



VOL. LXIX

JANUARY 1964



# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

**AWAKENED INDIA**

By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or  
all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXIX

JANUARY 1964

No. 1



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत  
Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

—:0:—

## श्रीविवेकानन्द-प्रणति-मालिका

### A GARLAND OF SALUTATIONS TO VIVEKANANDA

यं कांक्षन्ती तपस्तेने माता श्रीभुवनेश्वरी ।  
वीरेश्वरात्समुत्पन्नं तं नरेन्द्रं नमाम्यहम् ॥१॥

1. I bow down to that Narendra who was born out of the grace of Lord Vīreśvara, and desiring whom mother Bhuvaneshvari performed *tapas*.

क्रीडन्तं यं शिशुं दृष्ट्वा शैवा भूताः सुलज्जिताः ।  
बाललीलारतं बालमार्तण्डं तं नमाम्यहम् ॥२॥

2. I bow down to that child who (shone like) the rising sun, absorbed in childish pranks, and seeing whom playing the demon followers of Lord Śiva were abashed.

सत्यजिज्ञासया युक्तं तरुणारुणविग्रहम् ।  
वन्दे तारुण्यजुष्टं तं तृणीकृतजगत्सुखम् ॥३॥

3. I bow down to (that young Narendra) who was filled with the desire to know the Truth, whose form bore the colour of the dawn, who was youthfulness embodied, and who spurned all worldly enjoyment as straw.

भगवानस्ति वा कश्चिदथवा नास्ति किं न्विति ।  
पृच्छन्तं गुरुवर्यं तं नरेन्द्रं प्रणतोऽस्म्यहम् ॥४॥

4. I bow down to that Narendra who asked (Sri Ramakrishna) the *guru par excellence* whether God existed or not.

ज्ञातवानस्मि देवेशं साधनेन तवापि तत् ।  
 साध्यमेव यतस्व त्वमचिरेणाधिगच्छसि ॥५॥  
 इति श्रुत्वा गुरोर्वक्यं मोदसंलग्नचेतसा ।  
 साधनान्याचरन्तं तं शिष्यराजं नमाम्यहम् ॥६॥

5-6. I bow down to that king amongst disciples who joyfully performed spiritual practices after hearing the following words of (his) *guru* (in answer to his question): 'I have seen the Lord. You, too, can see Him through spiritual practice. Try, and you will attain Him ere long.'

उररीकृतसंन्यासं देशाविद्याऽपनुत्तये ।  
 भारताटनसंसक्तं यतिराजं नमाम्यहम् ॥७॥

7. I bow down to that king of ascetics who accepted *sannyāsa* in order to remove the (ubiquitous) ignorance in the country (India) and who was engaged in traversing India (for that purpose).

स्थित्वा कन्यापदे ध्याननिविष्टं गुर्वनुग्रहात् ।  
 आत्मजीवितकर्तव्यं विदन्तं तं नतोऽस्म्यहम् ॥८॥

8. I bow down to that (Vivekananda) who came to know, through the grace of his *guru*, his mission in life, while deeply engrossed in meditation at the feet of Kanyākumārī.

सर्वधर्मसभास्थाने वेदान्तमृषिदर्शितम् ।  
 घोषन्तं सिंहनादेन तस्मै ब्रह्मविदे नमः ॥९॥

9. I bow down to that knower of Brahman who proclaimed at the Parliament of Religions with the roar of a lion the message of Vedānta as taught by the *ṛsis* (of yore).

आसमुद्रं हिमाद्रचन्तमात्ममोक्षजगद्धिते ।  
 इति तत्त्वद्वयं येन कीर्तितं तं नमाम्यहम् ॥१०॥

10. I bow down to (that Vivekananda) who preached the twin doctrines of 'Self-realization and service to humanity' (throughout the length and breadth of India) from the seas up to the Himalayas.

समाप्य गुरुणा दत्तं कर्तव्यं ज्ञानचक्षुषा ।  
 बुद्ध्वा शीघ्रं निजं रूपं ब्रह्मवेदनदायकम् ॥११॥  
 त्यक्त्वा कलेवरं भौमं परं धाम निजेच्छया ।  
 गतवन्तं यतीन्द्रं तं विवेकानन्दमाश्रये ॥१२॥

11-12. I take refuge in that Vivekananda, the lord of ascetics, who, having finished his duties entrusted to him by his *guru*, gave up his mortal body of his own free will and went to the highest Abode, realizing his real nature, capable of giving the experience of Brahman, through the eye of knowledge.

## SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES OF SWAMI VIJNANANANDA

*Belur Math, November-December 1935*

Speaking about Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) to the assembled monks, Swami Vijnananandaji said one day: 'Swamiji was then staying in his room. In those days, this door in the centre used to be open all the time, and we used to go to his room or come out from this side also. Swamiji had moved about and lectured to hundreds of audiences in many parts of the world, where he had to associate closely with all sorts of people, including women, and some of his Western disciples were with him at the time; and I was wondering whether all that he did was in consonance with the Master's ideas. Why should he have mixed with so many women? So one day, finding him alone, I asked: "Swamiji, in Western countries you must have moved with women also; but were not the Master's teachings of a different character? He used to say that a monk should desist from looking even at the picture of a woman. And he gave me very strict injunctions against allowing women to come near me, however spiritually minded they might be. I have therefore been feeling somewhat puzzled about your action." Hearing me, he became grave and stern; and his face and eyes turned crimson. I was afraid to look at him and was repenting of what I had uttered inadvertently. After some time he said: "Well, Peshan, do you think that what you have understood is the last word on the Master and his teachings? And how much of him have you really understood? Do you know he has eliminated from my mind all distinction of sex? Is there any distinction of sex in the soul? Besides, the Master came for the good of the entire humanity, and not for the redemption of a selected few only. Man or woman, everyone will be saved by him. And you all want to measure him with your own mental yardsticks and confine him to your little understanding. What to speak

of the inhabitants of this earth, even the denizens of the other worlds, whether man or woman, will receive his grace. What he told you is quite correct, and you should follow it to the letter. But to me his instructions were different. And he did not stop with merely instructing me; he clearly showed everything to me. Now he holds me by the hand and guides me, and I am following his directions." Saying this, Swamiji quietened down a bit. I was struck with terror at the severity of his mood, and could not utter a word. I wanted to run away from there, when Swamiji, perhaps taking pity on me, said smilingly: "No nation can become great unless the primordial Śakti, or the energy that lies dormant in women, is awakened. I have travelled all over the world. The condition of women is very much the same everywhere. Particularly in this unfortunate country, it is deplorable, which accounts for our all-round degradation. Once the women of this country wake up to their pristine glory and greatness, you will find the whole nation making a rapid recovery. That is why the Holy Mother (Sri Sarada Devi) has come. After her advent the women of the world are waking up. This is only the prelude, you will see greater things hereafter."

'Swamiji's talk was interrupted by the entrance of a visitor, which gave me an opportunity to make my exit. He was speaking with such conviction and force that any kind of contradiction was unthinkable. But I was determined in my resolve to follow what the Master had told me. Swamiji's case, was quite different. He was the Master's chief disciple, and none else was in a better position to understand the Master than he. The Master got his work done through him. Swamiji was a unique personality, and we could not afford to imitate him. There was one thing that we noticed about him. Though he mixed with his Western women disciples, he

never allowed any young monk or *brahmacārin* to approach them. If they required anything, he would either take it himself or send someone among the senior monks. Even amongst his own brother disciples, he would make a distinction in this respect.

'I feared Swamiji as much as I loved him. When I found him in an unpleasant mood, I would simply avoid him. If he called me at such moments, I would just make a pretence of being extremely busy and escape.

'Swamiji is not dead, but still alive here. When I pass by his room, I walk on tiptoe very quietly lest I should disturb him. I don't look into his room for fear of meeting him face to face.'

Hearing this, a monk asked: 'Maharaj, do you see Swamiji even now?'

Maharaj: 'Of course I do. I see him sometimes pacing this verandah or on the terrace and sometimes singing in his room, and in many other ways.

'Formerly, while staying at the Math, I mostly occupied that small room there. I rarely opened the door leading to the verandah, as Swamiji used very often to pace up and down there. He used to be in different moods at different times. One incident of that period still lingers in my memory. Once he spent the whole night singing, in an exalted mood, a hymn to the Mother, all the while walking about in that verandah. He mostly sang only the first line of the song '*Mā, tvam hi tārā*'. While he was in this mood, no one dared to approach him. He went on singing only that first line and walked about, sometimes with his face bathed in tears and sometimes standing still. This continued till morning.

'Swamiji preached so much about *jñāna* and *karma*, but his heart was full of love. Behind a stern and forbidding exterior, he concealed the softness of a mother's heart. And what an abounding love he possessed for his brother disciples! Specially for Rakhal Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda), he entertained a feeling of deep love as well as respect,

as towards his *guru*. At the same time, he was intolerant of any faults or defects on the part of others. He did not spare even Rakhal Maharaj, whom he loved with such deep affection. Once he scolded him so severely that he simply wept, though he was not to blame at all. It was wholly my fault, and Rakhal Maharaj had made himself a scapegoat in order to shield me. Work on the embankment and masonry steps was then proceeding on the river bank, for which Swamiji had asked me to draw up a plan and give a rough estimate of the cost. I did it, but out of fear for Swamiji, kept the estimate deliberately low, and told him that rupees three thousand should be more than enough. Swamiji felt happy and informed Rakhal Maharaj of it. The latter assured him that it would not be difficult to secure that amount, and the work started. I was in charge of the actual work, but Rakhal Maharaj looked after the accounts and the collection of the money for the purpose. As the work proceeded, it became apparent that the cost would very much exceed the estimate; and I expressed my apprehensions to Rakhal Maharaj who, the good soul that he was, took pity on me and asked me to go on with the work as it was essential to get it completed somehow. I heaved a sigh of relief, but knew very well that I would have to face Swamiji's rebukes sooner or later. At this time Swamiji one day suddenly asked for the accounts. Rakhal Maharaj had kept clear account of everything. When Swamiji found that the expenses had already exceeded the original estimate, while yet much of the work remained, he got wild against Rakhal Maharaj. The latter bore it all without a murmur, but he felt very much mortified. As soon as Swamiji left, he entered his room and closed the door. Swamiji, however, very soon realized that he should not have been so violent, and repented his action. I was noticing everything and feeling sad, because it was due to me that Rakhal Maharaj had been subjected to so much torment. Swamiji

called me and said, "Peshan, just go and find out what Raja is doing". I went to Rakhal Maharaj's room and found all the doors and windows closed. I called from outside, but got no reply. I reported this to Swamiji, who became very much excited and said: "How silly you are! I told you to find out what he is doing and you only come and report that the doors and windows are closed. You must go again and find out what he is doing." So I went again, and getting no response to my call, softly opened the door and found Rakhal Maharaj in his bed, sobbing. I told him that I was feeling guilty inasmuch as it was I who was at fault. He looked at me and said: "Was it my fault, Hari Prasanna? Sometimes he uses such strong language that I feel inclined to run away somewhere to the mountains." He talked like this for some time, and then I returned to Swamiji and told him that Rakhal Maharaj was weeping in his bed. He immediately ran to the latter's room. I followed him. On entering the room, I saw Swamiji clasping Maharaj in his arms. He was bathed in tears and was telling: "Raja, pardon me. In a fit of temper I abused you, pardon me." Rakhal Maharaj had, by this

time, gained some control over himself; but seeing Swamiji weeping like that, he got non-plussed and said: "What does that matter? You scolded me because you love me, that's all." But Swamiji went on weeping and said: "Pardon me, Raja; you were the Master's favourite and he never uttered a single harsh word against you. And I have abused you so much over such a trifling matter. I am not worthy to live among you. I shall go away to the Himalayas and live in some quiet spot there." And Rakhal Maharaj replied: "What are you saying, Swamiji? Your scolding is for us a blessing. And you talk of going away! You are the head of our order, and what shall we do without you?"

"They went on talking in that strain for a long time, and then became silent. I can never forget that scene. I had never seen Swamiji weeping so bitterly. What a bond of love existed between them! Swamiji loved his brother disciples like a mother. And that is how he could not bear to see any fault in them. He wanted them to be as great as himself, nay, greater than himself. His love is incomparable."

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## THE HEART OF VIVEKANANDA

[ EDITORIAL ]

The sixth of this month marks the close of an eventful year. On that date falls the hundred and second birthday of Swami Vivekananda, whose birth centenary we have been celebrating for the last one year. The centenary has aroused widespread enthusiasm in India and abroad, and a good deal of interest is being evinced in the study of the Swami's life and works. The great problem before us now is to see that this interest and enthusiasm does not die out with the fanfare of the centenary celebrations about to be

concluded this month, but becomes a permanent force for the good of oneself and the welfare of the world. Here we are reminded of what the Swami said nearly seventy years back, when a similar interest and enthusiasm had been created in the wake of his bold and inspiring presentation of the universal truths of the Hindu religion at the Parliament of Religions—truths realized and re-suscitated by a long line of saints and sages of the past and by himself and his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, of the present. On that occa-

sion, he wrote in a letter to one of his disciples at Madras: 'A little boom was necessary to begin work. We have had more than enough of that. ... *Now show me what you can do.* No foolish talk now, but actual work; the Hindus must back their talk with real work; if they cannot, they do not deserve anything; that is all. ... In future do not pay heed to what people say either for or against you or me. Work on, be lions; and the Lord will bless you. I shall work incessantly until I die, and even after death I shall work for the good of the world. Truth is infinitely more weighty than untruth; so is goodness. If you possess these, they will make their way by sheer gravity. ... Enough of books and theories. It is the *life* that is the highest and the only way to stir the hearts of people. ... Truce to foolish talk; talk of the Lord. ... You must always remember that every nation must save itself; so must every man; do not look to others for help. ... I like to work on calmly and silently, and the Lord is always with me. Follow me, if you will, by being intensely sincere, perfectly unselfish, and above all, by being perfectly pure. My blessings go with you. In this short life there is no time for the exchange of compliments. We can compare notes and compliment each other to our hearts' content after the battle is finished. Now, do not talk; work, work, work! ... There is too much talk, talk, talk! We are great, we are great! Nonsense! We are imbeciles; that is what we are! This hankering after name and fame and all other humbugs—what are they to me? What do I care about them? I should like to see hundreds coming to the Lord! Where are they? I want them, I want to see them. You must seek them out. You only give me name and fame. Have done with name and fame; to work, my brave men, to work! You have not caught my fire yet—you do not understand me! You run in the old ruts of sloth and enjoyments. Down with all sloth, down with all enjoyments here or hereafter.

Plunge into the fire and bring the people towards the Lord!

Stirring words, indeed! and couched, as in fact are all his writings and speeches, in a language, most lyrical and fired with the inspiration of a genius! But we have quoted from the letter *in extenso* for a more weighty reason than that. The extract tells us in a nutshell what Swamiji wanted us to be and to do.

As we go through the letter, we are struck by the ease with which Swamiji tears himself off from all regional or racial considerations and speaks to man as such. Swami Vivekananda was one of those magnanimous souls, referred to by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, who have taken birth on the fair soil of India from time to time and sacrificed themselves at the altar of humanity, without the least thought of the self. And it is an interesting phenomenon how these great world teachers outgrow and transcend the limitations of birth and tradition—gently, without a violent break, without injuring but enriching the original plant that nourishes them, so that it brings forth the most luscious fruits and becomes a force for the regeneration of mankind from generation to generation. This aspect of Swamiji is what makes him dear to us, to whatever region or strata of society we belong. This is the secret of his irresistible appeal to whosoever came in contact with him—either personally or through his writings and speeches. As Romain Rolland, his French biographer, points out, everybody recognized in him at sight the leader, the anointed of God, the man marked with the stamp of the power to command. It was in vain that he refused to accept such homage, judging himself severely and humiliating himself. A traveller who crossed his path in the Himalayas without knowing who he was, stopped in amazement, and cried: 'Siva!' It was as if his chosen God had imprinted His name upon his forehead.

The Swami, to be sure, was a Hindu to the



core by birth, upbringing, and temperament, and he addresses himself in his writings and speeches mostly to his countrymen and co-religionists. He was justly proud of his lineage and heritage and wanted every Hindu to feel the same way about his religion and ancestry. 'Here am I,' he says in one of his lectures, 'one of the least of the Hindu race, yet proud of my race, proud of my ancestors. I am proud to call myself a Hindu, I am proud that I am a countryman of yours, you the descendants of the sages, you the descendants of the most glorious *ṛsis* the world ever saw. Therefore, have faith in yourselves, be proud of your ancestors, instead of being ashamed of them.' While travelling in Kashmir with his Western disciples, he once came across an old Mohammedan lady, whom he asked in a mild voice: 'What religion is yours, Mother?' And she replied with pride and triumph: 'Praise the Lord! By the mercy of God, I am a Mussulman.' And then he asked a Hindu: 'What is your religion?' The latter plainly replied: 'I am a Hindu.' Referring to this with a degree of wounded pride, the Swami says: 'To preach the doctrine of *śraddhā* or genuine faith is the mission of my life. Let me repeat to you that this faith is one of the potent factors of humanity, and of all religions.' And it was this same wounded pride that made him say on another occasion: 'Then and then alone you are a Hindu when the very name sends through you a galvanic shock of strength. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when every man who bears the name, from any country, speaking our language or any other language, becomes at once the nearest and the dearest to you. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when the distress of anyone bearing that name comes to your heart and makes you feel as if your own son were in distress. . . . You may see thousands of defects in your countrymen, but mark their Hindu blood. They are the first Gods you will have to worship, even if they do everything to hurt you.'

This was not said in a chauvinistic spirit, nor was it inspired by fanaticism of any sort. For he says in the letter quoted at the beginning: 'Know also that this (America) is a grand field for my ideas, and that I do not care whether they are Hindus or Mohammedans or Christians, but those that love the Lord will always command my service.' The Swami had been nourished and nurtured by the Hindu tradition and culture, first on the lap of his mother and later on at the feet of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. And he remained a Hindu, pure and true, till he drew his last breath. His first contacts were with the Indian masses and the educated classes, the princes and the university young men. The former were crushed by ignorance, poverty, and superstition, and exploited by the rich and the educated classes, while the latter had lost faith in themselves and in their culture and religion. The orthodox priestly class, with whom also he came in contact, while no doubt they preserved the ancient religion and culture from utter destruction in an outward crust of local customs, usages, ritualistic practices, and a strict literal adherence to the scriptures, had lost all capacity to distinguish the flesh from the kernel and made a mockery of religion and spirituality. This was the India that the Swami met with during his travels as a wandering monk for nearly four years. On the other hand, there was before him the supremely exemplary life of his Master, who, according to him, had in fifty-one years lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life, and so had raised himself to be an object-lesson for future generations. The contrast was terrible and brought tears to his eyes.

Naturally, the first concern of his was his own religion and his own people, whom he could advise as well as admonish and who were the most likely to hear and listen to his words. So he says in his Madras address: 'This national ship, my countrymen, my friends, my children—this national ship has

been ferrying millions and millions of souls across the waters of life. For scores of shining centuries it has been plying across this water, and through its agency, millions of souls have been taken to the other shore, to blessedness. But, today, perhaps through your own fault, this boat has become a little damaged, has sprung a leak; and would you therefore curse it? Is it fair that you stand up and pronounce malediction upon it, one that has done more work than any other thing in the world? If there are holes in this national ship, this society of ours, we are its children. Let us go and stop the holes. Let us gladly do it with our hearts' blood; and if we cannot, then let us die. We will make a plug of our brains, and put them into the ship, but condemn it never. Say not one harsh word against this society. I love it for its past greatness. I love you all because you are the children of gods, and because you are the children of the glorious forefathers. How, then, can I curse you? Never. All blessings be upon you! I have come to you, my children, to tell you all my plans. If you hear them I am ready to work with you. But if you will not listen to them, and even kick me out of India, I will come back and tell you that we are all sinking.' And he gave much of his time and energy to the service and uplift of his own people. But it was not the exclusive good of India that he sought. His first and foremost duty was, however, the removal of misery at home before he extended his helping hand to his neighbours. When he did extend his hand, it was quite unreserved, and he gave freely out of his bounteous nature. In fact, the best part of his life and energy was spent outside his motherland.

Though primarily it was to help his people at home that he went to America, once he was there he realized that he belonged as much to India as to the world and that no country had any special claim on him. 'Doubtless I do love India', he wrote from the West to one of his disciples in India, 'but every day my sight grows clearer. What is India or England

or America to us? We are the servants of that Lord who by the ignorant is called Man.' His message was as much to the West as to the East, rather more to the West than to the East. Misery was there, here, and elsewhere, even as in India. 'The West is groaning under the tyranny of Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the priests.' That was all the difference. Here it was poverty and superstition that were eating into the vitals of society; there in the West it was 'wealth and power in the hands of a few men who do not work, but manipulate the work of millions of human beings'. Here the earth was soaked with the widows' tears; there the air was rent with the sighs of the unmarried. There was not much to choose. Suffering was the same everywhere, only it differed in kind and intensity. He could not make distinctions between persons and countries in the matter of alleviating the suffering. So his sympathy and compassion went out in full measure to the people of the West; and he gave himself up wholeheartedly to the service of the country he visited, showering the light of spirituality wherever he went, on whosoever was ready to receive it, and even materially helping those in need with the money he had collected for India, though he never forgot the call of his country and religion.

He could not have forgotten the call of the country, for India symbolized for him not a mere geographical entity bounded by the seas and the Himalayas, but all that was noble, great, and worth preserving for the good of humanity—ethics, sweetness, gentleness, love, philosophy, and spirituality. Here, again, it was not from a narrow patriotic spirit of the politician that he regarded India in this light. For he knew very well, as much as anybody else, that 'there are not any good qualities which are the privileged monopoly of one nation only'. Yet before him was the fact of history. Empires after empires had risen in other parts of the globe, lived for a short while in unrivalled supremacy and

glory, and vanished from off the face of the earth with no more tale to tell than the ruins of devastated buildings and palaces. While here was India today, living and resplendent, in spite of the vicissitudes of fortune, in spite of years of foreign domination, and in spite of the vandalism of the conquering races. 'And if Manu came back today, he would not be bewildered, and would not find himself in a foreign land. The same laws are here, laws adjusted and thought out through thousands and thousands of years; customs, the outcome of the acumen of ages and the experience of centuries, that seem to be eternal; and as the days go by, as blow after blow of misfortune has been delivered upon them, such blows seem to have served one purpose only, that of making them stronger and more constant.'

What was the secret of this vitality, which had withstood the shocks of centuries and retained the power of rejuvenation? The Swami, with his keen insight, had discovered that it lay in her religion and spirituality, on the bed-rock of which she had founded her social and political institutions and the life of the individual. While system after system rose on her soil, while kingdom after kingdom toppled down, while civilizations flourished and decayed, while foreigners swept over the land and deprived her of her wealth, the undercurrent of spirituality continued to flow undisturbed, and that is the reason she could produce a host of spiritual giants even in the worst period of her national life, when all around there was gloom and darkness. If India had to retain this vitality, she must cling on to her religion and spirituality—that is the unalterable verdict of history. His last words before his final departure from this world were: 'India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict, she will die.' And he had said the same thing years before: 'Religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes, India will die.'

in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of every one of her children. I do not mean to say that other things are not necessary, I do not mean to say that political or social improvements are not necessary, but what I mean is this, and I want you to bear it in mind, that they are secondary here, and religion is primary.'

What he said regarding India applied equally well to other nations. His message was the same to them also. The other nations, if they will, may build up their culture and civilization on the strength of their power, pelf, and military might. But they should also remember that they cannot carry on that way for long. If they want to remain immortal, they must shift their ground and make spirituality the basis of their national existence, whether they will it or not. 'Everything goes to show', the Swami said, 'that socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on the boards. The people will certainly want satisfaction of their material needs—less work, no oppression, no war, more food. What guarantee have we that this, or any other civilization, will last unless it is based on religion, on the goodness of man? Depend on it, religion goes to the root of the matter. If it is right, all is right.' This life of the world, the life of ease, comfort, and sensual enjoyment, cannot be the be-all and end-all of existence, however necessary they may be at a particular stage of development of the individual or the nation. It would be the height of folly and ignorance to build up states and societies on such shaky foundations, as has been proved by the recent developments in history. The test of an advanced civilization is not the increase of wealth and material comforts that the nation can provide to its citizens, but the number of spiritual men that the country can produce. 'That society is the greatest where the highest truths become practical. ... If society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so;

and the sooner the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to preach the Truth! The world requires a few hundred bold men and women. Practise that boldness which dares know the Truth, which dares show the Truth in life, which does not quake before death, nay, welcomes death, makes a man know that he is the spirit.'

Swami Vivekananda's real life work was concerned with this ushering in of a new world order, where spirituality would have its fullest sway and every individual the fullest freedom and opportunity for the

expression of his divine nature. 'My ideal, indeed,' he said, 'can be put into a few words, and that is to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. ... I should like to see hundreds coming to the Lord.'

The observance of the Centenary would have fulfilled its purpose, and we would have paid the best homage to the memory of the great Swami, if each one of us, in whatever station of life we are, strove to manifest in our lives, in however small a measure, the divinity within and thus did our mite to fulfil his wish.

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## MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TO MODERN INDIA

SRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

I have been asked to deliver a presidential address. I do not know what I, or for that matter anybody, should say on such an occasion. Perhaps the best presidential address would have been to recite to you the words of Swami Vivekananda himself, because whatever he said or whatever he wrote throbbed with life. If someone translates his words, puts them to you in a different language, they lose this vitality.

As we all know, Swami Vivekananda was a unique personality. India has produced great men since ancient times, and Swami Vivekananda was one of them. These great men, these great of all ages, do not grow great simply in air. They grow in their times; they live in their times; and say things that are relevant to their times. They interpret old traditions and old beliefs and apply them to the problems of the new age. It is from this fact that their precepts derive their unusual strength. If I talk to you about old things, you may like them, you may admire them, you may even believe in them, but they have little relevance today. If I talk

about the things of the day, as politicians—those who work in the field of politics—do, you will be interested, as everybody else. But these have little depth. They do not move you. They may be interesting but you are likely to forget them after some time. But in Swami Vivekananda we find a combination of both the ancient and the modern. The Swami knew of the ancient basis of our approach to things and of our achievements; and he explained them to the people of today in their own language. He was surcharged with the lore and learning of India, but he did not confine himself to India alone; it was because of this that his voice was listened to with attention in other lands as well and people there were impressed with what he said.

I see a large number of children here. Someone may ask me what I would say to these children. There are many things that they have to learn. Whom should they look up to for learning them? It is quite possible that I may not be able to place before them a name from the history of India as apt, as

appropriate, as that of Swami Vivekananda. Let us look up to him, let us read him, let us learn from him many things, but above all the one for which he was particularly known and which manifested itself as energy, as force, as indomitable strength. Every word of his drips with this energy, and he used this energy at such a terrific rate that he died young. He did not complete his fortieth year, and even prior to that he had shaken the whole of India and the people abroad, and created an impression on their minds.

Vivekananda saw that India had degenerated into a weak nation. Indians are intelligent; they are brainy, they become doctors, they become engineers. This is all very good. But they are weak. The foremost quality that a people require is strength. If they do not have it, all their intelligence, all their knowledge becomes ineffective. Therefore the lesson he imparted was of infusing strength in the people, in every individual, in every nook and corner of India. During his short life he went all over India and preached; and what he taught made a powerful impact.

After him came Mahatma Gandhi. He taught us a number of things and the greatest of his teachings was that we remain fearless—the same lesson that Swami Vivekananda taught. Do not be afraid; stand fearless; because, to the man who is fearless, other things are comparatively easier. If we are afraid, if we are terrified, our intelligence and other faculties tend to weaken. The man who is fearless does not require to hide what he does. For instance, today we hesitate to talk about certain matters, we hide certain very small things. It means that we are afraid of ourselves, we are afraid of others. So what Swamiji told us is very important. We should be fearless, we should be strong as individuals and as a country. I shall say only this to you that you, particularly our young men, should get the opportunity to get acquainted with the ideas of Swamiji. We could not be so fortunate as to hear his voice, but we can at least read what he taught and

what he wrote, and learn from it. You will find that even his words are packed with vigour. Whoever reads them feels their impact.

Today our country is facing a difficult situation. It is confronted with great problems. We have to resolve them. This cannot be done all at once. There is no magic key by just turning which the difficulties vanish. It is a great test for us and for our country. We will gradually fulfil this test. Under these circumstances it becomes all the more necessary that we fearlessly stand up to these problems. If we do so, the problems which overawe us will disappear. On this occasion, I shall say that we should receive some light in our hearts from Swamiji. It will make it easier for us to find the way, because, as you know, Swamiji had a combination of both the old and the new.

The greatest problem before India is to arrive at a compromise between the old and the new. We have had our roots in this land for centuries. How should I put it? You and I, all of us are born in this land; I mean this land of Bharat. It has a history running into a thousand years. We have thoughts of Bharat, her way of years. We cannot leave it. And why should we leave it? It is very precious. How can we leave it? We learn from it. From a person who always looks up to the ancient we can learn many good things. But if he does not take into account the world of today, he certainly is not living in the present age. We live in the present day world. Even if we want to completely live in the ancient times we cannot do so. It is a different world. If we want to live completely only in the modern age, detached from the roots of ours from which we are derived, without learning from them and without having some sort of understanding of them, we tend to become, in a way, superficial.

Without roots nothing lives. There is no tree without roots. But if we are only roots, that will not do; and if it is only the upper

portion of the tree without roots, that will also not do. Both of them are essential. We have to correlate and combine both of them. Old world and ancient ideas, I think, are essential to the new world. We should understand them, and march ahead. I feel this is a big problem for India to tackle. As we are, something or other new has always been taking place in politics or elsewhere.

New questions arise and we look for their answers. But I feel this is the main problem. If we want to cut off ourselves from the world we can do so. Why should I say that we cannot do it? But I shall tell you what is in my mind, what I think. It appears to me that we have to face the problem that is in the world; and in a way, as far as possible, as much as we can, serve others, our country, our public, or the world, whatever you may like to call it. Because, these days all of them are somewhat mixed up. But we can better understand the present and work in it when we know about our roots in the ancient India and profit from them. Swami Vivekananda had both these things. He knew the ancient Indian ideals and learning shaped by our great men, and knew the world of today as well. That is why his words have so much power, and accordingly Indians must be powerful. It is a great idea that Indians should be energetic, Indians should be forceful. Without energy man is ineffective. I do not mean the physical strength as that of a wrestler, though that is also good; all types of

strength are good, but the strength of heart, strength of mind, a sort of toughness, strength not to bow down before a wrong, is what we must acquire. It is then that we will be irresistible in our onward march.

There are numerous problems confronting our country, many undesirable things, many weaknesses. How are we to overcome them? It will not do only to tackle an enemy who comes from outside. We say the Chinese attack us. It is correct. We have to face the attack, and we shall face it. But what is more difficult is a determination to face one's own weakness. Among soldiers, those who are the weakest of heart talk loudest in order to hide their weakness. But it cannot be hidden by shouting. We have to strengthen ourselves first. We must proceed along the correct path and purify our minds. And for doing all these things, as I have told you, the only example that I can place before you, from which children can learn, is that of Swami Vivekananda. In him we find all these qualities. In a short span of life, how he moved India! Not for a few days only; in a way, the movement still continues even after him. I did not come here to tell you anything. I came to offer my homage to Swamiji and to express the hope that the people of today and tomorrow, our countrymen, particularly our children and young men, will keep before them the example and memory of Swami Vivekananda and learn from his writings and his life.

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## SWAMIJI'S PHILOSOPHY IN HIS LETTERS

DR. P. S. SASTRI

The letters of Swami Vivekananda are a great treasure-house of Vedānta, both theoretical and practical. In these letters, written mostly to his friends and acquaintances, we find a tone of intimacy. A certain frankness

characterizes them. A query, a doubt, or a faulty statement evokes an expression of the heart. It is not so much the dry intellect of a thinker that we have in these outpourings as the spontaneous outburst of a heart deeply

stirred. And the system of thought thus given expression to is a more practical and human one of incomparable value.

Throughout the letters, one is aware of Swamiji's profound sense of gratitude to his Master, a deep love of his motherland, a fervent attachment to his own earthly mother and to the Divine Mother, and a longing to concretize the teachings of the Master. A life of the spirit, dedicated to the organization of a society on the lines acceptable to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, is no less evident here. Above all, there is the magnificent artist at work handling the language with superb skill. Of these varied aspects, here it is proposed to catch a glimpse of Swamiji's faith; and the endeavour can only be initiated in the following pages.

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA, THE INDIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITION, AND THE MODERN AGE

Swamiji's thought is basically oriented to the new conditions prevailing in his day. The awareness of the spirit of the age never deserted him: 'The present age requires new modes of thought and new life' (V. 129).<sup>\*</sup> Even though the *Gītā* has rightly become the Bible of Hinduism, it needs to be reinterpreted in the light of the modern conditions. This reinterpretation, says Swamiji, must not ignore the 'very consistent and harmonious faith' based upon the Upaniṣads. It is not a mere theoretical faith, but a practicable one, since he found it realized in the life of his Master. 'His life alone made me understand what the Śāstras really meant, and the whole plan and scope of the old Śāstras' (VI. 313). It was a life that provided a valuable exposition of the tenets enunciated in the traditional Śāstras and Upaniṣads. That life offered the strongest proof in favour of the teachings that could not hereafter be rejected as mere moonshine. That is why we find Swamiji emphatically declaring: 'Without studying Rama-

krishna Paramahansa first, one can never understand the real import of the Vedas, the Vedānta, of the *Bhāgavata*, and the other Purāṇas. His life is a searchlight of infinite power thrown upon the whole mass of Indian religious thought. He was the living commentary to the Vedas and to their aim. He had lived in one life the whole cycle of the national religious existence in India' (VII. 473). The Master was 'the concentrated embodiment of knowledge, love, renunciation, catholicity, and the desire to serve mankind' (ibid.). In him the ideal had become the actual; theory and practice had gone hand in hand and set at rest all scepticism.

The earlier teachers of religion and philosophy had done good work. But they were one-sided. Sri Ramakrishna overcame this limitation by harmonizing *yoga*, devotion, knowledge, and work. 'This is the new religion demanded by the modern age. (VII. 484) This harmonious synthesis has a many-sided appeal, and there can be no one left without any satisfaction. The Swamiji's ideal, accordingly, is 'to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life' (VII. 489). That it can be made manifest is afforded by the life of the Master. To achieve this end, one must live and learn continuously, for 'man learns as he lives, and experience is the greatest teacher in the world' (VIII. 291).

Experience always draws us towards fellow-beings, if we pay proper attention to it. But in normal life, we do not follow the path of harmony, but one of disintegration. Hence the Swamiji's impassioned cry: 'When, when, O Lord, shall man be brother to man?' (V. 5). The brotherhood of man, the motherhood of the Deity, and the neighbourhood of pain have to be felt and realized. Since 'the present Hindu society is organized only for spiritual men, and hopelessly crushes out everybody else' (V. 48), a great duty falls upon us to elevate the masses. The masses may be uncivilized or sinful. But we have to remember that 'it is for the sinful that the

<sup>\*</sup> The references in the brackets are to the volume and page of the latest edition of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, published by Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14.

Lord manifests Himself specially, not so much for the virtuous' (VII. 369). We have to go out to meet them, to encourage them into the path of virtue.

All experience is a going out of one's own narrow ego. It lands us into a relational universe. Yet it opens the emotional life of the individual, drawing him nearer the fellow-beings. This process is a gradual flowering of the basic emotions, an expansion and an illumination of the mind and heart. Hence Swamiji writes: 'Expand your hearts and hopes, as wide as the world. Study Sanskrit, especially the three *bhāṣyas* on the Vedānta' (V. 62). The Dvaita is the first of the 'three stages of spiritual growth in man', and 'by religion is meant the Vedānta' (V. 82). A knowledge of the three important schools of Vedānta is necessary, because they represent the stage through which an individual develops into complete selfhood. This would necessarily imply a systematic study and assimilation of the Indian philosophic tradition and discipline. 'Explain according to our sages and not according to the so-called European scholars. What do they know?' (V. 98). The basic truths which Swamiji wants us to accept are outlined in a letter of 1895, and they are in conformity with the Indian philosophical and religious tradition.

Misery in the world is removable since it is the product of the formation of distinctions. These distinctions begetting misery are the result of *avidyā*, while selfless work purifies the mind. Work is that which develops our spirituality, whereas that which fosters materiality is no-work. The form of the work to be done is determined by one's aptitude, country, and age. With knowledge we have to attack atheism, and by means of devotion and divine love we have to unify the world. The various founders of the different sects have contributed something of value to human life, and this work continues towards higher and higher ideals. (VI. 328-9) As such, he could say, 'All religions are sacred to me' (VII. 458).

Truth is to be found in the teachings of these great persons, but the seeker after truth must not be satisfied with the person but the truth. 'The masses will always have the person; the higher ones, the principle. We want both. But principles are universal, not persons' (VI. 362, cf. VII. 473). Thus it is that the masses tend to be satisfied with the great founders and not with what they taught as the ultimate goal of man. Swamiji, therefore, directs us to give up the cult of personality. This is not intended to minimize the value or greatness of the founder of a cult or mission. It was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa that first revealed to the world the powerful idea of the truth, not *in*, but *of* every religion (VIII. 299). But this can only make us admire the saint, while we accept the truth intuited or discovered by him. This acceptance must be a conviction with man. An individual or a nation can develop only when there is the conviction of the powers of goodness, where there is an absence of jealousy and suspicion, and when one helps all who are trying to be and do good (VIII. 299).

All this is a forceful plea for revitalizing the best that is in one's own tradition. From the *Gītā* downwards all the profound utterances in all religions have been directed against the giving up of one's tradition. The loss of tradition entails the loss of individuality, of self. As such, one should become self-conscious of his own tradition. He must study it, absorb it, and make it truly his. The careful study of the past is thus a necessity forced upon us. Here we are aided by the insights of the great masters. Their methodology enables us to grasp the entire tradition as a single intelligible and self-consistent system. In this light does Swamiji observe: 'The Vedas can only be explained and the Śāstras reconciled by Sri Ramakrishna's theory of *avasthā* or stages—that we must not only tolerate others, but positively embrace them, and that truth is the basis of all religions' (V. 53). The great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man are the various religious denomina-



tions; and these must be broken and destroyed (VI. 303). 'This is possible because love is the only law of life and all love is expansion (VI. 322). The stages or the phases of love enable us to speak of the various steps in the full realization of truth. At the last stage, one achieves a broad, impersonal, or universal outlook. 'The real spiritual man is broad everywhere. His love forces him to be so' (V. 60). He has *samadṛṣṭi*, the same state of mind with regard to all. Yet he does not obey the commands of society, but 'stands alone and draws society up towards him' and, therefore, he would *live for ever* (V. 71). What he achieves is a state of desirelessness, which is not the annihilation of the self but 'the disappearance of the inferior modification in the form of will and the appearance of that superior state' (V. 142). In this state emerges the peace that passeth understanding, for 'understanding only gives us good or evil' (VIII. 505).

#### SWAMIJI AND THE ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

If the spiritual realization is similar to the process of love, and if Swamiji emphasizes love, it might appear that he is offering a Vedānta that is not very much like that of Śrī Śaṅkara. The traditionalist may find here a rejection of the great idealism of Śrī Śaṅkara. Swamiji, it appears from a study of his letters, was not at first an Advaitin in the full sense of the term. He was more drawn towards the gospel of the Buddha. In a letter of 7 August 1889, he reveals his eagerness to get some of his difficulties in Śaṅkara resolved. Though an Advaitin, he leans more towards the gospel of the Buddha, particularly on the handling of the concept of caste. Ten days later, he is putting a few more problems in connection with *mokṣa* and *nirvāṇa*. A real intellectual crisis was overtaking him at the time (VI 208-13). By February 1890, he advances to the position of placing Kapila and the Buddha at the same stage of spiritual development. Both were eager to emphasize the suffering of man. But in the 'more grand

and rational' system of Śaṅkara 'the world is and is not—*manifold yet one*'. Śaṅkara and the Buddha developed their systems out of the Upaniṣads; and yet Śaṅkara has revealed a grand and lofty idea. 'Only Śaṅkara had not the slightest bit of Buddha's wonderful heart, dry intellect merely!' Swamiji further declares: 'Lord Buddha is my *iṣṭa*—my God' (VI. 226-7). He accepts the Buddha, since doing good to others is the only best kind of work; and yet he is a Vedāntist, because his God is Saccidānanda, which is 'the majestic form of my own self' (VI. 312). Thus, in a way, the Swamiji's Vedānta proceeded out of a synthesis of Śaṅkara's metaphysics with the Buddha's ethics. This blend makes it a positive, an affirmative philosophy of life.

It is a synthesis where we cannot categorize the nature of the Absolute, as Śrī Śaṅkara said. Thus, 'Saccidānanda is only an approximate definition and *neti, neti* is the essential definition' (VIII. 362). We must get back to the Upaniṣadic thought and accept the negative approach as the only logical one. Every determination is a kind of negation. In this enquiry, the self will be revealed to us not as a knowing entity, but as consciousness. The soul is not in reality a knowing being. When it is said to bring about the effects, 'it must be a combination of the Absolute and *Māyā*'. Knowledge, too, is a compound, though it is higher than *vāsanā*. Thus, the Absolute as conditioned by the phenomenal principle brings into being knowing and other activities which are not ultimately real. As such 'the Absolute first becomes the mixture of knowledge, then, in the second degree, that of will'.

Both knowledge and will are forms that express and reveal or suggest consciousness, which alone is foundational and *svayam-siddha*. 'Even the *unconscious plant-will* is a manifestation of the consciousness, not of the plant, but of the cosmos' (ibid.). That is, consciousness does not belong to this or that particular exclusively, for it is the ab-

solite Reality. And any analysis that does not lead us to this ultimate consciousness is defective and false. Hence does Swamiji say that 'the Buddhist analysis of everything into will is imperfect', because will itself is a compound and is preceded by consciousness or knowledge, which is prior to it.

'Knowledge is action' (ibid.). This, again, is a going against the teaching of Śaṅkara, according to whom the ultimate knowledge is not a process but a state. But knowledge for Swamiji is not the ultimate Reality. It is empirical and therefore implies action. 'When the mind perceives, then, as the reaction, it wills. The will is in the mind' (VIII. 363). This leads him to be wary of Deussen's approach which leans to the Darwinian. In his great *Systems of Vedānta*, Deussen read the Kantian primacy of practical reason into Śaṅkara's system; and Swamiji was practically the first to detect the enormity of the error involved in this procedure. He would rather follow the Sāṅkhya cosmology as modified by Advaita Vedānta. In that context 'the evolution of the *vāsanā* or will must be preceded by the involution of the Mahat or cosmic consciousness' (ibid.). Consciousness being basic or foundational, its empirical forms will be willing, knowing, and the like. Then again 'there is no willing without knowing' (ibid.). They are interdependent; and all relativity is a feature of finitude, a symptom of Māyā. If will can be unconscious, conscious, and super-conscious, knowledge or consciousness, too, can be sub-conscious, conscious, and super-conscious (ibid.). But then these forms of consciousness have different values and functions.

It is, then, clear that Swamiji's attachment to the Buddha is not the result of any metaphysical conviction. It is the need felt by him out of his immense love of and for humanity. He was constantly seeking to get himself more and more convinced intellectually and emotionally of the truth of Śrī Śaṅkara's system. In a letter of February 1902, we find Swamiji arguing that 'Śiva-

worship, in various forms, antedated the Buddhists'. 'The Buddhists tried to get hold of the sacred places of the Śaivas but, failing in that, made new places in the precincts.' Gayāśīrṣa was anterior to the Buddha. 'Gaya was a place of ancestor worship already, and the footprint-worship the Buddhists copied from the Hindus' (V. 171-2). These observations are not the products of any animus, but the expression of a fine perception of the similarity between Buddhism and Vedānta. Though Swamiji called Śaṅkara a 'mere pundit with much narrowness of heart', he declares that 'the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* are the true scriptures' (VI. 394). Śaṅkara's Vedānta has to be transformed into altruistic service, which alone is religion (VI. 395). Hence 'it is Śaṅkara whom you should follow' (VI. 397); and in Śaṅkara's system there is real scope both for *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. The modern age calls for the former. 'It is the heart, the heart, that conquers, not the brain. Books and learning, *yoga* and meditation and illumination—all are but dust compared with love' (VI. 400-1). Love alone gives the supernatural powers, *bhakti*, illumination, and emancipation (VI. 401). Thus, in a way, the *jīvanmukta* following the path of *pravṛtti* and working for the sake of the world is more necessary in the modern world. 'Whether we call it Vedāntism or any *ism*, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought, and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. I believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity' (VI. 415). Love of man for the sake of man's self is the essence of Advaita. This love is a powerful weapon that can transform the nature of the universe entirely. 'Matter changed into spirit by the force of love. Nay, that is the gist of our Vedānta. There is but One, seen by the ignorant as matter, by the wise as God. And the history of civilization is the progressive reading of spirit into matter. The ignorant see the person in the non-person. The sage sees the non-person in

the person' (VIII. 429). Love is a going out of one's narrow self. It is expansive, inclusive, and thirsting for identity with the object of love. Such a principle can transform matter into itself. This transmutation goes on till matter ceases to be itself. This is a logical extension of the Advaitic teaching.

This process of transformation is a necessity because the world, as it is, is not fully good. A good world is no world at all, for goodness cannot be predicated of the spirit and of matter as well. Man's error lies in seeking to express or *manifest* 'the Infinite in finite matter, Intelligence through gross particles'; and the human soul 'finds out its error and tries to escape. This going back is the beginning of religion; and its method, destruction of self, that is, love' (VIII. 383). It is not a destruction that can breed regret or emptiness. In going back to consciousness we are virtually guided not by the past or the future, but by the present (VIII. 414). This is because 'God can only be known in and through man' (VIII. 298). We have to accept the human situation and love individual human beings in order to save our souls.

Love cannot accept negative or exclusive states. 'The great secret is: absence of jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brethren, and try always to conciliate' (V. 37). This is a state of universality, which is not mere tolerance but perfect acceptance (VI. 285). In all genuine religious or spiritual experience, first in order of necessity and actuality is acceptance. This may be followed by states like repentance. It is in this light that we have to consider Sri Ramakrishna's concept of the truth *in* all religions. It is not a negating religion; for all negation implies the loss of freedom.

#### TRUE RELIGION

Freedom and individuality have to be cherished not only in us, but in everyone else; for 'no one has the right to make others miserable by his foolish acts' (V. 45). Every religion is an endeavour to express the same

truth (VI. 332). True religion always insists on purity, perseverance, and energy (VI. 344), and it fosters individuality (VII. 477). Acceptance, thus, implies religious unity, unity of life and spirit. 'Your ancestors gave every liberty to the soul, and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage, and society did not grow' (V. 47). This liberty is from the bondage of iron called the family tie, and also from the golden chain of religious brotherhood (VI. 372). Freedom, thus, implies detachment, a spirit necessary for all creative and purposive work. Truth, virtue, purity, love, and energy are needed to accomplish our undertakings (VI. 330). Given these, we realize that all religions are only 'the varied expressions of *The Religion*, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best' (VI. 416). Thus we come back to Sri Ramakrishna's theory of *avasthās* or stages. It is a theory that asks everyone to cherish his heritage.

'The Hindu must not give up his religion, but must keep religion within its proper limits and give freedom to society to grow' (V. 22). The earlier reformers failed because they held that religion was responsible for every social ill. Swamiji's motto, on the other hand, was: 'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion' (V. 29). True religion has nothing to do with the emergence of social evils. Only when religion is formalized, or when something is erroneously introduced as religious, then our evils come into being. In such a context, one fails to preserve religion in its proper sphere, and then he becomes too theoretical or formal. A good deal can be talked of a purely theoretical system. 'It is good to talk glibly about the Vedānta, but how hard to carry out even its least precepts!' (V. 52). This is so because we are dominated by the false self or ego (cf. V. 84). But 'the secret of religion lies not in theories but in practice' (VI. 245). Theory and practice must go together, and religion demands not a talking of ideals and values but a struggle to realize them, an en-

deavour to live them. The idea must be translated into life. 'The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life' (V. 104, cf. VIII. 349). To achieve this we must have a positive, an affirmative, approach to life. 'I am, God is, everything is in me' (VI. 276). It is a kind of higher pantheism, a daring mystic approach that we need to realize the great values. Practical Advaita must look upon and behave to all mankind as one's own soul (VI. 415). 'There is but one basis of well-being, social, political or spiritual—to know that I and my brother are one' (VIII. 350). This is the dynamic religion that is needed (VIII. 407).

This new religion demands faith in ourselves and also faith in the absolute Spirit. To have faith is to have an emotional certainty, an imaginative intuition, and a true vision of man. Swamiji was therefore never tired of emphasizing that 'we are destined by the Lord to do great things in India'. 'Have faith. We will do.' (V. 13) 'With eternal faith in Him', we can 'set fire to the mountain of misery that has been heaped upon India for ages' (V. 17). We need 'fiery faith, and fiery sympathy'. We must be enthused; and this is possible when our faith is actualized every moment in our lives. 'He is with me, I am sure of that if of anything' (VIII. 297). The faith that God is with us, that God does not forget us even if we do, so transforms the individual as to make him behold the reality of the divine Spirit in himself. This perception makes the whole world kin to us and we can then canalize our energies to the betterment of man. 'I do not believe in a God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth. However sublime be the theories, however well-spun may be the philosophy, I do not call it religion so long as it is confined to books and dogmas' (V. 50).

Yet a religion needs a set of symbols, for it is 'philosophy concretized through rituals and symbols' (VIII. 356). These rituals and symbols are necessary only at a certain stage

of the spiritual evolution of man. Later when man finds his true nature as revealed in the Advaita, he has no need of them. 'The older I grow, the more I see behind the idea of the Hindus that *man* is the greatest of all beings' (V. 94). The greatness of man stems from his identity with the Absolute; and this concept does not admit any kind of formalism. 'Ceremonials and symbols etc. have no place in our religion, which is the doctrine of the Upaniṣads, pure and simple. Many people think the ceremonial etc. help them in realizing religion. I have no objection' (VIII. 523). Here Swamiji is recognizing the needs of the different stages. At the same time he is fervently pleading for a religion of the spirit, for a practical creed. This creed does not need the help of any fixed dogma either of a person or of a book. What it needs is the actual living in the light of the ideal. 'Religion is that which does not depend upon books or teachers or prophets or saviours, and that which does not make us dependent in this or in any other lives upon others. In this sense Advaitism of the Upaniṣads is the only religion' (ibid.). In other words, it is the religion of freedom. This freedom implies, and is implied by, the identity of souls. 'Your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy—the want of heart' (V. 14). This has made man seek his own betterment. One must feel and sympathize with the poor, the miserable, the sinful. Hence it is that 'the great teachings of the Hindu faith' should be blended with 'the wonderful sympathy' preached by Buddhism; for 'no religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism' (V. 15). It was the hypocrites who misapplied the doctrines of *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika* to tread on the necks of the poor and the low, by laying undue stress on formalism

and identifying religion with it. 'If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect' (VI 265). The universal aspect is the world, and the right worship here is to serve. The Upaniṣad has declared that one should look upon his mother as God, that one should look upon his father as God. But Swamiji declares: '*Daridrādevo bhava, mūrkhādevo bhava*—the poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted—let these be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion' (VI. 288). It is the ideal of *lokasaṅgraha*, service to humanity. The free soul must refuse to have its freedom, like Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, till every organism is free. 'All beings from Brahmā down to a clump of grass will attain to liberation-in-life in course of time, and our duty lies in helping all to reach that state. This help is called religion; the rest is irreligion' (VI. 313). The man of religion has thus a great responsibility, a profound duty. His work actually begins when he is fully religious, and then he is involved in mankind, not in perfection. 'Perfect life is a contradiction in terms. Therefore we must always expect to find things not up to our highest ideal' (VI. 372). Hence we should not seek to find the Infinite in the finite (VIII. 389) or perfection around us. We should strive with others towards perfection.

#### THE GOSPEL OF WORK AND SALVATION

Swamiji thus offers the gospel of work. Work is worship, as Carlyle said. Then religion gets actualized. It is not an exclusive activity that makes one religious or spiritual; for the body is given to man to make the spirit work in and for man. 'The dwelling-place of the *jīvatman*, this body, is a veritable means of work, and he who converts this into an infernal den is guilty, and he who neglects it is also to blame' (VII. 445). The body should not be made a vehicle of sinful work; nor should it be denied altruistic activity.

But man depends on the Spirit for his very being and the Spirit cannot be imprisoned under any form. Man must first be free to think spiritual thoughts. Man is independent, and the essence of all religious thoughts is a continuous proof of the statement that man is *not a machine* (VIII. 302).

Man is a spirit in process. In this process, the spirit appears to be in company, in the community of others. But, in itself, it is alone without a second; and as such we have to rely on ourselves. The intense faith in truth demands that we be our own friends first; for the Ātman alone is the friend of the Ātman (VIII. 336). This self-reliance is the key to faith, not any kind of grace or mercy. Advaita thus directs us to withdraw ourselves from the world and yet to struggle for the regeneration of mankind. 'This world will always be a mixture of good and evil, of happiness and misery; this wheel will ever go up and come down; dissolution and resolution is the inevitable law. Blessed are those who struggle to go beyond' (VIII. 341). The paradox, then, is to do good to mankind and yet to strive after the emancipation of the soul; for all emancipation is a movement away from the world. Still this process presupposes the necessity of faith in ourselves. One cannot be saved by another, for, as the Upaniṣad declares, the other is the source of fear, of dualism, of anarchy. Extending this principle to the state, one can then declare that 'every nation must save itself; so must every man; do not look to others for help' (V. 65). 'All friendship, all love, is only limitation' (V. 72). Individual and national regeneration alike demand great enterprise, boundless courage, tremendous energy, and perfect obedience (VI. 351). In the regenerated state we can have knowledge, culture, distributive spirit, and equality (cf. VI. 381). All these together constitute the state of harmony; and human activity must be directed to the realization of this end. This activity should not stop till the end is reached.

'Work for the *idea*, not the person' (V. 68). The sole aim of work is the purification of the soul, whence it becomes fit for knowledge (VI. 299). One has to work so long as he does not attain to illumination (VI. 312). Till then, he must work as though he is alone. 'Be alone! and the Lord is with you. Life is nothing! Death is a delusion! All this is not, God alone is! Fear not, my soul! Be alone!' (V. 72). What is lonely is the spirit. To be alone and to be intensely and spiritually aware of this loneliness is to have an experience of Godhead. In contrast to this, the multiplicity presented by society cannot be spiritual. Society, then, is a false God, and the world is a 'network of foolishness'. There can be no compromise with it. 'Worldliness and realization of God cannot go together' (V. 81). 'The way to God is the opposite to that of the world' (VII. 469, cf. VIII. 414).

When the Absolute is said to be one without a second, the Upaniṣad emphasizes this loneliness. 'He who is alone is happy. Do good to all, like everyone, but *do not love* anyone. It is a bondage, and bondage brings only misery. Live alone in your mind—that is happiness. To have nobody to care for and never minding who cares for one is the way to be free' (VIII. 414). Here, by love Swamiji means attachment, which is a form of bondage and which is successful in preventing the individual from looking into himself. You can love others for the sake of regenerating their souls. All other love is detrimental to the perfection of the Spirit. He would not give anyone the whole of his love in return and he would remain entirely impersonal (VIII. 429). This is the being of the individual as the concrete universal. But Swamiji does not take such a universal as a relational system, since he is a thorough Advaitin who seeks to transcend the network of relations. 'I am the Advaitist; our goal is *knowledge*—no feelings, no love, as all that belongs to matter and superstition and bondage. I am only existence and knowledge' (VIII. 525). Here

Swamiji is using the word knowledge in its traditional Advaitic sense of being synonymous with absolute Consciousness. It may be a little surprising to find Swamiji coming back to the fold of the pandit, as he called Śaṅkara. But the former teaching represented one stage of his development, and the present one is an advance. Gradually, in and through experience, Swamiji came to accept the full Advaita of Śaṅkara.

In this Advaita, the world does not remain as real or as unreal. It has an inexplicable state, a form of being designated traditionally as *anirvacanīya*. Life is not ultimately real since it is conditioned by time. 'Life is evanescent, a fleeting dream; youth and beauty fade. . . . Wealth goes, beauty vanishes, life flies, powers fly—but the Lord abideth for ever, love abideth for ever' (VI. 262). The awareness of this truth gives a meaning and a hope to all human life; and Swamiji was acutely conscious of the eternal presence of God in him and around him (VI. 305). He could then say emphatically: 'You are God, I am God, and man is God. It is this God manifested through humanity who is doing everything in this world' (VI. 319). This living faith is the source of all activity, of all inspiration. The more this faith becomes intense, the more does one feel the entire universe in himself. The Spirit is all-inclusive and yet non-relational. Everything loses its identity in the Spirit and becomes one with the Spirit. And we read: 'When God and good and everything else is in us, there is no evil. . . . Good and evil are not two things but one, the difference being only in manifestation—one of degree, not kind' (VI. 379). Hence it is that the heart and core of everything in this world is good, and 'underlying everything there is an infinite basis of goodness and love' (VIII. 293). We are troubled or disappointed so long as we do not reach this zone of calmness (*ibid.*). But the man who gives up all desires, he alone is happy (VIII. 382). To be in harmony with nature one must give up hope, desire, and

aim, since nature is a chaos (VIII. 467). Out of the chaos of darkness, death, and falsehood, the Advaitin seeks light, immortality, and truth.

#### THE SEEKER OF TRUTH AND THE TEACHER

The seeker of the spiritual truth needs a guide in the form of the teacher. But the real teacher is one who has himself realized that truth, for then alone can he initiate the pupil into the proper way. 'Each soul is a star, and all stars are set in that infinite azure, that eternal sky, the Lord. There is the root, the reality, the real individuality of each and all. Religion began with the search after some of these stars that had passed beyond our horizon, and ended in finding them all in God, and ourselves in the same place' (V. 69). 'These stars are the great masters and saints who led the way and whose work continues to inspire man. All these have found their being in the Absolute. This might make one to come to the view that the Absolute is an all-inclusive whole or system. But Swamiji refuses to accept such a relational unit. The Lord of all cannot be treated as a particular or determinate individual. 'He must be the sum total' (V. 132). The Ātman is not 'the individual ego but the all-pervading Lord, residing as the self and internal Ruler in all. He is perceivable by all as the sum total' (ibid.). 'Jīva and Īśvara are in essence the same' (ibid.). Here Swamiji makes a necessary distinction between *jīva* and Ātman, whence the conception of God as a totality. One serves the *jīva* with compassion, and the self with love. This does not mean that *jīva* and Īśvara are different. 'This notion of *jīva* as distinct from God is the cause of bondage. Our principle, therefore, should be love, and not compassion' (ibid.). This feeling of love is 'the feeling of Self in all' (ibid.). This feeling called Love is 'beyond reason and learning and talking' (VI. 367).

The spiritual seeker needs, above all, the cultivation of love. The necessity of love

implies the rejection of the love of necessity. 'Learning and wisdom are superfluities, the surface glitter merely, but it is the heart that is the seat of all power. It is not in the brain but in the heart that the Ātman, possessed of knowledge, power, and activity, has Its seat. ... The chief nerve-centre near the heart, called the sympathetic ganglia, is where the Ātman has Its citadel. ... It is only a few that understand the language of the brain, but everyone, from the Creator down to a clump of grass, understands the language that comes from the heart' (VI. 425). When reason is transmuted through love, there arises knowledge which enables us to experience, here and now, the Unity of Being. This does not, however, mean that we have to surrender ourselves to the world around us; for that way lies the road to the distortion of the Self. We are therefore required to grasp the truth that 'this world is our friend when we are its slaves and no more' (VIII. 366). Within the framework of this world, we know and we have to know that we cannot have the supreme apprehension or experience (*anubhūti*) of the Absolute. 'The only knowledge that is of any value is to know that all this is humbug. ... "Know the Ātman alone, and give up all other vain words." This is the only knowledge we gain from all this knocking about the universe. This is the only work, to call upon mankind to "Awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached". It is renunciation, *tyāga*, that is meant by religion, and nothing else' (VIII. 383-4). Religion is a renunciation, not a conversion, since the latter is an attachment that leads to bondage and sorrow.

#### THE MYSTIC AND MYSTICISM

'Mystics as a class are not very favourable to me', declares Swamiji (VIII. 335). Here Swamiji was not referring to the real mystics who communed with God, but to the self-styled mystics who were so only in name and in actuality dabbled in mystery-mongering and various kinds of psychic phenomena. For he

says elsewhere: 'Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy. I feel that I must bless everyone, everything, love and embrace everything, and I do see that evil is a delusion' (VI. 366); which shows that he himself was a mystic, but a mystic who worked for humanity and yet remained detached. But this mystic mood emerges from the disappearance of the threefold bondage of lust, gold, and fame (VIII. 345). In that mystic mood, the act of creation appears as a sport. 'He is my playful darling, I am His playfellow. There is neither rhyme nor reason in the universe! What reason binds Him? He, the playful one, is playing these tears and laughter over all parts of the play! ... It is all His play. They want explanations, but how can you explain Him? He is brainless, nor has He any reason. He is fooling us with little brains and reason' (VI. 367). The Absolute is beyond reason, understanding, and sense; and yet in relation to the world It appears as having a sport which has no ulterior purpose. Bādarāyaṇa has not written in vain the famous aphorism, '*Lokavat tu līkākaiva-tyam*'. When one understands the true nature of this sport, he can declare: 'I am the infinite blue sky; the clouds may gather over me, but I am the same infinite blue' (VI. 429). The awareness of this all-ness in and as one's self is the spring of all mysticism. Again: 'He is nearer to you, my dears, than even your father and mother. You are innocent and pure as flowers. Remain so, and He will reveal Himself unto you. Dear Austin, when you are playing, there is another playmate playing with you who loves you more than anybody else' (VII. 453). We have to take refuge in God, giving up our uncanny theories and becoming children (VIII. 316). But the moment we know that we are players, this toy world would vanish (VIII. 467).

Swamiji, like a *siddha*, could state boldly that the work he came to accomplish in this world was fully done. By 23 August 1896 he writes: 'Now I am sure my part of the

work is done, and I have no more interest in Vedānta or any philosophy in the world or the work itself. I am getting ready to depart to return no more to this hell, this world. ... These works, and doing good, etc. are just a little exercise to cleanse the mind. I had enough of it. This world will be world ever and always. What we are, so we see it. Who works? Whose work? There is no world. It is God Himself. In delusion we call it world' (VI. 371). Here we have the supreme heights of Advaita realized by one amongst us. Such an experience renders the truths of Advaita doubly convincing.

The major tenet of this philosophy is that the world as we have it is a blend of the contradictories, that it is a curious mixture of *satya* and *anṛta*. 'This mixture of life and death, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, is what is called Māyā—or the universal phenomenon' (VI. 380). In this world we cannot expect to have only good. Even pleasure is a form of pain. One has to give up these relative entities or ideals and strive to realize *truth*. Then he will discover that truth is ever present in him, and that 'the same truth is manifesting itself in our relative error and knowledge', in good and evil, in life and death (*ibid.*). All the phenomena are thus the reflections of the one existence, truth-bliss-unity. One who realizes this is the *jīvanmukta*, the state spoken of as the goal of Vedānta and of all philosophies (*ibid.*). In this goal, the relativistic activities of knowing, willing, and feeling are laid at rest. The most important one that binds us down to error is the will. At every step, man is surrendering his will or the fictitious self. It is this surrender or subjection that has given rise to our social institutions. The easiest and smoothest way towards this self-surrender is the cultivation of love. At the philosophical level this takes the form of the surrender of desires (VI. 378-9). This leads to 'a vision and a search after the Unity of Being' (VIII. 347). This Unity of Being is *Sat* and it is also spoken of as *anubhūti* in



Advaitic literature. Since only Advaita has propounded this great truth, Swamiji observes: 'Only the Advaita philosophy can save mankind. . . ., giving tone and strength to the very nature of man, for it implies and emphasizes perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will' (VIII. 335). As man seems to strive for the Unity of Being and for the realization of Unity Eternal, he is proceeding knowingly or unknowingly to the goal set by the Advaita Vedānta (VIII. 347). This is the goal of living the life, of *anubhūti* or realization (VIII. 348); and 'ours is the gospel of oneness of all beings' (VIII. 375).

The individual conquers life when he realizes Unity Eternal which is an identity; and when he renounces or is detached, he conquers death. 'Death I have conquered long ago when I gave up life' (VIII. 446-7). Thus the great soul transcends life and death which imply each other. This transcendence is a spiritual inwardness, since its springs are in the Self; and we have to learn and understand these. 'He whose joy is only in himself, whose desires are only in himself, he has *learned* his lessons' (VIII. 504). Then the process of education for which man is born becomes complete.

Swamiji does hold to the doctrine of rebirth even if he does not discuss it in the letters. There are just a few references to this doctrine. He writes: 'Life is a series of fights and disillusionments. . . . The secret of life is not enjoyment, but education through experience. But, alas, we are called off the moment we begin really to learn (cf. VIII. 467). That seems to be a potent argument for a future existence' (V. 149). 'The single purpose in the whole of life is education (VIII. 431); and one can then view the series of rebirths as the many steps in the education or culture of the Spirit.

A closely allied doctrine is that of the *avatāra*. When we speak of one as an Incarnation, we only mean that he has attained Brahmanhood, that he is a *jīvanmukta* (VI.

312). Such an individual realizes the reality of thought, the unity or even identity of thought and action, and the oneness of thought and existence; and this realization is a continuous affirmation, not negation. 'In this universe where nothing is lost, where we live in the midst of death in life, every thought that is thought, in public or in private, in crowded thoroughfares or in the deep recesses of primeval forests, lives. They are continuously trying to become self-embodied, and until they have embodied themselves, they will struggle for expression, and any amount of repression cannot kill them' (VI. 355-6). It is thought that compels us to give up our dreams of dualism, relativism, and suppression. These dreams have in them the power of transforming themselves into the higher and better states. It is not a self-transcendence alone but a kind of self-transformation that is inherent in the nature of thought. This implies that 'perfection is already in man if he will see it' (VI. 356). Everything exists and exists in perfection; and one who realizes it in himself is a *jīvanmukta*, an *avatāra*. He is a mystic.

#### VIEWS ON COSMOLOGY, THE ABSOLUTE, ĪSVARA, AND MĀYĀ

Swamiji intended to write a book where he would first discuss cosmology, 'showing the harmony between Vedāntic theories and modern science' (V. 102). The evolution of *prāṇa* and *ākāśa* from *mahat* or Īśvara and that of the latter from Brahman is similar to the emergence of force and matter from the primal creative energy and that of the latter from the Absolute. The various spheres or layers of the universe are the varied products of *prāṇa* and *ākāśa*. At the lowest state, *prāṇa* is the physical force, and *ākāśa* the sensible matter. Above this solar sphere is the lunar sphere surrounding it; and here *prāṇa* appears as psychic forces and *ākāśa* as the *tanmātras*. Next we have the electric sphere in which *prāṇa* and *ākāśa* are inseparable. This is similar to electricity, which is

neither mere force nor mere matter. Higher still is the *brahmaloka* wherein we find *prāna* and *ākāśa* merged in the primal energy. Here the soul contemplates the entire universe as the sum total of *mahat* or mind. 'This appears as a Puruṣa, an abstract universal soul, yet not the Absolute, for still there is multiplicity. From this, the *jīva* finds at last that Unity which is the end.' These visions rise in succession before the soul which neither goes nor comes (V. 102-3). This is a scientific, rational explanation of the cosmology, taking the best from the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga systems of thought and blending it with the Advaitic teachings.

The universe emerges with the bondage of the soul and it is dissolved with its liberation, as far as this soul is concerned. This universe is a collection of names and forms; and this collection disappears as a collection to the liberated soul. It is like the waves in the ocean. Even if the waves disappear, the water that has given rise to them remains. One set of waves might disappear, but there are other sets of such waves; and so do the unliberated continue to have the world of names and forms. 'This name and form is called *Māyā*, and the water is Brahman. The wave was nothing but water all the time, yet as a *wave* it had the name and form' (V. 103). Name and form are inseparable from the wave, though the water is separate from name and form. Because they are inseparable, 'they can never be said to *exist*'; and 'yet they are not *zero*'. This is called *Māyā*, an inexplicable, but positive principle which alone can offer a satisfactory account of the phenomenal universe.

The Absolute as it appears in a determinate form is *Īśvara* or God. That which makes this appearance possible and probable is the principle of *Māyā*. This, however, does not mean that *Māyā* is a rival to the Absolute; for it does not exist to the Absolute. When we try to account for the *relation* of the world to the Absolute, we are forced to assume the principle of *Māyā*. God thus appears to us

as the first manifestation of finitude, and we worship Him as *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is the sum total of individuals; yet He Himself is an individual in the same way as the human body is a unit, of which each cell is an individual. *Samastī*, or the collective, is God. *Vyaṣṭī*, or the component, is the soul or *jīva*. The existence of *Īśvara*, therefore, depends on that of *jīva*, as the body on the cell, and *vice versa*. *Jīva* and *Īśvara* are co-existent beings. As long as the one exists, the other also must' (VIII. 384). *Īśvara* or God is a relational continuum, a concrete universal, a more coherent soul or *jīva*. But the *Ātman* is not a part, nor a relational whole. When the *Ātman* is apprehended as a determinate form, when it is viewed as conditioned or limited, it appears as the individual soul or as God. Thus both God and soul are not ultimately real. They are forms of finitude.

The ultimate Reality is the Absolute or Brahman which is the unconditioned, and which cannot be defined or categorized. 'Brahman is beyond both of these, and is not a state. It is the only unit not composed of many units. It is the principle which runs through all, from a cell to God, and without which none can exist. . . . Each one is the whole of that principle' (ibid.). This Absolute is the only existence, the only reality, and it gives a meaning, a significance, to everything. It is truly independent. Swamiji clung fast to these degrees of truth and reality in the true Advaitic tradition. The doctrine of the degrees of truth gives a significance to the nature of the world as well.

The nature of the world has baffled many thinkers in all ages and climes. That the world is not ultimately real is a truism. We read: 'The more the shades around deepen, the more the ends approach and the more one understands the true meaning of life, that it is a dream.' Everyone fails to grasp it because he seeks 'to get meaning out of the meaningless'. The wise man, therefore, 'gives up both pleasure and pain, and becomes a witness of this panorama without attaching

himself to anything.' He is saved from the trinity of bondage—desire, ignorance, and inequality; and he has the trinity of liberation—denial of the will to live, knowledge, and samesightedness (VIII. 344). Here is the quintessence of the traditional wisdom and experience of the great seers and saints. The world has to be passed by as an inevitable dream, as something that is necessary in the moulding of the Spirit. It is a veritable vale of soul-making, and once the soul is moulded, it gets back into its proper state. 'I am being lifted up above the pestilential miasma of this world's joys and sorrows; they are losing their meaning. It is a land of dreams' (VIII. 503). When we dream we do not consider the experience to be real or unreal, for the question does not arise then. In the dream there can be neither true space nor true time; and causality does not operate there. The dream only leaves behind a perplexity of the mind. The wise man probes deeper into this perplexity and arrives at the intuitions of Advaita. The other falls a prey to the lure of the dream. Swamiji's life is a constant reminder to man to overcome the fascinations and attractions of dreams.

The world as a dream, as a fact of normal experience, as a vale of soul-moulding, and as inharmonious, is the clearest expression of Māyā. In a letter of 20 January 1895, Swamiji speaks of the 'inharmonious Māyā'. The various turning-points and sinkings of

life reveal more of the depth of the sea along with its precious treasures. The observant soul is eager to know and feel this depth, not the change or becoming which is 'pure delusion'. 'The soul never comes nor goes. Where is the place to which it shall go, when all space is *in the soul*? When shall be the time for entering and departing, when all time is *in the soul*?' (V. 68) Space, time, and all other categories are within the soul or consciousness which is not subject to the categories. That which makes everything possible is self-revealing, self-luminous, and foundational. It is beyond all process, all becoming and change. It is *the Being*. The movement of the earth makes us have the illusion of the sun's movement. 'This earth is compared to Prakṛti, Māyā, or Nature, which 'is moving, changing, unfolding veil after veil, turning over leaf after leaf of this grand book—while the witnessing soul drinks in knowledge unmoved, unchanged (ibid.). The movement of the soul is as much an illusion as the illusory movement of the moon when the cloud moves across it. The Upaniṣads have therefore spoken of the soul as *asaṅga*, *avikāri*, *nirguṇa*, *kevala*. It is the witnessing consciousness, and it witnesses itself. When space and time cannot apply to it, when causality cannot be predicated of it, it has to be eternal, infinite, and present. All the souls are here and now; and since the ideas of space and time occur in the soul, everything is present in us.

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Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.

A good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.

MILTON

# UNITY IN THE UNIVERSAL SPIRIT

SRI S. K. ROY

It gives me very great pleasure to be present here, as I have always been interested in the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission. I deem it the highest possible honour to speak on such a topic, in such distinguished company. I come to my task with a feeling of total inadequacy, and an awareness of some incongruity provided by an ex-soldier, now civil servant and diplomat, suddenly turned evangelist. The views are entirely personal, but they flow from some personal convictions. Though not old enough to remember the revolutionary impact of Swami Vivekananda's ideas in India, I am one of the inheritors of this revolution. I would like to share with you the impact on the minds of some of my generation of the ideas of the men who made this revolution. It may be of interest, because it is a generation at the cross-roads between reason and contemplation. It may also help you understand some aspects of India in the second half of the twentieth century.

Shakespeare has so brilliantly satirized the seven ages of man, taking him 'mewling and puking' from his mother's arms on the four legs of a crawling child, to the two with which he struts through life, and back again to three legs when age walks with the support of a stick. In Vedic philosophy, man is seen as in process of continuous growth with certain roles to play in life, passing from the celibate scholar, *brahmacārin*, to become a householder leading a life of action, and ending with contemplation in preparation for re-assimilation with the Infinite. If, therefore, I talk somewhat intensely on matters which seemingly are outside my immediate activity, I am at least part of this ancient tradition. Perhaps I speak in a contemplative vein, long before I am worthy of so doing. But I would like to remind you of St. Augustine, who, only a

few short centuries ago, while praying most earnestly for, among other things, chastity, is said to have ended with the words: 'Grant me the boon of chastity—but not, O Lord, not yet.'

Let me anticipate, hopefully, a later stage in my life, because there is a certain unity of purpose in our presence here. It is most gracious of the Secretary General of the United Nations to find time in his busy schedule to speak on Swami Vivekananda, and join in the celebration of his birth centenary. This goes beyond the high intellectual and deep spiritual character of the individual whose centenary we are observing. This is as he himself would have wanted it. It reflects Swami Vivekananda's special dedication to that school of Vedāntic philosophy with which he is most closely associated, viz Advaita. Advaita asserts the oneness of God, soul, and the universe, and, therefore, has special meaning in an era when the unity of the peoples of the world is ever increasingly apparent, and when scientists are finding themselves lost in matter alone, only to complete the circle by arriving at a new science-based awareness of the soul, and some dimly perceived links between the soul, matter, and the existence of God. Thousands of years ago, Indian philosophers had arrived at such a conclusion on a purely philosophic basis, much as their philosophic speculation led up to the origin of both zero and the concept of mathematical infinity.

Swami Vivekananda in teaching, or some might say preaching, on the ultimate unity of all things was part of a tradition which is itself part of the Indian heritage from time immemorial. Its origins are lost in the distance of time, but there is evidence that it goes back to the Indus valley civilization, some 3,000 years before the Christian era.

We are also able to conclude that the expression of this essential unity in the Vedic hymns gradually grew from contemplation and speculation of generations of hermit sages and saints, who in their cave dwellings pondered on the mysteries of the universe in their search for Truth.

Wave after wave of foreign invaders passed into India, inflicted wounds on its body politic, and were absorbed into the national life. Yet, this spiritual speculation never ceased. The tradition continued to flourish and its very universality contributed, perhaps even created the synthesis of all the differing races and faiths. There is no precise point in time where Hinduism emerged. It is in its true sense a constantly changing individual pursuit of unity with the Infinite. It is even linked with the speculations of Islamic seers and sages in India. Kabīr and Rahīm sang on the same notes of universalism. The great Moghul Emperor Akbar gave it briefly practical meaning in his *Din-ilahi*. The so nearly achieved fusion in India is best reflected in Sikhism, and this in its way is intimately connected with certain concepts of Kabīr. Guru Nānak preached the unity of Hinduism and Islam, and it was the fifth Guru Arjun who, while laying the foundations for Sikhism, still retained this concept, beautifully expressed in the first three lines of one of his poems :

I do not keep the Hindu fast, not the  
Muslim Ramadan  
I serve him alone who is my refuge  
I serve the one Master, who is also Allah.

At different times in our history, great teachers have emerged who have achieved such a degree of personal unity with the Infinite that the impact of their lives continues through the religions that have developed from their teachings. From this source came Buddhism, the first of the universal religions. Therefore, you can readily understand that, aware as I am in real humility of my own inadequacy, the philosophy of Advaita, the non-duality of all entities, has a special meaning

for me in the context of this tradition of great men of India, more particularly of those who have so deeply influenced us during the last hundred years. Now we are celebrating Swami Vivekananda's birth centenary; last year it was Tagore's, and in a few years it will be Gandhiji's and Aurobindo's. They all had a very special veneration for the individual, and his right to believe in whatever held true for him. However, all of them believed that ultimately the aim of the individual was to dissolve his individuality, to shatter the shackles of his ego, to rise beyond parochial, social, and national bonds so that the human spirit might soar in a firmament of perfect freedom, with no frontiers between the individual and the universal.

Swami Vivekananda's specially significant contribution came from many factors, one of which was that he reached full stature very early in life and died while only thirty-nine years old. In a sense, he was ahead of the others in time. He believed that the East and the West must work in unison. He never encouraged the idea of India slavishly submitting to the ways of the West; nor would the India, dear to his heart, live isolated in an ivory tower of illusory glory. This he said clearly in his article 'Modern India' in 1899: 'On one side is modern Western science, dazzling the eyes with the brilliancy of myriad suns . . . ; on the other are the hopeful and strengthening traditions of her (India's) ancient forefathers, in the days when she was at the zenith of her glory. . . . On one side, rank materialism, plenitude of fortune, accumulation of gigantic power, and intense sense pursuits have, through foreign literature, caused a tremendous stir; on the other, through the confounding din of all these discordant sounds, she hears, in low yet unmistakable accents, the cries of her ancient gods, cutting her to the quick. . . . On one side is the independence of Western societies based on self-interest; on the other is the extreme self-sacrifice of the Aryan society. . . . Of the West, the goal is individual independ-

ence; the language, money-making education; the means, politics; of India, the goal is *mukti*; the language, the Veda; the means, renunciation. For a time, Modern India thinks, as it were, I am ruining this worldly life of mine in vain expectations of uncertain spiritual welfare hereafter ...; and again, lo! spellbound she listens—"Here, in this world of death and change, O Man, where is thy happiness?"

It was the endeavour of Swami Vivekananda to resolve this conflict in the spirit of synthesis and tolerance, which forms the very basis of Indian thought, and which automatically flows from the Advaitic concept that all distinctions are illusory. The moment the veil of ignorance is uplifted truth reveals itself, all distinctions perish and the play of *Māyā* becomes manifest. From the example of the life of Sri Ramakrishna, his spiritual teacher, Vivekananda knew very well that Advaitism was not only a conceptual analysis of the nature of all things, but a practical philosophy of life. He was one of the foremost Indians who carried the banners of this philosophy across the frontiers of India. He has been described as one 'whose influence was to shake the world, and who was to lay the foundations of a new order of things'.

Unfortunately, the world still sees a new order as a change of imperial structure or a new power framework. Yet, in the true sense, Swami Vivekananda's contribution to human progress and understanding is inadequately assessed when one merely states that he introduced Eastern philosophy and religion to the West at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. For those who could understand, he laid bare the juvenile nonsense inflicted on the Western world by Kipling's concept of an eternal division between East and West, unless bridged by strong men in violent action. He showed that the unity is of the spirit and of the mind, and in so doing, laid the foundation for the increasing realization that the common heritage of

man is deeply spiritual, and far deeper than the evolutionary aspect.

In speaking of him, it is impossible not to say something about the others whom I have mentioned, who in their own ways represented aspects of the same tradition of universalism, and who are Swami Vivekananda's contemporaries in the spiritual renaissance of India during this period. This same universalism pervaded the thinking of Tagore, who sought to build on the foundations of our ancient lore a new edifice, which would combine the wisdom, the learning, the spiritual yearning, and the material achievements of mankind. He felt the urgent need for such a structure before the flames of power and pride overwhelmed and destroyed the last vestiges of civilization. He lived believing that the West had something valuable to contribute to the East, and something to take away, for the greater fulfilment of both. He died during the last War, tragically saddened by the spectacle he saw of a great civilization laying itself in ruins. As he died, he still proclaimed his faith in man, and his belief that by an exchange of ideas and values between the East and the West, man would find his true heritage.

He never learnt of the full horror of the atomic era in which we live, but his prophetic commentary on the dangers of narrow-minded nationalism are more vividly true today than ever before. Of this nationalism, he said: 'If this persists indefinitely and armaments go on exaggerating themselves to unimaginable absurdities, and machines and storehouses envelop this fair earth with their dirt and smoke and ugliness, then it will end in a conflagration of suicide.'

For his own country, in the international field, he set standards which flow from the very source of our tradition, but which present both our difficulty and the challenge we face: 'India has never had a real sense of nationalism. Even though from childhood I have been taught idolatry of the nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity,

I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.'

In the same spirit, but with his own unique and timeless greatness, Gandhiji reminded us of our past, and showed us how to be more worthy of it in the present. He set us tasks beyond our yet undeveloped capacity, but was still able to lead us to freedom in a spirit, which sought justice and truth by means inextricably linked with the ends themselves. Bitterness was set aside, and our struggle for freedom culminated in a historic non-violent end of an empire, which may prove to be one of the stepping-stones of human progress.

He believed and taught that everything flowed from the individual and that freedom is nothing if it is not the freedom of one's inner being. Gandhiji believed in this firmly and said: 'Government over self is the truest Swaraj; it is synonymous with *mokṣa* or salvation. The first step to Swaraj lies in the individual. The great truth, "As with the individual so with the universe", is applicable here as elsewhere.'

In common with Swami Vivekananda and Tagore, Gandhiji wanted India to become free not just to regulate national life through national representatives but to have the opportunity to contribute towards the common happiness of mankind. Projecting ourselves beyond the present, we should look to the day man will realize his full potential and be worthy of Gandhiji's vision of his country's position in a better world. 'I would like to see India free and strong so that she may offer herself as a willing and pure sacrifice for the betterment of the world. The individual, being pure, sacrifices himself for the family, the latter for the village, the village for the district, the district for the nation, the nation for all.'

How incompletely we have been able to follow him is shown by our inability to live

up to the standards he set, and by the manner of his passing. He symbolized all that was gentle and peaceful, and in his life permitted love for all as his only emotion. That he should die violently, and by the hand of one of his co-religionists, who killed him in the name of his religion, shows the gulf between precept and practice. It shames us all, particularly when one considers how Gandhiji's own religious dedication gave him a true perspective of the individual's personal pursuit of truth. His words must surely find an echo wherever they are heard, and whatever the religious beliefs of the listener: 'After long study and experience I have come to these conclusions: that (1) all religions are true, (2) all religions have some error in them, (3) all religions are almost as dear to me as my own Hinduism. My veneration for other faiths is the same as for my own faith. Consequently, the thought of conversion is impossible. . . . Our prayer for others ought never to be: "God! give them the light thou hast given to me!" But: "Give them all the light and truth they need for their highest development!"'

The whole spirit of understanding, of tolerant adjustment and of seeking the best in man, so obviously provide the central theme of all this, that one can assert that it represents the true spirit of India as reflected by her great thinkers. Therefore the thinking of Swami Vivekananda necessarily has special meaning for us in India today—an India where we are striving, against immense difficulties, to create a unity of purpose for ourselves, and for the peoples of the world with whom we live, which goes beyond religious beliefs, and rests only on the cardinal admonition to love your neighbour whatever he believes, which is the common denominator of all religions, however inadequately it is practised. What Swami Vivekananda said in a letter he wrote in 1898 could apply to any religion, seeing itself in a true relationship with other religions, and may seem particularly appropriate when the need for unity in Christianity

has led up to the recent meetings of the Ecumenical Council in Rome. 'Whether we call it Vedāntism or any ism,' he wrote, 'the truth is that Advaitism is the last word on religion and thought, and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. We believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. Practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, is yet to be developed among the Hindus universally. On the other hand, our experience is that if ever the followers of any religion approach to this equality in an appreciable degree in the plane of practical workaday life, it is those of Islam and Islam alone. 'For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedānta brain and Islam body—is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedānta brain and Islam body.'

There was no spirit of chauvinism behind this vision of the future of India. The words were spoken over sixty years ago when India was still in subjugation, and her people a subject people. The great Swami saw the dangers, material and physical, which faced her, and translated this into both a warning and a vision of the New India. I would like to believe that he would have used different words today in speaking about India, again a

land of free peoples, taking her place in the world, and rediscovering her ancient ideals. He would have sought a much wider synthesis against the broader canvas of a world ever growing smaller.

Our attempts to translate our own heritage into everyday international life have aroused much irritation both at home and abroad. We are chastized for our falterings and criticized for our aspirations. Yet, there are many who have found hope in our efforts to heal breaches, and soften hard words, recognizing that when falter it is from human frailty, and how we occasionally are almost worthy of our ancient traditions, and of the examples of our great men. It is therefore vital for us to remember the teachings of Swami Vivekananda at this time, and it is particularly appropriate that we should do it in the company of the distinguished Secretary General of the United Nations, the World Organization on which rest so many of the hopes of mankind. Placing our faith in man we have to seek the common denominators in all religions. This, above all, was at the core of Swami Vivekananda's message, and it is from this that we may be able to respond to Tagore's prophetic exhortation: 'The call has come to every individual in the present age to prepare himself and his surroundings for this dawn of a new era when man shall discover his soul in the spiritual unity of all human beings.'

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THE UNIVERSAL MAN

SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

Swami Vivekananda is a saint, but of rather unusual type. Like all great saints, he directly communed with God. But unlike many of them, he did not retire from the world to enjoy the bliss of his spiritual experiences in silent prayer and meditation, or give spiritual instruction to a few chosen

followers. He awakened the spirituality of many earnest seekers in India and abroad, and at the same time dedicated his whole life to the task of uplifting the material condition of the common man, especially of India. The natural tendency of Vivekananda's mind was to soar above the strife and turmoil of the



world and to forget himself in contemplation of the Godhead, but another part of him bled at the sight of human suffering. It seems that his mind seldom found a point of rest in its oscillation between meditation of God and service to man. But he chose, in obedience to a higher call, service to man as his mission on earth, and this choice has endeared him to people in the West, Americans in particular.

Swami Vivekananda was born in 1863 in an aristocratic family of Calcutta. His character was influenced by his parents. He inherited the rational attitude of his father, who was well versed in English and Persian literature, and who was an agnostic in religion and a mocker of social conventions. The Mother, cast in a different mould, was a pious woman, devoted to the religious tradition of Hindus. She influenced his devotional nature. As a child, Vivekananda loved to meditate and pray, though otherwise he was sunny, sweet-tempered, and restless. During his college days he read avidly history, literature, physical sciences, and Western philosophy. John Stuart Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* upset his boyish theism. Hume's scepticism and Herbert Spencer's doctrine of the unknowable deepened his agnostic mood. Hegel's 'universal reason' and 'ballet of Bloodless Categories' could not satisfy his inherent spiritual yearning, and the natural sensitivity of his artistic nature and joyous temperament. What he wanted was a life which would kindle his own life, a living teacher who could help him in the hour of temptation, a human *guru* who by embodying perfection in the flesh would compose the commotion of his soul. He wanted to meet a man who had the direct vision of God and who could help him to attain inner peace. He was tired of books and oral instructions.

At this crucial moment of his life, Swami Vivekananda met Sri Ramakrishna, widely known in Calcutta as a God-intoxicated saint. He had heard about him from his English professor, W. W. Hastie, who told him that

Ramakrishna experienced ecstasy while meditating on God. Ramakrishna was later described by Romain Rolland as 'the fulfilment of the spiritual aspiration of three hundred millions of Hindus during the past three thousand years'. He had practised disciplines of the various aspects of Hinduism and realized that they all led to the same goal. His experiences ranged from the intimate communion with the personal God to the realization of his oneness with Brahman who is one without a second, eternal, immutable, and inexpressible by words. Later he followed the disciplines of Christianity and Islam and realized that these faiths, too, ultimately led their respective devotees to the experience of the same Reality. Thus he was the first man in religious history to proclaim the harmony of religions.

To the very first question of Vivekananda, then a young lad of nineteen, Ramakrishna's forthright reply was: 'Yes, I have seen God. I see Him as clearly as I see you—only more clearly. God can be seen and one can talk to Him.' Vivekananda was impressed, but still remained sceptical. After much observation and various tests, he accepted Ramakrishna as his spiritual guide and had many spiritual visions. One day he begged his Master to grant him the boon that he might remain absorbed in meditation for days together and enjoy the bliss of divine communion. Ramakrishna asked him, with a gentle reprimand, to see God with eyes open, rather than closed in meditation, and taught him that service to man was the highest worship of God. These words profoundly influenced Swami Vivekananda's future life.

After Ramakrishna's death, Vivekananda, with some of his brother disciples, took monastic vows and travelled throughout India as a mendicant friar studying the scriptures and history, visiting places of cultural interest, and mixing with all classes of people: princes and beggars, brāhmins and pariahs, scholars and the illiterate. He felt pride in India's past glories and became assured of her future

regeneration. He regarded himself, as he said later on, as 'condensed India', thus combining in one the role of prophet and patriot, but his heart bled to see the ignorance, poverty, and the ill health of the Indian masses. The thought of India's regeneration haunted him both in his dream and in his waking hours.

The life of the wandering monk which he began in the Himalayas came to an end at Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of India. Sitting on the last stone of his motherland, he was absorbed in deep meditation on the three problems which had been disturbing him during his wandering days. He also found their solution. What was it, he asked himself, that kept India alive in spite of the foreign domination of one thousand years and preserved her basic unity? The answer he found was the loyalty of the Hindus to the fundamental principles of their religion as laid down in the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and the secondary scriptures. These principles were experienced and taught to the public from time to time by India's saints and mystics. The second problem, whether India could contribute anything to world culture from her spiritual storehouse, was solved by his inner voice, which told him that the Western world was in need of India's spiritual help. The last question was: What was his immediate duty? Again he heard from within that India must learn the secret of science and technology as developed in the West to improve her material condition. He was convinced that religion was not responsible for India's downfall but what was preached in the name of religion, namely, superstition, hypocrisy, and falsehood. Real gems of Hinduism were embedded in the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, which teach that all power, wisdom, and strength lay hidden in the human soul and must be brought out. He saw danger in both outmoded orthodoxy, still advocated by fanatical leaders, and the misguided zeal for reform, preached by Westernized Hindus. He took a vow at Cape

Comorin to preach to the masses the immutable truths of Hinduism and to dedicate himself to the work of ameliorating the material condition of the common man. He said to himself: 'May I be born again and again, and suffer a thousand miseries, if only I may worship the only God in whom I believe, the sum total of all souls, and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the afflicted, my God the poor of all races.' He hit upon a plan and wrote to a friend: 'Suppose some disinterested monks, bent on doing good to others, went from village to village disseminating education and seeking in various ways to better the condition of all, down to the untouchables, through oral teaching and by means of maps and magic lanterns and globes and other accessories—would not that bring forth good in time?' He longed to find the means 'to improve the sanitary condition of the villages, introduce scientific methods of agriculture, and procure pure water for daily drinking' and 'to free the peasants from their illiteracy and give them back their lost confidence'. He remembered the vivid words of Ramakrishna: 'Religion is not meant for empty bellies.'

He decided to go to the West, to bring back to India the knowledge of science and technology, and money. The finger of destiny, as it were, pointed out America where an affluent society had been created mainly by hard work, ethical discipline, and scientific skill. He knew that American life, free from the tyranny of the caste system of India and the class system of Europe, was a shining example of social justice and unlimited opportunities for all. In America, he would appeal to the consciousness of humanity to help India and tell the world that India's sickness was everybody's sickness. Prior to his departure for America he confided to a few friends, 'It is for them I am going to America—for the people and the poor'. But he was too proud to go anywhere as a beggar. His vast knowledge revealed to him that the West, too, was a victim of another kind of suffering, no less

poignant. The uncontrolled development of science and technology was creating there secularism, which was crushing the souls of the Western people, who thus became victims of fear, suspicion, and jealousy. Swami Vivekananda felt he must share with the West India's spirituality to show them the way out of an impending crisis.

Vivekananda, a young man of thirty, represented Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, where, by his eloquence, regal appearance, earnestness, and saintly character, he captured the hearts of his audience. Those who heard him realized that he was speaking from direct experience and not from books of which he had read plenty.

What did he teach in America during his four years' stay there? Describing the scope and aim of Hinduism, the Swami said: 'The Hindu religion does not consist in struggles and attempts to believe a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing—not in believing, but in being and becoming. Thus the whole object of the Hindu system is, by constant struggle, to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes the religion of the Hindus.' He taught that true religion is above all dogmas, creeds, rituals, and religiosity.

Vivekananda spoke eloquently about the divinity of the soul: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas, rituals or books, temples or forms, are but secondary details.' He measured every word as he uttered slowly that it is sin to call a man a sinner. The audience, most of whom were brought up in the idea of original sin, fell into silence.

The way to universal peace and goodwill, the Swami said, lay through the realization of

the unity of existence and the solidarity of mankind. 'One atom in the universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in its wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, national, or narrow grounds. . . . No individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under the false idea of greatness, policy, or holiness, the result has always been disastrous to the isolated one.'

Vivekananda taught the harmony of religions to the Americans, most of whom were brought up in the doctrine of exclusive salvation and chosen people. Addressing one meeting he said that the different religions mean 'so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite—each determined by the conditions of its birth and association'. His attitude toward non-Hindu faiths was not one of mere toleration but that of positive respect. 'I accept all religions that were in the past and worship them all. I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship.' Swami Vivekananda had profound respect for Jesus Christ. He never attacked the true spirit of any religion, but mercilessly criticized bigotry and superstition, wherever found, including his own Hinduism. At the final session of the Parliament, he made a fervent appeal to America: 'Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty! It has been given to thee, who never dipped thy hand in thy neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbours—it has been given to thee to march in the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony.'

As he travelled in America, he observed the different aspects of American society and passed his views on to his Indian friends. After visiting a woman's prison near Boston, he wrote in 1893: 'How benevolently the

inmates are treated, how they are reformed and sent back as useful members of society—how grand, how beautiful! You must see to believe.’ His heart must have ached to think of the poor and the low in India. A little later he wrote: ‘Who feels in India for the three hundred millions of men and women sunken for ever in poverty and ignorance? Let these people be your God. Think of them, pray for them incessantly. The Lord will show you the way. I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.’

The freedom, purity, self-reliance, and generosity of American women impressed Vivekananda deeply. He described them as ‘the life and soul of this country’. In an almost ecstatic mood he wrote to an Indian friend: ‘I am at my wit’s end to see the women of this country. They are Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Fortune, in beauty, and Sarasvatī, the Goddess of Learning, in virtue. If I can raise a thousand such Madonnas in our country before I die, I shall die in peace.’

In 1895 Swami Vivekananda visited Europe, and at once sized up the English character. He wrote to friends in America: ‘I understand why the Lord has blessed them above all other races—steady, sincere to the backbone, with great depths of feeling, only with a crust of stoicism on the surface. If that is broken you have your man. They have solved the secret of obedience without slavish cringing, great freedom with law-abidingness.’ He started his religious activities in London, and wrote to an American friend in 1896: ‘The British Empire with all its evils is the greatest machine that ever existed for the dissemination of ideas. I mean to put my ideas in the centre of this machine and it will spread them all over the world. Of course all great work is slow and difficulties are too many, especially as we Hindus are a conquered race. . . . I am learning my lesson every day in patience and above all in sympathy. I think I am beginning to see the Divine inside the bullying Anglo-Indians. I

think I am slowly approaching to that state when I would be able to love the very “Devil” himself, if there were any.’

Though Vivekananda greatly admired European culture, his heart was devoted to America. In 1896 he wrote to an American friend: ‘I love the Yankee land, I like to see new things. I do not care a fig to loaf about old ruins and mope a life out about old histories and keep sighing about the ancients. I have too much vigour in my blood for that. In America is the place, the people, the opportunity for everything new. I have become horribly radical.’ He wished to infuse some of the American spirit into India, ‘that awful mass of conservative jelly-fish’, and ‘then throw overboard all old associations and start a new thing, entirely new—simple, strong, and fresh as the first-born baby.’

Three years later when he again visited America, he became aware of the competitive side of American life, and was distressed by the ruthlessness of wealthy businessmen swallowing up small tradespeople by powerful combinations. In Europe he ‘smelt war’ and saw her as ‘a vast military camp on the edge of a volcano’. He said, ‘If the fire is not extinguished by a flood of spirituality, it will erupt’. In Vienna, once the seat of the mighty Holy Roman Empire, he remarked: ‘If Turkey is called “the sick man of Europe”, Austria ought to be called “the sick woman of Europe”.’ He showed his prophetic insight in a letter written in 1896: ‘The next upheaval will come from Russia or China. I cannot clearly see which, but it will be either one or the other. The world is in the third epoch, under the domination of the Vaiśya, the merchant; the fourth epoch will be under that of the Śūdra, the manual worker.’

Swami Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 and was hailed everywhere as India’s first spiritual ambassador to the West. True, he did not bring with him money, or knowledge of science and technology. The time

was not propitious as India was under foreign rule. That dream had to wait a half century before it could be fulfilled. Now free India is sending to America and Europe her students in thousands to study science, technology, medicine, and other branches of knowledge, needed for her material progress. The American and several European governments also are helping India with loans and aids for the same purpose. But Swami Vivekananda took back with him many precious memories of American generosity, and above all a priceless asset: recognition of his spiritual power, which he had not received in the land of his birth. Swami Vivekananda, however, taught the Western world an important lesson: that India is neither a backward nor an underdeveloped country. She had produced in the past eminent men and women who left their impress in philosophy, religion, art, and literature. India, no doubt, lagged behind in science and technology, mainly due to the lack of encouragement from her foreign rulers, but even in recent years, before India became free, she produced several eminent men of science. An apple tree is not to be judged by many green or worm-eaten apples which lie strewn on the ground, but by a few ripened juicy apples, showing the potentiality of the tree.

With his wide knowledge of the outside world, Vivekananda developed an even greater love for India. But his adoration of India was not the idolatry of geography; it was the worship of a holy land where many spiritual truths had been experimented with and experienced. He saw that sparks of fire were still there, lying buried under a heap of dead ashes. Yet his love was not confined to India alone. 'Doubtless I love India,' he said, 'but every day my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called man. He who pours water at the root waters the whole tree.'

He now undertook the Herculean task of

arousing his countrymen from the slumber of ages. He was eager to restore to India her lost faith. He exhorted Indians to draw inspiration from their ancient heritage and at the same time learn from the West its physical sciences, its disciplines, and the secret of organized activity. 'The wonderful structures of national life which the Western nations have raised are supported by strong pillars of character, and until we produce a number of such, it is useless to fret and fume against this or that power.' In a whirlwind lecture tour from Colombo to Almora in the Himalayas, he asked Indians to give up selfishness and remember the ancient ideals of renunciation and service. 'If you can make the national life flow through these two channels, the rest will take care of itself.' He even spoke of 'creating in India a Western society based on Hindu spirituality'. He asked the Indians to develop 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel, and a gigantic will which nothing can resist'. He wanted a man-making religion, a man-making education and man-making theories. He said: 'And here is the test of truth: anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, or spiritually, reject as poison. Truth is purity, truth is knowledge, truth is strength, truth is vigour. Give up these weakening mysticisms and be strong.' To an English friend he said: 'Yes, the older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil like a man! Be wicked, if you must be, on a grand scale.'

A few hours before his premature death at the age of thirty-nine, he said: 'India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she goes in for politics and social conflict, she will die.' He laid down for the members of the Ramakrishna Order, which he organized for carrying out his plans, the twofold ideal of studying Western science and Hindu spirituality. By their harmonious co-operation, Swami Vivekananda felt, the world would at last deliver its new soul, now struggling to be born, and correct the present

imbalance in the human situation in both East and West.

Swami Vivekananda is an unusual phenomenon in our time—a philosopher, a man of action, a devotee of God, an introspective mystic, all in one. A writer, a poet, a dreamer, and also a dynamic speaker, he was, in his inmost heart, a passionate lover of God. His message is not merely for the hour, but for the modern age; not for a particular nation, but for humanity. When a person reads his words, in cold print, even after a lapse of sixty years, he is stirred whether he agrees with him or not.

Swami Vivekananda died in 1902. He now

belongs to eternity. Four years before his death, Vivekananda, apparently in good health and filled with ideas for his future work, said to a brother disciple that he would not live long. The astonished brother said that his work had just begun, why should he think of death? Vivekananda said: 'You don't understand. I find this body is a great hindrance to work. It limits a person. When I am dead, my spirit, free from all physical limitations will work more effectively for the welfare of all.' That is why, I believe, people everywhere, during the centenary year of his birth, have been paying spontaneous tribute of respect and affection to his memory.

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## MY MEMORIES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SRI MOHANLAL SHAH

I deem it a great fortune that I am able to witness the birth centenary celebration of the world-adored Swami Vivekananda, whom I had the rare opportunity of seeing on four occasions. I had his *darśana* (holy glimpse) for the first time in 1890, when as a wandering monk he visited Almora. He was the guest of Lala Badrilal Shah. I had gone there just by chance and met him. I prostrated before him and then came away. I was about twelve years old at that time. But that first glimpse is still vivid in my memory. I was taken aback to see his radiant appearance. He looked as if he was a second Buddha come in that form. I have not seen a second like him till today.

The second time I saw him was in 1897. He had come back to India after his triumphant victory at the Parliament of Religions in America. Almora then offered him a big welcome. Thousands of people greeted him there and showered flowers on him. I can best describe the occasion by quoting Mr. Goodwin who was with Swamiji at that time:

'At Lodea, close to Almora, there was a large

crowd of citizens waiting in the afternoon to convey him along the final part of his journey, and at their request the Swami mounted a horse dressed in handsome trappings and headed a procession into the town. It seemed that, as the bazaar was reached, every citizen of the place joined the company. So dense was the crowd that some difficulty was experienced in leading the Swami's course through. Thousands of Hindu ladies, from the tops of houses and from windows, showered flowers and rice on the Swamiji, as he passed along. In the centre of the town, a section of the interesting old-fashioned bazaar street had been turned into a pandal capable of holding three thousand people; decorated cloths stretched across from side to side of the street forming the roof, and the ends being beautified with festoons of flowers, banners, etc. In addition, every house displayed lights till the town appeared to be a blaze of light, and the native music with the constant cheers of the crowd, made the entire scene most remarkable, even to those who had accompanied

Swamiji through the whole of his journey from Colombo. . . .

'Naturally, with from four to five thousand persons crowding inside and outside of the pandal, and with excitement in full play, the proceedings of the formal welcome were brief. Pandit Jwala Dutt Joshi read first a Hindi address of welcome on behalf of the Reception Committee. Pandit Hari Ram Pande followed, with a second address from the Swami's host, Lala Badri Sah Thulgharia, and a Pandit read an equally appreciative address in Sanskrit.'

Fortunately I was also one of those lucky citizens who were there at that hill station, and had the opportunity to participate in the functions.

For the third time I saw Swamiji in 1898, again in Almora. He had come there for a short change and there were some disciples—foreign and Indian—with him. At this time, the *Prabuddha Bharata* press was started at the Thompson House, which is a spacious bungalow on the Mall at Almora. Swarupanandaji, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, was the editor of the paper. One day I chanced to pick up acquaintance with Swami Swarupananda. He was so kind to me and I was so charmed with his sweet behaviour that from the very next day I came to stay at Thompson House with him. It was perhaps sometime in the month of October. Since that day upto now, the relationship that started then between myself and the monks of the Ramakrishna Math is unbroken and becoming sweeter with the passage of time. After about four months, in March 1899, the *Prabuddha Bharata*—shifted to its permanent home at Mayavati, when Advaita Ashrama was started there by Capt. and Mrs. Sevier, the two English disciples of Swami Vivekananda. I also came to Mayavati along with others. Swami Swarupananda became the first president of the Mayavati Ashrama, and was succeeded, after his premature demise in

1906, by Swami Virajananda, his *gurubhāi*.

For the fourth time I had occasion to see Swami Vivekananda at Mayavati itself. In 1901, on January 3, Swamiji came to Mayavati with some of his brother-disciples and disciples. Though it was very cold at that time and snow-fall, rather heavy, was also there, Swamiji's fifteen-day stay at Mayavati was full of mirth and joy. It has become the most memorable event in the history of this Himalayan monastery. Swamiji used to pass much of his time at Mayavati in reading and writing. I was working in the *Prabuddha Bharata* press and had occasions to show him some proofs at that time. I was filled with awe to see Swamiji from so near. How kind was his heart! What feelings he had for the poor and the afflicted! He had infused this feeling for the poor among his disciples also; and I have seen some of them from very close quarters. They virtually looked upon the poor and the downtrodden as the veritable manifestations of God and used to serve them in that spirit. This has become the tradition behind all philanthropic activities of the Ramakrishna Mission.

I cannot adequately give expression to all the thoughts that come in my mind at the moment. My long association with the Advaita Ashrama of Mayavati, my personal contacts with many monks of the Ramakrishna Order, the happy incidents during my stay in the Ashrama and occasions of affection and kindness that I had from the Ashrama inmates—these and many more sweet moments of my life are crowding in my memory, and I am overwhelmed with emotion. But to crown them all are the precious memories of Swami Vivekananda, which I hold very sacred. They are luminously stored in the treasure-chest of my mind, and the heart is full. They have been my most cherished possession till now, and they will continue to be so for the rest of my life.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### THE NEW YEAR

With this issue, the *Prabuddha Bharata* enters the sixty-ninth year of its publication. While wishing a happy new year to all our readers and contributors, we offer them our hearty thanks for the co-operation and assistance given to us for all these years, and hope that these will be continued in future also.

### IN THIS NUMBER

In this month will conclude the year-long celebrations in connection with the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda. In commemoration of the event, we have devoted this number exclusively to articles on Swamiji.

'Śrī Vivekānanda-praṇati-mālikā—A Garland of Salutations to Vivekananda' is composed by Swami Harshananda, of the Ramakrishna Order in Co-operation with Sri P. Ramakrishna Bhat, Lecturer, Government College, Kolar, Mysore State.

'Message of Swami Vivekananda to Modern India' by Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, is the English version of the presidential address delivered in Hindi at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, in March 1963, on the occasion of the birth centenary celebrations.

Dr. P. S. Sastri, M.A., M.Litt., Ph.D., Head of the Department of English, Nagpur University, with whom our readers are well acquainted, strikes a new note this time in the selection of his subject: 'Swamiji's Philos-

ophy in His Letters'. The task of bringing together the different ideas scattered through the letters and stringing them into a comprehensive philosophy is not an easy one. Dr. Sastri has, however, set about his task with the earnestness characteristic of him. The theme is refreshingly original, and we hope the readers will find the article interesting.

'Unity in the Universal Spirit' is the text of the speech delivered by Sri S. K. Roy, Consul General of India, on 28 March 1963, at the New India House, New York, on the occasion of the Swami Vivekananda birth centenary celebration.

'Swami Vivekananda : The Universal Man', by Swami Nikhilananda, Head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York, is the text of the address given at the Smithsonian Institution Auditorium, Washington, D.C., on Friday, the 4th October 1963, on the occasion of the Swami Vivekananda birth centenary celebration.

Sri Mohanlal Shah is now staying at Lohaghat near Mayavati. He is closely connected with the Advaita Ashrama since its very inception, and stayed in the Ashrama itself for about thirty-six years. He was the printer and publisher of *Prabuddha Bharata* for a number of years, till 1923, when the printing section was shifted to Calcutta. The article in this issue has been re-written from a Hindi paper which was read at a public meeting held at Lohaghat to celebrate the birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda.



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

REMBRANDT AND SPINOZA. BY LEO BALET. Philosophical Library Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16. Pages 222. Price \$4.50.

The book is a guide to Spinoza's philosophy. It also deals with artistic contributions of Rembrandt, a painter of Netherlands, showing various inner relations between him and the great philosopher Spinoza.

The penetrating philosophical insight of the author is impressive. He brings out in a lucid manner the immense impact of the politico-religious life of the seventeenth century Holland on the philosophical thoughts of Spinoza.

The author seems to be well versed in philosophy, literature, music, art, and history. In all his deliberations he has been able to show evidence of his erudition and keen knowledge in all these fields.

DR. ANIMA SEN GUPTA

THE UPANIŞADS (PARTS I AND II). TRANSLATED BY F. MAX MÜLLER. Dover Publications Inc., 180 Varick Street, New York 14, U.S.A. Pages 320 and 350. Price \$2.00 each part.

The books under review form the reprint of volumes I and XV of 'The Sacred Books of the East', translated by an array of learned Orientalists of the nineteenth century, headed by Professor F. Max Müller. The role played by 'The Sacred Books of the East' in bringing the knowledge of the vast sacred literature of the East to Western countries can hardly be exaggerated. Though translations of some of these books existed earlier, the pains and research that went into the translation by Professor Max Müller were lacking in them. The books translated by the great Professor had since gone out of print, but that a prominent publisher has come forward to reprint them is in itself a proof of the popularity they enjoy even after almost a century since their publication.

Professor Max Müller approached these books in the true spirit of a scholar and historian, and tried to make the truest representation possible of the original works; and to do this, he had set before himself certain criteria which reveal the liberal, at the same time scientific, spirit of the sagely scholar. For example, while referring to the ancient sages, the Professor says: 'They can never be judged from without, they must be judged from within.' Max Müller's was a difficult task; the earlier translators had not taken the same amount of trouble in ascertaining the correct meaning of many Sanskrit words which were not easily translatable. Often, a preference given to the use of correct English idiom resulted in the sacrifice of the accuracy of the translation. Max Müller reversed this process, and paid more attention to

accuracy even at the cost of style. One instance in this regard is worth mention. The Sanskrit word 'Ātman' had been till then translated as 'soul', 'mind', 'spirit', etc. But the great Professor translated it as 'self' or 'Self' according to the context, though such a use of the word 'self' was strange in English language. But he stuck to it, and today, the use of this word as the equivalent for 'Ātman' has become universal.

The present edition contains the principal Upaniṣads—the *Chāndogya*, *Kena*, *Aitareya*, *Kauṣītaki*, and *Īśā* in Part I, and the *Kaṭha*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Taittirīya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Śvetāśvatara*, *Praśna*, and *Maitrāyaṇī* in Part II. Though these are cheap paper-bound editions, the paper used is of superior quality. The book is so produced as to last for years. In spite of the fact that many translations of the Upaniṣads are available today, these reprints of the 'Sacred Books', authentic as they are, should find a place in the shelves of every library worth the name in India and abroad.

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

CLASSICS IN LOGIC. EDITED BY DAGOBERT D. RUNES. Philosophical Library Inc., 15 East 40th Street, New York 16. 1962. Pages 818. Price \$10.

Ever since the dawn of history, the human mind has attempted to regulate its reasoning faculty into fixed channels by formulating the methods of reasoning. Thus the questions 'What is knowledge?', 'Wherefrom are we to obtain it?', and 'What are the guarantees that the knowledge we get is free from fallacies?' had to be answered and universally accepted, and the thinkers of various ages had to follow these methods of reasoning to be sure that their conclusions were foolproof. Thus the theories of epistemology and dialectics have come into existence both in the East and the West, and the history of these sciences can reveal the workings of the human mind through the centuries. The editor of the volume under review rightly observes in his Preface: 'Man's principles of logic, the fundamental categories of his thinking processes are universal and identical, not only in today's world, from nation to nation, race to race, group to group, and sex to sex, but also historically.'

This tome, presenting an anthology of the manifold theories of knowledge evolved by the thinkers of the West, is a veritable feast for the logician and the philosopher. The chapters are culled from the great logicians and epistemologists of many schools and epochs. Many of the articles here have been translated into English for the first time, from their German, Greek, or Latin originals. The chapters are arranged alphabetically according to authors' names. A chronological order, with an index at the end for ready reference, would have

been better, as that would have presented to the discerning reader the influence of the earlier thinker on the later ones.

The volume is a valuable addition to philosophical literature.

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA BIRTH CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

#### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SOCIETY, RANGOON

Swamiji's centenary was inaugurated on the 17 January 1963, with a week-long programme. On the first day, a mile-long procession was taken out. In the afternoon there was a big gathering at the Society's lecture hall, and Thiri Pyanchi U Chit Thoung welcomed the audience, which included nearly 200 Phongyis (Buddhist monks). Presiding over the celebration and paying glowing tributes to Swamiji, Sayadaw the Venerable Agga Maha Pandita U Wai Lu Wun formally inaugurated the centenary. The message of the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission was read out on the occasion. Discourses on the life and message of Swamiji, music recitals, and film shows formed part of the celebrations on other days.

#### RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTER, SEATTLE

On the 17th January 1963, Swami Vividishananda performed a special worship in the Center's shrine. On the next day he conducted a devotional service, attended by members and friends of the Center. On the 20th January, the Swami spoke on 'The Religion of Inner Strength, Peace, and Knowledge' with reference to the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

The Center plans to observe the celebration on an elaborate scale later in the year. It also intends to donate to the local public libraries books on Vedānta including the *Life and Works* of Swamiji.

#### ITALY AND HOLLAND

A centenary celebration meeting was held on the 23rd

At Johannesburg, the celebration was organized on the 12th January 1963.

March 1963, in which Prof. Fano of the Rome University and Swami Nityabodhananda spoke on Swamiji's contribution to the thought of the West. Articles on Swamiji and his message were published in the local newspapers.

Meetings in connection with the centenary, organized by Swami Nityabodhananda, were held in Amsterdam, the Hague, and Amersfoort.

#### CEYLON

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Colombo, inaugurated the centenary on the 17th January 1963. Functions were held at Trincomalee and Galle also. The main items of the centenary programme, to be observed throughout the year are: Seminar on Religions, elocution contest, essay competitions, film shows, sports, and publication in Sinhalese and Tamil booklets on the life and teachings of Swamiji.

#### JAPAN

Various parts of Japan celebrated the occasion under the auspices of Academy of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, Osaka. On invitation, Swami Siddhatmananda of Singapore spoke at Kobe, Fukuoka, Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and Okayane.

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#### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY

The one hundred and second birthday of Swami Vivekananda falls this year on Monday, the 6th January 1964.