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DECEMBER 1966

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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DECEMBER 1966

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

ARE THE BACKBONE OF DEFENCE

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No. 12



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:0:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

(112)

Sri Ramakrishna Math
Belur, Howrah
5 July 1922

Dear Mother,

I received your letter. I am happy to hear about you after a long time. We feel very much distressed at heart since the passing away of Maharaj; hardly do we find any inspiration or encouragement in any work. But Master's work can never stop; His is the mission that will restate the religion of the Age and it will go on for a long time to come. Whether we remain in this physical body anymore or not His work will not come to a stop in any circumstance. He will have some person or the other as His instrument to carry on His mission. There is not the least doubt in this regard.

Go ahead with your spiritual practices as you have been doing. Try to keep the mind engaged most part of the time in the worship of the Master, meditation, *japa* and study. He will certainly be merciful enough to give you peace. By His grace you will attain to this inner tranquillity even if you do not find any holy company around you. Only pray to Him with the bare heart of a child for devotion, conviction and love. Know for certain that He is very much moved at soulful prayers. The Master is ever present in His divine domain in His divine form. Maharaj and the other devotees, passed away so far, are all present by the side of the Master in that divine realm in their respective divine forms. It is as certain as anything. Move on with your worship, meditation and *japa* with this conviction in you. You will attain to peace.

Accept my heartfelt blessings and affection. I am doing more or less well. Hope you and the others are also well.

Your well-wisher,
Shivananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math
Belur, Howrah
6 July 1922

Dear Sriman —,

Glad to receive your long letter. It is heartening to know that you can devote yourself in repeating the sacred and all-redeeming divine name of the Master two thousand times daily. Continue to do like that now; you yourself will feel like increasing the number gradually. As you will find joy in *japa* you will feel like doing more of it.

You are quite true in regard to what you reflect in your mind. Indeed Divine Mother Durgā, Kālī, Lord Śiva and other gods and goddesses who have so far incarnated themselves for the good of this world are but different forms of our Master Sri Ramakrishna. It is but He who pervades all beings including the birds and beasts, trees and forests, rivers and seas, the sun, the moon, the planets and the sky; in everything visible and invisible is He. To the devotee He is the nearest of the near and dearest of the dear—more related to the heart than any of father, mother, brother or sister. Notwithstanding His supreme power and position He incarnates Himself in a humble human form to set lessons for the world. One aspiring after the realization of God must practise that humility so that the egotism can be obliterated altogether; one must be poorest of the poor, lowliest of the lowly at heart for that. We have seen that Sri Ramakrishna would bow down to anyone who would come to visit Him. All these are meant for examples before the world. It is a living reality that God has manifested Himself in endless forms and names for His divine play and it is for this that Sri Ramakrishna would bow low to anyone and everyone.

What to write you more! The more you repeat His name the more you will be able to realize everything gradually. He Himself will make you understand all; your mind too will then settle down.

The meaning of *Gāyatrī* is this: 'I meditate on that dynamic aspect of Brahman which is adored and worshipped by all and from out of which the three worlds—*Bhūh*, *Bhūvah* and *Svargah* have come into being. May the Divine Mother of the three worlds reveal Herself in my intellect'. The Master is the *Gāyatrī* as well as the Divine Mother Durgā; He is but all. If while repeating the name of the Master you find the reflection of the Divine Mother appearing in your mind and if you feel like repeating Her name, it is all well and good. Repeat that name whenever such happens. The Master and the Divine Mother Durgā are not different. Your chosen deity is Sri Ramakrishna but all the gods and goddesses are embodied in Him. While repeating His name if you see the Mother within you and find joy in repeating Her name, do that one. Doubtless, the Master will be pleased at that. May your progress into His realm be smooth—this is the blessing of my heart. The Master is very kind and I do say that He will surely have mercy on you. Have no fear; repeat His name deeply. Your mind will be calm and you will attain to peace.

Accept my heartfelt blessings and affection.

Your well-wisher,
Shivananda

'JUDGEMENT OF GOD'

[EDITORIAL]

Currents and Cross-Currents of History: God in History has often been more real than what He appears to be in the realm of Religion or Philosophy. The world is accustomed to hear about the God who governs the destiny of the universe in Mythology ; it has worshipped the God who, in the Holy Psalms, takes cognizance of the virtues and vices of individual to make His judgements just and equitable. But nowhere the image of God has been so vivid and living as it is in the pages of history. Here He is ever-wakeful to the currents and cross-currents of the world, stringent and meticulous in His review of right and wrong, convincing in His awards of peace and justice to the races and nations and, perhaps, rigorous and merciless in the execution of His laws of vengeance. At times He may seem to be late in His pronouncements of the verdicts and administration of the universal laws but His laws are always inevitable and infallible. One may doubt the God of Religions, disown His existence in Philosophy if one so desires, but one can hardly afford to disbelieve His all-powerful role in the history of men. 'And God will have vengeance. You may not see it in religion, you may not see it in politics, but you must see it in history, and as it has been ; it will come to pass. If you grind down the people, you will suffer. We in India are suffering the vengeance of God.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. VII, 1958, p. 279). These were therefore the prophetic observations made by Swami Vivekananda on the world of his time during the closing decade of the last century. What he said in that quiet evening of August, 1893 at the New England village-home of Prof. J. H. Wright before a small gathering of his listeners, appears to be more emphatic today than anything after the lapse

of these seventy-three years. Through the fast changing scenes of world history and the shifting fabrics of human civilization the remarks stand testified as well as magnified. Every liquidation of the Western empires makes the observations more time-honoured, each call for new unity among the masses of Asia and Africa adds to their historical merit and every mobilization of the oppressed and downtrodden bespeaks their undecaying wisdom that could ever be envisioned by any thinker of foresight and courage.

Persons familiar with the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda will hardly find any major world issue that had not been studied by him through the varied and diverse experiences of his own life. His deep feelings against the notorious colour problem, his enduring predictions about the contemporary Europe, his never failing vision of a rising East, and his monumental labours for the cause of world harmony—all make him a pioneer thinker of many a twentieth century international movement. He was in fact a series of individuals—a multitude of men in one, and it is no wonder that every serious student of history will find his verdicts on all the burning issues as stable, precise and pinpointed.

The Problem of Race Prejudice: Ever since the dawn of human civilization nations of the world have oscillated between the opposite poles of anarchy and dictatorship, unification and disintegration involving the opposite dangers of ossification or foreign conquest.. Science, in the meanwhile, has brought the world into one community which is to make a choice of one common destiny but it is yet an archaic society obsessed with the archaic belief that one man's gain will be another man's loss, supremacy of one will have to be followed

by the humiliation of the other. Jews and Arabs, Non-whites and Whites continue to live in their old archaic world to carry on their fateful wrangles. The burning controversies of racial superiority, the passionate shibboleths of religious intolerance among the most modern of the nations of today do not in any way justify the logic of the circumstances. Like the sailors quarrelling over sixpence while the ship is sinking, many still feel the vicarious thrill of a fatuous garrulity by being goaded by some voluminous pressure of archaic excitement that rouses them so often to the antiquated crude impulses. They have eyes but they do not, in clear sense, see the changing world; they have ears but they would not variously hear others beyond their own sect and philosophy. Time, however, cannot stand still to subscribe to this craven caricature of human progress; the laws of history do never remain inoperative. Irrespective of the frontiers of geography, man, everywhere and anywhere is the same; whether in Singapore or San Francisco, in Argentina or Algeria he runs in the same race of life and he does so not on a cinder track like that of a stadium but with hopes and possibilities in the vast arena of life. Life-flow is one and the same. So any rigid wall of race, colour or religion that divides the humanity can never hinder the flow of this universal spirit; it collapses sooner or later and this is what is happening in the world of our time.

The colour problem which is sweeping all over Africa and the Western world today has a significant bearing on the life and experiences of Swami Vivekananda and it is rooted in the long forgotten days of fifteenth and sixteenth century. Trading in Black cargo was a big business of the kings and emperors of Europe of the time. It was initiated by Portugal and Spain but the cheap human merchandise of Asia and Africa soon attracted many other European nations. No church did ever come forward

to protest against this inhuman practice when during the days of Henry, the Seafarer of Portugal shiploads of helpless Negroes were being emptied in the coastal towns of the West. No ancient monitor of European ethics could ever think the other way when the Queen of England awarded John Hawkins a coat of arms with its crest bearing the stamp of a manacled Negro. Instead, all of them took it to be a divine dispensation, misinterpreted the tenets of Christian humility and ridiculed those that argued for equality of men. But nothing went unrecorded to the everwakeful Time that was to pronounce its judgement later on. With the conviction of Nathaniel Gordon of Portland, U.S.A. on December 20, 1861 trading on slaves came to a stop in many parts of Europe but millions of helpless persons who had laid the foundation of the prosperity of the Western world remained all the more hated helots as before.

During the time of Swami Vivekananda's visit to the West in 1893 the feverishness of hate and discrimination was all at its play. On many instances he was taken to be a Negro and was subjected to the worst kind of discrimination. In his 'Memoirs of European Travel' he writes: 'I was sorely troubled by an overgrown beard, but no sooner did I peep into a hair-cutting saloon than somebody called out, "There is no place for such shabby-looking people as you". . . . Once I was burning with hunger, and went into a restaurant and asked for a particular thing, whereupon the man said, "we do not stock it". "Why, it is there". "Well my good man, in plain language it means there is no place here for you to sit and take your meal". "And why?" "Because nobody will eat at the same table with you, for he will be outcasted". So he humorously comments: 'Out with these differences of White and Black, and this nicety about the proportion of Aryan blood among the "natives"! ' (ibid., p. 320) As the representative from a land where toleration was the tradition rather than a custom

he was shocked and bewildered to see these horrible perpetrations but, as we all know, he was never slow to see the vengeance of God coming upon them. Another incident that came to happen in America during this visit would lay bare his bleeding heart for the ill-fated oppressed humanity: 'Being an Oriental he was often in the South mistaken for a Negro. Once, when he was leaving a train, a Negro porter, who had seen the Swami welcomed by a reception committee, came up to him, saying that he had heard how in him one of his own people had become a great man and that he would like to have the privilege of shaking hands with him. The Swami warmly clasped the hands of the railway-porter and exclaimed, "Thank you! Thank you, brother!" He related many similar confidence made to him by Negroes and he never resented being thought of as one of them. It happened several times in important cities of the South, that he was refused admittance to the hotels, because of his dark colour, the proprietors saying that they could not accommodate a Negro and showing him the door with scant courtesy; but even in these dilemmas he refused to say that he was an Oriental. . . . Long after, when a Western disciple referring to these incidents asked him in surprise, why he had not informed them who he was, he replied, "What! Rise at the expense of another! I did not come to earth for that!"' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples*, 1955, pp. 328-29).

All these had happened about seventy years back when there could be no United Nations banning Apartheid laws, no European or African leaders launching wide movements against racial discrimination and no Civil Rights Bill of the Federal Government of U.S.A. boldly upholding the rights of the minorities there. But history has, since, not stood idle. The march of events becomes amply reflected when one reads President Johnson's recent address at the

University of Rhode Island on August 20, 1966: 'The vivid contrast between lawful assemblies and lawless mobs has stirred America's conscience. We have begun to act at last to open real opportunities for the Negro American and other minorities and to help them move to achieve those opportunities'. Demands, once whispered here and there, have now risen to a consistent shout all over the world and the shout will not be silenced till the cause has been vindicated to the last. Political upheavals in the whole of Africa and the ever increasing race riots in the different parts of the West today are the indicators of a beginning of that much needed end.

Fast Changing Europe: Swami Vivekananda's 'Memoirs of European Travel' is one of the most valuable pieces of acute historical studies on European countries that he visited during 1895, 1896 and 1900. Here the valiant vedāntist at once becomes an imaginative realist who takes profound interest in the affairs of the people and the world, carefully surveys the historical forces at work and delivers a note of timely warning. From the humdrum of the then European life he carefully extracted the absurdities and ironies, pathos and wisdom which he expressed remarkably and subtly in short anecdotes and broad humours, in enchanting experiences and absorbing notes. T. S. Eliot once described 'humour' as 'a way of saying something serious'. Here too, the philosophy behind the humorous comments on the foibles of men as well as the state of the world shakes us, instructs us, adds to our historical foresight and keeps us going.

In the 'Memoirs' Swami Vivekananda speaks of only three civilized nations in Europe of the time—England, France and Germany, the rest being as badly off as the Indians. He mentions of Germany's superior industrial possibilities and military power far overshadowing those of Britain. In France he found 'the moon was setting', she was 'slowly consuming herself in the fire of con-

templated retribution'. To him Turkey was the 'sick man of Europe', Austria-Hungary, the 'sick dame' and Italy sinking down bereft of glory and prestige. He did not visit Russia but he came in contact with Prince Kropotkin, the exiled Russian leader at Paris and vividly predicted about the course of events there. Europe, to Swami Vivekananda, appeared to be a vast military camp. 'Throughout Europe', he noticed, 'there is a craze for soldiers—soldiers, soldiers everywhere' and clearly foresaw the approaching shadow of a dreadful war engulfing the entire continent.

An witness to the vicious British rule in India, Swami Vivekananda was unfailing in his vision to see the world wide British empire crumbling down into pieces and British supremacy sharply dwindling down. Referring to those ambitious British imperialists he wrote, 'It is their hunger that has civilized them, not their God. The love of men is on their lips, in their hearts there is nothing but evil and every violence. . . Their hands are red with blood. . . . But judgement of God will fall upon them. "Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord". . . .' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. VII, pp. 278-79) Men like Swami Vivekananda are great, because they tell the truth. At a time when it was extremely seditious for any Indian to speak against the British rule he was fearless in giving expression to his strong views against the British Empire even by standing before the citizens of London, the heart centre of the all-powerful British world and it is surprising enough that the *élite* of the land, the press and the public—all came forward to accept the bare and burning truth of his statements. One of the leading dailies like *The London Daily Chronicle* wrote: 'Vivekananda, the popular Hindu monk, whose physiognomy bore the most striking resemblance to the classic face of Buddha, denounced our commercial prosperity, our bloody wars, and our religious intolerance, declaring that at such a price the mild Hindu

would have none of our vaunted civilization'. (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples*, 1955, p. 374).

During those years of 1895 and 1896 no one perhaps could ever comprehend that the predictions of Swami Vivekananda would prove to be so much prophetic in the developments of later days. Within fifty years after his passing away two world wars sparked off one after the other shattering the entire Europe into pieces, new social and political revolutions broke out in many countries of Asia, Africa and Europe. Britain had to liquidate all her empires in Asia, Africa and the Middle East and India became a Republic. No one knows what the world will experience further.

The Rising East: Eastward and not Westward, as Bishop Berkeley thinks, the course of empire takes its way. But Swami Vivekananda was rather emphatic about the incoming cycle of working-class supremacy—'rising of the Shudra class *with their Shudrahood*' all over the world. Besides the non-white minorities in the Western world there were millions who awaited economic and political emancipation and he was impatient about their fate. It is the law of history that had once given rise to the arrogant school of Rudyard Kipling and it is the same law that was again to make this emancipation of the millions in Asia and Africa a conceivable reality. Socialism and Nihilism to him, however, were not ends in themselves. In them he saw merely the first break of the 'glow of the dawn of this new power'. He looks to these 'sects' as 'the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow'. (*The Complete Works*, Vol. IV, 1962, pp. 468-69)

China to Swami Vivekananda was fast 'going down to Shudrahood' and Japan heading towards a commanding future. Every student of modern Asian history knows that never in all the history of mankind did a nation make such a stride as Japan then did. In 1866 she was a mediaeval people,

a fantastic caricature of the extremist romantic feudalism; in 1899 hers was a completely westernized people, on a level with the most advanced European powers. She completely dispelled the persuasion that Asia was in some irrevocable way hopelessly behind Europe. She made all European progress seem sluggish by comparison. (H. G. Wells: *A Short History of the World*, Watts & Co., 1930, p. 285.)

But what was his prediction about India? India, to Swami Vivekananda, was a 'sleeping leviathan'. Stretching throughout a vast subcontinent with a vast historical background, the nation was like Jonathan Swift's Gulliver lost in long slumber while the world was passing through a critical phase of hopes and disappointments. Gulliver sleeping is always a Gulliver failing in his mission and he is often subjected to the humiliations of the Lilliputians even. India, too, met with the same fate. A nation which once gave birth to the restless enquirers like Śāṅkara and Buddha slowly escaped into milieus that made the entire race sit and brood palely by the candle light of 'ifs' and 'buts'. The thinkers who had the history of carrying the war to the enemy camps, began to shoot under cover. The parrot cries of contemporary Indian mind appeared to Swami Vivekananda, as ridiculous hyperboles in comparison with the bold adventures of those forgotten explorers and dreamers who roistered in taverns by day and gave reins to their imaginations at night. But Swami Vivekananda did never fail to see the end of the tenure of this retributive cycle of Indian history. Gulliver had a mission and so he could not sleep long. Swami Vivekananda, therefore, saw India waking up from the deadening inertia of the tyranny of the circumstances. He visualized a 'greater India than ever was' and said, 'I am sure it is coming'. (*The Complete Works*, Vol. III, 1960, p. 154.)

Vengeance of History: 'Vengeance of history' or 'judgement of God' is a concept

that had not been coined by Swami Vivekananda at any feat of emotional outburst or utopian imagination. A keen observer of world history he merely highlighted an old and ancient truth that had long become obscure due to the buzzing confusion of the centuries. As Shakespeare would say, 'Right is right even if nobody does it, wrong is wrong though everybody is wrong about it'. Unity of the mankind through the unity of the souls is the law that belongs as much to the realm of history as much as it pertains to God. It is eternal as well as historical and it cannot be hoodwinked or evaded either by any individual or by any nation. Action must have its opposite and equal reaction. This historical concept of human unity is the spiritual optimum towards which the world moves and works and this is the only ideal that Swami Vivekananda struggled for and strived after. Any other concept whether it is that of Potsdam or Yalta Agreement, the Monroe Doctrine or the Tripple Alliance or the NATO or the Warsaw Pact is bound to fall short of this universal spiritual optimum. While advocating this concept he makes a much needed rediscovery of history by going above the narrow and compartmentalized world of his time. If he has uttered a note of pessimism anywhere it is not the philosophical pessimism of Hardy or the soft-sadness of Arnold but it is the pensive melancholy of Coleridge's ancient mariner who describes the truth with the anguish of his whole soul. If he has criticized any sect, society or nation, he does so by the right of his being a truly universal man. He was not just a courageous reformer or a talented humanist. Had he been so he could have not been able to feel the sufferings of men with such uncommon intensity and striking spontaneity. His range of interest was extreme, his touch at once deep and powerful and insight keen, logical and discerning. He views the world as a keen historian, analyses its events like a detached

scientist, examines his each proposition with the doubts of a philosopher but comprehends everything like the man of God. The inspiring impress of his wonderful comprehension does burnish up the image of God reflected in the pages of history and illumine the vastness of the inviolable bands of universal laws.

In his deed and thinking, criticism and concern, emotion and indignation he has manifested the spirit of not the contemporary history but universal history and by doing so he has left a legacy of courage and imagination which the twentieth century world still frantically struggles to achieve. St. Paul's only argument against the Sadducees was 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him', words which St. Augustine echoed very truly '*Quod Deo non perit sibi non perit*'. The strongest argument of Swami Vivekananda against the power-intoxicated con-

temporary world was—'If man cannot believe in the vengeance of God, he certainly cannot deny the vengeance of history'. So while decrying every inequality, injustice and oppression around him the Swami alerted his audience in Annisquam in that quiet evening of August 1893 by his startling rejoinder, 'The vengeance of God, it is coming soon'. (*The Complete Works*, vol. VII, 1958, p. 279.)

But will the world pay heed to this warning of Swami Vivekananda and subscribe to his call for universal unity? Perhaps it will not. It did not accept Christ fully before it witnessed the ravages of barbarian invasions in Europe during the fourth and fifth century. It has not returned to sanity even after the devastations of two dreadful World Wars. The world will, perhaps, not listen to the message of Vedānta before it experiences a global dark age consequent upon the blasts of Atomic fire!

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THROUGH SOME RARE REMINISCENCES

SWAMI JNANATMANANDA

[The present article is a compilation of the reminiscences narrated by Swami Atulananda Maharaj (popularly known as Gurudas Maharaj) who passed away recently. The Swami, while in his pre-monastic life, had the rare privilege of meeting Swami Vivekananda during the latter's second visit to America in 1899—1900.—ED.]

It was in 1899 that Swami Atulananda (the then Heijblom) met Swami Vivekananda at New York for the first time during the latter's second visit to the U.S.A. Before that he had only come to learn of the great Swami through a pamphlet given to him by a lady friend of one of his own friends. Heijblom was then in a restless mood. One of his forefathers was a clergyman. So through him he got the opportunity to read

not only the Holy Bible but also many other books on religion and philosophy. But the more he read them the more he turned agnostic and, at last, he became almost a disbeliever in the existence of God. He came of a Dutch family which had settled in U.S.A. to run some business and probably he had to move from one place of U.S.A. to another on that concern.

He was present in Chicago when the

Parliament of Religions was being held there in 1893. It was a huge affair. Besides the section on Religion, it had also other sections like those on Science, Art, and others. Heijblom visited these latter sections but felt no inclination to go to the section of Religion where Swami Vivekananda had been delivering his epoch-making speeches. Thus he missed the chance of meeting or hearing the Swami at the first instance which might have changed his mind earlier.

After long six years when he was knocking here and there with an inner urge to find out the Truth, he accidentally met his aforesaid friend and had a frank talk with him about his doubts and suspicions about religion. To him then religion was but all hoax. The friend, however, gauged Heijblom's inner struggle and told him that he would take him to his lady friend who, he thought, had some clear ideas about it. With a hesitant mind Heijblom followed his friend and met the lady. The lady was very kind to receive him and after a little talk she gave him a pamphlet requesting him to read it with patience and come back to her for further discussion on the matter, if it was at all necessary.

Patiently Heijblom started reading the pamphlet but turning the very first page he found some direct answers to the problems which were haunting his mind for the last several years. His doubts began to melt away and on the next day he came back to the lady to express his gratitude and to enquire whether she had any other books of that type and also to know about the author who had so lucidly dealt with the intricate problems of religions and solved almost all his doubts. The lady told him that it was Swami Vivekananda who had come from India and delivered some speeches in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago as well as in many other places in America. When asked about the Swami's whereabouts, the lady, however, could not give him any definite answer. Only she informed

that most probably the Swami had gone back to India. It was then 1896 or so. Swami Vivekananda was then still in U.S.A. delivering his lectures in different parts of the country. But the lady was not aware of it. So Heijblom missed another chance of meeting Swami Vivekananda.

The little book, however, did not give him rest and he began to enquire of the Swami wherever he happened to go on his business concern. At last he came to know in 1899 that the Swami was still in U.S.A. and had opened a Vedānta centre at New York to hold Vedānta classes regularly. After some search he reached the place and found to his much relief that really a Swami was there and he was regularly taking classes on Vedānta and other religious matters. But it was not the Swami he was searching for. The Swami here was Swami Abhedananda, one of the brother-disciples of Swami Vivekananda.

However, he found some satisfaction here and began to attend the classes regularly. He was also getting all information about Swami Vivekananda here from time to time including the Swami's health and whereabouts. He was being told that the Swami was not in his health after his return to India and his physicians and friends were advising him to take some rest and have some change. The place for his change was not then settled. One day while they were attending their classes, suddenly an information came—probably by a cable, that Swami Vivekananda was coming shortly to the West for a change and he would come to New York via London. The little group which was attending the class became agog with emotion and expectation to see and hear Swami Vivekananda whom many of them had no occasion to meet or hear before. But to their dismay they were told that as the Swami was not in his health, he was not expected to take any serious discourse, far less to deliver any speech.

In time, however, the Swami arrived and

all his friends and admirers received him at the station and took him to the Vedānta Centre. The Swami looked tired and was not allowed to speak much at that time. From the next day, however, he was full of fun and joy and was receiving his old friends with his accustomed wit and love. Nothing much extraordinary was found in him at that time, save that he could have a wonderful memory to call many by their old names he used to call them four years back and to enquire of their children. Some came to tease him with naughty questions particularly about the customs of India viz. the throwing of children by the Indian mothers into the mouths of crocodiles, burning of *sati* etc. One day a lady came with a picture in her hand. It was that of an Indian mother throwing her child into the mouth of a crocodile. The lady came in an agitated mood and asked the Swami whether he could deny the fact or confirm it. The Swami calmly replied, 'Yes, madam, surely that is the practice in our country and I too was thrown by my mother into the mouth of a crocodile but see how I have come out of it; and that is the case with all the children of our country whom your clergymen have taken so much pain to picture in that way.'

At another time when the Swami was smoking a costly cigarette a young man came. The young man found the same unbearable and tauntingly asked him whether he knew the name of the cigarette he was smoking. Here, too, the Swami remained absolutely calm, called the arrogant youth by his side and in a whispering tone asked whether it was fair to tell the name of one's own beloved to anybody. The young man could not find out the meaning of it whereupon the Swami said, 'you know, this (cigarette) is my most beloved and so how do you expect me to disclose its name?'

In this way the Swami replied to all who came with questions and also pointed out to them that there were evils in their society too, and no society on earth could boast of being completely free from any evil. So it was better to cure one's own disease than to meddle into the affairs of others. Hereafter no one dared to put such questions to him again.

After a few days when the Swami partially regained his health, he agreed to speak before the members of the Society provided the group was small. So at last the much awaited day arrived. To quote Swami Atulanandaji's own words, 'We all assembled a few minutes before the schedule time of his speech. Swamiji came and took his seat among us and began to make his usual fun with almost all of us. We found nothing uncommon with him even at that time. Gradually the time for the lecture came. Swamiji slowly left his seat and went to the pulpit, and from that place he looked around as if to make a survey of his audience. Then we found he was no longer the Swami who had so long been with us. He appeared to be a quite different person, nay a giant. We had among us philosophers, scientists, historians etc., all of high intellect and social positions. But before him we looked as so many pigmies. All our intellect, brilliance, social status were cast into insignificance and with a pindrop silence we heard every word that fell from his lips. It was inspiration through and through and we all returned with our hearts full of joy and bliss.'

Swami Vivekananda could not stay long at New York this time. But his very presence, though short, his inspiring talks and speeches were enough for young Heijblom to leave his hearth and home and to become Swami Atulananda of the later days in the Ramakrishna Order.

THE MIND AND MESSAGE OF SRĪ ŚANKARA

DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

INTRODUCTION

IN a world where one half lacks a coherent faith and the other half has the regimented faith based on Dialectical materialism, class-conflict, and the *deterministic theory* of man and his nature, the philosophy of Śaṅkara has an irresistible appeal to the man of reason and to the children of science. It is the 'Philosophy for our Times,' which would ensure for us sane and fruitful living. Today the function or the role of religion is being increasingly questioned, and its relevance to our life is disputed. The different cults, and the denominational religions cut no ice. They make for division and conflict. Clever minds cry out, 'Does it pay to be religious?' Those who burn with a sense of social justice and abundant humanity and compassion for all, feel that religion as practised today by the different cults and the professional hypocrites, is worthless at its best and vicious at its less best. Many justify the existing social evils of the day in the name of religion. We have religions that are frankly anti-humanistic and anti-rational. Many ask us to surrender our soul and be saved. In short most of the denominational and sectarian cults have no sympathy with the social aspirations of men and do not satisfy the demands of logic nor the requirements of humanity and do not care to foster world unity. All these defects do not taint the rational religion of Advaita. Dr. Radhakrishnan's estimate of Śaṅkara sums up the excellence of his thought: 'Supreme as a philosopher and a dialectician, great as a man of calm judgment and wide toleration, Śaṅkara taught us to love Truth, respect Reason and realize the purpose of life. . . . He de-

stroyed many an old dogma, not by violently attacking it, but by quietly suggesting something more reasonable which was at the same time more spiritual too.'

Commenting on Śaṅkara's method, the masterly English translator of the *Sūtra-bhāṣya* Dr. Thibaut remarks in his erudite introduction: 'Śaṅkara's method enables him to recognize the existing differences which other systematizers are intent on obliterating. And there has yet to be made a more important admission in favour of his system. It is not only more pliable, more capable of amalgamating heterogeneous materials than other systems, but its fundamental doctrines are manifestly in greater harmony with the essential teachings of the Upaniṣads than those of other systems. . . . The task of reducing the teaching of the whole of the Upaniṣads to a system consistent and free from contradictions is an intrinsically impossible one. But the task being given, we are quite ready to admit, that Śaṅkara's system is most probably the best that can be devised.' (It is surprising the same author affirms that the *Vedānta-Sūtras* are more in tune with the philosophy of Rāmānuja)

The imposing metaphysical system of Śaṅkara is hailed as the peer to those of Kant, Plato and Hegel in the West by great thinkers like Deussen and Max Müller, and the orientalist Daniel H. H. Ingalls describes Śaṅkara's works in glowing terms. He writes: 'The method in the hands of Śaṅkara affects one almost as a great physical act of courage. The boldness is astounding, as the sonorous prose in which it is set is fascinating. If one has taste of grandeur; if one relishes for example the poetry of Lucretius with "Its flaming walls

of the universe" one cannot be unmoved by the sonorous prose of Śaṅkara where these flaming walls tumble down'.

The method is best described as 'the progressive discovery of truth'. It is critical and dialectical. He passes in review the position taken up by other systems and criticizes them after expounding their standpoint in full, with an expertness and impartiality which the very upholder of the system cannot do. In the process of the criticism he never fails to note the varying fullness, the philosophical worth and the logical acumen of other systems. The lower is criticized in the light of the higher in which it finds its fulfilment.

BLESSED ENQUIRER

Tradition hails the advent of Śaṅkara as the very incarnation of Śiva. In *Śaṅkara-vijaya* we have the verse, proclaiming the advent and the mission of Śaṅkara's life :

'The great Śiva had assumed the form of Dakṣiṇāmūrthi to impart philosophic wisdom through silence under a celebrated banyan tree. This prince of taciturnity, in order to save all the people lost in the forest of ignorance, scorched by the flames of the forest-fire of *saṁsāra*, out of abundant compassion rose from his seat, broke his silence, and chose to walk on earth in the person of Śaṅkarācārya'.

Śaṅkara appeared at a time similar to ours. The ritualists called Mīmāṃsakas, filled the hour with hectic ritual and propitiation of the multiple gods to secure property, progeny and health here and perpetual pleasure hereafter. The Hedonism preached by this school made them forget humanity and made them individual egotists. There was the ascetic who was torturing his self to know the truth. In such an age Śaṅkara the boy-Philosopher interpreted the coherent philosophy enshrined in the Upaniṣads, *Gītā* and the

Brahma-Sūtras, revealing the Philosophy of the unity of existence, the fellowship of faiths, the dignity and divinity of man as the basis of human compassion.

Śaṅkara was born in A.D. 788 of Nambudiri Brahmin parents Śivaguru and Āryambā in Kaladi. His parents ardently prayed for his birth to the Lord in Trichur temple. Śivaguru passed away soon after the boy was born. Śaṅkara early in life evinced precocious mastery of all Vedic lore and the different branches of ancient wisdom. In conformity with tradition he was initiated into *brahmacarya*, which is regarded as the second birth for man opening up his spiritual eye. It was prophesied that the child would live only for eight years. The fascination for *sannyāsa* was deep in the future world-teacher. Śaṅkara had not the usual hankering for the satisfaction of the pleasures of the senses, nor for the exercise of power or pelf or position. He had an intense reflective turn of mind and possessed an in-drawn personality. He had a mission and an ideal that directed him. He had no time to waste or luxuriate in the trifles of life.

Tradition records an incident which gives us a powerful insight into Śaṅkara's love of *sannyāsa*. The boy went to his village river for his daily bath and a crocodile caught hold of his feet. He cried out to his mother to grant him permission to renounce the world and take to *sannyāsa*; for the acceptance of '*āpat-sannyāsa*' would ensure his life. Then Śaṅkara went to the banks of Narmadā and took orders from Govinda, the disciple of the celebrated Gaudapāda. As a *sannyāsin* he travelled all over India on foot, impressing on us the fact of the unity of India. He defeated many an opponent and the supporters and expounders of anti-Vedic systems of philosophy. He went to Badri and Varanasi, and wrote his memorable

commentary on the *Vedānta-Sūtras* and it was approved by Vyāsa. He established different *Maths* all over India.

His works run into twenty volumes (memorial edition printed in Srirangam Vani Vilas Press). They can be classified into four distinct sections: (A) Commentaries: (1) on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, (2) twelve principal Upaniṣads, (3) *Gītā*, (4) *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, *Sanat Sujātīya* etc.; (B) Independent tracts on Philosophical topics explaining the system of ideas according to Advaita; (C) A series of poems explaining Advaita in one verse, in ten and in a hundred; (D) Devotional poems describing the path of the devotee in adoration of Śakti, Viṣṇu, Subrahmanya. His commentaries are known for their metaphysical brilliance and poetic excellence. They are clear and yet deep (*Prasanna-gambhīram*) penetrating as well as broad-based. It is only Śaṅkara's humility that makes him name his works as commentaries. They are not mere notes or annotations, but treatises that discuss and illuminate the mind and purify the hearts of men. It is his style that has earned for him a permanent place among the philosophic Sanskrit prose writers of India.

SUPREME DIALECTICIAN

The great philosophical insight of Śaṅkara has immense significance for religion. Before we pass on to the estimate of the function of reason which he uses to explain the Śruti let us know his view of the Śruti. The Śruti or the Veda to Śaṅkara is all not of one degree of importance. He holds that there is a great divide between the two parts of the Vedas, the ritual section i.e. *karmakāṇḍa* and the *Jñānakāṇḍa* i.e. the section relating to Brahman and spiritual realization. One deals about *dharma* delivering injunctions and prohibitions and awarding heaven and

hell as the rewards for those who obey the behests. It is a kind of supernatural pragmatism which makes *karma* the sovereign power in the world.

Śaṅkara feels that this section does not describe the ultimate truth of the Vedas. They deal only about the secondary categories, *dharma*. *Karma* cannot give us *mokṣa* even if it is infinitely pursued. According to Śaṅkara the Upaniṣads which represent the nature of Brahman convey the ultimate message. To realize the Brahman, which is already real and existent is the goal of man. The individual soul due to a fundamental ignorance has the feeling that the pluralistic world of souls and objects is real. It is this deep-rooted, firm, but false conviction that makes men hate one another, make war, cry down and destroy others. This separatist illusion (*dvaita-bhrānti*) is to be overcome for the realization of Brahman. This is not to be had as the result of action, but through real knowledge. Bondage is due to *ajñāna*, release is due to its opposite *jñāna*. Śaṅkara also rejects the compromise solution i.e. of *samuccaya-vāda*, the combination of *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti*. In his assertion of *jñāna* as the sovereign method for spiritual realization, he is not slow to realize the degree of worth in *karma* and *bhakti*. He urges that *karma*, when done selflessly as dedication to the Lord secures *sattvaśuddhi* (cleansing of the heart). It cleans the mind which is a necessary step for the removal of *ajñāna*, though not a direct and immediate step. Genuine *bhakti* makes us realize the finite failings in us. Śaṅkara, very clearly demarcates the two sections of the Vedas and asserts the difference in the values they pursue and places the real significance of the Śruti in Brahman realization. When Śaṅkara asserts that the Upaniṣads embody the final and true gospel of the Vedas, he does not rely on all the passages

in the Upaniṣads as stating the truth. Authority is not claimed for all the statements of the Upaniṣads, only the purportful scriptures lay bare the meaning. To determine the meaning of the Upaniṣadic passages there are the six determinate marks of purport, and among those reason (*upapatti*), appears to be only one of the marks of the purport, in reality its functioning is important, in the determination of all other marks of purport also. Further, applying the scheme of six *tātparyā liṅgas*, Śaṅkara establishes 'the non-difference of the individual soul to Brahman, the unreality of the world and the absolute reality of the non-dual spirit' as the prime purport and real message of the Vedānta. The method followed by him is simple but appears subtle. He classifies the Upaniṣadic passages into two categories, those passages that embody the ultimate truths, *tattva-vedaka Śrutis* and *atattva-vedaka Śrutis* i.e. those that speak of the apparent reality. Śaṅkara argues that the function of the Śruti is not to explain things that are already disclosed to us through perception or inference. The Upaniṣads seek to tell us something that we do not know and cannot know through any other instrument than the Vedas. The *abheda-vākya*s i.e. the identity passages disclose the novel truth of the unity of existence as well as the non-difference of the individual soul to Brahman and this is not disclosed by the *bheda Śrutis*. The *bheda Śrutis* merely elaborate the phenomenal world that is superimposed on Brahman. They confirm what we know through experience and other sources of knowledge. The scriptures are authoritative only in respect of that truth which cannot be had through any other sources. The law of novelty is insisted on (*aprāpte śāstrānām pramāṇam*), scripture is authoritative in respect of those truths that cannot be had from any other source. Relying on this principle

Śaṅkara argues that the supreme purport of the Upaniṣads is the identity of the individual soul with Brahman. Those *bheda Śrutis* that speak of difference between the soul and Brahman are not the prime purport. They are stated and refuted. The reason for rejecting the *bheda Śrutis* is that they do not give us any novel idea which we cannot have through other sources. *Apūrvatta* (novelty) is the criterion for the rejection of those scriptures. Hence, we find that the philosophical categories of Advaita Vedānta flatly contradict the deliverance of common sense. To the utter irritation of the realists Śaṅkara asserts that the worlds of men and things are unreal, because they are seen and perceived, because they are particular and finite and because, they are non-sentient. The truths of Advaita have to be learnt from the Śruti primarily, and not from mere intellection. They have to be explained secondarily with the help of logic and argumentation. In the plenary sense they have to be experienced. Spiritual experience carries with it self-certifying validity. The Śāstras in the ultimate analysis are only *jñāpakas* and not *kāraṅkas*. From this we gather that Advaita is not a facile acceptance of Śruti: Advaita is based on examined Śruti.

If Śaṅkara is not a blind literalist, nor is he an arrogant free thinker who built his philosophy on the basis of pure reason and human logic. This is not to say that he was illogical or inconsistent. If he was critical of the Vedas, he also was equally critical of reason and its functionings. He did not believe in logic for its own sake. He knew that human reason is at best a double edged instrument. It cuts both ways. It is in the words of our national poet Tagore 'all blade and no handle'. It cannot function in a vacuum. It cannot supply ends. It can work out the ends it is supplied, be they good or ignoble.

Hence it is described by Hume as the 'slave of passions.' In his commentary on a significant *sūtra* Śaṅkara prescribes the limits of reason. He writes, 'Mere reasoning cannot be depended upon in matters which must be understood in the light of revelation. Reasoning rests on individual opinion. The arguments of some clever men are refuted by others. On account of the diversity of men's opinions it is impossible to accept mere reasoning as a sure guide. Even men of outstanding intellectual eminence such as Kapila, Kaṇāda and others are seen to contradict one another. As against this if it be contended, that all reasoning is not unsound, even this assumption is based on reasoning. Further, it is possible for rationalists to argue, that if all reasoning is baseless, then the whole cause of our practical life will come to an end.'

Śaṅkara concludes that all reasoning as such is not useless. That reasoning which is not opposed to and is in accord with the prime purport of the Śruti is valid. Mere reason is inconclusive. It can prove or disprove anything. Reason can argue, it cannot discover or demonstrate. Though Śaṅkara does not accept the exclusive and sole deliverances of reasoning as ultimate truths, he is not slow to know the power of reason and its function in human development. The Upaniṣads themselves declare that Vedānta is not for 'one that is intellectually indolent. It requires a razor like mind to comprehend the truths of Vedānta. *Vicāra*, *jijñāṣā*, *manana* are not possible without the functioning of the intellect'.

Śaṅkara knew through his astute intellect that Reason has a limited role. On occasions he says that Advaita Vedānta can be stated in terms of rational philosophy. It is not a merely scriptural revelation. This he does in his commentary on the *Gauḍapāda Kārikā*.

Throughout the *bhaṣya*, in many places Śaṅkara speaks of the glory of reasoning. He writes 'that a hundred scriptural statements cannot turn blue into red or make fire cold'. He counsels us to argue, but not to argue perversely. Śaṅkara the giant intellect that he was has refuted the Logicians, the Sāṅkhyas, the Buddhists and the Mīmāṃsakas in his commentary on the *Tarka-Pāda* with the help of logic. Any one who reads the commentary of Śaṅkara on the first two *pīdas* of the second chapter will see how it regales the mind of the most astute metaphysicians and at times even baffles the expert. Hence, the *bhaṣya* is described at once as lucid and deep (*prasanna-gambhīram*). Śaṅkara's conception of reason holds the balance. He is not subjugated by reason though he is fascinated by it. Reason shakes men, but the mere reasoning power of argument does not shatter him. He is neither an abject flatterer of reason, nor is he its determined enemy. He uses it in the measure one should do without violation to the spiritual advancement of man.

WONDERFUL PHILOSOPHER

The Philosophy of Śaṅkara has to be viewed from three points: (1) It is a system of ideas. (2) It is a distinct integrated view of life. (3) Śaṅkara is a spiritual guide who has travelled for us the way of spiritual life. The philosophy of Śaṅkara is described as Absolute Idealism in West. Śaṅkara affirms the unity of existence as Spirit, infinite, non-composite, homogeneous Brahman. Brahman is *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda* (reality, intelligence and bliss). These constitute its essence (*svarūpa-lakṣaṇa*). They are not attributes. There is nothing real besides Brahman for us to describe it. All is Brahman. Brahman is Absolute, secondless (*ekam eva advitīyam*). If there is anything different from Brahman or other

than Brahman, then Brahman cannot be 'Absolute'. Differences and distinction are only compatible with what is finite and not with what is infinite. It does not undergo any change (*vikāra*) e.g. birth, growth, decay and death. It is immutable perfection (*kūṭastha-nitya*). It is the plenitude of Being. It cannot be described in terms of discursive reasoning or relational modes of knowledge; for it is not an object of knowledge as other objects pitted against a subject. Though it cannot be intellectually described, it can be experienced in spiritual realization. Its existence can be ascertained from the scriptures. Reasoning establishes its probability. Śaṅkara argues the existence of Brahman on *triple* authorities, scripture, experience and logic.

Though Brahman cannot be directly known, It can be pointed to and described negatively or indirectly. All the scriptural descriptions attempt to give indirect definition of Brahman (*taṭastha-lakṣana*). When Brahman is described as *sat*, what is sought to be indicated is that it is not unreal (*anṛta*), when described as *cit*, inertness is denied about it, when described as *ānanda*, the nature of misery is denied about it. Brahman is regarded as the root cause of all creations. Here too Śaṅkara strikes an original path. Perfection i.e. Brahman does not create the world or get itself transformed into the world of plurality. The world is not a product or *vikāra* (transformation of Brahman), but is the appearance (*vivarta*) of Brahman. Brahman appears as the world of matter and soul. The reality of the world is Brahman. But for Brahman there will be no world-appearance. But the relationship is not reciprocal. It is one-sided causation. Hence, no defect of the world touches Brahman. World appearance is due to *Māyā*. *Māyā* is what is not real. *Māyā* hides Brahman and shows up on its

place the world. It is a complex activity of suppression and substitution. It projects what is not. All our activities including the spiritual are possible and are sustained only if we have the separatist illusion. Otherwise all activity will come to a standstill. We do not know, how or when we got this illusion. Nobody walks into an illusion knowing it to be an illusion. Then it will no longer be an illusion. *Māyā* is beginningless (*anādi*) but it can be put an end to. Hence, it is not eternal, with the result Brahman alone is eternal. Whatever that is a product of *Māyā* is indeterminable as real or unreal, nor can it be a combination of the real and unreal. It is *anirvacanīya* in terms of the real and unreal. As long as this *Māyā* is there, one is sure to experience conflict and competition and nurse the feelings as mine and thine. In short it is this *avidyā*, this *dvaita bhrānti* that stands in the way of the realization of the *advayabhāva* i.e. the *sarva-ātma-bhāva*. Only the realization of the unity of existence can bring about fellowship among men and amity between the different creeds. Śaṅkara's clarion call is to realize the oneness of the Self in all. Such a realization can be achieved by the true knowledge of the Self. It is there. It is not a production, like an action. It is not a place of resort to which we have to travel. It is not a transformation. In short, it is not *utpādya*, *āpya*, or *samskārya*. It is our true nature which is to be realized. It is to be revealed. Hence it is called Self-realization. *Karma* and *bhakti* are contributory to it. Ceremonial purity cleanses the doors of perception and prepares the soul for the vision. If the window panes are dirty we cannot see clearly. Hence is the need for *ātma-suddhi*. We should listen to the scriptural truths the *upadeśa* of an enlightened *guru* and that is *śravaṇa*. The truths taught by the *upa-*

deśa have to be pondered over for a time examining their pros and cons, to get at the conviction of the truth, and that is *manana*. We have to continue to meditate on the Vedāntic *mahā-vākyas*, till we experience them in our very person, here and now, and that is *nididhyāsana*. *Bhakti* is the exercise in the process of self-identification with the Lord and the process of dissolving the ego. Śaṅkara, in his *Śivānandalaharī* describes the *bhakti* of the celebrated Śaiva hunter-saint Kannappar: 'The contact of the worn out shoe gave immense pleasure to Śaiva's body, the water brought in the mouth became the ceremonial bath, the swine's flesh which had been tasted before it was offered became his delicious food, what will not *bhakti* do? Lo! the barbarian became the best among the *bhaktas*'.

Śaṅkara does not down-grade *bhakti*. He is a great *bhakta*. The Absolute of Śaṅkara appears when viewed in relation to the world as God i.e. *Īśvara*. He is the creator, sustainer etc. of the world. The world is not a product of mere material forces, nor is it the accidental collocation of atoms, nor is it the evolution of an insentient Nature. It is the Work of *Īśvara*. *Īśvara* is *Saguṇa* Brahman. The *Nirguṇa* Brahman and *Saguṇa* Brahman are not two, nor are they antithetical. Without worship of the personal God, Advaita realization becomes difficult. Not by ignoring God, do we reach the Absolute, but by worshipping and transcending the worship we realize *mokṣa*. It is not correct to describe Śaṅkara as an atheist. If anything he is a super-theist. Śaṅkara has great respect for tradition. He does not want to break from them violently. He claims no originality for his majestic system, but declares, that his system is a synthesis or systematization of the doctrines in the triple texts.

He believes above all in the dignity and

freedom of man to overcome any limitation. He identifies the individual soul with Brahman. The essence of the soul in man is not the body, nor the mind, nor a complex of elements and *koṣas*. It is not the sense organs. It is not mere thought or intellect. It is not the transmigrating soul which is the agent of action and the enjoyer of fruits. In essence it is non-different from Brahman. The soul of man is not a banished stranger, but is Brahman. The four *mahā-vākyas* are: *Ayam Ātmā Brahma, Tat Tvam Asi, Aham Brahmāsmi, Prajñānam Brahma*. This experience was the rediscovery of Śrī Śaṅkara. It is this message that constitutes his title to undying fame, as the great world teacher. He summarized his entire philosophy in half a verse affirming the truth of three propositions: (i) The reality of Brahman, (ii) the non-reality of the world, (iii) the non-difference of the individual soul from Brahman.

GREAT WORLD TEACHER

The greatness of Śaṅkara is disclosed in his conception of human nature. Two very different conceptions of human life are struggling for the mastery of the world, based on different conceptions of human nature. The militant atheistic creeds regard man as a puppet in the grip of mechanical, economic and psychological forces with predictable responses to outer stimuli, some others of this creed regard man as a puerile passion. His freewill is denied and history is described as the working out of a machine. They believe that man is determined by several calculable forces. The alarmists of this school do not believe that human nature can change. The leopard cannot change its spots. So they despair about man. Yet other view is that man is essentially good and divine. He is not only perfectible and educable but is perfection under limitation. Śaṅkara

takes the second view and does not despair about man. His spiritualism is humanistic. He affirms the integrality of man and God, and sounds a spiritual note. His catholic outlook does not make him regard other religions as his rivals, nor does he look upon them as material for reclamation or recrimination. He regards all religions as alternate approaches to one and the same Reality, the differences arising from the temperamental distinctions. Only if all men are basically equal in essence, can we command that they should be treated as equals in one another's eye and equally respected. 'There cannot be happiness for any of us until it is won for all.' Nothing can integrate mankind at all levels as the *sarvātmabhāva* proclaimed by Śaṅkara. When our faith was drooping in for the efficacy of eternal values, Śaṅkara held it up for us by his message of hope.

Śaṅkara's fame has found references beyond the frontiers of India. A famous inscription in a dilapidated temple in the jungles of Cambodia, belonging to the times of Indra Varma reads as follows :

Yenādhītāṇi Śāstrāṇi Bhagavat-Śaṅkara āhvayāt ;

niśseṣa sūrimurdhātāmālāḍhā dīṅhrāpankajāt—

The heads of all scholars, like bees worship the lotus like feet of an *ācārya guru* who is named Bhagavat Śaṅkara.

Śaṅkara puts his final faith in the self-validating spiritual experience (*aparokṣanubhūti*). Spiritual realization is the authentic *pramāṇa*. Spiritual experience is total and is not fractional. It is 'arriving at a goal without travelling'. It is a transforming experience where we have all doubts destroyed, disbeliefs dispelled and the tensions overcome. Spiritual experience alone gives us the certitude. We no longer see the things through the blinkers of the senses or discursive reason. It is an awareness of our basic reality. It

is clear vision, direct, vivid experience. It is not dialectical knowledge born of mental perspicacity or discursive thought. It is not the work of feeble imagination but is the fact of immediate comprehension. It is the natural condition of the Ātman. The realization of the mighty basic reality that Ātman is one and not many. Spiritual realization alone can give the fundamental faith for the fellowship of men. Without this realization our tall talk of the brotherhood of all is just conventional good manners. It has no roots. It will dry up and bear no fruits. According to Śaṅkara the fundamental and only Reality is spirit. It is designated by the term Brahman in the Upaniṣads. It is a non-composite homogeneous consciousness principle. Its *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* is *satyam*, *jñānam* and *anantam*. It is unconditioned existence, unexcellable bliss and is infinite. It is not brute matter. Śaṅkara does not hold to the doctrine of materialistic non-dualism *bhūtādvaita*. Reality is a consciousness principle. It is not an object of knowledge. It is not even a subject related to an object. It is a unique type of consciousness which is neither a subject nor an object. Subject and object are both in it. It is self-luminous and self-manifest. It makes all objects clear to us. It is ever present. As the *Gītā* puts it 'of the real there is no non-existence'. Brahman is unlike all things we know. It is posited on the authority of the Śruti. Brahman is declared as indeterminable. We cannot predicate anything about it for the simple reason, there is nothing besides it which it is not. Further to describe Brahman in terms of any predicate is to limit it. All description is a limitation. It militates against its infinitude. Whenever we describe anything we need a thing in terms of which to describe it. By what can we describe the knower of all knowledge? It is the basic reality hence it can-

not be described. Students of logic experience difficulties in method of description. In a description we have a subject and a predicate, and a relation connecting them. If we ask ourselves the question, is the relation the same as the predicate or subject or is it different? If we say it is identical, then there is no predication secured. If we argue that the relation is different from the predicate and the subject, then we need another relation to connect them. This lands us in infinite regress. Hence, the subject predicate relation which is the soul of all description is self-discrepant and is unintelligible in the last analysis, however useful it is in life. It is the aforesaid reason that makes Śaṅkara regard Brahman as indeterminate (*nirguṇa*).

The concept of *nirguṇa* is supported by Śruti and sustained by logic and human reasoning. The Realists who are accustomed to a subject-object logic are not able to comprehend the rich philosophical significance, and the astute logical thinking and the significance behind the concept. They put it down as a mere blank negation and equate it with *śūnya*. Śaṅkara knew his critics well in advance and had anticipated their superficial logical criticism. He writes 'Brahman that is devoid of determination appears to the dull witted as nothingness'. Brahman is the Real of the real. It is the cause of all that appears. Everything is explained in its terms. The *Kaṭha* declares 'when that shines, everything shines after that, by its light all this is lighted' (*tasya bhāsā sarvam idaṃ vibhāti*).

In the history of human thought, throughout the ages, we find that whenever ultimate Reality is clearly defined and precisely identified with the name and qualities of a particular deity, no doubt it makes for clarity. It establishes a sort of religious absolutism. One religion becomes

the enemy of another. The powerful ones ridicule the others, persecute them in the name of their absoluteness, seek to convert them by peaceful and other methods. This leads to religious wars, and the consequent brutalities perpetrated in the name of religions. We have in the words of Swift, enough religions to hate one another. We make stones of our hearts and believe that we alone possess the final absolute truth and others are in absolute folly.

Such a contingency does not arise in the case of Śaṅkara's Brahman. Each man and each religion seeks to spell Brahman in terms of its idiom and knowledge. The creedal formulations are many. All are the same Truth. The truth is one, but men call it by different names. The concept of Brahman as *nirguṇa*, overcomes the defects of a *unimpersonal* manifestation of God and its consequent dogmatism, inhumanity and intolerance. It makes room for the *Fellowship of Faiths* by stressing the fundamental unity of existence. Rigidly defined theologies, become intolerant and dogmatic. In their fanaticism they produce unbelievably horrible, large-scale crimes in the name of God. They are responsible for manifestly untrue and profoundly evil doctrines. They in their essential nature carry with them qualities that produce hate and controversy. Humorously Eckhart admonishes the devotee 'Why do you pray to God? Everything you say about God is untrue'. St. John of the Cross says:

'All that the imagination can imagine and the reason conceive and understand in this life is not and cannot be, a proximate means of union with God.'

Brahman is a formless, timeless, non-egoistic unitary consciousness which underlies all the apparently separate egos in the world. Brahman is simultaneously both Ātman and Brahman. The core of the self is Ātman. It is the veil that hides

the underlying consciousness principle from us. It is the real, waiting to be released. Śaṅkara's genius is shown in the way, he has logically exposed the defects in the prevalent doctrines of the relation between Brahman and the world and the souls. The most popular doctrine is the relation of the cause and the effect i.e. the creationist theory. The things of the world are created by God. The problem of creation and the logical concept of cause-effect relation are bristling with difficulties. There is the problem of evil, there is the difficulty of finding out an adequate and moral purpose for creation. The concept of causation is based on the concept of relation. We have already seen how the concept of relation is shot through and through with inconsistencies. The doctrine that the cause itself transforms into the effect is also not free of defects. If the world is the transformation of Prakṛti as the Sāṅkhyas describe, such an explanation is unintelligible because a meaningful evolution is not possible for an insentient Prakṛti. If the world is contended to be the transformation of Brahman itself such a position is assailed by a number of doubts. The imperfections of the world touch the perfection of Brahman. Further, there is the contingency of Brahman experiencing all the sorrows of all men, a position which falsifies the Upaniṣadic description of Brahman. The above doctrines are not satisfactory and it goes without saying that Śaṅkara felt the Buddhist doctrine far removed from truth. The Buddhist doctrine holds the view that knowledge of the existence of objects is a flux of momentariness. Nothing endured more than a moment. Śaṅkara criticizes the school of *Vijñānavāda* idealism from the standpoint of realism. He criticizes realism from the standpoint of idealism. He refutes the doctrine that objects are momentary in their existence.

He asks the question who is there to affirm that they come into existence and endure for a moment. Śaṅkara refutes the doctrine of the *Śūnyavāda* also. It is Śaṅkara's feeling of unsatisfactoriness that made him propound the *Vivartavāda*. The *Vivartavāda* holds the view that the cause and effect are not equally real. They belong to two different orders of Reality. They are not reciprocally dependent. The cause Brahman is not dependent on the effect. The effect is dependent on the cause. The defects and the different characteristics of the effect do not in the least affect the cause. It is one-sided type of causation. Such is the relation between the world and Brahman.

TRUE HUMANIST

Between the Brahman and the world there is no reciprocal relation. The world as effect is dependent on Brahman. Brahman is its cause. The world is not as real as Brahman. It belongs to a different and lower order of reality. Śaṅkara designates the reality of Brahman as *pāramārthikasattā* and the reality of the world as *vyāvahārikasattā* i.e. apparent reality. The world's reality is no doubt not absolute like that of Brahman. But this does not mean that Śaṅkara reduces the world to the level of dream experience. The world of dream experience is designated as *prātibhāsika* reality. The world is on a higher level than this. It is the World and it is not like the dream world, a separate world to each. So our world of waking life has objective significance. The world is not the creation of the *jīva* according to Śaṅkara. The *jīva* is only an enjoyer and *Īśvara* is its creator. The world of experience is the joint creation of the personal God of Śaṅkara and *Māyā*. Hence it is unfair to describe Śaṅkara as an illusionist. Dr. Radhakrishnan has described the position: 'un-

real the world is but illusory it is not'. Another important doctrine in the philosophy of Śaṅkara is the affirmation of the divinity of the individual soul. Many religions and systems of philosophy look upon man as the fallen angel. They say he is a creature and can never become the creator. They grant salvation to those to whom God gives His grace and the rest are thrown into hell. Śaṅkara's position is a bold contrast to the other views. He believes that it is the power of Māyā that hides man's real nature which is Brahman-hood, and projects in its place the finitude of man. With the onset of philosophic wisdom and the consequent spiritual realization, man realizes his real nature here and now on earth in the embodied state. *Mokṣa* is not an attainment of anything new. It is self-realization. It is not bringing into being something which is not there but is a being as well as becoming of what is already there. This is the concept of *jīvanmukti*. The spiritual experience is open to one and all. It is the birth right of all human beings. Śaṅkara affirms *sarvamukti*. His doctrines of *jīvanmukti* and *sarvamukti* are his unique contributions to Religion. These doctrines disclose the great tolerance and universalism, the characteristics of Śaṅkara's thought. Śaṅkara asserts the dignity and the divinity of man in this grand way. He declares in his commentary on the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 'that the excellence of man consists in his capacity to reason and in his free will' (*jñānakarmādhikāra*). Śaṅkara in a very illuminating passage towards the end of his commentary on the *Praśna Upaniṣad* states, 'the student of Advaita Vedānta, leaves the causes of the origination of all disputes among the disputants themselves, and keeps his sense of Real alive. Protected by their example the Knower of the Vedas reposes happily'. Śaṅkara laments the barren dialectics, vain argumenta-

tion, and the dry scholarship of the grammarians.

Brahmānubhava or the realization of the unity of existence i.e. *sarvātmabhāva* is an experience of the greatest value. It is *mokṣa*. It is liberation from all the trammels. It is valuable because it is self-evident. The experience brings about an wonderful transformation in our thought, feelings and character, and this is supremely desirable not only to us but is manifestly helpful and joyous to our fellow men. It is this experience that makes us understand the sense and the value of the unity and solidarity of the world. It is such an experience that enables us to practise universal compassion, ungrudging love, and understand the true meaning of such portentous phrases as 'God is love', 'the world is my family'. This experience in the Upaniṣadic terminology gives us fearlessness (*abhaya*); *abhaya* produces *ahiṃsā*. Fear of death is also overcome. In the words of Eckhart these men, 'give out in love what has taken in contemplation'. Spiritual experience is the strongest force for the regeneration of man. It is most powerful instrument for the remaking of man and through that for the establishment of a New Social Order. Men who busy themselves to improve others without such an experience act from mere habit and their Humanism has no roots. It disappears like the night's paint with the first wash in the morning. Hence the Upaniṣads and Śaṅkara refer to spiritual experience as the Great (*Bhūmā*) and as the basic to all our joys and experiences of bliss. Realization of the true nature of the self is bliss. The pursuit of this basic intrinsic pleasure is the highest a man seeks. In the celebrated dialogue between Maitreyī and her husband, she asks for that instruction and refuses all else. She asks her husband 'what shall I do with all this mass of things, if I do

not attain immortality by that'. Yājñavalkya says that there is no hope of immortality by wealth. Then he proceeds to instruct her that self-knowledge is the solvent of all evils and is the supreme pleasure. It is because of this all things are pleasant to us. They are pleasant not in or by themselves.

UNFAILING MESSIAH

The message of Śaṅkara has a terrific topicality. It has an abiding vitality in it. Its vitality is not meant for one age or one time. It is eternal. It is neither old nor new. It has a contemporary relevance for our age. We who live in the dawn of the atomic age have a great deal to learn from Advaita. The Advaita Philosophy is not a closed system of thought like other systems in the East or in the West. It is an attempt to rise above the view that we can intellectually give a completely satisfactory account of Reality. No system is a complete account of Reality. No system possesses the disclosure of the complete Reality. Hence it is wrong to define

Śaṅkara's Advaita as one other alternative to other systems. He does not subscribe to the logic of *either this or that*. He says all these systems and plus something else. He puts forth the objections to any way which claims to know the mystery complex. Hence, it is called *anirvacanīya*, indeterminable in terms of the real and the unreal. There is hardly any other system which is more universal than Śaṅkara's. His greatest contribution is his positive interpretation of Brahman. He restored the glory of the Upaniṣads and their message in an age of barren nihilism and the blind formalism of the Mīmāṃsakas. Śaṅkara's religion satisfies both the demands of the intellect and the needs of the human heart.

*Pramāṇa-siddhānta-viruddham atra
yat kiñcid uktam matimandyadoṣāt
Mātsaryam utsārya tadārya cittāḥ
prasādam āddhāya viśodhayantu*

May the noble minded scholars, instead of cherishing ill-will, kindly correct any error here committed through dullness of intellect in the way of wrong statements and interpretations.

LIFE AND VISION OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(MISS) CHELA VARRENTZOFF

HIS ADVENT

'Welcome, Prince of Men!' 'Hail, Servant of God!' 'Heartly Greetings of Awakened India!' 'Long Live the Venerable Vivekananda!' With such mottoes blazoned throughout its cities did India welcome the monk who had gone to America, four years earlier essentially an unknown man. Yet, upon his return from the West in January, 1897, while travelling by stages from Colombo to Madras, Swami

Vivekananda received everywhere the adoration and homage of thousands upon thousands of his countrymen. At one place his carriage was drawn by a group of devotees, at another, hundreds flung themselves on the tracks in front of his approaching train, forcing it to stop so that they might catch a glimpse of him.' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples, 1955, p. 467*)

Moreover, Swami Vivekananda not only inspired the Indian heart with patriotic fervour, religious enthusiasm, and humanitarian ideals, but he also impressed the Western mind and heart with an understanding of India's culture and ideals as well as a deep appreciation of her ancient religious heritage. For among all the delegates to the great Parliament of Religions held in connexion with the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, among all the cardinals, bishops, and other ecclesiastical luminaries, it was Swami Vivekananda of whom the *New York Herald* chose to write: 'He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions.' (ibid., p. 311) 'Life-size pictures of the Swami were posted up in the streets of Chicago with the words "The Monk Vivekananda" beneath them, and passers-by would stop to do reverence with bowed head.' (ibid.) Indeed, possessing nothing but a few changes of clothing and some books, having travelled to America on money enthusiastically raised by those who revered him, Swami Vivekananda made a profound impression on Americans everywhere. Soon after the Parliament of Religions, at which he was so eminently successful, he was invited to make a lecture tour and thus he travelled to Chicago, Iowa City, Des Moines, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Detroit, Hartford, Buffalo, Boston, Cambridge, Baltimore, Washington, Brooklyn, and New York. Later he went to Memphis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and many other cities. Madame Calvé, the singer, Sarah Bernhardt, the actress, and William James, the philosopher, greatly admired him. Many were the praises sung to him by the newspapers in various cities. One reporter wrote: 'The workings of his mind, so subtle and so brilliant, so well stored and so well trained, sometimes dazzled his hearers.' (Marie Louise Burke: *Swami*

Vivekananda in America—New Discoveries, 1958, p. 571) 'He is an artist in thought, an idealist in belief and a dramatist on the platform,' wrote another. (ibid.) In the *Memphis Commercial* we read: 'His learning embraces such a wide range of subjects and his knowledge is so thorough that even specialists in the various sciences, theology, art and literature, learn from his utterances and absorb from his presence.' (ibid., p. 573) The Swami's 'astonishing fund of knowledge on every subject and his insight into every person and every situation were so devoid of self-consciousness and egotism that they enhanced rather than concealed his childlike nature.' (ibid., p. 575)

Various described as a 'thunderbolt' and a 'burning, roaring fire consuming all impurities,' Swami Vivekananda impressed both Western scholars (he was offered the chair of Eastern Philosophy at Harvard University after a lecture he delivered to the Graduate Philosophical Society at Harvard on March 25, 1896) and Eastern Princes (the Maharaja of Khetri and others especially were his staunch admirer), society people in New York as well as beggars in India. Contrast was, to be sure, a key to Swami Vivekananda's life. On the one hand he was entertained by the princes, professors, inventors, and other important people; on the other hand the life of the wandering monk was his ideal for many years. He walked the length and breadth of India, went often for days on end with no food, and lived among India's poorest as well as her richest. To anyone who liked one of his few possessions he said, 'What you admire is already yours,' and gave away the object with joy. In America much of Swami Vivekananda's lecturing and all his classes were given without cost, and the money that he did earn was immediately sent back to India for relief and educational work or given to

American charities. Never did he seek fame or credit; everything he offered to God and to his spiritual teacher, Sri Ramakrishna. Having lived a simple life, having served humanity well, Swami Vivekananda passed away sixty-three years ago. And today his influence has grown rather than diminished.

For example, the Ramakrishna Mission, which the great Swami started, runs at present scores of large modern indoor hospitals, and well as equipped outdoor dispensaries and maintains a wide net work of schools, colleges and students' homes of diverse types and denominations. These nursing and educational activities form only one part of the vast number of humanitarian projects which are now being carried on in Swami Vivekananda's name all over the world. To the large-hearted man of genius, Vivekananda, homage had been paid by thousands, and among them were Sri Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mahatma Gandhi; and with the increasing notice that is being taken of the Swami the questions have been repeated again and again: 'Who was this amazing figure?' 'What was he really like?' 'What kind of life did he lead in order to become so great that his influence might continue as a strong impetus for the relief of human suffering many years after his death?' Because of the interest in these questions, much research has been done on the life and personality of Swami Vivekananda.

HIS LIFE

He was born in Calcutta on January 12, 1863. His mother Bhuvaneshwari and father Viswanath Dutta named him Narendranath. His father was an attorney in the High Court of Calcutta. Naren was a mischievous and strong-willed boy; so much so, in fact, that his mother once declared, 'I prayed to Śiva for a son, and He

has sent me one of His demons.' But Naren was also sweet and loving, pure, and truthful. He liked the all-renouncing wandering monks. Being capable of deep states of concentration at a very early age, he had a strong tendency to meditate. From 1870 to 1877 Naren attended Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution. As a school-boy he was leader of such projects as visits to museums and zoos, and games and athletic competitions, at which he excelled. In 1877 Naren's father went to Raipur in the Central Provinces, and the family followed. As there was no school in Raipur Naren had an opportunity to be taught by his intelligent father, who believed that education was a stimulus to thought rather than a superimposition of ideas. In 1879 the family returned to Calcutta, where Naren studied three years' lessons in one and passed the College Entrance Examination in the first division. Thereafter Narendra attended the Presidency College for one year and then the General Assembly Institution founded by the Scottish General Missionary Board. Soon Naren began to rebel against the Hindu social system with its priestly autocracy and strict network of caste and creed. Yet, while rebelling, he did not take the evils of society as an excuse to let himself fall into degradation, but instead began to put all his energy into a search for answers, for Truth, for God, if He existed.

Naren became interested at this time in the Brahma Samaj, a movement which sought to liberalize and at the same time conserve the inborn aptitudes of the Hindu races. The movement encouraged belief in an Impersonal God with attributes and fought against image worship, polytheism, the Divine Incarnation theory, the caste system, child marriage, and several other Hindu practices and beliefs. Naren's father wanted him to marry and become an at-

torney, but Narendra was opposed to such a plan, for he felt that if he settled down to such a life, he would be hindered in his search for Truth and in his interest in God, which had now begun to take the form of a search for a person who had actually seen God. Naren did not want talk and excuses; he wanted actual perception of that in which he would believe.

Repeatedly disappointed by supposedly great spiritual teachers, and becoming rather disillusioned with the superficiality he was finding in the Brahma Samaj, Naren at last remembered Sri Ramakrishna, '... whom he had met for the first time at the house of a devotee of his (Sri Ramakrishna's) named Surendra Nath Mitra in November, 1881, whither Naren had gone to sing. The Master had been greatly attracted by the singing, had made inquiries about Naren and had even invited him to Dakshineswar' (where he was living). (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples, 1955, pp. 30-31*) Hence, Naren decided to go to Sri Ramakrishna, and he put forth his question, 'Have you seen God, sir?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized, one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.' This answer greatly impressed Naren; yet, when Sri Ramakrishna said to him, 'Lord, I know you are that ancient sage Nara—the Incarnation of Nārāyaṇa—born on earth to relieve the miseries of mankind,' Naren thought, 'He must be stark mad.' Still, Narendra greatly admired Sri Ramakrishna for the renunciation, lack of ego, and purity so obvious in his noble life. Naren was also deeply impressed by the

sane and worthy teachings that Sri Ramakrishna gave to some disciples later that day, and found it difficult either to believe that Sri Ramakrishna was insane or to believe that he, having said what he had, was quite sane. The next time he went to see Sri Ramakrishna, Naren lost all outward consciousness at a touch from him (everything appeared to Naren as to be whirling into a Void), and again, on the third visit, Naren also lost consciousness at Sri Ramakrishna's touch. Narendranath was certainly very perplexed about these experiences, since he knew that he had a strong mind and was convinced that hypnotism was impossible, since his mind had been set so strongly against it. Naren was skeptical; yet he had to admit that Sri Ramakrishna seemed to be a living ideal of renunciation, purity, and selfless love for all beings. How, he asked himself, could madness be present in a life in which there was such an intelligent outlook as well as such strong will and great love?

Naren had an open mind and was never one to decide on a question without making thorough efforts to understand the truth through his own experience. He made a searching analysis of the Master's realizations and mode of life, and, after observing Sri Ramakrishna's godly virtues, he decided to see if, as he had been assured, he could reach God with Sri Ramakrishna's guidance. Henceforth Narendra devoted himself to the task of realizing God and willingly accepted from Sri Ramakrishna the necessary advice and help which appealed to his reason. Sri Ramakrishna never required him to accept anything as true without submitting it to a test. That attitude of the Master in a very short time greatly increased 'Narendra's devotion, reverence and self-confidence, his capacity for personal endeavour and love of truth.' (Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna*

The Great Master, 1952, p. 763) Meanwhile, Naren continued to devour books and assimilate vast amounts of intellectual food. He early mastered the doctrines of Mill and other western logicians. He studied Descartes's doctrine centering around 'I, the doubter,' as well as Hume's philosophy, Bentham's atheism, Spinoza's pantheism, Darwin's theory of evolution, and Comte's positivism and Spencer's agnosticism. He studied the works of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and others of the German school. In order to learn how the nerves and brain are formed and how they function, he studied physiology and attended lectures at the Calcutta Medical College. In addition, all his life Naren studied the holy books and traditions of India. He read many volumes on history and on science and reached the point where he could get all the information out of a book by merely reading the first and last lines of pages.

Soon after Naren obtained his B. A. degree, his father died, and because Viswanath Dutta could never hold on to his money but gave it away in large quantities and spent freely, the family, used to a fair degree of luxury, found itself in severe financial straits. Narendra wandered about for months, and, half starving, walking everywhere under the burning sun, he sought work. Some of his acquaintances tried to induce him to a life of dishonesty, and several wealthy women made offers of money to him if he would offer them his favours, but Naren's burning purity made it impossible for him to be anything but firm in unhesitant refusal, yet sympathetic to those poor people who, not knowing what they were doing, sought a little worldly happiness and degrade themselves. It was partially through the poverty that he saw his family suffer that Naren's heart became softened and more acquainted with the actual condition of the suffering poor.

Also, through this poverty, Narendra's spiritual vision was broadened. For a long time Naren had ridiculed image worship and Sri Ramakrishna's remarks about his visions of God in the form of the Mother of the Universe. Naren was, however, ready to try anything; so he asked Sri Ramakrishna to ask the Divine Mother to relieve the sufferings of his mother and siblings. Sri Ramakrishna said that Naren had to do the asking. Naren protested but went in desperation to ask the favour and called on the Mother to show Herself if She existed. Indeed, he was then blessed with a vision of the Mother of the Universe, but so overwhelmed was he that all he could ask for was devotion and discrimination; the petty considerations of the world seemed to melt away in the Mother's presence. When he returned to Sri Ramakrishna, Naren told him that he was unable to ask the favour. He went back, and two more times the same scene was repeated. Later Naren was told by Sri Ramakrishna that his family would not suffer, and indeed, they never lacked plain food and clothing afterwards. Meanwhile, Naren had come to understand the profound reality persisting behind so-called image worship and never again ridiculed, but worshipped, the Mother of the Universe (the Dynamic aspect of Brahman) with great devotion. It was also at this time that Naren became seized with a desire for renunciation, and so burning was his spiritual sincerity and eagerness that Sri Ramakrishna was able to lead him through a tremendous panorama of spiritual experiences, which eventually culminated in the highest and most rare of spiritual realizations, *nirvikalpa samādhi*. Hence, in his later years of teaching, Swami Vivekananda never spoke of any spiritual truths which he himself had not experienced and realized.

Naren and Sri Ramakrishna came to

have a love and respect for each other that knew no bounds, because the love was not bodily or mental but based on the fact that each saw God in the other and revered the other in that light. Yet, they tested each other. Sri Ramakrishna tested the calibre of Naren's selflessness by ignoring him and treating him rudely for a short while; and also, later, by offering him psychic powers. Naren wanted neither favour nor occult powers for himself. Naren tested Sri Ramakrishna's aversion to money by putting a coin under his mattress, and indeed, later Sri Ramakrishna was unable to sleep and felt tortured; the mattress was examined and the coin removed. Sri Ramakrishna rejoiced to see that his pupil tested him and that he did not take remarks made about him (Sri Ramakrishna) as true without seeing for himself whether or not they were. In the beginning Narendra was just as opposed to Advaita—the doctrine of Monism, which declares that there is only one Reality and that that is God—as he was to the idea of God with form and to the worship of images as symbols. In fact, Narendra had exclaimed, 'There is no greater sin in the world than to think of myself identical with the Creator. I am God, you are God, these created things are God—what can be more absurd than this?' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples, 1955, p. 65*) Then, once when Naren was overheard ridiculing non-dualism, the Master in a mood of spiritual ecstasy touched Narendra. As a result Naren had a wonderful experience. He later said, 'I was aghast to see actually that there was nothing in the whole universe except God! The experience did not cease for several days. 'Since then,' Naren said, 'I could never doubt the truth of non-duality.' (Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master, 1952, pp. 769-770*)

When Sri Ramakrishna became seriously

ill, the band of young disciples gathered together in a tighter band and spent hours under his instruction, listening to his words of wisdom, and caring for him. Sri Ramakrishna chose Narendra as their leader, and before he passed away, it is said, he passed the spiritual power he had acquired through his life of austerity and purity to Naren and entrusted his message and mission to the world to Narendra. After Sri Ramakrishna's exit the young monks banded together at Baranagore, took vows of poverty and celibacy, and spent years in performing severe austerities with intense devotion, and altogether lived a life of burning renunciation. Then Naren began his wandering days, still, however, keeping in some contact with the devotees at Baranagore. He wandered through the northern centres of pilgrimages, the Himalayas, to Rajputana, the Bombay Presidency, and through southern India to Cape Comorin. All the way he practised the ideals of poverty, purity, and love that he had learned in Dakshineswar at the feet of the Master. He learned to know India; his heart began to beat for her suffering millions, and finally, sitting on the last bit of Indian rock at Cape Comorin, he hit upon a plan: 'We are so many *Sannyāsins*,' he thought, 'wandering about and teaching the people metaphysics—it is all madness. Did not our Gurudeva use to say, "An empty stomach is no good for religion"? That those poor people are leading the life of brutes is simply due to ignorance. We have for all ages been sucking their blood and trampling them under foot.' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples, 1955, p. 253*) He saw that renunciation and service must be India's two ideals.

He thus decided he would go to America and there obtain money to help India's people. Money was raised by his disciples in Madras, but he became uncertain as

to whether he was doing the right thing; so he asked his friends to distribute the money among the poor. Later, when money was again raised by his enthusiastic friends and when he had the blessing of Holy Mother (Sri Sarada Devi) for his project, he determined to go. In Chicago there was to be a Parliament of Religions, which Naren's friends very much wanted him to attend. Before sailing, Narendra took the monastic name, Vivekananda. Upon arriving in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda had no credentials, since none of his exuberant friends had thought such formalities necessary. However, the Swami met Prof. J. H. Wright, a professor of Greek at Harvard University, and the latter wrote to his friend who was chairman of the committee on the selection of delegates to the Parliament and highly recommended the Swami. Later everything was arranged so that the Swami could take part. It may literally be said that Swami Vivekananda entered the Parliament as an unknown monk and left it, to quote the words of Hon'ble Mr. Merwin-Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament of Religions, as the '... most popular and influential man ...' there. The whole crowd rose and cheered upon hearing his greeting 'Sisters and Brothers of America ...' Ovation for the Swami were tremendous, and people who would start to leave would stop and stay for hours if told that Swami Vivekananda would speak later. Immediately following his success at the Parliament of Religions Swami Vivekananda delivered lectures all over America. By 1895 he had changed his original idea of spending his time in earning money for India to giving intensive spiritual teaching in the West, where he found many earnest seekers of Truth. He established a centre in New York and held a very intensive training period for twelve disciples at Thousand Island Park. Thereafter he

went to Paris and London, where he had been invited by people he had met in America. In London the Swami gave lectures, to which the press had a very favourable reaction, and held classes at private residences, clubs, public halls, and in rented rooms. In December he returned to America, where he delivered lectures, held classes, and through correspondence guided the work of his disciples in India. In April he returned to London, whence he departed for India. On his return to India, as has previously been mentioned, tremendous crowds and decorated streets greeted him everywhere he went. In 1897 Swami Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission for the carrying out of his and Sri Ramakrishna's humanitarian ideals. Although his health had been shattered by his ceaseless work in America, he never stopped. Travelling all over India, he spread his message of strength, love, and wisdom and called upon the people to help him in his goal of regenerating India. Margaret E. Noble (Sister Nivedita) came from England and started a girls' school under the Swami's direction; and a permanent residence for the Sri Ramakrishna Math was established at Belur. Three magazines were started; famine, plague, and disaster relief works were organized; and schools and orphanages began to spring up as a result of the efforts of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna's other disciples. In June, 1899, Swami Vivekananda went to the West again to consolidate his work in England and America. Especially important were the six months that he spent in California, for during this time he established centres at Los Angeles and San Francisco. After leaving America the Swami spent four months in France, where he gave several lectures in French. He gave lectures in Athens, Constantinople, and various cities of Egypt. In December, 1900, he returned to

the Belur Math, thereafter made one short lecture tour, and then settled down to train the monks at the Math both in spirituality and in the skills and knowledge they would need to work in India and Europe.

The Swami had told the singer, Madame Calvé, that he would leave his body on July 4, and so it happened. (Marie Louise Burke: *New Discoveries*, p. 630) On July 4, 1902, a day during which he felt rather well, he passed away. (Those who knew him felt as if all joy and greatness had left the world; but they could take solace in the Swami Vivekananda's words, 'It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God!' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples*, 1955, p. 757)

HIS MESSAGE

Truly that statement embodies not only Swami Vivekananda's boundless enthusiasm and love for man, but also the core of his philosophy. The Swami's main concern was religion, not *a* religion, but *religion*. He once said, 'Of all the forces that have worked and are still working to mould the destinies of the human race, none, certainly, is more potent than that, the manifestation of which we call religion,' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, 1963, p. 57) and 'Religion', he said another time, 'is the manifestation, of the divinity already in man.' The real germ of religion was, as he saw it, a struggle to transcend the limitations of the senses, and so the essence of his religion is strength which is so vitally necessary to build character, to make religion '... not a creed, but an experience.' Indeed, religion as he says is not simply nice feelings or a charitable out-

look, but rather an exact science through which are known '... the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind' and through which the inner man is conquered and the subtle workings of the human mind are understood. 'Preach the philosophy, the spiritual part, and let the people suit it to their own forms,' he said, himself seeing and teaching that forms were but secondary and that in and through each creed, each set of religious forms, there was the '... same striving toward the same destination.' (Marie Louise Burke: *New Discoveries*, pp. 603-04 and 586) Spreading his Master's teaching of the harmony of religions, Swami Vivekananda explained, 'Contradictions come from the same truth adapting itself to the varying circumstances of different natures.'

As a universal religion which would suit different temperaments and stages of religious development, Swami Vivekananda propounded the Vedānta philosophy, which he saw not as a creed or a dogmatic form to which everyone must bow but rather as basic religion, by accepting the principles of which a follower of any or no creed could continue along his own path and at the same time be able to identify himself with every other creed and aspect of religion. The Vedānta that the Swami taught was the culmination of Vedic knowledge. It included Sāṃkhya philosophy. This Vedānta could be practised in every walk of life yet could also meet man's highest spiritual needs. It included every faith and noble effort of man, and it reconciled such modern conflicts as those between science and religion, faith and reason, spirituality and material advancement, work and contemplation, service to man and absorption in God. 'All of religion is contained in the Vedānta, that is in the three stages of the Vedānta philosophy, the Dvaita, (dualism—man and God), . Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism—

man and nature a part of God), and Advaita (monism—God alone exists, all appearances to the contrary being due to ignorance); one comes after the other. . . . The Vedānta applied to the various ethnic customs and creeds of India is Hinduism. The first stage, Dvaita, applied to the ideas of ethnic groups of Europe is Christianity; as applied to the Semitic groups, Mohammedanism. The Advaita as applied in its Yoga-perception form, is Buddhism.' (ibid., p. 603)

Renunciation Swami Vivekananda saw as the cornerstone of all true religion, and hence the practice of Vedānta requires continuous effort at total renunciation. The Swami said of this *sine qua non* of spiritual life, 'Renunciation is the very basis of our true life; every moment of goodness and real life that we enjoy is when we do not think of ourselves. (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 174) 'Without renunciation none can pour out his whole heart for others.' Most of the activities we find displayed around us everywhere are due to the struggle for infinite power or infinite pleasure. Ethics is based on renunciation of the search for that Infinite Power or Infinite Pleasure. Not self, but non-self is the aim. Man must give up the plane of matter and rise to other spheres to seek the deeper expression of that Infinite.

For, and now we come to the backbone, the practical methods, of Vedānta, 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more or all of these—and be free.' (*Thus Spake Vivekananda*, 1945, pp. 55-56) These four—work, worship, psychic control, philosophy—are the four *Yogas*, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Rāja*, and *Jñāna*, upon which the practice of Vedānta is based.

The essence of *Karma-Yoga* is given by the saying from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 'To the work you have the right, but not to the fruits thereof.' One may work, serving others and seeing them as the Lord Himself. Or one may work directly, worshipping the Lord in temples. Or one may work, offering all work to the Lord and thinking of Him constantly. It was through this teaching of selfless work and his emphasis on the divinity of man that Swami Vivekananda worked out the means by which spirituality and material well-being could be combined. People would uplift themselves spiritually with the right attitude towards work while at the same time they would be uplifting through their work the poor, sick, and starving human beings. *Karma-Yoga* also provided a means for reconciling service to man and absorption in God, work and contemplation. Surely one could spend time in contemplation, and then, such contemplation needed not to be interrupted, for one's work could take on the inward character of continuous deep contemplation, although outwardly very active. 'Look upon every man, woman, and everyone as God,' Swami Vivekananda said. 'You cannot help anyone; you can only serve; serve the children of the Lord, serve the Lord Himself, if you have the privilege.'

Love, surely, must enter into *Karma-Yoga*, and hence *Bhakti-Yoga*, the path of worship, is related to *Karma-Yoga*, for the essence of *Bhakti-Yoga* is love. *Bhakti-Yoga* generally consists in worshipping the Lord in temples, singing praises to Him, and loving Him with one's whole being; certainly this is a very exalted path to God. Swami Vivekananda, however, broadened *Bhakti* to love of all beings as God Himself when he said, 'Who loves all beings without distinction, he indeed is worshipping best his God.'

Jñāna-Yoga is the path of philosophy—the path of wisdom, freedom, and strength. Study of the scriptures is usually considered a major part of *Jñāna*, but the Swami especially emphasizes the bond-breaking energy along with a discriminatory power that comes with knowing the One Eternally Blissful Principle which is manifesting itself in all this variety. ‘Say to your own minds,’ he declared, “I am He, I am He.” Let us be brave. Know the Truth and practise the Truth. The goal may be distant, but awake, arise, and stop not till the goal is reached.’ (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 87) Again and again he stressed the importance of strength: ‘Know that all sins and all evils can be summed up in that one word—weakness.’ It is the motive power in all evil-doing, all selfishness, and all injuring of others. ‘All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future.’ (*Thus Spake Vivekananda*, 1945, pp. 8-9)

Swami Vivekananda often spoke about the human mind and its immense potential: ‘The mind uncontrolled and unguided will drag us down forever—rend us, kill us; and the mind, controlled and guided, will save us, free us.’ (*ibid.*, p. 35) Hence, *Rāja-Yoga*, the path of concentration and meditation, of psychic control, is of great importance in spiritual life, for it is by arduous efforts at controlling the wayward human mind that much spiritual progress and knowledge can be gained.

Vedānta, indeed, is a science in which, through detailed information and help concerning practices in *Bhakti*, *Jñāna*, *Rāja*, and *Karma-Yoga*, a *Guru*, or spiritual teacher (he might as easily be called a professor), teaches his pupils. The science that is taught is the science of spirituality which instead of leading to the secrets of atoms and esters, leads rather into the vast realm of superconscious experience. What more quarrel can there be between

science and true religion than between physics and anthropology? The two should rather complement each other. Faith and reason, too, need not be so opposed. Firstly, although Swami Vivekananda said religion was beyond logic in many respects since its realm was beyond the boundaries of human intellect, still, he believed, the facts of religion should not be contrary to reason. Secondly, no one should live a life of blind faith, but should experiment himself—with a proficient teacher—and should honestly try to experience the phenomena and facts about which he is curious.

‘Like moths hurling themselves against the flame, we are hurling ourselves again and again into sense-pleasures, hoping to find satisfaction there. We return again and again with freshened energy; thus we go on till crippled and cheated, we die.’ (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 119) Why, in the thoughtful moments we have after just being severely burned by the flame of worldly existence, we do not firmly and completely dedicate ourselves to practical research in the science through which our misery is explained and eliminated, is a mystery which is called *Māyā*. The Swami was free of the bonds of *Māyā*, a man of realization, who, knowing *Māyā*’s secrets, could tell men the Truth and lead them to the realization of it themselves; Vedānta he spread broadcast everywhere in order to take men from the hopelessness of sense enjoyment to the bliss of realization of their own identity with *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* — Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.

Yet, although Swami Vivekananda was a spiritual leader of the highest rank, he did not neglect the pleas and sufferings of bound humanity in any respect. A man had to be healthy, strong, and mentally alert before he could be a saint; so the great Swami worked for the starving and

the hungry common people as well as the spiritually hungry. 'At such periods he was literally mad for the regeneration of his motherland.' He wanted food, clothing, shelter, education, medicine, sanitation, and political freedom for the suffering people he saw around him as prerequisites to and in addition to spiritual freedom and eventual inner freedom from all the thorns of Māyā. Believing that India was in great need of Western material science while the West needed India's religious science, Swami Vivekananda wanted an exchange between East and West. Only by combining what was best in the East and West, he believed, could either civilization face the demands of the dawning modern age. Moreover, Swami Vivekananda was a man who knew those demands. Upon reading only a few lines spoken by him, one is immediately convinced that there is the man, one can say, a prophet, especially fitted to speak to the modern world, not just the world in 1900, but the world as it is today and most probably will be for several centuries.

Swami Vivekananda recognized the modern world as the Age of Analysis, as a time in which rationality and the intellect were important and revered. To logic and to rationality, to reason and to intellectual pursuits he was not only favourably but enthusiastically inclined. He himself was an intellectual giant born with a skeptical but always open mind as well as a great devotion to logic. One American reporter wrote of him, comparing him to a professor of mathematics, 'He advances no ideas, nor makes assertions that he does not follow up to a logical conclusion.' (Marie Louise Burke: *New Discoveries*, p. 572) Swami Vivekananda believed that modern man had been attempting to blaze a path of reason, like Buddha; like Buddha, he had been skeptical and iconoclastic; Buddha's agnosticism, pioneering

spirit, and thorough-going rationality had appealed to him. But modern man had not been ready, as Buddha had been, to push reason to its utmost limit and venture upon that tremendous voyage of the spirit which alone leads to moral and spiritual perfection. (ibid., p. 593) Modern man, rather than avoiding hypocrisy and instead trying to live a life in honest search of practical truth had rather displayed a tendency towards futile intellectual theorizing and argumentation. '...ninty-nine and nine-tenths per cent of those who attack religion (today) have never analysed their minds, have never struggled to get at the facts.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 163) Swami Vivekananda, in contrast, has provided the world with an example of a man who came to know religion as a genuine human fact, its goals realizable through realistic effort.

Two of the great gods of modern intellectuals, agnosticism and Western psychology, were justifiably taken to task by the Swami for, in the first case, ignoring the laws and truths of the Indian science of thought-control, and, in the second case, for miserably failing to cope with the superconscious aspects and laws of human nature. What the modern world needs is not modern popular psychologists' and philosophers' shuffling indecision, weakness, nor preoccupation with the average or lower-than-average man's anxieties and frustrations, but rather Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of strength and joy. Modern man needs to hear that, 'Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.' He needs to be informed that he is old-fashioned if he thinks he is an atheist if he does not believe in God. He is an atheist today only if he does not believe in himself!

And he should shake off his sour, anxious expression. It neither proves he is a thoughty intellectual nor a pious Christian. Despondency is not religion, whatever else it may be. By being pleasant always and smiling, it takes one nearer to God, nearer than what any prayer can do. After all, 'It is a funny world, and the funniest chap you ever saw is He, the Beloved Infinite,' and what are we but '...a school of romping children let out to play in this playground of the world!' 'Fun, is it not?' (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda: By His Eastern and Western Disciples*, p. 419)

Swami Vivekananda's philosophy of strength is not only conducive to joy in our lives but is also helpful in gaining knowledge, even concerning minor subjects of interest. The Swami makes an extremely excellent point when he brings out that our educational system is mistakenly oriented in cramming minds full of facts before they know how to think; his reasonable suggestion is that control of the mind should be taught before worrying about too many facts. Far too many people today have great difficulty in learning anything in a short time, because they are unable to concentrate their minds at will.

Those with scattered minds have yet to show that their lack of mental discipline will be of use to them. And those who, like Swami Vivekananda, believe freedom of the will to be the basis of all true self-development, but unlike him, do not believe that one must have a righteous and developed power of discrimination also have yet to prove themselves. The trouble has been lately that too many people emphasize the free-will part and not enough people worry about analysing that for which they will be free. The modern man seems to feel that he ought to be free in order to amass as many material possessions as possible and in order to enjoy as

many sense pleasures as possible. The world indeed seems to be staggering under its load of over-emphasis on body and possessions, and it is only strength, renunciation, chastity, truth, and purity which can bring the world back to at least a sane rate of spin. People everywhere are simply going wild in a delirium of sense pleasures—especially popular among the young being the search for the 'visionary experience' through drugs, and a particularly unfortunate aspect of this craze is the increasingly popular opinion that all the true religious experience of the saints and sages was simply due to starvation or drugs and was nothing but a physical amusement which anybody could enjoy who would partake of drugs. There seems to be a real lack of consideration for the fact that the religious experiences permanently changed the lives of those involved for the better, and in many cases the spiritual practice and experience enabled the saints to be of great service and solace to their fellow-man. Nothing on the other hand seems to happen to the 'peyote saints' except perhaps that they disregard their educational pursuits, or seek the values of the art-world, or disappear into a life of hopeless contradiction. Swami Vivekananda said the following words in relation to some who were getting carried away in pseudo-religious hysteria, but I think it has an application to all seeking after pleasure in either extremes of emotion or 'visionary experience':

'The effusion of sentiment which is not attended by a corresponding transformation of character and which is not strong enough to destroy the cravings of lust and gold by awakening in the heart an enthusiasm for the vision of God—is neither deep nor of any real value in the realm of spirituality.'

'Physical contortions, tears, horripila-

tions, and even momentary trance which result from this wrong emotion are, in reality, hysterical. These should be controlled by a determined effort. If that fails one should take a nutritious diet or even consult a doctor.' (Swami Vivekananda never believed in getting spiritual experience by severe humiliation or mutilation of the body.)

'So instead of practising restraint, devotion, and renunciation, they studiously cultivate these effusions with the result that their weakened nerves respond in this way to the slightest religious stimulus. If this is allowed to go on unchecked the result is physical and mental disaster.' (ibid., p. 126)

To those who would extoll the virtues and wonders of science as completely superior to religion, which to them is nothing but a collection of superstitions, Swami Vivekananda would point out that those who worship science also have their superstitions and blind faith, many believing what scientists say, no matter how strange, without ever even considering testing the truth of the statement. (It is not that science is not a worthy endeavour; Swami Vivekananda himself studied much of science and had great admiration for scientific pursuits, but he did not let the relatively easy conquests of external nature made by scientists blind his vision to the amazing results to be gained by that other science, religion.)

HIS MISSION

Despite modern man's apparent failings, Swami Vivekananda had great faith in man, for he also knew the Real Man within. Thus did he say that this knowledge of Vedānta should be given freely to everyone, although traditionally it had been considered wrong in India to teach

Monism to any and all, who would not, it was thought, be ready to hear such high truths. But, the Swami wanted Man, especially Western Man, to turn his attention inward, and he wanted each man to make prodigious efforts to be selfless and pure. If only a little effort were made along these lines, where would the problems of bias and prejudice, juvenile delinquency, world tension, fear of bombs, and the rest all be? Work for men everywhere, to be sure, but be someone vast and great yourself; otherwise your efforts will not make more than a pinprick in the thick-skinned world. 'Be and make,' said Swami Vivekananda. But one cannot *make* good results without *being* great. Said he, 'Rise and be strong!'

To man everywhere Swami Vivekananda indeed dedicated his life, but in his early years (approximately 1886 to 1894) he felt especially that he had a duty to help bring about the regeneration of India both by carrying on such activities as educational and medical projects and by stirring each Indian to lead a great and noble life, not to lose his glorious traditional and religious heritage by hollow mimicry of Western habits and civilization, but rather to revive in himself that tremendous spiritual power which had constituted India's greatness through the ages. Also, the Swami wanted to help India by making her known and understood in the right light by those Western nations which might be able to help as well as be helped by her. Thus did he speak all over America in 1893 and 1894 of Hindu customs and Hindu religion, of Buddhism and of the harmony of religions. This last, the harmony of religions, was especially important as it was such a prominent factor in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings. Later on, that is, from 1895 on, the Swami became especially interested in the underlying *unity* of religion, in formulat-

ing and in teaching the principles of Vedānta, to the West. He came to feel as he had not felt previously, that he had a mission in the West as well as in the East. It must be emphasized, however, that Swami Vivekananda's mission was in a sense twofold. Not only was he deeply concerned, as has already been mentioned, in finding a practical and unified answer to the many problems facing the modern world, but also, '...being the appointed messenger of Sri Ramakrishna, he was equally concerned with spreading his Master's teachings in their most pristine and also most complete form... As it was, he saw the two as one and inseparable.' (Marie Louise Burke: *New Discoveries*, p. 615) Yet, there was another purpose to Swami Vivekananda's spiritual mission which was closely related and constituted

to a foundation for the outward activities of his life. This fundamental purpose was Swami Vivekananda's deeper function of fulfilling the divine mission of a prophet among the people of the world,—mingling with as many people as possible, blessing all, and urging everyone to make their best efforts by the unquestionable example of his own life, in which he truly followed the *Dhammapada's* words :

Go forward without a path !
 Fearing nothing, caring for nothing.
 Wander alone, like the rhinoceros !
 Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
 Even as the wind, not caught in the net,
 Even as the lotus leaf, unstained by the
 water,
 Do thou wander alone like the
 rhinoceros !

THE NON-VIOLENCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI

SRI CHUNILAL MITRA

Mahatma Gandhi was an exception in his uncommon claim of a common fact that his whole life was an experiment, an experiment with no other thing than truth itself. The claim is uncommon, because it is made by rare persons. He not only equated truth with God but also occasionally construed the former as even wider than the latter. Truth is not only varied but also all-absorbing. In his words: 'My uniform experience has convinced me that there is no other God than Truth, no religion higher than Righteousness'. Hence he was confirmed that 'religion and morality were synonymous'.

Tagore pointed out that our greatest fortune is when 'others' become our own, while the greatest misfortune is when our

own men become 'others'. Gandhiji believed in this truth and acted likewise. Because of his love for Truth, he loved all, friend and foe alike. In fact, none was an enemy to him. To quote him 'To see the universal and all-pervading spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life.' He launched so many political, social, educational and cultural movements and yet worked for the salvation of the spirit. He achieved tremendous success in politics. Yet, politics was not the be-all and end-all of his life. All these activities were inspired by his search for Truth. 'My devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics', he said and yet he made

politics and religion no discrete subjects, no two separate studies. 'I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.'

The history of human civilization is the history of the evolution of our being, which, in its turn, is our advance from brutality to humanity, from humanity to morality, from morality to divinity. Accordingly the technique and the philosophy of the Gandhian way of life were based on some fundamentals and principles which to him, were like postulates. He was always outspoken in pronouncing them unequivocally. If those postulates were not construed properly, the greater part of what Gandhiji told or stood for is left unexplained as obscure or false, fictitious or vicious.

The postulates are in the forms of some pointers. To a weak or tyrannical Government, national or foreign, Gandhiji's pointer was: 'A Government which is weak or which allows itself to be led into courses which reason does not approve of, is not fit to rule. It ought to step aside and make way for a better rule'.

One other postulate is: 'To err is human, but to own up one's error and so to act to be proof against it is manly.' He opined that confession of error is like a broom that sweeps away dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before. Perhaps the greatest of the axioms is: 'The life of a nation like that of an individual is an indivisible whole.' Consistently he felt and believed that what is good for the one is good for the multitude. Nay more, the good of the individual is contained in the good of all. As a corollary he argued: 'The lawyer's work has the same value as the labourer's inasmuch as all have the right of earning their livelihood from their work.'

The sole object of the Mahatma was to establish truth, justice and righteousness on a sound pedestal throughout the length and

breadth of India first, and of the world next. In his words: 'My ambition is nothing less than to see international relations placed on a moral basis through India's efforts.' In the words of Romain Rolland: 'Unlike our European revolutionists Gandhi came not to make laws and ordinances, but to create a new Human Society based on Truth, Love and Non-violence'. In fact, his non-violence was the basic principle of all his activities. It was never a cloak, a policy with him. It was the creed of his life, the key to his success, the cardinal principle of politics and economics, morality and religion. It was at once the foundation and the culmination of his philosophy, the basis and fruition of his life.

On the Indian soil at least, in its tradition and civilization, non-violence is never a new thing. But the way Gandhiji approached it and the modes of its universal application were absolutely new and his own. As such, he re-innovated politics, rejuvenated morality and religion for the first time in two thousand years by his unique introduction of non-violence in them. His non-violence is every thing, all else are elucidations, auxiliaries or deductions. Unless it is understood in its entire connotation, his politics and economics, ethics and theology cannot be understood. For, they are nothing unless non-violent. Minus non-violence his policies and programmes sink, and Gandhism, if anything, becomes a cypher.

It is simple and yet strange. Its nature and the conditions for its observance must have to be closely followed, if we at all endeavour to profit ourselves by the acceptance of his philosophy and to fulfil his mission simultaneously. For, Tagore points out, 'to attempt to fulfil a man's mission and not to accept his philosophy of life are contradictory.'

As the first condition he asked us to be pure in heart. 'Without self purification the observance of the Law of Ahimsā must remain an empty dream'. (*Autobiography*,

p. 615) This purity is based on humility. It is ourselves to be humble and lowly. 'The seeker after Truth should be humbler than the dust. The world crushes the dust under its feet, but the seeker after Truth should be humble himself that even the dust could crush him.' (ibid., p. 14) This humility must not be thrust and imposed from without, but drawn and dawned from within. In Gandhiji's words: 'So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him... Ahimsā is the farthest limit of humility.' (ibid., p. 616)

In non-violence there is no scope either for pride or for jealousy. A votary of Truth, or a non-violent person does not only not find fault with others, but also does not speak ill of them. He takes 'others' as his equal or even more dignified than himself. In the words of the Mahatma again: 'It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings.' (ibid., p. 192) 'To slight a single human being is to slight those divine powers, and thus to harm not only that being but with him the whole world.' (ibid., p. 337)

The Mahatma warned us against all possible pitfalls consequent on the concept of non-violence mis-understood. For instance, non-violence is never flattery, and he told us: 'Non-violence very easily takes the form of hypocrisy. But love and fear are self-contradictory. Love never hesitates to sacrifice. It is disinterested to have anything in return.' So, his mission was to win over hatred by love, violence by non violence. He marched on and on, and did not wait for others, for, the hidden treasure, spirituality, must be earned by one's own

endeavour, personal hardship and meditation. He opined that if one man gains spiritually the whole world gains with him, and if one fails, the whole world fails to that extent.

To be truly non-violent we are to cultivate the quiet courage of dying without killing. 'It is the law,' said Gandhiji, 'of our species, as violence is the Law of the brutes'. Nevertheless, he would risk violence a thousand times, rather than (welcome) the emasculation of the race. For, he believed that to do wrong and to suffer wrong are equally unjust. Consistently he argues that the people that do not fight for their rights are like slaves, and that all nations and all individuals have the right and it is their duty to rise against an intolerable wrong.

Without non-violence knowledge of the Truth is impossible. For, it is not the weapon of the poor and the fearful, the meek and the weak, but the greatest armour of the brave, the powerful and the fearless. Truth can only be explored by fearlessness. The nature and conditions of non-violence may be summed up in the Mahatma's own words: 'To kill and to be killed by the enemy in a battle field is bravery; but to forbear the attack of an enemy without retaliation is a greater bravery'. His is a genius which though not born or gifted, is at least earned and acquired and yet surprisingly perfected! To a polluted and unjust politics, untrue and violent civilization, power-sick and militant world, to the misled statesmen and politicians may the Mahatma's message of identity of morality and religion on the one hand and the harmony and synthesis of religion and politics on the other, and his life of non-violence in thoughts, words and deeds serve as a guide, a perennial beacon.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Swami Jnanatmananda is the Head of the Ramakrishna Math, Udbodhan, Calcutta. In 'Swami Vivekananda: Through Some Rare Reminiscences' he presents some unforgettable recollections that he could hear from Swami Atulanandaji Maharaj directly.

The message of Śāṅkara is unique and it is still a wonder to the modern world of ours. In the article 'The Mind and Message of Śrī Śāṅkara', P. Nagaraja Rao, M.A., D.Litt, pays homage to the great world teacher who by his all embracing philosophical dissertations could provide the humanity with a true basis for universal brotherhood. The article is the summary of three lectures delivered by Dr. Rao on Śāṅkara's Philosophy of Advaita at the Institute of World Culture, Bangalore.

The essay on 'Life and Vision of Swami Vivekananda' by (Miss) Chela Varrentzoff won an award of one hundred dollars (\$100.00), the first prize, in the essay contest on Swami Vivekananda held by the Vedanta Society of St. Louis as one of the ways of celebrating the birth centenary of the great Swami. The contest was open to all students enrolled in the accredited colleges of the United States during the semesters of 1961-62 and 1962-63. (Miss) Chela Varrentzoff, the winner of the prize, is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and a member of the Vedanta Society of Northern California.

Sri Chunilal Mitra, M.A., B.T., Sāhitya-Vinode of 24 Parganas, West Bengal, elucidates on 'The Non-Violence of Mahatma Gandhi' in his article on the subject.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

REFLECTIONS AND MAXIMS (WITH A FOREWORD BY ALBERT EINSTEIN). BY BARUCH SPINOZA. EDITED BY DAGOBERT D. RUNES. Philosophical Library, New York, 1965. Pages 92. Price \$2.75.

Spinoza, the God-intoxicated, was the most illustrious philosopher of Europe, after Plato. Essentially an Idealist, he developed a philosophy of the Absolute. This seventeenth century sage of Holland is more modern than most of his successors. His depth of insight is as remarkable as the clarity of his philosophical manner. Proceeding in the manner of a geometrician, he evolved an almost infallible form of reasoning. One can be wary, not with his argument, but with his first principles. These principles are concisely formulated.

Dr. Runes has arranged Spinoza's observations on a variety of problems in an alphabetical order. These refer to religion, ethics, metaphysics, politics and psychology. The passages are so selected that after going through this Spinoza-Dictionary one is compelled to get back to the works of Spinoza for a more intensive study.

A few observations need to be pointed out because they are so apt and valuable. Aggression, we read, is present because 'men are assailed by emotions which are passions'. (3) Real bondage is only slavery to the emotions. (9) There is profound commonsense when he says that conceit appears when 'one attributes to himself a perfection which is not to be found in him'. (12) Spinoza believed in democracy, as much as he believed in reason. The faith in reason demands a rigorous control of the emotions called pleasure, pain, and desire.

The metaphysical system of Spinoza holds to an Absolute Substance which can be viewed in terms of consciousness or of extension. Accordingly, the order or connexion of ideas is the same as the order or connexion of things. This Absolute has no change; it abides. Then he cannot think of God assuming a human form or nature. (43) In reality, 'man is to man a God'. (52) It is a universal religion that Spinoza talked about.

Spinoza was opposed to the induction of philo-

sophical speculations into religion. So he observes that whether God is treated as fire or spirit, or light, or thought, it has nothing to do with faith. The best government, he says, will allow freedom of philosophical speculation no less than of religious belief. (26) Scripture does not teach philosophy, but merely obedience. (63)

'The intellectual love of God, which arises from the highest kind of knowledge, is eternal.' (3) The highest good is the knowledge and love of God. (34) The highest kind of knowledge is the intuitive one. (42) Scripture is sacred and its words divine so long as it stirs mankind to devotion towards God (73), irrespective of the denomination.

This compilation is a valuable one for any serious student of religion and ethics. The broad spirit of tolerance underlying these reflections is in tune with the spirit of Indian tradition. This small book will accomplish its task by making one more deeply interested in Spinoza's writings.

Einstein's foreword is brief and illuminating.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

A RECORD OF BUDDHISTIC KINGDOMS
(BEING AN ACCOUNT BY THE CHINESE MONK FA-HIEN OF HIS TRAVELS IN INDIA AND CEYLON, A.D. 399-414, in search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline. By James Legge. Paragon Book Reprint Corpn., New York. Dover Publications, Inc. New York. 1965. Pages 123 with Index, nine illustrations and the Korean recension of the Chinese text in 44 pages. Price \$ 1.75

The book was first published by the Clarendon Press in 1886. This is the second publication with the Korean recension of the original Chinese text.

In India he was from 405-411 A.D., and his book is known as '*Fo-Kow-Ki*'. He came by way of Ladakh, and described places as he went by them—Gāndhara, Taxila, Peshawar, Nagar, Mathurā, Sañkaṣya, Kanauj, Kośala, Pātaliputra and other places practically covering the whole of Northern India. Finally from Tāmralipti (Tamluk) he sailed for Ceylon. From there after a disastrous passage to Java he reached Shantung.

Kings, men, manners, society, art, literature, customs, philosophy, and historical events have been described in details with great admiration. The admiration of Pātaliputra palace was so great that he thought Aśoka used 'spirits' to build it for it could not have been the work of human beings. Such observations reveal that he was rather a credulous observer and recorder.

But, in spite of it, he has left a very useful account for posterity without which the study of

our past history would have remained incomplete and poor. His accounts of unbounded admiration of India and Indian character are both interesting and useful in the background of the present unhappy strained Sino-Indian relations. Mr. James Legge has done useful work in publishing this book again, and with Korean recension of the Chinese text which adds to the research value of the work. We recommend it to the lay public and scholarly world alike.

DR. P. N. MUKHERJEE

THE DISCOURSE COLLECTION, (From The Sutta Nipāta) TR. FROM PALI BY JOHN D. IRELAND. The Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Ceylon. Pages 36. Price 25 cents Ceylon.

This is a small collection of Lord Buddha's Discourses from out of the wider selection from fifteen of His Suttas and His answers thereto, which had all been included earlier in *Sutta Nipāta*. As summed up by the translator in his introduction they amount to morality and general conduct 'leading up to insight and realization' as per Buddhist *Dhamma*.

It is remarkable that many precepts on renunciation, detachment, dispassion, chastity, equanimity, compassion, meditation, etc., resemble closely those established in the scriptures of the Hindu-fold. The highlights of the book are the sublime descriptions of the real Brāhmaṇa as one who has reached final deliverance (Vide 7), after attainment of all purity (Vide 12), tranquillity, and transcendence over the 'body-mind complex' like Lord Buddha Himself. In answer to Ajita's questions about the nature of the world, why it is not known, by what it is soiled, and the source of fear, the Lord answers, the world is enveloped by ignorance, and because of 'wrongly directed desire and heedlessness' it is not known. And, the 'world is soiled by longings and cravings which result in sufferings'. All this leads to fear. In a masterly analysis the Lord also fixes the various sources for 'contentions and disputes', 'lamentations and sorrows', 'selfishness and conceit', 'feelings of pleasantness and unpleasantness', and exhorts people not to endear themselves (attachments) to objects and persons on account of desires, which are again traced to sense-impressions dependent upon the mental and material constitutions of the perceivers. Materiality disappears only for one who sees one-ness in multiplicity after purification of the spirit. Thus the world is an embodiment of the subjective and objective experience, the merger of one into the other alone would lead to a state of existence which is not emptiness, but a positive state of *nibbāna*.

Thus we have in this short space of thirty-six pages the ultimate goal of a *Bhikkhu* (spiritual aspirant), and the means to achieve it are clearly defined. In short all this is a good discourse on Advaita by Lord

Buddha in His own Buddhist Pāli which has been precisely translated.

P. SAMA RAO

NEWS AND REPORTS

HOMAGE TO SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

[*Extract from the presidential address delivered by Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission on the occasion of the Swami Abhedananda Birth Centenary meeting which was organized under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math at the Mahajati Sadan, Calcutta on September 10, 1966.*]

Today on the occasion of the birth Centenary of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj one naturally recalls the Swami's multifaced genius and monumental contributions. Although born at Calcutta his mind did never move towards the objects of enjoyment; it was attuned to the path of renunciation from the very beginning. While searching for a spiritual teacher who could guide him in the practice of *yoga*, he met Sri Ramakrishna and dedicated himself to the feet of that Great Master. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna young Abhedananda (then Kaliprasad) joined his brother disciples at the monastery of Baranagore. For his acute austerities and ardent zeal to realize the supreme Truth of Vedānta at this time, his brother disciples liked to call him as 'Kali Tapasvī' (Kali, the austere) and 'Kali Vedāntī' (Kali, the Vedāntist).

His command over Sanskrit and knowledge of the scriptures were profound. He was blessed by the Holy Mother for his celebrated Sanskrit hymn (*Prakṛtim paramām abhayām varadām ... etc.*) that he composed on her. On listening to the hymn the Holy Mother said about him, 'Goddess Sarasvatī will remain seated in the tongue of this boy.' Verily the prophesy became true in the manifestation of Swami Abhedananda's astounding oratory as a spiritual teacher in America during the later days.

On his return to India after ten or twelve years of preaching in America, he was accorded an address of welcome in Sanskrit at a meeting in Bangalore. His reply on this occasion in lucid Sanskrit once again proved that his mastery over the language remained undiminished, notwithstanding his prolonged stay in the West. After having an argument with him in Sanskrit, Srimat Dhanaraj Giri of the Kailas Math remarked, 'His is a wisdom that is supernatural'.

In response to a call from Swami Vivekananda to go to the West, Swami Abhedananda first went to London and from there to America where he continued to spread broadcast the message of Indian idealism. On this mission he had to cross the Atlantic for seventeen or eighteen times. He spread the light of Vedānta for a long period in the Western land and everybody would remain grateful to him for the labour he had to undertake for the purpose.

After his return to India he founded the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math. Many who came into his holy contact here, also became blessed in life.

Today when we celebrate his Birth centenary here, let us draw inspiration from the teachings of the illustrious Swami and build up our respective lives according to his mould. Then alone the celebration will be worth its cause.