if he concentrates. The parents at home and the teacher in the school, without their knowing, continually give training in concentration to the children. But as Swamiji has pointed out, ninety per cent of the energy of an ordinary human being is wasted through lack of concentration. He shows that the difference between the animal and the human being is the difference in the ability to concentrate. While a dog or the monkey responds to the diverse stimuli that impinge on it, the human being is able to disregard the irrelevant ones. Consequently, he is more efficient. The difference in achievement among the various human beings can also be explained on the basis of the difference in the ability to concentrate. Many human beings with high education, implying by this that they have high ability, however, end up with very poor achievement in life. Among the various causes responsible for this poor performance, undoubtedly, lack of concentration and inability to continually apply one's mind on a certain task is one of the important reasons. The work of a teacher is to help the child develop interest in the task undertaken so that he can do it with concentration. One of the important things about the human being is that achievement is very closely connected with the formation of habits. With high ability, but without proper habits of work, the level of achievement of an individual will be very low.

In a very realistic manner Swamiji writes : 'As soon as I try to call on my thoughts and concentrate my mind upon any one object of

knowledge, thousands of undesired impulses rush into the brain, thousands of thoughts rush into the mind and disturb it. How to check it and bring the mind under control is the whole subject of study in *rāja-yoga*. 'The practice of meditation leads to mental concentration' (11). That is why he even goes to the extent of asserting that 'the very essence of education is the concentration of mind, not the collection of facts' (11). What he means is that education should help us to develop concentration, and once we develop the ability to concentrate, we can use this to study any problem, gather the necessary data, and come to the right conclusions.

In passing, we may refer to the very interesting observation which Swamiji makes regarding the difference between the ancient Greeks and the ancient Hindus : 'The Greeks applied their concentration to the external world and the result was perfection in art, literature, etc. The Hindu concentrated on the internal world, upon the unseen realms in the self, and developed the science of Yoga' (11). Even today, we find that there is this difference between the modern Western approach to life and the modern Indian approach to life.

### CHARACTER IS AGGREGATE OF TENDENCIES

According to Swamiji, every experience leaves behind its impression (*vāsanā* or *samskāra*). He asserts that our tendencies for action as well as thought are based upon the results of our actions, depending upon the way they have led to pleasure or pain. 'The character of any man is but the aggregate of his tendencies, the sum total of the bent of his mind' (15). 'Every work that we do, every movement of the body, every thought that we think, leaves such an impression on the mind-stuff, and even when such impressions are not obvious on the surface, they are sufficiently strong to work beneath the surface, subconsciously. What we are every moment is determined by the sum total of these impressions on the mind. Each man's



character is determined by the sum total of these impressions' (16). The Swami tries to show the difference between the effects of good impressions and bad impressions. While the effects of good impressions are helpful, the effects of bad impressions are disastrous. As he puts it: 'If a man continuously hears bad words, thinks bad thoughts, does bad actions, his mind will be full of bad impressions; and they will influence his thought and work without his being conscious of the fact. In fact, these bad impressions in him will be always working. The sum total of these impressions in him will create the strong motive power for doing bad actions. He will be like a machine in the hands of his impressions' (16-17). Is this position psychologically sound? Are there differences between good impressions and bad impressions? Secondly, if there are such differences, how do they arise? To put it briefly, good acts are acts which are in conformity with the norms of the group in which an individual is brought up. Conformity of behaviour is what is expected. The behaviour that goes against the social norms leads to conflict within the individual and conflict between the individual and the group. Swamiji clearly shows that the individual who is continually suffering from internal and external conflict will be like a machine mechanically doing acts losing his ability to control himself, to direct his actions.

His observations regarding the individual with bad habits are very interesting and very valid. 'The only remedy for bad habits is counter habits' (18). Thus he fully recognizes that good actions as well as bad actions are merely the results of habit formation. The parent or the teacher who is confronted by mean behaviour of the child must look at it from a very detached point of view and try to study how the bad habit was formed, instead of becoming angry with the child or looking upon the child as a monster, or his behaviour, as a result of fate. As the Swami says: 'Character is repeated habits and re-

peated habits alone can reform character' (18).

#### QUALITIES OF THE TEACHER AND THE TAUGHT

Swami Vivekananda, in the course of his speeches and writings, has described very vividly the conditions that are necessary for success as a pupil and as a teacher.

The pupil must have purity—what is called the *trikarāṇaśuddhi*, purity in thought, speech, and action. This is the ancient tradition in India which requires the pupil to be a *brahmacārin*. Secondly, he must have the real thirst for knowledge; in other words, he must feel the need to know. Unless this felt need is there, all the other conditions of the curriculum, school building, the qualifications of the teacher—all these will be of no avail. Thirdly, there should be perseverance. This is a very important pre-condition for success in education. Unless the child or young man persists in the way in which a little child of one or two years of age persists by repeating in order to master the new word or the new movement, there cannot be any achievement. All these conditions imply that there should be self-control and self-restraint. He writes: 'All outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away; it will not cause power to return to you; but if restrained, it will result in development of power' (33). This depends upon the control of the internal and external senses.

As regards the qualifications of the teacher, it is probably to be assumed that, since a teacher is always a student, he must have all the characteristics of the student described above. Besides these, the Swami speaks of three other conditions: The teacher should not merely have information about a particular field; he must also be alive to the significance of his field of knowledge. To quote Swamiji: 'The teacher who deals too much in words loses the spirit' (31-32). Secondly, the teacher has to influence the pupil. According to Swamiji, the function of the teacher is neither communication of in-



formation nor mere stimulation of the intellect; it is a matter of influencing the pupil so that he is transformed. As we have seen already, the chief aim of education is one of development of the personality. Here Swamiji makes a very significant contribution. According to him, we influence others and we are influenced by others. This interchange is something which goes on incessantly, and this is something which is the most important thing in the school, particularly in the teacher-pupil relationship. As he writes: 'Words, even thoughts, contribute only one-third of the influence in making an impression, the man, two-thirds' (21).

He shows how the great leaders of mankind are unique, not with respect to what they thought and taught, but in the way in which they have influenced the people during the times they lived and long after. Every teacher must bear this fact constantly in the background of his mind. It is only then that he can be a successful teacher and fulfil his purpose as a teacher.

Finally, according to Swamiji, the teacher must have pure motive. 'The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive, for money, name, or fame. His work must be simply out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large' (32). In other words, no man can be a successful teacher unless there is an element of love on the one hand, and renunciation on the other. It is well to bear in mind that this love should not be towards a particular individual. The teacher with partiality in affection ends up in provoking jealousy and ill feelings. The teacher must develop an art of loving all his pupils with impartiality. This is rather a difficult thing to develop, to love and yet to be impartial.

#### MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AND KNOWLEDGE OF LANGUAGES

Swamiji was interested in the secular as well as religious education in India. He wrote: 'Therefore, the ideas must be taught in the language of the people' (70). He

realized that mass education must be through the medium of the regional languages. It is a familiar fact that the Ramakrishna Mission, in the last half a century, has produced religious literature in the various languages of the country. However, the Swami was equally clear in his mind that Sanskrit education should not be neglected. In fact, he asserted: 'Even the great Buddha made one false step when he stopped the Sanskrit language from being studied by the masses. . . . He spoke the language of the people and the people understood him. It spread ideas quickly and made them reach far and wide' (70). Unless Sanskrit education is available to the masses, it will lead to all the consequences of caste system and confine the *elite* to a few families. He was equally insistent that English language and Western sciences should be taught. Thus, while he was eager that mass education should be promoted through the language of the people, he was also eager that the people at large should have opportunities to learn the classical language—Sanskrit, and the modern language—English.

#### EDUCATION AND NATIONAL PROGRESS

He was greatly interested in the common man of India. He realized very clearly that the country where only a few people are educated cannot prosper. He also realized that education should build up character and induce faith in oneself and help him to become an efficient citizen. He wrote: 'The education that does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?' (7). He condemned the Indian tradition which is prescriptive. He wrote: 'In India, it was the king who used to prescribe everything, from Kulinism down to what one can eat and what one should not. In Western countries, the people do everything themselves' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. IV, p. 414). He was convinced that the rapid ad-



vancement of the West was due to freedom of the people to determine for themselves what is good for them. He particularly stressed the Western method, i.e. 'first of all, discussion about the wished-for end, then the carrying it out by the combination of all the forces' (*ibid.*). He contrasted the ancient civilization of India, Egypt, and Rome with the modern Western civilization and showed that the significant difference between the two consists in the gradual spread of education from patricians to plebeians. He wrote: 'I see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men' (*ibid.*, p. 415). He was convinced that the country can progress only by spreading education among the masses. He was also convinced that the country, for its progress, needed technical education, too.

He wrote: 'We need technical education and all else that will develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves and save against the rainy day' (7).

Thus we find that Swami Vivekananda was eager to promote the growth of the Indian nation through mass education, using the language of the people, and through technical education, for the development of agriculture as well as industries. Thus he was very clear in his mind about the dual purpose of education—it should promote the growth of the individual and contribute towards national progress. His vision about the purposes as well as the means of education was very clear. However, it must be regretted that the people at large, even the educationists, are not yet aware of the contribution of this great man towards the theory and practice of education at a time when the country was, as it were, at the threshold of resurgence, in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

---

Whenever Swamiji used the word 'I', he was identified with Brahman, and was referring to the universal Self.

At the Baranagore monastery (when Sri Ramakrishna's *sannyāsin* disciples were still young boys), Swami Abhedananda used to avoid all types of work. He would shut himself in a room and engage himself in study and meditation. He used to say that he did not wish to work. Sometimes he would observe complete silence and not talk for days on end. Some of us used to be angry with him for that. But Swamiji said: 'You people are jealous! You can't bear that somebody is doing something to improve himself. He is not lazily idling his time away. What if he doesn't work? Never mind, you don't have to work either. I'll do everything. Bring all the vessels that are in the monastery, I'll scour them for you.'

The very utterance of the word 'I' would take Swamiji beyond body, mind, and senses. This was his normal state of consciousness. What we have seen in Swamiji! During his last illness, when he was hardly able to breathe, he would still roar: 'Arise! Awake!'

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : THE EXPONENT OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

BY SWAMI SMARANANANDA

[Swami Smaranananda, a member of the Ramakrishna Order, is connected with *Prabuddha Bharata*. In this interesting article, he tries to clarify the oft-expressed doubt whether Swami Vivekananda was a true exponent of Sri Ramakrishna or whether he preached contrary to the teachings of his great Master.]

It was the year 1881. A strange drama was being enacted on the bank of the Gaṅgā at Dakshineswar, four miles north of Calcutta. The Gaṅgā, after her winding journey through hills and dales, was nearing her destination—the sea; but this did not deter her from retracing her steps during high tide, as it were, in order to witness this strange drama. In the Kālī temple of Dakshineswar, a middle-aged man, frail but wiry in physique, with bloodshot eyes, calling often 'Mother, Mother', was the centre of attraction. He was eagerly awaiting the arrival of someone very dear to him. At last, he arrived. And what joy! This dear one was a young man of 18, tall and handsome, and of an athletic build. The old man was mad in the remembrance of God and asserted that he saw Him face to face; the young man heard incredulously, then half believingly, and began to think that the former, though a lovable man, may be mad. Thus began the historic meeting between the two prophets of modern India, who came to her rescue in the hour of her peril—the Master and the disciple—Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Today, when many decades have rolled by since their exit from the arena of this world, we cannot hear the name of the one without remembering the other. Yet, at the time of their first meeting, what a contrast did they present! Whoever could have thought that Narendra, the brilliant graduate of Calcutta University and a man of penetrating intellect, was to be the chief disciple or the 'mad' Paramahansa—unlettered and merged in the thought of God? But that was to be. And, even their life stories present a striking

contrast. There are some who even think that Swami Vivekananda, in his life and work, did not represent his Master's ideas, but his own. Romain Rolland, who wrote the deep and moving biographies of both, begins that of Swami Vivekananda thus: 'The great disciple whose task it was to take up the spiritual heritage of Ramakrishna and disseminate the grain of his thought throughout the world was both physically and morally his direct antithesis.'

Was Swami Vivekananda, in truth, the antithesis of Sri Ramakrishna? In this article, we shall discuss this question and show that, though apparently Swamiji's teachings are at variance with those of his Master, actually, he represented his *guru* in every way and faithfully carried out the task assigned to him.

More than anything else, the very fact that the Master had all along trained Narendra to be his torch bearer and the leader of the future Order to be founded in his name, makes it patent that he was to represent Sri Ramakrishna in his actions and preach his message to the world at large. Then, if we are to accept the opinions of some people, are we to understand that Swamiji did not carry out his Master's behest? Really, that cannot be imagined even. Then, how are we to explain the variations found in the lives of these two personalities? It will not be difficult, at all, if we understand the work of Swamiji as the culmination of that started by the Master. And this was actually so is clear from the words of Swamiji himself: 'All the ideas that I preach are only an attempt to echo his (Sri Ramakrishna's) ideas. . . . Every word that



I have ever uttered which is true and good, is simply an attempt to echo his voice.' Swamiji reiterated again and again, at various places, that his only task was to work out his Master's ideas: 'I am what I am, and what I am is always due to him, whatever in me or in my words is good and true and eternal came to me from his mouth, his heart, his soul. . . . If I can show the world one glimpse of my Master, I shall not live in vain.' Again, in a letter addressed to Swami Shivananda, his brother disciple, in 1894, he writes: 'My supreme good fortune is that I am his servant through life after life. A single word of his is to me far weightier than the Vedas and the Vedānta. Oh! I am the servant of the servant of his servants.'

From all these, it is obvious that Swami Vivekananda's sole aim in life was to complete the task his Master had started. In fact, he had no option about it, for he declared often that Sri Ramakrishna had made him a slave, and though he would like to merge into the bliss of *nirvāna*, his Master would goad him on to work. Even the vision of Sri Ramakrishna, where he saw a divine child (i.e. himself) persuading a *ṛṣi* to accompany him to earth for helping him in his work, is indicative of the divine purpose of the advent of these two spiritual personalities on the Indian scene. Sri Ramakrishna repeatedly declared that Narendra had work to do in the world and reprimanded him when he wanted to merge into *nirvikalpa samādhi*. He declared to others about Narendra: 'The time will come when he will shake the world to its very foundations through the strength of his intellectual and spiritual powers. I have prayed that the Divine Mother may keep his realization of the Absolute veiled from Naren. There is much work to be done by him.' Such declarations of the Master show that he was fully aware of the nature of the work Swami Vivekananda would have to do in the world, and that he had fully instructed him about it.

Sri Ramakrishna's mission on earth—so far

as our human understanding goes and as his disciples have, time and again, declared—was to demonstrate that all religions lead to the same goal and that, through right practice, this goal is realizable. God is as true as any perceived thing, nay, He is much more true than the material things. He carried out this task by practising numerous *sādhana*s not only according to various spiritual paths within the fold of Hinduism, but also through the religious practices of Christianity and Islam. And, for this purpose, he was not in need of any academic education or even Śāstraic training. For he vindicated the truths spoken of in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, and other scriptures through personal experience. He even declared that his spiritual experiences had transcended the Vedas and the Vedāntas. Having acquired such spiritual riches, he felt the need of interpreting his experiences to the world at large. No doubt, when the flower blooms, the bees gather round it of their own accord. But one has to remember that the bees alone make honey, and not others. The disciples who came to him may be compared to these bees. But how can the greatness of the flower be made known to others? This can be done only through the honey collected by these bees. It was this aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's mission in this world that was assigned by him to his *sannyāsin* disciples, the chief among them being Swami Vivekananda.

As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, his body was predominated by the *sattva* element and activity was not for him. He was in need of one, a virile young man, with infinite capacity for activity; one who would have been educated in the modern way and would possess a sharp intellect and the ability to interpret the Master's message to the world in the light of modern science and rationalism and show that such a universal religion as preached by Sri Ramakrishna existed; over and above these, he was to be a person of the strongest moral calibre and capable of the highest spiritual realization. This messenger,



this St. Paul, Sri Ramakrishna found in his 'dear Narendra', who, to describe in his own words, was a 'thousand-petalled lotus' and 'one who had all the sixteen parts, as against Keshab Chandra's one part'.

That this work was assigned to Swami Vivekananda by his Master is clearly stated by the Swami himself. After stating why he preached only the Upaniṣads, he poses the question: 'What is the place of Sri Ramakrishna in this scheme?' And he answers: 'He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England, or the English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life, and I read the meaning.' Elsewhere, during his days of itineracy, he declared: 'I have a great mission to fulfil and I am in despair at the smallness of my capacity. I have an injunction from my *guru* to carry out this mission. That is nothing less than the regeneration of my motherland. . . . India must become dynamic and effect the conquest of the world through her spirituality.' Thus, at every step, Swami Vivekananda was conscious in his life of the task his *guru* had allocated to him.

It cannot be argued that, unlike Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji did not bind himself with various restrictions in his daily observances, nor did he spend years after years in spiritual practice. He did not do these, simply because they were not necessary for him. It may be noted that during his days with Sri Ramakrishna, the Master would be scrupulous about his own food habits or the persons with whom he mixed. But he allowed Narendra to eat anything or mix with anyone; for he said that his chief disciple was a huge forest fire capable of devouring all impurities. It is this very reason, and also the fact that the nature of his work made any such observances impossible, that compelled Swami Vivekananda to act differently from his Master with regard to the preliminaries of life. As for spiritual practices, what the Swami did was not negligible; moreover, Sri Ramakrishna

had already endowed him with the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, and through it, the knowledge of Brahman. Thus he had prepared his chief disciple for the role of the world teacher that he was to be.

## II

We have shown so far that, in his life, Swami Vivekananda represented Sri Ramakrishna fully, though the spheres of action of the two personalities were different. Now, we shall turn our attention to an aspect of the Swami's teaching which is very often pointed out as not in accordance with his Master's. This is the preaching of Advaita Vedānta by the Swami. Sometimes, it is said that Sri Ramakrishna was a *bhakta*, while Swamiji was a *jñānin*; and while the former preached devotion and the realization of God through that as the only aim of life, the latter emphasized the *jñāna-mārga* or the path of knowledge as well as service to humanity. These, they say, were Swamiji's own ideas. Reserving the discussion on service to the next section, we shall here take up the question of this apparent divergence between the teachings of the Master and his disciple.

This kind of difference between the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji is perceived only by those who have a superficial understanding of both; a deeper study would reveal to them the truth in a clearer light. On the other hand, those acquainted with Sri Ramakrishna's life need not be reminded that he practised the Advaita *sādhana* under his *sannyāsin guru* Sri Totapuri, after being initiated by him as a *sannyāsin*; and that, after practising only for three days, he had the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Even after the departure of Sri Totapuri from Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna desired to remain in that state of *nirvikalpa*, and actually remained so for full six months. Apart from these, what one very often forgets is that, along with the attainment of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the Master had another realization, about which Swami Saradananda says in his



*Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Līlāprasāṅga* (pp. 262-63 of *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*): 'He came to feel in his heart of hearts that the realization of non-duality was the ultimate aim of all kinds of *sādhanās*. For, having performed *sādhanās* according to the teachings of all the main religious denominations prevalent in Bharata, he had already been convinced that they all took the aspirants towards the non-dual plane. Asked about the non-dual state, he therefore said to us over and over again: "It is the finale, my child, the acme, which comes of itself in the life of aspirants, as ultimate development of their love for God. Know it to be the last word of all faiths, and faiths are paths (and not the goal)".' The author of the *Līlāprasāṅga* goes on to state that, from the time the Master had this realization, he was imbued with 'unbounded catholicity' and an 'extraordinary sympathy' towards all religions, and that he 'cut to the quick any one-sidedness in religion'.

One may question: Why, then, did Sri Ramakrishna talk of non-dualistic Vedānta very little? Why passages of such import are not found in abundance in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, if he had believed the non-dualistic realization to be the ultimate Truth? The author of the *Līlāprasāṅga* would answer such doubts thus: 'The Master accepted all the doctrines of non-dualism (Advaita), qualified non-dualism (Viśiṣṭādvaita), and dualism (Dvaita). But he used to say: "Those three doctrines are accepted by the human mind according to its progress. ... Finally, where man reaches the ultimate limit of spiritual progress with the help of *sādhanā*, he experiences the *nirguṇa* nature of the Divine Mother and remains in oneness with Her.'" Thus it can be seen that, though Sri Ramakrishna accepted the realization of Advaita as the ultimate goal of man, he fully realized that it was not for everyone to practise it. "Thus, although he was of opinion that Advaita knowledge was the ultimate truth, he always taught the general public, with its hankering for worldly objects, the

truth of qualified monism, and not unoften, even of the love of God after the manner of a dualist.' Each has to take up the path most suited to him, from wherever he stands. Therefore, the paths of Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita have a place in religion, inasmuch as they are helpful to aspirants to take to the spiritual path more easily. It is for this very reason that the Master spoke very little about the non-dual aspect of God when he spoke to householders. And, it should be remembered that the instructions recorded in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* were mostly addressed to householders, and not to monks. When he taught the would-be monks, he took them aside and gave instructions on Advaita. In spite of this fact, we come across statements in his sayings such as: 'Māyā is of two kinds—one leading toward God (Vidyā Māyā) and the other leading away from God (Avidyā Māyā).' He used to say, also, that *ajñāna* is a thorn which has to be removed by another thorn, namely *jñāna*, and then, both are to be thrown away at the end. Through these instructions, Sri Ramakrishna clearly showed that he upheld the Upaniṣadic teaching that *sādhanā* etc. only serve the purpose of removing the *ajñāna* or ignorance, under the influence of which one believes himself to be bound and so on. Actually, no one was ever bound and the *jīva* was never different from Brahman. This idea, too, we can very often find in the *Gospel*: 'What is the relation between the *jīva* and the Paramātman, the individual and the universal Self? If a piece of timber is thrown across the flowing Gaṅgā, one side of the water will appear to be separated from the other. In the same way, the idea of ego makes the soul seem distinct from the supreme Self. Really, there is no division between them.'

Thus it will be evident that Swami Vivekananda's preaching of Advaita Vedānta was not against the teachings of the Master. Besides, Swamiji, too, fully accepted the need of other paths and preached them also. The religion he preached was not cramped within



any steel frame. His was a religion vast as the sky and deep as the ocean. His book *Bhakti-Yoga* is a masterpiece of *bhakti* literature. It may be questioned then, How is it that he preached the Advaita Vedānta far and wide, among the householders in the East as well as the West, if his Master felt that it was not suitable for them? Yes, it is true he spoke of Advaita everywhere. But, we have to remember that when Sri Ramakrishna talked of religion to somebody, it was only for the spiritual transformation of that person. Swamiji, too, had this purpose in view, but not at all times and in all places. For he was fully aware that the Advaita Vedānta was not for the masses. He describes Advaita as 'the fairest flower of philosophy and religion that any country, in any age, has produced, where human thought attains its highest expression, and even goes beyond the mystery which seems to be impenetrable'. But he immediately adds: 'It is too abstruse, too elevated, to be the religion of the masses. Even in India, its birth-place, where it has been ruling supreme for the last three thousand years, it has not been able to permeate the masses.' Then, what was the purpose he had in mind when he spoke of Advaita Vedānta to large audiences, both in India and abroad? He had different reasons for doing so in either place. In India, he found that it was time to get rid of the 'weakening mysticisms' and the 'wailing and weeping' which were having sway over the minds of the masses. He felt that, to infuse strength amongst them, to lead them on to a higher stage from where they stood, the message of the Upaniṣads—'Abhīh'—the message of strength was most necessary. He himself explains this: 'I heard once the complaint made that I was preaching too much of Advaita and too little of Dualism. Ay, I know what grandeur, what oceans of love, what infinite ecstatic blessings and joy there are in the dualistic . . . religion. I know it all. But this is not the time with us to weep, even in joy; we have had weeping enough; no more

is this time for us to become soft. . . . What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills, which nothing can resist. . . . That can only be created, established, and strengthened, by understanding and realizing the ideal of the Advaita, that ideal of the oneness of all.' Thus, it was for awakening the people of India from the stupor they were in, that he preached the vigorous message of Advaita Vedānta.

In the West, he had to face audiences, highly intellectual, critical, and scientific-minded. They had to be convinced rationally, if they were to accept any religion or philosophy, rejecting their mood of agnosticism. This purpose could be achieved only through Advaita Vedānta, which could stand the assault of modern science and the keenest reasoning. And once the audience was convinced about the need of religion and its scientific basis, it was not difficult to persuade them to take up any religious practice—*bhakti*, *karma*, or *yoga*; for Vedānta is not in conflict with any religious system, as it accepts them all as necessary steps to the highest pinnacle of Truth—the oneness of all. Thus we find Swamiji preaching *bhakti* as well as *jñāna* wherever his purpose was spiritual transformation of his disciples—as it was in Thousand Island Park. But when it came to convincing anyone about the need and rational basis of religion, he had to take his stand on the unassailable ground of Advaita Vedānta. And, incidentally, in India too, his preaching of Advaita had the desired effect of awakening the intellectuals, dazed by the glamour of the West, to the glories of India's past.

Lastly, we may draw attention to Swami Vivekananda's remark that he himself was all *jñāna* outside, but all *bhakti* within, while reverse was the case with Sri Ramakrishna. In fact, we find this characteristic of Swamiji becoming explicit in his life at times. In a poignant letter to Mrs. Ole Bull, he writes: 'Peace have I sought, but the heart, that seat



of *bhakti*, would not allow me to find it.' It is therefore clear that Swamiji knew the glories of *bhakti*, but felt it his duty to carry the message of his Master to every nook and corner of the world—the message of the glory of the Ātman—and declare to the world: 'Ye sons of Immortality, arise, awake, and find your true nature.'

### III

Another comment, faintly heard at times, is that, contrary to Sri Ramakrishna's warning that 'building of hospitals and dispensaries' cannot be a substitute for the love of God, Swami Vivekananda started various humanitarian activities in India, through the Order founded by him. These activities may be, no doubt, useful to society, but they are not 'religion'. In fact, this aspect of monasticism was something new to India. Where are we to find justification for this in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings?

We have already shown that Sri Ramakrishna was fully aware that Narendra was destined to do lot of work in life. If these 'works' were not what Swami Vivekananda actually did, what else could they be? Apart from this question, we can find evidence in the teachings of the Master himself that he felt the need of service to humanity with the right spirit as a path to salvation, though he did not believe in humanitarianism, divorced from religion, as the ideal of man.

When, during his wanderings, Swamiji reached Kanva Kumari, the southernmost point of India, he sat on the seashore and pondered on what he had seen all along throughout India—starving people steeped in misery. He was reminded of his Master's words: 'An empty stomach is no good for religion.' And here, at Kanva Kumari, it became clear to him that 'religion was no longer an isolated province of human endeavour'. 'It embraced the whole scheme of things, not only the Dharma, the Vedas, the Upanisads, the meditation, the sages, the asceticism of great monks, the vision of the Most High, but

the heart of the people, their degeneration, their sorrows, their woes.'

Even at the beginning, when he had plans for humanitarian activities, he met with opposition from some of his *gurubhāis*, who challenged him to prove that his ideas were in accord with their Master's. Swamiji flared up at this and questioned their understanding of Sri Ramakrishna and told with great fervour: 'How do you know that these ideas are not in keeping with his ideas? Do you want to shut up Sri Ramakrishna, the embodiment of infinite ideas, within your own limits?' It is well to remember that he got the idea of seeing 'Śiva in the *ṣva*' from his Master, and when he first heard these words from the lips of his Master, he told everyone around him that he had got a new light in life that day.

We should not also forget that Sri Ramakrishna did not teach his would-be monastic disciples only for the sake of their personal salvation; for he could have conferred on them God-realization even by a touch. And, as for the disciples themselves, it was not so difficult a task to work for their own *mukti*. Therefore, the Master's purpose in training his disciples, particularly Swami Vivekananda, was to make them capable of bearing the burden of a great mission—the raising of India spiritually and propagation of the universal religion of Vedānta throughout the world. As the Master said of Narendra: 'The day when Naren comes in contact with suffering and misery, the pride of his character will melt into a mood of infinite compassion. His strong faith in himself will be an instrument to re-establish in discouraged souls the confidence and faith they have lost.'

True to his Master's words, Swami Vivekananda wandered throughout the length and breadth of India to gauge the nature of his work. And he found that India was *not* ready for spirituality. Before religion could be taught to the masses, they required to be fed, clothed, and educated. The old supersti-



tions were to be driven off; the sentimentalism that clouded the minds of people would have to be replaced by the strength-giving message of the Upaniṣads; and the intellectuals under the spell of Western materialism had to be brought back to the fold of their mother religion. To accomplish this colossal task would be the laying of a foundation on which the spiritual edifice of India could be raised. And it was with this end in view, he founded the Ramakrishna Mission. He inspired and called upon the lay devotees to gird up their loins for the struggle ahead. The leviathan of India was steeped in *tamas*, darkness; she was deep asleep. And to awaken her from this, *rajas*, activity was the foremost need. Over and above these, his heart wept for the downtrodden, for the suffering millions, and he cried out: 'I do not care for a religion that cannot feed the hungry millions.' Moreover, Swamiji opened up a new path in the practice of Vedānta—that of service. If the whole world, if all the living beings are, in reality, Brahman Itself, why not serve them and attain the Vedāntic realization of oneness of all existence? If worship of stone images can bring about inner transformation, why not the worship of living images of God? It is in this spirit that he wrote:

"These are His manifold forms before thee,  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?  
Who loves all beings, without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God."

Thus, Swamiji brought forth the grand message of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads from the caves and forests, where it was hidden, to be carried into the field and the cottage and, in this way, harmonized Vedānta with the modern ideal of humanitarianism.

Therefore, the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna got the true interpretation at the hands of his chief disciple—not merely in his preaching, but in concrete action. And this was the beginning of intense activity throughout India for shaping a resurgent India in all fields of life.

#### IV

We have so far dealt with some of the aspects of the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda, regarding which doubts are occasionally raised as to whether they represent the ideas of his Master truly. In this concluding section, we shall merely point out those aspects of Swamiji's life and teachings, which both apparently and intrinsically represent the ideas of his Master.

One such is the harmony of religions. True to Sri Ramakrishna's teaching that so many religions are all like so many paths leading towards the same goal, Swamiji did not hold the brief for any particular sect or religion. Though he represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, his catholicity of outlook was one of the main reasons for his being the most popular figure there. He asserted there with forceful oratory his conviction in a universal religion without limit of time or space. 'There was to be no other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution.' In his paper on Hinduism, the Swami invoked the gods of every religion, and finally, expressed the hope that 'upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: "Help and not fight", "Assimilation and not destruction", and "Harmony and peace and not dissension".'

His spirit of liberalism, too, was a direct legacy from his Master. As it is said in his biography about his period of discipleship: 'Sometimes, Nāren revealed a tendency to fanaticism. Sri Ramakrishna would admonish him: "My boy, try to see the Truth from all angles and through every perspective." This tendency to bigotry disappeared when Nāren realized the oneness of all spiritual endeavour and religious belief.' Thus Sri Ramakrishna weaned away his chief disciple from outright criticism of even the most diabolical of sects. Once when Nārendra went on railing against one of them for a long time, Sri Ramakrishna heard it quietly and



put in: 'Well, well, perhaps, every house may have a back door. Who knows?' And this silenced his rebellious disciple!

Another point Swamiji emphasized constantly was directly in line with his Master. It is that religion does not consist in mere talk, but in realization: 'Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing and acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes.' And, like his Master, he assured

everyone that religion can be realized.

We find, therefore, that Swami Vivekananda represented Sri Ramakrishna in every way. His life was only an extension of his Master's and Sri Ramakrishna's mission on earth found its completion in Swami Vivekananda. The tree of spiritual renaissance which sprouted at Kamarpukur and grew at Dakshineswar, put forth its blossoms in the life of Swami Vivekananda. Let us gather the honey from these blossoms and taste the sweetness of true religion.

---

Through Swamiji, the world has come to know of Sri Ramakrishna. But for him, very few could have understood our Master's genius. . . . We had strong faith in Swamiji's words. I tell you, you must have infinite faith in these two great souls, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and work for them. . . . Where else would you find a holy man like Naren?

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji are the two sides of the same coin. Among us (the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna), Swamiji alone truly understood the Master. . . . It is impossible to understand the Master without understanding him.

SWAMI PREMANANDA

No one can understand the Master properly who deviates from the interpretation offered by Swamiji. . . . We could have understood very little of the Master unless Swamiji opened our eyes.

SWAMI SARADANANDA

The Master's words are not as easy of comprehension as they appear to be on the surface; their meaning is sublime. We, of course, did not think so deeply. He imparted instruction, and we listened without thinking how profound it was. It was Swamiji who pointed this out to us. When he interpreted the deeper significance of the Master's utterances, we would be struck dumb. We, too, had heard them, but without the least thought that they were so profound. That is why I ask you to hear the Master's words and study Vivekananda's life.

SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

Swami Vivekananda was the child of Ramakrishna. It was his blessed Master who, by the magic of his divine touch, brought into play the latent greatness of his soul. Being the most worthy disciple of his Master, he followed the footsteps of Sri Ramakrishna.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

# GOD IN SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S PHILOSOPHY

BY SRI AMIYA KUMAR MAZUMDAR

[ Sri Amiya Kumar Mazumdar, M.A., is the Principal of the Krishnagar Degree College, Nadia. In this thoughtful article, he deals with the concept of 'God' as found in Swami Vivekananda's philosophy, and shows how it harmonizes the ideas of the personal and impersonal aspects of Reality. ]

The celebrated ontological proof of Descartes was refuted by Kant on the ground that the proof involved an illegitimate passage from thought to reality: the reality of God was proved from the *idea* of God. Swami Vivekananda was aware of the hazard of *proving* God through the help of an ontological argument. He, therefore, asserted that the best proof of God's existence lies in the experience (*anubhava*) a seer has of God. This experience is mystical or supra-logical. The Vedic sage proclaimed: 'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have *known* the Ancient One, the supreme Person, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion: knowing Him alone, you shall be saved from death over again.'

According to Swami Vivekananda, this is the best proof a Hindu sage gives about God when he says confidently, 'I have realized the Self; I have seen God'. The Swami, in his younger days, came across such a proof when he met Sri Ramakrishna who answered the Swami's question, 'Have you seen God?' by saying, 'Yes, I see Him more vividly than I see you, and you can also see Him'.

Direct experience of God is the only positive proof of God's existence, not only because other proofs leave a gap between the prover and the proved, but because religion is not a dogma with the Hindus, but realization of the potential divinity of man. Since every man is potentially divine, or to put it in a different way, man and God, the individual soul and the Universal Soul are basically identical, no proof of God short of realization of this identity is of any value.

Vivekananda's conception of God is basically the Vedāntic conception of God—every-

thing is divine—'All this is, indeed, Brahman.' But, while in Śaṅkara's view, there is a distinction between the Absolute and God, in Vivekananda's view the distinction is not absolute. God is the Absolute endowed with *Māyā*, says Śaṅkara, and since the world is eternally negated in Brahman, God as creator of the world is not ultimately real. Hence, from the orthodox point of view, Brahman (Absolute) alone is real, God (Īśvara—qualified or determinate Brahman) is ultimately unreal.

Personal God or Īśvara is a living and dynamic reality according to Swami Vivekananda. 'The difference between personal and impersonal is this, that the personal is only a man, and the impersonal idea is that He is the angel, the man, the animal, and yet something more which we cannot see, because impersonality includes all personalities, is the sum total of everything in the universe, and infinitely more besides. As the one fire coming into the world is manifesting itself in so many forms, and yet is infinitely more besides, so is the Impersonal' (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, 1958, pp. 319-20).

Although the idea of Impersonal God is the highest idea according to the Swami, yet it is true that the concept of Personal God stands on a better base when strengthened by the concept of Impersonal God. A generalization ending in the concept of Personal God can never be universally acceptable. For Personal God must necessarily have attributes. He is all-merciful. He is all-good. Our experience, however, shows that this world is a mixture of good and evil. Therefore, the acceptance of Personal God as the ultimate



Reality entails exclusion of evil and suffering from the domain of Personal God. This means, eventually, acceptance of two realities—Personal God and personal devil, the former being the source of everything that is good, the latter the source of everything that is evil. This metaphysical dualism is not, however, tenable. We see, therefore, that the idea of Personal God is not a true generalization. We have to go beyond, to the Impersonal.

The Impersonal God is unaffected by the problem of evil. The problem of evil is the standing difficulty in a theistic conception of God. If God is all-good and all-merciful, why evil at all in His creation? Again, if God is omnipotent, why can He not remove evil from the world? These are baffling problems. Once we accept the Impersonal God of the Vedānta as ultimate, these problems disappear. According to the Upaniṣads, good and evil are aspects of the same reality; death and immortality are two sides of the same God. Good and evil belong to the relative world, they are phenomenal. What is good for me may be bad for you. The Swami, therefore, concludes that, like every other thing, there is an evolution in good and evil, too. There is something which in its evolution we call, in one degree, good and in another, evil. The Swami gives an example in support of his conclusion. The storm that kills my friend, I call evil, but that may have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people by killing the bacilli in the air. They call it good, but I call it evil.

The Impersonal God is not a relative God, It is the Absolute. It would be wrong to say that It is either good or bad. In fact, It is beyond good and evil.

The Swami asks the question: What is the effect of accepting such an Impersonal Being as ultimate? What shall we gain by such a conception? He replies: "The Personal God will remain but on a better basis. He has been strengthened by the Impersonal. We have seen that, without the

Impersonal, the Personal cannot remain. If you mean to say there is a Being entirely separate from this universe, who has created this universe just by His will out of nothing, that cannot be proved. Such a state of things cannot be. But if we understand the idea of the Impersonal, then the idea of the Personal can remain there, also. This universe, in its various forms, is but the various readings of the same Impersonal. When we read it with the five senses, we call it the material world. If there be a being with more senses than five, he will read it as something else. If one of us gets the electrical sense, he will see the universe as something else again. There are various forms of that same Oneness, of which all these various ideas of worlds are but various readings, and the Personal God is the highest reading that can be attained to of that Impersonal by the human intellect' (*ibid.*, Vol. I, 1957, p. 377).

It follows, therefore, that the Personal God is not swallowed up by, or dissolved in, the Absolute or Impersonal God. Rather, the Personal God is sustained and strengthened by the Impersonal. We should not, however, hasten to the conclusion that there are two Gods. Reality is one: the Personal God and Impersonal God are like ice and water. Ice is frozen water, and when heat is applied to ice, it melts and is transformed into water.

The all-pervading nature of God is the main tune on which the Swami ceaselessly harps. It is not a mere theoretical concept hidden in the scripture, but has to be a living reality. It is with this object in view that the Swami urges that pathway to God is through one's own self. 'I am God'—proclaimed the seers of the Upaniṣads. The all-pervadingness of God is to be realized gradually through realizing the identity of one's own self with one's neighbours, one's motherland, and finally, with the universe as a whole. Once we remember this keynote, it would be easy to follow Vivekananda when he says that the soil of India is his highest heaven. The entire Indian nation is God for Swami Viveka-



nanda and service to the nation is his religion. As the Swami puts it: 'For the next fifty years, this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time being from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything' (*ibid.*, Vol. III, 4th Ed., p. 300).

The Personal God is a reading (of course the highest reading) of the Impersonal or the Absolute. What does it really mean? According to the Advaita Vedānta, the Impersonal God or the Absolute is differenceless Consciousness, one without a second. In the superconscious state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the *sādhaka* realizes his identity with Brahman, his ego is eliminated, and the world of multiplicity vanishes. But how did 'many' or multiplicity arise out of the undifferentiated One? To answer this question, the Advaitist introduces the doctrine of Māyā. The world of multiplicity is *anirvacanīya*, indescribable, for it is neither real nor unreal. The world is not real, because world-cognition is sublated in Brahman-consciousness, nor is it unreal, because it appears and is not anything absurd like the 'son of a barren woman'.

According to Vivekananda, Māyā is not a theory for the explanation of the world, but a statement of facts as they exist. What are these facts? First, that the very basis of our existence is contradiction; that wherever there is good, there must also be evil, and wherever there is evil, there must be some good, wherever there is life, death must follow as its shadow, and everyone who smiles will have to weep and *vice versa*. Death is stalking day and night over this earth of ours but, at the same time, we cherish the fond hope that we shall live eternally. A question was once asked of king Yudhiṣṭhira: 'What is the most wonderful thing on this earth?' The king replied: 'Every day people are dying around us, and yet men think they will never die.' This is Māyā. The increase of knowledge results in increase of misery. The least

amount of material prosperity that we enjoy is elsewhere producing equal amount of misery. This is Māyā. These are facts which have to be accepted. The question 'why should it be so' cannot be answered, because the question itself cannot be logically formulated. It is common knowledge that good cannot always be done through good, but sometimes it has to be done through evil methods. This, again, is Māyā.

The way in which 'māyā' is explained by the Swami has a special significance. And this will be clear if we remember Sri Ramakrishna's teaching on allied subjects. In the course of his conversation with Narendranath at Dakshineswar in 1884, Sri Ramakrishna was explaining the tenets of Vaiṣṇava religion, and after the discussion was over, he said to himself in a semi-conscious state: 'Compassion for creatures! compassion for creatures! Thou fool! An insignificant worm crawling on earth—thou to show compassion to others! Who art thou to show compassion? No, it cannot be. It is not compassion for others, but rather service to man, looking upon him as the veritable manifestation of God.'

On one occasion, when Narendranath had tasted the bliss of *nirvikalpa samādhi*—the highest realization, and implored his Master to allow him to remain in that blissful state indefinitely, Sri Ramakrishna sharply rebuked him saying: 'For shame! How can you ask such things? I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man. This realization will become so natural to you by the grace of the Mother that, in your normal state, you will realize the One Divinity in all beings; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor.'

Vivekananda realized the blissful state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* and yet he lived on the material plane to carry out the instruction of his Master to serve man as manifestation of



God, to raise the humble and the poor to their full stature.

The world was for Vivekananda a reality and not an illusion, since the mission of his life, viz. service of humanity, had to be carried out through the medium of the world. In other words, the world must be there, so that ethical and spiritual endeavours could be fruitful. To educate men, to restore their lost individuality, to raise the Indian masses from abject suffering, to rouse the sleeping Indian nation from indefinite slumber, Swami Vivekananda regarded this world of ours as the vehicle through which his mission was to be fulfilled. It is reasonable therefore to hold that he did not reject the world as unreal straightway.

It would, however, be hazardous to conclude that Vivekananda was not a true Advaitist inasmuch as he did not regard the world as false (*mithyā*). In orthodox Advaitism, also, the distinction is drawn between the *vyāvahārika* (phenomenal) and the *pāramārthika* (transcendental). For Swami Vivekananda, the world was real so long as his mission in life was to be fulfilled. After his work was done, the Swami was convinced that he would transcend the material world and merge in the supreme Oneness.

It is stated in the *Life of Swami Vivekananda* that he practised severe austerities in the springs of Kshir Bhavani, and the change that occurred in his mind at that time was indicated in the following words: 'All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only Mother! I have been very wrong.' Again, the Swami said: 'Since I heard that divine voice, I have ceased making any more plans. Let these things be as Mother wills.' The Swami surrendered himself completely to the Divine Mother and was pining for realization of the Truth.

In one of his letters from California, in 1900, the Swami wrote: 'Bonds are breaking—love dying, work becoming tasteless—the glamour is off life. Now, only the voice of the Master calling—I come, Lord, I come. "Let the dead bury the dead, follow thou Me"—I

come, my beloved Lord, I come. Ycs, I come. Nirvāna is before me. I feel it at times, the same infinite ocean of peace, without a ripple, a breath. . . . Oh! it is so calm.'

It has already been stated that, in the Swami's view, Personal God is necessary for the spiritual aspirant; only, It is not ultimate. Since it is difficult for ordinary seekers after Truth to grasp the Indeterminate and Impersonal God straightway, the aspirant passes through worship of Personal God, which is but a support during his spiritual childhood. Once the highest Truth is reached and the Impersonal is realized, it is no more necessary for the *sādhaka* to come down to worship the Personal God. It follows, therefore, that the Swami aimed at a synthesis of the two great teachings of the Upaniṣads: '*Ekamevādvi-  
tīyam*'—Reality is One without a second, and '*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*'—All this is Brahman.

Swami Vivekananda rejected the analogy that there must be a Personal God as creator of the world since a pot implies a potter as its creator. This argument presents an anthropomorphic conception of God which is not logically tenable. Besides, modern science proves that man's personal comfort, his well-being, and material prosperity are the result of man's exertions, being his conquest of nature, and not God's favour. There is yet another evil connected with the view that Personal God is ultimate. Tyranny and priestcraft have prevailed wherever people have looked upon Personal God as the supreme Reality without caring to know if there is anything beyond. According to the Swami, priestcraft and tyranny go hand in hand. How did priestcraft originate? Some strong men in old times got people into their hands and warned them that they would be ruined if they disobeyed the strong men. They presented religion as something otherworldly and God as supernatural. Priests tyrannized people by extorting from them money and demanding various other things from them assuring them that, by obeying the commands

of the priests, they would enjoy perfect happiness in heaven.

In repudiating the view put forward by the priests that man's sins will be forgiven and he will enjoy happiness in heaven, the Swami pointed out that man is potentially divine and he is not sinful by nature. The only sin that man can commit is to show weakness. Therefore, the fond hope that he will enjoy happiness in heaven through the help of the priests, in spite of his misdeeds, is based on unreality.

The Swami also attacks the tirade against the conception of Personal God as made from the Bauddha and Jaina standpoints. According to the Hindus, belief in the law of Karma is foundational. There cannot be a cause without an effect, the present must have had its cause in the past, and will have its effect in the future. The Hindu says that *karma* is inert and not spirit; therefore, some *caitanya* (spirit) is necessary to bring this cause to fruition. If I sow a seed and pour water suitably, the seed will grow up into a plant, and no *caitanya* would be necessary, so argues the Bauddha. The Jains believe in souls, unlike the Bauddhas, and argue that since human souls are *caitanya*, there is no necessity for a God.

The question that remains to be settled finally is this: How far is it appropriate to use the phrase 'highest reading' in regard to God? Are comparative estimates like 'higher' and 'lower' applicable to the Divine Being who is the supreme Reality? When the Swami used expressions like 'better base', 'highest reading', etc., all that he had in mind was the difference of approach to Reality through ratiocination or discursive reasoning on the one hand, and *nirvikalpa samādhi*,

supreme realization, on the other. The supreme Reality cannot, certainly, be divided into higher and lower, better and worse. An intellectual approach and the intuitive approach to Reality are not, however, antagonistic in Vivekananda's view. Intuition (*anubhava*) is the perfection of intellect or ratiocination. Intuition is intellect purified. Hence the problem 'how can the supreme Reality have two contraries, personality and impersonality' disappears, once we remember that the truly Indeterminate can manifest itself in any manner whatsoever. There is no limit to Its expression, nor is It guided by any phenomenal law. To say that the Impersonal cannot become personal is again to determine the Indeterminate which is a futile attempt. To the ordinary man, this is certainly a mystery. This mystery can be solved not through understanding but through love. Said the Swami: 'Who can understand the throes of the love of the *gopīs*—the very ideal of love, love that wants nothing, love that even does not care for heaven, love that does not care for anything in this world, or the world to come? ... And here, through this love of *gopīs*, has been found the only solution of the conflict between the Personal and the Impersonal God. ... We know that it is philosophical to believe in an Impersonal God immanent in the universe, of whom everything is but a manifestation. At the same time, our souls hanker after something concrete, something which we want to grasp, at whose feet we can pour out our soul. ... The only thing that they (*gopīs*) understood was that He was Infinite Love, that was all. A great landmark in the history of religion is here, the ideal of love for love's sake.'



# VIVEKANANDA ON THE WORLD STAGE

BY SWAMI BUDHANANDA

[Swami Budhananda, a member of the Ramakrishna Order, is at present connected with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York. In this illuminating article, he beautifully deals with the universal message of Swami Vivekananda and what it means to humanity for its real peace, progress, and solidarity.]

On Monday, the 11th of September 1893, in the afternoon, something peculiar happened in the spiritual history of man. The significance of that incident continues to unfold itself in the process of time. The venue was the Parliament of Religions sitting in the Hall of Columbus in the Art Institute of Chicago.

A number of delegates representing different religions of the world had made learned speeches. When it was impossible to put off his turn of speaking, the young monk Swami Vivekananda rose on his feet. Bowing mentally to Sarasvatī, the Goddess of wisdom, he opened his tremulous lips and addressed the vast audience—in which had gathered the cream of America's cultured men and women—as 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. One Mrs. Blodgett, who was one in the audience, relates: 'When that young man got up and said, "Sisters and Brothers of America", seven thousand people rose to their feet as a tribute to something, they knew not what. When it was over, I saw scores of women walking over the benches to get near him, and I said to myself: "Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught, you are indeed a god!"' Much later, Mrs. Blodgett became Swamiji's hostess in Los Angeles, of course, only after she was satisfied that her 'lad' was 'indeed a God'.

Why did these simple words, like 'sisters and brothers' move that sophisticated audience so deeply? Was it a sudden lapse into sentimentality? Was it for anything very new he had said? Such fraternal sentiments had been aired before by other speakers too. And Vivekananda had not yet spoken anything but those five words. It was not,

therefore, the mere words that made the impact. It was the power of the sovereign quality of his being, transmuted by illumination, that passing through those sound waves quickened every soul like a flash of lightning. And they all responded instantaneously. They did not know what he was going to speak. But they surely felt that, at last, here was one who truly was the brother of everybody.

On the first day of the Parliament he spoke only some 476 words, which would not fill even a column of a daily newspaper. But when he had concluded, there was deafening applause again. And, with that small speech, he came to be recognized as the greatest figure in the Parliament.

In the half dozen addresses he gave to the Parliament, the recurring themes of his message were: divinity of the human soul, the oneness of existence, non-duality of the God-head, and harmony of religion. In his final speech, he made that moving and memorable appeal to all religions for 'help and not flight, assimilation and not destruction, harmony and peace and not dissension'.

Swami Vivekananda gave a great message in the manner of one who had divine authority. Considering the newness of his message, it may be said that he was fortunate in having a unique response from the American audience. True, through their Transcendentalist Movement, Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott had already introduced strands of Indian thought to the informed people of America. True too, that Walt Whitman had already echoed some Vedāntic ideas in his *Leaves of Grass*. The invitation of the open

road, of the expanding horizon, and of the unlimited had already reached the mind of the American nation. Apart from this, as Ingersoll claimed, his relentless fight against traditional religions had shaken men's faith in theological dogmas and creeds, and thus prepared people's minds for the reception of Swami Vivekananda's message.

All of these factors, and some more, had undoubtedly created a mental climate in America. But this may not even fractionally explain the cause of Vivekananda's success in America. Indeed, even this word 'success' goes ill with Vivekananda. He never cared for success. If he cared for anything it was, in his own words, 'eternal love and service free'.

Vivekananda did not have it all very easy. There was organized opposition. There were determined vilifications from certain quarters who saw a peril to their self-interests in the growing popularity of the Swami. At this distance of time, we can very well see that it was good that Vivekananda's message had not an easy walkover. The contrary forces were, indeed, helpful like fire which proved the gold. Notwithstanding all anti-propaganda, Vivekananda's message was deeply appreciated by the cultured Americans, uncommitted to fundamentalism and bigotry. This not only proved the general goodness and receptivity of the people of America, but also the fact that this young nation at heart stayed a religious adventurer since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers.

But the receivers' qualities will not fully explain the success of the giver. In the last analysis, we have to seek for the fullness of the explanation in the preciousness of the gift itself, and withal, the greatness of the giver. Here was a message which brought the gladdest tidings of the noblest birthright of man—his own divinity and the inevitability of salvation. By making a unique juxtaposition of mere five words he created a spiritual history. Four of these words were taken from India and one from the West.

'Ye divinities on earth—sinners!' With these words, he struck the mightiest blow on the whole structure of 'soul-degenerating, cowardice-producing, negative, pessimistic thoughts' and set in motion a new wheel of Dharma of spiritual energism, freedom, conquest and creativity, of mastery over nature—inner and outer—of fearlessness, strength, love, and service—in one word, true universalism.

In this message, one not only received the intimation of one's divinity, but also of the spiritual unity of the universe. From such premises of spiritually experienced facts, logically flowed a new ethics for deliberation and action: 'Help and not fight, assimilation and not destruction, harmony and peace and not dissension.' The rationale and passion for human understanding and solidarity was never before or after more convincingly presented in any world forum. In a world habituated to listening to dogmatic voices of 'either or', or patronizing condescension of existing varieties of thoughts, his indeed was a refreshing and wonderfully inspiring message.

But more inspiring and wonderful was the man who gave this message. A saint who has realized the true nature of the Ātman is a wonderful person indeed. So says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*. And Vivekananda was not a saint of the common run. To properly evaluate the quality of the wonder he personified and the profundity of the message he delivered, we have to travel far from Chicago to Dakshineswar in India.

## II

'All the world's a stage,  
And all men and women merely players.  
They have their exits and entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages.'

says Jaques, one of Shakespeare's characters, in *As You Like It*.

Little do we know, though, that on this stage of the world, among actors, once in a while mingle unnoticed agents from above who play their parts in the fashion of men.



They heighten the tone of the entire drama of human existence, and then, suddenly quit the stage, leaving it quickened with a new meaning, mighty and full of glory. Such was the entry and exit of Vivekananda in and from the world stage.

Swami Vivekananda was born in Calcutta on January 12, 1863 and passed away on the 4th of July 1902. The work he did in the short span of 39 years is an amazing record in human history. An exceptionally brilliant student with an athletic frame and robust mind, he met Sri Ramakrishna in 1881, and eventually became his disciple. Under the guidance of his wonderful teacher, this wonderful student attained highest spiritual realization even when he was in his twenties. Sri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886. After the death of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda banded his world-renouncing brother disciples together, and established the nucleus of the monastic order, which later came to be known as the Ramakrishna Order. He travelled on foot all over India—all along practising austerities and making intensive study of scriptures as also of the problems of India and of men. He communed with India's great spirit, and discovered the solutions for India's various problems. He went to America in 1893, represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, worked in America for four years spreading the message of Vedānta from coast to coast, helping earnest seeking people on the path of spiritual life. After returning to India in 1897, he roused the whole nation in self-regenerating efforts which eventually culminated in the freedom of India from British rule. He organized the whole following of Sri Ramakrishna on a broader basis, gave it the character of a dynamic movement, and trained his brother disciples and own disciples for that purpose. In 1899, Vivekananda once again went to America to inspect and inspire the Vedānta movement he had started there earlier. In 1900, he attended the Paris Congress of the History of Religions and returned to India at the end of the same year.

The remaining days of his life were devoted to preaching, teaching, and consolidating the work done. He passed away in 1902 leaving behind him a world-wide spiritual movement.

On the very first occasion, when Narendranath visited Sri Ramakrishna, the master at once recognized that here was a great *ṛṣi* come down to earth to fulfil the purpose of the Divine Mother. To the utter surprise and embarrassment of the young man, Sri Ramakrishna stood before him with folded palms and showing him the regard due to a god said: 'I know, Lord, you are that ancient *ṛṣi* Nara, a part of Nārāyaṇa, who has incarnated himself this time to remove the miseries and the suffering of humanity.'

Then, for five years, went on a fascinating drama of divine love between the teacher and the disciple, the like of which one does not read in the spiritual history of the world. It was not easy even for Sri Ramakrishna to buckle this lion of a disciple. He roared, and showed his paw, and once in a while, gave one or two scratches too. Bondage he would not accept. He would not believe anything which was not demonstrated before his eyes. Sri Ramakrishna had to appear in an unending series of tests like a schoolboy before this exacting disciple.

The teacher had no other alternative but to be infinitely indulgent and forgiving. He was, indeed, afraid lest he should lose this gem, incomparable in the world. In his turn, Sri Ramakrishna tested his disciple more thoroughly, notwithstanding his vision about him.

One by one, many spiritual experiences were vouchsafed to Narendranath, and ultimately, the supreme realization of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*. It was a day of great joy for Sri Ramakrishna when Narendra accepted Kālī, the Divine Mother, as the counterpoise of Brahman, the Absolute. Then he was sure that his beloved disciple had attained that spiritual maturity without which he could not carry the fullness of his message.

Narendra had that traditional aspiration of

remaining immersed in the supreme bliss of *samādhi*. But Sri Ramakrishna put him to shame saying that seeking selfish happiness was not for him. For he had to do the Mother's work. He had to impart spiritual knowledge and remove the miseries of the lowly and the afflicted.

Then one day came about the actual transmission of spiritual powers—the transference of the content of the old container into a new one. Narendranath said: 'I actually perceived a power current of subtle force like electricity entering into me from his body.' And Sri Ramakrishna himself said: 'By the force of this Śakti (Power), you will do many great things in the world, and only after that, you will go back.' 'It seems to me', said the disciple, 'it's that power, which makes me work and work, whirling me, as it were, in the vortex.'

In the making of Vivekananda, his powers, teachings, philosophy, and work had gone forth not only bringing him down from the high realms, not only Sri Ramakrishna's careful training, but also his entire spiritual realization. What Vivekananda spoke and did were actuated by the unerring vision, infinite love, and fathomless wisdom of an illumined saint of a very high order. What is more, he became a channel of God's love for man. This was the meaning of Sri Ramakrishna's becoming a 'fakir' after transferring all his spiritual realizations to him.

Vivekananda was by divine commission and compulsion an awakener of souls and remover of peoples' miseries and ignorance. This explains why the mere utterance of the words 'Sisters and Brothers of America' raised that vast audience on their feet. They, somehow, felt the charge of the prophet's heart behind those words.

### III

The Upaniṣads teach us certain facts about Reality and our relation with It, such as: 'That Thou Art' (*tattvamasi*), 'I am Brahman' (*aham brahmāsmi*), 'This Self is Brah-

man' (*ayamātmā brahma*), 'Brahman is Consciousness' (*prajñānam brahma*). All these statements mean that man, the individual soul, the universe, and God are, in the ultimate analysis, one and the same pure consciousness.

These truths taught in the scriptures were experientially known facts with Vivekananda. Thus the doctrines of the divinity of the human soul, and spiritual oneness of the universe became the very breath of his life, as it were. He, undoubtedly, wore a body, but in that body he played his part on the world stage in a unique way. And this uniqueness of his role consists in the fact that he was all the time flaming in awareness of universal consciousness.

This awareness makes his philosophy of life a very different one from those of the academic philosophers, who do not normally acknowledge him as a philosopher. Nonetheless, he left behind him a spiritually illuminating, intellectually satisfying, and socially uplifting philosophy. In his philosophy, Vivekananda made transcendentalism answerable to human needs and human needs answerable to transcendentalism. His realism is concerned with the reality itself. Hence, it is not different from idealism.

The postulates of his philosophy may be culled at random from his sayings:

(1) He indeed is a *yogin* who sees himself in the universe and the whole universe in himself.

(2) Not one atom in the universe can move without dragging the whole world with it. There cannot be any progress without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world's following in its wake; and it is becoming clearer every day that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or any narrow ground. (Imagine, this was said before 1902.)

(3) I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding



itself apart from the community of others. Whenever such an attempt has been made under false notions of greatness, policy, or holiness, the result has always been disastrous to the one who thus secluded himself.

(4) Each is responsible for the evil everywhere in the world. Not one can be happy until all are happy.

(5) All that unites with the universal is virtue. All that separates is sin. When you hurt anyone you hurt yourself, for you and your brother are one.

Vivekananda discovered and pointed out this one great fact that when the central illumination of life which is the knowledge of the Ātman-Brahman equation is lost, life and civilization become cluttered with contradictions and assailed by conflicts ending into futilities. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda worked in the very heart of human consciousness and strove to awaken the soul of man. He knew it for certain that once the soul was awakened in a man, all contradictions and conflicts between the Absolute and the relative, the past and the present, the new and the old, the head and the heart, science and religion, reason and faith, East and West, my 'doxy' and your 'doxy', my 'ism' and your 'ism' would just vanish.

His illuminative cries were therefore: 'Yield not to unmanliness, O man!' (*klai-byam mā sma gamaḥ pārtha*), 'Ātman is not attained by one who has no strength' (*nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*), 'Arise awake, stop not till the goal is reached' (*uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*), 'Abhāḥ, abhīḥ'—'strength, strength', 'fearlessness, fearlessness'. These Vivekananda dinned into the languid ears of confounded humanity, for he knew that all our sins and sufferings, crimes and cruelties, exploitations

and oppressions in the world originated from fear which was born of the ignorance about the Ātman-Brahman equation.

'Strength' he spoke to the oppressor, the powerful. 'Strength', he spoke to the oppressed and the weak. Strength, he knew, could liberate all—the captives of freedom who make slaves of men; and captives of slavery who make brutes of men. Strength is the realization of oneness of aught that exists.

On this enduring foundation of the knowledge of Ātman, Swami Vivekananda sought to build his edifice of human understanding and solidarity. All other attempts to build on the negation of this foundation are merely building on sands.

Behold Vivekananda, the colossus of the Spirit, as wonderful as his message, rising Everest-like with his head above the clouds and storms of doubts and confusions, with his feet firmly planted in the timeless, his heart spreading over the world like the blue sky, and uttering in deep reverence to the whole of humanity words from his soul:

'May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls.'

Was this a salutation, a bequest, or a prayer? Whatever it might be, on this auspicious occasion of his birth centenary, let us all suck in within our soul, heart, and being, one particle of Vivekananda's dynamic Ātman-consciousness, love for God and men, and nourish it with all love and wisdom. Then whatever life may bring us in from anywhere, at any point of time, we shall be able to face it from that only possible position of true strength, which is Ātman-consciousness.

# THE MONASTIC IDEAL AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY PROFESSOR BATUKNATH BHATTACHARYA

[Professor Batuknath Bhattacharya, M.A., B.L., formerly of Surendranath College, Calcutta, is a regular contributor to *Prabuddha Bharata*. In this thoughtful article, he powerfully upholds the greatness of the institution of *sannyāsa* in the scheme of Indian life and says how Swami Vivekananda not only lived it gloriously in his own life, but also enriched the institution and enlarged its scope with his valuable contributions to it.]

Fervent faith and fearless spirit were the distinction of Swami Vivekananda among teachers of religion. He was truly the lion of a Vedāntist—the Vedāntakesarī—preaching the Advaita cult to an indifferent and unknowing world with a dauntless courage, born of adamant conviction and inspired by his Master's unique life of realization. Hence the perfect clarity and outspoken freedom of his utterances on all occasions. These features affiliate him to the Indian tradition of austere and selfless ascetics, as whose luminous representative—the Hindu monk—he burst upon the world synod of faiths at Chicago. Tribute to his personal achievement in the meteoric career of amazing triumphs, starting from 1893, is reverently offered by all who know the marvellous story. But the concept of *sannyāsa*, which he gloriously lived and upheld, claims to be gleaned from his works and rightly appraised. The monastic ideal is glowingly set forth by him, for he was a witness to the spiritual altitudes occupied by the Indian *sādhus* of his day. He was himself a sturdy trunk of the majestic banyan forest which the nineteenth century saw, but with a rare genius of adjustment to the new conditions of the age. In essence, however, his monastic ideal went back to the sages and saints—the *rṣis* and Brāhmaṇa anchorites—the misty springs of the mighty stream that had flowed through the ages in Bharata down to his own. Indian history, Swamiji envisaged as the record of an unbroken succession of these uncommon flowers of humanity.

The nineteenth century, generally pictured as the epoch of political strife and up-surge, saw in different parts of India at least a score

of these rapt and solemn figures who set at nought earth's riches and glories, wholly subdued their fleshy mould, cared as little for death as for life, and exhibited powers of mind and will which amazed renowned visitors from abroad. 'In the Mutiny of 1857', Swamiji relates, 'there was a Swami whom a Mohamadan mutineer severely stabbed. His Hindu brethren caught and brought the assailant, offering to kill him. But the Swami looked up at him calmly and said repeatedly "My brother, thou art also He" and expired. Thus alone the saintly victim who was vowed to silence could be persuaded to break it in his last breath when a word from him would have justly punished his slayer.' Swamiji flushed with veneration when he spoke of Nag Mahasaya, called the flaming fire of East Bengal by Paramahamsadeva—a householder who was more than a *sannyāsin*, a living embodiment of humility figuring in Sri Ramakrishna's divine drama on earth. Pavhari Baba was a towering figure of marvellous power born of *bhakti* and *yoga*, whose grace the Swami strove to win for a spell of two months in January-April 1886. When for several nights, however, he saw the luminous visions of his own Master, his mind changed. The adoring terms in which he speaks of the Babaji are remarkable, as coming from one of his stature and ample spiritual attainments. The Babaji was one of those, he says, who deny the greater potentiality of one moment above another and insist on every moment in eternity being equal to every other and on seeing the truths of religion face to face, now and here, without waiting for death. Religion to such as he is no motive to social conduct, but



an intense search after, and realization of, truth in this life. Once, when bitten by a deadly cobra, he calmly called it 'the messenger from my Beloved' and rid himself of its poison by his Yogic powers. Melting with love and compassion for all and anxious to serve them, he yet offered himself as the last oblation to his sacrificial fire after years of solitary meditation in the underground cell which led to the Gaṅgā. And he was not the only example in that age of uttermost renunciation and self-dedication. A score of such may be marked out from different parts—those who reveal the inner life, the courses of the spirit of this land. Their history, as poet Tagore remarks, though left out of text-books, makes up the vital core of India behind the troubled dream of her political annals.

This inner history of India during the nineteenth century is yet to be familiarized to the public mind. In Swamiji's writings etc., only a few of the great souls appear, but there were others no less eminent, though not so well-known to the outside world. But he had before his eyes the main divisions of the monastic community flourishing in his day—*sannyāsins*, *yogins*, *vairāgins*, and *panthins*. These were respectively the Advaitists of the Śaṅkarācārya orders, the Yogic adepts, the devotees of Rāmānuja and other dualistic sects, and the followers of the liberal reconciling tenets which had sprung up in the unsettled Muslim period. Bhagavandas Babaji of Kalna was an illustrious Vaiṣṇava, visited by Sri Ramakrishna himself. Lokanath Brahmachary, who passed away in the nineties of the last century, was deeply venerated in East Bengal for his severe austerities and occult powers. Prabhu Jagabandhu was a *bhakta* of simple, yet intense faith and of extensive influence all over Bengal and greatly honoured by Mahatma Sisirkumar Ghose and Premananda Bharati. These were luminaries of the spiritual sky who were eagerly sought out by savants and *litterateurs* of the West in their homely resorts. Ramalinga Swami and Sri Thyagaraja were out-

standing spiritual figures of the South. There was the renowned trinity at Varanasi—the venerable Trilinga Swami, Bhaskaranda Swami, and Vishuddhananda Swami, in whom Śāstraic lore became living truths. Gambhirnath Yogi, another hallowed name that conjures up deep realization and marvellous powers—the comely self-effacing *sādhu* of Gorakhpur, who chose ever to remain in the background, forewent his master's *gaddi* (seat) and meekly and joyfully served the *de facto mahanta* (head) of his sect. Ramdas Kathia Baba—a free soul of utmost holiness, of perfect bodily and mental control—the master of the self-renounced lawyer Santadas Babaji, Sai Baba of Sirdi in Ahmednagar, a symbol of inter-communal peace and amity, whose inconspicuous lodge in a crumbling old mosque drew visitors like Nana Saheb, Chandavarkar, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Balananda Brahmachari, a perfect model of austere purity, and Bholananda Giri of unassuming goodness and abounding love are names to which all reverently bow, though in point of publicity, they cannot compare with Maharshi Devendranath, Keshubchandra Brahmaṇanda, Prabhupad Bijaykrishna, Dayananda Saraswati, or Babaji, the Himalayan *yogin* of inscrutable mystery who, through his disciple, Lahiri Mahasaya, inspired Yogananda Swami of the Yogoda Math and Self-Realization Fellowship. All these lives illustrate that one cannot stick to normal life and yet expect superconscious revelation. They prove the basic truth in Swamiji's oft-quoted saying—'Religion is realization, it is a question of fact.' Religion, as a Western thinker remarks, is the thought which turns fearlessly to search for truth at all costs—prepared for any sacrifice. 'It is a silencer of books which talk too much.'

Unfettered freedom and absolute fearlessness are the prizes coveted in the ascetic mode of life. The recluse seeks release from the bonds and shackles of society, from the needs and failings and weaknesses of fleshy nature. *Mukti* or emancipation, which is his aim, is a



liberty larger and higher than freedom, as Tagore has remarked. It exceeds the demands of individuality in the free world of today. It is the very opposite of the conformism and regimentation inseparable from modern social behaviour—Eastern or Western. It self-imposes a rule and a way of life of strictest integrity and purity and far removed from the jelly-fish existence which satisfies the majority. It is a strenuous upward striving for the vision of the unseen Reality. If civilization is man's elevation from the life of the senses, its summit is *sannyāsa*—austerity and renunciation—the height of selfless existence.

'Alas! for the irony of fate,' wrote Swamiji in a letter from Ghazipur, in 1890, 'that, in this land of Bhagavān Śuka's birth, renunciation is looked down upon as madness and sin.' And in the *Udbodhan* of March 1898, he explains: 'As the objects of commerce are being brought from one end of the world to another, so, as its natural sequence, the ideas and thoughts of different countries are entering and forcing their way into the very bone and marrow of India. Of these ideas and thoughts, some are really beneficial to her, some are harmful, while others disclose the ignorance and inability of the foreigners to determine what is truly good for the inhabitants of this country.' Has the attitude to *sannyāsa* since then changed, has it become more or rather less appreciative again of the aims and ideals of the Indian monastic life? No better exponent of these in the present age can be imagined than Swami Vivekananda and no fitter occasion to hold them up than the Birth Centenary of one who faced the Western world as the representative of the most ancient Order of monks in the world.

The Indian monastic ideal was a product of the cultural outlook and directly stemmed from the social *milieu* distinctively Indian. Of old, as now, political and social power has been here always subordinated to spiritual and intellectual, says Swamiji. The outburst of national life was round colleges of sages and

spiritual teachers. He says on the historical evolution of India: 'I have seen castes in almost every country in the world, but nowhere is their plan and purpose so glorious as here. If caste is thus inevitable, I would rather have a caste of purity and culture and self-sacrifice than a caste of dollars.' The hard core of Indian ethos in Swami Vivekananda, as evinced by these sentiments which are strewn all over his works, was the granite pillar of the majestic human edifice. At a time when an exclusive philosophy of good living and material well-being is being authoritatively inculcated and widely imbibed by the classes and the masses, these utterances may sound a little inane and inapt. But uncompromising was Swamiji's position in this regard. 'Here is the only race where not only poverty does not mean crime, does not mean sin, but poverty has been deified and the beggar's garb is the garb of the highest in the land.' In like accents spoke also Rabindranath: 'Kings and emperors took pride in acknowledging meagrely-clad ascetics as their ancestors.' In 1898, interviewed by *Prabuddha Bharata*, Swamiji declared: 'Our method is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself.' And again: 'The banner of the spiritual cannot be raised too high in this country. In it alone is salvation.' He turns away altogether from the easy compromises and convenient adjustments which irresistibly appeal to frail common flesh and the desire to reap the best of both worlds at the same time. 'How many times I have been asked for a comfortable religion!' says Swamiji, 'Very few men ask for the truth, fewer still care to learn the truth and fewest of all dare to follow it in all its practical bearings. They are used to certain surroundings and have to overcome a huge mass of ancient superstitions, ancestral superstitions, class superstitions, city superstitions, country superstitions, and behind all the vast mass



of superstitions that is innate in every human being.' Truth is one thing and comfort is another, he says with emphasis. *Sannyāsa* sets its face against the degradation of the ideal to the actual—against comfortable religion. The clear light of Truth very few in this life can bear, much less live up to. The glory of Indian asceticism has been the translation to life of a very lofty ideal. And Rabindranath tells us that India, from weakness of heart, never made any great truth a mere matter of words, an impossible attainment, incompatible with the conduct of life.

'These man-gods', says Swamiji of the great teachers of the world, 'are the real gods of all nations and all races. Monachism has been the institution in India to maintain this tradition of human divinity. The one great idea that, to me, seems clear and comes through masses of superstition in every country and every religion is the one luminous idea, that man is divine, that divinity is our nature.' The glory of man's Self is nowhere more inspiringly set out than in the pages of his works. That is why we worship incarnations such as Christ or Buddha. 'They are the most perfect manifestations of the Eternal Self. They are much higher than all the conceptions of God that you or I can make.' A perfect man is much higher than such conceptions. Religion, as the oft-quoted sentence of Swamiji runs, is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man. 'Man is the apex', as he says elsewhere, 'of the only world we can ever know.'

Nothing short of the highest in man satisfied the Swami's idea of religion. 'Be a *ṛṣi*', he exhorts, 'that is the secret of power.' He quotes Vātsyāyana: 'He who has attained through proper means the direct realization of Dharma, he alone can be a *ṛṣi*, even if he is a *mleccha* by birth.' In his outlook of limitless liberalism, *Ṛṣihood* is everyone's destiny, to be a *Brāhmaṇa* is the goal of man's life. Says he in an address to the *sannyāsins* of Belur Math: 'The aim of this Institution is to make men. You must not merely learn

what the *ṛṣis* taught. You must be *ṛṣis* yourselves.' His faith in the ulterior reaches of man's perfection knows no bounds. 'It is my firm conviction', he declares in the discourse 'The Religion We Are Born in', 'that we shall be even greater *ṛṣis* than any that our history presents to us.' And his faith in the infinite perfectibility of man is not a lone sprout of the Indian spiritual sap. It is significant that Sri Aurobindo's vision of the onward spiritual transfiguration of the race and Sri Rabindranath's concept of the human Brahman joined to the Buddhist ideal of *Brahmavihāra*—abounding love and compassion for all life—bespeak the same dynamic faith, although these latter found expression after the comparatively quieter nineteenth century had passed into the war-torn, blood-stained, inly-convulsed second and later decades of the twentieth century. All three, sprung from the same politically submerged human stock, breathe a new cheer, utter an equally rousing call to mankind.

With Swami Vivekananda, *sannyāsa*, *Brāhmaṇahood*, *ḥīvan-mukti*, and *Ṛṣihood* are different terms for the same exalted condition and signify the apex of man's Godward striving and ascent. All these states convey the highest freedom and fearlessness. 'The only religion that ought to be taught', said he, 'is the religion of fearlessness', and his utterances have invariably the same savour. In lashing at social abuses, in exposing the motives of human conduct, in tracing the evolving ideas of godhead, in assessing the good and evil that diverse creeds have in practice yielded, Swamiji speaks in unfaltering accents of candour and impartiality. His standpoint is serene and detached as of an Alpine beholder who, from snowy heights, surveys the plains below or one of God's spies who scans the affairs of mortals and, in men's garb, observes how they keep the laws of Heaven. When a man has reached that state, he is no longer of the world though still in it. He is called *ḥīvan-mukta*, 'living free', free even while living, attached to nought on earth.



though moving in it. He is the highest of human beings, nay, of all beings, for he has realized his identity with the Absolute, he has realized that he is one with God. When you have known that you are He, that there is no difference, entirely no difference, that you are all of Him and the whole of Him, all fear ceases. The term '*sannyāsin*' he explained thus in a Boston lecture: 'He makes a complete renunciation (*sannyāsa*) of all worldly position, property, and name, and wanders forth into the world to live a life of self-sacrifice and to seek spiritual knowledge, striving to excel in love and compassion, and to acquire lasting insight.' And again he said elsewhere: 'He should treat the poor with loving care and serve them joyfully with all his might. To pay respects to the rich and hang on them for support has been the bane of all the *sannyāsin* communities of our country.' As Will Durant has remarked, religions are born among the poor and die among the rich. Elsewhere, Swamiji observes: 'India says: Show your power by suffering; the West says: Show your power by doing. The West has solved the problem of how much a man can have; India has solved the problem of how little a man can have.' In a world shrinking under the weight of growing numbers, the Indian ideal of fewer wants may well become, as in modern scientific humanism, the increasing concern of human economy.

The *sannyāsin's* life is a living protest against the obsession of matter which menaces the mental balance of the race. Materialism and all its miseries, said Swamiji, can never be conquered by materialism. Armies, when they attempt to conquer armies, only make brutes of humanity. He seems to have had a prevision of the devastating shocks and eruptions that, since his time, have twice rocked and shattered the fabric of civilization. 'The whole of the Western world is on a volcano which may burst tomorrow, go to pieces tomorrow', he declared. 'What is the meaning of the progress of civilization?' he

asks, and answers sarcastically: 'It is the successful accomplishment of the desired object by the justification of wrong means.' So also wrote Rabindranath: 'The moral principle which is valid for the individual is to be laid aside, if necessary, in affairs of state; this rule is becoming increasingly accepted.' Swamiji proclaimed his faith not in the ethics of convenience and the norms of comfortable society, but in the absolute morality of self-conquest and self-realization. 'If matter is powerful, thought is omnipotent', runs his resonant sentence. 'The adamant wall that shuts us in is egoism. Get rid of this puny I.' All struggles for the preservation of this illusive individuality are really vices. All struggles to lose this individuality are virtues. Perfect morality is the all-in-all of a complete control over mind. The man who is perfectly moral has nothing more to do; he is free. The man who is perfectly moral cannot possibly hurt anything or anybody. No one is more powerful than he who has attained perfect non-injuring. *Sannyāsa* in the Indian concept and practice has ever aimed at this absolute morality to be realized in life on earth.

Sanskrit poetry excels in devotional verses evocative of this sublime ecstatic unitive experience and the 'Song of the Free' and the 'Song of the Sannyāsin' are Swamiji's poems of a matching quality which vividly describe the world-free, all-renouncing wholly emancipated ascetic, intimately conscious of the oneness of all creation.

'From dreams awake, from bonds be free.  
Be not afraid—this mystery,  
My shadow cannot frighten me!  
Know once for all that I am He!'

'Have thou no home! What home can hold  
thee friend?  
The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed,  
and food,  
What chance may bring. . . . Like rolling  
river free







born and irrevocable, all-forsaking urge (*vidvat*). The uniform motive in all these varieties is personal redemption. Swami Vivekananda reoriented the outlook by his motto: '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*'—for the liberation of self and doing good to humanity. It is the synthesis of individual realization and social regeneration—Vedāntic Brahma-jñāna, fused with Buddhist Brahma-vihāra—the unitive consciousness merging in love, spread in widest commonalty, the bliss of making all men happy.

Under this inspiration, the Ramakrishna Order of monks stood forth as pioneers in relief works, organizers of hospitals and sanatoria, founders of schools, colleges, and *catuṣ-pāthis*, and technological institutes, halls of cultural exchange, and temples of humanities—nobly conceived and superbly executed. The Mission stands today as a synonym for well-trying method, impeccable integrity, disinterested work, self-forgetting care for the glory of the Master, assured success in whatever project it launches. Its field of labour ever expands, resources and materials inevitably pour in on all hands. It seems to have taken its cue from Swamiji's sage counsel: 'The one thing necessary is to be stripped of our vanities—the sense that we possess any spiritual wisdom and to surrender ourselves to the guidance of our *guru*. Truth will never come into our minds so long as there will remain the faintest shadow of *ahankāra*. Complete self-surrender is the only way to spiritual illumination.' The resulting marvels of organization and practical genius, of missionary zeal and secular well-being are the first fruits of the prophetic vision and unerring insight into the seeds of Time—those that would sprout and those that would wither—which proves the world teacher. Says Swamiji: 'Many may become *mukta* (liberated). The whole world seems like a dream to the liberated, but the *ācārya* must have the knowledge that the world is true, or else why should he teach? Again, if he has not realized the world as a dream, then he

is no better than an ordinary man, and what could he teach?' In Swami Vivekananda, this concept of a world teacher became alive and he showed in practice and taught all men this antinomy of a world, at once real and dream-like, and the webs of fancy he wove—of a world regenerate and an India reborn—are proving substantial on the loom of Time. Politics he shunned and disclaimed for the sake of something deeper and more enduring, and history records that many who espoused politics as the means of Indian liberation kindled the fire in their souls at the sacred flames of *tapasyā* or austerity that the Swami relit from the undying embers of Indian *sannyāsa*. He, however, had no illusions about political rights and material prosperity—machines and mansions, the trappings of power, and gadgets of comfort and luxury. As a true son of the Orient, he rated them aright as 'the Golgotha of wealth and power and splendour'—the dazzling shows thrown off by man's soul-force bent on the objects of desire, the fleeting shadows cast on the silver screen of eternity by the power of the Spirit, within which is the abiding Reality.

Indian independence is an historic event, the full import of which is yet to be rightly gauged. It is a challenge and an opportunity—a challenge to the human resources to rise to the ample stature of Indian manhood and an opportunity almost unique to realize the audacious dreams that had nursed and fortified the nation in the struggle for freedom. Among the daring visionaries who outlined the ground-plan of reascent India, none has a higher claim to grateful homage than Swamiji—'the best of men' by his household name and 'the bliss of discrimination' by his monastic name. To regenerate the core of manhood and to rekindle the age-old spiritual flame were alike his objectives, and between the two, he saw an inevitable link. Throughout the history of India, he says on the course of its evolution, a spiritual upheaval is almost always succeeded by a political unity which, in its turn, helps to



strengthen the spiritual aspiration that brings it to being. This nexus between the nation's inner life and outer achievement was stressed by all outstanding leaders of thought and political activity during the century of ferment closing with freedom. It is usual to highlight the successive stages of the struggle, the tussle of power between the rulers and the ruled, the repression and sufferings of the men of the highest mettle. The crown of their glory and the halo of their martyrdom are memories never to fade from the pages of history. But the purity of their impulses and purposes and their unyielding patriotic resolves had more than the usual zeal of freedom fighters. It is notable that the war of liberation in India, in its inspiration and progress, had a religious complexion. The adoration of the Motherland as Divinity, the adoption of the *Gītā* as the gospel of life, the appraisal of India's cultural heritage as a treasure for all time, the touch with *sādhus*, and the ideals of austerity and renunciation which moulded many of the heroic fighters prove this other than wholly secular urge behind their self-sacrifice. The nineteenth century was, indeed, a period of more than political resurgence. As the leviathan roused itself after centuries of slumber and stupor, the socio-religious stir was no less remarkable. For nearly ten centuries, the movements that had shaken the community aimed either at

strengthening orthodoxy or expanding the social fold, more or less regional in character and wholly spiritual in appeal. They were all alike deferential to scriptural authority and a liberal interpretation was the sole instrument of change and reform. These features persisted down the centuries, but the new era demanded a wider scope, a larger freedom, a more comprehensive world-view, an unfettered personal dynamism. In Swami Vivekananda, these new urges found a voice that rumbled like rolling thunder and filled the farthest skies.

India, now independent and making big strides towards the Western standard of civilization, sounds a twofold call to her sons and daughters. Will they be content simply to reproduce the performances of their new exemplars—to exploit the wealth in the earth's bowels and to cover the surface with the fabrics of industry and engineering, averting their faces from the eternal springs, the golden fountain from which all earthly possessions have flowed; or will they care to listen to her special message—the message of the Spirit, sounded by the seers and the saints, the sages and the *sannyāsins*, in an unbroken series through the long corridor of measureless time—the message of the most ancient order of monks in the world that Swami Vivekananda represented at the Parliament of Religions?

---

As for Swamiji, he is our crest-jewel. We do not care a fig even to lay down our lives for his sake. We shall feel thankful if we can but serve him even with our heart's blood. How can you ever understand what Swamiji is? ... Swamiji was a seer with a distant vision. He knew what would happen in the future, and therefore formulated these rules for the guidance of the Order. The more we discuss his words and try to practise them in life, the better for us.

SWAMI SHIVANANDA

# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VISITS TO ALMORA

BY MRS. GERTRUDE EMERSON SEN

[ Mrs. Gertrude E. Sen, who is a well-known writer and author of many valuable books, is living in Almora, and is a very close friend of the Ramakrishna Ashrama there. This illuminating article picturesquely describes the three visits of Swami Vivekananda to that hill station, which is so dear to all connected with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. ]

From the *Letters and Life* of Swami Vivekananda, this account of his three visits to Almora—in 1890, 1897, and 1898—has been pieced together. Almora is a small Himalayan town (present population about 16,000), in the northern part of Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the jumping-off places for pilgrimages to the sacred shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinarayan, and to Mount Kailas, sacred to Śiva, in Tibet. The town itself, which lies at an altitude of just over 5,000 ft., was founded in 1592 as the capital of the Chand Rājās, then ruling this region. Later on, it was conquered by Nepal, but reconquered by the British in 1815. Many of the old houses of Almora have upper storeys finely carved in the Nepalese tradition. The bazar, a single long street paved with stones, which runs along the rest of the ridge for about two miles with houses spilling down on both sides, has been cited as one of the best and most picturesque of the old hill bazars in India.

The surrounding hills and ridges are covered with deodars and pines. The annual rainfall is only some 45 to 50 inches, so that, compared with other hill stations of the western Himalayas such as Naini Tal, Ranikhet, Simla, or Mussoorie, or Darjeeling at the other end of the Himalayan chain, Almora is 'dry'. In fact, it has an almost ideal climate, not too cold in winter, not too hot in summer, not too wet in the rainy season. Apart from its healthful climate, there is the magnificent view to the north of some twenty or more great snow peaks, including Kamet, Nanda Devi, and Trisul—all over twenty thousand feet high and stretching in a jagged line right up to the border of Tibet, ninety miles away.

After the passing of Sri Ramakrishna, in

1886, the young monks of the Baranagore monastery soon scattered in all directions, eager to practise *sādhanā* in some remote and lonely spot, or to go on pilgrimages to the holy places. One of them, Akhandananda, spent three years wandering in the Himalayas and Tibet, and he was the first of Ramakrishna's disciples to visit Almora, where he received hospitable treatment from Lala Badri Shah, a leading citizen of the town. This gentleman was a true devotee, and afterwards showed extraordinary courtesy to all the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, many of whom, in later years, started from here on pilgrimages to the holy places, or remained in Almora for a time as his guests.

Like the others, Vivekananda, or Noren (Narendra) as he was then known, also longed to become a wanderer, to seek out some hidden retreat in the Himalayas, where he could plunge into deep meditation. He left Calcutta in 1888, and got as far as Rishikesh, from where he intended to proceed to Badrinath; but his first disciple, Sadananda, who was then with him and whom he had just initiated at Hathras, suddenly fell ill, and the plan had to be abandoned. Instead, they returned to Hathras, from where Vivekananda was then called back to Baranagore by his brother monks. He remained at Baranagore practically the whole of the next year, confronted with many difficulties and responsibilities, but his mind was restless, and letters from Akhandananda, still wandering about in the Himalayas, made him long even more fervently to shake himself free and follow a life of uninterrupted meditation. There must have been a plan at one time



during this year for him to join Akhandananda somewhere in the Himalayas and proceed to Tibet. An unpublished letter from Akhandananda (Gangadhar) to Badri Shah in Almora, written from Badrinath and dated June 19, 1889, refers to the expected arrival in Almora of Vivekananda, referred to simply as a 'brother monk'.

Badrinath,  
19th June, '89

My dear Badri Shah,

A *gurubhāi* of mine is proceeding to Almora. Please receive him warmly and try to accommodate him in a comfortable place and help him in every way so that he may not feel the least trouble during his sojourn at Almora. He is one of my advanced *gurubhāis*, a highly educated gentleman leading a perfect ascetic life since ten or twelve years. He has sacrificed all his worldly prosperities for the sake of Almighty. Now he is in the stage of Paramahansa. He will start tomorrow. I am doing all right; most likely, I will be starting for Lhasa in the coming month. . . .

Your well wisher,

Bengali Ganga Dhar

or

Who returned from Tibet

Babajee.

Vivekananda did not, at this time, go to Almora after all. Once more fate intervened. On the very day he was planning to leave Calcutta, the disciple Sadananda, who had taken months to recover from the illness he had contracted in Rishikesh, unexpectedly arrived to join the Baranagore monastery. The departure had to be postponed, but the idea was never given up.

Early in 1890, Vivekananda started out again, stopping off in Ghazipur to see Pavhari Baba, a saint living in an underground cave surrounded by a high wall, from whom he hoped to learn something about *rāja-yoga*. From Ghazipur, he wrote to Akhandananda, requesting him to come down to the plains immediately, so that the two might make preparations to depart for Nepal, Tibet, and

possibly, China. But the illness of a brother monk took him to Varanasi, and there he had news of the death of Balaram Bose, the great householder disciple of Ramakrishna, and returned to Calcutta. Finally, on July 6, he wrote to two of the brothers already in Almora, Saradananda and Vaikunthanath: 'I intend shortly, as soon as I can get a portion of my fare, to go up to Almora, and thence to some place in Garhwal on the Gaṅgā where I can settle down for a long meditation. Gangadhar is accompanying me. . . . This time I shall not go to Pavhari Baba or any other saint—they divert one from one's highest purpose. Straight up!' Before leaving, he told his *gurubhāis*: 'I shall not return until I acquire such realization that my very touch will transform a man.'

Today, a fine motor road brings the traveller from Kathgodam, the railway terminus at the foot of the hills, to Almora within a few hours. In 1890, travellers had to come by horse back, palanquin, or on foot, along a rough bridle-path. Vivekananda, accompanied by Akhandananda, set out, carrying only staff and *kamandalu* (waterpot used by *sādhus*). From Kathgodam, they walked on to Naini Tal, and after spending a few days there, set out for Almora, begging their food along the way. On the third day, they reached a place called Kakrighat, on the Kosi River. 'What a delightful spot for meditation!' Vivekananda remarked, sitting down under a great peepul-tree. Almost immediately, his body became stiff and motionless, as if all the life had gone out of it, and for a long time, he remained in that state. On returning to normal consciousness, he exclaimed: 'Oh, Gangadhar, I have just passed through one of the greatest moments of my life. I have found the oneness between the macrocosm and the microcosm. I have seen the whole universe within an atom!' Overwhelmed by this experience, he could think and talk of nothing else as they continued on their way to Almora.

When they were climbing the last steep

slope leading to the town, having had nothing to eat all day, Vivekananda suddenly sank down, almost fainting in sheer exhaustion, opposite a small Muslim graveyard. Akhandananda went off in search of water. Meanwhile, the fakir in charge of the cemetery, Zulfikar Ali by name, seeing his plight, offered Vivekananda a cucumber. Too tired even to lift his hand, Vivekananda asked the man to put it in his mouth! When the latter held back, saying that he was a Mussulman, Vivekananda characteristically replied: 'What does that matter? Are we not all brothers?'

This story was to have an unexpected sequel. Seven years later, on his next visit to Almora in 1897, no longer as an unknown, starving *sannyāsin*, but as the world-famous Swami Vivekananda, he was met on the way and conducted in a big procession to the town. Suddenly, he caught sight of that same Muslim fakir in the crowd and stopped to thank him publicly for his former service. 'The man really saved my life. Never had I felt so exhausted', Vivekananda explained.

It was in late August or September 1890 that Vivekananda first arrived in Almora. There he and Akhandananda joined the two monks, already staying as guests of Badri Shah. While he was staying at the house of Badri Shah, a curious incident happened. A man became 'possessed', and Badri Shah was asked to come and see him. Vivekananda went along, and the crowd, seeing his ochre cloth, begged him to cure the sick man. 'Who am I, my brothers?' he said. 'I am only a *sannyāsin*. The Lord will take care of him.' Yet since he was pressed to do so, he laid his hand on the head of the sick man tossing in a frenzy and frothing at the mouth. Almost instantly he grew quiet and, in a short time, became quite normal again.

After remaining a few days with his kind host, Vivekananda felt an irresistible urge to be alone, to plunge into that deep meditation for which his soul thirsted. He walked out to a solitary cave overhanging a small moun-

tain village. The exact location of this cave has never been determined, since there are several answering its general description around Almora, but very possibly, it was a large well-known cave on Kasar Devi, a forested spur five miles to the north-east of Almora town. This cave now has a built-up entrance to make it into a sort of hermitage for *sādhus*. In the cave, Vivekananda then practised an intense *sādhana*, determined to reach that ultimate realization which he held to be the goal of his life.

In the first edition of *The Life of the Swami Vivekananda*, written by his Eastern and Western disciples, a remarkable account of his experience in the cave is given, which is strangely omitted from later editions. 'Here in that cave, overhanging a mountain-village', the account reads, 'he practised austerities day and night. He determined to find Truth. And there in the silence, with not even a single soul to disturb his meditation, he had experience after experience in the way of illumination, until his face shone with a celestial fire. And then, at the very climax of all his spiritual exercises, instead of abiding in the ultimatum of personal bliss which he expected to do, he felt the impetus to work, and this seemed to force him out, as it were, from his *sādhana*.'

This was, indeed, a strange time for him. The monk Akhandananda has spoken of it thus: 'It seemed as if every time the Swami desired to retire into the life of silence and pure monasticism, he was compelled to give it up by the pressure of circumstance. He had a Mission to fulfil, and the very essence of his nature would force him into the realization of this line of work.' He himself, referring to his strange experience in the cave, said later: 'Nothing in my whole life ever so filled me with the sense of work to be done. It was as if I were *thrown out* from that life of solitude, to wander to and fro in the plains below.' And so he came back again to his brother disciples and his host in Almora. There he found a telegram awaiting him,



announcing the suicide of his widowed sister, and a letter soon followed with all the harrowing details. He suffered a great shock, and then and there, was rudely awakened to some of the special problems confronting Hindu women, particularly widows, and he made up his mind to fight their cause in the face of orthodox tradition.

The four monks now decided to continue on their way to Badrinath. They had travelled on foot some 120 miles when the illness of one, and then another, compelled them to abandon the idea of their pilgrimage. It was already intensely cold, with winter approaching. They made their way down to Rishikesh, beloved of *sādhus*, where the Gaṅgā enters the plains of India. A little later, at Meerut, Vivekananda suddenly decided to separate from his brothers. He must go alone, seeking to understand this India he now knew he had been born to serve. For the next two and a half years he wandered on, now and then encountering, by chance, some *gurubhāi* at an out-of-the-way place or passing one at a railway station. Then he completely disappeared. Somehow, in Madras, he had heard of a forthcoming Parliament of Religions to be held at Chicago in 1893, and young men of Madras raised the money to pay for his passage to the United States. Only the Holy Mother was told of his new plan, and she gave him her blessings. When next heard of, he had become the famous Swami Vivekananda who had taken the Parliament of Religions by storm.

Vivekananda returned from America and Europe in January 1897. With him came J. J. Goodwin, an English disciple and expert court stenographer, whom he had first met in New York, and an English couple, Captain and Mrs. Sevier, who had become his warm followers in London and were coming to India to help found an Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas—a dream Vivekananda had first spoken about to them in Switzerland. The strenuous work of lecturing and holding classes abroad, undertaken with the combined

hope of raising funds for starving India and spreading the message of Vedānta in the West, had had its effect on his health. The tumultuous welcome he received on his homecoming, in Ceylon and Madras, right up to Calcutta—the vast crowds, the processions, the public addresses, the innumerable interviews—added to his exhaustion. He wanted to fly to Almora for rest, but he felt that two major tasks awaited him in Bengal. The first was to organize the Ramakrishna Mission, for service to the poor, the down-trodden, and the needy among his countrymen, and the second was to plan immediate voluntary relief work by the monks in the famine, then sweeping several districts of Bengal. His fiery command to his brother monks and disciples was to forget their own salvation for the sake of others. Finally, in early May 1897, he left Calcutta, on the doctor's insistence, for Almora. Some of his *gurubhāis* and disciples also went with him. Goodwin and another English follower, Miss Müller, had already preceded him.

This time, Goodwin and other admirers went all the way down to Kathgodam to receive him. As the party was approaching the town by the old bridle-path, they were met on the way by a large crowd, and Vivekananda was made to mount a gaily decorated horse. The triumphant procession proceeded to the bazar, where three thousand people were waiting to give him a public welcome. All along the way, women gathered on the roof-tops, showered him with flowers and auspicious rice. Decorative awnings were strung across the street in front of Badri Shah's house, to form a *pandāl*, and all the houses were lighted up as if for a festival.

Two addresses in English and one in Sanskrit were read out, and to these, in view of the lateness of the hour, Vivekananda made a brief but moving reply, in English. He referred to the Himalayas as the land of their forefathers' dreams, 'the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of his life, to close the last chapter of



his mortal career here'. And he went on: 'This is the land which, since my very boyhood, I have been dreaming of. . . . I have attempted again and again to live here for ever, and although the time was not ripe, and I had work to do and was whirled away outside of this holy place, . . . yet I sincerely pray and hope, and almost believe, my last days will be here, of all places on earth. . . . These Himalayas stand for renunciation, and as our forefathers used to be attracted to it in the latter days of their life, so strong souls from all quarters of this earth, in time to come, will be attracted to this father of mountains, when all this fight between sects, and all these differences in dogmas, will not be remembered any more and quarrels between your religion and my religion will have vanished altogether, when mankind will understand that there is but one eternal religion, and that is the perception of the Divine within, and the rest is mere froth. Such ardent souls will come here, knowing that the world is but vanity of vanities, knowing that everything is useless except the worship of the Lord and the Lord alone. . . . These mountains are associated with the best memories of our race. Here, therefore, must be one of those centres, not merely of activity, but more of calmness, of meditation, and of peace, and I hope some day to realize it.'

This time Vivekananda remained in Almora two and half months, again as the guest of his old friend Badri Shah. Yet, sometimes, he felt that even Almora was not far enough away, not quiet enough. Twice he retreated to Dewaldhar, an estate some twenty miles to the north. There he rode horseback and enjoyed the delightful climate and magnificent scenery, especially the sunrise over the mighty snow peaks. Gradually his health improved, and he wrote to his doctor in Calcutta that he had not felt so well since he was a boy. Miss Müller, who undertook to feed him 'three square meals a day, European-style', no doubt, helped to hasten his recovery. But he would not give himself a longer rest

than was absolutely necessary. By the end of July, he was ready to leave Almora.

Before he left, the English residents of the station invited him to give a lecture at the English Club. He chose for his subject the different approaches of West and East in the search for a solution of the vital questions confronting the soul—the Western method, which seeks for a solution in the outside world, the Eastern method, which, finding no answer in nature, turns its enquiry within. He also gave two lectures at the Almora inter-College. Here, in response to the public request, he gave his first talk in Hindi, his subject being 'Vedic Teaching in Theory and Practice'.

The third visit of Vivekananda to Almora took place the following year. By this time, more of his foreign disciples had followed him to India. Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) arrived at Calcutta, from England, in January, 1898, and Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod from America, in February. Captain and Mrs. Sevier, as the heat of the plains increased, left for Almora, where they rented a large house, then known as 'Thompson House' and belonging to Badri Shah, at the western end of the ridge. They were still concerned with the question of finding a suitable location for the proposed Advaita Ashrama. Vivekananda was urged to come and stay with them as their guest, and fearing that the newly arrived Westerners would fall ill during the burning heat of the advancing summer, Vivekananda and the rest left Calcutta for Almora on May 11, 1898. The party included Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss MacLeod, Mrs. Patterson, wife of the American Consul-General in Calcutta, who had met and befriended Vivekananda in the early days in America, two of his brother monks, Niranjanananda and Turiyananda, and two of his personal disciples, Sadananda and Swarupananda. When they all reached Almora, Vivekananda and the monks became the guests of Captain and Mrs. Sevier at



'Thompson House', while the Western friends and Nivedita, now an initiated disciple, lived at 'Oakley House'.

The weeks that followed must have been almost a repetition of the wonderful days of Thousand Island Park on the St. Lawrence, back in the summer of 1895, when there gathered around him an ardent little group of seekers, one of whom, afterwards known as Sister Christine, became a life-long disciple and devoted the rest of her life to serving India. Vivekananda set himself the task of training these Western followers, of breaking down instinctive prejudices, of explaining strange Indian customs, myths, symbols, history. Every morning, after an early walk with the monks, he went on to 'Oakley House' for breakfast, and spent several hours in vivid talks ranging over an infinite variety of subjects. Sister Nivedita has left an inspiring account of these talks in her little book entitled '*Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*'. There were, also, discussions and interviews with many who came to see him. One day Mrs. Annie Besant, then leader of the Theosophical Movement in India, was entertained at tea at 'Thompson House'. On another occasion, a saintly Bengali patriot, Aswini Datta, who had met Vivekananda years ago as 'Narendra', saw him out riding horseback and followed him back to his door. In the ensuing conversation, Vivekananda made clear his own idea of how India's salvation was to be attained. 'Do you think merely passing a few resolutions will bring freedom?' he thundered. 'I have no faith in that. The masses must be awakened first. Let them have full meals, and they will work out their own salvation.'

Now and then, he was again overwhelmed by the old mood to be utterly alone. On one such occasion, he departed for Shya Devi, a forested peak some miles west of Almora. Here he remained for three days. When he returned—because even there people hunted him out to ask questions—he had at least made one worth-while discovery. He was

still, he claimed, 'the old-time *sannyāsin*, able to go barefoot and endure heat or cold and scanty fare, unspoilt by the West'. Back in Almora, however, a new shock awaited him. A wire brought news of the death of the faithful Goodwin in Ootacamund, in South India. When the telegram announcing Goodwin's death was handed to him, he stood in front of 'Thompson House', according to Miss MacLeod, gazing off to the distant snow peaks in absolute silence for a long time. Then he remarked very quietly: 'The days of my public utterance are over.' That night he composed a poem, 'Requiescat in Pace', which he sent to Goodwin's mother, and in feeling words, he paid tribute to his friend and disciple. 'The debt of gratitude I owe him can never be repaid, and those who think they have been helped by any thought of mine ought to know that almost every word of it was published through the untiring and most unselfish exertions of Mr. Goodwin.'

Once more, the time had come to move on, and Vivekananda decided to proceed to Kashmir with the Western disciples. Before they left Almora—Vivekananda for the last time—on June 11, 1898, an important step was taken. The editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* or 'Awakened India', the English journal originally started in Madras, had suddenly died, and it was decided to restart the journal in Almora. The young disciple Swami Swarupananda became its new editor, Captain Sevier offered to pay all the expenses for bringing up a hand-press, paper, etc., and to act as manager, and until the publication centre was finally removed in March 1899, to Mayavati, fifty-five miles from Almora—the site ultimately selected by the Seviers and Swarupananda for the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas—the journal continued to be brought out from Almora.

The three visits of Swami Vivekananda, and the many more from monks of the Ramakrishna Math and Missiou in years to follow, have made Almora a place of special signifi-

cance for the followers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, both of East and West. On the steep western end of the ridge on which the town itself is built, perches the Ashrama (familiarily known as the Ramakrishna Kutir), founded by Swami Turiyananda in 1916. It has grown to comprise several buildings, and anything from five monks in winter to twenty or more in the hot weather, may be found in residence here. The Ashrama is a living symbol of the place of retreat and

meditation that Vivekananda loved. Not far off is also the Vivekananda Laboratory, organized to carry on fundamental research work in plant physiology and agriculture by my husband Boshi Sen, a disciple of Vivekananda's first disciple Sadananda. In between the two still stands 'Thompson House', now belonging to a new owner and renamed 'The Avocado', almost exactly as the old house stood when Vivekananda lived there sixty-five years ago.

---

In Swamiji's presence, the whole mind would remain absorbed in him alone; while talking with him, one would perforce do so with the fullest attention. His words were wonderful, and so were his actions. One never knows where to stop, when one starts talking about him. I never came across any other versatile genius like him. His foresight was all-comprehensive. His ideas and his expressions would lift one up to a very high plane. I never found such bliss and happiness in any one else's company or talk as in his. One can never forget that experience, nor express it in words. His words were as divine command to us. And we loved him so much that any separation from him caused the greatest pain. Although I missed his company during the last two or three years of his life, the thought that he is really not dead but still alive would fill me with hope that one day I shall meet him again and talk to him. When the news of his passing away reached me, I was greatly shocked. I always felt that his words and actions were not of this world. Swamiji told me: 'Haribhai, whatever I have done is the Master's work, it is the Mother's work. He forcibly got it done through me. I had planned to do this and that, but, finally, I could do only what he willed. These are not Vivekananda's achievement, these are just what he forced him to do. I was merely a tool in his hand, and had simply to obey his command. Even though I wished my plans to prevail, I never succeeded. But I am happy at what has been achieved; and I am happy, too, after retiring from work. Whatever you are doing is also his works. Let things go on thus for the present!'

SWAMI TURIYANANDA



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND NATIONAL AWAKENING

BY PROFESSOR SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKHERJI

[ Professor S. B. Mookherji, formerly of Gadjah Mada University, Jogjakarta, Indonesia, is at present Assistant Director of the School of Humanistic and Cultural Studies, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. This article shows how great has been the contribution of Swami Vivekananda towards the national awakening of India, as we see it today. ]

The nineteenth century was the seed-time of modern India in a very real sense. It witnessed the birth of a number of spiritual and intellectual giants, who breathed new life into the dry bones of our motherland. They helped not a little to place India on the map of the modern world. Each of them, in his own way, lent a hand in preparing the ground for the regeneration and ultimate liberation of India, tied to the apron strings of alien rule for centuries. The cumulative effect of their work is being felt even today, decades after they have passed away. The builders of the Indian nation of today are the blessed ones, who have added their 'bundle(s) to the granary of human spirit' and said their 'word(s) in civilization'.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) is one of the towering figures in this galaxy of stalwarts. The times when he came, as every student of modern Indian history knows, were one of the darkest periods in the centuries-old annals of the country. Inferiority complex and slave mentality of the Indians, coupled with their loss of respect for their own cultural heritage and traditions, had created a tragic situation. There was a vacuum in the national mind. Old ideas and old values had been discarded; but their place had not been taken by new ones. The younger generation was straining every nerve to become an 'imitation of Englishmen'. Left to itself, it would have made India a pale copy of England in the long run. The older generation, for the most part, took cover behind the wall of orthodoxy and sought to bolster it up by a thousand and one childish devices. The Christian missionaries,

among others, reaped a rich harvest and converted thousands, mostly Hindus, to Christianity. The wailings of a nation's soul, incarcerated like Prometheus, had already begun to be heard.

Reaction against this sad state of affairs had already set in during the middle of the nineteenth century. The first faint murmurings of a new life were already audible. The life-work of Raja Rammohan Roy and Swami Dayananda Saraswati and others had re-awakened the country. But it fell to the lot of Swami Vivekananda, the chosen one of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the man-God of Dakshineswar, to carry the work farther and set the stage for the liberation of the nation later on under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Versatility is not unoften the sign of greatness, and a really great man is often a versatile man as well. So also was Swami Vivekananda. He was an inspired religious teacher, one who had realized God and felt His living presence in all places and in all beings; a superb orator, whose words, spoken from the depths of his heart, made a never-to-be-forgotten impression on his audience; a great thinker, one of the most erudite scholars of his times, an indefatigable worker and organizer, a polyglot, an apostle of humanitarianism to whom the poor were 'Daridra Nārāyaṇas' (God in the guise of the poor) and their service was the best worship of God. He was all these rolled into one.

But posterity will, perhaps, remember the Swami longest as a patriot. He has been rightly described as the 'Patriot-Saint' of

modern India. His great 'Periplus' for two years (1891-93) and his subsequent wanderings round the world (1893-96) revealed to him 'the tragic face of the present day, the God struggling in humanity, the cry of the people of India and of the world for help, and the heroic duty of the new Oedipus, whose task it was to deliver Thebes from the talons of the Sphinx or to perish with Thebes'.

The endless miseries he saw around him during his perigrinations through India 'was to be the flint upon the steel whence a spark would fly to set the whole soul on fire'. 'And with this as the foundation-stone, pride, ambition, and love, faith, science, and action, all his powers and all his desires were thrown into the mission of human service and into one single flame.' The flame was that of practical Vedānta. The first-hand experience of his country's poverty and degradation watered the seeds of patriotism and humanitarianism in Vivekananda and germinated them. Patriotism and humanitarianism became his passion, to be sublimated finally into a religion. But it was a religion with a difference. Religion, the Swami declared, is no religion, unless it gives us faith in ourselves, unless it restores our national self-respect, and unless it gives us 'the power to feed the poor and relieve the misery around' us. He declared further that God-realization is to be achieved through the service of afflicted humanity. He saw his God in man. 'Nara' or man and 'gaṇā' or the masses were to him 'Nārāyaṇa' or the Lord Himself in flesh and blood.

The Master (Ramakrishna Paramahansa) was no false prophet. Had he not declared years ago that the day his beloved Naren came 'in contact with suffering and misery, the pride of his character will melt into a mood of infinite compassion'?

None knew better than Vivekananda that political bondage was the root cause of a thousand evils and one. He, therefore, declared openly—it needed not a little courage in the late nineteenth century India—'India's first duty is to secure her freedom as a condi-

tion precedent to her social well-being' (quoted by Hans Kohn in *History of Nationalism in the East*, p. 373). He declared unequivocally that, if he was a lover of God, he was no less a lover of his country and countrymen as well. His patriotism, like all genuine patriotism, found expression in his profound love for the down-trodden people of his country, reduced to almost sub-human level through centuries-old oppression, injustice, and exploitation—social, political, and economic. Commiseration with and fellow-feeling for one's own countrymen and women were, in his opinion, the first lessons to be learnt by a patriot. Sincere patriotism, he rightly held, is an all-absorbing passion. It makes the patriot indifferent to everything but the well-being of his country and countrymen. He declared in the course of a speech: 'For the next fifty years this alone shall be our key-note, this our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all around us, the Virāt? . . . The first Gods we have to worship are our own countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other. It is most terrible *karma* for which we are suffering and yet it does not open our eyes!'

Vivekananda was convinced that study of holy books and meditation might wait. But the service of the suffering humanity could not. The idea of personal *mukti* or liberation was to be shelved for the time being. The first duty of Indians was the regeneration of India, the resurrection of her spiritual powers and their diffusion throughout the world for the happiness and well-being of humanity at large.

The Swami realized his oneness with all Indians—from the prince to the pariah. Every bit of Indian soil, every particle of Indian dust



was sacred to him. The patriot in him speaks to us through the following exhortation, among others: 'Be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim: "I am an Indian—every Indian is my brother." ... Proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice: "The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heavens, the Varanasi of my old age."' These soul-stirring words still ring in our ears more than sixty years after the death of Vivekananda.

We have it on the Swami's own authority that he went to America to find money for humanitarian work in India. He wrote and spoke to this effect on several occasions. Thus, in an address to the Parliament of Religions, Chicago, participation in which was the ostensible object of his first voyage to America, he told his audience: 'I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people, and I fully realized how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land.'

Succour to suffering Indian humanity was to be but the first step in the regeneration of India. But it was not all. A sound education is among the essential pre-conditions of progress, and Vivekananda felt the need of a sound system of national education. He had a poor opinion of the system of education prevailing in India at that time. He condemned it in no uncertain terms. While admitting that the education imparted in India had 'some good points', he emphasized that it had a tremendous disadvantage which was so great that the good things were all weighed down. 'In the first place, it is not a man-making education, it is merely and entirely a negative education. A negative education, or any training based on negation, is worse than death. We must have man-making, life-building, character-making, assimilation of ideas. If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have

more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. ... We must have the whole education of our country, spiritual and secular, in our own hands, and it must be on national lines and through national methods as far as practicable.' Vivekananda wanted the reconstruction of Indian intellect by 'spreading a real knowledge of Sanskrit', the language of Indian culture, by the integration of 'Western science in it, and by reviving the Indian universities, so that they might produce men rather than diplomats and officials'. Mind, body, and soul were to be harmoniously developed. Man-making was to be the aim of education. The Swami wanted Indians to be brave. He wanted to teach them to walk with their heads erect and with their chests out. He stressed the need of self-help, which, as we all know, is the best help. The habit of depending on others must be given up. He wrote in 1894 to Alasinga Perumal, a Madras disciple of his: 'Every nation must save itself, we must not depend on funds from America for the revival of Hinduism, for that is a delusion.' He wrote to another Madras disciple, Dr. Nanjunda Rao, in 1896: 'You must not depend on foreign help. Nations, like individuals, must help themselves. This is real patriotism. If a nation cannot do that, its time has not yet come.' Self-help, it may be recalled, furnished the philosophical basis of the Swadeshi (use of indigenous goods) and the national education movements launched by the patriots of Bengal after the notorious Bengal partition of 1905. Mahatma Gandhi's gospel of the spinning wheel and his constructive programme are among the classic examples of socio-national self-help in practice. Every student of Indian history knows the role played by them in the Indian people's uphill struggle for the recovery of their lost national heritage. They broke the inertia of ages and did not a little to bring back the joys of life and living to the dumb millions of rural India.

Great as was Vivekananda's love for India and for persons and things Indian, he was a



severe critic of the defects and drawbacks of Indian society and character. He lashed relentlessly at all social abuses, inequities, and superstitions that came to his notice. Nor did he spare the social institutions that had outgrown their utility. He fought against sectarianism wherever it was to be found. Referring to the very large number of *sādhus* (wandering monks) roaming all over the country and the class of hereditary priests eating the bread of idleness in a country where famines were a regular visitation. He wrote to Swami Brahmananda: 'A country where millions live on the flower of the 'mohua' plant, and a million or two of 'sādhus' and a hundred million or so of Brāhmaṇas suck the blood out of these poor people (of India), without even the least effort for their amelioration—is that a country or hell? Is that a religion or the devil's dance?' Untouchability, that Satanic device, which had reduced millions to the sub-human level and had driven thousands to the folds of Islam and Christianity, had few outspoken critics like Vivekananda. His condemnation of the inhuman system shows how his heart bled for its hapless victims. He wrote in a letter in 1894: 'Well, do you think there is any religion left in India? The paths of knowledge, devotion, and *yoga*—all have gone, and now there remains only that of Don't-touchism—Don't touch me! Don't touch me! The whole world is impure, and I alone am pure! ... Nowadays, Brahman is neither in the recesses of the heart, nor in the highest heaven, nor in all beings—now He is in the cooking pot.'

Time and again did the Swami turn the searchlight inward and declare that our internal dissensions, selfishness, and mutual jealousy and hatred were among the principal causes of our degeneration; that these cankers ate into the very vitals of the nation and perpetrated slavery. His observations in this context may be read profitably by every Indian having the well-being of the country at heart: 'A cloud of impenetrable darkness

has at present equally enveloped us all. ... What we have in India are only deep-rooted envy and strong antipathy against one another, morbid desire to ruin by hook or by crook the weak, and dog-like to lick the feet of the strong. Now the highest satisfaction consists in the display of wealth and power, devotion in self-gratification, wisdom in the accumulation of transitory objects, *yoga* in hideous diabolical practices, work in the slavery of others, civilization in the base imitation of foreign nations, eloquence in the use of abusive language, the merit of literature in extravagant flatteries of the rich, or in the diffusion of ghastly obscenities.' The Swami boldly calls the spade a spade and prescribes remedies for the socio-national distemper. In his own words, 'without mutual co-operation, we can never make ourselves strong men'.

Unfortunately, many of the evils complained of by Vivekananda pollute the country's atmosphere even today more than a decade after the end of alien rule. What is more regrettable is that they seem to have become worse than ever.

The so-called low classes constitute the very corner-stone of the socio-national edifice. The very life of the nation and society depends on them. This is why Swamiji declared: 'These uncared for lower classes of India—the peasants and weavers and the rest, who have been conquered by foreigners and are looked down upon by their own people—it is they who, from time immemorial, have been working silently, without even getting the remuneration of their labours! ... Those whose heart's blood has contributed to all the progress that has been made in the world—well, who cares to praise them? Ye ever-trampled labouring classes of India! I bow to you.'

The regeneration of the motherland will remain a will-o'-the-wisp, unless we can improve the lot of the so-called lower classes and untouchables and bring back the joys of living to them. The hungry, down-trodden



'Daridra Nārāyaṇas' of India must be given back their lost self-confidence and sense of self-respect. They must be taught to realize that they, too, have a stake in the country. A nation is an organic whole. The weakness or backwardness of any section of a nation retards the progress of the nation as a whole. The chain, it is well known, is as strong as its weakest link. The Swami was not unaware of this truth. He writes: 'Have you ever seen a country in the whole history of the world rise, unless there was a uniform circulation of the national blood all over its body? Know this for certain, that no great work can be done by that body, one limb of which is paralysed.' He emphasized that India herself is to blame for her degeneration and downfall, that they were primarily due to the neglect of the masses by the classes. 'It is simply due to your having despised the masses', he wrote, 'that you have now been living a life of slavery for the last thousand years; it is therefore that you are objects of hatred in the eyes of foreigners.' He dreamt of a great future for the Indian masses and wrote long, long ago: 'Let her (new India) arise out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop from besides the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains. These common people have suffered oppressions for thousands of years—suffered it without murmur, and as a result, have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. Living on a handful of grain, they can convulse the whole world.' Those acquainted with Indian conditions will readily admit that developments taking place in independent India are very much along the lines envisaged by the Swami. The prophet in him again seems to have come to the fore. Let it not be supposed for a moment that the journey's end has been reached.

What we see is only a beginning and a beginning in the right direction it undoubtedly is. There are hesitations, lapses, errors, and consequent retrogression; but the trend is unmistakable. There are clear indications that, in the new India taking shape before our eyes, the builders of the edifice of national strength and prosperity—the long-neglected, long-suffering Indian masses—will have their rights fully recognized and accorded the place that is rightfully theirs. The time for jubilation is not, however, as yet. The 'vast undone' still far outweighs the 'little done'. But, in this connection, let us remember Swamiji's warning: 'Keep the motto before you: "Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion."'

Politics and patriotism nowadays go hand in hand. That Vivekananda was a great patriot will be readily admitted. That he was not a politician will be admitted equally readily. Paradoxical as it may sound, chapters and verses may be quoted to show that the Swami was allergic to politics. He declared again and again with all the emphasis at his command that he had, and would have, nothing to do with politics.

Was Vivekananda a revolutionary? No, not in the sense in which that term is usually understood. But his life and teachings, his dynamic personality and personal magnetism had a tremendous impact on his country and on his age. He burst 'on society like a bomb'. His message of fearlessness, self-confidence, self-help, and self-respect released energies and brought about a revolution in the truest sense of the term. It finally awakened the somnolent leviathan that India of his day was. At his death at the turn of the century (1902), the giant was already awake, stretching its limbs and viewing the situation. To quote Romain Rolland: 'That day (the day on which he spoke on 'The Future of India' at Madras in 1897), the awakening of the torpid Colossus (India) began. If the generation that followed saw three years after Vivekananda's death the revolt of Bengal



(the anti-Partition movement), the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, ... it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty "Lazarus, come forth!" of the message of Madras.'

Not a few great Indians of our times were influenced and inspired by Vivekananda. Gandhiji is on record as having declared publicly that the study of the works of Vivekananda had been a great help to him and that they had 'lighted in him the flame of love of India' and had enhanced his understanding of India. Vivekananda was, in fact, the forerunner of Gandhi in more respects than one. They covered much common ground. Both inculcated fearlessness, which, according to one of his biographers, is Gandhi's principal legacy to India. To the one as well as to the other, the service of down-trodden humanity was the best worship of God. If the untouchables were 'Harijans', i.e. the Lord's own ones, to Gandhi, the down-trodden Indian masses were 'Daridra Nārāyaṇas' to Vivekananda. Vivekananda's conception of non-resistance—it was actually non-violent resistance or non-acceptance—is not basically different from Gandhiji's non-violent non-co-operation. Self-help emphasized by the Swami was, as noted above, the objective aimed at by the gospel of the spinning wheel and the whole constructive programme prescribed by the Mahatma. 'The spiritual and intellectual life of Aurobindo Ghose', wrote Swami Ashokananda of the Ramakrishna Order to Romain Rolland, the biographer of Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Gandhi, 'has been strongly influenced by the life and teaching of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. He is never tired of showing the importance of Vivekananda's ideas.' As for Rabindranath Tagore, Romain Rolland writes: 'It is permissible to presume that in him are united and harmonized the two currents of the Brahma Samaj (transmitted by his father, the Maharshi) and of the neo-Vedāntism of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. . . . There is no doubt that the breath of such a forerunner

(as Vivekananda) must have played some part in his evolution.'

Vivekananda's teachings electrified the country. He became the idol of the revolutionaries of Bengal and his works were very popular with them. Vivekananda's photographs and works were looked upon as dangerous objects by the minions of law and order. The possession of a photograph of the Swami was almost a crime in the eyes of the government of the day. The Ramakrishna Mission, a purely spiritual, humanitarian, and non-political institution founded by Vivekananda in 1897, and its sympathizers fell into the bad book of the bureaucracy. Lord Carmichael, the Governor of Bengal, a sympathizer and an admirer of the Mission's ideals and activities though he was, openly declared in 1916 that terrorists had been joining the Mission to achieve their objects with greater ease. After this fulmination of the all-powerful provincial satrap, a ban on the Mission seemed to be a foregone conclusion. The danger was, however, averted only through the efforts of the Mission's devoted English and American friends in high places, who defended it in a long memorandum dated January 22, 1917.

Thus we find that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were an unceasing fountain of inspiration to all those who infused life and vigour into New India later. In the words of Romain Rolland: 'New India . . . is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahansa and the hero who translated his thought into action dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilizing it. . . . The king of thinkers, the king of poets, and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore, and Gandhi—have grown, flowered, and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi.'



# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(A BIRTH CENTENARY TRIBUTE)

BY HIS EXCELLENCY U THANT

[ His Excellency U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, was the chief speaker of the evening at a dinner held by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, at the Warwick Hotel, on March 28, 1963, to celebrate the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda. The following is the text of his speech delivered on the occasion. ]

We are celebrating here tonight Swami Vivekananda's Centenary, and on this occasion, it will be superfluous for me to recount many of his extraordinary activities. But in the brief space of time at my disposal, I would like to touch on a few aspects of his missionary work, particularly in this country.

Swami Vivekananda, as most of you are aware, was the greatest spiritual ambassador of India, not only in her own history, but also in the history of Asia. One of the main results of his historic visit to the United States of America, over sixty years ago, was the finding of a synthesis between India and the United States, and through it, between Asia and the West. To understand Swami Vivekananda, it is very important to understand the cultural and spiritual background of India and Asia.

In Asia, as most of you know, we attach more importance to the mind than to the body, and still more importance to the spirit than to the mind. Traditionally, the aim of education in Asia has been—I stress the word traditionally—to discover what is happening inside of us, to discover what is the truth, to discover the truth inside of us; to learn to understand the extraordinary moral and spiritual qualities of man. In other words, the traditional aim of education and culture and civilization in Asia has been, throughout the centuries, the discovery of oneself, and to try to understand the spiritual qualities such as humility, reverence for old people, and so on.

In the West, the stress has been on the

development of the intellect, if my interpretation of Western educational aims and ideals is correct. There is too much stress on the intellectual development of man. The aim of education in the West—when I say West, I mean the United States of America, Western Europe, and also other European countries—has been, and still is, to create doctors, scientists, engineers, to discover outer space, to go to the moon and to Mars and the stars; the development of the moral and spiritual qualities of man is more or less ignored.

I feel rather strongly that the exclusive intellectual development without a corresponding moral and spiritual development is sure to lead us from one crisis to another. At the same time, in the middle of the twentieth century, in this space age and atomic age, a purely moral and spiritual development unaccompanied by a corresponding intellectual development is also an anachronism. So what is necessary in this second half of the twentieth century is a certain kind of synthesis, a certain kind of harmony, a certain harmonizing activity, by which man may be fully integrated. The development of man must be in all levels—intellectual, moral and spiritual. Only then man will be able to achieve the objectives set out in his own particular religion.

I think the main purpose of Swami Vivekananda's mission to this country was to find a harmony, a kind of synthesis between the Eastern concept of culture and civilization and the Western concept of culture and civilization. What we need today is not to

neglect or ignore the moral and spiritual qualities of mankind left by centuries of tradition and which are the key to all religion. It is much more true of these tense times, than sixty years ago.

Another aspect of Swami Vivekananda's mission, to my knowledge, is the need of tolerance in human relations. Not only religious tolerance, but also tolerance in all spheres of activity. I think this message is also very necessary in these tense times. If we recount a few phases of historical development, this will become clear. A few centuries ago, there was no such thing as religious tolerance. Religious tolerance was unthinkable. Let us take, for instance, the crusades. During the time of the crusades, the Christians believed, and they believed very strongly, that all non-Christians were heretics. But according to European history during the time of the crusades, the Muslims also believed very strongly that Christians were heretics. So both the Christians and the Muslims (they were known as Saracens in those days) decided to put the others to the sword. Various crusades took place resulting in the death of tens of thousands of people, both Christians and Muslims, but when reason prevailed they realized that both the great religions could exist in amity, side by side, without clashes, without hostilities, and without war. And since that time Christianity and Islam exist side by side in amity. Now, in the twentieth century, of course, there is religious tolerance. There may be some exceptional cases in certain parts of the world, but generally speaking, what humanity did not experience, say, a hundred or two hundred years ago is a reality now. Although there was no religious tolerance two or three generations ago, there is today religious tolerance.

With the same analogy. I may say, and I am sure you will agree with me, that in the second half of the twentieth century there is no political tolerance. We should not be

surprised. Human nature is such that it likes to indulge in some passions like hatred and bitterness—sometimes even hysteria. But my feeling is, although there is no political tolerance in these days, there will be political tolerance, if not in our generation, at least in the next one or two generations. This spirit of tolerance, this philosophy of 'live and let live', this concept of trying to understand the other's point of view, has been what Swami Vivekananda strove to put across, particularly to the American people. I think it is a very great lesson to be learned from the teachings of Swamiji.

When we say that his main mission here was a search for a synthesis and an appeal for tolerance, we should also try to understand the concept of culture and of civilization. The concept of civilization, of course, is very difficult to define. There is a mistaken impression—assumption, if I may say so—regarding the concept of civilization. There seems to be a general feeling that there is a kind of civilization existing in the West and a different type of civilization existing in the East. I feel that this is a fallacy. Civilization connotes certain qualities of the heart. A civilized Indian, for instance, cannot be distinguished, mentally, morally, and spiritually, from a civilized American. But a civilized Indian or a civilized American will find himself very different from any of his own compatriots in his own country; so we cannot classify civilization in a particular region. It is primarily concerned with the qualities of the heart and the mind.

There is also another misconception that wars and tensions were generated by conflicts of civilization and conflicts of cultures. I think this is also a fallacy. If you read history, you will find that England and France, or France and Germany, had wars for centuries, off and on, although they belonged to the same system of civilization and the same system of culture. The same can be said of many Asian countries which have



been, throughout the centuries, at war with one another, although they belonged to the same culture and they subscribed to the same religious systems. So tensions and conflicts do not arise necessarily from the conflicts of culture, or conflicts of civilizations. They arise primarily out of the evil in human beings, irrespective of the geographical regions they belong to. I think this fact also was stressed by Swami Vivekananda in many of his speeches and statements.

He, of course, attempted to teach many of his American friends the methods and procedures involved in meditation and contemplation which have been the traditional methods of finding our own selves. As I said earlier, the stress of education in Asia, and particularly in India, which is a very rich cultural country for thousands of years, has been to discover what is happening inside of us. I have said earlier that the stress of education in the West has been traditionally for the intellectual development of man. But in Asia, particularly in India, we try to discover what is happening inside of us by methods of contemplation and meditation, which is very difficult for the Western audience to understand. I think Swami Vivekananda attempted to present a very simple exposition of these methods of contemplation and meditation, so that the Westerners may not be lopsided in their development—exclusively in the intellectual field. Because he felt, very rightly, that the mere intellectual development will lead only to the discovery of what is outside of us. In America, in Europe, in Russia, what is outside of us is very clearly defined, while what is inside of us remains a deep, dark, jungle tract. So he brought out this idea of meditation and contemplation, with some success, as you all know from many of the publications published since his visit here, and I think it may perhaps be appropriate for me to read one of his statements regarding this method of meditation and contemplation.

This is what Swamiji wrote on meditation: You must keep the mind fixed on one object; meditation should be like an unbroken stream of oil. The ordinary man's mind is scattered on different objects, and at the time of meditation, too, the mind is at first liable to wander. Let any desire whatever arise in the mind, sit calmly, and watch what sorts of ideas are coming. By continuing to watch in that way, the mind becomes calm and there are no thought waves in it. These waves represent the thought activity of the mind. Those things that you have previously thought about too deeply have transformed themselves into a subconscious current, and therefore, they come up in the mind in meditation. The rise of these waves of thoughts during meditation is evidence that your mind is tending towards concentration.' To my knowledge, this is the simplest recipe to practise this very noble and very desirable art of meditation and contemplation, which is still being practised in many parts of Asia. Then, Swami Vivekananda, among many of his messages, had this very significant and very pertinent message for these tense times. He said: 'In this country (America), I do not come to convert you to a new belief. I want you to keep to your own belief. I want to make the Methodist a better Methodist, the Presbyterian a better Presbyterian, the Unitarian a better Unitarian.' On this subject also, I think it is worth quoting his attitude toward religious tolerance, which is one of the wisest maxims that ever came into my experience. He said: 'I accept all the religions that were in the past, and worship them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian church and kneel before the Crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhist temple, where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and his Law; I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the hearts of everyone. Not only

shall I do these things, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future.'

These are very wise words and, friends, on this auspicious occasion, when we are doing

honour to one of the greatest men of all time, let us dedicate ourselves anew to this pledge; to make Christians better Christians, Hindus better Hindus, Muslims better Muslims, Buddhists better Buddhists, and Jews better Jews.

---

The activity of an illumined soul must necessarily be understood on two levels. There is, first, the outer activity, which embraces the visible purposes of his life and which can be seen and comprehended by all in greater or lesser degree. But strenuous and inspired as such activity may be, it occupies only a part of his mind, by far the larger and more potent part operating on a level hidden from our view. Indeed, it would seem that the very essence of such a person consists in the fact that far beneath his surface mind are depths that are fully awake and fully absorbed in God. It is said that in its deepest levels the mind of a saint is so close to God that His effulgence forms, as it were, its very substance and texture. Surely that vast and silent part of Swamiji's mind, which was at one with God even while he was in the midst of the most 'cyclonic' outer life, not only served to inform and illumine his surface mind but had a function of its own which constituted the true and special significance of his mission. . . .

Wherever Swamiji went, whatever his external activities, his mission was, first and always, to impart spirituality to whoever was able to receive it. Such was his very nature. Whether he was answering questions regarding India's customs, lecturing on Hinduism, or castigating the bigoted and hypocritical, whether he was attending social gatherings or making chance acquaintances on trains or in hotels, he was, under all circumstances, shedding divine light. Quite literally he planted the seeds of spirituality deep in the hearts of innumerable human beings, changing the course of their lives for ever. So spontaneously and naturally did Swamiji do this that it almost seems as if he himself were not aware of it. But such 'unawareness' has always characterized prophets and saviours—just as it characterizes the sun, which does not deliberate upon whether or not it shall shine.

MARIE LOUISE BURKE



# THE DOCTRINE OF OBEDIENCE: ITS IMPLICATIONS

BY SWAMI VIMALANANDA

[ Swami Vimalananda is the Head of the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady (Kerala). In this scholarly article, he has dealt with the doctrine of obedience as it generally obtains in various spheres of normal and religious life and discusses its real implications. ]

1. Flexibility and change characterize nature. This, however, does not preclude conformity and submission to restraint in the occurrence of events and behaviour of objects. Fluidity and variation are dots and dashes in nature, outlining a circle in which universal laws undulate like waves and troughs in the sea. Freaks do exist; but they do not break the swing of law which forges a unity in variety and offers a picture of shades and contrasts. Everywhere in nature we meet objects tall or short, bulky or slender, strong or weak, hard or soft, rough or smooth, bright or dark, quick or slow, and having gradations between them. Quantitative and qualitative differences of things subject them to restraint or make them obey forces that act upon them. This phenomenon we observe in the inanimate and the animate parts of nature.

2. Conscious or unconscious submission to restraint is universal. Though the word obedience usually denotes a conscious attitude expressed in human behaviour, it has a wider application, covering inanimate, animate, conscious, and self-conscious levels of existence. A few examples are cited to make this clear. A machine obeys the mechanic; tides in the ocean obey the law of attraction; minerals obey the laws of change under heat and pressure; the flora and fauna of a region obey the seasons; migratory birds obey their innate urge to seek a fresh habitat; a thirsty man obeys the guide who leads him to water; a sick man obeys the doctor who promises a cure; a dissatisfied workman obeys the leader who pleads for his advantage; an army obeys its commander; a child obeys his parents and teachers; a religious man obeys his spiritual

director. It is clear from the above that at inanimate and low animate levels obedience is a mechanical reaction to external forces or internal urges, acting circumstantially. At a higher human level, the quality of obedience differs markedly, and becomes, as a rule, conscious and purposeful. The cause for it may be traced to the fact that man cannot live without society; and any human society has its own syntax of superordination and subordination based on obedience. Even the languages we use show the influence of the society which developed it.

3. Perhaps, the early Indo-European languages, representing the inflectional group of speeches, reflect some traits of the Aryan polity in their arrangement: Pāṇini enunciated in two aphorisms (*Svatantraḥ kartā* and *Kartur īpsitatamaṁ karma*) that the subject of a sentence is independent, and what the subject desires most is the object. A sentence is a combination of words mutually so related as to express a unified sense which none of the components can individually express. So also, a society is organized for a common end, and that end is achieved by the combined efforts of all the individuals constituting it. No individual, however important, can achieve that social end by himself. In a polity of the monarchic type, the king is the independent sovereign; but without his ministers, officers, servants, and subjects he has no existence. Functional grammar of languages here helps us to understand the grammar of politics. In syntactic languages, a mere array of words cannot express a sense if there is no proper subordination, concordance, and government of various parts of speech. An adjective qualifies, a preposition governs, an

adverb modifies, and there must be concordance in number. Each word may be important in its own position, functioning in a particular manner to express the import of the sentence. But if a sentence is ambiguous, or conveys two different meanings, it is an invalid statement. It is like a house divided against itself, or like a split society or State which works with opposite purposes, and thus it destroys itself. An independent subject alone does not make a true sentence; only a properly subordinated array of words does it. Although in a lexicon every word stands shoulder to shoulder, when they enter into a sentence to function, they have to obey the rules of grammar. Man, too, as a functionary in a combination, has to obey rules and submit to restraint. A dismantled aeroplane may sometimes show about sixty thousand parts which even designers of each segment may not recognize, not to speak of laymen; but when the parts are in position they function properly, because they obey the laws of dynamics; and, together, they keep the gigantic structure in the sky. Whether it is a sentence or a mechanical contrivance, it is mutual accord of parts that give significance to the whole.

4. Jaimini, who systematized the methods of Vedic interpretation and established a philosophy of sacrificial work (*yajña*) over two millenniums back, laid down that, in a given situation, sequence in time and place is possible only on the arrangement of principal and accessory. Two things cannot occupy the same place except as the container and the contained. Two events cannot occur at the same time except in different places. In the sphere of values, what replaces will have greater importance and validity than what is replaced. In the view of the Vedic Mīmāṃsaka teachers, a pre-planned *yajña* demands that every act in it and every ingredient of it must be in the proper time and in the right place, and that the prescribed period of time must be occupied only by those acts in order to complete its performance

without any blemish or corruption. In such circumstances, priority and posteriority in the events and superordination and subordination in the personnel and ingredients become inevitable.

5. Faith is the precondition of all correct and purposive action. Faithful and unselfish performance of work must be made the leading rule of a person's conduct in order to enable him to concentrate the mind on the perfect doing of his duty. Accuracy in liturgical acts is, therefore, considered supremely important. To secure religious exactitude, the Mīmāṃsaka teachers consider *yajña* as a supremely sacred duty, and not merely as a social act. When an act is deemed sacred, no part of it can be missed, altered, or done listlessly. The sages of the Vedic times and the masters who succeeded them were able to establish discipline in different orders to such an eminent degree and produce men and women of supreme competence, only because, in their systems, there was no room anywhere for frivolity, and because they considered any transgression in the performance of a sacrifice as sin. Even a painstaking, labour-consuming, extensive, and expensive performance of a religious work was considered null and void if there was the slightest corruption in its management, or any mispronunciation of a formula, or some error in the procedure, or omission of an ingredient. Such mental discipline is unparalleled in ancient history.

6. This meticulous care of the *yājñikas* and Vedic teachers, which pervaded every parallel discipline, directly resulted from the central Vedic concept that work is greater than its results and even the performers of the work. The main purpose of the Vedic scripture, according to the Mīmāṃsaka, is to incite men to action, that is, to command. Whatever else is said or unsaid in it is but a preparation for the fulfilment of the command. This being accepted as the import of all significant Vedic passages, a verb expressing action naturally gains precedence over all the other



words; and in a verbal expression, the injunctive suffix is the spearhead of action, because it conveys the efficient force behind the command. Who is to obey the command? The command, certainly, does not lose its inciting force if there happens to be none to obey it. The force of wind does not abate if there are no trees to be shaken. And trees there are enough for any wind to blow upon. There are innumerable human beings seeking security and reward, and they obey the command of a reliable authority. The moment they are convinced that compliance will give them heaven hereafter or happiness here, they are incited to work. Not only that much. The Mīmāṃsaka would go further and say that Vedic commands must be obeyed not only by the seekers of security and reward, but also by those who do not want to backslide from the moral and spiritual level they have attained in their transmigratory evolution. A section of them would assert that there is still greater benefit. If a competent aspirant performs ordained holy work with no personal motive whatsoever, but only as a matter of duty towards God, he would attain inward purity essential for self-enlightenment.

7. Man is the sport of natural impulses. He can live a worthy life only if he has self-mastery. Restraint is essential to canalize his energies toward fruitful ends. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* also emphasizes the need of such restraint and enjoins in words of transparent clarity: '*Tasmāt śāstram pramāṇam te kāryākāryavyavasthitau; jñātvā śāstravidhānoktam karma kartum ihārhasi*—So let the Śāstra be thy authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done; and, having known what is ordained by the scriptures, it befits thee to engage thyself in such activities.' Whether a person engages himself in holy works motivated by rewards, or he just fulfils his duty by doing scripture-ordained work, it is the *vidhi* or *niyoga* (the Vedic command) that goads him to perform the *yajña*. And when he has

elected to obey the command and perform the holy duty, for him, then, all considerations of reward recede to the background, and the mode of operation (*itikartavyatā*) alone absorbs him completely. To him, then, everything connected with his existence tends to be a means to sacrificial work, *kratvartha*. The institutor of the sacrificial work becomes, in a sense, a limb of the sacrifice itself. If he does not utter lies, fasts, and restrains his senses during the performance of the *yajña*, it is chiefly for the blemishless completion of the *yajña*, strictly according to prescription, and not for the gain of a personal virtue. Against this background of the sovereignty of the Vedic command, the Mīmāṃsaka establishes the doctrine of *śeṣa-śeṣi-bhāva* or *aṅgāṅgī-bhāva*. The doctrine had its far-reaching effect in the field of work, worship, education, and social organization in ancient India. Under the influence of it, the entire world was taken to be the field of work (*karma-bhūmi*), and everything in it was to be seen in a graded hierarchy with the Vedic command, which was held to be eternal, at the top. Sacrificial work is the end towards which all other things move as its means. Our national poet of the Gupta period, Kālidāsa, described the Himalayas as *Yajñāṅgayoni* or the source of sacrificial components. *Yajña* is the *aṅgin*, or principal, and minerals, plants, animals, men, and time and space are but auxiliaries or *aṅgas* of the *yajña*.

8. The entire scheme of *yajña* is brought into existence by the command of the Veda. The power of command (*codanā*) inherent in the Vedic injunction was called Dharma. Dharma was delegated to the classes of men living in obedience to the Vedic law. All the four Varnas and the four Āśramas obeyed the Dharma; and even a powerful emperor was but an obedient servant of Dharma, doing duties as Dharma bade him. Vedic command conveying the Dharma of each individual prescribed only duties, for it was assumed that rights followed Dharma like a shadow. Viewed in this light, the fourfold classification



of the people was not a mere sociological growth, but a psychological plan devised for the delegation of that Dharma which the Vedic command sought to perpetuate for universal good. Privileges which men enjoyed as functionaries in the scheme counted very little; the command of the scripture which they obeyed had dominance over everything else. By this arrangement, the nobler and more competent a person was, the more was he obligated. From this description, it is clear that men lived in obedience by practically submitting to the authority of the Vedas regarded as universally valid. The traditional Hindu ordered his life for centuries not as a slave of changing fashions or at the dictates of a powerful leader, but in obedience to a law which he believed to be divine and eternally binding. That is why he worked and worshipped, married and begat, bathed and slept, ate and drank, learned and taught, silently, contentedly, peacefully, and religiously in obedience to scriptural behests, doing harm to none, and making his life impersonal and spiritual. This picture is, of course, fading now owing to extrinsic social contact and assimilation.

9. We are living in the age of freedom and self-determination brought on by a cultivated scientific bent of mind. New views and new values have risen in the intellectual world. And so we may naturally ask: Is not man sufficiently intelligent to propose tasks for himself and capable of steering his life beneficially? Why should he obey the command of anyone else? An affirmative answer to this question is impossible, because even at this stage of civilization a vast majority of human beings do not know for themselves what is really wholesome for them, and they hinder rather than help the commonweal, particularly when self-love clashes with altruism. So enunciation of positive laws are as necessary today as it was in ancient times. It is fear of punishment and consequent obedience to law that ensure order and progress in society. No doubt, all

obedience to enacted laws is provisional, in so far as the laws as well as compliance to them are conditioned by circumstances. Man surrenders part of his freedom to a State, only to purchase his own safety and protection; and since no State can function without some kind of coercion, statutory obedience cannot be dispensed with except in a Utopia. Modern man, certainly, would ask for a share in making the laws which he is asked to obey; but he neither asks nor gets it except through representation, and a representative is not a photographic medium, reflecting each man's interest exactly as it is, nor even that of the majority, at times. Statutory laws are essential to the existence of a community and for the preservation of freedom itself; this is too patent to be established through a discussion.

10. Convention or contract is the basis of obedience. Children are too immature to think that they obey their parents and teachers, because that is the only way for them to get the necessary instruction, training, and protection to grow up to manhood. It is mostly convention, established through suggestion and example with an element of fear of punishment and deprivation of satisfactions, that makes the child submissive to rules. It may also be fondness for the other person who is the source of satisfaction for the child. Then, again, there is the obedience of an army, or a hierarchy in an office, which rises from contract and remuneration, backed by a sense of patriotism or love of common good. Usually, obedience observed in an official hierarchy conduces to efficient work and better results. Those who co-operate in tasks obey commands voluntarily in order to share the benefits of the enterprise, rendered highly effective through concerted efforts. At this level, obedience is not slavish submission to a dogmatic authority, but careful and considered submission, based more on discrimination than on convention, more on personal insight than on religious or ethical impulse. The



essence of contract is faithfulness to agreement voluntarily entered and voluntarily dissolved. This is the ideal obedience of a servant in any scheme. It is ideally ethical when both take a kindly interest in the concerns and welfare of each other. There is no question of blind submission in contract, and when one party starts grumbling the other agrees to relinquish, as both keep freedom of self-determination.

11. Nowhere is the doctrine of obedience worked out so earnestly as in religious orders. In this respect, the Roman Catholic Church stands out distinctly. All religions teach that man begins to live only when he practises self-discipline. Self-assertion does not take the religious aspirant to his goal; so he is shown the path of self-obliteration the moment he starts on his religious adventure. According to Catholic religion, sainthood offers the ideal of Christian perfection, and Jesus Christ represents the highest illustration of a saintly character. *Vita tua via nostra* (Thy life is our way) is the motto of the saint. Since Jesus Christ openly declared that he and the Father in Heaven are one, obedience in Christianity is a gift really made to God; for all authority is from God. The Catholic faith analyses three kinds of authority, namely, that of the natural order of the family, that of the spiritual order of the Church, and of the social order of the government. While obedience to the first two orders is regarded as universally valid, obedience to the third order is of a provisional character. The competence of the State to order the individual family or its religious life by legislation cannot be accepted without question. In the first two cases, obedience stands opposed to disobedience, while in the case of the last failure to obey the State law is considered only self-determination, or personal autonomy, or maybe, at the last resort, construed as rebellion liable to punishment and suppression. To a Catholic, religious disobedience is an offence against God.

12. The above attitude of religion toward

family, Church, and State is not without justification. Infancy of birds or mammals is usually short, and the instinctive clinging of the young one to the parent in their case vanishes as soon as the offspring is strong enough to fend for itself. Further, animals have no time-binding sense, as they have little or no memory. Human beings, on the other hand, have a prolonged infancy and non-age, entailing on them dependence on parents and subordination to elders for a protracted period. In the circumstances, the family becomes the true and natural basis of human life and well-being. Though it is true that some parents may miserably fail in rearing children properly, their substitutes, at best, cannot do what cautious, enlightened, careful parents can do for their children. States sprang up when aggregates of families surrendered to a sovereign power part of their freedom, in return for the protection and security they received. Without proper moulding of youth by age at home and in the school, and obedience to the laws of the State, social inheritance and civilization are not possible. It is generally observed that a man will do a thing as another wants, only if he has not the power to do as he himself wants. Therefore, persuasive or compulsory coercion is behind all conformity to standard. Immaturity and inexperience stand in the way of the child's discovering for himself what is his own good, and hence only the family or its surrogate can bring up a child to manhood. All religions have, therefore, stressed through ordinances of sacred books that it is the duty of parents to raise children under obedience, keeping the trust sacred and inviolable. The State had to concede *Patria Potestas* and the Church supported it. The rebelling child is to be conformed to a standard by the parents even as anti-social elements are made conformists by the State. Conformity implies an initial difference which is moulded into similarity. The child has before it a model, or standard, to which it has to be conformed, and a harmony is to be established between



himself and the model before him. The conventions, institutions, and *mores* of the parents are to be assimilated through adaptation and compliance. This can be accomplished only by living in obedience. Until the child realizes the advantages that accrue to him through membership in the family group, he must be made to obey rules and conform to the standards through mild or sharp coercion. And parents who afford them protection and satisfaction are the fittest to command obedience and conformity. Keeping all this in view, religion teaches that disobedience to parents is a sin against God, chiefly in the interest of the individual himself and of the family and the society. Despite occasional parental selfishness, cruelty, and callousness met with in this world, children's obedience to elders is universally admitted as a duty.

13. In paragraphs 6-8 it was made clear that the Vedic teachers considered the command of the Vedas to be the supreme authority in matters of conduct and morals. This is but natural in the light of the impersonal attitude taken by Indian sages all through. This impersonal spirit is expressed more than once by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya in his *bhāṣyas*. He says: *Pramāna-cintāyām puruṣapravṛttir-nodāharaṇam arhati*—when we are engaged in an enquiry into the question of validity, it does not befit us to cite the doings of individuals. This critical attitude is not, however, encouraged in the Catholic faith which considers the Church supreme in all matters pertaining to the salvation of man. Although the Church became ritualistic and even imperialistic later on, its original idea was completely moral and spiritual. Roman Catholic theology accepts a personal God; 'personal', in the context, means responsive to men in the way that human beings can be responsive. Love, goodness, and responsiveness are the attributes of personal God. Not merely reason, but the soul's communion with Hira establishes this truth. According to Anselm, this personal God is 'that than which a greater can't be conceived—*Aliquid quo nihil*

*majus cogitari potest*'. St. Theresa, too, exclaimed: 'O my Lord! O my King! who can describe Thy Majesty? It is impossible not to see that Thou art Thyself the greatest ruler of all.' Further, she elsewhere added: 'Our Lord said to me once that there was no obedience where there was no resolution to suffer. Nothing can sustain man's faith more adequately than the Most High. "We inevitably grow ourselves unto the likeness of that which we contemplate with adoration and self-surrender."' This is the central doctrine from which spiritual Christianity takes its rise.

14. In Christianity, like any other activity of life, piety is an affair of the community as well as of the individual; and hence obedience is the *sine qua non* of piety. The Roman Church saw that spiritual reality cannot flourish in individuals, unless it is nourished by a corresponding activity on the part of the community at large. Saints are born only in a country where men have learned to admire and appreciate sanctity. So the Church made an earnest, powerful, and extensive attempt to render itself the school of God. Men were taught to love the Lord and abase themselves before Him in utter humility and thankfulness. For it is from humility that obedience stems, and from obedience renunciation of self-will, patience, gentleness, piety, bountifulness, soberness, chastity, and other virtues follow. In the school of God, his servant learns to destroy with the powerful aid of His grace, pride, vainglory, self-complacency, desires for human favour and honour, and motions of impatience.

15. A Christian monastery of the mediaeval times was established on the ideal of a Christian family with the abbot as the father and other members as obedient sons and brethren under him. The abbot was elected for life and all monks remained usually attached to the same monastery. The need of each one was met, and from each, obedience, humility, and stability were expected in turn. The brethren received what they



needed, and if one got more than another, no one should grumble or murmur. Everyone was to be employed in doing good. Manual work was part of monastic discipline. Seniority among brethren ranked from the moment a novice entered the religious home. Every member had to act towards the other as they would act towards Christ. St. Benedict laid down the rule: When the elder passes by, let the younger arise and give place to him to sit down; nor let the younger presume to sit with him unless the elder bids him.

16. The order of a superior was to be considered as command of God since the abbot was the representative of God and appointed elders were his delegates. The extent and function of authority which each one wielded and the measure of his responsibility were clearly defined. Superiors could not transgress the proper sphere of authority. A Christian monk ought to hold nothing dearer than Christ; for him, there is no motive for obedience higher than that. Thomas Á. Kempis advised those who were in the monastery: 'Be desirous to do the will of another than your own, and wish and pray always that the will of God may be wholly fulfilled in you.' Loyalty to the profession demanded not only the correct internal disposition but also the external qualities. The picture of obedience in its external operation is given in St. Benedict's Rule as follows: Leaving immediately occupations and forsaking their own will, with their hands disengaged, and leaving unfinished what they were about, with the speedy step of obedience, they should follow by their deeds the voice of him who commands! Such prompt, unhesitant, cheerful, eager, generous obedience can be cultivated only by those who have grown sensitive and alert through prayer and study and have gained power of quick perception. This kind of disciplined obedience is always acceptable to God and sweet to man. The heart behind the mechanical obedience accompanied with a suppressed audible grumble is watched by God, and the disciplined obedience of the

loving and tranquilly uncritical servant is pleasing to Him. Every movement, every inclination, every turning of an obedient son goes to form his character. A son who slowly rises from the seat and slouches out of the room for a pen when the father commands, does not see Christ in the father. A disordered exterior is considered in the monastery often as an index of a disordered interior.

17. Religious obedience, however, differs from other types of obedience in one respect, namely, that it is not blind at least in one sense: 'Whenever the commands of one's superior are contrary to that of God, and above all, the precepts of charity, no one is bound to obey them, for it is written, "It is more important to obey God than man".' This early picture of living in obedience, however, underwent a lot of change in Christianity when the bride of Christ was degraded into the harlot of Caesar, or when, as Savonarola put it, the donations of Constantine poisoned the Church. When the Church became a religio-politico-social corporation and a parallel State tolerating slavery and other evils, obedience, no doubt, became a mechanical, artificial discipline. 'In striving to gain the whole world, Rome had necessarily sacrificed her own soul and that of the people on whom her rule fell. Her vault and columns weigh upon the mind with almost palpable oppression' (Wingfield Stratford: *The History of British Civilization*).

18. Having briefly surveyed the implications of the doctrine of obedience in different disciplines, I would consider it a serious lacuna in this paper, if reference is not made to this important doctrine as conceived by the greatest religious teacher of Modern India, Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji's ideas on the doctrine of obedience proceed from three sources and find their confluence in his own life. The first one is the specifically Upanisadic ideal of *gurubhakti* expressed all through Indian religions tradition. Śrī Śaṅkara brilliantly epitomizes it in a verse:



*Bhagavan kim upādeyam? guruvacanam; heyam api ca kim? akāryam. Ko guruh? adhigata-tattvāḥ śiṣyahittāya udyatas-satatam*—Sir, what must be accepted? Guru's words. What must be rejected? That which is no part of one's duty. Who is a guru? He who has realized the truth, and who has unbroken solicitude for the welfare of the disciple.' The exemplary relation between Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda is the best illustration of this type of spiritual obedience, based on divine love for one's guru.

19. The second strand in Swamiji's concept of obedience is the sociological need of obedience. He quotes his guru's own words and says: 'The sappling must be hedged round. No doubt, it is an evil to be bound by laws, but it is necessary at the immature stage to be guided by rules.' This is the type of obedience required of a child who must obey the parents and the teachers for his own security and growth. This is the obedience of the patient who must obey the doctor for cure and health. One who is in spiritual nonage, also, must obey his spiritual elders. The motive of obedience in this case is confidence in one's guided progress and intense faith in the elder.

20. Swami Vivekananda was a *samyagdarsin* who perceived the Truth. His ultimate goal was trans-mundane. According to Swamiji, there was no duty for him who had realized complete union with God. The life of the free-in-life (*jīvanmukta*) is beyond all laws and limitations. Such are precious few in history, though we may claim him as one. They are embodiments of love, and love in action seeks fulfilment through service. Swamiji, therefore, repeatedly advised a third strand of obedience to build up an organisation for the uplift of India and the world. Let us read in his own words the nature of this type of obedience which is essential for the building up of any altruistic spiritual organization. Occasional similarity with the rules of other churches, or organi-

zations, should not beguile us to think that Swamiji's idea of a religious organization was merely copied from an existing pattern. The triple strands of obedience according to Swamiji's concept described above will make that clear.

21. Why did Swamiji make it almost a passion of his life to build an organization? Let us study his answer in *ipsissima verba*, selected and quoted from his letters:

Organize and found societies and go to work, that is the only way. What is wanted is a powerful organization. Do you understand me? An organization that will teach the Hindu mutual help and appreciation is absolutely necessary. We want an organization. Off with laziness!

22. What was the nature of the organization Swamiji contemplated? First, an order of trained spiritual men; for he said:

Glory unto him on whom falls the Lord's choice. Nothing, I say, nothing can be done without the chain of discipleship, that is, the power that is transmitted from the guru to the disciple, and from him to his disciple, and so on. I do not believe in politics. God and truth are the only politics in the world, anything else is trash. Let him who has courage in his mind and love in his heart come with me, I want none else. Whether we be ten or two, I do not care, but those few must be perfect characters. Give up for ever the desire for name and fame and power. It is through love, a passion for truth, and tremendous energy that all undertakings are accomplished. Therefore, manifest your manhood. Neither number, nor power, nor wealth, nor learning, nor eloquence, nor anything else will prevail, but purity, *living the life*, in one word, *anubhūti*, realization. I have nothing to do with sectarianism, or party-forming and playing the frog-in-the-well. The only way of getting our divine nature manifested is by helping others to do the same. Why do those who think themselves unfit to teach other fellow-beings wear the teacher's garb and earn their bread by cheating them? Only that kind of work which develops our spirituality is work, whatever fosters materiality is not work. Those to whom religion is a trade are forced to become



narrow and mischievous by their introduction into religion of the competitive, fighting, and selfish methods of the world.

23. The picture we get of an institution in the above passage is that of a select spiritual community which required a fence at the sappling stage. But Swamiji had also in view a second type of organization as it is clear from the following passage:

The term organization means division of labour. Each does his own part, and all the parts taken together express an ideal harmony. We must organize our forces not to make a sect—not on religious matters, but on the secular business part of it. It is impossible to preach the catholic ideas of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and form sects at the same time.

24. It is evident from the above passage that Swamiji did not think of organizing man's relation with God, his inmost Self, or about the laws that bring about spiritual realization. Only the *secular business part* of religion he thought of governing through an organization. In a letter to Swami Brahmananda (dated 1-8-1898), he makes clear what he meant by organizing the secular business part:

Any amount of theoretical knowledge one may have; but unless one does the thing actually, nothing is learnt. I refer repeatedly to election, accounts, and discussion so that everybody may be prepared to shoulder the work. If one man dies, another—why another only, ten if necessary—should be ready to take it up. Secondly, if a man's interest in a thing is not roused, he will not work wholeheartedly; all should be made to understand that everyone has a share in the work and property, and a voice in the management. Give a responsible position to everyone alternately, but keep a watchful eye so that you can control when necessary; thus only can men be trained for work. Get up such a machine as will go on automatically, no matter who dies or lives. We Indians suffer from a great defect, viz. we cannot make a permanent organization—and the reason is that we never like to share power

with others and never think of what will come after we are gone.

25. And Swamiji stressed again and again that obedience is necessary to sustain the spiritual institution and secular business organization, though the quality and attitude of either may slightly vary. For he said:

Be obedient and eternally faithful to the cause of truth, humanity, and your country, and you will move the world. Obedience is the first duty. Well, do with alacrity what I ask you to. The true man is he who is strong as strength itself and possesses a woman's heart. You must feel for the millions of beings around you, and yet, you must be strong and inflexible, and you must also possess obedience; though it may seem a little paradoxical—you must possess these apparently contradicting virtues. You must be as free as the wind and as obedient as this plant and the dog.

26. It is not a statutory obedience that Swamiji emphasized, but an obedience based on a great spiritual principle which he supplemented with a number of practical instructions which would make submission to command natural and smooth. He said:

There is but one basis of well-being, social, political, or spiritual, to know that I and my brother are one. All love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction. Love is, therefore, the only law of life, he who is selfish is dying. Be the servant while leading, be unselfish, and never listen to one friend in private accusing another. A leader must be impersonal. I want that there should be no hypocrisy, no Jesuitism, no roguery. There should not be a breath of immorality, nor a stain of policy which is bad. Beware of everything that is untrue; stick to truth and we shall succeed. Maybe slowly, but surely. The brutal mania of leading has sunk many a ship in the waters of life. He is the best ruler who can serve well.

27. A wonderful combination of freedom and obedience is the result of unselfish love and the spiritual perception, born of prayer and meditation. And when the command is wise, obedience is humble and implicit.

# THE PROSPECTS OF ADVAITA AS A FUTURE WORLD PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

BY DR. S. N. L. SHRIVASTAVA

[Dr. S. N. L. Shrivastava, M.A., D.Litt., is the Head of the Department of Philosophy in the Vikram University, Ujjain. In his learned article, he shows how Advaita philosophy has the prospect of becoming a world religion without any fear of contradiction, and how great has been the contribution of Swami Vivekananda in helping it to become a positive and practical philosophy.]

While taking up my pen to write something for the special issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, intended to commemorate the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda, the choice of a theme baffled my mind for some time till I came to the definite conclusion that the best tribute I could pay to the hallowed memory of this illustrious prophet of a new India and a new humanity was by writing something on the Advaita Vedānta which was the very foundation, the bed-rock, of all his inspiring teachings.

It shall be my purpose in this article to show, in particular, wherein lies the unique strength of Advaita Vedānta and its appropriateness for modern times, as well as to examine and answer some objections that have of late begun to be urged against the Advaita, of course, to the extent it is possible to do so within the short compass of a single article.

The quintessence of the Advaita Vedānta may, I think, be summed up in few words as follows. Brahman is the one, abiding, eternal, unchanging, inexpugnable Reality which is of the nature of omniscient and omnipotent Spirit. The entire universe with its animate and inanimate existents is a manifestation of this supreme Spirit, through Its inscrutable power called *māyā*, in the order of space, time, and causation. The essential and inmost 'self' of man is identical with this supreme Spirit, and the unclouded awareness of this identity constitutes his freedom or *mokṣa*, complete freedom from all the vicissitudes of condition-

ed existence. It is a cardinal tenet of the Advaita Vedānta, peculiarly its own, that nothing short of the awareness of this supreme identity, whatever be the height of one's spiritual ascent otherwise, is *mokṣa*, properly so called. Not until the last vestige of the unawareness of the identity (*avidyā*) has been removed, can there be real freedom for man—freedom of the spirit, not what we call the 'freedom of the will'. It is only the attainment of the awareness of this supreme identity which can post one in that state of *absolute fearlessness—abhayam padam*—spoken of in the Upaniṣads; for the possibility of fear cannot be finally rooted out until the awareness or the realization dawns that there is no 'other' to one's own being—*dvitīyād vai bhayam bhavati*. Hence, *tattvamasi*, 'thou art That' is the *mahāvākya* for the Advaita, embodying its ideal of *mokṣa* which is the ultimate goal of life. *Mokṣa*, from the Advaitic point of view, is distinguishable from the various grades and forms of beatific visions and rapturous delights of fellowship with the Divine which may precede the awareness of the ultimate Unity. The highest peak of knowledge for the Advaitin is the awareness of that Unity, wherein the chasm between existence and knowledge, fact and idea, the 'that' and the 'what' in Bradley's well-known phraseology, is bridged over and 'Knowledge is Existence and Existence is Knowledge'—*bodha eva sattā sattā eva bodhaḥ*, as Śaṅkara has put it. Śaṅkara points out that the Śruti statement about the knowledge of the One by which all else is known could have no



meaning, unless it referred to a kind of knowledge as indicated above.

Again, *mokṣa* is not an attainment in the literal sense of the word. It is simply the recovery of awareness which has been eclipsed by unawareness (*avidyā*). The identity of the 'self' with the Absolute (*brahmātma-aiḥya*) is an eternal fact. The 'self', in the last analysis, is construed by Advaita Vedānta, not as a 'knower', but as *Knowledge Itself* to which the duality of 'knower' and 'known' is *given*. There can be no limitation of Knowledge, no division in Its being. All limitation, all division, is *for* Knowledge and *in* the known. The self *qua* Knowledge cannot but be identical with the Absolute or Brahman. The fact is there eternally; the awareness has to be recovered. It is the translocation of the properties of the known to Knowledge and *vice versa* which has been termed *adhyāsa* by Śaṅkara. It is this *adhyāsa*, he says, which the wise men have called *avidyā*.

Eternality of empirical individuality is denied by Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta alike. It has no reality beyond the realm of *saṃsāra*. Immortality, as conceived in both, the *amataṃ padam* of the Buddha, the *amṛtam* of the Upaniṣads, is not the perpetuation through all time of empirical individuality, but transcending it for ever.

There is a tendency in certain circles nowadays to caricature the idea of *mokṣa*, to ridicule it, to pooh-pooh it, and all in the name of the reality and preservation or perpetuation of 'individuality'. The critics hold out the horrors of the 'extinction' of individuality or its 'absorption' into the Absolute or some great abyss, and so on. The truth is that 'extinction', 'absorption' etc. are words with physical connotations and hardly adequate to express the spiritual experience of Identity. Then, again, the critics unduly emphasize the negative descriptions of *mokṣa*, ignoring its positive side. If *mokṣa* is self-losing in the narrower empirical sense, it is also a self-gaining in the larger and more extended sense—the consciousness of the Self

as the All and the All as the Self—*yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt vijānataḥ*. It is sometimes said that the ideal of *mokṣa* is a selfish ideal, the ideal of salvation for one's own self without caring for the welfare of others. It was Swami Vivekananda who rightly pointed out that real love for, and unselfish service of, humanity and genuine compassion for all beings was only possible *after* Self-realization, after gaining the awareness of oneness of one's own self with all selves.

#### THE REALITY AND STATUS OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

The crucial point in the Advaita Vedānta, and one which is most misunderstood, is the reality and status of the external world. Ever since Śaṅkara summed up the quintessence of his teaching on the point in the words—*Brahma satyam jaganmithyā*—'Brahman is Real, the world is false', the statement has come to be regarded as the *locus classicus* of the theory of 'illusoriness' of the world. It is a pity that the word used—*mithyā* (false)—is misconstrued. The false can never be equated with the illusory or the non-existent. Something which is false *must exist*; its falsity consists in its appropriating to itself properties which do not really belong to it. The false *exists*, but pretends to be what it is not. A false friend, for example, exists as a human being pretending to have qualities of a friend which he does not really have. In Vedāntic literature, the word used for what in the English language is called the illusory is *prātibhāsika*. The author of the *Vedānta-Paribhāṣā* has said: 'Existence is threefold—absolute existence, relative existence, and illusory existence. Of Brahman there is absolute existence, of ether etc. (i.e. of the world composed of ether and other elements) there is relative existence, and the silver seen in a nacre has illusory existence.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Trividham sattvam—pāramārthikam vyāvahārikam prātibhāsikañceti. Pāramārthikam sattvam brahmanah, vyāvahārikam sattvamākāśādeḥ, prātibhāsikam sattvam cūktirajātādeḥ* (Chapter II).



The external world of our everyday experience appears to us to be completely objective, independent, self-subsistent, abiding and unconditionally real, all things therein being precisely what the senses reveal to us. Is it really so? Let us take up the question of the 'objectivity' of the world of our perception. We are raising the question about 'the world as perceived by us'. That there is an objective order of reality which we perceive cannot be denied; we cannot, possibly, perceive nothingness or a vacuity. But do our perceptions give us *that* objective reality in its original, pristine, unconditioned nature? To this question, even science does not give an affirmative answer. 'Physics', says Bertrand Russell, 'is said to be an empirical science, based upon observation and experiment.' To the question 'What can we learn by observation and experiment?' Russell, as a spokesman of scientific knowledge, which is the only kind of valid knowledge for him, replies: 'Nothing, so far as physics is concerned, except immediate data of sense: certain patches of colour, sounds, tastes, smells, etc., with certain spatio-temporal relations. The supposed contents of the physical world are *prima facie* very different from these: molecules have no colour, atoms make no noise, electrons have no taste, and corpuscles do not even smell.'<sup>2</sup>

It will not be possible to explain and discuss here Russell's theory of sense-data *in extenso*. I am only interested in pointing out here the bearing of Russell's conclusions on the question of the 'objectivity' of the external world of our perception, Russell's contribution on the subject being significant on account of his strict allegiance to the scientific method and his scrupulous regard for not overstepping the bounds of scientifically ascertainable knowledge. The relevant conclusions are: (1) that what we directly and immediately perceive are the sense-data which are very different from the actual or real constitu-

ents of the physical world as physics takes them to be; and (2) that these sense-data, though not subjective according to Russell, have what he calls a 'physiological subjectivity', in the sense that they are physiologically conditioned, i.e. conditioned by our sense-organs, nerves, and the brain. The physiological subjectivity is thus finely explained by Russell, taking the illustration of photons of light travelling from a star and hitting the human eye: 'When this occurs, the results are very complicated. There are a set of events between the eye and the brain which are studied by the physiologist and which have as little resemblance to the photons in the outer world as radio waves have to the orator's speech. At last, the disturbance in the nerves, which has been traced by the physiologist, reaches the appropriate region in the brain; and then, at last, the man whose brain it is sees the star. People are puzzled, because the seeing of the star seems so different from the processes that the physiologist discovered in the optic nerve, and yet it is clear that without these processes the man would not see that star.'<sup>3</sup> Russell, surely, differentiates his position from subjectivism, and so, he talks of 'physiological subjectivity'; but even this does not prevent him from coming to the conclusion that, in a sense, the external world of our perception is inside us: 'The whole of what we perceive without inference belongs to our private world. In this respect, I agree with Berkeley. The starry heaven that we know in visual sensation is inside us. The external starry heaven that we believe in is inferred.'<sup>4</sup>

It is clear from Russell's account outlined above that *the world as perceived by us*, though certainly the perception of an objective reality (I would not twist his account into a subjectivist position), is not the perception of *that objective reality in its complete and unconditioned objectivity, but as condi-*

<sup>3</sup> Bertrand Russell: *My Philosophical Development*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 145.



tioned and transformed by our physico-psycho-sensorial instrument of apprehension.

The scientist Sir Arthur Stanley Eddington, in his celebrated Gifford Lectures, *The Nature of the Physical World*, has unequivocally expressed the opinion that all our scientific knowledge is but 'a schedule of pointer-readings', 'a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life', symbols and mathematical equations, without giving us any knowledge of the reality which the symbols symbolize. In his other book, *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, Eddington has considered the epistemological implications of scientific knowledge and has expressed the opinion that the human mind is like a fishing-net which can give us only such part or aspects of reality as it is capable of knowing. The Nobel Prize winner Werner Heisenberg, who more than any other physicist of the day, is said to have the right to wear Einstein's mantle, has recently said: 'We stand in the centre of the confrontation between nature and man, of which science, of course, is only a part. The familiar classification of the world into subject and object, inner and outer world, body and soul, somehow, no longer quite applies, and indeed, leads to difficulties. In science, also, the object of research is no longer nature in itself, but rather nature exposed to man's questioning, and to this extent, man here also meets himself.'<sup>5</sup>

It is clear from the above that, in our knowledge of the external world, even in our scientific knowledge thereof, we do not get reality in its complete and unconditioned objectivity. Such an objectivity is a will-o'-the-wisp. This is not to deny that there is an objective reality. The Advaita Vedānta does not. Brahman, says the Advaitin, is the ever-abiding, inexpugnable, objective Reality which we, in our relative, everyday experience perceive as the world. What we are perceiving when we are said to be perceiving the world is Brahman, conditioned by space-time-causa-

tion, not Brahman in its unconditioned nature. 'The world' says Śaṅkara, the paragon of Advaita philosophers, 'is an unbroken series of perceptions of Brahman, hence it is nothing but Brahman in all respects—*Brahmapratyayasantatirjagad ato brahmaiva tat sarvataḥ*' (*Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 521). Again and again, Śaṅkara writes in his commentaries that Brahman is the *adhiṣṭhāna*, *āspada*, and *kāraṇa*, that is, the objective basis and ground of the world-experience, and he is never tired of reiterating his theory of *ananyatva* or non-difference of the world from Brahman. Without something *being there*, without an objective reality, no experience whatsoever, he says, not even that of a mirage or an optical illusion, is possible. 'Without objective bases, even such perceptions such as that of the snake in the rope and the mirage etc. are not ever possible by anyone.'<sup>6</sup> Śaṅkara's scathing criticism of the Buddhist schools of subjective idealism or mentalism (*Vijñānavāda*), nihilism (*Śūnyavāda*)<sup>7</sup>, and momentariness (*Kṣāṇikavāda*) in his commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra* ought to convince any critic of the distinction of his own position from these schools of thought. To say that the world according to Advaita Vedānta is an 'illusion' or a 'Cosmic Illusion' or anything of the sort is the darkest travesty of the Advaita position. Swami Vivekananda, the modern compeer in Advaita Vedānta of the illustrious Śaṅkara, says: 'This world is "the evolution of nature and the manifestation of God". It is our interpretation of Brahman or the Absolute, seen through the veil of *Māyā* or appearance. The world is not zero, it has a certain reality; it only *appears* because Brahman *is*.'<sup>8</sup> The following are some other statements of Vivekananda on the point:

<sup>6</sup> *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā, Bhāṣya*, I.6.

<sup>7</sup> It may be pointed out here that Śaṅkara understood *Śūnyavāda* as literally 'nihilism', though the philosophy, as developed by Nāgārjuna and other Mādhyamika philosophers, is not just that. We are concerned here with Śaṅkara's criticism of the nihilist position as such.

<sup>8</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VIII, pp. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Eugene Exman in 'Search for Meaning' in the *Hibbert Journal*, July 1962, p. 276.



'Almost all of you have heard of the word *māyā*. Generally, it is used, though incorrectly, to denote illusion, or delusion, or some such thing.'<sup>9</sup>

'When the Hindu says the world is *māyā*, at once, people get the idea that the world is an illusion. This interpretation has some basis, as coming through the Buddhistic philosophers, who did not believe in the external world at all. But the *Māyā* of the Vedānta, in its developed form, is neither Idealism nor Realism, nor is it a theory. It is a simple statement of facts—what we are and what we see around us.'<sup>10</sup>

'Most of you are by this time familiar with the idea of *māyā*, and know that it is sometimes erroneously explained as illusion, so that when the universe is said to be *māyā*, that also has to be explained as being illusion. The translation of the word is neither happy nor correct.'<sup>11</sup>

The Advaitin, also, does not regard the waking world as on a par with the dream world. The reader may refer to Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra* (II.2.29) where Śaṅkara has argued the point that the contents of the waking state cannot be regarded as similar to those of the dream state—*na svapnādi-pratyayavajjāgratpratyayā bhavitumarhanti. . . vaidharmyam hi bhavati svapnajāgaritayoḥ*.

The illusionist interpretation of the Advaita position, therefore, which is, in fact, a misinterpretation, should be done away with and the world being *māyā* should, correctly speaking, be understood to mean 'relative experience' or 'conditioned experience' of Reality which the Vedāntin calls Brahman. But with this, we have not removed all the moss that covers the limpid waters of the Advaita. There is the much discussed, and I am afraid, much misunderstood, question of the reality

and status of God in Advaitavāda. The usual misunderstanding is that God in the Advaita system is illusory or phenomenal or is a reality different from, and 'lower' than, that of the Absolute. This Absolute is conceived as Nirguṇa Brahman, a thin abstraction of thought, devoid of all qualities and features and incapable of receiving and responding to the warmth of devotion of the worshipper, thus cutting the very roots of all religious feeling and devotional fervour. This misunderstanding takes our breath away. The Advaitin never regards Nirguṇa and Saguna Brahman as numerically two different entities, but simply as two forms or aspects of the selfsame Brahman, the Unconditioned and the Conditioned. 'Brahman has a twofold nature', writes Śaṅkara, 'the one as conditioned by the limiting adjuncts of name and form; and the other, shorn of all limiting adjuncts. . . The texts of the Śruti speak of the two forms of Brahman, the one the object of *vidyā* and the other the object of *avidyā*.'<sup>12</sup> Brahman in the context of the relational universe is God, the ruler and controller of the universe and the object of devotion, and religious life retains its full validity prior to the transcendence of the relational consciousness. Is not Śaṅkara the composer of so many devotional hymns of surpassing beauty which millions of devotees in India sing every day?

Again, Brahman is *nirguna*, not in the sense of being *devoid* of or *depleted* of every quality, but in the sense of exceeding every conceivable quality. It is that inexhaustible positivity 'through which all concepts burst'. Again and again, Śaṅkara writes in his commentaries that Brahman, being the Infinite and the All, the One without a second, cannot be categorized by any of the four basic categories of our finite understanding—*jāti* (class), *guṇa* (quality), *kriyā* (activity), and *sambandha* (relation). Under what class can the Infinite be subsumed? What will be Its distinguishing quality, since there is nothing

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II. p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya*, I.1.11.



else besides it to be distinguished from? Where is the space for the Infinite to move to and from? To what can the Infinite be related?

Otto has beautifully explained the relation of Saguna to Nirguna Brahman in Śaṅkara's thought by comparing the two conceptions to the two ways of describing Godhead by the Western mystics, the *via eminentiae* and the *via negationis*. The former is the way of expressing Godhead in the highest terms of absolute perfection conceivable by man, and the latter is the way of describing Him by negative predicates with the object of excluding all limited determinations. The latter does not indicate impoverishment or emptiness, but the continuation of the former to its highest point. "The case is very similar with Śaṅkara. When this relationship is understood, one is no longer perplexed by his apparent "confusion". The method which he uses is really that of *samuccaya* (summing up) with regard to the Saguna and the Nirguna Brahman. Only thus is he comprehensible and, from this point, the confusion in his writings is solved. Śaṅkara can employ this method quite consistently, for the term "nothing" which the mystic uses of God is the superlative exaltation of the Divine above all "something". In like manner, Śaṅkara's *nirgunatvam* is the superlative of *sagunatvam*. The former does not deny the latter, but the latter is taken up in the former. Therefore, Śaṅkara can justifiably pass from the standpoint of the *parāvidyā* to that of the *aparāvidyā* and *vice versa* a hundred times, until the distinctions between them are completely obliterated. (Eckhart does exactly the same.) The significance of this process of *samuccaya* is, obviously, to assure to the highest Brahman all the conceivable divine values of theism and include them in the conception of the Brahman. . . . Therefore, when Śaṅkara employs for his Brahman the terms of honour which, strictly speaking, belong only to a world-creating and world-transcendent God, it is not a question of accommoda-

tion, but is the very essence of his position.<sup>13</sup>

Śrī Rāmānuja's description of Brahman as 'Puruṣottama who is by nature free from all defects and is the abode of unlimited and innumerable auspicious qualities of the highest order'<sup>14</sup> is Brahman's description *via eminentiae*. The Advaitin is *not opposed* to this, but he would find its consummation in the description *via negationis* (the *neti neti* method of the Śruti). Said Swami Vivekananda: "The Impersonal instead of doing away with the personal, the Absolute instead of pulling down the relative, only explains it to the full satisfaction of our reason and heart. The Personal God and all that exists in the universe are the same Impersonal Being seen through our minds. When we shall be rid of our minds, our little personalities, we shall become one with It."<sup>15</sup>

Seen in the proper perspective, the Advaita idea of Nirguna Brahman, far from being a thin abstraction of thought, will be found to be the most rational idea of God, freed from all vestiges of relativism and anthropomorphism, the Glory beyond all glories which no image can express—*na tasya pratimā asti yasya nāma mahadyaśah*. The final consummation of all our religious and spiritual life is the realization of our identity with That.

The ultimate destiny of man according to Advaita and the meaning of his spiritual evolution could not be expressed better than in the simple and lucid words of Vivekananda: "The finite, manifested man forgets his source and thinks himself to be entirely separate. We, as personalized, differentiated beings, forget our reality, and the teaching of Monism is not that we shall give up these differentiations, but we must learn to understand what they are. We are in reality that Infinite Being, and our personalities represent so many channels through which this Infinite Reality is manifesting Itself; and the whole mass of

<sup>13</sup> Otto: *Mysticism East and West*, Meridian Books, New York, 1957, p. 112.

<sup>14</sup> *Śrī-Bhāṣya*, I.1.1.

<sup>15</sup> *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II, pp. 336-37.

changes which we call evolution is brought about by the soul trying to manifest more and more of its infinite energy. We cannot stop anywhere on this side of the Infinite; our power, and blessedness, and wisdom, cannot but grow into the Infinite. Infinite power and existence and blessedness are ours, and we have not to acquire them; they are our own, and we have only to manifest them.<sup>16</sup>

This, indeed, is the central teaching of the Advaita as philosophy or theory of reality and as religion in the sense of the highest spiritual status and freedom man is capable of attaining. We may call it philosophy or not, religion or not, in the usual acceptation of the meanings of these terms; India has given to this 'wisdom uncreate' the name of Vedānta, which literally means the *terminus ad quem* of all knowledge.

What is the bearing of this Vedānta on the practical problems of life and on our outlook on life? The reader is solicited to read and re-read Vivekananda's lectures on Practical Vedānta for an answer to this question. It was Vivekananda's genius to have pointed out in a forceful and convincing manner how Vedānta is capable of practical application in all departments of life. It is gross misconception of Vedānta to think that it disparages a healthy outlook on life. The truth is quite the reverse of it. 'The Vedānta' as Vivekananda said, 'does not, in reality, denounce the world. The ideal of renunciation nowhere

attains such a height as in the teachings of the Vedānta. But, at the same time, dry suicidal advice is not intended; it really means deification of the world—giving up the world as we think of it, as we know it, as it appears to us—and to know what it really is. Deify it; it is God alone.'<sup>17</sup>

There will be, as there always are, many philosophies in the philosophical landscape of the world; the Advaita may not be the one universally acceptable philosophy, but what can be confidently asserted is this that in times to come, a considerable section of thinking humanity will turn to Advaita Vedānta as the most logically consistent system of philosophy and religion of the loftiest kind.

Do we want to unite all mankind into one brotherhood and usher in an era of peace and fraternity, of unprecedented inter-national co-operation for the advancement of science and art, religion and philosophy, and all that is worthy of man at his best? Then, no mere political measure will ever achieve this. The Advaita alone provides the strongest metaphysical foundation for solid world brotherhood, and the bending of human energies for the realization of Oneness taught by the Advaita can alone be 'a heroic substitute for war', which is our highest desideratum in the uneasy world of today.

Let us follow the trail blazed by Vivekananda.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

I may make bold to say that the only religion which agrees with, and even goes a little further than modern researches, both on physical and moral lines, is the Advaita. ... When atheists and agnostics had destroyed the nation, it was found out that Advaita was the only way to save India from materialism. Materialism prevails in Europe today. The salvation of Europe depends on a rationalistic religion, and Advaita is the only religion that can have any hold on any intellectual people.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



# SCIENCE, PROGRESS, AND VALUE

BY SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA

[Swami Adidevananda is the Head of the Mangalore centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. In this article, he deals with the various notions prevalent about the meaning of progress and says that, though we should not overlook the necessity of science and technology, true progress is to be measured in terms of the eternal values. Swami Vivekananda has said that all healthy progress really means the 'manifestation of spiritual forces working within'.]

Science, technology, and progress are the *clichés* of our era; the first two are supposed to lead us to the last, which is the goal. We speak of progress, but what exactly do we mean by progress? It is not easy to define. There are people who measure progress by human inventions—television, ballistic missiles, space capsules, etc. A scientific humanist believes that the goal of human happiness can be realized only by means of social advance, unaided by any higher power. A classical humanist, on the other hand, thinks of history as the spirit of man groping its way towards Beauty and Good, while a religious thinker seeks his centre and end in God. There are other self-centred nondescript groups whose conceptions of progress need not be taken into serious consideration. It is difficult to define a single universal purpose which will reconcile conflicting claims. Some achievements of modern science have, undoubtedly, done good, and some harm. Our triumph over nature has immensely increased our servitude. We are utterly helpless without gadgets and appliances. While modern science and technology have integrated the world on a physical plane, the psychic barrier between man and man, nation and nation, has widened to an astonishing degree. Material wealth and spiritual poverty co-exist, throwing gloomy shadows.

The blind forces of variation and selection might have brought about the progress from amoebic life to conscious man, but we are not sure today if human will, in its present *milieu*, can bring about far more rapid progress in the future. Human history seems to defy the predetermined pattern or rhythm of

thinkers. As if to aggravate the issue, the second world war and its aftermath, in spite of the scientific and technological progress, have disturbed the idea of world peace or consciousness.

When a governing power attempts to commit a nation to secularism (whatever might be its secondary or figurative meaning), it is giving expression to the spiritual crisis that has overtaken its intellectuals and leaders. We are unaware of the depth of crisis in this superficial age. This open denial of spiritual values is, perhaps, a good thing. We stand face to face with the final question of our destiny. Now, once more, the time has come to look inward amidst the pathless jungle of our external progress and assess the conscious element amidst inert and mechanical forces of nature.

Man is a strange amalgam of divine and non-divine, and possesses the capacity for good or evil, for progress or retrogression. If he completely lacked the divine spark, the world would be far worse than what it is; if his nature was wholly spiritual, there would not be any temporal process of history. He has complete freedom to rise vertically to the realm of ideals or move horizontally in time and age without any transcendence. He must clearly find out his true thoughts and feelings, ideals and aspirations. Will he choose selfishness which invites his destruction or purposively go upward to attain the pitch of perfection? He must know the end he is aiming at. He can, if he chooses, advance to his goal by his knowledge of himself. Self-knowledge is not only knowledge of Self, but also discriminative awareness of one's

thoughts, feelings, and will. He must have a *weltanschauung* which will expand his heart, mind, and will. Man, with all his external professions, is still in his primitive state with the outlook and cravings of a cave-dweller. He has changed in his food and dress habits only, without a corresponding change within.

It cannot be denied that modern man is confronted with certain genuine difficulties with regard to progress and perfection. To put the issue bluntly, he is haunted by the question: What is the use of progress or perfection if our end is ultimate extinction? There is no meaning in striving, if there is no higher value which satisfies human aspirations. When the ancient teachers spoke of the transience of mortal existence or its vanities, they were dismissed as sentimental pessimists; but by a strange irony, the scientist has usurped the place of the prophet. According to Sir James Jeans, the well-known astronomer-philosopher, the second law of thermodynamics suggests that the world is heading towards a 'heat death'. So, the result of the victory of sciences is no longer a pleasing tale. Those who do not want to be frightened or haunted by the ultimate extinction require a metaphysical basis even for the fulfilment of humanistic values, let alone higher values.

The problems mentioned above are due to wrong understanding or interpretation of the term 'progress'. Progress is possible on two levels: the material and the spiritual; the former deals with temporal objects and the latter with perennial values. Material progress refers to the discovery of the mysteries of physical laws, and spiritual progress refers to psychological awareness in the depth of one's being. The one has for its goal the fulfilment of human desires through human effort, and the other the conquest of human infirmities, aided by higher powers. The one aims at the liberation of man on the physical level, and the other at the salvation of man on a spiritual level. One who has attained perfection within temporal limits may be un-

progressive when compared to the other who has triumphed over historical processes, independent of time or age. Worldly progress is dubitative attainment, whereas spiritual progress leaves indelible marks on the person who attains it. Spiritual realization is a unique experience cutting across historical barriers. The rise of Jesus in a Judaic milieu, superimposed by Greco-Roman leavening, is a wonderful instance of transcendence, independent of time or age. Spiritual realization is validated, not within the time order, but in a higher and timeless plane. The divine author of the *Gītā* tells us in his own telling phrase that what is night for all beings is day for the realized soul; he who has reached this stage is deluded no longer and is liberated in this life itself. 'Good and evil cannot bind him who has realized the oneness of the Nature and his own Self with Brahman', says Sri Ramakrishna.

Biologists tell us that matter has evolved into life with regulating mechanisms compared with which our most intricate tools are simple. Through evolution the living matter has acquired possibilities of experience and knowledge of control. Though the life of prehistoric man has been brutish, there has been an advance in moral sphere as well. The Vedāntic seers of India have given a new orientation to the concept of evolution from the earliest times. They have seen a common purpose running through all the stages of evolution: the return of the soul to its original source or essence. To them, the universe of experience is a vast field, where the soul is to rise to greater heights of awareness by controlling the nature within and without. The idea of true evolution is brought out in the dialogue between Bhṛgu and Varuṇa in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: There is logical and psychological progression from matter to life, from life to mind, from mind to self-consciousness, and from self-consciousness to transcendental bliss. The line of progress and perfection is reflected in the very nature of evolution. The imprisoned ray penetrates



the opaque lead-walls of body and mind and reaches its end. Man, in other words, becomes superman when his psycho-somatic sheath is invaded by the Spirit. 'From the dark I go to the varicoloured. . . . Shaking off evil, as a horse his hairs, shaking off the body, as the moon releases itself from the mouth of Rāhu, I, a perfected soul, pass into eternal Brahman-world—yea, into it I pass' (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VIII. 13) is the poem of the perfected soul.

According to this vision of progress, the Upaniṣadic thinkers looked upon every ascent or progress in human history as a phase in the attainment of perfection. They judged the progress of evolution—not in terms of inventions and achievements from agriculture to anaesthetics—but in terms of the degree of the conquest of spirit over matter. Apart from this, they held that the creation has no meaning or purpose, whatever might be the knowledge of achievement and control. They never gave inordinate importance to material prosperity or the life of the senses in the scheme of life. Vālmīki has pictured in telling language the cultures of Ayodhyā and Laṅkā. The culture of Laṅkā, high as it was, evoked no sympathy from Vālmīki. Moral consciousness was the criterion he employed in the valuation of civilizations. Moral and spiritual values were the basis on which Śrī Rāma built his administration without allowing evil to grow under his feet. He was the true philosopher-king to whom the goal of life was the attainment of spiritual perfection. This perfection will not come from outside adventitiously, but is in a potential form in every being at every level. Though it may not be manifest on the face of it, its manifestation would constitute the goal of life. When this spiritual awareness invades the minds of human beings, what is called Rāmarājya is established.

It is interesting to note how the Indian thinkers tried to impress the perennial values, which they intuited in the noumenon, on the plane of space-time and history and on the

pattern of individual and social life. Even the so-called caste system was conceived on the principle of spiritual progress. The place people occupied in society was proportionate to the degree of their spiritual progress. Similarly, they tried to prescribe graded discipline for individuals through the scheme of four *āśramas*. Though they held 'infinity in the palm of hand', they did not ignore social progress from the spiritual angle. Time is transient and all things connected with it are transient, too. In this passing show of ephemeral values, there are a few that do not pass away, but endure. The reality of spiritual values remain unaffected by the changes of historical and cosmic processes. The Indian sages viewed all the human institutions as vehicles of values, but distinct from the value itself. Though the pot is broken, the space within the pot is unaffected. When the purpose of life is achieved, all the human agencies which were once useful as means are wound up.

From what has been said above, it is easy to see that scientific or material progress does not constitute spiritual progress. It must be distinguished from the false notion of progress. Its special characteristic is that it emancipates man from all subtle psychic bondages. It is rather difficult to judge what is good and bad in the relative historical plane, where time is a vehicle of ephemeral values. From the standpoint of ultimate Reality, what is ancient is not necessarily imperfect and what is modern may not be good or perfect at all. That is how the sayings of ancient teachers carry, even in the present time, an element of eternity, and have a message for all time. But it is left to each generation to discover its own means to realize the reality of spiritual life amid the confusing din and bustle created by false prophets.

Strangely enough, science and progress, the two characteristics of our age, seem to be hostile to spiritual progress. Though science has changed the world externally, has eman-



culated men from drudgery by means of machinery, and has built an industrial society, it has not freed man from primeval instincts and tribal religion, which are antagonistic to higher values. A superstitious mind is the fertile ground to generate spiritual blindness, whatever may be its insight into the mysteries of nature. The mechanical progress has, indeed, mechanized the mind, drying, as it were, its creative potency. Science has become an end in itself, and has contributed little for the cultivation of imperishable values like truth, justice, non-violence, dignity of the individual, etc. If it had offered opportunity for spiritual development, the world would not have been divided into warring camps, each threatening the total extinction of the other. Industrialization has brought new problems, while the old problems remain unsolved. It has accentuated the difference between the employer and the employee, the rich and the poor. Simple peasants find it easy and tempting to migrate to the towns, neglecting agriculture and other useful crafts. Unable to imitate the rich, but inordinately craving to fulfil creature comforts, they have become victims of psychosomatic diseases. These neo-workers, who are uprooted from their moorings, would rather wallow in dirty slums with its drabness and monotony than return to their old places and productive work. The ancient kings seem to be less cruel and tyrannous when compared to the modern despots in farms and factories, in offices and laboratories.

While spiritual discipline has always laid emphasis on the control of desires and passions, material life tends to increase our wants and cravings. If there is large-scale production of some article, the entire advertisement machinery is geared to persuade the consumer to buy the goods with all sorts of lies and temptations. When unnecessary needs multiply, we delude ourselves by saying that the standard of life has risen. The ambition of powerful nations to form themselves into common economic markets to control

the less favoured and developing nations has become a menace to humanity. The world has become a market of greed with conflicting ideologies.

It is unfortunate that we are unable to see the difference between outward success and inward success. A man may be hailed as most successful by press and radio, yet he knows in the depths of his mind how barren and false has been his inner life with its compromises and defects. Another may be considered as total failure by worldly standards, but may be rich in his inward life: He is not perturbed by adversity or prosperity and is free from desire, fear, and anger. He looks upon all beings as himself in pleasure and pain. We must be able to discover the subtle difference between culture and sensuality, the good and the pleasant, means and end, physical health and mental hygiene. Science and technology can create material comfort but not good life. They have annihilated time, but cannot tell man what he should do with his unearned leisure. Miracle drugs can drive out diseases, but cannot bestow mental health. While science gives us extraordinary power to control nature, it does not help us in controlling our emotions or thoughts. We must realize the limitation of science to get the vision of higher values. The present condition of the world facing thermo-nuclear war is a consequence of setting science higher than spiritual values. Our world can be compared to a jet plane hurtling through the space without any control.

A few words may be said about the place of philosophy in our life. A glance at the current philosophical journals is sufficient to discourage even an enthusiast. Philosophy has been reduced to linguistic analysis and logical constructions. According to these over-intellectuals, all the philosophical problems are problems of language, and the philosopher does not, and cannot, discover anything about reality; he can, at best, analyse and clarify what is already known, in a confused manner. Philosophy has to be res-



cued from its absurd role if it has to declare the truth of timeless values. 'A man with no philosophy', declares William James, the father of Pragmatism, 'is the most inauspicious and unprofitable of all possible social mates.' If such is the importance of philosophy, it must be restored to its pristine role so that we may derive integral understanding, a comprehensive interpretation of our experience and a total vision of the world.

It is said that science describes, while philosophy interprets. The special function of philosophy, according to this view, is to co-ordinate the other branches of knowledge, to interpret the data collected by science. Even this is not a satisfactory function of philosophy. If we have to assign secretariat work to philosophy, we would do well in giving a new name to this form of activity. The Indian philosophers did not define philosophy in this manner. To them, philosophy was synonymous with the means and ends of human life, human culture. Philosophy has direct bearing on life. It clarifies one's thought, destroys pride and prejudices, and helps in distinguishing the real from the unreal. While physical sciences deal with *ponderables*, philosophy deals with *imponderables* which cannot be weighed or measured by yardsticks and balances. This is a unique character and privilege of philosophy. As dealing with those that cannot be estimated, it opens up a new vista, *a priori* knowledge. The philosopher of today should not live in the present alone. He must connect the past with the present and future, if he has to make any sense out of the confused historical pro-

cesses. Decrying the past is as irrational as denying the present or the future; for higher values do not change with the passing stream of time.

It is sufficiently made clear from what has been said as to what we mean by the term progress. Now, a few words, by way of conclusion, may be said as to its way. According to Vedānta, progress is the manifestation of the perfection of the Ātman, the Self within. This notion of progress implies both the perfection of the individual and the nation. 'All healthy social changes are the manifestations of the spiritual forces working within,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'and if these are strong and well adjusted, society will arrange itself accordingly.' When the individuals are raised, the nation is bound to rise. This perfection must go on expanding till the cosmic purpose is fulfilled. We do not, and cannot, know the finale of the cosmic purpose; our duty is to strive and go forward without thinking of the consequences or the end. The spiritual progress of the individual, no less than the nation, is to be measured in terms of truth, non-violence, and beauty. We have to cling to these immortal values without losing our strength and manliness, propriety and perspective, at a time when might seems to be right. And let us not forget what Swami Vivekananda warned about progress in India: He said that it lay between the Scylla of old orthodoxy and Charybdis of European civilization. We have to avoid both the monster and the whirlpool if we have to proceed in the path of true spiritual progress.

# THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION

(A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE ACTIVITIES)

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

[Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj is the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. This article is a brief review of the activities of the Organization, the visible symbol of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and the ideals they lived and worked for.]

The Ramakrishna Movement was initiated by the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna soon after his passing away in 1886. It was inspired by his life and teachings and worked out chiefly by his monastic disciples. Swami Vivekananda, however, gave to this movement a more practical shape in 1897, on his return from the West.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-86) was born in a distant village of Bengal; and early in life, he became the priest of the Kālī temple at Dakshineswar, a beautiful spot on the Gaṅgā, some four miles north of Calcutta. He had great love for God from his very childhood; and this led him, now that he was placed in favourable environment, to make an intense search for Him. Through an intense longing to see God and dispassion for things material, he, as it were, 'laid siege to the citadel of God and took it by storm' and attained God-vision. His entire life afterwards was lived in the highest plane of spiritual consciousness.

Sri Ramakrishna had realized Truth not only through the disciplines prescribed by Hinduism, but also through those prescribed by other religions, thereby proving by direct experience that all religions are true paths to God-realization. Such a bold assertion about the truths of all religious faiths was the greatest need of the age. It infused new life into religion, and what appeared to be mere superstition so long acquired significance. Through his variegated spiritual experiences, he arrived at a synthetic harmony that reconciled all conflicting views of life and religion. To him, all beings were little bits of that infinite God-head; and his love, there-

fore, was all-inclusive, irrespective of class, creed, race, or nationality. Today, this great soul is worshipped in India and abroad as a spiritual luminary of the first magnitude like the great saviours of the past.

## THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

During the last few years of Sri Ramakrishna's life, many sincere and yearning souls had come to him attracted by his spirituality. With great care and love, he trained these disciples, a good number of whom later embraced the monastic life, true to the spirit of renunciation he had infused in them. Foremost amongst them was Swami Vivekananda. After the passing away of the Master, the Swami travelled all over India, leading the life of an itinerant monk; and in his travels, he saw with his own eyes the miserable plight of his motherland steeped in squalor, poverty, and ignorance. He was filled with a fervour to uplift his motherland; and with this object in view, he crossed the seas and went to the United States of America. There he represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. His interpretation of Hinduism impressed enlightened Americans of various walks of life, and all earnest seekers of Truth were drawn to him. For four years, he preached the eternal truths of the Vedānta in U.S.A. and Europe, which the Westerners were sorely in need of. And these years of his life in the West gave him an opportunity to study the good and weak points in the Western nations; and by comparison and contrast with his own motherland, he realized the greatness of India in



many fundamental things. But he had also realized that there was much superstition, poverty, and ignorance in this country.

On his return from the West, the Swami formulated for the monks of the Ramakrishna Order the true significance of the monk's life in one pithy sentence, 'For one's own liberation and for the good of the world'. He admonished them to give up the selfish idea of leading the life of a recluse and to dedicate themselves to the service of others, to see God in the sick, the poor, and the ignorant and render service, as worship, to this God in man. With this angle of vision, he asked them to distribute spiritual, intellectual, and material food, according to the needs of the sufferer. The stress was on God-realization. Such a *sādhana* or spiritual practice was presented as on a par with the traditional disciplines. Social service was, as it were, a by-product of this divine worship. The Swami's message, therefore, cannot be evaluated in terms of philanthropy or social service, for fundamentally it is a spiritual one. This service to man, seeing the God in him, is the Swami's greatest gift to the modern world of strife, competition, and war.

#### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

On May 1, 1897, Swami Vivekananda had established an association called the Ramakrishna Mission Association to unite the lay and monastic followers of the Master in a common organized effort for the service of humanity. After the starting of the Belur Math in 1899, this association ceased to function as an independent organization, and the Math itself carried on the preaching, educational, and philanthropic activities. With the extension of the activities, it was found necessary to have a separate organization for better facilities of work and more efficient management of the activities. It was also found necessary to give the organization a legal status. So, in 1909, a society under the name of the Ramakrishna Mission was registered under Act XXI of 1860. The manage-

ment of the Mission is vested in a Governing Body consisting of the Trustees of the Belur monastery for the time being. This Governing Body is responsible to the Association, consisting of lay and monastic members. Everyone who has full sympathy for the objects of the Mission, and is prepared to accept all religions as paths to God and live in peace and fellowship with the followers of all religions, is eligible to become a member of the Mission. The Mission membership today includes men and women of various religious faiths and nationalities. The branch centres of the Mission, spread all over India and abroad, are under the control of the Governing Body, though often placed under the management of local committees, most of whose members and office-bearers are public men of the place. The principal workers of the Mission, however, are the monastic members of the Ramakrishna Order. They are helped by local friends and admirers. The activities of the Mission, which entail enormous expenditure—in 1961-1962 it was about 1.5 crores for its permanent activities alone—are maintained by subscriptions and donations from the general public as well as grants from State and Central governments and public bodies. Funds earmarked for any purpose are spent for that particular purpose; and funds of the branches are exclusively used for the welfare of the respective branch centres towards the promotion of their various activities. The branches and headquarters publish periodical—mostly annual—reports of their activities along with the accounts which are audited by certified auditors appointed by the Association in their General Meeting. The Mission renders service irrespective of caste, creed, colour, position, or nationality.

#### THE RAMAKRISHNA MATHS

These are monasteries devoted to religious study, worship, meditation, and preaching. They, like the Mission centres, are scattered all over India and abroad. The monks of the

Ramakrishna Order get their spiritual training in these monasteries. The Ramakrishna Maths affiliated to the Belur Math, started by Swami Vivekananda in 1899, are under the control of the Board of Trustees of the Belur Math, with its headquarters at the latter place. All the Maths have temples or chapels, where the presiding deity is Sri Ramakrishna. These Maths are financed by friends and devotees. When the Math centres carry on activities of the kind undertaken by the Mission, they, too, get help from the general public, and grants from the government and public bodies. The Math funds are also audited by certified auditors approved by the Trustees.

The above distinction between the Math and the Mission proper is only a technical one; and the two sister institutions are by no means water-tight compartments, being placed as they are under the management of the same group of monks, the Trustees and Governing Body members, respectively, of the two institutions. There are, again, many centres which are combined Math and Mission centres, and again, there are purely Math centres carrying on activities of the kind undertaken by the Mission. For these reasons, it is very difficult to review their activities separately.

The activities of the Math and Mission in India can be broadly divided into three groups: (a) Spiritual and Cultural, (b) Educational, and (c) Philanthropic.

#### SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL

The Math and Mission centres, specially the former, spread the spiritual teachings and cultural ideals as illustrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. This is done through public lectures and classes, birthday celebrations of the Master and other great incarnations and prophets, celebrations of Hindu festivities like the Durgā Pūjā, etc., running of reading rooms and public libraries, and the publication of religious literature and magazines. Some of the centres have published a good

amount of literature in various provincial languages, besides English, on the life and teachings of the Master and his disciples, as also translations of standard Sanskrit works on philosophy and religion. It is noteworthy that, during the birth centenary year of Swami Vivekananda, the *Complete Works* of the Swami are being published in nine Indian languages. Apart from several periodical magazines brought out by the different educational institutions, eleven regular magazines are conducted, five in English (one each from U.K. and U.S.A.), one in French from Gretz, and five in different Indian languages.

#### EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Education is not to be merely informative, or practical and useful. The development of intellectual capacity alone will lead us nowhere. People who are all intellect, and nothing else, may not be quite welcome members of any society, for without a firm moral foundation, such an intellect may be a danger to society. Nor can mere bread-winning be the ultimate aim of education. Education, to be worth its name, must help one to build character and to be a good citizen doing one's duty by one's fellowmen. 'Education', as Swami Vivekananda put it, 'is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.' To attain this goal of education, living with the *guru* (teacher), as of old, is quite essential. So, many of the Mission educational institutions are residential or partly so, and religious instruction forms an important feature in all of them. In addition to the college and school curricula, vocational training in various arts and crafts, like cane-work, carpentry, weaving, leather-work, etc., is given to the students in most of these institutions, specially in the residential ones. Sports and physical training are encouraged. In short, an attempt is made to help the students manifest the perfection already in them by making the environments suitable for building a healthy body, a healthy intellect, and a healthy mind.



In the education of girls, while all these ideals are stressed, particular care is taken to see that they imbibe all that is best in the Indian womanhood of the past, as seen in characters like Sītā, Sāvitrī, Mīrā Bāī, and others. Fine arts, domestic hygiene, cooking, etc. form part of their education.

During the year 1961-1962, the Math and Mission ran, in all, three general colleges at Madras, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (Calcutta)—the last two being residential—with 1,815 students on their rolls; three B. T. colleges, with 235 students; two basic training schools at Perianaickenpalayam and Madras, with 73 boys and 179 girls respectively; three junior basic training colleges at Rahara, Sargachi, and Sarisha, with 196 boys and 57 girls; two colleges for physical education and rural higher education, and a school of agriculture, with 85,214 and 60 students respectively, at Perianaickenpalayam; two social education organizers' training centres there and at Belur, with 208 students; four engineering schools at Belur, Belgharia, Madras, and Perianaickenpalayam, with 1,327 students; eight junior technical or industrial schools, with 545 boys and 322 girls; 86 students' homes or hostels, including some orphanages, with 7,026 boys and 528 girls; three *catuspāthis*, with 57 students; twelve multi-purpose higher secondary schools, with 4,449 boys and 952 girls; nine higher secondary schools with 2,925 boys and 2,246 girls; seventeen high and secondary schools, with 7,273 boys and 3,620 girls; twenty-four senior basic and M. E. schools, with 5,503 boys and 3,246 girls; twenty-nine junior basic and elementary schools, with 4,092 boys and 2,360 girls; sixty-five lower and other grades of schools, with 5,697 boys and 2,420 girls. The Sevaprathishthan, Calcutta, and the Sevashrama, Rangoon, trained nurses, the number of trainees being 132. Thus, there were altogether 41,780 boys and 15,930 girls in the educational institutions run by the Math and Mission in India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Singapore, Fiji, and Mauritius.

During the birth centenary year of Swami Vivekananda, work is under way to start a university in the name of the Swami at Belur.

#### PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES

Activities in this line are either permanent ones, or of a temporary nature. Under the first category come the hospitals, the dispensaries, the invalid homes, etc. Under the second category come all temporary relief works which are launched now and then, whenever there are famines, floods, fires, earthquakes, or outbreak of epidemics like cholera, smallpox, plague, etc. On such occasions, every monk who can possibly be released from his ordinary duties is moved to the scene of the catastrophe for rendering service to suffering humanity. The hospitals and dispensaries are called 'Sevashramas' or 'Homes of Service'. A good number of them are located in places of pilgrimage like Varanasi, Vrindaban, Hardwar, etc. and in the interior of the Himalayas and in distant villages. In large towns, such dispensaries render service to the poorer section of the people.

During 1961-1962, there were eleven indoor hospitals with 979 beds, which accommodated 22,157 patients, and 66 outdoor dispensaries, which treated 30,47,519 cases, including old ones. In these dispensaries, homoeopathic, ayurvedic, and allopathic systems of treatment are adopted, according to the needs of the patients. The indoor hospitals include the T. B. Sanatorium at Ranchi and the outdoor dispensaries include the T. B. Clinic at Delhi. At the Rangoon hospital, there is special provision for the treatment of cancer with radium and deep X-ray.

*Work for Women:* The Mission has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the maternity section of the Seva Prathishthan, the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinic at Jalpaiguri, the women's sections of the hospitals at Varanasi, Vrindaban, and Rangoon,

the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi, the Nivedita Girls' School at Calcutta, the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras, girls' high schools at Jamshedpur, the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha (24 Parganas), and so on. Besides, there are special arrangements for women in the other hospitals, dispensaries, and schools, and some institutions are conducted particularly for them.

*Relief Works:* After the independence of the country in 1947, the Government takes the initiative in starting relief measures wherever any calamities, natural or otherwise, take place. Therefore, the Mission's relief activities have occupied a secondary place in its scheme of work since 1947. In spite of this fact, the large-scale relief operations carried out by the Mission for the refugees from East and West Pakistan, following partition, need mention. During the year 1961-1962, the Math and Mission conducted flood relief in the Tanjore district of Madras, at Cranganore and Tripayar in Kerala, and in Barhiya thana in Bihar at a total expenditure of Rs. 49,000.

#### WORK OUTSIDE INDIA

Besides the centres in the West, engaged in the propagation of Vedānta, there are eleven Math and Mission centres in East Pakistan, two in Burma, one each in Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius, and Ceylon (with branches in the various parts of Ceylon). The work done by these centres is on the same lines as those of the Indian centres.

In other countries, there were fourteen centres in 1962—ten in U.S.A., one each in Argentina, England, France, and Switzerland. These centres are under the spiritual leadership of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order. These monks are sent to foreign lands at the

invitation of the local students of Vedānta and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. Through lectures, classes, and interviews, the Swamis preach the fundamentals of Vedānta and harmony of religions, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna. They lay stress on the universal teachings of the Vedānta—the divine nature of man and the oneness of the universe. They do not attempt at converting people to the Hindu faith.

#### CONCLUSION

In March 1962, there were 73 Mission centres, 65 Math centres, and 22 sub-centres, conducting permanent activities of various types. Thus it will be seen that the movement, inaugurated by the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, galvanized into an organizational force by the illustrious leader, Swami Vivekananda, and strengthened and enlarged by his brother disciples, has crystallized today into a dynamic institution, seeking in its humble way to mould the social and spiritual aspirations of humanity at large according to the concept of universal religion, as preached and practised by these two prophets of modern age. Let us close this account with the words of Professor Floyd H. Ross of the University of California, U.S.A., who says: 'One of the most vital contemporary religious and educational movements in India today is the Ramakrishna Movement. Under the leadership of men trained in the spirit of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, the Ramakrishna centres are living examples of how the timeless truths of the past have value when they are continuously relived and reinterpreted in the present. The Ramakrishna centres . . . are playing their own part quietly in helping to prepare the way for the united pilgrimage of mankind towards self-understanding and peace.'



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

In the preceding few pages, we have made a humble effort to present the diverse aspects of the multi-sided personality of Swami Vivekananda, and of his work, in a comprehensive manner. The life and activity of Swami Vivekananda covered a wide ground. The Swami threw light on many problems of the day, not only of India, but of the world at large. The full extent of his influence and its future possibilities are still a matter of research for the coming generations. As a disciple has said: 'What amazed us was that he not only saw problems clearly but found solutions for them—solutions that were quite unique.' Our contributors have, in their respective articles, touched upon some of these problems, which are as pressing today as in Swamiji's days, and dealt with them in the light of his words. They have approached their task with the utmost devotion and humility, and have spared no pains to make their themes thorough, interesting, useful, and self-contained. And a word of praise is rightly due to them. But we are fully aware that there are still many things unsaid, and many others that cannot possibly be communicated through words. They have to be personally experienced by a devoted study of the Swami's life and works. If this special number should inspire and help our readers to do so, nothing more could be desired.

Much has been said, here and elsewhere, about the achievements of Swamiji that have made him world-famous. But Swamiji himself said once: 'If you really want to judge of the character of a man, look not at his great performances. Every fool may become a hero at one time or another. Watch a man do his most common actions; those are indeed the things which will tell you the real character of a great man. Great occasions rouse even the lowest of human beings to some kind of greatness, but he alone is the really great man

whose character is great always, the same wherever he be.' We mention here a few incidents from Swamiji's life illustrative of this.

Swami Saradananda, whom Sri Ramakrishna considered as one of the ever-perfect souls, writes: 'No-one among us can stand any comparison with Swamiji. Let alone people like us, even Swami Brahmananda is of the same opinion. In fact, we were all pigmies beside Swamiji.' One thing that strikes us when we study Swamiji's life is that his spiritual greatness, acknowledged by all those who came in contact with him, did not sit heavily on him; it was so natural to him that he lived it unostentatiously. Swami Adbhutananda relates: 'When Swamiji returned from the West, he had with him Captain Sevier, Mr. Goodwin, and others. I went to see him, but was hesitant to meet him, thinking that he must have been puffed up with pride, now that he had some Western disciples. Swamiji read my feelings, and holding me by the hand, said: "You are still that brother Lato to me, and I am your brother Loren!" Then only I realized that Swamiji had acquired the power of knowing people's minds, and had not the least trace of egoism.' In another place he says: 'As soon as he returned from the West, he discarded his foreign suit, and started wearing a cheap cotton wrapper and a cheap pair of shoes. All the honour he had won he threw overboard.'

A Western devotee writes: 'Swamiji was so simple in his behaviour, so like one of the crowd, that he did not impress me so much when I first saw him. There was nothing about his ways that would mark him as the lion of New York society as so often he had been. Simple in dress and behaviour, he was just like one of us. He did not put himself aside on a pedestal as is so often the case with lionized personages. He walked about the room, sat on the floor, laughed, joked, chatted—nothing formal. Of course, I had noticed his magnificent, brilliant eyes, his beautiful

features and majestic bearing, for these were parts of him that no circumstances could hide. But when I saw him for a few minutes, . . . it flashed into my mind: "What a giant, what strength, what manliness, what a personality! Every one near him looks so insignificant compared with him."

Worldliness and spirituality are, no doubt, incompatible things and cannot co-exist. But a spiritual person need not necessarily be otherworldly, with no interest in the nobler joys of life or callous to the sufferings of others. If the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have anything to teach us, it is this: A long-drawn face is no sign of spirituality. God is of the nature of bliss, and in religious life, which is communing with Him, there is no place for despondency and depression. That is why the Swami admonishes us: 'If you have a clouded face, do not go out that day; shut yourself up in your room. What right have you to carry this disease out into the world?' When somebody asked him: 'Swami, you are never serious?', he replied humorously: 'Yes, when I have a belly-ache!' 'One of the greatest things about Swami', writes Maud Stumm in her memoirs, 'was his human side. Like a big lovable boy, he thoroughly enjoyed the things he liked—ice-cream, for example. How many times I have seen him rise from the table after salad, excusing himself to smoke or walk, when a very quick word from Lady Betty that she believed there was to be ice-cream would turn him back instantly, and he would sink into his place with a smile of expectancy and pure delight, seldom seen on the face of anybody over sixteen. He just loved it, and he had all he wanted, too.'

'One day he told me', tells the same writer, 'that he wanted to undertake some sort of work that would keep his hands busy and prevent him from thinking of things that fretted him at that time—and would I give him drawing lessons? So materials were produced, and at an appointed hour he came,

promptly, bringing to me, with a curious little air of submission, a huge red apple, which he laid in my hands, bowing gravely. I asked him the significance of this gift, and he said, "in token that the lessons may be fruitful"—and such a pupil as he proved to be! Once only did I have to tell him anything; his memory and concentration were marvellous, and his drawings strangely perfect and intelligent for a beginner. By the time he had taken his fourth lesson, he felt quite equal to a portrait; so . . . Turiyananda posed, like any bronze image, and was drawn capitally—all in the study of Mr. Leggett, with its divan for our seat, and its fine light to aid us. Many great ones may come to that room in its future years, and probably will, but never again that childlike man, toiling over his crayons, with as single a mind and heart as if that were his vocation. How often he thanked me for the pleasure it gave him, and for the joy of learning, even that!'

With all this interest in life, how he felt for the suffering humanity! Swami Abhutananda says: 'Whenever anyone came to Swamiji with his sorrows, if Swamiji could do nothing else, he would at least sing a few songs to assuage the sorrow.'

Many incidents are related about the love that existed between Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji, but nothing brings it in bolder relief than the following 'little' incident related by Sister Nivedita. Sri Ramakrishna was bed-ridden at Cossipore with a fatal disease, which the doctors had pronounced as cancer of the throat, leaving the young disciples with many warnings as to its infectious nature. Once, 'Naren', as he then was, came in and found them huddled together, discussing the dangers of the case. He listened to what they had been told, and then, looking down, saw at his feet the cup of gruel that had been partly taken by Sri Ramakrishna, and which must have contained in it the germs of the fatal discharges of mucus and pus, as they came out in his baffled attempts to swallow the

*(Continued on next page bottom)*



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

### MALAYALAM

VIVEKANANDA SAHITYA SARVASVAM (Translation of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*). Volumes 1, 2, 3, and 6. Price Rs. 6 each volume. Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, Kerala State.

One of the main undertakings—and in my opinion, the most important—in connection with the birth centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda is the translation of the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, hitherto available only in English, into different Indian languages. It is undoubtedly an arduous task, requiring the utmost patience, inexhaustible energy, and of course, the necessary literary equipment and an enormous expenditure. Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, who are publishing the works in Malayalam, have done an admirable job of it. With the financial help of the State and the Central Governments, as also the generous public, they have already brought out four out of the proposed seven volumes of the *Complete Works*, under the general title 'Vivekānanda Sāhitya Sarvasvam'. The translation, done carefully and diligently by a body of devoted scholars, well versed in the Vivekananda literature, is true to the original; specially the sixth volume reads as if the

words are coming hot from the lips of Swamiji himself. The language used is graceful, flowing, clear, and concise. The translators have maintained throughout the solemnity and dignity of the original. A speciality of the Malayalam edition is the arrangement of the works subjectwise and the addition of copious footnotes, containing relevant quotations from the scriptures, to support and substantiate the illuminating exegesis of Swamiji. This will, no doubt, be of the greatest help to the serious student. The translation is made directly from the original in English, Bengali, or Sanskrit, as the case may be. The get-up, printing, and binding are praiseworthy, specially in view of the low price of the volumes.

We hope the other three volumes will be out soon. These seven volumes, when complete, will be a precious asset to the people of Kerala, from the literary, cultural, religious, and every other point of view. For Swami Vivekananda was a saint with a universal outlook and a message for the whole of humanity. Every home in Kerala should possess a copy of these works in Malayalam—it is a *must* for the individual and national welfare.

P. RAMA MENON

---

(Continued from previous page)

thing. He picked it up, and drank from it, before them all. Never was the infection of cancer mentioned among the disciples again.

And how the Swami loved his own disciples! Miss MacLeod writes: 'We arrived in Bombay on the twelfth of February, where Mr. Alasinga met us, who wore the vertical red marks of the Vaisnavaite sect. Later on, once when I was sitting with Swami on our way to Kashmir, I happened to make the remark: "What a pity that Mr. Alasinga wears those Vaisnavaite marks on his fore-

head!" Instantly Swami turned and said with great sternness: "Hands off! What have you ever done?" I did not know what I had done then. Of course, I never answered. Tears came to my eyes and I waited. I learnt later that Mr. Alasinga Perumal ... had gone from door to door to beg the money to send Vivekananda to the West. Perhaps, without him, we never would have met Vivekananda.'

Swamiji was a man who truly walked with God. May his blessings be ever on us!

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

On Thursday, the 17th January 1963, the day on which Swami Vivekananda's birthday fell this year according to the Indian calendar, the celebrations in connection with the birth centenary of the Swami were inaugurated at the Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramkrishna Math and Mission, and other centres of the Mission. The following is a brief report of the observances in the various places.

At the Belur Math, the day-long celebrations comprised of Vedic chanting, special worship, devotional songs, and readings from the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. About 200,000 devotees and admirers visited the Math to pay homage to Swami Vivekananda. The room where the Swami used to live was beautifully decorated, and visitors and devotees filed past in solemn silence viewing his room and his personal belongings which are preserved there. *Prasāda* (consecrated food) was distributed to about 15,000 people.

In the afternoon, a public meeting was held at the Math, with Swami Yatiswarananda, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, in the chair. Swami Madhavananda, President of the Math and Mission, read out his message from the balcony outside Swami Vivekananda's room (for the text of the message please see *Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1963, pp. 41-42).

On the morning of Sunday, 20 January, a procession of devotees, over two miles long, went from the Belur Math to the Cossipore garden house, four miles away, where Sri Ramakrishna spent his last days.

In the afternoon, at 3-30 on the same day, a public meeting was held in Deshapriya Park in south Calcutta, when Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, President of India, formally inaugurated the world-wide centenary cele-

brations (his speech on the occasion is published in the February 1963 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, pp. 43-46). About 50,000 people attended the function.

In a message sent for the occasion, the late Dr. Rajendra Prasad, former President of India, said: 'Men who lead their fellow beings in any sphere of life are rare and those that lead the leaders are rarer still. These super-guides come not very often upon this earth to uplift the sinking section of humanity. Swami Vivekananda was one of these super souls. Well may the land of Bharat feel ennobled by the memory of such a great one having sprung on its soil to serve humanity at large, to be the spiritual pathfinder of many a suffering soul, and to shine in the spiritual firmament with the lustre of the glory of Vedic civilization enlightening the world. It was he who could set the sceptic mind of the West at rest in the spiritual arena. Ambassadors of spiritual missions had risen before him in the East, but none could speak to the West as he did with that voice of conviction, keeping audiences spellbound and enthralled. The worthy disciple of the worthy Master rose to the pinnacle of spiritual eminence, preaching the gospel of the innate oneness of the human race, and preaching universal love and the affinity of all human souls. Like the story of the seed and the tree, each sustaining the other's existence, personifying the two essential stages of spiritual sublimity, the centenary of this great scion of the spiritual world reminds us of the greatness of the human soul, for there could be no better interpreter of the heritage of the Vedic civilization than he. Not only Indians but Westerners too stand indebted to Swami Vivekananda for his bequest of *viveka* (wisdom) to posterity, and I join the millions all over the world in



wishing success to the celebrations in connection with his birth centenary everywhere.'

In New Delhi, addressing a huge gathering at the Ramlila grounds, on the 17 January, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, said that the nation could still gain inspiration from Vivekananda's writings and teachings. He strongly recommended the study of his works, which, he said, would infuse strength and spirit of nationalism into people's mind and awaken them to a great extent, because every word he uttered was imbued with the spirit of patriotism. Whatever he said was applicable even in modern times, he said.

Presiding over another meeting, held at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, on 3 February, he exhorted the people to follow the teachings of Swami Vivekananda who had taught mankind to shed fear. Swami Vivekananda, he said, fought relentlessly against the internal debilities in the various spheres of national life. The Swami had a 'luminous mind', and he never lost faith in India's spirituality even though here people were poor and downtrodden. If he were to name a single individual as an ideal for children and young men, he would name Swami Vivekananda, who, although he died before he was forty, left a deep impression on the sands of time. This spoke for the intensity with which he lived. Swamiji had a unique personality, and eminently integrated the past heritage with modern life. He gave a new orientation to old ideals. Though he was not fortunate enough to have met the Swami, Sri Nehru said, he was able to feel the glow of his personality.

Recitation competitions in Sanskrit, Hindi, English, Bengali, Punjabi, and Tamil for school students, and speech competitions in English and Hindi for both school and college students, were held by the local branch of the Mission. A Students' Day Meeting was held on 10 February 63.

In Madras, on 17 January, a decorated portrait of Swamiji was taken in procession

in the Mylapore area, where the local Ramakrishna Math is situated. In different parts of the city, more than forty processions by the students and people of the locality were taken around the principal streets. After the procession, 101 ceremonial lamps were lighted to mark the occasion. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Sri Kamaraj Nadar, the Chief Minister of Madras, praised the services of the Swami to the nation. *Prasāda* was distributed to about 10,000 devotees, and 1400 poor people were fed on the occasion. A mammoth public meeting was held on 20 January, when Sri Morarji Desai, the Union Minister for Finance, formally inaugurated the celebrations in the State. Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar presided over the meeting, which was addressed by Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliar, Sri M. Bhaktavatsalam, State Finance Minister, and others. Sri Bhaktavatsalam announced that the State Government had decided to rename the 'Ice House' in Triplicane, where Swamiji stayed in 1897, after his return from the West, as 'Vivekananda House', and also to install a statue in the compound of the house.

Similar celebrations were held in Bombay, Patna, Asansol, Varanasi, Shillong, Chandigarh, and other places.

## CELEBRATIONS OUTSIDE INDIA

### VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS, U.S.A.

On January 17, a special worship with prayers and meditation was conducted in the shrine of the Society. A number of devotees attended the function. On January 20, a public meeting was held in the chapel of the Society in the morning. Prayers, an address on 'Swami Vivekananda: the Man of the Hour', reading of Swamiji's poem 'The Song of the Sannyāsin', devotional songs, and instrumental music formed the items of the programme. The booklet *The Universal Message of Swami Vivekananda* was distributed. A notable feature of the celebration is the presentation of the book *Vivekananda* :



*The Yogas and Other Works*, compiled with a biography by Swami Nikhilananda, to universities, colleges, and public libraries in different parts of the United States.

#### RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE

##### LONDON

The formal inauguration of the centenary celebrations was performed at a public meeting in the Caxton Hall, on 31 January, by Mr. M. C. Chagla, the Indian High Commissioner. There were nearly 400 people, in spite of the snow-fall and the bad weather. Mr. Chagla said on the occasion that Swamiji was indeed a bridge between the East and the West. 'He was not only a great and illustrious son of India, but also known in the West as in his own country. He realized and preached day and night that the East could learn from the West and the West from the East. In his view, both parts of the world had much to contribute to each other for the benefit and emancipation of the human race. Swamiji's creed was that every individual had the divine spark in him. He also asserted that we could find God everywhere, in a Hindu temple, a Christian church, a Hebrew synagogue, or a Muslim mosque. God is omnipresent.

'Swami Vivekananda's legacy is the Ramakrishna Mission, with its branches dotted all over the world. They exist to spread the gospel of Swamiji and bring succour to the needy. One of the important tenets of Swamiji's teaching is that the best form of worship is service of mankind. The best way to show your faith in God or to practise religion is to serve your fellow man. Therefore the Ramakrishna Mission all over the world is dedicated to humanitarian work.'

Rev. Sydney Spencer, former Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, said on the occasion that what appealed most to him about Swami Vivekananda was the work that is being done by the Ramakrishna Mission

centres. They are all engaged in propagating religious unity, Rev. Spencer reminded the dedicated audience. The words of Swami Vivekananda, he said, were most prophetic. Swamiji said: 'Unity in variety is the plan of the universe', and he applied the truth in the sphere of religions. His approach was that of a mystic, like his Master Sri Ramakrishna's. He was truly a holy man, a *yogin*, an *akhandā brahmachārīn*.

#### CELEBRATION IN PRAGUE

The Czechoslovak Peace Committee and other cultural and scientific institutions held an evening in honour of Swami Vivekananda at the Naprstek Ethnographical Museum in Prague. Mr. R. K. Jordar, the Indian Cultural Attache in Prague, spoke about the life and work of Swami Vivekananda. Dr. Boris Merhaut of the Institute of Eastern Studies of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, spoke about Swami Vivekananda's importance for the development of independent India and his programme of national awakening. Among those present were: members of the Presidium of the Czechoslovak Peace Committee, Patriarch of the Czechoslovak Church, Dr. Miroslav Novak, Chairman of the Prague Peace Committee, Dr. Jaromir Berak, and the Director of the Institute of Eastern Studies, Jaroslav Prusek.

#### CELEBRATION IN MOSCOW

Under the joint auspices of the Institute of the Peoples of Asia and the Institute of Philosophy, the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, a scientific session was held presided over by Academician, Mr. P. N. Fedosiev, as a part of the centenary celebration in Moscow. 'Vivekananda, Humanist and Fighter for Social Progress', 'Philosophical Concepts of Vivekananda', 'Vivekananda and Indian Literature', 'Enlightening Ideas of Vivekananda' were some of the papers read on the occasion.