

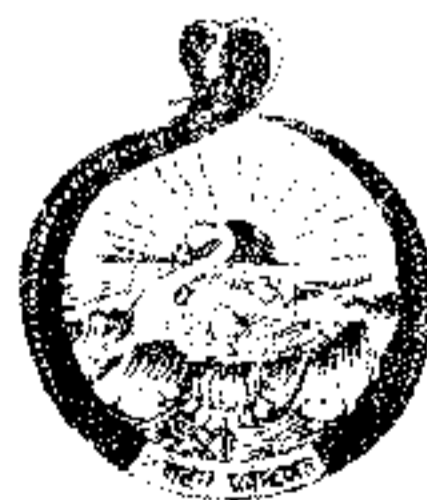
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Prabuddha Bharata

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Prabuddha Bharata

Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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DECEMBER 1976

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Cover :

*Reflections of Mounts Shwetwana, Thailu,
Sudarsan in a lake in Tapovan ground, Central
Himalayas.*

Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.



Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI

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No. 12

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

‘At particular times, particular kinds of Sadhus gathered here in large numbers. At one time, the Sannyasins, the Paramahamsas—not the herd of vagabonds roaming about for the sake of bread—began to pour in. Large numbers of those good people were to be found in the room [Sri Ramakrishna’s own room] day and night. And day and night were passed in the discussion of the Vedantic topics, such as the nature of Brahman and of Maya, and on *asti, bhati, priyam*¹.’

*

‘Hot discussions among them went on over these topics. I was then intensely suffering from dysentery and was having very frequent motions. Hridu² placed an earthen pan in a corner of the room. I was suffering from such acute dysentery and at the same time listening to their discussions about the Vedantic knowledge. Mother [that is, the Divine Mother] raised from within and indicated simple solutions of those knotty problems on which they were unable to come to any conclusions. I told them of those solutions and their differences were removed forthwith.

‘Once there came a Sadhu here. There was a beautiful glow on his face. He used to sit and smile only. He came out of his room once in the morning and once in the evening, gazed on everything—the trees, the plants, the sky, the Ganga and so on—and, beside himself with joy, danced with both his arms raised. He sometimes rolled with laughter and said, “Fine! How wonderful is Maya! What an illusion has been created!” That is, what a beautiful Maya God has conjured up. That was his worship. He had the realization of Bliss.’

*

‘Once a Vedantic monk came here. He used to dance at the sight of a cloud. He would go into an ecstasy of joy over a rain-storm. He would get very angry if anyone went near him when he meditated. One day I came to him while he was meditating, and that made him very cross. He discriminated constantly, “Brahman alone is real and the world is illusory.” Since the appearance of diversity is due to Maya, he walked about with a prism from a chandelier in his hand. One

¹ *lit.*, Being, Revealing, Endearing—characterizing Brahman, according to Vedanta philosophy.

² That is, Hriday, the Master’s nephew.

sees different colours through the prism ; in reality there is no such thing as colour. Likewise, nothing exists, in reality, except Brahman. But there is an appearance of the manifold because of Maya, egotism. He would not look at an object more than once, lest he should be deluded by Maya and attachment. He would discriminate, while taking his bath, at the sight of birds flying in the sky. He knew grammar. He stayed here for three days. One day he heard the sound of a flute near the embankment and said that a man who had realized Brahman would go into samadhi at such a sound.'

*

'One day I saw a sannyasi under the banyan-tree. He had put the salagram³ on the same carpet with his guru's sandals. He was worshipping them. I said to him, "If you have attained Knowledge to that extent,⁴ then why such formal worship at all?" He replied : "What difference does it make? Since I do everything else, why not this too? Sometimes I offer the flowers at the guru's feet and sometimes to God."'

*

'Hriday used to say, "Never before have I seen such ecstasy for God, and never before have I seen such illness." I was then seriously ill with stubborn diarrhoea. It was as if millions of ants were gnawing at my brain. But all the same, spiritual talk went on day and night. Dr. Rama of Natagore was called in to see me. He found me discussing spiritual truth. "What a madman !" he said. "Nothing is left of him but a few bones, and still he is reasoning like that !"'

*

'Formerly I had the state of mind of a jnani : I couldn't enjoy the company of men. I would hear that a jnani or a bhakta lived at a certain place ; then a few days later, I would learn that he was dead. Everything seemed to me impermanent ; so I couldn't enjoy people's company. Later the Mother brought my mind down to a lower plane; she so changed my mind that I could enjoy love of God and His devotees.'

*

'I have practised all kinds of sadhana : jnanayoga, karmayoga, and bhaktiyoga. I have even gone through the exercises of hathayoga to increase longevity. There is another Person dwelling in this body. Otherwise, after attaining samadhi, how could I live with the devotees and enjoy the love of God? Koar Singh used to say to me : "I have never before seen a person who has returned from the plane of samadhi. You are none other than Nanak."'

³ A stone emblem of Vishnu, worshipped by the Hindus.

⁴ That is to say, realization of the identity of the guru and God.

ONWARD FOR EVER !

I like to work on calmly and silently, and the Lord is always with me. Follow me, if you will, by being intensely sincere, perfectly unselfish, and, above all, by being perfectly pure. My blessings go with you. In this short life there is no time for the exchange of compliments. We can compare notes and compliment each other to our hearts' content after the battle is finished. Now, do not talk ; work, work, work ! I do not see anything permanent you have done in India—I do not see any centre you have made—I do not see any temple or hall you have erected—I do not see anybody joining hands with you. There is too much talk, talk, talk ! We are great, we are great ! Nonsense ! We are imbeciles ; that is what we are ! This hankering after name and fame and all other humbugs—what are they to me ? What do I care about them ? I should like to see hundreds coming to the Lord ! Where are they ? I want them, I want to see them. You must seek them out. You only give me name and fame. Have done with name and fame ; to work, my brave men, to work ! You have not caught my fire yet—you do not understand me ! You run in the old ruts of sloth and enjoyments. Down with all sloth, down with all enjoyments here or hereafter. Plunge into the fire and bring the people towards the Lord.

That you may catch my fire, that you may be intensely sincere, that you may die the heroes' death on the field of battle—is the constant prayer of



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATION—II

EDITORIAL

If we turn for a moment from this grim picture to ancient vibrant India, and take a look at the educational system then prevalent, it will become abundantly clear how progressive, practical, and productive were the goals and methods of that system. Education, as we have seen, should train the individual's intellect, help him control his actions, and purify his desires. This way no educated person could turn out to be an antisocial misfit, with protest in his eyes and bitterness at heart. The educational period was marked off as an *āśrama* (stage of life) called *brahmacharya* or the student period. Formal education began normally at the age of eight years, when the young boy left his parents and home to live with the teacher. This *gurukula*, or *guru-gr̥ha-vāsa*, in Swami Vivekananda's phrase, is the system of living as a resident pupil in the home of the guru, who taught both secular arts and sciences, and the holy scriptures ; it provided a congenial and all-round ideal environment for concentrated study. Swamiji commends it as a very desirable and effective practice that can and should be revived in modern times in all possible ways. 'The very essence of education is concentration', he says. Quality over quantity, mind over matter, brain over brawn are among the most important results of concentration. The key to the very treasure-house of knowledge is the power of concentration. One effective way of gaining mental concentration is to practise meditation, with *japa* (repetition of holy formulas) and *upāsana* (worship) daily. According to Swamiji, concentration and detachment (unselfish non-attachment, as taught notably in the *Bhagavad-gītā*) are more beneficial to the educational process than the mere collection of facts and figures. Intellectual indigestion resulting from being made to take in too much too soon is the inescapable problem

that the teacher and the taught are facing today.

As long as the learner, the aspirant, keeps in view the fact that during the *brahmacarya-āśrama*, until the whole education is completed, he is to walk the path that leads to Brahman—the embodiment of liberty (*mokṣa*), equality (*samatva*), unity (*ekatva*), and universality (since ‘All this is verily Brahman’, *sarvam khalvidam brahma*)—he will practise control of desires voluntarily and cheerfully. Educators and their systems should encourage the practice of continence as a means to the increase of intellectual and spiritual power needed for efficient education. ‘Every boy’, says Swamiji, ‘should be trained to practise absolute Brahmacharya, and then, and then only, faith—Shraddha—will come.’¹ Again, ‘The Brahmacharin must be pure in thought, word, and deed.’ The sacred thread that the student is invested with by the guru is made up of three equal strands, in order to keep him alert to the disciplines for the mastery of these three—*thought, word, and deed*. Without discipline of some sort and to some degree, the volcanic energy of youth cannot be expected to be elevated by education from the brute level to that of the human. And even the human continues to remain at a sensate organic plateau of selfishness and self-indulgence, unless the process of education continues to lift him from the secular to the spiritual realm.

Still some will raise the familiar question—whether or not religion should have a place in the educational system. This hoary question has been answered by different thinkers, both in the affirmative and the negative. Swamiji is unequivocally affirmative and declares, ‘Religion is the innermost core of education.’ But what religion does

Swamiji mean here? The negativists and antagonists often say that religious teaching in educational institutions should be avoided because it can cause bitter sectarian or communal conflicts and can become more a divisive force among students than a uniting one. Facts and instances are not wanting that support this sort of pessimistic secularism. But Swamiji’s religion is simply too vast for such blemishes—he wants our education to draw strength and sustenance from our own ancient heritage, and inculcate in the educated a non-sectarian non-dogmatic spiritual world-view. ‘Religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas, nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realization.’² The true eternal principles that are common to all the religions of the world have to be taught to all through education. A genuinely religious education based on the Vedāntic concepts of the Divinity of Man, the Unity of God, the Oneness of Existence, and the Harmony of Religions, can not only end all sectarianism but also help every student develop thoughts and attitudes that are progressive, responsible, and democratically constructive.

In one short sentence Sri Ramakrishna taught us the ideal of an effective education, when he said, ‘As long as I live, so long do I learn.’ Learning, getting educated, growth and development—all these form one continuous process from the cradle to the grave and even beyond. Thought precedes action, action precedes achievement, achievement precedes and produces progress and prosperity, which in turn lead to peace and happiness. This concatenation of life’s processes, which is a discernible fact of human experience everywhere, requires a firm foundation, to be laid at as early an age as possible. Says Swamiji, ‘One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire, and should

¹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. V (1959), p. 369.

² *ibid.*, Vol. II (1963), p. 43.

have before him a living example of the highest teaching.³ This is best achieved by placing the charge of imparting knowledge—sacred and secular—in the unfettered hands of those who excel in detachment and renunciation. Only selfless and self-sacrificing persons can be true teachers, with love and purity in their hearts, with sincere and serious interest in the welfare and development of their students.

The teacher (guru), the taught (disciple), and the teaching (knowledge based on personal experience)—these are the pillars on which stands the educational edifice. The teacher is the forceful conveying medium, and, again, like a catalyst, intensely active and helpful, but himself not entering into the 'chemical' reactions of the pupil's natural growth. The success of the teacher depends upon his experiential and intuitive wisdom, his personal purity of character and conduct, his unselfish and disinterested motives, and his love and sympathy for the student. Such a teacher, without using words or phrases of any formal religion, can silently but powerfully help the spiritual life of the student. No words of instruction, inducement, or propaganda can convey what an exemplary life can. An ounce of practice on the part of the teacher is more effective than tons of theory.

The Hindu scriptures say that 'knowledge is nectar' (*amṛtam tu vidyā*). Nectar is sweet, flows gently down the throat, and makes the imbiber immortal. Education should be such as to ensure a sweet relationship and a smooth and steady communication between the teacher and the students: such students, through this education, will attain immortal glory and eminence through their honest efforts to serve and sacrifice. Referring to such exemplary votaries of the Goddess of Learning, Swami Vivekananda says: 'The conditions necessary in the taught are purity, a real thirst

after knowledge, and perseverance. No impure soul can be really religious. Purity in thought, speech, and act is absolutely necessary . . .'⁴ Further, Swamiji is particular in exhorting the young to cultivate more virtues and values in their own lives than they demand in their teachers. The student in any case should have no greed of gain as motive for studying; should manifest love, truth, and unselfishness; should practise self-restraint, internal and external; should possess endurance, and must strive to be desireless and free from behavioural compulsions and instinctive urges. Hence Sri Ramakrishna said, 'That knowledge which purifies the mind and heart is alone true knowledge, all else is only negation of knowledge.'

In any scheme of effective education, one of the main elements, as Swami Vivekananda often says or implies, is the proper understanding of the relation between the importance of the *end* and that of the *means*. It is never too late for students or teachers to learn and to remember to pay as much attention to the means as to the end. 'Our great defect in life is that we are so much drawn to the ideal, the goal is so much more enchanting, so much more alluring, so much bigger in our mental horizon, that we lose sight of the details altogether.'⁵ The attention to the means and methods of education is more important than the concern we naturally tend to feel for the end product itself, and is in fact the expression of the *Gītā* ideal of non-attachment to the fruit of action. In the *Taittirīya-upanisad*, the student, on the eve of his returning home after finishing his study, is addressed by the teacher as follows:

'Speak the Truth. Do your duties. Swerve not from your study . . . Never deviate from Truth. Never fail in your duty. Never neglect your welfare. Never

³ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 369.

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. III (1960), p. 48.

⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 1.

neglect your prosperity. Never neglect study and teaching. Do not disregard your duties towards God and the ancestors. Serve the mother as a god. Serve the father as a god. Serve the teacher as a god. Serve the guest as a god. You should do such deeds as are irreproachable, and not others. You should do such virtuous deeds as we have done, and not others.⁶

Obedience to authority, good manners, and sublimation of disturbing desires are important elements in any effective education for human betterment and zealous pursuit of noble ends and their proper means. The end rarely if ever justifies the means; but the means almost always can reveal to us what ends they will lead to. The law of karma, which is the law of cause and effect in the moral world, is inexorably operating in and through every thought, word, and deed of every living creature. We reap what we sow, we get what we deserve. Education should be able to instil into every youth the conviction of the truth that material life is not secure without a moral basis, and moral life is not secure without a spiritual basis—wherefrom it is obvious that material well-being is dependent upon spiritual solidarity and stability.

Education is a magic word that can have diverse applications: in the fields of disciplined conduct, duties and responsibilities, rights and citizenship, parenthood, patriotism, social dedication and national integration, etc. With intense feeling for the regeneration of the uneducated masses of India, Swamiji observed:

‘Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of Europe and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own poor people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference? Education was the answer I got. Through education comes faith

in one’s own self, and through faith in one’s own self the inherent Brahman is waking up in them, while the Brahman in us is gradually becoming dormant.’⁷

Swamiji strongly disapproved the monopolizing of education by a few in the upper strata of society, as a bulwark of their personal privilege and prestige. There is nothing great and beneficial that a good and democratic system of education cannot give to man. Swamiji wanted the educated minority to make it their ineluctable responsibility to spread education among the masses and to bring the great spiritual truths within the reach of all: to give the masses ideas, information, and culture so that they could work out their own glorious destiny.

The education of women in India has taken great strides today. Swami Vivekananda, a pioneer in this field also, was particularly concerned about their education, to give them their true and equal place with men in society. He felt that of the many grave problems women may have to solve, there was none that cannot be solved by education of the right kind. ‘Female education should be spread with religion as its centre’, said he, and went to some length in explaining what he meant: ‘Brahmcharinis of education and character should take up the task of teaching at these different centres.’ ‘In villages and towns they will open centres and strive for the spread of female education. Through such devout preachers of character there will be the real spread of female education in the country. History and the puranas, house-keeping and the arts, the duties of home life and the principles that make for the development of character have to be taught.’⁸ ‘Other matters such as sewing, culinary art, rules of domestic work, and upbringing of children, will also be taught; while Japa, worship, meditation, etc., shall form an in-

⁷ *The Works*, Vol. IV (1962), p. 483.

⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. VII (1958), pp. 217-8.

⁶ *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, I. xi.

dispensable part of the teaching.⁹ 'Along with other things they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism.'¹⁰

Swami Vivekananda's dream of a new resurgent India, envisages the important place education has in promoting the growth and development of every Indian from an early age and in achieving national progress, prosperity, and welfare. India has always welcomed noble thoughts and ideas

from every part of the world. India's educational philosophy has sought to combine the material, mental, and moral aspects of life into one integral pattern centred in spirituality, for the good of one and all. Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches contain the most powerful and practical ideas and exhortations on education, that can teach men and women everywhere not only to live and learn but also to learn to live a worthwhile life and to practise what they profess.

(Concluded)

⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 217.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 342.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta,
12th April, 1919

Dear Sri —,

I have received your letter of the 11th inst. . . You are angry after reading my letter. It will not do if you get angry, yet continue to conduct yourself as before. Rather you will now have to live in such a manner that you can attract the sincere *śraddhā* (reverential faith) and love of the long-standing workers of the Ashrama, and that you keep them in harmony and they can work unitedly. Because [the idea is this] : Do I not understand that you are disliked by — and others, and they also want to flee the Ashrama? Why mention only — and others? You have so far sought the reason for all this, only outside, and not so much within yourself. If you from now on search in your own heart, you will see that this is due to your lack of love, or callousness and anger, pride, etc. Therefore you should become cautious from now on ; otherwise the entire work will become fruitless. Swamiji [Vivekananda] used to say, 'He who can conduct himself as the servant of all can alone become the leader of all.' You should remind yourself of this statement always. You should not think I am saying there is no fault with K—— and others, and you alone are at fault. They too have many faults ; but they will change if you remain all right : they will rectify their faults and not want to leave you and run away.

That the boys of——Math, owing to your harshness, want to leave the duties of that place and run away—this information has reached the ears of the authorities of the Belur Math and Mission. A few days ago the meeting of the Governing Body and the trustees of the Math took place. There I informed the members about the present famine conditions, etc. (at your place) and pressed

them to extend help to you. At this . . . certain persons said . . . 'By seeing the attitude of the monastic novices and others of that place, we have not yet been able to understand whether he [the head] is furthering the work of Sri Sri Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] or, being selfish, is accomplishing his own conveniences'. Though I was cut to the quick on hearing these words, still I tried to make them understand that it was only because of poverty and lack that you, being unable to decide what to do, act harshly towards others—not because of selfishness. This much for today. Accept my blessings.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta,
3/4/'27

My dear —,

I have received P——'s letter of 1st April.

There is no need to meditate on the guru for a long time. After remembering and saluting the guru, devote most of the time to meditation on the Iṣṭa (Chosen Deity). While repeating the mantra meditate on the Iṣṭa. Insofar as the *samskāras* (fund of past mental impressions) do not influence or disturb you while engaged in work, then do the work with one hundred percent attention. Selfless action is the special means for conquering past impressions. Putting firm faith in Sri Sri Thakur, go on striving, then you will be able to conquer past impressions and get peace of mind. Firm faith is the only help.

Accept my blessings and good wishes. Also convey blessings to R——. I am well. All are all right here.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta,
29/3/'27

Dear —,

I have received your letter. In whatever way Sri Sri Thakur keeps you, remain in that way with a satisfied mind : it is useless to become restless. I have written you before also to remain there only, peacefully, depending on Sri Sri Thakur. If it is his will, you may perhaps meet me : it is profitless to feel sorry on that account. Without the doctors' approval I will not be able to move out anywhere. I won't be able to stand the strain of going to Kasi in this heat ; therefore they will not give their approval for this. Don't think that just by staying with the guru you will be obtaining more of his grace. Wherever a person may remain, he who calls on Sri Sri Thakur sincerely and guilelessly, he, to be sure, will obtain his grace.

My blessings and good wishes are always on you. And convey them to G—— and B—— and others there. I am in good health.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta,
8/7/'27

My dear ——,

I have received your letter of 20 Āṣāḍh.¹ We have also known that Simla is a very cold place. Be that as it may, I hope that your mind will become steady after residing there for a few days. Let me know from time to time about your health and it will make me happy. Accept my blessings and good wishes, which are always with you. If convenient, you may once go to Hardwar in the month of Āśvin.² ... I am well. All at the Math [Belur] as well as here, are well.

If by meditating only on the *bīja*³ [of the mantra] you derive bliss, then do that only. You wanted to know how to meditate on the name [of the Lord]. The sound that is produced by uttering the name—on that sound you should try to make your mind one-pointed. In that [way] only will the mind gradually become steady and calm. The scriptures say, 'The Name itself is Brahman.' By continuously repeating the name again and again, bliss will come.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

¹ Third month of the Bengali year, included within June-July.

² Sixth month of the Bengali year, included within September-October.

³ *lit.*, 'seed'—used in connection with mantras to mean a mystic syllable or syllables believed to contain in potential form the power of the deity to whom the mantra refers.

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

HOW TO MINIMIZE OUR PERSONAL SUFFERING

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

V

According to Suśruta, an early master of Indian medicine, pain or suffering is of three kinds : *ādhibhautika*, *ādhidaivika*, and *ādhyātmika*.

Ādhibhautika sufferings are those caused

by animals or natural calamities, etc. Courage and preventive caution are almost the only help against these.

Ādhidaivika sufferings are those caused by fate or by celestial beings.

Ādhyātmika sufferings are those which

proceed from one's own body and mind.

How much or what can be done for minimizing *ādhibhautika* and *ādhidāivika* sufferings, Suśruta hints, is a matter of speculation. But we can to a great extent control the *ādhyātmika* sufferings—those proceeding from our bodies and minds. It is, in fact, from our bodies and minds that most of our sufferings originate. These sufferings, for which we have already sown the seeds, will have to be reaped and endured.

Yet it always remains open to us to adopt preventive measures right now, and thus be reasonably sure we are not laying in store future sufferings for ourselves. In this sense at least, we can truly minimize our personal sufferings.

What is the way to do this?

It can well be done by putting into practice a simple and clear sermon of the Buddha, on 'Avoiding the Ten Evils'.

The Buddha said :

'All acts of living creatures become bad by ten things, and by avoiding ten things they become good. These are the three evils of the body, four evils of the tongue, and three evils of the mind.'¹³

Most of our suffering is the product of these ten evils, of action or thought. So we must know what these are and how to avoid them. The Buddha explained what these evils are, and gave respectively ten commandments for avoiding them. He taught :

'The three evils of the body are : murder, theft, and adultery.

'The four evils of the tongue are : lying, slander, abuse, and idle talk.

'The three evils of the mind are : covetousness, hatred, and error.'

Now, how do we avoid these ten evils, to ensure that we do not create future sufferings for ourselves? The Buddha gave specific and precise instructions, combining

both negative and positive precepts in this regard.

Three evils of the body :

(i) Kill not but have regard for life.

(ii) Steal not, neither do ye rob ; but help everybody to be the master of the fruits of his labour.

(iii) Abstain from impurity and lead a life of chastity.

These precepts are small, given in a few words, but in each of these is the power of saving us from certain special and intense forms of suffering.

The word 'kill', in this context, can be taken to include all forms of violence and cruelty. A life which is built on violence—violence in thought, words or conduct—a life which has cruelty as its habit-pattern, will sooner or later bring upon itself other forms of violence which will cause suffering.

On the other hand, one who not only refrains from violence and cruelty, but further develops and practises reverence for life, will thus far cease to cause sufferings for himself.

To steal or rob is to base one's life on deceit ; and how can this fail to bring sufferings? Even if one's conscience becomes wholly withered, there is always the governmental machinery of law and order to cause ample and deserved suffering. Again, how much suffering has been caused for the world by robbing others, for instance, of the fruits of their labour ! And in time, one or other form of revolution is bound to come as the retribution of history : then all have to suffer. Therefore all religious teachers have warned us that anyone robbing anyone else of the fruit of his labour cannot help suffering.

In our smaller spheres of life, whenever we are genuinely concerned about giving others their due, the conflicts of life, petty or serious, are reduced to the minimum ; and to that extent our sufferings are reduced : our inter-personal relations, which

¹³ Paul Carus : *The Gospel of Buddha* (Open Court Publ. Co., Chicago, 1915), p. 126.

are an abiding source of happiness, are bound to improve.

Then we are advised not only to abstain from impurity but also to lead a life of chastity.

The word 'impurity' is here being used by the Buddha, clearly, to indicate all forms of immorality. Nowadays we hear so much about the 'new morality' and endless arguments in favour of permissiveness. But though the human race has been making such experiments for ages, all the same the fact remains that by lowering or manipulating moral standards we can never diminish the sufferings of mankind.

Whoever lives an impure, immoral life will bring upon himself or herself untold miseries. No one can help such people out of those sufferings until they themselves desist from immoral ways. So, whoever wants to minimize the sufferings of life, has one method of doing it right in his mind and hand.

In fact, the man or woman who is pure in heart and chaste in thought and conduct gathers, within, a special power which can defeat any suffering in life. The pure in heart can even see God! What then can any misery do to such a person?

Four evils of the tongue :

As regards avoiding these four evils, the Buddha taught :

- (i) Lie not, but be truthful. Speak the truth with discretion, fearlessly, and with a loving heart.
- (ii) Invent not evil reports, neither do ye report them. Carp not but look for the good sides of your fellow beings, so that you may with sincerity defend them against their enemies.
- (iii) Swear not but speak decently and with dignity.
- (iv) Waste not time with gossip, but speak to the purpose or keep silence.

Our world is such an interesting place that we often have to suffer here, even for

telling the truth! But when we begin to build our lives on truthfulness, we can grow inwardly stronger than all sufferings.

Truth is not to be practised, of course, merely for avoiding suffering : but for its own sake, and for growing stronger than suffering.

On the other hand, the life based on falsehood and deceit cannot but cause sufferings of many sorts. Exposure, ignominy, and punishment are bound to be the fate of such people.

Further—if you invent or spread evil reports about others, others will tend to do the same towards you, with a vengeance. That will surely cause suffering. So eschew it altogether. After all, most of us have tongues that tend towards carping. Whenever we thus turn them loose, somebody or other's feelings are wounded ; and then we begin to get back our dues in the form of sufferings.

The Buddha teaches us not only not to carp, but to always consider the good qualities of others, so that we may even be able to side with them when they are in trouble. When we do this, we are sure to find that one great source of our sufferings has been scotched.

Thirdly, we are taught by the Buddha not only not to swear but to speak decently and with dignity. Because speech is a very powerful instrument given by God to mankind, it should be used with great caution and circumspection. With even a few words you can inspire one with divine thoughts, or inflame another with anger, or even perhaps break a person's heart!

And wrong speech always comes back to you like a boomerang. How many personal tragedies have happened in the world because of even one chance wrong word! How many homes and hopes have been shattered, causing life-long miseries for those involved! Those who do not want to suffer that way, should heed this precept of the Buddha.

As the Hindu teachers point out, only such words should be uttered as are *satya*, *priya*, and *hita* (true, pleasing, and beneficial).

Finally, comes Buddha's admonition regarding gossip. Habitual gossipers are often tempted to invent lies, amusing stories, or petty scandals in order to appear interesting. But soon their purposeless talk involves them in conflicts and misunderstandings which cannot but cause further suffering for them.

There is a saying that a dumb man has no enemies. But a man with the power of speech intact, also need have no enemies, provided only that he either speaks to the purpose or keeps quiet. Silence is golden; and during periods of silence we can think on high subjects, and work for self-betterment.

Three evils of the mind :

As regards avoiding these mental evils, the Buddha taught :

- (i) Covet not, nor envy, but rejoice at the fortunes of other people.
- (ii) Cleanse your heart of malice and cherish no hatred, not even against your enemies; but embrace all living beings with kindness.
- (iii) Free your mind of ignorance and be anxious to learn the truth, especially in the one thing that is needful, lest you fall a prey either to scepticism or to errors. Scepticism will make you indifferent and errors will lead you astray, so that you will not find the noble path that leads to life eternal.

When we covet, we create miseries for ourselves unnecessarily: for we can never obtain all that we desire to possess or enjoy. Envy is a purposeless wastage of mental energy which not only weakens us but also is particularly prone to breed psychosomatic ailments. Again, weakness is among the root causes of all sufferings.

But when we rejoice at others' good fortunes, that rejoicing has a therapeutic effect on our minds. That is very necessary, for the upkeep of our mental health. A healthy and happy mind by itself is a powerful antidote for all kinds of suffering in life.

There is nothing so destructive to one's finer sensibilities as hatred. The hater always suffers more than the hated. And yet, how much hatred is still cultivated—and often deliberately—among persons, classes, races, and nations in this world! Much of the world's sufferings, as also personal sufferings, can be clearly traced to hatred. So, stop hating just now—any one for any reason—and you will find that one form of suffering is at once becoming less for you.

Lastly, there are ignorance and error. The typical superficial modern man boasts of his scientism, swears by hedonism, and disowns affiliation to any faith: for he thinks he is too highly intellectual to be religious. Having no moorings in any of the religions and their noble teachings, he pursues only sensate values. Completely devoid of self-discipline, he soon degenerates into a highly complex mixture of scepticism, cynicism, and immorality. With no urge towards the higher paths of life, he goes astray through error and infatuation, and follows one or other of the slippery paths which lead to the very depths of degradation. And then it will be all misery for him.

So the Buddha taught that we should free our minds of ignorance and error, learn the truth, and follow the noble path. All who are sincere about minimizing their personal miseries are earnestly invited to practise these ten commandments of the Buddha, and see for themselves their beneficent results.

VI

Still we will not have done full justice to the subject if we fail to note that there is yet another method of minimizing or end-

ing our personal sufferings. This may be called the mystic's way, of self-surrender and resignation to the will of God.

This is undoubtedly the most difficult way, for it is based on an unquestioning and absolute faith in God and dependence on Him. Only the valiant devotees of God can practise it. Many of us may not have that profound faith in God. But, who knows, there may indeed be some among our readers who are ready for it.

In any case, it will be inspiring for all to learn how this method has been applied in life. This was most clearly explained by the Christian mystic, Brother Lawrence, in a letter to a suffering nun. We quote from his eleventh letter as given in that great little book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*:¹⁴

'I do not pray that you may be delivered from your pains, but I pray God earnestly that He would give you strength and patience to bear them as long as He pleases. Comfort yourself with Him who holds you fastened to the cross. He will loose you when He thinks fit. Happy are those who suffer with Him. Accustom yourself to suffer in that manner, and seek from Him the strength to endure as much, and as long, as He shall judge to be necessary for you. The men of the world do not comprehend these truths, nor is it to be wondered at, since they suffer like what they are, and not like Christians. They consider sickness as a pain to nature, and not as a favour from God; and seeing it only in that light, they find nothing in it but grief and distress. But those who consider sickness as coming from the hand of God, as the effect of His mercy, and the means which He employs for their salvation—such commonly find in it great sweetness and sensible consolation.

¹⁴ (Translated from the French, Publ. by Fleming H. Revell Co., U.S.A., 1958), pp. 56-8.

'I wish you could convince yourself that God is often (in some sense) nearer to us, and more effectually present with us, in sickness than in health. Rely upon no other physician; for, according to my apprehension, He reserves your cure to Himself. Put, then, all your trust in Him, and you will soon find the effects of it in your recovery, which we often retard by putting greater confidence in physic than in God.

'Whatever remedies you make use of, they will succeed only so far as He permits. When pains come from God, He only can cure them. He often sends diseases of the body to cure those of the soul. Comfort yourself with the sovereign Physician both of the soul and body.

'Be satisfied with the condition in which God places you; however happy you may think me, I envy you. Pains and sufferings would be a paradise to me while I should suffer with my God, and the greatest pleasures would be hell to me if I could relish them without Him. All my consolation would be to suffer something for His sake.'

The essence of this mystic way of facing the miseries of life and rising above them, was taught by the Holy Mother in the following simple words:

'Everybody says regretfully: "There is so much misery in the world. We have prayed so much to God, but still there is no end of misery." But misery is only the gift of God. It is the symbol of His compassion. Is it not so?'¹⁵

There are thus countless ways open to us for minimizing or rising above our personal miseries. May we have the wisdom, enthusiasm, strength, and steadfastness to discover and then apply the methods suitable to us—so that the bliss, peace, and freedom promised in the scriptures may become experienced facts in our lives!

¹⁵ Sri Sarada Devi, *The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras - 600004, 1969), p. 280.



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

YUDHISTHIRA—THE PATH OF DHARMA

(Continued from the September issue)

[Though several weeks had been passed on the banks of the holy Ganga, since the end of the carnage of Kurukṣetra, Yudhiṣṭhira, eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, still could find no solace to his grief and remorse over his share in that historic conflict. Even the words—entreating, exhorting, sometimes bitter—of his brothers, friends, and advisers, were proving futile to cheer him and dissuade him from his resolve to renounce the kingdom and take up the austere forest-life. Hence Vyāsa (a grand-uncle of the Pāṇḍavas as well as of the dead Kauravas), the great sage and author of the *Mahābhārata*, had undertaken to enlighten Yudhiṣṭhira.]

After Vyāsa's first discourse, Yudhisthira replied :

O venerable sage, this transient kingdom and all other earthly enjoyments hold no charm for me. Moreover my whole mind is overwhelmed with grief at the misery and wailing of these myriads of bereaved women, who have lost husbands and sons. I can find no peace.

Then addressing Yudhiṣṭhira, Vyāsa, foremost of knowers of Yoga as also of the Vedas, resumed :

O king, by performing prescribed actions, or sacrifices, or through any other sorts of

work, nothing can be gained. Nor can any person give anything to any other. Whatever the Lord [Brahmā], the Giver of the fruits of action, allots to whatever person at whatever time—that will come to him at the right time, and effortlessly. Until that time, moreover, even the wisest cannot achieve anything by discussing *śāstras* (holy books) however profoundly. On the other hand, when the time is ripe, even a confirmed fool is seen to get wealth in plenty. Therefore all actions are dependent on time—of this there is no doubt. So long as the time of good luck does not come, no skill, no mantra, no medicine can by any means produce any result. But when the right time comes, all these become fruitful and prosperous in all details. With the help of time, the wind blows with great speed, the clouds become filled with water, trees in the forests are adorned with flowers, lakes and reservoirs become filled with lotus-leaves, the night is flooded with moonlight or filled with darkness—or again, the full moon shines in all its glory. When however the time is not ripe, never can trees put forth their flowers or fruits, nor rivers flow swiftly, nor birds or animals be filled with elation, nor women conceive, nor even the seasons come in proper sequence. Even

the rising and setting of sun and moon, the very tides of the ocean, are bound by this time.

In this regard there is the old story of king Senajit which you should now hear. . . After long experience, then, of this world with its resulting disillusionment, Senajit concluded thus :

'Nobody can get beyond the control of time : the birth and death of all beings has been already allotted by Nature, but still fools lament for their lost relatives or wealth and try to take measures to prevent further loss. They do not see that the more one gives way to sorrow, the more it increases ; the more one fears, the more fear increases. Again in pride you may feel, that this whole sea-girt earth is 'yours' ; but yet your own self is not yours ! The wise, understanding this, remain steady and are not deluded. In this world are thousands of sources of misery, and hundreds, of happiness : fools are ever under the sway of one or other of these, but never the wise. Even the sources of pleasure in this world become in time themselves unpleasant, while things at first repellent become in time appealing and pleasurable : thus in this world misery and happiness roam about together. Actually, here there is no real happiness—only misery— : and so the absence of misery comes to be called happiness ! . . . Thus he who wishes perennial happiness has to conquer both the pleasure and pain of this world. Everything one finds to be causing grief, heartburning, or exhaustion, must be cut out, like a finger bitten by a poisonous snake. Happiness or sorrow, that which is dear or repulsive—whatever comes, it is all to be experienced with an undisturbed mind. (Then one can clearly see, for instance,) if one omits even a trifling act of friendliness to one's relatives, what are their real motives for 'friendliness' to oneself. Only two types of people can at all enjoy happi-

ness in this world—the extremely foolish and deluded, and those few with the very sharpest discrimination.' Thus said that great king, who had come to know the true nature of happiness and sorrow.

Accordingly, you can well understand that those who feel misery at the sufferings of others, will never find time to be happy. Because at all times there will be some who are suffering. To all people, by turns, come happiness and misery, gain and loss, calamity and achievement, birth and death. The wise therefore never are elated or depressed by any happening. For kings, battle is the *yajña* (sacrifice), administering justice is the *yoga*, giving of gifts is the *dakṣiṇā* (fees and gifts to priests, etc., during sacrifices). The king who is egoless, devoted to *yajña*, following the moral codes intelligently, who protects his kingdom, maintains same-sightedness towards all as a righteous king should, remains victorious in war, drinks *soma*-juice during the *yajñas*, brings prosperity to his subjects, punishes justly, studies the Vedas and other scriptures thoroughly, keeps the four castes devoted to their proper duties, and finally dies in righteous battle—having thus purified his mind, attains the world of the gods. O king, the best monarch indeed is he who, having earned lasting fame on this earth, is praised by his ministers as well as his subjects, even after his going to heaven.

Clearly moved by these powerful words, yet still in a most distracted condition, Yudhiṣṭhira replied to Vyāsa :

Remembering those terrible scenes—the deaths of all our royal friends and relatives—of which I am the cause, I am still extremely restless with grief despite all you have kindly spoken to me. Being so extremely greedy for the kingdom, I have brought down to the verge of death that grand-uncle who brought me up as a child, on his own lap ! That scene, when the lion-hearted (grand-uncle) Bhīṣma was falling

from his chariot like a mountain struck by the thunderbolt of Indra. . . and I standing by without moving a finger, oppresses me as a terrible sin. I cannot describe my agony of heart at the sight of his body covered with blood ! Where in this world is a sinner to equal me? That same Bhīṣma who fought for long days with Parasurama (great warrior-sage, regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu) and who at Benares challenged and conquered one by one all the heroes of India assembled for that *svayamvara*¹—that Bhīṣma, the guru who had protected us always, I had to bring low² for the sake of a little transitory kingdom !

And if this were not enough, I had to deceive that great preceptor Droṇa who is honoured by all the world ! When he came to me to learn the truth about the 'death' of his son,³ and asked, 'O king, please say truly whether or not my son lives', I—purely from greed of kingdom—loudly proclaimed, 'Asvatthāma is dead. . . ' while inaudibly muttering the word 'the elephant'. Now, remembering that scene, my whole body is burning. Just think : putting off the armour of truth, I told the Guru that Asvatthāma was dead, whereas only the elephant by that name had been killed ! For such a sin, who can say in what terrible world I shall next have to suffer?

¹ Ancient custom in India, of a kṣatriya princess' choosing her husband from an assembly of princely suitors. In this case, however, Bhīṣma's exploits were for obtaining brides for his younger brother—not for himself.

² It should be noted that Bhīṣma himself had instructed the Pāṇḍava brothers as to how to bring about his death, since he possessed the power of choosing the time of his own death. Cf. *Prabuddha Bharata* for October 1976, p. 423.

³ That is, Asvatthāma. In order to dishearten the invincible Droṇa, Kṛṣṇa had advised the Pāṇḍavas to announce that 'Asvatthāma is dead', since an elephant of that name had just been killed. Since Asvatthāma had also a boon of immortality, Droṇa asked Yudhiṣṭhira—famed for his truthfulness—to confirm this.

Then recounting the sad death of his elder brother, Karna, as well as of Abhimanyu, brave son of Arjuna, and all their sons through Draupadī, Yudhiṣṭhira said to Vyāsa and others : Inasmuch as all this needless destruction of kṣatriyas was because of me therefore in this very place I shall give up my body in the austerity of fasting unto death. Then I shall no more have to take birth in any caste. Now I humbly request you all to please go to your respective places, allowing me to give up my body.

Hereupon, Vyāsa, seeing that Yudhiṣṭhira's grief had robbed him of his discrimination, spoke in consoling words :

O king, it is not proper for you to be thus overwhelmed by grief. Therefore I am again telling you what is for your good : please listen. As bubbles arise in water and again disappear, so *jīvas* (individual souls) in this world are born and die. All elements are destroyed at last : whatever conglomerates must also decay and be destroyed . . . separations are the end of all unions. Death is the end of life. But meanwhile if, being desirous of happiness, one merely wastes his time in idleness, at the end he has to suffer further. On the other hand, he who works patiently and skilfully achieves prosperity, fame, enjoyments and various powers : the idle and inefficient man gets none of these. Friends and wealth are not enough for happiness, nor enemies enough to cause sorrow, nor mere learning for wealth. Be that as it may, the Creator has certainly created you for certain actions. Therefore through the path of action lies for you the path to perfection. You have no right to give up your duties.

O Yudhiṣṭhira, in this regard please hear what a great brāhmaṇa, named Asman, has said in olden times. When king Janaka, stricken with grief, approached Aśman, he asked him what attitude was most conducive to welfare when relatives and wealth

either increase or decrease. To him Asman replied :

‘O king, as soon as man is born, misery and happiness take possession of him. And when either of these appears, man’s intelligence is blown off like a cloud by the wind. Thus, from birth there gradually grows in man’s mind the feeling that “I am not an ordinary man”; “I have come into a good family”; “I have attained my goal in life”—with these three types of pride his mind becomes imbued. Then through the power of this egoism he—naturally attached to outer enjoyments—spends all his father’s hard-earned fortune in dancing, singing, etc.; and at last resorts to thievery as a useful means. But the inevitable result of this is that the king will punish him, perhaps by the death-sentence: evil-doers have short lives. Even if one survives, he will sink through poverty in the ocean of misery. Therefore, wisely considering this, one should try to avoid such consequences. Old age and death attack all, whether strong or weak: even to a conqueror of the whole world these come. Whatever appears therefore—happiness or misery—one should bear all with steady mind; none can escape these since all are determined by Time: loss of desired things, appearance of unwanted things, rise or fall, fruitful or fruitless toil, etc.

‘As form, taste, smell and touch come of their own nature, so happiness and misery accompany life. All beings have to follow a day-to-day routine—sleeping, waking, eating, going out, etc. Still, even the doctors fall ill, the strong wither away, the beautiful grow ugly. Only by the decree of *Kāla* (Time, here used to mean Fate) do some get birth in good families, grow strong, beautiful, healthy, and find ample pleasures. Glory be to Fate! But (also by Fate) the poor, though not wanting children, get plenty, while the rich, though wanting, do not see the face of even one! Death by disease,

fire, flood, battle, famine, etc.—all follow Fate’s decree: those with fortunate birth, power and riches, generally die young . . . while the poor drag out long lives in great misery. The affluent generally do not retain much capacity to digest food, while the poor, though able to digest even sticks and stones, have so little to eat! Bad people, under the inexorable power of Time, perform more and more evil deeds; even the learned, under Time’s power, often act in most reprehensible ways: hunting, playing dice, committing adultery, drinking, etc.—all these they become absorbed in. Thus, good and evil (*iṣṭa*, *aniṣṭa*) attack all people, under the control of Time. One can find no other cause for all this than *Kāla* or Fate. The Lord as Time who has created air, the sky, fire, moon, sun, day, night, stars, mountains, rivers—He who protects all—He has engendered the feelings of happiness and misery in man’s mind. As the seasons come, change, and depart, so do people’s misery and happiness change under the influence of Time.

‘O Janaka,’ continued Aśman, ‘neither through medicines, nor *homa* (fire ritual) nor mantras nor *japa* can anyone get rid of old age and death. Just as on the ocean driftwood floats together a while and then separates, so on this earth creatures come together only momentarily. People always surrounded by song and dance and beautiful women; and poor orphans who can only beg their food—both are treated equally by Death. In this world many have parents, sons, wives; but in truth, none is one’s own. After death, what relation remains for them? Any gathering of friends is like a meeting of travellers only. “Who am I? Where am I staying? Where shall I go? Do I at all exist here? For what am I mourning?” Thinking thus in your mind, make it now steady. After all, this *samsāra* (relative existence) is constantly moving, like a wheel, never resting.

But then, of course, none has seen the other world. Still, according to the scriptures, which are the guiding light for good people, one should maintain faith in the reality of the hereafter and perform all the prescribed offerings to ancestors, as also various sacrifices (to the gods), while pursuing the three *vargas* (values of life : dharma, wealth, and desires) in this world. The whole creation is ever flowing towards the great ocean of Death ; yet nobody seems to be able to take this fact to heart. Instead, all—even doctors—are always taking bitter medicines, etc. ; yet they can no more overcome death than the ocean overflow its shores. Even researchers in chemistry, as well as those applying their medicines in practice, we see, are aging and wasting with their advance of years despite swallowing of geriatric drugs ! Again, those who devote themselves to scriptural study or to charitable works or sacrifices—they likewise fail to overcome death. The year, the month, the fortnight, the day or the night, once gone, never returns. As the ocean is fed by river-waters, so is Death being fed by the bodies of all beings.

(One hears endless discussions about the source of life :) some saying that this body takes form out of the *jīva*, others, that the *jīva* evolves out of the body, and so on. But whatever be the cause of all this, (it is obvious that) in this world the coming together of wife, son, family, etc., are only

momentary like the meeting of people in a travellers' rest-house. What to speak of other bodies, our own bodies cannot stay with us for long. Oh king, where now are your father and forefathers? Neither can you see them nor they you. In this world, none can see heaven or hell ; but the scriptures are the eyes of the wise, through which they come to know everything. Accordingly, you should devote yourself to scriptural study and practise their teachings, through which the righteous are able to pay off the three debts—to the *pitṛs* (ancestors), the *devas* (gods) and *ṛṣis* (sages)—through rearing virtuous children, through sacrifices, and through vows and penances, respectively. So, without regrets for past deeds, with purified vision, performing all righteous acts, you will be happy in both the worlds (earth and heaven). That king who, ridding himself of attachment and aversion, accumulates wealth virtuously—his name and fame will increase.' Vyāsa then concluded : O Yudhiṣṭhira, hearing all this from the sage Asman, king Janaka gave up grief with its burning, and taking leave of the teacher, departed homewards. Therefore, you also, giving up all heart-burnings, be of cheerful mind. You have conquered the world according to the dharma of a kṣatriya : now enjoy it all without any hesitation. Never show disrespect to anything here in this life.

(Concluded)

A man is the creator of his own fate, and even in his foetal life he is affected by the dynamics of the works of his prior existence....

This human body entombs a self which is nothing if not emphatically a worker. It is the works of this self in a prior existence which determines the nature of its organism in the next.... What is lotted cannot be blotted. A frightened mouse runs to its hole; a sacred serpent, to a well; a terrified elephant, to its stake—but where can a man fly from his Karma?

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S DISCOVERIES ABOUT INDIA—II

SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

SWAMIJI'S THIRD DISCOVERY

Swami Vivekananda's third discovery about India was that her contemporary state of decline was not due to religion but to the fact that the life-giving principles of Vedānta had not been applied to solve her social and national problems.

This is perhaps the most challenging thesis ever to appear in the field of sociology in India. It appeared at a time when our British overlords and Christian missionaries were flaying Hindu religion—and society no less—and heaping on it the entire blame for the degeneration of the country.

For example, the German sociologist Max Weber tried through his researches to find the connection between religious ideas of peoples, and their material prosperity. In his celebrated work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he showed that it was the reformation of the Christian church, led by Martin Luther, that 'liberated' the European mind and brought in the development of technology and the accumulation of wealth in Europe and eventually in the U.S.A. Applying in another book the same theory to India's history, he asks: how did India fail to evolve a technological society even though she had had a highly developed culture, enormous wealth, and intellectual ability?¹⁶ He then squarely lays the blame on Hinduism and its world-negating philosophy. But we find that Swamiji had anticipated, as it were, these charges in many of his observations. For instance :

'Thoughtful people within the last few years have seen it [the country's degradation], but unfortunately laid it at the door of the Hindu religion, and to them,

the only way of bettering is by crushing this grandest religion of the world. Hear me, my friend, I have discovered the secret through the grace of the Lord. Religion is not in fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy—the want of heart.'¹⁷

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not in fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny. . . '¹⁸

'You have the greatest religion which the world ever saw, and you feed the masses with stuff and nonsense. You have the perennial fountain flowing, and you give them ditch-water.'¹⁹

It is thus clear that Swamiji looked on religion from a very different angle than his contemporaries. If religion could help a man to get *mukti* or supreme liberation, could it not help him in solving his daily problems?—he asked himself. This comes to us with an urgency strikingly like Karl Marx's famous statement: 'Philosophers have hitherto only tried to explain the world. The real problem is how to change it' For centuries in India, most philosophers had used religion mainly to explain away the world, or as the means of escaping from its bondage. But Swamiji aimed at applying religion to solve the day-to-day problems of man as well. He was the first

¹⁷ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. V (1959), p. 14.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 15.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 223.

¹⁶ *vide* Marx Weber: *The Religion of India* (Free Press, Glencoe), 1958.

great Indian thinker of modern times to apply the principles of religion to solving the national problems and making religion a powerful instrument for social change in India.

Swamiji clearly saw that Hinduism had a core of sound spiritual principles based on the Upanisads and the *Gītā*, and that these principles when applied in practical life could solve many of the nation's problems. That is why he asked us to go back to the Upanisads. The religious stream had run clear during the age of the Upanisads; it became muddy only during later centuries by the introduction of countless taboos and superstitions and cock-and-bull stories and village customs—all of which, according to Swamiji, had been introduced into the clear stream of religion by the foreign hordes who periodically overran India—or through a natural reaction to their atrocities. He said :

'Go back to your Upanishads, the shining, the strengthening, the bright philosophy, and part from all these mysterious things, all these weakening things. Take up this philosophy; the greatest truths are the simplest things in the world, simple as your own existence. The truths of the Upanishads are before you. Take them up, live up to them, and the salvation of India will be at hand.'²⁰

'And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the down-trodden of all races, all creeds, and all sects, to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watch-words of the Upanishads.'²¹

Now what are these life-giving principles of the Upanisads, of Vedānta, of which Swamiji spoke? They are essentially three :

1. Potential Divinity of the Soul.
2. *Anubhūti*, or Direct Intuitive Experience of the Divine Reality.
3. Spirit of Harmony, based on the Relativistic Approach (as opposed to the dogmatic approach of most other religions and even of science) to the problems of life and reality.

Evidently, by life-giving religious principles, Swamiji meant not doctrines or creeds, but certain values, attitudes, and practical disciplines fostered by the Hindu religion. These spiritual principles had been lying hidden in the vast and profound ocean of Hindu culture. Sri Ramakrishna first churned them out through his stupendous spiritual efforts. But it was the genius of Swami Vivekananda that demonstrated their significance in bringing about a spiritual renaissance for the world and epochal social changes in India. Let us now examine what meanings Swamiji saw in each of these principles, and how he invested each with the power of his vision.

First Vedāntic Principle: Potential Divinity of the Soul

All schools of Vedānta believe that there is an ultimate spiritual Reality, called Brahman by the sages, which forms the substratum of the universe and of all individual souls. The schools, however, differ regarding the nature of Brahman and the relationship of souls to Brahman. But all schools are agreed about at least one point, namely, that every soul in its real nature is a part or reflection of Brahman—or Brahman Itself. They further agree that the knowledge of this relationship, or identity, in the empirical state of the soul's existence, remains either 'covered' by ignorance, or 'contracted'. That is why Swamiji said that 'Each soul is potentially divine'.²² By this he meant that every soul has the inherent capacity to realize its true divine nature.

²⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. III (1960), p. 225.

²¹ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 238.

²² *ibid.*, Vol. I (1962), p. 257.

What is evil or bad in man is not his soul or Ātman, but his mind. The soul is pure and self-luminous. This is the central idea of all schools of Vedānta; but for many centuries, few had understood its immense practical value.

The fields of application which Swamiji found for this doctrine, may be generalized into five :

A New Definition of Religion ;

A New Existential Philosophy of Life ;

A New Philosophy of Work ;

A New Social Philosophy for Uplifting the Masses, and the Solution of the Caste Problem ;

A New Philosophical Basis for India's National Ideal.

(i) *A New Definition of Religion :*

Though there are a number of religions in the world, the word 'religion' itself is very difficult to define. Semitic religions generally mean by it the despotic rule of the world by a supernatural Being called God. The Sanskrit word for religion, on the other hand, is dharma; and this word is so wide in its meaning that it includes a variety of things, as is seen in the well-known definition given by Kaṇāda²³: 'That through which *abhyudaya* and *nisśreyasa*²⁴ are attained is dharma.' However, Swamiji's definition of religion as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man', not only covers both these ideas of *abhyudaya* and *nisśreyasa* but points to the rationale and means of their attainment. The word *abhyudaya* is usually translated as 'material prosperity'. The correct meaning, however, seems to be that conveyed by Aristotle's famous word 'eudaimonia' (usually rendered in English as 'happiness' or 'well-being'). By this word Aristotle

meant the activity of the soul's powers in accordance with reason. True 'well-being' can be achieved, according to Aristotle, only by the balanced use of the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic powers of man, and this to us is clearly *abhyudaya*. *Nisśreyasa* means total freedom from all bondage, including not only gross sensual desires but also the subtle desires for name, fame, etc. It is the final emancipation of the soul not only from the body but also from the mind.

Now by the word 'divinity' Swamiji meant man's inalienable connection with the ultimate Reality or Supreme Spirit which forms the substratum of the universe. Many Christian theologians even now find Swamiji's concept of divinity of man, puzzling. But Swamiji did not use the word 'divine' in the Christian or Islamic sense of 'God'. By the word divinity or the Divine, Swamiji meant Brahman (the 'God beyond God', as Paul Tillich puts it), which is inseparable from the individual self or Ātman. He taught that God is within each one of us, the 'Ground of our being' as the philosophers say, and that each one of us is born to rediscover his own God-nature. That is why he said, 'No man is born into any religion but every man has a religion in his soul.'

'Religion is realization; not talk nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes.'²⁵

'If there is but one religion . . . true, all the rest must be true . . . All religions are so many stages. Each one of them represents a stage through which the human soul passes to realize God. Therefore, not one of them should be neglected. None of the stages are dangerous or bad. They are good.'²⁶

²³ Founder of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school of Hindu philosophy, who is believed to have flourished circa the third century B.C.

²⁴ *lit.*, that which is the supreme good; always applied to *mokṣa* or complete freedom.

²⁵ *The Works*, Vol. II (1963), p. 396.

²⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 499-500.

By the definition of religion as the manifestation of divinity already in the soul, Swamiji has not propounded any new concept. He has only expressed in the modern idiom what all schools of Vedānta have all along held, namely, that the soul or Ātman is an integral part of Brahman. This is in striking contrast to the view generally held among the Semitic religions that God is the 'Wholly Other', as Martin Buber puts it, that He creates souls and that the Creator and creatures could never be the same. Even though man is created in the 'image' of God, as substance they are entirely different. But according to all Vedānta schools, the soul is never created; it is uncreated and eternal like God Himself of whom it is a part.

According to Swamiji's interpretation of this ancient Vedāntic doctrine, every soul has behind it the infinite power and glory of the Divine which it is trying to manifest. The main problem in this process of Self-manifestation is the removal of obstacles in the form of selfishness and ensuing vices. Ethical life is the removal of these obstacles but is not in itself religion. When the obstacles are removed, Divinity manifests itself more and more and this divine life is true religion

For this removal of obstacles, for manifesting one's potential divinity, some may think *karma-yoga* to be necessary. But *bhakti-yoga* and *jñāna-yoga* are in fact equally efficient, and perhaps adopted by an even larger number of seekers for achieving the highest manifestations of divinity. The more our devotion towards the Lord, the more we manifest our inherent divinity.

Thus Swamiji's definition of religion expresses the traditional Vedāntic view avoiding all the controversies about dualism, non-dualism, etc. It is also a terse formulation of Sri Ramakrishna's concept of *vijñāna*, the integral experience by an enlightened sage

that Brahman alone has become the whole universe.

(ii) *A New Existential Philosophy of Life :*

Swamiji's definition of life, that it 'is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down',²⁷ is an expansion of the above-mentioned definition of religion as the manifestation of man's inherent divinity.

The traditional Hindu concept of life is that it is the bondage of the spirit in matter, and the goal of life is to escape from this prison-house of matter. Swami Vivekananda saw life from a different angle. He developed the concept of spirit influencing matter, spirit manifesting itself through matter. Life for him is not a prison but a battlefield, and every man has within him enough strength to come out of it victorious. Swamiji's message to all suffering humanity is a message of strength and hope. He based his doctrine of strength on the potential divinity of the soul. He said :

'Teach yourself, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'²⁸

According to modern Existentialist philosophers such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus, the chief characteristic of human life is 'angst' or anguish. Life is basically a series of conflicts, frustrations, and sufferings. Paul Tillich, a leading Existentialist theologian, tries to remedy this situation by his doctrine of 'The courage to be'.²⁹ Real courage according to him is the courage to face anguish and anxiety by realizing the

²⁷ His Eastern and Western Disciples : *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, 1949), p. 220.

²⁸ *The Works*, Vol. III, p. 193.

²⁹ *vide* Paul Tillich : *The Courage to Be* (Fontana Library), 1970.

soul's connection to the 'Ground of Being'. The closeness of this idea to some aspects of Swamiji's doctrine is so clear that there is some possibility that Tillich was influenced by Swamiji's ideas. In contrast to the commonly held Christian doctrine that man is a born sinner, Swamiji said :

'Ye are the Children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so ; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep ; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal ; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies ; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'³⁰

This teaching of Swamiji has led to considerable misunderstanding ; but it is a faithful exposition of the traditional Hindu view of the purity and immutability of the Self. The idea of sin, according to Hinduism, may be said to refer to the proclivity of a human being towards evil, produced in one by the latent impressions (*samskāras*) of one's evil actions committed in the past under the influence of ignorance. And this ignorance—*māyā*—which covers the glory of the soul like a veil, is said to be beginningless and incomprehensible to reason. All *samskāras*, whether produced by good or bad actions, are stored in the mind, or subtle body. Since the Self is distinct from both of these, the sinful tendencies thereof cannot taint the soul. Thus Hinduism, although recognizing sin and evil, still does not attribute these to the soul or *Ātman*, which is self-luminous and ever pure. In contradistinction, Christian theology holds that the soul of man is tainted with sin. But the words 'soul' and 'spirit' in Christianity (in fact, in the whole of Western thought) are used almost interchangeably with 'mind'. Still, since Christianity does not believe in

rebirth, how is it that man is *born* a sinner? A common answer, first given by St. Paul,³¹ is that man inherits the 'original sin' of Adam. How is this 'original sin' transmitted to posterity? The answer given by St. Augustine, that it is done through sexual intercourse,³² has been widely accepted, in spite of protests from Pelagius and other ancient and modern thinkers, many of whom the Church denounces as heretics. Hinduism recognizes sin, but gives it only the status of a temporary limitation of the soul, and not the status of the essential nature of man.

Moreover, Vedānta makes use of the psychological phenomenon that 'what we think we become'. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'The wretch who constantly harps on sin verily becomes a sinner.' When we brood over past mistakes, we only deepen and fortify our past *samskāras*. That is why Swamiji said :

'The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. Teach men of the strength that is already within them. Instead of telling them they are sinners, the Vedānta takes the opposite position, and says, "You are pure and perfect, and what you call sin does not belong to you." Sins are very low degrees of Self-manifestation ; manifest your Self in a high degree.'³³

Again, by propounding the doctrine of the potential divinity of the soul, Swamiji has reinstated the Law of Karma in its proper place. Karma is not fatalism, an excuse for remaining passive and lazy. It is the law of one's being and hence a powerful means of changing one's future. Explaining this fact, Swamiji said :

'Therefore, blame none for your own faults ; stand upon your own feet and

³¹ *Romans*, 5 : 12.

³² *vide*, *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* (15th edition) : Macropaedia, II, p. 367.

³³ *The Works*, Vol. II, p. 300.

³⁰ *The Works*, Vol. I, p. 11.

take the whole responsibility upon yourselves. Say, "This misery that I am suffering is of my own doing, and that very thing proves that it will have to be undone by me alone." That which I created, I can demolish; that which is created by some one else, I shall never be able to destroy. Therefore stand up, be bold, be strong . . . All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future. "Let the dead bury its dead." The infinite future is before you, and you must always remember that each word, thought, and deed lays up a store for you, and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and for ever.³⁴

The cause of misery is ignorance of our own true nature, say the sages. That is why, echoing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's advice to Arjuna, Swami Vivekananda exhorted our people :

'And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of *fearlessness*. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of your own nature.'³⁵

It is this life-giving message of spiritual courage that the people all over the world badly now need to face the difficult problems of their day-to-day life created by rapid modernization of society. It can give them strength and hope to face financial crisis, individual deficiencies, social inequities. Every one's life is influenced by his 'self-image', that is, his idea or image of himself. Childhood experiences, opinions of others about ourselves, real and imaginary weaknesses, all go to build up this self-image which, hidden in the depths of consciousness, influences our behaviour and

attitude. A great deal of human misery and failure is due to the wrong self-image. By changing it, by thinking constantly about one's real nature as pure consciousness and bliss, one can revolutionize one's attitude towards life, and remodel one's behaviour patterns. Swami Vivekananda wanted people to do this first :

'Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourself open to these thoughts, and not to weakening and paralysing ones. Say to your own minds, "I am He, I am He." Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare : "I am He." That is the truth; the infinite strength of the world is yours.'³⁶

Of course, in order to face the problems of life, what we need is the strength of divine qualities, and not the ordinary 'strengths' springing from selfishness, lust, or greed. These always produce more harm than good. Real strength lies not in disobedience and indiscipline but in facing the problems of life with the courage of a hero. What we need now is the strength to live in harmony with others, the strength to serve others, the strength to give strength to others. Swamiji's message of strength should not be in any way distorted so as to serve one's lower instincts. Swamiji insisted on all-round strength—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual.

It is this message of divine strength that India now needs in order to face its stupendous socio-economic problems. The recent wars with our neighbours, and changing international situations have shown us the great need for high morale and unity. For Christianity and Islam there are large and

³⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 225.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 160.

³⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 87.

powerful nations professing these faiths. But India is the main bastion of Hinduism. This has given us a kind of isolation in the comity of nations which others are trying to exploit. We now need an inner source of strength based on our own philosophy of life—not for aggression but for the preservation of our own culture.

(iii) *A New Philosophy of Work :*

Even as a means—what to speak of its being a goal—karma or work hardly ever had, before Swamiji's advent, a respectable status in the Hindu scheme of spiritual life. It was looked down upon as being at most a dispensable first step in the spiritual path. In spite of Srī Kṛṣṇa's masterly exposition in the *Gītā*, Hinduism had never developed a comprehensive philosophy of work as it developed the philosophies of *jñāna* and *bhakti*. The Mīmāṃsakas no doubt developed something along this line, but they restricted the meaning of the word karma to Vedic rituals based on scriptural injunctions and prohibitions.

It was thus Swami Vivekananda who first in modern times showed the great importance of karma in the daily lives of us all. Most of those who take to spiritual life are unfit to follow the loftier demands of *jñāna* and *bhakti*. *Karma-yoga*, as Swami Vivekananda showed, is today more important as a spiritual discipline for the majority, than *jñāna-* or *bhakti-yoga*.

One reason for this importance is, of course, Swamiji's bold extension of the concept of *karma-yoga*, to include the so-called secular activities of man—as had been clearly indicated in the *Gītā*. All activities that help a man in manifesting his potential divinity are good and are, according to Swamiji, religious. Hence Swamiji's definition of religion is broad enough to include all our activities, if done in the right spirit—even those of a doctor, engineer, farmer, lawyer, or businessman. This is, of course, in tune with Kanāda's definition of

dharma already referred to. Explaining this approach of Swamiji's to karma, Sister Nivedita in her revealing Introduction to the *Complete Works* of Swamiji, says :

' . . . No distinction henceforth between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life itself is religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid. This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of Karma, not as divorced from, but as expressing Jnana and Bhakti. To him, the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple.'

Since Marxism offers perhaps the greatest challenge to modern religion—including Hinduism—, it is interesting to compare Swamiji's idea of karma as a means of manifesting the potential divinity of a man, with Karl Marx's concept of labour as a means for self-realization.³⁷ There is a popular misconception that the goal of life according to Marx is only economic prosperity—materialistic gain. The German-born U.S. psychologist Erich Fromm has suggested a corrective to this misunderstanding. 'The very aim of Marx', he says, 'is to liberate man from the pressure of economic needs so that he can be fully human.'³⁸ Marx pointed out that labour is the factor that mediates between man and nature and in so doing, both man and nature are being transformed. Human labour transforms the objective reality into human reality. In transforming the objective reality, namely, nature and society, man modifies the conditions of his own existence and thereby himself. Labour is man's self-expression and by it he develops and becomes truly himself. As Erich Fromm has pointed out,

³⁷ vide Adam Schaff : *Marxism and the Human Individual* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1970), p. 76.

³⁸ *Marx's Concept of Man* (Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., New York, 1961), p. 5.

here Marx follows Hegel who understood labour as the 'the act of man's self-creation'.

The worker is a person who fulfils himself through his labour which transforms both him and the world. Marx believed that in a capitalistic society a worker cannot attain this lofty ideal of self-fulfilment because work remains external to the worker, without becoming an expression of his nature.

'Consequently he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs.'³⁹

As a result, according to Marx, work ceases to be an expression of the worker's nature. Rather than fulfilling himself in his labour, he denies himself and feels alienated from his environment—from the society of which he is or should be a part. It is this alienation that breeds frustration, tension, and social conflict. This concept of 'alienation' (originally propounded by Hegel) in an age of industrialism, is at the core of Marx's philosophical position.

Now Karl Marx, in spite of the unhappy image of him as projected by Western mis-interpretation, was undoubtedly one of the greatest thinkers of all time in the socio-economic field. These insightful concepts of his that we have just outlined, are being accepted as valued facts by an increasing number of thinkers all over the world, especially in the West. But the solution he proceeded to suggest for the problem of alienation has proved far from satisfactory.

Thus against the background of social unrest for which Marxism is the most

appealing—yet still unsatisfactory—answer, we now glimpse the importance of Swamiji's concept of karma. He re-interprets karma as an expression of the highest *jñāna* and *bhakti*. Since every man is potentially divine, service of man is according to Swamiji, service of God in man. And by God, Swamiji means the all-pervading Spirit that forms the substratum of all beings. Thus, society as a whole forms also a part of the 'divine Continuum', and every socially useful work is connected with this Continuum. As long as a man does socially useful work, he is expressing through himself the glory of the spiritual substratum of his being, and there is no alienation for him. It is while a man indulges in antisocial or destructive acts, that the divine Continuum in him becomes clouded and he gets alienated from that common background. So the real alienation for man is estrangement from his own higher Self. No type of work imposed by industrialization can cause alienation for man unless he first is alienated from his own Self. Alienation takes place only to the extent that work becomes an expression of the ego or lower self, and not when it becomes an expression of one's higher Self.

The dream of a worker's paradise where every work will be a creative one, where everybody is paid according to his need, has never yet been realized either in the so-called communist or capitalist countries. Everywhere, workers have to put up with monotony, boredom, uncertainty and conflicts. This is the price man has to pay for his technological advancement. Until the whole social structure is overhauled and the 'millennium' is reached, what we can and must provide the worker with, is a philosophy of life which sees meaning in all kinds of work, which seeks to transcend the limitations of work in its role as a means to higher fulfilment. Here the doctrine of the manifestation of the potential divinity of

³⁹ Karl Marx, quoted in *ibid* p. 98.

man—in the face of limitation, boredom, and anguish—alone can provide a meaning to human activities, of all types whatsoever.

Of course, even ordinary spiritual practices often seem monotonous and narrowing. Take, for instance, *japa*. Repetition of the divine Name may seem a monotonous occupation. That was what a famous mathematician once told Gandhiji. Gandhiji, however, countered with the query, 'But you have your recurring decimals?' The mathematician replied, 'But every decimal recurs with a definite added value.' 'So also', said Gandhiji beaming, 'in the same way, every repetition of the Name has a meaning.

Each repetition takes you nearer to God.' Now this same attitude has to be brought into the field of work. Spinning cotton, dressing vegetables, oiling machines, tightening nuts and bolts, teaching music—all may appear to be monotonous; but they cease to be so, and begin to acquire meaning, if we regard each act as a step towards God if we regard it as an act of manifesting our potential divinity. Thus in bringing all of man's activities, sacred or secular, traditional or modern, within the sphere of *karma-yoga*, Swamiji prepared, as it were, the synthesis to finally replace Marxism as well as all other materialistic philosophies.
(to be concluded)

A GLIMPSE OF THE LIFE AND MESSAGE OF THE HOLY MOTHER

SRIMATI MEKHALA DEVI JHA

From time to time, for the benefit of erring and perplexed humanity, God incarnates on earth as man. Not only so, but also the Divine Power accompanies these Incarnations, as a woman, and as His consort helps immensely in the accomplishment of His mission, both on the spiritual and material planes. The descent of Sītā with Śrī Rāma, of Śrī Rādhā with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, of Yasodharā with the Buddha, and of Viṣṇu-priyā with Śrī Caitanya, emphasizes this fact. Thus we also have coming down for our benefit, Sri Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, born as late as 22 December 1853, of poor parents in the little-known village of Jayrambati, West Bengal.

The biography of the Holy Mother may be read repeatedly, and incidents of her life may be heard or recounted daily, yet each time new facets are revealed which not only are fascinating to listen to, but also have ever-fresh value for us householders with all our painful problems, as also for earnest spiritual

seekers, and even for the character-building of the dynamic young people of modern times who so greatly need guidance for channelizing their energies towards a meaningful goal. Her happy childhood phase with all its delightful anecdotes; her austere and difficult domestic life after she came to live with Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar; and then, after his death, the last phases of her life as spiritual guide to numerous men and women—all these have this common point for an example to us ordinary beings: that her life, in all its phases, consisted of giving rather than of receiving.

Indeed, the Holy Mother gave her love and understanding to all those who crossed her path, irrespective of caste, creed, and even the ordinary standards of purity of character.

Once a member of her household threw a broomstick somewhat roughly aside, after sweeping a room. The Mother scolded her for this, and remarked: '. . . One should

not trifle with a thing, though it may be very insignificant. If you respect a thing, the thing also respects you. . . Besides, it is also a part of this family. . . Even a broomstick should be treated with respect. . . .¹ If this was her attitude towards an inanimate, even despicable, object, what did she not feel for living beings !

Sister Nivedita expressed the sentiment of almost all the devotees who had direct experience of the Mother's love, in a letter she spontaneously wrote to her in 1910 :

'Dear Mother ! You are full of love ! And it is not a flushed and violent love like ours, and like the world's, but a gentle peace that brings good to everyone and wishes ill to none. It is a golden radiance, full of play. . . Surely you are the most wonderful thing of God—Sri Ramakrishna's own chalice of his Love for the world—a token left with his children in these lonely days, and we should be very still and quiet before you—except indeed for a little fun ! Surely the 'wonderful things of God' are all quiet—stealing unnoticed into our lives—the air and the sunlight and the sweetness of gardens and of the Ganges. These are the silent things that are like you !'²

The Holy Mother's years while she was growing up at Jayrambati, away from her husband, were indeed a difficult phase. She and her parents were more and more often told by so-called well-wishers that Sarada's husband had become practically insane. But then when she came to Dakshineswar at age eighteen, Sri Ramakrishna proved all such accusations false, by being so very gentle and attentive to her wellbeing and comfort that all sceptics were astounded. Since Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi did not live a conventional conjugal life, many used to express sorrow that she would never experience the joys of motherhood.

To that, the Master used to reply that in later life hundreds of people would address her as 'Mother'—as indeed it happened. In fact, her more familiar name is Holy Mother for us all ; and many have regarded—and still do regard—her with even more love than they feel for their own mothers.

Meanwhile, when Sarada Devi was fourteen, Sri Ramakrishna had made a long visit to his home at Kamarpukur, and for six months of that time she had also stayed there. It was then that he began to look after her spiritual development. Then, after only about three months of her stay at Dakshineswar, the Master paid her a unique tribute. In a special ceremony he worshipped her as *Soḍaṣi*—one of the ten aspects of the Divine Mother—, even as the Mother-goddess is worshipped in a temple. For the Holy Mother this ceremony gave great impetus to her progress towards the highest achievement that humanity or divinity can attain.

Yet it was typical of her personality with all its innate humility, that she kept this realization of her divinity, a secret within herself. Only once in a while, to her close associates, did she make remarks such as this : 'The vision of God is in the palm of my hand. I can have it whenever I want'; 'In the midst of worldly activities, whenever I desire, I understand with a flash, that all this is nothing but a play of Mahamaya'; . . . 'No one will be able to know my real nature so long as I am alive.'³

And she would have continued her life thus, keeping her divinity concealed, if, after the passing away of the Master, circumstances had not compelled her to carry on his work of awakening the divine consciousness latent in all. Of course, Sri Ramakrishna himself had urged her to guide people out of their worldly darkness ; but repeatedly she had tried to avoid that great

¹ *Sri Sarada Devi—The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1969), p. 434.

² Swami Nikhilananda: *Holy Mother* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1963), p. 286.

³ *Sri Sarada Devi*, p. 122.

burden. She only became reconciled to it through several persuasive visions of the Master after his death, and appeals from his disciples and devotees.

Thus the Holy Mother gradually became the guru or spiritual guide for hundreds of people. She gave spiritual initiation and direction freely to whomsoever that came sincerely asking for it. Often her close associates told her she seemed too liberal with the granting of mantras to all and sundry. They compared her disciples unfavourably with Sri Ramakrishna's chosen few great personalities. But her reply simply was :

'Is it to be wondered at? He picked out the best types, and with what care he selected them ! And towards me he has pushed all this small fry, coming in their hundreds like ants ! Don't compare my disciples with his.' 'But when they come here and address me as mother, I forget everything and they get more than they deserve.'⁴

She was often seen sacrificing sleep and rest even in her old age and during her illnesses, to do *japa* (repetition of the Lord's name, or mantra) till late at night for the welfare of her disciples.

Indeed, *japa* occupied a truly high place in her opinion. She used to say :

'Through *japa* and austerity, the bondage of Karma is cut asunder. . . '

As wind removes the cloud, so the Name of God destroys the cloud of worldliness.'⁵

A simple metaphor explains her ideas on this subject very clearly, as recorded in her own words by a disciple :

'The moon in the sky is covered by a cloud. The cloud has to be removed by the wind, by degrees. . . then only one can see the moon. Does it pass all of a sudden? No. Similarly, with spiritual perfection. The effects of past work are exhausted slowly. When one realizes God, He grants knowledge and illumination within. . . one knows it oneself.'

Again, she once pointed to a timepiece and said :

'As that clock is ticking, so also go on repeating God's name. That will bring you everything. Nothing more need be done. Consider how small the seed of the Lord's name is, and yet from this sprout in time divine moods, devotion, and love, and above all surrender to His Will.'

The Mother, however, did not encourage laziness and lethargy—as is often misunderstood to be implied by words like meditation or *japa* or self-surrender to God. She said :

'Work you have to do as a matter of course. Work keeps the mind well.' 'Man must work because God expresses his will through the actions of man. . . ' 'But *japa*, meditation and prayer are specially needed. That is like the helm of a boat.'

Another time she said :

'Do the Master's work, and along with that practice spiritual disciplines too. Work helps one to keep off idle thoughts. If one is without any work, such thoughts rush into one's mind.'⁶

Further concerning work : 'However spiritual a man may be, he must pay the tax for the use of the body to the last pice. ' And when asked by a disciple why she remained so busy doing all kinds of duties from earliest morning till late at night, without anyone's help, the Mother replied : 'My child, it is good to be diligent. Bless me so that I may work as long as I live.' She said, again :

'How many are there who can meditate and practise *japa* all the time? At first they earnestly practise these disciplines, but. . . their brains become heated in the long run by sitting constantly on their prayer rugs. They become very vain. . . . It is much better to work than to allow the mind to roam at large. For when the mind gets a free scope to wander, it creates much confusion. My Naren (Swami Vivekananda) thought of these things and wisely founded institu-

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 405.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 400.

tions where people would do disinterested work.⁷

We see here evidence of the Mother's basic concern—in work or out of work—for the care of the minds and its concentration on higher things. This we can see most pointedly from her following words :

'Everything depends upon one's mind. Nothing can be achieved without purity of mind. It is said, "The aspirant may have received the grace of the Guru, the Lord and the Vaishnava ; but he comes to grief without the grace of 'one'." That "one" is the mind. The mind of the aspirant should be gracious to him.'⁸ 'My child, this mind is just like a wild elephant. It races with the wind. Therefore one should discriminate all the time.'⁹

'Even if the mind be not concentrated, do not give up the repetition of the holy word. You do your duty. While repeating the Name, the mind will get fixed of itself on the ideal, like a candle flame in a place protected from the wind. It is the wind alone that makes the flame flicker. In the same way, our fancies and desires make our mind restless.'¹⁰

As the Mother of all, her teachings about love and consideration for others come with special power. Once she remarked :

'One should not hurt others even by words. One must not speak even an unpleasant truth unnecessarily. By indulging in rude words one's nature becomes rude. One's sensitivity is lost if one has no control over one's speech.'¹¹

And her very last words of loving admonition give the clue to making religion practical in our own lives by attaining the vision of the oneness of existence in God :

' . . . , if you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger,

my child ; this whole world is your own !'¹²

Finally, as to the meaning and end of life, the Mother pointed out :

'The goal of life is to realize God, Truth, and to be always immersed in His thought. God alone is Truth, everything else is false.'¹³

Such were her words of power, addressed to devotees, disciples, and inmates of her household. Every great personality has delivered his or her message partly through his or her life and partly through teachings. Here it must be pointed out that the Holy Mother not only never preached, but rather remained always so much occupied with the most ordinary domestic duties that her life itself—her life of selfless service amongst the most difficult of circumstances and challenges—became her most powerful message.

The Holy Mother thus does not belong to the class of dazzling personalities who suddenly emerge in contemporary history and, after assuming superhuman proportions for a while, vanish forever. She belongs to the galaxy of great characters who by concretizing human ideals and values in their lives, raise world civilizations to a higher level, and whose influence, though perhaps seeming inconsiderable to most of their contemporaries, is found to last and expand without limit.

But even in Sarada Devi's lifetime, as the years passed, the spirit of the mother in her shone ever brighter in its glory and pristine purity, expressing this great cosmic principle of divine Motherhood, wherein humanity and divinity meet. In this light one can begin to understand the meaning of Holy Mother's own words :

'You must be aware that the Master looked upon all in the world as Mother. He left me behind for demonstrating that Motherhood to the world.'¹⁴

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 409.

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 322-3.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 411.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 434.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 217 (cf., p. 221).

¹³ *vide ibid.*, p. 402.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 59.

'THE WHOLE WORLD IS YOUR OWN'

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

In May, 1920, in an older section of Calcutta, a sixty-seven-year-old woman was dying of a malignant fever. One of her spiritual daughters approached her. Sobbing, she said, 'Mother, what is to become of us now?' Gently, the Mother consoled her : 'Have you not seen the Master with your own eyes? What can you fear? But still, I have something to say to you : *"If you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child ; the whole world is your own."*

This is the final spiritual advice of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother. Swami Nikhilananda wrote in the biography that he devoted to her, 'Perhaps we should see in these few words the supreme message of Sri Sarada Devi.'

We may learn two things from the Holy Mother's parting advice : We have nothing to fear regarding our final salvation, our welfare after this life. As worshippers of Sri Ramakrishna our salvation is assured. But we must still live some more time in this world and we want to be as happy here as possible. So the Holy Mother gives us the formula for finding and keeping happiness. Let us be pragmatic. Certainly, as devotees we shall be 'saved'. But why do we suffer? Why do we find existence painful in this life when it could be easy to live here peacefully? In her last message Sri Sarada Devi reveals the secret.

Let us carefully study her words. Let us consider this supreme teaching sentence by sentence, line by line ; for the Mother has promised peace of mind to those who follow her counsel. Are there any who do not desire this peace?

'If you want peace . . .'

The Mother gives us first of all a choice. Her advice is based on the proposition that we really wish to end the agitation and suffering which we experience almost continually. If that is not what we basically seek, it will not be necessary to study her words.

Sri Ramakrishna explained : 'One rarely says "You, O Lord, it is You" before having really suffered ; and even after having lost everything, this feeling of the "Yours" taking the place of the "mine" is still not natural to us.' On another occasion he said : 'The "I" must disappear to make room for the "You" and this does not happen as long as man is not spiritually awakened. As long as there is egotism we say, "I, I", and so long, we have no peace. When this egotism is destroyed we begin to say, "God, You are All."'

'If you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults . . .'

It is said that in this world the greatest mystery is that we see death all around us while nevertheless thinking that we ourselves will not die. But there is even a more striking mystery : While considering ourselves lovable, virtuous, and pleasant, we don't find that our neighbour is also lovable, virtuous, and pleasant. Which is as much as to say that we think ourselves worthy of the consideration of others without being prepared ourselves to offer others the same consideration. 'I am the centre of the world ! How is it that others cannot recognize my qualities and do not give me the respect that I merit?' Is it not a wonder that I never think about giving others that same sort of respect.

The great Christian classic, *The Imitation of Christ*, teaches :

'Endeavour to be patient with the

defects and infirmities of others, of what sort soever they be; for thou thyself also hast many failings which must be borne with by others.

'If thou canst not make thyself such an one as thou wouldst, how canst thou expect to have another be in all things to thy liking?

'We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we amend not our own faults. We will have others severely corrected, and will not be corrected ourselves. The large liberty of others displeaseth us; and yet we will not have our own desires denied us.

'We will have others kept under strict laws; but in no sort will ourselves be restrained.

'And thus it appeareth, how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance as ourselves.'

Vedānta goes even further and teaches that psychologically we cannot *see* a fault in others unless we possess the same fault to some degree in ourselves. A baby does not know theft. If a thief enters his room, the baby will laugh and chortle in front of him in the same way as with anyone else. But he who has within him larcenous tendencies will suspect even those who are not thieves. That which we see outside ourselves is nothing more than what we project.

The following question was put to Swami Prabhavananda: 'I know that we must pray in order to no longer see the faults of others, but what practical effort can we ourselves make while the prayer is being answered?' The Swami answered: 'Our first effort should be to see the good in others. There is some good in every being. What does an ordinary man do? He notices a slight fault in someone else and he exaggerates it. What does a saint do? In a drop of good he sees an ocean of goodness. If you really aspire to a spiritual nature learn to dwell upon the good qualities of others and you will be permeated with good. If you concentrate on his faults these same faults will grow in you.'

According to St. Vincent de Paul, 'Real charity says: Open your arms and close your eyes.'

'If you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults . . .'

Yes, but that is so difficult. Why? Because of desire, of ego, of māyā. Egotism is the normal state of man. To think, 'I am the centre of the universe' is the mark of an ignorant man. Finding petty weaknesses, seeing one's neighbours through prejudiced eyes, that is the preoccupation of most people. And what a nice world we have created as the result of such attitudes!

The American writer Ambrose Bierce defined an egotist as follows, 'An egotist is he who hasn't the least consideration for the egotism of others.' Eugene Labiche, the French playwright, called egotistical 'a man who doesn't think about me.' One of the *brahmacārins* (monastic probationers) at the Hollywood Vedanta Centre used to say, 'It's not my ego that bothers me, it's other people's!'

If you look for valid motives to explain your feelings of being entirely unique you will not be able to find any. Does a race exist that is completely better than another? Is there a country that is superior in all fields? Is there a completely just, honest, perfect person? Our observations and the evidence of history indicate that there is not; the discoveries of anthropology also show the same. No valid reason justifies the idea of separation, of exclusion, of segregation. Of course, we are in the habit of hiding our antipathies as well as manifold other weaknesses, beneath a varnish of politeness when we are amongst people, but what is politeness? Alphonse Karr, the French journalist, used to say: 'Politeness is a tacit convention between two individuals by means of which each dissimulates his own vanity to the advantage of the other's.' All ideas of separation, of exclusion, of segre-

gation are the products of ignorance, of māyā, of ego's endless attempts to ignore its own frailties.

The French poet Miguel Zamacoïs said : 'You pretend to believe that the universe revolves around the sun, but you know perfectly well that it revolves around you.'

'If you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own . . .'

To be in the mood to feel compassion for others, affection for all, that is so difficult! The world is full of such utter strangers. But a feeling of affectionate acceptance towards everyone must manifest itself in a religious aspirant. Our spiritual development will not be authentic and any gentleness we may achieve cannot be effective as long as our heart does not take part, in a habitual way, in the lives of others.

The French expression, *'Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner* (To understand everything is to forgive everything)' is well known and often repeated by those who speak English. It is a good proposition, superficially correct; but not completely sufficient, for forgiveness cannot automatically flow from understanding, unless this be of the highest order.

When we begin our religious practices, we frequently think ourselves already well advanced and we are convinced that it must be fairly easy to become a saint. But meditation, practised for a certain length of time, brings out previously unsuspected weaknesses, certain tendencies, which had been lying dormant in our subconscious. Many aspirants, after several years of effort, seem to find themselves worse than when they had started. How curious and surprised! But maybe it is well that this is so, for otherwise we could become inflated with spiritual pride. We try to give of ourselves to others, but we find out that we are still egotistical. We try to be pure, but we find

that sensuality has not entirely disappeared. We struggle for peace of mind, but we still feel ourselves in turmoil.

Contrary to the desired ends, we find in ourselves human weaknesses that persist in spite of all our efforts. At that point we begin to appreciate the qualities of others. All of the weaknesses that we had noticed in our neighbours begin to be revealed in ourselves. That is to say, it dawns on us that we are no better than others. In fact, we see that others are succeeding better than us and seeing this, just as we have long since understood and forgiven our own faults, we begin now for the first time to understand and forgive the faults of our brothers.

The expression 'to understand everything is to forgive everything' can, then, be modified thus : 'To be *guilty* of everything is to forgive everything.' We can never completely accept anyone as long as we don't feel ourselves to be like him. I can only identify with my brother when I at last feel identical with him.

By means of of meditation, contemplation, introspection, we learn to recognize our own imperfections. Seeing them, we can then at last begin to identify with our neighbour, which permits us to love him.

'If you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger . . .'

Sri Ramakrishna, during his youth at Kamarpukur, knew a woman of the village who hated other people. She did not like her neighbours and never mingled with them. She wished not to be bothered, to be left alone. This woman contracted an illness that caused a very disagreeable odour to come from her body with the result that no one wished to approach her, even to treat her. A frightening story! We can easily push others aside, but the inexorable result is that we will be left alone.

That which we alienate in alienating others is finally ourselves.

Charles Baudelaire used to say that we should be extremely careful as regards hate. He said that hate is a nostrum compounded of our blood, our health, our sleep, and two-thirds of our love—and hence should be resorted to with great caution.

I like the French verb *supporter* because it has a double meaning: to accept with patience, and also to sustain. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Those live who know how to bear.' At the same time they can help others to live.

Swami Prabhavananda often used to recommend to his disciples: 'Feel for others. You must feel for others.'

One day, at Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna was looking at the Ganga. At the foot of the stairway leading down to the river, two boats were anchored. The Master saw the boatmen quarrelling. The argument grew heated. One of the boatmen delivered a violent blow to the back of the other. At that moment Ramakrishna cried out in pain. His nephew Hriday ran towards him and saw that the Master's back had become red and swollen. At first he thought that someone had beaten him, but when he learned the truth he marvelled at the Master's spontaneous identification with others.

Swami Vivekananda said in *Jnana Yoga*:

'What is there to be taught more in religion than the Oneness of the universe, the faith in oneself? All the works of mankind for thousands of years past have been towards this one goal, and mankind is yet working it out. It is your turn now, and you already know the truth. For it has been taught on all sides. Not only philosophy and psychology, but materialistic sciences have declared it. Where is the scientific man today who fears to acknowledge the truth of this Oneness of the universe? Who is there that dares talk of many worlds? All these are superstitions. There is only one life and one world,

and this one life and one world is appearing to us as manifold.'

Swami Nikhilananda, in his biography of the Holy Mother, recounts the following incident: In spite of a background that had given her a limited knowledge of the world, she had risen, thanks to her maternal instinct, to a level of consciousness that had annihilated all prejudice against race or nationality in her. One day, while the Durga-Puja was being celebrated, the Holy Mother asked a disciple to buy gifts of wearing apparel for her nephews and nieces. This disciple selected items fashioned of cloth made in India, but the women of the family did not find the material to their taste and insisted that their preferences be respected. The disciple, animated by a strong patriotic feeling, replied with heat: 'You insist on foreign merchandise! How can one buy such a thing!' The Holy Mother, who was observing the scene, said smiling, 'My son, the people of the West are also my children! I must be within reach of everyone, I cannot reject anyone. Buy the articles that they want.'

'If you want peace, then do not look into anybody's faults. Look into your own faults. Learn to make the world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; the whole world is your own.'

I read a while ago a book edited by two Jesuit priests titled, *Maturity in the Religious Life*.¹ It contains transcripts of discussions that the priests had with communities of nuns. Together the priests and the nuns examined questions of obedience, of privilege, of responsibility, of giving oneself freely and lovingly to one's neighbour, and particularly of emotional maturity. The priests noticed remarkable things amongst the sisters. Each one tended to think that she was superior and possessed talents, qualities,

¹ John J. Evoy and Van F. Christoph: *Maturity in the Religious Life* (Sheed and Ward, New York, 1965).

and particular abilities that the other sisters should recognize. But rarely was a sister ready to recognize such talents in the other members of the community. And because of the fact that her value was not recognized, the sister would feel frustrated, disliked; she had difficulties with others and in this way produced unhappiness for herself.

These authors concluded that emotional maturity is a desirable quality in convents as elsewhere and consists of not feeling oneself as extraordinary. The most beautiful gift that anyone can give another is the gift of one's own maturity. To possess in oneself real maturity is beneficial to others and a source of satisfaction to oneself.

In speaking of the relations of the nuns amongst themselves in the community, the authors admitted that it is normal to be frustrated by one's fellows. The usual response to frustration is aggressiveness, but aggression is not a mature response. One should learn to tolerate frustration by means of understanding others. One of the characteristics of maturity is to be sensitive to others and to analyse the reasons why one feels frustrated. Concerning the faults of others, much wisdom is expressed in the saying. 'What can't be cured must be endured.'

When we begin to accept others, the priests continued, others open up themselves to us. They admit their errors. The result of this is that the real self is revealed. Then the other person becomes worthy of interest; the stranger becomes close. As we learn to know a person better and better we discover that he is more and more interesting and likeable. The reason God accepts us all is that he intimately knows us all.

For Vedāntists this is a familiar idea, for they believe in the Ātman, that unique divine essence penetrating all creatures, all life. The Ātman is in each of us; therefore in essence my fellow-being and myself are One.

It is true that the divine light is revealed more clearly in some than in others; there is

therefore a visible difference between individuals, between beings; but my essential nature and the essential nature of all creatures in this world is identical. Therefore, my fellow-being is an extension of myself, as I am an extension of him.

We are familiar with the story of Pavhari Baba, as recounted by Swami Vivekananda: This old man, a yogī, lived alone in a hole dug in the ground. All that he owned was one or two pots which he used for his cooking. He ate very little, and wore almost nothing, spending most of his time in meditation. He saw everyone with an equal eye. He had achieved a state of innocence. In each person, in each animal, in everything he saw the Lord of the universe. For him, every being was 'My Lord'.

One day a thief who had come to steal from his Ashrama, got frightened at the sight of the saint and ran away, leaving the stolen goods in a bundle behind; but the old man picked up the bundle, ran after the thief and after miles of hard running came up with him. He laid the bundle at the feet of the thief and, with folded hands and tears in his eyes asked his pardon for his own intrusion. He actually begged him to accept the goods, as they belonged really to him (the thief) rather than to himself.

This old man was full of love for all that exists. He would have given his life for an ant. Instinctively, wild beasts knew he was their friend. Snakes and ferocious animals went to sleep with him in his hole. They all loved him and never fought in his presence.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Maya is the attachment one feels towards one's relations: father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, and cousins. The love that is extended to all creatures as well is called daya. It comes from the knowledge of the fact that God exists in everyone.' And on another occasion: 'In a lake covered with water plants or scum, the fish sporting under

water cannot be seen from the bank. In the same way God, hidden by Maya from the eyes of man plays, invisible, at the bottom of the heart of every being.'

We cannot resist quoting Swami Vivekananda again :

'Those of you who have read Thomas a Kempis know how in every page he insists on this, and almost every holy man in the world has insisted on it. Intellect is necessary, for without it we fall into crude errors and make all sorts of mistakes. Intellect checks these; but beyond that, do not try to build anything upon it. It is an inactive secondary help; the real help is feeling, love. Do you feel for others? If you do, you are growing in oneness. If you do not feel for others, you may be the most intellectual giant ever born, but you will be nothing; you are but dry intellect, and you will remain so.'

It is well understood that if we can learn to love God, we will also love his creatures. But what we have discovered from this study

of the Holy Mother's last message is that the idea can also work the other way around. For in using the word 'peace' she means of course God's inner presence: 'If you want peace' thus, really means 'if you want God.'

We have here a profound teaching: you may move forward to loving God by first loving his creatures. Yet this is not an illogical idea. To make the whole world your own is a means of making God your own. If you cannot adore your brother who is God visible, how can you hope to adore a God who is not visible? Or as the Bible asks, if you cannot love your brother whom you know, how can you expect to love God whom you do not know? If you cannot see God in a human face, how can you hope to see him in the sky, in images made of stone or metal, or in descriptions given in holy books? We may call ourselves religious from the day when we have begun to see God in other men and women, when we can call the whole world our own.

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. by Madras Math, 1947). References: *Great Master* : No. 1, p. 523 ; No. 2, p. 524. *Gospel* : No. 3, p. 239 ; No. 4, p. 504 ; No. 5, p. 266 ; No. 6, p. 764 ; No. 7, p. 817.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever !' are from the *Complete Works*, Vol. V (1959), pp. 65-6.

In the second and concluding instalment of the Essay on Applied Religion entitled 'How to Minimize our Personal Suffering',

Swami Budhananda further discusses this important theme in the light of teachings of the illumined souls. The first part of this Essay appeared in our November issue.

In this month's (second) instalment of 'Swami Vivekananda's Discoveries About India', Swami Bhajanananda discusses the third discovery of Swamiji, namely, that India's historical decline through many recent centuries, was not because of its religion but because the life-giving principles of that Vedāntic religion had not been applied to solve her national and social problems. Among the many thought-provoking observations made by the author, the one on the merits of *karma-yoga* as taught by Swamiji—as contrasted with Marx's philosophy of

labour as a vehicle of human expression and fulfilment—is particularly revealing. The discussion on this third Discovery will be continued and brought to a close in the next instalment.

Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, has left for posterity the glorious and immortal heritage of a dedicated, God-centred life. Thus her message and her life—which are really inseparable, as she taught the truths she had lived and realized—have a dynamic and perennial significance for men and women the world over. 'A Glimpse of the Life and Message of the Holy Mother' is the edited text of a speech succinctly summarizing the Mother's many-sided life and teachings, delivered by Srimati Mekhala

Devi Jha at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh, on the concluding day of the annual celebrations last March.

The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's last message to a grieving disciple is justly famous among her devotees. It is an epitome of what she herself had done all her life, and hence the quintessence of the true religious life and vision. In 'The Whole World is Your Own', Swami Vidyatmananda—Assistant Minister at the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, Gretz, France—makes a study of the several 'layers' of this teaching in a manner that will prove spiritually helpful. Incidentally our readers may like to know that this saying of the Holy Mother is used as a grace before meals at the Gretz Centre.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

FOR APRIL, 1974—MARCH, 1975

(With some later information)

[We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in September, 1976 from Howrah, West Bengal 711202, India—Ed.]

The Ramakrishna Math and The Ramakrishna Mission

Though Ramakrishna Mission and 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 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 '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 institution does not necessarily imply that it is affiliated either to Ramakrishna Math or to 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 welfare 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

But for some difficulties and hardships here and there the year 1974-75 was more or less peaceful for our activities in India and abroad.

During the year under review a new Prayer Hall was declared open at Midnapore and the Universal Temple at the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, was reopened. At Narottam Nagar foundation of the school building was laid. The sixth storey was added to the Nurses' Hostel building at Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the new building for Out-Patient Clinic was inaugurated at Trivandrum. At Mysore the Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education started functioning.

Foundation of the Silver Jubilee Commemoration building was laid at Nadi in Fiji island and a new building was dedicated at Ganges Town monastery of Chicago centre.

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 place where Swamiji was born.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1975, 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 Pradesh 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 the Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Prominent of these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Varanasi, Vrindaban, Lucknow,

Kankhal, Trivandrum and Ranchi. In 1974-75 there were altogether 13 Indoor Hospitals with 1,588 beds which accommodated 46,541 patients and 74 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 38,45,428 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 346 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. Research on different branches of medical science as also Post Graduate training in D.G.O. and D.C.H. courses were conducted at Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta.

Educational Work: The twin organizations ran, during the period, five Degree Colleges of general education at Madras, Rahara (24-Parganas), Coimbatore, Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (24-Parganas), with 4,287 students on their rolls. The last two were wholly residential, and the colleges at Madras and Coimbatore had attached hostels for residing students. In addition, there were three B.Ed. Colleges at Belur, Coimbatore and Mysore with 407 students, one Basic Training School at Coimbatore with 29 students, one Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 99 students, four Junior Basic Training Institutes at Rahara, Sarisha and Sargachhi with 313 students, a College for Physical Education, another for Rural Higher Education, an Institute of Commerce and a School of Agriculture with 109, 56, 10 and 168 students, respectively, at Coimbatore, four Polytechnics at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 1,173 students, 8 Junior Technical and Industrial Schools with 681 boys and 14 girls, six Vocational Training Centres with 278 students, 90 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 8,984 boys and 540 girls, 14 Multipurpose Higher Secondary Schools with 6,551 boys and 541 girls, 25 High, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools with 12,311 boys and 8,298 girls, 26 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 2,654 boys and 1,823 girls, 53 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 10,710 boys and 7,630 girls, and 102 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 4,856 boys and 2,079 girls. The Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Math Hospital at Trivandrum trained nurses and midwives, the number of trainees being 235. 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 132 and 1,667 students, respectively. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy, an Institute of Commerce and a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre with 113, 51 and 113 students, respectively. The centres in Raipur and Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a 'Panchayati Raj Training Centre' and a training centre in farming (Divyayan), respectively, with 2,448 and 291 students. The centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 25 students. Thus there were altogether 57,601 boys and 22,075 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 the 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 Maternity Section of the Seva Pratishtan, 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 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, Raipur, Sarisha, Ramhari-pur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Sargachhi, Along, Narottam Nagar, 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, Kanknrgachhi (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 Arunachal Pradesh are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organization ran in the rural and backward areas nine Multipurpose Higher Secondary Schools, four High Schools, 47 Senior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 45 Primary Schools, 35 night Schools for adults, six Vocational Training Centres, a Rural Librarianship Training Centre, a Panchayati Raj Training Centre, a Village-Level Workers' Training Centre, a School of Agriculture, a College of Rural Higher Education and an institute for training village youths in farming—with a total of 20,391 students. The organization also conducted 18 Outdoor Dispensaries treating 3,10,363 patients and five Mobile Dispensaries serving 90,123 patients, besides running 108 Milk-distribution centres and a number of libraries with three mobile units—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 lakhs of people 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 among people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. More than 115 Libraries containing vast number of books and journals were conducted by them. Attached to the libraries Reading Rooms were maintained in many places. One Sanskrit Chatuspathi 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 Nisreysananda 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 :

A. Flood Relief—(1) in Midnapore by Contai Sevashrama, (2) in Cooch Behar by Rahara Boys'

Home, (3) in West Dinajpur by Saradapitha, (4) at Manihari by Katihar Ashrama, (5) at Darbhanga and at Laherisarai by Patna Ashrama, and (6) at Dhubri by the Headquarters.

B. Gruel Kitchen for drought-affected people—(1) in Bankura district by Bankura, Jayrambati and Ramharipur centres, (2) in Cooch Behar by Rahara Boys' Home, (3) in Jalpaiguri by Jalpaiguri Ashrama, (4) in 24-Parganas by Manasadwip Ashrama, Narendrapur Ashrama, Sarisha Ashrama and Rahara Boys' Home, (5) in Midnapore by Contai Sevashrama and Tamluk Sevashrama, and (6) in Purulia by Purulia Vidyapith.

C. Scarcity Relief—(1) in Bankura district by Bankura Sevashrama, (2) in 24-Parganas by Manasadwip Ashrama, (3) in Raipur by Raipur Ashrama, and (4) in Gujarat by the Math centre at Rajkot.

D. Cheap Canteen—(1) in Katihar by Katihar Ashrama, and (2) in Malda by Malda Ashrama.

E. Fire Relief—In Orissa by Bhubaneswar Ashrama.

F. Test Relief—in Bankura district by Ramharipur Ashrama.

Annual Celebrations : Most of the Math and the 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.

HOLY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, falls on Monday, 13 December 1976.

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

आजादी के आन्दोलन

VOLUME LXXXI

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