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CONTENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Answers	41
Onward for Ever!	43
Sri Ramakrishna: His Eternal Call — <i>Editorial</i>	43
Worldly Duties and Spiritual Life — <i>Swami Budhananda</i>	49
Some Correspondence of Sister Nivedita — <i>Swami Vidyatmananda</i>	58
Zen Sect of Buddhism— <i>Prof. D. C. Gupta</i> ..	63
Reporting Two Fireside Talks at Mayavati (1) Swami Gambhirananda's Reflections on His Recent Visit to the West ..	66
(2) The General Secretary's Visit to the West	75
Notes and Comments	78
Reviews and Notices	79
News and Reports	80

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No. 2

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Mukherji): 'How can God have any will ? Does He lack anything ?'

Sri Ramakrishna (with a smile): 'What's wrong in that ? Water is water whether it is still or in waves. The snake is a snake whether it is coiled up motionless or wriggles along. A man is the same whether sitting still or engaged in action.'

'How can you eliminate from the Reality the universe and its living beings ? If you do that, It will lack Its full weight. You cannot find out the total weight of the bel-fruit if you eliminate the seeds and shell.'

'Brahman is unattached. One finds good and bad smells in the air, but the air itself is untainted. Brahman and Sakti are identical. It is the Primordial Power that has become the world and all living beings.'

Mukherji: 'Why does one deviate from the path of yoga ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'As the saying goes: "In my mother's womb I was in a state of yoga ; coming into the world, I have eaten its clay. The midwife has cut one shackle, the navel cord ; but how shall I cut the shackle of maya ?"

'Maya is nothing but "woman" and "gold". A man attains yoga when he has freed his mind from these two. The Self—the Supreme Self—is the magnet ; the individual self is the needle. The individual self experiences the state of yoga when it is attracted by the Supreme Self to Itself. But the magnet cannot attract the needle if the needle is covered with clay ; it can draw the needle only when the clay is removed. The clay of "woman" and "gold" must be removed.'

Mukherji: 'How can one remove it ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Weep for God with a longing heart. Tears shed for Him will wash away the clay. When you have thus freed yourself from impurity, you will be attracted by the magnet. Only then will you attain yoga.'

Question (asked by Bankim): 'Sir, how can one develop divine love?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Through restlessness—the restlessness a child feels for his mother. The child feels bewildered when he is separated from his mother, and weeps longingly for her. If a man can weep like that for God, he can even see Him.

'At the approach of the dawn the eastern horizon becomes red. Then one knows it will soon be sunrise. Likewise, if you see a person restless for God, you can be pretty certain that he hasn't long to wait for His vision.

'A disciple asked his teacher, "Sir, please tell me how I can see God." "Come with me," said the guru, "and I shall show you." He took the disciple to a lake, and both of them got into the water. Suddenly the teacher pressed the disciple's head under the water. After a few moments he released him and the disciple raised his head and stood up. The guru asked him, "How did you feel?" The disciple said, "Oh! I thought I should die; I was panting for breath." The teacher said, "When you feel like that for God, then you will know you haven't long to wait for His vision."

'Let me tell you something. What will you gain by floating on the surface? Dive a little under the water. The gems lie deep under the water; so what is the good of throwing your arms and legs about on the surface? A real gem is heavy. It doesn't float; it sinks to the bottom. To get the real gem you must dive deep.'

Question (asked by a devotee): 'Sir, how can one see God?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Can you ever see God if you do not direct your whole mind toward Him? The *Bhagavata* speaks about Sukadeva. When he walked about he looked like a soldier with fixed bayonet. His gaze did not wander; it had only one goal and that was God. This is the meaning of yoga.

'The chatak bird drinks only rain-water. Though the Ganges, the Jamuna, the Godavari, and all other rivers are full of water, and though the seven oceans are full to the brim, still the chatak will not touch them. It will drink only the water that falls from the clouds.

'He who has developed such yoga can see God. In the theatre the audience remains engaged in all kinds of conversation, about home, office, and school, till the curtain goes up; but no sooner does it go up than all conversation comes to a stop, and the people watch the play with fixed attention. If after a long while someone utters a word or two, it is about the play.

'After a drunkard has drunk his liquor he talks only about the joy of drunkenness.'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

How much better it is today when we have so many divisions of science—how much more is it possible for everyone to have great mental culture, with this great variety before us! How much better it is, even on the physical plane, to have the opportunity of so many various things spread before us, so that we may choose any one we like, the one which suits us best! So it is with the world of religions. It is a most glorious dispensation of the Lord that there are so many religions in the world; and would to God that these would increase every day, until every man had a religion unto himself!

Vedanta understands that and therefore preaches the one principle and admits various methods. It has nothing to say against anyone—whether you are a Christian, or a Buddhist, or a Jew, or a Hindu, whatever mythology you believe, whether you owe allegiance to the prophet of Nazareth, or of Mecca, or of India, or of anywhere else, whether you yourself are a prophet—it has nothing to say. It only preaches the principle which is the background of every religion and of which all the prophets and saints and seers are but illustrations and manifestations. Multiply your prophets if you like; it has no objection. It only preaches the principle, and the method it leaves to you. Take any path you like; follow any prophet you like; but have only that method which suits your own nature.

Sri Kanchi

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: HE AND HIS ETERNAL CALL

EDITORIAL

I

Students of religion and religious movements have to make a clear distinction between saints and mystics on the one hand and prophets and divine incarnations on the other. Though both classes are men of God, the latter stand apart by their spiritual power and charisma, versatility and saving grace. Prophets and divine incarnations originate new religions and movements, or revitalize old ones, and the impetus they impart remains dynamic for centuries.

In fact, an incarnation of God—his life and his message—never becomes an anachronism. And that is a strange phenomenon. He displays a vitality that defies and eludes the ravages of time. Never does his charm fade out or his voice trail off. Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, and Caitanya—each one of them has proved his immortal presence and inspiration in the lives of millions of religious seekers. When they lived and moved as mortals, people heard them with awe and wonder. For they 'spoke with authority and not as the scribes'. Death could lay its cold hands on their physical frame only but not on their divine charm and masterful voice.

'It is My vow', says Śrī Rāma, 'to bestow freedom from fear on all creatures—to anyone seeking refuge and saying even once "I am yours".'¹ We hardly know how many centuries ago these words were spoken. But today a devotee may hear them and immediately a transformation can come over him. He takes refuge in Śrī Rāma, finds peace, joy, and enlightenment.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's words, especially those in the immortal *Gītā*, have a similar relevance and appeal. 'Constantly remember Me and fight', 'O Arjuna, be thou an instrument

¹ *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki, VI, 18.33.

only', 'Abandon all dharmas and come to Me alone for shelter. I will deliver you from all sins; do not grieve'²—these were not addressed to Arjuna alone on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. They were addressed to the sincere spiritual seekers of all times and climes. That is why they strike responsive chords in our hearts and we listen to them with remarkable results.

What the Buddha said to his disciples with his dying breath—'You must rely upon yourselves and you must be your own lamps to show you the path . . . Work out your own salvation with diligence'—has not died. That commandment enthuses many a flagging seeker and eggs him on to his exalted goal.

What tremendous power is packed into the words of Jesus Christ, the 'Saviour-Messenger', as contained in the synoptic Gospels! They stir the spiritually-inclined persons deeply and make them take up their crosses and follow Jesus; or sell all they have and give it to the poor, to become humble servants of the Galilean.

Likewise call the other prophets—Moses, Zoroaster, Mohammed, and Caitanya. And those who are attuned to them hear their voices. If there are people who do not hear the call of these divine personages, then it does not prove the nonexistence of these children of light. It only betrays the spiritual deafness or stupor of those people.

II

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886), who lived very close to us in time, proved to be a remarkably worthy successor to this prophetic line. Not simply that. All the previous incarnations and prophets—Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Christ, Mohammed, Caitanya—became living and vibrant in him and spoke once again through his lips. He is, as Swami Vivekananda once pointed out, 'the re-

formed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion'.³

The God-hunger that came on him early swept him like a tornado. For twelve long years he went on realizing the various facets of Divine reality in breathless succession. He did not know when it was day and when the sun set. Sleep and hunger forsook him. He was only aware of a raging fire of godly hunger within his breast. He practised renunciation, self-control, and humility to limits normally impossible. His devotion and adherence to truth were phenomenal, his passionate love for God unprecedented. Similarly, his realizations were extensive and surpassing. Every hour and day brought him ecstatic visions of the transcendental Reality. Gods and goddesses appeared before him in a cortege and soon disappeared in his body. The prophets and divine incarnations on whom he meditated showed up in celestial forms and dissolved in him. His ravenous spiritual appetite was finally appeased with banquets at the tables of Jesus and Mohammed. He came to live, owing to a prolonged habit, on a plane where a thin partition separated him from the Absolute or Brahman. And the slightest divine stimulus used to tear the partition and plunge him into *samādhi*. For the rest of his life he taught earnest seekers, trained a band of apostles, transmitted his power to them, imperceptibly initiated a major religious renaissance, and passed away.

Did he pass away? Dead and gone, as other mortals?

No, he did not die and go like other mortals, because he did not live as they do.

Even when he lived, his body was no barrier to his simultaneous presence in different places. Some of his disciples and associates were amazed to see him—and feel

² *Bhagavad-gītā*, VIII, 7; XI, 33; XVIII, 66.

³ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas), Vol. VI (1963), pp. 185-6.

his body and limbs—in far-off places and in Calcutta, behind closed doors, while he was sitting or talking or resting in his quiet little room at Dakshineswar. How then could death have made any difference to his existence?

Thousands of years after the physical death of a prophet or divine incarnation his spiritual presence is felt and seen. Sometimes his influence grows with the passage of time. If it is a law of the spiritual realm that a divine manifestation survives the destruction of the physical sheath, then Sri Ramakrishna, to whom all the past incarnations and prophets became actualities and in whom they were absorbed and assimilated, survives his physical death too. And what a vitally living presence he should be!

Whoever approaches even one aspect of the all-pervading truth or succeeds in embodying to perfection one great ideal—be he a poet, a thinker, a philosopher, a scientist, a saint—continues to live in the memory of humanity, shaping its course and outlook, and enjoying an apparent immortality. Sri Ramakrishna worshipped truth with unparalleled devotion and became one with it through its different aspects. He embodied to perfection a great many of the sublime ideals of humanity. Death, whose kingdom is limited to the space-time universe, cannot touch one who is identified with the transcendental truth, the substratum of the space-time universe. As the embodiment of many noble virtues, he stands deathless like the Himalayas with sublime peaks.

So there is nothing uncanny if Sri Ramakrishna appeared frequently to Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, and assured her that she was not a widow, and that he had merely 'passed from one room into another'. From the room of the sense-bound world to the room of the super-sensuous world.

No wonder if Swami Vivekananda felt and declared that he was only an instrument in his Master's hands, a puppet whose strings were manipulated by deft, invisible hands. 'Time and again', he once disclosed to a group of intimate brother-disciples and devotees, 'have I received in this life marks of his grace. He stands behind and gets all this work done by me.'⁴

Once a disciple asked Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Ramakrishna Order, 'But, Maharaj, do you mean that Sri Ramakrishna is still living?' Swami Brahmananda instantly replied: 'Are you crazy? If he were not alive, why should we lead such a life, giving up our homes and all our possessions? He is.'⁵

That was the opinion of all Sri Ramakrishna's other disciples, lay and monastic. Swami Vivekananda, who was their undisputed leader, gave vent to their feelings in the following words:

'Sri Ramakrishna is a force. You should not think that his doctrine is this or that. But he is a power, living even now in his disciples and working in the world. I saw him growing in his ideas. He is still growing. Sri Ramakrishna was both a Jivanmukta and an Acharya.'⁶

Let no one think that, since all his disciples have passed away, Sri Ramakrishna does not exist any more and is not active. If he dwelt in his disciples, those disciples also could not have ceased to exist. All his disciples declared with one voice that it was the Master who was spreading his message himself and what they themselves did was only nominal. If he was a force then, he is a force even now, for a spiritual force gathers strength even when its physical centre disappears. Therefore Swami Vivekananda saw Sri Ramakrishna as a 'power

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. VI (1963), p. 478.

⁵ Swami Prabhavananda: *The Eternal Companion* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1945), p. 192.

⁶ *op. cit.*, Vol. V (1959), p. 269.

... working in the world' and 'growing in his ideas'.

III

Sri Ramakrishna wept for God the Mother as nobody had done. After realizing God in all His aspects, he wept again. But this second weeping had a different meaning. The Divine Mother had revealed to his inner eye that he had many pure-souled young disciples. Why were they not coming? He had become fed up dealing with the worldly-minded. He longed to talk to the young eagle-souls whose feet never touched the muddy ground of the world. And pass on to them the treasures he had gathered. The yearning he felt for them was great, and it spilled over in the evenings as a piteous cry from the roof of the building in the garden. 'Oh, where are you all?' he used to yell. 'Come here! I am dying to see you!'⁷ It was more than a mother's longing for her lost child or a lover's for his beloved. The call worked like a magic spell and the disciples started to arrive one by one caught in its invisible toils. His happiness knew no bounds when he met, talked, communed and forged indissoluble bonds with them.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'He who sincerely prays to God will certainly come here. He must.'⁸ What did he mean by 'here'? If we do not sound esoteric or doctrinaire, we can safely say that he meant the divine ideal embodied in him. Because he had long before destroyed any sense of ego or personality, he could not have referred to an individual named Ramakrishna. He had made it amply clear to his devotees and disciples that he was interested in their spiritual welfare, that they need not even visit him if such visits hindered their pro-

gress towards God. 'If you are sure to find God elsewhere,' he had once told young Harinath (Turiyananda), 'go there by all means. What I want is that you realize God, transcend the misery of the world and enjoy divine beatitude.'⁹ If one understood 'here' to mean Ramakrishna as an individual living at a particular time and place, one would lose much.

There were occasions when he parted the veils and revealed who he really was. At other times he clearly told the disciples what he felt about himself. Once Sri Ramakrishna asked M. if he ever dreamt of him. M. replied that he dreamt of Sri Ramakrishna, many times. 'If you ever see me instructing you,' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'then know that it is Satchidananda Himself that does so.'¹⁰ He once told Girishchandra Ghosh, 'If your spiritual consciousness has been awakened at this place, know that I am only an instrument.'¹¹

Further Sri Ramakrishna declared more than once that he saw many devotees coming to him from many lands and many peoples, across seas and continents. This vision of his has been fulfilled to the letter. If Sri Ramakrishna meant by 'here' only himself as a person living at Dakshineswar Kālī temple, neither the statement about the coming of his foreign devotees nor their coming years after his death has any meaning.

Sri Ramakrishna called out from the roof of the building in Dakshineswar garden. His disciples soon started coming. Sri Ramakrishna is 'living' still and his spiritual stores are well stocked. There are hungry souls craving for spiritual food. He continues to call the hungry brood to his overflowing table. In the meanwhile several 'transmitting towers' have sprung

⁷ M.: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1947), p. 223.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 816.

⁹ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1964), p. 479.

¹⁰ *The Gospel*, p. 243.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 673.

up to relay and amplify the call. Swami Vivekananda and other apostles, M., the recorder of the Master's *Gospel*, his western biographers like Max Müller, Romain Rolland, and Christopher Isherwood, and the monastic preachers sent to different countries—these and many such agencies are the transmitters of the Master's plaintive call to spiritual aspirants all over the world.

Those who have ears to hear let them hear.

IV

While reading the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, some utterances of the Master suddenly strike deeper chords in one's heart. One somehow gets the feeling that the Master is addressing the reader too besides the person to whom he is speaking. We have attempted to give our readers here a few such statements of the Master relating to the inner life, with our reflections. Any devoted reader of the *Gospel* may cull out other such sets of utterances depending on their appeal and his need.

That Sri Ramakrishna implied much more than what his words literally conveyed—and wanted his devotees to gather that implication—is corroborated by an incident narrated by M. in the *Gospel* :

'The carriage [with the Master in it] rolled along Burrabazar. Everywhere there were signs of great festivity. The night was dark but illuminated with myriads of lights. The carriage came to the Chitpur road, which was also brightly lighted. The people moved in lines like ants. The crowd looked at the gaily decorated stores and stalls on both sides of the road. There were sweetmeat stores and perfume stalls. Pictures, beautiful and gaudy, hung from the walls. Well-dressed shopkeepers sprayed the visitors with rose-water. The carriage stopped in front of a perfume stall. The Master looked at the pictures and lights and felt happy as a child. People were talking loudly. He cried

out: 'Go forward! Move on!' He laughed. He said to Baburam with a loud laugh: 'Move on! What are you doing?' The devotees laughed too. They understood that the Master wanted them to move forward to God and not be satisfied with their present state.'¹²

Rightly did M. and the other devotees gather the hint—'to move forward to God and not be satisfied with their present state'—and the Master was happy that they did. When we read this passage, should we not also understand the obvious import? The Master stands behind us in this busy market-place of *māyā* and asks us not to be deluded by the show and noise and agreeable sensations but to move towards God, the only reality and bliss. His other sayings and commandments also need to be grasped similarly.

(a) '*God alone is the Reality and all else is unreal.*'

*'The only purpose of life is to realize God.'*¹³

In these two simple but pithy statements made to M. we feel the very heartbeat of the Great Master. While mirroring what Sri Ramakrishna himself did all his life, they tell us the essence of the spiritual quest. Without being convinced of God's reality and the unreality of all else, the spiritual quest does not get off the ground. Once the quest is on there can be no doubt about life's purpose. On reading Sri Ramakrishna's life the residual impression one has is this: God alone is real and life is useless without His realization. In these two sentences Sri Ramakrishna gives a verbal representation to his own life.

(b) '*You must practise discipline.*'¹⁴

By knowing God's reality and the purpose of life you only have an intellectual

¹² *ibid.*, p. 610.

¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 230, 213.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 56.

grasp of what spiritual life is. Making that grasp an unshakeable conviction and converting that conviction into realization needs constant effort. That is called *sādhanā* or spiritual discipline. Sri Ramakrishna wants all spiritual aspirants to practise discipline. 'I have done the full quota of spiritual striving, you at least do a fraction,' he used to urge his disciples. Without sincere and sustained *sādhanā*, an aspirant's life will be hollow, meaningless and boring.

'Can't one get everything through God's grace? Why practise discipline?'—one might easily raise a doubt. Sri Ramakrishna never discounted God's grace. In fact he very often asserted that without God's grace one cannot realize Him. The perfect guide—with the sharpest insight—that he was, he pointed out through the simile of the boat, sail, and breeze that one at least needed to unfurl the sail to catch and benefit from the breeze of God's grace. And that unfurling of the sail is the practising of spiritual discipline.

This teaching also was given to M. But its usefulness touches all those who can hear the message.

(c) *'Dive deep; one does not get the precious gems by merely floating on the surface.'*¹⁵

—said Sri Ramakrishna to a monk belonging to the sect of Nānak. The monk was a worshipper of the formless God.

Since he was a monk, we can safely presume that he had turned towards the Real and turned his back on the unreal. He had acquired the fundamental requisite of a spiritual life. He had also been practising spiritual discipline. But, it seems, he was not able to plunge deep into his inner self. Sri Ramakrishna, 'the King of the realm of spiritual sentiment', could, with one glance,

discover the shallowness of his spiritual life. So he advised him to dive deeper.

Generally there is very little depth in our spiritual life. In fact, most of us float on the surface all our life. We become so much used to surface-life that we begin to think we have gained in depth. What an inner poverty! Sri Ramakrishna was an expert underwater explorer in the ocean of God. The treasures he had discovered were immensely valuable. He knew that God's storehouse is inexhaustible. To get those treasures one has to dive deep. If an aspirant floats on the surface he will get only froth and not gems and pearls.

This saying of Sri Ramakrishna is a call to all truth-seekers to intensify their spiritual search and struggles.

(d) *'Build a quiet place for thinking of God—a place for your meditation. Have it ready. I shall visit it.'*¹⁶

These words of Sri Ramakrishna were addressed to one Shyam Basu. Whether he took what the Master said seriously and built a quiet meditation cottage is very doubtful. And there is no record that the Master visited any such place after he came to stay at Shyampukur. He was already suffering from the throat disorder to which he finally succumbed.

But were these words meant only for Shyam Basu, or for all those who would hear them? The former is very unlikely.

Building a quiet place for meditation anywhere in the outside world is difficult. Even if one succeeds in building such a place, it will not be a quiet place as long as the mind continues to rage and roar. So the best quiet place that one can think of is one's own heart. A tranquil heart and a controlled mind—where is greater quietness found than in them? 'Having it ready'

(Continued on p. 57)

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 298.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 901.

WORLDLY DUTIES AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from previous issue)

In another place of the *Gospel* we find Sri Ramakrishna drawing our attention pointedly to the distinction between pseudo-religion and true righteousness which can be attained only through proper discharge of worldly duties. He said :

‘... There are people who spout verses from the scriptures and talk big, but in their conduct they are quite different. Ramprasanna is constantly busy procuring opium and milk for the hathayogi. He says that Manu enjoins it upon man to serve the sadhu. But his old mother has not enough to eat. She walks to the market to buy her own groceries. It makes me very angry.’⁷

Knowing fully well what pertinent questions could arise here, said Sri Ramakrishna continuing on the topic :

‘But here you have to consider one thing. When a man is intoxicated with ecstatic love of God, then who is father, mother or wife? His love of God is so intense that he becomes mad with it. Then he has no duty to perform. He is free from all debts. What is this divine intoxication? In this state a man forgets the world. He also forgets his own body, which is so dear to all. Chaitanya had this intoxication. ...’

Another aspect of Sri Ramakrishna’s important teachings on worldly duties and spiritual life finds beautiful expression in what he said to Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Vidyasagar was a truly great man—great in learning, character, highly developed social

consciousness and quiet altruism. To this venerable man who had risen above the sordid selfishness of the common worldly creature and who was deeply involved in altruistic activities, Sri Ramakrishna revealed that altruism attained true meaning only by being converted into true spirituality, love of God. He said:

‘The activities you are engaged in are good. It is very good if you can perform them in a selfless spirit, renouncing egotism, giving up the idea that you are the doer. Through such action one develops love and devotion to God, and ultimately realizes Him. ... There is gold buried in your heart, but you are not yet aware of it. It is covered with a thin layer of clay. Once you are aware of it, all these activities of yours will lessen. ... Go forward. ... Through selfless work, love of God grows in the heart. Then, through His grace, one realizes Him in course of time. God can be seen. One can talk to Him as I am talking to you.’⁸

This was the great tidings which Vidyasagar deserved to receive by virtue of his great life and in fact needed too.

Even our noblest of activities in the world needs to be kept in perspective so that our vision may not be warped by the subtle silken veil of good-doing. To Ishan, who was advanced in age and spiritual aspiration, but was somehow stuck-up in good-doing, a sort of worldly piety, Sri Ramakrishna said:

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 375.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 35.

'What are these things you busy yourself with, this arbitration and leadership? I hear you settle people's quarrels and that they make you the arbiter. You have been doing this kind of work for a long time. Let those who care for such things do them. Now devote yourself more and more to the feet of God. ... Don't forget yourself because of what you hear from your flatterers. Flatterers gather round a worldly man. Vultures gather round the carcass of a cow. ... Arbitration and leadership? How trifling these are! Charity and doing good to others? You have had enough of these. Those who are to devote themselves to such things belong to a different class. Now the time is ripe for you to devote your mind to the lotus feet of God. If you realize God you will get everything else. ... Be mad! Be mad with love of God! Let people know Ishan has gone mad and cannot perform worldly duties any more. Then people will no longer come to you for leadership and arbitration. ...'⁹

Duties of the world are to be so performed that through each performance we become less worldly and come closer to God, and not move further away from Him. It is possible to do a good lot of pious things in the world and a great deal of social work and become progressively more worldly and less spiritual, unless we always deliberately try to correlate all our thoughts and actions to the fundamental duty and ultimate objective of life, which is the attainment of spiritual illumination. In all his teachings to householders Sri Ramakrishna was never tired of holding before them the glowing picture of their spiritual destiny and showing to them how through everything they need do as duty in the world, they could and should advance Godward.

III

In his teachings, with bold strokes of his brush, Sri Ramakrishna paints his ideal

man and woman of the world. What do they look like? Whom do they resemble?

- (a) Sri Ramakrishna's ideal man of the world is he in whom all the qualities of the head and heart are fully developed and evenly balanced.
- (b) He acquits himself admirably in whatever position he may be placed.
- (c) He is full of guileless faith and love of God, and yet his dealings with others leave nothing to be desired.
- (d) When he is engaged in worldly affairs, he is a thorough man of business.
- (e) In the assemblage of the learned he establishes his claim as a man of superior learning, and in debates he shows wonderful powers of reasoning.
- (f) To his parents he is obedient and affectionate; to his relatives and friends he is loving and sweet; to his neighbours he is kind and sympathetic, always ready to do them good.
- (g) To his wife he is the very god of love. He lovingly takes her Godward as a co-pilgrim.¹⁰
- (h) He performs his duties without attachment; brings up the children with adequate care until they become major; if she is faithful, provides for his wife with enough to sustain her even after his death.
- (i) He surrenders the fruits of all his actions, his gain and loss, to God.
- (j) Day and night he prays only for devotion and for nothing else.
- (k) The ideal wife of Sri Ramakrishna's conception has very little lust and anger. She is pure in body and chaste in thought.
- (l) She never encourages excessive sensuality on the part of her husband.
- (m) She is endowed with affection, kindness, devotion, modesty and other

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 580-2.

¹⁰ *Sayings*, pp. 107-8.

noble qualities. Such a wife serves all, looking on them as her children.

- (n) She helps increase her husband's love of God.
- (o) She does not spend much money lest her husband should have to work hard and thus not have leisure to think of God.

The Holy Mother lays the greatest emphasis on two things about this ideal woman: modesty and forbearance. She says:

'The only ornament of a woman is her modesty. The flower feels itself most blessed, when it is offered at the feet of the divine image. Otherwise, it is better for it to wither away on the tree. It pains me very much to see a dandy making a bouquet of such flowers and putting it to his nose, saying, "Ah, what a nice smell!" Perhaps the next moment he drops it on the floor. He may even trample it under his shoes. He does not even look at it.'¹¹

About forbearance she said:

'Women should not get angry so easily. They must practise forbearance.... Women are generally very sensitive. A mere word upsets them. And words also are so cheap nowadays. They should have patience and try to put up with parents or husbands in spite of difficulties.'¹²

In physical relationship, it is the precept of all scriptures, the husband and wife who intend to move Godward should be abstemious.

Sri Ramakrishna says:

'Your path as a married man is to live with your wife just as brother and sister after one or two children are born to you, and to pray to the Lord constantly that both of you may have strength to live a perfect life of spirituality and self-control.'¹³

On another occasion, he said to a householder devotee:

'You should not renounce woman completely; it is not harmful for a householder to live with his wife. But after the birth of one or two children, husband and wife should live as brother and sister.'¹⁴

Again, Sri Ramakrishna also said:

'Two obstacles to spiritual life are "woman and gold". Attachment to woman diverts one from the path leading to God.'¹⁵

We have to see clearly that there is no contradiction between these two sets of teachings. For men, women are obstacles; for women, men are obstacles. We have to understand the teaching in this way: it is the individual's lust which, keeping him body-bound, does not permit him to move Godward. It is only when a man or a woman has transcended his or her body-consciousness that spiritual experience is possible. The root of the obstacle is within oneself, not in the other.

And, therefore, after fulfilling to a certain degree their physical desires, husband and wife are advised to live as brother and sister in a spiritual comradeship for their pilgrimage to God-realization. But this cannot become a fact of experience unless husband and wife are pure-hearted and faithful to each other. And, above all, God's grace is needed; hence the advice for constant prayer.

The next important question is: Can a householder devotee try to earn more money without prejudicing his spiritual future? This question was put by a devotee to Sri Ramakrishna himself: 'Sir, may I try to have a larger income?' Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'Yes, if you mean to devote it to the life in the family based on discrimina-

¹¹ *Sri Sarada Devi: the Holy Mother*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1949, pp. 531-2.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 309.

¹³ *Sayings*, p. 101.

¹⁴ *The Gospel*, p. 862.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 185.

tion. But take care that you earn money by honest means.'¹⁶

And he also specified, 'For householders, money is a means of getting food, clothes, and a dwelling place, worshipping the deity and for serving holy men and devotees.'¹⁷ But he said, 'It's wrong to hoard money.' And distinguishing judicious saving from selfish hoarding, he enjoined that a householder must save money for paying his debts to gods, ancestors, sages, wife and children, and for various other exigencies of life.

There are some other important questions in regard to a householder devotee's life which Sri Ramakrishna answered.

A devotee asked, 'Sir, we are householders; how long should we perform our worldly duties?'

Sri Ramakrishna replied:

'Surely you have worldly duties to perform. You must bring up your children, support your wife, and provide for her in case of your death; if you don't, then I shall call you unkind. Sages like Sukadeva had compassion. He who has no compassion is no man.'

The devotee's second question was, 'How long should one support one's children?'

'As long as they have not reached their majority. When the chick becomes a full-grown bird and can look after itself, then the mother bird pecks at it and does not allow it to come near her.'

The third question the devotee asked was also very important: 'Sir, what is the householder's duty to his wife?'

Sri Ramakrishna said:

'You should give her spiritual advice and support her during your lifetime and provide for her livelihood after your death, if she is a chaste wife. But if you are intoxicated with the knowledge of God, then you have no more duties to perform. Then God Himself

will think about your morrows, if you yourself cannot do so. God Himself will think about your family if you are intoxicated with Him.'¹⁸

One of the most important questions before the householders who seek to move Godward is: how to harmonize their worldly and spiritual interests? In answer to this question, Sri Ramakrishna says, 'Do your work (in the world) with one hand, and hold the feet of the Lord with the other. When you have no work in the world to do, hold His feet fast to your heart with both your hands.'¹⁹

Elsewhere, making his precious teaching more clear with telling analogies on this most crucial problem of householder's life, Sri Ramakrishna teaches:

'Live in the world but keep the pitcher steady on your head: that is to say keep the mind firmly on God.

'I once said to the sepoys from the barracks, do your duty in the world but remember that the "pestle of death" will sometime smash your head. Be alert about it.

'In Kamarpukur I have seen the women of carpenter families making flattened rice with a husking machine. One woman kicks the end of the wooden beam, and another woman, while nursing her baby turns the paddy in the mortar dug in the earth. The second woman is always alert lest the pestle of the machine should fall on her hand. With the other hand she fries the soaked paddy in a pan. Besides, she is talking with customers; she says: "You owe us so much money. Please pay it before you go." Likewise do your different duties in the world, fixing your mind on God. But practice is necessary and one should also be alert. Only in this way can one safeguard both—God and the world.'²⁰

And he adds, while performing one's

¹⁶ *Sayings*, p. 99.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

¹⁸ *The Gospel*, pp. 595-6.

¹⁹ *Sayings*, p. 101.

²⁰ *The Gospel*, pp. 379-80.

duties in the world, one should constantly pray in this manner:

'O Lord, make my worldly duties fewer and fewer; otherwise, I find that I forget you when I am involved in too many activities. I may think that I am doing unselfish work but it turns out to be selfish.'²¹

In these days when egotistic altruism is often considered a substitute for serious religion, a warning of Sri Ramakrishna is significant. He says:

'Do not go out of your way to look for such works. Undertake only those works that present themselves to you and are of pressing necessity—and those also in a spirit of detachment.'²²

Householders who are earnest in their efforts to move Godward should not only know how to harmonize their worldly and spiritual interests but they should also live in the world in a special way, quite different from the humdrum way of the common, indifferent folk. To such aspirants, Sri Ramakrishna says:

- (1) 'Live in the world, but be not worldly. As the saying goes, make the frog dance before the snake, but let not the snake swallow the frog.'
- (2) 'A boat may stay in water but water should not stay in the boat. An aspirant may live in the world but the world should not live within him.'
- (3) 'What is the state of a man who is in the world but yet is free from its attachments? He is like a lotus leaf in water, or like a mud-fish in the marsh. Neither of these is polluted by the element in which it lives. The water does not wet the leaf nor does the mud stain the glossy coat of the fish.'²³
- (4) Further, such a householder may be compared to a waterfowl. It is constantly diving under water, yet by flut-

tering its wings only once it shakes off all trace of wet.²⁴

What sort of spiritual practices should he do? The Holy Mother teaches, 'spiritual progress becomes easier if husband and wife agree in their views regarding spiritual practices.'²⁵

Sri Ramakrishna says, of the many paths leading to God, the most suitable for this age, especially for the householders, is the path of devotion as taught by the great sage Nārada.

Devotion or love of God, according to Nārada, may be practised in a variety of ways, such as: constant remembrance of the Lord, meditation, repetition of His name, chanting His glory, study of devotional literature, singing devotional hymns, cultivation of various relationships to the Lord, keeping holy company, and avoiding evil company.

Sri Ramakrishna especially enjoins that the householder should specially seek holy company for such company elevates the mind and engenders yearning for and love of God. He says:

'The companionship of the holy and the wise is one of the main elements of spiritual progress.'²⁶

'... The worldly man must constantly live in the company of holy men. It is necessary for all, even for sannyasiṣ.

But it is specially necessary for the householder. His disease has become chronic because he has to live constantly in the midst of "woman and gold".²⁷

'As the blacksmith keeps alive the fire of his furnace by blowing the bellows, so the mind should be kept clean and glowing with the help of holy company.'²⁸

'Even the moist wood placed upon a fire soon becomes dry and finally begins to burn. Similarly holy company drives

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 71.

²² *ibid.*

²³ *Sayings*, p. 101.

²⁴ *The Gospel*, pp. 842-3.

²⁵ *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 324.

²⁶ *Sayings*, p. 119.

²⁷ *The Gospel*, p. 289.

²⁸ *Sayings*, p. 120.

away the moisture of greed and lust from the hearts of worldly persons and then the fire of *Viveka* (discrimination) burns steadily in them.'²⁹

From time to time the man of the world must also go into solitude and meditate. He should then say to himself, 'There is nobody in the world who is my own. Those whom I call my own are here only for two days. God alone is my own. He alone is my all in all. Alas, how shall I realize Him?'³⁰

Furthermore, he should constantly practise discrimination between the real and the unreal and earnestly pray to the Lord for faith and devotion.

One day a devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna with pathos in his voice, 'Sir, cannot we realize God without complete renunciation?' Sri Ramakrishna replied :

'Of course you can! ... I tell you the truth; there is nothing wrong in your being in the world but you must direct your mind toward God; otherwise, you will not succeed. Do your duty with one hand, and with the other hand hold to God. After the duty is over, you will hold to God with both hands.'³¹

On another occasion, after hearing some of Sri Ramakrishna's inspired sayings, a devotee exclaimed in exasperation, 'Sir, where is people's leisure? They must serve their English masters.' Sri Ramakrishna replied :

'Well, then give God the power of attorney. If a man entrusts his affairs to a good person, will the latter do him any harm? With all the sincerity of your heart, resign yourself to God and drive all your worries out of your mind. Do whatever duties God has assigned to you. The kitten does not have a calculating mind; it only cries, "mew, mew".'³²

IV

In the light of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, we have covered almost fully the issues confronted by married couples who are religious and seek to move Godward. But worldly duties and spiritual life are not the concerns of pious, married couples alone.

There are a good number of unmarried men and women, virgins, spinsters and bachelors, widows and widowers who have to live in what may be said to be the worldly milieu of life.

We are not concerned with those men and women who live wicked lives and out of wedlock. None can help them unless they turn from evil ways and repent. We are concerned with the good, earnest, sincere, aspiring souls who, while living in the world single lives, intend to move Godward. For some reason or other they cannot become monks and nuns. But they have virtually to live as monks and nuns. If they do not do so, if they cannot do so, if they will not do so, it is better, as St. Paul said, to marry and settle down.

For a variety of reasons high-minded grown up youths who have little fascination for the world cannot either enter the worldly life as responsible householders or renounce the world and become monks or nuns. Some keep sitting on the fence all their lives watching both the sides and never taking the decision. Perhaps this is also taking an invisible step in the inner evolutionary process. We really do not know. There are some who cannot go from home to homelessness because they inwardly seek a kind of pious security which is available even in the fringe of the world—a home, some money, some friends around. It is meet that those lacking in courage to take the leap of renunciation should not try to take a long jump and become spiritual cripples. There are others, — pure in heart and having genuine spirit of renuncia-

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 121.

³⁰ *The Gospel*, pp. 842-3.

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 66.

³² *ibid.*, p. 595.

tion,—who are kept tied to the world because their parents are so morbidly worldly that they by adopting every manner of cleverness tirelessly go on putting in their way one obstacle after another. They would rather see their sons or daughters become rakes than become monks or nuns—such is the perverse possessiveness of some parents. This attachment is understandable in the case of those who have only one son or daughter. But you come across this most baffling phenomenon particularly in the Hindu society in which parents having quite a number of grown up and well placed sons and daughters and also grandchildren raise a storm of sentimental objection when a son or a daughter wants to tread the path of renunciation. Hankering of the worldly man for the perpetuation of the line of progeny is permissible and also supported by the scriptures. But when their other children have earnestly taken it upon themselves to do so as enthusiastic men of the world, and only one son or daughter intends renouncing the world, there is no ethical reason why he or she should not be blessed and encouraged to follow the higher inclinations.

But curiously enough, most parents—even the so-called pious ones—seem bent on seeing that their children also slave in the world all their lives staying steeped in all its delusion and illusions, lust and lucre, as they themselves have done. They won't allow them to tread the path of higher life. And yet they are so well placed in life that they do not have to depend for anything on this fifth son or sixth daughter. The mother will make demonstrations of fainting, the father will quote scriptures to prove how serving the parents all your life is the highest religion. Hindus, by and large, are tending to become so worldly that they do not these days seem to believe that if a son or a daughter becomes a *sannyāsin* or *sannyāsini*, the family is purified and blessed. Not

so is the case with the Christians, particularly the Catholics. The pious Catholic families cherish the valued tradition of offering a son and a daughter to the Church. They deem it a mark of grace and a genuine honour in society to be given the opportunity to do so. Hindus may very well learn from them in this regard.

Parents should understand that if their one or two children among others dedicated their lives in search of God, their worldly interest will not only not suffer, on the contrary in some inscrutable ways they will become recipients of divine grace. Life is not all biology. There are higher dimensions to existence. It behoves parents to behave in a manner more responsive and responsible to God and less slavish to the world. Our planet will always need the services of flaming renouncers if it is to be a place for purposeful living. And every awakened householder should seriously consider how his family can be of service to mankind in this regard.

To those young heroic souls who have listened to the higher call and are sure that their renunciation will not leave their parents without the resources, help and care they would need, we would say: shed sentimentality, take courage, seek counsel from within yourself, holy men and God, and do what is glorious in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. If you have genuine fire within, you will blaze forth. Maybe the parental obstructions on your path are only Lord's tests for finding if you are true to your intent and ideals. In the ultimate analysis, renunciation is your personal responsibility. The world cannot be held responsible for your inability to renounce the world. Do not wait for the last bus. What is auspicious is to be done early in life. Cry to God for help and guidance.

Hinduism does not look with much favour on *anāśramīs*, those who neither enter the responsible householder's life through

sacramental marriage nor renounce the world formally and become monks and nuns.

But Hinduism sanctions what is known as *naiṣṭhika-brahmacarya* or avowed celibacy while living in the world, for both men and women. On all hands it is acknowledged that their lives are even of a more difficult type than those of monks and nuns. Formal renouncers are safe, in a way, unless they are endangered by their unrestrained impulses from within. As Holy Mother says, 'The ochre robe of a sadhu protects him as the collar of a dog protects it from danger. No one molests a dog with a collar, as it belongs to some one or other.'³³

Such, however, is not the case with avowed celibates, both men and women. They are like dogs without leather straps around their necks. Or, to give a more respectable analogy, they are like butter surrounded by fire, and butter that must not melt.

It is truly amazing and highly inspiring to see how these men and women work hard in the world without claiming its pleasures as their own and struggle and stick to their ideal. They deserve the salutations of the community and its protection too. But, in the ultimate analysis, these valiant souls should know that they have no friends in the world except their own good minds and God. They must be aware of this fact, that they have chosen to move single file on the razor's edge. God is kind and ever watchful. They are safe if they are true and pure in heart. Nothing can then do them any harm.

For their guidance, it is difficult to get any special and specific instructions because they are in a peculiar situation. They have to observe the rules of monks' and nuns' lives in their own way. And, like bees, they have to gather necessary spiritual succour from the scriptures available to them.

It, however, appears to us that some teachings of the Holy Mother may be of great help to aspirants of this category. Pointing to a watch, she once said to a young widow, 'Repeat the name of the Lord ceaselessly like the ticking of that watch!' To another woman disciple, she said:

'Don't be familiar with anybody. Don't take much part in the social functions of the family. Say, "O mind, always keep to yourself. Don't be inquisitive about others." Gradually increase the period of meditation and prayer, and read the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.'³⁴

Another day, she said to the same disciple some very startling words:

'Never be intimate with any man—not even your own father or brother, what to speak of others then. Let me repeat, do not be intimate with a man, even if God comes to you in that form.'³⁵

Life is precious and the world is full of traps. What the Holy Mother said to a woman, is also addressed to all men, to beware of women, with as much emphasis, specially for those who are in the world without the protection of monasticism or family life as such. To another disciple she said, 'Always do your duty to others but love you must give to God alone. Worldly love always brings untold misery.'³⁶

Sri Ramakrishna had the highest admiration for the householder who is also the devotee of the Lord. He said, as we have read in the beginning, 'He is indeed a hero. He is like a man who carries a heavy load of two maunds on his head and at the same time watches a bridal procession.'³⁷

And with his intimate knowledge of God, Sri Ramakrishna also assures us that God is pleased even with a little devotional practice from the householder.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 530.

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 531.

³⁷ *The Gospel*, p. 842.

³³ *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 520.

Sri Ramakrishna narrates an interesting parable on this point:

Once upon a time conceit entered the heart of the divine sage Narada, and he thought that there was no greater devotee than he. Reading his heart, the Lord Vishnu said, 'Narada, go to such and such a place; there is a great devotee of Mine there; cultivate his acquaintance.' Narada went there and found a farmer who rose early in the morning, uttered the name of Hari (God) only once, and with his plough went out to till the soil all day long. At night he went to bed after pronouncing the name of Hari once more. Narada said to himself, 'How could this rustic be a lover of God? I see him busily engaged in worldly duties, and he has no signs of a pious man in him.' Narada then went back to the Lord and said all that he thought of his new acquaintance. The Lord thereupon said, 'Narada, take this cup of oil, go around the city and come back here with it, but beware lest a drop of it fall

to the ground.' Narada did as he was told and on his return he was asked, 'Well, Narada, how often did you remember Me on your walk?' 'Not once, my Lord,' replied Narada; 'how could I when I had to watch this cup brimming over with oil?' 'This one cup of oil so diverted your attention that even you forgot Me altogether, but look at that rustic who, though carrying the heavy load of a family, still remembers Me twice every day.'³⁸

So, if you remembered God after getting up early in the morning and again before you went to bed, why, take heart, rejoice, for the Lord is pleased!

Yes, the Lord is surely pleased even with that little; but can you be satisfied, if you are a true devotee, with remembering the Lord of your heart only twice each day?

(Concluded)

³⁸ Sayings, pp. 356-7.

(Continued from p. 48)

ling all greed and passion. It is similar to the 'purgation' that the Christian mystics speak of. When such a quiet heart is made ready, will not God manifest there? That seems to be the meaning of 'I shall visit it'.

Shyam Basu failed to understand these words though he heard them. Shall we not hear them, understand and follow them? If we fulfil his conditions—of building a quiet place for meditation and having it ready—, he will surely fulfil his commitment.

V

Swami Brahmananda solemnly assured the doubting disciple that Sri Ramakrishna is still living, and added, 'Pour out your whole heart in prayer to Him. Ask to see

and to know Him. He will take away all your doubts and will show you His true nature.'

The Vaiṣṇava teachers say that Śrī Rāma still reigns in the Ayodhyā of the devotee's heart, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa plays His flute in the heart's Vṛndāvana which His devotee prepares. The devotee of Sri Ramakrishna should learn to make his own pure heart a Dakshineswar. Let the Gaṅgā of constant yearning flow by it. Let him plant and rear the 'Pañcavaṭī', the 'five-tree grove', of renunciation, devotion, discrimination, faith, and truthfulness. Thus preparing the sanctuary of the heart, let him pray and wait. The Blissful Child of Bhavātāriṇī, the Divine Mother, will not fail to come and reside in it.

SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF SISTER NIVEDITA

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The second letter is dated six months later—July 6, 1905. It was written from Nivedita's house on Bose Para Lane, Calcutta, to Josephine MacLeod, who was then in London. The letter gives Nivedita's reaction to the news that Alberta—now almost twentyeight—is going to be married.

17 Bose Para Lane
Bagh Bazaar
Calcutta July 6 1905

My dear Yum Yum,

There is no question, to my mind, about Albert's marriage being a step forward, not back. Mere un-marriedness does not in itself constitute anything. I fancy that Albert's aim has always been to be carried like a straw on the tide of the Will, & that may as well carry her into marriage as into a convent.

How happy I am over the news! I kept waking and sleeping all night to think and then dream of it. I received your letter, on coming in last evening from Dakineswar and seeing Shiva's moon there, high over the Ganges. So it was all for Albert & her beloved this time.

What a vision is before them both! She will find that all her past is like money put into a bank, all her future, the enjoyment of the interest!

They are both—both—both—blessed amongst mortals.

My love to your Bobbie, your foster-niece, as I call her. Ever your loving childe

Margot
Envelope endorsed
London.
July 22 '05

Envelope addressed to
Miss Josephine MacLeod
12 Bruton St.
London W

★

Nivedita's next letter is also to Josephine

MacLeod, written from Calcutta only six days later, on July 12. Writing to Miss MacLeod two times in one week on the same subject would seem to indicate that Alberta's marriage interested Nivedita intensely.

In this letter Nivedita expresses her ideas on the subject of matrimony. Nivedita says that the qualities that make a woman a successful nun are the same qualities that make a woman a successful wife—self-effacement, a sense of service to others, unbounded love. Nivedita says: 'I am sure that the nun is the true wife.' Is this merely Nivedita consoling herself? I don't believe so. I think her words show that she really felt her friend Alberta was taking on an obligation as noble and as severe as her own; and at the same time I speculate that in Nivedita's mind she felt she was herself the wife of the Lord and the mother of his Indian children. I believe it is natural that any really dedicated nun should feel that way.

But let us not speculate. Let us listen to the very interesting and surprisingly revealing words of Nivedita herself.

The 'Ly Betty' mentioned is Mrs. Besse Sturges Leggett, Alberta's mother by her first marriage and sister of Josephine MacLeod. I have not been able to identify the other references to people, the book, or what is apparently the reproduction of a painting.

17 Bose Para Lane
Bagh. Bazaar
July 12, 1905

My dearest Yum,

Mother writes me that Albert's wedding is on the 23rd. So a few days before you receive this letter she will have

left you, & it will all be over. I feel sure that she is going to great happiness—& I *know* that *he is!* It was so nice of you to have Mother all by herself for the news—she dearly loves a wedding. It has sometimes seemed to me that there has been one great danger in the high ideals which we have drunk in. We have rated nun-hood so high that wifehood has seemed low beside it. But more & more I have come to feel that this is untrue. In the one vow as in the other there is a daily faithfulness of word, thought and deed required of us—and the fulfilment cannot be too austere.

The husband is a motive of self-consecration, just as the altar is.

Marriage, to be kept ideal, means walking on a path long & difficult, sharp as the edge of a razor, & the way so hard to find! It is, for good women, like our sweet Albert, & like others one could name,—no yielding to a thirst, no yielding, or self-indulgence of any kind. It is a great *giving*, an infinite tenderness, a solemn quiet and joy—and *such* a compassion!

Its whole sacredness & beauty comes from the long abstinence & solitude before, & this treasure has to be guarded, & wrought in to the texture of daily life with much reserve, much silence, much prayer. Sweetness & steadiness at once. Motherhood & worship at once. These things it is & more.

But why do I say all this? Because I feel that you and I have gone through much torture & confusion of mind from the fact that Swamiji was a *man*, & could see women only from the outside. All that He taught us was true, of course, but it was not the whole truth. Indeed I almost venture to say that He lived in many things more truly than He spoke. As He felt that Sri RK [Ramakrishna] lived a life which He could not Himself have explained, so I often feel that Swamiji Himself *taught* the things that had come to Him from the past—from the historic past—from his discipleship—from samadhi—from the books—but all this, which to others would have been the end, the goal, to Him was only the starting point. To it he added

His national passion, so constantly a torture & surprise to Himself—and He added also His relations with women. He *talked* as if the things said of women by the books were true. But what did He live? He lived as if women were minds, *not* bodies. He made the highest demands. He assumed that they were selfless. And His demands were answered. And my conclusion is that He saw life unconsciously as an organic whole, in which each part was justified, that marriage is a *puja*—a ritual—a temple—a worship; that widowhood is nunhood; that the servant of man is far far higher than the saint (but also rarer).

Marriage has its temptations—God knows—but for women like Albert they are not the crude temptations (or so I think) of the monk's imagining. They are temptations to Philistinism, to dullness, to love of being first, and other sins of a psychic kind. And I am *sure* that the nun is the true wife, just as the wifely or mother-nature makes the best nun.

I am sure too that there is no special thing called a wife, or a wife's love. Love is one, undifferentiated, when it is true—and the thing that the child cries out for is the same that the husband needs. So to me Albert remains the same Albert, always—a nun at heart, though she be a wife—just as ideal when worshipping in her home as when worshipping in a church.

I don't know why I have made this long confession of faith, dear Yum! I have come upon it all through tears and struggles—and I did not know till this moment, I think, how quiet and sure I had become. But I do feel that we went through terrible dangers from the fact that we at one time ranked wifehood so low. And even now I *want* to say that to me even the strictest monogamy does not constitute purity in marriage, but the always making the experience an experience of the *soul*, does.

The love of the body must be, of course, but it should be the *result* of the love of the mind, not the cause.

Do tell me what you think of these

conclusions! I always feel that your clear mind is a sort of touchstone, by which I can judge of many things. I long to come and confess to you, often, just as I used to do in the [tent?] [hut?] [boat?] at Srinagar! I often fancy that if I could still do that, I could keep good, perhaps, in the old sense!

How I hope you have enjoyed Holland! I did not know that Miss Tidemann was there again. Nor do I even know her married name. You will feel very strange if you are obliged to be more or less in one place henceforth—but the great tie between Ly. Betty & you will make it sweet.

I have received all the post cards of P deC. and I am now waiting to receive a book about him which is publ. by [Newness?] I have ordered it, it is quite cheap, & hope to be able from it to form a true idea of his inspiration and of the place of each of these pictures in the scheme of his life.

The Ste. S. [?] at prayer which you first sent me gave me this wonderful inspiration about the Civic Motive in Art. And I want to know more. The post cards were just what I wanted. Exquisite.

Ever your child.

Margot

Envelope addressed to:

Miss Josephine MacLeod
12 Bruton St.
London W.

and forwarded to:

Ridgely Manor
Ulster
New York

Envelope endorsed:

London W.
July 29, '05

and endorsed:

Stoneridge, N.Y.
August 9, 1905

★

The next letter was written to Alberta, the bride-to-be, herself. It concerns the marriage, was written the day before the

marriage, and shows Nivedita in an India far away from England, contemplating the whole event in her mind's eye.

Alberta Sturges and George Montagu were married at St. Paul's Knightsbridge Anglican church in London on July 25, 1905. They had met in social circles in London about 1903. They honeymooned at Ridgely Manor.

George Montagu was born in 1874. Thus he was some three years older than Alberta, thirty at the time of the marriage. The Montagus were, and are, a well-known family in England. The title Earl of Sandwich was given to the eldest Montagu in 1660. It is interesting to know that the term sandwich, applied to two pieces of bread with cheese, or meat between them, originated from the fact that the Fourth Earl of Sandwich was given to eating informally at the gaming table. The family seat was at Hinchingsbrooke in the County of Huntingdon, north of London and not far from Cambridge. Through the long years this house was the scene of many elaborate entertainments. Several British kings and many other members of the aristocracy stayed there. In 1905 when George married Alberta he was simply George Montagu. The title was held by his uncle, Edward, a bachelor. In 1916 the uncle Edward died and George succeeded to the title. The young Alberta, who had been a favourite of Swami Vivekananda, and had received an original poem from him in September of 1900 to commemorate her twenty-third birthday, thus became the Countess of Sandwich and the chatelaine of Hinchingsbrooke Castle.

Let us listen, then, to the sincerity of Nivedita, expressed in this letter of July 24, 1905. Nothing but a real concern for the other.

The Dr. Bose referred to is Jagadis Chandra Bose, the renowned botanist. The letter is without envelope.

17 Bose Para Lane,
Bagh Bazaar,
Calcutta.
July 24, 1905

My sweet Albert,

All day I have been writing on the National Idea & the last hour or two I have been touching sorrow & poverty at the closest; but, dear one, in everything the words of your heart's joy have been ringing across my ears, & I cannot resist turning to you. It is 4 o'clock. And tomorrow you will be married! . . .

In half an hour we were to have started for Dakineswar. I wanted in the little room there to have told Sri Ramakrishna of your happiness & to have sent you his blessings tomorrow. But be sure dear Albert, that from that poor little room with its tiny light, & the great river outside, there does flow out a great stream of benediction towards you, though the storm intervenes between it & me tonight.

Every word of your letter I understand with my whole heart. Remember, all nun-hood all asceticism leads only to one point—that we be the servants of man, at the Will of God. And when we reach *this* we have reached what is highest for us, no matter what the form.

When your eyes read this you will be a wife—& what a wife! Dear one, in that wifeness you will reach higher & further, & you will offer not to one alone, but to the whole world “without one particle of benefit to yourself” what you have gathered & garnered through many a life-time, may be, in the convent-cell.

Yes, the marriage is great, is divine, is holiness incarnate, in which one offers oneself up to another's serving. But infinitely greater even than that is the marriage which I take it is yours, in which two are united in a common sacrifice. It is not only that you dear Albert will assuredly be worthy of the great reverence which wraps you about, in this love, but that the Prayer of the *Wife* which you will yet discover will also be fulfilled (& that prayer goes still deeper than the prayer of maiden-

hood, I think)—for you will *both* be worthy of each other's reverence. And last of all, when the Perfect Prayer is reached—the “make *him* all things” in fierce forgetting of self—it may ever be that yours will be the joy of Beatrice, to stand back & see the Beloved receive the uttermost vision, the vision which without her he could not have reached, yet in which she herself is seen as only the handmaid of God.

Surely *that* is the culmination of all marriage. Dear blessed Albert, anointed & crowned with service & for aid.

Believe me with love & prayer that I cannot express, & with the longing that Swamiji might send you his own word tonight.

Ever your own
Margot

Wednesday. It is over Dear. You have entered the new life, and all your to-morrows are to be a growth, in peace & joy. We thought and spoke of you all day yesterday & Dr. Bose who was working with me, asked me to express to you his best wishes.

★

Two days later, on July 26, 1905, Nivedita again wrote a letter concerning the marriage of Alberta, this time once more to Josephine MacLeod. It contains some personal passages, obviously referring to some disappointments, some hurts, that Nivedita was experiencing. I am not able to identify what these were. Nivedita's remark about renunciation is extremely interesting and not out of keeping with the experiences of others making progress in religious life. She says, ‘I used to think and talk of renunciation. I very much fear I actually know about it less and less.’ That is to say, as sacrifice of one's wants becomes more habitual and more natural, one is less and less aware of making sacrifices, of making any overt acts of unselfishness.

The Christine mentioned is Sister Christine, the American disciple of Swami Vivekananda who went to India to help Nivedita. Ldy. Isabel was Lady Isabel Margesson, at whose home in London Nivedita met Vivekananda. I have not been able to identify Mr. Helliger.

17 Bose Para Lane
Bagh Bazaar
Calcutta.
July 26 [1905]

My dearest Yum,

I am so vexed! I sent Albert a telegram yesterday. I thought she would like to have India represented & it has not been delivered. I do feel so annoyed—both at myself and at the culprits. I suppose it was wicked extravagance on my part, & this is a punishment. But I thought a word from Swami's land would be an added drop of happiness in our sweet Albert's cup of joy. The telegram was only "Love and prayer" and curiously enough I had a presentiment that it would not go right.

How empty the house must have seemed last night when they had gone away, and the revels were over! I could scarcely have felt closer if I had been on the spot. It was just like you all to have Bobbie over, too. It was lovely of you. But only Ly. Betty & Albert & you would have done it.

Dear Albert! How strangely sacred one feels a girl whom one loves, to be, when she is a bride. And the simplicity about this—the church—& the cottage in the country—& the intense love and reverence of both, make it, while it is all that anyone could have desired, yet quite unlike the common run of worldly splendour & success. We cannot resist the feeling that these two were destined for each other.

Just before leaving for London Albert wrote of it to me as the "City of Confusion". We little thought, then, of what she would take away from it next!

I shall be so eager to know the effect of all this, on your plans. What an angel Mr. Helliger must be! O dear Yum, must one *always* be ready to give up *everything* with a smile? I am afraid I am growing fearfully attached. There are some things that I *cannot* give up. Perhaps however if I knew *they* wanted it, I could. But I should run away to sob. Tell me—what is your law? On what do you rest? Is it "Happiness within"—or is it "Freedom always for all, even from myself"—or is it "Look joyful—whether you feel it or not"?

What is your law in dealing with *people*? Would you not *feel* hurt if someone you loved never said a word about wanting your presence; or would you only never let the pain be seen?

I used to think & talk of Renunciation. I very much fear that I actually know about it less & less.

Ah those great years of Swamiji! It was really a Bridge between the Real & the Unreal. Wasn't it? It was a life divine in its *quality*, whatever anyone liked to make of the externals.

And is it not strange that He seems to have met you, Christine, & myself, all in one year—1895?

I owe that entirely to Ldy. Isabel. I hope there will be some casting up of things where it will be put down to her benefit that she did that for me.

Now you are all going to be at Ridgely again for September. I could almost find it in my heart to say "I wish I were there too". But it would not be really true. I would love to be at Ridgely—but not for a million times that pleasure could I for one moment want to go away from this. And indeed I do not know whether the memories that would hang about the place would not fill it with pain.

Tell me if Mr. Montague [*sic*] is *clever*. What he has done—& what he hopes to do. I do feel that Swamiji is singling out the faces [?] of the future—& I cannot doubt that he is one.

Lovingly, ever lovingly
Margot

Sent to :

Miss Josephine MacLeod
c/o Mister Munroe
7 Rue Scribe
Paris, France

and forwarded to :

Stone Ridge,
Ulster Co.,
New York,
U.S.A.

Endorsed :

Munroe & Cie
7, Rue Scribe,
Paris,
12 Aout, 1905

New York, N.Y.
Aug. 22, 1905

Stone Ridge, N.Y.
Aug. 22, 1905

(To be concluded)

ZEN SECT OF BUDDHISM

PROF. D. C. GUPTA

(Continued from previous issue)

What does *dhyāna* mean in Zen? Dr. D. T. Suzuki writes :

Dhyana is generally translated as meditation, or a concentrated state of consciousness, whereas what Zen proposes is not to make us realize this, but to bring about the awakening of a higher spiritual power so as to come directly in contact with reality itself. This power, called *prajna* in Sanskrit and in Japanese as *hannya*, is the highest form of intuition we humans are in possession of. By the exercise of *prajna*-intuition, we attain what is known as *bodhi* in Sanskrit, *puti* in Chinese, *bodai* in Japanese. *Bodhi*, or more fully *sambodhi*, is "the supreme enlightenment" which was attained by Gautama when he was sitting cross-legged under the *bodhi*-tree by the river *Nairanjana* in the northern part of India, about twenty-five centuries ago. After this, Gautama, son of *Suddhodana*, came to be known as *Buddha*, the Enlightened One.

Hence Buddhism is now known as a religion of enlightenment, based on the personal experience of the Buddha. A life of emancipation which results from the experience of enlightenment means that one is free from the bondage of karmic causa-

tion, or one has crossed the stream of birth-and-death (*samsāra*) to the other side, to *nirvāna*.

The *dhyāna* sect was introduced into Japan in A.D. 654 and it still attracts attention, for its adherents are not only numerous at the present day but an unusually large proportion of them belong to the aristocratic and literary classes. It is the *dhyāna* sect which claims *Bodhidharma* as a founder and which is known in China under the name of *Ch'an*. In Japan this name was pronounced as *Zen*. *Bodhidharma's* 'wall-gazing'¹ was thought to be a model pattern of meditation posture. Although what he was really emphasizing has nothing to do with the physical side of the *dhyāna* exercise, nor with the encouragement of *dhyāna* alone at the expense of *prajñā* intuition, a majority of *dhyāna* sect followers adopted *Bodhidharma's* 'wall-

¹ After his unsuccessful interview with His Majesty, *Wu-Ti*, *Bodhidharma* betook himself to *Lo-Yang*, where he lived in a temple avoiding the company of princes and high ecclesiastics and, according to a popular legend, spent nine years sitting and gazing at a wall until at last his legs dropped off.

gazing' to suit their own one-sided interpretation. The passage relating to this part of Bodhidharma's teaching is as follows :

By 'Entrance by Reason' we mean the realization of the spirit of Buddhism by the aid of the scriptural teaching. We then come to have a deep faith in the True Nature which is one and the same in all sentient beings. The reason why it does not manifest itself is the overwrapping of external objects and false thought. When one, abandoning the false and embracing the true, in simplicity of thought, abides in pi-kuan, one can find that there is neither selfhood nor otherness, that the masses and the worthies are of one essence. He firmly holds to this belief and never moves away from it. He will not then be guided by any literary instructions, for he is in silent communion with the Truth itself, free from conceptional discriminations, serene and not-acting. This is called 'Entrance by Reason'.

The following is the view of Doshin, the fourth patriarch (A.D. 580-651), as regards the qualification of a *dhyāna* master :

He is one who is not annoyed by quietude or by confusion. Such is the person who likes *dhyāna* and keeps his mind on guard. When the mind is made always to abide in *samatā* (quietude) it sinks into torpidity ; when it is for a long time employed in *vipasyana* (contemplation), it is subject to frustration. In the 'Lotus Sutra' we have : 'Buddha himself abides in the Mahāyāna,² and in accordance with the Dharma in which he has adorned himself with the power of *dhyāna* and *prajñā*, and thereby helps the beings to cross the stream of *samsāra*.'

A well-known anecdote relates that Hung-Jen, the fifth patriarch, feeling he was growing old, decided to hold a poetical

competition and to nominate as his successor the composer of the best quatrain. The following lines, composed by Shen-Hsiu (Jinshu), his most eminent and learned disciple, called forth universal admiration :

The body is the Bodhi-tree,
The Mind is like a bright mirror.
Keep it clean all the time,
And let not dust accumulate.

Hui-Neng (Eno) as a lay brother was not qualified to compete and moreover could not write, but he induced another lay brother to inscribe the following lines on the monastery wall :

Bodhi (enlightenment) has from the first
nothing to do with the tree,
The bright mirror has also no stand on
which to place itself.
The Buddha-nature is eternally
illuminating,
And where could dust ever accumulate?
(Dr. Suzuki)

Bodhi is not a tree :
The mirror has no stand.
From the beginning nothing exists.
How could dust cover it ?

(Sir Charles Eliot)

The Master was so struck by these lines that though Eno was an illiterate lay brother he made over to him the insignia of the patriarchate.

Jinshu advocated learning and the practice of *dhyāna* as a necessary means leading to the attainment of the highest experience, whereas Eno was not necessarily an opponent of the *dhyāna* discipline, but he asserted the all-importance of *prajñā*-intuition, which directly enters into the heart of the Buddhist life. Jinshu thought that the mind was to be kept free from the dust of the defiling passions so that the ultimate reality would be reflecting on it in the way a brightly-shining mirror will truthfully reflect images of all things brought before it. The mind-mirror, according to Jinshu, was something which was liable to be stained by external objects and had to be

² Buddhism is divisible into two main schools: Hinayāna or 'small vehicle', also known as the Theravāda school, and Mahāyāna or 'greater vehicle'. Japanese Buddhism belongs to the latter.

guarded jealously against the possibility. Eno's experience, however, was contrary to this, for he found the mind-mirror forever in a state of purity and absolutely beyond the possibility of defilement by external agencies. He even went further, declaring that there was from the very beginning nothing to be described as a brightly-illuminating mind-mirror. Buddhists call it the doctrine of 'emptiness' (*śūnyatā*, in Sanskrit).

In Zen, each believer must work out his own salvation by austere discipline, bodily or mental. You cannot transmit the experience to others, unless they, too, have it growing out of their inner being for themselves. The following story, told by Goso Hoyen, will help us greatly in our understanding of the Zen method and Zen spirit which have been described as being against teaching based on intellect, logic, and verbalism :

If people ask me what Zen is like, I will say that it is like learning the art of burglary. The son of a burglar saw his father growing older and thought, 'If he is unable to carry out his profession, who will be the breadwinner of this family except myself? I must learn the trade.' He intimated this to his father, who approved of it. One night the father took the son to a big house,

broke through the fence, entered the house, and, opening one of the large chests, told the son to go in and pick out the clothing. As soon as he got into it, the lid was dropped and the lock securely applied. The father now went out to the courtyard, and loudly knocking at the door woke up the whole family. Then he himself quietly slipped away through the former hole in the fence. The people of the house got excited and lighted candles, but found that the burglar had already gone. The son, who had remained all the time in the chest securely confined, thought of his cruel father. He was greatly mortified, when a fine idea flashed upon him. He made a noise which sounded like the gnawing of a rat. The family told the maid to take a candle and examine the chest. When the lid was unlocked, out came the prisoner, who blew out the light, pushed away the maid, and fled. The people ran after him. Noticing a well by the road, he picked up a large stone and threw it into the water. Trying to find the burglar drowning himself in the dark hole, the pursuers all gathered around the well. In the meantime he was safely back in his father's house. He blamed his father very much for his narrow escape. Said the father, 'Be not offended, my son. Just tell me how you got off.' When the son had told him all about his adventures, the father remarked, 'There you are, you have learned the art.'

REPORTING TWO FIRESIDE SITTINGS AT MAYAVATI

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA'S Reflections on His Recent
Visit to the West

There is a fireplace at the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. In 1901, when Swami Vivekananda visited Mayavati for a fortnight (3 to 17 January), he would sit, talk, and sleep by this fireplace. Since then, the Mayavati monks have been meeting at this sanctified fireplace every night after supper in the company of visiting Swamis and guests and reading from a holy book. The informality of the whole sitting has charmed and inspired many, even chance visitors—monks of other Orders, as well as householders—due to its homeliness always attuned imperceptibly to high thoughts. Added to this there is the Himalayan atmosphere of this place, where, in pursuance of Swamiji's wish that the Ashrama remain dedicated to the cultivation of unmixed Advaita, no formal worship is done.

By the side of this fireplace on December 7, 1972, we had in our midst Swami Gambhirananda, a revered and senior monk of the Order (officially the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission). Incidentally, he was one of the noted editors of *Prabuddha Bharata* (1942 to 1944) and one of the Presidents of Advaita Ashrama (Nov. 1953 to Nov. 1963). The joy of the fireside-group was understandably great because he, after his return from the West to India on December 3 at Delhi, arrived at Mayavati within three days.

We may mention here that the Swami, though the chief executive of the Math and Mission since 1966, had never before visited the western world. Left to himself, he perhaps never would have done so. But his failing eyesight became a cause of concern to the authorities of the Order; and when the best available treatment in India failed to help him much, he was with

considerable difficulty persuaded to go to Boston accompanied by a western Brahmacharin. There he was under the treatment of the reputed eye-surgeon, Dr. Silvio Pirquet, for two months. The results of the treatment are yet to be fully known.

However, during the latter part of this treatment period, Swami Vireswarananda, the President of the Order, asked him also to visit the working Centres of the Ramakrishna Order in the West. This he did, though as he said, not as the General Secretary but as a pilgrim.

As we sat around the fireplace, we sought on behalf of *Prabuddha Bharata* to interview the Swami in a quasi-journalistic manner. The time and the place, the whole atmosphere with such stillness of the night, the sparkling star-studded sky peeping from without through glass panes, the crackling fire of golden flames—with this background nothing could have seemed more incongruous than a journalistic venture. The moment we announced 'This is *Prabuddha Bharata* interviewing ...', the Swami made no attempt to hide his uneasiness.

In briefly giving the purpose of the interview, we remarked how happy we at Mayavati were to receive him who had been one of the editors of the magazine and a revered President of the Ashrama. We submitted that the interview was prompted not only by a sense of duty to our brotherhood spread over many lands, but also by loyalty to our readers who of late have been unusually expressive of appreciation of the journal. We were sure that all our monastic members, devotees, and readers in India and overseas, who knew that the chief executive of the Ramakrishna Move-

ment had just returned from his long-deferred and much-needed visit to the West, would very much like to know what were his experiences, thoughts, and observations while in the West, though his visit was rather a brief one.

We had fifteen questions ready to hand. To our first question: 'May we know briefly, for the information of our readers, the itinerary of your trip?' he referred to his companion and attendant, Br. Dhruva, who had kept a diary of the four-month trip. A summary of it is found after this report. So we passed to the second: 'Maharaj, you had no doubt gone to America for treatment of your failing eyesight, and we thankfully understand from your surgeon that "the condition of your left eye has not deteriorated." This apart, did you ever have the feeling during your trip, that the Lord was also getting done by you an important, long-deferred duty of the chief executive, namely, a personal inspection of our working Centres in the West?'

The Swami did not seem to appreciate the question inasmuch as it was not rightly framed. He protested that 'the Lord' should not have been referred to in the question for it was not in keeping with the spirit of the Advaita Ashrama. Indeed we readily saw that the question was not rightly framed, for some of our assumptions were not correct. He had gone as a patient, and his eyesight was causing him much trouble. So, he should not have been expected also to perform the difficult duties of General Secretary while convalescing. By this time he had been sufficiently provoked. And the journalist will know that this is one of the ways of getting the best from the interviewed, particularly from one who is considered difficult to interview.

What we did at this stage was to read out all the questions which had been framed for the Swami, intending to leave

it at that. Or, you might say, to defer his answers till the next day, after he had had time to study the questions. Besides the two already given, the list was as follows:

(3) Did you feel that your visit to the West gave you a new and creative perspective about the responsibility and undertakings of the Ramakrishna movement as a whole in relation to the future of mankind?

(4) What impressions have you obtained as to the excellences, deficiencies, and possibilities of the Ramakrishna movement's work in the West?

(5) What were your feelings when you faced the members of our various congregations? How did American devotees react to your rather straight and matter-of-fact manners?

(6) What were the most oft-repeated questions from members of our congregations? What general impressions about their inner search did you receive from these questions?

(7) Americans in general dislike the ideals of poverty and chastity which are the fundamental virtues of a Vedanta student's life and the basic discipline in a monastic organization. For example, the cry against clerical celibacy is gaining volume in the Roman Catholic church. In such a situation, what are the prospects of our work, as a monastic organization, in America?

(8) After your visits to our American Centres, you visited those in the U.K., France, and Switzerland. Did you find any marked differences in the attitudes of Americans and Europeans, including the British, to Vedanta?

(9) You have been a Sannyasin for the last nearly fifty years of your life. This was your first visit to the West. What is your opinion, as a sannyasin, of life in western society in comparison with that here in India?

(10) What was your overall impression of 'The East versus the West': (a) Similarities (basic oneness?); (b) Differences (on the surface?)

(11) In view of the increasing interest and demand you may have noticed in the West, do you think it advisable to start more Vedanta Centres there, by sending more Swamis? Also, should we consider starting humanitarian and philanthropic work, as we do in India?

(12) Who is better appreciated and accepted in the West—Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda? And why so?

(13) Both the 'serious-minded older people' and the 'not-so-serious younger people' come to our Centres, seeking for something they need, in their own way. What should be our emphasis in either case?

(14) What was your strangest experience during the entire trip?

(15) What was the most remarkable experience during your visit to the West?

After the questions had been read, Swami Gambhirananda soon began an uninterrupted talk of about 40 minutes, prefacing this by asking us in his brisk manner to connect his remarks with the questions. We pass on this task to our reader—except in those instances where the Swami himself made specific references to the questions—and now report as nearly as we can, what he said:

'Since you ask about the general nature of my visit to the West, I may start by saying that I went to Boston simply for treatment of my left eye; was hospitalized for a week at first, later for seven more days; spent one and a half months convalescing in Boston. Then, when I seemed to be improving a bit, the President Maharaj asked me to visit the Centres in the West to observe how the work was going on, and talk with the monks, Brahmacharins, and devotees. Of course I was not sure how far

I could carry out his behest, since there was no certainty about my general health and eyesight, but I agreed to make some such tour, as simply one monk of the Order. I was in no mood to question people (or the Swamis) about the work, except as any visitor would do. So you see, the idea of now being interviewed for publication seems inappropriate: I am not an important person; you can get the opinions and reports of people who are important; better use them.

'I did want to visit the Centres, and see the places where Swami Vivekananda had been and stayed—that is, to make a kind of pilgrimage. But at every Centre, the Swamis arranged for meetings, often with hardly any warning to me! They seemed to think that I was a speaker, not knowing that I am not much along that line; still, wherever we went they made me get up and talk.

'One of you asked what was my most memorable experience in the West. One of the most, perhaps, was in London where, in the airport bus, one young man stood up and kindly offered me his seat. Since a young lady was also standing, I motioned to her to take the seat; but she would not. She obviously was showing respect to me as a visitor to her country, possibly even to the ochre robe. This was very nice. I had always thought the westerners had little if any respect for foreigners in their native dress, Sannyasins clad in *gerrua* robes, or for elders. Again: in Boston—where from the first week after my operation I used to take long walks along the Charles River—frequently I would be greeted by a middle-aged man riding a bicycle, who would say 'Namaste'. He was a total stranger, and I had no idea where he had learned that word; but it gradually became clear that many Americans have developed an understanding of and appreciation for our ideals and culture. Since our Boston Centre is

really in the campus of Boston University, I had tended to avoid meeting students, even casually, often taking another route when walking, since I was under the impression that they might at least make jokes at my expense, if not unpleasantries. But now I began to behave quite naturally when near them and found that they always treated me like any gentleman, plus a natural healthy curiosity about things Indian.

'Some of you have asked about my opinion of the development, the progress, of the Centres in America. It appears that at least two types of development are there: some have developed primarily along intellectual lines, with stress on lectures, classes, etc., as well as individual study and interviews. They may have shrines, with devotional appeal; but these are only for the intimate devotees and/or monastic members. On the other hand, some Centres have a larger shrine and/or temple intended for worship by larger groups of devotees, with images as well as pictures etc., for instance the Hollywood temple: at Kali Puja (when we happened to be there), well over a 100 devotees stayed up all night for the Puja, which was conducted very much as at Belur Math. Again, both at the Chicago and San Francisco temples, we saw the Durga Puja worship, of one and a half hours or more, attended with great reverence by approximately 125 devotees, and followed by feeding of all at each place. Thus at such Centres our programme is having an element of ritualism and devotion added to it. In many cases this helps, but I cannot now tell which is better: intellect or feeling. Certainly, as Swami Vivekananda often said, without appeal to the heart, the appeal to the head cannot accomplish much.

'This contrast is especially noteworthy in view of the wide popularity in America and Europe of the 'Hare-Krishna' move-

ment (of which we also have seen something in India). This movement has not much intellectual appeal: they stress the emotional side of religion. In almost every city we saw groups of their followers: standing on street-corners, usually wearing *gerrua*, often shaven-headed with *shikha*, with holy marks on the forehead, etc., and singing and/or dancing in the name of the Lord.

'In observing the development of the western Centres, another thing that struck me was the eagerness of young men and women to join the Order as monastics. I had heard something of this tendency before going; but there I found it to be very real. It seems to hold much promise for the future. Not only is the present number of Brahmacharins and probationers relatively large, but it is growing at a rapidly increasing rate. Our work in the West has not grown in an identical manner in all respects as in India. Everywhere the work is in a growing process. In India we have two ideals: *Atmano-mokshartham* and *Jagad-hitaya-cha* (for one's own salvation and for the good of the world). But in the West almost all stress is on self-culture, including the work needed to be done at the Ashrama such as worship, publication, helping in conducting the Sunday services, etc. No 'social service' as in the Indian context, like running hospitals, schools, relief work, etc., has been taken up. Before going, I had an idea, further, that such social service by our organization was very little needed in the West; and on this visit I found ample confirmation, spontaneously made by devotees, that the governments there have kept up with almost all needs in these areas of work. Though not undertaking services of this kind, the monastic inmates have contact with the public through retreats at some Centres, meeting visitors, annual festivals and other means.

'Another question was raised a while ago,

as to the methods of advancing our work in the West. Of course we have few if any statistics to go by, but it is my impression that the work is expanding. One figure may be worth mentioning: in line with our comments about the eagerness of young people to join the Order as monastics, there are now more than one hundred Western monastic members associated with the different Centres, and more are eager to join. There are also pressing demands for opening new Centres and sending more Swamis. And surely our Swamis will find a warm welcome and devoted helpers. There one finds many devotees as sincere and earnest as ours in India—maybe even more so. For example, while walking in the Central Park of New York City with Swami Pavitrananda, we noticed a lady standing behind with folded hands, waiting: she would not walk across in front of monks! As we were walking very slowly, both Swami Pavitrananda and I insisted that she go ahead, but she refused. She then made quite a detour and proceeded on her way. You might think this was mere sentimentality; but no, they have real devotion, as well as intellectual appreciation. Particularly at Gretz, I found striking similarities to an Indian ashrama: situated on nine acres of land, they have a shrine for worship, farm, orchards, cows, gardens, fields and a forest.

Of course, as their social system is very different from ours, the devotion takes different forms. Generalizations are unreasonable; yet here is one example: I noticed that elderly people who are devotees in the U.S.A. live “almost like anchorites” and they do not feel any loneliness. Many of them will come almost daily and work at our Centres and a considerable period of time they spend in reading our literature and meditating on Sri Ramakrishna. There are still others who live a lonely life and I used to think their loneliness meant that they had lost all affection or feeling

for others. But no: often you find they have a nephew, or other relatives or friends, whom they love and who takes care of them. Also we find that our old Swamis in U.S.A. are taken good care of by local friends all the 24 hours of the day.

I was, more specifically, asked about the “differences between the East and the West which I observed . . .” Again I much dislike to generalize, but perhaps a few random observations can be made. You see, I was not one of those tourists who, after spending a few weeks taking a fleeting air, railway or car view of the land, venture to make solemn pronouncements on its merits and demerits. Always bearing in mind what I have just tried to convey—and also that there is little difference between the people in East and West, that after all they are just human beings—still, one can’t help noticing certain things. For instance, the West is “clean” almost to the point of an obsession, and often the result is *waste*. In hospital naturally this is most obvious: for the sake of having “clean” (i.e. completely sterile) thermometers, they now throw away each one as soon as a patient has finished with it! (Of course this is partly the result of the endless array of machines to make new ones, and the relatively high cost of sterilization). And whenever you eat in public places, you are likely to eat from disposable plates, with disposable spoons etc., on a disposable tablecloth, and wipe your face with a disposable napkin (mostly paper or plastic). By contrast, in India, we seem remarkably unclean, despite our endless washings of hands etc. One of our Swamis who was in a hospital in India commented on highly-developed bugs, as big as flattened rice-grains! Again from the hospital environment, one difference which may be significant: in America the nurses and staff seem remarkably respectful and attentive to their patients compared with the casual attitude

sometimes noticed in some hospitals in India. The doctors become personally acquainted with the patients and conduct them courteously in and out of their chambers.

'Coming nearer to the socio-political differences between East and West, the most striking one is doubtless the degree of equality among social classes there. I do not know whether either Russia or other Communist countries can surpass this standard. Even the day-labourer, even the barber, acts, looks, and feels as good as any other man. Ask a hospital orderly his name, and he answers, "I'm Mr. So-and-So", with evident pride, whatever may be his ancestry. Of course, this is closely related to the degree of equality achieved in wages, salaries, and "standards of living"; and however we may decry dependence on such material things, the results are spectacular. A good nurse can earn 200 dollars (Rs. 1,500) per week; a plumber 11 dollars (Rs. 82) per hour; that means over Rs. 12,000 per month, assuming the 40-hour work-week; and their progressive labour laws make it compulsory to pay 50% more for any "overtime" beyond the forty hours. One could multiply examples; but you see that one natural result is that only the very rich can have servants in the way we almost universally do here. Our Ashramas naturally cannot afford to have servants, thus all household work that cannot be done by machine is done by devotees or the monastics. Among other things, this means driving cars: a hired driver is almost unheard-of; and of course this leads to more and more cars. Their city streets are often lined with double rows of parked cars, with a narrow lane in the middle, through which the moving cars wend their precarious ways, slowly; and morning and evening "traffic jams" reach unbelievable proportions.

'Related to this very "high standard of

living" is an equally high rate of crime. Auto-thefts are everyday occurrences as I heard on radio announcements by the Boston police, who reported that in the first nine months of 1972, 12,300 cars were stolen in Boston alone. I used to think that petty stealing was a worse problem here in India, but learned that in the West it has multiplied of late, partly because of the terrible increase in drug-addiction. Then, to combat the drug menace, the Government makes higher and higher penalties for drug-use and possession; hence the prices of illegal items go up; hence the users—already in part demoralized by their habit—are increasingly driven to petty stealing to get enough for their drug appetites.

'Again, I was asked to comment on the sort of audiences of groups of devotees whom I met in the West. So far as I could tell, these were fairly representative of the average membership of our Vedanta Societies. Perhaps they were somewhat larger groups than the usual Sunday congregations, with some casually-interested visitors; but that was a minor factor. As indicated earlier, their attitude was always friendly and respectful: even the man-in-the-street was like that. These groups listened with close attention to whatever I had to say—not at all less so than our Indian devotees. Then when question-and-answer meetings were held, one could tell from the alert and constructive nature of the questions asked that they had thought well on what had been said.

'Of course, the questions asked by such groups were at meetings planned more or less exclusively for devotees; and I addressed no outside groups (schools, churches, etc.). Since some of you were interested in the sorts of questions most widely asked, perhaps most frequent were those about the Holy Mother (for instance, 'Did you ever meet her?' 'What were the striking

aspects of her character? ...); then about the special message of Vedanta for the West, and 'What qualities in the people of the West qualify them to receive this message?' Again, 'What is the most striking feature in the life of Sri Ramakrishna?' and 'Are there any significant differences between the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna (and Swamiji) and those of Shankara and Buddha. Many also asked what I thought the future of our work in the West would be. And of course, everywhere devotees as well as monastics wanted to hear any or all reminiscences about the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna I had been privileged to meet.

'The groups of monastics with whom I had long discussions at all Centres where they are being trained, tended to ask more about how best to deepen their own spiritual lives; also about many aspects of the problems before them in regard to the probable extension of the work in the West. Again, both devotee and monastic groups often asked for practical hints as to how better to remember God in the midst of the busy life in the West.

'Reverting to the topic of public activities that the Western monks engage in, it seems to me—as a purely personal opinion—that some of the preaching-work will sooner or later have to be taken up by them. Already some western-born monks have begun such work. It will of course be greatly desirable for them to have knowledge of Sanskrit so that they can study and understand the scriptures in the original—or at least have dependable translations of the Upanishads and other fundamental Sanskrit scriptures—as well as a thorough grounding in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

II

During the second evening's fireside sitting, the Swami was more at ease, being assured that he was not going to be plied

with questions. Still, one or two questions were put to him, very unassumingly, about his interesting experiences in the West, and these were abundantly fruitful. Taken unawares, and seemingly unconscious that he was being so taken, he as it were re-travelled the places he had visited, in what is called in Sanskrit *mano-ratha* (mental chariot), looking for significant, sometimes funny, things he had viewed; and incidentally, lovingly narrated the pilgrimages he had made to places connected with Swamiji's life and work in the West. While he spoke, one could easily see his fervour for anything that was in the least connected with Swamiji's life—of which he is the author of the most authentic and exhaustive biography in Bengali. However, let him now resume speaking for himself: (1) *Chicago* (Oct. 16, ff.): 'The Art Institute in Chicago where the sessions of the Parliament of Religions of 1893 were held is still standing, although the large hall where the main sessions were held and Swamiji's addresses were given was subdivided into art galleries soon after the Parliament. We visited this building; further, we went to the site of the home of the Hale family, where Swamiji had stayed the greater part of his days in Chicago. Unfortunately, the building was demolished in 1967, despite the vigorous efforts of Swami Bhashyananda to obtain it; but the demolisher has not yet found funds to build on the lot. Again, we had a pleasant visit to Miss Cornelia Conger, the grand-daughter of J. B. Lyon, at whose house Swamiji stayed throughout the six weeks of the Parliament in 1893, when she was six years old. She related and nicely amplified on the incidents already recorded in her article in *Prabuddha Bharata* (1956) and incorporated in the *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*.'

(2) *San Francisco*: (Oct. 24, ff.): 'Irving Park, now renamed the Samuel Taylor Park, is seven miles from our Olema Re-

treat. There in 1900, Swamiji went on a three-week "camping-trip" with several devotees from both Northern and Southern California, including Miss Ida Ansell and Mrs. Rohrbach, who then in the 1940's pointed out to Mrs. Marie L. Burke (the author of the famous book, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Discoveries*) the many sites of special interest: where he cooked, took bath in the stream which he called 'Ganga', where he meditated, and the site of his living-tent. Mrs. Burke took us around and showed us in turn all such spots.'

(3) *Southern California*: (Nov. 4, ff.): 'The house of the three Mead sisters in South Pasadena, where Swamiji stayed three weeks in 1900, is still essentially unchanged; his bedroom is now a shrine-room; the house is owned by the Vedanta Society and several young men devotees live there. After tea with these men, we drove by car to the top of the steep hill back of the house where Swamiji often took walks, and had occasional picnics.'

(4) *Boston*: (Nov. 7, ff.): (During the previous stay in Boston, no places of note had been seen).

'*Greenacre*, was, and still is, a retreat in the country used almost wholly for religious gatherings. Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda, among others, went there several times. Swamiji had been there in 1894, on invitation to the Greenacre Conference, thereafter held yearly, with active support from Mrs. Ole Bull, Dr. Lewis Janes, Sarah Farmer, and other noted friends of Swamiji. We made the two-hour trip from Boston to visit the spot with Swami Sarvagatananda.

'*Breezy Meadows* was the home of Miss Kate Sanborn, who had first befriended Swamiji on the train from Chicago to Boston (August, 1893) and who introduced him to Professor Wright. The stately house with spacious grounds is unfortunately now

uninhabited and rather dilapidated, but since Swamiji stayed here for almost two weeks, we enjoyed visiting it. In the adjacent town of Metcalfe is the Sherborn Reformatory for Women, where, during his stay at Breezy Meadows, Swamiji addressed the inmates. He wrote in a letter to India, "It is the grandest thing I have seen in America ..." (August 20, 1893).'

(5) *New York City*: 'None of the buildings where Swamiji stayed is now traceable, and we did not find the opportunity to travel the 350 miles to Thousand Island Park, nor the over-100 miles to Ridgeley Manor.'

(6) 'In *London* and the surrounding area we found, largely as a result of recent research by Swami Yogeshananda there, no less than ten places directly associated with Swamiji's few months stay in England: Princes' Hall, where Swamiji spoke; Greycoat Gardens, where Swamiji and Swami Abhedananda were the first tenants living on the ground-floor; Lady Margesson's house, whence many of Swamiji's letters are addressed; a lecture hall at 37 Victoria Street, where Swamiji spoke; Mr. Sturdy's house in Holland Villas suburb, where Swamiji spent some days. Then in Wimbledon, a nearby suburb: Miss Muller's home, 'Airlie Lodge', where Swamiji stayed several weeks; the site of the Ruskin School where Sister Nivedita taught and Swamiji gave at least one talk; "The Lymes", "Brantwood" (84 Worple Road), and "St. George's Road"—from each of the last three is addressed one or more of Swamiji's letters.'

(7) 'In *Paris*: the *Sorbonne* (a large university) was the scene of some of Swamiji's lectures: the particular building where these were given (during the Congress of the History of Religions) was pointed out by Swami Vidyatmananda. The *Grand Palais*, where the Exposition of 1900 took place, which Swamiji visited

almost daily during his stay in Paris (1900), was also seen from the car. The *Eiffel Tower*, where Swamiji had lunch at least once with Miss MacLeod and other devotees, was viewed with admiration. Swamiji lived at 6 *Place des Etats-Unis*, (now an art gallery), which in 1896 was the rented home of the Leggett's and is now by kind permission of the owners, the scene of weekly *Gita* classes conducted by Swami Ritajananda. We thoroughly inspected this building. The *Theatre de la Ville*, where Sarah Bernhardt, the most noted actress of the 19th century, took Swamiji to see the play, *L'Aiglon* (about Napoleon), was also seen. In addition, Swami Vidyatmananda, who besides his studies of Swamiji's stay in France, has recently prepared an article on Swamiji's visit to the Swiss Alps with the Seviars (in 1896 and also in 1900, during which he first began thinking of an Ashrama in the Himalayas), read the article to me. He also showed the fine photographs which he took in the process of preparing the article.'

(8) In *Geneva*, and throughout the rest of the Western trip, no further sites visited by Swamiji were known.

In and around these accounts, however, Swami Gambhirananda sometimes 'added incidents, some of them humorous, to illustrate the personalities and attitudes of westerners. Both here and during the previous evening he mentioned some failings of western air-lines to provide adequate consideration to 'vegetarian' passengers: repeatedly he and Dhruva, on asking for vegetarian meals, were presented with cold boiled vegetables, plus perhaps some plain fruit and salad, but no milk, cheese, or other source of protein. He also severely criticized the thoughtlessness of some air-lines in providing very inadequate toilet facilities for long distance travellers in planes which were well-equipped in every other way.

In slight contrast, he now mentioned a few stray and funny incidents in Boston: when taking his daily walk, he noticed a little boy who was being teased by a ten-year-old girl. The boy reacted in a defiant mood, which made the Swami laugh. 'I had always thought that there was a basic difference between human nature in the East and the West; but now I realized that despite superficial differences arising from environmental and historical reasons, it is essentially the same everywhere.' Yet, several incidents, also from Boston, seemed to highlight one type of superficial difference: for instance, coming upon a group of college-age boys and girls sitting on the grass near the bank of the river, smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages. Again the Swami observed one or more young people (boys and/or girls) openly drinking beer in the streets of a respectable neighbourhood. The Swami, however, said that such casual incidents should not be generalized upon.

For humorous contrast, the Swami took evident pleasure in telling about the only walk he had the chance to take on the shore of the Pacific: at Laguna Beach (20 miles from Trabuco monastery) he went with Swami Chetanananda and Br. Dhruva for a stroll, quite close to the water's edge. While admiring the beautiful sunset, a big wave suddenly dashed up, thoroughly wetting his ankles and feet, while Dhruva got more, being on the seaward side. Swami Krishnananda, behind and quite dry, recorded the event with his omnipresent camera. And an American youth, who was sitting on the sand nearby and enjoying the fun, added, 'Welcome to the Pacific.' Promptly, however, silent but vigilant Swami Krishnananda brought from his car a dry pair of socks and a towel, as if he had been forewarned that the Pacific was going to have some fun with the Swami.

It was now past 10.30 on the night of

9 December, 1972. Swami Gambhirananda said almost apologetically that he would be the last person to break up this beautiful sitting, but he had to retire in order to be rested for the journey which he would be resuming next morning. All the monks

and devotees present were indeed happy and thankful to have had his holy company for this long, but were sad that it could not be prolonged.

Mayavati, 12 December, 1972

THE GENERAL SECRETARY'S VISIT TO THE WEST

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA'S 'ITINERARY' (Aug.-Dec., 1972)

Swami Gambhirananda, the General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, left Calcutta on Aug. 5, 1972 for the U.S.A. to have his eyes treated at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary in Boston. His surgeon, Dr. Silvio Pirquet, who rendered all services free of charge, performed a 'technically successful' operation on the detached retina of the Swami's left eye on Aug. 9. During his ten-week stay in Boston, the Swami stayed at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston with Swami Sarvagatananda. A second operation was performed on Sept. 18 to drain off some fluid which had accumulated in the left eye. The Swami then undertook a 6-week tour of most of the U.S. Centres of the Ramakrishna Mission returning to Boston for the final examination of his eye on Nov. 8. Dr. Pirquet, finding no deterioration in the condition of the eye, said the Swami could return to India and referred him to the Vision Rehabilitation Center in Boston where he was fitted with a special pair of reading glasses.

Meanwhile, as early as Oct. 1, the Swami gave his first two public talks,—on 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Modern World'—to the Sunday congregations at the Vedanta Societies of Boston and Providence. Then, when the doctor agreed, he promptly began a tour of all our Centres in the U.S.A.

although, as it happened, it was later regretfully decided to omit those at Portland and Seattle because of the developing strain of the first few weeks of travel. Though Swami Gambhirananda could not visit Portland and Seattle, he had several long-distance talks over the phone with Swami Asehananda and Swami Vividishananda respectively of the two centres. On Oct. 5, he flew to Chicago, where for two days he rested at our Ashrama, although giving informal talks to the Brahmacharins. Then to St. Louis (300 miles), where among other things he addressed Swami Satprakashananda's Sunday congregation on 'Sri Ramakrishna and His Message'. As at almost every Vedanta Centre, the auditorium was full, if not overflowing, in evidence of the great desire of devotees to hear and meet the Swami. Again, as at almost all Centres, the Swami met and talked freely with the audience after the service; then he was entertained at a generous meal with a smaller group of devotees. Later he was given a well-guided tour of the principal sights of the city and surroundings. And at the Centre, interviews were given to a few earnest seekers.

After two days in St. Louis, the Swami returned to the Chicago Centre, rested a day, and proceeded to the Monastery in Ganges, Michigan (130 miles), where he spent three days. On the 11th, he formally

opened a new shrine-room. Each evening he had extended talks with the Brahma-charins and Swami Bhashyananda, and the talks were greatly appreciated.

Back in Chicago, he attended on the 14th a large Durga Puja festival at the University of Chicago sponsored by the Hindu community of Chicago. Next morning, in the Centre's new Shivananda Hall, an overflow audience listened with evident joy to his lecture on 'Worship of God as Mother'. That afternoon he witnessed Durga Puja at the Centre's temple.

After seeing the places associated with Swamiji in Chicago, and other sites of interest, the Swami flew to San Francisco on Oct. 17. Next morning along with Swami Prabuddhananda he was shown several noteworthy parts of the city; that evening he attended Durga Puja at the New Temple of the Vedanta Society. 'The next few' days were largely spent in meeting the many devotees who wanted to see him, as well as in some sight-seeing; and on the evening of the 20th, a special Question-Answer class at the Old Temple was attended by 110 earnest seekers. The next day was spent at the Berkeley Centre across San Francisco Bay after visiting the well-known University campus just adjacent. In the evening he spoke to the congregation on 'The Possibilities of Vedanta'. Back in San Francisco next morning, he spoke to a large Sunday congregation on 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Modern World'. While at Berkeley, naturally he had quite a few lively discussions with Swami Swahananda. In the next two days he visited the Convents of San Francisco and San Rafael; then at Olema, the monastery and new Women's Retreat, where 55 devotees from San Francisco entertained him at dinner. Next day, the 25th, he drove to Sacramento where he talked on 'The Message of Vedanta' at a large public meeting held at the Centre. So happy was his audience

that another, impromptu meeting was requested for the next evening when a large group again heard the Swami talk on 'Sri Ramakrishna'. As could be expected he had had intimate talks with Swami Shradhdhananda and the monastic members of the Centre.

On Oct. 27, he flew to Los Angeles. Having rested the night at the Vedanta Society, he went next morning with Swami Prabhavananda to visit the Convent at Santa Barbara. There, among other events, he spoke before 200 people at the Sunday service in their Temple on 'Swami Vivekananda and His Message to the West'. Next day he returned to the Los Angeles (Hollywood) Centre; both this evening and the next he had talks with the monastics there. On Nov. 1, the Swami attended the weekly class at which Christopher Isherwood reads from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*; after this, he answered questions from the large group of devotees, with especially happy results. Next day he was driven to Trabuco Monastery, where he had individual and group talks with the monastics. The next four days were again spent at the Hollywood Centre, with a short trip to South Pasadena. Here a group of young men devotees are living in the house where Swamiji stayed three weeks in 1900.

On Sunday the 5th, the Swami spoke at the morning Service in the Hollywood Temple to 275 people (the largest audience of this tour). And that evening he attended with monastic members and devotees the Kali Puja lasting till 4:00 a.m.

On Nov. 7th, the Swami flew to Boston, for his final visit to Dr. Pirquet, as well as his first to the Rehabilitation Clinic. The next week he stayed at the Boston Centre, giving the Sunday lecture on 'Swami Vivekananda and His Message' as well as an evening question-and-answer class; Sunday evening also he spoke again at the Providence Centre (40 miles away). Mean-

while he visited several spots associated with Swamiji,—some at considerable distance.

On Nov. 16th, he flew to New York. At the Vedanta Society he had question-answer meetings with about 20 close devotees, and Swami Pavitrananda, that evening and the next. After some time for rest, sight-seeing, and talks with sincere seekers, he went on the 18th evening to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York, where he was indeed very sorry to see Swami Nikhilananda in a broken state of health. But he very much appreciated the way he was being looked after by his assistant Swami Adishwarananda and the devotees of the Centre. Next morning he spoke before an overflow congregation at the Sunday Service. On the 21st the Swami answered questions from an audience of 75; after this, many of them continued with informal questions for an extra hour.

On the 23rd, he flew to London, and the next day along with Swami Bhavyananda did quite intensive sight-seeing, including many spots where Swamiji had either stayed or lectured. On Sunday the 26th, he spoke at the evening Service on 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Modern Age', followed by dinner-meeting with 29 close members of the Centre.

Next morning the Swami flew to Paris. There, at the Gretz Centre he stayed three days, doing considerable sight-seeing, in-

cluding at least five places associated with Swamiji's stay in Paris. Each evening he answered questions from the group of Brahmacharins and close devotees of the Centre,—translated into French by Swami Ritajananda.

Then, on Nov. 30th, he flew to Geneva, where for two days he was entertained by Swami Nityabodhananda, meeting devotees informally and doing some sight-seeing.

On Dec. 2 began the long flight back to India, concluding safely at New Delhi on the 3rd, where he was met by Swami Vandanananda and a large group of monks. After a little rest (the public meeting at the Centre which had been scheduled had to be cancelled because of fatigue) the Swami proceeded by car to Almora, where they were received by the Swamis there. Then on the 6th, over mountain roads to Mayavati. There he rested for four days at this beautiful spot, where he had been for ten years (1953 to 1963) as President of Advaita Ashrama. Besides several fire-side talks with inmates and friends (parts of which are given elsewhere in this Journal), he shared many items of his own past experience, for guidance of the present workers at Mayavati. In course of this, he took several vigorous walks across the hillsides, as if to witness to the success of treatment, at least as to his general vision.

Mayavati, 8 December, 1972

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, p. 288 ; 4, pp. 645-6 ; 5, p. 662.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever !' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (1963), p. 17.

The birthday of Sri Ramakrishna falls early next month. He is a subject of perennial fascination. In this month's *Editorial*

we have dealt with a few of his sayings, which emphasize the essentials of a successful spiritual pursuit, against the background of his divine personality.

In this instalment of 'Some Correspondence of Sister Nivedita' we find some interesting remarks by Nivedita on the subject of matrimony and conjugal love. 'Marriage, to be kept ideal, means walking on a path long and difficult, sharp as the edge of a razor, and the way so hard to find !'

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RAJAJI PASSES AWAY

India and the world are poorer by the demise of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari—Rajaji, as he was endearingly called—at the age of ninety-four, in Madras, on this Christmas. He was a true son of India and was a citizen of the world no less. Rarely have great leaders lived so long, so usefully, and withal so sanely. A super-intellectual he was acknowledged to be. But his intellectuality was based on the rock-foundation of moral integrity. The man whom Mahatma Gandhi designated as his 'conscience-keeper' possessed one of the purest consciences, a rare distinction for a political leader and administrator. If a person attains peace while living an active public life through sacrifice and dedicated work, then none need pray after his death, 'May his soul rest in peace!' When a doctor asked Rajaji a little while before death as to how he felt, he replied, 'I am very happy.' 'Where is any happiness for the peaceless?' asks the *Gītā*. Rajaji was happy since he was peaceful. He was peaceful because his conscience was clear as crystal.

'If a man wishes to live a hundred years on this earth,' declares the *Isopanishad*, 'he should live performing action.' Rajaji loved that Upanishad as well as the *Gītā* very dearly. The gospel of dedicated action advocated by these two Hindu scriptures guided Rajaji's life. Though he could not complete the hundred years that the Upanishad recommends, he was dynamic all through his life, till the last few days. He was a fighter for India's political and economic freedom ; he espoused the cause of the socially under-privileged ; he was the champion of indigenous crafts and cottage industries ; he thundered against the drink and dope menace ; he actively worked for banning nuclear tests ; he worked hard to bring noble thoughts to his people through his writings and speeches, and more than that, through his personal life. The country and its leaders duly honoured him by offering the Governor General's office to him in 1947 and by conferring on him the highest national award of 'Bharata Ratna' in 1959.

Crowning all his precious personal qualities was his unshakeable faith in the *dhārmic* and God-centred life. In this he came very close to Mahatma Gandhi, whose intimate friend and collaborator he was for nearly three decades. All his religious writings, especially those on the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, the Upaniṣads, and the Hindu way of life, are strong witness to his devotion to *dharma* and God. In particular we may recall his reverence and admiration for Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He was one of those college youths who had listened to Swami Vivekananda's lectures in Madras. His *Ramakrishna-Upaniṣadam* in Tamil, which is available in English translation, is a gripping and instructive retelling of Sri Ramakrishna's charming sayings. In Rajaji's

death we have lost a redoubtable ally of religion and God-mindedness.

'Be a man first, my friend,' wrote Swami Vivekananda once, 'and you will see how all those things [money, name and fame], and the rest will follow of themselves after you. Give up that hateful malice, that dog-like bickering and barking at one another, and take your stand on good purpose, right means, righteous courage, and be brave. When you are born a man, leave some indelible mark behind you.'

Rajaji's life is a true fulfilment of that command of Swamiji to his countrymen.

For many decades to come, Rajaji will continue to inspire humanity through his exemplary life—whose memory fills the air like 'the aroma of altar roses'—and his vast, luminous writings full of sage-like wisdom.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BIOGRAPHICAL VISTAS: BY C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR, published by Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1, 1968, reprinted in 1970, pp. 292, Rs. 15/-.

It is the publishers' claim that 'the sketches give an objective appraisal of the life and work of the personages widely accepted as the shaping forces of modern India'. Sri Rama Varma also assures us in his Foreword that an objective approach is a characteristic feature of the sketches. The satisfaction is that this assurance is not unduly belied by the author in the thirty-five sketches included in the work which is dedicated to Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the author's friend.

The work covers a vast range of personalities as the first and the last of the sketches indicate. Beginning with Valmiki, the ancient poet, the author concludes with his college in Madras. And in between are interspersed the biographical sketches of historical personages belonging to different epochs of Indian history. Sankara, Mirabai, Tyagaraja and Sri Ramakrishna, Tagore, Dr. M. Viswesvaraya, Tilak, and Nehru and many other signal contributors to the growth of Indian society and culture are presented to the reader with great sympathy and understanding. While dealing with philo-

sophers and saints like Sankara and Ramana Maharshi, one naturally has to introduce the philosophical standpoints of the philosophers treated, even if the views are not subjected to any detailed discussion. Sri Aiyar is eminently suited for this task as illustrated in the work here. The inspiring and eventful careers of such scholars and fighters like K. T. Telang, M. G. Ranade, B. G. Tilak and B. C. Pal reveal to us the vast dimensions to which many an Indian personality developed in striving for the fulfilment of some cherished objectives. The intimate pen portraits of Dr. Annie Besant, Pandit Motilal Nehru, V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, etc., reveal to us almost as much about the biographer as about the subjects of the biography. Nostalgic memories of associations of different kinds run through the whole work indicating the manifold activities of the author during his lifetime.

The kind of political life that the author led could not possibly have brought him into contact with any radicals and revolutionaries among his contemporaries. Most of the accounts, therefore, are of personalities who either actively cooperated with the British aliens in their rule over India or were at the most liberal protesters. There are

exceptions, of course, like Tilak and Nehru, the former of whom has been rightly described as a unique phenomenon (p. 175). But imputing an 'intrinsic prejudice against foreigners who inter-meddled in Indian life and politics' to this great savant and courageous fighter (p. 174) needs more justification than has been provided. While what the author tells us about his relationship with Nehru (p. 234) reveals both the parties concerned as shrewd judges of situations and persons, the encomia showered by the author on entrepreneurs like Muthiah Chettiar (pp. 269-272) show the inclinations of the author in matters relating to economy. This makes the work more interesting in its study of the *cultural* aspects of Indian life than of the *political* aspects of the Indian struggle.

What makes the biographical sketches of Valmiki, Sankara, Tyagaraja and Tagore vastly enhanced are the profuse illustrations given from their works. But their value is considerably reduced by some serious drawbacks the work suffers from. Mythical stories lacking historicity are, for example, construed as elements of biography in the case of Sankara (p. 19). This is, to say the least, deplorable in a work of this kind. As a sketch of Mirabai, we have only a summary of the plot of a play by Dilip Kumar Roy on Mirabai's life. Nobody can do justice to Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings

in three and a half pages (pp. 62-65) and even that through an inadequate summary of the monumental work of Swami Saradananda. Historians of Indian Philosophy and Culture do not generally make statements like the one we have on p. 149 about Telang having 'proved' conclusively the date of the *Gita*.

The work is replete with controversial statements, as is to be expected when a variety of men belonging to different shades of opinion are evaluated. Bad transliteration of Sanskrit passages quoted in the work could have been avoided. (p. 264: 'Sarvam kalu idam Brahma'; 'Ekamevadvatiam'; p. 2: 'lalata-grihani'; p. 5: 'arirvedah'; p. 3: 'sailuishah', etc.).

In spite of all the drawbacks mentioned (and there are quite a few not mentioned here), the work is interesting in so far as it throws some light on the events in which the author was a participant and thus is of historical significance. The contribution made to the understanding of Indian philosophical tradition cannot be underrated by any reader. The book will, therefore, make a good addition to the libraries, though the usefulness of the book in personal libraries is doubtful. Rupees fifteen is almost a prohibitive price for a book of this size and kind.

DR. G. RAMAKRISHNA

NEWS AND REPORTS

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REPORT FOR 1971-72

During the period under report, the Dispensary treated 1,56,504 cases (in both Allopathic and Homoeopathic Depts.). The *Eye Department* proved itself to be a veritable boon to the poor people suffering from eye trouble. 14,754 patients were treated in this department. The *E. N. T. Department*, with necessary modern equipments,

treated 10,121 patients. *X-Ray Department* served 377 patients. *Children's Department* is providing some special treatment to the suffering children with the help of a Paediatrician. The fully-equipped *Dental Department* treated 7,486 patients. The *Laboratory* of the Dispensary examined 591 different kinds of specimens.

To meet the large expenditure and to serve the suffering people more effectively, the Dispensary needs assistance, co-operation, and donations of the generous public and the Government.