



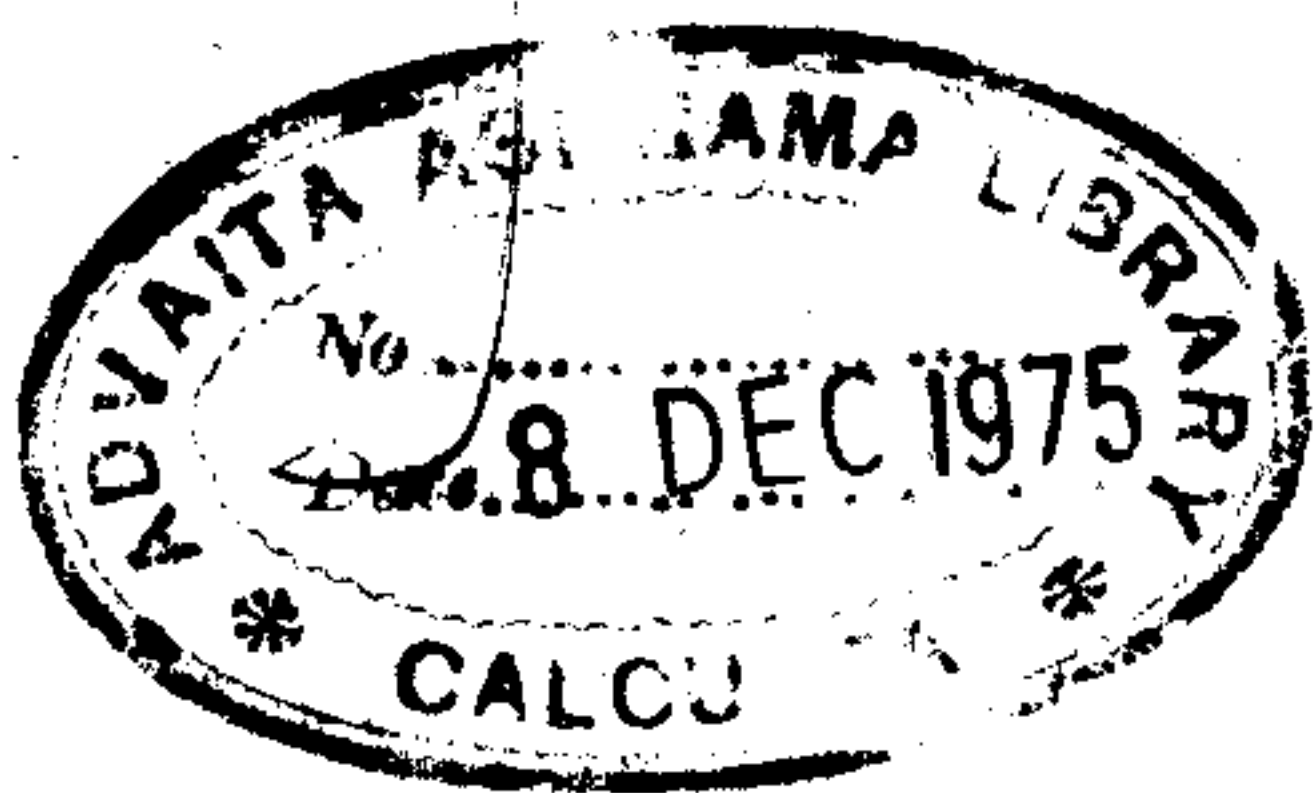
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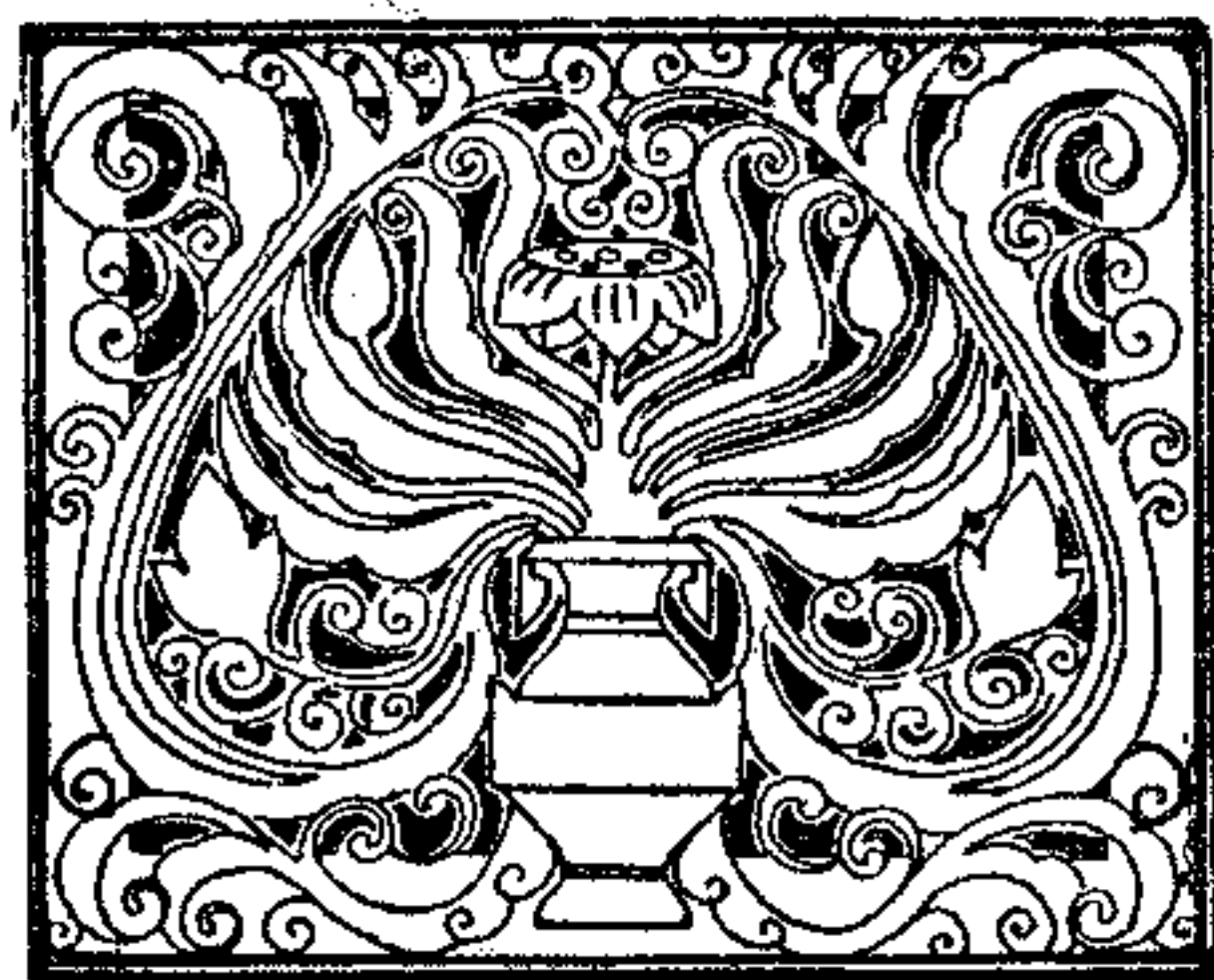
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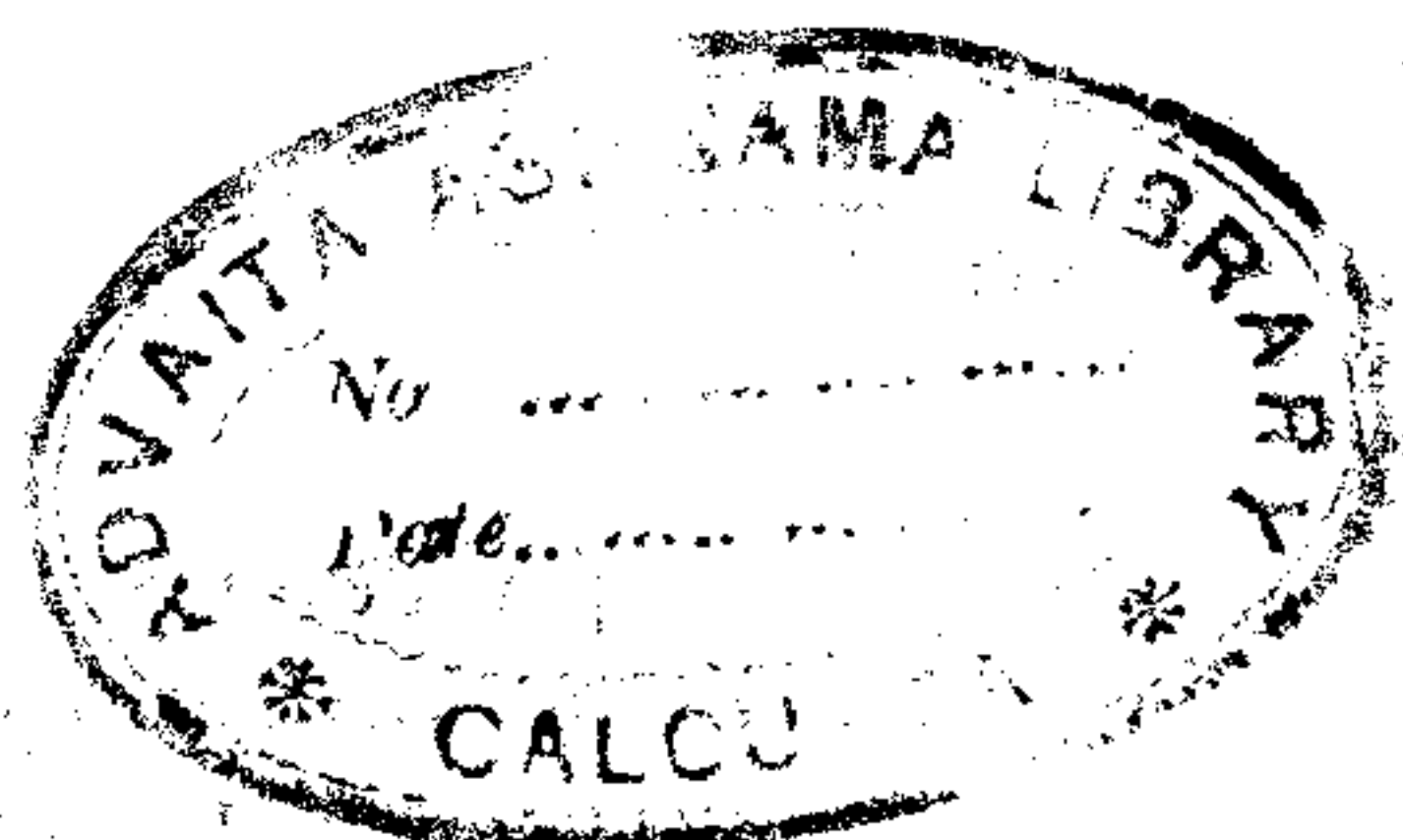
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Kanchenjanga from Sandakphu

Photo: Bimal Dey



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXX

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No. 12

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'Having initiated me thus in Purnabhisheka,¹ the Brahmani made me perform daily Tantric rites too numerous to mention. I now don't remember all things at all times. But I remember the day when I was able by the grace of the Mother to view with perfect equanimity, the supreme pleasure of a pair of lovers, seeing nothing in it but the blissful sport of the Divine; the mind instead of descending even to the neighbourhood of ordinary human feelings, soared higher and higher merging at last in deep Samadhi. After regaining normal consciousness, I heard the Brahmani say, "You have reached the desired end of a very difficult Tantric Sadhana and become established in the divine mood. This is the ultimate Sadhana of the (heroic) mode of worship."

'Shortly afterwards, when I performed the worship of the female figure according to the Tantra rites, I did it with the help of another Bhairavi in the open music hall of the temple in the presence of all, during the day-time. When it was over I saluted her according to Sastric prescription. This was the last rite connected with the heroic mode of worship, which I completed in that manner. Even as my mental attitude towards all women, namely, that of a child towards its mother, remained intact during the long period of the Tantric Sadhana, so also I could never take a drop of wine at that time. The mere mention of the name of Karana² (wine) would inspire in me the immediate experience of the universal Cause and I lost myself in it completely. Similarly, as soon as I heard other words of that kind, the Cause of the universe would present Itself before me and I would be in Samadhi.'

*

'It did not take me more than three days to succeed in any of the [Tantric] disciplines. When I took up a particular discipline and asked the divine Mother importunately with a glowing eagerness of heart for the realization of its result, She benignly crowned me with success in three days only.'

¹ Full initiation into Tantric rites.

² In Bengali the word 'Karana' means both 'cause' and 'wine'; so by the law of association the mention of the one gave rise to the thought of the other, of wine to the universal Cause.

*

[A devotee asked, 'Why did you have to practise spiritual discipline?'] 'Even the Divine Mother had to practise austere sadhana to obtain Siva as Her husband. She practised the panchatapa. She would also immerse Her body in water in wintertime, and look fixedly at the sun. Krishna Himself had to practise much sadhana. I had many mystic experiences, but I cannot reveal their contents. Under the bel-tree I had many flaming visions. There I practised the various sadhanas prescribed in the Tantra. I needed many articles—human skulls and so forth and so on. The Brahmani used to collect these things for me. I practised a number of mystic postures.'

*

'I practised the discipline of the Tantra under the bel-tree. At that time I could see no distinction between the sacred tulsi and any other plant. In that state I sometimes ate the leavings from a jackal's meal,³ food that had been exposed the whole night, part of which might have been eaten by snakes or other creatures. Yes, I ate that stuff.

'Sometimes I rode on a dog and fed him with luchi, also eating part of the bread myself. I realized that the whole world was filled with God alone. One cannot have spiritual realization without destroying ignorance; so I would assume the attitude of a tiger and devour ignorance.'

*

'When I first attained this exalted state I could not worship Mother Kali or give Her the food offering. Haladhari and Hriday told me that on account of this the temple officer had slandered me. But I only laughed; I wasn't in the least angry.'

³ In a certain form of Tantrik worship, food is offered to the jackals, the companions of the Goddess Kali.

ONWARD FOR EVER!

The Lord of Lords is not to be attained by much frothy speech. The Lord of Lords is not to be attained even by the powers of the intellect. He is not gained by much power of conquest. That man who knows the secret source of things and that everything else is evanescent, unto him He, the Lord, comes; unto none else. India has learned her lesson through ages and ages of experience. She has turned her face towards Him. She has made many mistakes; loads and loads of rubbish are heaped upon the race. Never mind; what of that? What is the clearing of rubbish, the cleaning of cities, and all that? Does that give life? Those that have fine institutions, they die. And what of institutions, those tin-plate Western institutions, made in five days and broken on the sixth? One of these little handful of nations cannot keep alive for two centuries together. And our institutions have stood the test of ages. Says the Hindu, 'Yes, we have buried all the old nations of the earth and stand here to bury all the new races also, because our ideal is not this world, but the other. Just as your ideal is, so shall you be. If your ideal is mortal, if your ideal is of this earth, so shall you be. If your ideal is matter, matter shall you be. Behold! Our ideal is the Spirit. That alone exists. Nothing else exists, and like Him, we live for ever.'



THOUGHTS ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

EDITORIAL

I

Concern for the welfare of women and amelioration of their condition, found expression in the activities of the United Nations as early as 1947. The first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (C. S. W.) was held at Lake Success, New York, in that year, from the 10th through 24th of February. After twenty-five years, in December 1972, the General Assembly of the U.N., with a view to taking stock of the positive results obtained by the efforts of the C. S. W., passed a resolution which among other things proclaimed the year 1975 as 'International Women's Year' (I. W. Y.). Decision was taken to devote this year for intensified action:

(a) To promote equality between men and women.

(b) To ensure the full integration of women in the total development effort, especially by emphasizing women's responsibility and important role in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional and international levels.

(c) To recognize the importance of women's increasing contribution to the development of friendly relations and co-operation among States and to the strengthening of world peace.

For giving these goals a practical shape and for securing the involvement and co-operation of all member-nations and the public, the U.N. sponsored a two-week I. W. Y. conference in Mexico City from 19 June through 2 July of this year. Over 3,000 delegates representing 125 member countries and U.N. agencies participated. Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim and Mexican President Luis Echeverria addressed the opening session of the conference. Dr. Waldheim said that 'dis-

crimination against women all over the world was unjust, wrong, deplorable and inhuman, and that it was halting progress in the world'. He gave a call 'to look to the long-term interests of the human race as a whole where there were still large areas of massive poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, and unemployment'. President Echeverria, author of 'Economic Rights and Duties Charter of Nations'—a document which calls for more equal distribution of the world's wealth—, speaking with a comprehensive perspective, said that 'the women should include in their fight the battle against misery, hunger, and [ill] health of people throughout the world'. 'There is no woman more discriminated against', he said with great insight and fervour, 'than the woman who does not have bread, school or medicines for her children, and this is the worst form of exploitation and of discrimination against woman'.¹

As usually happens in such congresses with world-wide representation, global politics did cast its unhealthy shadow on this Mexico women's meet, and militant voices spoke in harsh revolutionary terms. Nonetheless, the conference passed unanimously the 'World Plan of Action', a formidable document of 206 clauses, 'setting down guidelines for national and international action on all issues concerning women—from education, employment, health, housing and nutrition, to political participation, the family structure, the role of mass-media and spheres of regional and global co-operation'.² And some of the delegates spoke with realism, wisdom, and restraint. The First Lady of the Philippines, Imelda Marcos, said that the Oriental woman could never look upon man as a stranger or a rival, and explained

her stand thus: 'The Oriental woman has not sacrificed her femininity to individualism but has rather enhanced it with participation. She has not striven for a sterile status and has preferred to play her true role in nature and society'. In her address to the Conference, Prabha Rau, an Indian delegate, said, 'The concept of equality cannot blossom into full-fledged action unless it is inducted into the thought processes of human beings...'. One of the most impressive speeches, according to at least one report, was delivered by Valentina Tereshkova, leader of the Russian delegation and the first woman cosmonaut.

The International Women's Year will end with this December. However, the constructive programmes and plans of the U.N. will almost certainly gather momentum and continue to move towards fruition over the decades to come. Since the U.N.-sponsored women's movement has no regional or parochial approaches, but is broad-based so as to include many major issues facing humanity—such as hunger, poverty, population, equality, progress and world peace—, it deserves the earnest and whole-hearted co-operation of all countries, all sections of society, all agencies private and public, and all right-thinking men and women everywhere. Men as well as women must recognize the fact that without the sincere participation of women in all relevant human undertakings, society, like a bird with only one wing, will not be able to progress and evolve. 'Women are a power,' said Swami Vivekananda once, 'only now it is more for evil because man oppresses woman; she is the fox, but when she is no longer oppressed, she will become the lion'.³ 'If ever women shall come together purely for the benefit and good of man-

¹ *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, dated 21 June and 11 August, 1975

² *ibid.*, 11 August, 1975

³ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. VII (1958), p. 22

kind,' said Matthew Arnold, 'it will be a power such as the world has never known.'

II

The goal of equality between men and women was given the foremost place in the U.N. manifesto of goals for the I. W. Y. Women in almost every 'civilized' society have been discriminated against in the areas of employment opportunity and wages—among others. In many if not all countries there are not enough legal safeguards to defend women against such discrimination. During the I. W. Y. some of the member countries of the U.N.—for instance, India—have passed laws conferring on women such equality. Some other countries will soon be following suit. Still, more than provision of legal safeguards, intense efforts must be made through books, newspapers and other communicational media, and also through education, to bring about change of attitudes at all social levels. Since traditional prejudices against women have strongly entrenched themselves in men's minds, any attitudinal change will necessarily be a slow process. And militancy—a kind of fanaticism, as often seen in the Women's Liberation movement—can hardly be productive of any good or lasting results. In fact it will worsen the present stalemate and degrade men and women to the level of bickering brutes.

Equality between men and women, moreover, should not be taken to mean that women will imitate men in all respects. That would be preposterous and would upset the wonderful balance and diversity that nature has brought into existence for her own ends. Equality should be understood to mean that women deserve as much scope and opportunity as men to develop, work, and achieve the highest, by means consonant with their own nature. There should be a complementarity of relation

and roles between man and woman, and not competition. For man and woman are one entity. Where would man be without women in their various roles as mothers, wives, daughters, sisters, and so on? Family and home which are central to a human personality's development, have been mainly made possible because of women. A man who does not recognize this fact has yet to reach the human level in his mental evolution. A woman who wants to break the family and home is lighting the fuse of a highly destructive explosive device which will not only blow up her own feminine personality, but in the long run play havoc with the health of society and of its members. How the home is a necessary haven of intimate relationships, endowing man and child with the basic sense of belongingness—in a world made up more and more of strangers—is tellingly described by Dr. Raymond Aron, a front-rank French sociologist and political scientist:

'The social order derives from the biological nature of man, however diverse the social expressions of this nature might be. The family is the initial environment to which the child owes its first experiences and from which he receives an indelible impression. Even in its simplest form the family represents a complex ensemble. It is determined simultaneously by internal relationships between parents, and children, among the children, and by external relationships with the surrounding community and its critical aspects of socialization: schools, churches, mass communication media... '...there is nothing novel in the fact that men are socialized, shaped by the characteristic culture of one collective among the many. What is novel is the loss of certain illusions: no human person can exist prior to or outside the process of socialization.'

'One expects so much more from private life because it differs from other forms of sociability. In one's trade one may feel very replaceable but one re-

mains the most irreplaceable of beings for one's nearest and dearest. Never has the contrast between professional and home life been so sharp—between the anonymity of one and intimacy of the other. Never have the intervening groups between one and the other been so threatened... Only in his own home does each person seek compensation for the cold efficiency of work; there he no longer has the feeling of being alone among a host of solitary beings.⁴

Social life is based on mutuality. As distinct individuals, a man and a woman are equal. But as organic parts of the immense, living structure of society their roles are vastly different. There is an essential and indispensable mutuality and complementarity which need to be recognized, sustained, and strengthened. Not that man is superior to woman. Each is great in his or her role when it is well filled. Man may be by nature strong, courageous, a fighter and a doer. But without a woman to love and admire him, stand by him in times of despair, defeat and depression, and provide the safe refuge of a cheerful home, man's natural 'manliness' may sag, wilt, or even vanish. Then again, are not a woman's natural endowments of patience, kindness, courtesy, generosity and grace—and above all a maternal love—as much precious and great as the more typically masculine qualities? Can a man ever manifest the all-suffering patience and love that a woman brings to the difficult task of rearing a child or running a household? If women began to imitate men—as they have begun, especially in some of the super-industrial societies—the social and psychological harmony of humanity will be completely disrupted.

⁴ Raymond Aron, 'The Social Order—The Promethean Dream: Society in Search of Itself', *Britannica Perspectives*, Vol. II (William Benton, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., Chicago, U.S.A., 1968), pp. 76-7, 86

Swami Vivekananda once recalled meeting an American woman whose husband was a confirmed alcoholic, and who had complained to Swamiji about her problem. With his characteristic insight into human nature, Swamiji replied, 'Madam, if there were twenty millions of wives like yourself, all husbands would become drunkards.' Man leans as much on woman for support in facing the hardships and hostilities of life, as does woman on man. Through her typically womanly strengths she holds the family together, infuses courage into man, and gives their children a healthy self-confidence. 'It is the patience of woman', rightly observed Sister Nivedita, 'that makes civilizations.' Mother Teresa, a Christian nun, now very well known in India and abroad for her dedicated service among the poor and destitute in this country, made significant remarks on woman's role in society at the 'Ladies Study Group' seminar, Calcutta, last April. She firmly advised all 'emancipated' women to 'go home and make your home a home of peace so that your men may come out encouraged and strong and create a better world for you'.⁶

Marriage in its early stages is based largely on physical and emotional factors. Love then is mainly biological and sentimental, 'skin-deep' only. But in an endur-

⁵ *The Works*, Vol. V (1959), p. 244

⁶ *The Statesman*, Calcutta, dated 21 April 1975 (Speaking at another seminar of the same Study Group, at Kala Mandir, Calcutta, on the 'multi-dimensional personality of woman', Mother Teresa, approached the subject with striking simplicity and profundity. She quoted a young Carmelite nun who, when asked what role she would play in the Church, was reported to have replied: 'I will be the heart, I will love.' That, she said, was precisely the role of woman—'without which she is nothing'. Woman, she emphasized, must play that role in the family and in the world at large, fraught with violence and strife, where the woman's touch was sorely needed.)

ing marriage, genuine love between the partners can be a later discovery and development: the reward of many sacrifices. Then the dazzle of early physical attraction mellows into a steady glow of mutual respect and love that has an unearthly quality about it. Then there is no question of man being superior to wife, or the other way round. Each grows into the other and their egos blend but do not clash. Physical love can mature into a soul-love, and that seems to be the goal of marriage. Possibly even the feelings of 'he and she' are transcended in such a union of souls. An old Persian poem expresses the idea beautifully: 'Be I the string, the note be thou! Be thou the body, I the life! Let none hereafter say of us that one was I and another thou.'

Woman as mother has even a greater role to play, as on her depends the propagation of the human race and the rearing up of healthy individuals. In this noble aspect of her life, she stands even higher than man. To seek 'equality' with man in this area and to resent the role that nature has assigned her in the evolutionary scheme, would not only stunt her own development but also deprive the coming generation of happy healthy personalities. There is a lot of glib talk by the 'liberationists' about woman's 'enslavement' to 'child-bearing' and 'housekeeping'. But fortunately for humanity, vast segments of their sisterhood do not consider it 'slavery' to bear children or 'drudgery' to run the household. For in these functions women are in tune with the role assigned to them by nature—by the imperious command of instinct mediated by nervous system and endocrine glands. Seeking equality with the male of the species in these respects is a sign of wilful blindness to obvious facts. In this regard, and stressing the profound physiological differences between men and women, Nobel laureate Dr. Alexis Carrel

observed:

'Ignorance of these fundamental facts has led promoters of feminism to believe that both sexes should have the same education, same powers, and the same responsibilities. In reality, woman differs profoundly from man. Every one of the cells of her body bears the mark of her sex. The same is true of her organs and, above all, of her nervous system. Physiological laws are as inexorable as those of the sidereal world. They cannot be replaced by human wishes. We are obliged to accept them just as they are. Women should develop their attitudes in accordance with their own nature, without trying to imitate the males. Their part in the progress of civilization is higher than that of man. They should not abandon their specific functions.'⁷

Just as motherhood fulfils a woman, so maternal love insures the building up of a healthy ego in the child. Thus mother and child are a symbiotic unit: woman as mother needs the child for her own physical and psychological health as much as the child needs her for a healthy, all-round growth.⁸ Women therefore have a duty and responsibility to future generations of humanity that no man can lay claim to or discharge. Negligence of this duty by woman in the West—and to a relatively small extent in the East—is leading to grave repercussions on society. C. Edward Barker, a theologian and analytical psychotherapist, has some sane thoughts to offer on this serious problem:

'One of the tragedies of this modern science-soaked society with its obsession for technology, is that mothers now tend to think their contribution to the world is something of little account.

⁷ Dr. Alexis Carrel: *Man, The Unknown* (Hamish Hamilton, 90 Great Russell St., London, Nov. 1937), p. 93

⁸ *vide* Donald W. Calhoun: *Social Science in an Age of Change* (Harper & Row, New York, U.S.A., 1971), p. 102

The Women's Liberation movement reflects this. It assumes that motherhood is a temporary affliction imposed on woman which severely interferences with her fight to show herself as good as man. Women are clamant in their demand for so-called sex equality. Alas, such women have no idea that the job of being a mother and of offering a tiny human being her identity, warmth, protective love and tenderness, determines the health, well-being, security, stability and sanity of the coming generation. I have no hesitation in saying that *the future of the human race depends on the quality of its motherhood*. I am quite certain that the foremost reason for the present spate of violence, ugliness, drug addiction, crime and mental illness and the "skin-head" attitude that "looks back in anger" is that mothers have been so metallized by recent events including two world wars, that they have ceased to be the true feminine complement of man, and have become his rival instead. Just as many women under the mechanical pressures of this distorted age have lost their femininity, sensitivity and sensuousness, so they have lost their capacity to fulfil the greatest career in all the world, viz: essential motherhood. Mothers—once they are aware of it—have the key to bring the world back to sanity. A generation of 'good mothering' would make an unbelievable contribution toward producing a civilization that would work for stability and peace.⁹

Not that women should not aspire to become intellectuals, inventors, explorers, executives, politicians, or statesmen. Those who have such aptitudes should get the opportunities, and the efficiency they would bring to such professions, combined with feminine grace and tenderness, will surely profit humanity. The history of human society through the past many centuries as well as this century, affords

numerous such successful instances. But a real sense of fulfilment whether for man or woman, comes from living for a high ideal, from looking upon all duties—irrespective of their nature—as opportunities for greater self-development, and from sacrifice and self-effacement. Betty Friedan, the author of *The Feminine Mystique*, is credited with ushering in the Women's Liberation movement. Based on interviews with educated women, her book is said to have brought into the limelight the discontent and frustration that existed among such women, who had failed to find fulfilment and satisfaction in marriage, children, and home-making, despite the wide-spread belief that these were the most suitable and fulfilling occupations for women. Women, the author opined, needed to fulfil themselves by doing creative work outside the home.¹⁰ There certainly must be some truth in the findings and deductions of Ms. Friedan. But then, such 'discontent and frustration' as was found by her in educated housewives, also exists among educated men working on fulfilling jobs 'outside the home'. Therefore it must be concluded that the roots of such dissatisfaction in modern men and women, lie elsewhere. 'It is alienated or maladjusted man', said sociologist Robert Nisbet, 'who will appear to later historians as the key figure of twentieth century thought.' Not only the alienated or maladjusted man, but *alienated or maladjusted woman* too: that is the other key figure of this century. It can be said without fear of contradiction that contemporary man and woman suffer from spiritual malnutrition and material surfeits, from selfishness and egocentricity. And therein lie the roots of their discontent and frustration. A spiritual ideal, spirit of

⁹ C. Edward Barker: *The Church's Neurosis and Twentieth Century Revelations* (Rider & Company, 3 Fitzroy Square, London W 1, 1975), p. 102

¹⁰ vide Mrs. Shashi Deshpande, 'The Women's Liberation Movement and its Relevance to India', *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (Aug. 1975), p. 320

sacrifice, and self-abnegation are the unfailing remedy for psychologically sick humans. If women, more than even men, adopt and practise these ideals, and staunchly fulfil their duties, humble or exalted, all-round development and world peace are sure to result. Otherwise our present afflicted and ailing society will sink into greater sickness, gloom and desolation—and possibly irretrievably sink.

III

If women are struggling to get liberated, from what bonds do they seek liberation? Supposedly, from the life-style, role, and so-called slavery imposed on them by men. But such liberation should not mean getting bound by a life-style and role prescribed and imposed by liberationists themselves! As Merle S. Goldberg, executive director of National Women's Health Coalition, U.S.A., observed a few months ago:

'They [emancipated U.S. women] can now look forward to being exploited by their sisters, misled by their own publications, manipulated by their self-styled leaders, and cheated by "health collectives". Is this really what it's all about? Is this what they are fighting for?

'The starting point of change can be the admission by U.S. feminists that the new myths have no more validity than the ones they displaced. There is no magic spiritual bond that unites all women in a crusade for justice. Sisterhood is beautiful, but it's no substitute for authentic personhood. Any group that encourages its members to put blind group loyalty above personal integrity is repressive, and repression is supposedly what feminists are rejecting.'¹¹

As for bondage, men are as much bound as women. 'Authentic personhood'

—'person' meaning 'the actual self or individual personality of a human being'—spoken of by Merle Goldberg can never be attained as long as one thinks that one is the body with sex and other distinctions. It is only identification with the spiritual self in each of us—the Self which is beyond all distinctions of nation, race, or sex—that confers real or authentic personhood—and true liberation. Says the Upaniṣad:

'Endowed with *guṇas*, the individual soul (*jīva*) performs action, seeking its fruit; and again, it reaps the fruit of what it has done. Assuming all forms and led by the three *guṇas*, the *jīva*, ruler of the vital functions, roams about [transmigrates].

'Of the size of a thumb, but brilliant, like the sun, the *jīva* possesses both volition and egoism. It is endowed both with the qualities of intelligence and *Ātman*...

'Know the embodied soul to be a part of the hundredth part of the point of a hair divided a hundred times [that is to say, extremely subtle]; and yet it is infinite.

'It is not female, it is not male, nor is it neuter. Whatever body it takes, with that it becomes united...

'Those who know Him who can be realized by the pure heart, who is called incorporeal, who is the cause of creation and destruction, who is all good and the creator of the parts—those who know the luminous Lord are freed from embodiment.'¹²

The liberation of the spiritual self in human beings from false identification with body, mind, and ego, and from the need to be reborn after death, is the real liberation of an individual—man, woman or child. The attainment of this sublime goal is a gradual process, and everyone will have to begin the journey from where he or she stands. That we feel we are men or women is no doubt due to a form of 'conditioning'. But it is not entirely

¹¹ Merle S. Goldberg, 'International Women's Year: Fact and Fantasy', *Saturday Review*, New York, Vol. 2, No. 19 (June 14, 1975)

¹² *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad* V. 7-10, 14

due to mere social conditioning, as the Women's Liberationists claim. There is something still deeper and more universal than the social factor. It is nature; nay, more, the 'mother' of all nature, namely, a veil of ignorance covering the immortal, infinite, blissful character of the Self or Ātman. If this veil is to be removed it must be through a spiritual 'reconditioning': through knowing and realizing our essential infinite reality.

In the attempt to outgrow our physical and physiological bondage, we have to take the aid of this very bondage. Man or woman has to accept his or her role in society and fulfil it without resentment, egocentricity or remorse. When there is a sincere attempt to move towards the spiri-

tual goal, human life at the fundamental level of family or home becomes harmonious, balanced, and prosperous. When the home becomes thus a haven—microscopic though it seem—of peace, prosperity and equality, then the 'macroscopic' global society stands a fair chance of achieving these goals. The role that women can and ought to play, along with their men, in this great venture of self-fulfilment and global peace and prosperity cannot be exaggerated or over-emphasized.

The I. W. Y. is a supreme God-given opportunity to make a determined beginning in this direction; then the crowning of this effort with success will depend on unremitting and concerted toil in coming years.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

The R. K. M. Home of Service
Luxa, Benares City
The 29th April/1920

My dear Doctor,

....

You will be very sorry to learn that Swami Adbhutananda, our Lattoo [Latu] Maharaj is now no more. He breathed his last on last Saturday at ten minutes after twelve in the morning. His expiration was a wonderful thing, and I cannot describe to you the beauty of his face after he gave up his body. It was so serene, so affectionate, and full of light and cheerfulness, as if the result of his lifelong Sadhanas stood revealed at that moment. He began to remain in meditation from the very beginning of his illness, and continued to be in that quiet state to the end, till he expired. Whoever saw him then was struck with admiration and had to exclaim, 'How grand it is to be a real Sadhu [holy man, monk], and to quit the world in the way he did!' Indeed his life was an exemplary one, and thrice blessed. Blessed be the Lord, whose heavenly influence made us realize the spiritual truth expressed so vividly in the life of this saint, a most devoted and dear servant of Sri Ramakrishna. After the observances of the timely rites that were required to be performed, we took his body to Manikarnika,¹ decorated with flower garlands and other

¹ The famous cremation-ground and bathing-ghat in Benares, on the bank of the Ganga.

holy things, to be immersed in the sacred water of the Mother Ganges for Jala-Samadhi.² Now we are going to make the last ceremonial by feeding the Sadhus and the poor Narayanas [poor and destitute people considered as forms of God] on the thirteenth day of his ascension, at the Advaita Ashram here. We have lost a great soul, a spiritual giant, in the person of Lattoo Maharaj. The Lord be blessed.

Others of both the Ashrams here are doing tolerably well.

Trusting you are well and prosperous, with my best wishes and love to you and to dear Delicia as ever,

Yours in the Mother

TURIYANANDA

The R. K. M. Home of Service
Luxa, Benares City, U.P.
The 10th August/1920

My dear Doctor,

I am in receipt of your kind letter of the 3rd August after quite a long time. It was my thought-force perhaps, that made you write this letter. For I have been thinking of you so very much of late....

Holy Mother has left us all but she won't be able to leave the hearts of her devotees. There she will abide for ever, and continue to bless us all for all time to come.

My health is not satisfactory. I suffer from terrible pains in my legs and I am not free from other complaints arising from diabetes. But what could be done? I must bear them patiently to avoid further disturbances that may result from restlessness and useless anxieties....

Trusting this will find you well and prosperous, with my best wishes and love to you all,

Yours in the Lord

TURIYANANDA

Benares City
The 21st March/1922

My dear Doctor,

....

You want to see the Lord in everything. Why then do you not begin to see the Lord in everything even from now? *Just try and you shall succeed.* If you don't try even from this moment you shall never be able to see Him in everything at any time. *You must do it and nobody else shall do it for you.*

²lit., burial in water. The usual practice in North India for the disposal of the body of a dead monk is to sink it, tied to a heavy weight, in a holy river like the Ganga. —Ed.

Therefore go on seeing Him that way, and practice will make you perfect. Whole-hearted sincerity—that is what we need most.

I see you are sorry, for your wretched habit of suspiciousness is still lingering in you. If you don't like to have it really, then don't give vent to it any more. What is habit but the repetition of a thing over and over again? Don't indulge in repeating 'suspecting' things and you will be free from the habit of suspecting others. Here also you yourself will have to work it out, and nobody else would [will] do it for you.

My best wishes and love to Swamis and Brahmacharins there.

With my best wishes and love to you as ever...

Yours in the Lord

TURIYANANDA

AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—IX

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

One evening after *ārati*,¹ Bābā² was lying on a cot in his room and reminiscing:

While at Khetri I wrote a letter to Swamiji [Vivekananda] in America. I started writing the letter at 9 p.m., and concluded it when the eastern sky was lighting up. In plain language I wrote to him all that I had understood about the condition of the country and what I could do. Furthermore I wanted to know what I had to do.

I began to count the days in expectation of a reply and thought of many things that Swamiji might write. If he were to write: 'You are a sannyāsin. Why bother your head with mundane problems? Remain satisfied with your scriptures, spiritual practices, and travels', I would have left India, crossed the Himalayas again, and gone to Central Asia for which I had started once before, but from which I had been called back by Swamiji himself. He had asked me to come back to accompany him in

his Himalayan wanderings, because I was by then familiar with those mountain regions.

I was thus eagerly waiting for the reply, which reached me at last. This letter is partly published. The first perusal convinced me that it was flood-tide there in the ocean [of Swamiji's heart] and I could feel it coming here (showing his own heart). The nature and direction of my life and work were determined then and there. The work was started first at Khetri, then it was carried on here.

When Swamiji would lay stress upon any one idea it would seem that that idea was the only truth. It happened thus many times at the Math [Belur Math]: a casual visitor could hardly understand this. If on some day, talks centred round *sevā-dharma* (religion of service), Swamiji would speak in such a way that it appeared to us that all other paths but this were wrong.

Another day the topic would be knowledge, or meditation. We would then think that this was the only way, and the path of work was of no use. Swamiji would then

¹ Vesper service in the shrine, with waving of lights, etc.

² The name by which Swami Akhandananda was called by devotees and disciples.

appear to us like a Śaṅkara or Buddha, and the entire Math (monastery) would seem to be in meditation, so calm and quiet it would be! And the days he would talk about Rādhā, or the love of the other Gopīs (milkmaids of Brindavan) for Kṛṣṇa—that is, of *bhakti* or devotion, Swamiji would be a different person. He would say: 'Rādhā was not of flesh and blood, Rādhā was the foam on the ocean of love.' Many times I have heard him say this: perhaps he would be walking briskly to and fro and repeating this to himself. Ordinarily, he would stop any talk on Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, and encourage talks on Śiva and the study of Śaṅkara's works.

While saying these words, Bābā sat up straight and began to talk in an inspired mood:

Śiva! Śiva! Śiva!—the Deity of strength and courage; Śiva the terrible, the Conqueror of death, the Conqueror of all desires and passions. Ah! Śiva is the greatest Hero. None compare with Him. He has no fear. Everyone takes refuge in Him. He is the Lord of destruction, to whom all must finally come.

As he was uttering these words slowly and distinctly, his face grew brighter and the soft look in his eyes seemed to sparkle with the half-spoken thought: 'Śiva, Śiva, how beautiful, how calm and yet so strong!' Then he resumed:

One cannot understand Śiva unless one sees the Himalayas. The Himalayas are the image of Śiva. Śiva, Śiva, Śaṅkara! Śiva, Śiva, Śaṅkara! How beautiful is Śiva! The Master showed me the living Śiva. He took me to the temple of Kālī at Dakshin-eswar and said, 'Lo, there lying down is the living Śiva.' Oh, what a wonder I saw that day! What joy and bliss the Master poured into my heart!

Later Swamiji showed me the living Śiva in every creature—*jīve jīve Śiva*—in all that are helpless, poor, suffering, unfed, unclad.

All these are the veritable forms of Nārāyaṇa—God in human form. Swamiji's way of looking at them was quite different from that of others.

Our Master is fed when people are fed. I believe this. I have seen it. Our Master takes His food in millions of mouths. I find greater satisfaction in feeding Him that way. Personally I like this more than offering food in the shrine. He takes His food through all mouths—*brahmārpanam*.³

One summer night at the Alambazar Math, nobody could sleep due to the stifling heat. I took up a big palm leaf fan and began to fan the others and they all soon fell asleep; and I realized that my happiness lay in the happiness of others. Serving others means serving the Master. I fanned them, they slept in peace; and my discomfort was gone. That day I clearly felt myself in others, and others in me.

That night Bābā was on his bed, dictating the 'Reminiscences'. Suddenly he stopped and began to recount various things:

One day we were talking with Sarat Maharaj [Swami Saradananda]. It seemed as if our life had come to an end with the passing away of the Master. Then began our life of austere *sādhana* (spiritual striving), sometimes together, sometimes alone in the Himalayas or in other places of pilgrimage. Then later our work of the Math and Mission started, centring round Swamiji. After the passing away of Swamiji, we really felt that everything had come to an end.

Sarat Maharaj said, 'Our life has really ended with theirs. This (work, etc.) is the outer life; the inner life consists of the Master and Swamiji.' The more we talk of them—that is, the more we reflect on

³ Literally, 'Brahman is the offering.' Here presumably referring to *Bhagavad-gītā*, IV. 24, which begins with these words, and is repeated before meals in Ashramas of the Ramakrishna Order.

their lives—and their relation to our spiritual lives, the better for us, and the greater is the joy and bliss. That is why I am so much set on having these reminiscences written down. I am always thinking of them. This is now my only bliss. Even in my sleep I am not without these thoughts. I think of what should be written next—of why I am not able to recollect the facts in their proper sequence. Sometimes so many things rush into the mind that I am unable to express them properly.

Swamiji once said: 'Whenever I try to think of the past, I feel as if a film were unrolling. Scene after scene follows, some that have been seen, some never seen before, and some perhaps never to be seen at all'. Sasi Maharaj [Swami Ramakrishnananda] used to say: 'Do you know how it happens? It is like the blossoming of a flower. Slowly and silently it comes out. Would you like to hear how memory revives in many others? It comes out like bubbles, as when one steps into a quagmire.'

In Northwestern India (Himalayan region) there is a flat rock, whereon if one sits, they say, past memories are revived. I lay down on it for a long time, but nothing remarkable happened. What is the good of knowing the past? All such recollections will come to a dead end in the mother's womb, where the foetus lies with shrunken limbs amidst other filthy things. We are all born that way. I do not want to be born that way again. What do you say? Does anyone of you want to be born again, and in this way—eh?

Bābā sat up on his bed, folded his hands in salutation, and touching his forehead with joined palms again and again, prayed silently and solemnly.

*

A simple-minded young man had come from Rangoon. In the morning he had come to Bābā for initiation. He was asked to wait in the shrine room until called. It was near-

ing noon and there was no call. So the young man came down ready with fruits and flowers, sweets and garlands.

Bābā was shaving himself at the time. He said to the young man:

It is too late. Go and use all these for self-worship today. Take them one by one, and say, 'I offer it to myself.' (*Ātmane namaḥ*) Self-confidence, self-reverence are of primary importance. Then comes spiritual attainment. The Master used to say: 'One's Chosen Deity is one's own Self. Self-worshipping is really what is needed.' Do you understand? Now what will you do? Take the flowers and offer them at your own feet, put the fruits and sweets into your own mouth, the garland round your own neck. Is this prescription quite according to your expectation? Today there will be self-worship, tomorrow will be the initiation.

Turning to others present there, Bābā said: Really from now on, let us make it a rule for new-comers: they should worship themselves on the day before their initiation. What fun there will be! Why should there be monotony? Let us have new rules and rituals.

Bābā burst into laughter and laughed like a child; the house resounded with it. He was lost as if in his own mystical humour, and then sent one of his attendants to see what the young man was doing. Was he actually doing all that he was asked to do? Had he devoured all the sweets? When told in the affirmative, Bābā remarked, 'The boy is very simple.' Next day he was accepted and initiated; and he became a beloved disciple of Bābā.

*

Just on the day of Mahālaya,⁴ the Devotee received in Calcutta a call from Sargachi,

⁴The new-moon day of Bengali month of Āśvin, considered very sacred by Hindus. This was also the birthday of Swami Akhandananda.

and he responded forthwith. Now he was again at the feet of Swami Akhandananda after an absence of a month or two. The Durgā-pūjā season was approaching, and Bābā wanted many of his 'children' to be near him; and everyone was happy. Nobody suspected at that time that all this augured something else.

As soon as the Devotee got up after prostrating himself, Bābā said:

Early in the morning I was thinking about who will now write down my 'Reminiscences'. You came to my mind! So start from right now. It is your work, as well as mine. Don't talk or listen to anybody talking while you are at the desk. One day Swamiji was reading a newspaper attentively and I was pushing him to draw his attention. Swamiji said to me, 'How many minds have I? Only one!' So, when you do something, do it with the whole mind—no talking, or listening to anybody's talks, then.

The manuscript copies of the 'Reminiscences' were being prepared for the press. Correspondence with the *Basumatī* (a noted Bengali monthly) had been finalized. The Devotee casually asked, 'Why not the *Udbodhan*?'⁵ Bābā replied:

The *Udbodhan* is of course our own magazine; but the *Basumatī* is also ours. Do you know what a great devotee Upen Babu⁶ was? The *Basumatī* was our first journal: the *Udbodhan* came afterwards.

A few mornings later, Bābā began saying:

Do you know what I would like to do now? To go to some solitary place on a mountain or in a forest, and live in a small cottage by the side of a river. Nobody could find me out there. But do you know what they say? They say: 'O, we shall find you out wherever you may go. You are now

the centre of attraction!'

Still, what do I want? In that solitude there, three or four young boys should be with me. They will listen to whatever I say, and will love and serve me silently without any protest. There I shall write down all my reminiscences and travel accounts. I become like a child to those who serve me lovingly. They can handle me as they like: I wholly belong to them.

Bābā began to sing to himself, in a rather indistinct tone, a song that the Master used to sing to one or more disciples when they were alone:

'How shall I open my heart, O friend?
It is forbidden me to speak.

I am about to die, for lack of a kindred
soul.

To understand my misery....'

*

Some days later the Devotee found that the clues to the continuity of the rough manuscript of the 'Reminiscences' had all been lost, and the chapters could not be easily arranged in their proper sequence. When Bābā was told this, he said:

Quite naturally the clues are lost. Don't you see this body? Flesh and bones, fat and marrow have all combined to build up the body. Similarly, where is the beginning and where is the end of this universe? Even those who have come with supreme knowledge (*Brahmajñāna*) as their ideal, have to find out the clue from out of these. It is not an easy affair. So you start and find out the clue.

*

One evening, talks variously centred around subjects such as the behaviour of women, characteristics of God Incarnate as man, knowledge, devotion, *māyā*, and *mukti* (liberation). The first two of these talks were especially noteworthy. Bābā said:

Women enjoy the world more, they suffer also more—suffer from various miseries

⁵ The Bengali magazine of the Ramakrishna Order, founded by Swami Vivekananda.

⁶ Upendranath Mukherji, a noted devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, and founder-publisher of *Basumatī*.

and bereavements; they have more of hatred and jealousy, and more of love and devotion also. Very quickly they can take to spiritual life: for *māyā* is of *Mahāmāyā*. The deluding power seen in women comes really from the Universal Illusion of the Cosmic Mother.

An Incarnation of God has certain characteristics. He is never affected by delusion or bereavement. He leads an ideal life. Though born as a human being, Kṛṣṇa is regarded as the *Pūrṇa-brahman* (Perfect Godhead). Never did he commit a mistake, nor did he repent for any action done.

Kṛṣṇa lived a householder's life—there he is the ideal. One duty of a householder is to entertain a guest coming to his house. The guest must be served according to his wants, and also with the idea that *Nārāyaṇa* (God) is being served. Deputed by the gods in heaven, the sage *Dūrvāsa*—noted for his harsh temper—came to Kṛṣṇa, just to check on how he was observing the duties of a householder, and how much he would do to satisfy a guest. Generally people do not hold the name of *Dūrvāsa* in much regard, because of his violent temper. That should not be so. The sudden rages of *Dūrvāsa* burnt away the sins of many lives. His anger was a form of divine grace.

The sage *Dūrvāsa*, then, came to Śrī Kṛṣṇa at *Dvārakā* and asked, 'How will you serve me?' Smilingly Kṛṣṇa replied: 'According to your wish. Your servant is ready.' *Dūrvāsa* said to him: 'All right, perform the duties of a householder's life along with your wife. You two together will have to serve me, with no help from any third person. You will draw water for me. You will light the fire and cook my food. After that you will do just as I command.' So Kṛṣṇa and *Rukmiṇī* at once started to carry out his wishes, and did everything as directed. When *Dūrvāsa* sat down to take his food, Kṛṣṇa was standing by and *Rukmiṇī* was fanning him. After

the meal the sage demanded that they should massage his feet so that he might sleep a little. After some rest, he wanted to go out in a chariot drawn, not by horses, but by the husband and wife. The two had not yet even eaten, since the sage was not yet satisfied. All others got annoyed, but Kṛṣṇa remained composed and smiling. He unhitched the horses and began with *Rukmiṇī* to draw the chariot. So the chariot went rolling along the street. *Rukmiṇī* became thirsty and Kṛṣṇa began to bleed from bruises. Then *Dūrvāsa* could bear it no more. He stopped the chariot, alighted from it, fell at the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and *Rukmiṇī*, and cried, 'O Lord, now I understand why you are doing so much. This is the life of God Incarnate as man—to shine as a standard, an ideal to the people of the world.'

Rāma killed *Vālī* by mistake, and he lamented for *Sītā*. So, our Master used to say: 'Rāma is a partial incarnation of God—twelve annas (three-fourths) of a rupee—and Śrī Kṛṣṇa is God Himself Incarnate: the full sixteen annas. There is no alloy in it. The ring of this coin is genuine.'

An Incarnation of God has His own time and place. He comes when many people stricken with misery piteously call on Him day and night, and pray with a simple heart: 'O Lord, never shall I do such things again. Bring my miseries to an end. I make an offering of all my karma to you. Appear before me!' Or when, at the time of decay of religion, spiritual men begin praying to God, 'O Lord, come down on earth and re-establish the reign of law', then if the time is ripe, God incarnates as man, to suffer the karma (results of good and bad actions) of man. He has no karma of His own. Why then does He suffer so much from birth to death? Those who desire to love an Incarnation of God, must also be ready to suffer like Him.

JESUS CHRIST AND HIS MESSAGE

SWAMI ASAKTANANDA

Who was Jesus Christ? The Lord? What kind of Lord? A mighty official—a ruler of earthly empire? No, the Lord of the Universe: the Lord of Lords.

If the question were put to Christ himself, what will he say? He has, in fact, given the answer to this question on different occasions differently. He said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' Again, 'I am the door. By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved...' Again in a homely simile, dear to the hearts of those among whom he was born: 'I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.' To those who had the power to understand, he said that he was the Son of God; and to his closest disciples, 'I and my Father are one.'

The next question which comes to mind is: Why should we worship him, just because he says he is the way, the truth, the life, etc.? He is the door to enter in? In this world, human beings are submerged in agony and misery. What is truth? Where is real happiness? We do not know. Truth and untruth, both are mixed together. What truth really is we cannot know. And here is precisely our need for someone who *can* point out the truth, lead us toward it—the highest service that the great Incarnations such as Christ, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Ramakrishna, can give us. All these have in more or less similar words told us that they *know* the Way—if not indeed that they *are* the Way,—and we should follow them. Truly if such as these do not point out the way, show us and lead us toward the goal, how can we hope to find the road to immortal life? Therefore an Incarnation tells us this, shows us, 'There is the door, there is the way: Go!'

Sri Ramakrishna used to say an Incarna-

tion is like a hole in a great wall which is between the finite and the infinite—the relative and the absolute—; through that hole one can glimpse a bit of the infinite. In this sense, we believe, Jesus declares, 'No man cometh to the Father, but by me.'

But where is Jesus now? We hear that he was born long ago, took the human form once upon a time. But how far away it sounds. Yes, he came to earth in the form of a little babe the son of Mary in the house of a carpenter; but where is he today? He is in our heart of hearts: he is within. He is today, even today, in all human beings. It is said that when Śrī Kṛṣṇa was in Brīndāvan playing with the Gopīs (milkmaids), someone asked who was then in the Abode of Heaven. Who was left as the Lord of Heaven? Yes, the Darling of mother Yaśodā (Kṛṣṇa's foster-mother) was in a physical form for the time; yet the Lord, the Spirit, *was* still the Spirit always—pure Consciousness—in the abode of Spirit.

So, the tremendous power that manifested as Jesus is ever existing, eternal: it cannot be that he came from nothing. The Lord Himself comes on earth as an embodiment of knowledge and power, of love and compassion, through his own divine Power (Śakti or Māyā). In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna:

'Though I am unborn and eternal by nature, and though I am the Lord of all beings, yet, subjugating My Prakṛti, I accept birth through My own māyā.

'Whenever there is a decline of dharma (virtue), O Bharata, and a rise of adharma (immorality), I incarnate Myself. 'For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of dharma, I am born in every age.'

Now, what was the condition of the so-

ciety into which Jesus was born? Stagnant: 'religion' was just a word of mouth, while in practice it was all ritual, 'sacrifices', leading to group-rivalries, quarrelling priests, and even downright immorality and irreligion. What a terrible *fall* from the wonderful ideals and practice of the forefathers and their prophets! Yet, as Swami Vivekananda shows in his lecture 'Christ the Messenger', had there not been this great fall, the gigantic rise—the spiritual wave in the form of Christianity, with Jesus on its crest, could not have arisen. Thus it is just such great 'falls', in morality, in religion, in society, which demand, and actually bring in, that tremendous power of God in man's form.

The inconceivable spiritual force which then became embodied in Jesus has already taken almost 2,000 years to expand, to reveal itself; and yet we know not how much more is still to come!

The next question that comes to mind is, where do these Incarnations take birth? Clearly, they themselves choose the time and place, even the family, into which they will come—even the disciples and associates who are to come to them.

Yet the Incarnation stands out above even these holy surroundings. Jesus, though born in the home of a carpenter, was no mere carpenter. He was not just a goody-goody young man, a meek craftsman. He was no other than God Himself, infinitely powerful. He was absolute: he was the eternal word made flesh. It is easy for a Hindu to appreciate these ideas—the phenomenon of Incarnation. But many Christians don't understand it. Jesus says: 'Ye are born from beneath; I am from above. Ye are of this world; I am not of this world.' What does this mean? That he is not bound by the ignorance, the delusion, the worldliness with which we are bound. Similarly Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in the *Gītā*, says: Though I am the birthless, the deathless Lord of all, I seem to be born. It is only seeming, only My

māyā. I am still master of My Prakṛti, the power that makes My body, My form. Just see: it denies all logic—the birthless, deathless Lord taking 'birth', which means bondage for all. And still the Master of Nature, of the Power that made 'nim'!

But as we have said, he obviously chooses his time and place; and this time the Lord chose the house of a carpenter, of Joseph and Mary. Pure, simple souls, both of them. We are again reminded of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna in the home of the holy Khudiram and Chandramani, who like Jesus' parents had also had visions indicating a divine child's advent. And his childhood, like Jesus', was marked by tremendous power of thought, observation, memory. When the pundits got entangled in long arguments, he would solve their question by a few simple words! Though we know so little of these years of Jesus, still Luke tells us that at age twelve Jesus was 'sitting in the midst of the doctors (that is, teachers) both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers.' And when on this occasion his parents—who had left Jerusalem thinking him to be in the friendly group of pilgrims, and having to return a day's journey when he was missed—chided him for 'his absence, his answer was priceless: 'Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's 'business?' At so young an age, he was already not only brilliant in intellect, but fully aware of who he was—and who his Father was!

Yes, where else should that boy be? He had to be at his Father's place. His true home of course is the heart of man, the fittest temple of God—the temple of the purified heart of the devotee.

In his early manhood Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. After that his heart was full. He felt filled with the spirit of God as never before. 'The heavens were opened unto him' as Matthew tells us, 'and

he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." He saw with a new clearness what God wanted his life to be—the great role he was to play in the drama of redemption.

We read then that he went into the wilderness, led on by the Spirit of God, and fasted forty days, practising great austerities and meditating on the mysteries of life and death, the temptations and delusions of the world. At the end he was thrice tempted by Satan: urging him to perform various miracles, promising immense rewards—all of which he spurned saying, 'Get thee hence, Satan...' Then, as we believe, the last shreds of the covering of *māyā* were lifted up and he clearly perceived that the Son and the Father were one. Although the Incarnations have that knowledge all the time, still it seems they keep it covered with a veil, in order to see things and be 'tempted in all manners even as we are...'. That is why they have to practise all these disciplines and harsh austerities, till at last the proclamation comes to inspire us struggling mortals—in Jesus' words, 'I and my Father are one.'

Now I will again dwell, at a little more length, on the links between Jesus and Sri Ramakrishna. These are very interesting to us and to me particularly. Sri Ramakrishna, as you know, practised all the Hindu disciplines of the Tantras, of the Vaiṣṇava scriptures and the Vedas, he also practised Islam and found God through each of these different paths. Then in 1874, he began listening to the Bible. He did not know English, but someone read it in translation to him. After this he began to practise the disciplines of Christianity. Once while he was looking at a painting of the Madonna and Child, suddenly that whole picture became living to him and he went into deep ecstasy. He saw in this state a

church with devotees lighting candles, burning incense; and their faces were white. The devotees, it seems, were all of the western world.

Under this spell he spent three days. On the fourth, he saw a person of serene countenance approaching him slowly and smiling beautifully; and a voice from the depths of his soul rang out, 'Behold the Christ, who shed His heart's blood for the redemption of the world....' Then the Son of Man embraced the Son of the Divine Mother and entered into his body. Ever after, Sri Ramakrishna was convinced of Christ's divinity. He repeatedly declared that it is the same spirit which manifests itself as all these great world-teachers or Incarnations.

Again, after the passing of Sri Ramakrishna occurred a second notable event. In December of 1886, most of the young men who became his monastic disciples visited Swami Premananda's village home. One cold night they had lighted a big fire and around it were meditating, chanting the Lord's name, and talking of renunciation. Then Narendra (Swami Vivekananda) began to tell the story of the Lord Jesus, from the wonder of his birth to the supreme sacrifice of his death and the glorious resurrection. Narendra stirringly showed how as future monks they must follow Christ's example—sacrifice everything for the realization of God and the service, the redemption, of mankind. So greatly were they all moved by these thoughts that they then and there took the high vows of *sannyāsa*, in a mood of intense exaltation. That very night the Ramakrishna Order virtually came into being.

And early next morning they found out that that had been the night of Christmas Eve. Thus we all have another strong bond with Christianity and Christ.

Perhaps by now we have glimpsed a little of who Jesus was. Then what was his message? I would say his life was his mes-

sage. If one does not act according to one's own words, who is going to follow him? So what Jesus preached, he himself practised, and his life was that practice. Very practical he was. For we know, as he said, that a tree is known by its fruits. So also is the truth known by its fruits. Then again, for myself, I also judge things by my own understanding and comprehension: hence what I say about his personality and teaching must be coloured by my own thinking. But for me at least, the charm of the life of Jesus lies in three things.

First, he was primarily a man of renunciation, a true sannyāsin. Second, he was an embodiment of love and compassion. And third, he was a great exemplar of self-sacrifice. Let us consider first his renunciation. Truly he said, 'The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay his head.' No me or mine. No home even—what to speak of family ties or any such bondages of this world. No physical ideas, no sex ideas, nothing to hold him at all to this world. Himself an unfettered spirit, he saw everyone, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, saint or sinner, as the embodiment of this same spirit. Did he not declare, 'The kingdom of God is within you'—within every one of us?

Every man is a form of the Supreme Spirit. In every man there is a heaven. Jesus, at various times and to varying degrees of aspirants, says: 'I and my Father are one. I am in my Father. Ye are in me and I in you.' These are the greatest truths. Here I find no difference between the teachings of Jesus and those of Vedānta. His most profound idea was—renounce the world and realize God.

Once a rich young man came to him and said, 'Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And Jesus answered, 'One thing thou lackest, Go thy way and sell whatever thou hast and give

to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come and follow me.' Now if this saying of Jesus were directed to us, what would we do? We would say: I have to wait a bit, I have to do this, I have to do that, and so on. In this world of turmoil there will always be these waves of 'duty' rolling on—sometimes seven feet high, sometimes two feet, that is all the difference. If you think, 'I shall take a dip in the ocean when all the waves are calmed, all the water still', you will never be able to take the dip.

The idea is, we have to give up; we have to surrender all of the body, the mind, and everything to the Lord. As Jesus says, 'Whoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.'

Again, in Christ's personality, we find him the embodiment of love and compassion. He had unbounded love for humanity, particularly for those suffering the most. He preached nothing but love. When asked for the greatest Commandment he said: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind"... And the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Nay, he goes even further: "It hath been said by them of old time, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." But I say unto you, "Love your enemies,

bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you..."

So, if we really love the Lord our God with all our heart, and express love in all our dealings, what then will happen? We shall simply have to see God in all beings—for where is it that He is not? Surely He manifests best in human beings. So how can we help loving our neighbours? And without loving Him, real love for neighbours is impossible, what to speak of enemies! If we love Him with all our heart, we at once begin to love the Lord the neigh-

bour, the Lord the enemy. Because He is all: He is manifested everywhere.

Thirdly in Christ's life we are charmed by his utter self-sacrifice. Of course, it becomes clear that this is inseparably connected with his renunciation and his love and compassion. Where there is no sacrifice there is no love; and what means 'renunciation' without love? Really there is but one idea in morality and that is unselfishness. It is the foundation of all morality and ethics; and spiritual life demands complete self-surrender to God, complete self-giving to fellow-men. Jesus' demands here are stern: if a man is struck on his right cheek he should turn the left also. How many of us can do that? And if one carries away your coat, give him your cloak also. Are we ready for this? Yet these are his clear teachings. Not that he spoke only; you all know that he lived the life. He practised all this himself; he sacrificed himself completely. His life was his message to the world, a living example of self-sacrifice. If we cannot follow him, it is our fault, not that of the ideal man that he was!

But studying further the message of Jesus, we find that, like himself, this message is eternal. It is essentially the message which the great Incarnations have preached to mankind down through the ages. For thousands of years, people have gone down and down spiritually, and for thousands of years God has manifested Himself and brought us the same basic teachings in different languages with different stresses. Jesus of Nazareth says: 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' 'Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect.'

Now, each man is essentially perfect. The spirit, the essence, within man, is always perfect. Perfection is the very nature of the soul, the Ātman: this is the Christ in every man, sleeping as it were. What we have to do is to cleanse the

spirit: then It is there! The Upanishads say, 'Ye are the children of Immortal Bliss.' The Old Testament says, 'Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.' And Christ himself repeats, as John tells us, 'Ye are gods.' Sri Ramakrishna once said, 'The Lord is dwelling in the heart of all, but not everyone dwells in him.' But every one of us ultimately will have to dwell in Him, and then we shall know that we are free.

It is the Lord who comes to show the human being the way, to lead him toward Himself, and He leads him by giving His whole life. Every drop of His blood is given, in order to bring in peace and tranquillity, and the vision of God to us humans. It is the Lord who comes in the form of an Incarnation. Jesus says: 'Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake.'

Then comes the question, 'How shall we find the Kingdom of God?' Again Jesus' message is crystal-clear: as given by St. Luke, 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, "Lo here!" or "Lo there!" for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.' And as for the ways and means to reach it: 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened...'

But what of his miracles? You know that his glory lies in his spiritual message and teachings, not in healing the sick or blind or lame. Jesus never came just for that: he had a far greater purpose. Tremendous emphasis has of course been placed, even by great souls, on his powers

of healing and curing. But as Swami Vivekananda said, 'If Christianity would avoid preaching.....so much of Jesus' miraculous powers, Christianity would have taken over the entire world in no time.' If the Goal is within, all such externals can at best be incidentals.

And for us, the teachings of Christ—the way and the means—have been wonderfully summed up in his Sermon on the Mount. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Poor in spirit means, endowed with humility: a seeker of God must be humble, ready to serve all. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' True meekness is self-surrender to God—to be free entirely from the ego, the sense of me and mine. Family, possessions, everything belongs to God. To be perfectly unselfish, one must practise—practise and practise day in and day out. Every moment something comes up and we at once fill up with egoism. Always surrender self. Always depend on the will of the Lord. As Swami Vivekananda said, 'Unselfishness is God.' Why is unselfishness God? Because when a man is perfectly unselfish, his heart becomes so pure that the whole of it is nothing but the Lord Himself—the man within dies and God alone remains. He shines in his own glory. Then comes the highest promise: 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' The *pure* heart is nothing but the Self, the Ātman the self-effulgent Being always in the heart, but now covered. Purification of the heart is simply the removing of that covering: clearing away its dust and dirt. As soon as this is done the truth flashes of itself—the Lord is seen. All the spiritual disciplines are actually for purifying the heart.

The Lord is to be loved. He makes us His own when we love nothing, possess nothing but Him, who is Purity itself. Jesus says '...her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loveth much.'

All great Incarnations of God, whatever they say or teach, do it from a direct experience of truth. It is not just book learning. They come into the world to show the light—which they always *see*—to mankind and lead all to the abode of peace and bliss and immortality. As Jesus says, 'The Father who sent me has given me commandment to speak and I know that his commandment is eternal life.' 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

So, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*: 'Fix your heart on Me, give your love to Me, worship Me, bow down before Me; so shall you come to Me. This is My pledge to you, for you are dear to Me. Abandon all dharmas and come to Me alone for shelter. I will deliver you from all sins; do not grieve.' In our own times, Sri Ramakrishna beautifully said: 'I am the sanctuary. Take refuge in me.' The same eternal ultimate Godhead speaks to different persons through different Incarnations in different words.

Among these words of Jesus, one often impresses itself on me when I see the Christmas trees being lighted up, the houses all lighted—how often Jesus used this word, 'light'. 'I am the light of the world', he says; 'he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.' Again, 'He who walks in darkness does not know where he goes.' 'While you have the light, believe in the light, that ye may become the sons of Light.' And turning to us: 'Ye are the light of the world... Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'

You know this story about Kṛṣṇa? Once he suddenly left Brindavan; and all the Gopīs, the milkmaids, friends and beloved

of Kṛṣṇa, at once saw nothing but darkness, because Kṛṣṇa was gone and they could not find him. Some thought he had been drowned in the river Jamuna. One of them was sent to Mathura, ten miles away, to seek him. She did find him there, and prayed that he come back to Brindavan. But he wouldn't say he would come: all he would say was, 'Keep your light burning.' What is that light? It is nothing but the Lord Himself. And where? In the heart of man. Keep that light burning, keep the thought or recollectedness of God all the time. Thus Kṛṣṇa implies: 'Do not forget Me, but keep the memory of Me all the time. Think of Me.' And so Jesus so often said, 'I have come as a light into this world.' But that same Light was also Lord Kṛṣṇa and the other Incarnations of God. Let it not be covered with any cloud, any darkness. For the 'darkness' to which they so often refer is simply ignorance, the evil of 'I and mine', from which inevitably follow our bondages and resulting miseries. The moment we cover the Light—even veil the Light—with any the least thing else, that moment 'I and mine' arise instead of 'Thee and Thine'. Then the Lord must remain far off. Otherwise He is the nearest of the near, our very own, the Soul of our souls.

In Jesus this Light flowed out pre-eminently as compassion. His love and compassion were so great that even a single spark can illumine the entire life of a human being. In order to become sons of light, to dispel all the darkness of ignorance from our heart, to quench its thirst forever, let us pray to that omniscient Lord manifested as Christ: 'Oh Lord, be merciful to us. Make our minds calm and tranquil, make our hearts pure; let them blossom fully in the rays of Thy divine love so that we may be blessed by offering our hearts at Thy lotus feet. Oh Lord, make us Thine by Thine own grace.'

At Christmas time we offer gifts to many people, we receive gifts from many. What is the meaning of this? Does it not symbolize self-sacrifice? All the time through my ignorance, in my darkness, I have constricted myself in my own heart; and when I give anything to anyone, I have not only given a something, but have given a bit of my heart along with that. I begin to open my heart which had been all the while constricted. In other words, by giving we symbolize the beginnings of our self-sacrifice. Give and give! To whom do we give? To the Lord—the Lord in all beings, to the Christ in all persons, to the light always burning in the heart of man. When to *that* you are giving, out of your own light, you are truly giving. The heart is clearing up of itself. The dark clouds are lifting because the spark of light from your own heart is strengthening the spark, the same light, in the hearts of others.

That is the meaning of this giving: we open out our hearts. The Lord is merciful; there is nothing to fear in this world. Why should we fear when the Lord is our own? He is our most beloved. And we shall have to make Him our own even more intimately than our fathers, mothers, children, our dearest ones. He is the innermost in us all. He is the dearest one of all, and so we have nothing to fear. Try to meditate, to think of that infinite being—Jesus Christ or any other divine form—constantly. Let the heart be wide open, and the light manifest more and more.

As Jesus said, 'Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.'

God is always wanting to give us the Kingdom. We have nothing to fear. It belongs to us. Are we ready to receive that Kingdom? Ask this of yourself repeatedly on this day, and let us all become fit for that highest blessing.

SRI SARADA DEVI: MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

SWAMI SARADESHANANDA

In the mass of books published, describing the life and doings of the most revered Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi a rare and most charming panorama of her wonderful human play is available to all. Yet it appears to me that it has not been possible to adequately reveal the sweetness of her character—especially as ‘mother and daughter in one personality’—, although in these descriptions, occasional glimpses of it, like lightning flashes, can here and there be seen.

All, perhaps have read or heard about the childlike Paramahansa-state of Sri Ramakrishna, even up to details such as his walking about naked like a child with wearing-cloth under his arm. But surely, to behold with these ordinary eyes the sight of this extremely bashful maiden—high-born, hardly seen by the sun, the beloved daughter-in-law of the blessed Chandramani Devi¹—was possible for only a tiny minority, as result of great merit or by her grace. Even the treasurer (cashier) of the Kali Temple² at Dakshineswar, remarked about her, ‘Yes, I hear she stays here, but I have never seen her.’

Once at Jayrambati, sitting in the veranda of the drawing room of Uncle Kali (a brother of the Holy Mother), Sri Biswanath Banerjee, a lawyer from Ghatal (Midnapore District) and a respected disciple of the Holy Mother, told us with tears in his eyes and words sometimes catching in his throat:

‘Soon after Sri Ramakrishna’s *māha-*

samādhi (death) I became acquainted with his disciples, used to visit them at Baranagar and later at Alambazar, and received their love and affection. By their special grace I went to see and pay my respects to the Holy Mother [in Calcutta]. But it was not in my good fortune then to see anything but the toe-nails of the Mother, who seemed always covered almost completely. But once when I went with the Swamis to the Howrah Station to see her off for going to Kamarpukur and Jayrambati, the train’s departure was delayed and the Mother sat in the waiting room and worshipped Sri Ramakrishna. Then accidentally the door of that waiting room got opened slightly, and I was charmed to see the figure of the Mother, seated like a little girl for worship.

‘On another occasion I had gone to Kamarpukur with the Swamis. The Holy Mother too was then present there. Sitting in the veranda of the house one day we were all taking our food. Girish Chandra Ghosh, the great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, was also with us. Through the gap between the half-closed doors the Mother, seated, was watching her children eating. We were all happily engaged in a lot of small talk, when suddenly my gaze was drawn inside the room. I was sitting just in front of the doors. Seeing the figure of the Holy Mother, I was amazed and thrilled, and forgetting the food, remained gazing in that direction. Then suddenly I heard the loud voice of Girish Babu: “Do you see that—what this Brahmin is doing? Where is he staring?” I regained my consciousness, as it were, and hung my head. I couldn’t again look up in that direction. But, brother, that image of the Mother, the embodiment of

¹ Mother of Sri Ramakrishna, here referred to as *ratnagarbhā*, ‘who bore that “jewel”, Sri Ramakrishna’.

² Where the Holy Mother had lived many years.

love, became imprinted in my heart for all time.

'But now, a long time after that, getting the Mother here in our midst, talking with her, eating the *prasāda* (consecrated food) from her hands, and drinking in her love and affection, now my heart is consoled and is brimful. At Jayrambati alone have I felt the Holy Mother to be my own mother.'

Memories of my own childhood days come back to mind. I once went with my mother by a country-boat to my maternal uncle's house. As she was getting off the boat and entering that house, my mother removed her veil, and with head uncovered and full-throated voice she began to converse with all. I just started gazing at her face in consternation. At home, even indoors, I had always seen her set right her veil even if it were slightly moved to one side. And her talking—her voice so low that it was almost inaudible. If for any reason she went to a neighbour's house, the veil was sure to come down over her breast. Besides, there used always to be a companion with her. And there again, her voice could hardly be heard—if she were to talk with anyone she would whisper softly into the ears. Therefore I became speechless at this new scene, and kept staring into her face. And whenever I got my chance, I pulled down her veil and covered her head. My aunties would burst into laughter at this, and my mother would also laugh and, hugging me to her bosom would say, 'He is from my father-in-law's, and so cannot bear to see me without the veil!' In fact, without the veil she seemed rather peculiar to me—I felt that mother was now like a little girl. But after this I noticed that my elder sister too, as soon as she came back home from her in-laws, would discard the veil, wander about in the village, and freely talk with all—she was as free and bold with the

neighbours and others as were we and our brothers. Then gradually I understood that in their own fathers' houses, girls are not daughters-in-law but *daughters*—the feeling of girlhood will always prevail in them there.

The beloved daughter Sarada—endearingly called 'Saru' or 'Sari'—of Syamasundari (the mother of this jewel), liked always to live thus in her father's house at Jayrambati as a daughter. Therefore her devotee-children, coming to their uncles' house³ and witnessing the charming and free behaviour of the Mother, like a little girl, used to become amazed and entranced! Think what diverse *līlās* (sports) of the Divine Mother—in whose vast belly rests the whole universe—humanity has witnessed! This time the simple village girl has filled the cottage of a poor man with the liquid luminous moonlight of her love. Whoso comes to that house—rich or poor, learned or ignorant, young or old, woman or man—one and all are flooded and filled and begin to wonder: Who is this in the form of a girl—a Goddess or a woman? Mother or Daughter?

A Mother is she surely, by the nectar of whose love the heart is fully satisfied. And she is a daughter *towards whom* runs the current of love from a vibrating heart. But at Jayrambati in the depths of the senior devotees' hearts flowed the flood and ebb-tides of both these feelings. O Mother of the Universe! O Mother! In this oasis in the cruel harsh desert of the world, if You do not keep perennially flowing the Ganga-stream of love through human hearts, then this dear playground of Yours will dry up and wither away. Therefore, O Mother, I see that you have Yourself come as 'Mother' as well as 'Daughter'!



³The Holy Mother lived, at Jayrambati, with her brothers in their ancestral house. The devotees would consider those brothers as 'uncles'.

O Playful Mother, You conduct the sport which is ever new! May the abode of the beginningless play be indestructible!

In the diary of Srimati,⁴ who was blessed by obtaining the boundless love and grace of the Holy Mother, is recorded an absorbing description of the Mother's first visit to her (Srimati's) sister's house:

The Holy Mother went to their beautiful and well-decorated house and, by accepting with great satisfaction the service and hospitality—modest though it was—of the residents thereof, made them highly pleased and their life blessed. Seeing the various beautiful flowers in their garden, the Mother's mind became very cheerful. And after having seen and heard everything, she expressed great joy just like a little girl. That day the adored Deity of the devoted husband and wife, out of boundless compassion towards them, was pleased to be served and worshipped as a small girl. Illumining their home and hearts, She had caused the flow of a Ganga-stream of love and affection. Surely their scorched hearts were cooled, and the purpose of their lives was fulfilled. Furthermore, when we read that description, our thirsty souls sang in the voice of Menakā,⁵ 'Gaurī,⁶ my darling, has come!' In later editions of the *Māyer Kathā*, however, a portion of the description of that rare childlike mood has been omitted.

From the time of the birth centenary celebration of the Holy Mother, the inner attraction towards her on the part of the people in general, has been growing day by day. Seeing the rising swell of extraordinary devotion to her, finding expression in books, pictures, music and drama, it

seems to me that the mode of worship of God as Mother—taught by Sri Ramakrishna as most suitable to this age—is now becoming known to humanity. Nor can it longer remain unknown that for this purpose the Universal Mother's compassion has been fully revealed through beauty and sweetness: Tripura-sundarī⁷ appearing in the form of Sri Sarada Devī, who is Lalitā-Sodaśī.⁸ And those who have been able to discover their Mother and/or Daughter in the Holy Mother, they having alleviated their own hearts' thirst are still eager to drink more and more themselves and share with others this nectar of love and affection. Moreover they are restless to lay their own hearts as devoted offerings at those delicate feet. Therefore I feel now, O Mother, that this prattling of your restless child will not cause annoyance to you. The declaration of Sri Ramakrishna that worshipping God as Mother is the last word in *sādhana* (spiritual striving)—about this the denizens of this world want to know more and more.

How difficult a task it was in those early days for devotees living at a distance, to come to the Mother's house! Therefore once at Jayrambati, Revered Yogen-Ma⁹ said to Rev. Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda), 'Dear sir, coming to this place is for most people more difficult than going to Gaya or Kasi (Benares)!' But Sarat Maharaj at once replied gravely, 'Is this any lesser *tīrtha* (place of pilgrimage) than Gaya or Kasi?' Devotees coming from

⁶ *lit.* 'golden-hued'—a name of the Divine Mother.

⁷ A name of the Divine Mother (Consort of Śiva).

⁸ Lalitā, the Divine Mother Durga in specially graceful aspect; Sodaśī, *lit.*, sixteen-year-old girl—one of the *Daśamahāvidyās*, the ten great aspects of the Divine Mother.

⁹ Jogindra Mohini Mitra: a woman disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and an intimate companion of the Holy Mother.

⁴ The main and first writer of the book *Śrī-Śrī-Māyer Kathā* ('Talks With the Holy Mother'): Published by Udbodhan Office, 1 Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta 700003.

⁵ Wife of Himālaya (King of the Mountains) and mother of Pārvatī (or Gaurī).

far-off places were restlessly walking along open roads, sometimes even stumbling or falling. Whomever they met on the way they would ask, 'Where is Jayrambati?' 'Where is the Mother's house?' Naturally the villagers used to be surprised at such enquiries, but later on they became accustomed to these. And gradually the words 'Mother's house' and 'Mother's devotee-children' became very familiar to even the common people of that area. Furthermore, coming to know that these devotees were [for the most part] educated, respected, occupying high social position, the regard of the neighbouring people for them began to be roused. Of course one everywhere comes across extremely worldly-minded people, opponents of religion and devotion; and such people will not brook any religious observances or ritual. Again, another class of people, fanatical traditionalists, used to be annoyed on seeing the Holy Mother's long unbound, freely flowing hair, sari with coloured borders, and other forms of disregard of the restrictions on widows—since all these were marks of a married woman. Again and most especially, the renunciation of the householder's life by Sri Kedarnath Datta (latter Swami Keshavananda), president of the Koalpara Ashrama (four miles from Jayrambati) as also the young student devotees who followed him—the hobnobbing together of people from all castes there, and performance of all sorts of works relinquishing caste rules—all these without doubt were greatly stirring up the minds of the local people.

But meanwhile, the activities of the Koalpara Ashrama with the Holy Mother as its centre of inspiration, and her periodic visits to that place, had greatly augmented the zeal of the devotees in general. The services rendered by the workers of that Ashrama, costing them as it did great inconvenience, pain and suffering—and thereby revealing their devotion

and steadfastness—is surely incomparable in this world. They served and cared for the devotees who came from afar, regularly visited the Mother's house, often eating and sleeping there, and having received the Mother's grace, served and tended her with greatest devotion. It appears, indeed, that the Universal Mother Herself, for Her own ends, had created that environment and atmosphere.

For in preceding years, in order to feed, accommodate, and provide various comforts to the devotee-children coming from far, what an amount of anxiety and trouble the Mother had had to undergo! Jayrambati was a tiny little village, and even for money, one was unable to buy anything. There were no shops or stores, and even for ordinary necessities one had to go to a distant village. Once in a while, one might get in small quantities from poor farmer-neighbours, ordinary vegetables or grains grown by them, rice, lentils, *mudi* (puffed rice), molasses, or milk. When the Mother was physically fit, she herself, trying her level best, used to gather whatever was available and run the household; then again, the number of visiting devotee-children was also small. As long as her own mother Syamasundari was fit and strong, so long she too tried her best to feed and accommodate her 'grandchildren-devotees', the 'children of Sarada'. But later on, the number of devotees had grown apace, Syamasundari had died and the Holy Mother begun to age, her body becoming weak: it was exactly at that juncture that the Koalpara Ashrama came into being, serving a great need.

Whenever the Mother was residing at Jayrambati, the workers of the Koalpara Ashrama used to go twice a week to the well-known market at Kotulpur, two miles distant, for purchasing supplies. They would bring back the loads on their own heads to Koalpara, and next morning

carry them on their heads to Jayrambati where, placing those bundles at the Mother's feet, they would prostrate themselves before her. Those who have seen that sight have never been able to forget it. Thinking that if they stayed on for lunch they would be adding to the workload of the Mother's household, they would eat a little *mudī*, lovingly given by her, and talk a little while with her in great joy. Then they would enquire about the next needs of the Mother's household, and, taking her loving blessings and the dust of her feet on their heads, go back another four miles with their hearts filled and minds gladdened. There at Koalpara they would eat their lunch. If there was any special need, they would have to return to Jayrambati the next day! All this strain and trouble, the hard work involved, the austerity of a poor Ashrama's food and clothing—none of these could subdue their irrepressible zeal and spirit of service. Why? What nectar-stream had awakened in their souls this superhuman strength? Mother-love untouched by worldliness, the

unbounded love and tenderness of the Mother, was the original fountain of this inspiration. Satisfied and strengthened by that nectar-flow, they had made the impossible possible through their devotion to the Mother. O Mother, he to whom you feed the ambrosia of your love, he who drinks the milk of your love, for him there is nothing impossible. Drinking that nectar, your heroic son Swami Vivekananda became a world-conqueror; Rakhal Raja (Swami Brahmananda, who was lovingly addressed as 'Raja') became an empire-builder; and Swamis Premananda, Sivananda, Saradananda and other great children administered this kingdom ably. They have spread the empire of your love and affection to the farthest corners of the earth: they have brought the people of the earth and put them on your lap.

O Mother, please give me the ability to recount the rare sportive *līlā* of Motherhood that you have shown us, to the many new children who are so eager to hear about it!

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: WILLIAMS

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Soon after November of 1874, Sambhu Charan Mallick had been perhaps the first to read to Sri Ramakrishna from the Bible and to speak to him about Jesus of Nazareth. The life of Jesus was fascinating to Sri Ramakrishna, and his thoughts began to dwell on the personality of the Son of God. One day Sri Ramakrishna was seated in the parlour of Jadu Mallick's garden-house at Dakshineswar, looking intently at a painting of the Madonna and Child [Mary and Jesus], when a divine emotion

seized him and his heart was wholly filled with thoughts of the Christ. Notwithstanding his upbringing in a conservative brāhmaṇa family, his long practice of Hindu disciplines, and his adherence to the prescribed customs and rituals, he now abandoned himself to his ardent love for Jesus and Christianity, which simply crowded out from his mind all the Hindu ways of thinking and living. He spent three days continuously in that mood. At length, on the evening of the third day, he had a vision

of Jesus Christ, who appeared before him, embraced him and became merged in him. This vision convinced him that Jesus, like the Buddha and Śrī Kṛṣṇa among others, was fully a divine Incarnation and that Christianity too was a path which led to God-realization. In his search for more and more ways to reach God, Sri Ramakrishna was turning to the paths of others religions beyond the borders of India; and the experiences he thus gained led him to declare finally:

'I had to practise each religion for a time—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity. Furthermore, I followed the paths of the Saktas, Vaishnavas, and Vedantists. I realized that there is only one God toward whom all are travelling; but the paths are different.'¹

His mission was not to start another religion but to re-emphasize the direct and immediate knowledge of God through any path as the goal of all religions.

To the claim by overzealous devotees that Sri Ramakrishna experienced God in the same way a Christian devotee does—that he became truly a Christian, and that in his moving from the Hindu faith to Christianity his personality went through a complete transformation—most Christian theologians will object. Here we may quote a typical view:

'Sri Ramakrishna was never confronted by the Kerygma [initial proclamation of the Gospel message] of the Church; the Christian teaching of the creatureliness of man, the bondage of sin, and salvation through Christ was never acceptable to him. He saw Christ from his own point of view, with the attitude of a bhakta and sannyasin steeped in the Indian tradition.'²

¹ 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), p. 57

² Sm. Nalini Devdas: *Sri Ramakrishna* (The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, Bangalore, 6), p. 25

In any case, the outcome of this mystic experience, as Romain Rolland observed, was that 'Later it came to pass that Indian Christians recognized in him a direct manifestation of the Christ and went into ecstasy before him.'³ To illustrate Rolland's statement, we may bring before our readers Sri Ramakrishna's first meeting with a Christian devotee named Williams⁴—one among many who visited Sri Ramakrishna several times.

Williams lived somewhere in the north-western part of India. He had come in contact with Kedarnath Chatterjee, the Brahmo preacher, when the latter had gone to that region on lecture tour. He learnt that Kedar Babu had undergone considerable change in attitude and conduct ever since coming in contact with the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. Himself a sincerely religious man, Mr. Williams became eager to know more about such a Paramahansa. Occasional publication of news of the saint in the journals of the Brahmo Samaj, whetted his interest all the more. Finally he came all the way to Calcutta for the purpose of meeting Sri Ramakrishna. Since Good Friday was only a few days ahead, he waited patiently for that auspicious day, for his first visit to Dakshineswar.⁵

In the early afternoon, about 1 p.m., of Good Friday, very probably in the year 1881,⁶ Williams, accompanied by Kedar-

³ Romain Rolland: *The Life of Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1947), p. 84 fn.

⁴ He seems to have been a school teacher, and is known to have been an erudite scholar of the Bible.

⁵ *Mahātmā Rāmacandrer Baktrtābali* (Bengali), (Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-samādhi-mahāpāṭha, Sri Yogodyan, Kankurgachi, Calcutta), Vol. II, 3rd edition, pp. 384-5

⁶ Following Keshab Chandra Sen's first announcement in *The Indian Mirror* of 28 March 1875, the Brahmo devotees as well as interested among the general public came to know of Sri Rama-

nath, arrived at the Dakshineswar temple, and went straight to the northern porch of Sri Ramakrishna's room. He was a hefty, brown-complexioned, large-eyed man of middle age, and was wearing European dress. Taking off his shoes and hat, he reverentially stood with hands folded, in front of the door, with Kedar in all probability near him. Inside the room was the Paramahansa who was then talking with a small group of devotees, including Ramchandra Datta, one of his intimate disciples. Of medium height, although delicate in health, the Paramahansa with his short beard, beautiful dark eyes, and childlike face shining with radiance of divine joy, deeply impressed the new arrival.

Presently one among Sri Ramakrishna's audience drew his attention to the visitor, 'That Sahib, about whom Kedar Babu spoke, has come, it seems.' These words seemed to bring a sudden change in the Master. His mind was filled with spiritual emotion. As if losing control over himself, he rushed out of the room to receive the new arrival.⁷ One end of his dhoti was trailing behind him, but he was hardly aware of this.

krishna. Soon after this, Kedarnath Chatterjee became acquainted with him. Ramchandra Datta met Sri Ramakrishna first on 13 November 1879. Williams, we know, met him first on a Good Friday. According to Akshay Kumar Sen's *Punthi* (Bengali) (Published by Udbodhan Office, 1 Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta 700003, 5th Edition), this meeting occurred some time around that of Joseph Cook's meeting with Ramakrishna on 23rd February 1882. But the presence of Ramchandra Datta, at Williams' first meeting, with other circumstantial evidence, suggests that it occurred on the Good Friday of 1881.

⁷ According to *Punthi* (p. 376-7) the devotees did not tell Sri Ramakrishna about Williams' arrival; but they noticed that he all of a sudden became somewhat excited for no apparent reason, and rushed out to greet the new arrival. No other available evidence corroborates this account however.

As Sri Ramakrishna came out, Williams reverentially knelt before him, with his hands folded, and looked up at Sri Ramakrishna. Tears were rolling down his face. He kissed the saint's feet, and his tears wetted them.⁸ Sri Ramakrishna, on his part, merged in samādhi, his face beaming, seeming to scatter joy and bliss on all sides. Amazed at these developments, the other devotees could hardly even guess what was occurring between the two. After a while Sri Ramakrishna regained external consciousness and taking Mr. Williams by the hand, showed him into the room. He spread a mat on the floor for Williams, himself sitting on another. Pointing to the small gap left between the two mats, he remarked, 'Look, I am keeping this little gap of about a finger.' Smiling, Williams replied, 'Sir, gap there may be between the two mats, but my heart is already linked with yours.'⁹

Williams had come to Sri Ramakrishna especially to ascertain from him if one could have a direct vision of God. In this very first meeting, Williams had already experienced something which he perhaps had never in the least anticipated. For he later told many devotees that he was blessed with a direct vision of Christ in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. In fact, he had practically forgotten that he had come into the presence of a Hindu saint. He found that his cherished ideal, Christ his God, had manifested to him in varied hues in the personality of Sri Ramakrishna. Thus he sat there all the while with hands folded in deep reverence.

Among the few and scanty records of

⁸ Ramchandra Datta narrated this incident thus in course of a lecture on Sri Ramakrishna, *vide Baktrtābali*, Vol. II, p. 131

⁹ Williams narrated this incident to Swami Akhandananda, when he met him at Ajmer, *vide* Swami Akhandananda: *Smṛti-kathā* (Bengali), (Udbodhan, 2nd edition), pp. 65-6

this noteworthy meeting, there appears consistently one particular detail. Following some preliminary words, Sri Ramakrishna rather abruptly asked, 'Well, what's your idea about me? Who am I?'

This was a question of the sort Sri Ramakrishna used often to put to a sincere visitor for ascertaining the attitude under impulse of which he had come to him. Thus, testing the other's faith in himself and attitude towards God, Sri Ramakrishna used to develop a special spiritual relation with each seeker and guide him in his pilgrimage towards God. Nor did he consider merely the words of reply; he would also observe whether a particular person was expressing spontaneously his own idea, or was prompted by others to reply as he did. Sri Ramakrishna's purpose was to help each person move on from where he stood—to give him a push forward towards his highest goal. Williams was, however, one of the rare few who was asked this type of question at very first meeting; and from the sequel it is clear why he was.

Williams was quick to reply, ['You are, Sir,] Jesus himself, the Son of God, the embodiment of eternal Consciousness.'¹⁰

No doubt Williams' viewpoint could rarely be approved by Christian theologians. According to the kerygma of the Church, God revealed Himself fully, finally once for all, in the person of Jesus Christ. The orthodox Christian acknowledges Christ as the only saviour; he believes in the fallibility of man, the bondage of sin, and salvation through Christ alone. Notwithstanding the fact that Williams was a Protestant Christian, he must have had some direct experience which prompted him to speak the words he did. There is no least reason to doubt his sincerity.

Not much further is on record as to what transpired between the two, except that Williams clearly was convinced in that short time that, whether or not Sri Ramakrishna was a philosopher or a learned man, he was a man of highest realization, and that whatever he spoke he did it with authority.

Towards the end of the visit, moreover, we know Sri Ramakrishna said sweetly to Williams, 'Do not worry; but please do come to this place twice more.'¹¹ Further, so deep had been the impression on Williams of the Master's talks—replete with stories and illustrations from everyday life as they always were—that he readily took up this suggestion. And later it became increasingly clear that the impact of these visits (and quite probably more than 'twice more') had brought significant and lasting changes in Williams, deepening and enriching his spiritual life. Some years thereafter, Ramchandra Datta witnessed to his amazement that Williams the Protestant Christian was saluting the image of Siddheswarī (Kālī) at Thanthania. On being questioned, Williams said in a voice filled with emotion:

'I saw Christ in the image. Obviously, I do not hold my old views. Sri Ramakrishna crushed my prejudice and has given me a new vision, as it were. Through his blessings I can see and understand presently what did not strike me earlier. Now I do occasionally feel how foolish it was for us, the bigoted Christians, to hate images of gods. But it is my good fortune that I am blessed with a new lease of life.'¹²

Before ending this story, we should note here Swami Saradananda's concluding information about Williams:

¹¹ *Tattwamañjarī* (Bengali), Vol. XXLL, No. 2, pp. 40-1, gives a brief description of this visit. A similar account of this, and some later data, are found in the *Bakṛtābali*, Vol. II, pp. 389-90.

¹² *Bakṛtābali*, Vol. II, p. 390 (translated)

¹⁰ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Madras, 1970), p. 781

'This person... came to the conclusion after paying but a few visits to the Master, that the Master was an incarnation of God, and renounced the world according to his instruction. He engag-

ed himself in practising austerities at some place in the Himalayas to the north of Punjab till death.'¹³

¹³ *The Great Master*, p. 781 fn.

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—VII

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

We must be in tune with ourselves. If we are not in harmony, we prick others. Before we become angry with others, we become angry with ourselves first. When somebody becomes angry we must sympathize with him. Have sympathy from a higher plane. There are times when you have to be a little harsh towards others of scold them. You can do this without losing your inner poise. If you have inner harmony, it will induce harmony in others. If we are restless, we get both inner troubles and outer troubles.

Suppression or repression of feelings and instincts is not enough. We should learn to sublimate them. Have harmony in body and mind. Those who are friends generally have similar vibrations.

We must first of all develop a spiritual attitude towards ourselves, and then only can we establish a proper relationship with the Divine.

First of all we must have a firm intellectual conviction that we are the Spirit. But we should not stop with that. Our faith must be tested. Belief must manifest itself in appropriate actions and thoughts.

There is too much of talk about religion. The less we talk the better. Let us act. Let us live up to the ideal. Only a few can have real religion. There is too much of theory now.

In India there are spiritual traditions

and also freedom in spiritual matters. But a favourable environment alone is not enough. There must be strict discipline. In the East or in the West nothing can be achieved in spiritual life without hard struggle and practice.

The ultimate principle is One. But the approaches to it are many. From lower truths we should reach out to higher truths. We must get glimpses of the Ultimate Truth. These glimpses point out to us the higher path. We have to proceed step by step. We must proceed from the gross to the subtle. Our vision must become clearer, steadier day by day.

In dualism God is thought to be different from us. He is looked upon as our Father, Friend, Lord, Beloved, or even Child. According to qualified monism we are parts of the One which is in all. Qualified monism is a link between dualism and non-dualism. According to it, God is not merely the sum total of all the souls but He is also the Soul of all souls. Individualism is thus a reality. All are fellow-souls controlled by the Supreme Spirit. God is immanent and transcendent.

To realize God in me is the first step; then I realize Him outside, in others also. Then comes a new outlook, a new sympathy.

First of all the mind must be purified by discharging the duties of life. Then all our faculties of feeling, willing and reason-

ing must be integrated. This generates tremendous reserves of energy which we need for spiritual life. Through meditation and prayer we should learn to direct this energy upwards towards the Divine.

People are of various types. When we work with them we may feel a certain amount of distraction and disharmony. But we should minimize our conflicts and learn to work in harmony with all.

Selfless activity is a step towards the attainment of Unity. It purifies the mind. It leads you nearer to the Ideal. If faith is added, it becomes easier. Noble sentiments have a great spiritual value. Devotion is a powerful motive force. But there are a few who can cut their way through

to the Ideal with only the help of reasoning. Such people may not care for devotion or a personal God. How such people progress cannot be understood by the ordinary devotee who thinks too much of his devotional exercises.

We do not believe in standardizing people. Devotion or reasoning or meditation or work—each has its own intrinsic value. When the right type of person practises any one of them, it becomes a quick means of spiritual progress. But it is better to have a certain coordinated development of all our faculties—feeling, reasoning, and willing.

Anyway, the goal is to rise above these faculties and realize the Truth. May the Supreme Self inspire and guide us!

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), and 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub., Madras, 1947). References: *Great Master*: No. 1, pp. 196-7; No. 2, p. 199. *Gospel*: No. 3, p. 797; No. 4, p. 505; No. 5, p. 756.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 71-2.

The International Women's Year, coming to a close this month, has eminently succeeded in focusing the attention of humanity on the problems pertaining to women. Under the leadership of the U.N., the various member states are endeavouring to take suitable measures for abolish-

ing or minimizing discrimination against women in different areas and fields of life. During the past many months, numerous seminars and symposiums have been held and thousands of papers read and published, discussing this important subject. Wide-ranging and constructive though the thinking has been, yet the deeper strata of this question seem to have been barely touched. While taking note of a few important developments and results of such discussions, the Editorial this month is an attempt to draw the readers' attention to the spiritual aspect of the theme. Only by reaching the Divine, indwelling all, human beings attain real fulfilment, equality, and liberation.

'Jesus Christ and His Message', is a thought-provoking article on the life and teachings of one of the greatest of divine

Incarnations. This is the edited version of a talk originally given by Swami Asakthananda as a Christmas-day sermon at the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Hollywood, where he has been for some years the Assistant Minister.

'Sri Sarada Devi: Mother and Daughter', by Swami Saradeshananda, is a translation of the first article of the serial, '*Śrī-Śrī-Māyer Smṛti-Kathā*' ('Reminiscences of the Holy Mother') appearing in the *Udbodhan*, Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order. We have however omitted the brief introductory portion, as it contains biographical details well known to our readers. As the writer himself rightly observes, in course of this article, it reveals an aspect of the Holy Mother's personality which is not generally highlighted in other writings—namely, how the devotees could, and some did, look on her as their divine daughter, and how she responded similarly. The author is an initiated disciple of the Holy Mother—now in his eighties yet active, alert, always cheerful—a greatly respected senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order. Although we have endeavoured to

make the translation as literal as possible, yet it naturally misses a great deal of the tender and highly touching appeal of the Bengali original. (The translation has been done by our staff at Mayavati.)

This article appeared in the sixth issue of the seventy-sixth volume of the *Udbodhan*. We hope our readers will appreciate its appearance in the *Prabuddha Bharata* in this month when the Holy Mother's birth anniversary will be observed by her children all over the world.

The procession of earnest spiritual seekers who made a beeline to Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual stores at Dakshineswar, was as variegated as it was vast. Seekers belonging to scores of sects and denominations of Hinduism came to him, as well as those belonging to non-Hindu religions. Almost all of them found the spiritual food that suited their respective tastes and needs. Williams, whose 'First Meeting With Sri Ramakrishna' is delineated in this issue, was one such—a Protestant Christian who was strikingly influenced by the Great Master.

Swami Prabhananda, the author, is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE SWAMI AND THE COMRADE: BY DR. K. K. ROY, Published by Intertrade Publications (India) Pvt. Ltd., 55 Gariahat Rd., P.O. Box 10210, Calcutta-700019, 1974, pp. 193, Price Rs. 64/-.

In this book of five chapters, a select bibliography and a good index, Dr. K. K. Roy has made a concrete effort to point out the basic similarities between the conflicting systems of Hinduism and Marxism. Showing in the Preface the urgent need for mutual understanding, he proceeds in the four main chapters (Hinduism and Atheism, Moral Problems, Political Questions, and Social Doctrine) to provide a basis for this. In each chapter the argument takes the form of a dialogue between a swami and a comrade. Although one may differ with some of their opinions, it is hardly possible to differ with the main theme, namely

the strong similarities between the two systems.

In spite of fundamental differences regarding God, non-violence, and faith, the fact remains that both systems are sincerely interested in serving the common man, the poor and down-trodden, and in conferring upon them the dignity that is and should be their birthright.

In discussing these problems the author has brought his extensive studies to bear on the subject, and the book is not only interesting and informative, but a great boon in so far as it fearlessly points out the defects in both systems and suggests a proper line of approach. The price, to be sure, seems unduly high.

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THE BRAHMASUTRAS AND THEIR PRINCIPAL COMMENTARIES (A CRITICAL EXPOSITION)—VOLUME II: BY DR. B. N. K. SHARMA, Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-7, 1974, pp. xxviii+464, Price Rs. 45/-.

The Volume under review is second in the series of investigations undertaken by the author as a 'critical exposition' of the principal commentaries on the *Brahmasutras*. In the present Volume he covers the major portion of Chapter II and the first quarter of Chapter III. He intends to conclude his work in the coming Volume.

The *Brahmasutras* have held a lasting interest for Vedantists, in that they are a major *prasthanā* or canonical text of philosophical and religious wisdom. It has been the tradition of the great Hindu philosophical systematizers to expound this text and to derive the foundations for their 'systems' from it, along with the other two traditionally accepted canons, the Upanishads and the *Gita*. The effort of each system-builder has been to discover a unity of thought among all of these three sources, and to expound an integrated system based on them. It is well known to students of Indian philosophy and religion that the three who have most conspicuously done this work are Sri Sankara, Sri Ramanuja, and Sri Madhva.

The advantages of taking recourse to their commentaries are mainly two: (1) each projects a unique way of understanding the Reality, depending on his intuition and experience; and (2) while doing so, each enriches thought by bringing up (either as a support or in the form of criticism) the varied ways of thinking prevalent in his times, on ethical, religious and metaphysical issues. Besides referring to the regular classical texts—extant even today—of different schools and traditions, these sages preserve for us some of the notable phases of contemporary thought not otherwise available. For a fuller understanding of the ancient philosophical traditions, the various commentaries are thus a great help.

The erudite author, Dr. B. N. K. Sharma, who is well known for his writings on the Dvaita (dualistic) system of thought, has given us an opportunity through the present Volumes to study the traditional perspective of 'Vedantic theism' of Sri Madhva vis-a-vis the type represented by Sri Ramanuja, and the Vedantic absolutism of Sri Sankara. However, his well-known ardent advocacy of the Dvaita system results in persistent minimizing of the contributions of the other two, with obvious hazards for the unwary reader who may not be aware of this limitation on impartiality.

Dr. Sharma has highlighted the distinctive perspective of Sri Madhva as a commentator true to the intuitions of the Sutrakara (author of the *Sutras*). He shows how Sri Madhva has disclosed and proved to us that the thought-structure of the Sutrakara is consistent and unbroken from the beginning of the *Sutras* till the very close. Further he shows how the 'Vedantic theism' is upheld, with its ultimate distinctions of the three categories of being, viz., Brahman (as *Isvara*), Jiva and Jagat, and the absolute dependence of the latter two on the former in all matters of cosmic and individual functions and destiny. It is shown by the author how Sri Madhva by his unique concept of '*paradhina viseshapti*' arranges the cosmic structure of 'eternal entities' eliminating the element of opposition. At each step of his critical exposition Dr. Sharma has shown how Sri Madhva had the gift of original insight, not only into the Sutrakara's metaphysical position, but even the divisions of the '*adhikaranas*' (sections).

Dr. Sharma has pressed into service in appropriate places the explanations of the main points at issue by the great savants or teachers of the Madhva School, such as Jaya Tirtha, Vyasa Tirtha, Vadiraja Tirtha, Raghavendra Tirtha, etc. Thus his attempt is most helpful for grasping the concordant perspective of the masters of the Dvaita system on important issues. Along with Dr. Sharma's histories of the Dvaita School of Vedanta, the present work, like the previous Volume, is an invaluable source-book for the Madhva thought in general.

Still we should not mince matters about the perspective of Dr. Sharma himself. It is clear that his 'critical exposition' is undertaken by him to establish the superior vision and logic of Sri Madhva, as compared with others. But it may be conceded that Indian philosophical thinking is replete with variations in perspective, and it matters little whether one agrees or not with Sri Madhva's point of view. Thus Dr. Sharma's work is bound to have its place of importance for its contributions in clear analysis of the issues, and in helping us to understand one of the traditional and scholastic world-views—of one of the chief philosophers of India. Dr. Sharma's insistence on the study of the original texts rather than the English translations and notes, is rightly made. The present Volume is a welcome addition to the scholarly literature on Indian Philosophy. We look forward to the publication of the final Volume in the series.

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PHILOSOPHY OF THE THIRD WORLD : Co-AUTHOR AND EDITOR, HEYDAR REGHABY, Published by Lewis Publishing, Inc., Berkeley, Calif., U.S.A., 1974, pp. 180, Price \$ 2.50.

This book is the result of a symposium that took place in California in December 1973, where a number of scholars and students from different parts of the world, met to help in the building of a better Third World. The principal achievement of the symposium and of this book is to provide a basis for dispelling the wrong notions widely current regarding the Third World, and the undignified attitude resulting therefrom. The peoples subjected to colonial exploitation till yesterday, whether black or brown, are fast coming up and refusing to brook such attitudes of hatred and insult. They must be treated with dignity. There must be a new outlook and philosophy in regard to the Third World. 'The Third World is the expanding territory of those oppressed human identities who no longer allow themselves to be owned, nor oppressed.' (p. 17) A new philosophy of the new age is needed to solve the many associated problems concerning this Third World. If such is not forthcoming, the so-called civilized, affluent societies cannot long remain as they are.

Imperialism, 'a Western disease' (p. 23) must now go. The capitalist nations (the First World), as also the Russian communists (the Second World), suffer from the same disease—namely, the exploiting of poor, backward nations, collectively known as the Third World.

This is an excellent work. It is thought-provoking as it proceeds to show the proper, healthy line of approach to the problems of the Third World. And the methods advocated are very close to those being followed by our own national leaders in supporting the 'non-aligned' nations.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

SANKARAM VEDANTA-MIMANSA-BHASHYAM : BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATHI, Published by the Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, 68, II Block, Subbarama Chetty Lay-out, Thyagarajanagar, Bangalore 560028, 1974, pp. xiv+108, Price Rs. 4.50.

Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswathi is not unknown to us. Without acknowledging his indebtedness to Nagesa Bhatta, he has been trying to propagate the views of Nagesa for the last many years. The book under review presents the Sanskrit text of Sri Sankara called the 'Adhyasa Bhashya' with an original commentary by the Swami himself. It is followed by an explanation and a commen-

tary in English. The Swami is well versed in Advaita. But somehow he is prejudiced against commentators like Padmapada, Prakasatman, and Vacaspati. This is regrettable. The development of philosophy in India has been largely through the commentators. The commentators have found certain expressions in the writings of Sri Sankaracharya and have interpreted them in their own ways in order to meet the criticisms of opponents. No one can say that sources for *avaccheda-vada* (theory of limitation) and *pratibimba-vada* (theory of reflexion) are not in Sankara. But somehow the author takes a too narrow view of the whole problem. He even complains that the original teaching of Sri Sankara has been submerged. It is unfortunate that the author finds fault with the great interpreters of Sri Sankara. We can only look at the present text as one individual's attempt to understand the text of Sankaracharya in the light of Nagesa's aberrations. Yet the book is written in a very lucid manner.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

THE PROPHET'S DIPLOMACY : BY AFZAL IQBAL, Published by Claude Stark Inc., Cape Cod, Mass., 02670, U.S.A., 1975, pp. 142, Price \$ 8.00,

PHILOSOPHY—THEORY AND PRACTICE (Proceedings of International Seminar on World Philosophy, Madras, 1970) : EDITED BY T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Published by Centre for Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1974, pp. 652, Price Rs. 45/-.

THE WORLD, INDIA, THE EMERGENCY : BY SWAMI BALANANDA, Published by Balananda Bhakta Brundam, Temple St., Kakinada, A.P.

LORD VENKATESWARA AND ALWARS : BY DR. G. T. GOPALAKRISHNA NAIDU, Published by Tirumala-Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati, 1975, pp. 52, Price not stated.

BURMA AND THE WEST : BY SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKHERJI, Published by Ranjan Prakashan, City Station Road, Agra, 282003, 1955, pp. v+159, Price (deluxe, Rs. 20/-) ppbk. Rs. 12/-.

SCIENCE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT :—BHAGAVAD-GITA : Compiled & ed. by T. S. AVINASHILINGAM, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, 641020, (2nd edition) 1973, pp. ix+134, Price Rs. 3/-.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA KARNAMRITAM : Translated by Swami Tapasyananda, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 609004, 1975, pp. xi+205, Price Rs. 4.50.

HOW TO KNOW GOD (YOGA APHORISMS OF PATANJALI) : Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, (1st Indian edition) 1975, pp. xii+222, Price Rs. 5.50.

VISISHTADVAITA—PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION (SYMPOSIUM ...): By "24 ERUDITE SCHOLARS", Published by Ramanuja Research Society, 20 Burkit Rd., T. Nagar, Madras 600017, 1974, pp. xiv+273, Price Rs. 25/-.

TELUGU

SHASTRA SARAM : By SWAMI BALANANDA, Published by Balananda Bhakta Brundamu, (see above), 1975, pp. 94, Price Rs. 2/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION AND RAMAKRISHNA MATH

FOR APRIL, 1973—MARCH, 1974

(With some later information)

[We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in September, 1975 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, P.O., District Howrah, West Bengal 711-202, India. —Ed.]

The Ramakrishna Math and The Ramakrishna Mission

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of the Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to welfare service of various kinds. This distinction should be borne in mind, though the name 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any other institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to the Ramakrishna Math or to the Ramakrishna Mission.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though

both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

Summary of Activities

The year 1973-74 was more or less peaceful for our activities in India and abroad, though sometimes we had to face difficulties on different scores. The rising prices and non-availability of drugs, food-stuff and other essential commodities created financial stringency and thereby caused strain for the management in almost all our institutions.

During the year under review the three-storied hostel building of the Divyayan at Morabadi, Ranchi, was completed and declared open. At Kishenpur, a Mission Centre with a charitable dispensary was started by the side of the existing Ashrama in deference to the provision of the Will of the late Samsher Singh.

The effort to purchase a portion of Swamiji's ancestral home is still continuing; but as this entails prolonged litigation, the Mission has approached the West Bengal Government for

the compulsory acquisition of a few plots, including the one where Swamiji was born.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1974, 119 branch centres in all, of which 54 were Mission centres, 21 combined Math and Mission centres, and 44 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows: two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Burma, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America; and the remaining 46 Mission centres, 16 combined Math and Mission centres and 26 Math centres (88 in all) in India. The Indian Centres were distributed as follows: 29 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 12 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, five in Kerala, four in Karnataka, three each in Orissa, Andhra and Assam, two each in Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Types of Work

Medical Service: The Math and Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Typical of these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Varanasi, Vrindaban, Kankhal, Trivandrum and Ranchi. In 1973-74 there were altogether 13 Indoor Hospitals with 1,614 beds which accommodated 40,882 patients and 63 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 36,15,528 cases including the old ones. Besides, some centres had provision for emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Sevashrama treated 230 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T. B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. At Trivandrum there was also a department of Psychiatry.

Educational Work: The twin organizations ran, during the period, five Degree Colleges of general education: at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Belur (Howrah), Coimbatore, and Narendrapur (24 Parganas), with 4,464 students on their rolls. The last three were residential. In

addition, there were two B.Ed. Colleges: at Belur and Coimbatore, with 330 students; one Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 75 students; one Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 84 students; four Junior Basic Training Institutes: at Rahara, Sarisha, Sargachi, with 296 students; a College for Physical Education, another for Rural Higher Education, an Institute of Commerce and a School of Agriculture, with 119, 78, 12 and 162 students respectively at Coimbatore; four Engineering Schools: at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore, with 1,400 students. Further, there were 8 Junior Technical and Industrial Schools with 592 boys and 14 girls; 82 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 8,663 boys and 490 girls; 13 Multipurpose Higher Secondary Schools with 6,596 boys and 595 girls; 26 High, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools with 12,505 boys and 8,108 girls; 26 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 2,310 boys and 2,086 girls; 83 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 11,768 boys and 6,913 girls; and 90 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 4,755 boys and 1,048 girls. The Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Math Hospital at Trivandrum continued their training of nurses and midwives, the number of trainees being 233. The Institute of Culture in Calcutta conducted a School of Humanistic and Intercultural Studies and a School of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages, with 156 and 2,832 students respectively. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 107, 46 and 284 students respectively. The Centres in Raipur and Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a 'Panchayat Raj Training Centre' and a training centre in farming (Divyayan) respectively, with 1,690 and 183 students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 23 students. Thus there were altogether 57,718 boys and 21,667 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Fiji.

Recreational activities: Some of the Math and Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities to youngsters at stated periods outside their school hours. The *Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the

youth section of the *Janashiksha Mandir*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities.

Work for Women: The organization has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the women's sections of the Hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban; the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha (24 Pargs.); and the two Training Schools for nurses, in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Moreover, there are special arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools; and some institutions are conducted especially for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes: The twin organizations have all along tried their best to serve the unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Sargachhi, Along, Narottam Nagar (Arunachal Pradesh), Coimbatore, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Tiruvalla, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a farming centre at Ranchi, specially meant for Adivasis and Scheduled Castes. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Kukis and Mizos by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational and cultural activities in the Arunachal region are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organization ran in the rural and backward areas eight Multipurpose Higher Secondary Schools, four High Schools, 44 Senior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 46 Primary Schools, 59 night Schools for adults, six Vocational Training Centres and a Rural Librarianship Training Centre—with a total of 16,738 students. The organization also conducted 17 Outdoor Dispensaries with a total of 2,38,875 patients, besides running six Mobile Dispensaries and 117 Milk-distribution centres—all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such

varied activities, preaching and educative tours with magic lanterns, movie-films and such other means were also undertaken frequently. For the labouring classes in the industrial areas, the Mission conducted several night schools, community centres, etc.

Mass Contact: From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organization's activities are not concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. The message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where millions get free medicines, and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also, a considerable number of poor students get free education, board, or lodging. The organization is also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The publication centres sometimes sell booklets at nominal price, to suit the pocket of the masses.

Spiritual and Cultural Work: Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The centres established real points of contact between people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. They also conducted Libraries and Reading Rooms. One Sanskrit Chatushpathi, too, was run. At least ten centres published books on religious subjects and 12 journals in different languages. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihshreyasananda in South Africa (Rhodesia) and East Africa, with Salisbury (35, Rhodes Avenue) as his centre.

Relief and Rehabilitation Work: As usual

the Mission undertook relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some works were also conducted by the branch centres themselves.

The *Bangladesh Relief and Rehabilitation* was carried on through the branch centres at Dacca, Narayanganj, Bagerhat, Dinajpur, Barisal, Faridpur and Sylhet.

The following relief works were conducted in India:

Flood Relief: (a) in Midnapur district by Contai and Rahara centres, (b) in Tripura by Saradapitha, (c) at Puri by the Puri Mission, (d) in Gujarat by the Rajkot Ashrama; *Drought Relief*: in Maharashtra by the Bombay Ashrama and in Karnataka by the Bangalore Ashrama; *Scarcity Relief*: in Gujarat by the Rajkot Ashrama; and *Mobile Medical Relief*: in Maharashtra by the Bombay Ashrama.

Annual Celebrations: Most of the Math and Mission centres ceremonially observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami Vivekananda are: Special worship, *Homa* (making offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, *Bhajan* and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers and lectures by eminent speakers, including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and the Mission. In co-operation with the local public, some centres celebrate the more popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, RAIPUR, M.P.

REPORT FOR 1973-74

This Ashrama had its foundation laid in 1958 and was formally affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission Headquarters in 1968.

During the year under report, the Ashrama conducted the following activities:

Vivekananda Vidyarthi Bhavan: This is a hostel

for college students. During the year it accommodated 12 deserving students who were keen to be benefited by the Ashrama atmosphere.

Vivekananda Memorial Library: There were 654 members. At the end of the present period, 17,314 books were available of which 534 were added during the current year. The number of issuings of books this year was 23,940.

Vivekananda Free Reading Room: The free reading room had 11 daily newspapers and 105 periodicals and journals on its tables. About 200 readers used the reading room daily.

Vivekananda Charitable Dispensary: The *Allopathic* Section of the dispensary runs the following branch departments of its Medical Clinic: (1) X-ray, (2) E.C.G., (3) Dental, (4) Eye, (5) E.N.T., (6) Orthopaedic, (7) Gynaecology, (8) Paediatrics, (9) Pathological Laboratory, (10) Dispensing Section. In the year under report, a total of 65,031 'cases' was treated free, out of which 12,156 were new.

The Homoeopathy Department attended 20,373 'cases' out of which 3,130 cases were new.

Publication Work: The quarterly Hindi magazine *Vivek-Jyoti*, started in January 1963, has now entered its twelfth year of publication. The number of life-members of the magazine rose to 862 by the end of the year. The number of its annual subscribers was about 4,500.

Religious and Cultural Activities: Daily morning and evening prayers were conducted in the Shrine, and daily scriptural classes for the inmates. 33 public indoor classes were held (average attendance per class—300). 133 public lectures were delivered by the Secretary (average attendance per lecture—1,500). The birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated publicly on a grand scale. Other religious festivals were also duly observed, as well as days of national importance, whereon seminars and symposia were conducted.

Construction Work: During the year under report, a sum of Rs. 54,515.82 was spent on building construction (Temple: Rs. 48,072.93; Compound Wall: Rs. 6,442.89).

Panchayati Raj Training Centre: In 18 Institutional Camps, 137 Sarpanchas and Upa-Sarpanchas and 25 Janapada members underwent training while 30 Peripatetic Camps were attended by 1,528 Panchas.

HOLY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, falls on Thursday, 25 December 1975.