

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXVIII

AUGUST 1963

No. 8



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:0:—

## SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES OF SWAMI VIJNANANANDA

*Allahabad Math, January 21, 1933*

A monastic disciple was sitting in front of Swami Vijnanananda. The Swami told him : 'The Master was the living embodiment of purity. Contemplation of him or taking his name makes you free from all evil thoughts. The mind goes up on a higher plane, the Kuṇḍalinī (coiled up vital force) is roused. Whenever the mind becomes pure and holy by being detached from material things, it reflects the luminous image of God. For a man who has got that realization, the world ceases to exist. We fail to see God because our mind cannot go beyond the confines of the world and its objects.

'When I gazed upon the image of Buddha in the museum at Saranath, I had a supernatural experience; then I felt I had got dissolved in that bright sea of light.

'The world is like the day. When this worldly day dissolves into night, you should meditate on God. The Lord says in the *Gītā* : "The *yogins* keep awake at a time which for worldly people is night, and sleep when other

people are awake." That is to say, the real God-consciousness is dark as night to worldly people, but for the *yogin* who has controlled his senses, it is bright as day. And love for material things, which looks like the bright day to worldly people, is to the *yogin* a nocturnal sphere of eternal darkness.

'Swami Trigunatita had come to the Master. His father asked him, "Who is your father?" Swami Trigunatita answered : "My father is the *ākāśa* (space)." And to his father's question, "Who is your mother?", he replied : "My mother is *prāṇa* (life force)."

'See how strange it all is ! The Master used to say : "You should meditate in the mind, in secluded corners, and in the forest." Keshab Sen used to say that preaching should be done in market places, fields, and at bathing places on the rivers (i.e. wherever people assemble).

'Brahman is like a motionless snake. Śakti is like a snake in motion, and that is the Kuṇḍalinī. When this spiritual energy moves upwards, the mind also gets elevated; and

when it moves downwards, it draws the mind down to a state of darkness and ignorance.

'I find that, in women, this upward trend of energy is more evident. That is because they are a part of the divine Śakti. But ordinary people cannot look upon women in that way and that is why they entertain impure thoughts towards them. The mere sight of women, in the case of the Master, would activate the Kuṇḍalinī; his spirituality would gain precedence over all other feelings, all sense urges and passions became docile like worms before it. If you want to control your passions, you have to meditate constantly on the Master and the Holy Mother, and all degrading thoughts will at once cease to trouble you.

'Śakti worship is very difficult. Our monks can do it only because they have the blessings on them of the Master and the Holy Mother. Otherwise, it is very difficult to please Śakti.'

Then Maharaj began to speak about Lord Śiva: 'When I was in Varanasi in connection with the construction of the Sevashrama buildings, the Lord Viśvanātha revealed Himself to me and I embraced Him. He had a serene, smiling countenance; His body was soft and had an icy coldness. The chant "*agar vyom*" means that, in the beginning there was the *vyoma* or space and Lord Mahādeva resided in it and thus he came to be called the "*agradevatā*", the foremost deity.'

*Allahabad Math, February 6, 1933*

Before some monks and devotees who had assembled at the Math, Vijnan Maharaj said: 'I had a beautiful dream some three or four days' back. I saw that I had walked up to a temple of Śiva. There I found the Master standing at the entrance with a basket of flowers and other offerings. I was wondering whether he would recognize me after such a long time. I, of course, knew him at once. When I came near, he said: "How is it that you are here?" He touched my head with his hand and blessed me, and immediately I awoke. Then I thought within myself:

"Why shouldn't the Master recognize me? He knows the past, the present, and the future, and transcends time and space. He surely remembers the created beings—even animals, worms, insects, and all.

'While in his physical frame, the Master would go from Dakshineswar to the Śiva temple at Bally on the *nīlāṣṭamī* day to worship the Deity with sacred water. Once, after performing worship, he fell into an ecstatic mood, his face illumined with a bright smile, and pointing towards the Deity, he told Hriday: "Look, Śiva is moving; He is smiling. Look, the flower is falling." And immediately the flower fell from the head of Śiva. Such was the Master. Once in the temple of the Goddess Kālī at Dakshineswar, he said: "Mother, if you are really the Mother of the universe, this piece of cotton that I hold before your nose will move with the breath of your nostrils." And immediately the piece of cotton moved. Scientists, of course, would not believe all this easily.

'I was then about 17 or 18, a student in college. I went one day to the Master and asked him: "Has God a form or is He formless?" And his reply was: "God is both—and at the same time transcends both." By "form" I meant all things with form, and asked him: "If God possesses a form, is this bedstead also God?" He then said with emphasis: "Yes, it is also God; and these utensils are God, this wall is God, everything is God."\* I felt like one entranced, my inner being bright with a divine illumination. I listened to him spellbound. After a while, I said again: "If God is in everything, why this discrimination at the time of taking meals against touching this and that person?" The Master said: "Look here, a prostitute used to come here

\* On a Kālī Pūjā day in Patna, in connection with the Master's seeing God in every created being, Maharaj said: "The great devotee Prahlāda also had this insight. To Hiraṇyakaśipu's question whether God was inside the crystal pillar, he replied in the affirmative. As soon as the pillar was broken, God appeared in the shape of Nṛsimha (man-lion). He killed Hiraṇyakaśipu and took Prahlāda in His sheltering arms.

and eat the leavings out of the leaf-plates left by the *sādhus* after they had partaken of the *prasāda*. She had no restrictions about food; but do you then mean to say that she had therefore the supreme knowledge?" I said: "No, sir, she was a woman of bad character." "So you say that wisdom does not depend on food only," said he, "it needs some other thing besides." I sat there out of my wits; and that great personality of his also used to fill me with awe. He could do anything he liked; he had all powers within him.'

A devotee: 'But, sir, his photograph does not reveal his great personality. That you find rather in Swamiji's (Swami Vivekananda's) photographs.'

Maharaj: 'No, no, you are wrong there. The Master's was an extraordinary and rare personality. His is a picture of transcendence of all the six *cakras*. On looking at his picture which is suffused with a divine radiance you feel as if he is immersed in an ocean of joy, after transcending those *cakras*. I see many things in that picture, and therefore, I talk about them. But Swamiji, Rakhai Maharaj, and others did not use to reveal anything. Once, at Belur Math, we were sitting on the upper verandah, facing the Gaṅgā, and discussing these and similar things, when Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) happened to pass by and asked me: "What is all this you are talking about?" I became silent. Later on, when I read his *Līlāprasāṅga* (the biography of the Master), I discovered how much more sublime and esoteric things he had written about the Master. Then I thought: "I am what I am—he has out-paced me."

'The Master's was a unique personality. I say this because I have seen him. A wave of spiritual power constantly played over his entire body. Among ordinary human beings, some have a little play of power in their brains, and they become great physicists, chemists, or statesmen. But, in the case of our Master, the current of this power flowed through every part of his body. And what

an infinite reservoir of power he was! He could move about at will in the spheres among the sun and the moon and the stars—a marvellous man, indeed!

'Once the Master showed me his portrait saying: "I am in this; you should meditate on it." I agreed to do so. In this picture of the Master, you will find everything. You will find it out; gradually the Master himself will show you. He will help those who take refuge in him.'

*Allahabad Math, February 9, 1933*

Many monks and devotees had gathered in the afternoon. One devotee asked about the life beyond. Vijnan Maharaj explained it elaborately, and then went on to say: 'With everybody there is consciousness. This consciousness pervades the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, the air, etc.—down to the minutest being, and it is because of this consciousness that there is motion in everything.'

'Our Master had knowledge of the past, present, and future. Therefore he said that Rāma and Kṛṣṇa of the past had now come as Ramakrishna. He also said that he would be coming again. He conferred on Swamiji the boon of death at will. "Naren will give up his body whenever he wills it", said he.'

A monk had brought from Varanasi a rosary of *rudrākṣa* (beads of a special type). On seeing it, Maharaj said: 'Śiva is in meditation on Mount Kailas and each tear of joy that falls from His eyes becomes a bead of *rudrākṣa*. There is spiritual power in it and telling these beads fills one with spiritual joy. The *Śivaliṅga* is found in the Narmadā, and the *Śālagrāma* in the Gaṅḍakī river.'

Then, on being asked the reason for writing the name of Mother Durgā on a bael-leaf on the Vijaya day (Dassera), he said: "There are three bael-leaves on one stem, signifying Brāhmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva, or creation, preservation, and destruction. That is the trinity; and the entire twig represents God as the Mother of the universe. That is why

you have to write on it the name of Durgā with vermillion.'

*Allahabad Math, March 9, 1933*

A certain devotee's mother had been to see God Paśupatinātha in Nepal and, in accordance with Vijnan Maharaj's directions, had brought a rosary and a picture of Lord Paśupatinātha. The devotee had brought that rosary for getting it sanctified. Taking it up, Maharaj said: 'I usually sanctify rosaries by uttering the name of the Master and the Holy Mother while turning them.'

Telling the beads of the rosary thrice over with the Master's name uttered upon it, and again thrice with the Holy Mother's name, he gave it to the devotee saying: 'This will do. If you utter the names of the Master and the Holy Mother, that will include Swamiji, Rakhal Maharaj, and others. When I utter the name of the Master I say: "Jaya (victory to) Ramakrishna." Navagopal Ghosh of Ramakrishnapur used to utter "Jaya Ramakrishna" with great emphasis. And he did it with great ardour which always appealed to me. It made the heart move. And his wife, too, was all given up to the Master.

'And when I utter the name of the Mother, I say: "Mā Ānandamayī" (the Mother who is the embodiment of pure joy). The Mother's name has a special virtue: it saves you from women and all vulgar thoughts about them. I have felt this very strongly. Her name confers reverence, faith, devotion, wisdom, wealth, and everything else. In the book of *Candī*, you find She can give you wisdom and deliverance. The Mother's name gives me greater strength than that of the Master. Once, on a certain occasion, Swamiji was staying in Balaram Babu's house and the Holy Mother was also there. All the people were going up to make obeisance to her while I continued to sit by the side of Swamiji. He told me that I should also go and do likewise. I went up and, kneeling down before the Holy Mother, touched the ground with my head. I had not noticed that Swamiji,

too, had followed me up behind. Seeing me bowing down like that, he said: "Is it the way to do *praṇāma* (obeisance) to the Mother?" Saying this, he completely prostrated himself before the Mother, at which I also did the same. The Mother is very near and dear to me and the heart is always submissive to her.'

After sitting lost in thought for some time, Maharaj told the devotee: 'When you are free from worldly distractions at night, you should be alone and do *japa* and meditate on the Master and the Holy Mother. After that, keep the rosary hung up high so that no one else may handle it.'

Devotee: 'Is there any fixed time for telling the beads?'

Maharaj: 'No. You can do it at any time, whenever you like, even when you are taking a stroll. But doing it at night and in undisturbed seclusion will give you a feeling of spiritual joy sooner.

'Staying at Belur Math even for three or four days and earnest meditation there in seclusion will give one wonderful experience. Many of the monks have had visions and trances there. But, of course, the climate there is not very good. Mahapurush Maharaj is so careful about his health, but he suffers from bad health for about five months in the year, from the end of June till early November. He is now full of devotion, full of love. He always prays for the good of all.

'I went on a certain occasion from Belur Math to Kalighat to see the Goddess. The monk accompanying me carefully took me inside the temple where I had a good view of the Goddess and touched Her. When I was going round Her, She was good enough to reveal Herself to me. The Kuṇḍalinī surged upwards and illumined the Saḥsṛāra (the brain centre).'

*Allahabad Math, December 23, 1934*

Swami Vijnananandaji had been working on an English translation of *Vālmiki Rāmāyana*; some portions of *Bālakāṇḍa* and

Ayodhyākāṇḍa were already in press. At the very beginning of the book he had given a picture of Sītā-Rāma and the brothers, and Hanumān, and had tried his best to make the book attractive in all respects. These days he was engrossed in thoughts of Sītā and Rāma, and this was the topic he was now discussing with the assembled devotees.

'A few days ago, I was lying on the bed outside when I suddenly remembered the Master. He had said one day: "Where is my bow and arrow?" So I thought of including the portraits of the Master and the Holy Mother in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and had a block prepared. But the block became somewhat anglicized in character (laughing) with the Mother sitting first and the Master sitting to her left. So

what could I do if such was the will of the Mother? And she sat first! The Master very affectionately told me once: "For fourteen years, I had no food and sleep!" Lakṣmaṇa had no food and sleep for fourteen years. But Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were one and the same—both incarnations of the same Viṣṇu. The Master said to Swamiji: "He who was once Rāma and Kṛṣṇa is now Rama-krishna." You have, of course, read that in books. But in an ecstatic mood, he told me very lovingly: "I was in the forest for fourteen years."

In speaking of the Master, Maharaj was overwhelmed with feeling and, being unable to say anything further, sat quietly, deep in his own thoughts.

## MORALS AND RELIGION

[ EDITORIAL ]

We have before us on the table a book, *Morals and Religion*,\* by Fred S. Elder. The book, in about 200 pages, tries to show that morality is absolutely independent of any religious obsession or God-idea. It is one of the many efforts, specially by the pragmatists and scientific humanists, to bring about the 'liberation of morals from super-naturalism and otherwise unscientific associations'.

The effort is not new. In our country also, there have been thinkers and philosophers who have tried to get rid of God and to establish Godless religions based on pure ethics. Some even have tried to do away with religion and give credence only to ethical laws as the sole basis for human life and structure of human society. In the West, the last century saw many eminent philosophers who thought that God was an unnecessary factor for a real good life. Herbert

Spencer, in his *Data for Ethics* (1879) said: 'Now that moral injunctions are losing authority given by their supposed sacred origin, the secularization of morals is being imperative.' Kant, too, developed his theory of 'categorical imperative' when he said: (1) 'So act that the maxim of thy will may at all times serve as a universal law'; (2) 'So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end, withal, and never as a means only'. But he believed in the existence of that 'universal monitor'—conscience—which ultimately led him to be convinced of the necessity of God, who had endowed mankind with this awe-inspiring attribute. Later on, findings and theories of scientific philosophers like Darwin and Huxley supplied enough food and material for the pragmatists and scientific humanists who have built up quite a strong and apparently rational philosophy of their own, and have a large number of adherents to

\* Published by Philosophical Library Inc., New York-16, 1963.

their philosophy. Mr. Fred Elder, speaking about 'a non-super-natural, human, evolutionary theory of the origin and nature of man's moral senses', says: 'A purely natural morality does exist, all independent of divine guidance—forced into being by the fact that, without it, livable human social relations (and with them man himself) could not have come into being. All matters as to morals, all problems as to rightness and wrongness of men's acts in their mutual dealings, are covered by the science of ethics on a purely humanistic basis. Ethics has no concern whatever with any supposed relations of man, with any hypothetical God, heaven, or hell. ... God, heaven, or hell no longer enter into the picture of the educated man's ethical problems.'

## II

God or moral life always means a disciplined life, when one has to conform to some restrictions and observe some rules. Good conduct always means an amount of self-control. Practice of morals presupposes some labour, some effort, some struggle, some sacrifice of the pleasures of flesh, and some denial of the natural cravings of animal life. Now, what can be the motive in a man to undergo all these restrictions and denials, if it is for nothing at all? Swami Vivekananda questions the basis for this utilitarian demand for ethics without religion. He says: 'The utilitarian wants us to give up the struggle after the Infinite, the reaching-out for the Supersensuous, as impracticable and absurd, and in the same breath, asks us to take up ethics, and do good to society. Why should we do good? Doing good is a secondary consideration. We must have an ideal. Ethics itself is not the end, but the means to the end. If the end is not there, why should we be ethical? Why should I do good to other men, and not injure them? If happiness is the goal of mankind, why should I not make myself happy, and others unhappy?' Man does not ordinarily want to move even his little finger, if he can help it, without a

purpose, conscious or unconscious. Will a man, then, pursue virtue only for virtue's sake? Each living being, man not excepted, is concerned about his own 'good', and it is this idea of his 'good' that moves and guides him throughout his whole being on earth. This idea of goodness differs between animal and animal, between animal and man, and between man and man.

What, now, is the basis for the concept of goodness? We find in very low type of animals an idea, though not conscious, of natural goodness. Self-preservation is the motive force that guides them to take recourse to this kind of goodness. 'They will go in search of good food, good water, good shelter, and so on. 'Natural selection' of Darwin is a very cogent philosophy for this category of animal life. Going to higher animals, we find the idea of social goodness, where the consciousness moves in a wider circle, and goodness becomes an instrument and matter of convenience for the community. Practice of this goodness needs higher understanding and wider feeling of affinity. Living in herds, protecting each other, fighting against the common enemy are some traits of this kind of good life. But these two types of morality allow for adjustments and adaptations. They, therefore, change with needs and circumstances. We, therefore, find that moral concepts based on social or personal considerations differ among different people and in different countries. What is immoral to one group of people need not be so with others, and what passes for moral conduct with some may be a taboo with others. These moral concepts have no absolute value therefore. They are only relative in nature.

But there is also a higher type of goodness and morality above these two, with an absolute value, and this we may call spiritual goodness. And it is for man only to take benefit of this goodness and make for his real destination in life. Drop this idea of spiritual goodness from man, and there is hardly any dividing line between human beings and other animals. Professor G. R. Malkani says:

'It is in this purely religious sense that morality becomes the differentiating characteristic of man and divides man from the mere animal. Man has duties (*dharma*), the animal has none. Mere intelligence is not the dividing line.'

Consciously or unconsciously, the moral standard of a man is assessed from this point of view. Spiritual value is the main content of human ethics. It is for this reason that the moral life of man does not consist in taking good and healthy food or living in well-ventilated houses or keeping the body fit and healthy for a long time. Nor does it consist in 'simply paying one's bills, obeying traffic regulations, returning borrowed umbrellas, or anything else that can be indifferently performed in one kind of world, as well as in another', as a distinguished writer puts it. Generally, the common people praise a man as living a good life, if he is a law-abiding citizen, if he observes the common codes of social conduct, if he is non-injurious to others round about him, and if he does not become a cause of annoyance or any kind of inconvenience to his neighbours. We may call this goodness as negative goodness. Higher than this is that goodness where man shows a bit of courage by way of facing risks in any one of the good acts he performs, and sacrifices something of his own for the good of others. Such people are good social men, as they make charities, help other people, take some amount of trouble for the convenience of others, and so on. But, while they do so, they take care that they are not material sufferers in any way due to these acts of goodness. For example, there are rich people who are charitable by nature and give donations to philanthropic institutions, build rest houses for pilgrims, make gifts to temples, open food houses, etc. But they take care at the same time that, even after doing so, they have a sizable reserve for their own comfort and material welfare. They are looked upon as good people, but their sacrifice and goodness go only up to a limit and no further. This limit, of course, differs from man to man,

and wider the limit, better is the man considered.

But the best man from the ethical point of view is he who is reckless in his sacrifices, whose personal consideration of loss or gain is nil, who towers above the reach of happiness and misery, encouragement and disappointment, fame or dishonour. Highest ethics is that which helps a man to kill his little self completely and find enjoyment in the higher Self. As Swami Vivekananda says, ethics is that system of living where one attains freedom through unselfishness, through goodness. He writes: 'Ethics always says, "Not I, but thou". Its motto is, "Not self, but non-self". The vain ideas of individualism to which man clings when he is trying to find that Infinite Power or that Infinite Pleasure through the senses, have to be given up, say the laws of ethics. You have to put yourself last, and others before you. The senses say, "myself first". Ethics says, "I must hold myself last". Thus all codes of ethics are based upon this renunciation, destruction, not construction, of the individual on the material plane.' This supreme spirit of sacrifice and complete negation of selfishness are what make the true content of the highest form of ethics.

### III

But let us ask ourselves sincerely whether this great achievement—this annihilation of the ego-sense and attainment of the courage for supreme sacrifice—is possible without a faith in something which is above all these—which has a deeper existence—which has values higher than we ordinarily calculate upon? We may call it by any name, but it must be there as the lodestar to guide the sailor on to his destination—safe, eternal, not subject to change—by gaining which all gains fade into nothingness and all fears cease for all times. We call it God. We believe that a really good life is not possible without God. The poet-saint Tulsidas says: 'The moon may shed light on earth with full splendour, all the stars may come to shine on the sky,

and the entire chains of mountain, with their vast forests, may be set on fire, but can the night change into day without the rays of the sun?' Similarly, a man may show indication of this or that quality, may perform this good work or that, but to have that fire of renunciation, that complete unselfishness, that absolute goodness, he must have a deep faith in that highest Existence which we call God; nay, to be perfect, he must live, move, and have his being in God.

And what is God? Well, it is not only difficult, but also impossible to define God. He is beyond all description, all definition, even beyond all conception. Still He is there as the 'sum total of this universe'. Philosophically, He is the essence behind this entire created universe, 'from whom all beings are projected, in whom all live, and unto whom they all return'. Practically, as Swami Vivekananda has said: 'The highest ideal of every man is called God. Ignorant or wise, saint or sinner, man or woman, educated or uneducated, cultivated or uncultivated, to every human being, the highest ideal of beauty, of sublimity, and of power, gives the complete conception of the loving and lovable God. These ideals exist, in some shape or other, in every mind naturally; they form a part and parcel of all our minds. All the active manifestations of human nature are struggles of those ideals to become realized in practical life.' This struggle to realize the highest ideal forms the core of religion, and ethics is the theory and practice of those qualities of character which give strength to man to carry on this struggle, and sustain him in his onward march to the destination. Why should a man take any trouble at all of cultivating good conduct if it is for nothing, if his existence on earth is as ephemeral as that of material objects subject to destruction? If man is no more than a nervous speck of star dust, an outcome of fortuitous atomic adjustment, a pure mechanism without any deeper meaning behind, why should he, at all, cultivate these high qualities which he has to do at the cost of his creature com-

forts and material loss? Want of belief in God or religion—we mean religion in its broadest sense—reduces human life into a calculation of profit and loss, into an adjustment of mere conveniences and inconveniences and robs it of the hearty love and sacrifice, joy of denials and disciplines, strength of character and conviction, and above all, of that infinitely projected outlook on life which transcends all human conceptions, leading one to a state of pure bliss. If human life is a mere cosmic dance of electrons, what interest can a set of electrons have for another? If life activities are a few mechanical movements, what value have all those things which we admire as human qualities? If one pursues one's thought in this way to where it leads, one lands in contradiction and meaninglessness, wherefrom there is no way out. Whatever, therefore, might be the opinion to the contrary, man is essentially religious, consciously or unconsciously. We use the word religion, we again say, in the sense that it recognizes man as a spiritual personality as opposed to an automaton. A man feels that he is greater than the world, that he is not mere matter like the objects he sees around him, and by his very nature, tries to discover his real Self, which the Vedānta calls as the potential Divinity of each soul. And thus all his actions—political, economic, and social—are steps towards this discovery, ethics being the most helpful part of his conduct leading him forward in this process.

#### IV.

How is it, then, it may be pertinently asked, that many good qualities and high traits of moral character are found in persons who do not acknowledge any faith in God, and how is it that they are found wanting in men who profess to believe in God and be religious? We shall say that the former class of people are unknowingly religious and the latter are not, though they think they are so. Though some modern Western philosophers as Pro-



fessor Ewing say, 'There is no valid formal way of deducing the "good" or the "ought" from the "is"', 'ought' is really based on 'is'. What man *ought* to do depends on what man 'is'. The *Gītā* says that 'man consists of his *śraddhā*; he verily is what his *śraddhā* is'. A man cannot act in a way which is not his nature. Religiousity or agnosticism, therefore, does not depend on what one says, but on how one acts. 'Aught' in a man reflects his value-sense and that is the true indication of the development of his mind and culture. Mere professions and appearances are, oftener than not, deceptive.

All our ideas of ethics, morality, and good conduct, therefore, are based on an unconscious belief that we are essentially spiritual units. All our acts of charity, unselfish love, truthfulness, and sacrifice have really a deeper meaning than mere humanism. We may recognize it or not, all are going to God, just as the streams scattered over the earth ultimately run to the ocean. By disowning this spiritual truth, we are making a futile effort to resist the current that is carrying us perforce to the Great Ocean, which is the ultimate goal of all our endeavours. On the other hand, a conscious recognition of this great fact would have given us greater facility, greater ease, to reach the Goal with much less friction and struggle. It would have much reduced the drabness and anomaly of life and filled us with a rare sweetness, enabling us to look at the world as the created beauty of God, and on all men as His children. The necessity of law to make good citizens of us would have been much reduced, if we could only acquaint ourselves with the

divine law that connects all souls like a thread that runs through the different flowers to make a beautiful garland of them all. We would have found it hard to break the rhythm, if we only knew that through everything in the universe comes out the divine music and that it is to lead us to a state of Bliss where all our struggles and fights, cravings and possessions, tumults and conflicts find their eternal repose. This can be achieved only through the freedom of the Self from the bondage of passions and desires; and to achieve this is the essence of all moral thought.

'*Satyam vada*' (Speak the truth), '*Dharmam cara*' (Walk the way of piety), etc. are, therefore, not moral precepts based merely on humanistic or utilitarian considerations. The Vedānta recognizes the development of ethical virtues as the first step towards the preparation for realization of this great truth. If a man cultivates ethical virtues and tries to become what we call 'moral', but does not show any indication of his thirst for God, we shall say he is only preparing himself to do so. A man living a good life and trying to better it is only walking on the path of 'religion' and simply waiting for the time when the light of God would burst upon him, and he would feel that all his movements and actions—mental, physical, and spiritual—were to bring him face to face with that great Truth which is of the nature of *satyam-jñānam-anantam*—Truth, Knowledge, and Immortality. To face It is to know It, and to know It is to become one with It. This 'being' and 'becoming' is the end of all *true* ethics—the philosophy of human morals.

# THE PHENOMENALISTIC PRINCIPLE

BY DR. P. S. SASTRI

The subject and the object are opposed to one another like light and darkness. One refuses to admit in itself the nature of the other. When two entities cannot be at the same place or stage during the same moment, they are said to be opposed to one another; when the nature of one is incompatible with that of the other, then too, they are said to be in mutual opposition. Then the opposition between light and darkness is based on their respective natures. How can the subject be then related to the object?

Even if they are distinct, still it is possible that distincts can be misapprehended due to some similarity. Thus nacre appears as silver. The ground of such an appearance is the 'this', which may be nacre, but which is cognized as silver. The erroneous appearance is that of a content which does not belong to the *this*. The *this* and the *what* may be said to have a relation which seems to subsist between a generic and a specific nature, or between a qualified and its qualification, or between a whole and a part. None of these relations is possible with regard to the subject. Since the subject is pure consciousness, it cannot have any part of the object in itself. The object being an unconscious entity, if the self were to admit it, this unconscious element should be a natural or an acquired feature of consciousness. It cannot be a natural feature of a pure consciousness, if only because the subject of an act cannot become the object of the same act. But if it were an acquired feature, is this caused or not? The unconscious element cannot be a product, because the impartite consciousness cannot evolve itself into an entity made up of parts. Being a supra-rational entity, consciousness cannot admit any causal operation. We do not apprehend any evolution of an impartite entity like space.

The not-self cannot be the ground, because

it is not conscious. If the object is a conscious entity, it would be the same as the subject, thereby ceasing to be an object. One percipient, for instance, cannot have any immediate apprehension of another percipient, but can only infer the other. Moreover, the object cannot evolve itself into the form of consciousness, since an unconscious entity can be the cause of only an unconscious effect. The not-self cannot also accept consciousness as its own part, since the consciousness constitutive of a subject cannot move like this. Moreover, the qualities of one entity cannot appear in another, since a quality cannot give up its ground and float in the air. The subject is represented by the notion of 'I' and is of the nature of consciousness which is the not-this. It is therefore impossible for a confusion of the subject with the object, or of the object with the subject, as the basis of any relation.

Should the subject and the object appear as related, we have the first appearance which is self-contradictory. The ego, the mind, the body, and the sense-organs are apprehended as almost identical with consciousness; and yet since they are *directly* revealed and apprehended by consciousness, they are not on a par with other objects. Still they are the objects for a consciousness. The properties of such objects may not actually be transferred to the subject, and yet the subject can be, at times, apprehended as having those qualities. Thus we do treat an individual as deaf, even though deafness is a property of the auditory system only. Moreover, the subject has certain recognizable features. The subject, viewed as consciousness, is eternal, in the sense that it is not controlled by the time-series. Its nature is experience; and it is always undefiled by any pain or sorrow. These features are not separable from consciousness, and yet they can

appear as qualities which can be distinctly other than consciousness. They are, in fact, attributed to the mind or to the ego.

This attribution presupposes some similarity between the two entities. They cannot be similar in their entirety because the object is not consciousness. There can be no similarity between the parts, because consciousness is not a whole of parts. And when we speak of consciousness as an agent or doer, we admit that this is due to the ego which is mistakenly equated with consciousness. But how can I attribute deafness, a property of bodily organ, to the subject in the absence of any such equation? I know that A has a certain smell, and that B has a smell similar to that of A. When I smell B and when A is absent, the argument from analogy would tell me that I am smelling only B. Likewise, when I cognize a flower as yellow, I try to find out a cause for this colour and all the while I assume the reality of such a cause. In a like manner, when there is the cognition of the effect of an unconditioned appearance, I assume that this is due to something similar to it. In other words, any such transference involves the apprehension of a form where that form is not. This is technically called appearance (*mīthyā*) which may mean either that which conceals something or that which is inexplicable. In reality, there is no such appearance; and yet the appearance is natural.

When we admit that consciousness alone is absolute reality, anything said to be natural must be that which is closely related to consciousness. But a relation is an impossibility with regard to absolute reality. And yet we are aware of an individual only in a context of relations. Thus, in order to experience, the self must be a doer since one who is not a doer cannot experience the consequences of an action; and to be a doer, the self must be attached to desire and hatred. Thus one relation leads inevitably to the other in a continuous succession. It is a continuity similar to that between the seed and the plant, and as such, it is to be treated as natural. Whenever we treat the self as a

member of a relational context, we have the contradiction which is an appearance. It is manifest in such apprehensions as 'I am this', 'this is mine'; in all these cases, the 'I' is not the pure self. It is that form of the subject which is conditioned by the not-I. This conditioning is to be attributed a principle which may, for the sake of convenience, be designated as the phenomenalistic principle.

A simple appearance of one entity as having the nature of another does not necessarily involve any contradiction. Thus a white cloth presents a cloth as having a colour which is other than the cloth. A contradiction emerges when the real and the non-real are together presented as a single datum. When the not-this is integrated with the this, we have an appearance. This is the primary or basic appearance on which everything else is grounded. It can be analysed into not-this, this, belonging to not-this. That is, appearance or phenomenalism is a principle involving a relational context of at least two mutually exclusive entities. Here we have the *this* and the *not-this* and the two are presumed to enter into a relation of *belonging to*.

This apprehension of something as another is the result of the operation of appearance and non-knowledge. Appearance is a principle that brings forth the inexplicable, while non-knowledge is of the nature of non-consciousness. The activity of these two makes out that the apprehended appearance is neither simple absence of knowledge nor a mere erroneous cognition. The non-knowledge is a positive existent and it is the material cause of the entire apprehension of the world. Similarly, between entities, defects of the sense-organs, desire, hatred, and the like are only the conditions, not the causes, that contribute to our apprehension of self-contradictory data as real. If the conditions were to be treated as causes, we will have to enquire about that which has caused them. Such an enquiry will have to take us to the original cause of all appearance. The material cause of an appearance must partake

of the nature of its effect at least to some extent; and this cause can be one which may be described as something that does not give us true knowledge of reality. For the sake of convenience, we may designate it as non-knowledge.

The self cannot be the material cause of appearances, because it is beyond change. An unchanging and impartite entity can neither initiate nor undergo changes. Can the mind be the cause of these appearances? The mind as internal can cognize external objects only with the aid of the external sense-organs. But in erroneous apprehension of silver, the eye does not come into contact with silver. It perceives only the nacre. We have to say that the mind alone cognizes silver. But this is impossible, because the blind man does not have any such cognition. If the mind can cognize unaided by the sense-organs, why should it cognize only the existence of the given? It can as well cognize what the given is. In other words, the mind by itself is not conscious of anything, and it cannot then know anything. If the mind can apprehend appearances, it can as well apprehend truth. We have reason to reject the latter alternative. If all apprehension refers only to the mind, the self will be an unwanted fiction.

Since the self or mind cannot constitute the material cause of an appearance, we have to accept a phenomenistic principle, a principle that makes appearances possible. The principle cannot be equated with conditions like defective sense-organs which vary from individual to individual even though the appearances constituting the external world are the same for all. Moreover, the defective sense-organs are real in a way in which an appearance apprehended erroneously is not real.

The principle that we seek must be as much an appearance as the object apprehended; and the apprehension of such an object is equally an appearance. But since apprehension or experience is a feature of the self, this appearance must be ultimately grounded in

the self. The non-knowledge that brings about the apprehension is grounded in the self; and its character is found in the object as well. The emergence of an appearance is natural in the sense that it has an unbroken continuity. It has neither a beginning nor an end; and yet is conditioned by non-knowledge. The phenomenistic principle must then have its ground in consciousness, and it must be presumed to be beginningless. Such a principle can be subjective only, in the sense that the individual does not locate his consciousness outside himself. But it is a principle operating wheresoever we have centres of experience.

Consider the statements: 'I am ignorant', 'I do not know myself, nor others'. The first makes the self the ground of ignorance. Both the sentences express a direct, an immediate apprehension of ignorance. This ignorance is treated as other than the self and as a positive existent. Just as the statement 'I am happy' expresses my immediate awareness of a positive content, so does the expression 'I am ignorant'. This is not possible if ignorance is a simple absence or negation of knowledge. A statement like 'there is no knowledge in me' cannot record an apprehension of the pure ground. If it were to record such a thing, it ought to be synonymous with statements like 'there is no quality in me', 'there is no number in me'. These are plainly not synonymous expressions. I cognize the ground and something else. This is a determinate apprehension. If this ignorance is merely a negation of knowledge, it cannot have its ground in the self; for the self, being of the nature of knowledge, cannot coexist with the negation of knowledge. It can coexist only with a positive entity. This ignorance then is a form of knowledge revealed by self-consciousness (*sākṣi-caitanya*), and in its turn, it reveals an appearance.

Here it may be argued that an object gives rise to some knowledge, and that knowledge being the contradictory of ignorance, the object must be able to dispel our ignorance about it. The existence and validity of an

object is determined by a valid means of cognition. If this is correct, how is the object made manifest by self-consciousness? Does self-consciousness reveal ignorance as qualified by the object, or pure ignorance? It cannot be the former since an object is apprehended only through the operation of some valid means of cognition. It cannot be the latter since pure ignorance is beyond apprehension.

This argument does not take into consideration the real nature of self-consciousness. The object referred to here is not an object of mere self-consciousness, but one of a specific self-consciousness. Any object is an object of self-consciousness either as known or unknown. As known it is that, apprehended through valid means of cognition. As unknown it is apprehended in a general or a specific way, and this merely denotes that the ignorance pertaining to that object is removed. While the former needs the operation of some valid means of cognition, the other does not need any such. At the moment we know something, we are also getting rid of the ignorance about it. In either way, we have an immediate apprehension of ignorance.

Inferentially, too, we can argue that ignorance is as much positive as knowledge. An object that is in a dark room is not visible, and it is not therefore apprehended. The first rays of light coming from the candle reveal it. This object is distinct from the darkness that is dispelled by the rays of light. The ignorance we have about something is similar to darkness; it is distinct from the object and from the self that reveals its earlier existence. It is at the same place as the object, but it is not cognized by the sense-organs. The object that is not cognized stands enveloped by it; and with the cognition of the object, the enveloping ignorance disappears. This ignorance, however, is not brought forth into existence by something outside it. It is an enveloping principle, and as such nothing can be external to it. We can know an object only when the ignorance

enveloping it is dispelled. A valid cognition necessarily presupposes ignorance as an entity other than the object.

Does this ignorance envelop the object or the cognizing self? It cannot envelop the object because it is a living being that is ignorant of something. Nor can it envelop only the self, because it always refers to the objects. It refers to both. Whatever is veiled by ignorance can only be the conditioned, the determinate, since the unconditioned can be neither enveloped nor revealed. Veiling and revealing imply the relation of the container and the contained. Ignorance veils the objects and also makes the self project the non-existent into the external world. We project the existence of silver even though the given is nacre. This projection is at the basis of our experiencing multiplicity, distinctions, and relations. The veiling and the projecting activities are those exercised by what we have called the phenomenalistic principle.

This phenomenalistic principle is a principle of energy, in the sense that it is creative of appearances. It is always attached to the foundational consciousness. When we cognize the objects that are external, or when we speak of the ego whose ground is the self, we have this operation of this principle as grounded in the self. In other words, the self is the ground or foundation for all entities that constitute the not-self. As such, this principle of energy can be only other than the self; and at the same time, this energy cannot be other than the phenomenalistic principle. It needs the self and it also gives a distorted picture to the same self.

The knowledge about an object presupposes the existence of that object. If the object is an appearance, the apprehension will also be an appearance. What is the material cause of the object? If it is a real entity, the effect, too, would be real, since the effect partakes of the nature of the cause. Then the appearance would be real. If this material cause has a beginning, we must know the cause of this beginning; and this will lead

to a regress. We cannot argue that the material cause has no beginning, because we cannot establish such a contention on the basis of any valid means of cognition. To avoid a regress, we may assume a beginningless material cause. Such an entity cannot be beyond the time-series; and it must be the principle of appearance.

Because of ignorance, there is an enveloping or concealing of the not-self. It cannot conceal or illumine the self. It is inconsistent with its nature and function to envelop the self. Even if ignorance envelops the object, how do we know that it exists? When we know this is a blue pot, the enveloping has ceased to exist for the pot; and then it is impossible to apprehend it. When we do not know that it is a blue pot, we cannot also know the enveloping. It may be argued that since I apprehend the object now, I must assume that it was enveloped prior to this moment. But consider a cognition. It is momentary and it is spread over a number of moments. The object cognized in the second and third moments is also cognized in the preceding moment. And yet we do not cognize any enveloping. First we have the cognition and we know that it is a blue pot. Here we do not become aware of our prior non-apprehension of the object. This awareness comes only later.

One may bring forward the question of recognition. I cognized an object yesterday and I recognize it now. In the intervening time there is the non-apprehension of the object; and my present recognition necessarily assumes this non-apprehension to be true. But is there really a non-apprehension? If I am totally free from any knowledge of the object, how can I recognize it? My recognition of my personal identity can arise even when my self-consciousness does not leave me. It may be said that, during the interval between the past cognition and the present recognition, there is no awareness of any recollection; and that this is a positive apprehension. But we do not have in the intervening time any apprehension of non-apprehension. We

seem to arrive at the non-apprehension only inferentially. Moreover, any cognition is a cognition of only an aspect of the object; and even though recollection does not consciously play any part, we seem to cognize the object in its entirety. Even if it is argued that memory is implicitly present here, it is not possible to establish through any means of valid cognition that there is the apprehension of non-apprehension. We can therefore argue that only self-consciousness makes manifest both this non-apprehension and the objects. In other words, self-consciousness is the foundational principle on which are grounded ignorance and the objects.

Within the phenomenal world, we may argue that a particular effect is caused by a specific cause. But can we rationally enquire about the cause of the phenomenal world itself? Kant was guilty of such a step. He limited the concept of causality to the phenomena, and then affirmed that the things-in-themselves are the causes of the phenomena. These things-in-themselves, it appears, are trans-phenomenal. But, in Advaita, the cause of the phenomenal world is said to be phenomenal in itself. In this causal relation, both the terms are phenomenal. Though the phenomenal world of relations has its ultimate ground in the non-relational, its proximate ground is the network provided by the principle of relations. That is, the cause should be distinguished from the ground; and the inability or refusal to have such a distinction is at the root of the Kantian, Hegelian, and Viśiṣṭādvaitic systems of thought. Reality can be the ground, not the cause; and if it were to be both, then Reality would be a relational system only.

Following the lead given by Sureśvara, and accepting the view that the Absolute is both the ground and the content of ignorance, Prakāśānanda argues that the Absolute, through its own ignorance, appears to be bound *as it were*. The phenomenal world is the appearance of the Absolute. But this does not mean that each individual self creates the universe. The Deity, being the

content of my ignorance, employs the ignorance that is in me as the material cause of the world. When we say 'through its own ignorance', we are taking recourse to an unavoidable metaphysical expression; for the Absolute does not, and cannot, have any ignorance of its own. From our standpoint, it appears *as if* it were in ignorance. The expression only means that the Absolute or pure consciousness is the ultimate ground of ignorance, as of everything else.

For each appearance, says Vācaspati, there is an earlier appearance functioning as its cause. Padmapāda, however, seeks to find out the principal appearance or ignorance; and Prakāśātman argues that Vācaspati's theory involves the fallacy of self-dependence inasmuch as one appearance depends on another appearance. But Maṇḍana and Vācaspati have observed that, by its very nature, the phenomenalistic principle is one about which we cannot hope to have full intelligibility; non-intelligibility constitutes its character. Prakāśātman defines the phenomenal appearance as '*pratipanna-upādhanu traikālika niśedha pratiyogitvam*', and as '*jñāna nivartyatvam*'. The creative energy or the principle of appearance is that which is negated in, or excluded by, the ground assumed by us. It is that which is sublated or removed by knowledge. It is what forms the counterpart of the absolute negation in any accepted or acceptable ground. Ānanda-bodha, in his *Nyāya Dīpāvalī*, defines it as '*sad vivikṭatvam*', that which is other than being. It is a principle of becoming. Citśukha takes it to be '*svāśraya-niṣṭha atyantābhāva-pratiyogitvam*'. Definitions like these take us to a negative account of the principle. In a way, the phenomenalistic principle is negative in character. It negates the true character of Reality; and we can arrive at an idea and experience of Reality by negating that which negates it.

Padmapāda defines appearance as an inexplicable something which is the ground of neither existence nor non-existence. This qualification might be taken to mean (a) the

absolute negation of non-existence characterized by existence, (b) the twofold character of the absolute negation of existence and of non-existence, or (c) the absolute negation of non-existence as conditioned by that of existence.<sup>1</sup> The first meaning is not possible, because the appearances have a certain reality which prevents them from being characterized by non-existence, and because such a thing is not found to exist anywhere. When the thing to be proved is improbable, the argument would involve the fallacy of unknown predication.

The second meaning is self-contradictory. Of existence and non-existence, when one is denied, the other may have to be accepted as real. Moreover, the Absolute is said to transcend all determinate predication. Then it would be characterized by the negation of both existence and non-existence; and consequently, the Absolute would have to be an appearance. The absolute negation of existence may be predicated of the water in the mirage; but we cannot predicate of it the absolute negation of non-existence. That is, the argument, as per the second interpretation, rests upon partly provable and partly unprovable foundations. The water in the mirage can admit the negation of existence; and the external world can admit the negation of non-existence. But the two negations are not together found to coexist in a single datum. It may be replied that these two negations *qua* negations are only forms of one absolute negation. When we consider existence and non-existence together, we can predicate the negation of the two to determine the specific character of the water in the mirage.

The third interpretation would involve the union of contradictions. It would also apply equally well to the Absolute; and the inadequacy of the argument referred to in the examination of the second interpretation holds here also. Here we have a unified specific idea. The characteristic feature of

<sup>1</sup> See *Nyāyāmṛta*, 22-24.

the thing to be proven is unique in that two constituents are offered as a single determinate idea. But, in order to establish the character of appearance, it is enough to establish the absolute negation of existence; and the rest of the limitation imposed on the determinate idea is superfluous. This charge may, however, be met by arguing that this superfluity is useful in establishing the character of the phenomenal world as appearance which is neither being nor non-being. The negation of being and non-being would imply that the world is an inexplicable appearance.

One can still argue that the absolute negation of non-existence as conditioned by that of existence is not capable of being established, and that the parts of this concept can be separately proved. These partial proofs do not establish the truth of the whole concept. The separation of the elements of a unitary concept would make the concept no longer unitary.

Let us consider the argument carefully. An appearance is that which admits the twofold character of the absolute negation of existence and of non-existence. Do existence and non-existence absolutely negate one another? Does it mean that one necessarily pervades the absolute negation of the other? Or does it imply that the absolute negation of one is pervaded by the other? Any one of these interpretations can render the Advaitic argument self-contradictory. If existence and non-existence are mutually exclusive, they cannot coexist; and if they do coexist, they are not mutually exclusive. If the negation of non-existence coexists in the ground of the negation of existence, then existence and non-existence are not mutually exclusive.<sup>2</sup>

If the negation of existence is found in the ground of that of existence, the former cannot necessarily pervade the negation of existence. We can negate existence in the ground of the negation of existence; and this cannot then pervade the negation of existence. If exist-

ence is grounded in the same along with the negation of non-existence, the former cannot pervade the negation of non-existence. Moreover, the twofold negation of existence and non-existence can be apprehended in the rope-snake which is a third entity; and it is also observed in the phenomenal appearances. The invariable necessary relation between non-existence and the absolute negation of existence is found in entities like the horns of a hare.

If non-existence is found in the ground of the negation of existence, the latter cannot be pervaded by non-existence. And if the negation of non-existence coexists with the negation of existence in the same ground, non-existence would not necessarily indicate the negation of existence.

All these interpretations ignore the fact that existence and non-existence are not mutually exclusive. Existence is that which cannot be contradicted or negated at any time; non-existence, on the other hand, is that which is never an object of cognition in any ground.<sup>3</sup> The horn of a hare is totally unreal because it is never cognized. The phenomenal appearances which are cognized as real cannot be grouped together with entities like the hare's horns. The phenomenal appearances, however, are not absolutely real. We cannot as such designate any appearance by 'is' or by 'is not'.

The relation of pervading is a peculiar one-sided one. The smoke, for example, is the sign or mark or indicator, while the fire is the thing signified, marked, or indicated. Smoke is a necessary sign of fire, but fire is not a universal indicator of smoke. Whenever the sign or mark exists, the thing signified also exists; and when the thing signified is absent, the sign also is absent. Where we find the negation of existence, there we have non-existence; and where non-existence is absent, the negation of existence, too, is absent. If the negation of existence coexists with the absence of non-existence, or if the negation

<sup>2</sup> See Vittha on Gauda Brahmānandī, 50-1.

<sup>3</sup> Advaita-Siddhi, 51.



of non-existence coexists with the absence of existence, the necessary invariable relation between the middle and the major terms is lost. In the cognition of nacre as silver, we do have the absence of the existence of silver. Yet the silver is not absolutely or totally unreal. When we cognize the rope as a snake, there is the absence of the existence of a snake; and yet the snake is not absolutely unreal like the horns of the hare. The snake is the object of cognition and it has a ground. It is as such not a non-existent entity. And yet it is not a fully existent real. Here is a situation where we have the absence of existence coexisting with the absence of non-existence.

Consider the proposition: 'Where the character of cow exists, the negation of the character of horse exists.' The character of horse implies the negation of the character

of the cow. Then the negation of horsehood being absent, the character of cow would be absent. Similarly, the negation of cowness being absent the character of horse would be absent. But it is quite possible that a camel should reveal the negation of both horsehood and cowness.<sup>4</sup> Even then, there can be the necessary relation of the sign and the signified between the cowness and the negation of the character of horse, and between horsehood and the negation of cowness.

The Advaita position is therefore logically sound when it is argued that Brahman or the Absolute is absolute existence which expresses itself in a variety of ways. One of these ways is the form of the external world. These forms do participate in the character of existence.

<sup>4</sup> See *ibid.*, 55.

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THE TRIUNE PERSONALITY

BY PROFESSOR BATUKNATH BHATTACHARYA

Wave follows wave of spiritual challenge; in the wake of the world-poet Tagore's comes the centenary of the world-teacher—Swami Vivekananda, the apostle of religious harmony. The full significance of the two national celebrations in the annals of Young India is yet to be gauged. A renaissance of Indian manhood is assured if the dynamic message of the two supermen be truly laid to heart. Towards his life's close, Swamiji had declared that what he had given was fare for one and a half millennium. The first requisite for nurture on the sumptuous feast for the soul is faith. Two challenges confront liberated India today—one, of the age-old ideals and values, the other, of the modern age. The heroes of thought who keep alive the fire of ancient culture and strive to set the nation on its own feet, who foresee with

prophetic eyes the future glories and proclaim them in rousing accents, have only one lesson to impart—the lesson of complete manhood. This cannot be realized by exploiting natural resources only. To stir and strengthen the powers of mind and character is the first essential; material prosperity is an incidental gain sure to follow this inner awakening. The prime objective in the study of their great lives and teachings is to awaken national self-consciousness and the urge to self-fulfilment.

The two levers of human good in this age are admitted to be science and spirituality, and not religion and politics. But whatever the name—religion or spirituality, the elements need to be defined—the virtues, deeds, and ideas that lie at the root. These are generally presumed to be known and not ex-

plained in clear and certain terms. This haziness and uncertainty is dispelled by a complete picture of the personality of Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji's personality may be said to be a triune self and has to be appreciated in its three facets—as a *man*, as a *monk*, and as a *patriot*. On all the three sides, it is equally a-glimmer. And the secret of his versatile power was a mind of intense concentration and it showed itself in extraordinary skill and superb performance.

#### AS A MAN

His devotional songs in the Brahma Samaj when he was in his bright youth charmed and melted the hearers. Seated at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, he poured forth a stream of fervent songs which sent the godman into meditative trance. This musical talent sprang from the ever-flowing fervour and intense yearning of his spiritual life. In 1890, as an itinerant monk, he was the guest for a few days of Babu Manmathanath Mitra of Bhagalpur, who was of Brahma persuasion. Manmatha Babu picked out some of the abstrusest passages of the Upaniṣads and asked Swamiji about their import and marvelled at the fine interpretations that he had in every case. One day he heard the Swami humming in an undertone and invited some local talents to his house and was surprised at the rare gift exhibited by the *sannyāsin* at the soiree. Next day, he arranged for a large musical party at his place. He was sure that the party would break up by nine or ten at the most and hence had prepared no refreshments for the night for his guests. But the Swami went on singing and the hearers under his spell never moved from their seats or thought of food and rest, though the hours wore on beyond midnight. Kailas Babu who accompanied on the *pakhvāj* (an Indian drum, one of the accompaniments for vocal music) was tired and his fingers went stiff and he gave up. But the charmed circle of hearers wanted the performance to continue. Manmatha Babu was profoundly influenced

by Swamiji's unique personality. He was a changed man, and in a short while, retired to Vrindaban as a devout Vaiṣṇava.

Stories about the Swami's remarkable intellectual powers are without end. When the Belur Math was started, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in its many volumes, was procured for the library. A young disciple vented his doubts whether the heavy tomes would be read by anyone. The remark reached Swamiji's ears and he replied that he had gone through ten volumes already. While staying at Meerut, one evening he had the complete works of Percy Lubbock from a local library and finished the whole set during the night. Some doubters put questions and were astonished at his mastery of the contents.

Nobody suspected that the Swami had ever learnt shooting. During a short stay at Camp Taylor in U.S.A., the talk turned on marksmanship. The company stood on the high bank of a swiftly flowing stream and there were egg-shells floating past. After some in the group had tried to shoot them and failed, the Swami playfully wanted to have a turn. He aimed a rifle and every shot was a sure hit at the shifting mark. 'How could he do it?' they all asked. The secret was nothing but one-pointedness or as the Śāstras prescribe: 'Be intent like an arrow let fly.' Nivedita related how, in a busy street, when a frantic bull rushed hither and thither, the wayfarers fled in panic and none dared to go up to it. The Swami, chancing to be there, mused for a moment if he should act like the others, but then turned back and with a firm resolve going up to the beast, seized its horns. The crowd now took heart and followed him. This, too, is the same story of a sure aim and unwavering will. The *Bhāgavata* holds up the arrowsmith for emulation. Busy at his craft in the smithy beside the king's highway, he never perceives the royal procession or looks up at the noisy crowd or the blare of the pipes and drums. Swamiji's teaching was that, by this inhibition of distracting urges, the mind develops extraordinary powers within. 'Tramping as an ascetic in the Himalayan

slopes, he came upon a village in which the people seemed to be anxiously bustling about. A villager was in high fever and writhing in pain. An evil spirit possessed him, they believed. On seeing Swamiji, they were somewhat reassured and pressed him to relieve the sufferer by his powers. To say that he was no witch-doctor and had no skill in such a case would have been of no avail in the face of their respect for his Order. In this fix, he agreed to sit beside the ailing man in a meditative mood and with all the ardour of his soul repeated the name of his blessed Master. As the Swami passed his hand after a while over the head and the limbs of the sufferer, he felt better, and in a day or two, was rid of his trouble. Long afterwards, an inmate of the Belur Math, suffering similarly, recovered under similar treatment by the Swami, as recorded in his biography.

As a person far above the common run, he was, to put in the words of a Sanskrit poet, dourer than the thunderbolt and softer than a flower. Incomparable in his mental strength and courage, he had yet a very tender nature. In far-off strange climes, he used to cook Bengali dishes with his own hands whenever convenient, and his devotees joyfully arranged for it. He was, besides, most fond of red chillies. Once, on a brief visit to Switzerland for rest and recuperation, he was in great joy to find red pepper in a grocer's shop, and without ceremony, stuffed his mouth with a handful of the rare delicacy, and still munching it, asked the dealer if he had any hotter still! This flair for cooking he had till the last. On an *ekādaśī* day, almost at his life's close, it is so recorded, himself fasting in all strictness, he insisted on serving with his own hands to his Western disciple, Sister Nivedita. He served her himself with a playful chat on each dish, and poured water for her to wash her mouth and hands after the meal. Surprised, she asked the reason of this unusual act, and when he referred to Jesus doing so at the Last Supper, his words made them inexpressibly sad and fearful of the

end. Back from his second Western tour, Swamiji landed at Bombay and was in a hurry to reach Belur. To avoid public recognition and detention on the way, he travelled in English costume and arrived at the Math rather late at night, when the main gate had been closed. While the gateman went to fetch the key, Swamiji climbed the wall and, dropping within, went straight to the kitchen compound and stood before the company seated at supper. For some moments, they all looked askance at the 'stranger' in his outlandish garb, and when he was recognized, there was a roar of laughter and jubilation at his unexpected return.

In his Western tours, he had striven to establish India's rightful place in the comity of nations and that with unprecedented success. However, under his ochre robe and philosophic calm and tolerance of all, keen and fiery was his sense of national self-respect. On his voyage home from the second tour, when not far away from Bombay, his equanimity was ruffled by two Tommies who started vilifying Indian society and religion. The Swami was in a fury and holding them by the scruff of the neck, threatened to throw them overboard. Overawed by his manly figure and menacing manner, they asked his pardon and apologized. A like incident marked his return from Mayavati when he was about to entrain at Pilibhit. A British colonel who occupied the second class compartment he wanted to enter was in a rage at the presumptuous native, but seeing his noble and solemn figure and the effusive honour shown to him by his large following, hesitated to vent his feelings. Discreetly, he went to the station-master and told him to eject the monkish passenger. The helpless official was between the devil and the deep sea and inly prayed for the train to steam off and breathed a long sigh of relief when the guard blew the whistle and waved the green flag.

Swami Vivekananda's personality embodied a fiery and fearless spirit—the very picture of an ascetic who had burst all shackles that bind and bow man's nature. The Raja of

Khetri welcomed him to his palace in the fervour of his devotion and with honour meet for the highest. In keeping with the custom of the age, he arranged for songs by a nautch-girl as an entertainment. Swamiji naturally shrank from this treat and politely refused the invitation of the Maharaja. The nautch-girl was hurt, and in a plaintive tone, took up a song importing that equanimity was the mark of a *sādhu*, and in their company, even fallen creatures were redeemed, even as iron turned into gold at the touch of the philosopher's stone. This reminded Swamiji that he was one who should be beyond all differentiation and he joined the party. Years after, a like situation arose when the entry of some public women into the Dakshineswar temple precincts was strongly opposed by some of his brethren. Swamiji dissented from this puritanic attitude. And he affirmed that a holy shrine fulfilled its purpose when it was an instrument of reclaiming the depraved and fallen and not a resort of crowds of genteel and well-to-do people only. The greatness of Swamiji which won over the world was his melting love and compassion, the child-like frankness and simplicity which lit up his mien and manner. In his early life before *sannyāsa*, he was Narendranāth, but Bhuvaneshwari, his mother, called him Bilé. Though in his thirty-eighth year only, his physique broke down under the strain of prolonged work in strange lands in disregard of health and personal comfort. The mother's heart in Bhuvaneshwari apprehended behind it possible offence to some goddess. And she remembered that, as an infant, when Bilé fell ill, she had vowed that when recovered, she would roll him on the ground in a shrine. She now called to her side the world-renowned son and spoke of her wish, and the Swami readily agreed. And, in the courtyard of the Kalighat temple, after rolling like a five-year old boy, he stood up dust-covered—the hero of the Chicago Parliament of Religions!

#### AS A MONK

In that historic gathering at Chicago, Swami Vivekananda appeared in the majesty of the

ochre-robed Indian *sādhu* and awed his audience by speaking as the representative of the most ancient monastic order before the youngest nation of the world. He had to wait for some minutes before the plaudits called forth by his prefatory words of self-introduction subsided. Indian *sannyāsins*, following in the footsteps of *Śaṅkarācārya*, have been venerated as world-teachers. They are at the top of the social scale, on account of their life of dedication to an ideal and invincibility by the power of privation, and selflessness and goodwill towards all creatures. Fearless in themselves and fear-dispelling in their message for man, their sole pursuit is complete emancipation. The grandeur of this monastic character inspired and uplifted the vision and behaviour of Swami Vivekananda. Amidst the affluence and luxury and material prosperity of America, he burst out: 'I long for my rags, my shaven head, my sleep under the trees, and my food from begging.'

He loved to recall the historic anecdote of the Indian gymnosophist—seated on a ledge, above all fear and greed, rapt in the contemplation of the supreme Self—that the world-conquering Alexander sought out on the Indus bank after he had invited him in vain to his own presence. Again, during the Sepoy Mutiny, as the Swami admiringly related, a *sādhu* vowed to silence was fatally stabbed by a miscreant and was repeatedly urged to identify the assailant whom his companions seized, but nothing could break his silence. With his last breath, he simply cried out: 'Thou art also He!' This ideal of selfless asceticism was reflected in Swamiji's own life. He forbade his *confreeres*—the *sādhus* of his own Order—to hobnob with the rich or to submit to their whims. Nor did he himself show special regard to Indian princes. In his Rajasthan itinerary, his noble bearing and high repute won the admiration of the Maharaja of Alwar who invited him to his capital and entertained him with all honour. The young prince, then infatuated with English education and Western ideas, had no respect

for traditional views and outlook. He made no secret of his contempt for idolatry. One day, Swamiji was invited to a durbar where the Maharaja shone with his *entourage* and the sanctity of images was the topic that cropped up. The Swami casually asked a courtier to take down from the wall a portrait of the ruler, and to the amazed horror of all, urged him to spit on it. Murmurs of indignation broke from all sides. But Swamiji quietly explained that, between the effigy and the original, there was no real connection—it was just a drawing on paper daubed with some tints. What objection could there be, then, to the gesture of disrespect? But, he pointed out, the picture was shown respect, because it represented the person of the prince. Likewise, the image of a deity, though no more than a human fancy, was an object of people's veneration and a real aid to devotion and hence should not be treated with irreverence. He remarked on another occasion that every monastery and ascetic sect of this country went to the dogs through subservience to the rich and dependence on their favour: 'The *sannyāsin* should have nothing to do with the rich, his duty is with the poor. 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. A true *sannyāsin* should scrupulously avoid that.'

Many anecdotes of the extraordinary powers that asceticism develops pertain to Swamiji's peregrinations all over India. The Raja of Khetri became his ardent admirer from the very beginning, and it proved the stepping stone in the rising tier of his world-wide fame. The prince had no son and had asked for the Swami's blessings that he may have one. Two years passed and preparations for the American travel were complete and he was due to leave the shores of India. At this juncture, an urgent wire came to the Swami at Madras requesting him to grace the birth-celebration of a son to the Raja.

To this request he acceded, eager though he was to start on his momentous voyage. During his Rajasthan travels, his strict adherence to monastic rules and his disregard of bodily wants and discomforts were proved by a curious incident. Travelling under the vow of strict poverty, he had nothing with him but his railway ticket and, as the train rushed through the desert, the wind seemed to shower fire, and water could be had for a price only. His fellow-traveller was a Seth—fat and sleek and pot-bellied—who bought at his pleasure cool drinks and rich fare and sweets. And thus regaled from time to time, he turned to the Swami, twitted him as a renunciant with no needs or desires, looking down on money as an evil. Swamiji heard all, calm and silent. Thus passed the day and night. Next morning, they both alighted at a station and the Seth, as before, had his bath and meal and did not omit his flings at the monk—without hunger and thirst. But, all on a sudden, a banian bustled to the spot with plenty of catables and said that he was looking for the Swami. Greatly surprised, he asked the merchant as to who had sent these cates and for whom. The man replied that, during the night, he had dreamed that Ramji stood before him and pointed to a figure just like the Swami, bade him repair straight to the station, and serve him with food and drink. The rich Seth was now astounded to see this repast coming from nowhere to the holy man, and contritely fell at his feet and begged his pardon.

After Paramahamsadeva's departure, Vivekananda set out on foot to travel throughout India, his mind turned away from earthly ties, bent on a life of austerities, and filled with his Master's saintliness. For two months he stopped at Ghazipur, attracted by a *sādhu's* extraordinary practice of penances and hardship, routine of devotion, and loving kindness to all. All these made the renowned *yogin* and *bhakta*, Pavhari Baba, an object of worship like a living god in the country side. He was wholly free from the universal obsession of the body, and in proof of his

faith and realization, offered himself as an oblation in his sacrificial fire-chamber, furnished with inflammable materials. The story is well known, how one night a thief, who in awe of him had tried to run away leaving behind his booty—the utensils of the *sādhu's* shrine—was chased for a mile or so, overtaken, and forced to accept his ill-gotten gains. Swamiji was charmed by the sweetness of the *yogin's* speech and dealings with men and seriously thought of initiation from this recluse of rare goodness and sanctity, wholly resigning himself to meditative trance and the goal of personal salvation. For several days on end, he resolved to sit at his feet and seek his grace. But, as each day wore into night, he saw before his eyes the luminous figure of his compassionate Master, and at last, forsook the passing fancy. This episode not merely fixed the tenor of his own life, but opened a new chapter in human history. His destiny could not be immured for the rest of his days in a Himalayan cave, to be lost in meditative rapture seeking release from the cycle of births. A mission of world-good, a new phase in human relations—brotherhood and service of the distressed through the spread of Vedāntic monism—such was the aim and purpose of his advent willed by Heaven. This orientation of his spiritual career moulded the function of the Ramakrishna Order of monks and lay behind its unprecedented success as shown by the countless and multiplying centres of Vedāntic thought, homes of service, cultural institutes, educational establishments, etc. at home and abroad.

#### AS A PATRIOT

Swamiji's distinctive role as a patriot is linked with this decisive turn in his monastic life. The roots of nationalism are a sense of worthiness and a feeling of 'ownness' in all that pertains to the homeland. This awareness of 'mine own' in everything Indian was complete and unreserved in him. It was a different type from the usual political sentiment. It was total patriotism—a love that

does not choose or discriminate. Political rights generally enure to the benefit of the literate upper strata, but the marrow and backbone of the nation and the support of its well-being are the tillers and workmen. These producers of its wealth, however, under every polity, miss the cream of life, the lion's share of its substance going to the more powerful ones. To lift them to the human level is the all-time problem in every State whether free or dependent. Swamiji's ever-memorable message is like rolling thunder, rousing one and all to a sense of complete oneness with the soil and its children: 'Take courage, O hero, say with pride: I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother. Say: The ignorant Indian, the indigent Indian, the Brahmin Indian, the outcast Indian is my brother. The Indian is my life, my divinity is India's gods and goodesses—the Indian society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the Benares—the sacred refuge of my old age. Say brother: 'The Indian soil is my heaven, the good of India is my good; and say further by day and by night: O Lord of Gaurī, O Mother of the universe, give me manhood, O Mother Divine, dispel my weakness, my cowardice, make me a *man*.' The flaming nationalism which throbs in these words is ever needed to stir self-awareness amidst the distractions of alien 'isms'. A keen sense of reverence for Indian creeds and cults, customs and rules of conduct was his abiding trait.

He was the evangelist of Advaita Vedānta, radical and steadfast upholder of the attributeless and undifferentiated Brahman as the sole Truth. At the same time, he had implicit reverence for all the visible images and manifestations of living God-consciousness in all parts of India. When he returned from the West after his second tour abroad, he entered the Kalighat temple with hesitation, but the priests received him cordially and their liberalism was a most pleasing surprise to him. To reintegrate religious faiths was his life's purpose. 'I have come to fulfil, and not to destroy', he used to say in Jesus'

words. When his glorious life was coming to a close and his superb physique had broken down, still he trudged on with unflagging zeal—a pilgrim to Amarnath in the lap of the snow-bound Himalayas. With him went Sister Nivedita and, as usual, a stream of two to three thousand souls—ascetics and householders, old and young—in self-forgetful devotion, heedless of hardship and privation—an emblem of ageless India. The frozen heights fitly look like the far-spread abode of Mahādeva, on whom devotees meditate as a silver peak and whose proper image—which Nature moulds in a large cave—waxes and wanes here with the lunar phases. At every step onward, the eye and mind are filled with an awed sense of Śiva's majesty and commune with India's historic genius. As a pilgrim to the shrine of Kṣīra Bhavānī beyond Amarnath, Swamiji chose to be a lone tramp breaking away from the main body unnoticed—the saintly son rapt in the meditation of the Mother Goddess in a ruined sanctuary under Moslem ravages, the image within disfigured by vandalism. The Swami was inly agitated by the shame and sorrow of the incident, and resolved to rebuild the temple, and thus protect the Mother. But an intuition suddenly flashed within like a divine message: The deity protects the devotee, but what is man that he should presume to protect her Divinity? Her pleasure makes the temple, Her abode, prosper or decline. Her will can destroy the creation in a trice. Man is just a puppet, an instrument of Her cosmic sport.

The Swami covered the Indian sub-continent on foot, the temple cities of Deccan, and visioned the true image of the motherland—the splendid *mathas* and palaces beside the hovels of the poor—pictures of destitution, ignorance, and disease. Above the agitation for political rights, he rated the succour and service of the common man—submerged, outcast, meekly suffering—as the immediate need and the root of future well-being of the nation. In one of his epistles he wrote: 'May I serve the only Divinity, the

God universal—the Nārāyaṇa who unites in Himself the mass of all creatures—the sinners and sufferers of all nations—my only gods—may I have the scope to serve them alone.'

When the plague broke out in Calcutta in 1899, the official measures of relief were inadequate and could not reach the doors of the distressed. Garbage rose in heaps on the streets. Rats and vermin scurrying unchecked spread the epidemic. Immense was the need of men and money. Sister Nivedita showed the way of service and the *sādhus* of the Ramakrishna Mission took up the work of scavenging with her in the bustees and nursing the stricken who were forsaken by their own kin. Money was wanted in heaps to effect the relief. Swamiji said that, if needed, the land bought for the Belur Math would be sold. 'If men perished, what good would the Math serve?' Here is the main thread of all the Swami's thoughts, all his preachings—the good of society, uplift of the depressed, the making of man. Nation-building on these lines was for him true patriotic service, not the support of vested interests or the widening of the privileged classes. When Santhal men and women were digging the earth at Belur, Swamiji closely inquired after their weal and woe and, in keeping with their rooted ideas of tribal purity, treated them to unsalted food and also rich dishes which delighted their simple tastes. To his brethren in holy orders, he said: 'Would you be able to lessen a little the miseries of these folk? Otherwise, what is the good of donning the saffron robe? To give all for others' good—that is *sannyāsa*—true renunciation. Those who are the backbone of the community, whose labour provides its sustenance, the stoppage of whose work would raise outcries all over the city—is there none to console them in their woes?'

Swamiji was the first among Indian leaders to support socialism. 'I am a socialist', he declared for this reason only, if not for any other. Instead of the same classes carrying the same share of joys and sorrows, let there





Whitman had progressed to his fulfilment? Or, did the 'somewhere' have a mystic significance lost on the casual reader of his famous letter? Did Emerson mean to suggest some cosmic apprenticeship such as Whitman himself described in 'Vocalism' as essential before one attained 'the divine power to speak words'?

The transformation of Whitman from a competent journalist but literary hack into the poet and mystic has never been satisfactorily explained. As a daily and weekly newspaper editor, he had written excellent editorials, but he had also written a great deal of literary trash. His previously published writings in poetry and prose had given no evidence of genius. What explanation could be offered for such a change? A successful but not outstandingly gifted editor at thirty-four, and a great poet at thirty-six!

A legend, carefully nurtured by his friend and biographer, Dr. R. M. Bucke, indicates that Whitman, about the age of thirty-four or five, experienced a sudden illumination and thereby attained to what Bucke called 'cosmic consciousness', a phenomenon which Bucke argued explained the transformation. 'Writings of no value whatever', Dr. Bucke wrote, 'were immediately followed without practice or study, by pages across each of which in letters of ethereal fire, are written the words of Eternal Life; pages covered not only by a masterpiece, but by such vital sentences as have not been written ten times in the history of the human race.'

The 'sudden illumination' theory has its supporters even among scholars, and it has a titillating appeal to one's love of the supernatural. But there is evidence in Whitman's notebooks of a slower growth. In these, at least eight years before *Leaves of Grass* was published, he put down as jerky, often disconnected notations, what he later organized and polished as his poetical manifesto.

'I cannot understand the mystery,' Whitman wrote in one of these notebooks about the year 1847, 'but I am always conscious of myself as two—as my soul and I; and I reckon

it is the same with all men and women.' Whitman's two selves in the years before *Leaves of Grass* were, in fact, strikingly different. Walt the editor was a conformist, conventional in dress and editorial expression, 'respectable' in every way. He was a member of the Democratic Party, he attended clambakes at Coney Island with Brooklyn city officials, kept an editorial eye on the condition of the Brooklyn streets, and urged his subscribers to marry and buy double beds.

Beneath this conventional appearance, Whitman's other self was struggling with increasing power to give expression to the fundamental urges of its own unique nature. Fellow staff members of the *Brooklyn Eagle*, and Democratic politicians he met at Coney Island clambakes would not have recognized his *alter ego*.

'The ignorant man', Whitman's other self confided to a notebook in 1847, 'is demented with the madness of owning things. . . . I will not descend among the professors and capitalists—I will turn the ends of my trousers around my boots, and my cuffs back from my wrists and go with drivers and boatmen, and men that catch fish and work in the field. . . . I never yet knew how it felt to think I stood in the presence of my superior. If the presence of God were made visible immediately before me, I could not abase myself. . . . I will not be the cart, nor the load on the cart, nor the horse that draws the cart; but I will be the little hands that guide the cart. . . . I will not be a great philosopher, and found any school. . . . But I will take each man and woman of you to the window, . . . and my left arm shall hook you round the waist, and my right shall point you the endless and beginningless road. . . . Not I—not God—can travel this road for you.'

Many years later, Walt gave Emerson credit for helping him 'find himself'. His expression was: 'I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil.' It may have been true, as one interviewer suggests, that Emerson's prose poem,

'Nature' and the essays on 'Spiritual Laws', the 'Oversoul', and 'Self-Reliance' set Whitman's smouldering genius ablaze. The notebooks are overwhelming evidence that he was looking inward, that he was 'inviting his soul'. 'The truths I tell you . . . may not be plain, because I do not translate them fully from my idiom into yours', he tells us. 'There are flaming lines in the notebooks, but the material shows no attempt at organization. Later, in *Leaves of Grass*, we find many passages that had been set down originally in the notebooks as they floated up from the depths of the imagination. As a journalist, Whitman knew how to say what he wanted to say, simply and clearly. But that was the expression of his conventional self and came, as he later indicated, from the surface of the mind. Whitman's other self was anything but simple and lucid. It expressed itself in symbols and images that were suggestive, but were seldom explicit.

There is much evidence therefore that Whitman's genius manifested itself in a steady growth. His mind had always been meditative and withdrawn. Friends and acquaintances thought him slothful and lazy. But changes were going on beneath the surface that no one but Whitman could have suspected. By 1854 the tinder was ready. Whether Emerson unconsciously supplied the flame or whether it came spontaneously makes little difference. Great and original poetry cannot come out of nothing. *Leaves of Grass* was not an accident.

Many years later, Whitman told Dr. Bucke: '*Leaves of Grass* was there, though unformed, all the time, in what answers as the laboratory of the mind. I was more or less conscious of it, and thought often of taking action in that direction. But you can understand there was much to deter—that, until the impulse to move had become very strong, nothing would be done. I could clearly see that such an enterprise would meet with little favour—at all events at first—that it would be hooted at (as it was) and, perhaps, hooted down. The *Democratic Review* essays and

tales came from the surface of the mind, and had no connection with what lay below—a great deal of which, indeed, was below consciousness. At last came the time when the concealed growth had to come to light, and the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* was written and published.'

The change in Whitman seemed radical. Not only was there a change in style; he also underwent a change in appearance that was in keeping with the earlier warning given in a notebook jotting. The conventionally attired editor became the carelessly dressed poet. Many have suggested that the alteration in Whitman's appearance was a pose, a device to attract attention. But his whole inner orientation had changed and the outer, accompanying changes were in character.

There was also a change in purpose. Whitman, the editor, attempted to persuade men's minds. Whitman, the poet and prophet, sought to awaken men's souls. There was even a purpose behind what many persons regarded as his obscurity of expression. He wanted to make people *feel* as well as think. 'I swear I see what is better than to tell the best, it is always to leave the best untold.' His appeal was not to logic but to intuition. *Leaves of Grass* was aimed at the spiritual in man. Walt wanted all who read his poems to identify with him. In his biography of Whitman, Henry Seidel Canby argues that poetry to Whitman was something alive, to be lived. 'It was', he said, 'a living thing in action; not an idea or an emotion. You understood it and absorbed it as you understood and absorbed a person who powerfully impressed you—not so much through what he said as what he was.' Whitman characteristically had his own way of putting it: 'Camerado, this is no book, who touches this touches a man.'

In one of his notebook jottings, years before he published *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman wrote: 'The soul or spirit transmits itself into all matter. . . . A man is only interested in anything when he identifies with it. . . . I guess the soul itself can never be anything

but great and pure and immortal; but it makes itself visible only through matter—a perfect head, a twisted skull. . . . Wickedness is most likely the absence of freedom and health in the soul.’

Those who saw Whitman as a slothful and lazy man, a loafer who spent most of his time stretched out under apple trees or rambling along the seashore, were wrong. In his apparently relaxed body there was a singularly active imagination, and it was constantly reaching out, extending its spiritual grasp and range. He was the child that went forth every day and became the first object he looked upon ‘for the day or a certain part of the day, or for many years or stretching cycles of years’.

He identified with individuals: ‘I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I become the wounded person. . . . Not a youngster is taken for larceny, but I go up, too, and am tried and sentenced. . . . I am the mash’d fireman with the breast-bone broken. . . . I am the man, I suffered, I was there.’

His ability to identify dips far back into space and time:

‘Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind  
me,  
Afar down I see the first huge Nothing, I  
know I was even there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept  
through the lethargic mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from  
the fetid carbon. . . .  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust  
soul.’

Many of the poems in *Leaves of Grass* breathe with compassion, because Whitman himself was a man of tenderness and compassion. In ‘The City Dead-House’ the poet pauses to look upon the figure of a dead prostitute:

‘Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—  
itself a soul,  
Unclaimed, avcided house—take one breath  
from my tremulous lips,  
Take one tear dropt aside as I go for  
thought of you.’

‘If you consider Whitman’s life,’ Carpenter wrote, ‘you will see that Love ruled it, that he gave his life for love. There were other motives no doubt, but this one ultimately dominated them all.’ Another friend remarked that ‘he seemed to love everything and everybody’. It was revealed in his compassion and fatherly affection for the soldiers of both North and South whom he nursed during the American Civil War. He was consistently sympathetic and helpful in his relations with other members of his own family. Walt was the principal support of his mother from young manhood until her death, and it was to him that she always turned for affection, understanding, and financial assistance. He unhesitatingly sacrificed his own comfort to provide for a younger brother who had been feeble-minded since infancy. His sister made a bad marriage and was a temperamental problem, but Walt’s love and sympathy never failed. The more she suffered, the more he seemed to love her. He had a seemingly inexhaustible love for the downtrodden, the disreputable, the repulsive, the sick, the needy, the rejected.

In the very first poem of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman establishes the theme that is to be paramount:

‘One’s Self I sing, a simple separate person  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word  
En-Masse.’

It is the Self, individual and separate, yet also continuous and universal, that is the theme of the *Leaves* just as it is the theme of the Upanisads. But had Whitman read the Vedas? In 1856 Thoreau, impressed by similarities between Whitman and the Orientals, asked if he had read them, and Whitman replied: ‘No: tell me about them.’ But thirty years later, Edward Carpenter was convinced that Whitman had read enough of the Vedic writings to know that his message was continuous with theirs. A glance at these ancient and modern utterances assured him that ‘the same loving universal spirit has looked out, making its voice heard from time to time, harmonizing the divine eras, enclos-





men answers with a decisive 'no'. It has given this answer through the mouths of all the ancient sages, whether in this country or abroad. We find an echo of the same idea in recent years in Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Dr. Radhakrishnan, Aldous Huxley, and René Guenon. Sri Aurobindo in his great work, *The Life Divine*, has not only shown the inadequacy of this conception of man's destiny, but has indicated what place the present intellectual or scientific civilization occupies in the evolution of man and how it is bound to be superseded by a higher stage in the evolution.

#### IMPACT OF SCIENCE AND DECLINE OF RELIGION

The present age is unstable and unsafe. It has been a time of great changes, of great wars, and widespread social upheavals; further calamities threaten us now. We have been accustomed to look upon these troubles as political and economic, and we have tried to deal with them on those levels. But lately we have begun to realize that it is a mistake. The conflicts between nations, races and classes are seen to originate at a lower level, in conflict between fundamental ideas, that is, at the spiritual level which is the realm of religion. These conflicts are chiefly due to the fact that old and established religious faiths are no longer effective in controlling men's beliefs and actions. And this is so, not only here, but in all countries, and with respect to all creeds. There has been undoubtedly a decline in religious influence during the last hundred years, accelerated during the last fifty years, affecting to a greater or lesser degree all the faiths of the East and the West. Three principal reasons are responsible for it. But the most important of all has been the impact of modern science and its discoveries. There is no doubt that these discoveries are in contradiction to some of the dogmas, formulated in most cases thousands of years ago by the principal religions of the world.

The descriptions in the Book of Genesis which have been central to some theologies—Adam's fall, the idea of hell, of an active personal Devil at large in the world—these ideas have faded away. Our current creeds are founded for the most part on sacred books, revelations, and traditions that are of great antiquity. The most recent of world religions, Islam, was founded thirteen centuries ago; Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, and Hinduism date back to more and more distant ages, right to the dawn of history. The universe and man's place in it are seen to be very different now from what they were thought to be in those far-away times. So it has become difficult for intelligent minds to believe, with the simple faith of their forefathers, that the sacred books of their inherited religions give them a creed divinely ordained. The principal factor in the decline of dogmatic religion is the acceptance, throughout the whole of Western world and much of the Eastern, of the principle of toleration and freedom of thought. This second cause, the greater liberty of enquiry, the tolerance of dissent, is not to be combated, but welcomed. For our own generation, a third factor has come to shake the hold of ancient creeds; it is the moral shock of the two great wars. All these evils of the present scientific age are the consequences of men's failure to fit themselves into their circumstances or their circumstances to themselves.

#### A LESSON FROM HISTORY

Modern civilization has been on trial and is found wanting. The notion that our civilization might come to grief seems to be in the air. In America, particularly, this notion is weighing on peoples' mind. The Americans seem to us to be standing on the pinnacle of power, riches, and prosperity, and yet the American middle class is quite anxious and apprehensive. The Americans had imagined that, in migrating across the Atlantic, they had jumped clear of history, and now history has caught and pursued them. The lessons of history cannot be treated lightly, for she

has skeletons in her cupboard—not just one skeleton, but perhaps, about twenty of them. They are skeletons of civilizations that have come to grief in the past. The first dead civilization that comes to our mind is the civilization of Greece and Rome. The causes for its breakdown and collapse come home to us, because this modern civilization arose out of its ruins. The ancient civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Crete are also dead and buried. The facts are clear; the laws of history are pitiless. The modern civilization stands at the crossroads, faced by two alternatives: either to give the lie to history's verdict or to add our testimony to Hegel's terrible epigram: 'We learn only from history that mankind learns nothing from history.'

While other civilizations have perished, the Hindu civilization which is contemporary to those of Egypt and Babylon is still functioning. The survival of Indian and certain other Asian civilizations shows the life-giving character of human and spiritual values. Though the achievements of these ancient civilizations in physical sciences are immensely inferior to the modern, yet they had a truer perception of spiritual values and can teach many salutary lessons in the fine art of living. When a civilization triumphs, it is more by the might of spirit than by physical power that it does so. When it falls, it is through lack of spiritual vitality. Civilization after civilization have declined on account of spiritual bankruptcy. We cannot call ourselves civilized, simply because we use the aeroplane and the motor-car, typewriter and the television. Civilization is actually within us, in our religious ideas, social attitudes, and values of life. Modern civilization is showing steady deterioration in spiritual values. The reason is that Western civilization has given up the true spirit of religion, deposed God from His throne, and installed science in His place. The protagonists of modern civilization consider that thinking of God and life after death are waste of time and energy. According to them, the

wiser course is to make the most of this life, and for this purpose, science is both necessary and sufficient. The defeat of the human by the material is the central weakness of our civilization. If civilization is to survive, we must accept that its essence does not consist in wealth, prestige, and power, but in the free activity of the human mind, in the increase of moral sense, in the cultivation of refined taste, skill in the art of living, and above all, in the science of self-realization.

#### IS RELIGION A DOPE?

Religion faces today a double pronged charge. One of these is popular, and comes from the masses; the other is academic and comes from the psychological discoveries of the time. Thus we find a disquieting consensus of judgement upon religion from two vital quarters of society: from the masses and from the scholars. They contend that religion is shot through and through with unreality and is a make-believe escape of man to God. In between these two profoundly serious groups there are playwrights, novelists, and journalists, busy popularizing both forms of indictment and helping to forge them together with one of the most formidable attacks religion has yet had to face. The form which the popular accusation takes is a well-known phrase: Religion is a dope. The academic form may be summed up in the statement: Religion is phantasy. The reasons and motives for such charges against religion have been various. But the principal reason has been that scientists ridiculed the idea of God. It is related about Laplace that when he presented his system of universe to Napoleon, the latter asked him as to why there was no mention of God in it. To that the scholar politely replied that he did not need God to explain his system. Scientists opposed religion and the idea of God, because at every discovery that a peep at nature awarded, they were opposed by religionists, priests, and their blind followers. It has been said that religion has retarded human progress. It has intoxicated the mind of man

and has set man against man. The phrase 'Religion is the opiate of the people' represents a charge against religion which is now widely spread throughout the masses of the modern world.

#### THE ESSENTIAL VERSUS THE NON-ESSENTIAL

We cannot lightly rebut the above popular charge. We must admit the large and disquieting element of truth in it. Much religion there has been, and is, that was and is 'dope', but there is the true spirit of religion which is vastly different. That all the creeds and practices, all the parts, of any religion are not equally important or essential is obviously clear. All religions themselves make distinctions between obligatory and the optional, *nitya* and *kāmya*. That duty varies with time, place, and circumstances is also obvious, and is plainly stated, too, in all religions. The greatest of all Sufi writers, Jalal-Uddin-Rumi, has distinguished between the essentials and non-essentials of religion in emphatic words in his famous book *Masnavi*, which is accepted by the Muslim world as holy next to Koran. Jesus has a blunt saying, conveying a similar idea about 'casting pearls before swine' i.e. those yet unable to appreciate the difference between essential and non-essential. Kṛṣṇa condemns in very plain terms those who are always harping upon outer ritual and neglecting inner wisdom. It is necessary to make a distinction between religion understood in the sense of dogmas, rituals, and creeds, and the spirit of religion which knows nothing of these. The essence of religion is not in the dogmas and sects, in the rites and ceremonies, but in realizing its essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality. Religion in the past has been mixed with magic, quackery, witchcraft, and probably, the superstitious or supernatural phase came first to the primitive man. The dogmas which were once paths to the divine life are now hindrances, and should not be allowed to interpose a barrier between man and God and spoil the essential simplicity of spiritual life. Most of the dogmas and creeds seem

unnecessarily complicated by comparison and lack the touch-stone of true spirituality which is the essence of religion. In its true spirit, religion is a summons to spiritual adventure. It is not theology, but practice and discipline. To restore the lost relationship between the human and the Divine is the purpose of religion.

#### RELIGION—THE SUPREME NEED OF MAN

Religion and existence are inseparably one. Creation of any division between religion and life is basically wrong. The ancient Hebrew people had no word in their language to correspond to the word religion as it is commonly used today. The whole of life as they saw it came from God and was subjected to His law and governance. There could be no separate part of it in their thought labelled as 'religion'. Religion is the very essence of our being. Men might live without art, science, and philosophy, but he could not live without religion. In a sense, as Comte admitted, religion embraces the whole existence, and the history of religion resumes the whole history of human development. We would not be wrong in saying with Max Müller that the true history of man is the history of religion. But according to the current trend prevailing in the modern world, religion is taken to be something which is extra to life. To say that religion has no use in the present world where everything is measured by the coloured glasses of 'economics' is certainly wrong.

It is true that, for sometime, one might afford to neglect religion and live in a 'myth-making state' and believe that one could easily dispense with such a thing known as religion. But every time we are obliged to return to it. The Soviet Government is said to have attempted to abolish religion from the face of their country. But the policy was changed some years ago. It was found that great masses of people were clinging to their icons and their churches and refused to part with them despite persecution. The Soviet Government then decided to 'let alone' and



'let be'. She was obliged to make some room for religion in her social structure. All this only means that revolt against religion as commonly understood and practised may be local and temporary due to special causes as a reaction against priestcraft, but that permanent abolition of religion is impossible for the vast bulk of humanity. As long as human beings suffer from, and fear pain and death, look before and after, and think about such things, so long will the human heart and head demand and cannot be denied the solace that only religion can give. When anguish wrings the heart, then we overwhelmingly realize that it shall not profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul.

The religious instinct is one of the most powerful of human instincts. One of the earliest wants of the primitive man, once his immediate material needs were satisfied, must

have been food and comfort for the soul—for even the primitive man possessed a soul. Religion is rooted in the very nature of man, it is organic to him. If the masses are not given true and scientific religion by the philanthropic and the wise, then man will inevitably imbibe false and superstitious religion given to him by priestcraft. Our religion determines the end at which we aim in life and inspires our ideas. Though hidden, it is the most important thing about any man, for it is the mainspring of our conduct. We behave as we do because of the religion we have. So it is false to say that it does not matter what a man's religion is. Religion matters above everything. The great modern scientist Max Planck is, therefore, correct when he says: 'The religious element in man's nature must be recognized and cultivated if all the powers of the human soul are to act together in perfect balance and harmony.'

---

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

### (A BIRTH CENTENARY TRIBUTE)

BY SWAMI MUKHYANANDA

Indian genius has produced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the modern period, as it did in earlier periods, a series of great personalities in different parts of the country who have been the embodiment of the spirit of India in its varied aspects, viz. Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayananda, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Narayana Guru, Gandhiji, Ramana Maharshi, and Aurobindo. Swami Vivekananda has pointed out that 'national union in India is the gathering of her scattered spiritual forces'. All these great personalities, and many other luminaries, have tried to accomplish this task and illumine the Indian horizon, driving away the accumulated dark forces. It has been

widely recognized that, in the twin personalities of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Indian cultural ideals found their highest and broadest expression. They gathered all the past experience of the race, made them living and dynamic in the crucibles of their own lives, and shaped them anew to meet the needs of the modern age for the total benefit of humanity as a whole. In the words of Romain Rolland (1928), while Sri Ramakrishna, 'the seraphic master' 'was the consummation of the 2000 years of spiritual life of three hundred million people', his great dynamic disciple Vivekananda's 'constructive genius' could be summed up 'in the two words *equilibrium* and *synthesis*'. '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. Thus the essence of the whole panorama of Indian cultural history from the hoary antiquity of the Vedic times down to modern times finds a synthetic embodiment in the lives of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, giving a fresh impetus for the realization and unfoldment in future of heretofore undreamt of possibilities in the national and international fields.

Narendra Nath Datta, who later became world-famous as Swami Vivekananda, was born in 1863 at Calcutta. Endowed with a brilliant intellect, he was highly rational in his approach to life's problems. He possessed a pure and fearless character and an intense urge to seek the Truth. During his college days he imbibed all that the West could teach—its science, philosophy, and rational thought. But it did not slake his thirst for the ultimate Truth and he turned to all the saints and sages he could meet and put them this straight question: 'Sir, have you seen God?' And the only one who answered him clearly in the affirmative, and undertook to show God to him as well, was the great prophet of religious harmony—Sri Ramakrishna, whom he accepted as his *guru*. Narendra Nath imbibed all that the spiritual India could teach and soon soared to the empyrean heights of spiritual realization under the Master's guidance. The best traditions of the East and the West blended in his personality into a beautiful synthesis.

After the passing away of the Master in 1886, Swami Vivekananda traversed the length and breadth of the country as a

wandering monk and felt great agony at the appalling condition of the country in striking contrast to her past spiritual glory and material prosperity. His heart was filled with great compassion for the burning misery of suffering humanity. He was seeking ways of raising the material condition of the Indian masses and elevating her women and rousing the country from her long deep sleep. He had realized that India was a land of religion and spirituality, and, in spite of her prevailing degenerate condition, she would again rise to heights surpassing all past glory and greatness if she gathered together her scattered spiritual forces and once again launched forth on the path of her historic mission of the spiritualization of the human race. As he had felt the pulse of India during his travels, he found after much reflection that he could achieve this better and quicker if he captured the strongholds of the West whose dazzling material civilization had cast a spell on India. Soon an opportunity presented itself in the shape of the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago which was held in September 1893. Swamiji participated in it to represent India's religious traditions. The elite of the world were represented there and Swamiji won the day for the liberal, universal thought of India. His ideas were received with great admiration and respect all over the West and he was invited to address numerous crowded gatherings. He worked and widely preached in America and England (1893-97 and 1899-1901) and by his lucid presentation of the vast and profound Indian thought and his own majestic and moving personality once again turned the eyes of the world on spiritual India. Vedanta societies were established in the West and his Western disciples, like the great Sister Nivedita, Sister Christine, Capt. and Mrs. Sevier, and Mr. Goodwin came to help in the task of India's regeneration.

When Swamiji returned to India in 1897, an unprecedented ovation was accorded to him by enthusiastic crowds from Colombo to Lahore and Swamiji delivered to the people

his message of hope of a great future India. In powerful and fiery language he placed before them his ideas and plans and exhorted them to work for the all-round national regeneration—spiritual, moral, and material—and the elevation of the masses and women. He urged the people to build up a society ‘deep as the ocean’ in spiritual matters and ‘broad as the sky’ on the social plane and help evolve a ‘complete civilization’ on the basis of the mutual exchange and synthesis of all that is best in the East and the West. His was a message of strength, character, and manliness. The whole country was revived through his inspiring words and the great leaders of India drank deep from the life-giving waters of this immortal fountain.

To give permanence to this work of national regeneration and spiritual upliftment of humanity in terms of universal, non-sectarian principles, he established the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

Swamiji passed away in 1902 before he was forty, leaving a rich heritage to mankind of new visions of attainment and fresh vistas of development and words of lasting value and supreme wisdom compiled in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works* wherein he exhorts every man and woman to realize his or her inherent divinity and sends out the clarion call to ‘Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.’

Here it may not be out of place to recall what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who has been intimately connected with our national movement for independence and regeneration of the country from the early part of this century, said about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. ‘One of the effects of Sri Ramakrishna’s life was the peculiar way in which he influenced other people who came in contact with him. Men often scoffed from a distance at this man of no learning, and yet when they came to him, very soon they bowed their heads before this man of God and ceased to scoff and “remained to pray”. They gave up, many of them, their ordinary

vocations in life and business and joined the band of devotees. They were great men and one of them, better known than the others not only in India but in other parts of the world, is Swami Vivekananda. I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him and I think that it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda’s writings and speeches, and they would learn much from him. That would, perhaps, as some of us did, enable us to catch a glimpse of that fire that raged in Swami Vivekananda’s mind and heart and which ultimately consumed him at an early age. Because there was fire in his heart—the fire of a great personality coming out in eloquent and ennobling language—it was no empty talk that he was indulging in. He was putting his heart and soul into the words he uttered. Therefore, he became a great orator, not with the orator’s flashes and flourishes, but with a deep conviction and earnestness of spirit. And so he influenced powerfully the minds of many in India and two or three generations of young men and women have, no doubt, been influenced by him.’

Vivekananda’s interests were not only national but international. As Nehru says: ‘Swami Vivekananda, though a great nationalist, his was a kind of nationalism which automatically slipped into Indian nationalism, which was part of internationalism.’

Vivekananda believed that a healthy, strong, spiritual India would be able to cure many of the ills from which humanity and she herself suffered, and he wanted this country to rise once more and play its role in restoring peace, goodwill, and brotherhood among men and nations. To work for this regeneration of the country, he wanted men and women who, ‘fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with the eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved

to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of Self, the gospel of social raising-up, the gospel of equality'.

Let, therefore, the student and the citizen, the thinker and the nation-builder, the philosopher and the scientist, the man of action and the man of faith, indeed, all men and women,

find inspiration from Swamiji's immortal words about which Romain Rolland significantly remarked (in 1929): 'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock.'

## HOW TO CALL SWAMIJI'S PHILOSOPHY?

BY DR. BRATINDRA KUMAR SEN GUPTA

It has now been universally recognized that the Vedānta of India is the highest spiritual way of life. Swami Vivekananda, the intrepid interpreter of this way of life, has shown and proved beyond doubt that India's salvation lies in the resuscitation of this heritage. It is not merely an academic course of study, nor merely a discipline of the esoteric few. It is, in fact, the expression of the way of thought and the tenor of life that India represents. Let us examine what is meant by this understanding. Firstly, we are very much right in saying that India has upheld for more than 5,000 years a way of life and thought undisturbed, in spite of various extraneous vicissitudes. Such a continuity of life has been the privilege of a chosen few among the modern nations, and India can be regarded as a prominent one among this select band of nations. This way of life and thought has made India what she is today. Material prosperity India has seen through centuries of divergent rules; moral advancement she has also shown to the world at large at different periods of her social life. A Janaka, a Rāma, or a Buddha, or even in our own times, a Gandhi—each of them proves that a reformer of the highest type can be found at all times during her long history to uphold and cham-

pion the moral order of the whole texture of creation. But behind and beyond all these currents of her social and political life, far from her kings and generals, her law-givers and social reformers, there has always been an array of those people who dedicated their lives to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. They were human beings in flesh and blood, but they were quickened to the full by their spirituality. A Yājñavalkya, a Naciketas, a Śvetaketu, a Gārgī, or an Apālā—men and women of the society who would pursue their earthly avocations as people of all ages and climes—were so surcharged with a spirit of godliness that they advocated in assemblies or in houses that the only truth is the existence of the one Self in the whole universe. This profound thought cut through the whole social fabric, and the warp and woof of Indian life and thought were made up of a spirit of god-centredness. This one Self is God Supreme whom the *Bhagavad-Gītā* describes as the only unifying thread woven through the multiplicity of apparent creation, as a string going through a row of pearls. It is because this supreme Truth exists that all beings exist, and all beings get their place in the scheme of existence. It is, therefore, a spiritual compulsion with all of us to

see the existence of God Supreme in all beings.

Secondly, the life and thought of the people of India represent nothing short of what is meant by a teleological and a dynamic approach to all the problems of the world. Herein Swami Vivekananda's role becomes prominent. The rise and fall of material prosperity or the vicissitudes of moral standards have been in evidence in different ages. People might have failed in some ways and the country might have fallen on evil days. Hence bad administrations and concomitant bad standards sometimes prevailed. This is the evidence provided by historical records, and historical records have some common tales of weal and woe for all countries and nations. But when we take stock of Indian history as a whole, we can say firmly and squarely that people had tried to find out a purpose in their lives and became activized to realize that end. This is what I mean by a teleological and dynamic approach to problems. This sustaining approach is the Alpha and Omega of our spiritual heritage. Hence Swami Vivekananda becomes for us in this century a unique path-finder to this approach. It is well known that Swamiji was a dynamic personality, trying always to raise the lives of people to a higher plane. In his innumerable writings and speeches, he has left for posterity clear indications as to the purpose of all our endeavours in this life. Hence he gave a clarion call to the young men of Lahore, and through them to all of us, in these words: 'Therefore, young men of

Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita, for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love, until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached. Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go.'

In all our pursuits, therefore, be it education, service, profession, or administration, it is only god-centredness that creates some purpose to achieve for all beings. This is what Swamiji means by 'banner of love'. Love emanates only when we feel the presence of the Lord Supreme in the whole cosmos, and this love is primarily centred on the Lord. It is therefore the task of human beings, who have tasted of this honey of love and subjugated their own hankerings that belong only to the 'little self', to harness the society, the administration, and the world-conscience to subserve the highest beatitude of mankind. This beatitude is the purpose of all life, but it is the most elusive phenomenon to a world shorn of this glimpse of divine love, metamorphosing the whole human race. Swamiji's greatest contribution has, therefore, been a dynamic philosophy, based on the highest principles and purposes of human life, to be transformed into reality by an incessant urge of self-dedication in the streets and hutments of human habitation. Can we not, therefore, rightly call this exposition of Indian thought a system of practical Vedānta?

---

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Advaita holds Brahman as the substratum of the world phenomenon, but not its material cause. This cause is 'avidyā' or 'ignorance',

which is itself phenomenal in nature and is an inexplicable 'principle of creative energy, in the sense that it is creative of appearances'. Dr. P. S. Sastri, M.A., M.Litt., Ph.D., Head of the Department of English, Nagpur Uni-

versity, designates this ignorance as 'The Phenomenalistic Principle', and explains in perspicuous modern language the central place of this principle in Advaita metaphysics. . . .

'Swami Vivekananda: The Triune Personality' is yet another article in the birth centenary year of Swami Vivekananda from the pen of Professor Batuknath Bhattacharya, M.A., B.L., formerly of Surendranath College, Calcutta. In his beautiful way, Professor Bhattacharya has painted brightly the three aspects of the personality of the Swami—as a man, as a monk, and as a patriot. We hope this article will be read with profit and interest by our readers. . . .

Mr. C. H. MacLachlan, an ex-editor and publisher of *The Long Islander*, the journal started by Walt Whitman in the year 1836, is closely connected with the Vedanta Society of New York. In his interesting article, 'Walt Whitman: The Laboratory of His Mind', he tries to explain the background and elements that went to help the great American poet in the creation of his *magnum opus*, *The Leaves of Grass*. And in this effort, Mr. MacLachlan has been able to throw ample light on a difficult subject which deals with the 'transformation of Whitman from a com-

petent journalist, but a literary hack, into the poet and mystic'; and this, as the writer says, 'has never been satisfactorily explained'. . . .

Professor Indar Pal Sachdeva, M.A., of Allahabad, is a new contributor. In his article, 'Religion and Modern Civilization', he says that, in spite of the impact of science and technology on the modern civilization, the importance of religion in human life cannot be overemphasized, as it is the basic need for truly happy and prosperous living. . . .

Swami Mukhyananda is the head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh, Punjab. In his article in this issue, he briefly deals with the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. . . .

Dr. Bratindra Kumar Sen Gupta, M.A., D.Phil., Reader of Sanskrit, Burdwan University, says in his article that the Indian way of life is essentially a spiritual one, though it does not deny the importance of economics, politics, sociology, etc. in their proper places. Swami Vivekananda, in our own times, is the best interpreter of this way of life and has 'proved beyond doubt India's salvation lies in the resuscitation of this heritage'.

---

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

COGITATORS' TREASURY (THOUGHTS AND WISDOM FROM MANY MINDS). BY SAM GOODMAN. Published by Philosophical Library Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York-16. 1962. Pages 385. Price \$ 6.00.

The present century, with its wars of destruction and unrest, has ushered in the era of disintegrationists in the philosophic world, too. The logical positivists seek to banish metaphysics (and to transform philosophy into an inquiry into language. In such a bewildering chaos, it is encouraging to find Sam Goodman believing fervently that the thoughts and wisdom of mankind provide a rich treasure of practical and inspirational

philosophy. The passages he has selected are a delight to read; and at the same time, they set the mind thinking on the varied problems of life.

The treasure-house gives us thoughts on philosophy, thought, reason, psychology, life, knowledge, science, and everyday problems. The aim is to enable man to raise himself to higher levels of understanding, to make him understand fully the maxim 'Know Thyself'. As Goodman remarks: 'Man's most precious possession is his mind, yet he neglects it completely and permits it to develop with the whims of chance.' This element of chance must be eliminated; and it can be done so

only if man is willing to become logical and practical once again.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**LOGIC AND EXISTENCE.** BY MARTIN FOSS.  
*Published by Philosophical Library Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York-16. 1962. Pages 236. Price \$ 4.75.*

This is a remarkable book, not however for its philosophy, but for its poetry, feeling, and imagery. If we do not take the Introduction too seriously, in fact if we drop the Introduction completely and read on, we should get the best out of the book. It is not true to say, as the author seems to assert in the Introduction, that *nirvāṇa* is the goal of all Eastern philosophy, nor is *nirvāṇa* to be identified with Brahman. It is also not true to say that Eastern philosophy is all based on emotion. Again, in regard to Western philosophy, it is not thought alone that is the guiding light. 'Intuition', too, is there. The author sees it, but does not approve of it.

If we by-pass these few introductory observations in the book and take the main body of the volume, we find it richly rewarding. Starting with an analysis of 'fact', the author elucidates, in the first part of the book, the philosophical conception of substance, function, law, causality, and purpose. He claims to deal with abstractions. For the West, it is the 'sober and unemotional discovery of the "universal", the abstract "being" as such ... as an abstract expansion of thought' that is the goal of philosophy. This, however, does not seem to satisfy the author. So he wants to supplement it or synthesize it by the Eastern view of Brahman reached through non-mediate direct *darśana*. Perhaps, this is what he attempts in the second part of the book, where he plunges into a deep analysis of aesthetics, melody, grace, love, and generosity. The author concludes: 'Faith and knowledge belong together as soul and body. ... The reality of the soul, of personality, and its communion is the full reality, from which the body receives derivative and contingent existence' (p. 218).

There is nothing new in all this. Our ancient seers came to the same conclusions, several times over, in the long distant past.

As one reads through the chapters, excellently written, one feels more and more convinced about what Bergson has to say about intellect and its power of abstraction. In his brilliant essay on 'The Life and Work of Ravaisson' (*The Creative Mind* by Henri Bergson, Wisdom Library, N.Y.), he remarks that 'the farther it (intellect) goes in the series of generalities, the higher it feels it is rising in the scale of realities. But what it takes to be a higher spirituality is only the in-

creasing rarefaction of the air it breathes. It does not see that the more an idea is general, the more is it abstract and empty, and that from abstraction to abstraction, from generality to generality, one proceeds to pure nothingness'. This is the nothingness which the author condemns in Eastern philosophy and it is just this nothingness that Western philosophy seems to attain as the crown and culmination of its thinking process. There can be no more striking condemnation of the exaggerated claims made for the achievements of reason!

Despite these limitations, the reviewer has no hesitation in saying that this is a stimulating and elevating book. It merits the appreciation of all serious students of philosophy. A philosopher can always appreciate without accepting.

PROFESSOR P. S. NAIDU

**VOICE OF THE SELF.** BY SWAMI NITYANANDA.  
*Published by P. Ramanath Pai, 'Meera Bhavan', 8 Hanumantha Rao Road, Balaji Nagar, Madras-14. Pages 100. Price Rs. 2.*

The volume under review is a compilation of 'the spontaneous words' of Swami Nityananda, the saint of Vajreshwari (Bombay), 'as they came from the Master's mouth'. His words 'appeared as though they were direct answers to unexpressed queries and doubts entertained by some of the close devotees who had gathered at his feet' and these were faithfully chronicled. Swami Nityananda was a spiritual personality of a very high order and had attained self-illumination after intense *sādhana* and self-mastery. Swami Chinmayananda writes in his introduction to the book: 'Swami Nityananda is one of the rarest jewels among the saints of the recent India.' 'Illiterate and uneducated though he was from the standards of modern concepts of education, he was one of the most cultured men, who threw no stones at others but blessed them both in their material life and in their spiritual awakening.' The saint's words, as recorded in this book, reveal the great depth of his realization and are 'vivid, brilliant, and even inspired'. We have no doubt that they will be of great help to the seekers of Truth and will illumine their understanding.

The book contains a foreword by Sri Sri Prakasa, the former Governor of Maharashtra, who met the saint and here records his impression. The English translation (from original Kannada) by Sri M. P. Pandit of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, is very lucid and commendable. While going through the book, one feels as if these words directly touch one's soul. The general get-up and printing are quite attractive.

S. C.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY, ST. LOUIS, U.S.A.

REPORT FOR 1961-62

*Sunday Services:* The Swami-in-charge of the Centre spoke on different religious and philosophical topics in the Society's chapel on Sunday mornings. Total number of Sunday services held: 46. The usual services were suspended during the hot season for about six weeks, but the Vedānta students held regular meetings for prayer, meditation, and for listening to the Swami's recorded lectures.

*Meditation and Discourse:* On Tuesday evenings, the Swami conducted and expounded Chapter XI of *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*. In the beginning of the new year, he took up the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Total number of Tuesday meetings conducted: 46.

*Additional Meetings:* The Swami held two special meetings in the Society's chapel, one for young and adult groups of two Presbyterian churches, and the other for twelfth grade students of a school.

*Visiting Swamis:* When Swamis from other centres visited the Centre, special meetings were arranged.

*Anniversaries:* On the birth anniversaries of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Śaṅkara, Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, and such festive occasions as the worship of the Divine Mother, Christmas, and Easter, devotional worship and special services were conducted.

*Out-of-town Guests and Visitors:* The Society had the privilege of receiving about forty guests and visitors from different places in the U.S. and abroad. Most of them interviewed the Swami and attended the services.

*Interviews:* Many came to the Swami for spiritual guidance and for discussion of their personal problems. About one hundred interviews were given by him.

*Library:* The library of the Society was well-utilized by its members and friends.

*Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda:* To carry out the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, a centenary committee was formed. The presentation of two hundred volumes of *Vivekananda: The Yogas and Other Works* (compiled with a biography by Swami Nikhilananda) to universities, colleges, and public libraries was included as a special feature of the celebrations.

*The Extension of the Vedānta Work in Kansas City, Missouri:* The Vedānta students of Kansas City, Missouri, met every fortnight, when they listened to

the Swami's recorded lecture delivered in St. Louis. They also held an open meeting once a month on Sunday for the same purpose. Many borrowed books from the Vedānta library there.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVA PRATISHTHAN  
CALCUTTA 26

OPENING OF THE GENERAL HOSPITAL BLOCK

BY SRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

The newly constructed six-storied general hospital block was formally opened by the Prime Minister of India, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, on Monday, the 1st of July 1963, in the presence of a distinguished gathering including the Governors of West Bengal and Maharashtra, the Chief Minister of West Bengal, and ministers of the Central and the West Bengal Governments. The Prime Minister said on the occasion:

'I am happy to be here, and as you have just heard, I visited this institution, not this new building, but its predecessor, over a quarter of a century ago. It was rather a humble effort then, but it has grown and now we see its fine six-storeyed hospital building. I am glad to be here, because such an effort and such a fine hospital in the heart of Calcutta deserves every encouragement. And I am specially glad because the Ramakrishna Mission has sponsored this and is running it. In various parts of India, and to some extent outside India too, I have seen the work done by the Ramakrishna Mission hospitals and their other forms of service. I have very much been impressed by the quiet, unostentatious, and efficient way these Ramakrishna Mission foundations have been working, and this has always attracted me to their work, and we feel that we should do everything to help their work and help the Mission to carry on their good work of service.

'So I have come here and I have seen this fine new hospital building which has grown up, and I feel much impressed and I wish it all success. I am sure it will have success, because it has all the reasons behind it which commands success; the reasons being, the efficient way in which the spirit of service is preserved and the voluntary help by the large number of people of this great city of Calcutta. So I wish this venture every success and I am glad to open the new hospital block of this Pratishthan and I am sure it will prosper and grow and be of service to the people of Calcutta and outside.'