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*OR*  
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*Editorial Office*

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# Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVIII

JANUARY 1973

No. 1

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

## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by an actor): 'Sir, what is the difference between lust and desire ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Lust is like the root of the tree, and desires are branches and twigs.

'One cannot completely get rid of the six passions ; lust, anger, greed, and the like. Therefore one should direct them to God. If you must have desire and greed, then you should desire love of God and be greedy to attain Him. If you must be conceited and egotistic, then feel conceited and egotistic thinking that you are the servant of God, the child of God.

'A man cannot see God unless he gives his whole mind to Him. The mind is wasted on "woman and gold". Take your own case. You have children and are occupied with the theatre. The mind cannot be united with God on account of these different activities.

'As long as there is bhoga, there will be less of yoga. Furthermore, bhoga begets suffering. It is said in the *Bhagavata* that the Avadhuta chose a kite as one of his twenty-four gurus. The kite had a fish in its beak ; so it was surrounded by a thousand crows. Whichever way it flew with the fish, the crows pursued it crying, "Caw! Caw!" When all of a sudden the fish dropped from its beak, the crows flew after the fish, leaving the kite alone.

'The "fish" is the object of enjoyment. The "crows" are worries and anxiety. Worries and anxiety are inevitable with enjoyment. No sooner does one give up enjoyment than one finds peace.

'What is more, money itself becomes a source of trouble. Brothers may live happily, but they get into trouble when the property is divided. Dogs lick one another's bodies ; they are perfectly friendly. But when the householder throws them a little food, they get into a scrap.'

Actor: 'Sir, what is the proof that the soul is separate from the body ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Proof ? God can be seen. By practising spiritual discipline one sees God, through His grace. The rishis directly realized the Self. One cannot know the truth about God through science. Science gives us information only about things perceived by the senses, as for instance:

this material mixed with that material gives such and such a result, and that material mixed with this material gives such and such a result.

'For this reason a man cannot comprehend spiritual things with his ordinary intelligence. To understand them he must live in the company of holy persons. You learn to feel the pulse by living with a physician.

'You must practise tapasya. Only then can you attain the goal. It will avail you nothing even if you learn the texts of the scriptures by heart. You cannot become intoxicated by merely saying "siddhi" over and over. You must swallow some.

'One cannot explain the vision of God to others. One cannot explain conjugal happiness to a child five years old.'

Actor: 'How does one realize the Atman?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Longing is the means of realizing Atman. A man must strive to attain God with all his body, with all his mind, and with all his speech. Because of an excess of bile one gets jaundice. Then one sees everything as yellow; one perceives no colour but yellow. Among you actors, those who take only the roles of women acquire the nature of a woman; by thinking of woman your ways and thoughts become womanly. Just so, by thinking day and night of God one acquires the nature of God.

'The mind is like white linen just returned from the laundry. It takes on the colour you dip it in.

'First is the purification of the mind. Afterwards, if you direct the mind to the contemplation of God, it will be coloured by God-Consciousness. Again, if you direct the mind to worldly duties, such as the acting of a play, it will be coloured by worldliness.'

Question (asked by a devotee): 'Does the body remain even after the realization of God?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'The body survives with some so that they may work out their prarabdha karma or work for the welfare of others. By bathing in the Ganges a man gets rid of his sin and attains liberation. But if he happens to be blind, he doesn't get rid of his blindness. Of course, he escapes future births, which would otherwise be necessary for reaping the results of his past sinful karma. His present body remains alive as long as its momentum<sup>1</sup> is not exhausted; but future births are no longer possible. The wheel moves as long as the impulse that has set it in motion lasts. Then it comes to a stop. In the case of such a person, passions like lust and anger are burnt up. Only the body remains alive to perform a few actions.'

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<sup>1</sup>The momentum of the actions of his previous birth, which has given rise to his present body.



## OUR HIMALAYAN HERITAGE

EDITORIAL

I

For quite some time the *Prabuddha Bharata* has been coming out every month with cover-illustrations in which the Himalayan peaks figure prominently. Besides marking their aesthetic appeal, some readers might have wondered if there were more to them than what meets the eye. The Journal no doubt has its abode in the Himalayas and that is sufficient warrant for the snow-clad peaks to be on the cover. Surely, however, the majestic, sky-scraping, silvery peaks have far more significance than the Journal's domiciliary association and aesthetic effect.

The history, culture, and anthropology of a people are largely determined by geographical features and environmental factors. Students of ancient races—especially Greek and Hindu—know to what great extent natural factors shape civilizations and cultures, outlooks and histories. Bounded on the north by towering Himalayas and in the southern peninsula by shoreless oceans, the ancient inhabitants of India became gradually introspective. Hence the highest development of the 'science of the soul' in contradistinction to physical sciences developed by the Greeks and perfected by their disciples, the present-day western nations. Thus the Himalayas while forming the geographical backbone of this land and subcontinent have also become the cultural and spiritual spinal column of the Indian nation.

One of nature's most wondrous creations, the Himalayan range—its soul-stirring beauty no less—has entered the racial unconscious of the Hindu. A Vedic sage who seemed to have become inebriated with the beauty of the Himalayas sang that they proclaim the glory of God.<sup>1</sup> 'Of immovable things,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, 'I am the

### ONWARD FOR EVER!

Man's free agency is established in the soul, and the soul, realizing itself to be free, is always asserting the fact in spite of the mind's bondage: 'I am free! I am what I am! I am what I am!' This is our freedom. The soul—ever free, boundless, eternal—through aeons and aeons is manifesting itself more and more through its instrument, the mind.

What relation then does man bear to nature? From the lowest form of life to man, the soul is manifesting itself through nature. The highest manifestation of the soul is involved in the lowest form of manifest life and is working itself outward through the process called evolution.

The whole process of evolution is the soul's struggle to manifest itself. It is a constant struggle against nature. It is a struggle against nature, and not conformity to nature, that makes man what he is. We hear a great deal about living in harmony with nature, of being in tune with nature. This is a mistake. This table, this pitcher, the minerals, a tree, are all in harmony with nature. Perfect harmony there, no discord. To be in harmony with nature means stagnation, death. How did man build this house? By being in harmony with nature? No. By fighting against nature. It is the constant struggle against nature that constitutes human progress, not conformity with it.

*Prickhaunch*

<sup>1</sup> यस्येमे हिमवन्तो महित्वा । *Rg-veda*, X. 121.4.

Himalayas.’<sup>2</sup> The great Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa refers to the Himalayan range in the opening verse of *Kumārasambhavam* as the ‘King of mountains’ who is ‘ensouled by divinity’, and who lies like a ‘measuring rod of this earth’. On one occasion, Swami Vivekananda gave a revealing interpretation of this verse to a young student who later recorded it in his reminiscences quoting Swamiji’s statement:

‘The important words in this verse are *devatātmā* (ensouled by divinity) and *mānadandah* (measuring-rod). The poet implies and suggests that the Himalaya is not a mere wall accidentally constructed by nature. It is ensouled by divinity and is the protector of India and her civilization not only from the chill icy blasts blowing from the arctic region but also from the deadly and destructive incursions of invaders. The Himalaya further protects India by sending the great rivers Sindhu, Ganga, and Brahmaputra perennially fed by melted ice irrespective of the monsoon rains. *Mānadandah* implies that the poet affirms that the Indian civilization is the best of all human civilizations and forms the standard by which all the other human civilizations, past, present, and future, must be tested....’<sup>3</sup>

In these days of high-altitude aeroplanes and ICBM’s, the value of the Himalayas as a natural barrier against foreign invaders may be minimal. But even today they protect India and her people from the frosty blasts of soul-deadening materialism. By conferring tranquillity on the distracted modern city-dwellers, who care to seek their sanctuary, they prove to be divine physicians of the maladies of civilization. By sending forth the perennial rivers of spirituality, whose aqueous representatives are the Sindhu,

Ganga, Yamuna, and Brahmaputra, they act as spiritual guardians of Indian humanity. The Himalayas are not mute, inert masses of earth, rock, and snow. If one has the right vision and audition, one can see them living, conscious, and hear their silent teaching more potent and eloquent than spoken words.

## II

The sciences of orology, geomorphology, and dynamic geology postulate many theories of mountain formation. The continental drift is one popular theory which accounts for the enormous forces needed to upheave masses of earth and rock in the form of mountain chains. The Himalayas, according to this theory, were pushed up because the peninsular portion of India rammed into the main land mass. Of course, this was millions of years ago, long before man appeared on the terrestrial scene. But on the dial of the geological clock it is not much at all. Though we use the phrases ‘as old as the hills’ or ‘as old as the Himalayas’, geologists say that the Himalayas are young. And still growing!

‘Perennial youth and unabated growth’—that is what the Himalayas have to teach to humanity. These twin characteristics have been scrupulously transmitted to the philosophy and culture fathered and nurtured by them. Vedānta and Indian culture have remained eternally youthful and resilient. While standing firm with deep-going roots like the Himalayas, they have continually grown and expanded like them, as the times demanded. Vedānta takes in all past prophets and modes of approach to Truth, says Swami Vivekananda, while keeping its door open to welcome those of the future. The Indian culture, similarly, has been a genius of absorption and harmony. Throughout the prehistoric and historic times, streams of alien culture and civilization have flowed into India. And this country has rejected

<sup>2</sup> स्थावराणां हिमालयः । *Bhagavad-gītā*, X. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Pub. by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1961), p. 110.



none. Slowly and silently it has absorbed them all and made them into blood, muscle, and marrow. *Purāṇa*, which literally means 'ancient', has been interpreted by Śaṅkarācārya in the *Gītā* as 'though old yet new', *purā api navah*. That attribute of the immortal Self in man very appropriately describes Hindu religion and culture.

Growth and eagerness to learn are the characteristics of youth. 'As long as I live', said a modern Indian sage, 'so long do I learn.' Let us remember that this sage had realized the Highest through every avenue offered by the great religions of the world. Thus he had become a veritable Himalaya of divine realizations. Yet he was humble enough to say that he would learn till his last breath. That is the true spirit of Vedānta and Indian culture. Unless every Indian cultivates this spirit of learning and growth, he will remain an imperfect and underdeveloped representative of this glorious tradition and culture.

Hindu mythology has some interesting stories and beliefs about mountains. One such belief, which seems to find a corroboration in modern geological theories, is that the mountains maintain the balance of the earth. So a mountain is called a *bhūdhara*, 'earth-supporter'. Modern geologists speak of isostasy, 'a term used for the condition of gravitational balance that maintains the heights of continents and the level of the ocean floor'.<sup>4</sup> Without going into the intricacies of 'sial' and 'sima', we may say that isostatic adjustments between the deeper levels of the earth and ocean floor on the one hand and the earth's crust on the other demand the continual growth of the mountains. Thus the Himalayas, though continuously subjected to erosion, not only keep their eminence but increase it.

Applying this geological law to humanity as a whole, we see a kind of 'isostasy' at

work in the moral and spiritual realms. Those who survey the contemporary world scene are struck by the strange paradoxical fact that though man has increased his knowledge and skill he has declined in wisdom and morality. Falsehood, criminality, violence, inhumanity, self-indulgence, apathy—all these beastly and subliminal tendencies have increased so much that thoughtful people have begun to question their faith in the fundamental goodness and nobility of man. Herein comes the human 'isostatic' law into play. All those who believe in the higher values of life like truth, non-violence, humanity, altruism, self-control, and sympathy must stand firm by those ideals. Like the Himalayas which grow taller to maintain the crustal density, these men should grow in virtue, morality, and godliness to keep the balance against growing immorality and inhumanity. Let them not become despondent. 'Truth alone triumphs and not untruth. Through Truth is laid out the "path to the gods"', declares the Vedic sage. That is also the declaration of the 'King of mountains'.

### III

Because of their remoteness, austere aloofness, and icy coldness, the Himalayas have become associated with unworldliness and renunciation. All the same, those who have cultivated their acquaintance have become fascinated by them. From ancient times, men and women, young and old, when they grew weary of the sensate life, retired to the forests and river banks at the Himalayan foothills or holy spots and caves at higher altitudes for meditation on God. The names of many old and wise sages are associated with the holy places scattered all over the Himalayas. Vyāsa, the great author of the *Mahābhārata*, and Śuka, his illustrious son, are two of them. Mount Kailāsa in the Himalayas is considered to be the abode of Śiva, the King of yogis and renouncers. His

<sup>4</sup> *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Second Ed., p. 450.

consort Pārvatī, the Mother of the Universe, is looked upon as the Daughter of these mountains. The memories of two great incarnations of God, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, are associated with them. Śaṅkarācārya travelled extensively in the Himalayas and founded a monastery on their heights. That ancient tradition—of renunciation, self-searching, and spirituality—is still continued by seekers of Truth and supersensuous knowledge.

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest of sages that India produced in modern times, loved the Himalayas passionately. During his Indian wandering days, he visited some of the holy places in them and spent many weeks in penance, study, and meditation. On his return from the West, he travelled extensively in Kumayun and Kashmir. He made a pilgrimage to Amarnath, a cave dedicated to Śiva at an altitude of 13,000 feet above sea level. It was again this attachment to the Himalayas that led him to found the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, which he visited in January 1901. One of the most cherished dreams of his life was to retire to the Himalayan monastery after his labours 'and pass the rest of my days in meditation'.

To a touching address presented by the citizens of Almora in the Himalayas after his triumphal return from the West in 1897, the Swami responded briefly. But even that brief reply was suffused with his love and devotion to the Himalayas. He refused to speak on his future plans and missionary campaigns. He said:

'As peak after peak of this Father of Mountains began to appear before my sight, all the propensities to work, that ferment that has been going on in my brain for years, seemed to quiet down, and instead of talking about what had been done, and what was going to be done, the mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas always teach us, that one theme which is reverberating in the

very atmosphere of the place, the one theme the murmur of which I hear even now in the rushing whirlpools of its rivers—renunciation! *Sarvam vastu bhayānvitam bhuvī nṛṇām vairāgyamevābhayam*—"Everything in this life is fraught with fear. It is renunciation alone that makes one fearless." Yes, this is the land of renunciation."<sup>5</sup>

That message of renunciation, being constantly uttered by the Himalayas in wordless eloquence, is necessary for us today, to us in India and to our brothers in the West. This silent Himalayan message found verbal expression in the sages of the Upaniṣads, in Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the Buddha, in Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, in Caitanya, and, in our times, in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The world needs this message as much as India. Possibly India's need is greater at present. For she seems to be infatuated by the sham glitter and gospel of 'wealth and enjoyment' of the prosperous West. There is undoubtedly nothing wrong in enjoying life or earning wealth. But trying to enjoy on borrowed capital and increasing one's greed and need out of all proportions is surely wrong. The leaders and the people—the youth especially—of India need to bring into their life a bit of the spirit of renunciation, the spirit of voluntary poverty. By learning to give more and receive less, we will be able to reduce economic strains nationally and become fearless internationally.

For those who have heard the call of higher life, it is total renunciation of 'lust and greed' that the Himalayas speak of. 'There is no other way for salvation,' as the Upaniṣadic sages said.

#### IV

For good or evil, religion and other-worldly values form the keynote of Indian life. There are some western thinkers and

<sup>5</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati), Vol. III (1960), p. 353.



writers who facilely attribute this introspective trait of the race to the humid and hot climate of the torrid zone. But Swami Vivekananda opposed such a view. In the discussion that followed his lecture at the Graduate Philosophical Society of Harvard University, U.S.A., on March 25, 1896, such a question was put to the Swami. 'Is there no connection', the Swami was asked, 'between this idea of super-consciousness and the heat of India?' Swami Vivekananda replied, 'I do not think so because all this philosophy was thought out fifteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, among the Himalayas, in an almost arctic temperature.'<sup>6</sup>

If the highest Vedāntic doctrines, which are greatly impersonal and rather iconoclastic, took their birth in the Himalayas, those very Himalayas, by their awesome majesty, inspired the Indians to worship the personal aspect of God. 'Swamiji,' someone asked Vivekananda at Madras during his first visit to that city, 'why is it that in spite of their Vedāntic thought the Hindus are idolators?' Swami's reply was instantaneous, inspirational, and entirely original. 'Because', he answered, 'we have the Hima-

layas!' Rarely has so much meaning been packed into so few words!

Not only have the Himalayas inspired the ideal of a personal God. They have taught our ancestors to love God unselfishly, to love Him for love's sake. This lesson we gather from an anecdote in the *Mahābhārata*:

Through the machinations of their cousins, the Pāṇḍava brothers, led by Yudhiṣṭhira and followed by their faithful wife Draupadī, had to spend twelve years in the Himalayan forest. Draupadī had not the patience of Yudhiṣṭhira to go through this undeserved tribulation. So, one day, she asked him, how it was that he, the most virtuous of men, should suffer so much misery. Yudhiṣṭhira answered, 'Behold, my queen, the Himalayas. How grand and beautiful they are! I love them. They do not give me anything, but my nature is to love the grand, the beautiful; therefore I love them. Similarly, I love the Lord. He is the source of all beauty, of all sublimity. He is the only object to be loved; my nature is to love Him, and therefore I love. I do not pray for anything; I do not ask for anything. Let Him place me wherever He likes. I must love Him for love's sake. I cannot trade in love.'

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. V (1959), p. 306.

# LETTERS OF A SAINT

## THE LORD MY REFUGE

Dear S—,

Glad to receive your letter. May not such zeal and yearning leave you! It is necessary that everybody should be intensely eager for rising higher and, living a pure life, gaining devotion to God, so that the goal of human life is attained. I am very happy to know that you have such deep attraction (towards God). 'May the Lord give you strength of mind'—this is my importunate prayer to Him. It is extremely hard to be self-restrained, but then there is no other way. You have asked me as to which sense-organ has to be restrained first. But the Lord says that all the sense-organs will have to be brought under control: 'Controlling them all etc.'<sup>1</sup> Manu says:

'But among all the sense-organs let a man allow even a single organ to go unchecked: then through that, all his wisdom will leak away as water from a leathern vessel.'<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, all the sense-organs must be conquered. But though each of the organs is powerful, the tongue and sex-organ are, no doubt, the chief of of them all. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* also says:

'A man who has overcome the other organs cannot be a master of his senses until he controls the organ of taste; when the organ of taste is controlled, everything is controlled.'<sup>3</sup>

Surely, then, control of the palate is the first duty. But the Lord has also spoken from another point of view:

'The objects of the senses fall away from a man practising abstinence, but not the taste for them. But even the taste falls away when the Supreme is seen.'<sup>4</sup>

As our Master (Sri Ramakrishna) used to say, 'He who has tasted a drink of sugar candy will not relish a drink made of ordinary molasses.' The meaning is that when one develops love for God then one does not enjoy human love etc. Love for Him must develop. Then sense-objects will have no more charm. They will all appear to be worthless. Just as (the Master's saying goes), 'The farther you go towards the east, the farther you leave the west be-

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1 तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत् मत्परः ।

वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 61.

2 इन्द्रियाणां तु सर्वेषां यद्येकं क्षरतीन्द्रियम् ।

तेनास्य क्षरति प्रज्ञा दूतेः पात्रादिवोदकम् ॥ *Manu-samhitā*, II. 99.

3 तावज्जितेन्द्रियो न स्याद्विजितान्येन्द्रियः पुमान् ।

न जयेद्रसनं यावज्जितं सर्वं जिते रसे ॥ *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, XI. 8.21.

4 विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥ *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 59.



hind.' Similarly, the farther you advance towards God, the farther the sense-objects of themselves are left behind. No effort is needed to give up the sense-objects. This is the sign. Adoring God is the essential thing. No effort need be made to overcome greed and the senses; they will be conquered automatically.

Adoration of God means surrender of the entire mind and heart to Him. He will then become the dearest of all things. The hundred per cent attraction of the mind would be for Him alone. 'Oh, I have not attained Him', 'I have not yet developed love for Him'—saying thus you should weep. Then only He will grant you love for Himself. His mercy is needed. Without His mercy nothing will be achieved. But then the Master used to say, 'If you take one step towards Him, He comes a hundred steps forward. He is supremely compassionate.' This is the hope. Giving over to Him your heart and soul, try to love Him. Then you will see how compassionate He is. The question of food and clothing is not of much consequence. There is no harm in satisfying small desires, but it should be with discrimination so that you may not grow particular attachment to anything besides God. You should be watchful about it. Holy company, study of holy books—study of books which speak of God—, keeping away from evil company—these are necessary for generating devotion to God.

Swami Vijnanananda is in Allahabad, go to him. And ... is there, have plenty of talks with him. They will give you such instruction as will be for your good. In this way try to proceed towards the Lord, there will then be no fear at all. When you will take refuge in Him, you will be free from all anxiety and trouble. In the words of the Lord: 'By His grace shalt thou gain supreme peace and the everlasting abode.'<sup>5</sup> So what more to write? Take refuge in Him alone and you will attain all bliss. Accept my love and good wishes.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI TURIYANANDA

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, XVIII, 62.



# RELIGION AND THE COLLEGE STUDENT

BRAHMACHARI BHUMACHAITANYA AND MR. ERIC GRUVER

'The destiny of any nation', wrote Goethe, 'depends on the opinions of its young men over five-and-twenty.' Today, nearly two centuries later, such a statement would find few cordial listeners among those *over* five-and-twenty. Certainly not in an America scarred by riots, obscenities, demonstrations, and bad manners—all proliferated by a generation disturbingly apathetic about the future of this nation.

Why? Has society failed them, as they claim, or have they, instead, failed themselves? The results of a recent survey conducted among 500 college students give us some answers, along with a much-needed reassurance. One thing is clear: few of the educated youth today will accept pat answers as surrogates for the real ones they seek. Most are deadly serious in their search for meaning. Their need for self-identity has never been greater.

The survey, which invited responses in areas both directly and indirectly related to religion, was distributed to campus classrooms throughout the country. It found its way into community and state colleges, both public and private, as well as the universities. Although a large number of the students quizzed were enrolled in classes of comparative religion, the questionnaire was also distributed to others in foreign language, Christianity, and psychology. The results were gratifying to those who optimistically search for the sheep in wolf's clothing; who have listened, as the authors have listened, to perhaps the most intelligent, best-educated, and alert youth in our history.

A dramatic phenomenon occurring on campuses nearly everywhere in the nation is the rising interest in the 'other' religions. Although the baubles and bangles of

Eastern religion—occultism, spiritualism, *hatha-yoga*, and astrology—admittedly draw the curiosity of the young, a growing number of them are deeply interested in the philosophy and practice of Hinduism, Sufism, Zen Buddhism, and Islam. As a result, previously obscure religious studies departments are burgeoning. At times they lack funding, but rarely students; classrooms fill quickly during registration. (A number of high school programmes also are starting to include courses in Eastern religion.) And students are learning to discriminate between instructors who use comparative religion courses to simply reinforce Christian dogmas and those who teach the underlying unity of all the faiths, examining each of them thoroughly and fairly.

Why are students nourishing this interest in comparative religion? On the surface it would appear they are simply casting another vote of opposition to the Establishment, by shunning its Church. Closer examination, however, reveals a deeper cause. Less involved in the responsibilities of life, and at the same time more sensitive to its vicissitudes and disappointments, young people are searching for a fulfilment within themselves; thus, the enlarging interest in the esoteric rather than the exoteric—in mysticism instead of orthodox Christianity. An increasing number of them are finding the structure (and strictures) of organized religion all too confining, its rituals and forms empty and meaningless. Christian theology has never really recovered from the revelations of Galileo, Darwin, and Einstein, who pulled man's attention away from the theocentric universe, a world largely delineated by scriptural injunctions and dogmas.

Eastern thought, on the other hand, is



open-ended. In most cases, it supports the findings of science and recognizes that at heart there is nothing incompatible between the religious and scientific temper. 'Is religion', asked Swami Vivekananda, 'to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion?' And he answered, 'In my opinion this must be so....If a religion is destroyed by such investigation,...the sooner it goes the better.'

Three important facts have emerged from our study: 1. students are vitally concerned with knowing more about themselves not just the surface self but their deeper natures; 2. they are growing increasingly disenchanted with hallucinogenic drugs—they see their inherent danger and deceptiveness; and 3. a majority responded enthusiastically to wide-ranging religious concepts and beliefs. They tended to view religion as a deeply personal experience. Those who were serious about religion, generally refused to identify it with an established set of doctrines. Sixty-five percent, for instance, affirmed that any religion, if followed sincerely, will lead that person to God. 'It seems like', commented one student, 'we're getting hung up on whose religion is right, and not the essential question of "how can I reach God".' Another answered: 'Religion to me is seeking God in oneself.' And one student opined: 'Religion is a need within man to know the answers to questions that cannot be found in the phenomenal world.'

Happily, tolerance toward other religions and philosophical beliefs does not, by and large, extend into the mushroom or LSD cults. There is among students a decided movement away from any real belief that hallucinogens provide a catalyst for a genuine spiritual experience. Of those

students tested, only 16 percent expressed belief that such drugs were 'in some way related to a religious or mystical experience'. This should be reassuring to those understandably irritated by the promises of expatriate, ex-Harvard instructor, Timothy Leary, and other impresarios of the drug cult, who, during their hey-day, beguiled thousands into believing they had stumbled on to a talisman to the Transcendental.

We know, of course, that Indian scriptures make reference to the use of certain consciousness-expanding drugs, most particularly the mysterious libation known as *soma*. 'We have drunk *soma*,' exclaims one Vedic poet, 'we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the Gods.' Despite the mystical flavour of such paeans, there is every likelihood that the effects of *soma* were not unlike that of hashish or bhang; and it may well have been a concoction of that drug the early Aryans drank. Hemp (*cannabis sativa*), its source, grows plentifully throughout Asia.

Although it is true, as Dr. Radhakrishnan writes in his *Indian Philosophy*, that *soma* occupied 'a place in the affections of the Vedic Aryan', no credence is given it in the Upanishads or, for that matter, in any later Indian scriptures. No respectable Hindu teacher or yogi would endorse any hallucinogen. Mental stability is too widely revered in India to risk its loss through the use of such a drug as LSD, whose far-reaching effects and dangers are still largely unknown.

In a letter to the authors, psychiatrist Sidney Cohen, director of the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse at University of California, Los Angeles (U.C.L.A.), and the man who pioneered LSD research, was quite clear in citing the primary cause for the use and abuse of drugs by our youth: 'Drugs can assuage the pain of living a life without meaning. They can provide purpose, fictitious though it may be, in a purposeless existence. They offer hope, all too often

spurious, to the sufferers of that dread disease—hopelessness.’ Echoing this, one student wrote: ‘Drugs can give insights, but they’re temporary, and the user is limited by the very nature of the chemical he is taking....’ ‘If you can find God through artificial means,’ stated another, ‘he can’t be much of a God.’

This is not to imply, however, that a reactionary movement is afoot. Sixty percent of the students tested agreed that a ‘spiritual revolution is now occurring in the world’, substantiating the opinion of the authors that a large number of students are actually more concerned with changing themselves than society. Self-concern, in the religious sense, is a correlative of inner growth; for there must first arise in us a desire to change, to transform our character before we can advance spiritually.

In this respect, students seem on the right track. J. Alfred Cannon, M.D., well known for his work in social psychiatry at U.C.L.A., and now chief of psychiatry at Martin Luther King Hospital in Los Angeles, stated to the authors: ‘I am more and more convinced that the drive behind student unrest is a search for the “mystical”. It is a spiritual restlessness, a desperate search for meaning.’

A large majority of those tested lent further support to this view in another part of the survey. They were asked to select one favourite attribute or accomplishment from a list that included wealth, beauty, peace of mind, omniscience, God-realization, health and longevity, and power. The most popular, by far, was peace of mind; God-realization was second. (Interestingly enough, a number of students believed that once peace of mind and God were attained, ‘the others [as one declared] will follow as a matter of course’.)

Is this yearning for inner peace only apparent? Is it mere laziness in disguise? Hopefully not. If historian Arnold Toynbee

is correct, one of the pressing needs of the day is development of a contemplative state, not unlike that which British anthropologist and philosopher Gerald Heard so aptly called ‘alert passivity’, a condition of mind encouraging man’s highest reflections and noblest aspirations.

‘Contemplation’, writes Toynbee, ‘is not a passive state, and it is also not a merely intellectual activity. Contemplation means facing the facts of our human condition. It means confronting the universe and God, and it is impossible to confront God without trying to put oneself in harmony with the ultimate spiritual reality, however difficult and terrifying this quest might be.’<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned earlier, one of the reassuring facts to emerge from the study is that students indicated an extremely high toleration for other beliefs and religions. Of those tested, 65 percent considered all religions true in essence; 70 percent believed all of them would eventually lead to God; 62 percent considered the career of a monk or nun perfectly understandable, provided one were inclined to that type of life.

On the other hand, not all respondents were so refreshingly liberal. The Jesus ‘freak’ movement, for instance, had its representatives. Intolerant, fanatical, and often abusive, their needs seem more pathological than genuinely religious. From a study of the questionnaires, it was discovered with some surprise that nearly all of the Jesus ‘freaks’ joined the movement after a relatively long history of drug use. Most of their conversions were, apparently, impulsive. For it is generally conceded that such conversions, if inspired by a pathological problem such as chronic drug addiction, can terminate as suddenly as they begin. The denouement is too often depression and disillusionment. As a dejected student con-

<sup>1</sup> From an editorial written for the *London Observer*, reprinted in the *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1971.



fided to one of the authors recently: 'I'm off religion. Jesus let me down. I called on him when I was really in trouble and he failed me.'

The failure, of course, was the student's, not Christ's. Drugs masked his problems until their effectiveness wore thin; then Jesus was called in. He too 'failed' because the place and procedure of faith had been distorted to suit a condition requiring psychotherapy instead of religion.

If, as the survey indicates, youth has the *will* to change, it also suggests that the *way* is still to be carved through a thick bark of ignorance. There is much he does not know. One question, asking students to briefly identify a list of religious personalities, received such sparse comment that it was eventually dropped from future questionnaires. Although students taking courses in comparative religion indicated some acquaintance with major religious figures, others had little or no knowledge of Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, Vivekananda, or Mohammed. In another question, however, a large majority selected Christ as the 'person you most admire and would like to emulate in your life'. Second and third choices were Gandhi and Buddha respectively. Timothy Leary, known but generally disowned, and Brother Lawrence, unhappily unknown, ran last.

Students were also asked to imagine themselves confined alone for a year. Given a choice, which three books would they take with them? The overwhelmingly favourite was the Bible. (One class in Christianity, for example, at a southern U.S. college listed the Bible its first, and sometimes only, choice.) Other students, apparently unattracted to inspirational literature, included such entries as: *Playboy*, *Gone With the Wind*, *How to Play Chess*, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Sex*—and even the dictionary. One student listed Bach's *Twenty-Four Pieces for the Well-*

*Tempered Clavichord*, assuming, perhaps, that he would be permitted a piano in his solitude as well.

A number of questions sought answers in the area of formal religious commitment: Do you attend church? Which one? Are you attracted to faiths other than Christianity? 61 percent stated they were drawn to the teachings of other religions; of this percentage, two-thirds listed Eastern religion as their new attraction.

Apparently, this type of commitment is largely one of theory rather than practice. Only 6 percent admitted to praying or meditating as much as two hours a day, though 35 percent stated they did so an hour or less a day; 37 percent said 'infrequently'. Only 29 percent said they attended any church or religious organization 'regularly'.

Certainly, the survey strongly indicates a growing need on the part of our young people for a culture that can promise not only social security, but spiritual fulfilment as well. The American dream is changing, for the dreamer has changed. He is searching desperately for a *Weltanschauung*, a transcendent dictum, not as a panacea for his ills, but because it is man's nature to struggle, to free himself from the coils of his lower nature. It is the call of the soul for release. And, as Dr. Cohen states, 'We are witnessing this reawakening of spiritual faith in increasing numbers of young people. . . . The particular creed does not seem as important as the degree of conviction.'

The conviction, of course, is certainly there. We must now wait to see in which direction it will manifest itself in those who, despite their apparent indifference to this world, will very much share in its destiny.

\* \* \*

The results of the survey, conducted on 10 college or university campuses in the U.S., are as follows:

1. Male: 46% Female: 53%
2. Age: 18-20: 46% ; 20-23: 29% ; 23-25: 6% ; over 25: 9%.
3. Religious background: Protestant: 48% ; Catholic: 31% ; Jewish: 6% ; Other: 8%.
4. Father's profession: professional: 23% ; blue collar: 25% ; white collar: 38%.
5. College major: Philosophy/religion: 8% ; Humanities: 42% ; Sciences: 20% ; Undeclared: 19%.
6. Do you believe in the existence of an Infinite Being or Divine Intelligence ?  
Yes: 75% ; No: 7% ; Uncertain: 17%.
7. Do you now attend any church or religious organization ? Regularly: 29% ; Occasionally: 23% ; Infrequently: 21% ; Never: 29%.
8. Are you attracted to the philosophy and teachings of any religion other than Christianity ? Yes: 61% No: 36%.
9. If so, how long have you been interested in these teachings ? More than a year: 40%  
More than six months: 9%  
Less than six months: 14%.
10. I feel the need to practise some form of religious exercises:  
More frequently than I now do: 39%.  
With same frequency as now: 26%.  
Not at all: 27%.
11. I meditate, pray silently, or practise recollectedness of God:  
Three or more hours per day: 6%  
Two hours: 5%  
One hour or less: 35%  
Infrequently: 37%  
Not at all: 17%
12. Which statement seems most valid to you ?  
All religions are true in essence ; only their outer forms differ: 62%  
The majority of religions are true, but a few seem to be 'on the wrong track': 19%  
The differences are too great for me to see any unity: 10%
13. Have you ever experienced what you believe to be a spiritual revelation or strong 'awareness' of God ? Yes: 56% No: 40%
14. Do you feel the need to resolve *now* 'the problem of existence' ; that is, to find a reason for life or knowledge of a Divine Source ? Yes: 49% No: 43%
15. Rank in order of importance to you five persons from the list below whom you most admire and would like to emulate in your own life (indicating 1, 2, 3, '1' being most important, etc.)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
St. Augustine	1	28	25	32	19
Buddha	28	52	31	33	22
Gandhi	36	42	50	28	21
Billy Graham	3	38	14	20	6
Jesus Christ	186	27	18	3	7
Helen Keller	7	27	42	22	22
Lao Tzu	8	8	11	12	15
Brother Lawrence			2	1	2
Timothy Leary	2	2	4	4	11



- |                  |   |    |    |    |    |
|------------------|---|----|----|----|----|
| Sri Ramakrishna  | 2 | 8  | 8  | 15 | 11 |
| Bertrand Russell | 8 | 10 | 15 | 14 | 11 |
16. Do you believe that a 'spiritual revolution' is now occurring in the world?  
Yes: 61% No: 33%
17. All religions seem to demand an 'inner transformation'. (Cf. St. Paul: 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.') Do you think this is true? Yes: 75% No: 16%
18. Which of the following statements seems most valid to you?
- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| a. I accept the notion of reincarnation—that man has lived many lives. | 22% |
| b. I believe only in a 'one-life' theory.                              | 30% |
| c. I do not know.  | 44% |
19. What did Jesus mean by the statement: 'The Kingdom of God is within.'?
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. Jesus, as the personification of God's Kingdom, was 'among' his disciples.                     | 4%  |
| b. God is within every man as the Infinite Spirit.  | 82% |
| c. This earth has the potential of being a 'Kingdom of God' if we work hard enough to make it so. | 5%  |
| d. I don't know what the statement means.   | 5%  |
20. Which of the statements below applies to you?
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. I am an active member of my family's faith and do not plan to change.                                    | 22% |
| b. I am of the faith "in name only" and am searching for a new interpretation of the problems of existence. | 29% |
| c. I am not searching for any new faith.  | 26% |
| d. I have found a new set of differing beliefs.   | 18% |
21. List in order of importance to you the three problems or areas of concern which you consider to be most critical in the world today. (Check 1, 2, 3, etc., '1' being most important.)
- |  | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| Population explosion                           | 54  | 49  | 45  |
| Poverty  | 26  | 24  | 44  |
| Man's estrangement from God                    | 93  | 42  | 23  |
| Economic uncertainty                           | 4   | 7   | 10  |
| Threat of atomic war                           | 7   | 13  | 27  |
| Conservation of natural resources and wildlife | 20  | 54  | 65  |
| Integration                                    | 4   | 12  | 10  |
| Environmental pollution                        | 33  | 56  | 74  |
| Man's alienation from himself                  | 109 | 76  | 25  |
22. If you could be granted one wish, which of the following 'boons' would you ask for?
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. Infinite wealth and power                  | 19  |
| b. Physical beauty and/or strength            | 3   |
| c. God-realization or knowledge of the Divine | 88  |
| d. Omniscience                                | 19  |
| e. Peace of mind                              | 160 |
| f. Longevity and health                       | 34  |

23. Have you ever taken any narcotic or hallucinogenic drug? Yes: 53% No: 43%. If so, check below those drugs which you have taken and estimated frequency.
- |             | Less than<br>3 times | 3-10<br>times | 10 or<br>more |
|-------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| LSD         | 8%                   | 6%            | 9%            |
| Mescaline   | 9%                   | 9%            | 6%            |
| Heroin      | 1%                   |               | 2%            |
| Hashish     | 6%                   | 5%            | 4%            |
| Marijuana   | 8%                   | 7%            | 29%           |
| Cocaine     | 8%                   | 2%            | 35%           |
| 'Pep' pills | 6%                   | 5%            | 12%           |
| 'Speed'     | 3%                   | 2%            | 4%            |
24. Do you believe that hallucinogenic drugs, such as LSD, are in some way related to a religious or mystical experience? Yes: 16% No: 70%
25. Which statement seems most valid to you?
- Hallucinogenic drugs can produce a genuine religious experience. 3%
  - Although they are not the direct cause of a religious experience, these drugs produce an 'awareness' of a supernatural nature that can encourage one to begin a spiritual search. 23%
  - There is no spiritual significance to these drugs. 46%
  - None of the above statements apply. 21%
26. Which statement seems most valid to you?
- Monasticism, or living apart from society to practise spiritual disciplines, is an abnormal way of life. 11%
  - The monastic way, although suitable perhaps for some persons and helpful to them, is not my path. 62%
  - I feel drawn at times to living as a monk (or nun) and may consider it some day. 12%
  - I do not understand the meaning of the 'monastic life'. 10%
27. Which statement seems most valid to you?
- There seems to be a direct relationship between sexual experience and religious growth, and it is possible for the former to influence the latter. 22%
  - There does not seem to be any valid reason for the practice of self-control. Those who preach restraint of the senses are deluded misfits and themselves often frustrated. 19%
  - It is necessary to conserve sexual energy and practise self-control in order to advance spiritually. 19%
  - The practice of any form of discipline is injurious to the free life of the spirit. 6%
28. Which statement seems most correct to you?
- Although the other religions of the world are in themselves valid paths to God, Western man should worship as a Christian. 3%
  - Any religion, if followed sincerely by anyone, will lead that person to God. 65%
  - Oriental religion is better than Christianity because it is older and more 'mystical'. 3%
  - Religion is not a significant 'aspect' of life. 7%



29. Which statement below best defines 'mysticism' ?
- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| a. A concern with occult phenomena and psychic experiences.                       | 26% |
| b. A system or way of believing which teaches that God can be experienced within. | 32% |
| c. Something not really related to religion.                                      | 7%  |
| d. The science which deals with any mysterious or esoteric phenomena.             | 20% |

## SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF SISTER NIVEDITA

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

Margaret Noble, who became Sister Nivedita, was born on October 28, 1867. A hundred years later, Nivedita's centenary was marked throughout India as an event of major importance. A number of things were done to honour Nivedita's memory. Her collected writings were brought out in a handsome new edition by the Sister Nivedita Girls' School of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission. In the various literary, cultural and religious magazines in India editorials and articles appeared mentioning the contributions of this Irish woman who became such a lover of India and worker for India's uplift. In many places meetings were held, in which Nivedita's life and achievements were reviewed.

The impression we easily gain of Nivedita is of restlessness and force. We see her, at least in her public personality, as active, decisive, aggressive—perhaps sometimes too active, decisive, and aggressive for comfort. She contended with her guru and her friends. She contended against the government of her birth. She contended against the indolence of Indians. She contended to make the Indian woman the equal of the Indian man. She contended to make India free of foreign domination, free thus from

its sense of inferiority. She contended, in sum, to bring India into the modern world, and to give her a place of moral influence in that world.

Yet again, Nivedita was also a tender, womanly woman, and a great devotee. Her private personality was often gentler and more warm than the self she showed in public. Herein lies the value of the letters presented in this article. They permit us to view the woman behind the crusader, help us to see a facet of Nivedita's character not generally visible. Between the lines that she wrote as a private person to personal friends, we discover a tender side of Nivedita that had a deep understanding of human love, of marriage, of children, of the life of an ordinary woman.

Whether one would have felt completely comfortable with Nivedita or not, one would have been obliged to prostrate oneself before her greatness. Great she undeniably was. She was admired by people whose testimony we must respect. First of all, Swami Vivekananda accepted her as a disciple. That in itself establishes her as special. In addition, she enjoyed the love and affection of Sri Sarada Devi: she was intimate with, she ate with, and she received a letter and handmade gift from this saint

who had never before been acquainted with a woman from the West. Swami Sankaranda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission from 1951 to 1962, knew Nivedita intimately. He often spoke of how remarkable she was. At the time of Nivedita's death—and again recently at the time of her centenary—many eminent Indians expressed their appreciation for her. One of these was Rabindranath Tagore, who said :

I have not noticed in any other human being the wonderful power that was hers of absolute dedication of herself. . . . The life which Sister Nivedita gave for us was a very great life. There was no defrauding of us on her part, that is, she gave herself up fully for the service of India ; she did not keep anything back for her own use.

\* \* \*

A few years ago I was given a small collection of letters written by Sister Nivedita. I was told to do what it seemed to me best to do with them. As far as it was known, they had not been published, or even read by more than a few persons connected with the household of the individuals to whom they were addressed.

From the standpoint of history, the content of these letters is not of major significance ; they shed hardly any light on persons or events of the epoch. But after consulting admirers of Nivedita, and members of the family of those to whom the correspondence was addressed, I have decided to publish the letters exactly as they are, introduced by commentaries meant to explain the circumstances of their composition. All her abbreviations are there, her underlinings and tiny errors, the eccentricities of a writer for whom 'Alberta' became 'Albert' and 'child' 'childe', the breathlessness, the momentary nostalgia, the seeming naïveté. And all there is her living concern with the small, ordinary matters of everyday life.

Reading these letters, dealing as they do with prosaic topics, can help us to really know Sister Nivedita, to love her, and to sincerely respect her. Simplicity and enthusiasm are very visible, and a largeness of spirit. We also see that she was subject to struggles and uncertainty, and in her, frustration seemed to be near the surface. We see her striving to keep ambition from getting ahead of her religious responsibilities. What a touching statement she makes to Josephine MacLeod : 'I often fancy that if I could still do that [come and confess to you] I could *keep* good, in the old sense.'

To thus permit to be seen the human side of Nivedita will not, it seems to me, detract from the glory of this heroine and holy woman. And it will certainly do the reader good. As the French say, 'A few minor failings in a great soul make him more lovable because the aspirant can identify with these and take heart.' It is their humanness, and the fact that despite this humanness they achieved, that makes saints the adorable and encouraging beings that they are.

\* \* \*

There are eight letters in all, seven written in 1904 and 1905 and one in 1911, the year of Nivedita's death. Five were written to Josephine MacLeod and three to Alberta Sturges. All eight were written from India. All were written in longhand by Nivedita herself.

The letters to Josephine MacLeod concern one subject—the marriage of Alberta Sturges to George Montagu, later the Ninth Earl of Sandwich. These letters, according to a note written by Alberta on the envelope in which they were kept, were received by Alberta from Miss MacLeod in 1937. The two letters of 1904 addressed to Alberta herself concern the same subject ; and the letter of 1911 to Alberta is simply a friendly note written to an old friend



after the passage of years, congratulating her on the birth of a child.

Nivedita and Alberta were friends for a dozen years. They probably met at Ridgely Manor, New York, in 1899. Alberta was then in her early twenties, and Nivedita more than thirty. Could two persons have been more dissimilar? Alberta was an American girl whose step-father, Francis H. Leggett, Vivekananda described as a millionaire. Nivedita was the daughter of a poor protestant preacher, who died young, leaving a wife and three children to depend upon the wife's father for support. In 1900 Alberta was with her mother, Besse MacLeod Leggett, and her step-father in Paris, acting as hostess to many distinguished persons at the Leggett's house at 6 Place des Etats-Unis. In 1900 Nivedita had already been working for ten years, and she was even working in Paris that summer. In 1905 Alberta married and settled down among the British aristocracy in a historic country estate. She was to have four children. Hers was the orthodox life of wife and mother. Nivedita's life was radical in the extreme. She never married, indeed she took monastic vows in 1898, and by 1905 had become known throughout India as a fiery nationalist leader, strongly anti-imperialist. Nivedita died in 1911 at the age of forty-three, well known and nationally mourned. Alberta died in 1951 at the age of seventy-three; she had lived in retirement for many years before her death.

And yet these two women, so different, had much in common. They were both important actors in the same fascinating drama: the brief appearance on earth of Swami Vivekananda. Alberta was to Swamiji a sort of lovable niece, the daughter of a man and woman who had befriended, sponsored, and supported him. Nivedita was a disciple—an instrument

forged by Swamiji to carry out part of what he had come to earth to accomplish. How deeply devoted to Swamiji Alberta was, I do not know; yet she could hardly escape having been affected by knowing him. Nivedita's adoration of Swamiji, on the contrary, is well known. In book after book, article after article, lecture after lecture, she documented her devotion, her support, her personal identification with her master and his mission.

\* \* \*

The first letter in the collection is dated November 5, 1904. It is addressed to Alberta, probably at Ridgely Manor. The letter does not bear a return address, and there is no envelope, but we may be sure from the context that it was written from Nivedita's house in Bose Para Lane in the old part of Calcutta where Nivedita had started a school for Indian girls. We do not know exactly what Alberta had written to Nivedita, but it is possible to conclude from Nivedita's reply that Alberta had brought up the subject of religion and her own destiny in the world. By 1904 Alberta was more than twenty-seven and unmarried. According to Mrs. Frances Leggett, Alberta's half-sister, Alberta had had an unhappy love years before with a young German. Was she hesitant about marriage? It seems so. She seems to have been considering the consolation of religion, perhaps, although the Leggetts were protestants, even the life of a nun. She had met and become influenced by a Father Powell. Having known Swamiji four years earlier, Alberta seems to have felt that there was great truth in the Vedānta followed by Swamiji, Nivedita, and her aunt, Josephine MacLeod. Yet her Christian background and natural conservatism seem to have caused Alberta to doubt whether Vedānta was for her. She must have written all this to Nivedita, and she must also have mentioned

Father Powell's disapproval of the strange Nivedita. In her reply, Nivedita did not so much answer Alberta as touch on her own struggle—the enormous struggle of a western, normally Christian person, to Indianize and Hinduize herself.

The 'Yum' of the letter is Josephine MacLeod, sister of Besse Leggett, aunt of Alberta, and Vivekananda's great friend.

Nov. 5, 1904  
Evening.

My sweet Albert,

We arrived home late last night after a month's absence, curiously puzzled by the fact that during that month no foreign mail whatever had been directed to this house. This morning the postman staggered up the study-steps, with the mail of 4 weeks! In which I find your lovely letter.

I trust that I shall not again forget your birthday. I am so sorry! And the more so because *your* letter arrives just about the time of mine. Oct. 28. I remember that both in the year 1899 were spent at Ridgely.

Why, dear Alberta, you *could* not change your Master for Him whom the Indian woman names. Every world & custom, every discovery & prepossession of your life, makes you a Christian, & correspondingly every moment here makes of one born to it something which is *named* differently. That is all. Christianity, the Christian experience, is the education of the soul. You *must* go to the school whose doors are open to you, or remain unschooled.

Yum's different feeling is the result, not of Swamiji's teaching, but of her knowledge of India. & participation in a wider thought. She is like one who has left school & gone into the university. That is all. Or like one who has lived so close (*or* to the feet) in the presence of a great Seer that she has never needed to go to school! But you need more than *crumbs*, though they fall from the Master's own table. Without your own experience, your own "Master"—your own *Ishtha*, as I would

rather say—you may feel & be orphaned, starved, homeless.

Why *dear* Albert, if you want to learn the Indian Woman's virtues, you have but to worship the Blessed Virgin. You cannot drink too deep of the Cup of Catholicism—always saving & excepting its exclusion of all others. And yet even this is essential to the soul. Subjectively. One *must* grow strong in the belief that "this alone is true (for me)", before one can even begin to understand how true for another is something else.

But you know all this as well as I do—or far better. Oh how glad I am that you have met this wonderful Father Powell, & that he has helped you. How real, how deep, how intimate, is the relation of the Christian priest to the soul of his spiritual child!

I used to long so much for that kind of help from Swamiji. But He gave it so sparingly—with such worlds of reserve. It is only very gradually that I have begun to see the burning light of each word of help—the unfailing insight—so that He never allowed me to go to confession—but I should not learn to walk alone,—yet contrived to give me the help that it would have been, without one wasted word, & crowned it with the Absolution of him who is *drowned in God*. I never found in anyone such an understanding of & sympathy with, my love of Catholic Christianity, as I found in Him.

But, dear Albert, may I tell you what I have found to be a great mistake? You say "I listen to every one, saint or sinner. To me, they seem alike. The one has overcome ... the other has failed, & thus has learnt."

Perhaps it is very presumptuous of me, but I have seen & been through such a fiery furnace of suffering, in consequence of failing to understand this, that I do venture to tell you what an *awful* mistake I think it, to confound "saint & sinner". Not *everyone* learns by failure. Only those who *desire* to learn, more than they desire to enjoy, can do so. And the man who has really *learnt* from his failure, is not exactly the same, as far as others are



concerned, as a "sinner", though to himself, God knows, he may seem less worthy than another could ever paint him.

"Same-sightedness" does *not* mean the confounding of sin & holiness, and I cannot feel that we have the right to say that these things seem alike to us, unless we really have the power to reach at will "the irresistible rapture". There, there can indeed be neither good nor evil—because there is but One ... beyond all difference.

I have begun to understand why Swamiji chose to be named by the word Discrimination. I can see now that That was His ideal—that it is the crowning perfection of each power, each virtue, in its turn.

For instance—be you, a Catholic nun—what do you think? Will *your* mind & heart be just the same as that of some other who believes blindly—without thought—without sympathy. One who has never seen what you have seen, never *known* the things that you cannot forget. Never, dear Albert. The whole Universe is my wager to the contrary. Be the whole thing; do the whole; take the discipline; follow the path. To me, it has always seemed that your feet were on it. And *still* it will be different. You will carry in new light—new life. *You* & such as you, are the hopes of the Church. Pour all your treasure at her feet. Empty your very blood into her veins. It is well. She gives you a home, & a mode of life, but you carry to her the life itself.

And so I feel that spirituality is not really shown by confusion of perceptions, but by the power to make keen distinctions that escape the unspiritual. And then, having that power, there may be *indifference* to many external things of course. *Indifference* is one of the marks of higher development. We are indifferent to things of the body, when we are concentrated on things of the mind; indifferent even to things of the mind, when we are concentrated on God. Do you remember how Swamiji once spoke of Renunciation at Ridgely? "In India we never say that you shd.

renounce a higher thing for a lower. It is better to be absorbed in music or in literature than in comfort or pleasure, & we *never* say otherwise."

Fr. Powell has spirituality. His "Be still & know that I am God" rings with it. That is why you have needed him so badly. And surely that has been the use of these 4 years of barrenness & unrest. I seem to have learnt lately that that is the real use of suffering, only to purify. Suffering I fancy does not teach, it only makes us ready to learn. And then the teacher comes—the guide & helper. I am so so glad for you.

I am so grateful for this sight of Fr. Powell's letter. If only he cd. have *included*, instead of excluding me, I shd. have felt so thankful! For I feel always like an exiled & repudiated child of the Church Catholic, & she, in my eyes, so unspeakably great & blessed, laden with all that the future has to give the West.

I think you know how my intellectual life of many many years might be summed up as a wild longing to be restored to her, combined with a hopeless inability to subscribe to the doctrine of the objective & exclusive truth of her Creeds. And then came Swamiji, & gave me everything, everything that I had longed for, even the ideal of the nun—and with it the burning love of *Truth*, that shone like a star above Him, & made Him the hope & power of the modern as of the old. But since then, no priest, no nun, has been able to include me, & endorse my life. And for that I have been often sad. Yet I can see how the refusal to indulge myself in a submission that could not be perfect was really a long austerity, preparing me for the Light that was to come. And I am so thankful. That was *my* Purgatory—even as these four years have been yours.

I can quite understand Fr. P's saying that "letters lead to misunderstanding". After all, we are in opposite, or at least different, camps. It is useless to forget it. Yet I can love and understand his, though *he* cannot mine. But

in India—! He forgets his Religion here is not of “the poor & lowly” but the Faith of the alien Government—rich, powerful, not trusted or loved. Oh what a mockery!!!

How beautiful these traditional words of Christ. . . “And when ye have wondered, ye have known the Kingdom of Heaven.” Where *did* you find them?

And how beautiful the poem! Whose? God & Woman! It is a wonderful note. Something like that was the great Life we have seen.

I do not mean to cease to write, dear Albert.

Ever your own loving  
Margot  
(To be continued)

## EXCURSIONS INTO *UDDHAVA-GITĀ*

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

[Among the great scriptures of Hinduism *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* is one of the most popular. Though its twelve *skandhas* (cantos) cover almost all the essential points of Hindu religion and philosophy, the central theme of the book is about the mystery of divine Incarnation and the necessity of unflinching devotion to Him. The tenth and the eleventh *skandhas* of it depicting the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are the most important parts of the book. Towards the end of his earthly career Śrī Kṛṣṇa called his beloved disciple and follower Uddhava, and taught him the essence of Vedānta and the path of *bhakti* (devotion to God), exhorting him to take to a life of austerity, contemplation, and self-surrender to the Divine. This final message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, popularly known as *Uddhava-gītā*, extends from chapter six to twenty-nine of the eleventh canto.]

Swami Yatiswarananda, the late vice-president of the Ramakrishna Order and Mission, lived in the West spreading Vedānta for seventeen years, seven of which were spent in Europe. In 1935 while he was at Campfer, Switzerland, he conducted for a small group of intimate devotees classes on the *Uddhava-gītā* or ‘The Last Message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’. The text followed was the one with Swami Madhavananda’s translation and notes, published by the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta (referred to as *L.M.* in this serial).

The class notes then taken down were compiled and preserved during the War by the Swami’s students who were earnest seekers of truth. They are now being made available in print to the readers of the *Prabuddha Bharata* for the first time. The compilation is not strictly speaking a commentary on the original text. It is rather in the form of a series of loosely strung deep reflections, following the text only in a general way. The stirring passages of the scripture seemed to have triggered off the spontaneous outpourings of a great mind. The Swami wanted to train a chosen group of spiritually minded people who could give up their all for God, for such alone could be the real torchbearers of Vedānta. The stern and uncompromising tone of the talks in some places should be understood in this context.—*Ed.*]

### THE INCARNATION AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE PRINCIPLE

The book begins with the gods offering orisons of praise to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

‘O Thou Invincible One, through Thy Māyā consisting of the three *guṇas*, and resting in them Thou dost create, maintain, and destroy in Thyself this unthinkable universe, but these activities



do not touch Thee, for Thou art unimpeachable, being immersed in the unobstructed bliss of the Self.<sup>1</sup>

In this prayer we find the whole philosophy of the Vedānta. God is transcendent and at the same time immanent. The devotees, no doubt, worship the Lord as a person, but in this Person they find the Principle. To the advanced devotee Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of the Principle.

We need something to centre our feelings upon, and if we do not feel attracted to some Holy Form, some Holy Personality, we naturally take up some human idol and become attached to it. But in these Great Ones, though we are at first charmed by the human aspect, later we find the Divine in them. Here lies the necessity for the worship of the Incarnation.

If we want to construct a building, we must find a model. In these God-men we find that their bodies and minds are like glass-cases through which shines the Cosmic Spirit, whereas ours is at best an iron-case. So, our task is to transmute this iron-case into a glass-case. The God-men, through their superhuman spiritual endeavour, have shown us the way to transmute the iron-case into a glass-case. Even these God-men had to perfect their bodies and mind through regular spiritual practice and culture, through infinite striving. They, too, had to perfect their instruments. In the descriptions of the *purāṇas* (mythology) we find a wonderful blending of the personality and the Principle. The Super-conscious is manifest through the conscious, and if we are attracted by the human aspect, we come in touch with the Divine aspect.

<sup>1</sup> त्वं मायया त्रिगुण्याऽऽत्मनि दुर्विभाव्यं  
व्यक्तं सृजस्यवसि लुम्पसि तद्गुणस्थः ।  
नैतैर्भवानजित कर्मभिरज्यते वै  
यत्स्वे सुखेऽव्यवहितेऽभिरतोऽनवद्यः ॥ L.M., I.8.

### THE HOLY SYMBOL IS A HELP FOR BEGINNERS

Even the out-and-out *advaitin*, non-dualist, is prepared to place before us thoughts that can be understood and grasped by us in our present state, and thus take us by the hand and lead us on to higher and higher truths. Idolatry is a necessary stage which people must outgrow. And if people do not take up some holy idol to centre their feelings and emotions upon, they will take up some awful human idol, some man-puppet or woman-puppet, and worship that and become slaves to it.

Which is the better idol: an ordinary idol of flesh and blood, or an idol which represents a higher ideal? In the human idol you do not find a higher ideal. And if you try to think of the abstract, the abstract becomes and remains abstract, and the human idols, the man-puppets or woman-puppets, attract all our attention, become essentially real to us, and then everything else follows as a matter of course.

To the extent we are able to think of the Divine in us as distinct from our personality, as distinct from this man-form or woman-form of ours, we are able to think of the Divine in others, too, as distinct from their form, as distinct from their personality. And then we are safe. Then we can never become slaves to any male or female puppet.

### THE WAY OF DEVOTION

Devotion to the Lord serves as the greatest purifying agent in the life of the devotee. Our higher nature evolves and we become pure to the extent we are devoted to God, the source of all purity. Our lower nature overpowers us and we become impure to the extent we are attached to the pleasures of this world. This is the whole secret of purity and impurity. Hence we find the gods praying to Śrī Kṛṣṇa :

‘May Thy feet be the fire to consume our evil desires, the feet which sages, for their welfare, carry with tender hearts, the feet which are worshipped by devotees in diverse ways for attaining equal glories with Thee ... for transcending heaven. ... Thy feet which are meditated upon ... by the yogis desirous of knowing Thy Māyā through spiritual union ...’<sup>2</sup>

Attaining to heaven is not the ideal for the higher devotee. The true devotee does not care for heaven but wants to transcend it. There may be many other planes, many superconscious worlds, where one enjoys glory and splendour, but the true lover of God does not care for all these. His goal is that highest state of existence in which he is united to God who is of the nature of pure consciousness and pure bliss.

The seeker of knowledge wants to control himself through an effort of the will. The *bhakta*, the lover of God, centres all his feelings on God. Through one-pointed devotion all our desires are burnt away. So, in a way, the path of the devotee is an easier, a more natural one.

It is this devotion to God that ultimately unites the devotee and the Divine. But it is not the devotion of the sentimentalist. It is not emotional effervescence. It is the intense hunger of the soul for the Oversoul or *Paramātman* which no earthly desire can taint. Ordinarily, our devotion is an alloy. There is something permanent and also something perishable in it. It is not pure devotion. So it is with our sincerity. There is some sincerity, true, but this sincerity is mixed up with desires, and it is not perfect as yet. Only after the desires have been burnt away, can there be such a thing as perfect devotion or perfect sincerity. The devotee wants to get rid of his impurity through his self-surrender, through his devotion. That is the purify-

ing process of devotion. That is the first step.

All sin belongs to our second nature, never to our first nature. For if it really belonged to our first nature, it would never be possible for us to get rid of it. To the extent we identify ourselves erroneously with the body and the mind, we become and remain impure; to the extent we identify ourselves with our true nature, the Divine, we become pure and remain pure, and only by coming in touch with the Great Purifier in us, all our evil desires are burnt away. Lower consciousness is then replaced by higher consciousness, and spiritual life becomes an accomplished fact: a life of devotion, selfless service, and pure joy.

#### GOD, SOUL AND THE UNIVERSE

The Sāṅkhya is a very ancient system of Hindu philosophy, perhaps the oldest. It influenced all the other systems. Its psychology is accepted by almost all the schools of Hinduism. The two fundamental categories of Sāṅkhya are *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*: *puruṣa* is the spirit and *prakṛti* is the ultimate source of all material things including mind and senses. There are as many *puruṣas* as there are living beings. *Puruṣa* corresponds to the *jīva* (individual self) of Vedānta. According to both the systems, the self in its real nature is pure consciousness, infinite and eternal, but owing to ignorance identifies itself with the mind and body and is born again and again as a living being. The non-dualistic school of Vedānta has the concept of cosmic ignorance or *Māyā* which roughly corresponds to the *prakṛti* of Sāṅkhya. In both the schools, knowledge based on discrimination between the self and the not-self is considered to be the only means of liberation of the *jīva* from its bondage. These are the common points between Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, 10-11.



But Vedānta has the concept of an Ultimate Reality called Brahman, which is of the nature of Existence-knowledge-bliss Absolute, which manifests Itself as the souls and the material objects. Again, Sāṅkhya does not have any place for the Supreme Being or *Īśvara*, as Vedānta has. All souls come under the same category and if in the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems there is any reference to *Īśvara*, it only means a special type of *puruṣa* who is ever free and who is the Teacher of all teachers. But he is not the creator. Patañjali states that by devotion and self-surrender to this *Īśvara* one may directly attain *samādhi*. Creation and dissolution of the universe go on eternally in *prakṛti*. In Vedānta the creator of this universe, called *brahmā* or *hiraṇyagarbha* or *māhat*, is lower than *Īśvara*, the Supreme Controller. *Īśvara* is, according to Swami Vivekananda, man's highest reading of the Absolute.

Another peculiarity of Vedānta is the identification of the gods, Viṣṇu, Śiva or Devī, with the Supreme Godhead or *Īśvara*. The Incarnations are also often identified with *Īśvara* or the Godhead. The *Bhāgavatam* refuses to count Śrī Kṛṣṇa as one of the Incarnations of God. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is none other than the Supreme Godhead—*Kṛṣṇastu Bhagavān svayam*. So in the prayer of the gods and sages to Kṛṣṇa we find the statement :

Receiving energy from Thee, the *Puruṣa*, of infallible power, along with *Māyā* holds within Himself the *māhat*, like the embryonic state of this universe. This *māhat*, backed by the same *Māyā*, projected from within itself the golden sphere of the universe of various layers.<sup>3</sup>

This kind of identification of the Incarnation with the Supreme Being is found in the *Bhagavad-gītā* also which says :

'There are two *Puruṣas* in the world: the Perishable and the Imperishable. All beings are the Perishable, and the *kūṭastha* (which, according to Śaṅkara, refers to *Māyā* or Primordial Nescience) is called the Imperishable.

'But there is another, the Supreme *Puruṣa*, called the Highest Self, the immutable Lord, who pervading the three worlds, sustains them. As I transcend the Perishable and am above even the Imperishable, therefore am I in the world and the scriptures celebrated as the *Puruṣottama*.'<sup>4</sup>

In the holy personality the devotee sees a link between the finite and the Infinite. First he is drawn by the wonderful charm of the Personality and then, through it, he realizes the Infinite.

(To be continued)

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, I.16.

<sup>4</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, XV. 16-8.



## THE GREAT ONE AND THE FALLEN

In his total self-unconsciousness, Swami Shivananda considered himself the 'dog of Sri Ramakrishna', his Master. But his brother disciple, Swami Vivekananda, knew early in his monastic life that here was an extraordinary spiritual person, in his utter simplicity, and so called him a 'Mahā-puruṣa', a 'great soul'. One profile of his greatness was on an occasion highlighted by a sinner.

More than any one else, the sinner almost instinctively knows who is truly great. Only a sinless man does not hate a sinner, and is anxious to be of service to him. On this touchstone the genuine gold of a great personality is tested. Laws, reformers, prudes, and society in general, hardly ever offer the sinner any light in his self-made darkness, any comfort in his inner remorse, any asylum in his frightening desolation. And yet, more than others he needs these for being able to live happily and meaningfully.

But the truly great ones, who have risen above fleshly bondage and become spiritually illumined, spontaneously gravitate towards those who grovel in darkness, driven as it were by an undefined law of light and a divine urge for self-giving. Through them travels God's healing power to those who have fallen sick after taking the poison of the world.

When you find that a celebrated big man is without compassion, know that his is hollow bigness. When you find an unassuming common man spontaneously melting in compassion, know that the man has hidden greatness in him.

The compassion of the great souls which freely flows to all, without reservation or reasoning, is the 'one hope of the fallen. No one has to prove his credentials for receiving it in an abundant measure. Rather, demerit becomes merit in such a case. There is rejoicing at home when the prodigal son returns—just the return is more than enough compensation for the one who had lost the son. No expiation is asked; only a tearful hug is offered. The good ones are not so much the concern of the great. They do not need him so much as do the fallen ones. For one 'lost sheep' there is as much anxiety as if all depended on his reclamation!

If you have sinned, be contrite, but not worried. Be sure God has planted compassion somewhere in some great heart for your deliverance. Maybe he is not in flesh and blood,—he need not be. Cry in the desolation of your darkness. You will surely have the response. Cry until you have the response. All Magdalenes have their Christs. You too have yours.

That compassion of God, which made Jesus the saviour, is always in the process



of manifesting itself in a variety of ways all over the world, through various mediums for reclamation of souls that have strayed. Agents of this redemptive power of God sometimes act as if automatically, but there is an operative law of gravitation in the spiritual realm also, which sucks in the fallen souls in its orbit, for working out their transformation.

One morning at Belur Math, Swami Shivananda, then the President of the Ramakrishna Order—reverentially addressed as 'Mahapurushji' in recognition of his spiritual greatness—was seated on a cot in a solemn indrawn mood. All on a sudden, as if in response to some inaudible cry of an agonized soul, he eagerly told his attendant standing nearby, in a voice charged with a sense of urgency. 'Will you go and see if there is someone wanting initiation?' After looking here and there, the attendant went downstairs, where he found a young woman who wanted initiation. After inquiry, he was startled by the information she gave about herself. She had come from a village, accompanied by a man. She told the story of her sinful life and said that, although she had been born in a *Brāhmaṇa* family, she had gone astray in bad company and was living with a man of low caste, the man who had accompanied her there.

In a remorseful tone she said, 'May I not see him (Mahapurushji) once? Would he not be gracious to a fallen woman like myself?'

In the core of her utter inner darkness, the sun had shot its first ray of the rise; and her soul had already captured its ruddy glow. As the seed disintegrates before the coming of the sprout, the woman had become rotten before her whole being quivered in her entire universe as one simple question: 'May I not see him once?' This was that asking which Christ said was sure to be answered with a giving. Be it noted

that she had herself captured her potential salvation. And in this sense, though yet smeared by the dirt of her evil conduct, she had already made the upward curve, and hence was great in her own small rising manner. No sin can be so binding as to prevent a soul from reaching its inevitable salvation.

When the attendant, looking disturbed, returned to Mahapurushji, he enquired earnestly, 'Tell me, is someone there?'

'Maharaj, reluctantly said the attendant, 'a woman is there who wants initiation, but. . . .'

'What of that?' said the great soul, brushing aside what the attendant wanted to say. 'Ask her to bathe in the Ganga and come to me after visiting the shrine. Sri Ramakrishna is the redeemer of the fallen. He came specially to uplift them. What will happen to them if he does not come to their rescue? Otherwise, one could not call him the "redeemer of the fallen".'

Mahapurushji was ready to shower his blessings upon her, and later when she came to him for initiation after her bath, with a worldful of pardon, he said, as if he knew everything about her: 'What fear is there, my daughter? You will certainly be blessed since you have taken refuge in Sri Ramakrishna, the Redeemer of the fallen. Say this: "Whatever sins I have committed in this life and in lives past, I offer them here (that is, to Sri Ramakrishna) and I will not sin any more."'

After receiving initiation, the woman appeared to be an altogether new person. She had gone through the fire of blazing compassion, which burns only the dross and enkindles purity within, and had arisen fresh and new on the horizon of life. Being touched by the purifying power of the illumined soul, a nearly extinguished soul blazed forth again.

Mahapurushji remarked later that day:

'Do you know why there is so much sickness in this body, so much suffering? The sins of others are being worked out in this body: otherwise, why should it suffer so much?' He knew well what price he was to pay for redeeming this fallen woman: more and more of physical suffering.

But nothing could deter him. He could not bear to imagine that his Master would not be called the redeemer of the fallen

and that a soul crying in darkness should not be bathed in light.

He drank the poison avidly so that the other might have the manna.

So he was Shivananda, the 'Mahapurusha'.

—PEDESTRIAN

[Source: *For Seekers of God* (Spiritual Talks of Mahapurush Swami Shivananda—Section 60)]

## ZEN SECT OF BUDDHISM

PROF. D. C. GUPTA

Japanese Buddhists admit that the truth, if one in essence, need not be one in expression. The Zen holds that absolute truth is not taught in scripture and is not expressible in words. It must be discovered by intuition or learnt by telepathy. Zen sums up its doctrine by saying that the most important things are to understand the nature of life and death and to realize that our hearts are the Buddha himself.

Let me remind the reader that Zen in Japan has three divisions often reckoned as separate sects, the Rinzai, Soto, and Obaku. The Soto is the largest denomination and is remarkable for not having any subdivisions. All three sects are similar in their doctrines. There is, however, a slight difference of method and teaching between the Soto and Rinzai. The former emphasizes the importance of moral training and gradual development for obtaining enlightenment or the absolute truth; but the latter insists that enlightenment is rather a sudden revelation which cannot be caused or accelerated by study. The former holds that a good life is alike the cause and result of enlightenment.

The use of this word enlightenment brings

us to the main conception and theme of Zen, all the other activities being merely preparatory and external. It must not be supposed that other sects do not claim to show the way to enlightenment. A common saying among Buddhists compares enlightenment to a mountain peak approached from all sides by paths, and each sect maintains that its own road is the best and shortest. The word enlightenment is a rendering of Satori in Japanese, and the rendering seems suitable, for enlightenment is the word commonly used to describe the Buddha's own experience under the Bodhi tree which Zen adepts consider to have been similar to their own Satori. One gathers that Satori is not a mystery or secret or anything intellectual which can be imparted. It is a new view of life and of the universe which must be felt. It will prove satisfying and be 'the purifier and liberator of life', breaking down the prison walls in which the intellect is said to confine us.

Bodhidharma, the reputed founder of the school called Ch'an or Zen which has played so large a part not only in the religion and philosophy but also in the art and even in the social life of the Far East, arrived in



Canton from India about A.D. 520. The common account says that he was the son of a king in Southern India and his teaching is summed up in four well-known lines :

A special tradition outside the scripture :  
 Not to depend on books or letters :  
 To point direct to the heart of man :  
 To see (one's own) nature and become Buddha.

Study of the scriptures, prayer, and even good works are all equally vain. All that man needs is to turn his gaze inward and see the Buddha in his own heart. 'All living beings are in their original nature Buddhas.' The pious Emperor, Wu-Ti, of China, on hearing that a distinguished Buddhist teacher had arrived from India summoned him to the capital. But the interview was not a success. Wu-Ti did not relish being told bluntly that he had acquired no merit by causing temples to be built and the scriptures to be translated into Chinese, and Bodhidharma considered that His Majesty had no eye for the essentials of religion.

In the sermon which he preached on the occasion he insists that religion means nothing but the vision of the Buddha nature in one's own heart. It is a natural experience like a physical act and to those to whom it comes it gives light and deliverance : it is inevitable and convincing. 'To see into one's nature and become Buddha' is nearly the same idea which declares that Brahman the eternal and universal spirit is identical with the soul in every man. It is also true that there is a striking likeness between the thought of Zen and such passages as those which say, 'You cannot think it with thought, hear it with the ear, see it with the sight, breathe it with the breath' (*Kena-upaniṣad*). There are noticeable verbal coincidences. Thus it is said that the Buddha nature reveals itself in dreams : that it embraces the whole universe and yet is so small that a needle cannot

prick it. It may be that Bodhidharma belonged to some such school intermediate between Buddhism and Vedāntism and he left India because his special teaching did not win many adherents there.

The Zen doctrine emphasizes that enlightenment comes by sudden illumination and transference of thought from teacher to pupil, not by meditation, prayer, or study. Tradition is unanimous in reporting that Bodhidharma attached little importance to the scriptures and held that knowledge of the truth is obtained by sudden enlightenment, well known by its Japanese name of Satori. This disdain of scripture is very un-Indian, and a well-known legend which is often cited to justify it appears to be a Chinese invention and not traced to any Sanskrit or Pāli source. It relates that Śākyamuni (the Buddha), wishing to explain to his disciples the essence of his doctrine, said nothing but held up before them a bunch of flowers. None of them understood what he meant except Kaśyapa who looked at him and smiled, also in silence. This story is considered typical of the right way to impart instruction, not by explanation or reference to books but by a sort of telepathy, and the biographies of Zen saints contain countless instances of how some trivial and apparently irrelevant action of a master brought sudden illumination and peace to his pupil. Nevertheless, the Zen school, though it disparaged the scriptures, did not neglect letters and meditation, and both in China and Japan produced a long succession of ecclesiastical scholars and authors. Though Zen rejected scripture, it encouraged literature as a help and ornament of the religious life, and many secular works and the poems of Basho, came from the pen of Zen monks.

The Zen school of Buddhism developed in China with its philosophical roots, no doubt, in India. It perfectly suited and

met the Chinese temperament and tendency, and hence its moral and psychological trunks could never have attained their fullest maturity except on Chinese soil. Though the term 'zen' or 'zenna' (ch'an or ch'anna in Chinese) is the transliterated form of the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, it is far from emphasizing meditation. Its pivotal teachings consist in *bodhi* and *prajñā* and *anabhogacarya*. To those who have thus attained Satori (enlightenment) *samsāra* (relative existence) and *nirvāṇa* are the same. I presume it means that they are not locally different as states or abodes, but depend on feeling: he who has Satori is already in *nirvāṇa*, although to others he is apparently immersed in the troubles of this world. The other popular statement about Zen is that enlightenment is somehow a unification of the inner man.

Dr. D. T. Suzuki, the distinguished Japanese author on Zen, writes:

'In the beginning which is really no beginning and which has no spiritual meaning except in our finite life, the will wants to know itself and consciousness is awakened; and with the awakening of consciousness the will is spilt into two. The one will, whole and complete in itself, is now at once actor and observer. Conflict is inevitable: for the actor now wants to be free from the limitations under which he has been obliged to put himself in his desire for consciousness. . . . Ignorance prevails as long as the will remains cheated by its own offspring or its own image, consciousness, in which the knower always stands distinguished from the known. The cheating, however, cannot last: the will wishes to be enlightened, to be free,

to be by itself. Ignorance always presupposes the existence of something outside and unknown. The unknown outsider is generally termed ego or soul, which is in reality the will in the state of ignorance. Therefore when the Buddha experienced enlightenment he at once realized that there was no Ātman, no soul entity as an unknown or unknowable quantity.'

Enlightenment is direct intuitive knowledge, superior to reasoning and discussion, and for those who receive it certain and incontrovertible. The Buddha had a vision in which with the eye of the spirit he beheld the world process and even now in Japan the Zen adepts suddenly obtain illumination—Satori—which gives them a new view of the universe and makes them new men. For them *nirvāṇa* is vouchsafed. . . . There are two stages in *nirvāṇa*, one in this life and one after death. *Nirvāṇa* in this life means peace and perfect happiness, but it by no means excludes activity. The Buddha attained it at the beginning of his career as a teacher, and though he is sometimes described as loving solitude and meditation, he is shown to us as a busy instructor and helper of mankind, still active in old age. There is therefore some ground for the Mahāyānist doctrine that *nirvāṇa* and ordinary activity (*samsāra*) are the same, or two aspects of the same world. But what happens when one who has attained *nirvāṇa* dies? The question was often put to the Buddha and he always replied that it did not admit of an answer.

(To be continued)



## WORLDLY DUTIES AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

### I

The overwhelming majority of the world's population are householders. The duties they, as householders, have to perform in the world are called worldly duties.

The householders who take religion seriously have always to face a problem which others have not to face. The problem is, how to make spiritual progress while discharging their worldly duties. Can their worldly and spiritual interests be harmonized?

Householders seeking to make spiritual progress will have to face this problem everywhere, no matter to which religion they belong. And their spiritual progress will depend on whether or not they can find a proper solution to this problem and apply it in their own lives. We are going to discuss a solution to this problem that will be equally applicable to all worshippers, belonging to all religions.

In seeking a solution to any problem of life in any sphere of knowledge and action, the first prerequisite is the framing of the proper terms of reference as clearly as possible. Without clinching a problem to its proper terms of reference, no true solution to it can ever be found.

The issue on hand is: how to make spiritual progress while discharging worldly duties. These points frame the terms of reference:

- (1) The objective is spiritual progress.
- (2) The locus from which spiritual progress is sought to be made is the householder's stage of life.
- (3) The locus being the householder's stage of life, spiritual disciplines to

be adopted have to be suitable to this stage of life.

We shall see that when we understand clearly these three terms of reference how easily and correctly we get to the solution of the problem.

(a) The first term of reference, namely objective, is spiritual progress. What does making spiritual progress mean? It means movement towards God—as distinguished from movement away from God—for attainment of illumination and liberation of the spirit.

(b) It means that you have accepted the fact that God *is*, and that realization of God is the ultimate objective of human life. And that, no matter what you have to do as duties in the world, through that very doing you seek to reach God.

These are the clear implications of the first term of reference of which there is an important corollary. It is this:

No doubt, as a religious person, you accept the fact of God's existence; again, you do not accept. You think: how can I have faith in God without having seen Him? Is it not irrational to do so? Is it not soft-headedness? Well, it is neither.

Have you seen the atom? You have not. But you believe the atom exists. Why do you believe that? Because the seers of science, after ascertaining its existence, have told you so. Now, on the basis of that working faith, you can go and work in a lab and become a seer of the atom's existence by yourself. If this is permissible in the scientific sphere, there is no reason why it cannot

be so in the religious sphere. How many people have seen God down the ages and said so! On their testimony you can base your working faith. On the basis of this working faith, you first become the seeker of God and eventually the seer of God.

So, let all unnecessary doubts go and this first term of reference be firmly in your grip: that God is; that the ultimate objective of human life is the realization of God; and that you seek to move on towards that ultimate objective.

Let nothing succeed in disturbing the first term of reference which you now have well in your grip. Stand by your faith in quiet firmness. One need not publicize his innermost and sacred purpose of life. Let all controversies with unbelievers be avoided. Then, something is in hand and not in the wilderness.

Now let us try to understand the second term of reference which is: 'The locus from which spiritual progress is sought to be made is the householder's stage of life.'

When you accept the fact that 'God is', it has at once certain dialectical implications as far as you are concerned.

If God is, nothing in the universe, from the remotest star to the breath of man, can be independent of that fact. If God is, He will not be contradicted by any other fact or being. That is to say, He will not only be omnipresent but also omniscient and omnipotent.

If God is omniscient, His wisdom cannot be doubted. If He is omnipotent, His will cannot be challenged. That being so, things in the universe are as they are according to the wise dispensation of the all-powerful God. It therefore stands to reason that you are a householder by divine dispensation and that is the most suitable position for you for seeking God, for God's wisdom cannot be challenged. You must be convinced of the fact that you are in the best situation as a householder to seek God. And you can take

your step only from where *you* actually stand. And you can take your step only according to your might.

Please do not think when we say you, as a householder, are in the best position to move Godward, we are just trying to make you feel good. Though making you feel good itself may be a good piece of service, we are not trying to do that now. Here we are placing before you what the various Hindu scriptures unanimously say about the householder's position in life, as far as spiritual pursuit is concerned.

In the Hindu society the *sannyāsin* or monk has always received the highest regard of all, including the rulers of the country and the priestly caste. But, for very good reasons, the householder has been considered by all the Hindu lawgivers as the very foundation of society.

In the beginning of the 'Śāntiparvan' of the *Mahābhārata*, the great epic of the Hindus, Yudhiṣṭhira, the elder brother of Arjuna, was found in a mood of renouncing the world. After Draupadī's weighty arguments failed to deter Yudhiṣṭhira from his resolution, Arjuna got righteously indignant at this unbecoming behaviour of his brother and lectured him furiously. Others also tried by turns. However, they, with all their eloquence, failed to convince Yudhiṣṭhira, who had always an excess of *sattva* (serenity and equilibrium) and a tendency towards lotus-eating.

Finally came the grandsire, venerable Vyāsa, a very respected person in whose wisdom everybody had great faith. Throwing the weight of his sober view against Yudhiṣṭhira's inclination, Vyāsa made the following statement, eulogizing the eminence of the householder's life:

'.... The highest religion as sanctioned by the scriptures consists in the duties of a householder. The gods, the spirits of the departed ancestors, guests and servants all depend (for their maintenance)



upon a householder. Birds, animals, and various other creatures are supported by the householders. He, therefore, who belongs to that mode of life is superior to all. The life of the householder is the most difficult of all the four modes of life. Do you practise that mode of life then, O Yudhiṣṭhira, which is difficult of being practised by persons of uncontrolled senses.'<sup>1</sup>

This statement of Vyāsa, which represents the unanimous view of all the Hindu law-givers, indicates in what high regard the Hindus hold the householder's life. It is also, in passing, to be noted that, according to Vyāsa, it is difficult to perform the duties of the householder's life with uncontrolled senses. So, according to the scriptural wisdom, you have to believe that as a householder you are in the most convenient position to move Godward. Not only that, you have also the best equipment to make spiritual progress in your own ways. There is no reason whatsoever to feel jealous of the position or endowments of others.

How many times have we not thought, if only our position were different we should have made so much progress? This is a very shallow way of thinking, a delusion. Every situation has its own thorns and burns, only we do not know them.

A priest once said to Meister Eckhart, the great German mystic, 'I wish that your soul were in my body.' To this, Eckhart replied, 'You would really be foolish. That would get you nowhere; it would accomplish as little as if your soul were in my body. No soul can really do anything except through the body to which it is attached.'<sup>2</sup>

This is a great truth to be understood and remembered. Your soul has manufactured the most suitable body for your spiritual evolution. Therefore, be absolutely sure,

both physically and environmentally, you are in the right situation to move Godward, even though the situation may apparently look to be wrong or unpromising. If you do not accept your situation in this way, then you are not a devotee of God at all, for you question the Lord's wisdom. It is no wisdom to question God's wisdom, if you accept the *fact* of God. For a devotee of the Lord, what is, is good, as far as he himself is concerned, for nothing but good can come from God. And from God has come everything.

This is not, however, to say that you cannot improve your situation. In fact, you are continuously challenged to do so by your very nature and circumstances. But you are to know what is, truly speaking, an improvement of your situation. In the ultimate analysis, progressive movement towards God alone is truly the improvement of your situation. Any movement in any other direction is nothing but going backward, away from God.

Now the concern is: how to move in a right manner from this right situation of your life in the right direction, that is Godward? This brings us to the third term of reference, namely: 'The locus being the householder's stage of life, spiritual disciplines to be adopted have to be suitable to this stage of life.'

## II

For this guidance, we turn to Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother. Of all the great world teachers, they happen to be nearest to our times. And their teachings also have special relevance and applicability in the lives of the seekers of modern times. They moved in our parlours and they knew our minds and our problems very well. Therefore, in their teachings there is a freshness and an immediacy which at once appeal to our hearts and apply to our situations.

The *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* runs to

<sup>1</sup> *Mahābhārata*: Śānti-parvan XXIII, 2-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Meister Eckhart*, Vols. I & II (Tr. by C. de B. Evans, Pub. by John M. Watkins, London, 1952).

more than a thousand pages. The major part of the book is devoted to teaching the householder, as to how he should do his worldly duties to lead a spiritual life. As far as we know, there is no better source of inspiration than Sri Ramakrishna to whom we can turn for spiritual guidance on this issue. Again, there is also no better example available to us of perfection attained through discharge of worldly duties than the unique life of the Holy Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna became a monk in a formal way but the Holy Mother never renounced the world. Yet she, while staying in the world, attained illumination. And even after attainment of illumination she continued to live in the normal milieu of the householder's life. This makes her life a very precious source of guidance and inspiration to those seekers who, of necessity, strive to live a spiritual life while discharging their worldly duties.

Now, what are these worldly duties about which we hear so much? Obviously our worldly duties should be very closely related to the fundamental duty of life. The fundamental duty of man's life, as common sense would bear out, must be correlated to the ultimate objective of his life, which by the first term of reference has been accepted to be the realization of God. Whatever takes him away from that ultimate objective cannot be his duty, whatever convention or superstition may claim.

In very simple words Sri Ramakrishna teaches, 'What then is man's duty? What else can it be? It is just to take refuge in God and pray to Him with a yearning heart for His vision.'

This is the fundamental duty on the axis of which all other duties and aspirations, if you like, must evolve and revolve. Sri Ramakrishna therefore says :

'It does not matter much whether you are a family man or not. Always perform your duties unattached, with your

mind fixed on God. As for instance, the man who has a carbuncle on his back talks with his friends and others, and even carries out undertakings, but his mind is all the while on the pain.'<sup>3</sup>

This fundamental duty has to be observed in and through the *due* performance of one's worldly duties. The word 'due' is very important in the context. One should neither have an exaggerated nor distorted nor vague view of one's duties in the world. In perfect consonance with the teachings of the *dharmaśāstras* and the ancient masters, Sri Ramakrishna points out :

'... A householder has his duties to discharge, his debts to pay : his debts to the gods, his debt to his ancestors, his debt to the rishis, and his debt to wife and children. If a wife is chaste, then the husband should support her ; he should also bring up their children until they are of age. Only a monk must not save ; the birds and the monks do not provide for the morrow. But even a bird provides when it has young. It brings food in its bill for its chick.'<sup>4</sup>

For common men and women of the world who are body-conscious and world-conscious, there is no way of fulfilling the fundamental duty of life except through performance of their immediate and exigent duties in the world. Those who try to run away in a clumsy manner from the irksome duties of world, not so much for love of God as because of their inability to face the struggles of existence, cannot build their spiritual life on any sure foundation. Those who think that some sort of religious hankering which they feel within themselves confers on them some kind of right to neglect their worldly duties are clearly misguided.

<sup>3</sup> *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1938, p. 101.

<sup>4</sup> 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math Madras 4, 1947, p. 86.



By this kind of wrong thinking and sometimes worse doing, a person sets in motion against himself forces which effectively impede his pious intentions. He may so upset his wife by his religiosity taking the shape of an unconscionable indifference to his near and dear ones that she becomes disconcerted with all the imaginable consequences. Then the poor man does not know what to do with himself, his religiosity and the members of his family. He must know that if he is a married man to live in the world, he cannot make any headway in spiritual life by setting fire to the psychic atmosphere of his household. He needs their valuable help and cooperation. Sri Ramakrishna teaches a dexterous method (*karmasu kauśalam*) for gaining this in support of his religious pursuits. In answer to 'M's question, 'How ought one to live in the world', he answers :

'Do your duties, but keep your mind on God. Live with all—with wife and children, father and mother—and serve them. Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but know in your heart of hearts, that they do not belong to you. . . . The tortoise moves about in the water. But can you guess where her thoughts are? There on the bank, where her eggs are lying. Do all your duties in the world, but keep your mind on God.'<sup>5</sup>

There is hardly any other way of

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

peaceful and creative pursuance of higher life open to the householder. Sri Ramakrishna's admonitions regarding two persons appearing in the *Gospel* focuses our attention on this very important point. When 'M', the writer of the *Gospel*, visited the Master at Dakshineswar for the second time, Sri Ramakrishna told him sharply about a fugitive from the world who had come to take shelter at Dakshineswar:

'Pratap's brother came here. He stayed a few days. He had nothing to do and said he wanted to live here. I came to know that he had left his wife and children with his father-in-law. He has a whole brood of them! So I took him to task. Just fancy! He is the father of so many children! Will people from neighbourhood feed them and bring them up? He isn't even ashamed that someone else is feeding his wife and children, and that they have been left in his father-in-law's house. I scolded him very hard and asked him to look for a job. Then he was willing to leave here.'<sup>6</sup>

The implication of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching here is that finding a job was not only the primary worldly duty of Pratap's brother, but it was also his first step to spiritual life, this observance of his immediate duties associated with the situation of his life (*svadharma*) as a householder.

(*To be continued*)

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.



### C.I.A., YETI, AND MĀYĀ

Is there any relation between these three—C.I.A., Yeti or the abominable Snowman, and Māyā? Yes, please, if you would choose to have it so. You can make them as big and oppressive as you please, and as ineffectual as you have the courage to cut them down to size. The secret is in shedding all weakness, physical, mental and spiritual, and in being strong in all conceivable ways.

Our old Cāṇakya will bear me out that the intelligence system has always been recognized as an essential arm for functional purposes of any state. If any state has developed a highly efficient intelligence system, that is its business. And it deserves a pat on the back for that. But when that system goes out in the world and tries to muddle up things in other states, there starts the trouble. The Good Lord, Jack Anderson, and some other countrymen of his may know many non-flattering things about C.I.A., while the visage of the late redoubtable Edgar Hoover grins on like the Cheshire cat from the bournes of the other world. What is surprising is that in India we have started hearing statements from high places creating a creeping impression about the almost all-pervasive presence of C.I.A., trying to upset every good thing

India is trying to do for herself or others. To those not burdened with administrative responsibility it sounds like a 'huge joke', but to those who are saddled with responsibility it is a dangerous and near-successful master design for total subversion. For the teeming millions it is a ubiquitous bogey equipped with pelf, cunning, and highly advanced bugging devices. It has by now crossed political bounds and is entering the psychology of the nation, as the infamous McCarthyism one day did in America.

Therefore an a-political creature like me feels called upon to cry a halt to this sort of raucous complaining. Taking for granted that C.I.A. has been doing all the vicious things in India that it is said to have been, I would then say: 'Face the brute!' Nothing impresses people in the age we live as these two things: fact and reason. No hostile foreign intelligence can survive exposure. Expose all the awful things you have been fussing about before the gaze of the people with documented proof acceptable to rational people. Then C.I.A. will melt away. Aside, I may tell you, if you do not have any documented proof on hand it is better not to cry 'wolf'. Credibility, once lost, is hard to recover.



Besides this, you have a terrific lot of other unconnected things to do at home if C.I.A. has to be made ineffective. Stand on your own feet. Stop planning your economy on the expectation of the hypothetical money of some other state's exchequer. Cut out showy and expensive state luxury. Create employment for the unemployed and the underemployed. Check soaring prices. Stamp out corruption from administration. Hang the money-makers who adulterate food and confiscate their property. Cultivate a new patriotism on the age-old Indian ideal of self-sacrifice as distinguished from vapid secularism stuffed with tantalizing hedonism. Sharpen your own intelligence system, so that C.I.A. in India may not come to mean 'Common Intelligence Absent'—instead of Central Intelligence Agency. Launch your own 'intelligence aggression' instead of pathetically crying about that you are being pried upon.

Above all, shed fear, non-charity of heart, and dependence on others. If C.I.A. has grown in India to a pernicious degree, it has received all the nourishment from Indian situations of weakness. There is no other source of its supposed evil power in India except all sorts of cultivated weaknesses of Indians. This fact must be grasped well if you want to do anything creatively helpful in the matter. Make yourself strong

in every conceivable way, stand four square on your own feet without false expectations and false fears, and C.I.A. will have gone back home to plan something more intelligent and civilized.

Take care that you do not identify all American people with C.I.A. and teach the Indian people to hate all Americans. Hatred does greater harm to the hater than to the hated, and deeply hurts his mental health. So beware how you handle your propaganda machinery.

About the Yeti or the Abominable Snowman, either be strong enough to find it out and 'face the brute', or be wise enough to ignore its alleged footprints.

About Māyā, be strong enough to attain *citta-suddhi*, purity of mind, and discover its real nature or whole-heartedly resign yourself to God, and it disappears.

There is no need to be harrowed by any of the three. Gather inner and outer strength, be fearless to desperation. And there is no harm in being discretely open-eyed so that illusion may not pass for something real.

May I repeat, above all, that you should stand on your own feet? The nation that cannot stand on its own feet, its time is not yet. So said Swami Vivekananda.

25 October, 1972

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947. References: Questions 1, 2 and 3, pp. 378-81; 4, p. 431.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (1963), pp. 35-6.

The Himalayas rank as one of nature's sublimest of creations. They have entered into the Indian national consciousness in a

Himalayan way. They have determined our philosophy, history, literature, culture, and civilization, in short our *Weltanschauung*, while standing aloof and gazing into the mysteries of the starry vault. What is their significance, gross and subtle, physical and spiritual? The *Editorial* of the month is an attempt to remind ourselves of the Himalayan heritage.

To those pessimistic elderly moralists who neither have breadth of vision nor insight into modern sociological phenomena, 'Religion and the College Student' will offer an optimistic message and spread out a new vision. The authors have based their conclusions on an extensive survey conducted among 500 students of 10 college or university campuses in U.S.A. And they have discovered many 'sheep' in 'wolf's clothing'. Having constantly read and heard of promiscuity, drug-addiction, counter-culture, crime, etc., among American youth, it may come as a surprise and a relief to many that a majority of the youth among whom this survey was conducted wish either for 'God-realization or knowledge of the Divine' or 'peace of mind'! The findings of this survey underscore the statement of Dr. Cohen: 'We are witnessing this reawakening of spiritual faith in increasing numbers of young people. . . . The particular creed does not seem as important as the degree of conviction.' A careful study of this painstaking and documented essay by students—no less by their parents and teachers—in and outside India might be helpful in bridging the generation-gap.

Brahmachari Bhumachaitanya is an inmate of the Ramakrishna Monastery of the Vedanta Society of Southern California. Mr. Eric Gruver, M.A., is instructor in World Religions and in Philosophy at Cypress College, Cypress, California.

Eight unpublished letters of Sister

Nivedita form the core of this article the first instalment of which is offered to our readers in this issue. Of the eight letters, five were written to Miss Josephine MacLeod and three to Alberta Sturges. From the standpoint of history, as the author points out, the content of these letters is not of major significance. But as these were written to intimate friends, they are spontaneous and reveal 'the woman behind the crusader, help us to see a facet of Nivedita's character not generally visible'. They also incidentally offer brilliant glimpses of Swami Vivekananda's character and impact on Nivedita, his 'spiritual daughter'.

Swami Vidyatmananda is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, now assisting in the Centre Vedantique Ramakrichna, Gretz, France.

Zen Buddhism has a special appeal to rational and sceptical man—with some religious aspiration—in every age, because it is not dogmatic, and its approach is intuitive and individualistic. Prof. D. C. Gupta, Osaka University of Foreign Studies, writes on this subject with ample understanding. He has based his essay on the works of Sir Charles Eliot and Dr. D. T. Suzuki.

Although Sri Ramakrishna was a blazing example of renunciation and dispassion, yet he had deep sympathy and compassion for the worldly people. With this unusually keen insight into human nature, he analysed the problems of the householders who had spiritual hunger and gave them assurance and valuable guidance. Swami Budhananda's 'Worldly Duties and Spiritual Life', besides embodying many of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings to householders, is a comprehensive approach to a theme which is of utmost concern to an overwhelming majority of our readers.



### TO OUR READERS

With this number the *Prabuddha Bharata* enters its seventy-eighth volume. On this joyous occasion of the New Year's advent we offer our hearty good wishes and greetings to all our readers and subscribers, contributors and reviewers, advertisers, friends, and sympathisers.

We hopefully think that the Journal has been unobtrusively discharging its duties of 'awakening' men and women to an awareness of the potential divinity in oneself, in one's neighbour, and in the whole perceptible cosmos. The sleep of *avidyā* or ignorance from which one is to awake to the consciousness of divinity is very difficult to break. As if that is not enough, in these contemporary times, men assiduously invent and advertise new ways of stunning and devastating the mind through drugs and drinks, false beliefs and philosophies. All those who refuse to forfeit their sanity and are desirous of attaining the luminous knowledge of the inner self will find a

dependable ally in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. 'Awakener, ever forward! Speak thy stirring words', Swami Vivekananda, its founder, had commanded it. The Journal, we believe, is carrying out his command.

In the new volume we will endeavour to maintain some of the features of the previous years, and introduce one or two new ones. 'Excursions into *Uddhava-Gītā*' by Swami Yatiswarananda, the first instalment of which appears elsewhere in this issue, is one such.

If we are permitted to take the reader into confidence, we like to drop a hint. The Journal no doubt enjoys a fair-sized readership. But we feel it has to bear its message of strength and wisdom to many more who are in need of it but do not know how to obtain it. The benefited reader may well help many seeking brothers by introducing and recommending the Journal to them.

### REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**PATHWAY TO GOD: BY M. K. GANDHI, COMPILED BY M. S. DESHPANDE, Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14, 1971, pp. 74, Rs. 2/-.**

Mahatma Gandhi looked upon life as a sacred opportunity and cherished it as a pathway to God. He insisted on utilizing every occasion as an opening and every crisis as a test in this spiritual adventure. The present compilation of his writings under the heads of the intellectual, the moral and the spiritual aspects of *sadhana* throws a good deal of light on his approach and practice.

Of particular interest are the pages where his famous 'Inner Voice' is described. 'I saw no form. I have never tried for it, for I have always believed God to be without form. But what I did hear was

like a Voice from afar and yet quite near. It was as unmistakable as some human voice, definitely speaking to me, and irresistible. I was not dreaming at the time I heard the Voice. The hearing of the Voice was preceded by a terrific struggle within me. Suddenly the Voice came upon me. I listened, made certain that it was the Voice and the struggle ceased. I was calm. The determination was made accordingly, the date and the hour of the fast fixed. Joy came over me. This was between 11 and 12 midnight. I felt refreshed' (p. 57). Indeed, there are, as every seeker on the path knows, Voices and voices even as there are Visions and visions. The question is which one is authentic and which a pseudo.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

**GURU'S GRACE: AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MOTHER KRISHNABAI, TR. BY SWAMI RAMDAS, Published by Anandashram, Kanhangad, South India, pp. 175, Rs. 5/-.**

In this disarmingly frank autobiography of Mother Krishnabai at Anandashram is found a graphic account of the growth of a sattvic human consciousness into an effective universal consciousness under the hammer of pain, grief, disappointment, and struggle all through life. The story is moving and inspiring to every seeker of Truth who is faced with resistance from the agents of ignorance and darkness—both in him and in the universe. Especially instructive are the necessity of psycho-

logical change leading to the perception of the One Divine everywhere, the indispensability of the grace and help of the Guru, the role of personal effort in meditation and conscious self-enlargement. The book serves also as a history of the Anandashram of Swami Ramdas. Spiritual experiences vouchsafed to the author by the Guru—Papa Ramdas—the ascent of her consciousness from the lower centres upward and the luminous change brought about in her being thereby, the power of *Ramnam* as witnessed in many a crisis, are described in detail.

A model of humility, veracity, and sincerity in the spiritual history of India.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, SARGACHI

#### REPORT FOR 1968-71

In addition to conducting daily worship, religious classes and discourses, and celebration of the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, the Ashrama is running six educational institutions.

*Higher Secondary Multipurpose School* has three streams—Humanities, Science, and Agriculture. Here 420 students are educated under a good number of qualified teachers. Ample provision is made for practical classes in Science and Agriculture. There are also Library-Cum-Reading Room and carpentry-workshop in the school. Besides the usual courses, students are also given religious instructions. Some poor but meritorious students are given stipends from the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Mission.

*Junior Basic Schools*, three in number, have a total strength of 508 boys and girls, from 6 to 11 years of age. Students are taught up to class V by 15 teachers trained in Basic Education, Spinning, Clay-modelling, Painting, Embroidery, and Agriculture are the subjects.

*Junior Basic Training Institute* is a residential

institute meant for training up teachers for Junior Basic Schools. 100 trainees are in this institute.

*School-Cum-Community Centre* teaches the villagers rudiments of health and hygiene and helps them in various ways to better their lives.

The results of final Public Examinations of Higher Secondary Multipurpose School and Junior Basic Training Institute are uniformly brilliant.

There are good arrangements for sessional games and sports for the schools and the training institute. There are four separate *public libraries*, one of which is under the Rural Library Scheme of the State Government. Total number of books in all the libraries is 12,251; monthlies and periodicals, 37; daily newspapers, 13; average daily attendance in the reading room, 48. The Ashrama maintained two *Students' Homes* for the students of top classes. 46 students were admitted in 1970-71.

*Charitable Dispensary* provides one qualified physician and a registered compounder. In 1970-71 a total number of 9,645 cases were treated. In the veterinary section, 140 cattle received treatment. The dispensary has been aided by the Murshidabad District Board and one Charitable Trust.

The Ashrama has a branch at Berhampore six miles away from Sargachi and it has a big library and a free reading room. Weekly religious classes and discourses are held regularly here.