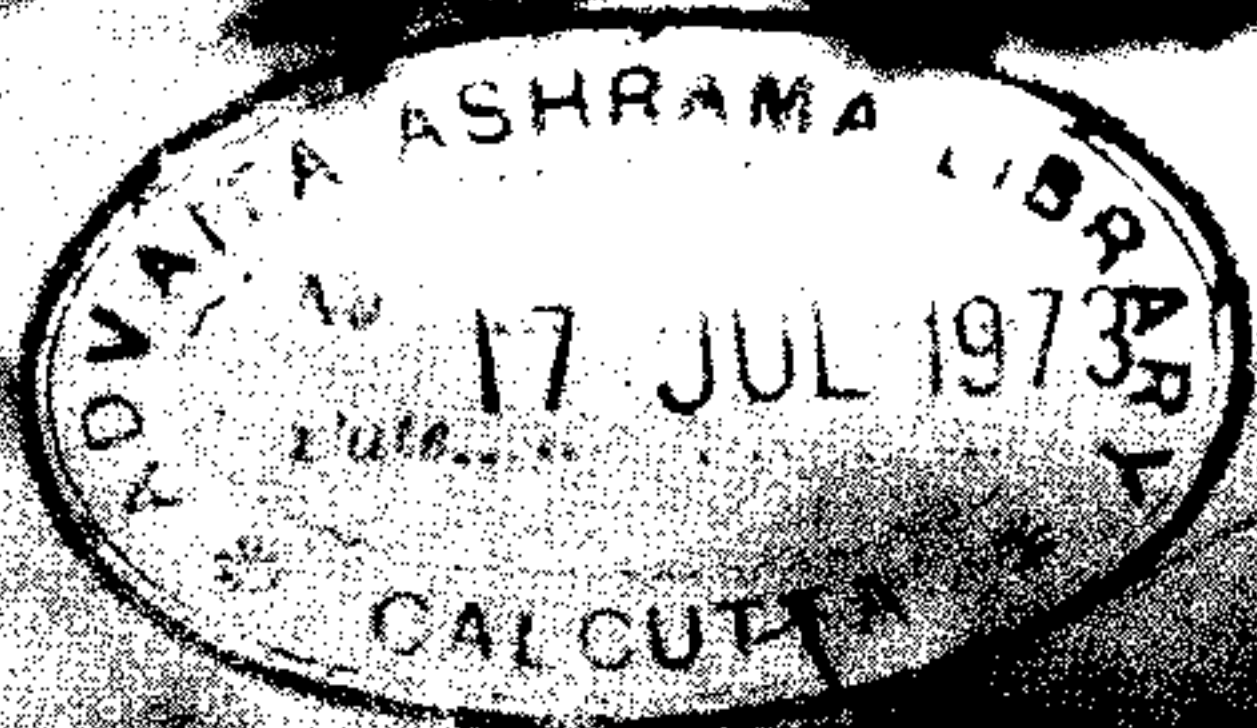


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JULY 1973



**Prabuddha**  
**Bharata**  
OR  
**AWAKENED INDIA**



**ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS**





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# Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 7

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Nanda) : 'Why has God assumed all these different forms ?

Why are some wise and some ignorant ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Oh ! It is His sweet will.'

So saying, the Master sang :

O Mother, all is done after Thine own sweet will ;  
Thou art in truth self-willed, Redeemer of mankind !  
Thou workest Thine own work ; men only call it theirs.  
Thou it is that holdest the elephant in the mire ;  
Thou that helpest the lame man scale the loftiest hill.  
On some Thou dost bestow the bliss of Brahmanhood ;  
Yet others Thou dost hurl into this world below.  
Thou art the Moving Force, and I the mere machine ;  
The house am I, and Thou the Spirit dwelling there ;  
I am the chariot, and Thou the Charioteer ;  
I move alone as Thou, O Mother, movest me.

'The Divine Mother is full of bliss. Creation, preservation, and destruction are the waves of Her sportive pleasure. Innumerable are the living beings. Only one or two among them obtain liberation. And that makes Her happy.

Out of a hundred thousand kites, at best but one or two break free ;  
And Thou dost laugh and clap Thy hands, O Mother, watching them !  
'Some are being entangled in the world and some are being liberated from it.

How many are the boats, O mind,  
That float on the ocean of this world !  
How many are those that sink

Nanda : 'It may be Her sweet will ; but it is death to us.'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'But who are you ? It is the Divine Mother who

has become all this. It is only as long as you do not know Her that you say, "I", "I".

'All will surely realize God. All will be liberated. It may be that some get their meal in the morning, some at noon, and some in the evening; but none will go without food. All, without any exception, will certainly know their real Self.

'Try to find out what this "I" is. Is this "I" the bones or flesh or blood or intestines? Seeking the "I", you discover "Thou". In other words, nothing exists inside you but the power of God. There is no "I", but only "He". (*To Pasupati*) You have so much wealth, but you have no egotism. It is not possible to rid oneself altogether of the ego; so, as long as it is there, let the rascal remain as the servant of God. The ego that makes a man feel he is a devotee of God or a son of God or a servant of God is good. But the ego that makes a man attached to "woman and gold" is the "unripe ego". That ego is to be renounced.

'There are two signs of knowledge: first absence of pride, and second, a peaceful nature. You have both. Therefore you must have received the grace of God.

'Too much wealth makes one forget God. That is the very nature of wealth. Jadu Mallick has become very rich. Nowadays he doesn't talk of God. Formerly he used to enjoy spiritual talk a great deal.

'"Woman and gold" is a kind of wine. If a man drinks too much wine, he does not show his father and uncle the respect that is due to them. Very often he abuses them. A drunkard cannot distinguish between his superior and his inferior.'

Question (asked by Shyam Basu): 'Sir, is there such a thing as reincarnation? Shall we be born again?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Ask God about it. Pray to Him sincerely. He will tell you everything. Speak to Jadu Mallick, and he himself will tell you how many houses he has, and how many government bonds. It is not right to try to know these things at the beginning. First of all realize God; then He Himself will let you know whatever you desire.'

---



## ASPECTS OF STRENGTH

EDITORIAL

### ONWARD FOR EVER!

*We are all travelling the same way, towards the same goal, but by different paths made by the necessities of the case to suit diverse minds. We must become many-sided, indeed we must become protean in character, so as not only to tolerate, but to do what is much more difficult, to sympathise, to enter into another's path, and feel with him in his aspirations and seeking after God. There are two elements in every religion—a positive and a negative. In Christianity, for instance, when you speak of the Incarnation, of the Trinity, of salvation through Jesus Christ, I am with you. I say, 'Very good, that I also hold true.' But when you go on to say, 'There is no other true religion, there is no other revelation of God', then I say, 'Stop, I cannot go with you when you shut out, when you deny.' Every religion has a message to deliver, something to teach man; but when it begins to protest, when it tries to disturb others, then it takes up a negative and therefore a dangerous position, and does not know where to begin or where to end.*

*Every force completes a circuit. The force we call man starts from the Infinite God and must return to Him. This return to God must be accomplished in one of two ways—either by slowly drifting back, going with nature; or by our own inward power. ...*

*Vivekananda*

### I

Swami Vivekananda was a story-teller of rare distinction. This quality he shared with his Master who, with the other great prophets of whom we know, was a superb artist at story-telling and improvisation. A simple story with great significance was once related by Vivekananda at Thousand Island Park to an earnest group of disciples. The story concerns the subject of this essay and runs thus:

"A mosquito sat long on the horn of a certain bull. Then his conscience troubled him and he said, "Mr. Bull, I have been sitting here a long time, perhaps I annoy you. I am sorry; I will go away." But the bull replied, "Oh no, not at all! Bring your whole family and live on my horn; what can you do to me?"<sup>1</sup>

A mosquito, however small, has its own weight and capacity for annoying. It is conscious of its strength, weight, and capacity. What it can never understand or even imagine is the bull's strength, weight, and capacity to bear burdens. With respect to worldly troubles, problems, situations, ills, adversities, and challenges, a strong man should care as much as the bull for the mosquito on its horn. Swamiji prefaced his story with the teaching, 'Neither seek nor avoid, take what comes. It is liberty to be affected by nothing; do not merely endure, be unattached. Remember the story of the bull.'<sup>2</sup>

### II

There is undoubtedly the physical aspect of strength; the body should be healthy, vigorous, and strong. But let no one confuse the meaning of strength with that represented by athletes and gymnasts, weight

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mavadati, Himalayas), Vol. VII (1958) p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> loc. cit.

lifters and prize fighters, and heroes in Superman comic strips. In the majority of such cases, the individual's entire energy is used in building up brawn while the other aspects of his personality remain un- or underdeveloped. Young men and women, who idolize such real or imaginary heroes, should guard themselves against this wrong approach. A tall, robust body, with rippling and bulging muscles, however spectacular and awesome it may appear, cannot be the goal of human life. Psychologically, *Homo sapiens* has travelled a long way up the evolutionary path from other primates, and it is retrograde for him to try to become like an intelligent gorilla.

This does not mean, however, that Swami ji did not emphasize physical strength. He urged the young men of this country to develop 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel' and declared that they will be 'nearer Heaven through football than through the study of the *Gītā*'. 'The Ātman is not gained by the weak,' he used to say, quoting the Upaniṣads, and explained that passions dominated the weak body and made it an unsuitable instrument for Self-realization. Personally, he set an example of great physical 'strength, manliness, and courage. These he had gained through years of superhuman struggle, tremendous self-discipline, and exalted states of Self-realization.

Iron muscles and steely nerves come usually to those who lead lives of self-discipline and follow basic rules of health and hygiene. The body has its natural defences which protect it from disease-causing bacteria and viruses. Only the civilized man weakens these defences by sense-indulgence and soft living, stimulants and narcotics. The body is a means to higher ends in life—for achieving perfect character and wisdom—and should be used for achieving those ends. From this standpoint, strength of body means the capacity to undertake strenuous efforts and to endure privations

cheerfully. 'Mosquitoes' of physical ills will not bother the vigorous activities of one with such strength. Fortitude of the *sāttvika* type, as defined by the *Gītā*, is what is meant by strength here :

'The fortitude by which the functions of the mind, the *prāṇa* (vital energy), and the senses, O Arjuna, are regulated, unswerving through yoga, is *sāttvika*.'<sup>3</sup>

A man with this kind of fortitude may not possess rippling muscles, but his energy is almost inexhaustible. He seems to be always in touch with the universal springs of strength and zest. He may grow old in body but his spirit will remain young. When he dies, it will be more like the ripe leaf or fruit falling from a tree—from this evergreen tree of creation.

### III

Those who quote Swami Vivekananda on acquiring muscles of iron and nerves of steel very often forget what he says in the same breath about possessing 'gigantic wills'. His words about the nature of these wills give us an idea of the adamant will that he himself possessed and which enabled him to accomplish successfully the mission his Master had entrusted to his care. He characterizes the strong wills thus: '... gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face'. In another context he spoke of the power of a will which is indomitable, which is one of the instruments of great achievements. Though it is a series of questions addressed to would-be patriots among his countrymen, what he expects of a strong will is plain :

'Have you got the will to surmount

<sup>3</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, XVIII. 33.



mountain-high obstructions? If the whole world stands against you with sword in hand, would you still dare to do what you think is right? If your wives and children are against you, if all your money goes, your name dies, your wealth vanishes, would you still stick to it? Would you still pursue it and go on steadily towards your own goal? ... Have you got that steadfastness?'<sup>4</sup>

A strong will is the direct result of a strong mind. Strength of mind is the product of moral and ethical discipline, concentration and purity, unselfishness and love. There can be a destructive type of mental strength and will power which often express themselves in megalomaniacs, anti-social persons, and 'hollow heroes'. Strength is not the word for it; it is a psychopathological syndrome. When moral perversion assumes epidemic proportions and the majority in society begin to worship anti-heroes, mental 'strength' of the destructive type becomes popular. This sort of destructive strength brings great pain and misery in its wake and finally destroys its own mediums. Men and women with an amount of sanity and discrimination between right and wrong, should give a wide berth to such anti-hero-worship which will lead to madness and moral suicide.

The constructive type of will power and mental strength, so inspiringly delineated by Swami Vivekananda, is the need of the hour, both in and outside India. Humanity is in desperate need of moral giants to replace the moral midgets occupying seats of power, authority, and administration. Why is post-Independence India gradually sliding into a moral, economic, and political morass? In the fields of education, industry, scientific research, sports, arts, and literary creativity, India as a nation seems to have hit the bottom. Undoubtedly,

gigantic problems are staring us in the face. But where is the problem, however gigantic, that does not yield before the mighty moral will of man?

Swami Vivekananda once envisioned the emergence of new India thus :

'Let her arise—out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains ...'<sup>5</sup>

New India is slowly emerging from these humble levels, nooks and corners. What is necessary is the moral stature and integrity, burning spirit of sacrifice and human love in the educated upper classes and national leaders to inspire and lead the masses towards the great dawn of a new era.

We hear people often complaining about the ubiquitous vice of corruption. No amount of legislative measures will be able to check or eradicate it. Only when moral and unselfish men become ubiquitous will the raging tide of corruption be beaten back. Let a few leaders, administrators, officers, professors, students, and artisans stand foursquare like the Rock of Gibraltar against the tide of corruption. It may be that they will have to face persecution, social ostracism, loss of wealth and fame, and even life. But let them stand firm and fearless. Soon their influence will spread. If immorality is contagious, so also is morality. When moral heroes with wills 'made of the essence of the thunderbolt' increase in number, a new wave of regeneration will set in. The slow descent of the country into universal chaos and moral morass will change into the ascent towards order, efficiency, prosperity, and glory.

<sup>4</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. III (1960) p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VII p. 327.

'It is as foolish not to be virtuous,' wrote Dr. Alexis Carrel, 'as to put water instead of oil into an internal combustion engine.' The human body which houses the spirit is a wonderful machine which also needs the fuel of morality and will power to drive it on towards its destiny. A man who lives in tune with moral principles and truth, who is unselfish and affectionate to his fellows, soon becomes the centre of a strange power and influence. Through him will begin to act the power which attracts as magnetism and gravity, shines in sun and stars, and spins the galaxies. Materially he may not gain, but spiritually he triumphs. Before him temptations of lust and lucre, name and fame, become as insignificant as the mosquitoes on the bull's horn. The sense of fulfilment, joy, strength and serenity which result from moral uprightness and living for a noble ideal, will be more than enough compensation for any material disadvantage. Such were the men who faced the stake and the gallows and the cup of hemlock with calm courage and conquered death by welcoming it for the sake of their sublime principles. Humanity would have been lost in a blinding gloom without such immortal examples to guide its faltering footsteps.

#### IV

Superior to both the physical and mental strength and as their substratum is the strength derived from the knowledge of Brahman or Supreme Reality. The Upaniṣads characterize Brahman as Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity. Infinity is non-dual, blissful, and fearless. 'Brahman is fearlessness,' say the sages. One who realizes It loses all sense of separateness. His vision becomes all-inclusive, because he becomes the All. 'Through the Ātman one attains strength,' says the *Kena-upaniṣad*. Real strength is that which does not quail even in the face of death, knowing full well

that death is only a change affecting the physical sheath. The Self does not die, because It was never born. That which is absolute existence and is the sole support of all phenomena, physical and psychological, including life and death, how can that be destroyed? One with this knowledge accepts crucifixion with a smile and prays for his tormentors. When death comes he will be hard as stone, for he has 'touched the feet of God'. The event of death for a *Brahma-jñānī* or a knower of Brahman, is a welcome and blissful event, for at that moment the last vestige of difference between him and the Supreme Truth disappears. Therefore the physical death of a man of knowledge is described as *mahā-samādhi* or the 'great ecstasy', in Hindu parlance.

To a man who has realized his identity with the supreme Reality, this manifested universe, though apparently boundless, shrinks to a mere drop. 'In me the Ocean of Infinite Bliss,' he sings ecstatically, 'the waves of the universe arise and dissolve by the play of the wind of Māyā.'<sup>6</sup> What can upset or vex or frighten or overcome such a man? To those who revile and insult and even do him physical harm, his reaction is one of love and compassion—'As a father who, though abused and kicked by his little son, will not be sorry or angry, but in fact will fondle the child'.<sup>7</sup> This world and its phenomena, problems and privations, strifes and scrambles, jealousies and competitions, joys and sorrows, affect him as much as the mosquito on the bull's horn.

His bonds broken, the man who has known the Reality overflows with love and compassion towards all those who are in bondage and misery. He spontaneously goes out to help humanity and joyfully takes

<sup>6</sup> *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*, 496.

<sup>7</sup> *Pañcadaśī*, VII. 288,



its burden on himself. He is ready to give up 'twenty thousand such bodies to help one man'—such is his divine selfless compassion.

The last part of a letter that Swami Vivekananda wrote to Sister Nivedita in 1899 aptly reflects the supreme strength, yet the tender mother-heart, of a Saviour of souls :

'The man who really takes the burden blesses the world and goes his own way.

He has not a word of condemnation, a word of criticism, not because there was no evil but that he has taken it on his own shoulders, willingly, voluntarily. It is the Saviour who should "go his way rejoicing, and not the saved" ...

'Come ye that are heavily laden and lay all your burden on me, and then do whatever you like and be happy and forget that I ever existed.'<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> op. cit., VII p. 508.

## LETTERS OF A SAINT

### THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora  
19-12-15

Dear—,

I have got all the news from your letter of the 12th instant.

For the last few days I have often remembered you. Yes, after your leave, you have been busy. You will have a vacation again, and you will work thereafter and take rest again. This way the Lord's work goes on.

My health is as it used to be. Good, bad—somehow it goes on. No abatement of the disease. I think the body will fall off in this manner. Whatever the Lord wills, that will happen.

I am feeling so happy at your great yearning [for spiritual life]. The Master [Sri Ramakrishna] used to say that in proportion to the increase in yearning, His grace, too, will increase. All that is needed is to have love, devotion, and attachment to Him. True, the devotee desires the vision of God alone, but for that he keeps on depending on the Lord's will. Arjuna said, 'I want to see Your Īsvara-form, O supreme Puruṣa !'<sup>1</sup> But the next moment, as if in embarrassment, he said, 'If, O Lord, You think me able to behold it, then, O Master of yogis, reveal to me Your immutable Self.'<sup>2</sup>

That is the truth. Only if He wants, He will reveal Himself; otherwise it is difficult. For even after seeing that Form, there was to be no peace. With great yearning, Arjuna had to say, 'I don't want to see It any more', and pray, 'O Lord, please show me Your natural [human] form'; and seeing that,

<sup>1</sup> द्रष्टुमिच्छामि ते रूपमैश्वरं पुरुषोत्तम । *Bhagavad-gītā*, XI. 3

<sup>2</sup> मन्यसे यदि तच्छक्यं मया द्रष्टुमिति प्रभो ।

योगेश्वर ततो मे त्वं दर्शयात्मानमव्ययम् ॥ *ibid.*, XI. 4

he became composed—'Seeing this gentle human form of Yours, O Janārdana, I now feel composed in mind ; I am myself again.'<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the devotee does not desire the vision of His form, but prays only for love, devotion, and attachment to Him. If only he gains these three, he has no want of anything else.

'He who does My work and looks on Me as the Goal, who is devoted to Me, who is without attachment and without hatred for any creature, he comes to Me, O Arjuna.'<sup>4</sup>

To work for His pleasure, to know that He alone is the dearest One, to love Him, to give up all other attachment, and not to harbour any ill-will towards anyone—this indeed is the most helpful way to attain Him.

There is one thing—that is *love*. If you can love, all is done. It is not that we do not know how to love : we are accustomed to loving wife, children, friends, relatives, wealth, people, etc. One has to turn that love towards Him ; for everything else than Him is now there, now not there ; it is not permanent. None else can be the object of that supreme love. Everything becomes stale, bitter, and does not remain constant. Only the love of God increases every moment and is infinite. 'That [love] indeed is charming, delicious, and ever new.' Enjoyment of everything else is followed by fatigue and revulsion. It is therefore that the devotee says :

'That deathless love which the ignorant have for the fleeting objects of the senses—as I keep remembering you, may not that love slip away from my heart.'<sup>5</sup>

When he develops this sort of love, the devotee need not wait for His vision. If he needs it, the Lord will reveal Himself, even by coming out of a pillar.<sup>6</sup> The vision of the 'transcendent and immanent' Brahman, by which the knots of the heart are broken, is not to be had with these eyes. 'He is revealed by the negative [*neti*, 'not this'] teachings [of the Vedānta], discriminative wisdom, and the knowledge of unity based upon reflection. They who know Him become immortal.'<sup>7</sup> 'O my good friend, he [who knows this Brahman] cuts asunder even here the knot of ignorance.'<sup>8</sup>

But then, it is not that He does not reveal Himself, if one prays to Him. To be sure, the Upaniṣad says :

'His form does not stand within the range of the senses. Nobody ever

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, XI. 51

<sup>4</sup> मत्कर्मकृन्मत्परमो मद्भक्तः सङ्गवर्जितः ।

निर्वैरः सर्वभूतेषु यः स मामेति पाण्डव ॥ *ibid.*, XI. 55

<sup>5</sup> या प्रीतिरविवेकानां विषयेष्वनपायिनी ।

त्वामनुस्मरतः सा मे हृदयान्मापसर्पतु ॥ *Viṣṇu-purāna*, I. xx. 23.

<sup>6</sup> The allusion here is to the story of Prahlāda—a great devotee of Viṣṇu—to save whom from the tortures of the demon-father, Hiranyakaśipu, Viṣṇu comes forth splitting a pillar, in the form of 'Narahari' or Man-lion. For details *vide* : *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, VII. Ch. 1-10.—*Ed.*

<sup>7</sup> *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, IV. 17

<sup>8</sup> सोऽविद्याग्रन्थि विकिरतीह सोम्य । *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, I. i. 10



sees Him with the eye. Those who know Him through the faculty of intuition as abiding in their heart, become immortal.'<sup>9</sup>

Everything depends on our heart. The more our heart dwells on Him, the more He too dwells in our heart. 'He is the friend of a sincere heart.' Indeed He is always in the heart. But how little we take notice of Him; we have kept our vision wrapped up with everything else. Otherwise why should there be delay in attaining Him? Well has the devotee said:

'Where do you seek for Me? I am by your side.  
If you really search for Me, I shall reach you in a moment.  
I don't dwell in temple or mosque, nor do I dwell in Kāśī or Kailāsa;  
—Not even in Ayodhyā or Dwārakā; but one attains Me through faith.'<sup>10</sup>

He is with us; you need not go to seek for Him anywhere else. 'I search and seek but can't find Him; He is his to whom He reveals Himself.' If we search for Him earnestly for a moment, He presents Himself before us. But who seeks Him? Are not all our professions mere words of mouth? Only if we feel His presence within can we succeed. He is our inner controller. We read in the scriptures, but do we believe? 'I am seated in the hearts of all.'<sup>11</sup> Is this a false statement? 'An eternal portion of Myself, having become a living soul in a world of living beings...'<sup>12</sup>—this saying is not untrue, but to us it remains, as it were, untrue. Why? Because we only read this, but neither do we believe it nor do we search for Truth. This is why our plight is like this. The Master [Sri Ramakrishna] used to say:

'One got the grace of the guru, the Lord, and the devotee; but for want of the grace of one, the man went to rack and ruin.'

That is, even though one is blessed with the grace of everybody else, one should have one's own grace. 'For, he himself is his friend and he himself is his enemy.' 'To him who has not conquered himself, his own self is hostile, like an external enemy.'<sup>13</sup> That is why if one's own grace does not descend upon oneself, the grace of others hardly helps.

Your attention has been drawn to yourself. The Lord will surely bless you. Be full of yearning. May He fulfil your wish—that is my prayer to Him.

SRI TURIYANANDA

<sup>9</sup> न संदृशे तिष्ठति रूपमस्य न चक्षुषा पश्यति कश्चनैनम् ।

हृदा हृदिस्थं मनसा य एनमेवं विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति ॥ *Sv.-up.*, IV. 20

<sup>10</sup> A song of Kabīr.

<sup>11</sup> सर्वस्य चाहं हृदि सन्निविष्टः । *Gītā*, XV. 15

<sup>12</sup> ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः । *ibid.*, XV. 7

<sup>13</sup> आत्मैव ह्यात्मनो बन्धुरात्मैवरिपुरात्मनः ।

अनात्मनस्तु शत्रुत्वे वर्तेतात्मैव शत्रुवत् । *ibid.*, VI. 5, 6

# SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S TEMPLE IN VRINDABAN AND ITS SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

Vrindaban is a holy place, one of the holiest places in India, and probably this is the only place which has been sanctified by three great incarnations—Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Caitanya, and Sri Ramakrishna. This was the playground of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in His boyhood, and many divine scenes were enacted here—particularly the demonstration of the great religious ideal of love for love's sake. And Śrī Rādhā, the beloved of Kṛṣṇa, was the personification of this love. Indeed, the very dust of this place is very holy. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that it is one of the representations, as it were, of Brahman, the Absolute Reality, and that is why he took some dust from Vrindaban and sprinkled it under the Panchavati at Dakshineswar, and made that place very holy. So it is but natural that in this place, which is one of the ancient seats of culture and religion in our country, where many saintly persons have come and added to its glory, there should be a temple for Sri Ramakrishna also so that his message for the modern world will spread to the common people all over India through the pilgrims that come to this holy place. We already have many temples here, but still there is room for one more, for this temple of Sri Ramakrishna.

Man has always found it greatly necessary to see God, who is Infinite, in a finite form, and in a particular place, where he can feel His presence. And that is the urge which is, as it were, behind the evolution of temples in any religion, particularly in our country. In the Vedic times there were no temples, but in every house there would be the altar with its sacred fire where oblations were offered to the gods. But during the Buddhist era—particularly after the first part of the Buddhist period—these things changed. During the Buddhist period there were Stupas which developed into Caityas and Vihāras, and also images of Buddha were installed in many of these

places. As a result, when the religion of the Buddha began to decline, all these things were adopted by resurgent Hinduism, and we had temples and images, images of various deities. We also had temples for great sages and incarnations. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhāgavatam* :

‘There are two kinds of temples, one for deities and the other for sages and incarnations. People who worship sages with desires will have all their desires fulfilled. And those who worship the sages without any desire, will attain liberation.’<sup>1</sup>

These holy temples have a great part to play in the religious life of any community.

We have heard from great teachers of men that God's images are not lifeless idols, but that they have ‘life’, and that is why we should worship them as we serve a living man. We must give the best offerings to the Lord who is installed and invoked in the image. The lives of saints afford many examples to prove that these images are conscious and living. There are many such incidents in Sri Ramakrishna's life also. I will recall only one here. Sri Ramakrishna had the doubt whether the Mother Kālī whom he worshipped in the temple at Dakshineswar was a living personality or a mere stone image. So one day he took a piece of cotton and put it before Her nostrils to see whether She was breathing. To his great surprise he found that the cotton was wavering, which proved that the Mother was breathing. That showed She had life and was not an inert image; and that was why he said, ‘My Mother is not *mṛṇmayī* [made of clay], but She is *cinmayī* [full of consciousness].’

Thus we know that the Lord lives in images also, and that our worship of images will lead us to liberation. This too was demonstrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, who worshipped the Divine Mother

<sup>1</sup> *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.



in the image and attained the highest realization.

These temples all over India have attracted sages, and the temples have played a very important part in the life of these great sages. Many of them lived near temples and worshipped the deities in the temples, and attained the Truth. Sri Ramakrishna is one of the latest examples of such sages. Now the temple of Mother Kālī where he lived and worshipped has become a place of pilgrimage for people all over the world. The sage Nārada says that places of pilgrimage are sanctified by saints.<sup>2</sup>

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Bhāgavatam* in answer to Uddhava's question :

'Installing My image, he must have a strong temple built for it, with beautiful flower-gardens attached, and for the continuance of the daily worship as well as gatherings and festivals on special days, he should make a gift of lands, shops, towns, and villages to support the worship etc. By doing so he attains a splendour equalling Mine.'<sup>3</sup>

Here in Vrindaban a great temple has been built and the image installed and arrangements made to a great extent for the continuance of the worship by all those devotees who have contributed to the completion of this undertaking. They are all really fortunate according to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Swami Vivekananda installed an image of Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine of a devotee's house in 1897. At the end of the worship when he made *pranāmas* (salutations), prostrating himself before the image, he composed the following stanza :

'Om. The Establisher of *dharma*, Embodiment of all religions, Greatest of Incarnations, I salute Thee, Sri Ramakrishna.'<sup>4</sup>

Let us consider what this means. The first epithet that Swamiji uses in respect of Sri Ramakrishna is *Dharmasya sthāpaka* [ 'Establisher of *dharma*' ]. The establishing of *dharma* is not peculiar to Sri Ramakrishna's life. It is a common objective of all *avatāras*. In fact, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, they all come for this very purpose.

The next epithet that Swamiji uses is *Sarvadharmasvarūpin* [ 'Embodiment of all religions' ]. All the previous incarnations have accepted the general current of our culture ; that is, the spirit of synthesis. From the Vedic times there has been this spirit of synthesis in our religious life. An ancient Ṛṣi declared : '*Ekam sat, viprah̄ bahu-dha vadanti*'. ('Truth is One, sages call it variously.') And this spirit of synthesis continued to permeate Hinduism down the centuries until the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Again when discordant voices were heard, Śrī Kṛṣṇa synthesized all the spiritual and social ideals that were prevalent at His time. Then again, during the mediaeval times, Śaṅkara synthesized all the prevalent six different sects and established his own philosophical system of Advaita or non-dualism. That is why he is called *Sanmata-sthāpanācārya*, the establisher of the six cults of Hinduism. The six sects are : *Saura*, *Gāṇapatya*, *Skānda*, *Śākta*, *Śaiva*, and *Vaiṣṇava*. Each of these sects holds that the deity—Sun, Gaṇeśa, Skānda, Śakti, Śiva, Viṣṇu, respectively—it worships is supreme. Even today, before conducting any worship we have to worship the *pañca-devatās* (five of these deities).<sup>5</sup>

So this spirit of synthesis was there in the nation and its cultural stream. But in the modern age nothing is accepted on faith.

<sup>2</sup> Nārada's *Bhakti-sūtras*, 70.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhāgavatam*, XI. xxvii. 50-1.

<sup>4</sup> ॐ स्थापकाय च धर्मस्य सर्वधर्मस्वरूपिणे ।  
अवतारवरिष्ठाय रामकृष्णाय ते नमः ॥

<sup>5</sup> In South India the *Kumāra* or *Skānda*-cult, being very popular, could not be ignored by Śaṅkara. The *Smārtas*, however, admit the other five only, and therefore practise *pañcopāsana* or *pañcāyatana-pūjā* (the worship of five deities).—Ed.

People are scientifically minded and cannot take anything on faith. They want proof for everything. And so the way Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave His message in the *Gītā*, accepting all religious ideals on faith, will not suit this age. Śaṅkarādārya also taught in the same way, possibly a little more intellectually. There was no scientific and practical approach to the synthesis. But Sri Ramakrishna made the scientific approach and synthesized all religions; and said that all religions are different paths to God-realization. He practised *sādhanā* (spiritual disciplines) as prescribed by each religion, and arrived at the same Truth. From this direct experience he concluded that all religions are different paths to the same goal. That is why Swamiji called him *Sarvadharmaswarūpin*, the 'Embodiment of all religions'. This scientific approach and direct experience are the proof that the modern world demanded, and he gave it.

Then there comes the other epithet, *Avatāravariṣṭha*, 'Greatest among the Incarnations'. How can there be, one may ask, any difference between one *avatāra* and another *avatāra*? The same Divine Personality, the same Lord, comes as Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Gaurāṅga, and Sri Ramakrishna. How can there be any difference among them? I shall just give an example. It may not be quite apt, yet it comes very close to clarifying the point, and so I shall place it before you. A certain man acts different parts in different plays, and is declared the best actor of the group. But still we say that in a particular play, in a particular role, he is at his best, *par excellence*. What does it mean? It means that in that particular role he gets the best opportunity to display all his latent talents in acting, while he did not have that scope in other roles. So we say, 'He is at his best in this role'. So also, according to the needs of the age and the country, *avatāras* play their parts which fulfil those needs.

And the need in the Vedic age was not so great. During the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa the need was great and He fulfilled that need. That is why He is still worshipped today all over India and even abroad. The *Bhāgavatam* says, 'All these *avatāras* are only *kalās* or *aṅśas* (parts) of the Lord, but Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Lord Himself.'<sup>6</sup>

Now comes Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji says he is *Avatāravariṣṭha*, 'Greatest among the Incarnations.' He does not mean that there is a difference, a superiority, as a person, in the same Lord, but that there is a difference in expression of the power for the fulfilment of the need of the age. All over the world today we have various sorts of conflicts: conflict between the rich and the poor, conflict between races, conflict between castes, conflict between religions, conflict between nations, and conflict between men and women. All these conflicts have been resolved by Sri Ramakrishna's life. He has given the solution for the conflict of religions, as already explained. He has given the solution for the conflicts in racial, domestic, and social spheres. He has pointed out that at the back of every human being there is the Ātman which is common to all, and if we only see the world, deal with the world, from that standpoint, then there can be no conflict in any sphere of life. That is the basis on which we can build the one world about which many thinkers and leaders of today are talking. They are talking of one world, but there is no foundation for that. This foundation can be had only in this experience of Sri Ramakrishna. He saw the same Ātman in every one, and that is why he had harmony. He saw all alike and he had no such word as alien in his vocabulary. All were his own people. So he has fulfilled the need of the whole world and not of any particular region or of any particular commu-

<sup>6</sup> *Bhāgavatam*, I. iii. 28.



nity. The problem was of the entire humanity and he has solved that problem. And he has also established faith in God by his own realization.

The world today is very acquisitive. Men want to get rich even by robbing their neighbours. And when this spirit is at its highest, Sri Ramakrishna's life shows to the world the spirit of renunciation of an exalted kind. He could not touch any metallic thing. If anything metallic was put under his bed, as Swamiji did once, he at once felt as if a scorpion had stung him, felt intense pain, and could not sit on the bed. That shows how extreme was his renunciation of 'gold', of possessions. He synthesized the life of a householder and that of a *sannyāsin* (monk) in one. He did not renounce his wife, but accepted her; and this acceptance was of the highest order, pure and immaculate. Thus he has shown and synthesized the life of a householder and a *sannyāsin* in one. From various standpoints we see that Sri Ramakrishna's life is much more significant to the world than the lives of the previous incarnations. From that standpoint only, it is said that Sri Ramakrishna is *Avatāravariṣṭha*. Otherwise it is the same Lord that comes in various forms. Sri Ramakrishna himself has said, 'He who

was Rāma and He who was Kṛṣṇa, is now Ramakrishna.' Lord Gaurāṅga or Caitanya also showed that the personality is the same by showing the *ṣaḍbhujā* (six-armed) form Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma. Śrī Kṛṣṇa also says, 'I embody Myself from age to age for the good of the world.' There is, however, a difference in the manifestation of power according to the need of the age or the country or the whole world. So from that standpoint it is said that Sri Ramakrishna is *Avatāravariṣṭha*, 'Greatest among the Incarnations'.

We have said above that Sri Ramakrishna came to establish *dharma*, religion. But one can raise an objection, 'We do not see any signs of it, for we see all around only selfishness, worldliness, conflicts, and hatred.' But I should like to say that he has given the message and it is slowly working all over the world, even at unexpected places. People who just hear it, take to it with great eagerness. That shows there is great demand or hankering for his soul-stirring message. The spiritual forces that he has let loose on this world have the power or potentiality to usher in a new age. We are at the end of an old epoch and the beginning of a new one.

## FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : SURENDRANATH MITRA

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

One day Surendranath Mitra confided his worries and anxieties to his friends and neighbours, Ramchandra Dutta and Manomohan Mitra. He also narrated an incident. One day after noon-meal he was standing in his parlour when a dark-complexioned *bhairavi* (a nun of the Tāntrik sect) wearing ochre-coloured cloths, with unbound hair, and

a trident in her hand, walked past the house. Looking at Surendranath she remarked, 'O my child, everything else is void, That alone is true.' Though he could not make out its significance, this made him think deeply.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ramchandra Dutta : *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Paramahansa Jīvan-vṛttānta* (Bengali), p. 115.

The two friends gave a sympathetic hearing to Surendranath but could hardly make out the cause of his worries. Nor could they find any solution. But remembering the efficacy of the holy company of Sri Ramakrishna, who had proved to be a great help to them, Ramchandra suggested, 'There lives a Paramahansa at Dakshineswar. Why don't you visit him, please?'

Manomohan not only supported Ramchandra's views but to convince Surendranath, narrated his personal experiences with the Paramahansa.

Surendranath, who had received an English education and held an important post in a British firm in Calcutta, laughed at this suggestion. 'You hold the Paramahansa in high esteem. Well and good,' he retorted, 'but why do you want me to visit him?' His friends were not dismayed. Anxious as they were about Surendranath, they would not leave the matter there. They continued to persuade him. He finally gave way with the remark, 'I will be like a crane among swans! I have seen enough of quacks. I may see him. But, mind you, if he talks nonsense I shall twist his ears.'<sup>2</sup> So confident were they about Sri Ramakrishna that they accepted their friend's challenge.

Like many other educated young men of the time, Surendranath boasted of his atheism and led a Bohemian life. He was addicted to drinking. He cherished an exaggerated notion about man's free will. Then

<sup>2</sup> *Bhakta Manomohan (Bengali)*, p. 70.

<sup>3</sup> Compare Sri Ramakrishna's remarks: 'You work in a merchant's office . . . . You tell lies at the office. Then why do I eat the food you offer me? Because you give your money in charity; you give away more than you earn. "The seed of the melon is bigger than the fruit," as the saying goes. . . . He who gives away in charity achieves great results. He achieves the four fruits: dharma, artha, kama and moksha.' ['M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by the Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947) pp. 670-71]

about thirty years old, Surendranath was fair-looking and strongly built. He had a reputation for charity.<sup>3</sup> Though somewhat harsh in his dealings with others, he was simple, straightforward, and outspoken.<sup>4</sup>

One day, very likely not later than the middle of 1880,<sup>5</sup> Surendranath started for Dakshineswar in the company of Ramchandra and Manomohan.<sup>6</sup> Entering Sri Ramakrishna's room they found him seated on a couch and a few devotees sitting on the floor. Surendra, on hearing from his friends, had formed an idea about the Paramahansa which was quite different from the one he had after meeting him. Nonetheless, it is true that Sri Ramakrishna's appearance could hardly impress him. At first Surendra, like many others, found nothing extraordinary about him. He did not salute Sri Ramakrishna nor did he care to greet him even. Quietly he seated himself in one corner of the room while Ramchandra and Manomohan prostrated themselves before

<sup>4</sup> Some days after Sri Ramakrishna had met Surendranath, he said of the latter: 'What a nice disposition he has now! He is very outspoken; he isn't afraid to speak the truth. He is unstinting in his liberality. No one that goes to him for help comes away empty-handed.' (*The Gospel*, p. 402).

<sup>5</sup> Manomohan Mitra, in his 'The Story of My Life', wrote: 'Some months after we began visiting Dakshineswar, our close relation, the staunch believer and outspoken Surendranath Mitra, and his younger brother Girindranath Mitra joined us.' Ramchandra and Manomohan met the Master on 13 November 1879. It was mainly on Surendra's initiative that the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated for the first time in the early part of 1881, and Surendra defrayed the expenses. Again *The Gospel* (p. 1006) mentions Sri Ramakrishna's visit to Surendra's house in (June-July) 1881. It may be presumed therefore that Surendra first met Sri Ramakrishna some time in the middle of 1880.

<sup>6</sup> According to the reminiscences of Girindranath Mitra, brother of Surendranath, as recorded in the proceedings of the sixth meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission, 30 May, 1897, Surendra first visited Sri Ramakrishna in the company of Amrita Krishna Basu in Jan.-Feb. of 1881.



the Master and took their seats. As was his wont Sri Ramakrishna was, however, the first to greet the visitors with folded palms.

The deep probe of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual insight revealed at the very first glance who the newcomer was. He recognized Surendranath as one of those few commissioned by the Divine Mother to defray a great part of his expenses.<sup>7</sup> He must have recollected one of his visions which he narrated in a subsequent meeting.<sup>8</sup>

Surendranath, with a casual look, was trying to size up the Paramahansa. But before he could form a definite idea his attention was drawn to the melodious voice of Sri Ramakrishna. Apparently paying no attention to the new-comer, Sri Ramakrishna continued his discourse. He said:

'Well, why does a man choose the role of a young monkey rather than that of a kitten? The young monkey, with great exertion, somehow clings to its mother while the latter jumps from one place to another. But the kitten's nature is different. The kitten, of itself, cannot cling to its mother. It lies on the ground and cries, 'Mew, mew!' It leaves everything to its mother. The mother cat sometimes puts it on a bed, sometimes on the roof, sometimes behind a pile of wood. She carries the kitten in her mouth hither and thither. The young monkey sometimes misses its grip, falls on the ground and gets hurt. But the kitten has no such fear, for its mother carries it safely. Here lies the

difference between self-effort and reliance on God.'

The words of Sri Ramakrishna struck Surendra. It seemed that they were meant for him. He began to ponder: 'That is it. I too am behaving like the young monkey. Self-willed as I am, I try to get things done through my personal efforts, and the result is I suffer terribly. Why do I not try to surrender myself to God like the kitten which depends entirely on its mother?'

The words of the Paramahansa were enchanting. Surendranath had never heard the like before. Like one starving he sat down with avidity to the spiritual feast that Sri Ramakrishna spread before him.

After a short pause Sri Ramakrishna continued:

'When the mother takes hold of the hand of her son there is no fear of a fall. A young boy and his father walk along a slippery ridge on a rainy day. Now, if the boy holds his father he may fall, but if the father holds the boy in his grip, there is no fear of a fall. Similarly if someone relies on the Mother and depends entirely on Her he will have nothing to fear, he will have no problem at all.'<sup>9</sup>

Surendranath heaved a sigh of relief. The burden of the anxieties which had seized his mind vanished like a cloud blown away by the wind. He resolved, 'Why not? I too shall depend entirely on the Mother and occasionally call, "Mā, Mā". The rest will be looked after by Her.'

After a long discourse, Sri Ramakrishna asked Ramlal, his nephew, to distribute the *prasāda* (consecrated food) of the Mother Kālī to all present. He obeyed.

It was time to leave. Surendranath was by this time a changed man. He saluted Sri Ramakrishna touching the ground with his head. And then the latter gave his

<sup>7</sup> Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1956), p. 646: 'Surendranath Mitra ... was, he (the Master) said, a "half-supplier".'

<sup>8</sup> Sri Ramakrishna, addressing Surendra, said, 'You have both—yoga and bhoga. ... The devotee of the Divine Mother attains dharma and moksha. He enjoys artha and kama as well. Once I saw you in a vision as the child of the Divine Mother. You have both—yoga and bhoga; otherwise your countenance would look dry.' (*The Gospel*, p. 308).

<sup>9</sup> Gurudas Burman: *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-carit* (Bengali), p. 188.

finishing touch. In a sweet, endearing tone, Sri Ramakrishna told him, 'Come again, won't you?' He could never have forgotten Ramakrishna, however much he might have tried. He was in fact caught<sup>10</sup> in the love-net of the adept fisherman that Sri Ramakrishna was.

On the return journey Surendranath confessed jokingly, 'Ah! How he turned the tables on me! I came to twist his ears; now I find my own ears twisted.' Pleased at the happy turn of events, his friends roared with laughter at this witty remark. 'Well, how could I guess that he was such a great man?' mused Surendra. 'How could I know that he could read others' minds? In reply Manomohan and Ramchandra narrated similar experiences of their own. Surendranath confided to his friends that he had in fact been contemplating suicide, so disgusted had he become with worldly life. A victim of mental depression, he suffered terribly at times. However, soon after this first meeting, he was changed noticeably. Even his marked Bohemian habits, includ-

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<sup>10</sup> Sri Ramakrishna lovingly called him 'Surendar' and sometimes 'Suresh'. He has been described by Swami Saradananda as 'the exceptionally loving devotee of the Master'. (*The Great Master*, p. 876).

ing the strong addiction to alcohol, were gradually overcome. His warm generous nature easily turned towards spiritual devotion. He used to cry mournfully for the Divine Mother,<sup>11</sup> like a child, and wanted to talk of Her only. He would often become absorbed in deep meditation on the Mother.

Surendra was the first to get prepared an oil painting depicting the Master's message of religious harmony. In the picture Sri Ramakrishna was pointing out to Keshab Chandra Sen that followers of different religions proceed to the same goal by different paths. Sri Ramakrishna expressed his appreciation of the picture. He said, 'Yes, it contains everything. This is the ideal of modern times.'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Surendranath looked upon Sri Ramakrishna as the Divine Mother Herself. He once told Sri Ramakrishna: 'Today is the first day of the year; it is also Tuesday, an auspicious day to worship the Divine Mother. But I didn't go to Kalighat. I said to myself, "It will be enough if I see him who is Kali Herself, and who has rightly understood Kali."' Sri Ramakrishna smiled. ... 'I couldn't come here yesterday. It was the last day of the year. But I decorated your picture with flowers.' Sri Ramakrishna, to M., 'by a sign, Ah, what devotion!' (*The Gospel*, pp. 945-6).

<sup>12</sup> *The Gospel*, p. 800.

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# SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN BOSTON, MARCH 1896

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

(Continued from the previous issue)

In volume five of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* it is mentioned that Swamiji gave two afternoon talks on March 22 and 24 of 1896 to a group of Harvard students. From two brief entries in Miss Emma Thursby's diary, which were made available through the kindness of the New-York Historical Society, we learn that these afternoon talks and the class lectures he held at Mrs. Bull's house on Brattle Street in Cambridge (mentioned in the first paragraph of the above article) were one and the same. 'Harvard students at Mrs. Bull's hear Swami,' Miss Thursby noted on March 22; and on March 24 the variation, 'Harvard students hear the Swami at Mrs. Bull's'. Unhappily, Miss Thursby was not much of a diarist and did no more than jot down these two news bulletins, but in the *Complete Works* we find Swamiji's answers to the questions asked by the Harvard students. The questions themselves were not taken down, but to judge from his answers, some of which were quite long, these young men were on the whole serious, thoughtful, and eager. They wanted to know about Buddhism, the problem of free will, the Vedāntic theory of evolution, the theory of Māyā, and so on. Although Swamiji's class talks themselves are lost, it would appear from this subsequent discussion that he had spoken primarily of Advaita Vedānta. It would appear also that he had immensely enjoyed talking to these earnest young men whose minds were still flexible and vigorous. He had, indeed, looked forward to such an occasion. 'I am very glad however,' he had written to Mrs. Bull in February of his proposed Boston visit, 'to get an opportunity to talk to the

graduates of Harvard.'<sup>18</sup> (The 'however' in this sentence was in reference to the lack of enthusiasm he had felt in regard to the Procopeia Club.) The Harvard students, in turn, found in Swamiji a teacher *par excellence*, one who could clarify and evaluate abstruse concepts and help a lost youth thread his way through Harvard's philosophical labyrinths. Once before, in December of 1894, Swamiji had spoken to Harvard students in Mrs. Bull's spacious teak-panelled music room and had unsnarled their philosophical tangles. 'He has helped students who were bewildered by their course of Philosophy at Harvard,'<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Bull had written to Dr. Lewis G. Janes, and there can be little doubt that this observation could be applied as well to his classes of March, 1896.

In connection with Swamiji's talks to Harvard students one recalls the 'Recollections of Swami Vivekananda' by the well-known philosopher Professor William Ernest Hocking, which was published in *Vedanta and the West* of August 1963. After writing of the profound impression Swamiji had made on him at the Parliament of Religions, Professor Hocking continued:

For several years I lost sight of Vivekananda. . . . I spent four years in Davenport [Iowa], earning money to come East and study with James. During those years, Vivekananda had begun his great work of founding centers for the Vedanta throughout America. In the course of this work he came to Cambridge. I heard him twice: once in a class in metaphysics, and once at the

<sup>18</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>19</sup> Sara Bull to Lewis G. Janes, Dec. 1894, VSNG.

home of Mrs. Ole Bull on Brattle Street. It was in these informal gatherings that the quality of the man most directly spoke, and I was confirmed in my regard, and my purpose to re-think my philosophical foundations.

(The dates on which Professor Hocking heard Swamiji speak are not certain. But whatever they may have been, the impact on his thinking was, clearly, formative and lasting. The same would hold true, one thinks, for other thoughtful, searching students who attended Swamiji's classes in 1894 and 1896.)

The 1896 class lectures at Mrs. Bull's were, in a sense, forerunners of Swamiji's lecture of March 25 before the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Club. This Harvard engagement, spoken of by his biographers as 'one of the most remarkable incidents of his whole American career', served the purpose, though without conscious intent, of an ideally appropriate farewell tribute. To be invited to speak before this society was to receive one of the highest honours intellectual America could pay, and while Swamiji himself does not seem to have been particularly impressed by the honorific significance of the invitation, it could not have been lost upon others. One can say without exaggeration that in the 1890s the Graduate Philosophical Club of Harvard represented the best of America's philosophical thought. It was not only one of the few graduate societies of any kind then existing in the country, but was, without question, the most intellectually rich and varied of them all. Its members included the graduate students of Harvard's Department of Philosophy and also, of course, Harvard's professors of philosophy and psychology (the latter being still officially regarded as a branch of the former). George H. Palmer, William James, Josiah Royce, Hugo Münsterberg, and George Santayana—to name them in order of their

seniority—were in 1896 its stars, and, with the exception of Santayana, who was as yet unknown to the world at large, were the stars also of American philosophy as a whole. Closely affiliated were Charles C. Everett in Harvard's *Philosophy of Religion*, Francis G. Peabody in *Social Ethics*, E. C. Moore in *Christian Morals*, and P. H. Hanus in *Education*, all well known in their respective fields.

Professor Palmer affectionately and accurately referred to the Department of Philosophy, of which he was head, as a 'philosophical menagerie'.<sup>20</sup> One could not easily have found elsewhere so varied, so lively, and so noisy a group of thinkers. All its members were brilliant, none thought along the same lines as any of the others, and each delighted in prolonged argumentation. An open and joyful debate took place endlessly on the campus and in the professors' cheerful and hospitable homes. Recalling this halcyon period of philosophical wrangling, George Foot Moore, who had been at the time a professor of Hebrew at the not-distant Andover Theological Seminary, wrote of it with nostalgia:

Palmer, . . . James, Royce, Münsterberg, and, a little later, Santayana, made such a constellation as no American University had seen or may perhaps see again in our time. They were men of widely diverse types; fundamentally different philosophies and opposite ways of approaching all philosophical problems were represented among them. It was no 'Harvard School,' having a system to inoculate the minds of docile pupils with, but so many vigorous and independent thinkers, fit to inspire students to thought by their very disagreements. For in fact they agreed on little else than freedom to disagree, and in their generous admiration and affection for

<sup>20</sup> Bliss Perry, *And Gladly Teach* (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1935), p. 223.



one another. Uniformity of opinion on things human or divine they had no wish to see among themselves or in their pupils, knowing that it is purchasable only by renunciation of a man's right to think for himself, which is worth more to him than even the possession of the truth.<sup>21</sup>

It is perhaps not too surprising that some of the students found themselves not so much inspired as 'bewildered by their course of Philosophy at Harvard'. But however that might have been, the professors were in transports. 'If our students now could begin really to understand what Royce means with his voluntaristic-pluralistic monism, what Münsterberg means with his dualistic scientificism and platonism, what Santayana means by his pessimistic platonism, . . . what I mean by my crass pluralism, what you mean by your ethereal idealism, that these are so many religions, ways of fronting life, and worth fighting for', James wrote with exuberance to Professor Palmer, 'we should have a genuine philosophic universe at Harvard.'<sup>22</sup>

In the *New York Herald* of January 19, 1896, it was said that Swami Vivekananda had 'just received an invitation from Mr. John P. Fox to lecture before the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Club'. While this statement may have been correct, it is misleading. In 1896 John Pierce Fox was a young man, footloose and without title or authority, who could not have taken it upon himself to issue so important an invitation. He had graduated from Harvard in 1894, had studied the following year in Harvard's Divinity School and,

in 1896, having not yet settled on a career, was occupying himself with tutoring and with working at other part-time jobs, one of which may have been as corresponding secretary for the Graduate Philosophical Club. In this last capacity, Mr. Fox may have relayed the invitation to Swamiji. Indeed, we find some evidence for this in a letter that Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Bull in the early part of 1896. (As published in the *Complete Works*, this letter bears the date 10 December 1895; but, as internal evidence makes clear, it must have been written in early January. A probable date is 10 January 1896.) 'I have received the Secretary's letter,' Swamiji wrote, 'and will be glad to lecture before the Harvard Philosophical Club as requested.'<sup>23</sup> That the 'Secretary' was Mr. Fox may be inferred from the following note that this young man wrote to Mrs. Bull on January 15:

I had a note from Vivekananda Monday [January 13], saying he expects to come to Boston in March or perhaps in February, and will be only too glad to speak to the students. It will be not before the Harvard Religious Union, but the Graduate Philosophical Club—the most philosophical organization at Harvard—so that the audience will be the best the University can afford.<sup>24</sup>

The reader who is interested in present-day research regarding Swami Vivekananda, its rewards and frustrations, may not object here to a short digression apropos of Mr. Fox. Various old letters made it clear to the present writer that in 1896 Mr. John Fox was a young man and very much devoted to Swamiji, that he was sent to London by Mrs. Bull to be with him, that he was well acquainted with many of Swamiji's close friends and helpers in both America and England and, in short, that if he were still living, his memories would be invaluable.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Münsterberg, *Hugo Münsterberg: His Life and Work* (D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1922), pp. 42-3.

<sup>22</sup> Henry James Jr., ed., *The Letters of William James* (The Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, 1920). Wm. James to George Palmer, 2 Apr. 1900.

<sup>23</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, p. 354.

<sup>24</sup> John Fox to Sara Bull, 15 Jan. 1896, VSNC.

able. Making inquiries at Harvard, I obtained his address and with prayer sent off a letter in December of 1961. Shortly a reply came from Mrs. John Fox, telling me that her husband had passed away in June of 1960. 'He often spoke of his friend Swami Vivekananda whom he knew at Harvard and when he lived with him in London,' Mrs. Fox wrote. 'What a shame that [he] isn't here to help you! Nothing would give him greater pleasure, as he loved and admired the Swami very much.' I need not say with what regret I read those words.

As has been said, Mr. Fox may have been instrumental in making the arrangements for Swamiji's talk before Harvard's Philosophical Club, but the invitation itself could have been issued only by consent of the senior members of that august institution. These would have been Professors William James and Josiah Royce, the only two professors of philosophy in residence at the time. Professor George Palmer was taking a sabbatical leave and travelling in Europe with his wife. Hugo Münsterberg, the brilliant young psychologist whom William James had brought from Germany in 1892 to take charge of Harvard's psychological laboratory, had returned for a time to his homeland. Although George Santayana, the youngest of the group, was teaching in Harvard in the spring of 1896, he was not yet a full professor with a decisive voice in the affairs of the Department. This left Professors James and Royce, Harvard's brightest philosophical stars in any event, in full command.

As far as I know, there are no records to prove beyond all possibility of doubt that these two professors attended Swamiji's lecture before the Graduate Philosophical Club. But to judge from Professor Wright's account of James's enthusiastic attendance at the Procopeia Club lectures and his remark that 'all the big wigs in

philosophy' were going to attend the Harvard talk, it is not likely that James was absent. Moreover, even if interest had not drawn them, the senior members of the Department of Philosophy, having invited Swamiji to speak before the Society, would hardly have done him the discourtesy of remaining away.

Other professors who, we can be reasonably sure, attended the lecture were Professor Charles Rockwell Lanman, chairman of the Sanskrit Department, who had helped to collect Harvard's Sanskrit library, which in 1896 numbered well over a thousand manuscripts (and who was later made an honorary member of the New York Vedanta Society), and the Reverend Charles Carroll Everett, head of Harvard's Divinity School. How many others were present we can only guess, but professors and divines, instructors, such as George Santayana, and graduate students, such as John Fox, no doubt packed the hall. It was, as Swamiji's biographers remark, a 'great critical gathering'.<sup>25</sup>

Swamiji's talk, 'The Vedānta Philosophy', which one can find in volume one of the *Complete Works*, was a short, brilliantly concise exposition of the origin, development, and meaning of Vedānta in its three phases. It was a talk intended for philosophers and students of philosophy, whose interest in the subject could be presumed to be primarily intellectual. And yet, toward the end, when speaking of Advaita Vedānta, Swamiji seems to have become electrified; the brilliant scholar became the incandescent prophet, pouring out his message, as was usually his way, directly to the hearts, as well as to the minds of his listeners.

'My success', Swamiji had written two days earlier to his Madrasi disciple Ala-

<sup>25</sup> *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, 1965), p. 389.



singa, 'is due to my popular style—the greatness of a teacher consists in the simplicity of his language.'<sup>26</sup> It was true that Swamiji made his lectures as simple as possible, his purpose being always to help spiritually, never to confuse intellectually; but simplicity of language was not the whole of the secret. 'That man', William James was later to exclaim, 'is simply a wonder for oratorical power.'<sup>27</sup>

The discussion following the Harvard lecture was long and lively—a sure indication of the audience's interest and delight. There were many questions; some were philosophical, some were concerned with the relation of Vedānta to science, to ethics, to psychic phenomena (one of William James's interests) and inevitably to the Indian caste system—though this was an odd question to be raised at Harvard, where the Bostonian caste system was accepted as one of the irrefragable laws of the universe. Unfortunately, the names of the questioners, many of which might today be of interest, have not come down to us, but one can assume that it was primarily the professors who asked, for such was, and is, the usual procedure at gatherings of this sort.

Swamiji's talk may have been longer than we know. A comparison between a report of his lecture in the *Evening Transcript* (see above) and the version that has been published in the *Complete Works* (as taken from a pamphlet printed in April or May of 1896) leads one to the unsettling suspicion that it has not come down to us in full. Who was to blame for whatever omissions may have been made, there is today no way of knowing. Indeed, before going to England Swamiji himself did some hurried editing. On April 14 Mr. Fox wrote

from New York to Mrs. Bull, who had charge of the publishing end of the lecture:

Mr. Goodwin wrote you, I believe, that Swami has worked on the Harvard lecture, spending about three hours Sunday morning with me. On the Vedas, commentators, etc., he wrote three pages of notes,—making everything clear on those matters I think. This afternoon, I am going to see him again about a thing or two more....

In regard to the expense of printing the Harvard lecture, Mr. Leggett is ready to help, but did not say to what extent: that would depend on the cost, I suppose.

I expect now to return Thursday, and will come out to see you the first thing, that there may be no more delay about publication.<sup>28</sup>

Duly published, the pamphlet contained an Introduction by the Reverend Charles Carroll Everett and a Note written by Mr. Fox. The latter, which gives additional information in regard to the lecture's editing, read as follows:

This lecture and the discussion which followed were stenographically reported. They could receive from the Swami only a cursory revision, owing to his departure for England, but it is hoped no errors have crept in. Professor LANMAN and Professor WRIGHT of Harvard [the latter despite the grief that then was his] have kindly assisted in the final revision. In the reporting of the discussion, some of the questions were unavoidably lost. The first four notes were added by the Swami. In the original lecture, the quotations from Hindu writings were first given in the Sanskrit, and then translated; these offhand translations stand as given.

Following the lecture and discussion, are the answers of the Swami to questions at two afternoon talks with some Harvard students, on March 22 and 24. These answers were stenographically reported, but the questions were not. There have also been added a few selec-

<sup>26</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 106.

<sup>27</sup> William James to Sara Bull, 2 Aug. 1900, quoted in *Vedanta and the West*, Nov.-Dec. 1953.

<sup>28</sup> John Fox to Sara Bull, 14 Apr. 1896, VSNG.

tions from unpublished lectures. Some of the answers and selections cover the same general ground, but they have all been retained on account of the variety in treatment.

While no adequate exposition of the Vedanta philosophy can be given in a single address, it is hoped that this, with the accompanying answers and selections, will be of value to those interested in the thought and life of the East.<sup>29</sup>

(It should be noted here that most of the 'selections from unpublished lectures' mentioned above by Mr. Fox have been reprinted in altered arrangement in volume five of the *Complete Works*, where they have been incorporated in the section entitled 'Notes from Lectures and Discourses'. The lectures from which these selections were taken were not identified in the Harvard pamphlet. It is possible, however, that some of the passages are from the Procopeia Club lectures. There is also the possibility that some are from a December 1895 question-and-answer class held in New York, as well as from two lectures delivered in New York and Brooklyn in January of 1896. The transcripts of these lectures—one of which seems to be still unpublished—and class were sent to Mrs. Bull in April before the publication of the Harvard pamphlet, with the suggestion that they be incorporated therein. Through a painstaking analysis of all the evidence it might be possible and rewarding to discover which selections come from which lectures, but such a scholarly procedure lies beyond the scope of the present article.)

Dr. Everett's Introduction to the Harvard pamphlet has been reproduced in full in the first edition of the *Life* and in part in the fourth edition. For the convenience of the present reader all of it is given here:

The Swami Vivekananda was sent by

his friends and co-religionists to present their belief at the Congress of Religions that was held in connection with the World's Fair in Chicago. This he did in a way to win general interest and admiration. Since then he has lectured on the same theme in different parts of our country. He has been in fact a missionary from India to America. Everywhere he has made warm personal friends; and his expositions of Hindu Philosophy have been listened to with delight. It is very pleasant to observe the eager interest with which his own people in India follow his course, and the joy that they take in his success. I have seen a pamphlet filled with speeches made at a large and influential meeting in Calcutta, which was called together to express enthusiastic approval of the manner in which he has fulfilled his mission; and satisfaction at this invasion of the West by oriental thought. This satisfaction is well grounded. We may not be so near to actual conversion as some of these speakers seem to believe; but Vivekananda has created a high degree of interest in himself and his work. There are indeed few departments of study more attractive than the Hindu thought. It is a rare pleasure to see a form of belief that to most seems so far away and unreal as the Vedanta system, represented by an actually living and extremely intelligent believer. This system is not to be regarded merely as a curiosity, as a speculative vagary. Hegel said that Spinozism is the necessary beginning of all philosophizing. This can be said even more emphatically of the Vedanta system. We occidentals busy ourselves with the manifold. We can, however, have no understanding of the manifold, if we have no sense of the One in which the manifold exists. The reality of the One is the truth which the East may well teach us; and we owe a debt of gratitude to Vivekananda that he has taught this lesson so effectively.<sup>30</sup>

Of the distribution and sale of the first edition of the Harvard pamphlet (which

<sup>29</sup> *The Vedanta Philosophy* (pamphlet), 4th ed. (Vedanta Society, New York, 1901).

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*



was later to run to several editions) we learn a little from the following letter that the talented if not altogether practical Mr. Fox wrote to Mrs. Bull on 6 June 1896, from the SS. *Victorian* on his way to London. It is of interest to notice that Boston's famed Old Corner Book-store had for sale various pamphlets of Swamiji's lectures :

I forgot to ask you about the receipts from the sale of the Harvard lectures, and so shall send word to Mr. Goodyear to write to you about the matter. You will want the money sent to you, I suppose. The Old Corner Bookstore will forward their receipts to Mr. Goodyear along with the receipts from the other pamphlets, unless you want to write to them : I had Mr. Wilson [the printer] send them fifty Harvard lectures. If the distribution does not go smoothly, I will straighten things out in the fall.

In the hurry at Mr. Wilson's, I forgot to have copies sent to Dr. Everett, Prof. Wright, and Prof. Lanman. Prof. Wright was away in the evening so I do not know just how many copies he would like. I left one copy for Dr. Everett when calling with Dr. Jaynes [Janes?]. I will ask Mr. Lough to see that he has more. As to Prof. Wright and Prof. Lanman,—could you not have ten copies sent to each? or perhaps Miss Hamlin could take them.

I have done a little Vedanta missionary work on the steamer, correcting false ideas of Mohini and Vivekananda held by three Boston ladies.<sup>31</sup>

The Harvard professors had been so deeply impressed with Swamiji's lecture and with his incisive and sometimes heated replies to their questions during the discussion, that he was offered the chair of Eastern Philosophy. Invitations such as this were not given lightly at Harvard. The offer had about it something of the solemnity of a marriage proposal; for President Eliot, not without good reason,

expected his professors to wed themselves heart and soul and for life to the University. Writing in the spring of 1897 to Hugo Münsterberg, who was having difficulty trying to decide whether to live in Germany or in Cambridge, Eliot made himself clear. 'I ought also to say to you frankly', he wrote, 'that the University will not be content to have you return hither without "burning your ships"; the University will desire that you return with the intention to remain in its service, just as any American accepts a professorship here with the definite intention of spending his life in all probability at Harvard. . . . In accepting a professorship which is not limited to a term of years the incumbent is expected to have the present intention to remain.'<sup>32</sup>

This stipulation would have applied as well to the offer made to Swamiji. The professorship of Eastern Philosophy was, like any other Harvard professorship, a lifetime post, and since the vows on both sides were inviolable, it is clear that the Harvard professors were not only much impressed by Swamiji's scholarship and mastery of his subject, but that many of them, including President Eliot, knew him more than casually and were impressed by him as a man. Harvard, in short, had decided that it wanted Swamiji for its own—forever. A higher honour than this could not have been paid by the academic world of America. But Swamiji was a *sannyāsin*; he could not bind himself to a secular institution, and he had, moreover, work to do and a message to give in the open world. Thus he refused.

On March 26, the day following the Harvard talk, Miss Thursby noted in her diary: 'Mrs. Bull gives reception for Sterling, Leggetts and self. Swami's lecture at Procopia.'<sup>33</sup> This reception was no doubt

<sup>32</sup> Münsterberg, op. cit., pp. 58-9.

<sup>33</sup> Diary of Emma Thursby, March 1896, Thursby Papers, New-York Historical Society.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 28, 6 June 1896, VSNC.

a late afternoon tea, and, although the diary does not mention it, Swamiji was certainly present, three of the guests of honour being his close friends and the fourth, Mrs. Antoinette Sterling, well known to him. And that evening, which in this cold and snowy month was remarkably springlike in its warmth, his hostess, himself, the guests of honour, and very likely other guests, such as Miss Farmer, who had by now come from New York, crossed over the Charles River to Boston where he was to deliver 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion' at the Procopeia Club.

During the next two days, in which the weather returned to a more seemly, March-like cold, Swamiji delivered his last three talks in Boston, holding in the evenings his third and fourth classes ('Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion' and the Upanishad class) at the Procopeia's rented arena, and on the afternoon of March 28 giving a talk at the Twentieth Century Club. Of this last, no announcements or reports can be found in the Boston papers, which leads one to think that the occasion must have been a private one. Our loss, however, is not great, for the lecture ('The Vedanta: Its Practical Bearings; How it Differs from Other Philosophies') and the discussion that followed were printed in leaflet form by the Twentieth Century Club and later published in volumes one and four, respectively, of the *Complete Works*. (The lecture as published in the *Complete Works* has been given the title 'The Spirit and Influence of Vedanta'.)

As its name would indicate, the Twentieth Century Club was riding on the crest of the times into the future. It was a club devoted primarily to social reform, and its standards of membership were high. As described by a contemporary magazine, 'It called at once for progressive men, in sympathy with the advancing spirit of brotherhood in the world.' It wanted 'men

to a degree dissatisfied with the existing social and industrial order; men reaching out for light and leadership, humble enough to confess their perplexity in the face of grave problems and teachable enough to receive instruction from any source'. This was a big order, and, as might be expected, the membership included men whose biographical sketches can be found in *Who Was Who*, as well as in various encyclopedias. To name a few: Edward Everett Hale, John Fiske, Davis R. Dewey, Robert A. Woods, and the club's president, Edwin D. Mead.

To have been invited to speak before Boston's Twentieth Century Club was, in a sense, as great an honour as to have been invited to speak before Harvard's Graduate Philosophical Club. Its membership was as elect and its guest speakers as carefully chosen. 'The Twentieth Century Club', a contemporary newspaper noted, 'is the modern representative of the old and famous Radical Club of Boston. Like that, it has the most distinguished men of the day as its speakers and guests.'<sup>34</sup> The Radical Club itself was not unknown to Swamiji. Among his friends were men and women who had been closely connected with it during its years of glory: notably, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Franklin B. Sanborn, who, like Professor Wright, had recognized Swamiji's genius even before the days of the Parliament of Religions, Julia Ward Howe, Charles Carroll Everett, Lewis G. Janes. In fact, the Radical Club, which had been formed in 1869 when to be 'radical' meant to be more liberal than, and in open rebellion against, the main body of the Unitarian Church, was associated both in spirit and in membership with the Free Religious Association, before which Swamiji had spoken in 1894. To speak before the one was, in effect, to

<sup>34</sup> *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 4 Apr. 1896.



speak before the other. The Twentieth Century Club, however, more truly represented the intellectual world of 1896, its interests lying more in the findings and promises of science and in social and economic reforms than in the speculative idealism of theology.

As far as we know, Swamiji's talk before this group was relatively short, but in it he presented compactly and powerfully the essential teachings of Vedānta in so far as they are of relevance to, and importance for, the Western world. He spoke of the broad impersonality of Vedānta, which stands as a background to all sects, which is antagonistic to none, and which, in fact, supports rather than nullifies variety in religious belief. He spoke of the Vedāntic teaching of the divinity of man, of the infinite oneness of human life, which is the basis and sanction of all morality and ethics, and in the unfoldment and realization of which alone lies universal brotherhood. Significantly, and perhaps deliberately, Swamiji gave in this last public lecture in America a proud and eloquent recital of his country's immemorial and consistent history of tolerance which was almost identical with that in his first address at the Parliament of Religions. Also, as in that first talk, he gave in this, his last, a free translation of the Sanskrit verse which stands as the rationale of religious harmony: 'As so many rivers, having their source in different mountains, roll down, crooked or straight, and at last come into the ocean—so all these various creeds and religions, taking their start from different standpoints and running through crooked or straight courses, at last come unto Thee.'

As though taking a long backward look over his work in the West, he seemed to find that the message he had started with—the message of universal toleration and sympathy, based on the essential divinity of all men and the identity of their goal—was the message he should end with, for this was a basic teaching of his great Master and one of which the West was in 'desperate need.

Fittingly, it was before the Twentieth Century Club, the group that represented the coming age, that Swamiji bade farewell to the country in which he had spent the better part of three years. According to the pamphlet in which his talk was printed, he said:

I have lived three years amongst you. I have travelled over nearly the whole of this country, and as I am going back from here to my own country, it is meet that I should take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude in this Athens of America. . . . In one line I would like to sum up all my experiences here. Here alone, in this climate, in this land of America, no question is asked about a man's peculiarities. If a man is a man, that is all, and they take him into their hearts, and that is one thing I have never seen in any other country in the world.

Swamiji left Boston on Monday, March 30. Although he did not leave America until a little over two weeks later, holding during that time a series of private classes in Chicago and one or two classes in New York, he had delivered in Boston the last of the public lectures he was to give during his first American visit and had made his official farewell.

(Concluded)



# ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

## AN ANCIENT INAUGURATION

About seventy-five miles north-west of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, there is a wooded place called Naimiṣāranya, on the banks of the river Gomati which is a tributary of the Gaṅgā. Naimiṣāranya is quite familiar to all readers of Indian mythical lore. The *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavatam* were sung there. It was there that Śrī Rāma performed the horse-sacrifice when Lava and Kuśa, his twin sons, sang the Rāmāyaṇa, and Sītā disappeared into the bosom of Mother Earth. At this Naimiṣāranya, at the beginning of the iron age, several sages gathered together to perform a sacrifice lasting a thousand years in order to protect themselves from the evil influence of the dark age and also to attain salvation. There was present among them the Sūta, a professional bard, by name Ugraśravas, that is, 'one of great renown'. He was also known as Raumaharṣaṇi, being the son of Ramaharṣaṇa. In order to occupy themselves usefully during the intervals between the duties connected with the sacrifice, the sages addressed the Sūta and said :

'O you blessed one, you have learnt and sung the ancient lore and stories, histories and moral manuals. You know well, O noble one, all the wisdom which the wise Vyāsa and other venerable sages possessed,

for you are a disciple of that great poetic sage. Great teachers reveal even the greatest secrets to their beloved disciples and you have been abundantly blessed by Vyāsa. Do tell us what in your opinion constitutes the highest good of man. Generally in this iron age, people are dull, lazy, ill-fated, sickly, and short-lived. There are several things that are worthy of being heard. We do not know which to choose. You therefore, O blessed one, do the thinking for us and sort out the most essential wisdom and impart it to us and thus bring to our souls peace and blessedness. We are eager to hear your words of wisdom. O Sūta, you know well why the Lord was born as the son of Vasudeva and Devakī. The Lord's advent is surely for the good and glory of beings. If a person, oppressed by the terrible miseries of the world, would only utter the name of the Lord with a contrite heart, he would immediately be set free. The very god of death trembles at the mention of the Lord's name. Even the sages, because they have taken refuge at His feet, are capable of setting free the sense-bound. Who will not hanker to hear the sanctifying stories of the Lord's sport, if he cares for his own welfare? The more we hear, the more we hanker to hear. The sweetness goes on increasing with every



word. What wonderful sports did Kṛṣṇa and Rāma play in this world? The dark age is upon us. We are gathered here to hear of God in order that the evils of the age may not touch us. Fortunately for us, you are with us. Please tell us about the Lord.'

The Sūta was immensely happy at this request of the Ṛṣis, for he thus got an opportunity to sing the glories of the Lord. The minstrel was a great devotee. Godly men were asking him about God. Can there be a greater good fortune for a devotee? The Sūta considered himself blessed by the opportunity thus afforded to sing the glories of God. After saluting Śuka, his teacher, and the Lord, the Sūta began in lyric phrases :

'O wise ones, it is gracious of you to have asked me to tell you about Kṛṣṇa, for the mind of man is purified by dwelling on Him. The highest duty of man is to cultivate devotion to God, a devotion devoid of any desire for worldly good. Only by such continuous thought of God will the mind of man be at peace. If the performance of duty does not help produce love of God, it ends in mere physical exertion and exhaustion. If one cultivates love of God, it will automatically generate dispassion to mundane matters and will lead to the realization of the Absolute. Even the correct and proper discharge of one's duties prescribed by the scriptures, if it fails to create a thirst for the stories connected with the divine deeds of the Lord, is only waste of time and energy. *Dharma*, the proper performance of one's duties, is a means to Self-realization: it is not a way of making money. Wealth acquired through fair and proper means should be utilized for the faithful discharge of one's duties and not wasted in sensual indulgences. Gratification of the senses should be reduced to the minimum; it should not be resorted to except for the bare upkeep of the body. Sense-

pleasure should not be made an end in itself. If lust and lucre are set aside, what is life for? Well, life is meant for knowing the Truth. Human life is not meant to be squandered on filthy lucre or beastly lust. The Truth which is the goal and soul of human life has many names. That Absolute is called Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān. It is one and one only. This Truth the sages realize in their own souls through dispassion and diligent search with a devoted mind. Therefore, O noble ones, the end and aim of the proper performance of one's duties is the winning of God's grace. One should, therefore, hear with one-pointed attention the stories of God's deeds, sing with love His glories, meditate with faith on His benign form and worship with ardour His lotus feet. A continuous current of divine remembrance should always flow through the mind. By dwelling on the divine sports of the Lord, the knots of the heart will be rent asunder. Such are the glories of godly stories; and who will not be attracted by them?

'In places of pilgrimage one can come across the devotees of the Lord and can hear from them about the glories of God. By hearing such stories with faith and love, one hankers for more. As one goes on hearing about God, the darkness in the heart is dispelled and the divine Presence is experienced there. By hearing the stories of the *Bhāgavatam* regularly and by serving the devotees, one develops devotion to God. As one progresses in devotion, the mind becomes freed from the dross of lust and greed. The mind thus purified becomes firmly devoted to God. Unflinching devotion enables the devotee to know the real nature of God and soul. He then becomes free from the bonds of *Māyā*, that is, relative existence. His doubts are cleared, the knots of the heart are sundered, and the incubus of past impressions is removed. Therefore, the wise ones diligently and

blithely cultivate devotion to the lotus feet of the Lord. All the Vedas sing His glories. All sacrifices are meant to propitiate Him. All yogic practices are only a means to realize Him. All rituals remind one of His presence. All knowledge, all austerities, all right conduct, all divine bliss, all these are ways and means of realizing God.'

The *Bhāgavatam* is a royal road to the citadel of God. The Sūta sang the glories of the various manifestations of the Supreme Lord. The *Bhāgavatam* is considered the

verbal form of Lord Kṛṣṇa by the devotees inasmuch as the nature of both is the same, namely, *Sat-cit-ānanda*: that is, Being, Knowledge, and Bliss.

This was the inaugural address, in metrical form, of the Sūta, the bard of the *Bhāgavatam*, to the sages at Naimiṣāranya, delivered long, long ago.

—Swami Siddhinathananda

Reference : *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* : I. chs. 1 and 2

## EXCURSIONS INTO UDDHAVA-GITĀ

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

(Continued from the April issue)

### THE HOUSEHOLDER'S LIFE

After narrating the story of the Avadhūta, Śrī Kṛṣṇa continues His instructions to Uddhava in the fifth chapter of the *Last Message*. He begins by telling him about the duties of a householder and how he should discharge them in a spirit of detachment.<sup>1</sup> In Hinduism the life of a householder was never looked upon as something futile or sinful, as in Buddhism and Christianity. Though the *sannyāsins* (monks) were given the highest place, the householder's life too was held to be great. In the *Mahābhārata* and the *purāṇas* (mythology), the householder's life was given supreme importance. The reason for this must be sought in the philosophy of the Ātman. The Ātman or Self is essentially free and unattached. So, whatever actions a man performs—be they the daily body-maintenance of the *sannyāsin* or the domes-

tic and social duties of the householder—they do not affect the Self. If a man realizes this secret, it does not matter whether he is a householder or a *sannyāsin*. But there is this one important condition. And that is self-control, purity. Without attaining to purity, no one can realize the Ātman. Detachment, self-control, calmness, and concentration are necessary for all types of spiritual aspirants—the householder or the monk. Both are required to follow the instructions of an enlightened teacher. But since it was easier to follow a life of discipline and purity as a monk than as a householder, the *sannyāsin's* path soon came to be looked upon with greater favour by the Hindu society which had always held up Self-realization as its ideal.

'He should be indifferent to his wife, children, house, fields, relatives, and wealth, etc., considering everything whatsoever as equally subserving his interest.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Last Message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati Himalayas, 1956), V. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, V. 7.



The significance of this stanza should be understood in the larger context of the doctrine of the Self. Otherwise it may lead one astray. Sri Ramakrishna insisted on most of his householder disciples' attending to their duties of life in a spirit of detachment. It is mentioned in the first chapter of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* that, when one of his relatives came to stay with him giving up his wife and children, Sri Ramakrishna scolded him and sent him back to his family. But he insisted on inner detachment for them. Just as the maid-servant does her duties in the master's home knowing that the household does not belong to her, so also should the lay devotees discharge their duties unattached. This philosophy of work is based on the doctrine of the Ātman which in its real nature is pure Existence-knowledge-bliss. The Ātman is all-pervading and it is Its immanence that is the basis of all sense-attraction. This idea is brought out tellingly in a famous passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*:

'It is not for the sake of the husband, my dear, that he is loved, but for the sake of the Self that he is loved. It is not for the sake of the wife, my dear, that she is loved, but for the sake of the Self that she is loved. It is not for the sake of the sons, my dear, that they are loved, but for the sake of the Self that they are loved. . . . It is not for the sake of the worlds, my dear, that they are loved, but for the sake of the Self that they are loved. It is not for the sake of the gods, my dear, that they are loved, but for the sake of the Self that they are loved. It is not for the sake of all beings, my dear, that they are loved, but for the sake of the Self that they are loved. It is not for the sake of all, my dear, that all is loved, but for the sake of the Self that all is loved. The Self, my dear Maitreyi, should be realized, should be heard of, reflected on and meditated upon. By the realization of the Self, my

dear, through hearing, reflection and meditation, all this is known.'<sup>3</sup>

If we really and truly want to have a spiritual outlook, we should consciously stress the principle of the Ātman in all personalities, but more so among those with whom we closely associate. In a monastic community or brotherhood this outlook becomes most essential for all. Then alone will common life be of mutual benefit to our spiritual progress.

If some time or other you feel drawn towards any person, at once analyse your feeling clearly and definitely. Root out the sense-element from that attraction and try to see only the Principle in the personality. This is very important if we really want to form a community of spiritual people. Otherwise such a community cannot be of much help to us in our inner unfoldment.

#### A FUNDAMENTAL SPIRITUAL LAW

All our actions and thinking are determined by our view of reality. Whatever we take to be real draws out our whole being—our thinking, feeling, willing, sense-perception. This is a great law. If the world becomes a reality to us, the world draws our whole heart and all our faculties. If the Divine becomes real to us, the Divine draws our whole attention. This is the meaning of Sri Ramakrishna's example of the raising of the curtain in a theatre. Before the show begins the spectators indulge in all sorts of talk and movements. But when the curtain goes up and the show begins, all eyes are riveted on the stage. As soon as we get a glimpse of the Divine, the Divine becomes more real to us than the world. That brings about a tremendous transformation within us. In the beginning such a higher glimpse may set all our previous ideas topsy-turvy. This

<sup>3</sup> *Br. Up.*, II. iv. 5.





Walt Whitman wrote, 'I inhale great draughts of space.... The east and the west are mine. And the north and the south are mine.' Some such attitude should be developed by all aspirants. Then the world will change before our eyes. Suppose you stand before some mountain ranges. The peak nearest to you appears to be enormous while the distant peaks appear smaller. Similarly, owing to attachment to the objects around us, we have a wrong conception of things and people.

Here are some very useful meditations to develop this sense of vastness in the aspirant.<sup>6</sup> One of the most famous is the 'Antaryāmi-brāhmaṇa' of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* :

'He who inhabits the earth but is within it, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, and who controls the earth from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self....

'He who inhabits all beings but is within them, whom no being knows, whose body all beings are, and who controls all beings from within, is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self....

'He who inhabits the mind (*manas*) but is within it, whom the mind does not know, whose body is the mind, and who controls the mind from within, is the Inner Controller, your own immortal Self....

'He is never seen but is the Witness, He is never heard but is the Hearer, He is never thought but is the Thinker, He is never known but is the Knower. There is no other witness but Him, no other hearer but Him, no other thinker but Him, no other knower but Him. He is the Internal Ruler, your own immortal Self. Everything else but Him is mortal.'<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For more meditations see Chapter VI of *Divine Life* edited with an introduction by Swami Yatiswarananda (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4).

<sup>7</sup> *Br. Up.*, III. vii. 3-23.

If you meditate daily on this, you come to have a new sense of values, a vaster sense of existence, and this is absolutely necessary for all aspirants. Instead of going after the many, clinging to the many, and longing for the many, the aspirant should feel the One within him and in all beings.

#### THE DOUBLE PROCESS OF WORSHIP AND ANALYSIS

'This body which is created by the Lord's attribute known as *Māyā*, is verily the cause of man's transmigration. And the knowledge of the Self serves to destroy this. Therefore, by means of discrimination one should unite the soul to the Absolute Self which is in the body, and remove the idea of reality of the gross body and then the subtle body.'<sup>8</sup>

Ordinarily, our thought-life and physical life imply complete identification with our gross body and our subtle body, and since it is not possible for us to get rid of this false identification all of a sudden, we should at least see that we minimize it as much as possible, and try to lessen this false identification more and more as we proceed towards the goal.

The trouble is that at the back of all our emotions there is this idea that we are men or women, that we are personalities and individuals. We also feel that we are spiritual aspirants or devotees of God. But this feeling can be made a means of transcending the idea of personality. So let us keep the idea of the aspirant, of the devotee, and worship the Divine. With this idea a certain amount of self-analysis is absolutely necessary, for even the idea of the aspirant, the devotee, is ultimately a false conception.

Since we are not able to follow the path of out-and-out analysis, we must follow the mixed path. We should worship the

<sup>8</sup> *L. M.*, V. 10-11.

Divine, looking upon ourselves as devotees, and also try to analyse our personality into Self and non-Self, consisting of gross and subtle bodies, and then try to identify ourselves with the Self, drawing ourselves away from the non-Self. So, this double process of worship and analysis is to be followed.

For concentration, most of us need a personal divine idea or a Holy Personality, but side by side with our meditation on this Holy Personality, on our Chosen Ideal (*Iṣṭam*), we should also try to think of and meditate upon the Principle of which this Holy Personality is a manifestation. Thus we learn to combine our meditation on the personal and the impersonal aspects of the Divine, and over and above this we should have also monistic meditations in which we try to separate our Self from all that is non-Self—from our bodies, gross and subtle. This course is to be followed, and it is very essential that we do this time and again.

It is also very essential that we have a fixed set of meditations every day, theistic and monistic ones, and these meditations are to be repeated and read every day without any break or change. I do not know whether this is being done or not, but we should make it a point to do it scrupulously as a part of our practices. It is a very necessary item of our *sādhana* (spiritual practice).

If any day one finds one is feeling one's body, one's individuality, more than usual, one's sense of personality very strong, then one must repeat these passages, especially the monistic ones, more than ever. One must have more of practice even if one's mind tries to rebel. This is far better than having new readings.

So, during the distress and affliction that come from the phenomenal world, we should consciously try to draw ourselves away from the phenomena and move towards the Divine in us. At least the former

is essential for a really spiritually minded person whether he turns all the more towards the Divine or not. What worldly people do is just the opposite.

We should never be contented or satisfied with ourselves, thinking we have done our best. It may have been our best for the time being, but we should pray to the Divine for greater and greater strength, to be able to do more. Today I may only be able to lift ten pounds, but I may ask for the strength to be able to lift a hundred pounds. My capacity may be increased, even if I have done my best and am doing by best, because this 'best' is not a fixed quantity.

It is not enough if we are able to separate the little personality from the body and the mind, but we should try to connect the finite with the Infinite, the individual with the Universal. This is all we can do for the present, as the transcendental, the Absolute, the One without a second, is too far off, and cannot be reached by us for many, many years to come.

To the extent that our identification with our bodies becomes less and less, we become purer and purer; and to the extent that we become purer, our identification with our bodies becomes less. So this is a parallel growth, not a vicious circle. And to the extent that our identification is lessened and the process of purification intensified, we move towards Self-realization.

In one of the minor Upaniṣads there is this passage :

'Making oneself the first churning piece and Om the other churning piece and rubbing them together through the practice of meditation, one should see the Lord in His hidden reality.'<sup>9</sup>

That is, one must go on steadily and perseveringly with one's *japa* (repetition of the

(Contd. on p. 315)

<sup>9</sup> *Brahmopaniṣad*, 4.





## SRI M. S. GOLWALKAR—A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE—PASSES AWAY HIS CHARACTER STAYS ON

If you could peep in from behind the non-transparent lattice of the other world and from there see and hear how people reacted to your death, you perhaps would have the best possible educative appraisal of your life and deeds. Many successful self-image-makers would be shocked to notice the private reactions of most of their voluble adorers—how happy they are with the 'good riddance'! Again, many controversial personages would be pleasantly surprised to watch their own unkempt images being affectionately brushed up by death itself.

Condolence tributes, more often than not, tend to be 'sincere' because everybody then tries to speak as honestly as his character permits under the pressure of that queer feeling that he himself might also be somehow mortal. Death is a great teacher. Of course, there are also people who on such occasions speak with uncontrolled sentimentality. A few even speak with their tongues in their cheeks. In any case their opinions can be safely ignored by the dead man looking down at the strutting mortals on our mundane plane, for he can easily see what stuff they are made of.

On 5 June 1973 the death occurred at Nagpur, of a fairly well-known Indian,

Sri Madhavrao Sadashivrao Golwalkar, the chief of R.S.S. (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh). While alive he was a highly controversial figure, adored intensely by his followers, and hated vehemently by his detractors. After his death what did he see and hear from behind the lattice? To his surprise he must have seen that with the cremation of his body, controversy about him had died down almost to ashes, and what emerged was his character. And his image now wore a tribute-garland of various flowers, many from unexpected gardens.

The flowers that made the unthreaded garland were of different hues, all freshly blossomed, and hence fragrant and colourful:

...A deeply religious man with great organizing ability, his death will be deeply mourned by his numerous followers and admirers and I convey to them my sincere condolences and sympathies.

—Sri V. V. Giri, President of India

He held a respected position in national life by the force of his personality and the intensity of his conviction, even though many of us could not agree with him.

—Srimati Indira Gandhi,  
Prime Minister of India

Sri Golwalkar had served the Hindu religion, Hindu culture and the nation to the end of his life.

—Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi

Sri M. S. Golwalkar was certainly a man of great learning and character. Death has snatched away a highly respected personality from public life.

—Sri Y. B. Chavan, Finance Minister of India

India had lost in the death of Sri Golwalkar, R.S.S. chief, a leader who had organizing ability and the capacity to suffer for the cause he held dear. One may not have agreed with his philosophy and outlook but one cannot help admiring his courage of conviction. He was able to create a large following and enforce strict discipline among his followers. Anyone who succeeds in introducing discipline among a large body of people does a national service.

—Sri Jagjivan Ram, Defence Minister of India

A *tapaswi*... a personality of indomitable determination... Mr. Golwalkar saw to it that his determination never came in the way of a glorious future of India.

—Sri S. M. Joshi, Socialist leader

In the death of Guru Golwalkar, India has lost a great patriot who dedicated his whole life for the cause in which he believed. Guru Golwalkar was a great organizer and disciplinarian.

—Sri Madhu Mehta, Swatantra Party General Secretary

In the death of the Guruji, nationalists all over the country have lost a pillar of hope and light, the Hindus, their most authentic spokesman, and millions of Swayamsevaks, their unerring guide and affectionate guardian.

—Sri P. Parameswaran, Jan Sangh Secretary

The late Sri M. S. Golwalkar was a leader with a broad national outlook

who always thought on all India basis. Sri Golwalkar had faith in spiritualism and had great regard for other religious faiths. He did not have a narrow view of any religion. In fact, he had love for the Muslims and only wanted them to join the national mainstream.

—Acharya Vinoba Bhave

(These tributes have been culled from various newspapers and periodicals.)

But in vain I searched for a tribute from any Indian Muslim. Maybe this is a kind of silent appraisal of his life and work by an Indian community. Maybe there should be another way of looking at this non-happening. I do not really know.

Now, Sri Golwalkar's life is an open book before all to read. You might not have agreed with him on many counts. Today this does not any more matter. What matters is that you find here a man, a character—spotless, selfless, fearless. He lived not for himself but entirely for others. At any time, about how many men in this world could this be said?

Still, the greatest service Sri Golwalkar rendered to India and her people was that he upheld certain values by practice and precept, which this nation needs for its survival and well-ordered growth. When most of the ardent and well-meaning political leaders of the country were talking of and working at river-valley projects, industrialization, family-planning, higher standards of living, etc., he was practising and preaching discipline, strength, fearlessness, character, sacrificial service, dynamic patriotism—without which none of the aforesaid modern objectives could ensure a better future and fortunes for India. Above all, in these days of open 'watergates' of indiscipline and festering corruption in more places than we may know, Sri Golwalkar left behind him disciplined men of character all over India.

If these men, who adore him as their



Guru, keep themselves dedicated to the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of every Indian, irrespective of his creed or religion, in future they may hear people

paying even greater tributes to their departed leader as a national hero of India.

18 June 1973

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(Contd. from p. 312)

Lord's name) and meditation ; one must go on repeating the same passages, having the same daily readings, without any break ; then only realization becomes possible.

Knowledge, as thought, removes ignorance, and then that knowledge disappears. Knowledge gives the aspirant the true idea of the individual self and the true idea of the Universal Self, and then brings about their perfect union. After that it ceases to be and the Absolute is reached in which there is no knower, knowledge, or known.

The devotee, who is dualistic in his approach, tries to connect his self with God ; the non-dualist tries to have the extreme form of analysis in which all that is non-divine is eliminated, and the Divine is

realized. Both try to deny the ego, to eliminate it, but in different ways. The devotee says, 'I am nothing, Thou art everything', the non-dualist says, 'My personality is nothing, the Infinite is everything.' There is a Sanskrit passage conveying this idea :

'Some people worship Thee saying, "I am Thine", some others do it saying "I am Thou alone". In spite of this little difference in attitudes, the final result of both is the same.'

So, really speaking, this infinite Thou is the same as this infinite 'I'. Both lead to similar realizations, only the way of expressing it is different ; so is the approach.

(To be continued)

## 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: Question 1, p. 801; Question 2, p. 901.

The words quoted in 'Onward for Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (1963), p. 138.

'So I preach only the Upanishads,' said Swami Vivekananda to Sister Nivedita. '... And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea *strength*. The quintessence of the Vedas and Vedanta and all lies in that one word.' The subject of strength was very dear to Swamiji's heart. The Editorial of the month is an attempt to unveil the deeper significance of Vivekananda's message of strength.

On 15th February this year, the new temple of Sri Ramakrishna at Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Vrindaban, was dedicated by Rev. Swami Vireswaranandaji, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He also presided over the public meeting held on the next evening. 'Sri Ramakrishna's Temple in Vrindaban and Its Spiritual Foundation' is his presidential address in which the spirit and significance of temple worship, religious synthesis, and Sri Ramakrishna's life are beautifully elucidated.

In the third and final instalment of 'Swami Vivekananda in Boston, March 1896', by Mrs. Marie Louise Burke, the reader will find many hitherto unknown details about the significant event of Swami Vivekananda's address before the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Club. Further, some new light is thrown on Swamiji's activities in Boston, subsequent to the Harvard address, which included a lecture before the distinguished Twentieth Century Club of Boston.

The *Bhāgavatam* is a great storehouse of spiritual wisdom and guidance. Its opening chapters beautifully summarize its philosophy in the dialogue between the Sūta and the sages of Naimiṣāraṇya. Swami Siddhinathananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, has prepared this instructive dialogue in a brief compass.

Of the many hints about intensifying the inner life, in this instalment of the 'Excursions', those about cultivation of detachment in the householder's life, developing a sense of vastness through monistic meditations, and the combining of devotion with rational analysis will be found especially useful.

The Musafir's musings have regard to Sri M. S. Golwalkar, a controversial figure in Indian life, who recently passed away.



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**JESUS ALIAS CHRIST:** BY SIMON S. LEVIN,  
Published by Philosophical Library, New York City,  
1969, pp. 136, \$5.50.

For quite some time now, we have been hearing about the application of 'higher criticism' to the Bible, particularly to the New Testament. And now, here is a book which out-Herods Herod in demolishing the very foundations of the Christian Gospels. Quoting chapter and verse, and seeking the support of 'researchers' in the field of the Gospels, the author, Simon S. Levin, claims to have destroyed the foundations on which the authenticity of Jesus Christ as a historic personage and his teachings are based. The main lines of argument of the author converge on three points: (1) at the end of Chapter V (p. 37) where it is declared that the 'Gospels are not history. ... The authors of the Gospels were not Jews, but pagans making in-expert use of Hebrew sources'; (2) at the beginning of Chapter VI (p. 39) where the author asserts, 'They [the Gospels] incorporate too much history that is contradictory, embroidered, and invented.' 'Can we be sure of any historical fact concerning him [Jesus]?' queries our author, and gives as his answer, 'Perhaps only one: that a Jew called Jesus (Yeshua), was executed as a rebel against Roman authority. The rest is commentary'; and (3) at the close of Chapter IX (p. 85) where our author gives us the benefit of his researches in striking words: 'So, Christ is not one; he is two. ... He is Jesus peeping through the veil of the Baptist. ... Veneration for Christ Jesus is misplaced; it is meant for Christ John.' The author's contention is that Jesus, John and Christ are three different entities, and the Gospels fuse them into one. 'Jesus plus John add up to Christ.' (p. 72)

The entire work is devoted to the production of 'evidence' to support the three points noted above. As a background to the general arguments, the first chapter presents the 'bloody and chaotic' Jewish history for 300 years (165 B.C. to A.D. 135). Chapters II-V contain a highly critical and devastating study of the four Gospels to prove that they contain 'history made to order'. Having dismissed the Gospels, the author takes up the life of Christ and quotes various 'authorities' to the effect that 'Jesus emerges as a political adventurer, a revolutionary, and the leader of a gang of desperate men intent on the seizure of the Jewish throne,' (p. 46) and 'was crucified under Pilate as a rebel'. (p. 62) This is a monstrous caricature of the holy Person. And every act of Jesus narrated in the Gospels is

twisted out of all recognition and presented as a treacherous deed of a rebel. For example, the entry of Christ into Jerusalem just before Passover is termed the forcible entry of a rebel chieftain for planning an insurrection; the driving out of the money-changers from the Temple, as a military attack after surveying the defences of the holy Shrine (p. 51); and the Last Supper, a secret military conference of defeated rebels to reform and plan fresh strategy. (pp. 52-3)

And who was Christ? An answer is given in Chapter IX, where the Christ-idea is likened to the founding of Baháism in Iran, around the middle of the last century, by Mirza Ali Mahomet, who was soon martyred, and after some years his teachings were taken over by 'a practical, worldly leader' who radically revised and popularized the original teachings, 'quietly falsified history', etc. The author compares Jesus to the latter man—'Jesus absorbed John ... the life is the life of Jesus, the doctrines, those of John the Baptist.' (p. 72)

The author goes on in the same strain and dismisses in chapters X-XIII all the Christian beliefs about Paul and the Apostles, and concludes in Chapter XIV that 'The Gospels are a wish-fulfilling myth of God-made man ... rewritten and 'reshaped' ... "many times".' To crown all, the author re-writes the Gospel and presents his own version of it in an 'Appendix.'

The reviewer desires to ask a question: 'What about the profound spiritual experience of the long line of Christian saints who saw Jesus, conversed with Him, were inspired by Him, and had their lives completely transformed by His Grace? What about the witness of Sadhu Sunder Singh of this century?' Sri Ramakrishna saw Christ, beyond all doubt; Swami Ramadas also saw Christ. There are many today who have been blessed by His vision. Christ is a Living Presence and immortal. To deny Him is to deny the spirit and the spiritual world.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

[The reviewer is a devoted Hindu and *not* a Christian.—Ed.]

### BENGALI

UNAVIMSA SATABDITE BANGALIR MANAN  
O BANGLA SAHITYA: BY PRANABRANJAN GHOSE,  
Published by Lekhapada, Calcutta 12, pp. 260,  
Rs. 8/.

What the author endeavours to do in the book



under review is an analytical study of the intellectual life of Bengal in the last century. In order to achieve his objective he has selected nine major personalities: Rammohan Roy, H. L. V. Derozio, Pearychand Mitra, Devendranath Tagore, Akshay Kumar Datta, Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, Rajnarain Basu, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The list could have been longer, but the author has confined himself to those literary artists—except Derozio, of course—whose contributions to the development of Bengali prose are worth reckoning. And he assures us in the Preface that he will discuss the works of the poets and dramatists in a forthcoming volume.

In a book of 260 pages covering the lives and activities of as many as nine eminent Indians (not limited to Bengalis), the author has exhibited an appreciable historical sense, apart from his competence as a literary critic. Sri Ghose combines in himself indeed, a sound historian and a fine literary critic. And as such he has been necessarily selective both in respect of personalities and of relevant materials. His approach to the subject is analytic as well as synthetic. Analytically, the author has studied his heroes along with the diverse strains that went into their mental make-up and has brought out the essential characteristics of their thoughts and contributions. He has rightly highlighted Rammohan's persistent endeavours for the emancipation of Bengali intellect; Derozio's open and inquiring mind intent upon striking at the root of meaningless Hindu traditions on the one hand and arousing patriotism among the Bengali boys on the other; Pearychand's desire to uplift contemporary society through literary creations and his success in creating essentially Bengali diction free from Sanskrit style; Devendranath's attempts to take his countrymen back to the essentials of their age-old culture by his Brahmo movement as well as by his able encounters with Christian missionaries like Alexander Duff; dissemination of western science and education through writings, by a true disciple of Rammohan like Akshaykumar Datta; Vidyasagar's great love for mankind as evidenced in his widow-marriage movement, among other humanitarian activities, as well as his dynamism and strong sense of self-respect; attempts to turn the attention of his West-intoxicated countrymen to the best in Hindu (or for that matter, Indian) culture, in the ways of Devendranath by his friend and admirer Rajnarain Basu; a somewhat curious amalgam of conservatism and liberalism in Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, who was saturated in our heritage and as a literary

artist was the precursor of Bankimchandra in the field of historical novels; and finally the rejuvenation of Hinduism by converting it into what may be called the 'Religion of Humanity' in the true sense of the expression by Ramakrishna Paramahansa, 'the highest embodiment of God-consciousness and piety in an age of Philistinism.'

Though Pranabranjan is an admirer of each of these eminent men, he is not blind to their shortcomings. He does not hesitate to remark that Pearychand's literary creations have not unoften lacked grace and charm owing to a moral undertone (p. 65). He has rightly observed that Vivekananda was much more progressive than Devendranath, Rajnarain, and Bhudev in underlining the necessity of breaking caste-barriers and pointing out that the welfare of the nation lies in the uplift of the masses (p. 223). Endowed with analytical acumen, Pranabranjan can also be convincingly synthetic in outlook. For instance, his remark that modern Indian intellectual ferment is the result of the synthesis of European political consciousness as seen in Rammohan, and Indian spirituality as epitomized by Ramakrishna (p. 230). Equally apposite is his observation that the educated Bengalis in the nineteenth century were basically country-bound and did not lose their cultural identity despite their love and regard for Western culture (p. 228).

The author however could have included in his volume, among others, a pioneer historian like Rajendralal Mitra, since this indefatigable scholar contributed a great deal to our historiography. The impact of Derozio and of his disciples collectively known as 'Young Bengal' on the contemporary life, however ephemeral, could have claimed some space in the work.

Omissions of the kind noted above, however, do not detract from the merits of the work. It is undoubtedly a significant addition to the existing literature on the subject and an English rendering of it is sure to be welcomed by readers of other languages.

Sri Kalyan Kumar Das Gupta

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

JIBEY SIDDHANTA: BY PUROSHOTTAM SHARAF, Published by Anil Gangopadhyaya, Prabartak Co., 5213, B. B. Ganguli St., Calcutta, 12, 1972, Rs. 2/-; pp. 116.

AWARENESS AND PEAK-EXPERIENCE IN HINDUISM, BUDDHISM AND EXISTENTIA-



LISM : BY J. M. HONDIUS, PUB. (?) BY SRI VAISHNAVI SHRINE, Tirumullaivayal, Madras 62, 1973, Rs. 2/-, pp. 83.

LIFE OF SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR AND THE ESOTERIC SIGNIFICANCE IN THE KANDAR ANUBHUTI : BY SRI N. V. KARTHIKEYAN, Pub. by Divine Life Society, P.O. Shivanandanagar, U.P., 1972, Rs. 1/50, pp. 108.

KANDAR ANUBHUTI (God-Experience) of SAINT ARUNAGIRINATHAR, BY N. V. KARTHIKEYAN, Pub. by Divine Life Society (as above), 1972, Rs. 8/-, pp. 554.

NARAHARI, PROPHET OF NEW INDIA, BY V. K. GOKAK, Pub. by Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd., 172 Naigum Cross Road, Dadar, Bombay 14, 1972, Rs. 10/-; pp. 277.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF ST. LOUIS MISSOURI, U.S.A.

REPORT : April, 1971—March, 1972

*Weekly Services* : Swami Satprakashananda, the Minister-in-charge, conducted weekly services on Sunday mornings and Tuesday evenings in the Society's chapel. Sundays he spoke on various religious and philosophical topics; Tuesdays he conducted meditation and expounded the *Bhagavad-gita*. On special occasions devotional songs and film shows were added to these programmes. Besides members and friends, many came from churches of many denominations, and from universities, colleges and schools. The Swami met the students and visitors after services, individually or in groups, and answered their questions. During the summer recess, and during the Swami's illness in November-December, tape-recordings of his discourses were regularly used at Sunday and Tuesday meetings.

*Other meetings* : The first Thursday of the month, the Swami expounded *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, adding incidents from his personal knowledge of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and answering questions from the audience. Weekdays from 11-00 to 12-00 noon there was silent meditation in the Society's chapel. On November 24, 90 girl-students of a Catholic Academy in a near-by city came with their teachers, for a discussion-meeting with the Swami in the Chapel, lasting for 1½ hours. On December 8, 120 students of a neighbouring High School with their teacher in Humanities, came, listened to a tape-recorded lecture followed by a question-period with the Swami. On December 15, the Swami addressed 200 students of the St. Louis University High School

in their auditorium, and answered their written questions.

*Anniversaries* : Birthdays of Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Vivekananda, Swamis Brahmananda, Premananda and Shivananda were observed with worship in the Shrine and special services in the Chapel. Special services were also held on Good Friday, Durga Puja and Christmas Eve.

*Vedanta Society of Kansas City* continued their weekly and fortnightly meetings with the tapes of the Swami's discourses. On May 5, the Swami visited Kansas City for a special service. On December 18th, Swami Ranganathananda visited Kansas City as guest of the Society.

*Guest Swami* : Swami Satprakashananda was guest-speaker at the Annual Banquet of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, May 14th, and on the 15th performed ground-breaking ceremony for the Society's planned monastery building at Ganges, Michigan. Swami Prabuddhananda, of San Francisco, who had also spoken at the Chicago Banquet, came to St. Louis on May 16, and spoke on the 18th to about 100 people at the Society's Tuesday service. On August 17, Swami Ranganathananda and Bhashyananda were guest-speakers at the Tuesday service; again on December 18, Swami Ranganathananda was speaker at the Sunday service and in the afternoon at a Reception, he talked at length with devotees and friends, including newspaper reporters.

*Interviews* : The Swami gave about 300 interviews to earnest seekers of spiritual instruction or those asking about personal problems.

The Society maintains a rental library, book-salesroom, and freely distributes pamphlets, folders, and printed or mimeographed sheets on Vedanta.

# AN APPEAL

## RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

### FLOOD RELIEF WORK IN TRIPURA

The Ramakrishna Mission started relief work among the flood affected people of Tripura on the 26th May, 1973. The following articles were distributed among 1,580 recipients of 352 families of 14 villages under Sonamura and Kankraban areas up to 12.6.73 :

Rice 1,331½ Kg., Dal 255 Kg., milk powder 116 Kg., baby food 15½ Kg., pine-apples 135, Dhoti 120 pcs., Sari 311 pcs., Lungi 134 pcs., children's garments 468 pcs., old clothings 69 pcs., bleaching powder 93 Kg. and Phenyl 16 litres.

More food, clothing, medicine, shelter, etc., are urgently needed for the victims of the devastated areas. Due to the paucity of funds we are compelled to keep our activity strictly within limits though there is need for help in vast areas.

We appeal to the generous public to come forward with their helping hand so as to enable us to carry on this humanitarian work in an efficient manner. Any contribution in cash or in kind will be gratefully accepted and acknowledged by the following centres :—

1. Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math 711-202, Howrah, West Bengal.
2. Advaita Ashrama, 5 Delhi Entally Road, Calcutta 700-014.
3. Udbodhan Office, 1 Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta 700-003.
4. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Calcutta 700-029.
5. Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan, 99 Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta 700-020.

Belur Math  
June 15, 1973

*Swami Gambhirananda*  
General Secretary

