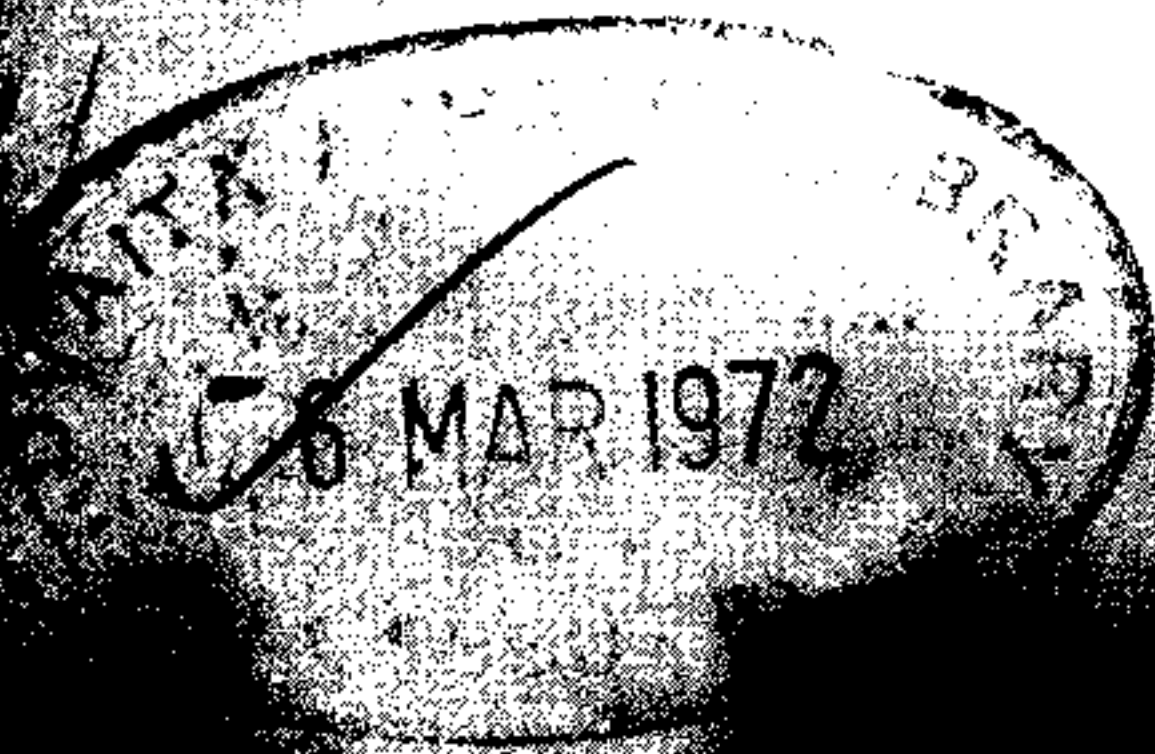


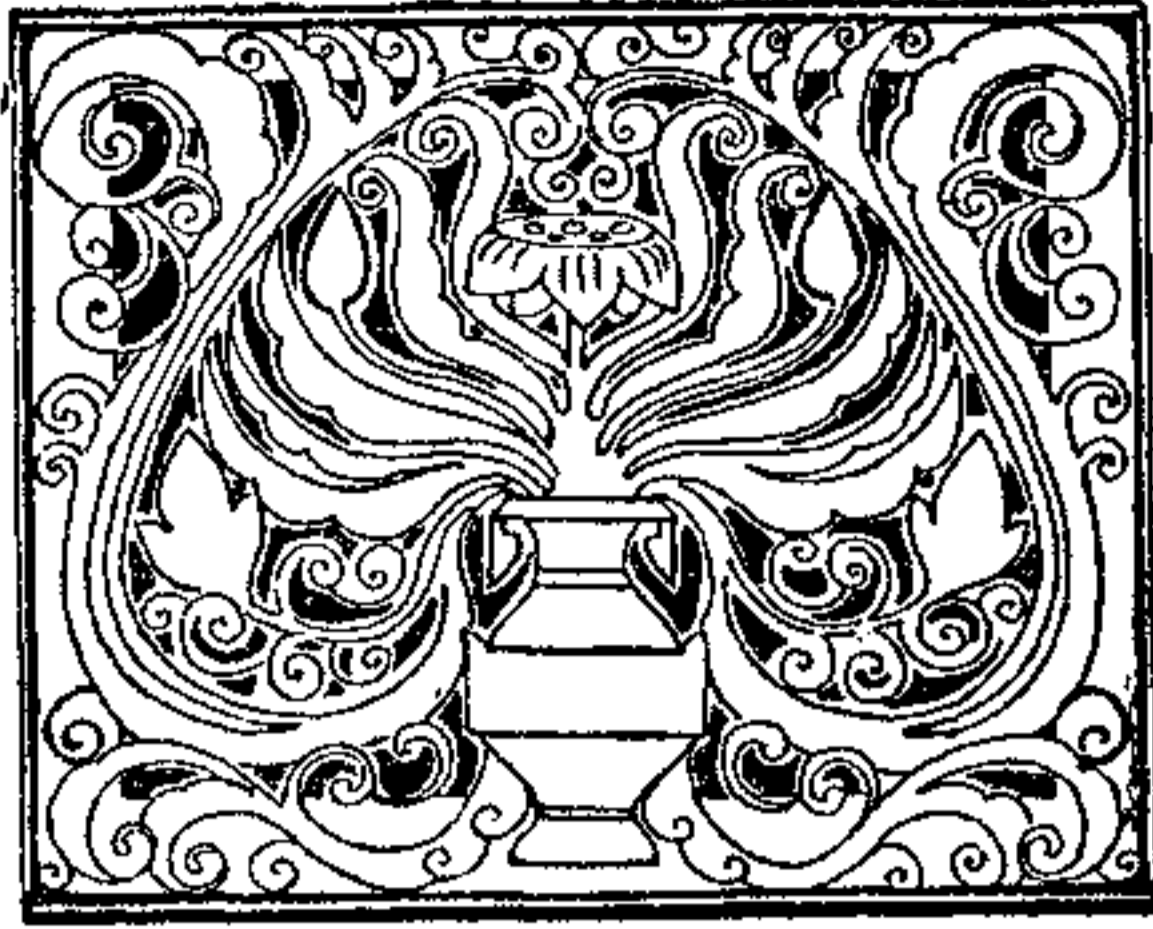
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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVII

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No. 3

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Rakhal's father's father-in-law): 'Sir, can one realize God while leading the life of a householder?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Why not? Live in the world like a mud-fish. The mud-fish lives in the mud but itself remains unstained. Or live in the world like a loose woman. She attends to her household duties, but her mind is always on her sweetheart. Do your duties in the world, fixing your mind on God. But this is extremely difficult. I said to the members of the Brahmo Samaj: "Suppose a typhoid patient is kept in a room where there are jars of pickles and pitchers of water. How can you expect the patient to recover? The very thought of spiced pickles brings water to one's mouth." To a man, woman is like that pickle. The craving for worldly things, which is chronic in man, is like the patient's craving for water. There is no end to this craving. The typhoid patient says, "I shall drink a whole pitcher of water." The situation is very difficult. There is so much confusion in the world. If you go this way, you are threatened with a shovel; if you go that way, you are threatened with a broomstick; again, in another direction, you are threatened with a shoe-beating. Besides, one cannot think of God unless one lives in solitude. The goldsmith melts gold to make ornaments. But how can he do his work well if he is disturbed again and again? Suppose you are separating rice from bits of husk. You must do it all by yourself. Every now and then you have to take the rice in your hand to see how clean it is. But how can you do your work well if you are called away again and again?'

Question (asked by a devotee): 'What then is the way, sir?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'There is a way. One succeeds if one develops a strong spirit of renunciation. Give up at once, with determination, what you know to be unreal. Once, when I was seriously ill, I was taken to the physician Gangaprasad Sen. He said to me: "I shall give you a medicine,

but you mustn't drink any water. You may take pomegranate juice." Everyone wondered how I could live without water; but I was determined not to drink it. I said to myself: "I am a paramahansa and not a goose. I shall drink only milk."¹

'You have to spend a few days in solitude. If you but touch the "granny"² you are safe. Turn yourself into gold and then live wherever you please. After realizing God and divine love in solitude, one may live in the world as well. (To Rakhal's father) That is why I ask the youngsters to stay with me; for they will develop love of God by staying here a few days. After that they can very well lead the life of a householder.'

Question (asked by M.): 'Sir, if it is God Himself who has become everything, then why do people have so many different feelings?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Undoubtedly God exists in all beings as the All-pervading Spirit, but the manifestations of His Power are different in different beings. In some places there is a manifestation of the power of Knowledge; in others, of the power of ignorance. In some places there is a greater manifestation of power than in others. Don't you see that among human beings there are cheats and gamblers, to say nothing of men who are like tigers. I think of them as the "cheat God", the "tiger God".'

M. (with a smile): 'We should salute them from a distance. If we go near the "tiger God" and embrace him, he may devour us.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'He and His Power, Brahman and Its Power—nothing else exists but this. In a hymn to Rama, Narada said: "O Rama, You are Siva, and Sita is Bhagavati; You are Brahma, and Sita is Brahmani; You are Indra, and Sita is Indrani; You are Narayana, and Sita is Lakshmi. O Rama, You are the symbol of all that is masculine, and Sita of all that is feminine."'



¹ A paramahansa is one belonging to the highest order of monks; the word also means 'swan'. There is a popular tradition in India that a swan can separate the milk from a mixture of milk and water. It is said that a secretion of acid turns the milk into curd, which the swan eats, leaving the water.

² An allusion to the game of hide-and-seek.

ONWARD FOR EVER!

That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical. That is my opinion; and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so; and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth! The world requires a few hundred bold men and women. Practise that boldness which dares know the Truth, which dares show the Truth in life, which does not quake before death, nay, welcomes death, makes a man know that he is the Spirit, that, in the whole universe, nothing can kill him. Then you will be free. Then you will know your real Soul. 'This Atman is first to be heard, then thought about and then meditated upon.'

There is a great tendency in modern times to talk too much of work and decry thought. Doing is very good, but that comes from thinking. Little manifestations of energy through the muscles are called work. But where there is no thought, there will be no work. Fill the brain, therefore, with high thoughts, highest ideals, place them day and night before you, and out of that will come great work. Talk not about impurity, but say that we are pure. We have hypnotized ourselves into this thought that we are little, that we are born, and that we are going to die, and into a constant state of fear.

Sri Ramana

SPIRITUAL LESSONS FROM A MAGNET

EDITORIAL

I

It could not be a mere flight of poetic fancy that made Shakespeare say that a wise man 'Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything'. If we are eager to learn, open-minded, and humble, running brooks and standing stones can indeed teach more than academicians and libraries. All great teachers of mankind, as is borne out by their sayings and parables, learnt from every natural object, animate and inanimate. Upaniṣadic sages, Buddha, Christ, and Mohammed frequently refer to rivers, mountains, trees, birds, rocks, and flowers in their various teachings. The *Bhāgavatam*, a Hindu devotional classic, speaks of a fully illumined sage, an *avadhūta*, who learnt a lesson from each of his twentyfour gurus. Among them were found the hill, the python, the water, and the pigeon. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya, who set in motion a mighty devotional movement in Bengal, admonished all devotees to be 'humbler than the grass-blade and more forbearing than the tree', and then to repeat the Lord's name. A magnet, by virtue of its specialities, can surely impart a few lessons to any eager learner. And it is no wonder that Sri Ramakrishna, who had an uncommon flair for drawing lessons from the simplest of things, should use the magnet to illustrate his teachings on divine love.

II

Sri Ramakrishna has made use of the analogy of the magnet mainly in three of his teachings. The natural attraction between God and the soul, he says, is like that between the magnet and a needle. The soul is constantly drawn away from worldliness by God. Says Sri Ramakrishna :

'Maya is nothing but "woman" and "gold". A man attains yoga when he has freed his mind from these two. The Self—the Supreme Self—is the magnet; the individual self is the needle. The individual self experiences the state of yoga when it is attracted by the Supreme Self to itself.'¹

Not everyone feels this attraction. Those who do feel it are in an exiguous minority, and they are generally considered abnormal. Sri Ramakrishna explains this fact simply by pointing out that a needle thickly overlaid with mud is not attracted to the magnet. Similarly, the human soul, thickly plastered with the mud of 'lust, anger, and greed, and other evil tendencies and inclination to worldly enjoyments as well', does not feel the natural divine attraction. Unfortunately, the majority of humanity is spiritually 'antimagnetic', and it is they who are abnormal.

In another teaching Sri Ramakrishna compares man's temporal life to a voyage. He who can keep his mind always attuned to God will not lose his course and come to grief. Referring to the mariner's compass, he says :

"The magnetic needle always points to the north, hence the sailing vessel does not lose her course. So long as the heart of man is directed towards God, he cannot be lost in the ocean of worldliness."²

Yet another teaching refers to the sea and the ship. But in this case, the ship, passing over a submarine magnetic hill, comes all undone and sinks. Thus does the liberated soul lose his individuality and get absorbed in the Supreme Self. Sri Ramakrishna says :

"The loadstone rock attracts the ship sailing over it, draws out all its nails, separates

its planks, and finally, sinks the vessel in the deep. Even so, when the human soul is attracted by the magnet of Universal Consciousness, the latter destroys in a moment all its individuality and selfishness, and sinks it in the ocean of God's infinite love."³

In one context he pictures the needle of the human soul pulled in opposite directions by two magnets. On the one side is the worldly attraction, of the magnet of 'woman' and 'gold'. On the other is the magnet of God Himself. Sri Ramakrishna says that God is a far bigger magnet and so His attraction will prevail in the end. When a devotee develops intense love for God, according to Sri Ramakrishna, the needle-magnet position becomes reversed. Then God becomes the needle and the devotee the magnet! 'The devotee', Sri Ramakrishna affirmed, 'attracts God to him. God is the beloved of His devotee and is under his control.'⁴

III

Magnetism and electricity have been known and studied since ancient times but as totally unrelated quantities. It was only in the last century, through the experiments of H. C. Oersted and Michael Faraday, that these came to be identified as aspects of the same phenomenon, namely, electromagnetism. An electric current is always surrounded by a magnetic field and under certain conditions magnetic forces can induce an electric current. Excepting for gravitation, nearly all other forces in the material cosmos—frictional forces, chemical forces which keep the atoms together in molecules, cohesive forces which fasten together larger particles of matter, elastic forces which preserve the shape of bodies—are of electromagnetic origin. The earth has its own magnetism and all the stars and

¹ 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-4, 1947), p. 288.

² *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1967), p. 189.

³ *ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴ *The Gospel*, p. 301.

galaxies have their magnetic fields. According to the modern electron theory, the fundamental nature of matter is electrical. The more recent study of nuclear magnetic resonance spectrum reveals yet another subtle feature that the protons in the molecule behave like tiny magnets. It is common knowledge that these protons have an electrically positive behaviour.

Why should gravitation, that awesome universal force which 'guides the whirling of the stars, comets, meteors, and galaxies ... in the immense inscrutable void', and electromagnetism be separate and not be unified into one field of force? This question troubled Dr. Einstein and he made a bold bid in his Unified Field Theory to construct a bridge between them. What his Unified Field Theory does do is to show that gravitational and electromagnetic forces are not independent of each other—that they are in a very real physical sense inseparable. To be more specific, it describes gravitational and electromagnetic forces in terms of a deeper reality that undergirds both—a basic universal field within which gravitational and electromagnetic fields are merely particular transient forms.^{4a}

Whether the distinguished physicist succeeded in his remarkable attempt or not is left for the theoretical physicists to explore. But from the Vedāntic point of view, we can only state that Truth or Ultimate Reality defies any such mathematical mesh. Undoubtedly, matter and energy, space-time and gravitation have their support and *raison d'être* in that Reality. If, however, an all-comprehensive generalization is desirable, why should it be limited to the objective universe? The Vedānta goes a long stride forward in postulating, on the basis of superconscious experience, an imperishable,

all-pervading Ultimate Reality which expresses Itself as electromagnetic and gravitational fields in the world outside and the divine attraction of the soul for the Supreme Self in the world inside. Says the Upaniṣad :

He who inhabits the earth, water and fire, the sky, air and heaven, the ether, moon, and stars, light and darkness, all beings and their mind, senses, and intelligence—but is within them all, whom they do not know, whose body they are, and who controls them from within, He is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal self.⁵

In the words of Swami Vivekananda :

'God is the highest form of generalized law. When once the law is known all others can be explained as subordinate to it. God is to religion what Newton's law of gravity is to falling bodies.'

'God is the centre of attraction for every soul ...'

'... the soul of man is a part of the cosmic energy that exists, which is God'.⁶

IV

That God periodically comes down on earth and lives and moves among men is a well-established truth in all major world religions, especially in Hinduism. Why He wears the human vesture and goes through all sufferings, and sometimes crucifixions, is known to Him only. One of the explanations is that He comes down to establish religion on a firm foundation. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that God wants besides to enjoy the love of His sincere devotees, and so comes down as man for this 'love-banquet'. 'It is just for this love of the devotees', said Sri Ramakrishna once, 'that God contracts Himself into a human form and descends on earth to play His lila.'⁷

⁵ *Bṛhadāranyaka-upaniṣad*, III. vii. 3-22.

⁶ Swami Vivekananda : *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (1963) p. 110, Vol. II (1963) p. 244, p. 224. Also *vide* Vol. II pp. 50-1.

⁷ *The Gospel*, p. 330.

^{4a} *Vide* Lincoln Barnett : *The Universe And Dr. Einstein* (Comet Books, Collins, London, 1956), p. 115.

Whatever the explanations, it is undoubtedly true that an incarnation of God exercises an extraordinary fascination on humanity, and men and women flock round him as iron filings cling to a magnet. In the lives of Buddha, Christ, and Caitanya we read that multitudes followed them wherever they went and hung on every word they spoke. In Vālm̄ki's *Rāmāyaṇa* we read that, when Rāma left his capital for going into the forest, all the citizens followed him weeping and wailing. The city looked deserted and lifeless. Such was the attraction of prince Rāma for the people of Ayodhyā.

An episode in Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life⁸ depicts how Brahmā, one of the Hindu trinity, stole Kṛṣṇa's calves and cowherd friends but was completely outwitted and humbled in the end. Kṛṣṇa knew in a trice that it was a trick played by Brahmā and remained nonchalant. He immediately brought forth from himself a duplicate set of calves and cowherds, faithful to the originals in every detail. In the evening when Kṛṣṇa returned to his village Vraja with them, neither the cows nor the parents of the boys found any difference physically. But there was a tremendous upsurge of affection in the cows and the people towards their young. This went on for a whole year by the end of which Brahmā realized the supreme glory of Kṛṣṇa and restored to him the original calves and cowherds. Kṛṣṇa withdrew the duplicates into himself.

To a question by King Parīkṣit as to how it was that the inhabitants of Vraja loved Kṛṣṇa (in the form of their kids) more intensely than their own flesh-and-blood children, the sage Śuka answered:

'For all creatures their own self is dear: others such as one's progeny and wealth are dear on account of the self only. . . . The whole of this creation, moving and unmoving, is loved for the

sake of the self alone. Know this Kṛṣṇa to be the Self of all selves. . . .'

Sri Ramakrishna's life is full of incidents in which people felt a similar magnetic attraction in him. To cite one instance: Once he visited Shyambazar, a village near his native town and a place predominantly inhabited by Vaiṣṇavas, for listening to *saṅkīrtan* or devotional singing. The Vaiṣṇavas were much attracted by his wonderful spiritual moods during singing. On seeing his ecstatic states, rumour spread everywhere that a man had arrived 'who died seven times and came back to life again'. A description of this event, in Sri Ramakrishna's own words, goes on thus in part:

'For seven days and nights I was surrounded by a huge crowd of people. Such attraction! Nothing but kirtan and dancing day and night. People stood in rows on the walls and even were in the trees.'

'... People came thronging from distant villages. They even spent the nights there. At Syambazar I learnt the meaning of divine attraction. When God incarnates Himself on earth He attracts people through the help of Yoga-maya, His Divine Power. People become spell-bound.'⁹

Just as some people are attracted by God and deeply love Him, so too there are some others who rabidly hate God. How come they hate God, the embodiment of absolute love? The answer is, repulsion is as much a characteristic of magnetism as attraction is. Hatred is only negative love or 'love in reverse gear'. So the God-haters too reach Him, and that rather fast. Nārada's words in the *Bhāgavatam* are our authority for this:

'It is my firm conviction that even by *bhakti-yoga* a man will not attain such union with God as he would with constant enmity towards Him.'¹⁰

⁸ *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, X. chs. xiii, xiv.

⁹ *The Gospel*, pp. 496-7.

¹⁰ VII. i. 26.

With a remarkable insight into human psychology, the great sage Śuka says :

'Those who constantly cherish love, hatred, fear, affection, kinship, or friendship towards Śrī Hari (i.e. the Lord) will indeed attain oneness with Him.'¹¹

V

A magnet can indeed teach a few vital lessons to any spiritual aspirant. All that he needs to learn them is a little of earnestness and receptive humility.

To put down the lessons briefly :

Firstly, the magnet teaches that a natural and an inexpugible attraction exists between God and man. If the aspirant does not feel the attraction, he needs to cleanse himself of the mud of *māyā* that covers the needle of his soul. 'Tears wash away the mud', says Sri Ramakrishna. Tears shed for God have a corrosive effect on the encrustations of the soul. No sooner is the mud washed away than does the magnet attract the needle, that is to say, man realizes God.

Secondly, the magnetic needle in the compass counsels the aspirant to direct his mind, under all circumstances, to God. Sailing on the worldly ocean is seldom smooth. Clouds of ignorance and worry cover the sky and the winds of desires and difficulties furiously lash the waves. By keeping the needle of the mind pointing steadily towards the Divine, the aspirant avoids all dangers and never loses the course.

Thirdly, the submerged loadstone hill, which has a wrecking effect on a ship, points out the fact that as the aspirant approaches the Supreme Self, the deep-rooted passions like lust, anger, and greed are destroyed completely. That destruction is wrought by God Himself. With the destruction of passions the aspirant becomes perfectly

pure. He, like the shattered ship, founders in the ocean. But the ocean in this case is God's immortal consciousness and bliss.

Fourthly, from the process of magnetization, we can draw a lesson or two. One mode of magnetizing is to rub or stroke a bar of either iron or steel with a strong magnet. The ferrous bar becomes a magnet. Similarly, by constantly associating with the holy we can also become holy and be devoted to God. Another way of magnetization is by induction. Magnetism can be produced when the piece of metal is laid parallel to a magnet—or in the North-South position as the earth itself is a huge magnet—and tapped gently a number of times. This is similar to the regular practice of *japa* and *dhyāna* (repetition of God's name and meditation). Steadfast spiritual practice, the magnet teaches, rouses the dormant divine love which draws the soul to the Divine Lord.

VI

'The quest of God', said Maurice Maeterlinck, 'is but a spiritual form of gravity.' It is also a spiritual form of universal electromagnetism. Man continues to seek for God unsolicited, as the needle the magnet, despite the attempt of some segments of humanity 'to build a culture upon the premise that God is dead'. As God is Truth and Love, He can never die. In fact, He comes in hot pursuit of man as the 'Hound of Heaven' :

'But with unhurrying chase,
And Unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

Modern man has betrayed God not knowing that it would mean the terrible doom of self-betrayal. This is the key to the understanding of the modern sociological

¹¹ *ibid.*, X. xxix. 15.

phenomenon of 'alienation'. Self-betrayal yet time to rectify this mistake and go back usually leads to self-destruction. There is to God and eternal life.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora

24.5.1915

Dear —,

....As long as one has a body pleasure and pain will cling to him. It is said in the Vedas: 'न वै सशरीरस्य सतः प्रियाप्रिययोरपहृतिरस्ति'¹—'For a person with body-consciousness there is no escape from the pleasant and the unpleasant.' But it is not advisable to spend the whole life in coddling the body—this is also the behest of the Vedas. 'अशरीरं वाव सन्तं न प्रियाप्रिये स्पृशतः'²—that is to say: in his body itself resides the bodiless Ātman which cannot be touched by the pleasant or the unpleasant. If one gets riven by pleasure and pain, it is because of the thought that I am the body. It is not bad to try to go beyond pleasure and pain through the cultivation of the thought that 'I am not the body', 'I am the Ātman without a body'; undoubtedly this will lessen much of our misery.

In this world everything happens as a result of thought. As one thinks so one becomes. Great good is likely to accrue from at least occasionally thinking of bodilessness than always thinking of oneself as the body. Lord Jesus said: 'He that has, to him shall be given. He that has not, from him shall be taken even what he has.' That is to say: He who has will be given more. He who has not from him will be snatched away even that little he may have. A very true saying. Our Lord (Sri Ramakrishna) also used to say: 'He who always says, "Nothing (no spiritual progress) has been gained by me", "I am a sinner", nothing indeed will be gained by him and a sinner he becomes.'

Therefore you are not to be disheartened. On the contrary, you are to try to cultivate this attitude: I have been devoting myself to the chanting of the Lord's name; of what should I be afraid? By His grace all my difficulties will pass away. Say 'Victory to the Mother Kālī' and with determination engage yourself in thinking of the Mother. You will then feel an influx of strength within you. If you keep lying down, you feel like doing so all the more. If you can but once spring up, you like to stir out and strength also will flow in. This is why Jesus said that he who has will be given more, he who has not from him will be snatched away even what little he has. Great

¹ *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VIII. 12.1

² *ibid.*

enthusiasm is necessary (for living a spiritual life). Sri Ramakrishna never liked the namby-pamby attitude; he greatly loved the attitude of reckless abandon in seeking God. Therefore Swamiji (Vivekananda) preached unequivocally the message: 'उत्तिष्ठत, जाग्रत, प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।'—'Arise, awake, stop not till the goal is reached',³ etc. No fear for you. Call on Him—He will set everything right. It is not as if He is alien to you. He is yours more than the so-called one's own. Knowing this for certain from within pray to Him and everything will be all right. Now this body is, next moment it is not; but He abides from everlasting to everlasting. You must make Him your own.

... Be not dejected, cultivate great strength of mind, and remember the Lord's name always. He alone is everyone's refuge. Resign yourself completely to His feet and be free of all worries. All fear and anxiety will leave of themselves and a new strength will be infused into your heart. Victory to the Great Guru (Sri Ramakrishna).

Accept my good wishes and love. Nothing more to write.

SRI TURIYANANDA

³ This was how Swamiji rendered the mantra in English, though the literal translation would be, 'Arise, awake, approach the illumined teachers and learn from them the supreme knowledge.' (*Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, I. iii. 14).

MEDITATION: WHY AND HOW

SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA

Before coming to the subject of meditation proper, I wish to point out to you how we are taught in India, even as children, that divinity dwells within every person. Once when I was a young lad, about six or seven years old, I was fighting with another boy of the same age. At one point I was holding him down on the ground and began to kick his head. When my mother saw that she came running and said, 'What are you doing? Don't you realize that the head is the *brahma-randhra*, the seat of Brahman, and you are kicking that?' She scolded me vehemently, took the boy on her lap, fed him, and consoled him. That created a deep impression in my mind—not that I never fought after that!

Sir John Woodroffe, an Englishman who was Chief Justice of India, visited a school one day where there were Christian as well as Hindu boys. Sir Woodroffe had studied Tantra and Vedānta philosophy, practised spiritual disciplines, and was a good friend of the Ramakrishna Mission. He asked the boys, 'Where is God?' All the Christians pointed their hands upward, and all the Hindus pointed toward their own hearts. So it is taught in India that God is found within each person.

One day not so long ago, as I woke up from sleep, I noticed that my finger began to move. I thought to myself, what causes this finger to be moved in this way? Then it struck me that there is a power, the power of God, within me, and because of

that Presence my mind can think, my body can move, my senses are active, and without that Presence I am nothing. I remembered the passage from the *Kena-upaniṣad* :

'At whose behest does the mind think? Who bids the body live? Who makes the tongue speak? Who is that effulgent Being that directs the eye to form and colour and the ear to sound? The Self is the ear of the ear, mind of the mind, speech of the speech. He is also breath of the breath, and eye of the eye. He who realizes the existence of Brahman behind every activity of his being, whether sensation, perception, or thought, he alone gains immortality.'¹

It is possible to think, to speak, and to act because of that effulgent Being existing within each one of us. Without that Presence we are nothing. This is something that we have to realize and experience. And when we experience this truth we shall feel like Sri Ramakrishna : 'I am the instrument, Thou art the operator; I am the house, Thou art the householder.' The mind, body, and senses must learn to pay homage, as it were, to the divine being that is within each one of us. That is our main duty.

This idea, that the essential nature of man is divine, is not only found in Hinduism but is taught in all religions, although it is sometimes misunderstood. Every religion, whether it be Christianity or Judaism, Sufism or Buddhism, teaches this fundamental truth, that 'ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you'.² Vedānta calls that Spirit the Ātman, which is one with Brahman. Man is fundamentally the Spirit of God encased in physical, subtle, and causal sheaths. The physical sheath, this body, needs food for sustenance. The subtle body also needs food in the form of art, music, and cultural life. What is food for the

causal body? To devote ourselves to God, to meditate upon Him and love Him. Otherwise, as the physical body without food will starve and the subtle body without cultural life or some intellectual unfoldment becomes dull, similarly, without giving food to the causal body our life is spent in vain.

Now the question arises, if we are fundamentally the Ātman, one with Brahman, why are we not conscious of it? In a sense, we are aware of it. For the nature of this Ātman, the nature of God, is *Sat*, eternal life, *Cit*, pure consciousness, *Ānanda* bliss and joy; and what are we all running after but joy of life, freedom, and knowledge? If we analyze what it is that we are seeking, it is God. Psychologists will have to understand one day that this seeking is the urge for God in every one of us. And where can this God-urge be fulfilled? It is normal and natural that we seek to fulfil it in the outside world. To quote the Upaniṣads :

'The Self-Existent made the senses turn outward. Accordingly, man looks toward what is without, and sees not what is within. Rare is he who, longing for immortality, shuts his eyes to what is without and beholds the Self.'³

In this connection a Western philosopher, Spinoza,⁴ pointed out that 'the things which men, to judge by their actions, deem the highest good are riches, fame, and sensual pleasure. Of these the last is followed by satiety and repentance, yet men will pursue the same thing over again. The other two are never satisfied. The more we have the more we want, while the love of fame compels us to order our lives by the opinion of others. But if the thing is not loved, no quarrel will arise concerning it, no sadness will be felt if it perishes; in short,

³ *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, II. i. 1.

⁴ Benedict de Spinoza, 'On the Improvement of the Understanding'.

¹ *Kena-upaniṣad*, I. 1, 2.

² I Cor. 3: 16.

no disturbances of the mind arise. All these spring from the love of that which passes away. But the love of a thing eternal and infinite fills the mind wholly with joy and is unmingled with sadness. Therefore it is to be desired greatly and to be sought with all our strength.'

In order to seek the Infinite we need discrimination, the ability to discern what is called in the Upaniṣads 'the eternal amongst the non-eternals of life; the highest abiding joy in the midst of the fleeting pleasures of life'. As discrimination arises through the process of spiritual growth, we earnestly seek the truth which is already within each of us.

It must be remembered that the spiritual aspirant is not attempting to accomplish anything new. God is already there. That fulfilment can be had because it is already there. We are, as it were, standing on a buried treasure, and yet we are trying to seek that treasure everywhere else. We must dig where we are standing. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the Lord says:

Fools pass blindly by the place of my dwelling

Here in this human form, and of my majesty

They know nothing at all,

Who am the Lord, their soul.⁵

It is not enough to believe that the treasure is there. We must practise *sādhana*, spiritual disciplines, to remove the obstacles—the dirt and dust which hide the treasure—then alone shall we find it. And what are these obstacles? The first obstacle is ignorance. Through ignorance we are blinded to knowledge of the Ātman, and the sense of ego arises. From the sense of ego we become attached to things that give us pleasure and we have aversion to things

that give us suffering and pain. And finally, there is the desire to cling to this surface life. When these obstacles are removed, God shines forth. Then the state of transcendental consciousness, which we call *turiya* or *samādhi*, is attained. Each one of us has to reach that state, and each of us has the power to reach it.

There are three conditions that must be fulfilled in order to attain that state of realization. The first of these is human birth. Secondly, the aspirant must have the desire for liberation, longing for the truth of God. And finally, he needs the grace of an illumined teacher. Many times people think that the idea of a *guru* is found only in Hinduism, but it is an idea common to all religions. What is known as knowledge of Brahman, knowledge of the Self, is attained when one learns about it from a man of God.

A Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'⁶ To be born of water, to receive baptism or initiation or what is known as *dīkṣā*, is to receive the grace of the guru. To be born in Spirit is to attain the state of *samādhi*. Then only can you enter the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus then asked Jesus, 'How can these things be?'⁷ And Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.'⁸ Then he pointed out this beautiful truth: 'And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.'⁹ In other words, the very birthright of man is divinity. We are not born in sin and

⁵ *Bhagavad-gītā*, IX. 11. (The translations of the *Gītā* verses used in this article are taken from *Bhagavad-Gītā, The Song of God*, Tr. by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood).

⁶ John 3: 5.

⁷ *ibid.*, 3: 9.

⁸ *ibid.*, 3: 11.

⁹ John 3: 13.

iniquity. Our very nature is divine, otherwise we could never realize that divine being.

Then Jesus said, 'Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'¹⁰ To 'believe in him' means to have faith in the man of God, the spiritual teacher. Then, having faith in the words of the guru and also in the words of the scriptures, the spiritual aspirant must also have faith in himself : if others have realized God it is possible for him to do it too. And with enthusiasm he has to practise the disciplines as taught by the guru. As he practises the disciplines purity of heart comes.

'Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God.'¹¹ This does not mean that we have to die to find God and to be born in Spirit. Rather, purity of heart is to be attained here and now. In the Upaniṣads it is pointed out beautifully that seeking for God does not require running away from the world and its objects. You can live in the world, only you must live untouched by attachment, aversion, and delusion. To live in this way, to work without attachment to the fruits of one's actions, is called *karma-yoga* in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. One time my master was asked by a disciple, 'Can anybody realize God while living in the world?' And his answer was, 'Who is not living in the world?' Live in the world, but be not of it. Sri Ramakrishna used to give the illustration : Let the boat float on the water, but do not let water get into the boat.

How then are we to meditate on God? What is his nature, and how are we to think of him? Sri Ramakrishna, who practised many kinds of spiritual disciplines following the teachings of different sects of Hinduism and also Christianity and Islam, pointed out this truth : 'Infinite is God.

Infinite are His aspects. If one lives continuously in consciousness of Him, he knows Him in His true nature. He knows Him as impersonal without attributes ; he also knows Him as personal with attributes.' Then he gave the following illustration : There is a vast ocean in which, because of intense cold, icebergs have formed in some places. The water is formless, and yet at the same time it has assumed form. In the same way there are innumerable forms of God, and there are the *avatāras*, incarnations of God, such as Christ or Ramakrishna. Whatever concept of God you choose to meditate upon, whether it be with form or formless, whether you choose Christ or Kṛṣṇa, Buddha or Ramakrishna, you must have *iṣṭa-niṣṭhā*, intense devotion to your Chosen Ideal. You cannot worship this way today and that way tomorrow. If you want to get water, you must keep digging for it in the same place. You will never find water if you dig in one spot today and in another spot tomorrow.

There is a prayer : 'They call You by many names. They divide You, as it were, by different names, yet in each one of these is found Your omnipotence. You are revealed through any of these.' If you have intense devotion to your Chosen Ideal, He will reveal Himself to you. He may reveal Himself with form or without form. You may see many aspects of the same Reality.

The uniqueness of Vedānta, in this connection, is its ideal of universality, of sympathy for all religions. It looks past the creeds, theories, and dogmas to the common ideal, which is to realize the truth of God. Swami Vivekananda said, 'The eternal Vedantic religion opens to mankind an infinite number of doors for ingress to the inner shrine of divinity, and places before humanity an almost inexhaustible array of ideals, there being in each of them a manifestation of the Eternal One.'

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 3 : 15.

¹¹ *Matt.* 5 : 8.

Now we come to the practice of meditation. After the guru has studied the tendencies of the disciple, he selects the Chosen Ideal accordingly, and gives the disciple a *mantra*, the name of his Chosen Ideal. The disciple begins to meditate as he has been taught, but like Arjuna, he finds that the mind is difficult to control.

Restless man's mind is,
So strongly shaken
In the grip of the senses :
Gross and grown hard
With stubborn desire
For what is worldly.
How shall he tame it ?
Truly, I think
The wind is no wilder.¹²

In answer to this Śrī Kṛṣṇa says, 'Yes, Arjuna, the mind is restless, no doubt, and hard to subdue. But it can be brought under control by constant practice, and by the exercise of dispassion.'¹³ Through regular practice of meditation with an undistracted mind, the perfect state of meditation is finally attained. The nature of this state is beautifully expressed in the *Gītā* :

' "The light of a lamp does not flicker in a windless place" : that is the simile which describes a yogi of one-pointed mind, who meditates upon the Atman. When, through the practice of yoga, the mind ceases its restless movements, and becomes still, he realizes the Atman. It satisfies him entirely. Then he knows that infinite happiness which can be realized by the purified heart, but is beyond the grasp of the senses. He stands firm in this realization. Because of it, he can never again wander from the inmost truth of his being.'¹⁴

Utterly quiet,
Made clean of passion,
The mind of the yogi
Knows that Brahman,
His bliss is the highest.

Released from evil
His mind is constant
In contemplation :
The way is easy,
Brahman has touched him,
That bliss is boundless.

His heart is with Brahman,
His eye in all things
Sees only Brahman
Equally present,
Knows his own Atman
In every creature,
And all creation
Within that Atman.

'That yogi sees me in all things, and all things within me. He never loses sight of me, nor I of him. He is established in union with me, and worships me devoutly in all beings. That yogi abides in me, no matter what his mode of life.'¹⁵

The spiritual aspirant does not come to that state of absorption, *samādhi*, all at once. As you practise, first you begin to feel the Presence, that He is. You become convinced of it; it is no longer hearsay. Then you begin to feel that He is moving and living. You talk to Him. And in all these experiences there is a feeling that this happens not through your efforts but rather through His grace. This is a tangible experience. It is then that you become a blessing to yourself and a blessing to all mankind. Your very presence becomes a blessing to all.

In conclusion I would like to quote Swami Vivekananda again :

'The greatest help to spiritual life is meditation (*Dhyāna*). In meditation we divest ourselves of all material conditions and feel our divine nature. . . . The touch of the soul can paint the brightest colour even in the dingiest places; it can cast a fragrance over the vilest thing; it can make the wicked divine—and all enmity, all selfishness is

(Continued on page 101)

¹² *Gītā*, VI. 34.

¹³ *ibid.*, VI. 35.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, VI. 19-21.

¹⁵ *Gītā*, VI. 27-31.



NOBLE AND INVINCIBLE

In a world accustomed to easy opportunism, to people for whom shifting loyalties are acceptable as practical paths to success, the ideals of uncompromising truth and unflinching loyalty seem to have lost their relevance; they appear anachronistic. Yet they are ageless ideals and even now healthy hearts yearn for them. There are always people eager to adore and follow those robust spirits who stand out for these ideals in word and deed. For it is these spirits who are the salt of the earth; deprived of them humanity loses its vitality and flavour and becomes stale and degenerate. Human society is ever in desperate need of such sterling character, which could be depended upon under all circumstances. And if such character be also endowed with a nobility of vision and intense concern for the well-being of others, what an inspiration and blessing it would be!

Fortunately for seeking, aspiring hearts, such an inspiration is provided by the grand characters presented by the *Mahābhārata*, that epic saga of mighty spirits. And among them all stands out in Himalayan majesty the hero Bhīṣma, whose character and deeds will continue to thrill and uplift, to the end of time, even the pettiest of beings, the faintest of hearts.

Born as Devavrata, he was the lone,

motherless son of King Śantanu. Being also gifted with extraordinary valour and skill and graces of head and heart, he was the best beloved of his father as well as of the people of the kingdom. He grew up to be their adored and precious Crown Prince, the hope of their hearts.

But fate plays its own pranks and it picked up King Śantanu for its game. It put in his path, during one of his hunting trips, Satyavatī, the daughter of a fisherman—a maiden of unusual loveliness and charm. The sudden encounter took the King by storm. He was captivated by her instantaneously. Neither his royal prestige nor his advanced age could resist her charm. He would marry her and seeking out her father, straightway asked her hand in marriage. Any ordinary person would have jumped at this offer. But Satyavatī's father, fisherman though he was, had his own dignity and discretion. He kept his own counsel. 'Your Majesty,' he said, 'I am tremendously honoured by your proposal. But my heart is a little uneasy. Unequal alliances are not advisable, specially for the weaker side. After a time she will be reduced to the status of an insignificant person in the royal household. Kindly forgive me if I am unable to agree to the proposal.' 'Why so?' replied the King. 'Entertain no

such fears. Her status and dignity will be assured. In fact, I am going to take her as my queen and no less!' Even after hearing this the fisherman demurred, 'But, Sire, how can she be the queen unless her son can ascend the throne? And how can he ascend the throne so long as our noble Crown Prince Devavrata is there already in line?'

To this the King had no answer; he was silenced. By all means he wanted the charming Satyavatī; but by no means he would denigrate the precious prince. His heart was rent in twain and reluctantly he withdrew his suit and returned to his palace. Days passed but time did not prove to be the healer in his case. The unfulfilled desire smouldered in the heart, too embarrassing for the royal sovereign to share with others. Loyalty and affection for his son struggled with love and attraction for Satyavatī. The suppressed conflict began to take heavy toll; the King began to pine away and not all the royal physicians could do anything to restore him to health and cheerfulness.

All showed concern; but the one who was most seriously concerned was Prince Devavrata. His utter loving devotion to his father was matched by his penetrating intelligence and he started his own course of action for finding out the remedy. He had his own guesses and made his own discreet inquiries. Soon he came to know of the Satyavatī episode. The revelation did not dispirit him; no embarrassment or resentment did he feel taking it as an insult to the memory of his mother. His sole concern now was how to make his father rightfully healthy and happy; he lost no time in taking steps to achieve this purpose. He went to the fisherman, met him and verified from him the actual events that transpired. Then he asked him frankly, 'You demanded of my father that your grandson should succeed to the throne. Did you really mean

it or did you just put forth the condition in order to put off the proposal?' 'Prince, I was quite serious about it,' was the answer. 'If that condition could be fulfilled, the King could have my daughter right now!'

'If that be the case,' Devavrata declared promptly, 'I am here to give the guarantee. I hereby renounce my right to the throne. Your grandson will get it. Take my word for it.' The fisherman was taken aback at this unexpected reply but still his assent was not coming forth. A little more reflection, and he remarked, 'Great indeed is your sacrifice, and noble are your words. I certainly believe you. But, even so, how can you bind your sons? How can you and I prevent your sons from laying *their* claims to the throne? No, it is better to drop the matter.'

To any lesser person this would naturally be the dead end. But to Devavrata of luminous mind and resolute heart, this was no impasse at all. Without hesitation came forth his calm rejoinder, 'If that is the only obstacle, then it is as good as cleared. I hereby solemnly vow that I shall have no issues; I shall remain unmarried; I shall remain a celibate for life! Now what more?' The fisherman was dumbfounded with awe and joy at these solemn words. All that he could do was to express his absolute satisfaction and give his unqualified assent: 'Prince, you have won my daughter for your father. Take her with you.'

When Devavrata and Satyavatī presented themselves before the King he could not believe his eyes. When he heard what had transpired he could not believe his ears. However, when he understood the situation, he also began to realize the true dimensions of his son's greatness. Devavrata's unbelievable unselfishness, his matchless filial devotion and above all his all-sacrificing renunciation threw Santanu into an ecstasy of admiration. 'My son!' he ex-

claimed, 'Your renunciation and all-sacrificing love are awesome ; they have made you invincible and immortal. Now, not even death shall have power over you, unless you court it yourself. Be you known hereafter as "Bhīṣma", the terrible.'

Solemnly had the vow been taken and with equal solemnity, to the fullest degree, was it fulfilled by Bhīṣma. He remained true to it, till the very last. And from this his sacrificial resolve, no circumstances, no power on earth, could shake him.

After leaving two sons by Satyavatī, Śantanu passed away. From then on Bhīṣma assumed the unique role of being the protector, guide, and guardian of the royal family as well as of the people, while his brother Vicitravīrya was put on the throne. Eventually he became the 'grand-sire' to the whole nation, a truly grand-sire in the best sense of the term. Taking care of the princes, training them all-round, installing them in positions of power and holy responsibility while he himself stayed down to serve, asking nothing of them except that they live and rule worthily—that was his unremitting, untiring, role.

Such transparent sincerity, such breath-taking nobility could not but have their impact on others who came into touch with them. The first to be so influenced was Satyavatī. Instead of developing into the usual type of stepmother—jealous, suspicious and resentful of the stepson—she came to regard him as her own, to depend upon him as her nearest and dearest. At one time, one of her sons was killed in an accident and the other was yet to be married, she became concerned with the continuity of the royal line and appealed to Bhīṣma to marry. 'But, mother!' pleaded he, 'how can that be possible? I cannot go against my solemn vow.' But Satyavatī was insistent: 'It is because of *me* that you had to take up that vow. Now *I myself* shall release you from it. You must consent to

marry.' 'Mother, I understand your anxiety. But I, too, cannot prove false to my vow. However, don't feel afraid. I shall see that my brother is duly married and the royal line is not broken,' he assured her. Pressing into service his own valour and skill, he fulfilled his promise by obtaining for his brother worthy brides. In due course Satyavatī's two grandsons became respectively the progenitors of the famous Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. But, in the process of securing brides for his brother, Bhīṣma had to incur the wrath of one princess Ambā who had set her heart on King Śālwa and who wished to be released from the current wedding arrangements. Chivalrous Bhīṣma readily obliged but Śālwa would not accept her ; neither would Vicitravīrya consider marrying one whose heart was given to another. So in desperation she sought to save her honour by being married to Bhīṣma, since it was he who had brought her! But, of course, that was easier said than done. Enraged, she went to Paraśurāma, the Guru of Bhīṣma, and enlisting his sympathy on her behalf, prevailed upon him to command his disciple to accept her. But even the Guru was not able to shake him from his resolve ; the disciple was ready to lay down his life for the sake of the Guru but would not dishonour his vow. The mighty Guru had to accept defeat at the hands of this reverent but resolute votary of truth.

Utterly loyal to his ideals and duties, his commitments and his responsibilities, Bhīṣma lived a full life with his head held high, undefeated and above reproach. His life was a series of crosses, a bed of spikes and thorns, rather a veritable bed of sharp arrows, but he sought no escape from it ; rather, he welcomed it and thrived on it. Invincible in battle and in spirit, he stood at his post, in the service of Dharma—of truth, virtue and justice—, in the service of the people, of even those who fought against

him and were sworn to vanquish him. No wonder, that at the conclusion of the Mahābhārata-war, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, chose this 'stainless knight without fear and without reproach'

to instruct and guide the Pāṇḍavas, in matters relating to the temporal as well as the eternal.

—EXPLORER

THE GĪTĀ AMONG THE TRIPLE TEXTS

SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

The term *prasthāna-traya* is used among Vedāntic scholars to denote the three standard texts that have been adopted in post-Śaṅkarite era as the source books of Vedānta, namely the Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. The exact meaning of the word is somewhat obscure. The addition of the prefix *pra*, indicating original source, to the word *sthāna*, taken as meaning 'ground', will give it the sense of 'original sources'. It can also mean the 'citadels or strongholds of Vedānta'. Another meaning that could be given is the 'threefold movement' of Vedānta, wherein the word *prasthāna* is interpreted to mean an 'onward march'.

But really there are only two sources, and these are the Upaniṣads, which are by themselves known as the Vedāntas, and the *Bhagavad-gītā* which, though not an Upaniṣad technically, has been given the status of an Upaniṣad. The *Brahma-sūtras*, the third one included among the *prasthānas*, are really references to the Upaniṣadic passages, in the form of short and easily memorizable phrases and sentences. They are understandable only in the light of the commentaries, and the commentaries vary according to the spiritual tradition followed by the interpreting Ācāryas. Among the commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* now extant, that of Śrī Śaṅkara (8th century A.D.) is the oldest. Whether he followed

any older commentary or only the Advaitic (non-dualistic) tradition handed down orally from teacher to disciple, we do not know for certain. But in the text of the *Brahma-sūtras* we come across references to various authoritative teachers like Audulomi, Kāśakṛtsna, and so on. An earlier commentary on the *Sūtras* is, however, definitely mentioned by Śrī Rāmānuja (12th century A.D.), who is undoubtedly one of the great Vedāntic Ācāryas, though belonging to a school different from Śaṅkara's. Rāmānuja says that this commentary of Bodhāyana, who must have maintained a doctrine of identity-in-difference (*bhedābheda*), was the original treatise on which he has drawn upon in his interpretation of the *Sūtras* in the *Śrī-Bhāṣya*. And tradition even says that Rāmānuja went up to Kashmir to study the text of the commentary of Bodhāyana, which was a closely guarded volume in a library in that far-off country.

It is also maintained that Rāmānuja did not write a separate commentary on the Upaniṣads, because the interpretation of the *Brahma-sūtras* involves an interpretation of the Upaniṣads, in so far as each *Sūtra* is based on some Upaniṣadic passage or other. This fact is in support of our statement that there are really only two *prasthānas*, the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*. But nonetheless, the fact that Śrī Śaṅkara, the most

arresting figure in the history of Vedāntic thought, has written commentaries on all these three texts separately and expounded his doctrine on the authority of these texts, has set the precedent for some others of different schools to write commentaries on all the three texts and, for Vedāntic scholars in general, to consider the study of all these three texts and their commentaries, as the accepted standard of Vedāntic scholarship.

According to the traditional view, the teachings of all these texts are identical, being a single revelation. The scriptures must have *eka-vākyatā* or unity of purport in order to be meaningful. If they contain diverse or contradictory teachings, they will create only confusion. So every commentary is an attempt to show that there is no contradiction in and between them, and that they agree with the metaphysics and theology that form the tradition of the interpreting school. While this point of view has to be essentially true in regard to the Upaniṣads and the *Brahma-sūtras*, it need not necessarily be so with regard to the *Bhagavad-gītā* in exactly the same sense as the tradition maintains. There is a time-honoured Sanskrit verse which speaks of all the Upaniṣads as cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the author of the *Gītā*, as the milker, and the *Gītā* as the milk he has drawn out of the cows. While this beautiful metaphor shows the basic unity of both the texts, it does not preclude the milk of *Gītā* from having a new flavour and nourishing property.

The Upaniṣads are essentially philosophical in outlook. The very word means the knowledge that shatters ignorance. Regarding the metaphysical position of the Vedānta, all its adherents agree that it teaches the unity of all existence, but they differ in their conception of that unity and its relation to multiplicity. The Advaita of Śaṅkara (*Kevalādvaita*) maintains that Ultimate Reality is a spiritual unity which sublates all multiplicity, as multiplicity is

a mere appearance conjured by ignorance and does not, therefore, coexist with unity. The Viśiṣṭādvaita and allied schools maintain that the unity propounded is identity-in-difference. All multiplicity is organically related to the central Unifying Principle (Īśwara or God) and the whole therefore constitutes an Organism to which the multiple centres stand in the relation of limbs. The Dvaita school stresses on the ultimacy of difference without compromising its absolute dependence on the Supreme Being who is the only independent and self-sufficient existence. The multiplicity is entirely different from, but absolutely dependent on, Him. Their relation is like that of reflected image on its matrix. But it has to be understood that it is a reflection without a reflector. In spite of the stress on the ultimacy and distinctiveness of difference, even this school is a doctrine of unity of all existence, since God, the principle of unity, is the sole independent and self-sufficient existence. It is better to call it 'Brahmādvaita' (doctrine of non-dual Brahman) than 'Dvaita' (dualism), as some of its modern adherents prefer to do.

Whatever the metaphysical view we take the Supreme Being of the Upaniṣads, though described as *Sat-cid-ānanda*, is more a spiritual Principle than a spiritual Personality. Though immanent, He is yet too much of a sublime and transcendental Being, unconnected with the world of changes, whom a votary should search for in the recess of his thought. The calmness of communion and the coldness of intellectualism rather than the warmth of love and surrender characterize the sentiment that links the aspirant with the Supreme Being of the Upaniṣads. The description of these texts breathes the forbidding grandeur, the overpowering glory of a Transcendental Being. The path of spiritual fulfilment it lays down is *vicāra*, self-analysis, and not *upāsanā* in the sense of

Bhakti (love), prayer, and worship. For the Brahman of the Upaniṣad is the true Self of the aspirant, a fact to be recognized and not a state to be attained to.

Is a Personal God then foreign to the Upaniṣads? That will be going too far. For example a text like the *Śvetāśvatara* is full of devotional sentiment and presents a God who can be loved. In the *Kāthopaniṣad* there is the famous passage implying the doctrine of grace, 'He whom It chooses, he attains the goal; to such a one the Ātman reveals Its own nature.'¹ But such passages are few and far between, and the idea of a Personal God seems to be rather rudimentary than explicit and elaborate just like many other doctrines that have become very closely associated with the Upaniṣadic philosophy in later times. For example, the doctrine of *māyā*, which is an integral part of Śaṅkara's system of Advaita and which unavoidably comes to the mind of any student of Indian thought, is present in the Upaniṣads, but only in a rudimentary form. The doctrine prominently expounded in these texts is the unity of all existence, and the doctrine of *vivarta* (apparent transformation forming the core of the doctrine of *māyā*) is only the explanation given by the school of Śaṅkara to this unity in relation to our experience of multiplicity. Still this doctrine is traced to the Upaniṣads by reference to the few passages scattered here and there in the text. The idea of a Personal God is also analogous. It cannot be denied that the Upaniṣads contain it, but it is only in a rudimentary state and its explication had to await further development in man's thought and experience.

It is in the *Bhagavad-gītā* that we find this new development, and for this reason it is definitely one of the two 'movements of thought' or *prasthānas* spoken of before. Strictly speaking the *Gītā* is not an Upa-

niṣad, as it is not a part of Vedic literature but of the *Mahābhārata*, which is only a *smṛti* (a scriptural writing of known authorship). Still it calls itself an Upaniṣad, and this claim has been conceded by an authority of Śrī Śaṅkara's eminence by writing a commentary on it as on the Upaniṣads and by quoting often from it in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*. Could we not support this claim on the ground that its contribution to Vedāntic thought is distinct and original in the same sense as that of the Upaniṣads properly so called? The Impersonal Brahman of the Upaniṣads and the Personal God of the *Gītā* are the two complementary seed thoughts that have coalesced into the Vedāntic world-view and way of life.

When the idea of Personal God is mentioned, it should not be understood that the Personal God of the Vedānta is like the nature deities of primitive religions or even like the much-vaunted God of Semitic monotheism. The former is merely an anthropomorphic way of understanding natural forces, unless you interpret them with the Vedāntins as the *vibhūtis* (power-attributes) of the Supreme Being. The God of Semitic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, bears the unmistakable signs of His descent from Yahveh who was one of the Molochs or tribal gods of the many Semitic tribes. A Moloch was the impersonation of a tribal community just as the nature god was of a power of nature. Exterminating internecine wars formed the most important feature of the social life of these tribes, and the defeat of a tribe meant the desecration of the temple of the Moloch of the defeated tribe and the imposition of the conquerors' Moloch on the conquered. Yahveh was probably the ultimately triumphant among the Semitic Molochs. He also exacted his tribute of blood and burnt offerings of children. With the gradual social evolution

¹I. ii. 23.

of the Hebrews, the Yahveh developed into the Personal God of the Jews, who were His 'chosen people' as distinguished from the rest of the world. He was a jealous God too, who did not brook any other God beside Him, which only means any other conception of God that other people may have. It was this God who was changed into the Father in Heaven by the Christian thinkers. He was the Father of all, but yet there was no place by His side for any other 'conception of God' that other people might have. He was, no doubt, the Redeemer, but only of those who surrendered to Him as the Incarnate Christ, while the rest of mankind are sinners reserved for hell, as there is no other way except through Christ. He is also a conquering God, as 'missionizing' in practice has meant only the elimination of all other forms of worship than the Christian. In all these respects the Father in Heaven of Christianity reveals the features of the ancient Moloch Yahveh, and whatever philosophic basis it has got is derived from the doctrine of the Logos, which is essentially the product of Greek thought. The above survey is not meant to belittle the Christian conception, but only to show that it is not as immaculate as its protagonists claim and that it reveals the limitations of its origin along with many noble and universal features.

Unlike the Semitic God, the God of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the product of thought and based on experience. Whatever accretions of historic processes there are in His conception, can be easily detected and removed. In the first place, He is the expression of the fundamental Upaniṣadic conception of the unity of all existence. This unitary experience is described as the experience of the One on whom the universe in its multiplicity is based. The multiplicity is also described as the Body of the Universal Spirit which it indwells both as a whole and in every part. Whether the

multiplicity is real or apparent is not a problem that the *Gītā* touches upon. The only comment on this point is a line: 'My Being, which is the source of all entities, is the support of them all but not limited by them.'² It can mean the world is a *real* expression of Him, but by virtue of His unique power as the Supreme Being (*yogam-aiśwaram*), it fails to affect Him. It can also be interpreted in the sense of 'apparent' manifestation within the meaning of Śaṅkara's Advaitism, but this will jar against the spirit of realism that characterizes the *Gītā* thought to the end.

The above is sufficient to show the metaphysical foundation of the God of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Though He is identified with Viṣṇu, such identification is not a necessary part of it. For He is behind all forms. 'His hands are everywhere, His feet, His eyes, His head, and His face too are everywhere. His hearing is also all-pervasive. He enfolds everything.'³ He is a Person without the limitation of personality as understood by us. Would it not be proper to call Him 'Impersonal' for this reason? It has, however, to be remembered that just as the limited human personality is always associated with the term 'personal', and thus God is likely to be conceived as a 'man' when we apply the term personal to Him, so also the term 'impersonal' may make one feel that the Being referred to is like nature and its forces, something fixed, irresponsive, insentient, and mechanical. To avoid these misconceptions it is better to denote the Supreme Being as Personal-Impersonal, and this appears to be the *Gītā*-view, as seen by its broadbasing its Personal God on the Upaniṣadic Brahman, the Absolute Being. Like the Semitic Personal God, He has no exclusive individuality. Nor is He jealous of a votary's owing allegiance

² *Bhagavad-gītā*, IX. 5.

³ *ibid.*, XIII. 13.

to conceptions other than the one inculcated in the *Gītā*. The God of the Vaiṣṇavas (followers of Vaiṣṇavism) is somewhat like that, but not of the *Gītā*, in spite of its being a text of the Bhāgavata school of thought. For the Personal God of the *Gītā* declares that in whatever way a man approaches Him, in that same way He approaches the devotee. Personality is, therefore, an essential aspect of Him, but it does not centre round any single individuality. He manifests in forms appropriate to the devotee's mode of thought.

On this skeleton of philosophic thought, which is to a large extent reflected in the Upaniṣads too, the *Gītā* builds up the perfect figure of a Personal God—who is Personal not in the sense that He is an individual but in the sense that He is the source of redeeming love expressing Himself in diverse forms and relations of love in relation to a votary. Describing Himself, the Lord says in the *Gītā*: 'I am the Father of this world, its Mother, its Grandfather. I am the holy syllable *Oṅkāra*, I am the revealed scripture, I am the Goal, the Support, the Refuge, the Lord, the Witness, the Resting Place, and the Well-wisher of all beings. . . .'⁴ He is a God of redeeming love, ever engaged in redeeming the *jīvas* from bondage. Those who abandon all their responsibilities to Him, thinking of Him as the highest, and who worship and meditate on Him with single-minded devotion—He uplifts them from the ocean of *samsāra* (relative existence). He is equal to all, saint and sinner alike. But the saints

⁴ *ibid.*, IX. 17-8.

live in Him and therefore He in them. The sinner, however, alienates himself from Him out of self-will. But even a sinner is not beyond the operation of His redeeming love. If the sinner turns his attention to Him, and devotes himself whole-heartedly to Him, the Lord's mercy will work for his uplift and redemption. He accepts every loving offering of man, irrespective of its material worth, be it only a leaf, flower, fruit or water. Devotion makes them all sweet to Him.

But what is remarkable is that the God of the *Bhagavad-gītā* enters into man's life not merely at the point of external worship or of meditation. He embraces His votary in and through every action or phase of his life, provided the votary has the spirit of resignation. So He declares: 'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrificial offering you make, whatever gift you make, whatever austerities you perform—do all that as an offering unto Me.'⁵ And then again, as His final and potent exhortation to spiritual seekers, the ringing notes of which have for long been bringing cheer and comfort to the seekers on the path, the Lord declares: 'Abandoning your dependence on all relative notions of Dharma and Adharma, seek shelter in Me alone. I will liberate you from all sin. Grieve not.'⁶

Among all the *prasthānas*, this is an assurance that the *Bhagavad-gītā* alone vouchsafes.

⁵ *ibid.*, IX. 27.

⁶ *ibid.*, XVIII. 66.

(Continued from page 92)

effaced. The less the thought of the body, the better. For it is the body that drags us down. It is attachment, identification, which makes us miserable. That is the secret: To think that I am the spirit and not the body, and that the

whole of this universe with all its relations, with all its good and all its evil, is but as a series of paintings—scenes on a canvas—of which I am the witness.'¹⁶

¹⁶ *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), p. 37.

THE HARMONY OF RELIGIONS ACCORDING TO SRI RAMAKRISHNA

DR. WALTER H. MAURER

In the well-known eulogy of Śiva's greatness called simply the *Mahimnaḥstava*, ascribed to Puṣpadanta, there occurs a verse which reads in translation thus :

'With regard to varied religious systems [like] the Threefold Knowledge, the Sāṅkhya, the Yoga, the Doctrine of Paśupati [and] Vaiṣṇavism and [the opinion that] this one is best, that one is suitable—in spite of the variety of tastes which favour different paths, straight or crooked, You (i.e. Śiva) are the one goal of men, as [is] the ocean [the goal] of waters.'¹

Here Śiva is regarded as the supreme Godhead and hence the object of all forms of worship. But in other Hindu texts, where Viṣṇu is viewed as the expression of the ultimate Reality, it is affirmed that all acts of worship, under whatever name they may be called, are in reality accorded to Viṣṇu.

Now the functions of Śiva and Viṣṇu are often interchanged, what is done by the one being said of the other and vice versa, and sometimes it is stated that the Supreme assumes different names (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva) in the processes of creation, maintenance, and dissolution of the universe. Thus, we read in the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* :

'The Lord (i.e. Viṣṇu, also called Janārdana) is designated Brahmā, Viṣṇu,

and Śiva when He engages in the creation, maintenance, and destruction [of the universe].'²

In medieval times there arose a syncretistic deity called by the compound name 'Hari-Hara', the two elements being common names for Viṣṇu and Śiva respectively. But this deity never gained much of a foothold, and Hindus have preferred to worship either Hari or Hara rather than the two viewed as one.³

This tendency to syncretize which we see here had its roots in the Ṛgvedic period. The personalities of many of the gods in the *Ṛgveda* tend to be somewhat shadowy and indistinct, the same great properties of majesty, luminosity and the like being attributed to all of them. With few really distinctive characteristics to distinguish the one from the other their personalities flow together, leaving only their names to keep them apart. The Vedic seers were aware of this, and often in the same hymn we find one deity identified with another. This identification is carried still further in the following statement where various prominent gods are considered names of a single reality :

'They call [it] Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni; or it [is] the divine Sun-bird.

¹ Stanza 7; for the text of the whole work with English translation consult the edition of W. Norman Brown. *The Mahimnastava, or Praise of Shiva's Greatness* (Poona, American Institute of Indian Studies, 1965). This particular stanza is referred to also by Satis Chandra Chatterjee in *Classical Indian Philosophies: Their Synthesis in the Philosophy of Sri Ramakrishna* (University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1963), pp. 148-9. The translation given here is my own.

² Cited by S. Radhakrishnan in *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (Oxford, 1940), p. 310.

³ A. L. Basham states that 'temples of Harihara are still frequented in the Telugu and Canarese districts ... but Harihara never became really popular, and Hindus have generally accepted the two gods without trying to combine them.' (Vide his article on 'Hinduism' in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths* ed. R. C. Zaehner (Beacon Press, Boston, 1959), p. 230.

That which is one seers call by various names : Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.⁴

The idea, then, that there is ultimately a single reality behind the multiplicity of everyday life is at heart very old. It was further developed and formulated in the Upaniṣads, the final portion of the Veda. In those treatises a further step was taken : the eternal part of every individual, i.e. his self or soul (Ātman), was said to be identical with the Supreme Reality (Brahman). The knowledge of this identity would release the wandering soul from further bodily integuments, considered to be the product of actions and their consequences (*karman*). Not all actions could keep one's soul tied to the world of matter : only actions that were motivated by desire or gain could do so, just as a seed properly nourished by water and fertile soil is able to produce a plant or a tree. But actions performed in a disinterested spirit, without concern for any particular result, were as though not performed at all, like a parched seed incapable of germination.

This has remained the essential teaching of higher Hinduism, though the philosophical superstructure built upon this basic doctrine by various teachers throughout the centuries varies, sometimes considerably. These differences concern mainly the precise nature of the material world, whether it is real or illusory, and its relation to Brahman and also the relationship between the individual self and Brahman.

This ancient idea that the world of diversity and change in which we live is ultimately founded on one eternal principle which may be realized by many paths very naturally has given Hinduism an elasticity

⁴ इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति, अग्निं यमं मातरिश्वान-
माहुः ॥ *Rgveda* I. 164. 46.

quite unknown to the adherents of many other religions who often maintain the rigid position that, while there is only one final Being or God, He is accessible only to those initiated into the mysteries of their faith who follow the prescriptions enjoined by its sacred books. But Hinduism by its nature adopts the view that the various religions of the world are, each in its own way, merely attempts by man to reach the one divine essence behind the façade of multiplicity and impermanence, though the names whereby that eternal essence is called may vary. Thus, say the Hindus, all religions are equally valid and true. It is an implied corollary that which particular religion one adopts as his own depends on the background in which he has grown up. Mahatma Gandhi on frequent occasions affirmed his respect and belief in all religions. For example, in *Harijan* he wrote :

'I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of the different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths, we should find that they were at the bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.'⁵

But, on the other hand, we must not suppose that it is only within the all-embracing bosom of Hinduism that the essential oneness of all religions has been propounded. The pagan Platonic scholar Maximus of Madaura with remarkable circumspection and clarity of insight observed :

'There is one supreme god who is, as it were, the God and mighty father of all. The power of the deity, diffused through the universe which he has made, we worship under many names, as we are all ignorant of his true name.'⁶

⁵ *Harijan*, Feb. 16, 1934.

⁶ So according to Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

On the whole, however, such syncretic views among adherents of religions other than Hinduism are a rarity. There is an oft-related story attributed to Gautama Buddha which graphically depicts the utter blindness with which people engage in theological arguments. A certain king of Banaras, for the sake of diversion, offered a prize to that one of a group of blind beggars who could most accurately describe an elephant. Each one, touching a part of the elephant, declared what it seemed like to him. One, touching the elephant's leg, thought it was like a tree-trunk; another, happening to handle the tail, thought it like a rope; another, touching the ear, thought it like a palm-leaf, and so on. But none could give an overall description.⁷ So it is with truth itself: each of us is like a blind man, apprehending only a part of the complex whole, and yet in that imperfect and fragmentary knowledge we think we have the total picture.

That all religious faiths are based on the same underlying reality and are but different approaches to it was a cardinal teaching of the great saint Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.⁸ He experimented not only with the various spiritual disciplines of Hindu tradition, but, what is more significant, he tested out the truth and efficacy of Christianity and Islam by placing himself in the position of a devotee of each of these great

⁷ Mentioned by Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-9, but often referred to, e.g. by Satischandra Chatterjee and Dhirendramohan Datta in *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy* (University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1960), pp. 80-1 (in a discussion on Jainism).

⁸ The account here given of Ramakrishna's teachings is based on that of S. C. Chatterjee in *Classical Indian Philosophies*, pp. 104 ff., and this in turn principally on the *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Kathāmṛta* recorded by M. (i.e. Mahendranath Gupta), Calcutta, 1897-1932, which has appeared in an English translation by Swami Nikhilananda under the title *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, 1942).

religions. In each case he achieved the same result, though, of course, his experiences varied. He was convinced that, since these diverse paths all led him to the same reality, that reality must itself be varied and many-sided, though in one aspect formless and characterless. He concluded that the Absolute (Brahman) and the personal God (*Īśvara*) were not two separate entities unrelated to each other or even related as substance and quality, but were different states or phases of the same eternal essence, in the one case unmoving and uncreative, in the other creating, maintaining, and destroying the universe. In the same way it is the same water whether moving or still, and the same serpent whether lying coiled up or creeping.

This view is different from that of Śaṅkara who teaches that the Supreme Reality (Brahman) is without form or character (*nirguṇa*) and that it is only considered to have these attributes from a lower or practical viewpoint (*vyāvahārikadr̥ṣṭi*). From the higher viewpoint (*pāramārthikadr̥ṣṭi*) there is no personal God, only undifferentiated Brahman. According to Śaṅkara Brahman does not engage in any creative activity; what we call the material world is just an illusory superimposition projected on Brahman by our ignorance. God, in a way, then, is as much a product of this illusion-producing ignorance of *māyā* as the material world itself.

But according to Ramakrishna both Brahman and God are equally real, being different states or aspects of one and the same reality, the one static, the other dynamic.⁹ There is in this view no conception

⁹ The learned author has endeavoured here and elsewhere in this article to make a comparative study between Śaṅkara and Sri Ramakrishna. Śaṅkara was a great scholar and a systematizer who took his stand mainly on the Upaniṣads to build an impregnable bastion of Advaita Vedānta. Even so, he accepted the *Sagūṇa-brahman* almost on a par

of a lower grade or mere appearance of reality. In its static aspect (*nityarūpa*) the Supreme Reality is the undisturbed ocean of existence-consciousness-bliss (*saccidānanda*); in its dynamic or 'sportive' phase (*līlārūpa*) it is God or *Īśvara*, or as Ramakrishna preferred to say, 'Kālī', since he emphasized veneration of the divine Mother Goddess. It is clear, then, that according to Ramakrishna's view the world of objects is real, being the product of the creative side of the Supreme Being, but by definition, as it were, it is but a temporary thing which will utterly vanish when the other phase of the Eternal Being is in operation. The everyday world is not an unreality, a product of *māyā*, as taught by Śaṅkara, but though real, it is impermanent, a mere passing phase, so to speak. In fact, the term *māyā*¹⁰ was often used by Ramakrishna to mean 'egoism', the self-consciousness in an individual that causes him to associate himself with what he does. This false sense of 'I' is the ignorance which conceals the

with *Nirguṇa-brahman* when he wrote his commentaries on the *Brahma-sūtras* and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. His comments on the last two verses of the XIV chapter of the *Gītā* speak, besides, of the identity of Brahman and Its Power.

Sri Ramakrishna, on the other hand, was practically unlearned but he literally 'lived, moved, and had his being in God'. Though he had received instruction in Vedānta, he had absorbed and assimilated all other streams of Hindu religious thought. His version of Advaita is in complete accord with Śaṅkara's on fundamentals. But there is bound to be a lot more besides as, unlike Śaṅkara, he was not a propounder of any school of philosophy. He simply uttered his experiences which, as he once said, 'have gone beyond Vedas and Vedānta'. Strictly speaking, we cannot use a phrase like 'Ramakrishna's Vedānta'.—*Ed.*

¹⁰ Sri Ramakrishna has used 'māyā' in different connotations, one of which is in its classical Vedantic meaning of *avidyā* or nescience. He has also equated it with 'woman and gold' as attachment to these two makes one forget God. He has further used it in the Bengali vernacular sense of 'attachment to one's relatives etc.'.—*Ed.*

true reality from him like a veil. Since the world is real for only so long as Brahman continues Its sportive play (*līlā*), it may be indeed likened to a play which is real only as long as it lasts; the play is not a final, immutable reality in itself. Nor is the world different from Brahman. It pervades every part of the world, it is everything and everywhere—*sarvam khalvidam Brahma*, in the words of the Upaniṣad. To illustrate this Ramakrishna resorted to a very vivid and concrete simile: just as when one climbs a staircase and, on reaching the top, sees that the roof is composed of the same material as the stairs, so when one has withdrawn from the world to Brahman, he realizes that all the world too is Brahman. To the individual with deep metaphysical insight (*jñānin*) who has thus withdrawn from the material world of objects, the only reality is Brahman, formless and indeterminate; but to the ordinary devotee (*bhakta*) of Brahman as God (*Īśvara*), He has manifold shape and form, though it is one and the same Brahman throughout. Just as, says Ramakrishna, the same water may in severe cold take the form of ice, but melt away in the heat of the sun, so to the devotee (*bhakta*) the same Brahman takes the form of the world, but to the *jñānin* it is formless.¹¹

From this brief analysis of Ramakrishna's concept of Brahman we may see that what he teaches is not exactly the same as any of the various forms of Vedānta—Śaṅkara's Advaita, Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, Madhva's Dvaita or any of the lesser versions. Yet, neither is his teaching wholly different, but rather does it have characteristics of all these. It is a new Vedānta, a kind

¹¹ Sri Ramakrishna has used the simile of water and ice to explain how God, the formless, assumes forms under the 'cooling influence' of the devotees' love, and not for explaining how the formless Brahman becomes the material world.—*Ed.*

of synthesis of the salient features of all these Vedāntic schools. A word ought now to be said about its relationship to these differing schools and finally Ramakrishna's attitude towards the great religions of the world.

Śaṅkara's pure monism (Advaita) is a very abstract doctrine postulating a single formless and qualityless reality—*nirguṇa* Brahman, which cannot be grasped by any ordinary intellectual process, but requires for its realization the most extensive kinds of discipline and withdrawal. Śaṅkara realized this difficulty and that is why he had to admit of a lower degree of knowledge which regarded Brahman as possessed of form and quality, i.e. a personalized Brahman. But he insisted that this conditioned Brahman was unreal, a product of *māyā*. Ramakrishna combined both kinds of Brahman, *nirguṇa* and *sagūṇa*, and insisted they are both true, merely aspects or states of one and the same Brahman. We have seen that the world, according to Ramakrishna's teaching is real, but subject to dissolution when Brahman enters into Its static, quiescent stage. Ultimately, then, the world being impermanent and non-eternal, formless and qualityless Brahman is the only reality, and in this respect Ramakrishna's view accords with Śaṅkara's. The two aspects of Brahman are both true, and as described by Ramakrishna, it is like a man who is at one time asleep, at another awake and active, but it is the same man. So, in sum, *nirguṇa-brahman* and *sagūṇa-brahman* are not higher and lower stages of Brahman, but one and the same Brahman in different states.

Another point of difference is that while Śaṅkara regards only the path of knowledge (*jñānamārga*) as the highest way to Brahman, the other paths, viz. *yoga*-, *karma*-, and *bhakti-mārga* (the paths of psychic control, works and devotion), being merely helpful in purifying the mind and pre-

paring the aspirant for the path of knowledge, Ramakrishna, on the contrary, says that all these roads are equally efficacious. Nor is worship of idols wrong or even inferior, since, as everything in the world is Brahman including the material of which idols are made, devotion to images is tantamount to devotion to Brahman.¹² Furthermore, most people need a symbol of some sort and in praying to it they realize that it is only a concrete representative of the deity.

Ramakrishna's acceptance of the two stages of Brahman allows for a compromise with the Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita, since in both of these systems, however they may differ from each other, Brahman is conceived as endowed with qualities and form. Since neither the view of Rāmānuja nor that of Madhva recognizes the absolute identity of the self with Brahman, it must be said that they emphasize the idea of Brahman as a personal God, for whom Ramakrishna's system, as we have seen, makes ample allowance, as a particular phase of Brahman. Though, then, there are undoubted differences between Ramakrishna's Vedānta and these other versions, yet, since it has characteristics of all of them, it may be called a kind of synthesis of the various schools of Vedānta. S. C. Chatterjee uses the Sanskrit term *samanvayin* from *samanvaya* meaning 'synthesis'.

Ramakrishna insists that the essence of religion is not creed, dogma, rites, and various external trappings, but the experience of God and communion with Him.

¹² Remarkable elucidations of image worship have been given by Sri Ramakrishna, and this one is not among the familiar ones. When a disciple once argued with him that God was not the clay image, he quickly interrupted saying, 'But why clay? It is an image of Spirit.' He said further that God Himself had provided different forms of worship 'to suit different men in different stages of knowledge'.—Ed.

Nor is God to be found in deep philosophy and scriptural learning. Again using one of his vivid and homely similes, he says a mere scholar who has delved deeply into the scriptures of his religion, but has not experienced God face to face, is like the vulture who soars high in the sky, but has his eyes fixed on the charnel-pit ready to pounce upon a decaying corpse. God may be experienced by following the path of any religion: 'He is infinite and infinite are the ways of approach to Him.'

How, we may ask, is God to be experienced directly? First of all, the mind must be purged of impure and evil thoughts, for just as a needle covered with mud is not attracted by a magnet, so one whose mind is sullied cannot be drawn to God. Secondly, there must be a clear discrimination (*viveka*) between evil and good, the non-eternal and eternal, and similar pairs of opposites, and there must be a concomitant endeavour to cultivate the positive element in these pairs. Thirdly, the mind must be freed of attachments, passions and all sorts of indulgences. This state is called *vairāgya* or dispassion. After the mind has been purged and cultivated in this way, the

aspirant must meditate on God (*dhyāna*) and hold his mind steadfastly on Him (*dhāraṇā*). With his mind thus singly intent upon God, he should pray to God to reveal Himself to him, and by His grace He will certainly do so; just as, says Ramakrishna, the watchman whose face cannot be seen in the darkness, raises his lantern to light up his face when asked, so God, when supplicated by the devout, lifts the veil and shows His face.

The devout of all religions may experience God directly by following the paths laid out for them by their sacred books. Calling God by different names, they are like many persons drinking water from different parts of the same pool, some calling the water by one name, others by another, but the water is the same.

The One who, himself without colour, by the manifold application of his power Distributes many colours in his hidden purpose,

And into whom, its end and its beginning, the whole world dissolves—He is God!
May He endow us with clear intellect!¹³

¹³ *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad*, IV. 1. The translation is by R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1949), p. 402.

It is my belief that religious thought is in man's very constitution, so much so that it is impossible for him to give up religion until he can give up his mind and body, until he can give up thought and life. . . . Thus we see various forms of religion in the world. . . . Amidst this chaos there is harmony, throughout these discordant sounds there is a note of concord; and he who is prepared to listen to it will catch the tone.



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

DEVOTION TO ŚRĪ RĀMA, THE SECRET OF MENTAL HEALTH

Garuḍa asked Kākabhuṣuṇḍi¹ in loving tones : Since you are pleased with me, kindly treat me as your servant and answer these seven questions. O wise Master, tell me first what form is the most difficult of all to obtain. Next consider and explain briefly what is the worst misery and the highest pleasure. Tell me also the essential characteristics of both the saint and the evil-doer, for this is a secret you know. Tell me further what is the highest religious merit as made known in the scriptures, and what the most awful sin. In your limitless wisdom and supreme compassion, explain to me also the diseases of the mind.

Kākabhuṣuṇḍi : Listen, my dear, with the greatest reverence and devotion while I briefly answer your questions.

The human form is the most excellent of

¹ Kākabhuṣuṇḍi was a crow endowed with supreme wisdom and devotion to Śrī Rāma. Once he doubted the greatness of Śrī Rāma. He had to suffer for it but, at last, by the grace of Śrī Rāma, he was freed from Māyā and his doubt was cleared. Afterwards Kākabhuṣuṇḍi was filled with devotion to Śrī Rāma and always engaged himself in repetition of His name, singing His glories, and narration of His exploits.

Garuḍa, a carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, was assailed by doubts about the glory and greatness of Śrī Rāma. He was sent to Kākabhuṣuṇḍi by the Lord Śiva for the clearing of his doubts.

all. Every living creature, moving or unmoving, craves for it. Human body is the ladder that connects the soul with either the heaven or the hell. It is the bestower of knowledge, devotion, dispassion, and even the final emancipation. Men who fail to worship the Lord even after obtaining this form, and are engrossed in sense-pleasures, throw away the philosophers' stone while rushing for bits of glass.

There is no misery in the world so great as poverty and no pleasure like that of associating with the saints. It is an essential characteristic of the saints, O Garuḍa, to be beneficent to others in thought, word, and deed. The saint suffers for the good of others while the wicked one torments others. The saint in his compassion resembles the birch tree (whose bark, which peels off easily, was used for holy writings in ancient days) and submits to extreme distress for the good of others; while the wicked are like the hemp which have their skin flayed off and perish in agony merely to supply cords to bind people. Listen, Garuḍa, the wicked injure others like serpents and rats even when they have nothing to gain. They would kill themselves to ruin another like the hail which dissolves after destroying the crops. The rising of the wicked like the appearance of a comet

is a cause of calamity to the world. The rise of the saints gives constant happiness even as the rising sun and moon bring delight to the whole world.

Non-violence is the highest religious merit declared in the scriptures ; and there is no sin so great as abusing others.

Hearken now, dear, to the diseases of the mind from which all people suffer. Infatuation is the root of all diseases and from it again, spring many miseries. 'Wind' of lust, the 'phlegm' of insatiable greed, and the 'bile' of anger constantly inflame the human heart. When these three combine, there results a miserable paralysis of the whole system. Who can name the diseases caused by obstinate humours?—The 'ringworms' of 'me and mine', the 'itches' of envy, the 'sore throat' of joy and sorrow, the 'consumption' that aggravates at the sight of another's well-being, the 'leprosy' of wickedness and perversity, the excruciating 'gout' of egotism, the 'parasitic diseases' of hypocrisy, deceit, arrogance, and pride, the terrible 'dropsy' of thirst for enjoyment, the violent 'ague' of the three types of cravings (for progeny, wealth, and honour), the two 'fevers' of jealousy and indiscrimination—but why continue the interminable list of diseases?

A man may die even of one disease ; but these diseases are innumerable and incurable. How can a constantly ailing man find peace? Sacred vows, religious observances and practices, austerity, knowledge of the scriptures, sacrifice, repetition of the Lord's name, charity are so many different remedies ; but, O Garuda, the disease does not abate.

Thus every creature in the world is diseased by joy and sorrow, fear, love and separation. I have mentioned only a few diseases of the mind. They attack everyone but a few persons only can detect them. They somewhat diminish on detection, but these tormentors of people are never destroyed. Fed on the unwholesome 'diet' of

sense-enjoyment they sprout even in the minds of sages, not to speak of lesser people. These diseases are destroyed if, by the grace of Śrī Rāma, the 'treatment' combines the following factors: With a true guru for a 'physician', faith as the 'prescription', dispassion for sense-pleasures for a 'healthy diet', devotion to Śrī Rāma (the Lord) for a 'life-giving medicine' and faith for the vehicle in which the medicine is administered. By this treatment the disease is utterly subdued ; all other measures will go for nothing.

You may know that the mind is freed from disease as soon as it gathers strength in dispassion ; appetite for noble resolutions increases every day and thirst for sense-pleasures disappears. When one bathes in the pure waters of knowledge, the heart is suffused with devotion to Śrī Rāma. 'Cultivate devotion to the Lotus Feet of Śrī Rāma' is the precept of the Lord Śiva, Brahmā, Sanaka, Nārada and others, who are foremost in the thought of the Supreme. All the scriptures declare that without devotion to Śrī Rāma there is no permanent happiness. It would be easier to grow hairs on the shell of a turtle, or slay a child of a barren woman, or to bloom a variety of flowers in the air, than for a creature to be happy without the Lord. Sooner shall thirst be quenched by drinking from the waters of a mirage, or horns sprout on the head of a hare, or darkness fill the sun than a creature find happiness if he has turned away from Śrī Rāma.² Realizing this, the wise discard all doubt and worship Śrī Rāma.

I tell you an established truth and my words will never be false : they who worship Śrī Rāma cross the turbulent ocean of the world. —*Sañjaya*

Source : *Rāmacaritamānasa*, 'Uttarakāṇḍa'.

² The examples given are sheer impossibilities. Purport of the sentences is that it is impossible for the creatures to be happy without devotion to Śrī Rāma or God.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, SARAH BERNHARDT, AND NIKOLA TESLA

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

In the *Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples one finds references to the Swami's acquaintance in New York with Sarah Bernhardt, the famous actress, and with Nikola Tesla, the great electrical scientist.¹ The source of these references is a letter the Swami wrote from New York in February of 1896 to his English disciple, Edward T. Sturdy.² 'Sarah Bernhardt, the French actress has been playing "Iziel" [*Izeyl*] here,' he informed Mr. Sturdy and proceeded to tell him that he had been to see the drama and that he had, at a later date, attended a gathering at which both Mme Bernhardt and Nikola Tesla had been present. In this letter the Swami discloses something of his conversation with Mr. Tesla, and elsewhere (*Memoirs of European Travel*)³ something of his talk at the same gathering with Sarah Bernhardt. But of the gathering itself he says very little. Nor does he mention how he happened to attend the drama *Izeyl*, but one can well imagine that, busy though he was at the time of its short run at the Abbey Theatre in New York, he was taken to it by insistent friends, not only because no one should miss seeing the Bernhardt, as she was called in America, but because the play itself was based on the story, or legend, of Buddha and the courtesan Ambā-pālā. It was, in short, Indian, and as Swami-

ji was also Indian the conclusion was obvious: he must see it.

In January of 1896 Mme Bernhardt had brought *Izeyl* to America, along with a number of other plays, from her theatre in Paris, where, according to the *Boston Transcript*, it had been 'one of the most sensational novelties of a decade'.⁴ She had transported across the Atlantic not only the original cast of *Izeyl*, but 'all the original scenes, properties and costumes'—an operation that was characteristic of the Bernhardt's methods of procedure. As Swamiji was later to remark, 'Sarah Bernhardt is given to spending lavishly.'⁵ *Izeyl* was elaborately staged and, to judge from the sketches in the newspapers, the sets presented a wide variety of effects—Egyptian, Arabian, Classical Greek, Coptic, and amid all this Eastern or near-Eastern glory, at least one scene that Swamiji found to be authentically Indian. A few years later he was to mention the last in his travel-letters written for the *Udbodhan* magazine. He wrote:

'One year, [Mme Bernhardt] performed a drama touching on India, in which she set up a whole Indian street-scene on the stage—men, women and children, Sadhus and Nagas and everything—an exact picture of India! After the performance she told me that for about a month she had visited every museum and made herself acquainted with the men and women, and their dress, the streets and bathing ghats and everything relating to India.'⁶

Clearly, Swamiji was impressed by the care Mme Bernhardt had taken in her researches

¹ His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1949), p. 355.

² *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama, 1948), pp. 298-301.

³ *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Advaita Ashrama, centenary ed. 1963), Vol. VII, pp. 373-4.

⁴ *Boston Evening Transcript*, 24 March 1896.

⁵ *Complete Works*, VII. p. 374.

⁶ loc. cit.

and by the faithfulness with which she had reproduced this particular scene.

The play itself, however, was something else again. Its four acts, which Swamiji patiently sat through, concerned the courtesan Izeyl's determined attempt to win the heart of Buddha. To quote from one of the many ecstatic reviews in the New York papers: 'She pleads to him, in passionate tones, for love. And he repels her; tenderly, but none the less persistently. Izeyl loves him all the more for his consistency, and is converted to his strange ascetic creed.'⁷ 'It is a sort of Frenchified life of Buddha,' Swamiji wrote to Mr. Sturdy. It was indeed. And it was Frenchified in more than plot. Written especially for Sarah Bernhardt by two now-obscure French poets, Armand Sylvestre and Eugene Morand, the drama took place entirely in French verse, and perhaps for this reason, as well as for its high-flown sentiments, was considered one of the cultural highlights of the New York season. *Izeyl*, as it turned out, was not a play to make history and was soon forgotten; but during its short run in New York it was such a success that although it had been scheduled to play for only five days, three extra performances were given, the last of which was a *matinée* held on Wednesday, February 5.

'I went to see this Buddha business,' Swamiji told Mr. Sturdy. '.... A courtesan 'Iziel' [Izeyl] wants to seduce the Buddha under the banyan—and the Buddha preaches to her the vanity of the world, whilst she is sitting all the time on Buddha's lap. However all is well that ends well—the courtesan fails.' Swamiji went on to say that during the performance Sarah Bernhardt had spied him in the audience and forthwith had wanted to have an interview with him.

(It should be noted here that there has

⁷ New York *World*, 21 January 1896.

been some confusion as to when Swamiji first met Sarah Bernhardt. In early editions of the *Life of Swami Vivekananda* his first meeting with the great tragedienne is mentioned in conjunction with events that took place in 1895—a year in which the meeting could not have occurred, for Mme Bernhardt was not in America in 1895. This fact together with an error in date in her biographies, has led to the supposition that Swamiji could not have met her until 1900, when both were in Paris. The truth is that Mme Bernhardt was in New York in January and February of 1896, as, of course, was Swamiji.)

Mme Bernhardt's idea of an interview was unusual. 'A swell family of my acquaintance arranged the affair,' Swamiji wrote. 'There were besides Madame, M. Morrel [Maurel], the celebrated singer, also the great electrician, Tesla.'⁸ Clearly, the interview was not private; but it is unlikely that Sarah Bernhardt wanted to discuss spiritual problems with Swamiji, for she does not seem to have had a more than passing interest in such matters. According to her biographers, her only close contact with religion had occurred during her childhood and early teens, when she had spent several years in school at a convent in France. There she had been baptized at the age of eleven and, for a time, had fervently desired to become a nun. 'But I doubt whether I would have remained a nun for life!' she later confided to a friend. 'I was never genuinely religious. It was the glamour and mystery and, above all, the tranquillity surrounding the life of a cloistered nun that attracted me. I should have run away from the Convent before many weeks.'⁹

She would have indeed. Tranquillity was actually one of the last things Sarah

⁸ *Letters*, p. 298.

⁹ Basil Woon: *The Real Sarah Bernhardt* (Boni and Liveright, New York, 1924), p. 70.

Bernhardt wanted from life. She loved and needed excitement, people, and fanfare; and seldom, if ever, in her long career did she lack these necessities. Nor did Sarah Bernhardt have any pressing personal problem in 1896 such as might have led her to seek Swamiji's help. Her art and her career, in which she was utterly absorbed, were the primary loves of her life, and her career had long since reached the grand plateau where it was to remain until her death twenty-seven years later. She was without question the most famous and adored woman in the world; she had no rival and held the place of a major goddess worshipped by millions. It was said of her that she was one of the national glories of France let alone the eighth wonder of the world, and the tribute suitable to both a national glory and world wonder was paid to her. 'In every country', Jules Lemaitre wrote of her, 'she has been accorded receptions which are not given to kings. She has had what the princes of the mind will never have.'¹⁰ In 1896 her fame was more than secure; it was impregnable and resplendent. Moreover, by 1896, her private life had more or less quieted down. The stormy and passionate adventures that had marked her earlier years were over, as were the eccentricities and wild escapades of her youth that had kept her name ringing, as she had wanted it to ring, in the ears of a scandalized public. Fifty-one years old when Swamiji first met her, she had attained to a dignity of bearing, a certain maturity of judgement and, if one can call it so, a serenity of heart; and yet she had lost none of her extraordinary incandescence and charm. One imagines, then, that Sarah Bernhardt—famous, adored, beautiful, ful-

filled, and untroubled by questions as to life's ultimate meaning—desired to meet Swamiji simply because he was, as she had seen at a glance, a great and remarkable man, an imposing *Presence*, and, like Izeyl herself, a Hindu.

Mme Bernhardt's slightest wish in those days, and for many years to come, was tantamount to a royal command. Yet no one, not even she before whom monarchs had bowed, could command Swamiji. If he had sensed in her desire to meet him merely the whim of a spoiled and self-willed woman, it is very likely that he would have refused the invitation. As it was, he must have seen beyond the fabulously famous actress to a woman with greatness of heart, of immense vitality and indomitable spirit; a woman whose zest for life and singleness of purpose no amount of suffering—and no amount of adulation—could destroy. Sarah Bernhardt's motto, which she had adopted at the very beginning of her career, was one Swamiji would have approved: '*Quand même*'—'Just the same', or, translated by her granddaughter, 'Despite all'.¹¹ It was a motto that Sarah Bernhardt lived by, magnificently overriding all obstacles (and there had been many) in her path to glory. She was, to be sure, obstinate, given to violent tempers, incredibly extravagant, demanding, capricious, and utterly scornful of convention; but Sarah Bernhardt was never petty, never was she weak, nor was she by any means stupid. She had genius and was well aware of it; she had also the determination and the capacity for endless and painstaking work. Further, she had the capacity, when necessary, for true self-sacrifice, as was evident, for instance, in her tireless and selfless nursing service during the Siege of Paris in 1870. Indeed Mme Sarah

¹⁰ Jules Lemaitre: *Les Contemporains*, quoted in *The Fabulous Life of Sarah Bernhardt* by Louis Verneuil (trans., Ernest Boyd, Harpers & Brothers, New York, 1942), p. 189.

¹¹ Lysiane Bernhardt: *Sarah Bernhardt, My Grandmother* (Hurst and Blackett, London, 1949), p. 46.

was not only a great actress, she was, as the passing years were to reveal more and more, a great and gallant woman. 'Wherever there is the least manifestation of greatness,' Swamiji once said, 'know for certain God is there.' And thus, even as he had gone to see Sarah Bernhardt in *Izeyl*, so would he agree to this interview with her, which was arranged, almost certainly, by the Austin Corbins of New York, whom they both knew and who were indeed a 'swell family'. The meeting took place, as certainly, at the Corbin home at 425 Fifth Avenue.

There is at present no way of knowing the exact date of the interview or whether it involved lunch, tea, dinner or supper. One is inclined to believe, however, that the gathering was a small supper party, for late evening was generally the time the principal guests were free. There were at least seven people present: the hosts: Mr. and Mrs. Corbin, and Miss Corbin; the guests: Swamiji, Sarah Bernhardt, Nikola Tesla, and Victor Maurel, a famous French baritone then singing with the Metropolitan Opera Company. The talk must have been general, and certainly it was lively, for the first three guests are all known to have been delightful and fascinating conversationalists. As for Monsieur Maurel, there are no detailed descriptions of his life and personality that I know of, but from Swamiji's account of the gathering to Mr. Sturdy, one gets the impression that for the most part the French singer just listened, as well he might have.

It was no doubt at this party that Sarah Bernhardt told Swamiji in that 'wonderful voice' (which he was later to mention) and mostly in French, her English being exceedingly poor, about her researches for the Indian street-scene in *Izeyl*; and he no doubt expressed his admiration. She assured him again and again that India was 'very ancient, very civilized', and she certainly told him, as she was to do again in Paris in

1900, that his country was the dream of her life. Swamiji listened, amused, perhaps charmed, for whatever Sarah Bernhardt said, she said it charmingly. When writing of her, he always seemed to be vastly and benignly entertained, as by an exceptionally talented, highly spirited, and astonishing child. In any event, the talk at the Corbins' surely had its light and vivacious moments, Mme Bernhardt chatting animatedly about India, about her researches, about the theatre, and Swamiji listening amiably. But it would appear that before long the conversation slid into a discussion of Indian philosophy and that—perhaps in reply to a question—Swamiji spoke at some length on the subject of Vedānta cosmology.. Sarah Bernhardt was by no means lost or bored by this turn of events, but it was Nikola Tesla who, according to Swamiji, was the most pleased. 'Madame is a very scholarly lady and has studied up the metaphysics a good deal,' Swamiji wrote to Sturdy. 'M. Morrel [Maurel] was being interested, but Mr. Tesla was charmed to hear about the Vedantic Prana and Akasha and the Kalpas, which according to him are the only theories modern science can entertain.'

This was probably not Swamiji's first meeting with Nikola Tesla, that extraordinary genius, whose fame today is by no means commensurate with his achievements in the field of electricity. We know that Mr. Tesla attended Swamiji's lectures in New York in the year 1896; for, about a year later, Swamiji remarked during the course of a lecture in South India:

'I have myself been told by some of the best scientific minds of the day, how wonderfully rational the conclusions of the Vedanta are. I know one of them personally, who scarcely has time to eat his meal, or go out of his laboratory, but who yet would stand by the hour to attend my lectures on the Vedanta; for, as he expresses it, they are so scientific, they so exactly harmonize with the aspirations of the age and with the conclusions

to which modern science is coming at the present time.¹²

Swamiji was surely referring here to Nikola Tesla, who did indeed scarcely leave his New York laboratory. 'I spend so many hours at my laboratory at times that my friends become alarmed and threaten to lock the place up and hide the key,'¹³ Tesla told a newspaper reporter in 1894. Yet evidently the Vedāntic cosmology that Swamiji expounded in New York in January and February of 1896 drew him forth on Sunday afternoons to Hardman Hall and, later, to Madison Square Garden; and at either place, if he had arrived late, he would have had to stand. Swamiji's first meeting with Tesla may have occurred even earlier than 1896. As will be seen a little later, the electrical scientist had demonstrated his most recent inventions at the World's Columbian Exposition (where the Parliament of Religions was held) and had most probably been one of the distinguished guests at the vegetarian dinner that the Chairman of the Electrical Congress, Professor Elisha Gray, and his wife gave for Swamiji in September of 1893 at 'their beautiful residence, Highland Park, Chicago'.¹⁴

Curiously, he who did so much for industrial America is today scarcely mentioned in American histories. But in 1896, Nikola Tesla, who in July of that year would reach the age of forty, was a celebrated figure, regarded by scientists and laymen alike with something approaching awe. No other electrical scientist of his day, including Thomas Edison, whom Tesla looked upon as a somewhat doltish trial-and-error man, understood so well the properties of electro-magnetic waves, and no one could make them do his bidding as could he. Be-

fore coming to America from his native Croatia (now Yugoslavia) he had invented the polyphase alternating-current system (an accomplishment no one had thought possible) and had made remarkable discoveries in the fields of high frequencies and high voltages. These achievements were to release electricity from the bondage of the direct-current powerhouses, those feeble generators that were so dear to Edison's heart but that could do no more than send hesitant and fluctuating charges of electric current to distances not much greater than half a mile. It was in 1896 (the year of our story) that the gigantic Niagara Falls powerhouse, which utilized Tesla's patents, went into operation and that, for the first time, electric power of high voltages could be transmitted for many miles. The age of electric power was born then and there; and Nikola Tesla was, without question, its father. He created, as has been said of him, the modern era.

Famous and honoured among scientists for his astounding discoveries and inventions, Tesla was equally famous among laymen for the spectacular shows he delighted in staging. His motors and dynamos had supplied the Columbian Exposition with electricity from one end to the other, creating a night-time brilliance never before seen; but his personally staged exhibit at the Fair was even more sensational. In a shed hung with black velour, Tesla, who, to start with, looked rather like Mephistopheles, entertained both himself and crowds of dumbfounded people by making an unsupported metal egg stand on end and whirl at high speeds as though possessed. The next moment he would be waving wireless tubes of varicoloured and brightly glowing gas in his darkened shed, a feat that even today would perhaps seem passing strange. But remarkable and eerie as these things were, they were as nothing compared to his main act, which was to allow a million

¹² *Complete Works*, (1963), III. p. 185.

¹³ *Baltimore Herald*, 21 October 1894.

¹⁴ *Life*, (1949), p. 413.

volts of electricity to pass through his body and leap visibly from his outstretched hand to light lamps, melt copper plates and explode metal discs. This spectacular performance was Tesla's answer to the direct-current men who had labelled his alternating current as 'deadly'.

The shows he put on in his New York laboratory for his dazzled friends were even more dramatic. From huge and grotesque-looking apparatus, arcs of lightning fifteen feet long leapt crackling across the room, sheets of electrical flame and sulphurous smoke appeared and vanished, coloured lights without wires glowed mysteriously, and, again, Tesla's tall and elegantly clothed body acted as a conduit for voltages of awesome power. If Swamiji visited this laboratory, he would have had to do so before March of 1895, for in that month the building where it was housed burned down, the fire starting not, as might be supposed, in the laboratory itself but on a floor below. By February of 1896 Tesla's second laboratory was not yet functioning in as fearful and wondrous a manner as had the first; so perhaps Swamiji missed seeing many of its glories. Yet he may well have heard of the earthquake that the scientist inadvertently caused in its vicinity. This was no mere tremor; for blocks around buildings shook with alarming vigour, plaster fell, gas, steam, and water pipes broke, windows shattered, and heavy furniture jiggled over the floors. Nikola Tesla, serenely unaware of these goings-on, was trying out his new high-frequency oscillator. It worked.

Everything Tesla invented worked, and practically everything he invented was, either literally or figuratively, of a world-shaking order and, for the most part, beyond the grasp of his contemporaries. By 1896 there were far more wonders stored in his brain—which served him as a filing case, drawing board and laboratory—than he had as yet revealed. Already, for instance, he

had discovered the fundamental principles of radio and the principles, also, of remote control, both of which he was to demonstrate in New York in 1898. He had in mind, not as fantasies but as well-worked-out possibilities, radio-controlled missiles and jet-propelled airplanes. He had invented fluorescent lighting; had described what are today known as cosmic rays and the phenomena of radioactivity. In the early part of 1896 he was publishing his *improvements* on the production of X-rays that he had been working on for several years and that Röntgen had only just discovered.

These are but a few of the things Nikola Tesla worked with and played with long before anyone else had dreamed of them and long before anyone could think what earthly good they were. Ironically, many of his important inventions and discoveries are today credited to other men. He himself was in part to blame for his present obscurity. This genius, as great and prolific as any the world has known, could have made fortunes on the ideas that shot in rapid succession from his mind, like stars from an inexhaustible Roman candle. Yet he often neglected to take out patents, or, if he had patents, sold them for too little. As a result he was dependent on others for capital; and those others lacked his vision. Further he refused to engage a business manager, made no disciples, confided in none of his many assistants, drafted no blueprints, and made few notes. 'I found I could *visualize* with the greatest facility,' he wrote in a short autobiographical sketch. 'I needed no models, drawings or experiments. I could picture them all in my mind. . . . It is immaterial to me whether I run my machines in my mind or test them in my shop.'¹⁵ Others, however, could not

¹⁵ John J. O'Neill: *Prodigal Genius* (Ives Washburn, New York, 1944), p. 257.

picture or even begin to understand the models whirling away inside Tesla's brain, and thus his non-materialized inventions were as perishable as is the human body.

Nikola Tesla died in New York at the age of eighty-seven. And despite the fact that over a half of his two hundred and twelve patents are today in essential use, he died in poverty and obscurity. The world, thriving on the many gifts he had made it, had caught up with him and, slowly at first and then with a rush, had moved away from him, scarcely nodding as it passed.

But this is to go far beyond our story. In February of 1896 Tesla was young, famous, and abounding in self-confidence and vitality. He was six feet two inches tall, slender, handsome, charming, and highly cultured. He dressed meticulously, even while working, and was given to dining in solitary splendour at the luxurious Waldorf Hotel. Now and then, however, he would invite his friends to regal dinners that were the talk of the town and would entertain them afterwards with the thunders and lightnings of his laboratory. If Sarah Bernhardt was the goddess of the age, he was the god. He was the god Thor, who could not only create lightning and shake the earth, but could cause palpitations in many a female heart. Yet, Tesla followed a severely rigorous programme of self-discipline and austerity. He refused far more invitations than he accepted, and, for the sake of his work, had banished women from his life altogether. His effort was to achieve supermanhood; and as far as the development of almost superhuman mental powers were concerned, he had been successful.

Of the third, or, rather, the first, member of the astonishing trio that met at the Corbins' house I need say very little, for readers of this magazine know of the towering spiritual eminence of Swami Vivekananda—a Prophet, a Divine Teacher,

as great as any the world has ever known. The Swami himself compared his mission and message to the West with that of Lord Buddha to the East, which, charged with the incalculable power of his Enlightenment, transformed the thought patterns of the world.

The year of our story (1896) was the crest year of Swamiji's mission to the West. It was the year in which he gave the lectures and held the classes that constitute his books *Jnana-Yoga*, *Raja-Yoga*, *Karma-Yoga*, and *Bhakti-Yoga*—books that comprise his principal teachings of Vedānta. It was the year in which he was invited to lecture before Harvard's Philosophical Graduate School—then the inner sanctum of intellectual America—and at the illustrious and progressive Twentieth Century Club in Boston. It was the year also in which he met with tremendous success in London, acclaimed not only by laymen but by notables of the Anglican Church as well.

The importance of Swamiji's personality and work is, of course, beyond all comparison with that of a scientist or an artist—however great they were—for it was of the limitless spirit. Nonetheless, the trio that convened at the Corbins' home that evening in February of 1896 was something to contemplate. Sitting together in one room were three people, each peerless in his own field, each at the height of his achievement and fame, each looked upon by others as somehow superhuman.

Indeed, the genius and vitality that flowed there, manifesting itself so abundantly on three different levels, was staggering, and the ground it covered was immense. Taken together, the spheres those three represented and commanded stretched over the entire spectrum of human life and expression—the sphere of the emotions and the senses, the sphere of the intellect, and, embracing and transcending both, the sphere of the spirit. One could search far through

history and not find a comparable meeting.

I might mention in passing—for I believe it is of interest—that these three had in common certain characteristics, which may or may not be peculiar to genius. One of these was a prodigious memory. Swamiji, as is well known, could memorize long and abstruse books word for word at one or two rapid readings. Tesla could at will instantly 'see' in exact detail any page he had ever read or any concept he had ever visualized. Mme Bernhardt could memorize with absolute accuracy, and never forget, the leading role of a long, oration-strewn, five-act drama after four readings. Another shared characteristic was their ability to go without sleep. Swamiji usually slept no more than three or four hours out of twenty-four. Nikola Tesla never slept more than two hours a day—except once a year when he deliberately slept for five hours, thereby storing up a tremendous reserve of energy. (At least once, he used this extra three-hours-a-year sleep by working steadily for a eighty-four hours at a stretch without ill effects.)¹⁶ Sarah Bernhardt habitually went to bed very late and arose very early. She had the ability, shared with Napoleon, of taking short naps at will during the day—falling asleep instantly and awakening at the precise moment she had set for herself, fully refreshed and ready for hours more work. None of the three had good physical health, yet through each flowed—though on entirely different levels—an energy, a vitality, that was indefatigable. In all three that vitality was channelled exactly as each willed. They allowed nothing and no one to divert it from rushing along the course they had, early in their lives, marked out for it. None ever wavered a hair's breadth from his chosen work, nor failed for so much as a second to give it full attention. Yet (or perhaps therefore) each could

command the full, worshipful attention of others; each seemed endowed with the quality of being bigger by far than life.

Needless to say, when these three embodied powers met that February evening, each had spent a strenuous day. As has been said, we do not know exactly on what day the meeting took place; but let us consider the not-untypical day of Wednesday, February fifth. Swamiji had held two classes and, perhaps, in between had given many interviews, written letters, and dictated portions of *Raja-Yoga* to his disciple Ellen Waldo. Mme Bernhardt had lived two passionately intense lives on the stage and had twice met with a violent end—once in the matinée performance of *Izeyl* and again in the opening evening performance of Sardou's *La Tosca*, in which play she had leapt to her death from a parapet. Not improbably, she had held a rehearsal throughout the morning. As for Nikola Tesla, he had, as was his wont, spent hours of concentrated work in his laboratory. For him the party would not mark the end of the day; it was an intermission only; he would return to his workshop after midnight to work until five in the morning.

But while the dedication of each of these three to his work was total, there were recesses, so to speak, and the interview was a recess they all seem to have enjoyed. Sarah Bernhardt, her still slender figure crowned by a mop of frizzy red hair, dressed, no doubt, in a characteristically longsleeved, shimmering, but somewhat shapeless, evening gown adorned with a gold and turquoise belt; Nikola Tesla in the elegant white tie and tails he donned every evening; Swami Vivekananda in a flame-coloured silk robe and orange turban—all three handsome and radiant—must have chatted together like old friends. As we have surmised earlier, the talk probably started with the sets for *Izeyl* and found

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 208.

its way to Indian philosophy—specifically Vedānta (or Sāṅkhya) cosmology, which, to Mme Bernhardt's apparent interest and Tesla's delight, Swamiji explained in some detail. 'Mr. Tesla thinks he can demonstrate mathematically that force and matter are reducible to potential energy,' he wrote to Mr. Sturdy after the party. 'I am going to see him next week, to get this new mathematical demonstration. In that case, the Vedāntic cosmology will be placed on the surest of foundations. I am working a good deal now upon the cosmology and eschatology of the Vedānta.'¹⁷

Tesla's interest in correlating Vedāntic theories with modern science must have been more than exciting to Swamiji, for it was his special desire at this period of his mission to show the harmony between Vedānta and modern science. But one searches in vain, both through Swamiji's lectures and writings and Nikola Tesla's published papers, for a further reference to the mathematical demonstration that Swamiji had so hopefully looked forward to. It is highly probable that he met with disappointment in this respect. Indeed a year and a half later, during the course of a lecture in Lahore, he said, "There is the unity of force, Prana; there is the unity of matter, called Akasha. Is there any unity to be found among them again? Can they be melted into one? Our modern science is mute here; it has not yet found its way out."¹⁸ In fact, to judge from the views that Tesla held for many years thereafter on the relationship between matter and energy, he had either not fully grasped Swamiji's ideas on this subject, or, not being able to demonstrate them mathematically, had rejected them as false.

Now, Tesla did not believe that there is a sphere or level where one can hardly tell

whether electricity is force or matter. Despite his remarkable discoveries and inventions, his concepts were, stubbornly one thinks, not of the twentieth century. In 1938 he made an emphatic statement about a belief he had doggedly held since 1893 or 1894: "There is no energy in matter other than that received from the environment; ... [this] applies rigorously to molecules and atoms as well as to the largest heavenly bodies, and to all matter in the universe in any phase of its existence from its very formation to its ultimate disintegration."¹⁹ In short, Nikola Tesla was of the firm conviction that matter and energy were two entirely and eternally distinct entities. Like all nineteenth century physicists, he believed that atoms were, as Newton had said, 'solid, hard, impenetrable and unbreakable'. He believed, further, that electricity was a force that acted upon the atom from the outside, thereby producing electric currents. He did not believe and did not want to believe that "force and matter are reducible to potential energy".

It is risky for a layman who has not studied the subject (and perhaps even for those who have) to make any statement whatsoever in regard to modern physics; but I shall nonetheless hazard the guess that the present-day views of matter and energy come a great deal closer to what Swamiji had in mind than did the views of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the parallel between some aspects of Vedāntic cosmology and some aspects of modern physics seems startling. Pointing this out, one twentieth-century scientific expositor has written, 'In Brahmanic thinking, as in modern physics, matter and energy are identical. There is one universal "mass-energy" which plays as dominant a role in ancient Hindu philosophy as does God in the Bible. Named Brahma [Īśvara], it is

¹⁷ *Letters*, p. 299.

¹⁸ *Complete Works*, Vol. III. p. 400.

¹⁹ O'Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

regarded as the one universal divine agent.²⁰ This same author goes on to say, 'Modern physicists speak of matter as a special state of energy. . . . Mass is concentrated energy; energy is deconcentrated mass. Einstein created the term 'mass-energy' to embody this interchangeability.'²¹ What this 'mass-energy' is no one, to date, really knows; but everyone knows only too well that mass and energy are not two different things, and we know, further, that 'out of one single shotgun pellet we could extract as much energy as all the power stations of the world could produce during twenty-four hours'.²²

As early as 1905 the Tesla-inspired power stations were theoretically outmoded, for it was in that year that an unknown young man published five articles in the German *Year Book of Physics*, one of which was to contain the special theory of relativity and another, the now famous equation: $E=mc^2$. It was many years before the world was to grasp the significance of these articles; and almost as long a time before Nikola Tesla finally conceded that Albert Einstein could be right.

Yet do not Einstein's mathematics more nearly approach what Swamiji had hoped for from Nikola Tesla than anything Tesla could have produced? Was not Swamiji too far ahead of the scientific knowledge of his age to find in 1896 any real agreement between Sāṅkhya cosmology and science? Was he not thinking along the lines of a physics that was yet to be born? I only pose these questions; I shall not try to answer them.

But whatever the answer may be, Nikola Tesla was, as Swamiji said, charmed with the ideas of Vedāntic cosmology and, up to a point, was surely in accord with them;

nor did he ever forget them. In the last years of his life, when he had finally conceded that mass could be converted into energy, he wrote a paper—more rhapsodic than technical—on the incalculable power at the command of man. And in this paper, a portion of which was published for the first time in his biography, *Prodigal Genius* by John J. O'Neill, he said:

Long ago [man] recognized that all perceptible matter comes from a primary substance, or a tenuity beyond conception, filling all space, the Akasha or luminiferous ether, which is acted upon by the life-giving Prana or creative force, calling into existence, in never ending cycles, all things and phenomena. The primary substance, thrown into infinitesimal whirls of prodigious velocity, becomes gross matter; the force subsiding, the motion ceases and matter disappears, reverting to the primary substance.

Can Man control this grandest, most awe-inspiring of all processes in nature? . . . If he could do this, he would have powers almost unlimited and supernatural. . . . He could cause planets to collide and produce his suns and stars, his heat and light. He could originate and develop life in all its infinite forms. [Such powers] would place him beside his Creator, make him fulfill his ultimate destiny.²²

Here one finds that well over forty years after knowing Swamiji, Tesla remembered the exact terms the Hindu monk had used, and although he chose from both Vedāntic cosmology and modern physics the parts that gratified his obsession with supermanhood, it is clear that Swamiji's lectures, conversations, and perhaps classes on Raja-Yoga had stirred him deeply.

As for Sarah Bernhardt, there are no available records that show what memory she kept of Swami Vivekananda; but we know that this New York meeting was not her only one with him. Over four years

²⁰ Fritz Kahn: *Design of the Universe* (Crown Publishers, New York, 1954), p. 31.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 38.

²² *ibid.*, p. 39.

²³ O'Neill, *op. cit.*, pp. 251-2.

later, in the fall of 1900, they met again in Paris, where she was playing the title role in Rostand's *L'Aiglon*, the story of Napoleon's ill-fated son. Swamiji very probably saw *L'Aiglon* at the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, for in his *Memoirs of European Travel* he speaks of the play and its historical setting at some length. He speaks also of Sarah Bernhardt's ability to play the role of a young boy. 'Madame Bernhardt is an aged lady,' he wrote (she was then just fifty-six); 'but when she steps on the stage after dressing, her imitation of the age and sex of the role she plays is perfect! A girl, or a boy—whatever part you want her to play, she is an exact representation of that. And that wonderful voice! People here say her voice has the ring of silver strings!'²⁴

Whether Swamiji saw *L'Aiglon* or not, he talked with Mme Bernhardt in Paris. They talked again of India, the country of her dreams, which she never managed to visit. 'The Prince of Wales [later Edward VII] has promised to take her over to a tiger and elephant hunting excursion,' Swamiji wrote with evident amusement. 'But then she said she must spend some two

lakhs of rupees if she went to India! She is of course in no want of money. . . . But Sarah Bernhardt is given to spending lavishly. Her travel to India is therefore put off for the present.'²⁵

But while Swamiji met both Sarah Bernhardt and Nikola Tesla at least once after their meeting at the Corbins', these tremendously vital archetypes of man's genius in three spheres—spiritual, intellectual and sensory, or one might say aesthetic—never again came together as a trio. Their meeting in February of 1896 had been like some splendid astronomical conjunction that occurs but once in hundreds, thousands of years. What meaning it had in the lives of Sarah Bernhardt and Nikola Tesla or in the larger life of mankind we can only guess; but that Swami Vivekananda delighted in meeting and talking to these two people, each so great in his and her own field, we can be sure; for 'Man' was his love, and human greatness, wherever he found it and however it was expressed, never failed to give him joy. 'The more I live,' he said at a later date, 'the more I become convinced that everything is contained in that one word—“Man”!'

²⁴ *Complete Works*, Vol. VII. pp. 373-4.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 374.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥२३॥

Śvetāśvataropaniṣad

These truths, when taught, shine forth only in that high-souled one who has supreme devotion to God, and an equal degree of devotion to the spiritual teacher. They shine forth in that high-souled one only.

UNCHANGING RELIGION IN A CHANGING WORLD

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

'Decay is inherent in all compounded things ;
Only Truth abides forever.
Work out your salvation with diligence.'

—BUDDHA

Anyone with a little thinking ability cannot deny that things are constantly changing. In the whole universe, from the molecules to the mountains, from dust and grains of sand to planets and stars, all are undergoing changes incessantly. The sun is losing its heat continuously. There may come a time when the sun will have no heat.

The march of time turns events into history. History is not made by man. History shapes itself through the march of time. Time goes on. And as time goes on, changes take place. Nobody can say what will come in the future. War represents the highest will-power of man ; but nobody can be sure, however powerful the party may be, what will be the outcome of the war. The more powerful party has also sometimes been defeated. Tyrants appear ; tyrants disappear. Nations rise and nations fall. In this way, things are going on.

Alexander is considered 'the Great' even now. At the age of twentytwo, he went out on an expedition and conquered vast territories of land. In ten years he died, at the age of thirtytwo. But in less than thirtytwo years his empire crumbled to pieces, disintegrated.

In our life, we find, changes begin from birth. Man is born, grows into youth and adulthood, then decays and dies. Every moment the body is undergoing changes. Not only the body. Much more difficult for us, mind is constantly changing. We have absolutely no control over our minds. However strong we may be physically, however much will power we may manifest now and then, man's trouble is that he has no control over his mind.

If we find in our own life that we are not sure of our minds, we cannot rely on others, either. We do not live alone. In society we have to deal with others. They create problems. And we create problems. In social affairs, in politics, in international relationships, when conflicts of self-interest come, nobody knows what people will do. In politics, it does not take any effort to say no for yes and yes for no. By what politicians say you do not know what they mean. They do not say what they mean ; they do not mean what they say. This is in the very nature of things when man has no control over his mind.

And then, there are the ever-changing circumstances of life. We do not know in what circumstances we shall find ourselves the next moment. In such a state of affairs, how can we have stability in life ? How can we be 'integrated'—as the psychologists say ? It is idle to expect that we shall have peace of mind.

I do not deny that from the standpoint of this world man's achievements in the twentieth century have been very, very great, tremendously great. But this world is not everything. There will come a time when we shall have to bid farewell to this world. Our life is related to other worlds. This life is not the complete picture. We see only a segment of life. Beyond time, there is timelessness. As long as we live in time and space, we are limited. And though man's achievements have been great, we know from our own experience whether modern man is happier or not.

This is one side of human life and the world. The world is constantly changing. We stand on slippery ground, on quicksand. We cannot be sure of anything in ordinary circumstances.

Some serious persons have observed these things, have become painfully aware of these things. They did not like simply to adjust themselves to this situation. They did not feel at home in such circumstances. They took up the challenge. Their thinking was different from that of ordinary persons. They wanted to know: What is the end of all this? If everything is fleeting, what is the value of hard work and more hard work? What is the purpose of work and what do we gain by it? Many persons gain from the worldly standpoint; many persons have success, name and fame. But these things have only market value. The question is, what has been the inner satisfaction? That is the real criterion. In the hour of reckoning, what counts is our inner strength, our inner satisfaction—not what people say or what the newspapers publish.

Some persons were keenly aware of these things and began to think deeply. Not that they did not want to face life or were incapable of facing it, but they felt that they must know what is the purpose of life, what we shall gain by all these struggles. Then the struggles will be worth going through.

Those who were thoughtful found certain unusual things. They found that the greatest change is death—greater than birth, growth or decay. Even materialists will feel extremely sad when their relatives die. It becomes hard to dismiss the feeling that there is something more after death. Our thoughts, our feelings pursue the persons who have gone away, who have gone beyond the curtain where we cannot see them at all. We cannot feel that they are gone altogether. We feel they are somewhere still living. Even materialists, who do not care for religion, who do not care for another life, at times begin to think and feel, 'Can we see them again? Can it be possible that we shall not see them any

more?' Facts indicate that we cannot see them any more, but our hearts do not respond to such an indication. Our feelings deny that there is nothing else after death. It is a question of feeling—feeling is an important factor in life. We feel there is something beyond the horizon.

Then there are dreams. In dreams we see things which we cannot account for. We cannot see dead persons physically, but in dreams we see them. That gives us a feeling that they are alive. How can they come in our dreams and not in our waking hours? We see many things in dreams and sometimes they come true. We may 'study' or try to 'read' dreams, but that is not the important thing. There are certain dreams which cannot be explained by logic. They indicate that there is something beyond this material world.

Then there is the Creation itself. We see that behind this Creation there is so much intelligence. It cannot be simply nature. In the human body, it seems there is so much intelligence. In the world, in the universe, we find so much beauty, beauty that no human artist can copy. It is hard to believe that these things grew automatically. And the Creation is so powerful. So many factors we see. One feels that behind the visible universe there is Someone, some Hand: it is not simply the action and interaction of molecules and atoms. One can see that there is intelligence behind this Creation. Nobody denies that. Then, if there is intelligence, there must be a Being with intelligence. When we see the Creation, automatically we feel that there must be a Creator. At least some persons begin to feel there is a Creator.

And we have the idea that those who do not belong to this world have greater freedom. Some persons believe in ghosts; some persons have seen ghosts. Ghosts move about freely; they need no transportation, no jet plane is necessary. We feel that

ghosts can go anywhere, can talk, can frighten us, and are more powerful than human beings. Even the most powerful person might be afraid of ghosts. Or there will be some tremor in his mind. So we feel there are some persons more powerful than human beings.

And when there is trouble in life, we spontaneously pray to someone, to some Being. Even if we do not believe in God, even if we do not pray in so many words, the longing for help comes up. As long as there is disease and death, man at times will long for a saving hand. So there is prayer, or at least longing. It may not be a set prayer. It may not be congregational prayer, sitting in churches or temples or mosques. Prayer comes from the heart, and it is going on eternally. In ancient times, perhaps the first man prayed; and now we also are forced to pray. In times of war, both sides begin to pray in their churches. Even those who do not believe in God begin to pray. The system of prayer is continuing, and some prayers are answered, too. Even if we cannot account for it, it has been found that some prayers are answered.

There is another factor in life, as I said—our minds. We have no control over our minds. Why should we be so helpless with our minds? Some persons could not tolerate that. They began to study mind, the factors of mind. It was not from the psychological standpoint, but from the standpoint of the big problem: the meaning of our life, the purpose of our life; where do we go? And why has man become so helpless? They began to study the factors of mind and why mind becomes so restless and how it can be controlled.

Some persons began to meditate, and, through their attempts, became better than ordinary persons. They gained control over their minds. They became more ethical, they had more fellow-feeling. Where did they get that power? Why were they differ-

ent from others? Some persons not only prayed to God; they felt they were in touch with God, in some form or other. And it is not a question of how others saw them. It was their own inner feeling. That inner feeling gave them strength and poise and freedom from restlessness.

Vedānta says that the goal of life, the goal of each soul, is freedom, mastery: 'Freedom from the slavery of matter and thought, and mastery over external and internal nature', as Swami Vivekananda said. He put it in such an intense way. We are not aware what great slaves we are, slaves of thought and matter. More deplorable is the slavery of thought, the 'malady of thought'. We are helpless; we have no control over our thoughts, no mastery over internal or external nature. Science is trying to get control over external nature. As I said, from one standpoint its achievements have been great. But from the standpoint of practicality, how little are those achievements! How much control do we have over external nature? And external nature does not oppress us so much as internal nature. The goal is to get freedom. Some persons intensely long for that freedom, a freedom which is much greater than political freedom. The power that comes from the control of one's mind is much greater than the power of the most cruel despot in the world.

Alexander the Great had his worst defeat in India, not from the opposing army but from a penniless monk! Alexander wanted that monk to go with him to Greece. The monk refused to go. Alexander said, 'If you don't come, I will put you to death.' The monk, knowing that the Self is deathless, laughed and said, 'I have never heard a greater lie.' History does not say that the monk went. Just see! Alexander the Great, the conqueror, had his most abject defeat from a person who owned nothing, who had no external power. But he was

the master of his mind. That is the important thing.

Some persons tried to have mastery over their minds and they got their real freedom, their real conquest. History indicates that there have been such persons. We may not take note of them, we may not have the capacity to understand them, but we cannot deny that they lived.

This pursuit to conquer ourselves and to have a relationship with the hereafter is called religion. Ordinary religions want to make God an instrument for man's material success, or else they think in terms of heaven. In this life there is no possibility of getting happiness without evil, without unhappiness. This world is a mixture of life and death, happiness and unhappiness, knowledge and ignorance; we cannot get one without the other. Suppose we get very, very great peace and joy. But why should there be a 'fly in the ointment'? A spark of fire may reduce a palatial building to ashes. Why should you suffer from fear of that spark of fire? Even if you get great peace—I don't deny that some persons get peace—what about other things? Why can't we get the one without the other? The 'other' may spoil the whole thing. A drop of poison may spoil a big reservoir of milk. Why should man be so helpless? Religion tries to overcome man's helplessness.

But if we study the history of religion, we find that religion also is changing. Different religions speak in different ways and there is fighting between one religion and another. I read in today's paper that secularized Christianity wants more secular involvement. They want to 'modernize' religion. Already it is secularized, and they want to make it more secular. The outer condition of religion, the way persons live their religious life, does not indicate that there is anything permanent. Religious institutions have become part and parcel of

the changing world, and one religion fights with another religion. And if we study religion intellectually, we find many things which cannot be accounted for, which we cannot believe.

But behind all these religious pursuits, are there not some permanent truths? In every religion there have been saints who have achieved something, who have got glimpses of truth, who have got some connection with things beyond this world, beyond sense experience. Otherwise religion could not have survived. Religion as it is, institutional religion, does not represent the highest Truth; but there is some high Truth behind it.

If we study all religions, we find one thing in common: they all think in terms of happiness which cannot be disturbed by anything unhappy, anything evil. Buddha did not talk of God; but he talked of enlightenment, he talked of Nirvāṇa, which means supreme joy: *Nirvāṇam paramam sukham*. All religions speak in terms of that. Behind all religions, however low, we see the aspiration; and we find some persons who got glimpses—to a greater or lesser degree—of the truths which they speak about. They speak from their first-hand experiences of spiritual realization. However much the disciples or biographers may exaggerate, we find plenty of examples of persons who have realized the Truth. But these things are not recorded in history books. And in institutional religion, we hardly find examples of persons who have realized the highest state.

Why can't we ordinary persons reach that state? Because our minds are busy with other things. We are busy with the thoughts of the world. Once Swami Vivekananda was asked, 'If there is a God, why do we not realize Him?' He said, 'Because you talk in vain, you waste your energy talking about useless things. If the thought that you give to the world were given to the highest truths, you would realize God in no time.'

Behind changes, there must be something changeless; otherwise you could not perceive change. So the Upaniṣads say, 'In this body which is changing, there is something which does not change.' The reality behind matter is the Truth. Behind these changing things, behind matter, there is something non-material, something changeless. We live in time and space, slaves of causation. That indicates there is something beyond time; the finite indicates there is something infinite. And when we go beyond time and space—if we can—then we are free; we are no longer obsessed, troubled or tyrannized, by times and circumstances.

It is said, when you go beyond sense objects, you realize the Infinite. Infinite—because you no longer perceive anything material; there it is all joy. The Upaniṣads say: 'Only he who realizes that state is free from fear.' He has reached a state which is changeless, eternal. In one verse in the Upaniṣads, it is said: 'He who has found, amidst evanescent things, that which does not change; he who, in this universe of death, has found life itself; he who, in the midst of manifoldness, has found oneness; unto him alone belongs eternal peace, unto none else, unto none else.'¹

Behind this manifoldness, there is the Oneness. From the One has come the many. It is not simply a philosophical or logical truth. These truths have been found through experience. Some sages speak in terms of the realization of that Truth. In the Upaniṣads we find several instances where sages said: 'We have realized that state which is beyond the reach of relativity. We have realized that state by attaining which one gets real peace.' What is the definition of Brahman or God? One definition is: by getting which we do not long for anything else; we are completely satisfied, satisfied not only for the present but for all

time. We are sure of the future. Or, rather, there is no future at all; there is oneness of time, not ordinary time.

This is the Truth. Some have found it out; some have spoken from experience. What is the proof of religion? Simply experience; not logic, not philosophy. Philosophy is mere guess-work, but the realization of Truth is a fact of life. Some persons have realized that state. We find that the saints, prophets and incarnations of the major religions all say the same thing. Only persons who live in the relative world find differences. But those who have gone into the heart of things, who have reached the depth of being, all speak in the same way: 'I and my Father are One.' That One is Brahman.

This was true not only in ancient times but is true in the present time, too. In the present age we also find persons who speak in the same language, though such persons are rare. Swami Vivekananda said (in the West, I think): 'It is a hallucination to think that you are imperfect, that you are limited, that you are helpless. You are perfect. You are omnipotent. You are divine. You are that now, not in some future time. It is your reality. It is the unchanging essence in you, so it is yours now. Realize that and be free at once!'

What the sages discovered in ancient times can be realized even now. Otherwise, their experiences would not have been true. Truth is that which is unchanging, which has no past, present or future. It is true for all eternity.

So there is after all something which is unchanging in a changing world: this unchanging religion. But we cannot believe it unless we try to understand by doing spiritual practice.

Today I read in the paper a prediction of what will be the future of religion. The speech of a great scholar—I think he was the president of the Society for the Scientific

¹ cf. : *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, II. ii. 13.

Study of Religion—was quoted. I felt curious to see what he said. He spoke so confidently, as if he knew everything. He said that the future of religion is bleak, because religions are fighting with one another, because they talk irrationally, and so on. He said of a Tibetan astrologer that he was foretelling ridiculous things. Yet he himself was predicting that the future of religion would be bleak, that religion will become one tiny little sect, that no one will care for religion.

But religion did not come out of propaganda and publicity. Some persons, out of their inner longing, found the Truth and lived their lives. If you think of Truth, even in a cave, it will have an effect on others because mind is one. Some persons realized the Truth, and the power of that Truth began to spread. Religion did not come by organization. Every religion grew out of the realization of a great saint or prophet.

There have been many attempts to start a religion by organization. Such attempts have always failed. For the time being they

become huge affairs, with buildings, branches, papers, secretaries, international secretaries, and so on ; then they fade away. But the Truth which an unknown person has realized in his life begins to spread and spread mysteriously.

We need not worry about the future of religion. The future of religion is bright, so long as there is one single person who thinks in terms of Truth ; who thinks not in terms of logic or philosophy or science, but in terms of 'What am I?' That is the real problem. If a person thinks very intensely, he is sure to find Truth because it is his very nature. Religion is always alive. It is the unchanging, eternal Truth.

Whether we shall find it, whether we shall seek it, is a different matter. But those who seek will find. That is the one common message of all saints, sages and prophets. So we need not worry about the future of religion. Let us think how we can develop religious feeling in our own life, how we can find our selves, how we can know our selves. That is perfectly logical.

अनापन्नविकारः सन्नयस्कान्तवदेव यः ।

बुद्ध्यादींश्चालयेत्प्रत्यक् सोऽहमित्यवधारय ॥१९॥

—SRI SANKARACHARYA in VAKYAVRITTI

Have the firm conviction that you are one with the changeless Innermost Self that moves the intellect etc. like the loadstone moving iron.

VIVEKANANDA BALAKA SANGHA

AN EXPERIMENT IN CHARACTER-BUILDING FOR THE YOUNG

SWAMI SASTRANANDA

'HUMAN' TECHNOLOGY FOR MAN'S SURVIVAL

Thoughtful men have become greatly concerned, and rightly too, with the prospects of human survival in the context of two explosions, the nuclear and the population. It seems fairly certain that unless man himself can keep in check the overwhelming power of the physical as well as the biological nucleus, his chances of civilized life—nay, even primitive life—are very little.

Science and technology have somehow contributed to the physical development, material power, and quantitative expansion of man but his mind and his spirit, in short his quality, have lagged far behind. Humanity, instead of evolving higher, seems to have regressed into the brute more and more. Nations seem to have become more and more aggregations of powerfully-equipped predatory animals, fearful and cunning at the same time.

Unless a miraculous transformation is effected, unless corresponding miraculous efforts are made to reverse the current trends in human affairs, the future seems to be indeed dark and frightening. But the effort to turn away from greed and hatred, conflict and destruction and to settle down for intelligent and peaceful co-operation must be sustained by a tremendous energy—one far greater, more intense and more concentrated than the demoniac energy which it seeks to conquer.

In short, what is needed is a total mobilization of man's energy operating at its highest and intense level. This is possible only by an all-absorbing goal or ideal, summoning his total loyalty, a cause to which

he can fully dedicate his body, mind, and soul. And this is the plane of religion and morality, this is the path of spiritual adventure.

Humanity needs to harness rightly the marvellous power and energy of 'religion' for its survival and advancement. Let us remember that it was from the men of religion that 'science' too originated. It is the 'religious' instinct again which has supplied power for the great movements of the world, humanitarian, cultural or revolutionary.

But the world has also been witness to the terrible results arising out of the perversion of the religious instinct. In the words of Swami Vivekananda :

'The intensest love that humanity has ever known has come from religion, and the most diabolical hatred that humanity has known has also come from religion, ... Nothing makes us so cruel as religion, and nothing makes us so tender as religion.'¹

An intelligent study and analysis will reveal that it is the wrong, partial and partisan direction of this intensely powerful energy that has produced the hideous aberrations. We need the energy, but we need to harness it in the interest of all men, for the good of all humanity, for the evolution and manifestation of higher humanity. It should not be allowed to run berserk in narrow, harmful channels.

The world needs science and technology ; but it needs far more man and human technology, of spiritual technology which is the technology of higher man. For a

¹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas), Vol. II. (1963) pp. 375-6.

successful survival and fruitful progress, man needs to combine in himself spiritual vision and the scientific spirit and energize them with religious zeal. Men need to be recast in this mould. But before large-scale 'foundries' can be suitably fashioned for the purpose, the process has to be tested in and experimented with 'pilot-plants'. Before proceeding to erect mighty and complex structures, we have to begin with simple, small scale units.

What are these small units? How can they be brought into being? Are they practicable? Have they been tried anywhere? The present article describes one of the small experiments undertaken for the purpose.

TRUE RELIGION IS CHARACTER-BUILDING

Wars begin in the minds of people, in the minds of individuals. Peace and co-operative endeavour also have to begin there only. But healthy ideas cannot easily sprout in the rocky and saline ground of older people, who have grown up all their life in certain adverse environments. Where generations have lived on with certain well-established notions and prejudices, likes and dislikes, fears and hatreds, re-education is not easy. But not so in the case of the young in whose unprejudiced minds it is possible to implant new ideas and nurture them. How the Nazi leaders took hold of German youth and implanted in their impressionable minds the wrong ideas of racial superiority, glorification of war; etc. is a fact of history. What is needed is the propagation of healthy and positive ideas conducive to human well-being. Religion has to come into the minds and lives of the young in a positive and powerful way.

Many of our leaders and educationists have recognized the importance and urgency of the right type of moral and religious education. But many of the attempts have

failed, specially in India, due to certain factors. Firstly, the presence of many denominational religions and religious groups exhibiting mutually exclusive and antagonistic attitudes renders the task of working out a suitable common curriculum of religious and moral instruction almost an impossible job. Even if it is made possible, it becomes so unwieldy that it turns out to be an infliction rather than attraction for the young minds. Secondly, religions as practised and sometimes preached, have accumulated such a mass of irrational beliefs, prejudices and superstitions that the modern mind feels repelled, particularly the inquiring minds of the young. Thirdly, political adventurists and demagogues have exploited religious prejudices and rivalry for selfish purposes to such a degree and have so embittered group relations that a section of people have been driven to the desperate conclusion that religion should be totally eliminated from public life. Hence the 'secular' state, which cannot countenance any kind of 'religious' instruction in public, and certainly not as part of governmental activity.

The only way out of this impasse is to take hold of and implement the true, life-giving, indispensable and generally acceptable essence of religion and courageously drop other controversial aspects. If need be, even drop the name 'religion'.

Swami Vivekananda's remarks in this respect are very revealing. In a letter to Sister Nivedita he declares :

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need for those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt. . . . The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. . . . Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want.'²

² op. cit. Vol. VII. (1958), p. 489.

This gives us the clue and basis for the right approach. The stress is to be on character—on individuals of sterling character. Character-building is the essential content and sphere of true religion and morality, a theme and goal universally acceptable, to secular and even anti-religious states.

CHARACTER-BUILDING : AN EXPERIMENT BEGINS

It was to serve such a cause, in however an elementary way, that the VIVEKANANDA BALAKA SANGHA came into existence and has been functioning for nearly two decades, a programme and an organization which claims to be nothing more than 'An Experiment in Character-Building for the Young'.

The first seeds were sown in April 1953. The location was the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore (South India). The idea, the inspiration, stemmed from the late Swami Yatiswaranandaji (1889-1966) who was then the President of the Bangalore Ashrama. Swami Yatiswaranandaji was one of those rare individuals who had imbibed the virtues of both Indian and Western cultures. One of the seniormost and highly respected monks of the Ramakrishna Order, holding in succession several high offices (he passed away while he was the Vice-President of the Order), people found in him a noble character, breadth of vision, and active human sympathy. Before taking up the Bangalore assignment, he had been working for seventeen years in Western Europe and U.S.A., teaching Vedānta. While in the West he became interested in the 'Sunday Schools' and their efforts for promoting religious and moral ideas among the young. One of the strong pulls which made him return to India in 1950 was his desire to work for the young and help in training them to be worthy

citizens of a free country (India had achieved political independence in 1947). He was particularly interested in the younger generation, and the youth also—both boys and girls—eagerly responded to his warm and affectionate influence. To many of the elderly people who came to him in search of solutions for their and the country's problems, he would say, 'I am interested in serving those who will have to serve others', and again, 'I am not so much interested in you, not even in your son; but I am very much interested in your grandson'. His keen concern was how to start some suitable activity to help the young. During one of his frequent tours, in 1952, while at Colombo he had been attracted by the 'Sunday School'—religious and moral classes—organized by the local Ramakrishna Mission for about 250 children. Soon after returning to Bangalore he expressed his active desire that something like that should be started in Bangalore and entrusted the task of implementing the idea to the author of this article, who consequently had the privilege of organizing and directing the Vivekananda Balaka Sangha, for eleven years.

CAPACITY NEEDED TO HANDLE THE EXHUBERANT YOUNG

Anyone visiting the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore, today, is struck by the lively enthusiasm and orderliness permeating the various activities as well as the large number of participants, particularly of the younger generation. It is the youngsters who have been responsible, in no small way, for the infusion of a living quality and enthusiasm into the functioning of the Ashrama. They might not have intended it themselves; and often youngsters prove disconcerting to elderly people who wish rather to be left to themselves and to their own quiet and peaceful life.

In fact, when the Boys' group (Balaka Sangha) was started, there was no lack of opposition, specially from certain 'senior citizens' who complained: 'The quiet dignity of the Ashrama has been ruined; it has been made over to the noisome kids.' This is the voice of age which cannot welcome and digest youthful life, because of some of the inseparable factors of roughness and noise. 'Alive and kicking' is a very apt and meaningful phrase. When we have to handle life, we have to be prepared for an amount of kicks also. Shall we accept these 'kicks' as welcome excitements or frown upon them as disorderly and disrespectful disturbances? It is the same difference between the approaches of a loving father to the kicks of a lively child and the reaction of a frail, standoffish recluse. Those alone—who have the intelligence, vision, and patience to handle life and the lively energy, if sometimes disconcerting, of the young—can become the true builders and benefactors of the nation. Not those who shun youthful exuberance because of their own fragility.

THE LOVE THAT SUSTAINED

Fortunately, Swami Yatiswaranandaji, though advanced in years—he was then sixtyfive—was young, progressive and dynamic in his outlook and actions. As such he had no hesitation whatsoever in rejecting the protests of the tired or retired individuals. He even took personal responsibility for making the boys' centre an integral part of the Ashrama activity. Very revealing was his response to a particular situation. It had been a highly strenuous day for him. Not only had he worked very late the previous night, as was his usual routine, but owing to heavy correspondence etc. he could not have his afternoon rest also till very late. It was already 4 p.m. by the time he was free to have a

little nap but just then ebullient boys arrived for their games, work, etc., and his room was right near the arena of their activity. Anyone of us, much younger, would have been much upset by the situation and might have sought relief by scolding the boys, or someone else in their charge, by admonishing them to keep quiet and not to disturb. But all that the Swami did was just to exclaim to himself, *svakhāta salile* . . . , referring to the wording of a famous Bengali song, which means 'I am drowning in the waters of the well dug by my own hands'. What he meant was that none was to blame and that he would gladly bear these disturbances, for the sake of a larger interest. He loved the boys and it is no wonder that his love sustained the work, and all those who had to implement the programme. The key to success of any such human 'technology' is that genuine love which can accept difficulties for oneself for the sake of those whom we seek to serve.

The result of that love and concern for the young has been the flowering out of an activity, an organization, nay an institution which has generated joy and satisfaction among the hundreds of boys³ participating in it but also admiration among the thousands of men and women who have been visiting the Ashrama as visitors or as part of its congregation.

THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF ENDLESS EFFORT

What catches the eye of people is the varied activities of a smart and well-trained, enthusiastic and skilful group of young boys integrating with, and lending

³ There is a smaller parallel activity for girls also, started in 1954 under the inspiration and guiding support of Swami Yatiswaranandaji—the Sarada Balika Mandali—but conducted in a separate premises by a group of intelligent and enthusiastic women voluntary workers.

colour to the aims and activities of the Ashrama itself. The Balaka Sangha boys are in the *bhajan* group (choir) of the Ashrama, singing, chanting, and playing musical instruments; they are part of the service group who clean the prayer-hall, help in decorations, arrange for lectures and other meetings, keep the premises clean, and form the bulk of the volunteer-corps for the various special functions. They are specially prominent at the time of the annual celebrations, and particularly on the Boys' Day which attracts perhaps the largest audiences. Young boys by themselves form a complete music group rendering attractive songs, give folk dances, deliver talks, and present beautiful and uplifting dramas. Every evening some 75 participate in an integrated session of games, work, and classes—and on Sundays some 125 more. They have a fine new premises for housing their activities, excellent library and enviable equipment of all kinds.

But what most people cannot see, or do not know, is that all this is the cumulative effect, the resultant manifestation, from very small beginnings, of continual effort and endless experimentations needed to meet newer and newer problems and situations which presented themselves in continual succession. It is good now to have a peep into its history and inner workings.

HISTORY AND INNER WORKING : A PEEP

The activity started as a weekly programme, on Sunday mornings only, with just five or six boys and two classes of half an hour each, one for imparting character-building ideas mostly through stories and the other for teaching songs, essentially devotional. With the passing of weeks newer items were introduced—games, a milk-canteen, simple work-programme, etc. The facilities available were extremely limited and rudimentary; yet there was something

in the programme which began to attract more and more boys and within a couple of years it became a full-fledged everyday activity. The Ashrama verandah was in the early days, all the 'premises'; a discarded steel-drum, an old wooden bat and used tennis balls formed the 'games equipment'; there was no other incentive except the joy the boys experienced. In course of time excellent facilities became available for the Sangha—halls, rooms, games-fields and equipment, a sizable staff consisting of a monastic director, medical consultant, psychologist, and several assistants along with substantial funds. But the lack of facilities in the early days made little difference for the boys as well as the teachers and there was so much creative enthusiasm evident among them that many of the boys—who have now become mature adults—look back with great nostalgia to that pioneering period and prefer it to the comparatively sophisticated later period.

What began and continued for some time as a spontaneous, freely-experimenting movement, had perforce to be restricted later on by certain procedures, -rules and regulations in the interest of consolidation and long-range regular functioning. Also the basis and objectives had to be defined and clarified as far as possible. The result was the following formulation :

The scheme was to help in giving practical expression to some of the eternal values and manly virtues presented by the great spiritual tradition of India, and suitable for the young, specially as exemplified and preached by Swami Vivekananda, of whom Jawaharlal Nehru once said : 'If there is any one individual whom I could name as the model for our younger generation to follow, it is Swami Vivekananda.' This would mean :

(a) Development of a harmonious character, based on an all-round growth—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual ;

(b) Recognition of the dignity of the individual and the spiritual unity and equality of human beings ;

(c) Realization of the fact that one's own true welfare and progress is inseparably bound up with those of others, and as such sharing and loving service must become an indispensable feature of life ;

(d) Stress on the truth that man is the maker of his own destiny, and that there is no substitute for steady and sustained effort for achieving individual or social advancement.

It was natural that Swami Vivekananda became the guiding ideal for the activity and the organization functioned under the name 'Vivekananda Balaka Sangha'.

Time and working experience helped in clarifying the essential features and in spelling out the details of the Sangha's functioning and development. The functional classification of the Sangha would be 'Cultural and Recreational Centre for Boys'. Boys of the age-group 7-15, studying in secondary schools and residing in their own homes, would be eligible for admission, at the request of their guardians. The facilities provided would be free, though in order to discourage parasitic tendencies and promote a healthy attitude of 'giving' as against 'grabbing', boys would be encouraged to make some contribution, wherever possible. The Sangha would be a training place for normal boys and not an asylum for the abnormal or subnormal, or a reformatory for the delinquent. To the extent possible the boys accepted as members were to be helped in the path of self-development as well as practical service. If any worthwhile results were to be achieved, care had to be taken in the selection of entrants and admission restricted to those who could measure up to a fair standard of regularity, discipline, and multi-sided interest. Quality would be the watchword. Hence quantity had to be curtailed. Owing

to the limited facilities available and the standard aimed at, the daily section would be restricted to 75 boys and the weekly Sunday Section to about 125. Deserving boys from the Sunday section would be accommodated in the daily section ; and those who outgrew the Sangha and 'graduated' out of it would be taken in as teaching-assistants, or helped to organize some other group of a higher age-bracket.

WORKING DETAILS FOR HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT

In the quest of the boys' harmonious development, the first consideration has to be for their physical fitness. Games combine physical exercise with recreation in a happy way ; so a variety of outdoor games is arranged by turns to suit the different age-groups. For inclement weather, provision is made for indoor games. Apart from the physical utility, the moral and social aspects of games are fully utilized. Great stress is laid on discipline, team-work, and careful use and maintenance of games-grounds and equipment. The games-programme lasts from 4-30 to 6-00 p.m.

While most of the boys are engaged in games, one group of boys carries on the work-programme. The boys are divided into different groups named after outstanding noble characters of traditional heroic India (e.g. Bhīṣma, Ekalavya, Naciketa, Mahāvīra, Buddha) and each group, with its own leaders and deputy leaders, takes charge, by turns, of all the routine work for one week. That includes keeping clean the halls, class-rooms, stores, and playgrounds as also the washing rooms and latrines ; taking care of games-materials, watering plants, and running the milk-canteen (over the years when milk was served). All the work is done by the boys and the teachers in charge. There are no servants. The work-programme is carried

out in such a way as to help the participants to imbibe, in a natural and spontaneous way, the ideas of self-help, dignity of labour, social equality, and efficiency.

After the games, boys—specially the under-nourished and of the lower age-group—are served milk (prepared out of gift milk-powder) or biscuits and other healthy food items, as and when available. The milk-canteen, especially, is made an occasion to inculcate the habits of cleanliness, personal as well as environmental. Periodically the weight and height of boys are recorded. The honorary medical consultant renders minor medical assistance where needed, and some medicines and vitamins are supplied.

After the games and milk-distribution (when available), all the boys attend various classes, suited to their respective age-groups and mental level. Select prayers, chants and songs from the spiritual and devotional literature are taught and moral and spiritual instruction, based on the positive and healthy, universal and ennobling elements of religion, is imparted.

Chanting and music classes provide a joyful group activity and help in the development of the aesthetic and finer side of the young. Over the years the boys of the Sangha have become an important and impressive element of the Ashrama *bhajan* group (choir).

The subject-matter for the moral and spiritual instruction classes is drawn from the lives and teachings of the great ones of the world, particularly in the fields of religion and ethics, arts and science. The contents and treatment vary according to the level of the students, who are grouped into different classes for appropriate instruction. The classes are conducted in an informal atmosphere conducive to personal contact, responsiveness, and mutual communication. At the same time, the importance of exercising the intellect and disciplining behaviour is not forgotten. There

is no rigid curriculum. The material is so chosen as to hold the interest of the boys on a high plane and promote a worthy character.

Frequent written exercises are also given and periodic tests are conducted so that what is good and beneficial is taken seriously and ideas get a better chance to sink into the young minds. An excellent library of some 2000 choice books and also magazines (in Kannada, the regional language; in Hindi, the national language; and in English, the international language) dealing with stories, adventures, biographies, history, science, plays an important role in the acquisition of knowledge. Earnest efforts are made so that the boys make good use of the library and cultivate the reading habit.

Regular visual education classes add another fruitful dimension. With the help of the epidiascope and slide-projector and selecting suitable material from the large number of illustrated books and magazines, the teacher gives a lively running narration and interpretation. This provides the boys instruction and entertainment simultaneously and they enjoy the sessions immensely. Stereoscopic discs and some movie pictures are also utilized. For teaching songs etc. the gramophone and tape-recorder are pressed into service.

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Every Sunday, the boys gather together and conduct their own congregational worship along with chanting and songs. Occasional special classes, symposia and celebration—meetings help the boys to learn the art of speaking. During their summer vacation a two-week 'retreat' is held with a view to intensifying their cultural and spiritual side through a programme of special classes, meditation, art-exhibition, etc. At this time several guest lecturers are

invited to address a select group of boys on different cultural subjects.

Special work programmes—such as repair and renovation of games-fields, wire-fencing, interior painting, and distempering—have been organized to promote purposeful group-activity. In a small garden of their own the boys grow some flowers and vegetables. The flowers are used for worship. When vegetables are raised, some of the boys take them home to prepare some good dish for distribution among their fellow-members of the Sangha. A manuscript magazine offers a suitable medium for expressing literary and artistic talents; opportunities are also created and necessary help given to those who show interest in drawing, lettering, philately, mechanical handicraft, and the like.

As mentioned earlier, they are organized to serve as volunteers for routine as well as for special occasions, the assignments varying from gathering flowers for the shrine and cleaning the temple hall to looking after the footwear of the visitors and cleaning the latrines. In all these, regularity, orderliness, and a quiet efficiency are stressed.

Occasional excursions are arranged to places of religious and cultural interest. By turns several boys have been also participating in cultural programmes organized outside the Ashrama, local or *mofussil*.

Boys are trained in *Kolāṭa*—a kind of folk-dance, with vigorous singing and foot-work, keeping time with clashing short sticks in both hands. This needs a good co-ordinated movement of hands, feet, and eyes.

Another powerful and appealing medium for the dissemination of noble ideas and ideals has been the drama. Further, it is also a training ground for intelligent, co-operative endeavour, hard, disciplined work, and alert, co-ordinated activity. As such, the drama has been utilized for the benefit

of the boys and incidentally others also, all through the years. At least once a year full-length dramas are publicly staged, portraying great lives and exalted teachings. The high standard of the themes and the fine performance of the young participants have made the boys' drama one of the chief attractions of the Ashrama annual celebrations, to which the cultured and educated public greatly look forward.

In tune with the main objectives of the Sangha, namely the development of a steady and harmonious personality, annual competitions and tests in the various items—games, music and chanting, speaking and story-telling, written tests etc.—have been organized and prizes awarded to the successful candidates. But, it should be remembered, greater importance is attached to their steady progress and total performance throughout the year. The major prizes are awarded to: (1) The Best Boy of the Year—taking into consideration the best all-round performance in regard to games, classes, cleanliness, conduct, and personal quality. (2) Best Sportsman—for proficiency in the various games and sportsmanly behaviour. (3) Best Volunteer—for outstanding devotion to duty. (4) The Best Group—for the group in which the aggregate individual performances as well as group-achievement come out best. Awards are also made to those who take top places in attendance and to those who participate regularly in gardening, magazine compilation, and such special activities. Apart from the rolling-cups, which cannot become anyone's personal possession, individual prizes generally books—are given which can be of lasting value in building a worthy life. Fancy articles are eschewed.

In general, the rewards and incentives offered are linked to the achievements, efforts and needs of boys in relation to character-development. So the rewards and honours go mostly to those who prove to

be steady, dependable, industrious, and unselfish. Such are also given various kinds of economic and other assistance to the extent practicable and desirable.

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL TRAINING— THE PRACTICAL ASPECT

After all this narration, there still remains the crucial issue, with which practical people will seriously be concerned, namely: how has the experiment tried to bring in positive and wholesome religion into the lives of the boys and with what success? What is its special contribution, if any, to the field of 'man-making' as distinct from the usual, and often discredited, religious and moral instruction which has gone on all the time?

When we seek an answer to this pertinent question, we have to be very much alive to one important fact: it is not just the information, just the words—spoken or written, chanted or sung, however brilliantly taught by the teachers, reproduced by the pupils and admired by the audience—that really count. It is the ideas which have gradually sunk into the personality of the pupil, both by virtue of his receptivity as well as the teacher's transmitting potential patience and confident persistence, that count. 'Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character'—is the miracle-formula. A character-building programme is not to be judged by the occasional talent and passing precocious responses of the participants but by the steady exposure to simple right ideas and by corresponding simple actions repeated time and again, day in and day out. Two utterances of Swami Vivekananda—'Calm, silent and steady work and no newspaper humbug' and 'Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses. . . . Silent, unperceived, yet omnipotent in its effect . . . '—aptly describe the

right approach and provide the guidelines for character-building.

An experiment was made in the matter of teaching an important Upaniṣad, the *Taittirīya*, to a small batch of fifteen to sixteen year old boys, in an intensive session of fifteen to twenty classes, stretching over five to six weeks. Both the traditional mode of chanting as well as the contents of the text were taught. An esteemed orthodox pundit was requested to check if the boys had learnt the chanting all right. Reluctantly he agreed, since the boys apparently belonged to a heterodox group. He was happy to certify, after listening, that they were 99% correct. Encouraged by this, the notebooks of the boys in which they had answered various test questions on the Upaniṣad, were also given for his perusal. He took them without comment and they remained with him for quite a few days. It was assumed that what the young boys wrote was too trivial for the prompt attention of such a distinguished scholar in Sanskrit and Vedānta philosophy. But one morning he brought the books back, apologizing for the delay. The reason he gave was very revealing: 'I was so much impressed by the answers and the way the boys had written that I took them to our college, to show to my own students. I wanted them to see and benefit. Hence the delay!' Kudos indeed. But while such performances are good in their own way, they will not ensure that a corresponding character-development will result. In fact, sometimes premature book-knowledge of lofty scriptural truths may even mislead the boys to thinking that they have already 'known' the 'scriptures' and so block their further desire and effort to learn in a mature and fruitful way. It is better not to give to the young much theoretical instruction in religious and spiritual matters, until and unless there is a suitable course to integrate them into life.

Accordingly, in the Balaka Sangha the stress has been on how to inculcate, through various everyday activities, such character-building elements as clean and orderly habits, an alert, clean and discriminating mind, an attitude of earnestness and reverence and a spirit of loving, enthusiastic service, instead of just mouthing, off and on, lofty terms like 'Jñāna', 'Bhakti', 'Yoga', etc.

In the matter of food or clothing, work or play, study or entertainment, in purchasing and preserving things, in undertaking new projects or activities, in selecting reading material, in forming friendships, boys are guided to exercise and develop their power of discrimination—to prefer what is good, worthy, substantial, and durable as against what is merely pleasant, superficial, unworthy, and trivial. Be it work or play, they are taught to accept the task or responsibility that comes to their share and discharge it with care and enthusiasm. Attention to the small details, the little acts and obligations of everyday life, is stressed. Unhealthy tendencies to showing off and seeking position and approbation, which are not uncommon, are discouraged. Instead, 'Don't seek position; the position will seek you. Be keen to strive hard and acquire the fitness needed', is the motto and instruction. The truth is brought home by demonstrating its validity in the lives of the boys themselves and choosing such striving boys for positions of honour and importance.

THE DRAMA AND DRAMATIC EXPERIENCES

The area of dramatics, of staging plays, was one such proving-ground. Glory on the stage, with a vast audience to admire, is certainly a tremendous attraction to many a candidate. But flashy talent, more eager to show off than put in regular practice needed, was cold-shouldered. Sometimes

the more talented boys, assigned to leading roles, would try to flaunt their importance by absenting themselves for practice or claim special privileges and exemptions from team discipline essential for staging a quality show. On some occasions they would even hint at withdrawing from the drama itself at a crucial time—juvenile blackmail, one might say! Quick action was taken to put people in their places. Preference was given to those who would be prepared to practise earnestly and to value team-work more than self-centred glory. For each role there would be more than one boy trained and ready. While justice would be done to all, if anyone displayed too much conceit and self-importance, he would be dropped or assigned only a minor role. Soon the boys learned clearly that none was indispensable; none could blackmail; that where there was genuine earnestness and sustained striving—in spite of no apparent talent—the results achieved, the appreciation earned were even superior to mere undisciplined talent.

Some actual instances are very instructive: 'A' (actual names are omitted for obvious reasons), while talented, was so much after publicity that he would not allow 'B' to play the major role, even in a repeat performance. He alone would be the star! Blind with jealousy, he even went to the extent of beating him up. Earlier, 'B' after having faithfully practised three major roles, was only given a ridiculously minor one; but he was very sporting and put forth no grievance. What was the tangible outcome of all this, for all to see? 'A' was dropped once for all while 'B' grew from strength to strength till he gave his crowning performance in a highly-acclaimed drama and got many other distinctions too. 'C' was flashy and bright but not amenable to discipline of body and regular practice. Result: In the eleventh hour while he had to take the leading role he had a break-down and the

show was about to be cancelled. But 'D' who was calm, steady, and also intelligent stepped in, and with a tremendous effort and confidence picked up the role in the course of a day. From then on, he not only distinguished himself in the field of drama but he shone in others as well.

Most touching, however, was the case of 'E'. A refreshingly clean and good-hearted boy of twelve, during the important celebrations of Swami Vivekananda Centenary, was assigned to several roles all of which he picked up with assiduous care. Due to some reason or other, other boys were selected for the actual roles and 'E' got only a secondary role. He was content; no grievance. Just when he was going into the green-room for 'make-up', however, another boy came running and surprisingly asked that he be given even this role 'E' was to play. To the director-in-charge, the request was so selfish and preposterous that he could not even scold in reply: all he could do was to say ironically, 'Go and ask 'E' himself to give up his chance in your favour!' Ordinarily such a request would never be made, and even if made would be rejected with anger or contempt or both. But surprisingly the thoughtless fellow did go and ask 'E' that he be allowed to play the role. More surprisingly, 'E' said, straightaway, 'All right' and came out of the green-room. Now the director was getting ready for an emotional blow-up on the part of 'E', who had been deprived of his only stage-appearance in the last minute, and was bracing himself up for a tantrum. But surprise of surprises! Not only was there no resentment on the part of 'E', he had actually responded wholeheartedly. So magnanimous was this pure young soul that after giving away what seemed to be his last opportunity to be in the play, he happily sat down in the wings and was a care-free spectator of the drama! Such spontaneous unselfishness and jealousy-free

conduct was indeed a matter for the angels to witness, and an object-lesson for adults. The result: In the next drama, by design he was given the leading role, to which he also did full justice. Nearly ten years later, now, his clean, good heart and spirit of service continue to grow.

REVERENCE—THE KEYNOTE

True religion is synonymous with the living vision, love and service of the Divine in everyone and everything. So a reverential attitude, all round, is sought to be inculcated. Reverence is due to the parents, teachers and leaders, as embodiments of the Divine; reverential love is also to be extended to fellow-members of the Sangha and other friends. And no less important is the attitude towards oneself. Each boy is himself a manifestation of the Divine; his body and mind are the temple of the indwelling God and as such should be kept pure and looked after with care. The Ashrama (the premises where the Sangha functions), the various buildings and equipment are His and for His service; so all things are to be kept and protected in a clean and tidy way. Wastage and careless or contemptuous handling of things would be unpardonable.

To help in associating the attitude of earnestness and reverence with all actions, brief prayers or *mantras* (chants) containing uplifting themes, are recited at the beginning and end of all classes or other sessions. For example, just before taking milk or food served for the group, the boys consecrate it with an appropriate chant. It is a sight then to see how all the boys in the vicinity stop their activities as soon as they hear the chant and wait in reverential silence. The evening *ārati* (worship accompanied with the waving of lights) and prayer session of the Ashrama, with its serene devout atmosphere is a part of their daily routine.

They are constantly instructed in, and reminded of, the effect of actions, good or bad; how through repeated right thoughts and actions they can create a great future for themselves. Prayer is stressed not as a magical formula or pious mumbling but as a pure, earnest and intense seeking of worthy goals and as a supplement to right effort.

Again, faithful to the spirit of true religion, an atmosphere of healthy freedom is maintained. Clear and independent thinking, warm and enthusiastic hearts and courageous originality in doing things are appreciated and encouraged. The training in discipline of the Sangha is certainly compatible with a spirit of fearlessness and joyous freedom among the boys.

A REVIEW AND AN ESTIMATE

In the field of 'human technology', specially that of character-building, it is not wise to expect quick, massive and spectacular results. It is also impractical to think that merely because of the teacher's eagerness and effort a large number of the pupils would readily be moulded to the expected shape. Ample margin must be allowed for wastage and failures. Even if only a few of the trainees benefit, the work must be considered a fair success. Considered against this background, the Vivekananda Balaka Sangha's performance over the years may be definitely considered as highly successful.

A large proportion of the participants have benefited in various degrees. Playing and working in the open and clean environment of the Ashrama, the boys' health has improved. In fact, they thrive in the clean atmosphere, physical and mental, of the Ashrama. Most of them feel more at home in their Sangha than in their own homes and consequently manifest energy and effort, not normally expected of them. In general,

there is an expansion of their physical and mental capacities.

An appreciable number have imbibed something of the qualities of a good 'worker'—alertness, punctuality, regularity, steadiness, and attention to details. So the work they undertake is marked with the stamp of quality, be it cleaning of latrines, arranging seats or decorating with flowers. (This has become so much ingrained in them that some can no more even tolerate sloppiness, disorderliness, and unpunctuality.) Apart from routine items of work, some have become skilled in some special fields—namely installing and looking after public-address system, tape-recording, rigging up the stage, curtains, lights, etc. for dramas, making artistic decorations for celebrations and the like.

The interest of a few of the boys in leading a moral and spiritual life, and undergoing the necessary disciplines for the purpose, has been aroused. Some have developed into good dependable leaders and are giving practical expression to the ideal of selfless service. Some have grown into teachers in the Sangha itself, for the later batches of boys. A select few have even decided to dedicate their lives to Truth and God, for implementing Swami Vivekananda's twin ideal, 'Self-unfoldment and selfless service'—*'ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca'*.

HAPPY RESULTS, TOUCHING EXPERIENCES

The thoughtfully organized, carefully run and patiently pursued experiment of the Vivekananda Balaka Sangha has inevitably produced certain touching experiences and happy results which should be warmly satisfying even to the most careful and conservative experts in the field.

An expert from the Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi, after seeing for himself the activities, commented in the journal *Social Welfare* (May 1957):

'The Ramakrishna Mission at Bangalore has organised a recreational centre for children on scientific lines. Here, recreation is a means to an end, i.e., all-round development of the personality of the child. As part of its recreational activities, the Mission has organised indoor and outdoor games, music competitions and dramas for children. A reading-room and children's library, religious and moral instruction are some of the other activities of the centre. The dramas and group songs give an opportunity to the children to learn to share responsibility, attain organizing capacity and express themselves fully. ... The most important feature of the milk-canteen is, that it is run by children themselves. As a matter of fact all the activities of the play-centre are directed by honorary workers including a psychologist and are organized and conducted by the children themselves. Thus the children get experience of working on democratic lines. ... The workers have instilled remarkable team-work among the children and afforded them opportunities for developing their personality and participating as a group. ... The Ramakrishna Mission of Bangalore is rendering valuable service to the community by the excellent work turned out by the Ashrama in the field of children's recreation.'

This was a spontaneous appreciative reaction of the professional expert, an unexpected publicity which the Sangha did not seek. During the Vivekananda Centenary Year, an eminent industrialist and large-hearted philanthropist associated with the Ashrama was invited to preside over the Balaka Sangha Day. After witnessing all the programme and learning of the details from the report, he was so much impressed and even astonished that he said, 'Why, all these years, I never knew that the Ashrama conducted an activity of this quality and magnitude!' Yes, it was 'silent and steady work' indeed.

Once, the local U.S. Information Service Centre had organized the screening of 'Circarama' (a special movie show) to wit-

ness which some forty boys of the Sangha had got passes. Consonant with Swami Vivekananda's instruction, 'In this world, take the position of a "giver" —not a beggar, petty or glorified—the boys made a collection among themselves and forwarded the contribution to the U.S.I.S., thanking them for the wonderful show and requesting acceptance of the token of appreciation, to be used for some good cause. A couple of days later, the officer-in-charge wrote back, returning the contribution, saying that the Sangha activity was the best deserving cause to receive the contribution! On another occasion, when the U. N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld died under sad circumstances, touched by the event, the boys wrote a letter of condolence in their own boyish hand and decided to forward it to the most appropriate person and that would be the Prime Minister of Sweden. Nobody expected anything further to come out of it. But we can imagine the amazement and thrill of the boys when that busy Prime Minister, who must have been receiving thousands of letters at that time, himself generously sent a letter of thanks in reply the very next day.

But most gratifying of all is the flowering out of some of the boys into real persons of worthy character in the various spheres of life. One common factor with all such has been their unswerving loyalty and attachment to the Sangha and its work even after they have graduated out of it. Some have not only served as honorary teachers, but a few of them have been trained so well all-round that they can take over the general direction and responsibility of the whole work, when the need is there. One of them, who fulfilled his commitment to serve the Sangha for ten years—first as a pupil, then as a leader, then as an instructor—later on developed the capacity to be in charge of it. Another boy, who in his early teens, was about to slide down into the life of a

do-nothing by adverse domestic circumstances and poverty, somehow got into the Sangha. Over the years, his vagabond tendencies which would raise their head now and then were successfully held in check by loving and patient handling. He was not allowed to drop out, though the temptation was there. Time not only cured him of these deficiencies, but the positive and noble elements in him also unfolded gradually. Now he is a person of rare qualities, responsible and dependable, selfless and generous, hard-working and humble—deeply grateful to the Sangha for what it did for him. In turn he has, by his one instance, justified the whole experiment. As far as humanly possible, he has given practical expression to his gratitude by offering all his energies and resources for its service of the Sangha and the Ashrama.

Then again, there was the frail-looking boy, quiet and even shy, with no apparent physical vigour or talents. But inside the frail frame burnt a cool flame of noble aspiration and tenacious determination, which was brought out by his long years of steady participation in the Sangha at various levels. In course of time he demonstrated the power of gentleness and of 'calm, silent and steady work' by taking up worthy projects, which needed quite some money and much more of effort, and accomplishing them in a way which would surprise much more resourceful and 'dynamic' persons. He has dedicated himself to the cause of spreading the 'man-making' ideas of Swami Vivekananda among the students and has also organized an education society for the same purpose.

Most of those who have stayed on in the Sangha for at least two years have developed a loving regard and even attachment for it. A sizable number have continued their devoted association even after finishing their college education and getting into jobs. Those who have dropped out, due to

various reasons, have still a soft corner in their hearts for the Sangha. Even those who have strayed away feel mostly like coming back. The number of those who have become totally indifferent and estranged is rather small; and the instances of those against whom drastic disciplinary action had to be taken or who had to be expelled have been very few. With the passing of years, some old boy or other comes back to re-establish contact and express his gratitude in tangible terms.

CONCLUSION

Taking the various aspects into consideration, the Balaka Sangha has been a worth-while project, truly benefiting an appreciable number of boys directly, and in some cases their parents or guardians also indirectly. Instances are not wanting where the boy has been instrumental in launching his parents or guardians into the path of moral and spiritual striving. In the light of working experience for nearly two decades it can be safely declared that such Sanghas are not only desirable but also very necessary for our people. It is a programme fit to be emulated by others elsewhere. (The 'Sarada Balika Mandali' at Bangalore for girls and the 'Ramakrishna Taruna Sangha' for boys at Mysore are functioning along similar lines.) But those who wish to organize such centres elsewhere and work them successfully may take note of certain preconditions. Foremost is the availability of the right type of organizers and teachers—at least a few who have understood and appreciated the ideal of man-making and have, in their own way, striven to give expression to it in their own lives. Money and equipment are secondary. Too much of equipment, procedures and sophistication will act as a dead weight choking the spontaneity and creative expression of the boys and obstruct a healthy personal

relation between the teachers and the boys which is all important. It would not be superfluous to indicate some of the necessary qualities which a successful teacher-guide of the boys will have to possess :

(1) A genuine interest in the welfare of the boys and a keen desire to be of service.

(2) Ability to mix with the boys in their multi-sided activities and infuse in them his own enthusiasm and steadiness.

(3) Great patience and a loving heart judiciously mixed with firmness for the sake of discipline. Refusal to cater to cheap popularity with the boys and readiness to take unpleasant decisions in the interest of their true and lasting welfare.

(4) A basic understanding of the essentials of religion, of the significance of the life and teachings of the great religious luminaries ; and a capacity for interesting narration and story-telling.

(5) A proper perspective on life and the ability to utilize even commonplace things and events with the ultimate objective of the experiment, namely 'man-making'.

(6) A sympathetic understanding of the aspirations and problems of the young, and a sincere effort to direct their energies along healthy and fruitful channels.

It is often the errors of omission or commission on the part of the grown-ups in training the young that have led on to a lot of confusion, conflict, and frustration

in human affairs. This is particularly true of training in the field of religion and morality. It should not mean brain-washing with partisan and parochial doctrines and dogmas but assimilation of brain-nourishing, heart-expanding, wholesome ideas. It is high time that those who aspire to be the leaders of people honestly learn to distinguish between healthy religion—which is integrating and hence indispensable—and the narrow, divisive and destructive movements which usurp and function under the name of religion. Specially where young, formative minds are concerned, to feed them with the poison of sectarian stupidity and hatred, in the name of religious instruction would be criminal. But, to withhold from them, out of ignorance or cowardice mistaken for secularism, the life-giving and spirit-liberating nourishment of genuine, integrating religion would be tragic and suicidal. Reduced to simple terms, man's ideal needs are : Minds illumined by an integrating vision, hearts aflame with unifying love and compassion, hands capable of fruitful activity for the service of fellow humans. This is the essential religious ideal as well. It is enough if we can help the young to preserve their body and mind clean and healthy, and light up in their heart the spark of such a noble motivation. The rest will take care of itself. And that is precisely what the VIVEKANANDA BALAKA SANGHA stands for.

No great idea can have a place in the heart unless one steps out of his little corner. It will be verified in time. Every great achievement is done slowly. Such is the Lord's will. . . . Let nothing daunt you, who on earth has the power to snub us so long as the Lord favours us? Even if you are at your last breath, be not afraid. Work on with the intrepidity of a lion but at the same time with the tenderness of a flower.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

PRAYER AND MODERN MAN—A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE

RABBI ASHER BLOCK

In the Book of Deuteronomy it is written : What the Lord expects of you is to love Him and to serve Him with all your heart. Naturally we must ask, What is service of the heart? A well-known Rabbinic interpretation is : The 'service of the heart' is Prayer.

Now, in Hebrew, the word for 'service' (*avodah*) is literally *work*, and so our further question is, what kind of 'work' is this? This question is especially pertinent for modern man, who is familiar with other types of work but not this. We know the work of the hand, and we know the work of the mind. What, now, is this work of the heart? (In the 'Ethics of the Fathers', these three areas, when dedicated to God, are spoken of as The Three Pillars upon which the world stands : Good Deeds, Torah Learning, and Avodah-Worship.)

In a general way, perhaps, we can delineate the area of 'the heart', distinguished from body and mind, as the area of man's will. An important daily prayer speaks of subduing the 'impulses' of our heart to God's service. This evidently is a major undertaking, for the objective involved, in both Biblical and liturgical language, is nothing less than to acquire a 'new heart', a pure heart. The prophet, in very vivid terms, portrays this transformation as the replacement of a 'heart of stone' with a 'heart of flesh'. Surely all this calls for some special understanding. We must be able to define what is 'stone' and what is 'flesh'. Moreover, one wonders, how does this spiritual *heart transplant* actually take place? Thus it is apparent that unless we can provide some much-needed definitions and answers to such relevant questions, we shall not know what prayer is and how to pray.

Let us begin our analysis with some of the contexts in which the Bible speaks of the role of the heart. Among the most famous episodes are those found in the narrative of the Exodus. Most of that story really revolves about 'the hardening of Pharaoh's heart'. And two things come forth quite clearly : One, there is a contest of wills between Pharaoh and God ; two, God's will prevails. Now, in essence, this is the theme of the entire Bible, from beginning to end. If the Exodus story is distinctive at all, it is only in the drama of the telling. Pharaoh is the graphic personification of resistance to God's will, even as Moses is the graphic personification of submission to God's will.

Specifically, there are three categories of will and action portrayed in the Bible, and these are wholly reflected in the Prayer-book. One is : any action by man that is without Divine approval cannot succeed. Such action is symbolized by the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the building of the Tower of Babel, the worship of the Golden Calf, and so on. It is specially dramatized (in Deuteronomy) by the unauthorized battle which the Israelites undertook against the Amorites. Moses said : 'I warned you, but you would not listen, and presumptuously marched into the hill-country, whereupon the Amorites attacked you like bees, and administered a crushing defeat.' This, according to the Bible, is what inevitably happens to human initiative that is without Divine sanction. The second category is where human beings act not on their own but in accordance with God's will. Such actions never fail. Examples of these are : Abraham's going forth in search of a land, Joseph's adventures in Egypt, the battles against Sihon and Og,

the conquest of Canaan, etc. The third category is where God achieves His purposes without any human intervention at all. This was the case in the defeat of Korah and his followers when they challenged Moses; this was the case in the rout of the Assyrians when they besieged Jerusalem; and this, pre-eminently, was the case in the deliverance from Egypt. 'Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.'

It is most instructive that both the Biblical and the liturgical traditions chose to highlight for special remembrance the Exodus from Egypt rather than, say, the conquest of Canaan. This was not because one is 'pacifist' (in the usual sense of that term) and the other is not, for even in the case of the Exodus there was a heavy price in human life. ('My creatures are drowning, how dare ye sing?') But what is so outstanding about the event of the Exodus is that *there* the will and the power of God are unmistakably evident. In the case of the conquest, some might feel that the prowess of Joshua's army had a part to play, whereas, at the deliverance from Egypt, all know that the Israelites were weak and helpless slaves. 'Therefore they believed in God and in Moses, His servant.' Therefore also the Decalogue, which calls for complete submission to the sovereignty of God, begins with a pointed reference to God's liberation of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

With this as the basic presupposition of the entire tradition, it becomes quite obvious that we moderns have a terrific problem on our hands. For almost everything we take for granted in our modern approach—personal initiative and striving, the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness, the will to assert our own destiny—all this seems to go against the very grain of tradition. No wonder most moderns find it very difficult, if not impossible, to pray. And no wonder some moderns, caught in this sharp conflict, are even ready to postu-

late the 'death of God'. In their own minds there is the intuition—and it is not altogether invalid—that in this world there cannot be an ultimate dual authority. And since they themselves are not ready 'to lie down and die', there is left only one alternative.

And it is not only the extremists who have this problem. It is upon all of us, in greater or lesser degree. The rest of us have merely found a more diplomatic way of straddling, or evading, the issue. For example, we are fond of quoting that verse in the Exodus story, 'Speak to the Israelites that they go forward!', and we take that as a call to activism. Similarly, the injunction 'to remember the Exodus', which occurs so many times in the Bible, is commonly interpreted by us to mean that, in the spirit of the Exodus, we must *strive* for liberty, we must *engage* in social action, we must *win* our own battles. But what shall we do with the text: 'Let God do the fighting—you hold your peace.'? The fact of the matter is, if we are fully honest with ourselves, and objective in the use of the Bible, *this* is the keynote text. By keynote text is meant that throughout the Bible, on every page and in almost every paragraph, the central actor, the doer, the performer is God and not man. That may sound harsh to our modern ears, but it is the truth. In the traditional *haggadah* (the liturgical service for Passover Eve), Moses' name is hardly mentioned. Even in the Bible, where his name is ever-recurrent, Moses' role is predominantly that of messenger, mediator, instrument in the hands of God. And, by implication, this is what we are also expected to be: instruments, not independent agents.

The explicit lesson of the Exodus that emerges both in our Scriptures and our prayers is essentially a lesson of submission, not initiative. Wherever the Exodus is mentioned, it is God's role as Redeemer

that is stressed. And lest one be tempted to say, 'All this refers to the past; surely it does not condition our future', we note the well-established theme of the prayerbook: He who wrought wondrous deeds for our fathers, redeeming them from slavery to freedom, *may He also redeem us*. The accepted classical terminology of our worship is: 'not unto us, O Lord, but unto *Thy* name the glory!' 'May our eyes behold *Thy* return to Zion.' 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and *He* shall sustain thee.'

INTELLECT *vs.* WILL

When we examine the nature of the conflict between modern man and tradition, we find that it is not fundamentally or primarily a conflict of *ideas* but rather a conflict of *wills*. If we bear this distinction in mind, it will spare us much philosophizing and argumentation. In terms of ideas, modern man is not least prepared but perhaps best prepared to accept the basic suppositions of Judaism and of all great religions. Even a cursory view of the latest intellectual trends will convince us that the theoretical truths of science are in complete harmony with the theological truths of religion. Modern physics has demonstrated, almost beyond a doubt, that the ultimate reality of this cosmos is universal, spiritual, eternal. By 'universal' is meant that natural law is indivisible. In pressing the concept of universal law to its logical conclusion, Albert Einstein (in our day) was able to devise one equation, one formula that, he felt, encompassed all existence. Likewise, we have been shown that existence itself is non-physical. What we had considered to be 'matter' turned out to be not matter at all, but only atoms and electrons, which are really particles of energy. And, finally, modern thought and research have proven to us that the power or energy which is at the heart of the universe is indestructible and eternal.

There we have, in effect, the 'thrice holy'

of Isaiah's vision, which (according to recognized usage) declares that God is 'heavenly' or spiritual, that He reigns 'throughout the earth', and that He is 'for ever and ever'. There also we have the first three Principles of Faith as formulated by Maimonides—namely, that God is the Master of all creation; that the Divine Essence is incorporeal; and that He was, is, and ever will be.

Why, then, the great conflict between traditionalism and modernism, between spirituality and secularism? The conflict enters in the realm of practice, rather than in the realm of theory. Science in our day, and much of philosophy, is not primarily concerned with how a man *lives*; it is mainly preoccupied with how he *thinks*. Thus it is quite possible for a scientist or philosopher to 'believe' that the universe and mankind are one, and yet, in daily life, be frightened by certain aspects of the universe, and be hostile toward most of his fellow-men. The scientist or philosopher may 'believe' that the world is non-physical, and yet, in his daily habits, be quite sensualist and materialist. The scientist or philosopher may 'believe' that ultimate reality is eternal, and yet, in terms of ideals and aspirations, will act as though 'tomorrow we die'.

Of course, one may say, many religionists too profess all these things and do not live up to them. Yes, that is true. But the crucial difference is that religion *expects* the individual to harmonize his actions with his beliefs. If it be true religion, it does not let him rest—professing one thing and doing something else. That is where the problem of those of us who consider ourselves both religious and modern comes to a head.

Logically, we may grasp the fact that, if there is only One Universal Existence, there can be only One Universal Will, only one Master of the House. Yet, psycho-

logically, we find ourselves possessed of individual, personal wills that want to act on their own, that want to go their own merry way. Is it not our prevalent psychological state that individuals seek their own self-interest and their own self-preservation above all else? How realistic is it, therefore—while we are in this state—to expect that the personal ego, which is so strong and resistant, will allow itself to be submerged in any other will, including the Will of God? Yet, this is precisely what the religious ideal demands: *Kabbalat ol malhut shamaim*—the acceptance of the total sovereignty of God. In the Decalogue itself, after the affirmation of the existence of the One God, the command ‘not to have any other gods . . . or worship them’ comes in the most emphatic terms. We may not like the translation of *El kana* as ‘jealous’ or ‘zealous’ God, but the intent is crystal clear. God is an absolute God; He will brook no competition or rivalry.

For anyone, therefore, who is sincere about the central imperative of the Bible and religion, the problem is not primarily an intellectual one but a spiritual one. It is a problem of training the will, of curbing selfish desires, of sublimating false emotions—in short, it is the task of getting a new or pure heart! And that is the task of prayer.

The problem of prayer is mainly twofold. One part is to define the underlying concept of a ‘new heart’. That is relatively easy. What we have arrived at is: a ‘heart of stone’ or a ‘hardened heart’ is a self-centred heart. A new or ‘soft’ heart is one wherein the hard crust of ego has been melted down, to enable it to be re-united with God, the centre of all true existence. The second objective is far more challenging. It is to determine *how* such transformation can be brought about.

Surely we will all grant that modern prayer (whatever has been left of it) has

fallen on evil days. Is it possible, then, to inject ‘a new heart’, a new spirit, into our praying? Verbally, we still recite: ‘Create in me, O Lord, a pure heart; renew within me a right spirit’, or ‘Purify our heart that we may serve Thee in truth’; etc., but for most of us, most of the time, these are just words. Our rational ideals may be very fine, but we are still very far from truly feeling them or willing them. This is what Jeremiah meant when he said: ‘Thou art near in their mouths, but far from their inner being.’ And this, indeed, is what the third commandment of the Decalogue is about: ‘Thou shalt not take God’s name (or Reality) in vain.’ The fact of the matter is, we do take God’s name in vain, because we have not harmonized our emotions with our reason. We *talk* God-centredness, but we feel and live self-centredness.

This is our dilemma; this is the dichotomy of our existence. We are fractured selves, and we must somehow learn to make ourselves whole. ‘Thou shalt be whole-hearted with the Lord thy God.’ It is not an easy task. That is why worship is called *avodah*; it is hard work. And that is why all the genuine teachers and exemplars of the prayerful life have stressed the need for continued effort, self-discipline, and growth. There are laws to be fulfilled, there are skills to be acquired, there is a ‘ladder’ which we must climb.

AVENUES TO GOD

Bachya Ibn Pakuda (religious philosopher of the 11th century) carefully pointed out that just as there are laws and duties governing physical life and growth, so there are laws and duties governing spiritual growth (‘duties of the heart’). We have to pass through many ‘gates’, before we can hope to reach our destination, which is the gate of the love of God,

Similarly, Moses Hayim Luzatto (of the 18th century) in his major work, *The Path of the Just*, meticulously, almost 'scientifically' outlined the steps and procedures for achieving spirituality. We need 'watchfulness', then 'zeal', then 'cleanness', and so on, until we finally reach the goal of 'holiness'. Now, though various teachers will differ in the particular systems they propound, the fundamental approach is the same—going back all the way (as we shall see) through the oral and written tradition to the fountainhead of revelation: the Mosaic Principles of the Decalogue.

According to Judaism, these are the main avenues of coming closer to God: Torah learning, prayer, righteous deeds, and the fulfilment of love. These correspond, universally, to the main elements of human life: the mind, the will, the hand, the heart. As was indicated before, it is often easiest to start with the mind. Even modern man, because of the insights of scientific truth, can affirm the oneness of the universe, intellectually. What remains to be done is to take this *belief* in oneness and follow the process of will and action that will finally culminate in a *love* of oneness. At present our will and desire are for many, many things—for wealth, for pleasure, for power, for prestige—for almost anything and everything but the One God. In the terminology of our prayerbook, our heart is 'not pure', and we therefore must struggle and work hard at the purification of it. (Incidentally, this is not only the terminology of the prayerbook. The philosopher Kierkegaard wrote a book entitled *Purity of Heart*, and his very perceptive definition is: Purity of heart is to will one thing! That is exactly the Jewish analogue of *Kavanah*, which means 'single-minded' or wholehearted devotion.)

Psychologically, we know, it is easier to begin working with the surface mind than

it is to try to control the deep will and emotions, because the mental process is largely conscious, whereas the latter is largely subconscious. Hence, we must muster all the conscious energy that we can, to withdraw our thoughts from the fleeting objects of the world, and concentrate them on God. If we do that long enough, intensely enough, and earnestly enough, then gradually our deliberate thought will become habitual thought, and our habitual thought will sink down into our subconscious emotions.

If we analyze the traditional prayerbook and the daily regimen of Jewish prayer, we find two dominant characteristics: awareness and repetition. Awareness of God is a rational element, and is highlighted by the Synagogue motto: *Know before Whom you stand*. Know God—know the true Reality of the world! This knowledge is strengthened by references to God in nature, God in history, God in personal experience, and so on. This part of the prayerbook the modern mind will more readily grasp, for it pertains to discursive thinking. However, there is the other element which is at least as important traditionally, but which baffles many people: namely, the element of sheer repetitiveness. This element is expressed in that other Synagogue motto: *I set the Lord constantly before me*. Here we have worship not only periodically—morning, noon, and night—but throughout the day, such as in the form of 'one hundred blessings'. Probably the reason the *Ashre* (psalm 145) was chosen as the daily psalm is that it expresses this very intensity. 'I shall praise Thy name every day and for ever and ever.' In this one psalm, the name of God, or pronouns for His name, are mentioned no less than fifty times! One cannot long remain neutral to such a state of affairs. Either one reacts to this with repugnance, declaring this is utterly ridiculous; or one begins to sense what is actually involved

here, and is ready to declare with the author of Proverbs: 'The name of the Lord is a tower of strength; the righteous one runneth into it, and is uplifted.'

Now, that which determines whether we react positively or negatively is not the repetition itself, but our estimate of the aim that is projected. One can cite many examples even in modern life (or perhaps especially in modern life) where this process is resorted to without any hesitation or shame. Does the professional advertiser worry that perhaps the names of his products occur too often in the commercials he has written? Does the professional politician apologize for repeating too much his party line or his favourite propaganda? And—most to the point—the very person who will resist falling into the mood of the *Ashre*, on the pretext that the name of God is redundant, will not at all become tired, in his personal daily conversation, of using the personal pronoun—I, me, my, mine—again and again and again. Yes, this we do not tire of. But when we are bid to transpose these ego-pronouns to *Thou, Thee, Thy* and *Thine* a strange heaviness, comes upon our hearts.

Of course, the very analogies that have been used from the realms of advertising and politics, will lead some to fear the very process that the prayerbook is advocating. See to what uses this can be put! they will exclaim. And surely their voices should be heeded. We are dealing here with a tremendous power that is resident within human life, and whenever we deal with live power—be it in the physical or the spiritual realm—there are dangers as well as blessings, depending upon the use or abuse of that power. That is why Jewish prayer, out of long experience, has formulated a blending of the non-discursive element with the discursive, the emotional with the rational. In every prayer-formula of a *berahah*, there is the first part which is

uniform and recurrent, like the basic motif of a symphony, and along with that a conscious, logical support for it—from nature, from history, and from real personal experience.

Many years back a book was published by Emile Coué, entitled *Autosuggestion*. The gist of its teaching was: to repeat over and over again, 'Every day in every way I am getting better and better.' For a while the sales of that book, day by day, were getting bigger and bigger. But it could not last long, because it was only a psychological device without a spiritual substance. Sooner or later any intelligent person would ask, 'Am I only fooling myself?' Valid prayer must be built upon a verifiable as well as a psychological base, an experiential as well as an inspirational foundation.

ACHIEVING ONENESS

But there is still more to the process. The acts of the body must be enlisted along with the impulses of the mind and the will. The acts of the body are rituals and ethics. Here, too, it may sound strange to modern ears to have ethics and ritual coupled in this manner. But, in the Jewish scheme of things, there is really no basic distinction between them. They are both encompassed in the third great motto of Jewish life: *Let all your acts be in the name of Heaven!* Both ritual action and moral action have the same spiritual motivation behind them. That motivation is to draw us out of the shell or prison of our self-centredness into something greater beyond ourselves. In ritual, by thinking of the universe about us, we get out of ourselves. In ethics, by thinking of our fellow-man, we get out of ourselves. In either case, if the act is performed in a religious spirit, a form of *teshuvah* is accomplished—that is, a 'turning' from the self to God. In one

case, God is identified with the universe ; in the other case, God is identified with human beings. In both instances, there is a 'turning' also from our lower selves, which spell selfishness, to our higher Self, which spells godliness. Each kind of 'work', which has this motive behind it, whether in ceremonial or moral form, is 'worship'. Thus, and only thus, *avodah-work* becomes *Avodah-worship*.

With this concept of worship, we begin to unravel some of the mysteries and some of the problems we encountered earlier in connection with man's initiative and activism. The one wholesome attitude that comes forth, religiously speaking, is that which is so beautifully and succinctly expressed in 'The Ethics of the Fathers': Be as servants who serve their master, but without seeking a prize. Serving the Master without desiring any personal reward is truly selfless work, and as such is a form of worship.

But it must be clearly understood that such type of work is virtually impossible without conscious devotion to a supreme ideal. And this is precisely how the fourth commandment conceives of man's labour. 'Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, so that the seventh day may be a Sabbath unto the Lord.' Work in such a manner (it prescribes) that the work will lead to Sabbath as the Goal ! And Sabbath is the Day of the Lord.

Another way of understanding the Sabbath commandment is : First strive to accomplish all *your* work, and then you may have a Sabbath of the Lord. Strive all the six days to do all that is humanly possible for you to do. Man must put forth all his best effort before he has a right to expect the grace of God. But at the same time he must be inwardly attuned to receiving God's grace. This is probably the essential meaning of man's being required to be 'partner with God'. To be overactive is to

leave out God. To be overpassive is to leave out one's self. And as to the overall relationship, we must constantly remember who is the *senior* partner and who is the junior partner !

We have thus been ascending a ladder, as it were. 'Know before Whom you stand' is the intellectual rung of the ladder. 'I place the Lord always before me' represents the conscious will. 'May all our deeds be dedicated to God' is the active ingredient. Thus *mind* and *will* and *hand* have been enlisted in the service of God. But the highest factor—the culmination of the entire prayer-process—is *love*, the supreme 'service of the heart'. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*. Love is the spiritual expression of oneness, even as monotheism is the rational expression of oneness. And when one has reached this degree of spiritual attainment, there can be no differentiation between intellect and feeling, between truth and goodness, between relation to God and relation to man. All has been swallowed up in Oneness.

As a final note, and as a form of summary, it is most helpful to realize that all this is—not only figuratively, but in a sense literally—*halahah leMosheh mi-Sinai*, 'the Path revealed to Moses at Sinai'. Our entire progression has followed the exact structure found in the Decalogue. The keynote is struck with 'I am the Eternal thy God who brought thee out of Egypt'. In the Exodus we behold the supreme power and Providence of God. It is to God that we must give our ultimate allegiance, if we too want to be liberated from our bondages. But we may not yet be ready for that. We may still be bound too strongly by our egos, to surrender our initiative and entrust our destiny to God. Therefore, we must undergo training, for 'purifying our hearts that we might serve God in truth'. The first step in that training is intellectual. 'Thou shalt not have other gods before Me.' We

must develop the capacity to discriminate, at least mentally, between the true God and false gods, between Reality and vanity of vanities. Next, we must begin to translate this knowledge into a will and desire to live up to it. Just talking and thinking about Truth is not enough. 'Thou shalt not take God's name in vain.' Thirdly, we enter what may be termed the 'psychosomatic' stage, when we endeavour to make our physical actions correspond to our thought and will. This is the principle involved in the Sabbath.

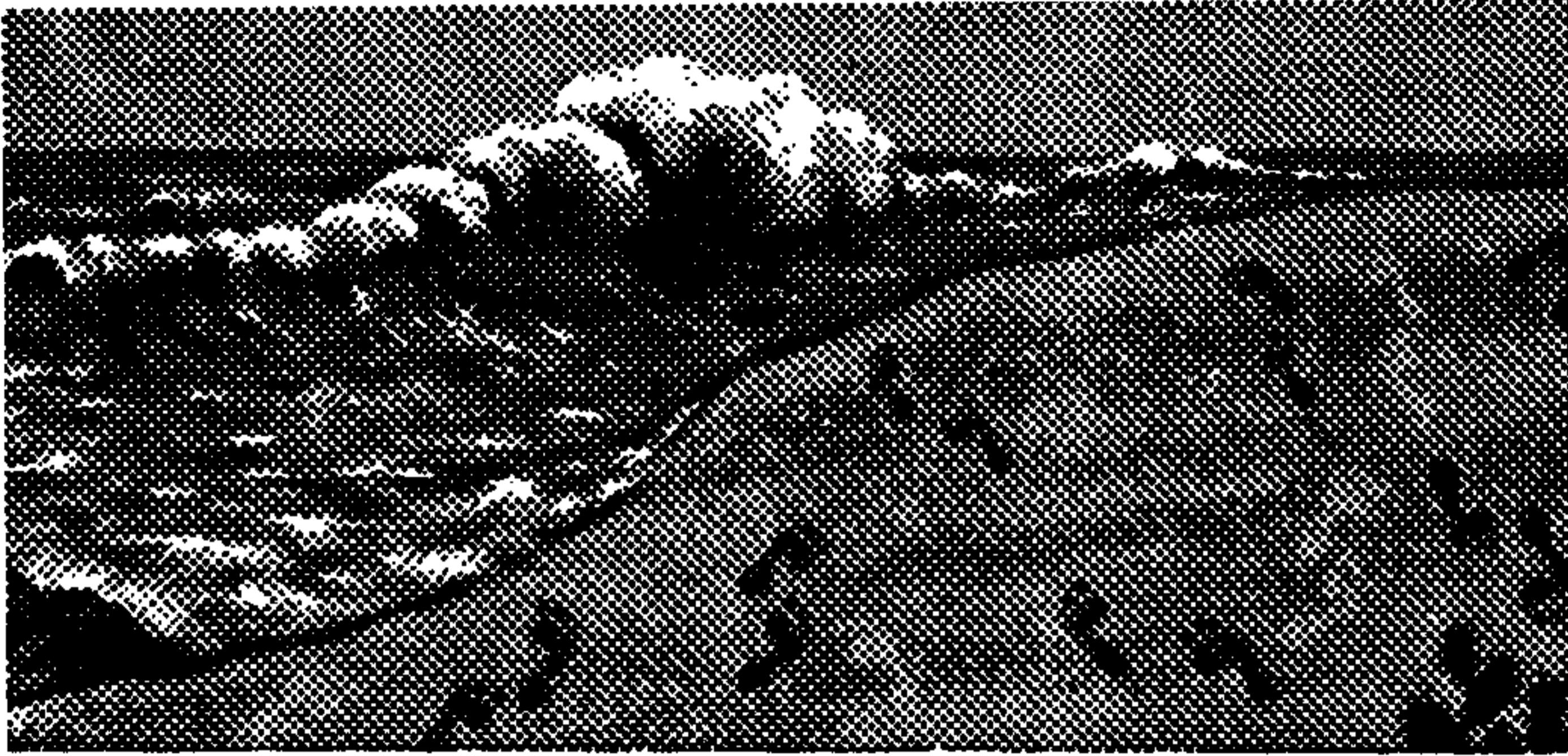
And then, when the brain and the will and the hand have taken on a new direction in life, we can hope for a genuine 'change of heart'. This is the inner meaning of the commandment about parents and teachers who are 'spiritual parents'. It is really a commandment of love—but

not just ethical love, which is spoken of in the second Tablet of the Law, but a form of spiritual love. This commandment (according to tradition) was placed in the first half of the Decalogue, to illustrate the relation between man and God. We must strive to make our relationship to God as real and intense as the highest human relationships that we know, and vice versa. Thus the Two Tablets, pertaining to the human and the Divine, are inextricably tied in with one another.

According to a very ancient tradition, the one revelation (above all else) that came directly from God was the *Anokhi ha-Shem*, 'I am the Eternal thy God.' From that Absolute Oneness, all else, logically and inevitably, followed. Prayer is the process of putting that One Truth into practice . . . until it becomes our One Love.

Christs and Buddhas are simply occasions upon which to objectify our own inner powers. We really answer our own prayers. It is blasphemy to think that if Jesus had never been born, humanity would not have been saved. It is horrible to forget the divinity in human nature, a divinity that must come out. Never forget the glory of human nature. We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which *I am*. Bow down to nothing but your own higher Self.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



HUMAN TRENDS

THE PLAY'S THE THING, RELIGIOUSLY SO

'Jesus Christ Superstar.' This is the title given to a collection of songs composed by two young pop music writers. They have dubbed their work, dealing with the last seven days in the life of Christ, 'a rock opera'. A record album under this title has sold millions of copies, yielding millions of dollars.

A stage production of this 'opera' (there are secular as well as spiritual reservations) opened in New York City with one of the largest advance ticket sales in American theatrical history. Additional stage productions throughout the world, continuing record sales, and a forthcoming film of 'Jesus Christ Superstar' could yield as much as \$100 million, and this is a conservative estimate.

The two young writers have issued statements proclaiming their sincerity in composing such a work. They meant no harm, they said, and had no intention of ridiculing anything or anybody. From all appearances, they seem to be quite satisfied with what they have done.

It is conceivable that this satisfaction may stem from reports that the two young men are making \$60,000 each week from this 'opera'.

SOMETHING NEW

This is part of a trend among Western youth: religion presented in a theatrical

setting. The overall series of similar events is called 'The Jesus Movement'. Members involved are called 'Jesus Freaks'.

In Western slang, freak means someone with intense feelings about a subject. Newspapers, major magazines, television, radio—the Western communications media *en masse* has been quick to categorize this particular wave of energy.

It is with an almost audible sigh of relief that the press concerns itself with 'The Jesus Movement'. And why not? For the past few years references to youth have emphasized drugs, promiscuity, riots on university grounds, rock music concerts that end in violence and death, and at best, a nihilism that alternated with hostility much too often.

Those segments of Western youth that have now turned to Jesus are quick to let you know it. As with most youthful decisions, this one has been accompanied by a vocal commitment that is deafening. Rallies, speeches, meetings, crusades, tours, press conferences, television appearances—'The Jesus Movement' is coming at you in typical Western fashion.

Which is to say with noise, energy and plenty of youthful models to make the product appealing.

America, Germany, England, France, Holland, and Spain are just a few of the

countries invaded by this 20th century 'Children's Crusade'.

JESUS ON TELEVISION

In Germany, a recent television show portrayed the life of Christ as a criminal adventure story. Jesus was shown as a Marxist believing mankind is good. Judas is trapped by a woman, who is played by a transvestite. Matthew is a wild blond youth trying to save Jesus from doom.

In European coffee houses, cafes and other gathering places for youth, the décor is often converted to pseudo-religious settings, complete with the singing of spirituals by European and American singing groups.

Many Western churches are in favour of the 'Jesus Movement' because religious interest is equated with the number of people attending services. Both in Europe and in America, churches have presented rock music concerts as a way of getting youth through the doors, into the pews and onto the record books. And so there are 'Jesus Teach-In's' and a 'Jesus Festival of Music'.

Also at present, one finds 'The Campus Crusade For Christ' in which university students are told of the wonders of Jesus by youthful often self-appointed missionaries.

WHAT BROUGHT ON THIS FERVOUR?

Apparently disgust, disappointment and disillusionment with promiscuity, drugs, rock music and radical politics. These preoccupations and pastimes were seen by 'Jesus Movement' converts as destructive. And so to Jesus.

Most of those involved are young and have been classified at one time or another as hippies, mainly on the basis of appearance. 'The Jesus Freaks' are often teenagers or in their twenties for the most part.

The press, parents, and older people are more content with 'The Jesus Movement'

than they are with, say, the appearance of their offspring at a campus riot.

However, Oscar Wilde has noted that 'morality is simply the attitude we adopt to people whom we personally dislike'. Thus it is possible that the overt hostility of youth to parent these past few years has simply assumed another form.

Spiritual progress is usually measured in inches, at least for most of us. Miraculous transformations are rare enough to be considered almost non-existent. The complete turnabout loudly proclaimed by 'Jesus Movement' members may, for too many, turn out to be not so complete after all.

For as the French say, the more things change, the more they remain the same.

PSYCHODRAMA

It is the name of a new method of analysis. Patients are encouraged to perform, to act out their problems and fears. Supposedly these instant theatricals are beneficial and therapeutic. Today in some Western countries, religion has become a form of theatre as well, and anyone can join the company of players.

Even Indian religion has not escaped unscathed. Just a few years ago, an interest in Indian religion by the leading rock group of the moment, the Beatles, resulted in an almost world wide intoxication with things Indian among followers of popular music.

Sales of sitars increased, the demand for incense grew intense and meditation became the thing to do. It still is, in some quarters. The lotus posture was a position of favour in the West, literally as well as figuratively. And as usual, the communications media tripped over each other trying to talk with anyone who wore a turban and spoke in the soft accent of India.

The world famed musician Ravi Shankar, a gifted and respected musician, once appeared at a youthful music concert. The

first sounds from his sitar brought an incredible ovation. It was with some slight amusement, tinged with cynicism, that he thanked his audience for applauding him while he merely tuned his instrument.

Such was the euphoria and intoxication of just a few years ago, that any citizen of India who sat cross-legged in a corner with closed eyes could easily have become a national celebrity in America.

The intoxication has subsided to a degree, though traces of it remain. Meditation is still spoken of by some as a cure for everything. Members of the 'Haré Krishna Movement' can be seen in major Western cities, youths with shaven heads, ochre robes and begging bowls. This is an opportunity for more exotic role playing, though the movement itself appears to have levelled off and is not spoken of or written of with the frequency it once was.

It is possible that these young people are sincere every step of the way. However, Swami Vivekananda points out that nature's justice is ruthless and relentless. And Western history, described by one writer as the study of Europe's criminal calendar, gives evidence of this.

CONSIDER THE 'CHILDREN'S CRUSADE', 13TH CENTURY

At this point, the crusading armies of Western Europe had not been successful in 'freeing Jerusalem from the infidel'. The infidel, in the person of the Saracens or Moslems, had been defeated handily in the first crusade.

By the second and third crusades, they had begun to learn more efficient battle tactics and the bodies of crusaders rotting in middle eastern deserts were proof of this. As Swami Vivekananda says—let every dog have his day in this miserable world. And the Saracen Armies were having theirs.

It was in 1212 that an orphan boy Stephan, a twelve-year-old shepherd in

Cloyes, France, began to daydream. All of his fantasies had him as a hero leading a crusade of children to Palestine and placing Jerusalem once more in the hands of Christianity. 'Restore to me the Holy City of Jerusalem', said a voice in one of his daydreams. The innocence of children would prevail where sinful adults had failed.

And so began what writer Richard Siskind in his book *The Crusades* calls 'the most improbable and pitiable crusade of them all'. Stephan's daydreams and voices may have been part of his recurring epileptic fits. Sad to say, he also possessed great eloquence and he soon had 20,000 children from Western Europe following him on a march to the Mediterranean Sea.

PRIDE AND SAINTHOOD

Stephan's pride, vanity, and foolishness were soon manifested. He called himself 'St. Stephan of Cloyes' and sold locks of his hair as relics. In front of 20,000 children, he rode in a decorated cart, surrounded by an honour guard made up of children of the wealthy and the nobility.

The procession, what was left of it since many children had gotten sick or died or lost interest, reached the sea and encountered a major obstacle.

The sea did not part, though 'St. Stephan of Cloyes' had promised it would. This of course meant that the original plan of walking directly to the Holy Land had to be abandoned. However, help soon arrived in the form of Hugh the Iron and William the Pig, two men who offered to furnish ships so that the innocence of children could prevail.

'God's will', said Stephan and the children boarded the ships. They were never seen again.

TREACHERY

Storms and shipwrecks killed some of them. The rest were betrayed into the

hands of the Saracens by the treacherous Hugh and William, who sold them into slavery.

Born of envy, a rival children's crusade sprang up during the same period. This time, the youthful leader was Nicholas the Prophet, who was encouraged in this pastime by his father, a foolish and vain man. Towns, villages were emptied of all children as more than 30,000 youngsters flocked to Nicholas.

This crusade is considered the historical truth behind the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Germany, who in a fairy tale played sweet music on his flute and lured children into following him.

Nicholas' crusade was as ill-conceived, ill-fated and as disastrous as that of 'St. Stephan of Cloyes'. Winter weather, disease, sickness—all took their deadly toll. The crusade failed miserably and Nicholas himself disappeared never to be seen or heard from again.

As for his father, the members of his village were extreme in their distaste at the effect of this crusade upon their own children. They hung Nicholas' father and left his body dangling for a long while as a warning to the fathers of other would-be prophets.

History shows that youthful religious crusades are at best precarious and probably destructive to those involved. And as the Greeks tell it, whom the Gods would destroy, they first make proud.

THE WORLD IS ONSTAGE

It would be painful to many of us to examine our lives too closely. We would, for example, see that we play many roles, assume numerous disguises. We slip into costume so easily and unawares. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna: 'This world is like a stage where men perform many parts under various disguises. They do not like to take off the mask, unless they have played

for some time. Let them play for a while, and then they will leave off the mask of their own accord.'

And so we play at spiritual enlightenment. Today, we often find that what was once sacred and private often emerges as a circus and public.

A forthcoming motion picture deals in serio-comic fashion with Christ's second coming. This time, Christ appears in Los Angeles, California. He declares worldwide peace, thereby forcing munitions makers into bankruptcy.

He dismisses all of the Christian hierarchy, forcing the church fathers to seek steady employment elsewhere. Christ's beard and sandals lead the youth to mistake him for a pop music star. Judas makes unworthy advances to Christ, is rejected and out of revenge, betrays him.

Just before being hung in a California parking lot, Christ utters his last words, which are—'Oh no, not again.'

As of this writing, the movie is currently in production and should be in cinema houses sometime in 1972. Concerning a reaction to this film, one can only say that the mind boggles. If one thing is certain, it is that the press will give it widespread attention.

NO SUBSTITUTES

Current religion based plays, films, songs, along with such trends as 'The Jesus Movement' are attempting to substitute pageantry for the disciplines and rigours of spiritual practice. Intoxication is forever temporary, to coin an ironic phrase. And as Swami Vivekananda forcefully says in *Karma Yoga*: 'No one can get anything unless he earns it only what we earn is really ours.'

The energy of 'The Jesus Movement' has yet to stand the test of time. Good intentions pave the road to any number of hells. And is it possible to attain anything by

wishing for it? Well, there is an old saying: wish in one hand and spit in the other and see which one fills up the quickest.

The plays and the films do offer an audience a chance to enjoy ambivalent feelings. On the one hand, one can be irreverent without guilt. After all, the production is the work of someone else. One merely sits and watches and listens.

And then there is the pleasure of the art, the sensual appeal in sight and sound. Plus there is a smugness that comes from being in step with the times, abreast of popular trends. It is also possible to allow oneself to be deluded that there is religious value in these offerings.

And as for the pageantry of 'The Jesus Movement' itself, it is undoubtedly comforting to many that some youngsters are fondling prayer books instead of heaving bricks through university windows. The feeling of comfort will pass as does everything. And the movement members themselves may be surprised at the continuing tests and trials life continues to toss their way.

BUT FOR NOW...

'The Jesus Movement' is getting more and more attention from the press. In a recent television appearance, a youthful leader of the movement proudly boasted of a 100-pound cross he dragged across America and through England. He claims to have averaged one soul saved per mile of cross dragging. His most impressive statistic was his boast of having passed a pool hall and in doing so, 'saved' seventeen souls who were inside and presumably unspiritual but in a hurry to change.

A 100-pound wooden cross being dragged thousands of miles does more than just attract attention. It could easily exhaust the physical facilities of most souls on this planet, be they realized or unrealized. Apparently 'The Jesus Movement', like many

of the Christians in medieval times, has as Lin Yutang says, made the mistake of confusing being uncomfortable with being virtuous.

Frank Lloyd Wright, the great American architect and something of a free thinker, said that when God created America, he tilted it on its side and everything that was loose fell into southern California. It is here that 'The Jesus Movement' originated and it is also from here that ominous rumours and fragments of stories are wending their way east.

One reads newspaper accounts of the horrible murders in Hollywood in 1969, of a beautiful young actress and several of her companions. These murders were committed by members of a cult, some of whom, under the influence of drugs, felt their leader to be Christ.

More and more one reads that such murders are not isolated instances, that more and more cults are in operation in southern California, with blood sacrifices of animals, and human beings. Devil worship and Black Masses are being celebrated in the west.

One writer says that in California, the disappearance of 80 young girls has not yet been solved or accounted for by police. He implies that their disappearance could be a part of these cults.

This is a form of theatre, albeit primitive and dangerous to the participants. It allows for and encourages the worst instincts of humanity. Again it should be noted that the attention given by journalists could be a factor in the spread of these cults.

BUDDHA

'Decay Is Inherent In All Compounded Things;
Only Truth Abides Forever.
Work Out Your Salvation With Diligence.'
—Buddha

The dictionary defines diligence as constant, careful effort; perseverance. None of this seems evident in either 'The Jesus Movement', in cults or in any of the religious energy currently being manifested by many youthful practitioners.

Jack Newfield, an American political writer and sometime social commentator, gives some insight into the youthful Western mind in his book *Reporting About America*. Though the subject is politics, his observation is worth reading. He says: '... the hippies will not change America because change means pain, and the hippie sub-culture is rooted in the pleasure principle ... political action is a painful, Sisyphean task that includes sacrifice, boredom and defeat.'

Is spiritual action easier? Hardly. Yet the hope of immediate gratification is transferred from drugs and sex to religion and sad to say, perhaps the disappointment found in the former may well appear in the latter.

In which case, religion will be blamed, irate words shouted in criticism of spirituality, clenched fists thrust into the air in defiance and a new outlet for energy and pride quickly sought. And probably found,

since the Gods are known to have a sense of humour.

To paraphrase Swami Vivekananda, what is play to the Gods again becomes death to man.

SUMMING UP

There can be no summing up. Nor can there be a smug prediction as to the future of the current religious craze in the West. This much can be said: Any beginning is but a prelude to an end. We can only wait until this play finishes, until the curtain comes down and the actors are exhausted.

Those who are blessed with a genuine need to learn will not allow the inevitable letdown to discourage their search for spiritual knowledge and awareness. You get what you wish for. We have only to wish for that which is proper and beneficial for us.

Setbacks of any kind are temporary to those who are strongly motivated.

May the day come soon for all of us when our wishes are the ones that set us free from being an actor in the painful drama, this continuing misery of rebirth and death.

—MARC OLDEN

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from: M: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, 1957. References: Questions 1 & 2, pp. 184-5; 3 & 4, pp. 228-9.

The words quoted in 'Onward for Ever!' are from: *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1962), pp. 85-6.

If modern civilization has proved anything to man it is that we can dispense with everything but God. True science, sane psychology, and genuine religion rap out the identical admonition: Seek God and survive. The Editorial of the month makes an approach to Love Divine through the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and the Hindu scriptures.

In 'Meditation: Why And How', Swami Prabhavananda deals with a subject which

is much talked about but very little understood and still less practised. While elucidating the basic concepts involved in meditation, he throws a flood of light on its practice through the torches of Hindu and Christian Scriptures.

Swami Prabhavananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, is the founder-leader of the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

Of the many characters created by the genius of Vyāsa, the author of the Sanskrit epic *Mahābhārata*, Bhīṣma stands out towering and radiant. Valour, nobility, tenacity, selflessness, chastity, and wisdom are together synonymous with Bhīṣma. Through his awe-inspiring oath he achieved absolute control over death: *ichhā-mṛtyu*, 'death at his own will'. The 'Śāntiparvan' and 'Anuśāsanaparvan' of the *Mahābhārata* are the witnesses to the vast and insightful wisdom of this great man. An inspiring profile of this 'Noble and Invincible' hero is drawn by the 'Explorer'.

'The *Gītā* Among the Triple Texts' is a thoughtful dissertation highlighting the importance of the *Bhagavad-gītā* among the *prasthāna-traya* and its special message of God's intervention in redeeming man. Swami Tapasyananda is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

No doubt, the spirit of religious harmony—a unique feature of Hinduism—and the synthesis of varying schools of Vedānta are outstanding in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings. But when these teachings are treated as philosophical concepts, we might tend to move away from the core of Sri Ramakrishna's personality and precepts, and get involved in something secondary and external. This was quietly pointed out by the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, his helpmate in his mission, than

whom no one can know and understand the Master better.

'Mother,' a disciple once said to her, 'what a unique thing our Master gave to the world: he has established the harmony of religions.' 'My child,' said the Mother, 'what you say about the harmony of religions is true. But it never occurred to me that he had practised the disciplines of different religions with the definite idea of preaching this harmony. Day and night he remained overwhelmed with the ecstatic thought of God. He enjoyed the sport of the Divine by following the paths of the Vaiṣṇavas, Christians, Mussalmans, and the rest. But it seems to me, my child, that the special feature of the Master's life was his renunciation. Has anyone ever seen such natural renunciation? Renunciation is his great ornament.'

Without losing sight of the essential spirit of his renunciation and God-consciousness, we can study and appreciate the aspect of religious harmony and synthesis manifested in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings. 'The Harmony of Religions According to Sri Ramakrishna' is a scholarly paper revealing Sri Ramakrishna as a great synthesizer. The learned author also focuses our attention on some of his essential teachings which lead one to the realization of God.

Dr. Walter H. Maurer is the Professor of Sanskrit and Chairman of the Department of Indo-Pacific Languages of the University of Hawaii. He is a distinguished scholar in Sanskrit and the author of the critical edition in two volumes, of *Sugamānvaya-vṛtti*, a commentary in Jaina Sanskrit on Kalidāsa's *Meghadūta*.

Religion in the sense of truth-seeking will never become outdated. 'We need not worry about the future of religion. It is very bright. ...' Swami Pavitrananda's article is adapted from a Sunday talk given on

February 25, 1968, at the Vedanta Society of New York of which he is the head.

Mrs. Marie Louise Burke is very well known to the readers of Vivekananda literature through her invaluable work *Swami Vivekananda in America, New Discoveries*, first published in 1958. Her indefatigable efforts, stemming from an abiding devotion to Swami Vivekananda, have brought to light a mass of information on Swamiji's second visit to America, specially to California. All these further 'Discoveries' are embodied in a new volume which is going to the press shortly.

In 'Swami Vivekananda, Sarah Bernhardt, and Nikola Tesla' Mrs. Burke makes an informing and refreshing study of three great personages and their meeting on a certain day in February 1896, in New York. 'Taken together,' she observes, 'the sphere those three represented and commanded stretched over the entire spectrum of human life and expression—the sphere of the emotions and the senses, the sphere of the intellect, and, embracing and transcending both, the sphere of the spirit. One could search far through history and not find a comparable meeting.'

If children be compared to rosebuds, the influence of great and saintly souls can be likened to the 'gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses'. The Vivekananda Balaka Sangha has been a silent but significant experiment in 'soul-horticulture'. The fascinating story of its inception under the inspiration and brooding guidance of Swami Yatiswarananda, its slow but sure development, and its inner workings and

remarkable results achieved in 'man-making' is revealed by the skilful pen of Swami Sastrananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

Prayer, in its broadest sense, is seeking union with God through the whole of our personality: the mind, the will, the hand, the heart. Can modern man do it as did his forbears? The answer given in 'Prayer and Modern Man—A Jewish Perspective' is affirmative, unequivocal, and convincing. The Jewish perspective of prayer as presented by Rabbi Asher Block in his lucid and practice-oriented writing will be found to be universally applicable by all our readers. The author is the Rabbi of the Jewish Center, Little Neck, Long Island, New York. In the past he has contributed valuable articles to the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

Marc Olden, who is closely associated with the Vedanta Society of New York, opens a wide window on 'The Jesus Movement' in which large sections of the Western youth have been showing a deep interest. But excitement and euphoria are not spirituality. If the youth 'want to find inspiration and fulfilment in Jesus Christ, they will surely have to dissociate themselves from nervous excitement and sensual stimulations. Rapport with Jesus Christ can be held at the non-sensual levels only. For that one has to drill deep into oneself. And that is hard work. If it is a case of transferring the hope of immediate gratification 'from drugs and sex to religion', Marc Olden rightly says that 'perhaps the disappointment found in the former may well appear in the latter'.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

TOWARDS BETTER EDUCATION BY SRIMAN NARAYAN, Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1969, pp. 196, Price Rs. 5/-.

The present system is good, but not good enough. So let us think out a 'Better' system of education. And the book under review comes in to help us with new ideas 'Towards Better Education'. When we venture to compare two things and say that one is better than the other, we should have a criterion or standard of judgement, in terms of which we could pronounce our verdict. And in the field of education we have an infallible standard with which to assess the worth of schemes and plans of education; and this standard is Swami Vivekananda's ideal of education. Nowhere in the book under review could the reviewer find anything that could measure up to Swamiji's exalted ideas of education. Even the last chapter 'A Vision of the Future' where some stray ideas on spirituality are found, looks pale by the side of Swamiji's magnificent conception of 'man-making education'.

What, then, does the book tell us? The 'Wardha Scheme' is known to every teacher in our country. Well meaning educators tried to work it out in practice, and they have managed to work it to death. The thinking that went into the framing of the Wardha scheme is the foundation for 'Better Education'.

The book has great deal to say about English (chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 10). Six out of the fourteen chapters of the book are concerned with the language question in some form or other. The British are gone but English stays. It is bound to stay. It is solely for our benefit that it should stay in spite of ill-conceived opposition. And Indian English is our creation. It is not foreign.

Then come economics and politics of education. It is the duty of the state to finance education at all stages. It is educationally, psychologically, and even economically unsound to say that the produce of youthful learners' hands should feed the mouths of teachers and their dependents!

Next comes correlation. The less said about it the better! It is a complete failure in the hands of even the most devoted teachers.

The reviewer is most painfully constrained to say that politics and economics of education occupy an unduly large place in the book.

Self-knowledge, self-discipline, and self-realization in the highest Vedantic sense should inspire Indian writing on education. Teachers should read the book and see how far these ideals are found in the book under review.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

THE RELEVANCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI TO THE WORLD OF THOUGHT, GANDHI CENTENARY VOLUME, EDITED BY DR. T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Published by The University of Madras, 1969, pp. 182, Price Rs. 10/-.

The book is the collection of 17 papers presented by scholars of the Madras University in the Seminar on the Teachings of Mahatma Gandhi held in the University from the 25th to the 28th November, 1968. At the suggestion of the National Committee for Gandhi Centenary set up by the Government of India they have been published in the present book.

The 17 papers cover practically all the aspects of Gandhian thought and activity, such as, national integration, faith, Sarvodaya, non-violence, dharma, social reconstruction, and so on. Two chapters—'Gandhi and Tagore' and 'Buddha, Asoka and Gandhi—A Study in Comparison'—have been very ably written.

True to the dictum of Carlyle that the history of the world is the biography of its great men we may say that Gandhiji represented an epoch, a complete age in the most complete manner in his life. This valuable study of Gandhiji is, therefore, of great relevance not only to a proper understanding of Gandhian thought but of the contemporary age.

What one might miss in the work is a paper on Gandhi and Students, which would have been of the greatest relevance to the present age, and certainly Gandhiji had much to say on the topic.

We recommend the book to all as a very valuable and useful work that should not only be read but followed in life.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

GEMS FROM THE TANTRA (KULARNAVA) BY M. P. PANDIT, Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1969, pp. 106, price Rs. 6/-.

Man has to overcome his ego-consciousness and by gradual stages realize his identity with the Divine Consciousness. The discipline that will lead the aspirant to the destined goal is laid down in the *Kularnava Tantra* as in many other scriptures. The author, who is well-versed in Tantra lore, has most carefully selected seventy-two passages from the Tantra which deal with the discipline. The passages are first given in the original Sanskrit. Then follows their exact English translation and brief explanatory notes. The book is a useful anthology bearing on Tantra Sastra. We, however, feel that it is priced rather high.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

ADVAITA VEDANTA BY ELIOT DEUTSCH, Published by East-West Center Press, Honolulu, Hawaii 96822, pp. 119, 1969, Price \$ 6.00.

Advaita Vedanta is one of the three philosophical systems of Vedanta in India. The central doctrine of Advaita is to establish the oneness of Reality, the illusoriness of the empirical world and the non-difference of the self from Reality. In his reconstruction of Advaita Vedanta the author has concentrated his attention on the eternal and universal values of philosophy. In a brief compass of 119 pages he has presented the basic metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical ideas of Advaita Vedanta. He has not only shown a sense of proportion but also of proper selection.

Orthodox Advaitins may not like his view that the *Bhagavadgita* is not as important as the other two foundations of Vedanta, viz. the Upanishads and the *Brahmasutras*. Secondly, though Brahman is not a 'He', a personal being, very few people oppose the impersonal concept of it as the 'It'. It is claimed on the blurb that the book is written in a critical rather than 'pious' spirit. Had the author compared Advaita with the other two vedantic systems, Dvaita and Visishtadvaita, the critical nature of the work would have been more manifest and helped the understanding of Advaita. On the whole the author offers a concise and connected account of Advaita providing interpretation within limits.

SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA

THE ESSENTIALS OF MODERN MATERIALISM BY CHARLES S. SEELY, Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, pp. 64, 1969, Price \$ 3.50.

This is a confident essay written after 60 years of strenuous research involving tours of 95 countries by the author. He has discovered that Materialism is the sole-sufficing explanation of the phenomenon of the universe and that mind, spirit, God are all products thrown up by the working of forces that are material in their origin. Materialism and its child physical science hold the key to all progress and the sooner man understands this fact the better for all.

A case of the proverbial mountain in labour producing the mouse.

M. P. PANDIT

THE PANCADASI OF BHARATITIRTHA-VIDYARANYA, AN INTERPRETATIVE EXPOSITION, BY T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Published by the Centre for Advanced

Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1969, pp. 242, Price Rs. 10/-.

Dr. Mahadevan's doctoral dissertation 'The Philosophy of Advaita' has led him to its logical conclusion and the result is the present detailed and systematic exposition of one of the great classics of Advaita Vedanta. The 15 chapters of Panchadasi deal with the discrimination of the real from the non-real, the nature of the self as pure consciousness, and the Absolute Brahman as bliss. The text takes the aid of Sruti (Verbal testimony), Yukti (logical reasoning), and Anubhava (experience). Dr. Mahadevan's exposition is lucid. He makes a comparative study of the various methodologies of western thought. The problems are so discussed and presented as to reveal their vitality and validity in modern times. To derive the maximum benefit from this text one should read it along with Swami Swahananda's rendering of the Panchadasi, published by the Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

THE NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN BY J. R. ZURCHER, translated by Dr. M. R. Bartlett, Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, pp. 186, 1969, price \$ 6.00.

The book begins with a long and sustained criticism of cartesian dualism and the legacy it has left behind for European thinkers. It ends with suggestions for getting out of the cul-de-sac created by Rene Descartes. Long before Descartes Plato too was caught in the dualistic trap. Aristotle attempted to get out of it by conceiving the soul as the organizing form of the body (which is matter).

Setting out these arguments, the author, in the second section of the book, seems to rely on Aristotle to find a solution to 'the problem of the union of the soul and the body' (Pt. II pp. 89-172). And the approach is avowedly from the Christian standpoint. This is made clear right at the beginning in the sub-title of the book.

However, before the author reaches this constructive section of his book, he makes a critical survey of the mind-body problem as viewed by Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibnitz, Bergson, and also by some psychologists like William McDougall, James, as well as some scientific philosophers. Commencing at p. 78 the argument that is advanced is centred in the view of Alexis Carrel (Nobel Laureate and the author of the remarkable book *Man, the Unknown*), Claude Bernard, the famous psychiatrist, Harold G. Wolff and others. He seems to be in agreement with the trend of thought initiated by

them in regard to mind-body relationship. But he is not completely happy with this trend either (pp. 83-4). In the very last paragraph of section I (pp. 84-5), our author says that all viewpoints—the metaphysical, the existential and the scientific—are inadequate to explain mind-body relationship. They give only 'a partial explanation of what we are in living reality'. Agreed, what then is it that gives a total or complete explanation? Our author's ready answer is 'Christian theology'!

The second part of the book is more or less an exposition and defence of the solution offered by Christianity to the mind-body problem. Some attempt is also there in this part, to combine philosophy, science and theology, and to present, what is claimed to be, a new solution to the old problem of mind-body relationship.

The whole trouble is that firstly Christian theology confuses mind with soul, and secondly it is asserted that the soul has a beginning in time, but no end. It was created but it is immortal after creation. This is an untenable position. The only tenable view is that presented by Vedanta. It is a pity that our author is unaware of the profound thoughts of Vedantic philosophy. Even so his book is eminently worth reading.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

VISHUDDHA VEDANTA SARA BY SACHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI, Published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Mysore State, pp. 104, price Rs. 1.25.

Swami Sachidanandendra Saraswati is now fairly well known to students of Advaita Vedanta. He is already the author of three or four works bearing on the philosophy of Sri Shankara. The author is fully convinced that in Shankara's writings we have 'the pure wells of Advaita undefiled'. The author is prepared to go to any length to show that Sri Shankara's philosophy has a wholeness about it 'needing neither a before nor an after'. He does not take anything for granted nor does he leave anything to be filled in by later interpreters. His reading of the Upanishads is the most correct one and his Advaita has their fullest support. In the author's opinion, later writers have added little of substantial worth to the solid utterances of the great master. He even goes so far as to say that they have twisted his teachings to suit their preconceived notions.

The present book is in the form of a dialogue between the disciple eager to cross the ocean of relative existence and the revered guru equally eager

to lend him a helping hand. The dialogue is developed in a most skilful manner. The answers given by the guru always point to something beyond and consequently rouse the curiosity of the disciple to come out with more searching questions. In a consummate manner the dialogue is carried on from point to point till, in the end, the whole ground of Advaita Vedanta is covered.

The first section deals with Advaita metaphysics from the standpoint of mystic intuition (anubhava). The second shows how Jnana stands distinguished from Upasana on the one hand and Nididhyasana on the other. The third section deals with the doctrine of Karma Yoga. The fourth states the characteristics of the Jivan-mukta.

The dialogue is powerfully reminiscent of the prose section of Sri Shankara's *Upadesha Sahasri*. The matter discussed closely follows the commentary on *Brahma-sutras*. It is an eminently readable book, with a freshness of presentation.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

HINDI

GITA MATA KI GOD MAIN (PART II, SECTION I), BY SEEKER, Published by the Gita Ashrama, 10 Sadar Bazar, Delhi Cantonment, 1967, pp. 152, Rs. 4/-.

The book is a collection of essays based on the teachings of the *Gita* and the Upanishads, dealing with practical aspects of religious life. As these essays were originally written as letters to the author's sons and son-in-law, they are in a simple and convincing style, free from the complexity and verbosity of most of the works on philosophy and religion. Though there are many commentaries on the *Gita*, both in English and Hindi, this commentary is different. It is not a commentary in the literal sense, it is the expression of the faith of a person who is well versed in the philosophy of the *Gita* and has tried to follow the teachings in his life also. The author, in a lucid style, tells us how to get guidance from the *Gita* and other scriptural texts in all levels of life. Individual, social, national, and international, all problems are dealt with from the spiritual point of view. These essays may not contain anything new for the scholars and philosophers, but they serve the purpose for which they are written. They are meant for people who have religious and spiritual inclination, but are puzzled by the problems encountered in practical life. For such common men and women the book will be very useful.

PRITI ADAVAL

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S HOME-COMING TO BANGLADESH

At the time the partition of India took place, doubt was felt in many quarters if the Ramakrishna Mission would be able to continue functioning in what then came to be known as Pakistan. But the Mission had always been popular with both Hindus and Moslems, for its services were open to all and it never preached any religious dogma to which any sect or community could take exception. The Mission authorities, therefore, decided that unless conditions became so bad as to render impossible the smooth functioning of the institutions of the Mission, the work which the Mission had so long carried on in those parts of India which constituted Pakistan would continue. But soon incidents began to happen which clearly showed that it would be foolhardy for the Mission to try to continue its activities in Pakistan as a whole, more particularly in its western wing. It was true that a large section of the intelligentsia wanted that the Mission's humanitarian work should continue, but as against this there were masses of ignorant and bigoted people whose religious prejudices were such that they were not prepared to allow any organisation not owing allegiance to their particular faith, to function in the country. Apart from the pin-pricks which the monks continually felt as a result of this kind of bigotry, some major incidents took place which left no room for doubt that it was no longer possible for the Mission to function in West Pakistan. The Mission authorities accordingly closed down its centres in Karachi and Lahore and withdrew all its monks from West Pakistan, much to the regret of its Pakistani friends and well-wishers not a few of whom were Moslem.

But the Mission's work in East Pakistan continued though there too difficulties cropped up from time to time and many

felt it was only a question of time when the Mission authorities would be forced to close down its centres in this part of Pakistan also. Some of these centres had functioned for decades and the people around had seen them render services to the most needy among them making no discrimination whatsoever on grounds of race or creed. It was, therefore, hoped that perhaps as the years went by the suspicion and distrust which some people had about the Mission's bonafides would pass and the Mission would be able to function without let or hindrance. But this was not to be. The first major hurdle which the Mission faced in the Eastern wing of Pakistan was that visas stopped being granted to Indian monks who wanted to visit the centres there. The Mission had to make do with those monks who had Pakistani nationality and they were very few. The Mission had as many as eleven centres in East Pakistan and some of them were quite large and had a wide range of activities. Because of the visa restrictions, the man-power situation became so acute that the work at each of these eleven centres had to be reduced to a minimum. In addition to the man-power problem, there was also the problem of money, for with the migration of the more affluent Hindus into India and the majority of the Moslem community being indifferent to the enterprise of the Mission though they were its major beneficiaries, the amount of support which the Mission enjoyed before was no longer available to it. As a result, the centres began to languish.

But the climax came when the military crack-down started on March 25, 1971. With the collapse of normal life in the State even the marginal activities which the Mission had so long been carrying on with depleted man-power and resources came to

a halt. The violence that erupted took a heavy toll of property in the Mission centres and might have taken a toll of life also, but luckily the monks, each and every one of them, had a providential escape. The loss that the centres have suffered in terms of buildings, furniture, books and equipment will run into a million or more. A loss not so tangible perhaps, but nonetheless terrible, more terrible than the loss of property, was the fact that those who once supported the Mission were either dead or scattered or themselves reduced to a state of penury needing help.

Though all the Mission centres had to be abandoned and all the workers working there had to leave what was then East Pakistan, the Mission's devoted services to the people of that country continued on the Indian soil through its extensive relief operations among the evacuees, who in their millions had found shelter in this country from the oppression of Pakistani army. It was then anybody's guess if the Mission could ever revive its centres in that country.

But with the emergence of sovereign Bangladesh committed to the declared policy of secularism, socialism and democracy, the Mission found itself in the swift-flowing current of events which made the immediate opening of its activities in Bangladesh imperative. As the millions of evacuees began their trek back to their free homeland, at the request of both the Government of India and Bangladesh, the relief operations of the Mission which were so long being conducted on the Indian soil were shifted to Bangladesh—at Khulna and Jessore to start with—for facilitating rehabilitation. Along with that, pressure from the people and their Government began to mount on the Mission authorities for promptly reviving the closed centres in Bangladesh, for it was felt that the Mission could in its own way contribute in depth to the reconstruction of the country.

In order to make an on-the-spot inspection of the loss suffered by the centres in Bangladesh and also to investigate what possibilities there were of reviving them, the General Secretary, accompanied by two other monks, visited Dacca on January 19. On arrival in Dacca, the General Secretary called on Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as well as the Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation. Both welcomed the idea that the Mission should resume its activities in Bangladesh and assured the General Secretary of every possible help that they could render. The Prime Minister said he was aware of the quality of work the Mission did in the service of humanity and had always entertained the highest opinion about it. On being presented by the General Secretary with a set of Swami Vivekananda's *Complete Works* and the *Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna*, both in Bengali, the Bangabandhu said he had read those books already and was glad now to have his own copies of those books. Referring to Swami Vivekananda he said, 'He was indeed a Great Man.'

Impressed by the fact that there was genuine goodwill towards the Mission, not only among the leadership of the country but also among the common people, the Mission authorities decided to take immediate steps to revive their centres in Bangladesh, and as a first step to that end, to start relief and rehabilitation work in as many areas as possible since this was the country's most pressing need. They also decided that prior to beginning this work it would be a good idea to have a public meeting at which the ideals which the Mission tried to pursue through all its activities might be explained. Accordingly, a meeting was held at the Mission premises in Dacca on February 10, 1972 at which a large and distinguished audience including Ministers, High Court Judges, University teachers, top Govt. officials, military

personnel and students, was present. Swami Gambhirananda, General Secretary of the Mission, presided and Mr. A. H. M. Kamaruzzaman, Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, was Chief Guest. Among those who spoke at the meeting was Prof. Yussuf Ali, Education Minister, who said he had seen personally the fine work the Mission had done while giving relief among the Bangladesh refugees in India. Mrs. Badrunnessa Ahmed, Member of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh, also testified to the good work of the Mission in various fields. Mr. J. N. Dixit, Head of the Indian Mission, referring to the Mission's Philosophy of life, stressed its relevance in the context of the present-day world.

In the course of his speech Mr. Dixit took his audience into confidence and shared with them what he called a secret. He revealed that one day Mr. Kamaruzzaman sent for him and told him that they wanted the Ramakrishna Mission to come and work in Bangladesh. In requesting Mr. Dixit to facilitate this happening, the Minister also said that they would judge Mr. Dixit's success or failure as the Ambassador of India by how far he succeeded in

making it possible for the Mission to send its workers to work in Bangladesh.

The chief guest, Mr. Kamaruzzaman, said that he welcomed the Mission to Bangladesh not merely because he wanted it to give relief to the distressed in his country; more important than that, he wanted it to help the youth of his country to develop their character. He said that while it was true that he believed in secularism, it did not mean that he thought religion was not necessary in life. He, in fact, thought that religion was essential in both individual and collective life. But it was the kind of religion which the Ramakrishna Mission preached which he thought was best and most appropriate in a secular State. The Chief Guest also made a token distribution of clothes and blankets to the refugees.

Swami Gambhirananda, in his presidential address, dwelt at length on the life and teachings of Shri Ramakrishna and pointed out that belief in the divinity of man was what characterised most the Mission's approach to the problems of life.

The meeting received wide coverage through the press, radio and T.V.

S.L.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, MANGALORE

REPORT FOR 1971-72

This branch of the Ramakrishna Mission was started in 1947 and was moved to its own premises in 1951. The activities of this centre are as follows:

Boys' Home: It maintains poor and meritorious students, irrespective of caste or creed by providing them free board, lodging, stationery, clothing, etc., within the limits of the resources at its disposal. In the Balakashrama an attempt is made to impart integral education through the inculcation of spiritual values in their widest sense. Boys are encouraged to cultivate virtuous tendencies, acquire the art of social duty, develop refined tastes and also self-respect, sympathy, etc. Boys are allowed to manage the affairs of the Home gaining thereby the spirit of self-reliance, cooperation, and personal effort. A weekly discourse was conducted by a monastic member. The boys were taught to chant *Bhagavad-gita*, *Vishnusahasranama*, the *Lalita*.

Sahasranama and to sing devotional songs. The important festivals and birthdays of saints were celebrated in a fitting manner. Total strength: 47.

Charitable Dispensary: The Ramakrishna Mission Charitable Dispensary was started in 1955 with a view to alleviating the sufferings of poor patients in and around the locality. Within a short time it has risen to be an important centre of medical relief in the town. The Dispensary treated 28,791 patients during the period under review of which 6,767 were new cases.

Needs: (1) Endowment for maintenance of poor students. One boy can be maintained by an annual contribution of Rs. 600/- or by an endowment which will fetch that interest. (2) New bedding and clothing for the boys. There is a constant need for these articles. (3) Since there is scarcity of water in the Ashrama, we plan to sink a bore-well at a cost of Rs. 20,000/-. (4) A permanent endowment fund procuring a monthly income of at least a Rs. 1,000/- for the maintenance of the Dispensary.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S WORK IN BANGLA DESH

AN APPEAL

The general public are aware of the extensive Relief work done by the Ramakrishna Mission for the Bangla Desh evacuees within Indian borders for all these months. With the repatriation of the refugees to Bangla Desh after the War, the Mission shifted its Relief centres to transit camps in Jessore and Khulna. Now the Mission is extending its work within Bangla Desh by reviving its ten defunct centres gradually and starting Relief and Rehabilitation work through those permanent centres. Our monastic workers have already started work at Dacca.

It is needless to mention that all our permanent centres were damaged heavily—some of them were almost totally devastated. To restore them to working condition will mean a huge expenditure. The Relief and Rehabilitation work will also need considerable funds in view of the complete destitution of the people on a large scale. They need not only material help, but also psychological reassurance, both of which can be provided by the Ramakrishna Mission.

Any contribution meant either for Relief of the people or for revival of the Mission centres or for both will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the undersigned. Cheques and drafts should be drawn in favour of the "RAMAKRISHNA MISSION" and Crossed, and sent by Registered Post.

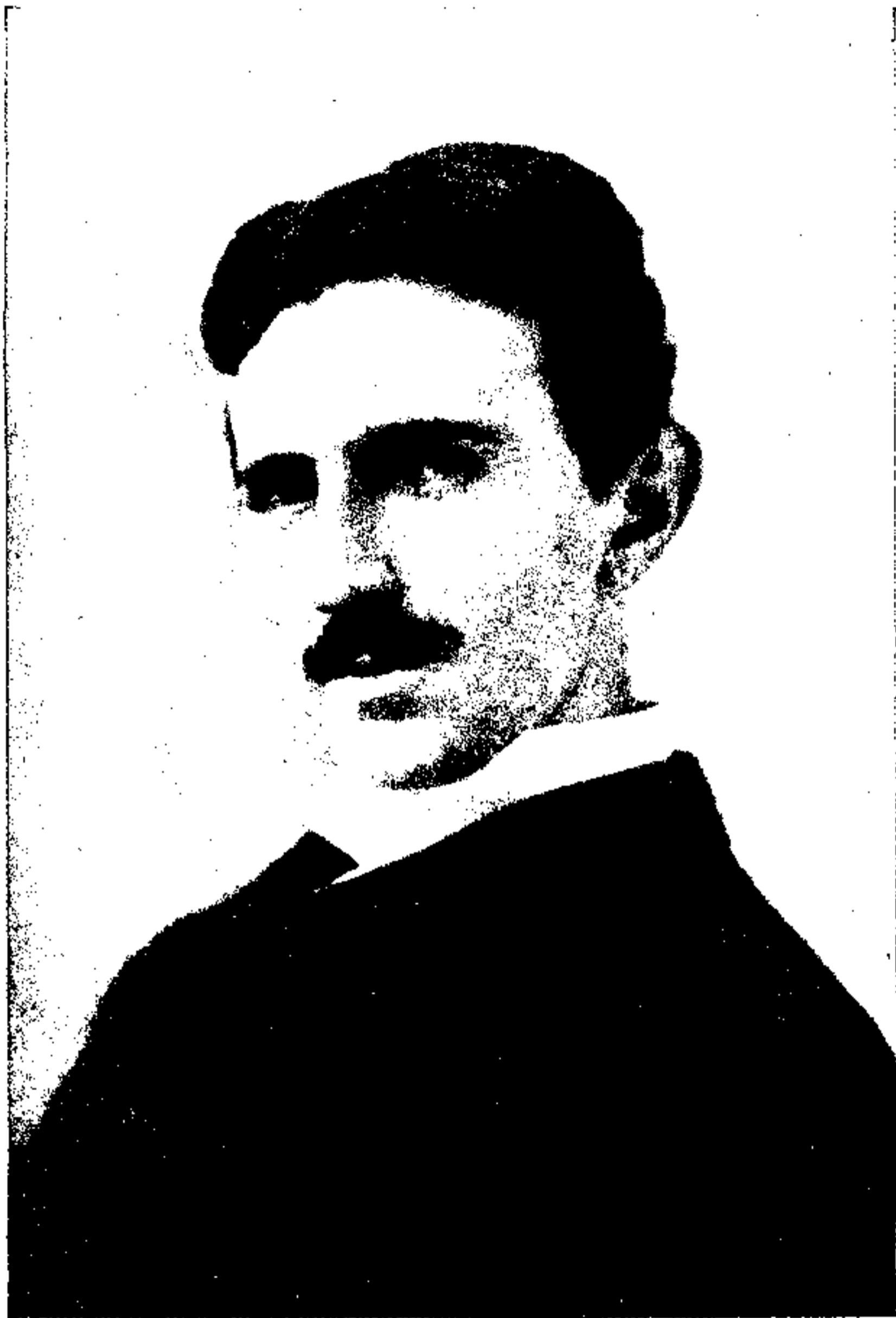
Dated, Belur Math
January 27, 1972

Swami Gambhirananda
General Secretary



SARAH BERNHARDT IN HER STUDY (*to the right*)
NEW YORK, 1896

Courtesy :
The Bryon Collection
Museum of the City of New York



NIKOLA TESLA (1895)

Courtesy :
Nikola Tesla Museum
Beograd, Yugoslavia



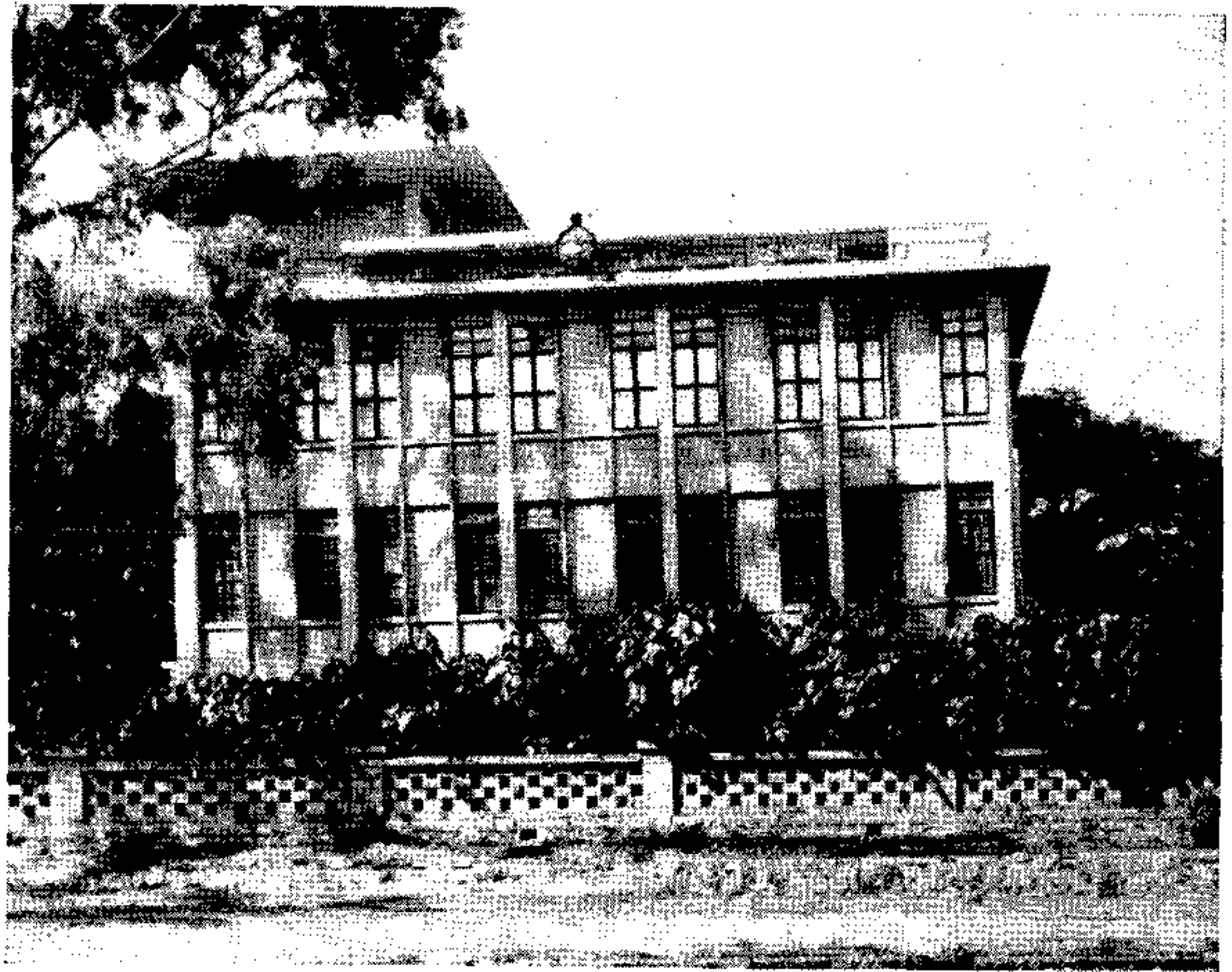
SARAH BERNHARDT IN
RACINE'S PHE'DRE

Courtesy :
Theatre Collection
New York Public Library

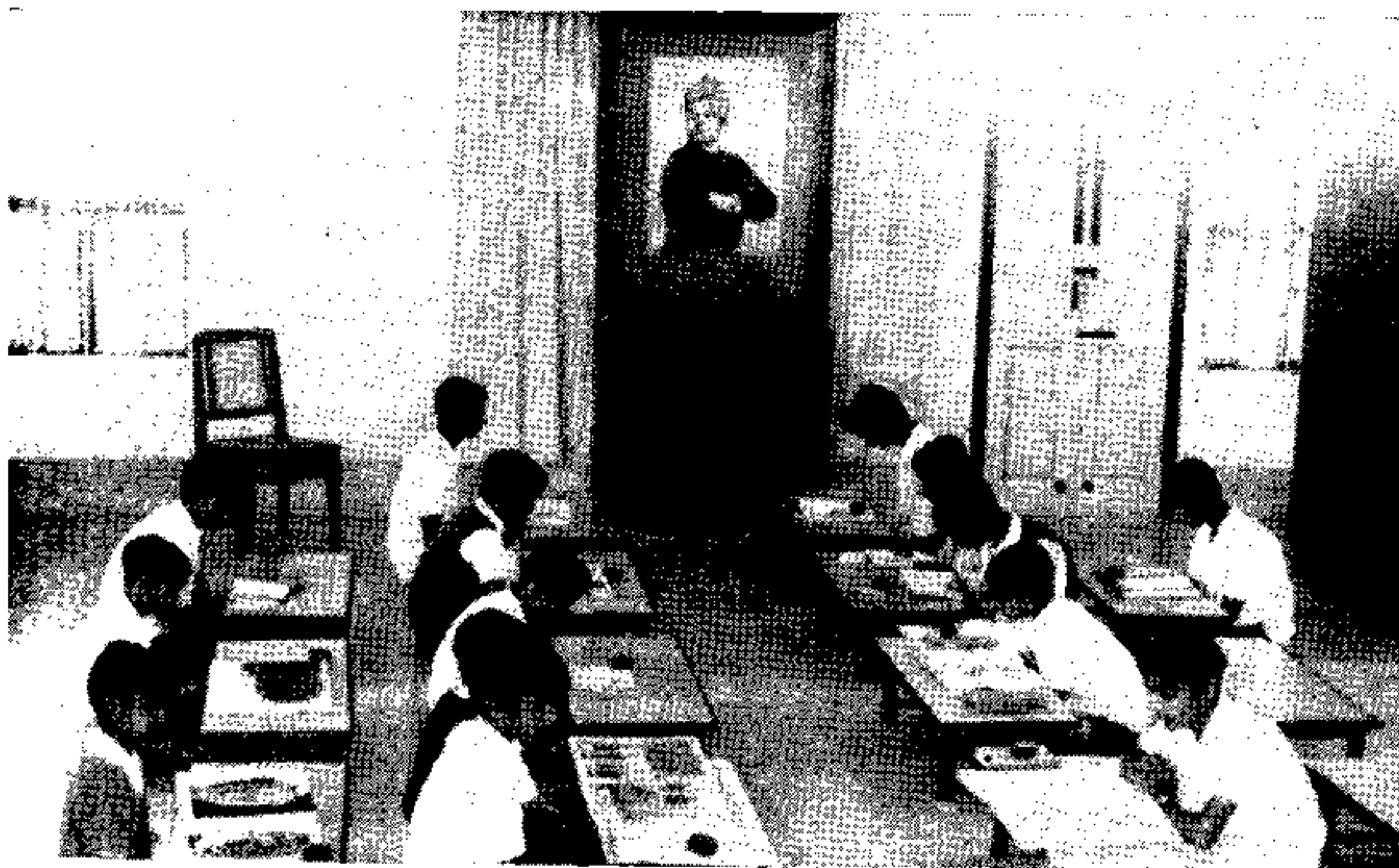
THE BEGINNINGS



Swami Yatiswarananda



Right :
Swami Vivekananda
Centenary Building



Left :
Boys at Study : Library



PLAY & WORK

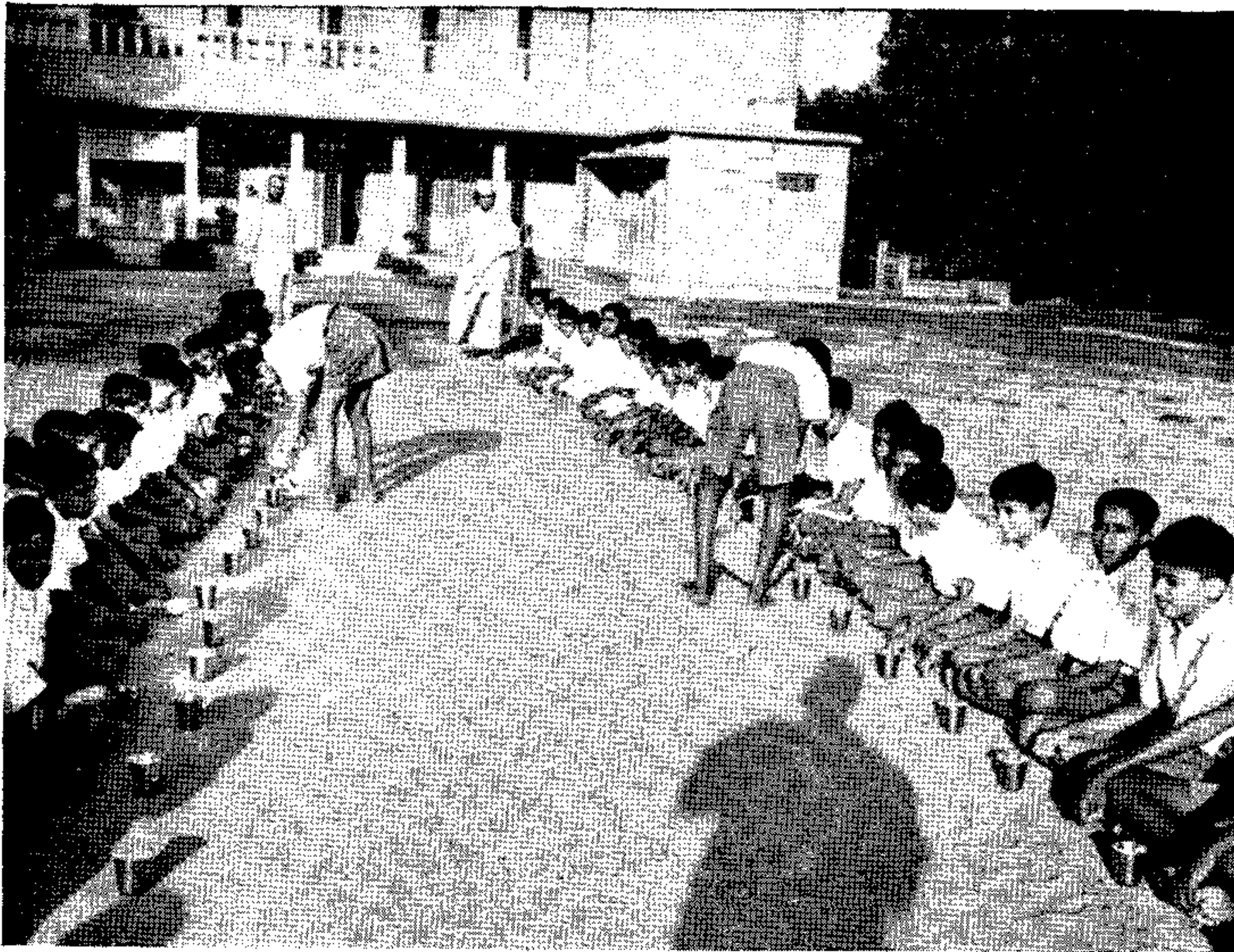
Above :
Boys at Play



Right :
Dance with Sticks



Left :
VOLUNTARY SERVICE
Shoe-keeping



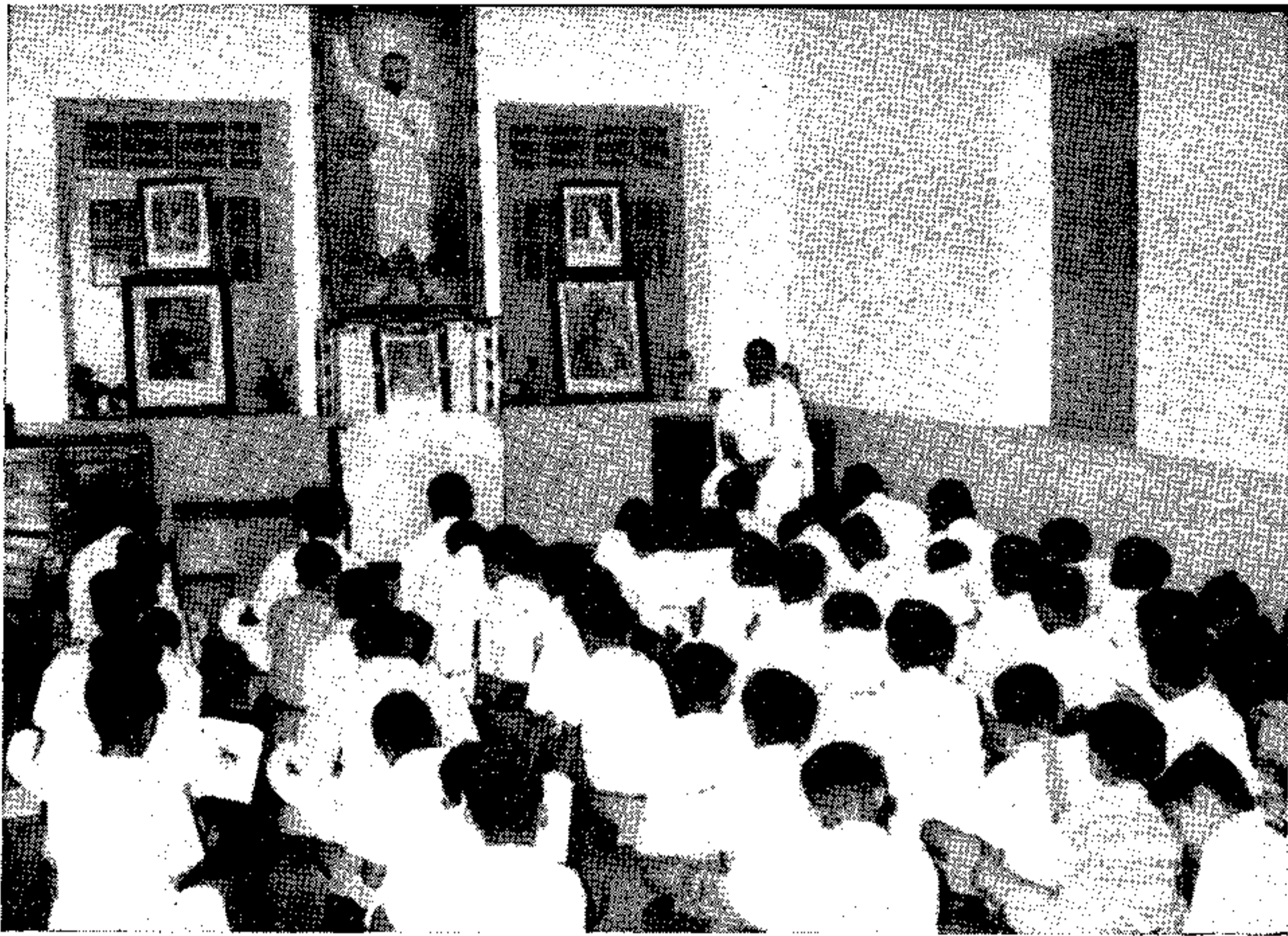
VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Above :
Milk Canteen

Right :
Boys at Work
Digging and Weeding



Left :
Boys at Work : Watering
and mowing the lawn



STUDIES & HOBBIES

Above :
Boys at a Class

Right :
Drama : Munivahana



Left :
Hobbies : Exhibition