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Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or
all of these the Vision of the Paramatman is Obtained.

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Prabuddha Bharata

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RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

FEBRUARY 1984

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No. 2

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

INTEGRAL VISION OF VEDIC SEERS*

'Truth is one : sages call It by various names'

हंताहं पृथिवीमिमां नि दधानीह वेह वा ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

(1) Lo! I will place the earth either here or there [as I please]; for I have drunk of the Soma in abundance.

Rg-Veda 10.119.9.

ओषमित् पृथिवीमहं जंघनानीह वेह वा ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

(2) I will drive the sun, like the earth, either here or there; for I have drunk of the Soma in abundance.

Rg-Veda 10.119.10.

दिवि मे अन्यः पक्षोऽधो अन्यमचीकृषम् ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

(3) One portion of mine is in the sky; I let the other trail below [on the earth]; for I have drunk of the Soma in abundance.

Rg-Veda 10.119.11.

अहमस्मि महामहोऽभिनभ्यमुदीषितः ।
कुवित् सोमस्यापामिति ॥

(4) I am the greatest of the great, raised to the firmament¹; for I have drunk of the Soma in abundance.

Rg-Veda 10.119.12.

* The *Iti-va-iti Suktam* is concluded here. The sense of triumph, even of defiance, expressed in this hymn comes from the identification of the seer with the cosmic Reality. Some of the monistic hymns of the Middle Ages, like the *Aṣṭāvakra-Samhitā* are a continuation of the spirit of this ancient Vedic hymn.

(1) According to Sāyaṇa, here the Self of the seer is identified with the Self of the Sun.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL discusses the awakening of the power of the inner Self and how it can be made to work in ordinary life.

After discussing the early spiritual struggles and attainments of Swami Vivekananda, Ann Myren shows, in the second and concluding instalment of her article SPIRITUAL TREASURE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, how Swami Vivekananda, like a Prometheus, brought down for modern humanity the four great spiritual treasures of Self-knowledge, devotion, Yoga and dedicated service. Ann Myren teaches social sciences at the College of Alameda, California.

Dr. Arun Kumar Biswas, M. Sc. Tech., D. Phil. (Cal), S.M.(M.I.T.), Professor in the Department of Metallurgical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur,

has brought together in the article KHETRI IN THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT an immense amount of material on one of the most significant episodes in the life of Swami Vivekananda. In the first instalment of the article included in this issue the author briefly outlines the history of Khetri kingdom, and proceeds to give a poignant account of the deep relationship that existed between the Raja of Khetri and Swamiji.

WHY DO WE LIVE? is an interesting Japanese sermon excerpted from the book *Japan Today* (1904) by Dr. J. A. B. Scherer. The author was an American Evangelical Lutheran pastor who founded a mission of his denomination in Japan in 1890 and later on returned to the U.S. to become a well-known preacher, teacher and author of several books on Christian and Japanese religions.

THE POWER OF PRAJNA

(EDITORIAL)

The magic ring within

Every schoolboy knows the story of Alladin and the magic lamp. A magician comes to know of the wish-fulfilling magic lamp kept in a secret underground chamber. He sends down the boy Alladin (Alla-uddin) through a trap-door, after putting a magic ring on the boy's finger. Alladin finds the lamp but refuses to give it to the magician unless he was lifted out of the chamber first. At this the magician becomes angry and slams the trap-door shut. Alone and fear-stricken, Alladin weeps and accidentally rubs the ring on his finger. Suddenly a little genie materializes and

takes the boy, who still has the magic lamp with him, out of the chamber. Later on, while trying to clean the old lamp, he rubs it and there appears a mighty genie. With his help Alladin is able to acquire great wealth, a palace and the king's daughter in marriage.

Like many fairy tales, fables and most religious myths, this Arabian Nights story too admits of a psychological interpretation. The magician stands for what Freud calls the 'Id', the instinctive libidinous lower self, and Alladin represents the ego. The under-world is the vast unconscious or unknown part of the mind. The *buddhi* or the higher intellect is the magic ring.

Meditation, an exercise of the *buddhi*, corresponds to the rubbing of the ring.¹ The little genie is none else than the self-luminous higher Self in us known as the *pratyagātman*. The help of this little inner genie is necessary to get the magic lamp which stands for the *mahat*, the Logos or Cosmic Intelligence. The mighty genie is the Cosmic Self. Once a person comes into touch with *mahat*, he gains higher spiritual knowledge and even great psychic powers.

It may not be possible for all people to get the magic lamp and have the mighty genie under his control. In other words, awareness of the infinite Reality and acquisition of cosmic powers may be beyond us. But all of us have the magic ring in our hearts. By rubbing this inner ring, by exercising the *buddhi* through meditation, we can all experience the light of the inner Self, the *pratyagātman*.

This inner light is called *prajña*; it is the power of the *pratyagātman*. This power of consciousness lies hidden within all of us. It is meditation that brings it out. Meditation during its early stages is a struggle to focus thoughts. But in its advanced stages, as the light of *prajña* emerges, it becomes a focussing of this inner light. Meditation then becomes like pressing the button of a flash-light, *prajñaloka* as Patañjali calls it.²

Prajña, however, is not mere light,

1. As a matter of fact, one of the Upaniṣads compares meditation to the rubbing of the two pieces of wood of a tinder-box (*araṇi*): 'When meditation is practised by making the body the lower piece of wood and Om the upper piece and by rubbing the two, the luminous one (the Self) hidden in the depths is directly perceived'.

स्वदेहमरणं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम् ।

ध्याननिर्मथनाभ्यासाद्देवं पश्येन्नगूढवत् ॥

Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 1.14

2. *Yoga-sūtra* 3:5,25.

consciousness. It is also fire, power, a manifestation of *kuṇḍalini*. The power of individual *prajña* is limited like that of the little genie of the magic ring. But it is enough to solve many of our immediate problems. It can bring about great changes in us, and even alter our entire personality structure. About these possibilities of one's inner Self Swami Vivekananda said in his lecture on 'The Mission Vedanta';

Teach yourselves, teach every one, 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.³

And yet, few people utilize this power of *prajña* or are even aware of it. Of course, one cannot make use of it unless one gains a direct experience of it. So the first struggle in spiritual life should be to awaken *prajña* in us.

Conditions for the awakening of prajña

Meditation is not an end in itself. It should lead to some transcendental experience of which the awakening of *prajña* is the primary one. However, this will not happen if meditation is practised merely as a ritual or duty or haphazardly. According to Yoga books, meditation will lead to the awakening of *prajña* only when it is practised with *śraddhā* (faith), *vīrya* (enthusiasm), *smṛti* (memory) and *samādhi* (concentration).⁴ Buddhist scriptures speak of six *pāramitas* or extraordinary virtues which convey the spiritual aspirant to the other shore of life known as Nirvana. Without practising the first five of these *pāramitas*, namely, *dāna* (charity), *śīla* (morality), *kṣānti* (forbearance), *vīrya* (zeal) and

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 3, p. 193.

4. Cf. Patañjali's *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.20.

dhyāna (absorption), it is not possible to attain the last one, *prajña*.

Sraddhā, faith, is a fundamental necessity in spiritual life, even in Yoga. It is a form of intuition or precognition which serves as the primary base for all kinds of knowledge.⁵ Aspirants endowed with childlike unconditional faith attain quick progress in spiritual life. One reason why meditation does not produce much effect in some people is that they harbour so many doubts deep within.

From faith rises *vīrya* (zeal). 'What is zeal?' asks the tenth-century Buddhist teacher Śāntideva, and answers, 'Enthusiasm for the Good. What is its opposite (i.e. what are the obstacles to it)? Lethargy, evil tendencies, sorrow and self-condemnation.'⁶ These obstacles, especially the last one which manifests itself as false humility, sense of guilt, weakness and self-hatred, are caused by lack of faith in the purity and power of one's true Self, the Atman. 'Our first duty is not to hate ourselves', says Swami Vivekananda, 'because to advance we must have faith in ourselves first and then in God. He who has no faith in himself can never have faith in God.'⁷

The test of true spiritual zeal is constant recollection (*smṛti*) of the goal. If we devote only one or two hours a day to meditation, it may take a several years to bring about any significant change in us. But the practice of constant recollection brings about a rapid transformation of consciousness. Even in ordinary day-to-day

life most of our mistakes, sufferings and delusions are caused by our unconscious way of living and thinking.⁸ In Southern Buddhism (Hinayana or Theravada) the maintenance of constant *smṛti* (*sati* in Pali) is considered so important that even meditation (*dhyāna*) is thought to be lower to it. Spiritual recollection is of two types: objective and subjective. The first one is constantly remembering the object of one's meditation or devotion, namely, one's Chosen Deity; this is called *smaraṇa*. The other is constantly maintaining self-awareness, the witness attitude. In Buddhist scriptures this self-remembrance is called *samprajanya* or *vipaśyana* (*vipassana* in Pali).

When either the subjective or the objective type of recollection is practised, true meditation known as *samādhi*, conscious absorption,⁹ becomes natural. In the fullness of time this blossoms into *prajña*, illumination.

Utilizing the power of prajña

The ultimate goal of life is everlasting liberation, happiness and fulfilment, and it cannot be attained without realizing God, the infinite Reality. But one can have some real understanding of the Infinite only after the awakening of *prajña*, the light

8. Śāntideva says, 'If the mind which is like an unruly elephant is tied down securely with the rope of *smṛti* all fear will go and all blessedness will come'.

बन्धश्चेत् चित्तमातङ्गः स्मृतिरज्ज्वा समन्ततः ।
भयमस्तं गतं सर्वं कृत्स्नं कल्याणमागतम् ॥

Bodhicaryāvatāra 5.3.

9. Here 'samādhi' simply means deep meditation or *dhyāna*, in accordance with the context of *Yoga-Sūtra* 1.20. True *samādhi* is a transcendental state and is identical with the experience of *Prajña*. Patañjali has evidently been much influenced by the terminology of Buddhist Yoga,

5. As a matter of fact, according to some Indian philosophers, all the different types of sensory and rational knowledge are only different forms of re-cognition (*pratyabhijñā*) of a primordial self-intuition.

6. किं वीर्यं कुशलोत्साहस्तद्विपक्षः क उच्यते ।

आलस्यं कुत्सितासक्तिर्विषादात्मावमन्यना ॥

Śāntideva, *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 7.1.

7. *Complete Works* (1977) Vol. 1, p. 38.

of the *pratyagātman* or inner Self. The main function of *prajña* is to lead the aspirant to the Infinite. The method of awakening *prajña* and the method of realizing the Infinite differ from each other in several respects. The former is a partly unconscious, faltering, trial-and-error search, whereas the latter is a fully conscious, divinely guided attunement. Both need purification of the mind of two different types. The awakening of *prajña* is the result of 'gross purification', the Dark Night of Sense as St. John of the Cross calls it; it does not destroy the seeds of past experiences (*samskaras*) but only keeps them in check. The attainment of the Infinite calls for 'subtle purification', the Dark Night of the Spirit as St. John of the Cross calls it; it destroys the *samskaras*. It is the light of *prajña* that burns up the seeds. Thus *prajña* purifies and leads the soul to the infinite Reality.

The second function of *prajña* is the integration of personality. Before embarking on the quest for the Infinite the defects of body and mind are to be eliminated, their workings are to be harmonized and the entire personality is to be completely transmuted. The whole process involves three types of integration.

Integration of the body

During the early stages of spiritual practice, the maintenance of good health is not as important as the maintenance of intense aspiration and purity of mind; in fact, too much concern for the body could even be an obstacle. But after the awakening of *prajña* when the quest for the Infinite begins, good health becomes an important determinant. For it is impossible to dive deep into the ocean of Light if the body is ill, nor can an unhealthy body

withstand the impact of higher spiritual experiences.

With the exception of some highly infectious diseases, most of the constitutional illnesses like alimentary disorders, asthma, arthritis, high blood pressure, etc. are caused by the malfunction of life-energy called *prāṇa* (*chi* in Chinese, *ki* in Japanese). The Western system of medicine is inadequate to deal with these troubles. What is needed is a holistic approach, and here the Indian system of health care known as Haṭha Yoga provides valuable help to the spiritual aspirant. Haṭha Yoga consists of seven steps: *ṣaṭ-karma* (six processes of internal cleansing, like washing the intestines etc.), *āsana* (bodily postures), *mudrā* (bodily 'tying-up'), *prāṇāyāma*, and the three steps in meditation known as *pratyāhāra*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Of these only the first four steps are usually stressed.

The important point to note here is this: these physical processes no doubt increase blood circulation, relax the muscles and tone up the internal organs, but their main purpose is to harmonize the flow of *Prāṇa*. However, the regulation of *Prāṇa* can as well be done simply by focussing *prajña*, even without all those postures, washing and breath control which may often produce more harm than good if improperly practised. Once the *prajña* is awakened, the aspirant has to learn to open up, through meditation, the *Prāṇa* of the defective organ or system to the light of *prajña*. In this way it is possible to get rid of some of the chronic illnesses. More important, the body becomes, instead of an obstacle, a help in the higher spiritual quest.

Integration of the unconscious

Most of our problems, difficulties and conflicts are created by our wrong attitudes,

emotions and reactions which, in their turn, have been shaped by the experiences of childhood and of previous births. The impressions of these past experiences are stored in the dark unknown regions of the unconscious. By focussing the light of *prajña* towards these underground catacombs we can dig out and destroy the seeds of fear, lust and hatred sown during the early years.

When the light of *prajña* reveals more and more of the dark chambers of the unconscious, we become more familiar and friendly with our own lower self. It will not again work against us, as it used to do, but will cooperate with us in our search for God. This is the only way to get rid of the feeling of insecurity and self-alienation that many people suffer from. Psychic energy which had formerly been wasted in repressing evil tendencies gets conserved and this greatly improves our work efficiency and our ability to face the day-to-day problems of life.

Our present image of ourselves has been shaped by the opinions of others which we have been hearing from childhood. The experience of the luminous higher Self transfigures our self-image and endows us with a higher dignity which will protect us from temptations and will enable us to remain unaffected by the ups and downs of fortune and friendship.

Integration of dream life

Dream life represents a totally different dimension of human existence. Though it bears the marks of waking experiences, it is an independent life beyond the control of ordinary conscious efforts. Very often the dream life goes contrary to the norms of waking life, and Dr. Jekyll of the waking state becomes Mr. Hyde of the dream state. As long as the dream life remains impure, spiritual life will be incomplete and discontinuous. Can one's dream life be altered? Yes, it is possible, provided one succeeds in contacting the dreaming self. Through meditation we can go deeper and deeper into our consciousness until we reach a point where only a thin wall separates the dream and waking states. At this time by focussing the light of *prajña* across the barrier we can contact the dreaming self. Once the dreaming self is recognized, he becomes our friend. The light of *prajña* purifies him, and this will alter the whole pattern of dreaming. This is a part of a more comprehensive Yogic technique known as *Yoga-nidra*. There are other ways of influencing dream life, but none so effective as the focussing of *prajña*.

Thus we see that the awakened *prajña* helps us to lead a healthier, purer, more efficient and purposeful life and, above all, leads us to the portals of the immense possibilities of Divine Life.

SPIRITUAL TREASURE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

ANN MYREN

(Continued from the previous issue)

II

Now let us examine some of the possible effects the experience of nirvikalpa samādhi had on Swami Vivekananda. Of course the obvious one is that he had the ultimate true knowledge of humanity and the world. By his own experience he knew that somehow we have all become deluded and are in a sense hypnotized and that we desperately need 'strong medicine' to end our state of delusion. Further, his consciousness had permanently changed, having gone beyond the restrictions of the mind and senses. These are the minimum effects of knowledge of the Absolute. Clearly we can see that his knowledge far transcended all cultures ; it had become universal. Although to Westerners Swamiji seems the most Western of men, it is a fact that he was born and reared in India, and steeped in Hindu culture. But granting that his Western education was broad and thorough, it could not approach the depth and intensity of the spiritual education he received from Sri Ramakrishna. He mastered many Indian spiritual disciplines, and yet when we read Swami Vivekananda's teachings today we find only a few traces of Indian cultural practices. Swamiji himself often declared that he taught only the Upaniṣads. That is to say, his message, which is a universal one, expresses those universal Upaniṣadic truths that underlie Hindu culture, and yet transcend all cultural boundaries.

He himself said that he had a message to give, and he had no time to be 'sweet to the world'. He denied that he had a 'work'; he was, after all, a sannyāsin ; he was free.

But he further said that he had a message which he would give after his own fashion. He said, 'I will neither Hinduise my message, nor Christianise it, nor make it any 'ise' in the world. I will only my-ise it and that is all. Liberty, Mukti is all my religion, and everything that tries to curb it, I will avoid by fight or flight.'³⁵ We know Swami Vivekananda taught only what came from his own experience and that, therefore, the source of these words was his experience of nirvikalpa samādhi. In the same letter he said, 'Come out, if you can, of this network of foolishness they call the *world*.' Here we see he shows the way to liberation, renunciation—coming out of this world. Let us take these two ideas, liberation or mukti, and renunciation or vairāgya, two of the Swami's greatest spiritual treasures and see what application they have to collective humanity and to the individual person.

As we know Swamiji was born in 1863, and it was at this time that significant intellectual events were taking place in the West. Charles Darwin published *The Origin of the Species* in 1858, and Karl Marx worked on and published *Das Kapital* in the years 1876-1894. The works of these thinkers and the rise of science dealt death blows to the spiritual view of humanity which had been in slow decline in the West since the Renaissance. By the end of the century Sigmund Freud had come onto the scene with a completely biological view of man, and the long trend of materialism reached its apogee. The

³⁵. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati, Almora: Swami Chidatmananda, 1964) p. 252.

materialistic view of man and society became the dominant view in the twentieth century. And it followed that empiricism with its concomitant method, science, would define the means of knowing and the validity of knowledge. That is, what is real is what we get through our senses, and further, there is no reality beyond sense knowledge. The world made great technological progress by these methods, but as we know, we are now struggling with countless problems ranging from the possible destruction of all life on the planet to the isolation and alienation of the individual.

Although we see the negative side of the forces of materialism, we should remember that in spite of its excesses, we have in the world many nations which have as their goal the improvement of the condition of humanity. We are no doubt critical of the totalitarian regimes which force people to live and think in certain ways, but at the same time we see that this has become the age of the common man. The methods of the new age are surely debatable, but the goal, the improvement of the condition of humanity is not. Yet in spite of our great strides forward, the condition of much of the world is wretched. Regardless of our acquisition and use of extensive scientific knowledge, the power to control events in the interest of all people seems beyond our reach.

Now we are ready to consider the man Swami Vivekananda and see which of his spiritual treasures are essential to men and women for the coming decades. First, we know that he was a Jivanmukta, living free. Further Sri Ramakrishna said that Narendra belonged to the class of the ever-free. That is, he was not just free in this life, but he had been born free and had never been bound. The Master also said that he was never entangled in the world, and when a little older he would go

directly toward God and that he would teach. We see that these words were prophetic, and as the years went by, Swamiji had many experiences which bore out the truth of Sri Ramakrishna's statements.

Swami Vivekananda was free from any kind of egotism; his heart was free from maya, his intellect was illumined and his secular knowledge immense. His understanding of men and women and the nature of the world was a true understanding free from the usual biases imposed by relative knowledge. He wrote, when discussing the problem of good and evil in the world, that it is only possible to do good when the Self has been realized because '...such a soul has known and got the control of the material of which both good and evil are manufactured, and he alone can manifest one or the other as he likes, and we know he manifests only good. This is the Jivanmukta—the living free—The goal of Vedanta as of all other philosophies.'³⁶

The greatness of the living-free can be judged by their capacity to resist becoming one with the Absolute and being, therefore, able to live in the relative world. As Swamiji said, if the jivanmukta is able to live in the world, he becomes a power for tremendous good. Such was his own case. One use of that divine energy was the power to give his spiritual treasure to us through his teachings. Of course Swamiji did this, and in so doing he fulfilled his role as a world teacher.

Another incident tells us about his relationship to humanity. He said, when in San Francisco in 1900, 'You know, I may have to be born again. You see, I have fallen in love with man.' Sri Ramakrishna himself said that Naren was the incarnation of man. This has meaning when we understand the Indian legend of Nara-

³⁶. *Complete Works*, (1956) vol. 6, p. 380.

Narayana which states that at the very beginning of creation the Lord was incarnated in two divine forms, Nara (Man) and Narayana (God). These forms exist simultaneously and will last as long as this creation exists. It was in reference to this idea that the Master said that Naren was the incarnation of man.³⁷ Who would be better fitted to teach all humanity, all men and women that they are divine, not related to divinity, not a spark of divinity, but the whole of the divine, Brahman-Atman?

To review, Swami Vivekananda was born in a period of critical historical developments for both the East and West. He combined in his education both the Eastern spiritual disciplines and Western secular knowledge. Having a Western education, he was suited for a world mission because the dominant force in history in the nineteenth century was the West. He was born ever-free; he could not be deluded, and consequently had the power to do great good. He had complete and perfect knowledge of humanity's spiritual nature, and thorough knowledge of the condition of men and women. He was the incarnation of man who had spiritual power to give men and women, and that power would shift the direction of the world's history.

A new age is now upon us, one in which we are seeing a decline in the force of materialism and a rise in the power of the Spirit. Many thinkers have indicated that there appears to be a shift taking place in the consciousness of humanity. Swami Vivekananda said, '...In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilizations that Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was

born. In this age, as on the one hand people have to be intensely practical, so on the other hand they have to acquire deep spiritual knowledge.'³⁸ There has been a long and deep belief in the Indian tradition that Mahapurushas are born, teach, and reestablish dharma, religion. Sri Ramakrishna was such a person. This new religion or dharma, which Sri Ramakrishna commanded Swami Vivekananda to teach, has several distinct characteristics. But first we must examine the ideals of the new era and second, the nature of the new religion and the means by which humanity will pursue it to achieve the new ideals. It appears that Swami Vivekananda's spiritual treasure is not to be conferred upon a few spiritual seekers only, but upon the whole human race.

We have, as previously mentioned, embarked upon a new era which is centred on humanity. The number of social movements alone in this century is adequate evidence for such an assertion. In these social movements we generally see that the two ideals of freedom and equality are most prominent. These ideals, which had their present-day origin in the Age of the Enlightenment, are increasingly demanded by men and women. Now in this case, although we are dealing with social matters, we still find that the ultimate source of ideals is Spirit, Brahman-Atman or God. It is from the knowledge of the highest that we derive the highest ideals whether spiritual or secular. Spirit is the source of inspiration and is brought into society by great souls.

It is natural that people should want freedom and equality for these are attributes of their true nature, the Atman. The Atman or Self is absolutely free and exists equally

37. Swami Ashokananda, *Swami Vivekananda in San Francisco* (San Francisco: Vedanta Society of Northern California, 1969) p. 13.

38. *Complete Works*, (1956) vol. 6, p. 463.

in all. So to seek freedom and equality is to seek the reality of one's own Self. And of course in today's world, much of humanity, and certainly those in power, seem to seek freedom in the sense world and equality in the political and economic spheres. This is not to say that we should not have institutions which are directed toward freedom and equality. But we have to start at the source, Spirit, if we are going to make freedom and equality actual living forces in the world.

Swami Vivekananda had, as the basis of his message of freedom and equality, the freedom of nirvikalpa samādhi. Like Prometheus, who reached into the heavens and stole the fire to give to humanity, Swamiji ascended to the Absolute and brought humanity actual freedom and equality. Because these two ideals have their real source in the Absolute, we must find out what we can do to shift our focus from material freedom and equality to spiritual freedom and equality. But before we can do that we must understand the real nature of humanity.

Swami Vivekananda's concept of humanity and the human world of action was broad and free because it was based on the divinity of man. That there is no difference between Brahman-Atman and the person was an entirely new teaching for the West. For India this message had been taught, of course, but it had never been taught to the masses. Further, Swamiji taught that the practice of his teaching is not to be confined to the purely religious side of our lives, but it is to be infused into the whole of life in order to bring men and women to a new development of their capacities. Whether these capacities are practical, scientific, intellectual, aesthetic, or religious, Swamiji's aim was that men and women should realize the totality of their natures, both their own divinity which is identical with God and also their other

potentialities.³⁹ This emphasis on the human side of development derives directly from the fact that Swami Vivekananda was the incarnation of man. He thought and felt that there was no difference between secular and spiritual knowledge. Everything is a revelation of Reality and is really Spirit. The Real appears in terms of our mind as intellectual, in terms of our senses as physical or material and in terms of our heart as aesthetic or emotional. But it is always the same reality. This profound teaching, the visible God, is the bridge from the relative to the Absolute.

Now we can try to understand the nature of Swami Vivekananda's perception of humanity from his words. For us words make concepts; concepts are intellectual constructs embracing a number of ideas, a generalization, usually based on a sense perception which is evaluated by the intellect. This is, in part, how the lower mind functions. For Swamiji, after his very high spiritual experience, what we call a concept, for example, the divinity of man, was a continuous spiritual experience. His awareness had changed. When he was in London teaching and lecturing he wrote, 'Some days I get into a sort of ecstasy and I do see evil is a delusion.'⁴⁰ When we experience evil or, for that matter, good, it is cognized by the senses and evaluated by the intellect. Swamiji's experience was of the non-reality of evil. He lived and worked in a higher plane of consciousness than we. As Swami Saradananda said, everything Swamiji taught was from his own experience. It might be more accurate to say that *everything he taught was his own experience*. His consciousness had undergone a permanent transformation. He directly perceived the divinity of man. He

³⁹. Ashokananda, *Swami Vivekananda*, (1969) p. 13.

⁴⁰. *Complete Works*, (1956) vol. 6, p. 366.

had crossed the bridge from the relative to the Absolute and experienced men and women as Spirit.

Here is an invaluable spiritual treasure. Give men and women true knowledge of themselves and all human actions will become centred in the Real, and thus all talents will flourish as they are freed from the restraint of narrow materialism. It is the control of nature which has given us a powerful technology. But imagine the effect of the control over the *senses* by numbers of men and women. The harnessing of that power derived from sense control will transform the world. Swamiji himself said, 'All healthy social changes are manifestations of spiritual power working within, and if they are strong and well-adjusted, society will arrange itself.'⁴¹ There are two obstacles to social and individual change: adherence to outworn tradition and wrong metaphysical assumptions. The shifting of the current of history rests upon our ability to experience divinity. Swami Vivekananda *knew* we could change history.

What is the nature of this Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta which will inspire humanity to seek the truth in their lives and to manifest their highest human potential? First, one of Sri Ramakrishna's basic teachings came from his practice of all of the main religious denominations of India, including Islam and Christianity. He was convinced by these practices that all disciplines led to the non-dual state, the Absolute. According to Swami Saradananda, the Master said, 'It is the finale, my child, the acme, which comes of itself in the life of all aspirants as the ultimate development of their love of God. Know it to be the last word of all faiths, and the faiths are only paths (and not the goal).'⁴² Of course we understand him to mean the culmina-

tion of either the love of Truth, the impersonal, or the love of God, the personal. Vedanta is a path, and nirvikalpa samādhi is the goal whether we worship the personal God or follow the path of the impersonal. Swami Saradananda further said that the Master regarded the ceremonies, ideas and action which helped individuals or societies toward the non-dual plane as higher than others.⁴³

Let us examine two of the ways which will take us to our ultimate goal, becoming one with the Absolute. Oneness with the Absolute is exactly what Swami Vivekananda had in mind when he stressed the divinity of man, which means that we are to view ourselves as complete and perfect divinity, Ātman-Brahman. Now we know that Swamiji did not say we should not worship the personal God. He spoke about such worship often, but he further said that the highest worship laid down by bhakti (love) was the worship of man. Clearly, he did not want the worship of God to be confined to temples and churches. Thus we need to stand on the truth of the Self, that we are absolutely divine, whether we are on the path of the personal or impersonal God. This is one of the great treasures of Swami Vivekananda; we start with our own divinity, see other persons as divine, then adopt whatever ancillary disciplines we need to support these two fundamental practices. When we do this we have taken one of Swami Vivekananda's greatest spiritual treasures and made it our own.

If we could really get it through our heads and hearts that we were the Ātman, divinity itself, can you imagine what a tremendous push our spiritual life would get? All of the weaknesses we so dearly love to dwell on, all of the hurts others do to us, all of the smallness would be replaced

41. *Complete Works*, (1959) vol. 5, p. 415.

42. Saradananda, *The Great Master*, (1952) p. 258.

43. Saradananda, *The Great Master*, (1952) p. 598.

by an invigorating freedom flowing from the Self. An identity centred in the Ātman would revolutionize our spiritual and secular lives. We would act from the highest motive to the highest goal, letting go of the sense of accomplishment, the sense of failure, the petty likes and the devastating jealousies. Such an identity does not give us license to commit any act we desire. We must be honest, cautious and circumspect as we practise this truth. We must constantly remember that Spirit is pure and is not realized through actions catering to the lower self, but by actions which transcend the limitations of the empirical self. If we practise being the pure, infinite Self, then all of our actions will begin to conform to the highest ethical, moral and spiritual principles. This practical method of change is one of Swamiji's great spiritual treasures. We can change ourselves and we can change the current of history.

Swamiji said, 'The masses will always have the *person*, the higher ones the principle. We want both. But principles are universal, [persons are not]. Therefore stick to the principles he [Sri Rama-krishna] taught, let people think whatever they like of his person...'⁴⁴ We know from our own observations that this is an age where the universality of humanity is stressed through knowledge and supported by the intermingling of various cultures and peoples. And we must remember Swamiji's state of consciousness when he wrote and spoke. He was not making his observations from the standpoint of empirical knowledge alone. Rather he was thinking and expressing himself from a high plane of consciousness. He said, 'The eternal, omniscient, omnipresent is a principle, not a person.' It is discovered, not created. We are embodiments of that

principle. The realized souls have blown away their little personalities.⁴⁵ We should strive to do the same. When our personalities are blown away as those of the *jivan-muktas* are, we will be absolutely selfless, we will be *jivan-muktas*. Is it too much to speak about large numbers of men and women becoming *jivan-muktas*? Swami Vivekananda spoke of '...every person becoming as intensely practical in the scientific world as in the spiritual. Then harmony will pervade the whole world...' and men and women will become *jivan-muktas*—free whilst living.⁴⁶ Men and women will stand as the embodiments of the eternal, infinite, omniscient principle.

Now we come to the path of worship of the personal God, the second way of attaining our ultimate goal. If we blow away our personalities as the great holy ones have done, what will we have left? Of course we will have principle. And if we worship the personal God we must not kill the principle for the person, as Swamiji indicated. How then can we have pure devotion? Perhaps if we start from the basis that we are Spirit, the Ātman, and the personal God is the infinite Spirit, we can solve the problem. Here we have the worship of the Spirit by the Spirit. When we feel devotion and we want to experience the love of God and the love of God for us, we will experience this love in the freedom of Spirit. Our love will be vast, free and pure. We are, after all, only manifesting the bliss aspect of our infinite Self, our real Self, when we feel devotion. We will not be entrapped in our own small personalities, weaseling and worming our way to God. Let us go to God with infinite love, and let us go in freedom and strength. Yes, Swamiji taught a man-

⁴⁴. *Complete Works*, (1956) vol. 6, p. 362.

⁴⁵. *Complete Works*, (1964) vol. 7, p. 496; vol. 8, p. 31.

⁴⁶. *Complete Works*, (1976) vol. 2, p. 188.

making religion. And by his own definition, he meant that we should fully perceive something of the Infinite presence in our own hearts.⁴⁷ We can take whatever God gives us. If it is love we will accept it; if it pain and suffering, we will be unmoved for we are the Infinite One. This is the worship of the personal based on principle, the principle of our own divinity.

Here we have been discussing principles, true spiritual treasures which Swami Vivekananda has given us. As previously stated Sri Ramakrishna commented on spiritual practices and said that those practices which help us toward the non-dual path are the highest. Now let us examine the practices based on principles which Swamiji gave us that will take us to the transcendent spiritual treasure, nirvikalpa samādhi. Perhaps it is too bold to suggest that we have nirvikalpa samādhi, but after all, it is the experience of our own Self.

Swami Vivekananda was a revolutionary thinker. He often said startling things, and he even said once before a lecture that he was going to throw a few bombs. We can get an idea of the explosive nature of some of his statements if we read part of a letter which he wrote to his fellow disciples in the fall of 1894. He wrote, 'If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect. The universal aspect of God means this world, and worshipping it means serving it—this indeed is work, not indulging in ceremonials.'⁴⁸ We see that Swamiji expected all of the monks of the Order to serve the living God, which they do. This idea which may seem familiar to us was an entirely new direction for an order of

monks in India, and it had its origin directly in an experience of Sri Ramakrishna.

One day at Dakshineswar the Master was commenting on the religion of Lord Chaitanya which included compassion for all living creatures. When the Master uttered the words, 'compassion for all living creatures,' he went into samādhi and after a while came back to a semi-conscious state of mind. He then said to himself, 'Compassion for creatures! Compassion for creatures! You fool! An insignificant worm crawling on earth, you show compassion to others! Who are you to show compassion? No it cannot be. Not compassion for others, but rather the service of man, recognizing him to be a veritable manifestation of God.'⁴⁹ Of course Sri Ramakrishna spent the first part of his life serving and worshipping God and having the experiences which made it possible for him to spend the second part of this life serving men and women as a teacher. Now if we take Swami Vivekananda's interpretation of the Master's words, we are to serve the man-God; we are to see humanity as divine so that part of our service becomes the recognition of the divinity in men and women.

Naren, as he was then called, heard the words of the Master and said something more which will give us a better understanding of the depth and breadth of this teaching of Sri Ramakrishna's. Naren said that he understood from the words of the Master how the ideals of bhakti and Vedanta were to be reconciled. Here when Sri Ramakrishna said Vedanta, he meant the view that the divine is the impersonal transcendent Ātman-Brahman. The Master had said that generally those persons practising Vedanta leave the world, and undertake their dry practices away from

⁴⁷. *Complete Works*, (1956) vol. 6, p. 64.

⁴⁸. *Complete Works*, (1956) vol. 6, p. 265.

⁴⁹. *Life*, (1979) vol. 1, pp. 138-9.

the bustle of human society. But Naren said that he had understood from the words of the Master that the '...ideal of Vedanta ...can be practised even at home and applied to all aspects of daily life.' Naren went on to say that Sri Ramakrishna meant that God alone had manifested himself in the world. He is both immanent and transcendent. And if we view man and God this way, there will be no room for jealousy, pity, or arrogance. But by serving man and knowing him to be the manifestation of God, our hearts will be purified and in a short time the aspirant will realize that he is a part of God—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.⁵⁰ It seems that this experience which Naren had with Sri Ramakrishna became the essence of his ideas of karma yoga. And this teaching coupled with his great heart undoubtedly influenced the Swami in his formulation of his world mission which places before humanity a powerful and necessary spiritual treasure.

Here then is the perfect practice, karma yoga, which will help us all whether we are attracted to the path of devotion, bhakti, or the path of knowledge, jñānam. If we are inclined toward devotion then in our karma yoga we will practice serving the Lord's own creation or we might serve the Lord as the indwelling being in every person. If we are more given to jñānam or knowledge, then we can discriminate and try to see each person as the Ātman or else intuitively grasp the whole creation as Brahman. In either case we will have taken for our own one of Swamiji's spiritual treasures, discrimination. When we separate the unreal from the real, personal or impersonal, we stand on the sure ground of truth. And further, we have taken as a guide for action a principle, discrimination, that has been proven by saints and sages as a way of God-realization. Naturally as

we take this attitude of seeing God everywhere, in all men and women, we will spontaneously be helped to develop dispassion, vairāgya. When we begin to realize that all creation belongs to God or that it is all Brahman, we can begin to act freely without the restriction of an overbearing ego. That is, we begin to become selfless, and in so doing, we come closer to our own reality, divinity.

Also this great treasure, karma yoga, has another benefit for us. If we can raise our minds so that we feel we are in contact with divinity, we find that our concentration improves immensely. We stop worrying about how things will come out, if they will be acceptable, or if we have done a good enough job; distracting thoughts will disappear, and we will work in freedom and joy. It sounds a little too good to be true, but we can surely see that if we are absorbed in divinity, then our small self will disappear from our actions. Our feeling of limitation will be gone. If we are dedicated to the practice of serving the divine in others, then we are on the high road to transcendental experience, Swamiji's treasure.

We all want the experience of God, otherwise why would we take up the practice of religion? One purpose of religion is to raise our consciousness so that we may know the truth. Swami Vivekananda never tired of encouraging people to aspire to the truth, to act on the truth and to realize the truth. We know that one means of the realization of truth is meditation. Sri Ramakrishna said to Naren early in their relationship that Naren was *dhyana siddha*, perfect in meditation. Because he was perfect in meditation a good part of his mind was plunged in meditation all of the time.⁵¹ We have evidence of this from

⁵⁰. *Life*, (1979) vol. 1, p. 139.

⁵¹. Ashokananda, *Swami Vivekananda*, (1969) p. 8.

his biographies which give us some idea of his intense spiritual practices in India. The references to his spiritual practices and realizations in this country are somewhat scant, but as mentioned before, he did have nirvikalpa samādhi when he was here. Also Sister Nivedita wrote in a letter that he had said about himself at a New York class that, 'I was a fool—a teacher has no right to let himself go into trance.'⁵² There is little reason to think that this is the only time it happened. It is a fact that by the time Swamiji returned to India the first time, he was continuously in a superconscious state. He had reached this high state where he remained.⁵³

We should remember these facts about the Swami's spiritual state for three reasons. First, he spoke from these high states and his teachings proceed from the direct consciousness of Truth. Second, he was able to affect those around him by the condition of his mind. When he was in samādhi in that New York class, one of his disciples called '...[it] the best lesson he ever gave her!'⁵⁴ And third, he was able to give power when he initiated people, which greatly helped them to undertake spiritual practices such as meditation. It can certainly be said that meditation was his gift to America. Historically, whenever a very great soul comes and gives his power to the people of a nation, those people become transformed and their transformation causes a deep current of spirituality in the society. He founded societies, and left groups of people who followed his teachings and practices of meditation. Look what has happened in the last twenty years with regard to meditation in American

society. There was little widespread knowledge of these practices in 1960; today there are many different groups trying to help people toward a spiritual way of life. Meditation has become an accepted practice by a wide variety of spiritual seekers, psychologists, and persons who simply want a little tranquility in their lives. The great spiritual treasure of meditation was brought to this country by Swami Vivekananda. And it is only now that we are beginning to see the emergence of a society which has become ready for the liberal and strength-giving teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

The Swami lectured and held classes in both America and England from 1893 until 1896 when he set sail for India from England, arriving in Colombo, Ceylon, early in 1897. He had returned from the West triumphant, a sannyāsin who had travelled to the West, with the age-old teachings of the Vedas. He had taken the great treasure of India, her spiritual truth, and given it to the world.

Swami Vivekananda continued to work in India, but his work was quite different from the Western work. He taught both monks and lay persons, but he did not lecture extensively. He also did two very important things: he founded the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, an organization dedicated to serving the world, and he was able with the help of an English devotee to secure the property for Belur Math. Both of these accomplishments gave a sound foundation to his Master's work. And although Swamiji was often in conflict over whether to abandon the world and go to the Himalayas or to struggle with the work his Master had given him, he was a great karma yogin. His selflessness, his spirit of service, his love of humanity always won out over the everattractive idea of losing himself in samadhi and reopening the

⁵². Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, (1982) vol. 1, p. 96.

⁵³. Ashokananda, *Swami Vivekananda*, (1969) p. 15.

⁵⁴. Basu, *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, (1982) vol. 1, p. 96.

treasure-box in which Sri Ramakrishna had locked up his treasure.

Swamiji had two significant spiritual experiences during this period in India. These two experiences tell us much about his spiritual stature as well as his own inner spiritual direction. The first of these events was at Amarnath in Kashmir where he visited the cave in which there is an ice image representing Shiva. The trip there was both arduous and treacherous. He prepared himself to enter the cave by covering his body with ashes. He entered the cave, and prostrated before the great ice emblem. And then Shiva appeared before him and granted him the grace of Amarnath, not to die until he so chose. This, of course, calls to mind Sri Ramakrishna's statement that when Naren realized who he was he would no longer stay in the body.⁵⁵ The Swami's health was permanently affected by this pilgrimage, either from the cold and physical hardships or from the spiritual experience.

Swamiji was in Amarnath at the end of July, 1897, and by September his mind had shifted, and he had become absorbed in the Mother Goddess Kālī. It was during this period that he wrote the poem, 'Kali the Mother', which was based on his deep mystical experiences at this time. He had seen the mad play of the Mother in which '...Terror is Thy name,/Death is in Thy breath,/And every shaking step/ Destroys a world for e'er./Thou Time, the All-destroyer!/Come O Mother, come!⁵⁶ This mood affected him deeply and permanently. He insisted to his disciples, 'Only by worship of the Terrible, can the Terrible Itself be overcome and Immortality gained. Meditate on death! Meditate on death! Worship the Terrible, the Terrible! And the Mother Herself is Brahman! Even

Her curse is blessing. The heart must become a cremation-ground; pride, selfishness, and desire all burnt into ashes. Then, and then alone, will the Mother come!⁵⁷ Following these experiences he went off by himself and did not return to his disciples for about five weeks. When he did come back he was transformed. He told his disciples that while he was by himself he had pondered over the desecration of a Kali temple, and how people could have allowed such sacrilege. He thought that had he been present he would not have allowed such a thing to happen; he would have laid down his life to protect the Mother. At this point he heard the Mother saying, 'What, even if unbelievers should enter My temples, and defile My Images! What is that to you? Do *you* protect Me? Or do *I* protect you?' He said little more about this experience to his disciples other than, '...but spiritually, spiritually I was not bound down.'⁵⁸ Another incident from this period of Swamiji's life must be mentioned. One day he came to his disciples in simple sannyāsin dress with a look of austerity on his face. He quoted from his own poem, 'Kali the Mother', and said, 'It all came true, every word of it; and I have proved it, *for I have hugged the form of Death!*⁵⁹

These two experiences are probably only a sampling of his realizations of God with form. He had countless spiritual experiences during his days with Sri Ramakrishna. He must have experienced many forms of God. And his teaching demonstrated that he was open to the worship of any form which suited the aspirant. However, he never taught the worship of Shiva or Kali publicly, or for that matter any form of God, but invariably emphasized

⁵⁵. *Life*, (1979) vol. 2, p. 373.

⁵⁶. *Complete Works*, (1955) vol. 4, p. 384.

⁵⁷. *Life*, (1915) vol. 3, pp. 283-4.

⁵⁸. *Life*, (1915) vol. 3, p. 285.

⁵⁹. *Life*, (1915) vol. 3, p. 286.

the path of the impersonal. To command both these approaches to divine experience requires tremendous energy, concentration, austerity and wholehearted desire. Imagine what a combination of forces the Swami had mastered. And finally, we can see from his relationship with Shiva and Kali what an extraordinary devotee he was. His devotion to God was infinite.

It is clear from these experiences and from his relationship to Sri Ramakrishna that one of his very greatest spiritual treasures was devotion. But it was not devotion which sprang from any sense of limitation. It was devotion which poured from an infinite soul, a soul which knew no boundaries. And this was a spiritual treasure that he gave us; if we are to be devotees and worship the personal God, we must do it from the position that we are infinite. No begging to God, but demanding—standing up and facing strength with strength, and power with power.

In 1899 Swamiji made his second trip to the West. He returned to India late in 1900 and for the next year and a half he worked in India, instructing the monks and lay persons and directing affairs of the Math and Mission. Sometimes he travelled to other parts of India, but his headquarters was Belur Math. One time at Belur Math the Swami came downstairs from his room in a high state of spiritual consciousness. He pointed to the sannyasins and brahma-charins who were there and exclaimed, '...where shall you go to seek Brahman? He is immanent in all beings. Here, here is the visible Brahman! Shame to those who neglecting the visible Brahman set their minds on other things! Here is the Brahman before you as tangible as a fruit in one's hand! Can't you see! Here—here—here is this Brahman.' He spoke these words with such power that those present had a '...strange perception of Reality'. Swami Premananda was returning from his

bath in the Ganges. When Swamiji saw him he exclaimed, 'Here—here is the visible Brahman! Here is the visible Brahman!' When he heard these words, his gurubhai stopped and fell into a deep meditation. About a quarter of an hour passed...and then Swamiji said, 'Go to your worship.'⁶⁰

Yes, the Swami had great power, perhaps so much that his body was weakened. Although his health had somewhat improved on his trip to the West, when he returned to India he was not well, and he had some serious bouts with various illnesses. In 1902 he was only thirty-nine, but as summer came Swamiji's life was nearing its end. It is very probable that he knew he was going to leave the body. Things which he said indicated that the end was near, and if we remember the promise of Amarnath, we know that he could leave the body when he chose to. On July 4th, a day he greatly revered for its promise of liberty for humanity, he went to the chapel of the monastery, closed all the shutters, and meditated alone for three hours. He spent the rest of the day teaching Sanskrit to members of the monastery, walking with Swami Premananda, and doing other things. He was also heard to remark to himself that day, 'If there were another Vivekananda, he would have understood what Vivekananda has done! And yet, how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!'⁶¹ This is a most unusual remark for Swamiji to make. But if we can glimpse his achievement we will be able to understand the remark. When evening approached Swamiji lay down on a mat on the floor to rest, and he asked one of his disciples to fan him. He appeared to be sleeping lightly when he took two quick breaths, his hand shook slightly and

^{60.} *Life*, (1918) vol. 4, p. 46.

^{61.} *Life*, (1979) vol. 2, p. 652.

he seemed to go into samādhi. Swamiji had apparently availed himself of the promise of Amarnath and left the body to regain his treasure, his native state, the Absolute.⁶²

He came for such a short time; he worked hard for the good of all people. He may have moments of darkness about the work and his mission, but he never despaired about the real nature of humanity.

He held out the highest for every man and woman. He taught us to realize our own nature, to find the truth, to serve our fellow men and women. His spiritual treasure was immeasurable; it had been accumulated for the good of everyone. He gave this treasure freely, without stint, so that *all* men and women would be raised to a new level of spiritual and human accomplishment.

⁶². *Life*, (1918) vol. 4, p. 81.

(concluded)

KHETRI IN THE RAMAKRISHNA MOVEMENT

DR. ARUN KUMAR BISWAS

When it was decided that I should visit the Hindustan Copper Corporation's mining establishment in Khetringar, Rajasthan, a few days before the Christmas of 1982, I also resolved to be a pilgrim to the Maharaja's palace at Khetri, where Swami Vivekananda had stayed for a long period inspiring the Maharaja and countless inhabitants of Khetri. During my visit, I started reading about Khetri and realized that Khetri was a *tīrtha* (sanctified place) in more than one sense. It represents the Shekhawati spirit of independence and the Rajput tradition of heroism and valour, and constitutes a small but glorious part of Bhāratatīrtha (Holy Land of India) eulogized by Tagore in one of his famous poems.

This article consists of three sections: the first one outlines briefly the long heritage of Rajput and Shekhawati traditions. The second section is the major one describing the interactions between the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and the people of Khetri. Notwithstanding some beautiful treatments of the subject in Hindi, English and Bengali such as those by Jhabarmal Sharma, Benishankar Sharma, Shankari

Prasad Basu and others, a coherent treatise utilizing the material available in all the three languages is yet to be presented. The third and last section contains some reflections and suggestions of the author.

I

Ancient civilization on the banks of the Saraswati

Swami Vivekananda was one of the first to challenge the theory of Aryan 'invasion' of India¹ — his original Bengali words were *O sab āhamaker kathā*: 'That is all nonsense.' At the Paris Congress of 1900 he asked if any Vedic text referred to Aryans as outsiders 'migrating' to India. That Mahenjo-daro civilization (discovered twenty years after Swamiji's death) and script are Vedic in character has been conclusively proved by the well-known archaeologist Prof. S. R. Rao². In the course of

1. The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1954) Vol. 5, Pp. 436-37.

2. S. R. Rao: *The Decipherment of the Indus Script*, (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1982).

his wanderings in north India Swamiji had a vision of an ancient ṛṣi chanting Vedic hymns on the bank of the Indus³. After repeated floods, the Aryans migrated from the Indus, a major section moving towards the valleys of the Yamuna and the Ganga. On their way, they must have lived on the banks of the Saraswatī—now the dried-up Ghaggar (see, the map of northern Rajasthan).

The dried up beds of the ancient river Saraswatī near Bikaner have been investigated by archaeologists like L. P. Tessitory, Aurel Stein, A. Ghosh, Herman Goetz etc.⁴ The proto-historic mounds and terracottas of Saraswatī, Umā-Maheśwar and Govardhandhārī Krishna etc. are some of the earliest landmarks of Indian culture in Rajasthan. Even today, the Sāraswat Brāhmins in India bear the noble heritage of the river.

Swamiji wrote (in May, 1895) to the Maharaja of Khetri about the divine message revealed 'to the sages on the bank of the Saraswatī'. It is only very recently that the truth of Swamiji's vision of the beautiful civilization that grew on the banks of the Saraswatī (now known as Ghaggar, see map) has been understood through the findings of archaeologists. Kalibangan has been described by Thapar as 'truly the first city of Indian cultural heritage.'⁵ This Harappan metropolis was found to contain Indus valley seals as well as fire altars for animal sacrifice, thus linking the Indus

valley with Vedic civilization. Copper bangles, ploughing implements, bronze mirror, gold and carnelian beads were the other important finds. The *R̥g-Veda* clearly captures the mood of the ancient seers who had migrated from the flood-stricken Indus to the Saraswatī valley :

O Saraswati, does thou not trouble us with excess water, but accept our friendship. Saraswati, the inspirer of truthful word, the instructress of the right-minded, has accepted our sacrifice. She makes manifest by her deed a huge river, and generates all knowledge.⁶

A visit to the Bikaner museum to see the ancient image of the goddess Saraswatī, who was linked to Holy Mother Sarada Devi by Sri Ramakrishna himself, was the first point in my pilgrimage to Khetri.

Shekhawati dynasties

Whereas one section of the migrant Aryans moved towards the Gangetic valley founding the Suryavamśa (Solar dynasty) of Ayodhyā (where Lord Rāma was born), another section moved towards the south and founded the Candravamśa (Lunar dynasty) to which belonged Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas of *Mahābhārata*. The Maharajas of Jaisalmer claimed to be Yādavas, of the lineage of Yadu, an ancestor of Lord Kṛṣṇa—or Candravamśis.⁷ The kings of Mewar (Udaipur) and Amber (Jaipur) and their Shekhawati feudatories derived their lineage as Suryavamśis^{8*}. The

3. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1949) Vol. 2, P. 256.

4. A. Ghosh, 'Rajputana Desert', *Bulletin of the National Institute of Sciences of India*, 1. 1952. Pp. 37-42.

Aurel Stein, 'Ancient sites along the Saraswatī', *Geographical Journal*, 99. 1942. Pp. 173-82.

H. Goetz, *Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

5. B. K. Thapar: 'Kalibangan: A Harappan Metropolis' in *Ancient Cities of the Indus*, Ed. G. L. Possehl. 1979.

6. Quoted in A. C. Das, *Rig Vedic India*, 1971. p. 71.

7. James Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, New Delhi: M. N. Publishers, 1978 Reprint) Vol. 2, p. 169.

8. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, P. 39.

* Swamiji used to discuss these lineages in the court of Khetri. Once a Muslim musician of the court (Musraf Khan?) asked him whether he, the musician, had any lineage. Swamiji jokingly replied that he was a tārāvamsī. The musician later used to claim that he was a 'tārāvamsī'.

Mewar ancestry is believed to start from Lord Rāma's first son Lava and the Amber ancestry from his second son Kuśa.

Kuśa's descendants are also known as Kuchwahas. They migrated westward. The famous king Nala (his wife was the chaste Damayanti) settled in the city of Nurwar (or Nishida near Gwalior). His descendant Dhola Rai founded the state of Dhoondar (modern Amber or Joipur) in A.D. 967.⁹ At this time, Arab and Turk invasions of India started. Mahmud of Ghazni repeatedly invaded India during 1010-1022 and plundered Thaneswar, Somnath etc. of their enormous wealth. It is believed that he plundered, amongst many others, a famous temple at Nerhar (near Pilani and Khetri) belonging to the kingdom of Satrajit of *Mahābhārata* fame.

The next invader Muhammad Ghori was resisted by Prithviraj of Delhi and his Rajput friends before the final defeat of the latter in 1192. Samarsi of Chitor and the Kuchwaha king Pujoon had married Prithviraj's sisters and stoutly defended him and the motherland against the invaders till their death.¹⁰ Prithviraj died on the bank of Saraswati.¹¹ The victims have been immortalized by the Rajput bard (Charan-akavi) Chand.¹²

9. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. 280.

10. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. 284.

11. Wolseley Haig Ed. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. 3, P. 40.

12. Swamiji liked to listen to Chand's poems in the court of Khetri. When Swamiji's younger brother Mahendranath later on met Munshi Jagmohanlal, the latter recalled one such favourite song of Swamiji describing the heroism of Rajputs, recited the same and explained its meaning. It related a cavalry fight over the possession of a fort on the top of a hill, the sound of horses' hoofs, the clang of swords and spears, etc. Mahendranath Dutta, *Vivekānanda Swanūjir Jibaner Ghatanabali* (Bengali), Vol. 2, P. 179.

The Shekhawati chieftains were descended from Balaji, the third son of Raja Oodikurn who became the Kuchwaha King of Amber in A.D. 1389. Balaji founded a separate kingdom for himself in Amrutsir. His son Mokul was childless till he received the blessings of a Muslim mystic named Shekh Boorhan. Mokul's son was named Shekhji and his branch of the Kuchwaha family became known as 'Shekhawati'¹³ Shekhji revolted against the tyrannical rule of the Amber dynasty and refused to pay Chandrasen of Jaipur (A.D. 1524) the customary tribute of colts. He was inspired by his patron saint Boorhan: *Kyā socate ho? Tumhāre ghore tumhāre hī pās rahenge. Tumhāri svādhīnatā kā upabhog tumhī karoge* ('Why do you worry? Your horses will remain with you and you will enjoy freedom.') This incident is still recalled as *Jagadīshkā bardān*, 'blessings of the Lord.'¹⁴ Shekhji's son Raemal employed the famous Sher Shah's father as a sepoy; this fact has been recorded in *Akbarnāmā* and Price's *Mohamedan History* (1820).

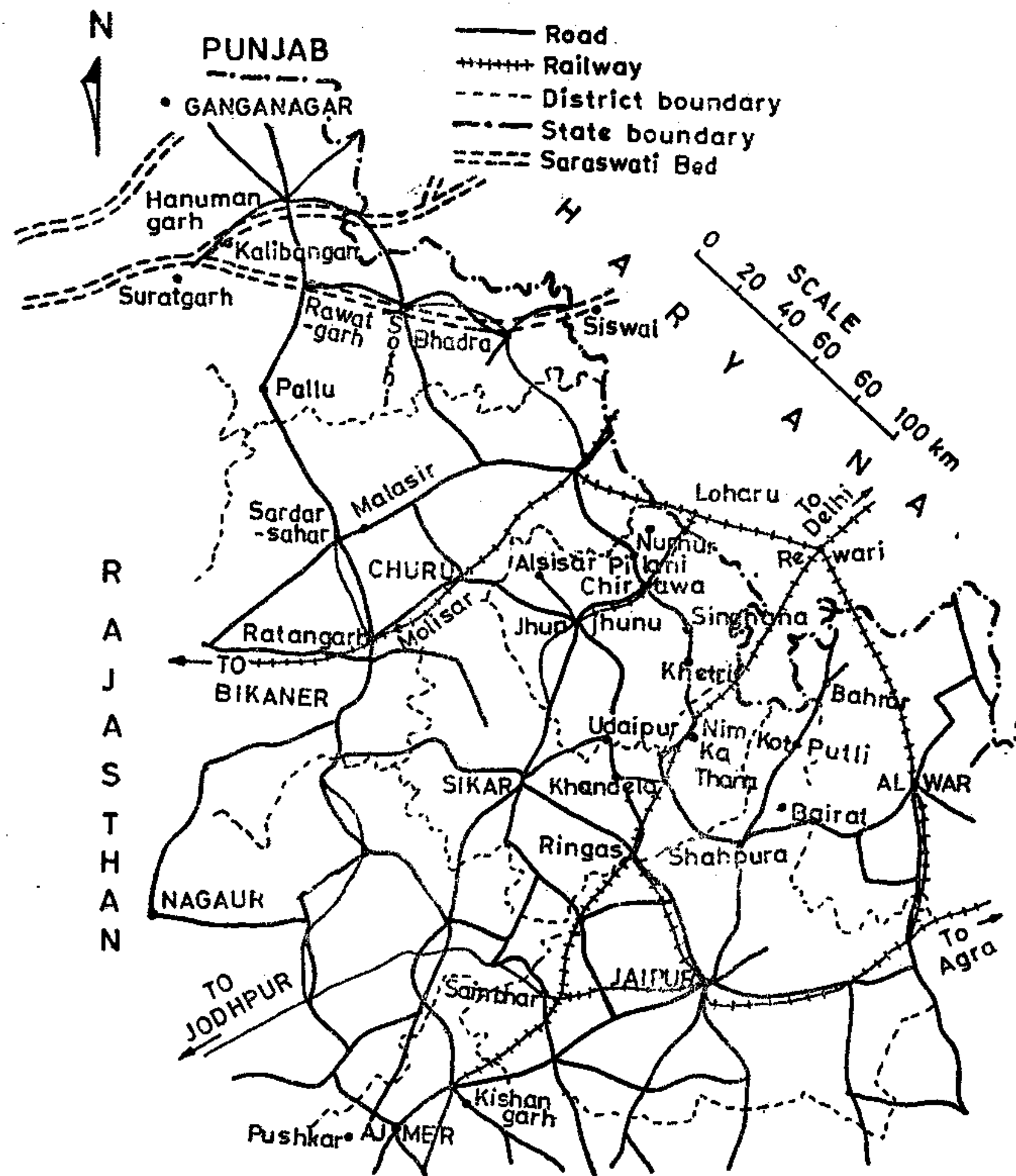
Raisal Darbari Shekhawat consolidated his kingdom around Khundaila (now Khandela) and Udaipur (see map) in collaboration with the Mughal emperor Akbar and Man Singh of Jaipur. A very controversial topic of his time was whether to aid Akbar in cementing Hindu-Muslim unity or to assist the defiant Rana Pratap of Mewar (Udaipur). The issue became clear during the tyrant Aurangzeb's time. Shujaun Singh, a descendant of Bhoj Raj, a Shekhawat, unsuccessfully fought against Aurangzeb's army which demolished the temples of Khandela.¹⁵

Bhoj Raj was Raisal Darbari's third son

13. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, Pp. 285,313-24.

14. Jhabarmal Sharma, *Khetri ka Itihas*, (Hindi) 1927.

15. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, Pp. 313-24.



MAP OF NORTHERN RAJASTHAN

and started the northern Shekhawati kingdom around Udaipur (near Khetri, see map, not to be confused with the Mewar capital). This branch came to be known as 'Sadhant' after Shardul Singh who annexed Jhunjhunu from the Kayam Khani Nawab Ruhel Khan and later on annexed Singhana and Khetri as well. Shardul's grandson Bhopal Singh came to the Khetri valley during his marriage, lived in the area and constructed in 1754 the famous fort Bhopalgarh on the top of the hill (2337 ft. above sea-level). The two palaces where Swamiji used to stay in Khetri during 1891 and 1897 face the Bhopalgarh fort.

Rajput heroism

Like many educated Indians, Swamiji was also moved by the tales of Rajput chivalry. Charanakavi Chand's poems, the tales of Padmini and Rana Pratap and the spirit of defiance exhibited by Shekhawati chief such as Shekhji, Shardul Singh etc. inspired him and made him inspire others. He read Colonel Tod's Annals of Rajasthan and could quote from memory extensively from this book.¹⁶ Even in America he introduced

16. Vivekananda Swamijir *Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, P. 179.

the book to his Western friends and disciples. In a letter to the Hale sisters dated 5 May 1895, he wrote that he hoped they were enjoying Tod's 'Rajasthan'.

The reason for Swamiji's fascination for Tod's work is not far to seek. Tod loved the sacred land of the Rajput heroes, and Swamiji loved heroism wherever he found it. A few quotations from Tod may not be out of place here :

Reduced in power, circumscribed in territory, compelled to yield much of their splendour and many of the dignities of birth, they (Rajputs) have not abandoned an iota of the pride and high bearing arising from a knowledge of their illustrious and regal descent.¹⁷

What nation on earth would have maintained the semblance of civilization, the spirit or the customs of their forefathers, during so many centuries of overwhelming depression, but one of such singular character as the Rajput? Not an iota of their religion or customs have they lost... Mewar, the sacred bulwark of religion never compromised her honour for her safety.¹⁸

Then a warning to the British in 1832 :

Their history should be deeply studied by those who have succeeded to the paramount power; for Aurangzeb had less reason to distrust the stability of his dominion than we have: yet what is now the house of Timour?¹⁹

Swamiji was equally enamoured of Rajput traditions. In his famous reply of May 1895 to Khetri court's felicitations to him on his success in the U.S.A., he wrote :

The Kṣatriyas have always been the backbone of India, so also they had been the supporters of science and liberty.... You, Rajputs, have been the glories of ancient India.

17. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, P. 112.

18. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol 1, P. 210.

19. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. viii.

Rajasthan's contribution to science and industry

In this context we may also mention the glorious contributions of Rajasthan to Indian science. Starting from the Indus Valley civilization, the fame of Indian non-ferrous metallurgy has been chiefly due to the mines of Rajasthan. Tod records his observation about the old copper mine at Dariba (recently reactivated): 'filled with water and the miners are all dead'²⁰ and that 'the tin mines of Mewar were once very productive, yielding no inconsiderable portion of silver.'²¹ Zinc and Lead have been made out of Zawar ores near Udaipur in Mewar since time immemorial.

The inhabitants of Khetri may legitimately be proud of their contribution to copper metallurgy for many centuries. Khetri copper belt extending between Singhana to Raghunathgarh in Rajasthan is marked by intense mining activity. Following the discovery (in 1972) of a thick deposit of Ochre Coloured Pottery (OCP) dated 2500-2200 B.C. in Jodhpura—15 km from Bairat, the capital of Matsya Desa, and in later times an important site of Buddhist Rock edict—a team of archaeologists discovered in November 1977, 'the richest find of pre-historic copper objects in a single site' at Ganeshwar, 15 km from Neem ka Thana and 60 km from Khetri.²² By 1979, a huge hoard of copper celts, axes, chisels, bangles, fishing hooks, arrows, etc. had been unearthed.

Copper was mined at Khetri during the Mauryan period. Abul Fazl recorded in 1590 that 'Babai has a copper mine.

20. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, P. 549.

21. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 1, P. 10.

22. R. C. Agrawala and Vijay Kumar, 'Ganeshwar-Jodhpura Culture', in *Harappan Civilization—A Contemporary Perspective*, Ed. G.L. Possehl. 1982. Pp. 125-34.

Singhana Udaipur has a copper mine and a mint for copper coinage.' The mints functioning in Singhana and Khetri were closed by the British in 1869.²³ Much of the ancient Indian arts and crafts based upon non-ferrous metals and alloys like bronze, brass etc. had been made possible by the ingenuity of the mine and metal workers of Khetri and Mewar region.²⁴

The Kuchwaha Maharaja of Amber (Jaipur), Sawai Jai Singh II ruled during 1699-1743 and, taking advantage of the crumbling Mughal empire, extended his influence 'from thirty *kos* of Delhi to the shores of the sea at Surat'. The astronomical catalogue known as *Zij Muhammad Shahi* was prepared under his direction. This is the last Indian astronomical work in pre-British India.²⁵ The astronomical equipments as well as the new city of Jaipur were designed by Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, a Bengalee astronomer who helped Jai Singh in all astronomical pursuits and in negotiations with the Portuguese court-missionary Padre Manuel and the French astronomer-missionary Claude Boudier.²⁶ The latter came all the way from Chandernagore in West Bengal to Amber, set up a telescope and held scientific dialogues with Jai Singh and Vidyadhar.²⁷

The Khetri kingdom

The independence of Shekhawati rulers (of Khandela and Udaipur and later on of

Khetri) was however curbed during Jai Singh's regime. The British had replaced the Mughals as the central authority in Delhi but this did not change the suzerainty of Jaipur. The rulers of Khetri had to struggle perpetually with the Jaipur throne. Abhay Singh of Khetri assisted the British in 1803 against the Mahratta power which had ravaged Rajasthan; as a reward, the pargana of Kot Putli (see map) was awarded to the Khetri kingdom in 1806 with the understanding that 'the Raja will consider it his duty to conciliate the ryots and inhabitants of that district, promote their welfare and prosperity and refrain from any oppressive measures'. Sikar and Khetri were considered to be powerful feudatories of Jaipur throne, almost as independent in domestic arrangements as their suzerains.

Raja Fateh Singh who became chief of Khetri during 1842-70 wrote in his autobiography: *Merī pratham sikṣā Hindī me hui. Merī matr̥bhāṣā Hindī hī hai ... 1855 me maine angreji padhnā ārambha kiā.* 'My basic education was in Hindi which is my mother tongue ... In 1855 I started learning English.'²⁸ Aided by Major J.C. Brookes, the British Political Agent at Jaipur, Fateh Singh introduced some land reform measures and established several schools and hospitals. This was highly applauded by Sir John Lawrence in the Agra Durbar of November 1867. The palace in which Swami Vivekananda stayed in 1891, and which is at present a centre of Ramakrishna Mission, was built during 1864-66 and named 'Fateh Bilas' by W.H. Beynon, the Raja's friend, during his visit to Khetri in February 1866. In the meantime the two principal personalities of our narrative were born: Raja Ajit Singh as the son of Thakur Chattu Singh at Alsisar on 16th October 1861, and Swami Vivek-

23. J. C. Brooke, 'The Mines of Khetri in Rajputana', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1864, Pp. 519-529.

24. Hindustan Copper Ltd., Brochure on Khetri Copper.

25. *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, Vol. 2, Pp. 288-90; 9; 10.

26. W. A. Blanpied, *The Astronomical Efforts of Raja Sawai Jai Singh II*, Harvard University, 1973.

27. Edward Maclagen, *The Jesuits and the Great Mughal*, (London: 1932.) p. 134.

28. Fateh Singh, *Autobiography*, (Calcutta: E. M. Lewis Central Press, 1869.)

ananda as Narendranath Dutta at Calcutta on 12th January 1863.

Raja Fateh Singh did not have a male heir. Advised by his minister Nandlal Nehru, elder brother of Pandit Motilal Nehru, he adopted the nine-year old Ajit Singh as his son and heir in 1870. A few months later, Fateh Singh died at Mussoorie and the boy Ajit Singh became the next Raja of Khetri. His education was arranged by Raja Ram Singh of Jaipur under the guidance of Kantichandra Mukherji, the headmaster of Maharaja College, Jaipur, and later on Raja Madhav Singh's prime minister. Educated at Noble's school at Jaipur, Ajit Singh became an able successor to Fateh Singh.

Contact with Bengal

By the time Swami Vivekananda met Maharaja Ajit Singh for the first time in 1891, many emotional contacts had already taken place between Bengal and Rajasthan. During Akbar's time, Raja Man Singh of Amber, after defeating Pratapaditya of Jessore in Bengal, brought the image of Goddess Kali known as 'Jasoreswari' and a family of Bengali priests to Jaipur. Sawai Jai Singh's contact with Vidyadhar Bhattacharya, the Bengali astronomer, in the early part of the 18th century has already mentioned. Again in the nineteenth century, another famous Bengali administrator Kantichandra Mukherji was brought by Maharaja Ram Singh to Jaipur, first appointed as a teacher and then elevated as an administrator. A branch of the Brahmo Samaj was established in Khetri around 1886 which was its only branch in Rajasthan at that time. It was possibly established by a legal luminary from Bengal.²⁹

²⁹. Benishankar Sharma, *Swami Vivekananda—A Forgotten Chapter of His Life* (Calcutta: Oxford Book & Stationery Co. 1963) p. 16.

The holy name of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had been spread in the Shekhawati Kingdom around Khetri by Pandit Narayan Shastri much before 1886, when the Great Master passed away. Pandit Narayan Shastri was himself a Shekhawati Rajput. Well versed in philosophy, he had rejected an offer to be a court pandit of the Maharaja of Jaipur, and had come to Bengal to study Nyaya philosophy.³⁰ At Dakshineswar he met Sri Ramakrishna in 1857 and received his initiation into sannyasa from him.³¹ Soon after this he left his wife and family for the practice of austerities and it is not known how and when he died.³² Narayan Shastri met the famous Bengali poet Michael Madhusudan Dutta and disapproved the poet's conversion to Christianity. He wrote in Bengali with a piece of coal on the wall of the verandah on the eastern side of Sri Ramakrishna's room in Dakshineswar, that it was a mean act to change one's religion for the sake of money. This writing used to attract attention of the latter-day disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.³³

From one Pandit Sitaram, Swami Akhandananda learnt, while staying and studying in the tomb of a Jain sadhu at Malsisar, that Narayan Shastri had spread Sri Ramakrishna's message in that part of Rajasthan 'many years ago' and had preached that the Master was an incarnation of God.³⁴ Whether Narayan Shastri did this after he finally took leave of the Master, or whether he used to visit his

³⁰. M., *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, Vol. 4 (Calcutta: Kathamrita Bhavan) Pp. 123-25.

³¹. *Kathamrita*, Vol. 2, p. 151.

³². *Kathamrita*, Vol. 2, p. 151.

Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office.) Vol. 4, Pp. 88-96.

³³. *Lilaprasanga*, Vol. 4, Pp. 88-96.

³⁴. Swami Akhandananda, *From Holy Wanderings to the Service of Man*, (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1979) p. 68.

homeland from time to time while staying as a disciple of the Master at Dakshineswar, is difficult to ascertain now.

It is clear that Maharaja Ajit Singh was brought up in a cultural atmosphere which was a happy blend of Western liberal education and Indian spiritual wisdom. He visited Calcutta in 1890, arranged there a conference of Sanskrit scholars, stayed with his subjects like Surajmal Jhunjhunja, and might have heard from them, or even earlier from Pandit Narayan Shastri in Khetri, about Sri Ramakrishna.³⁵ Thus when his minister Munshi Jagmohanlal told him that a Bengali sadhu had come to Mount Abu where the Raja was staying at the Khetri House, he was eager to meet the sadhu, who was no other than Swami Vivekananda. They met each other for the first time at the Khetri House, Mount Abu, on the fourth of June 1891. Swamiji found in the Raja an enlightened ruler, a musician, a poet, and above all an ardent and faithful disciple.

II

Ajit Singh's first meeting with Swamiji

Many facts about Ajit Singh's life and his association with Swamiji have been mentioned by earlier authors, and it is not necessary to repeat here all of them. Only a few salient points need be brought out here in order to clarify and integrate the vast, scattered pieces of information on the subject.

The very first two questions put by the Raja to Swamiji and the respective answers he received are most revealing. In reply to the question: 'What is life?' Swamiji said:

'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down'. The reply brought out not only Swamiji's personal struggles against heavy odds but also reminded the listener of his own experiences as well. Ajit Singh must have remembered the struggle against the Jaipur throne which had led to the establishment of the Shekhawati dynasty at Khetri a couple of centuries ago—the kind of struggle which he too had started waging, and was to continue till his death in 1901. The second question, about education, brought out Swamiji's definition that education is the nervous association of ideas and his giving an illustration from Sri Ramakrishna's life.³⁶

The Raja was fired with a deep spiritual fervour, and Swamiji became his friend, philosopher and guide. The beautiful association of the two continued uninterrupted from 4th of June to 27th of October 1891 as indicated by the Waqayat Register.³⁷ They were together at Mount Abu till 24th July. Often they dined together. On the 15th of June and again on the 22nd they spent the whole day (9 am to 5 pm) discussing religion and cultural matters. On the 27th of June, Swamiji sang and the Raja accompanied him on the harmonium.³⁸

Leaving Mount Abu on the 24th of July and spending a few days at Jaipur, Ajit Singh and Swamiji reached Khetri on the 7th of August 1891 and stayed together for two and a half months.

A careful perusal of the Waqayat Register entries as noted by Benishankar Sharma prompts the author of this article to firmly suggest that the nautch-girl episode in Swamiji's life took place on the 9th of

³⁵. Jhabarmal Sharma, *Adarsha Naresh*, 1940.
Sailendranath Dhar, *A Comprehensive Biography of Swami Vivekananda*, (Madras: Vivekananda Prakashan Kendra. 1975) Vol. 2, Pp. 1482-1484.

³⁶. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1949. Vol. 2, Pp. 219-221.

³⁷. *Swami Vivekananda, a forgotten chapter of his life*.

³⁸. *Swami Vivekananda, a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 40.

August 1891, Sunday evening, on the roof of the Dewan Khana, also known as Futeh-Bilas, where the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Smriti Mandir is located in Khetri at present.

The party from Mount Abu reached Khetri on the 7th of August and the next day was a rest day. On the 9th, Sunday, people of Khetri started coming to pay their respects to the Raja who had been out of town for a long time. Jhabarmal Sharma says: 'It was customary for the subjects to pay homage to the Raja (on his return after a long absence) during morning and evening; this was known as *salam malum*.' Swamiji came to the Raja's palace and stayed with him up to 2 pm (Did he bestow spiritual initiation to the Raja on this day?). It rained a little, but still it was hot. After playing tennis, the Raja came and 'sat with his officials on the roof of the Dewan Khana in the evening at 7 pm.' Below the roof of the Dewan Khana is the big Durbar Hall of Futeh-Bilas and above the roof is the room which was given to Swamiji for his stay at Khetri.

To follow Jhabarmal Sharma's description: the Raja sitting on the roof sent a request to the Swami, through his attendant, to kindly come down for religious discussion. Swamiji came down and some discussion took place till a group of *nartakīs* (dancing and singing girls) came to pay their respects to the Raja. An elderly *nartakī* sought the permission of the Raja to entertain him with a song. The Raja permitted her to sing, but Swamiji stood up to leave her company. Ajit Singh assured Swamiji that the woman was a reputed singer of Bhajans, but that assurance probably did not impress Swamiji. He went back to his room, which was just above and overlooking the roof where the incident took place, and hence he could hear the song even from his room or the balcony in front of it. As is well known to the

readers of Swamiji's biography, the soulful rendering of Surdas's Bhajan: 'O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities! Thy name, O Lord, is same-sightedness ...' deeply touched Swamiji. He realized that there was divinity in all beings, even in the singer woman whom he had ignored. He came down to the hall of audience and joined the party. Swamiji addressed the elderly *nartakī* as '*māyī*' who in turn addressed him as her *lāl*.³⁹

In later years Swamiji recalled this episode several times to Sister Christine, Ida Ansell, Sister Nivedita, and others. In May 1898, Swamiji went to Nainital with Sister Nivedita to meet Ajit Singh and there also, some dancing girls wanted to meet him. This time he readily agreed and told Sister Nivedita about the earlier episode.⁴⁰ In his letter of 23rd August 1896 to Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swamiji advised that public women should be allowed to visit Dakshineswar since 'the Lord manifests himself specially for the sinful'!

That the *nartakī* episode took place during Swamiji's first visit to Khetri has been clearly stated by Jhabarmal Sharma who had heard a first-hand account from Munshi Jagmohanlal, a direct witness, and got his version thoroughly scrutinized and certified by Swami Akhandananda (who wrote a preface to Sharma's book). Jhabarmal Sharma's graphic description (no date was put by him) can easily be connected with the Waqayat Register entries for the date 9th of August 1891, as quoted earlier.

It is remarkable that Swamiji stayed at Khetri for more than two and half months; this was partly out of his deep affection for the new disciple Raja Ajit Singh. Swamiji also took the opportunity to study Patanj-

³⁹. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, (1913) Pp. 153-54.

⁴⁰. Sister Nivedita, *Notes on Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1967), Pp. 14-16.

ali's *Mahābhāṣya* on Pāṇinī's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* from Pandit Narayan Das, a reputed grammarian whom he referred to as 'my professor' in his letter to Pandit Shankarlal dated 20th September, 1892. Swamiji must have also studied Yajurveda with another scholar, Pandit Sunderlalji Ojha mentioned in the same letter.

The days were spent in spiritual discussions, scientific observations through telescope and microscope. Raja Ajit Singh was a musician and poet and Swamiji used to sing songs composed by the Raja. In his introduction to Jhabarmal Sharma's book *Khetri Nares aur Vivekananda*, Swami Akhandananda has spoken of the love-filled poetic heart of the Raja and how Swamiji used to sing a particular song composed by the Raja with great feeling.⁴¹ Swamiji also greatly enjoyed the Raja's recital of the Veena.

The Guru and the disciple were not much different in age. Together they used to go for a ride and occasionally on a hunting trip—Swamiji refused to take any gun even at the risk of facing wild tigers—and admired the flora and fauna of the Shekhawati kingdom. They shared their interest in fauna till the end of their lives. In his letter dated 28th April 1893 from Khetri Swamiji asked Dewan Haridas Beharidas Desai whether he could offer a lion cub of Junagadh to Ajit Singh in exchange of a suitable animal of Rajputana. Again, he wrote from Almora to the Raja on the 9th of June 1898: 'I want a couple of tiger skins if I can, to be sent to the Math as present to two European friends.' And then, 'Fish roes will be sent for your lake, as the right season is approaching, from Calcutta'.

41. The song begins with:

बिन बिन मोकुं कछु न सुहावे
तड़पत जिय अति ही अकुलावे...

Ajit Singh's court was adorned by philosophers, poets and musicians. One of them was the famous maestro Musraf Khan who played on the Veena on 21 October 1891 before Swamiji, and was later on sent by Pandit Motilal Nehru (Ajit Singh's legal adviser) to the World Music Conference in Paris.⁴²

Swamiji admired Rajasthani customs and manners. He wrote to his monastic brothers from London on 27 April 1896 about the rules and regulations to be followed in the Math: 'There should be fixed hours for meals. Everyone must have a seat and a low dining table. He will sit on the former and put his plate on the latter, as is the custom in Rajputana.' Swamiji praised the Rajput style of wearing a dhoti.⁴³

Raja Ajit Singh had recommended to Swamiji that to protect himself from the hot wind (*loo*) of Rajasthan, he should wear a turban. The Maharaja taught him how to wind the turban. Swamiji thereafter wore turban and the various photographs show how many styles of winding it he had mastered. Swami Turiyananda used to mention how speedily and neatly Swamiji could wind the turban. It may also be pointed out that the 1887 group photograph at Baranagar Math shows him with a headdress.

The controversy as to whether Raja Ajit Singh gave the name 'Vivekananda' to Swamiji, and if so, when (during the first visit in 1891 or during the second visit in 1893, immediately before Swamiji's departure for the U.S.A.) has been discussed at length by several authors, especially Jhabarmal Sharma, Benishankar Sharma, Shankari Prasad Basu and S. N. Dhar. It is evident that Swamiji used to change his name from time to time. While he wrote as 'Sacchid-

42. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter in his life*, p. 50.

43. Mahendranath Dutta, *Londone Swami Vivekananda* (Bengali) Vol. 2, p. 168.

ananda' to Sm. Indumati Mitra as late as on 24 May 1893—seven days before his departure for the U.S.A.—he had used the name 'Vivekananda' in his letter dt. 26th April, 1892 to Haridas Beharidas and, according to Shankari Prasad Basu, that was the time when Swamiji started using the name. S. N. Dhar further points out that some of the earlier letters of Swamiji such as those dated 24 January 1890, February 1890, 6 July 1890 etc. bear the name 'Vivekananda'. It is quite possible that Ajit Singh's statement preferring the name 'Vivekananda' to 'Vividishananda', mentioned by Jhabarmal Sharma was made in 1891 at Mount Abu.⁴⁴ This is clearly indicated in the Waqayat Register entries. The final decision regarding the name was probably taken by Swamiji himself, while booking his passage to America at Bombay, prior to his second visit to Khetri.

The claim made by Benishankar Sharma that 'It was not at Madras (but at Khetri) that Swamiji secured the funds which enabled him to go to America' has been ably refuted by Swami Gambhirananda by citing a letter of Swami Shivananda dated 13 February 1894 and numerous statements of Swami Vivekananda himself.⁴⁵ It is acknowledged, however, that Raja Ajit Singh arranged to convert Swamiji's ticket to one for a higher class and provided him with enough pocket money, a part of which was to be delivered in U.S. currency through Thomas Cook & Son. Swamiji lost the circular notes, and a series of telegrams sent by Ajit Singh to Thomas Cook enabled him to receive \$ 150 at Boston.⁴⁶ In a letter written from Japan to Ajit Singh—quoted

by Mahendranath Dutta—Swamiji regretted that the money had gone to the U.S.A. bank; otherwise he would 'buy Japanese goods and go back to India!' (He actually bought and sent some presents to Ajit Singh).⁴⁷

Swamiji wrote to Ajit Singh on 1st December 1898: 'You made it possible for me to get rid of a terrible anxiety and face the world and do some work'. Swami Gambhirananda has identified this 'terrible anxiety' as concern for Swamiji's mother and two younger brothers.⁴⁸

Raja Ajit Singh's help to Swamiji's family

Ever since Swamiji resolved to renounce the world—even before the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886—he could not shake off the tremendous agony he felt for the plight of his widowed mother and his young brothers: Mahendranath and Bhupendranath who were only seventeen and six years old respectively in 1886. On 14 July 1889 Swamiji wrote to Pramadadas Mitra, the great scholar and philanthropist of Banaras, regretting that his mother had refused to accept the monetary donation sent by him. When Swamiji's younger sister committed suicide in Simla (end of 1890) the news was sent by Mahendranath to Swamiji who was then staying at Almora. After this, Swamiji resolved to move without letting others know about his whereabouts. But his agonized heart was never consoled. Nine years later he wrote to Mrs. Bull (12 December, 1898): 'I went years ago to the Himalayas never to come back; and my sister committed suicide, the news reached me there, and weak heart flung me off from that prospect of peace!! It is the weak heart that has driven me out of India to seek some help for those I love'.

⁴⁴. Jhabarmal Sharma, *Khetri Nares aor Vivekananda*, 1927, p. 11.

⁴⁵. Swami Gambhirananda, *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1373 B.S.) Vol. 2, Pp. 421-25.

⁴⁶. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 85-91.

⁴⁷. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali* (Bengali) Vol. 3, Pp. 1-3.

⁴⁸. *Yuganayak Vivekananda* (Bengali) Vol. 1, Pp. 421-25.

Mahendranath suffered from haemoptysis and Swamiji's relatives continued to cheat and harass his mother. Under these circumstances, Swamiji might have told Raja Ajit Singh, on the latter's enquiry, about his family during his first visit to Khetri. Mahendranath writes that Ajit Singh was eager to know more details and wrote to 'Sarat Maharaj, Jogen Maharaj and Mr. Sannyal to send news about Swamiji's family and to keep this matter a secret.'⁴⁹ It is not clear whether the Raja sent any monetary help to Swamiji's family even before the 31st of May 1893. Probably he did, and did it secretly. Mahendranath's letter to Ajit Singh dated 28 February 1893 contains the opening sentence: 'Anxious as I am at not receiving your Highness' any letter for a long time, I am still more so for the health of the newborn child.'⁵⁰ This clearly shows that Ajit Singh had sent news of the birth of his son Jai Singh few months earlier, and had been in regular correspondence with Swamiji's family through the Alambazar Math.

Ajit Singh wrote to Mahendranath on 10 March 1893 enquiring about his studies and the books he was reading. Mahendranath replied on the 22nd of March, and this correspondence went on. Mahendranath has noted in his memoir that the Raja used to write to him twice every month in his own hand (evidently to keep the matter confidential) as a humble devotee of Swamiji.⁵¹

In the meantime, Munshi Jagmohanlal went to Madras and persuaded Swamiji to come to Khetri for the second time and bless the newborn baby.⁵² Just before

Swamiji's trip to the U.S.A., Raja Ajit Singh not only gave a fat purse to him, but also decided to send Rs. 100/- every month to Swamiji's mother. This removed 'a terrible anxiety' from Swamiji's mind and 'made it possible for him to face the world and do some work'. This noble act of the Raja elicited warm appreciation from Swamiji's monastic brothers. Swami Ramakrishnananda wrote on 13 June 1893: 'When such a noble prince like your good self feels always anxious to redress the family, I am confident that their troubles will very soon come to an end.'⁵³

Swami Shivananda wrote on 20th July 1893: 'I had a chance of having a look into the letter from you enquiring Vivekananda's former household affairs; ... I was able to form a high opinion of your kind-heartedness.'⁵⁴

On the 6th of July 1893, Raja Ajit Singh ended the confidentiality of his correspondence with Mahendranath and hoped that Mahendranath 'will not mind my Dewan Jagmohanlal writing to you ... you must not think by this that I will quite drop off writing to you at times.'⁵⁵ Mahendranath writes that the monthly donation of Rs. 100/- used to be sent to Swamiji's mother till the Raja's death in 1901.

It seems that the Raja was willing to donate another Rs. 100/- per month to the Math but Swami Brahmananda did not agree to accept this offer conveyed through Swamiji in May 1893; this annoyed

birth in 1889, Motilal had his horoscope prepared by the court astrologer of Khetri. Ajit Singh had two daughters but no son at that time. In 1891, he solicited and received Swamiji's blessings to have a son.

49. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali* (Bengali) Vol. 2, Pp. 180-81.

50. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 69.

51. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, Pp. 180-81.

52. It is known that after Jawaharlal Nehru's

53. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 163.

54. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 164.

55. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 167.

Swamiji.⁵⁶ In his letter of 1st December 1898, Swamiji requested the Raja that this additional monthly stipend of Rs. 100/- be paid to him 'for my lifetime for my expenses'. Very promptly the Raja sent Rs. 500/- through his banker in Calcutta, Seth Dulichand Kankaria, and continued to send monthly donations.⁵⁷

The intimate contact between the Raja and Swamiji's family and admirers continued after Swamiji's departure for the U.S.A. in May 1893. Ramakrishnananda's letter dated 10 February 1894 inviting Jagmohanlal and the Raja to attend Sri Ramakrishna's birthday ceremony on 11 March 1894 is very touching :

'We all wish that you once come and see what supernatural things occur that day. Thousands and thousands of men from Calcutta aristocracy and gentry resort at the place, the garden of Paradise, where our Lord lived, to forget the cares and anxieties of the world and enjoy peace, merriments and real happiness...singing chorus songs in praise of the Greatest of the Great...won't you come to see such a grand scene and grandeur things ?'⁵⁸

Raja Ajit Singh wrote to Swami Akhandananda on 26 December 1894 about the impending marriage of his elder daughter Suryakumari, with the prince of Shahpur during the end of January 1895. Swamiji's family and followers in Calcutta were invited. Swami Yogananda, Swami Saradananda and Sannyal mahashay consulted one another, and sent as present a Dhākā sari, paddy, Dūrvā grass and vermilion—the traditional token of Bengali goodwishes. Later Mahendranath explained to Jagmohan-

lal the significance of the typical Bengali presents offered to the Rajasthani bride.⁵⁹

After leaving India, Swamiji wrote many letters to Raja Ajit Singh. Some of these letters—originals or copies—were sent to Alambazar Math. A few of these papers 'kept in a file in the eastern corner of the big room in Alambazar Math' were unwittingly destroyed by Nirranjan Maharaj.⁶⁰

In 1896 Sharat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) went to U.K., and a week later Mahendranath followed him and both met Swamiji in London. Mahendranath wanted to study law but Swamiji advised him against it. Aukhoy Kumar Ghosh, a young devotee of Swamiji also went to U.K. to study law. Both of them might have received financial help for their travel from Raja Ajit Singh. Ghosh was the first person to inform the Raja about Swamiji's success in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago.⁶¹ In his letter dated 13 January 1899, Ghosh asked Raja from London for permission to use £ 20 sent to Mr. Sturdy for Mahendranath ('nobody knows where he is for the last 19 months').⁶² This establishes Raja's continued support to Mahendranath during his stay at U.K. During the summer of 1897—after Swamiji reached India—Mahendranath left for an extensive tour across the continents. Swamiji's youngest brother Bhupendranath wrote to Jagmohanlal about Mahendranath's trip to Turkey and that 'he will travel to Persia, Tibet, Mangolia up to the Chinese wall.'⁶³

The above pieces of information abun-

^{56.} *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, p. 181.

Londone Swami Vivekananda, Vol. 1, Pp. 139-40.

^{57.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 176-77.

^{58.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 195-98.

^{59.} *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, p. 185.

^{60.} *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 3, Pp. 136-7.

^{61.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, Pp. 202-4.

^{62.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 205.

^{63.} *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 200.

dantly show how intimate Ajit Singh's relationship was with Swamiji's family and friends. Many statements made by Swamiji prove the special affection he bestowed on the Raja. To Ramakrishnananda (1895): 'Whenever the king of Khetri wants some information, you write yourself, nobody else should know.'⁶⁴ To Akhandananda (13th November 1895): 'King (of Khetri) is the only householder in India who has proved his unquestionable friendship so far.'⁶⁵ To Jagmohanlal (11th October 1897):

'Certain men are born in certain periods to perform certain actions in combination. Ajit Singh and myself—are two souls—born to help each other in a big work for the good of mankind—we are as supplement and complement.'⁶⁶ Mahendranath writes: 'Raja Ajit Singh served Swamiji the way Rasmani's son-in-law Mathuranath Biswas served Sri Ramakrishna.'⁶⁷

(To be concluded)

⁶⁴. *Swami Vivekanander Vani O Rachana*, (Bengali), (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, B.S. 1369) Vol. 7, p. 170.

⁶⁵. *Swami Vivekanander Vani O Rachana*, Vol. 7, p. 176.

⁶⁶. *Swami Vivekananda—a forgotten chapter of his life*, p. 118.

⁶⁷. *Vivekananda Swamijir Jibaner Ghatanabali*, Vol. 2, p. 212.

WHY DO WE LIVE ?*

(A JAPANESE SERMON)

DR. J. A. B. SCHERER

In a certain place there was once an extraordinary dunce by the name of Chokichi, [begins the preacher]. Now, there are very many dunces in this world, but this particular fellow was a most accomplished dunce. In the matter of forgetting things he was a perfect genius.

One day his mistress said to him: 'Chokichi, this is the anniversary of the death of our principal ancestor, and his reverence the priest will be here before long. Therefore we must have the customary offerings ready to set before the household gods. So hurry to the market and buy me some carrots, dock, wild potatoes, mushrooms, and lotus root—these five things.'

With this she gave him five farthings, and Chokichi with an exclamation of assent, girded up his loins and started off.

As he was hurrying along to market on a dogtrot he met his neighbour, Chomatsu.

'Hallo, Chokichi!' said the latter; 'you are in a great hurry. What are you after and where are you going, anyhow?'

'To market to buy some things,' answered Chokichi, as he hurried on.

'Well, what are you going to buy?'

'What am I going to buy? I don't know, I'm sure,' was the reply.

So the story goes. This forgetting the important business that his mistress had sent him on, and only racing in the street—it was a great piece of folly, was it not?

And yet this Chokichi is not to be heedlessly laughed at. For while it may not

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be true of this audience, yet in certain distant parts of the country there are many people who forget the essential thing, just as Chokichi did; whereas, so far as other matters are concerned, they know everything about them. If you don't believe it, ask anybody.

Here, Hachibei! [The preacher addresses an imaginary character.] They tell us that everything born into this world has a commission from heaven. For example, take the cow and the horse—what were they born for? And Hachibei will answer, 'Why, anybody knows that! They were born to carry heavy loads and to save folks labour.' But the cock, what was he born for? Ask him that and he will tell you, 'He was born to tell the hours.' The dog, what was he born for? 'He is to guard the gate.' But the cat, what is she for? 'She is to catch the rats.' Ask anything you please, so far as general matters are concerned, and he knows all about them. Well, then, Hachibei, you yourself, what were *you* born into this world for? But Hachibei will scratch his head, and finally answer, 'What was I born for? I don't know. Most likely I came just to eat rice and find fault.' For us to think that man alone came into this world to wander purposeless—that is for us to belong to the foolish fellowship of Chokichi... It is man alone that has *not* come into this world just to eat rice and to grow old. Man is called the lord of the universe; of all things he is chief. He is not like the dog or the cat. It is not for him to wander aimlessly.

But let us go on with our story. Chokichi reached the market place at last, but he had quite forgotten what he came to buy. And so, as he was loafing around the place with the money in his hand he caught sight of some cakes in a shop window. Forthwith he bought and ate about a dozen of them. Then he loitered here and loitered there; he drank a little wine and loafed

in the grogshop. He spent every one of his five farthings buying things in the street and eating them on the spot. And then he went home grumbling to himself: 'It wasn't enough! Mistress didn't give me coppers enough! And so I can't get any fried eels or duck-hash!'

Now, when he got home, may be his master and mistress weren't waiting for him! And may be they weren't hot! 'Look here, Chokichi, what have you been doing? Have you brought what you were sent for?' When they said this Chokichi answered in a dazed sort of way: 'No, I haven't brought anything at all.' 'But what have you done with the money we gave you?' 'Oh, the money?' said he; 'why, I spent it all for things to eat in the street; only it wasn't nearly enough.'

Master and mistress sat completely dumb. At length they broke out: 'Why, what are you thinking about? The five farthings—don't you understand? We didn't tell you to spend them in any such way as that! You were to buy carrots, and dock, and the rest! But instead of buying what we need, you spent them in stuffing yourself, and then on top of that you tell us that you haven't enough! You must be a perfect fool!' And they stormed and scolded away.

Now, dunces are beyond redemption. 'Why!' said Chokichi, with a look of utter amazement, 'do you want some carrots and some dock? If that is what you want, I've just been to the market, and why didn't you tell me so? That would have been the very time to get them.'

[Now the preacher continues:] Well, well! He was an accomplished dunce! And in the wide world one could hardly find a master that would keep such a fellow for five minutes. So in the end there was nothing to do but send him away with two or three cuffs across the head. However, it is quite useless for any of you to hear a

story of this kind and merely roar over it. This is nothing less than a parable. And with the words of Confucius on our lips, 'If I see folly I look within myself,' today both you and I should well consider whether we too do not belong to the company of this Chokichi.

In the first place, we received at birth from our Master Heaven these admirable bodies that we call the five members. We were provided with what we call the five senses—far more precious than the five farthings—the five functions of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. In our hearts, likewise, we received at birth the five virtues of love, justice, courtesy, wis-

dom, and truth. And the real meaning is simply this. Heaven desires to have us buy what we call the five relations—the car-rots and the dock—which are these five things: obedience to parents, loyalty to masters, concord between husband and wife, harmony among brothers, and a mutual fidelity in our intercourse with others. And yet, quite forgetting the essential business of the five rules or doctrines, day and night we spend our time in nothing but this buying and eating things in the street, with its 'I want this—I want that—that will not do—or, there is not enough of this!' Why, is not this Chokichi? It was not to wander about thus purposeless that we were born.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

TANTRIC PRACTICE IN NYING-MA: BY KHETSUN SANGPO RINBOCHAY, TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY JEFREY HOPKINE. Published by Rider & Company, 17-21 Conway Street, London W1P 6JD. 1982. Pp. 239. £7.95.

There are at present four major sects in Tibetan Buddhism: Ge-luk, Sa-kya, Ka-gyu and Nying-ma. The first organized sect was the Kadampa founded by Brom-ston-pa, the devoted disciple of Dīpankara Atisa. In the 14th century there arose the great reformer Tson-kha-pa who founded the Ge-lug-pa sect (Yellow Hats). The Kadampa was absorbed into the Ge-lug-pa sect. The present Dalai and Panchen Lamas belong to Ge-lug. Of the remaining three sects the Nying-ma is the oldest. Nying-ma takes a synthetic view of both the original teachings of the Buddha, popularly known as the Hinayana, and its later form the Mahayana. Unlike the strictly monastic Ge-lug-pa, the Nying-ma admits lay priests. Tantra, as preached by Padmasambhava, is being practised by this sect in its pure form till today. The book under review is a brief exposition of the spiritual practices of the Nying-ma sect. Its author Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay is a member of the lay clergy of this sect.

Tantras are profusely varied in their theme

and expression. Hindu Tantras claim their authority from divine revelation which they call Agama or Nigama. Early Buddhist Tantra which claims its origin from the Buddhist Sūtra, is distinct by its nature though its rituals and practices are similar to those of Hindu Tantras and the Yoga. The ultimate goal of Tantra is to attain liberation from the cycles of birth and death. Unworthy followers of the Tantra consider that the use of five 'ma-kāras'—the five things whose names begin with the letter 'ma': *madya* (wine), *māmsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (parched grains) and *maithuna* (union of male and female)—is prescribed by the Tantra only to satisfy their sensuous desires. Whatever might be the meaning of these 'ma-kāras', the original Buddhist Tantra had no place for any of them. The book under review proves this beyond any doubt.

Though Buddhism was introduced into Tibet in the seventh century A.D., it could not remove the influence of the original primitive religion of Tibet, known as Bon. Practices in Bon consisted of sorcery, devil-dance, animal and human sacrifice, belief in many deities, devils, demigods, occult powers etc. The present form of Tibetan Buddhism is a compromise with the original Bon

faith. King Sron-btsan-sgam-po (born in A.D. 617) of Tibet tried his best to establish the pure form of Buddhism by replacing the Bon form of worship. He brought many Buddhist texts and scholar monks to Tibet from India, introduced the modern Tibetan alphabet, got many Indian texts translated into Tibetan and promulgated laws based on the ten Pāramitās (virtues) prescribed by the Buddha. Śāntarakṣita of the Nālandā University was invited to Tibet who, by virtue of his sublime character and vast scholarship, could induce the minds of Tibetans to some extent to adhere to the doctrine of the ten Pāramitās and the law of Chain of Causation (*pratīyasamutpāda*). He was followed by the great Tantric adept Padmasambhava who introduced esoteric Buddhism into Tibet. But Buddhism had to wage an incessant and arduous struggle for over three centuries against indigenous Bon beliefs till Atīsa Dipankara appeared on the soil of Tibet in the eleventh century, after which Buddhism may be said to have truly become the national religion of Tibet. Atīsa was a great teacher of the pure form of Buddhism. But esoteric methods of Tantra suited the Bon-biased Tibetans most, and they accepted Padmasambhava as their Guru ever since his arrival. The present form of Tibetan Buddhism may be considered a synthesis of Bon, Tantra and the original tenets preached by Śākyamuni, the Buddha. Nying-ma (pa) is the true representative of the doctrine preached by the line of Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava and Atīsa Dipankara.

Tantric Buddhism is popularly known as Mantrayāna or Vajrayāna or Sahajayāna. The Yogācāra school of Buddhism gave importance to 'Vijñāna', and its attainment gradually led to several esoteric developments. Mantras, dhāraṇīs, mudrās, maṇḍalas etc. along with utterance of some obscure syllables (*bija*) were regarded as helpful for the purification of the body and the mind and for the attainment of supreme knowledge (*mahā-prajñā*). The method (*upāya*) when joined with supreme wisdom (Prajñā) would lead to the highest enlightenment. This union of Prajñā and *upāya* was allegorically expressed in terms of sexual union. It was purely symbolical and restricted to meditation, and had nothing to do with the physical union of the male and the female. Both in Tibet and in India there are 'Yuganaddha' (couple in embrace) figures called in Tibetan 'Yab-Yum'. The Buddhists take them as allegorical.

The aim of the Buddhist Tantra is to attain the Great Wisdom—*mahā prajñā*—by which one

gets rid of the cycles of birth and death. Though its aim is the same as the Nirvana of original Buddhism, the Tantras (both Buddhist and non-Buddhist) prescribe the following practices: *kriyā* (rites), *caryā* (tantric practices), *mudrā* (figure poses), *maṇḍala* (mystic circles), *mantra* (spells), *sīla* (moral virtues), *vrata* (vows), *saucācāra* (ritualistic cleanliness), *niyama* (austerities), *homa* (oblations), *japa* (muttering of mantras and prayers) and *dhyāna* (meditation). Some of these acts are common even to the brahmanical practice of daily religious acts. All or most of these are essential to prepare oneself for attainment of the Great Wisdom or Buddhahood.

Tantric Practices in Nying-ma, the book under review, provides a classical presentation of the preparatory tantric paths in the oldest living school of Tibetan tradition, as well as a glimpse into the higher, more secret reaches of tantric realization. The book is divided into four parts. Part one deals with the 'external preparatory practices' and part two with 'special internal preparatory practices'. 'The path to Buddhahood has two parts, preparatory and actual. There are two types of preparation common external and special internal (p. 19)'. The Buddhahood is the goal. 'Everyone has the nature and essence of a Buddha, and is capable of becoming a Buddha (p. 30).'

External preparation consists in meditation on six objects and principles regarding the conditions of human existence and its final aim. The six meditations are:

1. the difficulties of attaining human life and favourable conditions for spiritual fulfilment,
2. the impermanence of life,
3. the faults of the cyclic existence,
4. to be conscious about causes and effects of action,
5. the benefits and pleasure of liberation, and
6. reliance on a spiritual guide or Guru.

Śākyamuni Gautama himself must have practised all these meditations before attaining his Buddhahood, except perhaps reliance on a Guru! The Nying-ma considers that 'the road or channel through which a student can receive the Buddha's marvellous teaching is a teacher (Guru)' (p. 30). The student also must have the faith that he is a Buddha by nature (p. 30), and that 'Buddhahood can be attained only through a union of method (*upāya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).' (p. 101).

The chief internal preparatory practices are the following:

1. Refuge in the Three Jewels—the Buddha

(here the Guru), the doctrine (dharma) and the spiritual community (sangha).

2. Acquiring the 'mind of enlightenment' or *bodhi-citta* which is the fundamental characteristic of a Bodhisattva, the 'generation of an altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.' (p. 125).

3. Vajrasattva meditation, purifying oneself by meditation on Vajrasattva by uttering the mantra: *Om Vajrasattva ... sarvasiddhim me prayachchha, ... ha ha ha ha hoh, ... Bhagavan-sarvatathāgāta-Vajra mā me muñcha, ... Vajrī bhava ... āh hūm.* 'O, Vajrasattva, give me all siddhis, Tathagata, do not abandon me; (become invincible for me) āh hūm' (p. 146). Here Vajra means non-dual wisdom (p.148).

4. Offering mandala—a meditation with offerings of many articles to the Buddha—a form of *mānasapūjā*, or mental worship. '...you should imagine the Buddhas ..., you may also arrange various altar things before you—perfumed water, incense, flowers and so forth.' (p. 156).

5. Cutting attachment, that is, detaching oneself from every object of the world, '... Cutting attachment here is a form of offering, in this case of one's own body, which one cherishes above everything.' (p. 161). '...here it may be taken to mean driving egoism out of oneself.' (p. 166).

6. Guru-Yoga. It 'is the supreme method of generating the ultimate cognition. It is a means of entering the state of blessed empowerment' (p. 167). It is a complete surrender to the Guru for obtaining the highest perfection. 'Please come to give blessings and empowerment *Guru-padma siddhi hūm...*' (p. 170,174).

The internal preparation for 'Great Perfection' ends with the Guru-Yoga prayer of Bodhisattva ideal of sacrificing one's own merit for others and praying for the liberation of all: 'May we all together attain Buddhahood.' (p. 182 + 215).

In Part I and II of the book, already analysed, Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay presents a gloss on the instruction of the great nineteenth century lama, Patrul Rinbochay, on the preliminaries traditionally undertaken before achieving the Great Perfection. Part III is an edited translation of an oral commentary by Khetsun Sangpo Rinbochay on one of 'The Seven Treasures' (mDzod-bDun) a collection of works by the fourteenth century master Longchenpa which together provide a clear exposition of the Great Perfection. The oral commentary was given by Khetsun Sangpo in Dharamsala, India, in 1972. Part IV is an English translation of the verses and prayers for daily recitation and meditation

by the students of Tantra during the periods of their external and internal practices for Great Perfection, Buddhahood. The book is thus an exposition of the actual spiritual techniques practised in the Nying-ma sect.

The book also provides a glossary, bibliography, notes and index. Sanskrit equivalents of Tibetan words wherever given are helpful to understand the exact implication of the expression, as the direct translation from Tibetan into English is not always clear enough. The book is however not an introductory volume to Tibetan esoteric Buddhism. It assumes that the reader is already familiar with the theoretical concepts behind the practices. Had the editor provided at least a brief outline of the main doctrines of Tibetan Buddhism in a prefatorial note, the book would have been of much help to a wider circle of spiritual aspirants.

We are glad that many texts of Buddhist Tantras—preserved in Tibet in their original purity—are now being translated and expounded for English-knowing students and spiritual aspirants by worthy Tibetan Lamas and devoted scholars of Tibetology from non-Tibetan countries. The task is really very hard, and credit goes to both Prof. J. Hopkins and Lama Khetsun Sangpo for bringing out this book and similar other books which have provided the readers with a new and correct outlook on the meaning and purpose of the Tantras in Buddhism.

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Anantapur (Andhra Pradesh), PIN. 515 865. 1982,
Pp. 84. Price not mentioned.

This book is based on Śankara's commentary on Gauḍapāda's Māṇḍūkya Kārikā. The exposition is in three sections viz. (1) The Waking State, (2) The Dream State, and (3) The state of Dreamless Sleep.

A definition of Reality is first attempted by stressing the three Advaitic criteria of truth namely (a) non-sublatibility, (b) practical efficiency, (c) universal validity. The author further indicates the superimposition of space, time and causality on Reality or Pure Consciousness (p.4). According to him, the Self persists inalienably,

in spite of the fact that the three states of waking, dream, and sleep appear and disappear. The phenomenon of the world can never appear without the substratum of the Self which is of the nature of pure consciousness, and which persists throughout as the witness of the phantasmagoria, the appearance and disappearance of the world being foisted upon it in the waking state (p.9). The author considers all the possible objections about the validity of the so-called waking state. The method used here is of questions and answers are quite elaborate and convincing.

It is very difficult to comprehend the state of deep dreamless sleep. The skill of the author lies in elucidating the nature of sleep by unveiling the mask of *avidyā* or ignorance and by establishing the unalienable presence of the Self in deep sleep. He brings home the fact that it is impossible to be conscious of the absence of consciousness or not to be unconscious of consciousness (p. 64). The author has very clearly pointed out that there is no such experience as conscious sleep, with specific features, as any such experience would turn the sleep into wakefulness. It would be no sleep at all.

This small book lucidly teaches an aspirant how to examine the three states of consciousness. After he has mastered this technique, the aspirant will cease to sleep, (non-apprehension of Self) to dream, (misapprehension of Self) and will wake up (that is, apprehend *turiya* or Cosmic Reality as his true Self). Thus he will be free from the effects of the superimpositions of the states of consciousness (*avasthāvatva*) like sorrow and fear etc. on the pure Self.

The subject matter of the book is highly philosophical and almost beyond the ken of an ordinary reader. But the author has expounded it in a simple and clear manner. Deep study of the *sāstras* and his personal experiences, the flowering of his own *sādhanā*, have made this exposition weighty and authentic.

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SEEDS OF CONSCIOUSNESS (THE WISDOM OF SRI NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ.)
ED. JEAN DUNN. Published by Grove Press Inc.
196, West Houston Street, New York, N. Y.
10014. 1982. Pp. 215 \$ 9.95.

This volume comes in the wake of two earlier volumes on the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta

Maharaj entitled 'I am That' and edited by Maurice Frydman, already reviewed in these columns. The style is the same and the period of the dialogue is from 7th July 1979 to 2nd April 1980, a year or so before the passing away of the Maharaj. But throughout these volumes, no question is a duplication and no answer is a repetition. The eternal knowledge of the Self wells out of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj when he is roused by the questions put by ardent devotees. His love and compassion for the questioner, and through him for other aspirants, is so very apparent from the way he answers. The questions are varied, but they all pertain to the spiritual hankering of men in the world. Maharaj settles the mind of the questioner with his forthright answers. The questioner often tries to stick to his mundane position, while every answer from the Maharaj lifts him up, shatters his doubts and leads him to a higher level of existence. Sometimes the questioner may seem to be attempting to teach the Maharaj, but with unwavering conviction Maharaj puts back a question or two and the questioner is set right in the true position. As an instance of the way this was done, we may quote from a piece of conversation of January 2, 1980:

Questioner: In the unmanifest, in the awareness, a feeling, 'I Am' becomes total consciousness. but the consciousness within, which is time-bound, the knower of this consciousness cannot be that consciousness. He is totally different. A Jñānī is established in the state prior to all knowledge.
Maharaj: Where do you come from? Who directed you here?

Q: I am from Australia and I was here before, three years ago, for a few days.

M.: Have you felt any effects from when you were here before?

Q.: Yes, a change.

M.: You have been here for knowledge, but would you be prepared to accept life without the body?

Q.: Yes. What are the characteristics of life without the body?

M.: That is unchanging, the life with the body is changing, transient. Your true nature is such that you are not aware of the consciousness or the waking and sleep states.

'The trouble is that people do not really understand with conviction that the body, breath, and consciousness are time-bound, and the beginning and end of life is a tiny thing that has

happened in the state that is permanent. At the end of the day the consciousness will disappear and no one will want to know the road by which to travel.

In life one comes with a ticket, and at the end of life one must go; there is no appeal. Realize that the beginning and end of life is a journey with a time-bound ticket, and know that at the end of the ticket whatever has come will go, and be a witness of that, step out of it.' (p. 179).

I have quoted this piece *in extens* only to indicate the full strength of the quality of the teaching of Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj.

On another occasion a question was put to Maharaj: Is there any value in repeating the *mantra* and if so, to what extent? Maharaj 'By repeating the *mantra* with a great deal of concentration, the inner receptacle in the body is purified, so that one becomes receptive to such inner knowledge that may come and the mind disappears into a spirit of reality.' (p. 176)

The essence of Maharaj's teaching is: Be conscious of your being—of 'I AM'-ness. Without this consciousness one would not know that one exists, and there would be no effort for self realization.

Religious teachers have been telling us to love others. This approach would quite easily be a matter of frustration to an honest seeker who knows that he does not, and cannot love others like himself. The teachings of Maharaj are quite illuminating in this respect. He says: 'Be true to your ownself. Love yourself absolutely. Do not pretend that you love others as yourself. Unless you have realized others as one with yourself, you cannot love them. Don't pretend to be what you are not, don't refuse to what you are. Your love for others is the *result* of self-knowledge, not its cause.' (p. 16)

The reviewer of this book had the good fortune to see Maharaj during the last year of his physical existence. Although he did not put any questions to Maharaj, he was a silent listener to some of his wise sayings. Blessed are those who could serve Maharaj and listen to his ever fresh words of wisdom. The present record of these conversations would go a long way in quenching the thirst of spiritual aspirants.

The editor Jean Dunn, is one of the Maharaj's close followers quite a proper person for putting Maharaj's words in the right order. The prefatory 'A Date with Eternity' by Smt. Damayantie

Doongagi is a befitting homage to Maharaj. The 'Introduction' by Ramesh S. Balsekar is also informative.

The get-up of the handy paperback is excellent with its meaningful cover design by Peter Morance.

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HINDU PHILOSOPHY: BY DR. THEOS BERNARD. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. 1981. Pp. 207. Price Rs. 50.

Hindu philosophy had for long remained an interesting area of study only for the students of philosophy and religion. The situation is quite different now. Thousands of people in the East and the West are now turning to Hinduism either in search of a satisfying conceptual understanding of life and reality or in pursuit of higher spiritual experience and fulfilment. Considering this widespread interest, it is rather surprising that there are very few introductory books on the subject. But it is difficult to present a complex body of thought and tradition in a short manner. The insiders usually do not know what to exclude and the outsiders are, at times, deprived of the essence of the tradition. It goes to the credit of Theos Bernard to have written a short but clear and systematic account of almost all the schools of Hindu philosophy, free from both the drawbacks.

Although the book was first published in 1947, its present reprint is refreshing. It gives a reasonable introduction to all the six systems of Vedic philosophy, namely, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mimāṃsa and Vedānta. In addition, it includes a valuable chapter on Kashmir Śaivism, which is usually eliminated by the writers of history of Indian philosophy. Every chapter is well planned and presents the purpose, the scope, the philosophy and the literature of each system of Hindu philosophy in a systematic way. In the excellent general introduction the author makes the remarkable observation that all the different philosophical systems *together* provide one total unified vision (*darsana*) of Reality. A detailed glossary at the end of the book further enriches the contribution of the author.

The chapter on Vedānta is specially to be

noted for its handling of the Vedānta philosophy as developed by the author of the *Vedānta-sūtras*. But the Vedantic schools developed after the commentaries on the *sūtras* have been excluded from this portion. Their formulators have rather been briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter of the book. The thoughts of Śankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva definitely deserve a more serious treatment. A factual mistake in the brief account of Śankara's life also could have been avoided in the reprint. Śiva has been mentioned as the family deity of Śankarā. But more probably, Lord Kṛṣṇa (Kesava) was the family deity of

Śankara, as is evidenced by the family's ancient temple at Kalady.

The book, on the whole, is a reliable account of the schools of Hindu philosophy and deserves to be popularized especially among the youth of this country. We suggest that the publishers bring out a much cheaper edition of the book in a smaller format for mass distribution.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI SRI MATRI MANDIR AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADA SEVASHRAMA, JAYRAMBATI

REPORT FOR APRIL 1981 TO MARCH 1982

Sri Sri Matri Mandir

The little village of Jayrambati remains much as it was when Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi was born here in December 1853. It is now an important centre for pilgrimage well known among the seekers of truth in India and abroad. On the grounds where Mother was born a temple enshrining her marble image has come up, and the two old cottages which served as her places of residence from 1863 to 1915 and from 1916 to 1920, and where numerous devotees were received by her and given initiation, are being maintained. All the year round thousands of devotees from all over the world come to take back their share of holiness and inspiration. Some fifty thousand were served with cooked prasād during the year.

The sub-centre, Ramakrishna Yogashrama at Koalpara, 8 kms from Jayrambati, where Mother stayed on several occasions and installed the photographs of Sri Ramakrishna and herself in the shrine for daily worship, is being maintained as a place for retreat, as also is the Jagadamba Ashrama nearby, where also Mother lived occasionally.

Pallimangal: The Integrated Rural development project known as Pallimangal was started in June 1980. Rs. 20,325.83 was spent in helping

thirty-two farmers with seeds, fertilizers, soil testing and pesticides for growing rice, wheat and potatoes. Veterinary aid was given to 559 heads of cattle. Under the self-employment scheme, 9, 12, 5, 4, and 1 persons were trained respectively in the manufacture of Dhoop (incense), hobby-loom products, ganjis, bakery products and chalk. The mobile medical service provided medical relief to 2,400 people and under the child welfare scheme six litres of cow's milk were distributed among some thirty children every day.

Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama

The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Charitable Dispensary, started at the instance of the Mother in 1916 as a humble homoeopathic dispensary, treated 29,269 cases during the year. The Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Vidyapitha—begun as a night school during Mother's life time—now consists of a junior high school, two junior basic schools and two pre-basic schools providing education to six hundred students including girls with twenty-five persons in all on the staff. Aid from the State Government being meagre, the Sevashrama has to depend on the public in order to make these schools worthy of Holy Mother's name.

Present needs: (1) Construction of monks' quarters (20 rooms), Rs. 3 lakhs; (2) permanent fund for the charitable dispensary, Rs. 1 lakh; (3) construction of a boundary wall, Rs. 3 lakhs; and (4) school welfare fund, Rs. 2 lakhs. Cheques drawn in favour of either Sri Sri Matri Mandir

or Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Sevashrama may be sent to the institution concerned under P. O. Jayrambati, District Bankura, West Bengal, PIN 722 141.

**RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND
RAMAKRISHNA MISSION
BHUBANESWAR, ORISSA**

REPORT FOR 1978-1982

Founded by Swami Brahmananda in 1919, the Math is situated in a peaceful and quiet locality and has a spacious garden. Daily worship and vesper services in its shrine were carried on as usual. Religious discourses and weekly scriptural classes were conducted in the Math, in the different parts of the city and also in Cuttack. The birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, the other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna as well as of other prophets and saints were celebrated. The Math has published so far over thirty titles in Oria, including translations of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

The Charitable dispensary under the care of a devoted retired civil surgeon served 27,353,

26,384, 26,669 and 24,338 people respectively in the four years ending with March, 1982. The Vivekananda Library with 11,375 books and the reading room with some fifty newspapers and periodicals continued to draw readers to the extent of 100 people every day on an average.

There were about 120 boys and 125 girls every year in the Vivekananda Upper Primary School, and ninety boys in the Vivekananda Middle English School.

During the period under report flood relief operations (1980) in Munigunda (Koraput district) and tornado relief operations in Khajurdiha (Keonjhar district) were conducted. The rehabilitation programme of building 250 houses at a cost of Rs. 6,000 per house in the Gunupur subdivision for the victims of Vamsadhara floods is still going on.

The Math spent Rs. 3,163. 80 ; Rs. 3,516. 40 ; Rs. 2,688. 96 ; Rs. 4,203. 73 in the four years towards helping poor students.

Needs: A permanent fund for giving assistance to poor students: Rs. 1 lakh. Cost of new books and furniture for the S. V. Library: Rs. 50 thousand. A permanent fund for the Charitable Dispensary: Rs. 3 lakh. A permanent fund for the publication of books in Oria: Rs. 2 lakh.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Chinese Philosophy

It is doubtful whether, except India and China, there are any two neighbouring countries in the world which, in spite of inseparable geographic contiguity, have remained almost total strangers to each other for centuries. India and China have the two most ancient and glorious surviving civilizations of the world, and yet each remained totally unaffected by the cataclysmic historical changes taking place in the other until the Second World War. It is of course true that Buddhism was introduced into China in the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. But by that time Buddhism had become a universal religion, and the Chinese naturalized it to such an extent that it soon lost its Indian trappings. Moreover, India had rejected Buddhism, and what went to China were the discarded crumbs from the table of Indian culture. The real culture of India is Vedantic and it never penetrated into China.

On the other hand, India learned almost nothing from China—not even paper, printing and gunpowder which all came to India through the Arabs and Western peoples. Nor did India utilize the Buddhist influence in winning the alliance of the Chinese during the critical periods of its history. The truth is that the national characteristic of self-sufficient, holier-than-thou attitude had prevented Indians from learning anything from others until the humiliation of political slavery and economic insecurity compelled them to do so.

In recent years China has become a political sphinx for India. There are difficult political issues which vitiate the relationship between the two countries, but it is clear that a major obstacle to the rapprochement between them is sheer lack of basic understanding of each other's culture and ways of thinking. In a book on Chinese philosophy, published soon after the Korean war, H. G. Creel wrote: 'If some of the things the Chinese think and do seem hard to understand, it accomplishes little to shrug our shoulders and say that they are a quaint, mysterious or unreasonable people. If we take the trouble to try to learn why they think and act as they do, we may find that they are quite as reasonable as we are.'

To understand a nation we must understand its culture, and culture is codified in its philosophy. How many Indians know anything about Chinese philosophy? How many Indians even know that China developed its own independent philosophical thought down the centuries? The vast majority of educated Indians harbour the wrong notion that the only philosophy China had was Buddhism until it was dethroned by communism.

Chinese philosophy is centred on man. No other people have raised humanism to such a high pedestal as the Chinese have done. And yet they do not view man in isolation but as a part of a natural ontological harmony known as the Tao. Considering the fact that Judeo-Christian and Western philosophical conceptions have sown only seeds of intolerance, conflict, meaninglessness and destruction all over the world, it is surprising that not more than two or three universities in India have opened their doors to Chinese philosophy.
