Eternal Values for A Changing Society

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

VOLUME
II

Great Spiritual Teachers

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VOLUME TWO

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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FOR
A CHANGING SOCIETY

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By

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST AND SECOND EDITIONS

PUBLISHED BY

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, CALCUTTA

The Advaita Ashrama published in the past some of the lectures of Swami Ranganathananda. The present volume contains all of them and a few more speeches and writings, arranged in a logical order to enable the readers to grasp the central idea running through them all, which the name of the volume suggests. One of the main contributions by Swami Vivekananda to modern thought was to show that society can change in infinite ways in response to historical necessities; but that is no reason why the eternal values underlying all human endeavour should be discarded or even changed. Nay, he was emphatic that these alone can ensure stability at the same time that they supply the driving power for progress. In his conception, spirituality is a dynamic force expressing itself as an unfailing basis of continuous advancement towards the only human goal—God-realization—through varied activities on the social and other planes.

The book is an answer to many basic social, political, economic, and spiritual problems that beset the modern age; and we are sure that the readers will hail it as a timely publication.

Acknowledgement of the sources has been made at the proper places, and our thanks go to all who have permitted us to use these materials.

November 1958 PUBLISHERS

PREFACE TO THE ENLARGED ONE-VOLUME THIRD EDITION

We are happy to place before our readers in East and West this important book *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* by Swami Ranganathananda. The book comprises the speeches and writings of the Swami during the last thirty-six years in India and abroad.

A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, which has its Headquarters at the Belur Math, District Howrah, West Bengal, Swami Ranganathananda is a member of its Board of Trustees and of the Governing Body of its closely allied institution, the Ramakrishna Mission. Born on 15 December, 1908, in a middle-class Hindu family in the sylvan village of Trikkur, Kerala State, the Swami bore the name of Śaṅkaran in his pre-monastic life. After completing his High School education in the neighbouring village of Ollur, during which the study of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature inspired him with the ideals of renunciation and service, young Śaṅkaran renounced the world and, receiving the blessings of Swami Shivananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the second President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, at the hill station of Ootacamund *en route*, joined the Ramakrishna Order in its Mysore branch in July 1926, at the early age of seventeen and a half. And he spent the next twelve years—the first nine in the Mysore and the next three in the Bangalore, branches of the Order—under the loving training and care of Swami Siddheswarananda, the founder, later, of the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna in Gretz, France. In 1929, he was initiated into *brahmacharya* by Swami Shivananda at the Belur Math and became a full-fledged probationer of the Order under the new name of Yati Chaitanya. And four years later, in January 1933, Swami Shivananda initiated him into *Sannyāsa* or monastic Order, and conferred on him the monastic name of Raṅganāthānanda. Absorbed as he was in a disciplined life of meditation, study, and monastery services, his Mysore experience

provided the firm foundations for all his subsequent life and work in the holy Order.

During the last year of his stay in Mysore, he was the Warden of the ashrama's hostel for school and college students. While in Bangalore, he was closely associated with hundreds of students and teachers of the city and conducted moral and religious classes for the prisoners, including *satyāgraha* prisoners, of the Bangalore Central Jail. This was followed by three years in Rangoon as Secretary and Librarian of its Ramakrishna Mission Society, during which he undertook extensive lecture tours in Burma, and six years in Karachi—the then capital of the Indian province of Sind and now the main seaport city of West Pakistan—as the President of its Ramakrishna Math and Mission branch. At Rangoon and Karachi, he not only continued his close association with students and teachers as their friend and guide, but also exercised his beneficent influence over vast sections of the general public. His regular weekly study classes, held at the Rangoon and Karachi branches, on the Upaniṣads and the Gītā, and occasional lectures and discourses on other spiritual, philosophical, cultural, and educational themes, used to draw record crowds of men, women, and students belonging to diverse faiths and nationalities.

While in Karachi, apart from various philanthropic activities, the Swami also organized the raising of large funds from public donations and despatching over 1,250 tons of rice by special steamer to Calcutta to relieve the distress of the victims of the Bengal famine of 1943.

From 1949 to 1962, Swami Raṅganāthānanda was the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission branch in New Delhi. Here he built up a spacious public library and auditorium, a large university students' text-book library, and a magnificent temple dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. In the humanitarian field, he organized bands of dedicated workers engaged in the fields of hospital social services and leprosy relief. His Sunday morning discourses at the Delhi University and his

Sunday evening discourses in the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission, which used to attract large audiences—the number at the Mission rising sometimes to over two thousand—became outstanding features of the cultural and intellectual life of India's capital city. During these years in Delhi, and later in Calcutta, the Swami undertook repeated lecture tours within India, addressing universities, colleges, schools, cultural institutions and administrative training academies and groups. At the request of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, he also undertook extensive lecture tours covering Japanese universities and several South-East Asian countries in 1958 and several times thereafter, and seventeen European countries, including Czechoslovakia, Poland, USSR, and Spain, between April and August 1961.

The Swami has given several broadcast talks at the invitation of the All India Radio. He addressed the annual Convocations of the Calcutta University in February 1966, on *India's Educational Vision*, and of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, in June 1967 on *The Indian Philosophy of Social Work*.

A collection of his speeches and writings under the title *Eternal Values for a Changing Society* was published in 1958 by the Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta-14; a second impression of the same was brought out two years later. With the kind permission of the Advaita Ashrama, we are now happy to bring out an enlarged edition of this book incorporating many of his important speeches and writings, which were not included in the earlier editions, and most of his speeches and writings subsequent to 1958.

This volume of the Swami's speeches and writings, bearing the significant title of *Eternal Values for a Changing Society*, can be taken, in view of its subject matter and treatment, as a companion volume to his book *The Message of the Upaniṣads*, published by us earlier and a revised second edition of which is also being published now along with this book.

May 1971 PUBLISHERS

PREFACE TO THE ENLARGED FOUR-VOLUME FOURTH EDITION

Swami Ranganathananda (1908), Senior Monk of the Ramakrishna Order, exemplifies the ideal of the *Guru* of the Indian tradition. The ideal teacher is best described by India's saint-philosopher, Ādi Śaṅkarācārya (788-820) in his *Vivekachūḍāmaṇi*. The teacher needs to be: *srotriyo, avṛjino, akāmahataḥ, brahmavittamaḥ, śāntaḥ, nirindhana ivānalaḥ* —'well-versed in the Vedas, free from sinfulness, not smitten by any desire (except the desire to serve others), Godward bent, calm like the flaming fire that has burnt itself out.'

Swamiji combines in himself great learning and innate humility—a mark of the aristocracy of the intellect.

Swamiji, with his gift of eloquence, enthralls people all over the world with his magnificent exposition of India's ageless culture backed by an erudition which, though firmly rooted in the Indian scriptures, gives due place to the role of science and technology in human affairs. He beckons to the past only to illumine the present; he holds up the spiritual goals of the *Vedas* and the *Upaniṣads* but does not decry the material benefits of modern science and technology. He advocates a synthesis of spirituality and science, as the celebrated scientist Dr. Albert Einstein also had averred: 'Science without religion is blind, and religion without science is lame.'

Swamiji's exposition of Indian spiritual and social values is as much derived from intensive study of books, ancient and modern, as from his own authentic experience as a *Sannyāsin*. His joining the Ramakrishna Order at the early age of seventeen-and-a-half was a response to the Call Divine in the form of a dream at the age of nine or ten.

Swamiji's spiritual ministrations are avidly sought after by people all over the world, by the rich and the poor, the

sophisticated and the simple-minded, both in urban and rural areas.

True to Swami Vivekananda's dictum, 'Religion is not for empty bellies,' Swami Ranganathananda is always in the forefront to organize help to the famine and flood relief services of the Ramakrishna order and other voluntary agencies with great vision and quiet efficiency.

An Apostle of God who upholds the view that 'service to man is worship of God,' Swamiji has given a commendable lead in extending medical aid, particularly to leprosy patients and to the rural population.

His book, *Eternal Values For a Changing Society*, now being brought out in four volumes, is the fourth edition of the single-volume original, revised and enlarged by Swamiji. The volumes contain Swamiji's speeches and writings covering a wide spectrum—culture, religion, science, philosophy, education, administration, management, and biography.

The low pricing of the publication has been made possible by generous contributions, through Swami Ranganathananda, from lovers and admirers of Vedānta in the West and the East, particularly from Europe, U.S.A., and Australia. We are beholden to them all.

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Rāmanavami,
March 30, 1985

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION

In the book, Devanāgarī or Sanskrit characters are transliterated according to the scheme adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 and since then generally acknowledged to be the only rational and satisfactory one. In it, the inconsistency, irregularity, and redundancy of English spelling are ruled out: f, q, w, x, and z are not called to use; one fixed value is given to each letter. According to this scheme :

a	stands for	अ	and sounds like	*o*	in	c*o*me
ā	,,	,,	आ	,,	,,	,,	*a*	,,	f*a*r
i	,,	,,	इ	,,	,,	,,	*i*	,,	b*i*t
ī	,,	,,	ई	,,	,,	,,	*ee*	,,	f*ee*l
u	,,	,,	उ	,,	,,	,,	*u*	,,	f*u*ll
ū	,,	,,	ऊ	,,	,,	,,	*oo*	,,	c*oo*l
ṛ	,,	,,	ऋ	,,	may be pronounced like *ri* in *ri*ng				
e	,,	,,	ए	,,	sounds like	*a*	in	c*a*ke
ai	,,	,,	ऐ	,,	,,	,,	*i*	,,	m*i*te
o	,,	,,	ओ	,,	,,	,,	*o*	,,	n*o*te
au	,,	,,	औ	,,	,,	,,	*ou*	,,	c*ou*nt
ṁ	,,	,,	(*anusvāra*) and sounds like *m* in so*m*e						
ḥ	,,	,,	(*visarga*)	,,	,,	soft half *h*			
,	(apostrophe) stands for *s* (elided a (अ))								
k	stands for	क्	and sounds like	*k*					
kh	,,	,,	ख्	,,	,,	,,	*kh*	in sil*k h*at (uttered quickly together)	
g	,,	,,	ग्	,,	,,	,,	*g*	,,	*g*o
gh	,,	,,	घ्	,,	,,	,,	*gh*	,,	lo*g-h*ut

ṅ	stands for	ङ्	,,	,,	,,	*ng*	,,	si*ng*
c	,,	,, च्	,,	,,	,,	*ch*	,,	chur*ch*
ch	,,	,, छ्	,,	,,	,,	*chh*	,,	chur*ch-h*ill
ja	,,	,, ज्	,,	,,	,,	*j*	,,	*jug*
jh	,,	,, झ्	,,	,,	,,	*dgeh*	,,	he*dgeh*og
ñ	,,	,, ञ्	,,	,,	,,	*n*	,,	si*n*ge (burn) (a palatal n)
ṭ	,,	,, ट्	and sounds like *t*				in	cur*t*
ṭh	,,	,, ठ्	,,	,,	,,	*th*	,,	ho*t-h*ouse
ḍ	,,	,, ड्	,,	,,	,,	*d*	,,	bir*d*
ḍh	,,	,, ढ्	,,	,,	,,	*dh*	,,	re*d-h*ot
ṇ	,,	,, ण्	,,	,,	,,	(cerebral n) bo*n*d		
t	,,	,, त्	,,	,,	,,	*t*	,,	French
th	,,	,, थ्	,,	,,	,,	*th*	,,	*th*umb
d	,,	,, द्	,,	,,	,,	*th*	,,	*th*ough
dh	,,	,, ध्	,,	,,	,,	*th*	,,	brea*the h*ard
n	,,	,, न्	,,	,,	,,	(dental n) Pe*n*		
p	,,	,, प्	,,	,,	,,	*p*	,,	*p*un
ph	,,	,, फ्	,,	,,	,,	*ph*	,,	to*p-h*at
b	,,	,, ब्	,,	,,	,,	*b*	,,	*b*at
bh	,,	,, भ्	,,	,,	,,	*bh*	,,	a*bh*or
m	,,	,, म्	,,	,,	,,	*m*	,,	*m*an
y	,,	,, य्	,,	,,	,,	*y*	,,	*y*oung
r	,,	,, र्	,,	,,	,,	*r*	,,	*r*ust
l	,,	,, ल्	,,	,,	,,	*l*	,,	*l*ump
v	,,	,, व्	,,	,,	,,	*v* or *w*	,,	le*v*y, *w*ater
ś	,,	,, श्	,,	,,	,,	(palatal s)		
ṣ	,,	,, ष्	,,	,,	,,	*sh*	,,	*sh*ip
s	,,	,, स्	,,	,,	,,	*s*	,,	*s*un
h	,,	,, ह्	,,	,,	,,	*h*	,,	*h*ome

The following points may also be noted :

(1) All Sanskrit words, except when they are proper nouns, or have come into common use in English, or represent a class of literature, cult, sect, or school of thought, are italicized.

(2) Anglicized Sanskrit words like 'kārmic', saṁsāric', 'Arhathood', etc. are romanized.

(3) Current geographical names, except in cases where their Sanskrit forms are given, or in special cases where the context requires it, and all modern names from the commencement of the nineteenth century, are given in their usual spelling and without diacritical marks.

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1

GAUTAMA BUDDHA: THE LIGHT OF ASIA*

1. Introductory

A GREAT thinker has said that the history of the world is the history of its greatest men. This is especially true of India whose long history is filled with the life and work of some of the greatest men the world has ever seen.

2. India's Unique Way of World Conquest

But the men whom India considers great are not kings and military conquerors like Alexander, Charlemagne, or Napoleon, but philosophers and thinkers like Śrī Kṛṣṇa, *Bhagavān* Buddha, and Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. These latter have also been conquerors, but of a different type. In the memorable words of the Mauryan Emperor Aśoka of the third century before Christ, India's conquest is through *dharma* or righteousness (Rock Edict 13):

> 'What has been obtained by this conquest (of *dharma*) creates affection. This affection is firmly established as it is won by conquest by *dharma*. ... This rescription *dharma* has been written for the purpose that my sons and great grandsons who will hear about my new conquests should not consider that further conquest is to be undertaken. If there has to be conquest, through weapons of war, let them take pleasure (after their victory) in peace and light corrective measures. They should consider that the only true conquest is conquest by *dharma*.'

They conquered through non-violence and love, and that love is enshrined in the grateful hearts of millions today.

3. The Upaniṣads: The Spiritual Source of Indian Culture

The Upaniṣads are the fountain-head of not merely the religion of India, but of her culture and philosophy as well. The great sages of the Upaniṣads stand at the very dawn of history as the progenitors and inspirers of a culture and a civilization which, starting like a little stream up in the mountains in the dim antiquity of the

* Contributed to the Daily, *The Rangoon Gazette*, Rangoon, Burma, on the occasion of the birthday of Bhagavān Buddha, May 1941

Vedas, has come down to us as the mighty river of Indian national life, enriched and ennobled by the valuable contributions of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and thinkers of the first magnitude. The Indian of today, to whatever section he may belong, whether he knows it or not, is the inheritor of this rich heritage. And he is proud of the fact that this veritable Gaṅgā of Indian culture has fertilized and nourished not only India, but lands far and near as well.

4. *Srī Kṛṣṇa: The First Epoch-making Personality of India*

The first great personality who enriched Indian thought and life, after the sages of the Upaniṣads, was *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He stands as the great national leader, impressing every department of Indian life with his genius and personality. He is the unfailing source of inspiration for much of Indian mysticism, art, literature, and philosophy. And his great teaching to Arjuna contained in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the Song Celestial, was the first attempt made in India to preach religion and philosophy to the people at large; and with Śrī Kṛṣṇa begins the evolution of a truly national culture and philosophy. In this he represents the liberal tradition of the Upaniṣads as opposed to the sacerdotalism of the earlier part of the Vedas. In the *Gītā* he opens the door of salvation to one and all, besides showing that all religions lead to the same goal (IX. 32, IV. 11):

'Those that come to Me, O Arjuna, even if they be the most sinful, or be they women, Vaiśyas, or Śūdras—all attain to the highest Goal.'

'Through whatever paths men come to Me, I receive them through those very paths; all paths, O Arjuna, which men follow, lead ultimately to Me alone.'

5. *Bhagavān Buddha: India's Second Great Epoch-maker*

The second great teacher who enriched Indian culture and who made Indian thought overflow its narrow geographical bounds is Gautama Buddha, the subject of the present sketch. *With Bhagavān Buddha begins the story of that Greater India which fills the whole of the Asian continent with the sweetness and aroma of her spiritual contribution.*

Buddha exemplifies in his person the ideal man of the Upaniṣads and the man of steady wisdom of the Bhagavad-Gītā. His life and character gave strength and vigour to many an earlier teaching and idea, and vitalized Indian society for more than a thousand years.

It is a mistake to suppose that Buddha taught something absolutely new or anything hostile to the spirit of the existing philosophy and religion. It is more correct to hold that he taught a purer doctrine and expounded and exemplified a more positive philosophy of life than the prevailing ones of the day. True it is that he preached against the exclusiveness of caste and the excessive ritualism of the Vedic priesthood and taught a religion of moral and spiritual discipline. But, in this, the spiritual and philosophical tradition of India as enshrined in the Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* was behind him. In the words of Sir E. Denison Ross, C. I. E., ('Introduction' to the *Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold, 1926, p. XIII):

'There was nothing absolutely new to the Indians in the teachings of Gautama, and his message could only be intelligible in its original form to the Hindus. The changes he made were in either the cosmogony or the ritual of the Hindus, and could only appeal to those familiar with both.'

Rhys Davids, another Western scholar and student of Buddhism, also says (quoted by Sir. E. Denison Ross, op. cit., p. XVII):

'It is inaccurate to draw any hard and fast line between the Indian Buddhists and their countrymen of other faiths.'

Sir Edwin Arnold, in the preface to his *Light of Asia,* points to the same truth when he says:

'The mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brāhmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts.'

6. *The Early Life of Buddha*

It is not possible in the course of this short article to enter into any detail regarding the life of the blessed Teacher. But I would like to touch upon a few of the outstanding events of his long career and ministration. Born of King Śuddhodana and Queen Māyā of the Śākya clan in the city of Kapilavastu, we find young Siddhārtha

spending the early years of his life in his father's palace in the customary fashion of the princes of those days. But there was something in him even then which made him the beloved of the people; for with the valour of the Kṣatriya he combined true gentleness and humility of spirit. The father had great hopes of his son; for had not the astrologers told him that prince Siddhārtha would become an emperor of the wide world? An emperor he became, but not like Alexander or Napoleon; but a *svarāṭ*—a master of his *passions and of himself first, and then a ruler of the hearts of men.* And in this transformation is contained all the romance of the life of the Buddha.

7. *Buddha's Historic Renunciation*

Siddhārtha was married to princess Yaśodharā, and to them was born the young prince, Rāhula. King Śuddhodana took every means to make the life of his son pleasant and happy; but the great future whispered to the young prince his mission in life, and the stark reality of life presented before him the painful scenes of suffering, sickness, and death, and the joyous visions of renunciation and enlightenment. With a resolution possible only for a true Kṣatriya, Prince Siddhārtha left the securities and luxuries of his home and palace, and his pre-monastic name of Siddhārtha as well, and wandered forth into the wide world in quest of the highest truth and the peace that passeth understanding.

8. *Under the 'Bodhi' Tree*

For many years he struggled and searched, now following this sect, now that, wandering from place to place, until at last he came to Gaya, in modern Bihar; and, finding the place beautiful and serene, he sat down under a *Bodhi* tree, resolved not to move till the highest truth was found (*Lalitavistara, XIX. 57):*

Ihāsane śuṣyatu me śarīram
tvagasthi māṁsaṁ pralayaṁ ca yātu;
Aprāpya bodhiṁ bahukalpadurlabhām
naivāsanāt kāyam ataḥ calişyate—

'Let my body wither away in this seat, let it be reduced to mere skin,

flesh, and bones; but I shall not move an inch from hence till the highest enlightenment is gained.'

Sitting cross-legged in meditation under the sacred tree, Gautama's mind rose to the height of contemplation and of ecstasy, and with the passing of every successive watch of the night, fold after fold of the garment of Truth was unveiled till the dawn found the naked Truth revealed (*Light of Asia,* p. 130):

... The spirit of our Lord
Lay potent upon man and bird and beast,
Even while he mused under the Bodhi-Tree,
Glorified with the conquest gained for all,
And lightened by a light greater than day's.

Gautama became Buddha, the Enlightened One. And he rose from his seat with a shout of joy, for he had attained insight into the meaning of life and existence (*ibid.*, p.131):

Many a house of life
Hath held me seeking ever him who wrought
These prisons of the senses, sorrow-fraught,
Sore was my ceaseless strife.
But Now,
Thou builder of this tabernacle—thou!
I know thee! Never shalt thou build again
These walls of pain,
Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits, nor lay
Fresh rafters on the clay;
Broken thy house is, and the ridge-pole split!
Delusion fashioned it!
Safe pass I thence Deliverance to obtain.

9. *'Turning the Wheel of Dharma'*

Gautama had attained Deliverance and Enlightenment; but now the question arose in his mind whether he was to keep this wisdom to himself or broadcast it so as to redeem the suffering world. After an intense mental struggle, he decided to share the new-found treasure with one and all—*bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya*—for the good of the many, for the happiness of the

many—and thus achieved a greater renunciation than the one he had attained by leaving the princely life. With this assurance and resolve, he proceeded to the holy city of Vāraṇāsi, where he first 'turned' the *Wheel of the Dharma*. And for the next forty years, he wandered from place to place, meeting all classes of people, from prince to peasant, wiping the widow's tears and assuaging the orphan's wails, imparting wisdom to all and gathering a large number of disciples and followers. He charged his disciples (*Dhammapada,* quoted by Sister Nivedita in *The Master as I Saw Him,* p. 257):

Go forward without a path!
Fearing nothing, caring for nothing,
Wander alone, like the rhinoceros!
Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
Even as the lotus-leaf unstained by the water,
Do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros!

The words of the Master carried a freshness and a vigour which appealed to the better minds of the day, and his adoption of the language of the people as a vehicle of expression helped in the spread of his thoughts and ideas. His wide heart embraced one and all, the afflicted and the despised. After a long career of benevolent ministration, the Blessed One passed away at Kuśinagara, in the northern part of the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, in the year 543 B.C.

10. The Dharma and Emperor Aśoka

The *Dharma* of the Lord continued to spread, thanks to the activities of the *Saṅgha* or monastic Order. It rescued the national mind from the intellectual confusion of the age by elevating the people morally and spiritually, and it ushered in the age of Aśoka, which may be called the brightest period in India's history. The spread of Buddha-dharma under Aśoka is one of the most instructive chapters of world's history. Aśoka's relinquishment of war and all forms of violence as an instrument of state policy is the only example of its kind in all history; and this great example has a deep significance for us today in the context of the second world war which humanity is waging against each other. Through his numerous edicts inscribed on rocks and pillars, Aśoka helped the spread of

the message of love, tolerance, and service. He sent out bands of monks to spread the noble *Dharma* far and near, and, for the next thousand years, this activity continued to be the main aspect of India's foreign policy. In a special sense, Emperor Aśoka was instrumental in making Gautama the Buddha, the Light of Asia. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru quotes the following well-known tribute of H. G. Wells to the memory of Aśoka (*Glimpses of World History,* Letter 24):

'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Aśoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star. From Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet, and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine and Charlemagne.'

11. Swami Vivekananda on Buddha

In concluding his great work on *Karma-Yoga,* Swami Vivekananda gives the following tribute to the character and personality of *Bhagavān* Buddha *(Complete Works,* Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, pp. 116-18):

'Let me tell you in conclusion a few words about one man who actually carried this teaching into practice. That man is Buddha. He is the one man who ever carried this into perfect practice. All the prophets of the world, except Buddha, had external motives to move them to unselfish action. The prophets of the world, with this single exception, may be divided into two sets, one set holding that they are incarnations of God come down on earth, and the other holding that they are only messengers from God; and both draw their impetus for work from outside, expect reward from outside, however highly spiritual may be the language they use. But Buddha is the only prophet who said: "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is." He was, in the conduct of his life, absolutely without personal motives; and what man worked more than he? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such character, such high philosophy, such wide sympathy. This great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy, yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals, and never put forth any claims for himself. He is the ideal *karma-yogī,* acting entirely without motive, and the history of humanity shows him to have been the greatest man ever born; beyond compare the greatest combination of heart and brain that ever existed, the greatest soul-power that has ever been manifested. He is the first great reformer the world has seen. He was the first who dared to say: "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made

to believe it from childhood; but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it, and help others to live up to it." He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of *karma-yoga.'*

12. *'Be Lamps unto Yourselves!'*

All through the teachings of the Blessed One, there is a constant insistence on right conduct based on true understanding. The aim of life is to develop a perfect character. Buddha referred to himself as an example of this attainment which is open to all, and never laid any special claims to divinity or godhood for himself. Religion, according to Buddha, does not consist in mere performance of ritual or propitiation of deities; but it consists in the struggle to achieve self-possession and peace. In his last discourse addressed to Ānanda, just before his passing away, Buddha summed up his teachings in the following beautiful words:

'Therefore, O Ānanda! be ye lamps unto yourselves. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp. Hold fast as a refuge to the Truth. ... Herein, O mendicants, a brother continues as to the body, so to look upon the body that he remains strenuous, self-possessed, and mindful, having overcome both the hankering and the dejection common in the world. And in the same way as to feelings, ... moods, ... ideas, he continues so to look upon each that he remains strenuous, self-possessed, mindful, having overcome both the hankering and the dejection common in the world. And whosoever, Ānanda, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves, and a refuge unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge, but holding fast as their refuge to the Truth, shall look not for refuge to anyone besides themselves—it is they, Ānanda, among my *bhikkus,* who shall reach the very topmost height—but they must be anxious to learn.'

13. *Conclusion*

Let me conclude this short sketch with the following exhortation of Buddha as given in the *Dhammapada* (II. 1, 4 and 5):

'Wakefulness is the way to immortality; heedlessness is the way to death; those who are wakeful die not, the heedless are already dead. Continuously increasing is the glory of him who is wakeful, who has aroused himself, and is vigilant, who performs blameless deeds, and acts with becoming consideration, who restrains himself and leads a righteous life. Let such a one, rousing himself to wakefulness by the restraint and subjugation of himself, make for himself an island which no flood can engulf.'

2

THE ETERNAL MESSAGE OF BUDDHA*

1. *Introductory*

I HAVE been asked to speak to you on '*The Eternal Message of Buddha*, a theme dear to our hearts. The lamp that was lit in India in the sixth century B. C. lit the hearts of millions and millions of people in Ceylon, Central Asia, China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan, Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, and Indonesia, in the succeeding centuries. Through Buddha, India established silken bonds of fellowship and love with the peoples of Asia. The process forms one of the arresting episodes of human history.

2. *The Indian Tradition Before Buddha*

To understand Buddha and the great movement initiated by him, it is necessary to understand the developments of Indian thought and life previous to him and leading up to him. When Buddha appeared on the Indian scene, India had already lived a life of over two thousand years comprising the Mohenjodāro or pre-Vedic, the early Vedic, the later Vedic, and the Upaniṣadic periods of her history. The first two of these periods were characterized by remarkable civic and social developments and religious and philosophic questionings. A high level of material and civic culture is evident in the Mohenjodāro period. A spirit of dynamic faith and enthusiasm is evident in the Rg-Vedic period. Life was joyous and free, and in a context of communion of men and women with nature and its gods arose the inspiring poetry of the *Ṛg-Veda,* the earliest book of the human race. And in the midst of the enjoyments and delights of social existence, the finer spirits of the age were asking searching questions about life and death, about nature, man, and the gods, thus laying the foundations of a dynamic and comprehensive philosophy which was to find its full development in the

* Lecture delivered on 18 September 1958 at the Women's University, Kyoto, during the Swami's lecture tour of Japanese Universities, and re-delivered in the Anatomy Lecture Theatre of the Medical College, Geneva, on 27 June 1961, during the Swami's lecture tour of Europe

Upaniṣads or Vedānta a few centuries later. The *Ṛg-Veda* had unequivocally formulated the unity of the Godhead in the famous declaration: *Ekaṁ sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti*—'Truth is one, sages call It by various names', and had sensed the wider unity of God and man and nature.

While these developments of thought were taking place, the Vedic Indian culture, confined till then to the north-west, was expanding steadily to the east of India and slowly getting fused with the culture, religions, and social forms of the people of the new territories. The need for organizing the vast and complex social whole was being increasingly felt and was met through a non-violent social policy and method, which found gradual formulation in the *varṇa* (translated, not aptly, as caste) theory of social classification with the Brāhmaṇa, the man of God, at the top; the Kṣatriya, the man of valour, next; the Vaiśya, the agricultural and commercial group, as the third; and the Śūdra, the unskilled labour force, as the fourth. Originally a natural division of labour, neither rigid nor watertight, this *varṇa* system slowly developed rigid features in the later Vedic period, with the Brāhmaṇa at the top forgetting his divine vocation and developing into a privileged social class, intent on retaining his power over the rest. He began to use the complicated system of rituals and sacrifices, with complex theologies in their support, to maintain his privileged position, and claimed increasing social power through his supposed power over the gods. This is the period of the later Vedic literature, the Brāhmaṇas, a period marked by an increasing complication of religious life and distortion of social values.

3. *Importance of the Upaniṣads*

But very soon protests arose against these distortions, both in the field of philosophy and in the field of society; a new spiritual earnestness and philosophic temper began to inspire large groups of the finest minds, both men and women, and Indian thought entered into the fourth or the Upaniṣadic period of her history. In voicing their protest against barren ritualism, in advocating morality as the foundation of spiritual life, in defining spiritual life as the realization, in this very life, of the divinity inherent in man and the

transcendence of the finite ego, and in proclaiming the unity and solidarity of all existence in the non-dual spiritual Absolute or Brahman, the great sages of the Upaniṣads reversed the cramping tendencies of the earlier Brāhmaṇa literature and paved the way for the emergence of two creative personalities — *Bhagavan* Sri Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the Gītā, in the pre-historic period, and *Bhagavān* Buddha, the Light of Asia, in the historic period, of Indian history.

4. *The Lofty Spirituality of the Upaniṣads*

The Upaniṣads or Vedānta represent the highest development of Indian spiritual thought. The sages of the Upaniṣads, among whom were great women like Maitreyī and Gārgī, towering intellectuals like Yājñavalkya, Sanatkumāra, and Varuṇa, philosopher-kings like Janaka, and pure and truth-seeking boys like Naciketā, Satyakāma, and Śvetaketu, were moved only by one passion—the passion for Truth and, its corollary, the happiness and welfare of all humanity. *Satyameva jayate*—'Truth alone triumphs', proclaims one of the Upaniṣads (*Muṇḍaka* III. 1.6); and this famous Upaniṣadic passage now adorns the crest of the Republic of India. The Upaniṣads were not interested to frame a creed or propound a dogma. They sought, and sought with a persistence rare in the history of philosophic thought, for that changeless Reality in the changing facets of man and nature, and discovered the One in the many, the Brahman or the Ātman, the unity of the Self in man with the Self in the universe, the 'One without a second', *Ekameva advitīyam*. This Mount Everest of experience, they further proclaimed, is the goal of human existence, the birthright of every being, and the path to it lies through the steady pursuit of 'Truth, right effort, right knowledge, and *brahmacarya* or self-control'—*Satyena labhyaḥ tapasā hi eṣa ātmā samyag-jñānena brahmacaryeṇa nityam (ibid.*, III. 1.5).

5. *The Universal Message of the Gītā*

The enduring edifice of thought which the Upaniṣads or Vedānta raised, in those far-off days, through a dispassionate study of life and experience, provided the basis for all later developments of Indian thought, life, and religion. Rightly, therefore, is Vedānta

called *Sanātana Dharma,* Eternal Religion, or the 'Perennial Philosophy'. To begin with, it was naturally the possession of a few—those who had the requisite moral and intellectual strength to grasp and live its lofty truths. Then appeared a creative genius in the person of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who synthesized the varied religious thoughts of the age in the light of Vedānta, and gave, through his immortal *Bhagavad-Gītā,* the Song Celestial, a message of practical spirituality, breaking the barriers of caste and class and sex. Śrī Kṛṣṇa made Vedānta the property of the Indian people as a whole and silenced for a time the conflict of sects and castes through his message of unity and toleration. Proclaiming the *Magna Carta* of religious freedom, he infused the spirit of positive toleration and acceptance into the Indian religious spirit, which has remained indelible to this day. 'Through whatever paths men come unto Me, I receive them through those very paths; all paths, O Arjuna, ultimately lead unto Me only', says Kṛṣṇa to his warrior disciple, Arjuna, in the *Gītā* (IV. 11). Proclaiming the spiritual equality of all men, he further declares (*ibid.,* VI.29): 'One endowed with true spirituality will see oneself in all beings, and all beings in oneself; he will be equal-minded everywhere.' And (*ibid.,* XIII. 28): 'Thus seeing the same God everywhere equally present in all, the sage does not injure the self by the self, and by that he attains to the highest goal.' Through the comprehensiveness of his message and the many-sidedness of his personality, Kṛṣṇa became the perennial inspirer of much of the mysticism, poetry, religion, and philosophy of later ages of Indian history.

6. *The Philosophic Background of Buddhism*

For some centuries after Kṛṣṇa, everything seems to have gone on well; but, later, the creative impulse of the original movement seems to have been lost, as happens to everything in the flow of time; materialism with the higher classes and superstition with the common people gained ascendancy, while the intellectuals indulged in barren speculation and the religious aspirants indulged in meaningless asceticism. Earnest men and women, who were moved by the spiritual impulse, renounced the world to practise meditation in the forests, singly or in groups, often under the guidance of a teacher or teachers. The spirit of renunciation and free inquiry,

which had appeared on the Indian horizon towards the end of the later Vedic period, found a more pervasive expression now in the eastern fringes of the orthodox Vedic society—in the province of Magadha and its neighbouring regions, corresponding to modern Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. And it was here that, in response to the demands of the age and the promise of Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* that God will incarnate Himself whenever the world needs Him, the next great renaissance of the Indian spirit was achieved with *Bhagavān* Buddha as its centre; and this renaissance not only energized India vertically and horizontally, but also energized practically the whole of the vast continent of Asia.

7. *Some Misconceptions about Buddha Removed*

It is against this background that we have to view the life and teachings of Buddha and the dynamic movement initiated by him in the India of the sixth century B.C. Without that perspective and the thought-background provided by Vedānta, it becomes difficult to grasp his teachings in their original intentions and emphasis. As Dr. Radhakrishnan points out (*Gautama the Buddha,* p.33):

> 'Gautama the Buddha has suffered as much as any one from critics without a sense of history.'

There are a few Western scholars who appreciate this fact. In his Introduction to Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia,* Sir E. Denison Ross, C. I. E., says (London, John Lane the Bodley Head Ltd., 1926, p. XIII):

> 'There was nothing absolutely new to the Indians in the teaching of Gautama, and his message could only be intelligible in its original form to the Hindus; the changes he made were in either the cosmogony or the ritual of the Hindus, and could only appeal to those familiar with both.'

In his Preface to the above book, Sir Edwin Arnold says (*ibid.,* p. XIX):

> 'Though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brāhmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts.'

On the inter-relationship between Buddhism and Brāhmanism, Rhys Davids says (*Buddhism,* London, 1907 Edition, pp. 83-85):

'But the foregoing account will be sufficient, I hope, to remove at least one misconception—the prevalent notion that Gautama was an enemy to Hinduism, and that his chief claim on the gratitude of his countrymen lies in his having destroyed a system of iniquity and oppression and fraud. This is not the case. Gautama was born, and brought up, and lived, and died a typical Indian. Hinduism had not yet, in his time, arisen. And he had but little quarrel with the religion that did prevail. His purpose was to build it up, to strengthen it, not to destroy it. ... Such originality as Gautama possessed lay in the way in which he adopted, enlarged, ennobled, and systematized that which had already been well said by others; in the way in which he carried out to their logical conclusion principles of equity and justice already acknowledged by some of the most prominent earlier thinkers. The difference between him and other teachers lay chiefly in his deep earnestness and in his broad public spirit of philanthropy. Even these differences are probably much more apparent now than they were then, and by no means deprived him of the support and sympathy of the best among the Brāhmins. Many of his chief disciples, many of the distinguished members of his Order, were Brāhmins; he always classed them with the Buddhist mendicants as deserving of respect, and he used the name Brāhmin as a term of honour for the Buddhist *arahats* or saints. ... So, far from showing how depraved and oppressive Hinduism was, it shows precisely the contrary; for none will deny that there is much that is beautiful and noble in Buddhism; and Buddhism was the child, the product, of those phases of Indian belief out of which Hinduism afterwards arose. ... He probably deemed himself to be the most correct exponent of the spirit, as distinct from the letter, of the ancient faith. And it can only be claimed for him that he was the greatest, and wisest, and best of that long line of illustrious reformers who have endeavoured, through the centuries, to infuse new strength and new truth into the religious life of India.'

No writer has realized more clearly this Vedāntic perspective of Buddha and Buddhism than Edmund Holmes. He writes in his *The Creed of Buddha* (p. 98):

'Those who have followed me thus far will, I think, admit that Buddha's scheme of life coincides at all vital points with the scheme that I worked out by drawing practical deductions from the master ideas of that deeply spiritual philosophy which found its highest expression in the Upaniṣads.'

8. *Birth and Early Life of Buddha*

There are three eventful periods in the life of Buddha: first, his early life up to the age of 29; second, his renunciation, search for Truth for seven years, and final illumination under the *bodhi* tree in Bodha-Gaya; and third, his forty-five years of unremitting public teaching moved by compassion.

The personal name of Buddha was Siddhārtha, and the family name Gautama. He was the only son of King Śuddhodana and

Queen Māyā. Śuddhodana ruled over the principality of Kapilavastu in the foot-hills of the Himalayas in modern Nepal. Soon after the birth of the child, Queen Māyā died, and her sister Prajāpatī became the foster-mother of Gautama. Wise men came to the palace and, beholding the new-born child, foretold a great future for him saying that he was destined to become either a great emperor of the world or an emperor of the Spirit. Very soon the second destiny knocked at his door. Educated into the capacities and talents of a warrior prince, Gautama grew up to be a vivacious youth skilled in archery and other manly sports. Soon he entered the next stage of life, when he took for wife the princess Yaśodharā. King Śuddhodana was pleased to find that his son was developing into a worthy heir apparent. But the prince began to look beyond the pleasures and delights of worldly life and ask searching questions about life as a whole in the recesses of his heart. The facts of suffering and death could not be concealed for long beneath trivial pleasures. He must confront them and wrest the truth out of them. Is there a Truth beyond sorrow and death, and if there is, can man realize it, and if so, how? This question began to take increasing possession of his heart, until the time came when he could no longer evade it.

9. *Buddha's Historic Renunciation*

In India, renunciation of the world, adoption of the free monastic life, and calm meditation were well-established norms in the Upaniṣads as a path leading to the realization of the true Self. Bold and free spirits resorted to this difficult path, which, as described in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (III. 14), is 'difficult to pass and hard to tread like walking on the edge of a razor, so say the sages'—*Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā durgaṁ pathaḥ tat kavayo vadanti.* This path became defined as the path of *jñāna,* knowledge, enlightenment—leading to spiritual emancipation or *mukti*—in later spiritual thought, which also defined two other paths of spiritual life, namely, *bhakti-yoga*, the path of devotion to a personal God, and *karma-yoga*, the path of dedicated action. The *Gītā* had earlier blended these three paths in its teaching of *yoga* as practical spirituality, based on equability of reason and leading to equality of vision and efficiency in life and action.

Gautama resolved to follow this hard path of *jñāna,* which had been trodden by the great sages of earlier periods. In his discourses after enlightenment, he has referred to this fact. He resolved to renounce home and wife and attachments and wander alone in quest of saving wisdom. When he was making preparations for the great departure, word was brought to him that his wife had given birth to a male child; the name Rāhula was given to the child, in view of the slight obstacle that his birth presented to Gautama. But he stood by his resolution to leave that very night. His charioteer, Canda, had got his faithful horse Kaṇṭhaka ready; it was midnight; the town of Kapilavastu and the palace of Śuddhodana were hushed in slumber. Gautama rose; and as he was about to mount his horse, a desire arose in his heart to have a parting look at his sleeping wife and new-born son. With gentle footsteps, he entered the room and bent low over the sleeping wife and child and desired to kiss the child, but desisted, for fear of waking the mother, and gently withdrew from the room, mounted the horse, and rode out into the wide world of forests and towns and villages, into the mysteries of the truth of existence, and, finally, into the minds and hearts of men and women.

This renunciation of Gautama later became an arresting theme for much poetry and art. It was certainly a great event in human history and it has left ineffaceable marks on Indian religion and life.

10. Buddha's Early Spiritual Struggles in the Forest

The change from the ease and comfort of the palace to the hardships and uncertainties of a monastic life was hard to bear at first. In his discourses Buddha has given vivid descriptions of the state of his mind during the transition. But his iron determination and his passion for Truth made these changes in his external circumstances of no consequence. He soon entered on a course of study, discipline, and meditation, first under two well-known teachers in succession, and later, moving into the jungles of Uruvela in the vicinity of Gaya, all by himself. Five other aspirants attached themselves to him as disciples, inspired by the rigour of his austerity and earnestness. After years of fruitless mortification of flesh, he

discovered that, though his body was facing death from emaciation, Truth still remained an interrogation; he discovered that austerity was only a means, not the end, and that the end was the knowledge of Truth. So he gave up the path of senseless austerity and began to strengthen his body and mind through food and drink. At this, the five disciples forsook him, and went towards the holy city of Vāraṇāsi (Banaras).

11. Buddha's Enlightenment at Buddhagaya

The day came when he decided to make a supreme effort to win enlightenment. Feeding on the alms made of sweetened milk and rice given by a village girl, Sujātā, Gautama sat down under a sacred *aśvattha* tree towards the evening with the resolve never to move until the Truth was achieved. As the night advanced, his meditation grew deeper and deeper; layer after layer of the coverings over Truth was lifted; and towards the dawn, he found the naked Truth revealed. It was the great moment of his life, the great moment in the history of man's spiritual quest. Gautama became Buddha, the Enlightened; he had achieved true freedom, emancipation of heart, *cetovimukti,* as he himself termed it. This state had been earlier described by the Upaniṣads in a famous verse *(Muṇḍaka,* II. 2.9):

Bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiḥ chidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ;
Kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare—

'The knots of the heart are cut asunder, all doubts become destroyed, and all his actions (bondage-producing seeds of actions) become eliminated, when the supreme Truth is realized.'

12. 'Turning the Wheel of Dharma' at Vāraṇāsi

After attaining this great realization, Buddha experienced an access of compassion in his heart, which moved him to take steps to impart it to humanity as a gospel of redemption from spiritual blindness, finitude, and self-centredness, and the sorrows and miseries flowing from them. He felt assured that, though the vast majority of the world was sense-bound and hence incapable, there were some who had the moral and spiritual capacity to grasp his message and profit from it. After enjoying for seven weeks the

inexpressible bliss of his lofty realization in the vicinity of the sacred tree, henceforth to be known as the *bodhi* tree, Buddha wended his way to Vāraṇāsi where, at Sārnāth, the Deer Park in its vicinity, he met the five disciples who had earlier deserted him. After some initial hesitation, they finally recognized the spiritual eminence of Buddha and acknowledged him as their guide and master. He then preached to them two discourses, in the first of which he expounded his famous doctrine of the 'Middle Path' between the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, the Four Noble Truths, and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to insight, enlightenment, and peace.

Craving, he declared, is the root of all tension and sorrow—craving for both worldly and heavenly pleasures. This arises from spiritual blindness. Through spiritual education in the noble eightfold path of *śīla,* morality, *samādhi,* meditation, *prajñā,* insight, man becomes liberated from ignorance, craving, and sorrow. He achieves supreme enlightenment, *sammā-sambodhi,* and transcends his separate limited individuality and overcomes the round of birth and death, which is *saṁsara,* in the realization of the Truth of *advaita,* the non-dual Self.

This discourse is famous as the *dharmacakra-pravartana* discourse, the 'turning of the wheel of *dharma*'. *Dharma* had become static and lifeless; Buddha, through this discourse, set it in motion; and it continued to move for centuries together, flooding India and Asia with ethical and spiritual inspiration. Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke of '*dharma saṁsthāpana*' — firm establishment of *dharma* — as the motive of divine incarnation; Buddha spoke of *dharmacakra-pravartana*. Both refer to an identical dynamic divine process of world redemption through the setting in motion of a current of moral and spiritual energy.

Srī Kṛṣṇa had spoken in the *Gītā* of the wheel of interdependence of man and the divine order, and nature and society, which had been set in motion at the very beginning of the world. The continuous rolling on of this wheel is the basis of human happiness and welfare. The wheel is symbolic of dynamic movement. Buddha set in motion anew this wheel of *dharma,* which had got stuck up in the mud of materialism, worldliness, and self-centredness. This wheel

later entered Buddhist art and became the symbol of the dynamic expansion of Indian culture under the inspiration of Buddha *Dharma.* And this symbol of the wheel adorns today the banner of the Republic of India.

In the second discourse at Vāraṇāsi, Buddha exhorted his five disciples to give up the natural but mistaken identification of the Self with the five *skandhas* or constituents of the changing personality, namely, the body, sensation, perception, predisposition, and consciousness, with regard to each of which, or all together, true knowledge will affirm: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self.' Through such knowledge, man gives up identification with the finite, limited, separate self, which is mortal, and realizes himself as the non-dual, non-separate, absolute Self.

13. Foundation of the Saṅgha

At Vāraṇāsi, Buddha gathered to himself, in a short time, sixty disciples; he then sent them far and wide with the charge that they preach to one and all his message of deliverance from ignorance, craving and sorrow—'*bahujana hitāya, bahujana sukhāya* (for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many), in his own weighty words. He thus set in motion the first great missionary movement in history which, in the succeeding centuries, altered the destinies of nations in the most peaceful way. *This peaceful way has not been the characteristic of any of the missionary movements of religions which had their birth outside India.* Peace is the product of a sense of non-separateness, universality. This universality is the keynote of the Indian religious spirit nurtured in the philosophy of Vedānta. That spirit found a mighty expression in Buddha and his missionary movement in the sixth century B.C., and got a further impetus from the great Emperor Aśoka three centuries later. And that spirit has continued to characterize the movements of India's soul ever since.

After sending his band of missionaries far and wide, Buddha proceeded towards Uruvela, the scene of his enlightenment, where he met the first one of his famous disciples, Kassapa. To him, who was a fire-worshipper, Buddha preached the famous 'Fire Discourse' at Gaya: Man is burning in the fire of the senses, in the fire

of craving; the putting out of this fire through dispassion and insight is *nirvāṇa,* liberation. At Rājagṛha, the capital of Magadha, Buddha got two of his greatest disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, 'the most excellent pair', as he put it. And during a visit to his native Kapilavastu, Ānanda, who became his devoted attendant, and to whom many of his discourses are addressed, joined him as a disciple.

14. Buddha: A Great Traveller

Buddha was a great traveller; except for the rainy seasons, he was constantly on the move through villages and towns, for full forty-five years, preaching to the people, guiding his monastic disciples, and organizing the monastic *Saṅgha* or Order. The spiritually sensitive minds of the day felt the impact of his benign influence and rallied under his banner. Laymen or monks, simple folk or intellectuals, men or women, all those who came under his influence were led forward in the flood of his ethical and spiritual message. 'Be good and do good' was his universal exhortation. Religion is striving for goodness and not external ritual or ceremony. Through goodness of heart alone can *nirvāṇa,* the highest excellence in life, be attained.

15. Buddha's Last Message

Three months before he passed away, he gave his last famous discourse of the *mahāparinirvāṇa,* the 'final passing away'. In this, he reemphasized the central principles of his message, *śīla* or morality, *samādhi* or meditation, and *prajñā* or insight; and after an address to laymen, he exhorted his monastic disciples thus:

'It is through lack of understanding and of comprehension of the four noble truths, O monks, that you and I have passed for so long in this road of rebirth. When the noble truths of suffering, of the origin of suffering, of the cessation of suffering, and of the way to the cessation of suffering are completely understood, the craving for the process of life will be destroyed, and there will be no more recurring of the present state.'

The discourse concluded with the following exhortation:

"These, O monks, are the truths which, when I had understood them well, I expounded to you. Having learnt them well, you should practise and develop them

increasingly, devoting yourselves to them, so that the religious life, lasting a long time, is perpetuated, for the welfare and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, and for the individual welfare and happiness of gods and men. And now, O monks, I have this to say to you: *All conditioned things are subject to decay. Strive diligently to work out your own perfection.* In three months from now, the Tathāgata will attain to his *parinirvāṇa* (death).'

16. Buddha's Final Passing Away

Then he passed through many towns and cities and reached Pāvā, where, in the house of Cuṇḍa, the smith, he partook of a meal which proved fatal. He took ill; still he continued to teach, taking an occasional rest. Accompanied by his faithful attendant Ānanda, and a large number of monks, Buddha crossed the Hiraṇyavatī river, entered the *sāl* (Himalayan teak) grove of the Malla country, and lay down on a couch spread by Ānanda between two trees to die. At this time, Subhadda, a wandering monk, appeared and asked to see Buddha. Knowing Buddha to be very sick, Ānanda was about to turn away Subhadda, when Buddha, overhearing from within, asked Ānanda to let Subhadda in. Buddha instructed and gladdened Subhadda, who then and there joined the Order and became the last of his disciples. After consoling his beloved attendant Ānanda, who was weeping at the thought of the imminent departure of his beloved master, Buddha quietly passed away, after giving his disciples a reiteration of his central message: *'All conditioned things are subject to decay; work out your liberation with diligence.'*

17. The Peaceful Spread of the Dharma throughout Asia

Thus ended the earthly physical career of Gautama Buddha, one of the greatest teachers of Indian history, and one of the most dynamic characters of world's religious history. But the *Dharma* continued to spread peacefully first in India and then gradually to Ceylon in the south and to the countries to the west and north-west of India under the patronage and zeal of Emperor Aśoka, who sent missions to all these countries and enunciated India's foreign policy as the gift of spiritual wisdom through peace and fellowship. His rock and pillar edicts, scattered over his empire, which included modern Pakistan, Afghanistan, and portions of Central Asia,

proclaimed the principles of toleration and kindliness, goodness and compassion. From the northwest, the *Dharma* spread to China six centuries after Buddha's death, and later to Tibet. From China it spread to Korea. And from China and Korea it entered Japan in the seventh century A.D., and in the succeeding four centuries. There was initiated a pilgrimage of faith between India and China. The Chinese pilgrims, Fa-Hien, Hiuen Tsang, I-tsing, have left records of their travels in India; which throw a flood of light on Indian history and life. Hiuen Tsang, especially, studied in the Indian Buddhist international university of Nālandā, and was honoured by the Indian ruler of the time, Emperor Harṣa. He was in India in the middle of the seventh century A.D., when Prince Shotoku was taking steps to introduce Buddhism into Japan. From the towns of the eastern coast of India, the *Dharma* was carried by energetic missionaries to the countries of Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, and Indonesia, as also to China, between the fourth and tenth centuries A.D. In each of these countries, the message of Buddha imparted a depth to man's spiritual striving and a powerful stimulus to the nation's cultural life. The content of that message found varying expressions in the different countries which received it in accordance with the genius of the people and their felt spiritual needs.

18. Decline of Buddhism in India in Later Centuries

Thus, within fourteen centuries, the Light that was lit in India had become the Light of Asia. But by that time it had undergone a transformation in the land of its origin, consequent on the loss of its original impetus; Hiuen Tsang had recorded signs of decay of Buddhism in the India of the seventh century which he had visited. Two centuries earlier, it had the patronage of the great Gupta Empire and had created the world famous art of Ajanta and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. But the decay that had set in could not be arrested. And its later developments could be hardly distinguished from other popular Indian faiths; soon there was an assimilation, and Buddhism as a separate religion ceased to exist by the tenth century A.D. Its spirit and most of its distinctive features had become reincarnate as post-Buddhistic Hinduism. Even in other countries, the message had been transformed in some instances out of all recognition. The stern *jñāna-mārga* of early Buddhism had

become transformed into a doctrine of total soullessness in the Theravāda, into the warmth of *bhakti* or devotion and divine Grace in some aspects of Mahāyāna, into the Vedāntic doctrine of *Tathatā*, or Buddha-nature inherent in all beings, in the 'Pure Land' doctrines and in the Zen, and into pure magic and ritual in some layers of almost all of them. And post-Buddhistic Hinduism in India was but a federation of all these diverse developments, but under different names and forms, and loosely held together by the philosophy of Vedānta.

19. Conclusion

Today, the world needs the healing touch of the message of Buddha, a message of renunciation, compassion, and service. There is need to liberate the essence of that spirit and message, which is eternal, from the non-essentials, which, being but local and temporary, are obsolete and time-worn. India believes in the eternity of the Spirit and the impermanence of its temporal expressions. This search for the spirit of a religion, and the efforts at giving it a new expression in tune with the demands of the changed social situations, alone can help to renew the eternal springs of that religion.

3

BHAGAVĀN BUDDHA AND OUR HERITAGE*

1. Introductory

IT is remarkable that our country which, unlike Ceylon or Burma, does not profess to be a Buddhistic country, has yet become very enthusiastic about the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the birth of *Bhagavān* Buddha. A phenomenon like this can take place only in India, not in other countries—the celebration of the birthday of a great teacher whom we are not supposed to be following as professed adherents. But it is this very fact that invests this celebration with a significance which we would do well to understand—how India and the vast body of Hindus could enthusiastically enter into this great celebration and make it a nation-wide affair. The answer to this question will be found in the nature and scope of the faith of the Hindus and the place which Buddha holds in that faith.

2. Modern India's Recovery of the Buddhist Period of Her Long History

For centuries together, we had entirely forgotten Buddha, and his doctrines and creed had become almost alien to us, while they had been taken up by peoples outside India and made the religion of their own countries and societies. It is only for the last hundred years, ever since the recovery of Buddhism and its literature by the Western scholars and of archaeological finds in India, that our people have begun to love and appreciate the great personality of Buddha and his teachings. But once the discovery was made that there was such a great period in Indian history which was dominated by the personality of Buddha, our national mind reacted to this fact with enthusiasm and devotion; we felt elated at the uncovering of a period of our ancient history which had been dark to us, but glorious

* Speech delivered at the celebration of the 2500th birthday of Bhagavān Buddha at the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, on 30 May 1956, and later published in the *Vedanta Kesari*, Madras, in its issues for September and October 1957

at the time at which it was lived, and dominated by this great teacher and his sublime message of unity, holiness, renunciation, and love for one and all; and that period of our history is today accepted by us as one of the greatest periods of Indian history. When the great message of Buddha throbbed in the hearts of millions of our country, the whole nation rose morally, spiritually, as also politically; and with that accession of strength, our nation became the centre for a wide and rich cultural diffusion in the world outside.

Greater India of the historic period is the gift of Buddha to us and the world. Till then India was self-contained, though even then there are evidences of her thought and people influencing her neighbouring countries in an unorganized way; but organized work of this type was largely confined to India itself. Whatever cultural values we had evolved, whatever religions we had developed, we had tried to diffuse them only within the Indian continent. But with Buddha started that organized expansion of Indian culture and Indian thought outside India, for which half the world is grateful to this country today. It is in this context that we are viewing the great work of Buddha and what it can do to enrich and ennoble our spiritual and cultural life in this age.

3. Swami Vivekananda and Bhagavān Buddha

Swami Vivekananda is one of the most prominent leaders of our country in recent times who has called our attention to the great work of *Bhagavān* Buddha in the past and the greater work that the Buddha spirit can do to us today. In his lectures and discourses, he has beautifully expressed his conviction that modern India requires to assimilate the great intellect of Śaṅkara and the great heart of Buddha, the great heart for which, somehow or other, in the later development of philosophy in this country, we had practically found no place. That the human mind cannot only think high, but also feel deeply, and work energetically from that high point of view, was something which was continually forgotten for centuries together; and it was Swamiji who pointed out to us that the origin of almost all the social maladies in our time, all those things which made us immobile as a people, leading to the accumulation of all sorts of evils in our body-politic — all these experiences of recent centuries

can be traced back to the banishment of the Buddha spirit, of the Buddha heart, from the thought and practice of our country. In the same breath, he exhorted us to turn back once again to that great heritage, to call back Buddha to our nation and to our hearts; and he also added that until we did that, our country could never hope to develop that internal strength which we all wish and pray for. This was the approach of all enlightened minds of India in recent decades. This positive approach to Buddha and his place in our history has gripped the minds of our people, so that today, after nearly sixty years of education by Swami Vivekananda and other leaders, the nation feels a sense of pride in owning Buddha as one of its glorious teachers and in being the children of a country which produced a Buddha. That is the context in which we are living and functioning today.

4. *Buddha and the Indian Tradition*

In what sense can we say that Buddha is intimate to us, that his contribution is of vital importance to us today? What is his place in our national tradition? Unless we answer that question, we shall not be able to accept him with that whole-heartedness with which we have accepted the other great teachers who preceded and succeeded him. We have responded with all love and enthusiasm and reverence to the celebration of his 2500th birthday, and yet we are not Buddhists. When we ask ourselves as to what are those traces of the teachings of Buddha in ourselves through which we are slowly and imperceptibly discovering our kinship with this great teacher, we are led to the realization, through a study of his life and message, that he is closest to us in all the essential teachings that he gave, in all the greatness and depth of the holy dedicated life that he lived. We may have forsaken the creed which developed out of his teachings in later centuries as Buddhism; yet, even in the matter of that creed, many aspects of it are akin to our own; but our interest in Buddha today does not proceed from that source; it does not mean that we are going to become Buddhists in the political or sectarian or creedal sense. Whether to become such a Buddhist or not is not a vital question with us; after all, if a man or a group changes the label of his or its creed, it will only result in removing his or its name from

one column to another in the census register. It does not result in the increase of the moral or spiritual strength of the nation. But if the nation as a whole, or at least large numbers in it, can inspire themselves with the spirit of Buddha, can imbibe his spirit of love and compassion and tolerance, can imbibe that spirit by which knowledge can flow into love and service of the people, if that can be developed in us, resulting in a purer and a nobler mode of life, certainly the whole nation stands to gain and to benefit from that assimilation.

5. *Buddha and the Upaniṣads*

That is the line in which the country has tried to understand Buddha, and that is the line in which Swami Vivekananda taught it to accept this great teacher, who according to him, *is the fulfilment of the spiritual thought of the Upaniṣads which had preceded him.*

Coming close upon the age of the Upaniṣads, wherein the foundations of the subsequent developments of culture and religion in India had been laid, Buddha stands closest to the spirit of the Upaniṣads. In fact, it is not possible to appreciate the life and teachings of Buddha adequately without understanding the spirit of the Upaniṣads. There are at least a few Western scholars who appreciate this fact. A large number of Western scholars who have written books on Buddha have been unduly harsh on the prevailing Vedic religion, often confusing their estimates of it with post-Buddhistic developments. It looks as if they sought the growth of the plant of the Buddha movement at the cost of the soil in which it was raised and reared, to trace its life development outside that soil and climate. But there have been, as I said, a few Western scholars who have realized that Buddha could not be understood except in the context of the spiritual soil and philosophical climate provided by the sages of the Upaniṣads.

6. *Edmund Holmes on the Vedāntic Background of Buddhism*

One such author whom I would like to quote, one who has made a sympathetic study of Buddha, is Edmund Holmes. In his book, *The Creed of Buddha,* he warns us that to understand Buddha

without understanding the Upaniṣads is to miss the significance of Buddha and his teachings. The understanding of the Upaniṣads is absolutely essential, for it is against that Himalayan thought background that we can realize the significance of the new advances that Buddha made in the thought and practice of that great philosophy. Writes Edmund Holmes at the commencement of his fifth chapter entitled 'A Misreading of Buddha' *(The Creed of Buddha,* p. 98):

'Those who have followed me thus far will, I think, admit that Buddha's scheme of life coincides, at all its vital points, with the scheme that I worked out by drawing practical deductions from the master ideas of that deeply spiritual philosophy which found its expression in the Upaniṣads'.

Again (*ibid.*, pp. 102-103):

'The cumulative evidence afforded by these facts, added to the internal evidence which has already been set forth in detail, seems to point with irresistible force to one conclusion, namely, that Buddha accepted the idealistic teachings of the Upaniṣads—accepted it at its highest level and in its purest form—and took upon himself as his life's mission to fill the obvious gap in it—in other words, to make the spiritual ideas, which had hitherto been the exclusive possession of a few select souls, available for the daily needs of mankind. If this conclusion is correct, we shall see in Buddhism, not a revolt against the "Brāhminic" philosophy as such, but an ethical interpretation of the leading ideas of that philosophy—a following out of those ideas, not into the word-built systems of (so called) thought which the metaphysicians of the day were constructing with fatal facility, but into their practical consequences in the inner life of man.'

7. *Upaniṣadic Parallels in Buddha's Life*

There are a few points in the teachings of Buddha which have always been points of controversy, wherein great interpreters have differed from one another. The most important of these are two: first, the well-known *Anatta* doctrine, the teaching that there is no permanent soul; this teaching is so pervasive of Buddhism that we can take it as part and parcel of the original Buddhism. In the second discourse delivered by Buddha at the very beginning of his public ministration at Sārnāth, entitled the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta,* we have an exposition of this *Anatta* doctrine; so that it is necessary for us to understand what Buddha meant by this *Anatta* or *Anātmā* doctrine, which *apparently* represents a fundamental point of departure from the great teachings of the Upaniṣads on the subject of the true nature of individuality. The second is with regard to the

nature of the ultimate reality. When man attains *nirvāṇa,* what does he realize and what happens to him? Does he attain something positive or something negative? On this subject the language of the Upaniṣads is clear, in spite of all the prefaces with which they have expounded it, stating that the ultimate Truth is that from which speech and thought recoil, that it transcends all specifications. In spite of this kind of reservation, the Upaniṣads leave us in no doubt that the ultimate Truth is a 'Yes' and not a 'No'. It is a positive something and not a negative nothing; the Upaniṣads speak of it as Brahman, the One without a second, the Self of all, beyond sense and thought, the Impersonal, the Transcendent as well as the Immanent. Even though it transcends specifications by speech and thought, yet it is a positive reality. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (VI. 3. 12-13) says:

Naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṁ śakyo na cakṣuṣā;
Astīti bruvato'nyatra kathaṃ tad upalabhyate—

'This Self cannot be reached through the organs of speech or thought or sight. How can It be realized except through one who says "It is"?'

Asti ityeva upalabdhavyaḥ—

'It must be comprehended as "is" (and not as *"is not").'*

The last category of thought can only be a position, and not a negation, according to the Upaniṣadic thought. On this basis when we proceed, we do not see in the teachings of Buddha any clear reference to the reality of a changeless Being behind the fluctuations of Becoming.

As in the case of the soul, it is something composite, impermanent, and ultimately insubstantial, so in the case of the world, it is also impermanent and insubstantial; but with regard to the ultimate Reality realized in *nirvāṇa,* Buddha did not say that it also is impermanent and insubstantial. He did not say anything about it at all. He was silent about it, as he was also silent about the nature of the individual in the state of *nirvāṇa,* and evaded giving direct answers to questions relating to them. That is a point which we shall have to discuss, the meaning of this silence of his on the subject of

the ultimate Reality in man and in the universe, and to determine his position in the great philosophical tradition of the Upaniṣads.

8. *The Parivrājaka Movement*

In the life of Buddha we can trace three eventful periods. The first is the period of his youth and early manhood when, as Siddhārtha Gautama, he lived a life in the world, all the while yearning to gain the truth of all life and existence. Gifted as he was with a keen mind, a pure mind, a mind that questions and struggles to find the truth, the spirit of utter dispassion for the life of empty pleasures came upon him at the age of twenty-nine, and he entered the second stage of his career, namely, renunciation and whole-souled search after Truth. Gautama getting the spirit of dispassion and leaving the world of evanescent pleasures in search of Truth is not a new or strange phenomenon in Indian history. Hundreds and thousands of ordinary and gifted men and women had passed through the same experience. They had followed the path of renunciation to search for the meaning of life, so that at the time of Gautama, there were many wandering teachers who were also inspired by the great desire to penetrate the world of appearance and come in touch with Reality. They had renounced all sense pleasures and become wandering ascetics, *parivrājakas;* and these *parivrājakas were large in number at the time of Buddha. Thus, Gautama did not initiate something unique or new in turning a parivrājaka.* He himself was one of the *parivrājakas;* and when he left the world, he attached himself now to one teacher and then to another, each of whom was a *parivrājaka.* This tendency to go forth into the homeless state in search of Truth was well established in the age of the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads; they give us arresting pictures of gifted men and women imbued with the spirit of renunciation and earnestness, with hearts pure and tranquil, leading lives of meditation and truth-seeking, alone or in groups, in forests and quiet retreats. This is a tradition which goes back to a very early period of Indian history. Says Rhys Davids (*Buddhist India,* pp. 161-62):

> 'The career of such a wandering teacher seems to have been open to anyone, and even to women. And the most perfect freedom, both of thought and of expression, was permitted to them—a freedom probably unequalled in the history of the world. 'This curious state of things would only have been possible among people of a very fair degree both of average general intelligence and of gentle manners.'

So far as the renunciation of Gautama, the future Buddha, is concerned, so far as the steps that he took in this direction are concerned, he fully falls in line with the national tradition well established in the Upaniṣads.

9. *Buddha's Search for a Guru*

Following this established pattern, we find Gautama, in the wake of his renunciation, attaching himself now to one teacher, then to another, in his search for Truth. First he goes to Ālāra Kālāma. He was a famous teacher of the time, and to the last day of his life, Buddha held him in great respect. Learning what he could from Ālāra, we find Gautama attaching himself next to another famous teacher, Uddaka, the son of Rāma. These were his two teachers, themselves spiritually advanced souls, living in the forest near Rājagṛha with their groups of seeker-followers. Writes J. G. Jennings (*The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha,* p. lxvi):

> 'Though Gautama ultimately rejected the teachings of both these ascetic thinkers, the Brāhman doctrine of the *Parama-ātman* evidentiy remained as the basis of his own doctrine of the impermanence of the individual.'

Thus the first step that Gautama took on entering the homeless life was to search for a *guru,* one from whom he could get guidance in his spiritual quest, and in this, again, he was on the trail blazed by the Upaniṣads. For we know from the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. 2. 7, 11) that the seeker after Truth, the seeker after spiritual excellence, forsakes all interests in rituals and ceremonials which had been elaborated by the ritualistic portion of the Vedas, knowing them to be useless in the search for the highest Truth:

Plavā hi ete adṛḍhā yajñarūpā
aṣṭādaśoktam avaraṁ yeṣu karma;
Etat śreyo ye abhinandanti muḍhāḥ
jarāmṛtyuṁ te punarevāpi yanti—

'These paths of sacrifices and rituals are very frail boats; the fools who rate them high and indulge in them enter into the cycle of birth and death again and again.'

Tapaḥ-śraddhe ye hi upavasanti araṇye
sāntā vidvāṁso bhaikṣyacaryāṁ carantaḥ—

'But the wise with tranquil minds live in the forest as mendicants practising austerity and faith.'

10. Inadequacy of the Heaven Concept

The Upaniṣad (*ibid.*, 1.2.12) then proceeds to state that a person who wants to realize the ultimate Truth must examine all that can be gained by ritualistic acts in this world as well as in the next, whether in the earthly world or in a heavenly world; whatever pleasures and delights can be had in these, he must examine thoroughly with the eye of reason, of understanding, and, having examined, reject them as of no consequence at all, because Truth cannot be had by a life of pleasure here or elsewhere. Having rejected all these things, he must search for the Truth within himself, for which he approaches a great teacher and sits at his feet and learns the lessons of pure spirituality:

Parīkṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo
nirvedam āyāt nāsti akṛtaḥ kṛtena;
Tadvijnānārthaṁ sa gurum eva abhigacchet
samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyam brahmaniṣṭham—

'Having examined all the worlds which are caused and conditioned by actions, a Brāhmaṇa shall conceive utter dispassion for all of them; for the Unconditioned cannot be had through the conditioned. In order to realize the Unconditioned, let him approach, in all humility, a teacher who knows the spirit of the scriptures and is established in Brahman.'

11. 'The Uncaused Cannot Be Had through the Caused'

'The uncaused cannot be had through the caused', says the Upaniṣad. That is a great idea. What kind of dispassion does that person get? That this world as well as the world of heaven is the product of actions and that both are within the causal chain. Buddha also taught at a later period that what falls within the sphere of causality cannot be unconditioned and absolute.

The most reiterated formula in Buddhism refers to Buddha's knowledge of the entire range of conditioned things and their cessation:

Ye dharmā hetuprabhavā teṣāṁ hetuṁ tathāgato hyavadat;
Teṣāṁ ca yo nirodho evaṁ vādi hi mahāśramanaḥ —

'Whatever entities (*dhammas*) are produced from a cause, of these the *Tathāgata* tells the cause (*hetu*); and also that which is the cessation (*yo nirodho*) of these; thus declares the great recluse.'

Therefore, says the Upaniṣad, to realize the unconditioned reality, taking the mind away from all conditioned things here or elsewhere, one should, in a spirit of questing humility, resort to a great teacher, a teacher who is a *brahma-niṣṭha,* one established in that Reality and thus embodying the spirit of the *śāstras* or scriptures (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* 1.2.13):

Tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak
praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya;
Yenākṣaraṁ puruṣaṁ veda satyam
provāca tāṁ tattvato brahmavidyāam —

'To one who has so approached, and who has fulfilled all moral virtues, and become tranquil, the teacher shall impart that highest wisdom by which the Imperishable, the True, the Self, is realized.

12. Buddha's Asceticism in the Jungles of Uruvela

Thus, so far as the approach to the two great teachers is concerned, Gautama followed the tradition laid down by the Upanisads; having approached those great teachers, he learnt whatever they had to give. If the particular teachers could not give the highest teaching, that does not mean the highest teaching was not there. For, after all, teachers who have assimilated the highest teachings are not to be had in every generation; and this particular seeker was of a type that could not be satisfied by an ordinary teacher. He assimilated whatever his teachers could give and asked for more; but they could not satisfy the aspirations of his heart for the highest realization. With all politeness, Gautama then left these two teachers and resolved to seek the highest Truth for himself. It was in that mood, with that spirit, that he walked from Rājagṛha to

the place which is today known as Buddha Gaya in the jungles of Uruvela. Having gone there, he established himself in a course of severe austerity, penance, and inward contemplation. Five other devotees were also engaged in the same pursuit in the place. They recognized the advanced spirituality of Gautama and accepted him as their spiritual guide and leader and followed him in his path of austerities. It was a path that was well defined and followed by various *sādhakas* of the time, a path consisting of severe austerity of body and mind. It was a form of extreme, rigorous asceticism. Gautama was a thoroughgoing person. If he accepted a procedure, he would not rest content till he thoroughly saw to the end of it. So he was foremost among the six seekers in the practice of austerity and mortification, until he became extremely happy and hoped that he would soon attain enlightenment.

13. Buddha's Illumination After Forsaking such Asceticism

But one day, when Gautama was getting up from his seat, he fell down unconscious from weakness; regaining consciousness, the following thought arose in his mind. 'What foolishness! I am in search of the highest Truth. It is a search that calls for the utmost courage and stamina, and yet I am weakening my body, weakening my senses, the only instruments I possess by which I can undertake this voyage of discovery; I shall not proceed on this path of foolish mortification any more.' So he immediately forsook the path of senseless austerity, and proceeded to a nearby village to beg for a little food to strengthen himself. Seeing Gautama abandoning the path of asceticism, the five disciples felt that their leader had strayed into the path of luxury and ease and decided that he was not worthy of them; they deserted him and went away.

Gautama did not mind their desertion. He went to the village and received a bowl of *pāyasa* or sweetened milk-rice from a village girl by name Sujātā; he bathed in the nearby river, ate the *pāyasa* and rested during the afternoon; and towards the evening he proceeded to a nearby spot where there was a large banyan tree, and sat under it with the determination not to rise till he had realized the highest Truth.

All these were in the line of what the Upaniṣads had prescribed. Sitting under the tree, with senses and mind under control, Gautama entered into the depths of meditation. His naturally pure mind, which had become purer as a result of the discipline he had undergone for six years, was now so fine that with a little effort he soared to the heights of meditation. In the first three watches of the night, Gautama plunged deeper and deeper into the depths of his being, and the descriptions of his meditation given in the Buddhist scriptures tally with what the Vedānta describes as the process of entering into the *nirvikalpa* state of *samādhi,* the *samādhi* where the mind transcends the sphere of form, the sphere of consciousness, and the sphere of duality, and ultimately goes to the highest realm where no personality exists, where existence is unconditioned and pure. Towards the fourth watch of the night, Gautama realized the highest Truth and attained *bodhi,* Enlightenment. He became Buddha, the Illumined.

14. Buddha's Own Account of His Illumination

What exactly is the nature of this illumination? As I said before, this question has been left unanswered by Buddha. It has not been answered by his immediate disciples either; but they have given some description of it in negative terms, as the cessation of craving, of the grasping ego, of ignorance and delusion; and this silence regarding the nature of the unconditioned, impersonal state and its description in negative terms, or even through silence, is perfectly Vedāntic. But it was sought to be answered in more positive language by later followers who had split up the movement on various grounds into eighteen sects within a century of the Master's death. *Thus it was from the later followers' formulation of answers to a question on which Buddha himself, and also his immediate disciples, had kept silent that all the confusion and misunderstanding regarding Buddhism has arisen.*

Let us try to understand the content of that realization in the words of the Master himself. In his very first discourse at Sārnāth, Buddha expressed the content of that realization in these few simple words (*Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta* 26, adapted from J. G. Jennings's translation):

'There (at Uruvela) I settled, *Bhikkhus,* there being everything needed for effort. And being myself subjected to earthly existence, I perceived the wretchedness of what is subjected to earthly existence, and seeking the supreme peace of *nibbāṇam* not affected by earthly existence. Being myself subjected to decay, to disease, to death, to grief, (and) defilement, I attained the supreme peace of *nibbāṇam* not affected by decay, disease, death, grief, (and) defilement.

'And the knowledge *(jñānam)* now as a thing seen arose in me: "My liberation *(vimutti)* is established, separate existence *(jāti)* is terminated here; there is not now rebirth *(punna-bbhavo)."* '

Continuing further, Buddha said (*ibid.*, *Sutta 36*):

'Then I turned my mind to the knowledge of the destruction of the taints *(āsavās).* I knew verily *(yathābhūtam)* the four truths: "This is sorrow."... "This is the origination of sorrow." ... "This is the cessation of sorrow." ... I knew verily: "These are the taints *(āsavās)*"... "This is the origination of the taints." ... "This is the path leading to the cessation of the taints."

'When thus I perceived and understood, my mind *(cittam)* was liberated from the taint of lust *(Kāma-āsava);* and ... the taint of individuality *(bhava-āsava)*; and ... the taint of ignorance *(avijja-āsava)*; and when I was liberated, there arose in me the knowledge of my liberation. I knew: "separate existence *(jāti)* is ended *(khīnā)*; the holy life *(brahma-cariyam)* is lived, what must be done is done; there is nothing beyond this *(nāparam itthattāya)."* '

15. *Buddha's Illumination: Its Upaniṣadic Ring*

This is how Buddha described the content of his realization; and it can easily be mistaken for a passage in any one of the Upaniṣads. Destruction of the separate ego sense, cessation of rebirth, attainment of perfect purity and insight—this is spiritual emancipation according to both the Upaniṣads and *Bhagavān* Buddha. Both term it *mukti* or *nirvāṇa,* a state which ensues when *avidyā,* spiritual blindness along with all its effects, is completely destroyed. Says the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (II. 2.8):

Bhidyate hṛdaya-granthiḥ chidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ;
Kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare—

'The knots of the heart are cut asunder, all doubts are dispelled, (the seeds of) all actions get exhausted, when the supreme truth of Oneness is realized.'

16. *Buddha's Initial Hesitation to Teach Mankind*

The Buddha had attained the *'bodhi'*, enlightenment, which is *'bahukalpadurlabha'*, difficult to get even by aeons of struggle. He enjoyed the supreme bliss of his attainment for seven weeks all alone in Bodh-Gaya or Buddha Gaya. Then a question arose in his mind: Should he or should he not share this treasure with the world? Initially, he was inclined to keep it to himself, and for good reasons; for the worldly-minded cannot comprehend it, and it would be mere vexation of spirit to teach it to them. But the god Brahmā intervened on behalf of the world, and Buddha agreed to communicate his realization out of 'compassion for the world' and the knowledge that there would be some at least who would be pure enough to comprehend so high a teaching. With this resolve, he entered the third and most significant phase of his eventful life. To put the matter in his own words (*Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta* 26, Jennings's translation):

'Thus, O *Bhikkhus,* as I pondered, my mind inclined me to inaction and to refrain from explaining the *Dharma.* Then, because of compassion for living beings, I gazed over the world and I saw (beings with natures) scarcely tainted, ... much tainted, with keen faculties, with dull faculties, well-disposed, ill-disposed, docile, indocile, and a few who lived perceiving a world beyond sin and danger—just as in a pond of blue lotuses or pink lotuses, some lotuses born and springing up in the water do not emerge from but are nourished under the water; others ... reach the surface of the water; and others ... rise above and are untouched by the water.'

17. *His Final Overcoming of that Hesitation*

Though he felt that the world, so much given to sensuality and ordinary pleasures, might not understand him, still there might be a few whose minds were not so full of the dust of ignorance and attachment and who, with a little effort, could be made to see the truth; he decided to search them out and share his experience with them. That was the difficult choice before Buddha, and his compassion decided for him. Every teacher who has reached very high levels of spirituality is in the same quandary. The higher the attainment, the more difficult it is to find people capable of sharing that attainment. We know in the case of Sri Ramakrishna how he could not share with one and all some of his innermost experiences. That was why he yearned for the arrival of those pure-minded disciples

headed by Narendra, later Vivekananda, to whom he could communicate whatever he had experienced.

Thus we find Buddha looking out for those to whom he could communicate his realization. The thought of his two venerable teachers, Ālāra Kālāma and Uddaka, came to his mind and, out of gratitude for them, he resolved to seek them out and impart his realization to them. He said to himself (*ibid.):*

'There is Ālāra Kālāma, wise, intelligent, and learned, his nature has so long been scarcely tainted. What if I should first declare the *Dharma* to him? He will quickly comprehend it. ... and the knowledge clearly came to me: "Alara Kālāma died seven days ago.". Then, *Bhikkhus,* this thought came to me: "Nobly born was Ālāra Kālāma. If he had heard the *Dharma,* he would quickly have comprehended it. Then the thought came to me: "There is Uddaka, the son of Rāma, wise, intelligent, and learned; his nature has long been scarcely tainted." ... And the knowledge clearly came to me: "Uddaka, the son of Rāma, died yesterday evening." Then, *Bhikkhus,* this thought came to me: "Nobly born was Uddaka, the son of Rāma. If he had heard the *Dharma* he would quickly have comprehended it."'

18. Buddha Walks to Vāraṇāsi from Buddhagaya

Then the thought came to him of the five disciples who had been with him, had later deserted him, but who were also advanced spiritually. He decided to seek them out; and learning that they had gone to Isipaṭṭaṇa or Sārnāth near Vāraṇāsi or Banaras, he decided to go there, a distance of 114 miles from Buddha Gaya. Reaching Isipaṭṭaṇa, he saw from a distance the five disciples sitting in a park there. And enfolding them in the love of his pure mind, he approached them. But at first they were not inclined to greet him and show due courtesies, because they had decided that he had fallen from the path. They addressed him by name calling him 'friend'; yet there was something compelling in the demeanour, in the dignity, in the poise of Buddha that made them receive him with love and reverence. He then said to them (*ibid.):*

'Hear me, *Bhikkhus,* the Immortal has been gained by me. I teach, I show the *Dharma.* If you walk as I teach, you will ere long and in the present life learn fully for yourselves, realize, and having attained, abide in the supreme fulfilment of the holy life, for the sake of which the clansmen rightly go from home to the homeless life.'

19. 'Turning the Wheel of Dharma' at Sārnāth

When they did not seem to have been convinced of his spiritual

bona fides, he said again, in a gentle tone of authority: 'Are you conscious, O *Bhikkhus,* that I have not spoken to you in this manner before?' They understood that he spoke from the depth of personal realization, and became receptive and attentive. The Master then imparted his realizations to them and, through them, to humanity, in two well-known discourses, the first of which is the *Dharmacakra-pravartana Sūtra* and the second, the *Anatmalakṣaṇa-Sūtra,* delivered five days later.

Addressing the five on the first occasion, the Buddha said *(Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga, Khandhaka* I. 6, J. G. Jennings's translation):

"These two extremes, O *Bhikkhus,* are not to be approached by him who has withdrawn (from the world). Which two? On the one hand, that which is linked and connected with lust through sensuous pleasures, and is low, ignorant, vulgar, ignoble, and profitless, and on the other hand, that which is connected with self-mortification, and is painful, ignoble, and profitless. Avoiding both these extremes, the middle road (*madhyama pratipada)* bringing insight, bringing knowledge, leads to tranquillity, to highest knowledge, to full enlightenment, to peace. And what middle road leads to peace? It is indeed this Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right outlook, right will, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right absorption. This middle road leads to peace.

'Now again, this is the Noble Truth as to sorrow (*dukkham ariya saccam):* birth (*jāti)* is sorrowful, decay is sorrowful, disease is sorrowful, death is sorrowful, union with the unpleasing is sorrowful, separation from the pleasing is sorrowful, the wish which one does not fulfil is sorrowful—in brief, desire-ridden transient individuality (*pañca-upādāna khandha)* is sorrowful.

'Again, this is the Noble Truth as to the cessation of sorrow (*dukkha-samudayam ariya saccam):* It is this recurring craving (*tanha*) associated with pleasure and attachment, seeking enjoyment everywhere, namely, the craving for sense-pleasure (*kāma tanha),* the craving for separate earthly existence (*bhava tanha),* the craving for heavenly existence (*vibhava tanha*).

'Again, this is the Noble Truth as to the cessation of sorrow (*dukkha nirodham ariya saccam*): It is the cessation of this very craving, so that no remnant or trace of it remains, its abandonment, its renouncement, liberation (*mukti*) from it, detachment (*an-ālayo*) from it.

'And this once more is the Noble Truth as to the road leading to the cessation of sorrow (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī patipada ariya saccam*): It is indeed that Noble Eightfold Path *(māggo).* ...

'As soon as my knowledge and insight (*nāna dassanam)* concerning these Four Noble Truths were pure, I knew that I had attained supreme and full enlightenment

(*sammā-sambodhim)* ... The knowledge now as a thing seen arose in me. The liberation of my mind (*me ceto vimutti*) is established, separate existence is here ended, there is not now re-birth.'

In the second discourse, the Buddha stripped the notion of individuality of all its unreal elements *(ibid.):*

"Rūpam (material form) is *an-atta* (not the self); *vedanā* (sensation) is *anatta* ... ; *sanna* (perception) is *an-atta* ... ; sankara (predisposition) is *anatta* ... *; vinnānam* (consciousness) is an-atta (not the self).

'Again what think you, *Bhikkus?* Is the material form permanent (*niccam*) or impermanent (*a-niccam*)?" "Impermanent, revered sir." "But that which is impermanent, is that suffering (*dukham*) or happy (*sukḥham*)?" "Suffering, revered sir." "That then which is impermanent, is suffering, and by nature changeable (*vi-pariṇāma dhammam*), is it proper to regard it thus: This is mine, I am this, this is my self (*etam mama, eso'ham asmi, eso me atta*)." "No indeed, revered sir." "Is sensation permanent? ... Is perception permanent? Is pre-disposition permanent? ... Is consciousness permanent? ... That then which is impermanent, suffering, and by nature changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: "This is mine, I am this, this is my self'?" "No indeed, revered sir."

'And so, *Bhikkhus,* all material form whether past, future, or present, whether within us or external, whether gross or subtle, low or high, far or near, is to be regarded with right insight as it really is (*yathā bhūtam)* thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self ... All sensation ... gross or subtle, all perception ... gross or subtle, ... all predisposition ... low or high, ... all consciousness ... far or near, is to be regarded with right insight as it really is thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.

'Regarding them thus, O *Bhikkhus,* an instructed *ariyan* disciple becomes indifferent to (*nibbindati*) material form, becomes indifferent to sensation, becomes indifferent to perception, becomes indifferent to consciousness. Becoming indifferent, he becomes free from desire (*vi-rajjati*); through non-desire (*vi-rāgo*) he is liberated.

'When he is liberated, there arises in him the knowledge, "I am liberated". He knows "*jāti* (birth or separate existence) is ended (*khīna*); *brahmacariya* (the holy life) has lived; *karaṇīyam* (what ought to be done) has been done; there is nothing beyond (*nāparam*) this state (*itthattāya*)." '

The above two discourses, and several others in the Buddhistic scriptures, can be easily mistaken for passages in any one of the several Upaniṣads.

20. *'The Middle Path'*

Buddha is the teacher of the *madhyama pratipada,* the middle path, in spiritual life, neither austerity nor indulgence, but a steady pursuit of truth with all the strength of body and mind. It is the exposition in the first discourse, repeated in his later expositions of the spiritual life, that has come down to us as the famous teaching of the Middle Path associated with Buddha. It was original only in the sense that he taught it with a force, he expounded it with such authority, that the country which had strayed into the extremes of sense indulgence and senseless asceticism accepted it and benefited from it. But it was there in the Upaniṣads, as it is there in any moral and spiritual system; for, if our pursuit is morality and spirituality, we gain nothing from senseless asceticism and much less from sensual indulgence. Such austerities have a place only in a religious discipline dominated by the idea of the magical. But moral and spiritual discipline has for its aim the reshaping of our character, the creation of a new pattern of human personality, through increase in inner purity and the overcoming of spiritual blindness. Training for such a character has nothing to do with any kind of magic or trick generally associated with such kind of austerity. *In giving the authority of his powerful personality to the Middle Path, Buddha helped to release the spiritual life from the grip of magic and mummery, and to direct human energies to fruitful channels, towards the cultivation of a moral and spiritual character.*

We are familiar with this emphasis on the middle path in the Gītā. In its sixth chapter (verses 16, 17) Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

Nātyaśnatastu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ;
Na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna—

'Yoga is not for him who eats too much or does not eat at all, nor sleeps too much or does not sleep at all.'

Yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu;
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā—

'But *yoga* becomes the discipline for the destruction of sorrow for him who is moderate in eating and recreation, moderate in work and sleep and waking.'

Thus Vedānta and Buddha emphasize this Middle Path. In the case of Buddha there is this additional charm that his teaching on

this subject issued out of his personal experience of austerity and its meaninglessness; it was not hearsay with him, which explains the tone of authority in his utterances on the subject.

21. *'The Ārya Satyāni'*

The Middle Path is meant to lead the seeker to a firm grip on experience and to the discipline leading to the realization of the truth imbedded in experience. With this end in view, Buddha expounded the Four Noble Truths, or the *Ārya-satyāni*, and the Eightfold Path, to his five disciples. The first of the four truths is the truth of suffering, the universal experience of satisfactions falling short of desires. The Upaniṣads spoke of life ridden with sorrow till life detaches itself from the changing waves of surface-becoming and gets rooted in the changeless depth of being. The second relates to the origin of suffering; this is *tanha (tṛṣṇā)* or desire, the tendency of the ego to go out of itself to seek satisfactions, impelled by spiritual blindness. The Upaniṣads spoke of *avidyā* and *kāma* as the roots of relative existence; through them we forge links in the causal chain of existence, forget our own spiritual nature, and become cogs in the wheel of *saṁsāra;* that *tṛṣṇā* or desire, with its root, ignorance, must be eradicated. Therefore, the third truth is the recognition of the possibility that we can overcome suffering. And the fourth truth is the path that leads to the cessation of suffering through the eradication of ignorance and desire; and this is the path that leads to the state of *nirvāṇa,* the state of enduring peace and emancipation.

22. *'The Noble Eight-fold Path'*

This fourth truth which flowers into the Noble Eightfold Path, with its stress on moral and spiritual endeavour, constitutes the essential teaching of Buddha. So far as the discovery that the world is suffering, that life is suffering, and that it proceeds from *tṛṣṇā* is concerned, there is not much difference between the Upaniṣads and Buddha. When we compare the teachings of the Upaniṣads with those of Buddha, we find very little difference so far as the content is concerned, but a good deal of difference in the way certain points were stressed or developed or ignored in the two teachings. For

example, Buddha laid stress on the subject of suffering. He also developed the subject of the path to *nirvāṇa* in all its details; but he ignored defining the goal, the state of *nirvāṇa.* Buddha takes various examples to show that life is suffering. Thus the fact of suffering in life gets a good deal of emphasis in his teaching. This special stress on suffering is absent in the Upaniṣads. Though recognizing the fact of suffering, the Upaniṣads lay stress on the state of bliss that transcends suffering and proclaim that as the true nature of man.

23. *The Meaning of Buddha's Stress on Suffering*

It is a question of stress, as I said. You can say that life is sorrow, if you look at it from the human end. You can say that life is joy, if you look at it from the ideal end. Both conclusions are true. The Upaniṣads also say that to live as a separate individual, as a finite individual, cut off from the vast ocean of Being around us and in us, is sorrow. The finite, separate individual is the focus of tension and strain; the world and the soul are in their essential nature the *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* Brahman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute; cut off from that ocean of being, the finite separate individual becomes a zero, and yet feats to become a zero, and fears still more to shed its finitude. As Śaṅkara said: 'Cut off from that ocean of pure Being, the world gets reduced to a zero.' If life or the world is separated from the supreme Ātman, which is the source of all joy, of all existence, and of all knowledge, it will become sorrow-ridden, fugitive, and dark. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, zeros have value only when the figure '1' is behind them. Take the '1' away, they become mere nothingness. So also is human life; cut off from the Reality of the One, it becomes ridden with sorrow, reduced to darkness and nothingness. Buddha took this finite individual for his theme—the human soul subject to ignorance, desire, delusion, grief, and death. And his compassion went out to steady his feet, illumine his mind, and fill his heart with wisdom, peace, and joy; hence his stress on psychology and ethics, but not on metaphysics.

24. *Buddha's Practical Approach to Man's Spiritual Life*

The finite, separate individual ever passes into something other than itself in the ceaseless flow of becoming. Spiritual teaching must

proceed from this fact. This is the *doctrine of actuality* preached by Buddha. In revealing this, he was compelled to ignore studiously all metaphysical questions as to the existence or otherwise of a permanent self behind the fleeting ego, of an abiding reality behind the world of becoming, and of the nature of *nirvāṇa*. His silence on these questions is matched by his expressiveness on how man can wisely tackle the actual situation in which he finds himself. Man has forgotten his real self; he has grasped things other than himself. In so grasping, he has fallen into the endless chain of cause and effect, of *avidyā, tṛṣṇā,* and *Karma,* or ignorance, desire, and action, into the chain of *pratītyasamutapāda,* the whirlpool of *saṁsāra*. It is nothing but sorrow to be thus caught in the wheel of birth and death and change, to be merely a helpless thing worked upon by forces outside of oneself.

This is the meaning of the first and second Noble Truths, the actuality of sorrow. But, according to the Upaniṣads, it is only half the truth. Buddha also meant it to be taken only as half the truth. To both, there is also the state beyond sorrow and the path that leads us from the world of sorrow to the world of joy. But the Upaniṣads proclaimed in no uncertain terms that that ultimate state of bliss and peace is also the essential nature of each and every individual even now. This was not stressed by Buddha. The Upaniṣadic Brahman or Ātman is peace, so is the *nirvāṇa* of Buddha. But the Upaniṣads stress the fact of bliss imbedded in our nature, while Buddha stressed the fact of sorrow which we actually see in and around us. In the case of Buddha, the stress on actuality was meant to focus that attention on ethical preparation and spiritual struggle which had been largely dissipated in defining metaphysical subtleties of the goal. This alone can explain his consistent silence on the subject of the nature of the goal. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan (*Gautama Buddha,* p. 56):

"The Buddha warns us against the danger of assuming that, because we are divine in essence, we are not divided in actuality. To become actually divine is our goal.'

This severely practical approach of Buddha to the problem of the spiritual life is expressed in the Noble Eightfold Path, and finds repeated emphasis through parables and illustrations in all his teachings. To both the Upaniṣads and Buddha, Truth is not merely

a thing to be intellectually known, but also a value to be inwardly realized; *mokṣa* and *nirvāṇa* are *puruṣārthas*. Both refer to spiritual realization as *kṛtakṛtyatā,* doing what ought to be done. Neither intellectualism nor sentimentalism can help us. And both these aberrations have often vitiated Indian spiritual life, not only before Buddha, but also after him; his own movement became infected by this intellectualism five centuries after his time, and never recovered from the resulting stagnation. There is constant need to hearken to Buddha's stress on the path to be traversed, his insistence on the remaking of character through severe practical self-discipline in thought and conduct.

25. *Vivekananda's Endorsement of this Approach Today*

It has been a recurring experience in India that we talk high philosophy and live very low lives. In Buddha's time, probably, it must have been much more serious. We know that, in our own time, it is a very serious problem with our nation as a whole; we have the mood and the energy to discuss the highest philosophy or pressing national problems in our drawing-rooms, at our tea-tables, and at public meetings; but in day-to-day life, we lapse into a spiritual lassitude and function largely at the bottom levels of existence. Swami Vivekananda was the first to diagnose this trait of ours in this age. And in great agony he said (*The Complete Works,* Volume V, p.15, Seventh (Enlarged) Edition):

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.'

The highly sensitive mind of Swami Vivekananda felt this great disparity between the highest philosophical conceptions and the unspiritual, unsocial, and unethical practices of our people. And he strove to bring about harmony between our professions and our practices. If it is a desideratum in our own time, we may as well infer from Buddha's silence on the goal, and stress on the Eightfold Path, that it may have been more so in his own time.

26. *Buddha's Silence on Ultimate Questions: Māluṅkyaputta*

The silence of Buddha on ultimate metaphysical questions and

his constant stress on conduct and character is clearly brought out in his replies to the questions put by the monk Māluṅkyaputta. Māluṅkya asked Buddha with a bluntness almost bordering on discourtesy to state whether or not the world is eternal, whether or not the perfect Buddha continues to exist after death, and demanded that if he did not know the answers, he should be straightforward and say that he did not know.

Buddha answered (*Majjhima Nikāya*, Discourse 63, Woodward's translation):

'Suppose, Māluṅkyaputta, a man were pierced with an arrow well steeped in poison, and his close friends and relatives were to summon a physician, a surgeon. Then suppose the man says: "I will not have this arrow pulled out until I know of the man by whom I was pierced, both his name and his clan, and whether he be tall or short or of middle stature; till I know him whether he be a black man or dark or shallow-skinned; whether he be of such and such a village or suburb or town, I will not have the arrow pulled out until I know of the bow by which I was pierced, whether it was a long bow or a cross bow; till I know of the arrow by which I was pierced, whether it be a reed-shaft, or of a sapling. ..."

'Well, Māluṅkyaputta, that man would die, but still that matter would not be found out by him.

'... But I am one who declares thus: Whether the world is eternal or not, nevertheless there is birth, there is decay, there is death, there are sorrow and grief, woe, lamentation, and despair; and it is the destruction of these things that I do declare.

'... Wherefore, Māluṅkyaputta, do you bear in mind that what I have declared is declared, and what I have not declared is not declared. Bear that in mind.

'And what, Māluṅkyaputta, have I not declared? That the world is eternal or otherwise... that the *Tathāgata* is beyond death or otherwise, and so forth.

'And why, Māluṅkyaputta, have I not so declared?

'Because this thing is not concerned with profit; because it is not a principle of the holy life; because it does not lead to repulsion, to aversion, to cessation, to calming, to the super-knowledge, to the supreme wisdom, to *nibbāna*. That is why I have not declared it.

'And what, Māluṅkyaputta, have I declared?

'I have declared, "This is suffering: This is the arising of suffering; This is the ceasing of suffering; This is the way leading to the ceasing of suffering."

'And why, Māluṅkyaputta, have I so declared?

'Because it is concerned with profit; because it is a principle of the holy life; because it leads to repulsion, to aversion, to cessation, to calming, to the super-knowledge, to the supreme wisdom, to *nibbāṇa*. That, Māluṅkyaputta, is why I have declared it.'

27. *Buddha's Silence on Ultimate Questions: Vacchagotta*

Buddha's silence regarding the reality or otherwise of a permanent self is well brought out in his encounter with Vacchagotta the Wanderer (*Sutta Nipāta*, VI. 400. Woodward's translation):

' "Master Gotama," said Vacchagotta, "what have you to say about the existence of the self?"

'At these words the Exalted One was silent.

' "How now, Master Gotama? Is there no such thing as the self?"

'At these words the Exalted One was silent.

'Then Vacchagotta the Wanderer (in disgust) rose up from his seat and went away. Not long after he was gone, the venerable Ānanda said to the Exalted One:

' "How is it, Lord, that the Exalted One made no reply of the question asked by Vacchagotta the Wanderer?"

' "If Ānanda, when asked, 'Does the self exist?', I had replied to him, 'The self exists', then, Ānanda, that would be to side with all those *samanas* and *brāhmanas* who are eternalists.

' "But if, Ānanda, when asked the question, 'Does the self not exist then?' I had replied,' 'No, the self does not exist' that would be to side with those *samaṇas* and brahmaṇas who are annihilationists.

' "And, Ananda, when asked by Vacchagotta the Wanderer, 'Does the self exist?', I had replied, 'The self does exist', would that reply be consistent with my knowledge that all things are impermanent?"

' "No, Lord, it would not."

' "Again, Ānanda, when asked, 'Then, does not the self exist?', if I had replied, 'No, it does not exist', it would have added to the bewilderment of Vacchagotta the Wanderer, already bewildered. For he would have said, 'Formerly I had a self, but now I have one no more." '

The sage of the *Kena Upaniṣad* (I. 3, 4, 6) had faced this problem earlier; Buddha shares his hesitancy to define the indefinable which is the true self in man:

"The eye does not go there, nor speech, nor the mind; we do not know or

understand how this (knowledge of the Self) could be imparted. It is entirely different from the known; yet it is beyond the unknown. Thus have we heard from the teachers of old who explained It to us,

'That which cannot be apprehended by the mind (and the senses) but by which, they say, the mind itself is apprehended — know thou That alone as Brahman, and not that which people worship here.'

The goal of the Eightfold Path is *nibbāṇa;* Buddha defined *nibbāṇa* only in negative terms, as the destruction of craving, of ignorance, of separate individuality, of delusion and sorrow.

28. *Buddha's Silence on Ultimate Questions: The Monk Rādhā*

Addressing the monk *Rādha,* the Buddha said that the five *skandhas* (constituent factors of personality) should be regarded as the seat of Māra; then the following conversation ensued between the two (*Sutta Nipāta,* III. 187, Woodward's translation):

' "What was the purpose of so regarding", asked Rādha.
' "For the sake of disgust", replied Buddha
' "But disgust, Lord, for what purpose is it?"
' "Disgust, Rādha, is to bring about dispassion."
' "But dispassion, Lord, for what purpose is it?"
' "Dispassion, Rādha, is to get release."
' "But release, Lord, what is it for?"
' "Release, Rādha, means *nibbana.*"
' "But *nibbāṇa,* Lord, what is the aim of that?"
' "This, Rādha, is a question that goes too far. You can grasp no limit to this question. Rooted in *nibbāna,* Rādha, the holy life is lived. *Nibbāna is its goal. Nibbāna is its end."*

The Upaniṣadic way of expressing this truth is contained in an arresting dialogue of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (II. 4.12-14).

Addressing his wife Maitreyī, the sage Yājñavalkya said:

'As a lump of salt dropped into water dissolves with (its component) water, and no one is able to pick it up, but whencesoever one takes it, it tastes salt, even so, my dear, this great, endless, infinite Reality is but pure Intelligence. (The self) comes out (as a separate entity) from these elements, and (this separateness) is destroyed with them. After attaining (this oneness), it has no more consciousness. This is what I say, my dear.'

Maitreyī said:

'Just here you have thrown me into confusion, sir, by saying that, after attaining (oneness), the self has no more consciousness.'

Yājnavalkya said:

'Certainly, I am not saying anything confusing, my dear; this is quite sufficient for knowledge, O Maitreyī.

'Because, when there is duality, as it were, then one smells something, one sees something, one speaks something, one thinks something, one knows something. But, when to the knower of Brahman everything has become the Self, then what should one smell, and through what? What should one see, and through what? What should one think, and through what? What should one know, and through what? Through what should one know That through which all this is known — through what, O Maitreyī, should one know the knower?'

29. *Buddha's Silence on Ultimate Questions: Yamaka and Sāriputta*

The teachings of Buddha on the subject of self involve the distinction between the true Self and the false self. When we are asked to deny self-hood to all the constituent elements of personality, the *pañca upādāna skandhas,* we are not left to believe that we are empty nothings.

That Buddha, and also his immediate disciples, kept in view this distinction between the false Self and the true Self is brought out in the episode of Yamaka's heresy (adapted from H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translation):*

'Not understanding the true import of Buddha's teaching on the subject of *nibbāṇa,* Yamaka the monk came to the belief that, 'on the dissolution of the body' the monk who has lost all depravity is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death'. His fellow monks, after trying in vain to make him give up what they considered a wicked heresy, requested Sāriputta to tackle him.

'Sāriputta asked Yamaka whether the report about his views was true.

'Yamaka replied:

' "Even so, brother, do I understand the doctrine taught by the Blessed One, that, on the dissolution of the body, the monk who has lost all depravity is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death."

'Sāriputta then asked him whether the five *skandhas* of form, sensation, perception, predispositions, and consciousness were permanent or transitory.

'Yamaka admitted they were transitory.

"And that which is transitory, is it evil or is it good?' asked Sāriputta.

'It is evil, brother', replied Yamaka.

'And that which is transitory, evil, and liable to change—is it possible to say of it: This is mine; this am I; this is my self?' asked Sāriputta.

'No, brother', said Yamaka.

"Accordingly, brother Yamaka, as respects all form whatsoever, as respects all sensation whatsoever, as respects all perception whatsoever, as respects all predispositions whatsoever, past, future, or present, be it subjective or existing outside, gross or subtle, mean or exalted, far or near, the correct view in the light of the highest knowledge is as follows: This is not mine; this am I not; this is not my self.'

"Perceiving this, brother Yamaka, the learned and noble disciple, conceives an aversion for form, conceives an aversion for sensation, conceives an aversion for perception, conceives an aversion for predispositions, conceives an aversion for consciousness. And, in conceiving this aversion, he becomes divested of passion, and by the absence of passion he becomes free, and when he is free he becomes aware that he is free; and he knows that rebirth is exhausted, that he has lived the holy life, that he has done what it behoved him to do, and that he is no more for the world."

'Sāriputta then asked him whether the *arhat* who has achieved *nibbāṇa* can be comprised in form, sensation, perception, predispositions, and consciousness, or distinct from them. Yamaka replied in the negative.

"Considering now, brother Yamaka, that you fail to make out and establish the existence of the *arhat* in the present life, is it reasonable for you to say: Thus do I understand the doctrine taught by the Blessed One, that, on the dissolution of the body, the monk who has lost all depravity is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death?"

"Brother Sāriputta, it was because of my ignorance that I held this wicked heresy; but now that I have listened to the doctrinal instruction of the venerable Sāriputta, I have abandoned that wicked heresy and acquired the true doctrine."

30. Buddha's Silence on Ultimate Questions: King Pasenadi and Nun Khema

The conversation between King Pasenadi and the nun Khema further elucidates the point (Oldenberg, quoted by Edmund Holmes in his *The Creed of Buddha):*

'To the question of King Pasenadi of Kosala regarding the existence or otherwise of Buddha after death, the nun Khema replied that Buddha had not revealed this subject.

'The king was astonished and asked:

' "What is the reason, venerable lady, what is the ground on which the Exalted One has not revealed this?"

'She asked the king in reply whether he had an accountant who could count the sands of the Gaṅgā or measure the water in the great ocean.

'The king replied in the negative.

' "And why not?", the nun replied, and continued: "The great ocean is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable. So also, O great King, if the existence of the Perfect One be measured by the predicates of corporeal form: these predicates of the corporeal form are abolished in the Perfect One, their root is severed, they are hewn away like a palm tree and laid aside, so that they cannot germinate again in the future. Released, O great King, is the Perfect One from this, that his being should be gauged by the measure of the corporeal world: he is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable, as the great ocean." '

31. The 'Bodhi' of Buddha versus the 'Jñāna of Vedānta

Jñāna and *bodhi* are indefinable; so are the ways of the *Jñāni* and that of the Buddha. The following verse quoted by Śaṅkara in his *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā-bhāṣya.* (IV. 95) reinforces and clarifies nun Khema's view:

Sarvābhūtātmābhūtasya sarvābhūtāhitasya ca
Devā api mārge muhyanti apadasya padaiṣiṇaḥ;
Śakunīnām iva ākāśe gatirnaivopapadyate—

Even the gods feel puzzled while trying to follow the footsteps of those who leave no track behind, of those who realize themselves in all beings and who are always devoted to the welfare of all; they leave no track behind like the birds flying through the sky.'

32. The 'Nirvāṇa of Buddha versus the 'Brahman' of Vedānta

The attainment of *nirvāṇa* in Buddha's teachings tallies in all essential respects with the attainment of the impersonal, formless Brahman in the Upaniṣads. By the negation of self-hood to the five *skandhas,* the second discourse at Sārnāth did not explain *away* the self, but pointed to this Impersonal Brahman, the Universal Self, as the true Self of all; for, in the words of the Upaniṣads, *Brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati*—'the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman' *(Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad,* III. 2.9); again *Ayam ātmā brahma*—'this Self is Brahman' *(Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad,* I.2.); and *Brahmavid āpnoti param; tadeṣābhyuktā; satyaṁ jñānam anantaṁ brahma*—'the knower of Brahman attains the Highest; on this, there is the

following declaration: Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinity (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad,* II.1).

In the course of one of his addresses to the monks on the subject of *nibbāṇa* in the Jeta grove at Sāvatthi, the Buddha uttered these solemn words (*Udāna,* Woodward's translation):

'There is, brethren, an unborn, a not-become, a not made, a not compounded. If there were not brethren, this that is unborn, not-become, not made, not compounded, there could not be made any escape from what is born, become, made, compounded.

'But since, brethren, there is this unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded, therefore is there made known an escape from what is born, become made, and compounded.'

33. *Common Teachings of Buddha and the Upanisads*

It will be clear from the above extracts from the teachings of Buddha and the Upaniṣads that the goal of spiritual life in both is the destruction not of self as such, but of all limited and false notions of the self which treat it as separate from the other selves; the realization of the true Self ensues when ignorance and delusion, leading to attachment and identification with the body and other constituents of personality, are overcome. This realization is deep and immeasurable as the ocean, because the individual loses himself in the universal, the *jīva* in Brahman, which is *advaita,* 'the One without a second'. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad's* analysis of individuality through the negation of the five *kośas* or sheaths leads to the same conclusion; the self that manifests through each of the *kośas,* or through all of them, is unreal and shadowy, finite and fugitive. When the *Kosās* are negated, the one true Self, which is the Self of all, shines in all its glory in the *nirvikalpa samādhi.* This is *prajñā* or *bodhi* in both the teachings.

When the Upaniṣads tell us that the Ātman should be realized through hearing, reflection, and meditation, it is not the finite, separate, changeful, personal self of man that is meant, but the impersonal, universal, changeless Self which is the Self of all. And nowhere does Buddha negate the reality of this Self which is the theme of the Upaniṣads; nor does he ever negate the reality of the impersonal Brahman of the Upaniṣads, though Buddha's discourses often refer to Brahma, the personal Creator, as paying homage to Buddha and as a being falling within the world of change. His Sārnāth discourse, entitled *'Anattalakkhaṇa-Sutta',* is acceptable to the Upaniṣads in its entirety, and can be correctly understood only in the light of the Upaniṣadic exposition on the subject.

Sri Ramakrishna held the view that Buddha's teachings were on the lines of the *jnana-yoga* of the Upaniṣads. The Vedas and the Vedic path, often criticized in the Buddhist scriptures, mean, in every instance, only the Vedic *karma-kāṇḍa,* the ritualistic portion; but never the *jñāna-kāṇḍa,* the philosophic portion comprised in the Upaniṣads. These Upaniṣads themselves contain criticisms and evaluations of the Vedic *Karma-Kāṇḍa,* almost exactly on the lines of the Buddhist criticisms and evaluations. And even the *Gītā (II. 42, 43)* speaks disparagingly of the *vedavādaratas,* those who indulge in Vedic ritualism impelled by desire and attachment. Śaṅkara's Advaita is a severe critique of the *karma-kāṇḍa* as well as the philosophy behind it. The Upaniṣads and the *Gita* prescribe for the spiritual seeker dispassion and other moral virtues on the lines of Buddha's Eightfold Path. Buddha's final exhortation to Ānanda to work out his salvation with diligence, depending on himself and not on any personal god or other external aids, is equally applicable to the *Jñāna-yoga* of the Upaniṣads, which also advocates the three stages of *sīla, samādhi,* and *prajñā* prescribed by Buddha for the spiritual life. Also common to both is the notion of the 'ten fetters' and their destruction, characteristic of spiritual progress and realization.

Buddha's silence on the subjects of a permanent Self and of the nature of *nirvāṇa,* and his studious disapproval of metaphysical discussion, did not have the results he anticipated. Silence on questions of deep import acts as a spur to speculation.

34 *Buddha and Saṅkara*

This was what happened to Buddhist thought in subsequent centuries. A flood of metaphysical speculation on these forbidden themes ensued. And such speculation, without any guidance from the Master or his first disciples, and without any guidance from the Upaniṣads, which were not to become widely known till Śaṅkara, a

thousand years later, split up the Buddhist movement into sects upholding views many of which were clearly considered as heresies in the Master's own time. Yamaka had a Sariputta to correct him of his nihilistic views. But Yamaka's views did not die with his correction. What Buddha wanted to avoid in the case of Vacchagotta—bewildering his mind by saying there is no permanent Self—became the source of bewilderment and confusion to his later followers. These wrong views steadily penetrated the later Buddhist movement at the intellectual levels and, in the eyes of many Buddhists and all non-Buddhists, became the main characteristic of that thought.

This later intellectual movement found no point of contact with the vast masses of the Buddhistic population, which sought solace not in *nirvaṇa,* or its metaphysical formulations, but in the worship of the Buddha through the idols, temples, processions, and pilgrimages of popular Buddhism; cut off from its intellectual sustenance, popular Buddhism slowly decayed and withered and got absorbed in the reviving Vedic religious movements of later Hinduism. And intellectual Buddhism found its challenge in Śaṅkara in the eighth century, who succeeded in reuniting Indian philosophic thought with the thought of the Upaniṣads. Unlike the other post-Buddhistic movements which were merely revivalist and sectarian, Śaṅkara's was synthetic and constructive and inclusive.

The Advaita Vedānta of Saṅkara has absorbed all the essential elements of Buddhist thought; it is becoming increasingly clear that if Buddha's teachings are to be provided with a metaphysical support, we have to search for it in Śaṅkara's Advaita. In the Buddhist philosophy (as presented to us in the Buddhist scriptures), we have, in the words of Dr. Oldenberg, only 'a fragment of a circle, to complete which and to find the centre of which is forbidden, for it would involve an inquiry after things which do not contribute to deliverance and happiness', (quoted by Edmund Holmes, *The Creed of Buddha,* p. 64). If Buddhism had continued in the spirit in which Buddha had meant it to proceed, if it had not indulged in metaphysical speculations, but propagated only the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, Saṅkara need not have appeared. But when, against the exhortations of the Master and

without his guidance, metaphysical attempts to 'complete the circle' miscarried, resulting in intellectual confusion and spiritual anarchy, Śaṅkara appeared and gave to humanity the priceless thought of Advaita Vedānta, which, in the words of Thibaut ('Introduction' to *The Vedānta-Sūtras,* p. xiv),

'is, from a purely philosophical point of view, and apart from all theological considerations, the most important and interesting one which has arisen on Indian soil; neither those forms of the Vedānta which diverge from the view represented by Saṅkara nor any of the non-Vedāntic systems can be compared with the so called orthodox Vedānta in boldness, depth, and subtlety of speculation.'

Writes Dr. Radhakrishnan (*Indian Philosophy,* Vol. II, p. 446):

'It is impossible to read Śaṅkara's writings, packed as they are with serious and subtle thinking, without being conscious that one is in contact with a mind of a very fine penetration and profound spirituality. With his acute feeling of the immeasurable world, his stirring gaze into the abysmal mysteries of spirit, his unswerving resolve to say neither more nor less than what could be proved, Saṅkara stands out as a heroic figure of the first rank in the somewhat motley crowd of religious thinkers of the medieval India. His philosophy stands forth complete, needing neither a before nor an after.'

35. *Vivekananda on the Decay of Indian Buddhism*

Commenting on the decay of Buddhism in India, Swami Vivekananda said sixty years ago ('Sages of India', *Complete Works,* Vol. III, Ninth Edition, pp. 263-65.):

'The earlier Buddhists, in their rage against the killing of animals, had denounced the sacrifices of the Vedas; and these sacrifices used to be held in every house. There was a fire burning and that was all the paraphernalia of worship. These sacrifices were obliterated and in their place came gorgeous temples, gorgeous ceremonies, and gorgeous priests, and all that you see in India in modern times. I smile when I read books written by some modern people, who ought to have known better, that the Buddha was the destroyer of Brāhmanical idolatry. Little do they know that Buddhism created Brāhmanism and idolatry in India. ...

'Thus, in spite of the preaching of mercy to animals, in spite of the sublime ethical religion, in spite of the hair-splitting discussions about the existence or non-existence of a permanent soul, the whole building of Buddhism tumbled down piecemeal; and the ruin was simply hideous... The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain ever conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion, have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism.'

And referring to the legacy which Buddhism, in its state of degradation, left for Śaṅkara, and his great work of synthesis, Swami Vivekananda continued:

'But India had to live, and the spirit of the Lord descended again. ... the marvellous boy Śaṅkarācārya arose. The writings of this boy of sixteen are the wonders of the modern world, and so was the boy. He wanted to bring back the Indian world to its pristine purity, but think of the amount of the task before him. I have told you a few points about the state of things that existed in India. All these horrors that you are trying to reform are the outcome of that reign of degradation. The Tartars and the Balucis and all the hideous races of mankind came to India and became Buddhists, and assimilated with us, and brought their national customs, and the whole of our national life became a huge page of the most horrible and the most bestial customs. That was the inheritance which that boy got from the Buddhists, and from that time to this, the whole work in India is a re-conquest of this Buddhistic degradation by the Vedānta. It is still going on, it is not yet finished. Śaṅkara came, a great philosopher, and showed that the real essence of Buddhism and that of the Vedānta are not very different, but that the disciples did not understand the Master and have degraded themselves, denied the existence of the soul and of God, and have become atheists. That was what Saṅkara showed, and all the Buddhists began to come back to the old religion.'

36. Conclusion

It is this combined legacy of the two great architects of Indian thought and culture—Buddha and Śaṅkara—that modern India is learning to appreciate and to cherish, discovering, after centuries, the deep kinship between them. Behind them both stand, like the Himalayan background, the eternal visions of the sages of the Upaniṣads which found their undying expression, in a later period, through Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-Gītā.*

The self-transcending ethics of unselfish love and compassion of Buddha and his movement, united to the philosophy of the transcendent Self of Śaṅkara's Vedānta, is the new thought—the New Vedānta—which is energizing and stimulating India's mind and heart today. It is no wonder, then, that India as a whole has responded with enthusiasm and devotion to the message of the 2500th birthday of *Bhagavan* Buddha.

4

THE CHRIST WE ADORE *

1. Introductory

WE, in India, have learnt, through our religion, to look upon great teachers with a heart open to the inspiration which they hold for all humanity. The approach of our people to the lives of all teachers has something refreshingly beautiful about it; it is hard for non-Hindus to understand how we, professing a different religion, can open our hearts, with equal fervour, to receive the inspiration of this great Son of Man, Jesus. India's approach to religion is experiential and not dogmatic. It is spirituality that India seeks in its religious quest and not a creed or dogma. This is also the approach of Jesus Christ to religion, as we shall presently see. It is this approach that explains the spiritual hospitality of the Indian mind. This, broad, all-inclusive, approach will be increasingly appreciated and accepted by the thinking people of the world in the coming years. *What is now the cherished possession of a national culture will eventually become an integral part of human culture and civilization.* Such a consummation will help to release the Christ-spirit from the shackles of a narrow sectarian creed in which it has been stifled for centuries. This will be the service that the spirit of India will render in this age to the religion of this great Master.

2. Birth and Boyhood of Jesus

We are familiar in our country with the idea that, at the birth of divine personalities, there is joyous co-operation of man and nature to welcome them; for it is an event heralding universal joy. In the words of one of our sacred books: 'The ancestors rejoice, the gods dance in joy, and this world gets a saviour — *Modante pitaro, nṛtyanti devatāḥ, sanāthā ceyaṁ bhūrbhavati (Nārada Bhakti-Sūtra,* V. 5).

* Speech delivered at the Christmas celebration held at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, in 1954, and later published in the December 1955 issue of the *Bulletin* of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta

Very similar is the account of the birth of Jesus Christ, as given in the various Gospels of the New Testament. Deeply touching is the description of the episode in Luke. The parents, Joseph and Mary, had come to Bethlehem in Judea from Nazareth in Galilee, to be taxed according to the newly promulgated Roman law. Mary was expecting her first child. The couple took shelter in an inn, where Mary gave birth to an infant who was destined to become a great spiritual teacher. For want of accommodation in the inn, the mother wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. At this time, a group of shepherds, keeping watch over their sheep nearby, received, in the stillness of the night, in an extraordinary way, the intimation of the birth of this wonderful infant.

'And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you born this day the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapt in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger'. (Luke, II. 9-12).

The shepherds were amazed. Hardly had they time to recover from this amazement, when they heard a multitude of angels singing, praising God: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill, toward men' (*ibid.*, II. 14).

The shepherds proceeded to Bethlehem in search of the babe as indicated, and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger, and they offered him loving worship and homage.

Next, we get a glimpse, a tender and pleasing glimpse, of him as a boy of twelve. He was accompanying his parents to the Holy temple in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. After the ceremonies, the parents started homeward; they expected Jesus to be in the party, but after a day's journey when they found him missing, they searched for him here and there and, finally, retracing their steps, found him, after three days, in the courtyard of the Holy temple discussing with the learned doctors points of law and faith. When his mother, piqued, told him how much she and his father had been worried over his disappearance, he gave a characteristic answer: 'How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my

Father's business?' (*ibid.*, II. 49). His parents could not make anything of this enigmatic reply, but they were satisfied when they found him willing to return home with them.

We get hardly any account of Jesus during his youth and early manhood. 'And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man', says the Gospel in a compressed narrative (*ibid.*, II. 52).

But we have enough references to show that Jesus, very early in life, had become aware of the great purpose of his advent and set about it with a thoroughness that nothing could thwart. He must have also spent long hours in silence and aloneness in the nearby mountains and communed with himself. Later, when we meet him next, he is already a young man of about thirty. Moving from place to place, Jesus heard of another teacher who was creating a stir by his way of life and preaching. This was John the Baptist, who went about in the wilderness of Judea, and later in the Jordan area, proclaiming; 'Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew, III. 2).

3. *Semitic Religious Tradition*

The lives and works of John the Baptist and Jesus introduce us to a new chapter in Semitic religious history. There is something extraordinary, something refreshingly striking, in their contribution, which has made religion in the West flow into a new channel of God's intimacy with man, with love as the bond between both. In the old Semitic tradition, this was not the central idea. The idea there was that God was far away; His distance from man was the measure of His majesty; man was called upon to conduct his life here below with faith and fear, and the fruit of such faith was to be reaped after death. Such a religion tends to be largely this-worldly, increasingly bound to time and the historical process. As a socio-political faith, with a slight flavour of the otherworldly, it constantly tends to be bound in a rigid creed which leads to dogmatism, bigotry, and intolerance, on the one hand, and formalism and stress on correct ritualistic behaviour, on the other.

The New Testament contains vivid descriptions of such a situa-

tion in the field of religion at the advent of John the Baptist and Jesus. Its pages reveal the birth-pangs of a new spiritual *Weltanschauung* at once universal and human, the recurring conflicts of this new ideology with the entrenched monotheistic exaggerations, the deep aspirations of the people for release from the rigidities of a lifeless tradition as represented by the priesthood, and the shining figures of John and Jesus proclaiming through life and teaching a compelling message of hope and assurance.

Man, as spiritual seeker, transcends the sphere of law and commandments of a religion. Whereas law and commandments relate him to parochial and temporal interests, spirituality relates him to the eternal and the infinite. Jesus came to offer this to man, to give the bread of life to the spiritually hungry. Insistence on correct ritualistic behaviour does not bring satisfaction to man at this stage. They are as stones to a hungry man, as the New Testament puts it. Jesus proclaimed a religion of wide and deep horizons; he brought God near to man and bound both with the cord of love; he eliminated fear as the medium of their relationship. With love implanted in his heart in place of fear, man emerged as the lover of his fellow-men; he learnt to find fulfilment in a life of love for God and service to man, to God in man. This love for God, this intimate communion with Him, is the fulfilment of the righteous life; it is the only means of satisfying the soul's spiritual hunger. This is the *essential* of religion. It holds that man has a higher dimension which transcends his physical and social personality; he is essentially spiritual; in that inmost being of his lies his intimacy with and closeness to the divine, and his kinship to all creation. Religion is the realization of this spiritual fact and its expression in life and behaviour.

This is the approach of Jesus to religion. And this is the approach which India has learnt from the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Srimad Bhāgavatam*, and other scriptures, and has made it part and parcel of our national awareness. These scriptures have taught us that *religion is realization;* it is not creed or dogma or mere believing; it is not merely the good life, the moral life, the righteous life, though all these are necessary for the flowering of religion in spiritual realization.

Thanks to the Upanisads, religion in India, unlike religion in Palestine, learnt to understand and appreciate this mood of spiritual earnestness, this passion for the spiritual as distinct from the merely socio-religious and moral, and to welcome it. This is the meaning of our national idea that *Śruti* is more binding than *Smṛti,* that life according to the *Smṛti* is only a prelude to life according to the *Śruti.*

4. *Jesus Came to Fulfil, Not to Destroy*

For the first time, a glimpse of this great idea came to the Semitic world through John and Jesus; it was not that this idea was entirely absent from the older tradition; a few gifted individuals had borne witness to it. But theirs were forlorn voices incapable of making any impression on the tradition. This was the case even with John the Baptist, who was compelled to refer to himself as 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness'. But with Jesus the idea became a force, which inevitably came into conflict with the traditional religion. In the New Testament, we can see these two currents flowing side by side. The conflict was all a one-way affair; it was the old in conflict with the new, and not the new in conflict with the old. A spiritual message is large enough to accommodate all forms of faith. Its approach is synthetic and inclusive. Love and grace do not negate law and commandment, but fulfil them. Jesus himself never desired to exclude the old religion. He claimed to have come to fulfil and not to destroy. In this broad and generous spirit, which is the mark of a deeply spiritual religion, we find him endeavouring to effect a synthesis of the old and the new.

The New Testament gives us glimpses of this attempt at synthesis between the message of Moses and the message of Jesus. 'For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (John, I. 17).

To the rich man who wanted to know the way to inherit eternal life, Jesus gave the advice to fulfil the commandments before proceeding higher in the spiritual quest. It was in this sphere of the higher spiritual life that Jesus had something new to give. It was not merely new, it was also startling to the people who heard him. 'They were astonished at his doctrine', records the New Testament in several places.

5. *Baptism of Jesus*

The appearance of John the Baptist on the horizon was the first surprise to the people. John was an ascetic and lived a celibate life. Asceticism and celibacy were foreign to the Semitic tradition. John burst upon the people's attention with the startling proclamation: 'Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' The people were familiar with the notion of a kingdom of heaven. So there was nothing startling in that; it was a far-away thing in time and space, and they could afford to wait till death and take things leisurely till then. But John proclaimed that the kingdom of heaven was *at hand:* not far away, but *here, now.* To a people suffering from Roman oppression, this was a happy announcement; and they naturally interpreted it in political terms. He asked the people to prepare themselves to enter into it by inner purification through sincere repentance; and he instituted a symbolic purification through baptism in the Jordan river.

Hundreds of people flocked to John to be baptized; a few among them who were wicked at heart, he sent away hurling after them words of rebuke and threat. He exhorted the baptized to practise charity, justice, mercy, and honesty. The crowds took John to be the promised Messiah; but he divined their thoughts and proclaimed in clear language:

> 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire'. (Matthew, III. 11).

Presently, Jesus, who was still an unknown figure, went to him to be baptized by him. John eyed Jesus for a minute and then remonstrated, saying that he was not fit to baptize him, but that he had need to be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus replied: 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness' (*ibid.*, III. 15). John baptized him, and, coming out of the water, Jesus had his first recorded spiritual experience; and a voice from heaven proclaimed: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased' (*ibid.*, III. 17).

Jesus now began his mission. John was arrested and beheaded shortly after, for the fault of being far ahead of his time. Immediately after baptism, Jesus retired to the silence of the mountains nearby and passed through a tense inner struggle and, coming out victorious over the 'temptation', moved to the coast of the lake of Galilee to enter into the period of his public ministry.

6. *His Spiritual Mission*

The first act of this ministry was the gathering of his disciples. There is something very fascinating in this process, in the call he sends forth and the response he receives; its simplicity and directness are charming. Finding Peter and his brother Andrew, both fishermen, casting their nets into the sea, Jesus went up to them and summoned: 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him' (*ibid.*, IV. 19-20). Two other fishermen, James and John, he similarly gathered, and later Matthew, the customs clerk, and the rest of the twelve.

This is something we understand well in India: the tremendous magnetism of a spiritual teacher who finds and gathers round him those who are to be his spiritual intimates and the bearers of his message, the pure ones who have the capacity to share his inmost thoughts and relieve his loneliness. Buddha, after his illumination, went to Vāraṇāsī to gather his five disciples. We are reminded, in this connexion, of the words which Sri Ramakrishna (1836-86) spoke at the close of the period of his *sādhanā,* describing the longing of his heart for his disciples (*Ramakrishna: The Prophet of New India* by Swami Nikhilananda, p.38):

> 'A mother never longed so intensely for the sight of her child, nor a friend for his companion, nor a lover for his sweetheart, as I longed for them. Oh! it was indescribable. Shortly after this period of yearning, the devotees began to arrive'.

Jesus now began to move about with his disciples, preaching the kingdom of heaven in the synagogues and performing various miracles of healing. But the congregations of the synagogues could not understand or appreciate him. They were certainly looking for the advent of a heavenly kingdom; but it was one largely political in complexion, tribal in scope, and intended to free the Jews from the hated Romans. One who claimed to be the promised Messiah had to fulfil this national demand. Jesus did claim to be the Messiah in

direct and indirect references, but made only vague mystical references to the kingdom. He merely incurred the displeasure of the orthodox. But the masses followed him, fascinated by his personality and the miracles he wrought. Although he delivered his message in the famous 'Sermon on the Mount' to his disciples alone, it has provided spiritual nourishment to vast masses of mankind these nineteen hundred years.

7. *The Sermon on the Mount*

The 'Sermon on the Mount' expounds moral and spiritual ideas which are universal; they do not breathe the air of Jewish exclusiveness. They are the G. C. M. of the inner life of spirit, and will not sound strange to any spiritual seeker nourished on the ideas of the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. But it sounded strange to the ears of those who listened. There was newness in them, and there was a ring of authority in their utterance. It was not an authority deriving from any sacerdotal office; it took its force from inner realization. The New Testament has put it pithily: 'And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine. For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes' (Matthew, VII. 28-29).

The Sermon was a tremendous departure from the accepted ideas of the time; it was a mighty attempt to release the life of the spirit from the shackles of tribal morality and dogmatic religion. Old familiar words were used, but they were given new meanings; old moral codes were invoked, but they received an inward content and direction; old familiar hopes were mentioned, only to be filled with new spiritual meanings. And all these innovations had been prefaced with a 'but I say unto you', conveying a sense of authority. It was no wonder that the people were astonished at his doctrine.

There is a continuity from John to Jesus. John preached baptism unto repentance with a view to preparing man for the kingdom of heaven; and Jesus took up this idea, in spite of its background of Jewish dogma, for, as he expressed it, he came not to destroy, but to fulfil the law and the prophets. Repentance is based on the Jewish dogma of original sin; but whatever be the dogma behind it, it has its significance for spiritual life, in so far as it initiates the inner cleansing

process; it leads to humility and receptivity of heart. As a moral act, it steels the mind against further evil doings. Without this resolve, no spiritual life is possible. But repentance is not everything; there are further steps to be taken before we can achieve the kingdom of heaven which, though near at hand, is yet far. It was these further steps that Jesus elucidated in his impressive Sermon.

Jesus opened the Sermon with a reference to repentance and its fruit: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' *(ibid.*, V. 3).

But he struck a new note thereafter: not only was the kingdom of heaven at hand, but it was also *within* us — not outside; and we *can* realize it. This was a revolutionary conception that spiritual realization was to be had then and there, *in this very life,* here and now, not after death. And so he added: 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall *see* God' (*ibid.*, V.8).

Thus purity of heart is the one condition for spiritual realization. It follows that everything else—acts of piety, morality, and social service—is but the means to attain this purity. This was entirely new language for his listeners—that we can *realize* God, become intimate with Him, and be blessed in this very life. *And here we have his unique message, a spiritual religion of inward realization.* We are reminded of the ringing proclamation of the Upanisads:

Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ—'The Self, O dear, must be realized' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* II. 4.5); *Tam akratuḥ paśyati vīta-śoko dhātu-prasādāt mahimānam ātmānaḥ*—'He who is humble and pure realizes the glory of the Atman and becomes free from grief.' (*Kaṭha Upanisad,* II, 20).

The farthest that Judaism had gone till then was to make man hear the voice of God; the idea of *seeing* God was thus an innovation which, with all its corollaries, was the main point of departure from the prevailing tribal god and faith. These corollaries are set forth in the succeeding passages dealing with the inwardness of morals, rituals, and pietistic acts, indicating the clear departure from the old in the emphatic words in refrain: 'Ye have heard that it

was said by them of old time. ... *But I say unto you.'* The moral and ethical demands of a spiritual religion are far more exacting than those of a socio-political faith; hence he said: 'That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew, V. 20).

The departure became complete when he exhorted his listeners to strive for perfection: 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (*ibid.* V. 48).

This exhortation sounds strangely Vedāntic in significance. He then wound up the Sermon with a ringing statement on the need for the *practice* of the teaching, and not merely the hearing of it or *believing* in its truth, and illustrated the nature of wisdom and folly through a beautiful parable (*ibid.*, VII. 24-27):

'Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. And the rain, descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it'.

How akin this sounds to the exhortation of an earlier teacher, Srī Kṛsna, in our own country!

'Those devotees who practice, in a converging life endeavour, this teaching of mine which fulfils all righteousness and leads to immortality, endowed with faith and a godward passion, are extremely dear to me'. *(Bhagavad-Gītā,* XII. 20).

Here is a refreshing statement of the scope and goal of religion. The emphasis is on *sādhanā,* the *practice* of religion, with a view to attaining *anubhava,* realization. 'Religion is realization; it is being and becoming', in the words of Swami Vivekananda; it is character. It is not a cosy belief, but an adventure, something that sets the soul on fire, the carrying, as Jesus would say, of one's cross by oneself and not by proxy. It reminds us of Buddha's last words addressed to his dear disciple, Ānanda:

'Be a lamp unto yourself, O Ānanda; depend not on any external refuge: work out your emancipation with diligence.'

Perfection is a complete transformation of character through the realization of the kingdom of heaven which is within. *It is the fruit of lived religion.* This conception frees religion from all elements that are magical and misty, materialistic and primitive. The strength that comes to a life through the realization of the ever-present Atman within is something palpable. It is the rock-bottom of experience, which ensures steadiness of wisdom and character; it is the *sthitaprajña,* the life of steady wisdom, of the *Bhagavad-Gītā.*

8. *The Healing Touch of Jesus*

With the 'Sermon on the Mount' closed, once for all, the chapter of obscurity in the life of Jesus. Multitudes thronged round him, many of them victims of serious bodily and mental ailments, some of whom were endowed with deep faith in his spiritual power. They sought his blessing which was given, and they were cured. Some he touched; some just touched the hem of his garment; and some he just blessed, saying, 'Be thou whole'. In all cases, the effect was immediate. Jesus had the power within him, and he had compassion in his heart. But he did not like to exhibit this power or make it known wide. Accordingly, he exhorted the cured not to make a fuss about it. He asked them to mollify orthodoxy by making customary gifts to the synagogue in thankfulness for the healing. He gave the credit for all healing to the faith in the heart of the healed: 'Thy faith hath made thee whole.'

From now on, the events in his life move ever faster; and the shadow of tragedy, arising from the conflict with established religious authority, becomes darker and darker, until it reaches its final act in the crucifixion. But within this brief period of about two and a half years, we are introduced to events and episodes and personalities which have the touch of the immortal about them. They form the bright and cheerful scenes of an otherwise gloomy drama. We find Jesus moving from place to place, a picture of alertness and vigour, compassion and humanity, humour and laughter. We watch him in his dealings with the rich and the poor, the good and the sinful, the lowly and the lost; we are amazed at the poise, self-assurance, and versatility which he manifests in these varying situations.

9. *Mary and Martha*

The touching episode of Mary and Martha of Bethany has entered into world literature. The two sisters were deeply devoted to Jesus. The death of their brother Lazarus made them grief-stricken. They heard that Jesus was in the neighbourhood. Martha went out to call Jesus. She expressed her faith in his divinity, and then rushed home to call her sister, Mary, saying: 'The Master is come and called for thee' (John, XI. 28).

Both then rushed out to welcome the Master. Mary fell at his feet weeping. Jesus was moved:

'When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. ... Jesus wept' (*ibid.*, ix. 33, 35).

He then went up to the grave of Lazarus and, after deeply communing with God for a moment, commanded Lazarus to come forth. And forthwith he rose alive.

In another touching scene, we find the same Mary doing a loving service to Jesus at Bethany, just before his last supper.

She brought an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on the head of Jesus, as he sat at his meal. When a disciple protested at the waste and said that it could better have been utilized to help the poor, Jesus made the significant and ominous remark:

'Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her'. (Matthew, XXVI. 10-13).

There was also a third occasion when the two sisters met Jesus; it is a story full of mystical import. They received Jesus into their house. Mary was sitting at his feet and hearing his inspiring words; whereas Martha was busy in the kitchen. She complained to Jesus about her sister Mary:

'Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her: Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke, X. 40-42).

10. *Divine Life Demands Total Renunciation*

During his wanderings in Judea, Jesus was approached by a certain man who knelt before him and, addressing him 'Good Master', asked him what he should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus reprimanded him for calling him good, saying that none except God deserved the epithet, and asked him to keep the ten moral commandments. The man replied that these he had been keeping from his youth; he would like to know what else he should do.

'Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

'And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. (Mark, X. 21-22).

Seeing him thus go away, Jesus made the famous remark that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

This episode illustrates the distance that separates mere social ethics from divine life, and proclaims total renunciation as the watchword of the latter. The young man of the story went away grieving; but the story itself has inspired many a young man and woman of later generations, of the type of St. Antony and others, to fulfil to the letter the demands of Jesus and scale the heights of holiness and blessedness.

11. *The Compassionate Jesus*

The compassion of a divine incarnation and his power to redeem shine remarkably through two anecdotes, which also reveal the way purity views sin.

A Pharisee, Simon by name, invited Jesus for a meal one day. Jesus accepted and sat down to eat. A woman in the city, who was a sinner, hearing that Jesus was in the house of the Pharisee, brought an alabaster box of ointment and washing his feet with her tears and

wiping them with her hair, kissed them and anointed them with the ointment.

Seeing this, the Pharisee was angry that Jesus should have allowed a sinner to do all this. Jesus, addressing Simon, said:

'There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her: Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman: Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace'. (Luke, VII. 41-50).

Jesus was teaching in the temple in Jerusalem. The Scribes and Pharisees brought before Jesus a woman taken in adultery and, announcing that, according to Mosaic law, she had to be stoned, asked him for his opinion, just to entangle him unawares. The Gospels give a fine picture of Jesus stooping down and writing on the ground with his finger, as if he did not hear them. But when they pestered him, he lifted up his head and, turning to them, declared:

'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even upto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her: 'Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?' She said: 'No man, Lord'. And Jesus said unto her: 'Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more'. (John, VIII. 7-11).

The power behind the words 'Thy sins are forgiven' is the power of God working through an incarnation only; it is beyond the reach even of saints. This divine power working through Jesus is specially revealed in his famous declaration:

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light'. (Matthew, XI. 28-30).

We are reminded of an identical promise given by an earlier incarnation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa (*Bhagavad Gītā,* XVIII. 66):

'Renounce all your duties and take refuge in me alone; I shall redeem you from all sins; grieve not'.

12. The Teachings of Jesus

Trials and tribulations began to confront Jesus. Various attempts were made by the priests to entangle him in some remark of treason or blasphemy. But his intelligence and ready wit baffled their attempts. A group of priests brought a Roman coin and asked him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not; on his asking whose image and superscription the coin bore, the priests answered that it was of Caesar. Then he answered, to the amazement of the clever priests:

'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (Matthew, XXII. 21).

Then a lawyer came forward to entangle him with a clever question, as to what constituted the great commandment in the law; *and the world got in the answer of Jesus a compressed statement of spirituality and social ethics:*

'Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets'. (*ibid.*, XXII. 37-40).

This great enunciation gave rise to a very practical question: Who is my neighbour? In answering it, through the famous parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus contrasted the universality of the spirit and temper of spiritual ethics with the narrow and parochial temper of creedal and sectarian morals.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves; they stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. A priest and a Levite chanced to pass that way; seeing the helpless man, they, instead of going to his help, went away by the opposite side of the road. Narrating the above, Jesus continued:

'But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw

him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him: Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee'. (Luke, X. 33-35).

After narrating this, Jesus asked his questioner as to who really behaved as neighbour to the one that fell among the thieves. 'And he said: He that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him: Go, and do thou likewise' *(ibid.,* x. 37).

In between the harassments of the priests, Jesus did a lot of teaching; first to the simple masses and then to his close disciples. To the former he spoke in parables, making thereby difficult subjects easy to comprehend Each one of these parables, like the parable of the good Samaritan, elucidates one or other aspect of his central theme, the life of godliness. Some of them, like the parable of the Ten Virgins, are full of mystical significance. He spoke to the disciples about the service of man, the poor, the sick, the homeless, the naked, and the forlorn, in the spirit of the worship of God:

'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me'. (Matthew, XXV. 40).

He charged the disciples to go forth and preach his gospel among the people, and he prescribed a way of life and behaviour for the preachers, which breathes the spirit of renunciation, dependence on God, non-possession, peacefulness, and humility, echoing the exhortation of Buddha to his disciples. *It is a tragedy of history that subsequent Christian preachers, unlike the Buddhists, have largely strayed from the strait and narrow path shown by their great Master.*

To his chosen disciples, Jesus gave his spiritual teachings directly and without the aid of parables. He revealed to them, a few days before his death, his true personality as the Christ, the annointed One, and charged them not to tell it to anyone else till the day of resurrection:

'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. ... Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in

me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works'. (John, XIV. 6-10).

He asked all those who would choose to follow him to be prepared to deny themselves and take up their crosses; it was not a cosy and comfortable religion that he offered, but a heroic path of adventure, a life of total renunciation in the love of God:

'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'. (Matthew XVI. 25-26).

13. The Betrayal and the Trial

The preachings, movements, and miracles of Jesus had stirred up by now a good deal of hostility from the priests, who now began to take steps to apprehend him and bring him before the law. They picked up stray bits of remarks made by Jesus and built up a case for blasphemy against the faith. The tragedy deepened with the last supper in the company of all his disciples, when Jesus made the ominous remark that one of his disciples would betray him and hinted at Judas. When Peter protested against it, he made the still more ominous remark that even Peter would deny him thrice before the next morning. Feeling the end near, and with a heavy heart, Jesus moved to Gethsemane and sat down to pray, asking Peter and two of his other disciples to watch and pray in the meantime. But Peter fell asleep, and Jesus, annoyed, rebuked him:

'What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak'. *(ibid.,* xxvi. 40-41).

This happened three times; but the third time he allowed them to sleep and, after prayer, waited for the betrayal by Judas, who had been bribed by the priests to do so with thirty pieces of silver. Judas came up soon after with the priests and soldiers, and betrayed Jesus to them through a kiss of the Master's hand for identification, and the soldiers took Jesus into custody. Peter, in defence, cut off the ear of a soldier with his sword. Jesus reproved him saying.

'Put up again thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword'. (*ibid.,* XXVI. 52).

Henceforth, it was mounting pathos to the end. Jesus was taken to the high priest, Caiphas; all the disciples deserted him. Peter, however, attended the trial from a distance; and during the trial he denied thrice, before passers-by who asked, that he had anything to do with Jesus. The operations of an inexorable fate left Peter sad and weeping. The priests decided, though without much evidence, that Jesus was guilty, and they hauled him up before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate asked Jesus whether he took himself to be the king of the Jews. Jesus remained silent, which amazed Pilate. Pilate found Jesus was not guilty, but the priests demanded his crucifixion amid tumultuous scenes. Pilate, finding no other way, yielded to their demand and, washing his hands with some water symbolically, said that he was innocent of the blood of Jesus, whom he referred to as a just man. The people assembled there cried out that they were willing to take his blood on themselves and on their descendants. What a tragic statement, and what tragic consequences have followed therefrom ever since!

14. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection

The doleful procession, with Jesus adorned with a scarlet robe and a crown of thorns and carrying his heavy cross, proceeded to Golgotha. He was attended by soldiers who jeeringly hailed him king of the Jews and spat upon and smote him; then they removed the scarlet robe and put his own raiment upon him and nailed him on the cross on the mount of Calvary between two thieves similarly crucified. They placed over his head a taunting signboard: This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.

After hours of intense agony, Jesus cried with a loud voice:

'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matthew, XXVII. 46).

and then in an appealing voice:

'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' (Luke, XXIII. 34).

It was a Friday. The mother of Jesus was a witness of this pathetic scene from a distance; with her was her sister and Mary Magdalene and John. Before he finally expired, Jesus pointed to his mother and asked John to treat her as his own mother, and asked

her to treat him as her own son. After this expression of tenderness, Jesus bent his head and expired, after nine hours of intense torture.

The tragedy was complete. Forsaken by the world, for whose redemption he had come, Jesus ended his earthly career when he was hardly thirty-three. But his spirit triumphed in the resurrection. Joseph of Arimathea, a silent but influential devotee, took his body for burial with the permission of the Roman governor. He laid the body in a new tomb and, placing a heavy stone over it, departed. The two Marys, however, remained near the sepulchre. After three days, on Monday, they had a shaking spiritual experience; and they learnt about the resurrection of Jesus through the angels. They rushed to convey the news to the disciples at Galilee in fear and joy. On the way, the radiant form of Jesus appeared before them, and they fell at his feet and worshipped him. Directed by him, they informed the disciples of the glad tidings, and Jesus appeared to all of them on a hill in Galilee, blessed them, spoke to them, commanding them to teach the gospel to all the world and, before disappearing, assured them that he would be with them always unto the end of the world.

In this moving story of the resurrection, there is one touching episode relating to one of the disciples, Thomas, who was absent at that time. When they related the vision to him, he refused to believe them until he had a direct experience. Exactly eight days after, Jesus again revealed himself to all of them, including Thomas, and invoked his peace on them. Calling to Thomas, Jesus asked him to feel his wounds with his fingers, which he did in amazement and sorrow and joy. Jesus admonished him to believe and not be faithless, and added a significant remark:

'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed'. (John, XX. 29):

As a sequel to the above episode, the expression 'doubting Thomas' passed into the world's vocabulary of banter.

It is interesting for us to recall the tradition that our country first heard the message of Jesus from this direct disciple of his, and a group of Christians of our Kerala state trace their spiritual descent from him.

These are, then, some of the salient features of the life and teachings of this arresting personality, whom the Hindus spontaneously recognize as a divine incarnation. As we have seen, his life is full of sweetness and tenderness, tragedy and pathos; it is spiritually inspiring. *To us in India, however, the end is just a tragedy, bereft of any special spiritual beauty.* It is the life that is, in our view, spiritually beautiful and elevating. The deaths of our own spiritual heroes, Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa, were near tragic; but we did not build our religion on them. India treats the manner of their death most casually, while she seeks to build her religion on their lives and teachings.

It is no wonder that ordinary people do not understand the depths of a divine incarnation's personality; they can at best appreciate his miracles, while missing his character. Too much insistence on these miracles converts religion into a sort of magic, and degrades the content of the life-giving message to cheapness. All great teachers, including Jesus, therefore, discountenanced them. The difficulty of recognizing an incarnation has been well expressed by Sri Kṛiṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā;* only a few can understand him; the rest will deride him or just ignore him:

Avajānanti mām mūdhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam;
Paraṁ bhāvamajānanto mama bhūtamaheśvaram—

'Fools deride me when invested with a human body, not being able to grasp my transcendent nature as the supreme Lord of all beings'. *(Bhagavad-Gītā,* IX. 11).

The trial and crucifixion of Jesus is the measure of the intolerance and folly of the contemporary society. There is pathos in the lament of Jesus over Jerusalem:

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!'. (Matthew, XXIII. 37).

Persecution is the outcome of intolerance, which is a social malady arising out of the limitations of its *Weltanschauung.* India was, and is, fortunately free from this malady, thanks to its generous spiritual outlook which finds beautiful elucidation in several of our sacred books:

'Knowers of Truth declare that it is the same non-dual Reality that is spoken of as Brahman (Absolute) by the philosophers, as Paramatman (Supreme Self) by the mystics, and as Bhagavān (God) by the devotees'—

Vadanti tat tattvavidaḥ tattvaṁ yat jñānam advayam;
Brahmeti Paramātmeti Bhagavān iti śabdyate—(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, I. 2. 11).

15. The New Movement

To teach the world faster than it can learn is to court disaster, as Bertrand Russell has put it. The teachings of Jesus relating to the kingdom of God and the resurrection were just incomprehensible to most of his hearers. There is the typical instance of the Pharisee demanding Jesus to state when the kingdom of God should come Jesus answered:

'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you'. (Luke, XVII. 20-21).

This statement that the kingdom of God is within us can hardly be squared with the dogma of the innate vileness of human nature. How beautifully have the Upaniṣads expressed the above sentiment of Jesus:

Na sandṛśe tiṣṭhati rūpamasya
na cakṣuṣā paśyati kaścanainam;
Hṛdā manīṣā manasābhiklṛpto
ya etadviduramṛtāste bhavanti—

'The form of the Self is not an object of vision;
None can behold Him with the fleshy eye;
One can know Him when, by constant meditation
And free from doubt,
He is revealed by the heart.
Those who know thus become immortal'. *(Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* VI. 9).

The crucifixion was a tragedy of the first magnitude; *but a greater tragedy was the way it was handled.* Woven into the prevailing dogmas, it slowly became central to the new movement. The man of joy, which Jesus undoubtedly was in real life, became

transformed into the man of sorrows, in dogma. We may find a forbidding austerity in John the Baptist; but the Son of Man, as he himself has said, came eating and drinking, trailing clouds of humour and laughter. By transforming him into a man of sorrow, dogma has helped to turn his religion into grim and cheerless aspects, with serious consequences for the emotional life of its followers. Only a few great saints have been able to penetrate through this spiritual heaviness. 'A sad nun is a bad nun', wrote St. Theresa; and she exclaimed: 'O Lord, save us from sullen saints!'

The dogma of one man's sin affecting all humanity gave rise to its logical corollary of the dogma of one man's blood washing away the sins of all; such an approach led inevitably to a chain reaction of such tragedies involving the lives of Stephen and Joseph, Peter and Paul, immediately after, and of countless other good and noble and innocent souls, thereafter. The theory that the blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church developed out of this dogma; and, in place of calm reason and generous love, frenzy, fanaticism, intolerance, and bigotry gripped the propagation of the life-giving message of Jesus down the centuries, destroying as many lives as it undoubtedly helped to build, with groups interchanging places as persecutor and victim.

It is interesting to speculate how the message would have spread, like a little leaven leavening the whole bread, from one good soul to another in comparative peace and goodwill, if the divine life and sublime teachings of Jesus had found the central place, instead of the popular and striking dogmas of'the scapegoat' and 'the atonement', physical resurrection and the second advent, earthly kingdom, and the imminence of the Day of Judgement. These dogmas were purely tribal in their scope, including the prevalent concept of the monotheistic god. They were the nurseries of contemporary Jewish patriotism and national cohesion, sectarian intolerance and political frenzy.

This fettering, in cast-iron dogmas, of the universal message of Jesus—the ideas of the indwelling divinity, of divine grace, universal ethics, and spiritual realization—caused the distortion of its universality through bigotry and intolerance, and the dilution of its peace and love content with hatred, violence, and war.

Judaism represents an impressive human movement of ethical fervour and faith in the divine; but its scope was severely limited to the Jewish community which, in response to the challenge of a hostile world, had tightened its moods and ways, life and laws. The radiant faith in a living God and the laws and commandments which nursed that faith in the hearts of its people, made it the only steady spiritual island in the sea of the moral and religious confusions of the Roman world. As such, it had justification for its faith in its world mission; it was also fitted to be the nursery of the new message of John and Jesus, which had brought with it the vision, the energy, and the character to translate that faith into reality. The only impression that the Gospels warrant us to carry is that Jesus meant his movement to be at first a deepening and, eventually, a broadening of his people's heritage. He took in much before he gave out in ample measure; he came to fulfil and not to destroy 'the law and the prophets'. Here was an attempt at a lofty spiritual synthesis by an equally lofty spiritual character. But history records the tragedy of its failure; the word 'fulfil' was slowly interpreted, not in its spiritual sense as meant by Jesus, but in its prevailing socio-political significance; and this not merely by the Jews, but also by the new movement, which led to the dissatisfaction of Jews against the new movement with its tragic consequences, on the one hand, and the strait-jacketing of the soaring spirit of the new movement itself in the 'letter' of the dogmas of the old faith, on the other.

The new movement thus began as an uneasy combination of the universal and the tribal, the spiritual and the dogmatic, the peaceful and the passionate. The latter elements in their original context, which was consciously parochial and limited, were constructive and creative; but in their new context of the universal, they became largely negative and destructive. The former elements, however, became the source of the high spiritual, mystical, and humanitarian temper of the new movement. The history of Christianity, in its twin records of persecution, violence, and war, on the one side, and lofty mysticism, moral passion, and humanitarianism on the other, bears the impress of this inner division, which also explains its recurrent conflicts with science. A successful synthesis needs the guidance of an adequate *Weltanschauung,* which was not available at the time. *The successful synthesis of thought elements, each one of which is*

vital and powerful, flowering as they do from human experience at various levels—the ethical passion of Judaism, the mystical and humanitarian fervour of Christianity, and the rational temper of science—calls for the guidance of a philosophy or world-view such as that of Vedānta, which is not afraid of any aspect of experience, but seeks truth in all of them with zestful detachment and devotion.

16. The Future of Indian Christianity

It is against this background that we view with hope the future of Indian Christianity. Under the guidance of the philosophy of Vedānta, the Christian message in India can achieve that synthesis by which it will flow as an entirely constructive force with its universal elements functioning free in the spirit of the universal, and its dogmatic elements digested and retained to accord with the spirit of the universal and human.

Our people have the genius, inherent and active, to appreciate a truly spiritual message; our minds are hospitable to spiritual ideas, however new or startling they may be. ***The message of Jesus and his life divine have found their lodgement in the Indian soul, through the irresistible appeal of their beauty and charm.*** It is our earnest hope that the Christian message, *passing through Indian experience,* will bear in its look a new charm and force of tolerance and gentleness, peace and fellowship, capturing thus the Master's spirit *in full.*

17. Conclusion

The gospel of Jesus is a gospel of spiritual redemption. That gospel has a meaning only when we feel the bondage of worldliness irksome and heavy, and seek for freedom in the freedom of God. There is the assurance given by the Master that we shall then get what we seek. To ask and seek and knock is our share, and to give and reveal and open is the Lord's. That is the mood and attitude in which we adore Christ. That is the Hindu way of acceptance and assimilation.

5

THE MESSAGE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD*

1. Introductory

I am very thankful to the Muslim Students Society of Rangoon for organizing this public function in this spacious City Hall and inviting me to speak on *The Message of Prophet Muhammad.* I belong to a movement, which was started by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda over 50 years ago, and which stands for the fostering of the spirit of harmony and fellowship among the world religions, for fostering the expression of the religious impulse in the service of man, irrespective of caste and creed and race and sex, and for the deepening of the spiritual life of man everywhere in the modern age.

2. The Character of Prophet Muhammad

The character of Prophet Muhammad has been misrepresented, not only by many prejudiced non-Muslim critics, but also by the violent, ambitious, and worldly-minded faithful Muslims as well. In his personal life, the prophet shines as a man of high character, integrity, and humanity. He lived a simple spartan life, exemplifying the truth of the dignity of labour. In his later life, he felt that he had a mission to deliver to humanity in general, and to his own Arab people in particular, and he set about implementing this mission and succeeded, before his death, in uniting the Arab people through a religio-political ideology and making them conscious of their destiny to be a civilizing force in the world.

He also instilled love of knowledge in the Arab people. His inspiration soon transformed Arabia from a backward bedouin-inhabitated desert area into the political and cultural hub of Eurasia for four centuries, marked by advancement of science and learning, trade and commerce, and dynamic international contacts. This is the period when the universal spiritual message of Islam and its

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* Based on a public lecture delivered, on the occasion of the celebration of the Prophet's birthday by the Muslim Students Society, Rangoon, at the City Hall, Rangoon, Burma, on 21 April 1940

rational and scientific temper dominated the Muslim mind, which endowed them with an insatiable spirit of curiosity, which inspired them to learn from contemporary civilizations like the Indian, the Chinese, and the Greeko-Roman, and which stimulated them to advance science, philosophy, and the arts in many directions.

But, after the Mongolian invasion of the thirteenth century after Christ and the complete destruction of Baghdad in 1258, when many millions were killed, whole areas were laid waste, and political rule in the centre of the Islamic world passed into the hands of barbarian infidels, leaving only Egypt and Spain to nourish Arab culture for another two centuries, there set in the slow and steady erosion of these universal and rational elements and the rising, to dominance, of its dogmatic and intolerant elements. The Mongol invaders, and later the Turks, were soon converted to Islam and became the carriers of Islamic religion, culture, and political power. With some great exceptions, these new Muslim groups came under the influence, less of Islam's rational and universal, and more of its dogmatic and intolerant, elements. This led to the increasing exploitation of the name of Islam by several military conquerors to destroy and rob and pillage other countries and cultures, which has given a bad name to this great religion.

3. *The Message of the Prophet: Its Universal Elements*

As in the case of every religion, there is, in the message of Prophet Muhammad also, a mixture of the eternal and universal ethical and spiritual elements along with the temporary and local socio-political elements. These represent the two aspects of every religious tradition, firstly, as a path to God, and next, as a socio-political ordering of human life. The followers of Islam derive their inspiration primarily from the Quran and secondarily, as deriving from the Quran, from the *Ṣarīah* and the *Hadith*. All the three contain elements, what the Indian *Sanātana Dharma,* or Hinduism calls, *śruti,* representing the first, *smṛti,* representing the second, in varying proportions. The stagnation and decay of Islam commenced, as in the case of *Sanātana Dharma* in recent centuries, with the dominance of the *smṛti* over the *śruti* elements. It was a dominance of the fundamentalist group over the ever-diminishing rational and humanist group which advocated the scientific approach and the stressing more and more of the eternal, universal, spiritual elements and the soft-pedalling of the temporal and local elements, in response to the advance of history.

The following select passages of the Quran breathe the spirit of the *śruti* or the eternal and the universal:

(We commence) with the name of God
The most Merciful (to begin with),
The most Merciful (to the end).

All praise belongs to God,
Lord of all the worlds,
The Most Merciful (to begin with),
The most Merciful (to the end).

Master of the day of Judgement.
Thee alone do we serve,
And Thee alone do we ask for help.

The Quran speaks of Muhammad and the universal elements of his mission in these words:

'We have not sent thee but as a mercy and blessing for the world.'

The second *Sura* of the Quran commands us to believe, in not only what was revealed to Muhammad, but also in what was revealed to those who went before him. This clearly indicates the Prophet's acceptance of many true religions of which Islam is one. The universality of the Prophet's message is also revealed in his teaching, that only those are nearest to his heart and to God who do what is right. In several *Suras* of the Quran, we come across this universal approach:

'To every one have we given a law and a way. And if God had pleased, He would have made you all one people (believers in one religion); but he has done otherwise that He might try you in that which He hath severally given unto you. Wherefore press forward in good works. Unto God shall ye return and He will tell you that concerning which ye disagree.'

'Shall I not inform you of a better act than fasting, alms, and prayer? Making peace between one and another; enmity and malice tear up rewards by roots.'

'It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the east and the west; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the scripture and the prophets; and gives his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk, and to orphans, and to the needy, and to the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and set slaves free, and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due; and those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.'

'Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us, and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Issac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the prophets received, from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and unto Him we have surrendered.'

'Lo! religion with Allah (is) the Surrender (to His will and guidance).'

Oh ye who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for Allah in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty towards Allah. Lo! Allah is informed of what ye do.'

In the course of his farewell sermon before his passing away, the Prophet gave the message of a universal and humanistic ethics:

'And hearken, O mankind! An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not superior to an Arab, a white man is not superior to a black man nor a black man superior to a white man, except by virtue of his conduct. The noblest in the sight of Allah is he who is noblest in conduct.'

Says the Quran elsewhere:
'Man's actions are judged by his intention.'

'He is not of us who sleeps with his stomach full while his neighbour is hungry.'

There is an oft-quoted saying in the Quran which also has the ring of universality:

'Let there be no compulsion in religion.'

That God is one and that He is beyond man's sensory experience is highlighted in another beautiful verse of the Quran:

'Sight perceives Him not. But He perceives men's sights; for He is the knower of secrets, the Aware.'

This teaching is exactly similar to the teaching of the *Kena Upaniṣad* (1.7):

Yaccakṣusā na paśyati
yena cakṣūṁṣi paśyati;
Tadeva brahma tvaṁ viddhi
nedam yadidam upāsate —

'That which cannot be seen by the eye but through which the eye itself sees, know That to be Brahman and not what people worship here (in the manifested world).'

4. Islam in the Light of the 'Śruti' and the 'Smṛti' Concepts of India's Sanātana Dharma

Some Muslim thinkers have made a distinction between Islam and Muhammadanism and they have preferred the word Islam to Muhammadanism. The former is a more universal concept than the latter, the truths taught in it being impersonal in origin. This is the meaning of *Śruti* in the Hindu or the *Sanātana Dharma* tradition of India; the sages of the Upaniṣads, or of the *Śrutis*, were only discoverers of eternal spiritual truths which can be re-discovered by any one else also at any time. But the latter, namely, Muhammadanism, refers to a person as the sanction for the teachings it expounds. Without the personal founder, the teachings cannot stand. Such teachings constitute, as I said earlier, the *smṛti* dimension of a religion, which is limited by place, time, and history. The Hindus consider even their *Bhagavad-Gītā* as a *smṛti* in form though a *śruti* in content, since it deals with ethical and spiritual truths only and not social rules and regulations.

In the Hindu tradition, unlike in all other religious traditions, there is a clear distinction between its *śruti* and its *smṛti* elements. The *śruti* stands for the body of eternal and impersonal truths valid for all times and peoples. And the *smṛti* stands for the temporal and the local elements; and because they are temporal and local, they cannot be universal. And Hinduism emphasises that they need to be changed age after age, in response to changing socio-economic conditions. The *śruti* is represented by the Vedas generally, and by the Upaniṣads particularly. They contain truths of the spiritual dimension of life discoverd by different sages, among whom were many women also. These truths, like any truth about the physical world, are eternal and are capable of being re-discovered by any human being equipped with moral purity and mental penetration. Among these truths are the innate divinity of man, the unity of God as infinite and non-dual consciousness which is the Self of man and nature, man's capacity to realize this truth in life, and the availability of different paths to realize God. The Hindu mind discovered the presence of these truths in every world religion. And the mystics of every religion, including the Sufi mystics of Islam, apart from the Prophet himself, have borne witness to these eternal spiritul truths. This is what India calls the *Sanātana dharma* dimension of any religious tradition.

The *smṛti* is represented by the various law books of the Hindu tradition, like *Manu Smrti, Yājñavalkya Smṛti, Āpasthamba dharma-śūtras* etc. They deal with rules to regulate the day-to-day life of people individually and collectively; they deal with subjects such as food, dress, marriage, inheritance etc. This is what India calls the *yuga dharma* dimension of any religious tradition, the *dharma* relevant for a particular *yuga,* age or epoch. The Hindu tradition, even in its orthodox form, provides for the giving up of old *smṛtis* and the creation and adoption of new *smṛtis*. That is why, in the long history of the Hindu tradition, there have been many *smṛtis,* but only one *śruti;* and, in this modern period, the most arresting fact of Hindu life is the rejection of the authority of the old *smṛtis,* and the free and fearless adoption of new *smṛtis* by the people, in response to the onward march of history and the demands of the modern age. The age-old experience of the Hindu tradition demonstrates the truth that the changing of these *smṛti*

elements of any tradition, which become at a later age, what in Greek mythology is called, *procrustean beds,* not only will not harm that tradition but, on the contrary, will only strengthen that tradition, and make it better fitted to achieve human development. The Hindu tradition recognizes the fact that, with respect to human development and fulfilment, these *smṛti* elements of a tradition are like the bark of a tree; as the tree grows, the bark also must grow side by side; if not, the bark will choke the tree and destroy it. But a living tree will cast off its old bark and create for itself a new bark suitable to its growth. With regard to *smṛtis,* in general, the following pithy observation of Sri Ramakrishna (1836—1886) presents the essence of Hindu wisdom aptly:

'The Mughal coins have no currency under the (British East India) Company's rule.'

One of the features that helped to sustain the impressive millennia-long continuity of the Hindu tradition is the general acceptance of this dominance of the *śruti* over the *smṛti.* This produced two great results, namely, the emergence of a galaxy of mystics and saints and reformers, and the high respect they commanded from the people, even though some of them preached openly against several aspects of the teachings of the current Hindu *smṛtis.* If, on the other hand, the *smṛtis,* what in Islam is called the *Ṣarīyah,* had dominated the Hindu tradition, these mystics and saints and reformers would have been silenced or destroyed. In our own time, a Vivekananda (1863-1902) appeared, and he preached strongly against several beliefs and practices advocated by the Hindu *smṛtis,* showing them to be obsolete and enemies of human development and fulfilment; and yet he was accepted, respected, and honoured even by the orthodox tradition. This stands in sharp contrast to the tragic fate of several lovable saints and innovators in the wide spectrum of the Semitic tradition.

5. *Islam: Creative versus Stagnant*

Islam has produced some of the most lovable men and women of God, the Sufis. The Prophet's teachings contained inspiration for this God-ward direction of human life, and mystics began to appear in Islam within a century of his death. The earliest outstanding Sufi

mystic was a woman, Rābia of Basra (717-801 A.D), who has inspired most of the later Sufis. She and several other Sufis were monastics, a state of life condemned by Islamic *Ṣarīah* or law books. Many of them had a hard time to express their deep-felt spiritual urges and experiences, for fear of offending the rigid *Ṣarīah* or fundamentalist orthodoxy of Islam, which has even put to death some of the noblest among them. This is the bitter fruit of a stagnant Islam. If Islam were dominated by its creative, by its eternal and universal, elements, this would not have taken place. In the first four centuries of Islam, when it was creative, these dogmatic and rigid fundamentalist elements had been held in check by the rational, universal, and expansive spirit of Islam, which made for the flowering of the Islamic culture and civilization. Since the destruction of Baghdad, there has been an increasing dominance by its rigid and intolerant *Ṣarīah or smṛti* elements, and the consequent exploitation of Islam, as referred to earlier, by power-hungry worldly-minded individuals to cover their own greed and blood-thirstiness.

If Islam is to become creative once again, and help in the human development and fulfilment of its followers, it has to capture once again the rational and universal temper of its early period, by taking inspiration from the *spirit* of Islam and not from its *letter*. This rational approach is found in many early Muslim thinkers. It is expressed in a famous verse by Jalāluddin Rūmi, in his *Masnavi*, which is treated as only second to the Quran in importance and reverence (quoted by Dr. Bhagawan Das in his *Essential Unity of All Religions*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan edition, 1960, p. 100):

Man ze Qurān maghz rā bardāṣtam,
Ustukḥāṇ peṣe sagāṅ andakḥtam—

'The marrow from the Quran have I drawn,
And the dry bones unto the dogs have cast.'

6. *Conclusion*

Such a creative Islam alone will be able to establish happy and fruitful relations with its sister world religions, and also to become a progressive force in its own secular field. Islamic conquerors and missionaries have a bad reputation as idol breakers with respect to other religions. If this is accepted as an essential element of Islam, it will have to be engaged in this fruitless task till the end of time; and consequently, it will never be able to establish happy and peaceful relations with other religions, many of which will continue to use images and symbols. It is good for Islam to engage in another type of idol-breaking, namely, idols of the mind, consisting of prejudices and prepossessions. This is one of the important disciplines of the scientific method as expounded by Francis Bacon, who refers to the need for every scientific seeker to free the mind from the 'idols of the cave', from the 'idols of the theatre', etc. etc. In a famous poem, the great Jalāluddin Rūmi protests vigorously against this idol-breaking programme, which applies to all Semitic religious missionaries generally, and to all Islamic conquerors and non-Sufi missionaries specially. (*Masnavi*, quoted in Claude Field's *Mystics and Sufis of Islam*, p. 154):

Moses, to his horror, heard one summer day
A benighted shepherd blasphemously pray:

'Lord', he said, 'I would I know Thee, where Thou art,
That for Thee I might perform a servant's part,
Comb Thy hair, and dust Thy shoes, and sweep Thy room,
Bring Thee every morning milk and honeycomb.'

Moses cried, 'Blasphemer!' Curb thy blatant speech!
Whom art thou addressing? Lord of all and each,
Allah the almighty? Thinkest thou He doth need
Thine officious folly? Wilt Thou all bounds exceed?
Miscreant, have a care, lest thunderbolts should break
On our heads, and others perish for thy sake.
Without eyes He seeth, without ears He heareth,
Hath no son nor partner through the endless years;
Space cannot contain Him, time He is above.
All the limits that He knows are Light and Love.'

'Put to shame, the shepherd, his poor garment rent,
Went away disheartened, his ardour spent.

'Then spake God to Moses: 'Why hast thou for Me
Driven away My servant, who goes heavily?
Not for severence it was, but union
I commissioned thee to preach, O hasty one!

Hatefullest of all things is to me divorce (of man from man),
And the worst of all ways is the way of force;
I made not creation, self to aggrandize,
But that creatures might with Me communion prize.

What though the childish tongue trip? 'tis the heart I see,
If it realy loves Me in sincerity.'

6

ŚAṄKARA AND THE CHARACTER OF HIS GREATNESS*

1. *Introductory*

WE HAVE gathered here this evening to celebrate the birthday of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. I do not propose to dwell at length on the life of Śaṅkara except in so far as it helps to illustrate the main theme of my speech—the character of his greatness. As for that, the life of Śaṅkara, in its merely outward bodily incidents, may be told in a paragraph. But the quantity and quality of thought and achievement, that he packed into the short span of his life of thirty-two years, have earned for him a place among the world's immortals. Today our minds are staggered at the thought that so much could be achieved by one single individual in so short a time. It speaks volumes for the burning motives within him, moving him to work incessantly for human betterment and welfare.

2. *Śaṅkara: The Personality and Its Environment*

Conscious of a great message that he was to deliver and the mission that he was to fulfil in this country, we find Śaṅkara, while yet a boy, leaving his home with a firm resolve to bend all his energies and resources towards that end. If we are to appreciate his work, we have to capture an understanding of the climate of thought in which he lived and functioned. He is a remarkable specimen of Indian humanity of those times. If we can get a close view of these two things—the environment and the personality—we shall be able to assess the type of work done by him and see whether we have any lesson to learn from his life and work. Possessed of extraordinary powers, this young boy, highly intelligent and deeply conscious of his mission, has worked wonders in the cultural, philosophical, and religious fields of Indian life.

We can know and appreciate better the great work that Śaṅkara has done by a consideration of the background of contemporary

*Speech delivered at the Śaṅkara *Jayanti* Celebrations at the Ramakrishna Math, Karachi, now in Pakistan, in May 1947.

historical conditions. At that time, there were various conflicting systems of thought in India, and the condition that prevailed can be best characterized as nebulous. Politically as well as socially, philosophically as well as religiously, there was no central rallying point from which men could view the entire panorama of Indian thought and say: 'Here is the unity of India'. The several systems of thought were narrow and self-sufficient and had nothing to do with each other. That is why I said that our thought and religious life then were nebulous. The country was divided into various sects and creeds and they only paid lip allegiance to the Vedas; even this was thoughtless and uncritical.

Politically, as it has happened so often in the history of India, and let us hope it will not happen in future, the country was divided into a congeries of little states. On the death of the last Buddhist sovereign, Emperor Harṣa, who had brought about some sort of political unity of India by bringing these states under his empire, the political equilibrium was disturbed, and Hindustan again became divided into small states fighting with each other without any common loyalty to unite them. Thus politically, philosophically, culturally, and religiously, there was no central rallying point. It was at such a time that the master mind of Śaṅkara set to work to produce unity in the field of religion, culture, and philosophy, leaving the political aspect of it to be worked out by future generations. But even what he had undertaken was a gigantic task for a single individual.

3. *Śaṅkara's Life-Mission*

We find clearly from a study of Śaṅkara's career that his purpose was to reduce to unity and harmony, under the hegemony of Vedānta, the multiplicity of conflicting thought systems, without destroying the integrity of the prevalent faiths. He could have brought everything to a dead dull level of uniformity, but he did not do that; for it militated against his idea of the richness of diversity in the world of faiths. *Unity was his aim and not uniformity—unity in diversity*. Diversity connotes richness. But diversity, when it destroys the central unifying cord, becomes chaotic and an enemy of all progress and well-being of a community. Therefore, the purpose

of all the great thinkers in this country has been, and is, to preserve the variety and to subordinate it to an overriding unity. The operation of this idea has created harmony out of all the diverse thoughts and faiths in this land, instead of reducing everything to a single uniform faith at the point of the sword, as has happened in some other countries.

It is a federation of faiths that Śaṅkara established through a struggle based on reason and free discussion designed to appeal to the heart and mind of the people. As such, he fully deserved the title of *Ṣaṇmata-sthāpana-ācārya* (the teacher who established six religions) conferred on him by a grateful people. This is what we get out of the work of Śaṅkara. There were myriads of faiths justifying themselves through appeals to varying shades of logic and revelation, but there was no loyalty to a fundamental principle which could be considered to be a mediating element between sect and sect and party and party. Śaṅkara tried to introduce this mediating element between these, and he found it in the great philosophy of Vedānta which proclaimed, as ultimate Reality, a principle that is personal as well as impersonal, immanent as well as transcendent.

In Śaṅkara we find that intense sympathy, a desire to understand other points of view, and a patient effort at critical appreciation of thoughts and things. With an iron resolve attuned to a deep affection and loyalty for the people and the culture of his vast country, and with a strong conviction that he was born to strengthen the one and enhance the other, we find him taking up this problem with a firm determination to produce cosmos out of chaos in the world of culture and in the mind of man in India. And a sustained struggle of a lifetime brings to India a measure of unity, harmony, and order in religion, thought, and culture, which is a record unparalleled in the history of man.

4. *Heroes of the Spirit versus Heroes of the Sword*

There have been great men who have fought for great causes. All over the world there have been great heroes. In Mohammed Bin Kasim we have the example of a courageous youth possessing the heroic touch. There is something to be admired in a young lad of sixteen marching forth from his home-town in Arabia in quest of

adventure and conquering a province like Sind with the help of a few companions. We have again Napoleon who marched his army across the Alps and fought and defeated the Austrians in Italy. We have many such examples in our own history. But, as contrasted with all these stands the brilliant example of Śaṅkara. A single individual, whose only companion was his glowing spirituality, vast intellect, and deep sympathy, going the length and breadth of India and conquering its mind and heart is something unique in history—even in Indian history. He captured both the intellects and the hearts of men. He established an empire of the spirit, of love, and of lofty spiritual idealism. From the example of Śaṅkara we can picture the greatness of a person who sways the world in this manner. It is such type of leaders that India, nay, the whole world, need badly today.

The environment that obtained at the time of Śaṅkara is of interest to us today. Those were the times when men paid homage to intellect and character. Those were days when men of culture and intellect and the rare ones with new ideas were respected all over the country. In a sense this has been so throughout our history. All fights were on the intellectual level, on the ideological level. When we think of those days, we feel that we need today to recapture that idealism and learn again to settle our quarrels *not by breaking heads but by breaking wits*. It speaks of the high culture of a society where problems are solved not by the sword but by discussion. It was this democratic attitude that prevailed at the time of Saṅkara. People were invited to hear the exposition of a new idea, and the subsequent discussion saw the opposition of idea to idea and the meeting of argument with argument. We have, out of these clashes of ideas, the emergence of a rational philosophy. We find, at the time of Śaṅkara, people's minds ever ready to receive new ideas; there was an intellectual receptivity to truth.

5. *Teachers who Appeal both to the Head and Heart of Humanity*

This attitude and mood is the high watermark of culture. We sadly miss that today. We try to impose an idea by the force of the sword and not by an appeal to the intellect and understanding. It is difficult to spread an idea in the latter way. But the former way—

that of the sword—is unworthy of a cultured and civilized people—a way which, fortunately, has been rarely tried in India. Therefore, most teachers and leaders in India have resorted to a third and easier way—an appeal to the emotions of the people. Their appeal was to the feeling and not to the understanding. This method we find very much popular among the political leaders today. At its best, it no doubt produces fine loyalty and deep enthusiasm for a cause; but at its worst, it expresses itself in fanaticism and mutual destruction. *But the most enduring appeal is that which affects the intellect, the mind of a people, and which, through its inherent truth and beauty, gradually penetrates to the heart, producing deep convictions and rational faiths.* This method has been tried by very few in the world, and amongst those who have tried, and tried successfully, one is Buddha and the other is Śaṅkara. Usually, the masses can be appealed to through their emotions only. But Śaṅkara is an exception to this general rule; though an intellectual of a rare order, he has appealed to both the heart and the intellect of men. We have in Śaṅkara a great intellectual who at the same time also commanded the emotional allegiance of the masses. Today in Hindustan, if there is one teacher of the historic period who commands the allegiance of both the intellectuals and the masses, it is Śaṅkara. Yet, most of his writings are very abstruse and cannot be easily understood. But his other writings, consisting of soul-stirring devotional songs and hymns, are there. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, referring in deep appreciation to this striking aspect of Śaṅkara's work, remarks (*Glimpses of World History*, Letter 44):

> 'Śaṅkarācārya's record is a remarkable one. ... The whole country is stirred up intellectually by Śaṅkara's books and commentaries and arguments. Not only does he become the great leader of the Brāhmin class, but he seems to catch the imagination of the masses. It is an unusual thing for a man to become a great leader chiefly because of his powerful intellect, and for such a person to impress himself on millions of people and on history. Great soldiers and conquerors seem to stand out in history. They become popular or are hated, and sometimes they mould history. Great religious leaders have moved millions and fired them with enthusiasm, but always this has been on the basis of faith. The emotions have been appealed to and have been touched.
>
> 'It is difficult for an appeal to the mind and to the intellect to go far. Most people unfortunately do not think; they feel and act according to their feelings. Śaṅkara's appeal was to the mind and intellect and to reason. It was not just the repetition of a

dogma contained in an old book. Whether his argument was right or wrong is immaterial for the moment. What is interesting is his intellectual approach to religious problems, and even more so the success he gained in spite of this method of approach. ...

'And tne great success which met his campaign all over the country in a very short time also shows how intellectual and cultural currents travelled rapidly from one end of the country to another.'

We are moved to admire the people of his time. About one hundred and fifty years before Saṅkara, the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang came to India and he was struck by the intellectual curiosity of the people of this country, their eagerness for knowledge, readiness to accept new ideas, and their deep interest in education. Himself a great scholar, he came here to learn, to slake his thirst for intellectual and spiritual knowledge. That is the kind of atmosphere in which Śaṅkara lived and worked, with nothing but his keen intellect and deep conviction to help him. Whenever such a personality appears in such a context, we can expect to find the birth of a mighty ideology capable of changing the thought and life patterns of a people.

6. *Śaṅkara: A Great Traveller*

Thus, within the course of a few years, we find this great man travelling the length and breadth of India to fulfil his mission. He was like Buddha before him, and Vivekananda after him, a great *parivrājaka,* a traveller, in the true sense of the term, ever in contact with nature and man. He was ever on the move, preaching and teaching and uplifting the people wherever he went. Having no desires of his own to satisfy and having nothing to gain for himself—in the words of the great teacher Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose able commentator he becomes, and who said that having nothing to gain for himself he yet worked hard so that good may come to society—we see Śaṅkara going from place to place in order to uplift the people, to enlighten them. His teacher had asked him to go to Vāraṇāsi first to bring harmony in its world of thought. He defeated his opponents in argument at Vāraṇāsi and established the greatness of the Vedānta philosophy on firm rational foundations. From there he went all over the country on foot. What must be the loftiness and intensity of the impulse in the heart of this noble person which could impel him to go from place to place in a vast subcontinent like India,

removing the doubts of people, discussing patiently with them on all aspects of philosophy and faith, and bringing order out of the contemporary chaotic and nebulous condition of the thought and faith of his country.

7. *Śaṅkara Establishes the Ten Orders of Monk-teachers*

This is the greatness of this teacher. He gathered up the scattered cultural and spiritual energies of the people and raised their voltage tenfold. Being a man of intense practicality and possessed of rare organizing abilities, Śaṅkara took steps to ensure the continuity of his great work by setting up ten Orders of monks— the *paramahaṁsa parivrājakas,* a band of roving and teaching monks—and establishing four monastic centres at the four corners of India and entrusting them to the care of monks noted for their intellect, character, and vision. The location of these centres—at Sringeri in the south, at Puri in the east, at Dwaraka in the west and at Badarinath deep in the Himalayas in the north—reveals his farseeing genius as also his vision of the geographical and cultural unity of India. *Paramahaṁsas* are a class of sannyāsins who are never attached to the world and have nothing to gain for themselves; when they go about as peripatetic teachers they are called *parivrājaka ācāryas.* This is the beautiful expression to describe a person who goes about uplifting society. His detachment makes him a universal man—above the limitations of caste, creed, and sect. With his sympathy unobstructed by physical or mental barriers, he functions as the lover and benefactor of man. The *paramahaṁsas* are free to move about everywhere. They are neither men nor women; neither Hindu nor Muslim; neither Christian nor Vaiṣṇava; neither Śaiva nor Śākta. They are all and above all. They remain uncontaminated, ever purifying others. They are the equal and the free. For, in the memorable words of the *Gītā* (V. 19):

'They, with their minds resting on equality, have conquered relative existence in this very life, since Brahman is perfect and equal; therefore they indeed rest in Brahman.'

But mark the deep humility of this great man who, though outshining his *guru,* Govindapāda, in learning as well as achievement, yet always proclaimed himself in all his works as his disciple:

Śrīmat-paramahaṁsa-parivrājakācārya-Govindabhagavad-pūjyapāda-śiṣya. In this he typifies the natural humility of the wise man of his philosophy.

8. *Conclusion*

Śaṅkara never remained at a place for long; he went about as a peripatetic teacher. And as a result of his ceaseless striving, we have the unity of Hinduism and Hindu culture of which we are so proud today. But after 1000 years, today, we are face to face with a more complex situation. To bring unity not only in Hinduism but in India as a whole, in which all religions and cultures can find a harmonious blending, is a task that remains for us to accomplish today. This is the challenge of the present age to the genius of India. The work of synthesis which we have successfully carried on in every epoch of history is there to inspire us, and Śaṅkara's method and manner are there as a guide for us. He was a teacher of unity. His spirit was universal. His mind was inclusive and not exclusive. He taught not merely toleration, but also dynamic acceptance. Herein lies the value of his work to us. Wherever there is emphasis on unity, there is knowledge; its fruit is concord and happiness and beneficence; and wherever there is emphasis on diversity, it is ignorance; and it results in conflict and misery, says Śaṅkara. We need badly today the message of that unity based on understanding and leading to all-round concord.

7

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON GURU GOBIND SINGH *

1. *Introductory*

OUR NATION will soon be celebrating the fourth centenary of one of the greatest heroes of our history—Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708). He was a mighty personality thrown up by the tumultuous socio-political *milieu* of the India of the later Moghuls who had reversed the policy of broad and constructive nationalism of the early Moghuls in favour of a narrow, bigoted, and violent communalism of an intolerant brand of Islam. The cry of distress of millions of Hindus and Sikhs reached the throne of Mercy which sent down in response two great heroes who were also lovers of God and man, Guru Gobind Singh in the Punjab and *Chhatrapati* Shivaji in Maharashtra. The resistance movements organized by the two against the prevailing tyranny were entirely inspired by the spiritual and human motives imparted by two great spiritual teachers—Guru Nānak and Samartha Rāmdas.

2. *Guru Nānak and the Sikh Movement*

Guru Nānak and his movement sought to weld Hindus and Muslims into a powerful nation dedicated to the realization of the universal spiritual and human values transcending the prevailing communalisms of sects and creeds and castes. This movement soon gathered strength, and, equally soon, faced fierce opposition from the contemporary Muslim communalism and the Moghal political state. The tragedy which began with Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, continued and reached its highest intensity during the period of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, whose struggles and sacrifices, successes and defeats, make him shine as the greatest tragic hero of later Indian history. His character, dedication, intellect courage, and, above all, compassion, mark him out as a born leader and saviour; in his life, as well as in his defeat and death, he has been a beacon of light and hope to millions of his countrymen.

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* Contributed to the *Sikh Review*, Calcutta, 1967

Swami Vivekananda was a great admirer of Guru Nānak and Guru Gobind Singh. Himself a hero of a rare type whose intellect and character and vision have powerfully influenced the shaping of modern India, Swami Vivekananda saw in Guru Gobind Singh a powerful nation-builder, and greeted him as 'one of the last and one of the greatest heroes of our race'.

Apart from creedal differences, the people of India are one. The word 'Hindu' originally represented this common national stock; and foreigners always referred to all the people of India by that name, irrespective of caste and creed. Sir Mohammad Iqbal was proud to proclaim: 'Our Hindustan is the best of all countries. Religion does not teach man to hate each other; we are all Hindis and Hindustan is our (common) country.'

3. *The Glory of 'The Land of the Five Rivers'*

It is instructive for us today to know what Vivekananda said about Guru Gobind Singh sixty years ago. Speaking in Lahore in 1897 on 'The Common Bases of Hinduism' the first of his three lectures there, the Swami, greeting the brave people of the Punjab and eulogizing the greatness of Guru Nānak and Guru Gobind Singh, said *(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol III, Eighth Edition, p. 366):*

"This is the land which is held to be the holiest even in holy Āryāvarta; this is the Brahmāvarta of which our great Manu speaks. This is the land from whence arose that mighty aspiration after the Spirit, ay, which in times to come, as history shows, was to deluge the world. This is the land where, like its mighty rivers, spiritual aspirations have arisen and joined their strength, till they travelled over the length and breadth of the world, and declared themselves with a voice of thunder. This is the land which had first to bear the brunt of all inroads and invasions into India; this heroic land had first to bare its bosom to every onslaught of the outer barbarians into Āryāvarta. This is the land which, after all its sufferings, has not yet entirely lost its glory and its strength. Here it was that in later times the gentle Nānak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened, and his arms outstretched, to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus, but of Mohammedans too. Here it was that one of the last and one of the most glorious heroes of our race, Guru Gobind Singh, after shedding his blood, and that of his dearest and nearest, for the cause of religion, even when deserted by those for whom his blood was shed, retired into the South to die like a wounded lion struck to the heart, without a word against his country, without a single word of murmur.'

4. *Conclusion: The Greatness of Guru Gobind Singh*

Towards the end of the same lecture, the Swami, referring to the Indian conception of religion as realization, whose fruit is universal love and compassion, and paying a special tribute to the greatness of the tenth Guru for his character and vision, said *(ibid., pp. 378-80):*

"Therefore, take more thought before you go and find fault with others. Let them follow their own path to realization so long as they struggle to see truth in their own hearts; and when the broad, naked truth will be seen, then they will find that wonderful blissfulness which marvellously enough has been testified to by every seer in India, by everyone who has realised the truth. Then words of love alone will come out of that heart, for it has already been touched by Him who is the essence of Love Himself. Then and then alone, all sectarian quarrels will cease, and we shall be in a position to understand, to bring to our hearts, to embrace, to intensely love, the very word Hindu, and every one who bears that name.

Mark me, then and then alone you are a Hindu when the very name sends through you galvanic shock of strength. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when every man who bears the name, from any country, speaking our language or any other language, becomes at once the nearest and the dearest to you. Then and then alone you are a Hindu when the distress of anyone bearing that name comes to your heart and makes you feel as if your own son were in distress; then and then alone you are a Hindu when you will be ready to bear everything for them, like the great example I have quoted at the beginning of this lecture, of your great Guru Gobind Singh. Driven out from this country, fighting against its oppressors, after having shed his own blood for the defence of the Hindu religion, after having seen his children killed on the battlefield—ay, this example of the great Guru, left even by those for whose sake he was shedding his blood and the blood of his own nearest and dearest—he, the wounded lion, retired from the field calmly to die in south, but not a word of curse escaped his lips against those who had ungratefully forsaken him! *Mark me, every one of you will have to be a Gobind Singh, if you want to do good to your country.*

'You may see thousands of defects in your countrymen, but mark their Hindu blood. They are the first gods you will have to worship, even if they do everything to hurt you; even if everyone of them sends out a curse to you, you send out to them words of love. If they drive you out, retire to die in silence like that mighty lion, Gobind Singh. Such a man is worthy of the name of Hindu; such an ideal ought to be before us always. *All our hatchets let us bury; send out this grand current of love all round.*'

8

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND UNIVERSAL RELIGION *

1. Introductory

It is an undeniable fact of history that one of the most potent factors in the evolution of humanity has been the force which manifests itself as religion and the religious motive. From earliest times it has supplied the motive for social cohesion and social progress. Besides satisfying the individual's spiritual needs, it has also been the power to unite individuals into groups and communities.

2. Religion: A Curse as well as a Blessing in The Past

But it is a strange paradox that this same impulse which has contributed to human unity and welfare has also been the cause of much strife and disunion among mankind. It seems as though religions are closed systems and the only relation they can have towards one another is that of antagonism. The powers for blessing which they exhibit in their narrow spheres of sect and community turn into curses when applied to the large world outside. Every system has appealed to the religious susceptibilities of its votaries to goad them either to war, persecution, or murder. Thus some of the most atrocious crimes and inhuman practices in all history have been perpetrated in its name. These are some of the blackest pages of all religious history. Whatever blessing it has conferred in private has thus been nullified in public.

3. Indian Religious Thought: Its Unique Feature

The only country where religious wars and persecutions have been comparatively negligible is India. This, let us note, is not because there is no deep religious feeling in India, as some critics would think, to whom love for one's religion is achieved only by hating other religions; neither is it due to any absence of variety in

*Contributed to the *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1936

the religious outlook. History shows, and even today it is a fact, that both in point of spiritual fervour and the variety of its expression, India stands foremost in the world. The science of comparative religion tells us that the evolution of religious ideas has been, to a great extent, identical throughout the world. But whereas, outside India, this evolution stopped at the tribal stage and the monotheistic conception, Indian spiritual genius soared higher and yet higher and discovered the Unity behind all the gods. This is a great landmark in the history of religions in general, for it marks the stage at which religion turns out to be the messenger *of all peace* and *all* blessing to the *whole* of humanity, instead of being partially good and partially evil, as it has been in its earlier stages. For India herself, this discovery was momentous; for through this she has been spared from endless travails of religious persecution. This idea carries with it a certain universal outlook, being based on a highly rational philosophy, which later Vedic thought, especially the Upaniṣads, developed into its logical conclusion by discovering the Unity behind all existence.

4. Sectarianism: Its Evils and Their Remedy

The relationship between religion and religion has been anything but happy. Religions which seemed to have worked well in the places of their birth are found to be failures in their careers outside. Sentiments like love, brotherhood, and peace give place to those of hatred, scorn, and strife. In the name of religion, countries have been devastated, great cultures have been destroyed, and masses of men have been massacred—all with the 'pious' idea of extending the empire of the 'One God'. Little does the fanatical religionist realize that that is not the way to establish the 'Kingdom of Heaven' on earth. There is no doubt that the destruction of old cultures like those of Peru, Mexico, etc. really leaves such a 'Kingdom of Heaven' poorer in spiritual content. The sectarian spirit of religion is manifestly antagonistic to the very spirit of modern times which is scientific through and through, and which appeals not to sects and sections but to humanity at large. Consequently, the prestige of religion itself has suffered much in modern times. If religion is to be a living force in the modern world and contribute its share for the ushering in of a future civilization of humanity, it

requires to be restated and cast into rational and scientific moulds. The solidarity of mankind is the ideal for which science stands. The immense possibilities which the scientific advancement of the last three centuries holds in its bosom for the realization of the great hopes of poets and philosophers of the past ages, require for their consummation a new spirit, a new outlook, and a new message, universal in its appeal, which will mediate between religion and religion on the one hand, and science and religion on the other. Where is this message, this quickening impulse, to come from? To this insistent question, the eager minds of thinking men, both in East and West, turn towards India and the invaluable treasure of her spiritual and philosophic thought, the Vedānta.

5. *Vedānta: Its Contribution to Indian Thought and Life*

This is no audacious claim. We have seen already how Indian thought took a great step towards religious harmony when it discovered the one God of whom all other gods are but manifestations. This is the great idea embodied in the famous verse of the *Ṛg-Veda* (I. 164.46): *Ekaṁ sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*—'Truth is One; sages call It by various names', such as Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, etc. Not only this; no new thought has ever suffered suppression in India—be it in science, religion, or philosophy. Where all knowledge is held as sacred, how is it possible to suppress any aspect of it? The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. 2. 4) speaks of the *parā* and *aparā* kinds of knowledge: *Dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā caiva aparā ca.* All sciences including even the holy Vedas are only *aparā* knowledge. Let us note, in this connexion, that *aparā does not and cannot mean here anything inferior in kind. That knowledge which is derived from human experience in parts and aspects is aparā,* while that which is the fruit of a study of experience as a whole, of life in its totality, is *parā.* And all knowledge of the *aparā* kind is only an expression of the *parā vidyā,* Philosophy. This is the same as *Brahmavidyā,* Brahman standing for the totality of existence and experience.

This is the famous Vedānta philosophy, which is the very kernel and core of Indian culture, the fairest flower of its thought—the one which has given Indian culture its distinctive character and uniqueness. It is the spirit of Vedānta which has moulded all forms of Indian life and which has mediated between sect and sect, imparting to the rich variety of Indian thought its synthetic unity. This is the mesmerism of Indian thought which is slowly gripping the minds of many a serious thinker of the West. Those who speak of Hinduism as a bewildering mass of confused religious and social ideas and practices have not yet grasped Vedānta. To understand India and Hinduism requires, first of all, an intimate acquaintance with the spirit of Vedānta. It is in virtue of this Vedānta that we are enabled to speak of the fundamental unity of India. It will be in virtue of this same Vedānta that we will be enabled not merely to speak about, but achieve, the fundamental unity of humanity itself. And if religious harmony, social progress, and national solidarity are lacking in present-day India, the quickening impulse must come from this Vedānta alone, for it is the storehouse of all wisdom.

6. *Indian Thought and Sri Ramakrishna*

The oneness of all existence is the message which Vedānta teaches. The immediate implication of this message in life and thought is another great idea which seems to run counter to the very spirit of religious sectarianism, but which breathes truly the scientific spirit. As Swami Vivekananda expresses it *(Complete Works,* Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 15):

> 'Man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth.'

If truth is like a pyramid, the philosophical understanding of Unity is its apex. Viewed from this supreme height, no aspect of life or effort can appear as false or erroneous; for truth itself is the goal of all paths. It is chiefly in the application of this great idea to the pressing problems of modern life that the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are supremely significant. Through them we find Indian thought, especially Vedānta, speaking to the modern world for composing its distractions and ushering in on earth an era of what the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. 6) calls *Satyātma prāṇārāmaṁ mana ānandaṁ śānti samṛddham amṛtam*—'Truth, the solace of life and bliss of the mind, exuberant with the wealth of peace and immortality'.

7. *Universalism: Old and New*

The idea of universal religion is not something new in the world. There have been two senses in which it has been understood. When a religion steps out of its local boundaries and starts on a career of conquest and annexation, adding new recruits, much in the same way as an empire extends by the accession of new territories, it styles itself a universal religion. Such a religion keeps before itself the alluring ideal of becoming a world-religion sooner or later and believes itself to be the only fit candidate to that estate. The outstanding examples of this type are Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The last one differs from the other two both in its methods and motives of such extension. Unlike Christianity and Islam, the spread of Buddhism has been singularly characterized by a spirit of peace and non-violence. This is undoubtedly due to the influence of Indian thought wherein Buddhism has its roots and from which it has sprung. Christianity and Islam, on the other hand, have followed a relentless course of destruction and persecution with the ostensible purpose of 'saving' the 'damned souls'.

Now this idea of universal religion is self-destructive. Not through conquest and the use of might is the way to universal religion. It breathes the spirit of the Old Testament, where, when a tribe conquers another tribe, it also destroys the latter's god and imposes its own god over it. It is this same spirit which is working now when, in the place of tribes, we have alien cultures and religions. And when there are two claimants, both equally strong, zealous, and fanatical, this idea of universalism is seen to defeat itself. The fact is, there is a world of difference between the two assertions—'My god is the only true god and you must accept Him' and 'My god and your god are one and the same, differing at best only in name'. When a single religious belief, sincerely held, is disturbed and destroyed, the purpose of universal religion defeats itself.

The second idea of universal religion is seen expressed in the eclecticism of Akbar and some modern sects and movements. Eclecticism is like a bouquet of choice flowers, and like a bouquet it has not any enlivening principle in it and is bound to wither away. A still greater criticism is that it has a tendency to become a closed system

in itself, which defeats its very purpose. It says, 'There is so much sectarianism in the world; it must be destroyed; so let us start a new sect'. This sounds like the famous wartime sentiment—a war to end all wars. But just as not one among the older sects is entitled legitimately to claim universality, by the same inexorable logic, no new sect also can lay claim to that position.

8. *Sri Ramakrishna's Ideal of Universal Religion*

From the previous analysis we have come to this—that no religion can aspire individually to become universal. Unity in variety is the test of universality and not a dull and dead uniformity. In sharp contrast to the previous two conceptions stands Sri Ramakrishna's ideal of universal religion. The very first principle of this ideal is: 'If one religion is true, then by the very same logic all other religions are also true', the verification of which is found in the fact that 'holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character' *(Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 22). Hence this great teacher left every religion undisturbed; neither did he start a new religion. Yet his life was the greatest vindication of true religion. Nay, it was a veritable Parliament of Religions. He traversed the various paths of the Hindu faith and attained perfection in each. Not content with this, he lived the life of a pious Christian and a devout Muslim reaching the goal of the respective paths. As a result of all his experiments, he realized that all religions are at bottom one, they all teach the same truth and lead to the same goal. In his own words *(Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna,* 1954, p. 152):

> 'Many are the names of God, and infinite the forms that help us to know Him. By whatsoever name or form you desire to know Him, in that very form and under that very name will you see Him. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God; various and different are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kāli at Kalighat (in Calcutta). Similarly various are the paths that take men to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of these paths.'

Again *(ibid.,* p. 155):

> 'As a mother in nursing her sick children gives rice and curry to one, sago and arrowroot to another, and bread and butter to a third, so the Lord has laid out different paths for different men suitable to their natures.'

What follows? To quote Sri Ramakrishna again (*ibid.*, p. 156):

'Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Mohammedan should follow Mohammedanism. For the Hindu—the ancient path, the path of the Āryan *ṛṣis*, is the best. A truly religious man should think that other religions are also so many paths leading to the Truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.'

Thus, in Sri Ramakrishna's view, the existence of many sects and religions not merely does not stand as obstacles in the way, but actually helps the realization, of universal religion. Let sects multiply until each individual will have a religion for himself. As no two individuals can be exactly similar in respect of taste, outlook, and capacity, so no one religion can perfectly satisfy the needs of all. Thus sects ought to multiply until they coincide with humanity itself. But *sectarianism* will disappear. And with its disappearance will be realized the ideal of a universal religion. In fact, it is already existing, no one has to create it, only each one has to discover it for himself. But its symphony is marred and distorted by the sharp and dissonant note of sectarianism. And sectarianism will disappear only when the world understands this new ideal of religious harmony taught by Sri Ramakrishna, when men will learn to see truth in every sincere longing of the human heart, knowing it to be an urge towards light and truth.

9. *Conclusion*

This ideal of universal religion accords most with the modern spirit and temper. It enables religions to work for human welfare as co-operating parts instead of remaining as colliding units. And religious fellowship will bring in the sense of human kinship and brotherhood and enable the collective wisdom and effort of man to work towards the evolution of a complete human civilization and a world-culture.

9

THE MESSAGE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA*

1. *Introductory*

Swami Atmananda of this Ramakrishna Mission centre just now indicated to you that he would be giving a Hindi rendering of my main speech in English; still I felt that, before my speech in English, it would be appropriate if I spoke the following few words on the subject of Sri Ramakrishna in Hindi:

Yesterday we had the *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā,* spiritual dedication, of our Sri Ramakrishna Temple here. In this connection, I shall tell you about an experience I had recently. Just now you heard from the speech of the President of our Sri Ramakrishna Order, Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, that Sri Ramakrishna was the teacher of universal religious harmony, and that, through his message, peace can be established in our country as well as all over the world. Three years ago, when Sri Ramakrishna birthday was celebrated at the Ramakrishna Mission in Patna, Sri Jagjivan Ram, Union Defence Minister at the time, had come to address that meeting. The Secretary of the celebration, introducing the Defence Minister to the audience said: our Union Defence Minister is a very busy person; and yet, he has come here to speak a few words about Sri Ramakrishna. When Sri Jagjivan Ram stood up and began his speech, he said these following words as prefatory remarks:

I have not come here in the role of the Defence Minister of India; I have come, on the other hand, to offer my *śraddhāñjali,* flower-offering of devotion, to Sri Ramakrishna. And it is my firm conviction that, if the whole world were to accept the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, then no country will feel the need to have a defence minister like me!

Hearing this, I was extremely happy; this is the correct and true understanding of Sri Ramakrishna, through whom not only in India, but also all over the world, peace can be achieved, brotherhood and the spirit of service can be established.

*Presidential Address on the occasion of the Sri Ramkrishna Temple Dedication Public Metting, on 3 February 1976, at the Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashram, Raipur, Madhya Pradesh

With these few words spoken in Hindi, I shall now give my main speech in English which, later, Swami Atmananda will render into Hindi.

2. Significance of Sri Ramakrishna Temple Dedication

It is a great occasion for the ashrama here, for this town of Raipur, and for our Madhya Pradesh state itself, that we have the dedication of this Ramakrishna Temple in the premises of this ashrama. This evening, we had the benediction from The President of the Ramakrishna Order in a few choice words. He has placed before us the great ideals that Sri Ramakrishna had lived in our time. The temple which bears his name is meant to bring blessings to the people of this town and of this state as well.

In all our ashramas, we celebrate every year the birthday of Sri Ramakrishna. But we are not observing such a Sri Ramakrishna birthday celebration here just now; what we are celebrating today is the dedication of the temple in which an image of Sri Ramakrishna was installed yesterday. Quoting Śri Kṛṣṇa's words to Uddhava in the *Śrimad Bhāgavatam,* the President of our Order told us in his speech that God is worshipped in two forms: as deities and as incarnations. Sri Ramakrishna was not a deity but was a human being like you and me; but he was also a blazing divinity; and so, to worship him is to worship God Himself. That is the teaching in our great *Sanātana Dharma.*

3. The Unique Relation of Raipur to Swami Vivekananda

Raipur has a special significance for a temple like this to Sri Ramakrishna, because this city is associated with his chief disciple, Narendra, who spent a couple of years here when he was a high school student. And you all know how Sri Ramakrishna was deeply drawn to him; he used to say: wherever Naren will keep me, I shall be present there. So Narendra's association with Raipur will make Sri Ramakrishna's presence here much more effective than at any other place, except Kamarpukur and Calcutta (big applause).

The people of Raipur will do well to remember and cherish this background of their town. When Narendra came here, he was an unknown young student, and today he is the well-known Swami

Vivekananda, the disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The world remembers him today as the architect of modern India, and as the builder of a bridge of understanding between India and the West. So this city has associations, very intimate associations, with Narendra and, through Narendra, with Sri Ramakrishna himself.

4. The Uniqueness of Ramakrishna Temples

There is a uniqueness about a temple to Sri Ramakrishna. We are not lacking in temples in India. We have had plenty of them; we are having plenty of them even today. But a temple bearing Sri Ramakrishna's name has a special significance. I should like to expound this theme this evening. Take, for instance, this Raipur Ramakrishna temple. Behind it are years of work in the service of the people of this area—work not merely spiritual or cultural, but also humanitarian. Two years ago, in fact, the work on this temple was suspended while the time and energies of the monks and devotees were diverted to urgent drought relief work in this state. Thousands and thousands of poor people were fed, were employed in test relief works, and were rendered many other types of service, including house-building. Earlier, too, similar services had been given to other suffering people. During the large-scale influx of migrants from East Pakistan in the sixties, much effective relief was rendered by the Ramakrishna Mission with this Raipur ashrama as the base of operations.

So a Ramakrishna Ashrama and a Ramakrishna Temple have a unique message to the people of our country to-day. And it is this: this ashrama and this temple are meant to be a source of inspiration to make our people love other human beings, and even animals, and serve humanity, without distinction of caste, creed, or sex. To see God in man is a great teaching of our *sanātana-dharma* (eternal religion). Sri Ramakrishna puts it in a beautiful formula: 'Every *jīva* (soul) is Śiva (God). Service of the *jīva* is the worship of Śiva.' This is an extraordinary teaching. We have not practised it much in our country in the past, though it has been there all along in our holy books—in the Upaniṣads, in the *Gītā,* in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.* We did not apply it effectively till now. We constructed temples; but these temples did not have, and still mostly do not have, any vital

relation with the rest of the world, with the rest of our life and work in the world. That was the wrong direction we took in the past. But now we shall correct it. We shall go to a temple, we shall worship the image there— it is a living presence of the Divine; it is what we call in our *bhakti-śāstras* (devotional scriptures) an *arcāvatāra*—God incarnated as an *arcā,* which means an image. But we shall also not neglect God in His incarnation as living human beings. He who is there in the temple as the *arcā,* is also present in your heart as the *antaryāmin,* inner Self. So, when we see the image and worship it, our worship should not stop there; we should also, on coming out of the temple, worship God residing in all living beings. That makes our worship whole, and that makes our life and character intergrated.

5. *Integration Of Life and Religion*

But, unfortunately, till the coming of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, we had been keeping this whole idea of temple worship away from the practical life of man. We thought we could have any type of life here—we could be selfish, we could be quarrelsome and litigious, we could be exploitative of other human beings, we could even cheat the state about our tax dues—and yet things would be all right with us if we only went to a temple, just worshipped an image there, and put some money in its offering box! But with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, we are taught again, for the first time after a lapse of ages, the true meaning of temple worship. We are taught that this temple worship—this image worship in a temple—is mainly to inspire us to see God in ourselves and in every living being. We should derive that inspiration from our temples. This has been said in many passages in our great spiritual literature. But now, to help awaken you to this truth, you will find as the background of this temple project, the great record of human service by this ashrama, and by our other ashramas in various parts of India—service rendered through hospitals and schools, and special services to people in distress during famine, flood, earthquake, and other calamities. *All these constitute an integral part of this temple worship in a Ramakrishna Centre.* The two—service of the people outside in society and worship of God inside a temple—are

not different things standing apart, but they form one integral whole of a comprehensive philosophy of life. It is, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna, to see God with eyes closed in meditation and to see Him with eyes open in daily life. Go to the temple and worship Him; and then pour out what you gain therefrom in loving dedicated service outside.

Now, this is a teaching which our people had for ages entirely failed to grasp and live by. We need therefore to understand and implement this great teaching today. We do want more temples; but we want temples which will give us strength, which will make us *grow spiritually,* which will make us manifest the Divine that is within us, and which will generate humanist impulses in our hearts and make them flow out into channels of love and service of beings. That is the purpose of these temples. And the sooner we convert all our temples, all our churches, all our mosques, into that kind of worship-places, the better for us, the better for all religions. Indeed it is for this purpose, especially, that India produced Sri Ramakrishna in the modern age.

6. *The Twin Message Of Sri Ramakrishna*

Most of us know about the various *sādhanās* (spiritual disciplines) that Sri Ramakrishna performed, crossing the barriers of individual Hindu sects, and even of our whole Hindu religion, and embracing also Christianity and Islam, and creating therby a benign pattern for unity and harmony among the world's religions. That is one of the greatest contributions of Sri Ramakrishna. No doubt, the teaching of such a message of unity and harmony appears from the very beginnings of our culture, in our philosophy, in our Vedas of over five thousand years ago; but this is the first time the world has seen a person teaching and *living* the harmony of all religions.

Two great ideas especially shine in Sri Ramakrishna's life and message: one, the deepening of man's spiritual life, and the other, the harmony among the religions of the world. Swami Vivekananda, closing his famous lecture on 'My Master', summed up Sri Ramakrishna's message in these words. (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Volume IV, p. 187, Eighth Edition):

'This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light."

'The more such men are produced in a country, the more that country will be raised; and that country where such men absolutely do not exist is simply doomed, nothing can save it. Therefore my Master's message to mankind is: "Be spiritual and realize truth for yourself." He would have you give up for the sake of your fellow-beings. He would have you cease talking about love for your brother, and set to work to prove your words. The time has come for renunciation, for realization; and then you will see the harmony in all the religions of the world. You will know that there is no need of any quarrel. And then only will you be ready to help humanity. *To proclaim and make clear the fundamental unity underlying all religions was the mission of my Master.* Other teachers have taught special religions which bear their names; but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. *He left every religion undisturbed because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the one eternal religion.*'

7. *The Vision of Harmony Behind Indian Culture*

So, we who seek to follow Sri Ramakrishna must realize the spiritual dimension of our personality, the Ātman that is the immortal and inalienable birthright of one and all; and show respect to every other path that men and women follow to realize this truth. Depth of spirituality and breadth of understanding and sympathy must go side by side. That is the only way to make religion a creative and dynamic force in human life. We in India need both these teachings today. To take up the subject of harmony first, and only briefly here, I would particularly stress that in this Bhārata-bhūmi—this vast land of India — it has been an integral feature of our religious and state policy from ancient times, to respect one's neighbour's religion and enhance the spirit of harmony among different religions. Our great teachers, from the Vedic times to Sri Ramakrishna, have taught us this lesson. Our saints and devotees have also exemplified it in their lives; and our political states have further upheld the same great policy of harmony, the spirit of active toleration, of acceptance, in their dealings with the world of religions. The great Mauryan Emperor Aśoka, in the third century B. C., upheld this as an article of political faith, and in his vast empire from Afghanistan in the northwest to Karnataka in the south, we find his edicts on rocks and pillars proclaiming far and wide this great idea: *samavāya eva sādhuḥ—samavāya,* that is, concord, alone is just and fair—in the world of religions. That is an article of faith still, so far as the people of India and the state policy of India are concerned. The famous British historian, author of a ten-volume book: *A Study of History,* the late Arnold Toynbee, has said that, unlike all Semitic religions and cultures, the Hindu religion has been distinctive for its great idea of harmony between different religions and cultures. One goes to a church, another goes to a temple, and a third goes to a mosque; what does it matter? The same God is being worshipped everywhere, says Hinduism.

This capacity to sense the underlying unity behind the different religions is natural and easy to the Hindu from ancient times. Now you have to give it to the Christians; you have to give it to the Muslims. They have never had it. Their Semitic tradition has been exclusive, and not inclusive like that of the Hindus, as shown especially well by Toynbee in his book: *A Historian's Approach to Religion.* But slowly they are coming to understand this truth today. We find now that a Catholic and a Protestant are able to come closer to each other in friendship. How? Is it not because of the Hindu influence, the Vedāntic influence, which says that the truth behind all the different religions is the same? So, why hate each other? Why not come together in friendship? Instead of mutual confrontation, practise what they call today mutual dialogue; try to understand each other, and pool all the spiritual resources to serve man, instead of dissipating them in mutual suspicion and hatred, which only bring religion itself into contempt.

8. *The Spiritual Basis of Harmony*

This is the message of Vedānta to all the religions of the world. Therefore we, in India, must all the more cherish and protect this ideal and practice of harmony as our special heritage. In our country, we find our six hundred million people, belonging to various cults and various religions, living in harmony, living in

peace—except the groups that come occasionally under the grip of narrow political frenzies in the garb of religion. Why? Because our sages have taught this lesson to receptive minds, our great and far-seeing political leaders of past and present also have taught as this lesson. And in order to help us retain this great ideal in the modern age, and diffuse it all over the world, Sri Ramakrishna came, experimented with the whole range of man's religions, lived a luminous life, and became, as it were, *a parliament of religions* in himself, years before the meeting of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.

Here is a beautiful and inspiring verse from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. Such verses are also found in the *Rg-Veda*, in the *Gītā*, and other books among our scriptures (I. ii. 11):

Vadanti tat tattva-vidaḥ
tattvaṃ yat jñānam advayam;
Brahmeti, paramātmeti,
bhagāvān iti, śabdyate —

'That one and the same non-dual *Jñāna* (Pure Consciousness) is variously called by the knowers of Truth as Brahman (The Absolute, in philosophy), as Paramātman (the Supreme Self, in mysticism), and as *Bhagavān* (the Blessed Lord, in the religion of *bhakti* or devotion).'

This teaching, that the same God is approached by various people through various ways, must become dynamic again in India today, so that India may continue to grow in her spiritual strength as a centre of harmony, of understanding, and of cooperation among her diverse religions, and also between her believers and her non-believers. For a contrast, look at Ireland: just now how much fighting is going on between the Catholics and the Protestants, in spite of the fact that both belong to the same great Christian religion! Again, currently we find this type of fighting erupting in Lebanon also, between its two sections of the same Arab race and common Semitic traditions, namely, Muslims and Christians. We too had, till recent years, a lot of suffering here—our Hindus and our Muslims fighting with one another. We had of course a foreign government till lately, which did much to divide us and make us

fight with and weaken one another. But today, we are realizing that we can become true to ourselves only by assimilating the teaching of the broad and deep, positive and creative, elements of our philosophical and spiritual tradition, as exemplified for us in the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna.

This then is the first part of the twofold message of Sri Ramakrishna.

9. What is True Religion?

The second part of that message of Sri Ramakrishna relates to what is spiritual life, what is true religion. For centuries, we had thought that going to temples, to churches, or to other holy places, or taking baths in holy rivers, or performing some rituals, constituted spiritual life. But Sri Ramakrishna taught us that these were not the essentials of religion: they were only acts of piety, means for the culture of true religion—means which certainly help some in the cultivating of true religion, but which, if made ends in themselves, may also injure true religion. This is ritualism, in the harmful sense. For religion means *spiritual growth;* it is that which makes you grow spiritually; it is *ādhyātmika vikāsa* (spiritual expansion). Have your acts of piety achieved for you that spiritual growth? If they have, or are beginning to do so, then they are fine; they are welcome. But if they have not, then that piety has become reduced to a static religiosity, a piety-fringed worldliness. Our history shows what a fund of piety we always had; how many temples, how much of worship, have been there; and yet for centuries now, we have failed to develop national health and strength, character and public spirit, and the elevation of our millions to the levels of human dignity and equality. Static piety, increasingly noisy and showy, on the one side, and widespread human exploitation and degradation on the other, have made for poverty and suffering and continual foreign invasions and oppressions. These brought our country down and down, century after century. If true religion were there, how could these things have happened? So, we need to understand what is true religion, and then live it.

What is true religion? *The essence of religion is spirituality,* inner growth or realization, says Sri Ramakrishna. Achieve spiritual growth; that is the message of true religion. Merely being pious

won't be enough. Piety is easy; you can get external piety cheaply. But what is needed is your inner growth. Sūrdās, Mīrābāi, Guru Nānak, Tulsidās, all these and other saints have taught us to be spiritual, to manifest the Divine that is within man. *To grow spiritually is the real purpose of religion: it is the science of religion.* Go to the temple, spend even five minutes there, and, when you come out from there, you should feel that you are one step nearer to God, one step nearer to your own infinite Self, that you have manifested the Divine in yourself at least a little. That is the criterion of spiritual growth. Every act of religion, every act of piety—in fact every action in life— must be directed to make you grow spiritually. That is the true test of religion. If this growth is not there, all this going about in piety becomes absolutely meaningless.

What does the Hindu religion teach? It teaches, first, that God is present in every human being, in all beings: *aham ātmā Guḍākeśa sarvabhūtāśaya-sthitah*—'I am present in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna', says Sri Kṛṣṇa is the *Gītā* (X. 20). Secondly, if God is in the hearts of all, should we not manifest Him in our life, conduct, and action? Should we not become aware of Him, and also see His presence in every other human being? Let me try to *realize* God who is always within me—that is the mood in which to face the first challenge of the Hindu religion. Then, let me try to see the same God in all other beings, and thus love other people, serve other people, and not exploit them or fight with them, or be jealous of them—this is the mood in which to face the second challenge. With our slave type of minds, all these centuries, we have not responded to these two challenges. But, today, forsaking that static way, and freeing our minds, we must see that mutual love and concern, spirit of service and dedication, great efficiency and strong character, come out of our religion. Character is the test, the fruit, of true religion; it alone is the true measure of the spiritual growth of man. Sri Ramakrishna emphasizes this again and again.

10. Static Piety versus Dynamic Spirituality

Sri Ramakrishna never liked showy religion; and much of religion today is showy and also noisy. That is why Swami Vivekananda wrote in a letter [*The Complete Works,* Vol. VII (1958), p. 489]:

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need for those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.'

The more character you have, the more religion you have. Showy religion is no religion at all. Sri Ramakrishna warns us against such a religion. We read this saying of his in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna:*

'Beware of the man who wears *tulasi* leaves in his ears!'

Some people pose as being very pious by wearing holy *tulasi* leaves in their ears, and the next moment they go out and cheat somebody, or do other evil acts; both these can go, and have gone, together in India. But the truly spiritual man will never do such things. Show that you are spiritual by your love, by your human concern, by your spirit of service. That is a central teaching of Sri Ramakrishna; and it is also a central teaching of all our *śāstras,* or books of the science of religion. They exhort us to *live* religion and thus manifest the Divine that is within. Swami Vivekananda therefore defines religion thus:

'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.'

When that Divinity manifests even a little, concern for other individuals will come, a spirit of service will come, efficiency will come. And exploitation, litigiousness, weakness, fear, and inefficiency—these things will disappear. The Hindus have been, and still are, among the most litigious people in the world. We are very fond of quarrelling, fighting, and going to the courts—formerly even up to the British Privy Council, but now to our own Supreme Court—for flimsy causes. Why? Because we have had only piety-fringed worldliness, or in other words, religiosity only, but very little true religion. That piety of ours did not reveal any spiritual growth. Now that Hindu must change and a new Hindu must emerge, who will sense the presence of God in himself or herself and in every other human being, and will make his or her love of God flow into the channels of love and service of man.

Temples are meant to inspire you with this vision. *What you take in by worship and contemplation, that you must pour out in love and service.* When that vision, and conduct in the light of that vision, are not there, then temples and worship and rituals, which in our

Sanātana Dharma are aesthetically and spiritually beautiful, become increasingly reduced to *static pietistic* forms, bereft of all spiritual meaning and fruits. This is the glowing theme of a passage in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* which our people will do well to understand and assimilate today, so that our temples and all other forms of worship, may become fruitful in terms of character and *dynamic spirituality* for which they are meant. Contrasting static piety with dynamic spirituality, God in his incarnation as Kapila, addressing His mother Devahūti, says (*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam,* III. xxix. 21-6):

Ahaṃ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
Bhūtātma-vasthitaḥ sadā;
Tam avajñāya māṃ martyaḥ
Kurute'rcā vidaṃbanam.

Yo māṃ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
santamātmānam iśvaram;
hitvārcāṁ bhajate mauḍhyāt
bhasmanyeva juhoti saḥ.

Dviṣatah para-kāye mām
mānino bhinna-darśinaḥ;
Bhūteṣu baddha-vairasya
na manaḥ-śāntiṁ ṛcchati.

Aham uccavacaiḥ dravyaiḥ
Kriyayo't pannyānaghe;
Naiva tuṣye' rcito-rcāyām
bhūta-grāmā-vamāninah.

Arcādau arcayet tāvat
īśvaraṁ māṁ sva-karma-kṛt;
Yāvat na veda sva-hṛdi
Sarva-bhūteṣvavasthitam.

Ātmanaśca parasyāpi
yaḥ karotyantarodaram;
Tasya bhinna-dṛśo mṛtyuḥ
vidadhe bhayam ulbaṇam—

'I am present always, in every being, as the very Self of all; but mortal man, by insulting Me in man, makes his worship of Me in images a mere farce.'

'He who worships Me in images, foolishly ignoring My presence in all beings as their Self and Lord, his worship is in vain, like pouring oblations of ghee (clarified butter) in ashes (instead of in the fire).'

'That man can never attain peace of mind who, out of pride and a (wrong) sense of separateness, and practising inveterate enmity to other beings, really practises enmity towards Me who exists in other bodies.'

'O sinless one, I am not at all pleased with the worship, accompanied (though it be) with big and small offerings and rituals, offered to Me, in images, by him who insults the dignity of all beings.'

'Let worship be offered to Me, the Lord, in images, accompanied with meticulous discharge of one's duties (to society), till one learns to see Me in one's own heart.'

'He who makes the slightest difference between himself and others—he who thus dwells on this (false) sense of separateness—spiritual death shall be his terrible reward.'

11. The Philosophy of Service

The verse, coming immediately after the above six, can be considered as the scriptural inspiration behind Swami Vivekananda's great message of 'Renunciation and Service'; and he quite likely had it in his mind when he uttered these following words in 1897 on *The Future of India (The Complete Works.* Vol. III (1960). pp. 300-1):

'So give up being a slave! For the next fifty years, this alone shall be our keynote—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race, everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything. ... What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all around us, the *Virat? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods. Before we can crawl half a mile, we want to cross the ocean, like Hanuman! It cannot be. Everyone going to be a yogi, everyone going to meditate! It cannot be.* The whole day mixing with the world, with *Karma Kāṇḍa,* and in the evening sitting down and

blowing through your nose! Is it so easy? Should *ṛṣis* come flying through the air, because you have blown three times through the nose? Is it a joke? It is all nonsense. What is needed is *Citta-suddhi*, purification of the heart. And how does that come?

'The first of all worship is the worship of the *Virāt*—of those all around us. Worship it. *Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do.* These are all our gods—men and animals, and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other. It is the most terrible *karma* for which we are suffering, and yet it does not open our eyes!'

Now listen to that next verse of the *Srīmad Bhāgavatam:*

Atha māṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu
bhūtātmānaṁ kṛtālayam;
Arhayet dānamānābhyām
maitryā abhinnena caksusā—

'Therefore, worship Me, who am the Self of all beings and who have already built a temple (for Myself in them), by giving gifts and showing respect (removing the felt privations of all beings and protecting their dignity and self-respect while so doing); (and do all this) in a spirit of friendliness and attitude of non-separateness.'

The whole of the above teaching of Swami Vivekananda may be said to be a commentary on this śloka.

Worship Me in all beings—says the Lord. But how?—asks the devotee. The Lord replies: *dānamānābhyām*—by *dāna* and *māna*. *Māna* means respect. Show respect to the other individual. He may be poor; he may be ignorant; he may be of a lower social or economic status; but show respect to him, for 'I am present in him', says the Lord. *Dāna* means giving, or gift. If the other is hungry and is in want, provide him with food and employment. If he is ignorant, provide him with education. If he is down with frustration, give him peace and consolation; and, removing the felt needs of humanity and all beings thus, 'worship Me'—*mām arhayet*. What should be my attitude? *Maitryā*—with intense friendliness. What a beautiful idea! But the next and last phrase is still more wonderful: *abhinnena cakṣuṣā*—with the eye (or vision) of non-separateness. We are essentially one. You may be rich; the other person may be poor; you may be highly educated while the other may be ignorant. Still, do not see merely these variable externals, but focus your attention on

the invariable and inalienable truth within all beings, namely, the Lord; for 'I, the one Lord, am present in all as their very Self.' This is the meaning of *abhinnena cakṣuṣā*—looking upon all with the same eye of equality. This *abhinnacakṣu*, or *abhinna-dṛṣṭi*, is highly praised in the Vedānta; and its opposite, *bhinna dṛṣṭi*, is always condemned as unethical and harmful, because it is untrue. But, unfortunately, what we have had all these centuries, in our Indian society, was the devil's play of *bhinna dṛṣṭi*—you are separate; I am separate; I get a hundred rupees more salary than you; I am a Brahmin and you are a Harijan, and so on *ad infinitum*.

But today, with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, we are re-taught this great message of our Vedānta philosophy, of equality and human dignity. This is what India needs; it is also what the world needs—this teaching of how to see the same Ātman in every being. When we implement this great philosophy, then alone will we be able to build a united integrated nation in our country—strong and creative, progressive and human. Then and then alone will the full development of India become an accomplished fact.

So, as I said in the beginning, behind this Ashrama and Temple is this great philosophy of healthy inter-human relationships—service in place of exploitation, worship in place of even service. Through service of God in man, we can realize God that is ever within us, and stimulate the same creative process in the recipient of our service also. Through this process of service itself, the *kācā āmi*, or 'unripe I', will become the *pākā āmi*, or 'ripe I', says Sri Ramakrishna. He gives the description of the 'unripe I' as being that which says: I am a Hindu or I am a Muslim; I am a man of wealth, a man of power, a man of position. Transform this *kācā* 'I' into the *pākā* 'I', exhorts Sri Ramakrishna. The *pākā* 'I' says: I am the servant of all; I am the friend of all; I am a child of God, a devotee of God. Till now, though we have had plenty of piety, our 'I' has been of the 'unripe' variety; therefore we could not do much good, and did much harm instead. Sri Ramakrishna now exhorts us to convert this 'unripe I' into the 'ripe I'. That is the meaning of being spiritual—the manifestation of a little of the inherent divine dimension of man. That is spiritual growth, spiritual expansion—*ātma-*

vikāsa; the spiritual growth of individuality (*vyaktitva)* into personality (*vikasita-vyaktitva*). It is only with the onset of this unique type of growth that men and women become capable of working with other men and women, in a cooperative spirit—without fighting and quarrelling with each other and pulling down, not only each other, but also the institutions concerned and the nation.

Sri Ramakrishna gives another illustration to illumine this subject of man's spiritual growth:

> Live in the world: there is no harm in that; but don't allow the world to live in *you.* A boat will be *on* the water; that is the right place for the boat; but the water should not be *in* the boat. If water enters a boat, it will either sink or gradually decay and become unfit for the purpose for which it is meant. Similarly, when the world—that is, worldliness—enters into a man, he becomes stagnant.

Saṁsāra (relative existence), in its evil sense, means this stagnation. Living in *saṁsāra,* or in the world, is not the same thing as being a *saṁsāri or a worldly individual. We are all in saṁsāra.* Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Sri Ramakrishna were also in *saṁsāra.* The teaching is not against *saṁsāra* or the world, but against the *saṁsāric* attitude, against worldliness. We Hindus really have had too much *saṁsāra* within us. That was why we quarrelled and fought, lost our political freedom, and made our society a den of exploitation, corruption, human distortions of the worst type. And now, with the inspiration of these great teachers, a new India is emerging, with creative ideas and progressive humanistic attitudes increasingly influencing our thought, action, and behaviour. Swami Vivekananda wanted us to develop *character,* 'deep as the ocean and wide as the sky'; he wanted us to combine, in our character, the intensity of the fanatic and the extensity of the materialist. *(The Complete Works.* Vol. V (1959), p. 227; Vol. III, p. 174)

This is a far-reaching message of Sri Ramakrishna and of the institutions bearing his name.

12. Life is Itself Religion

These Ramakrishna institutions, again, are not like the usual type of religious organizations where there is a gulf between life and religion. Sri Ramakrishna came to bridge that gulf and to teach us that *life is itself religion.* He exhorts us to see life in its unity and wholeness. This is the *vyavasāyātmika buddhih* (one-pointed intelligence) spoken of in the *Bhagavad-Gīta* (II. 41), where there is a unity of vision and unity of purpose and endeavour, external and internal. This is the basis of all character development. Young people today want to see character coming out of religion; if they do not see this, they are not going to be inspired by religion or religious people. If you profess religion and show no character, they will respect neither religion nor you; and they will grow cynical as a result. But when you show character along with your religious belief, they respect it. This is true here; it is also true abroad—in America, in Europe, everywhere. So, this is the challenge before all religion: can it and does it show character? Just as the food that you take in must show its effect in the strength of your body, so also the religion that you profess and live by must show its effect in your inner riches, in your character, in your spirit of service, in your day-to-day life.

13. The Spiritual Fascination of Sri Ramakrishna

So, this is the message, to spread which Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda came. And in this context, I must mention also a third personality, namely, Sri Ramakrishna's life companion, Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, who was simple and unassuming and yet an embodiment of purity, love, and compassion. These three spiritual giants are at the back of this Ramakrishna Movement, the mission of which is to spiritually illumine and energize not only India, but also the rest of the world. There is a remarkable spiritual and human fascination about Sri Ramakrishna. I have seen how people all over India, and also abroad, listen with the greatest interest and reverence to talks about him. Wherever the name of Sri Ramakrishna is uttered, that place becomes holy and elevating. These experiences help me to understand the truth of what the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* has said about Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Here are two beautiful verses from that great book *(Srimad Bhagavatam* I. i. 19; X. 31.9):

Vayaṁ tu na vitṛpyamaḥ
uttama-śloka-vikrame;
Yat sṛṇvatāṁ rasajñānām
svadu svādu pade pade—

'We are not satiated listening to words relating to the heroic deeds of the supremely famous (Śrī Kṛṣṇa). The more we listen, the more becomes the appetite in us to hear more and more of the same'.

Tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta jīvanam
kavibiriditaṁ kalmaṣapaham;
Śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmadatatam
bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūridā janāḥ—

'Your [i. e., Śrī Kṛṣṇa's] words are a divine elixir, bringing life to scorched souls, highly praised by poet-saints, auspicious to listen to, and productive of expanding *Śrī* (wealth and welfare). Those who spread them wide on earth are the most generous of persons.'

What a beautiful sentiment! The words of, and words relating to, Śrī Kṛṣṇa are nectar to parched souls, says the text. The same can be said of Sri Ramakrishna. The story of his life is nectar; his words are nectar. Thousands and thousands of people, in all parts of the world, read at least a few pages daily from that great book, *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrta—The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.*

I cannot do anything better, in closing, than to recall a simple beautiful verse on Sri Ramakrishna composed by Swami Vivekananda. The time and occasion, when this verse first came from his lips, are reminiscent of the event we are now celebrating. Yesterday, we installed an image of Sri Ramakrishna in the temple here. There was a somewhat similar occasion about a year after Swami Vivekananda's return in 1897 from the West. A householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Mrs. Navagopal Ghosh, had constructed a small shrine in her new house in Howrah. She had approached Swamiji and asked him: 'Naren, you please come and establish Sri Ramakrishna's picture in my shrine.' Swamiji agreed. He took his bath in the Gaṅgā and reached the house at the appointed time. He entered the shrine; it was a small room but it had marble flooring. He reverentially placed the picture of Sri Ramakrishna on the altar and prayed: 'Be Thou present in this home, and bless this family.' His installation worship was very simple and informal, for, to him, Sri Ramakrishna was a living presence. Then, while saluting the Master at the close of the worship, this *śloka* (or verse) burst forth

from his mouth—a verse which is now recited during the *arati* (morning and evening service) in all our centres in East and West:

Sthāpakāya ca dharmasya
sarva-dharma-svarūpiṇe;
Avatāra variṣṭhāya
Rāmakrishnāya te namaḥ—

'Salutation to Thee, Sri Ramakrishna, who came (into the world) to establish *dharma* (religion), the embodiment of all the *dharmas* (of the world), and the best of the divine incarnations.'

14. Conclusion

This verse portrays the real character of Sri Ramakrishna as a spiritual teacher, and conveys the infinite scope of his mission in the world. He came to establish *dharma*—religion or spirituality. But not any new religion bearing his own name, not a Ramakrishna religion or sect: no, nothing of the sort, but he is *sarvadharma-svarūpin*— 'the embodiment of all religions'. Through him each and all of the world's religions will thrive as true spiritual forces; a Christian will become a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Hindu a better Hindu, through the influence of his all-embracing spirituality. And therefore, *avatāra-variṣṭhāya*—'to the best of divine incarnations', *Rāmakṛṣṇāya te namaḥ*— 'to that Ramakrishna be our salutations.'

10

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND MAN'S SPIRITUAL HERITAGE *

1. Introduction

You have just heard the speech of our Chief Guest of this evening, Sri Karunakaran, our State Home Minister. Those of you who do not understand Malayalam, the language of this Kerala State, have missed something valuable he had spoken. It will be made up when some of the other speakers will be giving their speeches in English. But I would like to convey to you, who do not know Malayalam, and stress once again to those who know it, an important idea conveyed by Sri Karunakaran. He said in simple Malayalam that, standing silently for a few minutes in front of the image of Sri Ramakrishna in the newly built temple was enough spiritual education and nourishment. Many such beautiful sentiments he had expressed in his speech.

And I recall a similar occasion when I had participated at the Sri Ramakrishna birthday celebrations at our Sri Ramakrishna Mission, Patna, in 1973. Among the other participants were the Governor and the Chief Minister of Bihar, and Sri Jagjivan Ram, Union Minister of Defence. While introducing Sri Jagjivan Ram to the audience, the Celebrations Secretary had observed that they were all happy to have the Defence Minister of India with them at the celebration, in spite of his heavy engagements. Then Sri Jagjivan Ram rose to speak. He prefaced his speech with these beautiful observations:

> 'I have not come here to speak as the Defence Minister of India; I have come here as a devotee to pay my reverential homage to Sri Ramakrishna. And I am fully convinced that, if Sri Ramakrishna's teachings spread widely in the modern world, there will be no need for defence ministers in any country!'

* Presidential Address at the Seminar held on 15-4-1976 in connection with the Inauguration of the Sri Ramakrishna Temple at the Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, Kerala, and published in the *Vedanta Kesari* for November 1976

That was a touching remark and I liked it immensely. It was in that spirit that Sri Karunakaran also had spoken here today.

We have a large number of people gathered here to celebrate this occasion of the dedication of a temple to Sri Ramakrishna; there are also several distinguished people on the dais who will be addressing us later. Among them I am specially glad to see my friend, Sri A.M. Thomas, newly appointed Chairman of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission and previously India's Minister of State for Defence. I was his guest at Canberra, Australia, during my lecture tour of that country in 1969 when he was our High Commissioner there. Again, we were together at Lusaka, capital of Zambia, during my African lecture tour in 1974. I am happy to have him also with us this evening.

2. Sri Ramakrishna and the Indian Heritage

India's spiritual and cultural heritage is rich and varied, and with a long history. In recent centuries, it had become incrusted with many weakening elements; our religion had become mixed up with many superstitious practices and pernicious social customs. We had become confused as to what constituted true religion. Our religion and culture stood in need of a re-authentication and re-statement, not by mere scholars or reformers, but by a spiritual teacher of authentic experience and comprehensive vision; and India received such a teacher in Sri Ramakrishna who, in the course of the fifty years of his life, lived and verified the entire gamut of the spiritual life of humanity.

3. The Spirituality of Indian Culture

We often refer to Indian culture as being spiritual. I know that several people question this statement about our culture; and there is meaning in this questioning, because it is obvious that we have more than a fair share of unspiritual, worldly, and wicked people in our country, and that too even among our religious people! So today, the claim that India is spiritual, and the contrasting of India with other countries, saying that they are materialistic, can be questioned, and have been questioned. It is, therefore, good for us to know in what sense such a statement about our culture can be true and in what sense it cannot be true.

Indian culture is not spiritual, if we mean by it that all Indians are spiritual; but it is spiritual, if we mean that this culture has a spiritual direction. We get the nature and scope of a culture by asking the question as to what is the highest human excellence upheld in that culture. In one, it is intellectual greatness, in another, it is military brilliance, in a third, it may be wealth, in a fourth, it may be political greatness. All these are respected in India, but the highest excellence India honours is Godliness. The highest honour is reserved in India for the man of God. And this is true even in the modern period. Even the universal honour paid to Mahatma Gandhi was not for his politics, or for his intellectual acumen, but for his saintliness. No king or emperor or military conqueror in history received the heartfelt honour and reverence that Swami Vivekananda received from the people of India on his return to his motherland from his glorious work in the West in the last decade of the last century.

4. *The Upaniṣads and Indian Culture*

And this spiritual motivation of our nation's culture is derived from the glorious philosophical and spiritual contributions of our immortal Upaniṣads of over four thousand years ago; and that forms a fascinating chapter of not only our national history, but of human history as well.

Very early in our history; in its very formative years, there was an intellectual and spiritual ferment, the product of which was the literature known as the Upaniṣads. That thought ferment affected a cross-section of our people living in the area covered by the present-day States of East Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttarpradesh, Western Bihar, and northern Madhyapradesh. And the people who participated in that ferment, whom we call *Ṛṣis* or sages, included intellectuals, kings, emperors, women, and children, who were moved by a common passion, namely, passion for truth, and a second corollary passion, a passion for human happiness and welfare. They have breathed that passion into that literature, which expresses it in a passage in one of the Upaniṣads, namely the *Muṇḍaka: Satyameva jayate*— Truth alone triumphs. Max Muller, in his *Three Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, pays the following tribute to these sages (pp. 39-40):

> 'Much of the excellence of the ancient Sanskrit philosophers is due to their having been undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease. They thought of nothing but the work they had determined to do; their one aim was to make it as perfect as it could be made. Need we wonder then that their work was done as well as it could be done, and that it has lasted for thousands of years?'

5. *The Upaniṣads as Apauruṣeya*

The Upaniṣads give us an insight into the working of the minds of these sages, the methods they adopted in their search for truth, and the truths discovered by them; but they give us very little information about their personal lives. They want us, thereby, to hold on to the truth content of what they discovered and test the same ourselves, and not to consider what they said as true because *they* had said it. The Upaniṣads are, in this sense, *apauruṣeya,* impersonal; and therefore they are universal. They do not give man a set of finished and final dogmas or creeds which he is just to swallow; they ask man to discover spiritual truths for himself, to *experience* spiritual truths. And the greatest truth that they discovered, and asked humanity to rediscover for itself, is the ever-present purity and divinity of man. Our senses reveal man as weak, ignorant, and limited, and subject to birth and death. But they discovered, through a penetrating investigation, the eternal, immortal, ever-free dimension of man, the Ātman. This discovery was not the result of any intellectual speculation, but of *anubhava,* experience — *Vedāhametam puruṣam mahāntam.* When one sage discovered this truth and announced it, other sages took it up and re-verified it in their own experience, just as is done today in the physical sciences with truths about the external world.

6. *The Upaniṣads Verified in Bhagavān Buddha*

This and other discoveries tell man that spirituality is his very birthright and that human life should be so planned and lived that this truth must shine in man's life, conduct, and behaviour. Very soon, India was deeply impressed by this teaching, and increasing numbers of our gifted people, men, women, and even children, began to be drawn to it and to carry on experiments designed to verify it in life. The most glorious example of this verification in our history is the great Buddha. When he got up from his meditation at

Buddhagaya on that blessed full moon night of the month of Vaiśākha over two thousand five hundred years ago, the great words he uttered according to the sacred books of Buddhism, were: *The immortal has been gained by me.*

The discovery and subsequent verifications of this profound truth about man, about all men irrespective of caste, creed, race, or sex, made for a spiritual view of man, even though most men are ignorant about it; and ignorance about a truth does not abolish that truth, but knowledge about it will make life true and fulfilled. The Upaniṣads, therefore, summon every one to strive to realize this truth about oneself: *Uttiṣṭhata, Jāgrata, Prāpya varān nibodhata* — Arise, awake, and, approaching the great ones, enlighten yourself!

This is the great emphasis in our cultural heritage; it does not teach man that he is a sinner, that he is just the body only, but it teaches that he is an *amṛtasya putra,* child of immortality.

7. *The Spiritual Contribution of Srī Kṛṣṇa*

This great truth of our philosophy and religion, and the other truths supporting it, are strengthening and purifying ideas, making for spiritual growth, development, and fulfilment. But we often fail to live up to them, we become weak, superstitious, narrow-minded, and are unable to grasp such pure and lofty truths. So society decays, *dharma* declines, and human life goes down to low levels, making for general unfulfilment. Then, out of the depths of our culture, comes the redemptive energy in the form of a great personality, whom India calls an *avātara,* divine incarnation. The greatest of them was Sri Kṛṣṇa, who speaks of this decline and redemption of *dharma* to Arjuna in the opening verses of the fourth chapter of the *Gitā:*

Imaṁ vivasvate yogaṁ
proktavān aham avyayaṁ;
Vivasvān manave prāha
manurikṣvā'kave'bravīt—

'I communicated this imperishable Yoga to Vivasvān; Vivasvan communicated it to Manu, and Manu communicated it to Ikṣvāku;

Evaṁ paraṁparā-prāptam
imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ;
Sa kāleneha mahatā
yogo naṣṭaḥ parantapa—

'This (Yoga), known to the *rājarṣis* (spiritually striving men and women holding high social and political responsibility), has come down through a *parampara* or succession (of teacher-student relationships); but in course of ages, O Arjuna, this Yoga was lost.'

Commenting on this passage and asking: how was this yoga lost? Śaṅkarācārya remarks: *durbalān ajitendriyān prāpya* — by falling into the hands of weaklings and people bereft of discipline of the sense organs. And in the next verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he has come to revive it and teach it to him, 'since you are my devotee and friend'. This idea was repeated by Buddha also, that he had come to 'turn the wheel of dharma'. *dharma-chakra-pravartana;* he called his teachings as the re-teaching of an ancient *dharma,* as the cleaning up and re-opening of an ancient road which had been overgrown with weeds and jungle due to long neglect.

8. *'The Splendid Symphony of the Universal Soul'*

And, today, it is the same work that Sri Ramakrishna has done to religion, to the whole subject of man's spiritual life. We in India had forgotten the true meaning of religion; the same was the case with the followers of other world religions. As Swami Vivekananda pointed out in one of his letters:

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries; what we want is character.'

Our religion became largely cheap magic or superstition or a bundle of do's and don'ts. Swami Vivekānanda pointed out that this cheapening of our profound religion resulted from increasing physical and mental weakness; and we began to consider every village superstition, every *deśācāra* or *lokācāra,* as *Sanātana dharma.* It is amazing and tragic to note that even a *puṇḍit* or a scholar reduces, has reduced for centuries, his *Sanātana dharma* to the cheapest levels, like going to Rishikesh and, paying five rupees to a priest and holding the tail of a cow, hoping to go to heaven! When even

great *puṇḍits* did not understand the loftiness of our Vedānta or *Sanātana dharma,* what to speak about our common people! At such a crisis, help can come only from an extraordinary teacher who has experimented with, and experienced, religion, and who speaks with authority. Such authority, in the field of religion, does not proceed from any high office, like that of *mahant* or bishop, but only from spiritual experience. That is the Indian tradition; and the people of India will not be satisfied with anything less. And when our people hear such an authentic voice, they respond, no matter what creedal or racial or national background the teacher has. When the lotus blossoms, said Sri Ramakrishna to his disciples explaining the spontaneous attraction of such a teacher to all spiritual seekers, the bees come of themselves to suck its honey; there is no need to send out any invitation!

Sri Ramakrishna's appearance at Dakshineswar was exactly such a phenomenon. As soon as he had completed his spiritual experiments and experiences in the Hindu, Christian, and Islamic religions, seekers began to come to him, first in a trickle, then in a steady stream. And they belonged to all categories: great religious and social leaders like Keshab Chandra Sen, agnostics like Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, simple devotees like Aghoramani Devi or Gopal's mother, and brilliant university youths like Narendra, the later Swami Vivekananda. And each got what he or she sought and needed. Romain Rolland, in his *Life of Ramakrishna,* presents this great teacher and his disciple Swami Vivekananda as *the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul,* and says:

'Ramakrishna is the consummation of the two thousand years' spiritual life of three hundred million people.'

9. *India's Ever-peaceful International Relations*

The spirituality of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and every other religion, found a wonderful harmony in Sri Ramakrishna; so that, it is not just the Indian spiritual heritage that shines through him, but it is the entire gamut of human spiritual heritage, which, today, stands reauthenticated and strengthened and purified through him as valid paths to God-realization. Sri Ramakrishna represents the universal expansion of

the Indian spirit for the good of all humanity. The world fears all political, economic, or military expansions of nations; but during her five thousand years of history, India has never experienced any such type of expansion. But she has experienced cultural and spiritual expansions several times in her history; and they have always been *peaceful and beneficent* and have been welcomed and sought after by the contemporary world. It is such a world-wide impact that the world began to experience through Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the modern period. *The five thousand years of uniform peaceful international relations of our country, without any single instance of foreign aggression, form a unique and impressive feature of world history.* Not that India had not the power; she had often mighty empires with great military might; but her culture, arising from and moulded by the philosophy and spirituality of the Upaniṣads, and by the teachings and example of teachers like Buddha, has historically conditioned India to be only a source of peace and blessing to the world. Swami Vivekananda has referred to this in a moving passage of his lecture at Colombo in 1897 *(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. 3, 1960, pp. 105-6):

'The debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense. Civilisations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient and modern times, wonderful ideas have been carried forward from one race to another; ... but mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This in the main, other nations have taught; but India for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist. ... Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peep into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but *every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it.* We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live.'

10. *The World's Response to Amar Bharat*

In the modern period also, our country has produced great men, not only in religion but also in politics, social reform, literature, and other fields, like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Gandhiji, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Jawaharlal Nehru; and every one of them was universal in outlook and sympathies. During my lecture tour in various countries, I have been greatly impressed by

the hearty response of sensitive minds to the spirit of this Eternal India, this *Amar Bhārat*. I wish to share with you all, in this connection, one such experience abroad, which finds fuller treatment in my book, *A Pilgrim Looks at the World*, Volume One.

During my four-month tour of seventeen countries in Europe organized by the Government of India in 1961, I addressed the Polish Institute of International Affairs at Warsaw, Poland, during my three days' stay in that country. The subject chosen for the lecture was *The Spirit of Indian Culture*. In the course of my lecture, I referred to the spirit of toleration characteristic of Indian culture and illustrated it with the benevolent treatment that the mother-heart of Hinduism had extended to the Jewish refugees that had come to Kerala during the wide dispersal of the Jews to various parts of Asia and Europe after their Temple in Jerusalem was shattered by Roman tyranny in 70 A.D. With the forming of the new State of Israel after the Second World war, and the migration of Jews to that State from various countries, it was found that the only Jewish group among the immigrants which had not only not suffered but had been cherished and protected by the country of exile, was the group from India; all the rest had had to suffer all sorts of insults, persecutions, killings, individually and collectively.

After the lecture, I was returning with the Indian Ambassador and his Cultural Attache to the Ambassador's residence, when, on the way, they told me that that was a telling point that I had made and that it went home, because most of the audience consisted of communist Jews, and the Jews in Poland had experienced, during the War most intensely, what they had always experienced during all the previous centuries in a constant and general way, namely, the torture and killing, through gas chambers and otherwise, of over three million Jews at the hands of the Nazis, out of Poland's nine million Jewish population! Nothing could have better impressed them about the benevolent spirit of Indian culture than that reference in that context, they said.

11. The Sweet Fruits of India's Vision of Unity in Diversity

It is this spirit of love, harmony, and universal benevolence of

Indian culture that has found a glowing manifestation in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in our time. And we need to cultivate and strengthen this spirit, not only in our own country but also in all parts of the world. Ours is a nation which is multi-what-not. The only philosophy that has held us together, and that will hold us together for all time, is the philosophy of *Unity in Diversity*, with active understanding and toleration as its essential ingredient; *this social philosophy flows from the spiritual vision of the great sages of our Upaniṣads of the One behind the many, of the one divine Ātman in all beings*. Our cultural and sociological policy has derived from this vision; accordingly, our toleration is not just a pragmatic policy or practical expediency, but a principle derived from a deeper vision of Truth, the *Advaitic* vision of the one Self in all. As defined by the late Dr. S. Radhakrishnan (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p.317, Oxford University Press, Second Edition):

> 'Toleration is the homage that the finite mind pays to the inexhaustibility of the Infinite'.

Indian toleration is extended not only to the various groups of religious believers and to the faithful, *but also to the non-believers and the faithless, to those who have sincerely tried rationally to find a faith but have failed*. This is the wide sweep of the Indian mind and heart that our Upaniṣads originally moulded and that got sustained and amplified by subsequent spiritual teachers, as also by political leaders like Emperor Aśoka of the third century before Christ.

12. Practical Vedānta

Vedānta presents God as the central thread of unity. He is the *Antaryāmin*, the *Antarātman*, of the theists and the atheists, of the Hindu, Muslim and Christian. He is the divine thread of unity, like the thread that unites all the pearls in a garland, as expressed by Śri Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*: *Mayi sarvamidaṁ protaṁ sūtre maṇiganiva*. We have a good record of functioning in the light of this spiritual vision in the field of international relations; but our record within our own nation, in this field, is poor and dismal: we failed to treat the millions of our common people as brothers and fellow humans, as demanded by this vision. And this is our special task in the modern

age; and Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda and Holy Mother Sarada Devi provide us with the necessary inspiration to implement this vision in our political, social, cultural, and educational fields. This is the message of what Swami Vivekananda calls *Practical Vedānta.*

The implementation, by our people, of this message of Practical Vedānta is meant to provide a healthy body-politic to the ever-healthy soul of India. When we install the common people of our country, including the Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes, on the high pedestal of human dignity, through educational, cultural, economic, and ethical uplift, we shall be evolving a socio-political order which will be a fit body for that ever-pure, strong, and eternal soul of this nation.

13. Conclusion

This subject is, therefore, of great interest to us in India; and we are happy that the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, in this township of Kalady which is the birthplace of Śaṅkarācārya, whose philosophy, the great Advaita, stands sponsor to all national efforts for the implementation of the deep-felt aspirations of the human heart, is holding this seminar.

11

SRI RAMAKRISHNA: HIS UNIVERSAL APPEAL*

1. Introductory

Sri Ramakrishna is presented by various thinkers, in various countries, in extraordinary language. They have all been impressed by something unique in him. The French biographer Romain Rolland presents Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the following highly appreciative words *(Life of Ramakrishna,* 'To My Western Readers', p. 8):

> 'From this magnificient procession of spiritual heroes whom we shall survey later, I have chosen two men who have won my regard because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul. They are, if one may say so, its Mozart and its Beethoven — *Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer — Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.'

What a beautiful expression—splendid symphony of the Universal Soul! In the course of fifty years, Sri Ramakrishna lived an intense life, which touched every aspect of human spiritual urges and aspirations. Biologist the late Sir Julian Huxley had demanded (*Evolution after Darwin,* Vol. I, p. 21):

> 'Once greater fulfilment is recognized as man's ultimate or dominant aim, we shall need a science of human possibilities to help guide the long course of psycho-social evolution that lies ahead.'

What are the possibilities lying hidden in every human being? It was precisely this *science of human possibilities* that India developed in her Upaniṣads, and has continued to develop in all subsequent ages of her long history, through the lives of a galaxy of great spiritual personalities. In that unbroken line of luminous teachers came Sri Ramakrishna in our own time, here in this very Calcutta city, passing often through its streets and lanes, and purifying it. He was unique in being internally extraordinary but externally quite ordinary, even less than ordinary. To penetrate that external ordinariness, and to capture that extraordinary dimension within, needs

*Based on the speech delivered at the fifth session of the second Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Convention, 1980, held at the Netaji Indoor Stadium, Calcutta, on 25 December 1980

the penetrating power of art and spirituality. Apart from his direct disciples, the one biographer that succeeded in achieving this was Romain Rolland. Says he (*ibid.*, p. 14):

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. *But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods.*' (italics not by Rolland)

2. *God-ward Passion Flowing into a Man-ward Love*

That is a penetrating observation from a great literary critic and biographer. No other writer on Sri Ramakrishna has presented this aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's unique greatness.

The first part of Sri Ramakrishna's life was spent in a tremendous *God-ward passion,* in isolation and aloneness, away from human society, in the silence and quiet of the Dakshineswar Kali temple, in a one-pointed scientific research into lived religion. That was a wonderful period of about twelve intense years of *sādhanā,* through which spiritual experiences and the spiritual mood became a constant and inseparable part of him. But the second part of his life shows *that God-ward passion flowing out as a man-ward love and concern.* This second aspect contains something still more fascinating and of greater interest to all humanity. This part of his life reveals his intense love for man and keen desire for human company, so much so, that, in later days, when great leaders of thought, devotees, and young people started coming to him, and when he would go into deep spiritual ecstasy at the slightest spiritual suggestion in the course of a song or conversation, he would pray to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, give ecstasy to those who want, but let me commune with men. Do not make me a dried-up ascetic.' This intense love for man that Sri Ramakrishna manifested has a great significance for man in this modern age. Romain Rolland makes a special reference to this, and terms it as the coming 'down from the Mount of Sinai', and titles the very next chapter as *The Return to Man* (*ibid.*, p. 78):

'It is moreover this extreme period of this long yogic trance which is likely to puzzle, nay, to irritate, my French readers, who are used to treading on firm earth and have not experienced the shocks of spiritual fires for a long time. Patience for a little while longer! We shall come down from the Mount of Sinai—down among men.'

3. *Sri Ramakrishna: The Universality of His Appeal*

Unlike religious teachers, Sri Ramakrishna had a universal appeal. Among those who went to him were simple and pious Hindus —men, women, and children; highly intellectual people and great leaders of thought and religious movements, like Keshab Chandra Sen. He had also among his visitors sceptics and agnostics like Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, founder of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Calcutta, as well as several school and college youths, including Swami Vivkekananda. He never rejected anyone, but welcomed all, and they all felt happy in his company. When you read *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* you come across the diverse types of poeple that pass through the pages of that great book. Every one of them was drawn by the magnet of Sri Ramakrishna's personality. He condemned no one; he accepted every one. Now, what is the nature of this universal acceptance?

Our country is destined to develop in its own millennia-long historically conditioned way. 'Individuality is our motto', said Swami Vivekananda. We gave perfect freedom to every one to pursue any religion he or she liked. And Sri Ramakrishna took up this great subject, experimented with it for twelve long years, and re-authenticated it. He expressed the national wisdom in a brief utterance: *Yato mat, tato path*—'as many religions, so many pathways to God'. Our country has been known as a land of harmony, as a land of tolerance. It is unfortunate that we miss that touch today, because we have lost touch with our own ancient wisdom, and have not also come into contact with the great teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. In fact, we have lost our moorings. It is time that we applied that profound spirit of harmony, which Sri Ramakrishna has brought to us, even to our political field of life. Why should there be political violence in our democracy? Why should we not respect everybody's right for his or her opinion and give a patient hearing to him or her? Let him or her express his or her ideas and we shall listen without disturbing his or her right of free expression, but shall retain our freedom to judge

for ourselves. Why coerce other people? This kind of violence in thinking and action, as is rampant now in the fields of politics, religion, and other aspects of our national life, is so un-Indian! It is also violative of the democratic tradition! We shall be able to take our country back to the long tested way of Indian wisdom only by sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna.

4. Sri Ramakrishna's Message: 'Dive Deep!'

This extraordinary teacher of harmony wants modern man to dive deep into the human personality and discover the ever-present innate Divinity, the focus of all peace and love and harmony. At the sensate level, man deals only with cheap things, with perishable things. At deeper levels, he comes in touch with what is really valuable. As Sri Ramakrishna himself expressed it: when you swim on the surface of the sea, you get only cheap shells; dive deep, you get pearls there! So he used to sing: *Ḍūb, ḍūb, ḍūb, rūpa-sāgare*— 'Dive deep, dive deep, dive deep (O mind), in the ocean of God's beauty'. After diving deep into the human mind, the literature of India has produced great pearls of wisdom. Go to the Upaniṣads, go to Buddha's teaçhings, go to the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* you find this remarkable and rich heritage of wisdom of our country. Words coming from the depth of truth alone abide. In the language of the *Gītāñjali* by our Rabindranath Tagore: 'words coming from the depth of truth'. Such alone can go deep into man's heart. Other words simply pass off. Sri Ramakrishna's words have this quality. The *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* has described this charm of the life and message of great spiritual teachers, with special reference to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, but which can also be applied to Sri Ramakrishna today (1. 1. 19):

Vayam tu na vitṛpyāmaḥ
uttama-śloka-vikrame;
Yachṛṇvatām rasajñānām
svādu svādu pade pade—

'We are not satiated listening to the immortal words relating to the wonderful deeds of the most Glorious One; as we listen—we who have the capacity to understand and appreciate Divine Love—our appetite only increases to hear more and more'

Such is the universal charm of Sri Ramakrishna. His fascinating personality is conquering ever-increasing millions of hearts in all parts of the world. You will find people, all over the world, deeply interested in that great book: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* They see something new, something unique, something wonderful in it. In Iran, for example, I saw so many scholars fascinated by the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. In England, the Dean of West-Minster and his wife told me, when I visited them in 1977 or in 1976, that they were then studying *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* and found it to be a wonderful book. From the way it is winning hearts in all parts of the world, we can look forward to the day when the whole world will be inspired and educated into a universal vision and sympathy by this great book.

5. Conclusion

Today, so far as the problems of our own country are concerned, we can do nothing better than work out the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna asks us to unfold the Divine within and live in harmony with others. Swami Vivekananda exhorts us to treat our country as a mighty anthropological laboratory for human development and progress, covering a seventh of the human race that is India. That 'science and technique of unfolding the human possibilities', that programme of total human development and fulfilment, is what Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have taught us. This positive and luminous message of theirs will slowly and steadily influence millions of people in India and abroad. They inspired, among many others, our own revolutionary Muslim poet of Bengal, the late Kazi Nazrul Islam, who in his famous song on Sri Ramakrishna sang:

Satya yuger puṇya smṛti
ānile kalite tumi tāpas—

'O great sage, you brought the memory of the *satya yuga* (the golden age), in this *kali yuga* (the iron age).'

and on Swami Vivekananda he sang:

Bhārate ānile tumi nava Ved
mūche dile jāti-dharmer bhed—

'You brought a new Veda to India and wiped away the stain of differences of caste and creed.'

It is for us, and for the millions of others in India, to translate that vision of the poet into reality, by tirelessly working out Sri Ramakrishna's ideas of total human development. What can be a better purpose of human life, of all politics, economics, sociology, and education, than this? Romain Rolland, as I already mentioned, described Sri Ramakrishna as a 'splendid symphony of the Universal Soul'. The whole world is seeking for that symphony, for that harmony. There is so much of disruption within man, there is so much of disruption outside man, in society. If we seek to create harmony out of chaos, we need guidance and inspiration. That fund of inspiration you will find in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

12

SRI RAMAKRISHNA : HIS UNIQUE GREATNESS*

1. Introduction

I have been asked to speak to you in English. Ever since my boyhood, I have been inspired by the very name of 'Balaram Bari' where Sri Ramakrishna used to come again and again. As we heard just now, we are celebrating the centenary year of Sri Ramakrishna's first visit to Balaram Bari. From far-away Hyderabad, I have come to participate in this function and to derive the inspiration from it. We heard just now very informative and illuminating talks from Swami Gambhiranandaji and Swami Bhuteshanandaji about the greatness of this great house nearby, namely, Balaram Bari, now known as *Balaram Mandir.*

2. Sri Ramakrishna's love for man

Sri Ramakrishna came from Dakshineswar to this house again and again. Wherever a great holy man goes, that place or those places become holy. The place by itself is not holy but the association of a great and holy man with it makes it holy. Here Balaram Basu, the owner of the house, was himself a great devotee, but he was very humble; he never asserted himself; he embodied that beautiful concept in our *bhakti* tradition known as *akiñcana bhāva.* Sri Ramakrishna was drawn to such a devotee. There is something great in that phenomenon of places and things becoming holy through the contact of great and holy people. When we speak of Sri Ramakrishna coming to Calcutta, visiting Balaram Bose's house, in fact, not only that house, but also many other houses, and passing through many streets and lanes of this great city, we see that

*Based on the tape record of a lecture delivered on the occasion of the Balaram Mandir Centenary Celebration meeting at Baghbazar, Calcutta, on 28th February 1983

phenomenon, that had happened before in the lives of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and other incarnations, repeating itself in our own time, with respect to Calcutta and its environs. They have become sanctified by the touch of Sri Ramakrishna's feet. Many people in Calcutta today may not know this association; but I am sure that, in course of time, people here will realize how this great city was purified and sanctified by the touch of Sri Ramakrishna's feet and holy associations.

3. *His love of Man flowed out of His love of God*

But, behind this close association with the homes, roads, and lanes of Calcutta, there was a wonderful chapter of extraordinary spiritual practices and realizations in Sri Ramakrishna's life. That chapter was followed by the equally wonderful chapter of spiritual ministration to hundreds of seekers— men and women, young and old, believers and agnostics, of which, this association with Calcutta and visits to Balaram Bari form a very important part. In that wonderful first chapter, we find him forgetful of the world and away from it in God-seeking and God-intoxication. We find him engaged in intense spiritual *sādhanas,* just like a great scientist forgetting the world, forgetting its social engagements, in his absorption with a great research in his laboratory. That was Sri Ramakrishna in his first twelve years in Dakshineswar— fully absorbed in seeking God through as many paths as were available in the human heritage. That was a wonderful chapter not only in Sri Ramakrishna's life, but also in human history and in the history of religion.

But equally, if not still more wonderful, is the second chapter when, after all his varied experiments and experiences in the vast field of the spiritual dimensions of human life, a tremendous desire arose in his mind and he expressed it thus:

> I want to commune with human beings; I want to commune with Thy devotees; I don't want to see Thee only in ecstasy, O Divine Mother. Give ecstasy to those who want; please don't take me away from communion with men and women.

This is a great chapter in the life of Sri Ramakrishna— this communion with man, without, following his communion with God, the One Self of all, within. It was that human impulse that

brought him to Calcutta, that brought him to this Balaram Babu's house, that has made him such a tremendous attraction to you and to me, and to the millions he is attracting year by year round the world. Sri Ramakrishna is certainly entering into the hearts of millions of people today. And people also spontaneously open their hearts to receive him. This Balaram's house is a symbol of that love of man in Sri Ramakrishna and that fascination of Sri Ramakrishna to the human heart, irrespective of caste or creed or race or sex. This is what I witness actually happening today, when I go round the world year after year; and it is an inspiring experience to see how people open their hearts spontaneously to receive Sri Ramakrishna on reading the great book: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.*

4. *Sri Ramakrishna: Outwardly Ordinary but Inwardly Immense*

What is the secret of this tremendous attraction of this great personality? When he was in Dakshineswar, in the early years, only a few people knew him, and still fewer people were attracted to him. To all others who knew him, he was just a *pūjāri* or priest of Mother *Kali,* a very ordinary person. But this ordinary person becomes slowly recognized as extraordinary by increasing numbers of people. What is the meaning of that extraordinary development? Today, his life and words touch the lives of millions of people; it touches the lives of spiritual seekers; it fascinates artists and writers, who have the capacity to go deep into the human personality through their aesthetic sensibilities, and they give the rest of mankind a vision of that extraordinary personality which was Sri Ramakrishna. I have been particularly fascinated, in this context, with the remark of Monsieur Romain Rolland in his *Life of Ramakrishna.* He was a great artist; he could see through the simple exterior of Sri Ramakrishna and discover and express the beauty and charm of the universal dimension within. Says he in his 'To My Western Readers' (pp. 8—13):

> 'From this magnificent procession of spiritual heroes whom I shall survey later, I have chosen two men, who have won my regard because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized *this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul*—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. ...
>
> 'I am bringing to Euroupe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna. ...

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, *whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and gods*'. (italics not by Rolland)

5. *Conclusion*

In a letter to Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda had said:

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries; what we want is character'.

Religions of the world, under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna, will become transformed into spiritual forces to evolve maximum character; and Swami Vivekananda defines maximum character as the same person developing the intensity of faith like a fanatic, and the extensity and liberality of reason and sympathy like an agnostic; deep as the ocean and vast as the skies shall be our character, says Swamiji. That will be the fruit of *bhakti* or devotion, combined with *Jñāna* or knowledge, and issuing in *Karma* or dedicated action as service, as taught by Sri Ramakrishna and exemplified in his life and in the lives of his disciples. It is for our devotees to realize this type of character in themselves and influence others also in that direction. "To this tremendous manifestation of the Divine, Sri Ramakrishna to Thee, we offer our salutations'— *avatāra variṣṭhāya Rāmakrishṇāya te namaḥ*—in the words of the last line of the hymn composed by Swami Vivekananda. Salutations to all of you.

13

SARADA DEVI, THE HOLY MOTHER *

1. *Introductory*

In recent years, the name of Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, is becoming increasingly known among the people, and her Birth Centenary Celebrations have hastened the process of lifting the veil of obscurity behind which she had remained hidden so far. This knowledge has roused an amazing degree of spiritual enthusiasm in men and women, and an eagerness to know more about this great woman of our age who, as the disciple and helpmate of *Bhagavān* Sri Ramakrishna, played the roles of wife and nun and mother and *guru* in one.

2. *Sarada Devi: The Mesmerism of Her Personality*

What is the source of the mesmerism of this name and personality? Even a slight acquaintance with her life will make us realize that this mesmerism does not proceed from any aspects of her personality which the modern world recognizes as significant in women. To all outward appearances, the Holy Mother was just ordinary, or even less than ordinary. Rustic in simplicity, almost unlettered, and shy and modest, she was far removed from the educated, self-conscious, active type of modern women. And yet, her life finds powerful responsive echoes from the hearts of all men and women, rustic and modern alike. It is evident that she has captured, in her life and being, the fundamental value which lies at the back of the womanliness of woman and which transcends all distinctions based on mere sex and the attractions thereof. This fact alone explains her universal appeal, representing, as she does, not a mere national or racial type, but the fulfilment of woman as woman, the realization, in flesh and blood, of the *Eternal Feminine*.

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* Lecture delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, Burma, at a public meeting held on 4 December 1954, on the occasion of the Holy Mother's Birth Centenary Celebrations

3. *Her Life-Career: A Brief Sketch*

No greatness has sprung up and got reared and even flowered in greater obscurity and silence than that of Sarada Devi. She was born in the obscure village of Jayrambati in West-Bengal, India, on 22 December 1853. Her advent coincided with the brightening of the family fortunes of her poor but pious parents, who enfolded her in tender love and care. Even as a child, she was active and hard-working, and helped her mother in her household chores. She was hardly six when she was betrothed to Sri Ramakrishna who was then twenty-three and who was passing through the stormy period of his spiritual *sādhanās* and realizations. Through this betrothal, little Sarada entered into the current of the life of one who, in his God-intoxication, passed most of his life in divine ecstasies and visions, and the rest in soul-stirring conversations with earnest souls, conveying a message of radiant spirituality to the modern world.

It was a strange betrothal; for it remained unconsummated in the physical plane, but found its spiritual consummation in a union of souls on the occsion of the *Ṣoḍaśī-pūjā* in 1872. This was the culminating act of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual *sādhanās* when he worshipped the Divine Mother of the universe in the person of his wife, at the end of which the worshipped and the worshipper entered into deep *samādhi* and realized their spiritual identity. Thenceforth they became as one soul functioning in two bodies, and Sarada Devi assumed her equal role in the fulfilment of the mission of Sri Ramakrishna.

4. *Sarada Devi: Her Spiritual Eminence*

Sri Ramakrishna himself recognized the spiritual eminence of Sri Sarada Devi. Unlike the general run of spiritual aspirants who forsake all worldly connexions on entering the religious life, for which there is the sanction of religious law and custom behind them, Sri Ramakrishna welcomed Sarada Devi to his side when she, coming of age, came to claim her rights over him. It is a deeply moving episode in their lives, which helps to reveal the stuff of both. Sri Ramakrishna was in Dakshineswar, passing through storms of spiritual moods and experiences; except on the two occasions of his

brief visits to his native village, he had not met his wedded wife these twelve long years and seemed apparently to have forgotten her.

Sarada Devi, now about eighteen, entered his room late at night after an arduous journey from her native village in the company of her father. She had her fears in her heart proceeding from the gossip she had heard in her village about the deranged condition of her husband's mind, and her own knowledge of his utter indifference to worldly concerns. But Sri Ramakrishna, though a bit surprised at her sudden arrival, welcomed her very cordially, and accommodated her in his own room for facility of medical attention, and arranged for the medical care of her body which had been ravaged by illness and fatigue during the long trek. She found in him the same loving divine husband whom she had known during his previous visits to the village. When she had settled down, Sri Ramakrishna one day addressed her thus:

> 'As for me, the Divine Mother has shown me that She resides in every woman, and so I have learned to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the one idea I can have about you; but if you wish to drag me into the world, as I have been married to you, I am at your service.'

To this challenging question of her divine husband, Sarada Devi gave a straight-forward answer:

> 'Why should I desire to drag your mind down to the worldly plane? I have come only to help you in your chosen path. I desire only to live with you and serve you and to learn of you.'

This reply of his pure and spotless wife pleased Sri Ramakrishna immensely and he experienced a great accession of spiritual strength. His mission, in the world, of calling humanity back to an awareness of its inborn divine nature is not to be a lonely struggle; he recognized in Sarada Devi a companion in this noble mission; within a year of her arrival, he verified the truth of this exalted view of his wife through the *Ṣoḍaśī-pūjā* experience referred to above.

From now on till the end of his life, for full fourteen years, Sarada Devi served the person of Sri Ramakrishna and the large number of disciples and devotees visiting him, with a rare devotion and self-effacement unrivalled in human history. It was also the

period of her intense spiritual education under her divine husband. She has referred to this period as a continuous experience of intense bliss. Months together they lived in the same room and slept in the same bed, with no trace of carnal thought in the mind of either. Their minds constantly soared in the region of divine awareness and bliss; each stood transfigured to the other; and both became instruments for the working out of the divine will. The immense store of spiritual energy—divine *śakti*—which was generated by the *sādhanās* of Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi contains the promise of the spiritul evolution of modern humanity which keenly feels its own tragic spiritual poverty in the midst of abundant material wealth.

5. *Her Role as Spiritual Teacher*

Sri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886. Sarada Devi was thirty-three at the time. Having lived in a non-physical plane of relationship with her husband, she did not experience the feeling of widowhood at his death. To her he continued to be a living reality to the end of her days. And for the next thirty-four years, she lived a life, complex in its roles and varied in its riches, and withal silent and sweet, that gained for her the endearing title of *'Śrī Mā'*, 'the Holy Mother', by which she is known ever since.

The Holy Mother was called upon to be the spiritual guide of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, constituted initially of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples under the leadership of Swami Vivekananda and to be the *guru* of an ever-increasing circle of spiritually hungry men and women. Her spiritual eminence and the divine power of her personality enabled her to fulfil this mighty role with ease and naturalness. But it was in the role of a household woman, in the midst of her own family circle consisting of her worldly-minded brothers, sisters-in-law, and their children, that the Holy Mother manifested a unique facet of her character and personality. It is this aspect of her personality that provides a shining example of practical spirituality capable of inspiring all men and women. The nun shone through the house-holder, and both through the heart of an all-loving mother. Far from shunning a distracting world, she embraced it and enfolded it in her love. And in the midst of a

thousand distractions, she preserved the naturalness and peace of her personality.

6. *The Manifestation of Divine Motherhood in Sarada Devi*

Verification is the proof of a theory or a claim. The test of life alone proves the genuineness of a moral virtue or a spiritual value; virtues are tested more in ill-fortune than in good fortune. To maintain poise and grace in good weather is easy enough; but it is only bad weather that tests their genuineness. The calmness, poise, and grace, and the spirit of unobstructed love and self-effacing service, which Sarada Devi expressed in her day-to-day life in the context of a highly distracting environment of sheer worldliness, proclaims the supremely uplifting power of godliness and spirituality. The possession of this power by a man or a woman makes him or her pure and holy. The expression of this power in life is love. Sarada Devi was the very personification of this purity, holiness, and love which is the meaning of the ideal of motherhood at its highest and best. This power lies imbedded in the heart of every woman. An ordinary woman captures in her life only a fraction of this ideal by which she shines in her loving kindness and holiness. A merely biological function becomes elevated through the infilling of a spiritual value. But this spiritual value shone in its fullness, even outside the biological context, in the personality of the Holy Mother, demonstrating thereby the ideal in its pure form. Out of the abundance of her heart Sarada Devi gave of her love to one and all without any distinction and, by so doing, justified the endearing epithet of 'the Holy Mother'.

Herself out of the ordinary in all basic values of character and personality, but hiding these under the mantle of the simple and the ordinary in social and physical make-up, the Holy Mother eludes the grasp of ordinary minds, but reveals her true form to all seekers of basic values. Did not Sri Ramakrishna say of her: 'She is Sarasvatī, the goddess of Wisdom, come to give spiritual knowledge to humanity.' And had she not also said of herself: 'Sri Ramakrishna has left me to manifest the ideal of divine Motherhood.'

In her life and in her teachings she has left a balm for suffering humanity in search of light and peace. Her love knew no distinctions of sex, creed, or race. It enfolded and uplifted the Muslim labourer Amjad as much as the *sannyāsin* Saradananda, the gifted Sister Nivedita as much as the simple 'mother of Annapurna'. The Holy Mother's deathbed advice to the latter is typical of her universal personality and depth of insight. To the 'mother of Annapurna', sorrowing at the thought of Holy Mother's imminent passing away, she said these words of uplifting consolation and strength:

'If you want peace of mind, do not look for faults in others. Rather look out to discover your own weaknesses. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one here is an alien or a stranger, my child. The whole world is your own.'

7. *Conclusion*

Let me conclude this tribute with the beautiful Sanskrit verse composed by Swami Abhedananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, in praise of the Holy Mother's pure nobility:

Pavitraṁ caritaṁ yasyāḥ pavitraṁ jīvanaṁ tathā;
Pavitratā-svarūpiṇyai tasyai devyai namo namaḥ—

'Whose character is all pure and whose life is similarly pure; who is the embodiment of purity divine; that shining goddess I salute again and again.'

14

SARADA DEVI: THE CROWNING GLORY OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD *

1. *Introductory*

In the course of her five-thousand-year-old history, India has experimented with human life from various angles and at various levels, and has discovered many truths about human life and human destiny, some of which she also later proved and verified, through the lives of some of the greatest, as well as some of the commonest, among her people, down to our own times.

Her great philosophy, the Vedānta, discovered ages ago that the object of human life is not pleasure and organic satisfactions, much less pain, but knowledge, *jñānam,* through a detached scrutiny of both. Pleasure and pain, and all experience, provide the opportunity to man to awaken himself or herself to the world of knowledge, both secular and spiritual, for which nature has provided him or her with the necessary organic capacities. Young immature cultures, like immature minds, fail to grasp this vital truth and proceed to build the edifice of their culture and character on the shaky basis of the sole pursuit of organic satisfactions; and all such edifices decay and fall, unable to stand the pressures from without and within. But Indian culture has endured these thousands of years, surviving dark periods of challenges from without and within, because of its stable foundations, its mature *weltanschauung,* provided by her great sages and seers.

2. *Man's Innate Divinity*

Among the truths that that *weltanschauung* has placed before India and the rest of humanity, the most significant is the shining truth of the innate divinity and purity of man. Men and women, nay, in fact, all beings, are divine in their essential nature. And Vedānta views social and cultural evolution as the process of the unfoldment of this great value in the context of inter-human relationships, from

*Contributed to the book: *Beacon Light of Eternity,* published by The Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Natal, in February 1979, on the occasion of the 143rd birthday of Sri Ramakrishna

which alone are derived the cherished human values of freedom, equality, and the dignity of personality. Vedanta presents this as the measuring rod of cultural and social progress. Swami Vivekananda, accordingly, presents religion in precise scientific language as: 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man'.

3. *Equality of Man and Woman*

Among the various types of human inter-actions for the manifestation of this innate human divinity, that between man and woman is most important. Unlike in the Semitic tradition, where woman is presented as produced from a *dispensable* rib of man, the Upaniṣads present man and woman as the equal halves of a divine unity, each the complement of, and incomplete without, the other (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* 1.4.3):

> *Sa imam eva ātmānaṁ dvedhā apātayat: tataḥ patiśca patnī ca abhavatām. Tasmāt idam ardhabṛgalam iva sva iti —*

'He (the divine Person) divided Himself into two halves: thus was the origin of husband and wife. Therefore, this (the body of man) is only like the one half of a split pea.'

The Upaniṣads also discovered that the real nature of man and woman as the Ātman, as the sexless Self, is ever pure, perfect, and free. Associated with body and mind, it becomes conditioned as organic individuality with its sex and other differentiations. This is ***man*** or ***woman,*** the *known,* the subject of sociology and other empirical sciences, behind which is man or woman, the *unknown,* the subject of the science of spirituality.

Man the known is limited, imperfect, and helpless; and he or she strives to become whole, through associations and relationships with individuals and groups and objects, outside of himself or herself. The satisfactions proceeding from such associations range from the purely animal and organic to the deeply spiritual, passing through the intermediate stages of the primitive, the cultured, and the refined. It is discipline and restraint, followed by creative onward movement, that characterizes progress from one stage to the other. And all such discipline and restraint involves checking of the lower self, man the known, and progressive manifestation of the higher self, *man the unknown,* the Ātman, the transcendent sexless Self.

4. *Women in Indian Culture*

This spiritual vision of man, realized by the sages of the Upaniṣads, became the rock foundation for the later development of the vast and varied Indian cultural edifice. It had a profound impact on India's theories of marriage and morals, inter-personal and inter-religious relationships, and attitude to God and the world. Thanks to it, India has always upheld, *in theory*, the spiritual equality of man and man, and man and woman. But *in actual social practice,* India has often failed to live up to this great vision. And the fullest social implementation of this great vision, on a nation-wide scale, constitutes the meaning and significance of the modern period of Indian history, through the lived experiences and teachings and examples of the greatest of her modern teachers, namely, Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Vivekananda was the first Indian leader and teacher to point out the great harm done to the Indian nation and its culture by the neglect and suppression of women and the common people. And since his time, she has, through powerful socio-political movements, deliberately set about the great task of regaining the social balance, by giving back to her women and the common people their individual freedom and worth and dignity, to enable them to grow to their full stature and to take their equal place in home and society.

In this connection, it is worthy of note that, unlike several other highly developed societies of the modern period, India has not experienced a violent political revolution or a feminist movement. It is only when a world-view goes rigidly counter to the claims of women for a status of dignity and honour as *persons,* and men uphold such a limited world-view as against the spirit of the times, that a feminist movement or a woman's liberation movement explodes in a society. But in modern India, men themselves came forward to uphold the claims of women, and also of the common people, and move onward with the times; such men arose not only in social and political movements, but also in religious movements;

and they worked hand in hand with awakened Indian women as well, imbued with the passion to evolve a progressive social order in modern India. And, in this effort, they were sustained, as much by the ancient Indian philosophical and spiritual tradition, as by the modern teachers and leaders of the nation along with the modern Western humanistic socio-political thought and experience.

The aspirations of modern Indian women have to be viewed against this background. Free to seek the most advanced intellectual development or pursue any social or political avocations, the Indian woman of today does not feel herself as a competitor of man but as his comrade and helper, whose good wishes and active help she also values.

5. *Woman as Wife to grow into Woman as Mother*

This has led to important consequences for the Indian ideal of womanhood. For the first time after several centuries, marriage is becoming a comradeship of equals, a joint adventure in the development of society and the enjoyment of its delights. And India's spiritual heritage today gently whispers to every woman, as also to every man, to utilise the marriage context to achieve the increasing liberation of the tremendous value of the Ātman, the sexless Self, behind man and woman. Vedānta upholds this as the goal and direction of social evolution, or of evolution at the human stage.

So far as woman is concerned, this is achieved by the wife growing into the mother, not merely, or even necessarily, biologically, but certainly spiritually. Motherhood is a spiritual transformation of wifehood. If woman as wife is socially significant, woman as mother is spiritually glorious. If the spiritual is no more than coterminous with the biological, then woman as mother of a little genetic group would have remained the highest possible moral and spiritual development for her sex. But Vedānta sees the spiritual as transcending the merely genetic and the biological, and even the social, and finding expression in an ideal of motherhood, where love and service break the barriers of family, race, and creed, and assume a universal aspect. It is this spiritual elevation in self-transcendence that enables woman, *even as wife,* to function effectively as a citizen of a free socio-political order, embracing with her

mother-heart the millions of its body-politic. If this is called *finding life* — larger and fuller life — then the path to it lies through self-development by self-effacement. That is what a woman does when she *grows* from wifehood to motherhood. In this, no human value is neglected or negated, but there is only a growth from a smaller to a larger personality, and a progressive manifestation of the inherent divinity.

6. *The Glory of Mother in Indian Culture*

And this is, as I have pointed out earlier, the Vedāntic criterion of progress of an individual or a culture. This motherhood ideal is the highest reach of womanhood, according to Indian culture. This symbol of self-effacing love and service, namely, the mother, has revealed to the Hindu mind the presence of a divine reality within, over and above the limited personality of the visible mother. To the Hindu, even God is revealed as the Mother of all creation. A people and a philosophy that has educated itself to look upon God as Mother, has also learnt to invest its view of woman with the utmost tenderness and reverence. The very hoary culture of the Hindu trains him to look upon all women, nay, to look upon the female of all species, as forms of the one Divine Mother. In the words of the *Manu Smṛti* (11. 145):

Upādhyāyāt daśā-cāryaḥ,
ācāryāṇaṁ śataṁ pitā;
Sahasraṁ to pitṛn mātā
gauraveṇātiricyate —

'From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is tenfold superior to a mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to a teacher, and a mother a thousandfold to a father.'

And what constitutes this abundant glory in the mother is her self-effacing love and compassion which, to the Hindu, is the mark of high spirituality and true culture. And men in general, and women in particular, have the privilege to attain to this high spirituality and true culture by growing beyond the limitations of mere sex, even while living and functioning physically at that level in all dignity and freedom. It is this vision that India has always held up

before all men and women, and which her women, more than her men, have passionately struggled to realize in their lives.

7. *Indian Ideal of Womanhood: Ancient and Modern*

The ideals of chastity and purity, unselfishness and service, simplicity and modesty, exemplified in great women like Sītā, Sāvitrī, and Damayanti, have been pursued by the Indian women, drawn by that vision of innate and inalienable divinity of man and woman. Millennia of historic experience have made these the warp and woof of their being. And modern Indian women cannot jump out of this age-old inheritance of theirs. In his lecture on *The Sages of India,* Swami Vivekananda pointed out this truth over eighty years ago *(The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. III, eighth edition, p. 256):

> 'Any attempt to modernize our women, if it tries to take our women away from that ideal of Sīta, is immediately a failure, as we see every day. The women of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sīta, and that is the only way.'

Women in old India were nourished on the ideals of Sītā, Sāvitrī, and Damayanti. But women in modern India, even while responding to these ideals and examples, are in search of a newer inspiration to sustain them in the wider opportunities for self-expression offered by the modern age, compared to their sisters of previous ages. Modern Indian women are in search of an adaptation of the ancient spiritual values to the vastly expanded modern conditions and opportunities of life and work. And it is this authentic sanction that the modern Indian women receive from Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda.

8. *The Uniqueness of Sri Ramakrishna*

Among spiritual teachers, Sri Ramakrishna is unique in several respects, even in the impressive context of India's age-old religious history. He worked as a priest, performed all his spiritual experiments, communicated his universal spiritual message to humanity, and trained his disciples — all in the precincts of a temple, the Kāli Temple of Dakshineswar, near Calcutta, built and sustained by a distinguished woman, namely, Rani Rashmani; his first spiritual guru was another distinguished woman saint and intellectual,

namely, the intrepid and freely-wandering Bhairavi Brahmani; in the temple, he was the worshipper of God conceived as the Divine Mother of the Universe, namely, *Bhavatāriṇī Kāli;* and, in spite of being an ascetic, he agreed to his mother's proposal of marriage and took as wife a remarkable woman, Sarada Devi; and both lived a unique married life together, in mutual love and service and respect, and in the service of all humanity, without a trace of the physical in their relationships, but manifesting a unique union of souls even while living as separate individuals at the physical level.

9. *A Great Ancient Myth Recreated as Lived History*

In the mutual relationship of Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi, modern India once again experienced that purest love, untouched by any trace of the carnal, manifested in the relationship of Śiva and Umā of her ancient tradition, whom her greatest classical poet and dramatist Kālidāsa describes as 'the parents of the universe' — *Jagataḥ pitarau.* In his epic poem *Kumāra-saṁbhavam,* Kālidāsa vividly describes Umā's, or Pārvatī's, pure love winning Śiva as her husband, after Śiva, on his part, had burnt to ashes *Kāmadeva,* the Indian Cupid, who had tried, through his various arts, to rouse carnal love in Śiva. Kālidāsa presents Umā, or Pārvatī, as the embodiment of all beauty (1.48):

Sarvopamā-dravya-samuccayena
yathā-pradeśaṁ viniveśitena;
Sā nirmitā visvasṛjā prayatnāt
ekastha saundarya didṛkṣayeva —

'Gathering all excellent things of beauty, and fixing them in their appropriate places, the Creator of the universe created her, with the desire, as it were, to see all beauty centred in one person.'

When this Pārvatī expressed a wish to serve the ascetic Śiva who was then performing *tapasya* (spiritual practices) in the Himālayās, Kālidāsa describes Śiva's response in a great verse, the sentiment of which, and the situation it describes, had found a profound re-creation, in our own time, in a really historical event of Sri Ramakrishna's hearty response to his young wife Sarada Devi's request to be allowed to serve him at the Kāli Temple at Dakshineswar (*Kumārasaṁbhavam, 1.58):*

Pratyartha-bhūtām api tāṁ samādheḥ
śuśrūṣamāṇāṁ Giriśo'numene;
Vikārahetau sati vikriyante
yeṣāṁ na cetāṁsi ta eva dhīrāḥ —

'Even though (her presence nearby) would be an obstruction to his (practice of) *samādhi,* Śiva agreed to her (Pārvatī's) request to serve him; those persons alone are *dhīrās,* i.e., heroes, whose minds do not get disturbed even when circumstances to disturb them are present.'

And, finally, Śiva's pure love surrenders to the pure love of Pārvatī, says Kālidāsa in a great verse (*ibid.*, V. 86):

Adya-prabhṛtyavanatāṅgi tavāsmi dāsaḥ
krītaḥ tapobhiriti vādini Chandramaulau;
Ahnāya sā niyamajaṁ klamam utsasarja
kleśaḥ phalena hi punaḥ navatāṁ vidhatte —

"From now onwards, O Beautiful One, I am your slave; you have purchased me through your *tapas,* i. e. spiritual practices!" — when Śiva said this, all her tension and tiredness arising from her holy penance vanished immediately; it is well known that all tension and tiredness become creatively renewed when they yield (their expected) fruits.'

This ancient and ever-living Śiva-Umā *myth* of India became *real history* when, in our modern age, Sarada Devi, now in the bloom of her youth and arriving at Dakshineswar from her far-away village at Jayarambati, presented herself before her ascetic husband Sri Ramakrishna, late at night on a day in May 1872. Sri Ramakrishna received her cordially and, when she had settled down, he addressed her thus:

'As for me, the Mother has shown me that She resides in every woman, and so I have learned to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the one idea I can have about you. But if you wish to drag me into the world, as I have been married to you, I am at your service.'

To this challenging remark of her divine husband, Sarada Devi gave an equally straight-forward and conclusive answer:

'Why should I desire to drag your mind down to the worldly plane? I have only come to help you in your chosen path. I desire only to live with you and serve you and to learn from you.'

10. Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi

This unambiguous reply of his pure and spotless wife pleased Sri Ramakrishna immensely and he experienced a great accession of spiritual strength. He became convinced that his mission in the world — of calling humanity back to an awareness of its inborn divine nature — is not to be a lonely struggle; he recognized in Sarada Devi a companion in this noble mission; and within a year of her arrival at Dakshineswar, he verified the truth of this exalted view of his wife through the historically unique *Ṣoḍaśī-pūja* experience when, unlike in the past when wives worshipped their husbands and looked upon them as divine, Sri Ramakrishna worshipped his wedded wife Sarada Devi as *Ṣoḍasī,* or *Tripura-sundarī,* or *Lalitā* — the Divine Mother of the universe personified as Beauty.

From then on till the end of his life, for full fourteen years, Sarada Devi served the person of Sri Ramakrishna, and the large number of disciples and devotees visiting him, with a rare devotion and self-effacement unrivalled in human history. It also saw her intense spiritual education under her divine husband. She has referred to this period as a continuous experience of intense bliss. Months and months they lived together in the same room, and slept in the same bed, with no carnal thought arising in the mind of either. Their minds constantly soared in the region of divine awareness and bliss; each stood transfigured to the other; and both became instruments for the working out of the Divine Will in the modern world. The immense store of spiritual energy — divine *Śakti* — which was generated by the *sādhanās* of Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi contains the promise of the spiritual evolution of modern humanity, which keenly feels its own tragic spiritual poverty in the midst of abundant material wealth.

11. The Mesmerism of the Eternal Feminine

After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886, Sarada Devi continued his spiritual ministration, for the remaining thirty-four years of her life, to an ever-increasing number of men and women

from India and abroad. What is the source of the mesmerism of her name and personality? Even a slight acquaintance with her life will make one realise that this mesmerism does not proceed from any aspects of her personality which the sophisticated modern age recognizes as significant in women. To all outward appearances, the Holy Mother was just ordinary, or less than ordinary. Rustic in simplicity, almost unlettered, and shy and modest, she is far removed from the contemporary educated, self-conscious, active type of women; and yet, her life finds powerful and responsive echoes from the hearts of all men and women, rustic and modern alike. It is evident that she has captured, in her life and character, the essence of the modern spirit of truth and humanism, and the fundamental value which lies at the back of the womanliness of woman and which transcends all distinctions based on mere sex and the attractions thereof. This fact alone explains her universal appeal, representing, as she does, not a mere national or racial type, but the fulfilment of woman as woman, the realization, in flesh and blood, of what the German poet Goethe, in his immortal *Faust,* presents as *The Eternal Feminine.*

12. *Sarada Devi and Sister Nivedita*

Readers of her biography will obtain glimpses of the modern mind and outlook and sympathy, shining through her external rustic personality, in several human situations, be it in scolding an old-fashioned mother not to ruin the life of her teen-age daughter through early marriage but to arrange for her further education and personality development, or in her over-coming all caste distinctions in a natural human way and treating Muslims and Christians as her own children as she treated Hindus. Her ready acceptance of the Irish intellectual Miss Margaret Noble, later famous as Sister Nivedita, as her own spiritual daughter, is specially significant in this context. Swami Vivekananda wondered how to make Miss Margaret Noble, who had become his devoted disciple in England and who had offered to dedicate her enormous energies and her shining intellect to the furtherance of his mission in India in 1898, acceptable to the Indian people, in the context of the then prevailing social exclusiveness and distrust of the Western people. He decided to introduce her first to the Holy Mother and, through her,

to the Indian people. And, to the great satisfaction of the Swami, and to the immense joy of Margaret herself, the Holy Mother gave her a motherly welcome as soon as the Swami introduced Margaret to her and the Holy Mother made her sit on her own cot and conversed with her with loving intimacy; and to the end of her days, Nivedita considered herself as the Holy Mother's *khooki,* i.e., little daughter.

13. *Swami Vivekananda's Vision of the Future Indian Woman*

Conveying Vivekananda's vision of the woman of the future, Sister Nivedita says in her great book: *The Master as I Saw Him (Complete Works of Sister Nivedita,* edited by Pravrajika Atmaprana, Vol. 1, p. 195):

> 'He could not foresee a Hindu woman of the future, entirely without the old power of meditation. Modern science, women must learn; but not at the cost of the ancient spirituality. He saw clearly enough that the ideal education would be one that should exercise the smallest possible influence for direct change on the social body as a whole. It would be that which should best enable every woman, in time to come, to resume into herself the greatness of all the women of the Indian past.'

Again, highlighting, in the same book, the Swami's stress on the need, for both men and women, to outgrow their physical limitations by their steady spiritual growth and closer and closer approach to the realization of the Ātman, the sex-less Self, she remarks (*ibid.*, pp. 196-97):

> 'He saw plainly enough that what was wanted was a race of women-educators, and this was how he contemplated making them. Strength, strength, strength was the one quality he called for in woman as in man. But how stern was his discrimination of what constituted strength! Neither self-advertisement nor over-emotion roused his admiration. His mind was full of the grand old types of silence and sweetness and steadiness, to be attracted by any form of mere display. At the same time, woman had as large an inheritance as man in all the thought and knowledge that formed the peculiar gift of the (modern) age to India. *There could be no sex in truth. He would never tolerate any scheme of life and polity that tended to bind tighter, on mind and soul, the fetters of the body. The greater the individual, the more would she transcend the limitations of feminity in mind and character, and the more was such transcendence to be expected and admired.'* (italics not by Nivedita)

14. *Conclusion:*
Sarada Devi: the Link between the Ancient and the Modern

Sarada Devi stands as an inspiring example to the modern woman in her efforts to steady her steps through the currents and

cross-currents of the revolutionary modern age. Herself an ideal wife and nun, it was the mother that shone through her varied roles, including that of the guru. She never assumed the airs of a guru; in spite of her immense spiritual status and stature, she always made her innumerable disciples, Eastern and Western, feel that she was their mother and not guru. Accordingly, on many occasions, after initiating her disciples in the divine *mantra,* she would cook for them, feed them, and wash their dishes. When they naturally protested that it was not proper for them to have their guru serve them, she would reply that she felt it a privilege, as their mother, to serve them.

The following revelation of her personality given by Sister Nivedita in *The Master as I Saw Him* may form a fitting conclusion *to this brief exposition of Sarada Devi's status as the crowning glory of Indian womanhood. (ibid.,* pp. 147-48):

'But is she the last of an old order, or the beginning of a new? In her one sees realized that wisdom and sweetness to which the simplest of women may attain. And yet, to myself, the stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind are almost as wonderful as her sainthood. I have never known her hesitate in giving utterance to large and generous judgement, however new or complex might be the question put before her. Her life is one long stillness of prayer. Her whole experience is of theocratic civilization. Yet she rises to the height of every situation. Is she tormented by the perversity of any about her? The only sign is a strange quiet and intensity that comes upon her. Does one carry to her some perplexity or mortification born of social developments beyond her ken? With unerring intuition, she goes straight to the heart of the matter, and sets the questioner in the true attitude to the difficulty. Or is there need for severity? No foolish sentimentality causes her to waver. ...

'And yet is she, as one of her spiritual children said of her, speaking literally of her gift of song, "full of music", all gentleness, all playfulness. And the room wherein she worships, withal, is filled with sweetness.'

15

SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA: AN APPRECIATION *

1. Introduction

AMONG the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Ramakrishnananda holds a unique position; he bears the Master's name, and he, among all the disciples, may be considered as a specially commissioned apostle chosen to work in one part of the world, namely, South India. While other disciples were sent to various places as a matter of course, the special act of commission to this teacher by Swami Vivekananda is something distinctive, and there is significance in this event. I shall have occasion to point out towards the end of my discourse in what relation Swami Ramakrishnananda stands to that great change in the mind and face of South India which is to come in the not distant future.

2. The Early Promise

Let us make his acquaintance as the young boy Śaśi who entered this world at Calcutta in the same year in which Swami Vivekananda entered it—in 1863. We find him cheerful, vivacious, and active as a child, and inteliigent, inquisitive, and energetic as a boy. At school, he studied the various subjects that were taught to him, but the fire in him could not be quenched with the studies that the school provided. There was in him even in early boyhood a passion for purity, a spirit of dispassion, and a mood of searching and inquisitiveness, a burning desire to probe deeper and not rest content with what was given on the surface plane of experience. A mood of spiritual quest was marked in him even in his boyhood. And so, along with Sarat (Swami Saradananda), a younger cousin of his, we find him wending his way to the Brahmo Samaj, which was the movement to which most of the spiritually hungry among the English-educated went at that time. There he came in touch with the great Keshab Chandra Sen and others. He participated in the spiritual ministry of the Brahmo Samaj and sought to satisfy his soul's hunger. From there an inexorable destiny guided his steps

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gently and steadily to the temple of Dakshineswar, where he met with the great Sri Ramakrishna, whom he accepted as his *guru*, guide, and all in all, and under whose training he developed into that great spiritual personality in whose blessings we all have the privilege to share.

3. *Meeting with the Master*

Sasi's meeting with Sri Ramakrishna is significant because of the future which lay hidden within it. He goes to the teacher and there was an interview between the teacher and the disciple. It was characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna, and characteristic also of the disciples who went to him, that in these interviews there were interesting questions and answers. Sri Ramakrishna asked Sasi—hardly eighteen years then—as to what aspect of God he would like to meditate on, whether God with form or God without form. This was a usual question which Sri Ramakrishna put to various aspirants coming to him. But straight came the answer from this young, inquisitive, and frank boy to this query of the Master: 'I do not know whether God exists at all or not—so how can I decide whether I should worship God with or without form?' The mood behind this frank answer is very significant for religion. There is an earnestness behind its apparent agnosticism. Religion with most people is a matter of belief or conformity. It ensures for them a life, cosy, comfortable, and secure. But it lacks adventure and, consequently, leaves the heroic souls cold. The heroic souls come to religion in a spirit of quest, in a mood of adventure, and find no joy in cosy and comfortable beliefs which they dare to question with a frankness which cannot be appreciated by ordinary teachers but only by the greatest of teachers. Sri Ramakrishna represented in himself that spirit of a great world teacher who could tame and train these fearless and frank souls. Of such stuff was Sasi made. Of such stuff, even in a more intense form, was Swami Vivekananda—then young Narendra—made. All these souls were fearless and frank, yet possessed of that dynamic inquisitiveness which makes for greatness in any sphere of life. Sri Ramakrishna gathered around himself such young and inquisitive and aspiring souls and slowly shaped them in their particular lines of personality development, and gave to humanity the services of a galaxy of apostles.

4. *The 'Mother' of the Infant Order*

Swami Ramakrishnananda's devotion to his Master was characterized by a supreme spirit of dedication and self-effacing service characteristic of the mother-heart. During Sri Ramakrishna's illness in the last year of his mortal existence, Swami Ramakrishnananda dedicated himself to the unremitting care of his Master's body, excelling in this all his other brother-disciples. The spirit and intensity of that service to the person of the Master earned for him, after the passing of the Master, the name Ramakrishnananda. Swami Vivekananda, who had desired to take that name for himself, chose however, to bestow it on his brother-disciple, Sasi, in appreciation of his self-effacing love and service of the Master.

We next meet with him as Swami Ramakrishnananda in the first monastery of the Ramakrishna Order at Baranagore, Calcutta, in the company of Swami Vivekananda and other young *sannyāsin* disciples of the Master. The great mother-heart of Sasi found another remarkable expression in the life of that monastery. This famous monastery is the origin of the now world-wide Ramakrishna Math and Mission. That origin is characterized by an intense spirit of renunciation, spiritual devotion, austerity, self-sacrifice, and brotherly love, which is characteristic of the traditional monastic life of our country. In the Baranagore monastery, the life of the members was marked by an utter forgetfulness of the body and its needs in an intense pursuit of spiritual awareness and divine presence. But in this code of life there was one exception—and that was Swami Ramakrishnananda. Second to none in his spirit of renunciation, austerity, and devotion, he chose to give expression to these through the loving service of the Master's relics in the chapel and of the Master's children in the monastery. His mother-heart found the fullest expression in these two channels.

His labours to keep intact the infant monastery and his care and watchfulness over the bodies of his brother-disciples, whose souls had sped to God in self-forgetful devotion, have become inspiring legends in the Ramakrishna Order. Actuated by the monk's love of wandering and of the open and free life, we find Swami Vivekananda and all his brother-disciples filing out of the Baranagore monastery one by one. They went, they came, went again, and

came again. Every time they found Swami Ramakrishnananda steadily tending the monastery fires—spiritual and physical. For ten long years he tended the infant Order with a rare love and devotion. The monastery's life centred in him and his life centred in the Master whose service constituted his austerity and spirituality, pilgrimage, and devotion. In the meantime, great things were happening outside which were to affect profoundly the course of the world and the life of Swami Ramakrishnananda.

5. In the Vineyard of God

For, Swami Vivekananda, after his wanderings through the length and breadth of India, had gone to the West and preached successfully, for four long years, the message of Vedānta, through the Chicago Parliament of Religions and a thousand other platforms. On his return to India in 1897, he had burst upon our national horizon with a mighty spiritual force, had shaken our nation out of its lethargy and complacency, and had imparted to it a message of strength and practical spirituality, of patriotism and national service, the message, in short, of a dynamic national character. This dynamic impact was to affect Swami Ramakrishnananda's life also in a radical way. For, as part of his plan of spiritual campaign in India, and in response to the desire of his Madras devotees and admirers, Swami Vivekananda decided to open one of the three centres of his movement in Madras—the other two being in Calcutta and in the Himalayan village of Mayavati. And he deliberately chose Swami Ramakrishnananda for Madras, as his apostle to South India. The call was sudden as well as revolutionary. From the even tenor of a cloistered life, he was to plunge into the responsibilities and cares of an abbot in a big city. Swami Ramakrishnananda cheerfully responded to the call of his beloved leader and thus expressed another facet of his great spirit of renunciation and self-effacement. He reached Madras in the middle of 1897 to commence a new form of spiritual *sādhanā*, where service of God flowed into service of man, and which continued to the end of his life in 1911.

This self-effacement of Swami Ramakrishnananda, as also of other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna like Swami Premananda and Swami Turiyananda, each one of whom was a spiritual giant, contains a lesson to the spiritually-minded in our country today.

Spiritual pride is the bane of some aspects of our spiritual life. And spiritual pride is worse than worldly pride. The examples of the children of Sri Ramakrishna will help us to avoid this vice and implant self-effacing humility in its place. *Little saints breathing high spiritual airs is a social malady which can be cured only by the examples of a few spiritual giants following the humble way.* A mantle of simplicity and humility covered the gigantic spiritual stature of Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swami Premananda, and other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. He went about his work in his new field in Madras denying himself in the affirmation of the Divine. Only to a few discerning souls was it given to see the man behind the mantle.

Apart from this, there was another aspect of his work in Madras, especially in the early years. Swami Ramakrishnananda came to Madras which had only just a while ago experienced the mighty impact of Swami Vivekanandà's personality. The difference between the two personalities was wide. Swami Vivekananda was an orator and organizer, and a dynamo of spiritual energy and power, which neither the East nor the West could resist or ignore. Swami Ramakrishnananda was the opposite of this. But he possessed just those gifts which could canalize a spiritual flood for the lasting benefit of the people concerned. His purity and renunciation, non-sectarian spirituality and broad tolerance, his utter selflessness and intense love for man, and, above all, his complete dedication to the cause of his Master—these he dedicated to the devoted service of the people of this part of our country. He was endowed with a strong physique and keen intellect; the first enabled him to bear the hardships of a pioneer's job, while the second enabled him to satisfy the spiritual demands of an intellectual people such as the people of Madras are known to be.

South India may well claim the honour of having been the spiritual teacher of India for centuries together. To this South India came Swami Ramakrishnananda. We can see the unseen hand of Providence in this choice. His attainments and outlook and approach bore a relation to the spiritual background and present requirements of South India. The wholesome effects of this choice are already beginning to manifest; but its full effects, its mature fruits, would come in course of time.

6. *Static Piety versus Dynamic Spirituality*

We may well ask what is the type of spirituality that is now wanted in this part of our country? There is one fact that emerges from South Indian history; it is that the people here are intensely religious. For two thousand years at least, the people of South India have paid passionate allegiance to the spiritual ideal through Buddhism or Jainism, Śaivism or Vaiṣṇavism. Yet, in recent centuries, there has been a developing tendency to entomb the spiritual idea in social conformities and forms and to confuse spirituality with frozen patterns of mere *smārta* or rigidly orthodox behaviour. This tying up of spirituality made for the stagnation of spirituality along with the stagnation of society. This was the situation all over Hindu society by the end of the eighteenth century, but it was much more pronounced in South India due to its comparatively sheltered political existence. With the impact of the West on our society, however, its centuries-long stagnation got disturbed and society began to move, slowly at first, but faster and faster afterwards.

This gave rise to a critical social situation; a stagnant religiosity, which found expression largely in formal acts of piety and correct *smārta* behaviour, could not catch up with, much less sustain, the movements of a dynamic society. Life and religion, therefore, began to function in separate compartments. This division in the mind of man had disastrous consequences for his character and personality. The impulses of a static piety and the forces of dynamic social urges tended to cancel each other, so as to reduce man's strength of character and effectiveness of personality. Religious orthodoxy needed to be rescued from a rigid social orthodoxy, especially when that society was in a phase of dynamic movement. It is only then that religion comes to itself, which is what true orthodoxy means, and becomes strong to sustain and guide the new social urges. In the absence of this orientation, religion functions as a dead-weight on life and society, continuing to swear by a world which is no more. This explains the evil aspects of communalism in modern India in its Hindu, Muslim, or Christian forms. For communalism is religion entombed in rigid and narrow socio-political frames. It dries up the human heart along with drying up the springs of religion itself. The country needed a restatement of true orthodoxy in religion as a spiritual adventure and quest which has the capacity to invigorate a society from within and make for progress all-round. This was the service that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda did to religion in general and India in particular. And it was the pure message of that dynamic and comprehensive spirituality that Swami Ramakrishnananda bore to the extremely religious people of the South.

7. *God-ward Passion and Man-ward Love*

The impulse of this spirituality flowed in the two channels of a God-ward passion and a man-ward love. And the currents of that flow broke down in its flood the limitations of creed and dogma on the one side, and sect and *saṁpradāya* on the other. Swami Vivekananda did not engage himself in any programme of social reform; he considered social evils as diseases on the social body; social reform, he held, dealt only with the symptoms, and was therefore temporary in its effect. Lasting benefit to society comes from spirituality which, energizing from within, makes for health and vigour without. This is the dynamism of a spiritual orthodoxy as contrasted with the staticity of a rigid social orthodoxy. Emphasis on this spiritual orthodoxy makes for a deepening of man's spiritual awareness and a broadening of his human sympathies, resulting in basic social health and development in a natural way.

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in Madras, as expressed through Swami Ramakrishnananda, was a combination of this central spiritual orthodoxy with a peripheral social orthodoxy. The latter helped to smoothen the passage of men from a mere adherence to the letter and forms of religion to its inner life-giving content and spirit, while the former helped to demonstrate the beauty and charm of this inner content and spirit, and to draw up to it with irresistible force the native religious instincts of the people.

Swami Ramakrishnananda's life in Madras was an eloquent expression of this inner spirit of religion. It manifested itself through his every act and speech and mood. He lived and functioned in a constant awareness of the presence of his Master, whom he worshipped through ritual and labour, through study and teaching. Often would he be filled with spiritual ecstasy and emotion

which would find chance escapes in talks with the Divine which, to an onlooker, were audible, yet incomprehensible. Though meticulous as to ritual, his worship in the temple was no act of prosaic ritual; it was the outpouring of a devout heart to the ultimate spiritual Principle who as a Person was a reality intimate and close to the worshipper. In his worship of his Master in the chapel of the monastery, the people of Madras got a glimpse into Sri Ramakrishna's own worship of the Divine Mother at the temple of Dakshineswar. To a people so devoted to temple and worship and ritual as South Indians are, Swami Ramakrishnananda's methods and manner and moods of adoration were an inspiration and an education.

Swami Ramakrishnananda's spirituality did not get confined to the precincts of the temple. What he took in by contemplation, he poured out in love and action in a variety of fields of human service—spiritual and intellectual, cultural and philanthropic. In fact, his life of fourteen years in Madras was a saga of self-effacing austerity of a new type through which abundant good flowed to humanity. Through lectures and classes, conversations and instructions, he scattered what he had gathered. He did these in addition to his constant efforts to run the ashrama household on precarious means. So much work he did, and so many burdens he bore, without feeling the strain of work or weight of burden, because of the fullness of his love for God and concern for man.

8. *The Catholicity of Creative Spirituality*

His catholicity was another fruit of his comprehensive spirituality. He was a reverential student of the Bible and the Koran side by side with the Hindu scriptures. As for the Bible, he knew it from cover to cover, and he adored Jesus Christ with a passion met with only among the early Christian saints. He would go to the old Christian church at San Thome in Madras and enjoy the delights of Christian piety there. He was equally at home with the Vaiṣṇava as with the Śaiva adorations. *The example and ministrations of such a dynamic catholicity introduced into the South Indian religious mind a new impulse of spiritual creativity and unity.* This impulse had within it the force of Sri Ramakrishna's personality and the message of universality of the Indian spiritual tradition.

The message, originating in the Vedas and the Upanisads, found effective voice in the *Gita* (IV. 11) and the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (I.2.11) in a later day:

Ye yatha mam prapadyante tāṁstathaiva bhajamyaham;
Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ —

'In whatsoever way men approach Me, in the same way do I respond to them; all paths, O Partha, lead eventually to Me only.'

Vadanti tat tattvavidah tattvaṁ yat jnanam advayam;
Brahmeti paramatmeti bhagavān iti śabdyate —

'It is one and the same non-dual Pure Consciousness that knowers of Truth declare variously as the Absolute, the Self, and God.'

Says Swami Vivekananda in his speech at the Chicago Parliament of Religions (*Complete Works,* Vol. 1, p. 18):

> 'The whole world of religions is only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man, and the same God is the inspirer of all of them.'

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in the South, as elsewhere in India and abroad, embodies this message of the spirituality of religion. This explains its universal appeal; it attracts to itself the spiritually hungry of every creed and sect. Those who gathered round Swami Ramakrishnananda belonged to a variety of sects and creeds which had lived exclusive and even mutually hostile lives for the past few centuries. At his touch, the high walls that separated them fell, revealing the beauties in each other's garden and leading to union in heartbeat and pulse. Here is the initiation of a process which contains momentous consequences for India and the world. Though it found only a limited expression in Swami Ramakrishnananda's time, it proved its worth and validity and significance through him and the movement of which he formed a part. And since his time, it has been steadily advancing, uniting heart with heart and hand with hand, to create a pattern of enduring national unity in the South as elsewhere.

Swami Vivekananda had proclaimed (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 371):

'National union in India must be a gathering up of her scattered spiritual forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.'

The intensification of this process in the coming years, with the resultant sucking, into its stream, of the currents of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, Christianity and Islam, is bound to evolve a pattern of *fundamental* national unity in India based on the principles of unity in diversity, toleration, and fellowship, with sects preserved but sectarianism destroyed, and liberating values, spiritual and human.

9. *The Silence of Creative Work*

The way Swami Ramakrishnananda lived and worked in Madras gives us an insight into the impact of true religion on society. The only asset of a spiritual movement is the character and spirituality of its members and their radiant faith in the Divine in man. The influence of such a movement spreads from person to person and group to group, until its spiritual leaven, pure and potent, eventually leavens the whole bread of society. This is the history of the Christian faith during its early centuries. Śaṅkara refers to this leavening process in his introduction to his *Gītā* commentary.

Guṇadhikaiḥ gṛhītaḥ anuṣṭhiyamānaśca dharmaḥ pracayaṁ gamiṣyati —

'A spiritual idea spreads in society when it is grasped and lived by men and women of more than ordinary virtue.'

Swami Ramakrishnananda spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna in this part of India primarily through his exemplary life and character. Its silence was the measure of its potency. He carried Swami Vivekananda's exhortation into practice (*Complete Works*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 11):

'Calm, silent, and steady work, no newspaper humbug, no name-making, you must remember.'

Though a spiritual giant, he hid his sainthood behind an exterior of simplicity and common human ways. *What a lesson this, alike to the pious and the saintly in India, several of whom tend to proclaim their piety and their sainthood through even their bodies!* Those who proclaim religion thus are castigated by the *Bhagavatam* as *dharmadhvajas;* they carry cathedrals on their

heads, and not in their hearts! The truly religious, on the other hand, express their inner fulfilment through a character which is fearless and gentle, and which exudes the aroma of purity, renunciation, and love.

This is how a great teacher like Swami Ramakrishnananda lived and worked in Madras to lay the solid foundations of a spiritual movement which has spread far and wide and which, since his passing away forty-two years ago, has been uplifting the hearts of thousands in this city and province. The faith in his heart flowed into works for the good of his fellowmen. The vast and varied educational activities of the Mission in Madras today, serving the needs of about 6,000 boys and 4,000 girls, have for their original inspiration the compassion of his heart on a poor youth, orphaned by plague at Coimbatore, whom he took up and made the first inmate of the hostel which is today the Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home. His visits to Travancore-Cochin, Mysore, and Burma helped to lay the foundations of the far-flung Mission institutions which we see in those areas today.

10. *Our Secularism: Its Scope and Limitations*

There is much discord and division in the Indian mind today as it expresses itself in the religious and cultural, social and political fields. The last few centuries had witnessed a contraction of our loyalties in the form of sectarian narrowness in religion and caste narrowness in society. To the prevailing divisions of Hindu society have been added Christian and Islamic divisions. In the absence of a broader understanding of religion, the people have tended to express the intensity of their religious feelings and loyalties through narrow communal movements based on sectarianism and intolerance. Yet, the desire for national unity is a powerful urge; it is the most outstanding fact revealed by the national renaissance; and it forms the stimulus behind all progressive socio-political movements in modern India. When the world of religion lay divided and broken, this urge for unity sought effective expression through non-religious channels, mainly political. The political movement in India, therefore, gradually developed into a national movement, breaking down the barriers of sect and creed, caste and sex, and liberating the Indian spirit from the shackles of foreign subjection

and indigenous division. In the wake of political freedom, the nation proclaimed its formal unity through its newly adopted Constitution for a sovereign democratic and secular state. The wisdom of declaring India a secular state may be questioned and has been questioned. But that was a step dictated by actual conditions, social and political, cultural and religious, and meant to forge a common national loyalty. Political wisdom consists in reckoning with *actual* social forces and formulating policies based on that assessment, for enhancing the unity and strength and progress of the nation. The secular as applied to the state means only non-communal and not non-religious; it is, of course, not anti-religious.

Citizenship of an all-Indian state involves common national loyalties and aspirations on the part of all the people, irrespective of caste and creed and sex. At present, these loyalties and aspirations proceed from forces outside the creedal and caste loyalties, which latter function largely at the communal and the parochial but not at the national level. This is the logic of forces behind the secular state. But, in the Indian context, this cannot be the final answer to our social problem. *A common political loyalty, on the one side, and divisive religious loyalties, on the other, ill go together, except in the short run.* The division in the national mind thus engendered will lead to a weakening of the national character and loosening of our national ties in the long run. But a nation is wise in resorting to this social expediency and resigning itself to its long-range effects, if it has in its possession no higher wisdom capable of bridging the gulf between the sacred and the sacred, and the sacred and the secular.

The nation has accepted this expediency with a deep-seated feeling that it misses the truly Indian touch. But, feeling apart, the question is: Do we have that higher wisdom in our country? The answer from those who know India intimately is an emphatic yes. This question when seriously put will lead the nation to an appreciation of our authentic national spiritual tradition, Vedānta, and to its dynamic expression in our age in the message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The lives and experiences of these two master minds furnished a positive and adequate answer to this question, long before the nation formulated the question to itself under the pressure of social forces. *They represent the spirit of unity and synthesis at the highest level—the triple unity of faith and reason, faith and faith, and faith and life.* That spirit forms the very core of Indian culture and spiritual tradition. The impact of this spirit on the various creeds and sects in India will lead to an increasing emphasis on their common spiritual elements resulting in the liberation of values, universal and human, imbedded in them. Religion then will function as a force for human unity, fellowship, and service, and contribute its vital quota to national life to convert the formal political unity proclaimed in the Constitution into a real and lasting national unity.

11. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Synthesis

This is the meaning of the Ramakrishna—Vivekananda movement for our nation today. It has a message to every Indian citizen—message of renunciation and service—the intensification of which in life will make for character and spirituality, which are the results of the impact of religion on the individual, on the one hand, and national unity, strength, and progress, which are the results of the same impact on society, on the other. This was the message that Swami Ramakrishnananda lived and taught for fourteen years in Madras. This message has one supreme quality—it is everything positive and nothing negative. The message that was then spread in this part of India through one centre and one voice is now being radiated, as a fruit of his labours, through a score of centres and scores of voices. Already it has achieved a measure of unification of the national mind and purpose and thinned the barriers between sect and sect and community and community.

12. Conclusion

Though what is accomplished is small compared to what remains to be achieved, the methods and results have vindicated their cogency and adequacy for the solution of our many religious and social problems. *Our task today is to struggle to lay hold of the wisdom of that authentic national tradition and remould our nation in its light and inspiration.* In this supreme creative adventure, the examples of Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples will provide us with an unfailing source of stimulation and guidance.

16

MAHĀPURUṢAJI AS I KNEW HIM*

1. *Introductory*

SWAMI APURVANANDAJI has exerted more than the usual pressure of loving persuasion to make me agree to contribute to this volume of reminiscences. Having been the devoted personal attendant of Mahāpuruṣaji for long years, and receiving his love in abundance, Apurvanandaji is in a unique position to share with the readers a plethora of reminiscences. But my reluctance arose from the fact that I had not the privilege to live long years in Mahāpuruṣaji's company and had consequently very few memories of him which could be shared. It is, however, true that I have received from him all that sustains one in the life spiritual. From him I received *mantradīkṣā,* 'spiritual initiation'; from him also I received the most spiritually impressive *brahmacarya* and *sannyāsa* initiations of the Ramakrishna Order, including the monastic name I bear.

2. *My First Meeting with Mahāpuruṣaji*

Though most dreams are just dreams, useless except for the psychoanalyst, some dreams may reveal the trend of the future development of one's life and destiny. From this point of view, Mahāpuruṣaji, whose monastic name of Śivananda is more than a mere name—his brother disciples saw in him a manifestation of the Śiva nature—came into my inner life years before I saw him with my physical eyes.

Devoted from childhood to the worship of God in His aspect as Śiva in the impressive cave temple situated on a rocky hill in my native riverside village of Trikkur in central Kerala, I had a vivid dream when I was hardly nine or ten: I felt myself being carried high up in the sky, above the din of the world, and ushered into the presence of an old sage sitting cross-legged in a large room which vibrated with his holiness and peace. The sage, whom my heart spontaneously recognized as Śiva, lovingly beckoned me to take my

*Contributed in English to *Shivananda Smṛtisaṁgraha*, a book in Bengali in three volumes of reminiscences of one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, compiled and edited by Swami Apurvananda

seat to his left; I obeyed. He then imparted to me some spiritual instruction. I felt a great sense of joy and blissfulness, in which mood I woke up from the dream.

Four or five years later, at the age of fourteen and a half, I came across, first, the remarkable book, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna,* and, later, the biographies of Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother, and the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda. The impact of the study of these books on my young mind is indescribable. It helped to generate a spiritual tide which gave form and force to the inchoate spiritual ideas and aspirations struggling for expression in my boyish mind and imagination. And, during the next three years, the tide developed into a flood of love and dedication to the holy cause for which this blessed trinity appeared in the world, founded the holy Ramakrishna Order of monks, and attracted spiritually sensitive youths to join the same. At the age of seventeen and a half, I left home and parents on 25 June 1926 with the intention of joining the Order in its Mysore branch, which was then presided over by the late Swami Siddheswarananda, who had fortunately come to the town of Trichur then to see his parents. I accompanied him by a night train from Trichur, which is six miles from my village of Trikkur, to the city of Ooty the next morning. Here he wanted to meet Swami Śivananda, familiarly known as Mahāpuruṣaji, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the second President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, who was then spending a few months in that beautiful hill station. Swami Siddheswarananda took me to his presence; I prostrated before him and felt blessed to be in the presence of a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. And we stayed there for a week as his guests.

3. *Receiving the Three Blessings from Him*

On the fifth day of my stay, Swami Siddheswarananda arranged for my spiritual initiation from Mahāpuruṣaji. I entered a large room where Mahāpuruṣaji was seated cross-legged on a carpet. He motioned me to sit on a seat spread to his left. As I took my seat and received spiritual instructions from him, I found the entire scene strangely reminiscent. I found it to be a re-enacting, in the world of fact, of the dream I had in my boyhood: going up and up the hill, being ushered into the presence of Śiva in the form of a serene old person, getting seated to his left, and the blissful feeling generated

in my heart. After the initiation, he asked me whether I had anything with me to offer him as *gurudakṣiṇa,* 'offering to the guru.' When I replied in the negative, he placed two or three mangoes in my hand asking me to offer those back to him. I did as directed and left the room after prostrating before him.

Siddheswarananda was familiarly known as Gopal and much loved by Mahāpuruṣaji. When he and I went to take leave of Mahāpuruṣaji and receive his blessings on the eve of our starting for Mysore on July 2nd, Mahāpuruṣaji gave me this brief parting message along with his blessing: 'Serve Gopal'. And for the next twelve years, I was privileged to serve Siddheswarananda, both in a personal sense and in the sense of the holy cause of which he was the local leader, for nine years in the Mysore branch of the Order as cook, dish-washer, and housekeeper for six years and, later, as warden of its Home for students for three years, followed by three years in the Bangalore branch of the Order. During the first seven years of this period, I had my *brahmacarya* and *sannyāsa* initiations from Mahāpuruṣaji, the first, on Bhagavan Buddha's birthday in May 1929 and the second, on Swami Vivekananda's birthday in January 1933, at the Belur Math. On the first occasion, Mahāpuruṣaji was present throughout the ceremony, which was held, in those days, in the room behind the old chapel of Sri Ramakrishna dedicated by Swami Vivekananda in 1899. His physical presence, with a smiling serene face, intensified the spiritual atmosphere of the ceremony, at the end of which he conferred on me, as is the custom, a new name, Yati Chaitanya. Due to infirmities of age, he could not be physically present on the occasion of my *sannyāsa.* But after the ceremony, I, along with the other eight fellow-candidates, went to his room to receive, from the *guru*, the monastic vows and blessings, and the monastic robes and names.

On each of these two occasions, I had the privilege to spend over three months at the Belur Math in his elevating company and render him little personal services, which included bringing tube-well water from near-by Lilooah for his daily bath, and a cup of curd for the diet of his faithful dog.

4. Memorable Hours with the Teacher

The most memorable experiences on these occasions were the daily morning sessions in his room after breakfast, lasting sometimes for over an hour. Monks and probationers come in batches and prostrate before him and stand aside. He is sitting on his bed or in his chair, indrawn, often with the *hookah* (hubble-bubble) in front, from which he draws a puff now and then, mostly absent-mindedly, and occasionally exchanges courtesies with the monks and novices present. When the indrawn mood relaxes, he converses on various topics with those present, interspersing it with humour and laughter, an endearing trait especially characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples. Sometimes the talk turns on to deep spiritual themes, and those present wait on every word that then falls from his lips. In between all these, one hears him utter, in a tone suffused with deep devotion, such spiritual phrases as: *Saccidānanda Śivam, Jai Guru Maharaj, Jai Mā,* etc.

Within ten months of my joining the Order, Mahāpuruṣaji had permitted me, as a special case, at the request of Swami Siddheswarananda, to wear ochre clothes, which are usually worn by brothers of the Order only after their *sannyāsa,* in place of the probationer's white clothes. Viewed in retrospect, this blessing has contributed not a little to my spiritual stability and spiritual growth.

5. Spiritual Guidance through Letters

Though living far away in Mysore, I had the good fortune to receive from him extremely valuable spiritual guidance through letters. To my earnest request to be allowed to stay with him and serve him for long periods, he pointed out the futility and impracticability of seeking to be physically near one's *guru*, and exhorted me to serve the *guru* through devoted service to the Order in the various fields of its activities. He encouraged the monks of the Order to develop a many-sided character and exhorted them to cultivate knowledge, secular and sacred, and develop practical efficiency. He always emphasized the need to combine meditation with work, and pointed out the importance, for all monks generally, and for me specially, of the company of one's monastic brothers for gaining spiritual strength. He warned me against the weakening effects of religious sentimentalism and explained that true love of God can be gauged, not by our sentimental effusions but by purity of our character and spirit of dedication and service. He always exhorted the monks and laymen to strive to acquire spirituality, and warned them against all forms of showy piety and cheap religiosity.

The following passages from some of his letters will convey some idea as to the type of spiritual guidance he gave and spiritual strength he imparted to spiritual aspirants. The letters carry his own signature with the spelling 'Shivananda':

In his very first letter, Mahāpuruṣaji wrote:

Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama,
Laxa, Banares City
9/12/27

My dear Sankaran,

I am very pleased with your letter. You are proceeding on the right way. It is the nature of the mind, unless it be purged of its bad habits by constant prayer and meditation, to drag man down to lower pleasures. It has acquired those habits through our past acts. So there is nothing to be disheartened in it. You and everybody shall have to infuse in it good ideas and good habits by present acts. Then it will trouble you. That is the reason, when a man wants to be spiritual, he has to remain always on the guard so that the mind goes not back again to its unnatural habits. During this period constant struggle takes place. You are passing through that. If you have faith in yourself and in the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, you are sure to come out victorious. He helps him who struggles—that is His nature. Know it always that His helping hand is always guiding you. Otherwise, you would have been vanquished long ago and would have become an ordinary man. So you need not fear; with full faith in Him, go on with your struggles—pray to Him for strength and help; meditate on Him. Through His blessings, the character of the mind will change and it will be a helping maid by your side. But you shall have to keep a constant watch on the mind till He comes and resides permanently within it. You shall feel it yourself.

Sentimentalism is not good. Why shall you try to weep? Loving and weeping are not the same things. You shall love Him, that's all. Tears are not the indication of *bhakti. Bhakti* can be gauged by one's manners and behaviours— how he is attached to the Lord, whether he loves Him or the world.

The main part of *pūja* (ritual worship) is when we try to think of His presence in the room and within us, seeing the union between the Lord within and the Lord on the throne. Feeling this, you may worship Him in the manner you like. You cannot expect the same attitude to develop daily in the mind during worship. The sweetest feeling will fill you gradually. That is the reason why we worship, pray, and meditate, and try to think of the presence of the Lord in everything in the world, and we think that by each of our acts we are serving Him. So go on with the best of attitude you can command to worship Him, and do the Lord's work.

I am doing well through His grace. Hope this will also find you to be the same. May you have *bhakti, vairāgyam,* and *jñānam* through His blessings. With my love, blessings, and good wishes,

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math
P. O. Belurmath
15/4/28

My dear Sankar,

Glad to get your letter and to know that through His grace you are all well now.

Dull periods often come at first, and that is not bad. Because it brings in the heart of a true devotee the zeal for greater endeavours. Praying to Sri Guru Maharaj, in your case also, may it bring in you the spirit for greater efforts. You are proceeding in the right lines—through His grace, it will be over and your heart will be full of constant love and devotion for Sri Guru Maharaj.

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Belur Math P. O.
Dt. Howrah (Bengal)
10/7/28

My dear Sankaran,

Received your letter duly and am glad to know that you are doing well. Praying to Sri Guru Maharaj to increase your hankering to know Him and to lead a pure and holy life. ... We are all human; temptations and bad thoughts come. Shall we have to weep for them? Let them come; what's of that? the more they come, we shall have to pray with double the energy to the Lord. They come, as it is the will of the Lord; and when it will be His will again, they won't come. Know you to be His children—so you cannot be impure and unholy. Knowing this, pray to Him. Never indulge in these bad thoughts and evil deeds. Throw them away as soon as they come.

If you cannot perform *dhyānam* (meditation) it does not matter; *Japam* (repetition of God's name) will do. One can meditate well, another can make *Japam* well. Through either *Japam* or meditation, one can attain liberation.

When Sri Guru Maharaj will give you opportunity, you will come to me to have bodily *darśan*—otherwise, I am ever present within you in spirit.

Through His grace I am doing well. With my affectionate love and blessings,

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math
P. O. Belurmath
17/11/28

My dear Sankar,

Your affectionate letter of the 12th last is to hand. Surely your prayers are being granted. You are advancing towards the goal unmistakably. One day you shall realize that through His grace. ...

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math
P. O. Belurmath
14/5/30

My dear Yati Chaitanya,

Glad to get your letter and to know all about you. ... My health is not good. I am glad to know that your health has much improved. I am blessing you: May you have *Viveka* and *Vairāgyam* like Buddha. ...

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Sri Ramakrishna Math
P. O. Belurmath
7/7/30

My dear Sankaran,

Received your letter and the *kuṁkum* of Sri Chāmuṇḍā Devī. I am blessing you: May Śrī Chāmuṇḍā Devī grant you *bhakti, vivek,* and *vairāgyam*. My fever has left; I am better now. You need not come here again so soon. What is the necessity of spending so much over railway fare? What shall you gain by coming over here? Pray to Sri Guru Maharaj wherever you be; only through His grace you can gain peace; need not travel here and there. Do not give up work; try to combine it with prayer and meditation. Idleness in the name of meditation and *japam*, I do not like. For your salvation, cannot you depend on Him? How can you become Him unless you surrender yourself entirely to Him. What work you do is equally efficacious as the *japam* and meditation. You can visit your parents if you like. Seek the advice of Siddheswarananda and depend entirely on him. ...

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Belur Math P. O.
Dt. Howrah (Bengal)
24/9/30

My dear Yati Chaitanya,

Received your letter duly. ... My dear boy, to be spiritual is not an easy thing. Unless one gets purified through the fire of struggle, he is not fit for spiritual progress. So such struggles will come—we need not be at all afraid for that. You are a child of Sri Ramakrishna. Be always conscious of it and brave the struggle. Through His grace I am sure you shall succeed. You are thinking of Sri Ramakrishna—the personification of purity. All impurities will have no hold on you. I am also praying: May you have peace and happiness, purity, *vivek*, and *vairāgyam*. ...

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

Belur Math P. O.
Dt. Howrah (Bengal)
24/3/31

My dear Yati Chaitanya,

Received yours duly and have gone through its contents. Such depression in mental attitude often comes to *sādhakas* (spiritual seekers) at the initial stage. But those who do not understand their condition, they get deluded and get lost. But as, in your case, you are fully cognizant of them and of their evil effects, and trying to overcome them, through His grace they will pass away. Pray to Him for strength; and struggle; never give way. if you can cross this hurdle, next time it will not be of such strength. You must have the will to overcome them. You know their nature; throw them overboard. I am praying for you and blessing you.

With such mental condition, it will be suicidal for you to go outside and live alone. Do not do it. During this time, do not trust your intellect, but do as the other *sādhus* (monks) tell you to do. This is the advantage of living with others.

My health is not good. I am getting repeated attacks of asthma. You need not be anxious for me. May He grant you strength, purity, *vivek, vairāgyam,* and obedience. My blessings and best wishes to you.

Affectionately ever yours,
Shivananda

6. *A Mass of Love and Blessings*

Mahāpuruṣaji appeared to every monk and devotee as a mass of love and blessings. Hundreds of monks and thousands of laymen were the fortunate recipients of his love and blessings. He gave me to understand that, in initiating me or any other seeker, he had only offered me or the seeker concerned at the feet of the Lord. To any one asking for his blessings, his characteristic reply was: 'What else have we with us to give others except blessings?' Very rational in his attitude and outlook, and singularly informal and deeply human, sainthood and holiness, and the presidentship of an international spiritual and humanitarian movement, sat lightly on his mind and heart.

A few weeks after my *sannyāsa,* I sought his blessings on the eve of my visit to the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sargachi, West Bengal, in order to fulfil my heart's long-cherished craving to meet, and receive the blessings of, Swami Akhandananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. He was then the Vice-president of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. As the founder and head of that Ashrama, he was the first and foremost among the fellow-disciples of Swami Vivekananda to implement his message of the service of God in the poor and the suffering. Mahāpuruṣaji was happy to learn that I was going to meet Akhandanandaji to receive his blessings. I spent three happy days in the latter's holy company at Sargachi and received his love and blessings in ample measure. But sad news awaited me on my return to Calcutta; for Mahāpuruṣaji had suffered a stroke of apoplexy that very day, 25 April 1933, and lay in his room in the Belur Math with the right side of his body paralysed. After a few weeks' treatment and care, the crisis passed, though the paralysis of the right side, with resulting incapacity of speech, continued, till his passing away about ten months later.

7. *The Last Glimpse*

The last time I saw him was on the eve of my departure for Mysore after he had passed the crisis. I entered his room; he was lying on his back with his head resting on high pillows, and face serene, calm, and majestic. As I prostrated, Swami Apurvananda, who was attending on him, informed him that I was leaving for

Mysore to resume my duties in the Ashrama there. Unable to utter speech as he was, his eyes had an eloquence of their own and conveyed the feelings of his heart. Mahāpuruṣaji's face beamed with a smile of benediction, which found expression in the lifting of his left hand in an act of blessing. He communicated to Apurvananda by signs to give me some money with which I was to offer special worship to the Divine Mother at the temple on the Chāmuṇḍi hill in Mysore, which was a favourite shrine of his, and to Sri Ramakrishna in the shrine of the local ashrama. I received the money as a sacred charge and did as he had desired on reaching Mysore, sending him the sacred *prasād* of the worship in due course.

8. *Conclusion*

I consider myself thrice blessed for getting shelter under a teacher of his spiritual eminence, for being offered by him at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, and for receiving his ample blessings in as much measure as I could spiritually digest and assimilate.

17

SRI NARAYANA GURU: AN APPRECIATION *

1. Introductory

ROMAIN ROLLAND, in his work *The Life of Ramakrishna,* speaking about 'the great Shepherds' of modern India, refers (p. 160 fn.) also to numerous less known spiritual leaders, and introduces Sri Narayana Guru as:

> 'the great *Guru* ... whose beneficent spiritual activity was exercised for more than forty years in the State of Travancore over some million faithful souls (he has just died in 1928). ... He preached, if one may say so, a *Jñāna* of action, a great intellectual religion, having a very lively sense of the people and their social needs. It has greatly contributed to the uplifting of the oppressed classes in Southern India and its activities have in a measure been allied to those of Gandhi.'

2. Sri Narayana Guru: His Social Background

Sri Narayana Guru came of a section of India's population which possessed no rights and privileges and which consequently received the name of depressed classes in modern times. Totally neglected and often oppressed and suppressed for a thousand years by the higher classes, the seventy million depressed classes of India, as of other parts of the world, constituted the basis of economic prosperity and social well-being of the country, as they formed the entire labour front. Continued slavery for generations had produced in these classes, as it is bound to produce in any class of men, an oppressive sense of its own littleness and helplessness — a sense of despair. Slavery is bad enough; but a situation in which the slave begins to accept his position as part of a natural social order — a position in which there is dictated duty without any inherent right and privilege — is something which reduces man to the level of cattle and robs him of his human prerogatives. This was precisely the condition of the Indian masses at the beginning of the nineteenth century when India was thrown open to the play of world forces. The mingling of the age-old idealism of India with the thought-forms and forces of the modern world has ushered in a new

* Contributed on the occasion ot Sri Narayana Guru Birthday Celebrations, Rangoon. Burma, 1940

epoch in Indian history, whose foundations were laid in the last century by the life and work of a few great leaders and the movements associated with them. These teachers and movements mainly appealed to the higher classes generating in them a sense of past guilt and of its present 'duty to the masses'. The movements have borne fruit so that the modern Renaissance in India does not exhaust itself in a mere political upheaval but assumes more enduring forms of a religious awakening and social transformation. The world outside sees mostly India's political awakening. Far more important to India herself is the great struggle for social justice and social welfare that is going on within her bosom. It is, in the words of Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 11):

> 'a struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things — sympathy for the poor, and bread to their hungry mouths, enlightenment to the people at large, and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts by the tyranny of your forefathers'.

3. Religion and Social Change in Modern India

Thanks to the work of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, Hindu society has seriously taken in hand the work of self-purification. The charter of freedom has been proclaimed in no uncertain voice and the dead-weight of custom and tradition is being slowly lifted. We have also to thank Western thought and political practice which have helped to break what Vivekananda characterized as, our 'crystallized civilization'. Social progress in India has always been on the lines of sharing the benefits of culture and of higher Hindu thought by larger and larger sections of the population. Democratization of knowledge and opportunity meant also elevation of the people. The best genius of Hinduism lay in this direction in a special sense. If there had been stagnation due to the dead-weight of meaningless custom and oppressive tradition, it meant only that society had forgotten the larger plan and purpose of the ancient leaders. Society is then in need of a new dynamism. In India, this urge to progress has always come from great saints and sages and not from mere political thinkers. A new passion for *dharma* has supplied the necessary revolutionary urge. Hinduism seeks to demonstrate that progress and well-being of the masses do

not lie against religion. Swami Vivekananda sums up this outlook and programme in the formula: 'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion' (*ibid.*, p. 29).

But the awakening of the conscience of the privileged is only one act in the drama of enfranchisement. The other equally, if not more, important part is the process of self-discovery on the part of the oppressed themselves. This period of awakening of the masses to a sense of their worth and importance is a critical period in the history of a people. It may be either explosive and destructive or gentle and constructive; but the effect is revolutionary in both cases. The most serious criticism against a violent revolution is that it rarely achieves its original purpose. The second type is more permanent and far-reaching in its effects.

4. *Sri Narayana Guru's Approach to Social Change*

That these recent changes in Hindu society are of a peaceful and constructive character is as much due to the good sense of the Indian masses as to the soundness of Hindu social philosophy and ideals. The movement of reform associated with Sri Narayana Guru is unique in one important respect: it is entirely constructive and devoid of any bitterness against the higher classes. All over the world, the unprivileged classes, in their awakening, have manifested what may be called legitimate hostility and bitterness against the privileged. All the blame has been attached to one side. From the purely human point of view, there may be some justification for this attitude and the class-hatred that it fosters. But it is harmful to the abiding interest of social health and well-being. The theory that all social progress is the result of class-antagonism and class-struggle is yet to be proved. Clash of interests in a society is inevitable. What is not so evident is that social progress is the beneficent result of such clashes. It is more reasonable to hold that true progress is possible only where class-antagonism is least, in virtue of the emphasis on ideas and ideals which are the common wealth of all the classes.

This is the meaning and significance of the Indian conception of *dharma* — a conception which seeks the unity of social endeavour through harmony and co-operation. It is to the eternal glory of Sri

Narayana Guru to have inaugurated a movement which embodies in itself this unique genius of Hinduism and to have released the forces of the Spirit for the solution of the many pressing problems of even the mundane life of his people. In this, he takes rank with the saints and reformers of earlier centuries and, more especially, with Guru Nānak, the founder of the Sikh fraternity. Except in one respect, there is striking similarity between the life and work of these two masters who are separated by about five centuries. Nānak belonged to the higher classes but fraternized with and reformed the lowly and the lost in Hindu society. Narayana Guru was born with the social stigma of an untouchable among whom he worked and whose life he transformed. The so-called lowness of his birth could in no way hide or smother the richness of his native endowment. It is this wealth of native genius that enabled him to raise himself and his people above the depressing circumstances of an unjust social order. He imparted life to the almost dead bones and muscles of his people and made them conscious of their human worth and dignity. Rightly is he called the *Guru* whose breath is hope and whose touch is life.

5. *The Guru's Wisdom and Discernment*

Sri Narayana shows himself at his best in wisdom and discernment in the role of a religious and social reformer. There has been no dearth of reformers and reform proposals in modern India. But most of the social reforms advocated by them were more ornamental than real. In his famous lecture on 'My Plan of Campaign' delivered at Madras in February 1897, Swami Vivekananda referred to this problem in these words (*Complete Works, Vol. III,* Ninth Edition, *pp. 213-215):*

"To the reformers I will point out, that I am a greater reformer than any of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction; mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth. ... We admit there are evils. Everybody can show what evil is, but he is the friend of mankind who finds a way out of the difficulty. Like the drowning boy and the philosopher, when the philosopher was lecturing him, the boy cried: "Take me out of the water first"; so our people cry: "We have had lectures enough, papers enough, societies enough; where is the man who will lend us a hand to drag us out? Where is the man who has sympathy for us?" Ay, that man is wanted.'

About the time these words were spoken at Madras by the great prophet of modern Indian Renaissance, the sunken masses of the neighbouring province of Kerala were finding their hopes and their voice in the personality of Sri Narayana Guru, who had by then started his silent work of transformation. World events are compelling us to the view that the best legislative authority in the world is character. The *ṛṣi* or sage has always been recognized as the law-giver in India. His knowledge and his detachment constitute valid sanctions for the equity of his legislation. In Sri Narayana Guru the people found such a law-giver. Himself a monk and a man of God, in virtue of which he rose above all social conventions and obligations, he yet descended to the level of his fellow-men in an attitude of compassion, and lent his loving hand to drag them out of their misery. And he had the supreme satisfaction to witness, even in his own lifetime, the ample reward of his labours in the improved tone of the moral and material well-being of his people.

6. *The Guru's Programme of 'Root and Branch Reform'*

Sri Narayana Guru is reputed to have been a great *Ayurvedic* physician. But he was a greater physician of social maladies. He prescribed education as the one remedy for all the ills of the depressed classes. He was the unwearied champion of modern education for his people. This was to pave the way for their economic and social advancement. Equally important is the acquirement of culture, for which he prescribed Sanskrit education. A third vital need was spiritual sustenance, which comes first in importance in his scheme. To meet this need, he consecrated temples and shrines. Temples, modern education, and Sanskrit culture formed integral parts of the Guru's method of root-and-branch reform. In asking his people to depend upon their own resources, he inspired them with self-respect and self-help, which helped to draw out their latent capacities. The power thus released was canalized into constructive channels, resulting in the creation of a network of institutions to serve the religious, educational, social, and economic needs of the community throughout the province of Kerala.

7. *The Solid Gains*

The curse of untouchability is practised in its most extreme form

in Kerala, for which that province had earned the name of lunatic asylum from Swami Vivekananda. The thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, mingled with the silent and steady work of Sri Narayana Guru, led to the great act of expiation in the famous Travancore Temple-entry Proclamation, which at one stroke bridged the wide gulf that separated the privileged classes from the masses in religion, and wiped away one of the deep-seated stains on the society and the province. In this great achievement, Sri Narayana Guru's contribution has been immense. Under the inspiration of his name and ideals, the depressed classes of Kerala are making rapid strides in educational advancement and economic improvement. To several sections of them, the name 'depressed class' is a thorough misnomer today. It is only a question of time when this label of stigma on them and on Hindu society will be a thing of the past, not merely in the province of Sri Narayana Guru's birth, but also in the whole of India. This was the dream of Swami Vivekananda, as it is the passion of Mahatma Gandhi today. Only then will be accomplished the purification and strengthening of Hindu society and Hindu religion, when the paralysed limb of society, constituted of the seventy million people of the unprivileged classes, will be galvanized into self-conscious activity, and contribute their share to the building up of a healthy national life.

8. *Conclusion*

In this great work of reform and consolidation in the wider fields of India, the ideals and methods of Sri Narayana Guru are bound to be an unfailing source of inspiration and guidance. *In all that he was and in all that he did, Sri Narayana Guru stands as the supreme symbol of hope and redemption to the depressed classes of India.*

18

SISTER NIVEDITĀ AND THE CHARACTER OF HER GREATNESS*

1. *Introductory*

IT is by sheer chance that I am in Coimbatore and before you today; and I am very happy to spend a few minutes with you to discuss the life and message of Sister Nivedita and the character of her greatness. Our country has been celebrating her birth centenary during the last over a year. Hers was a great life on which it is good for us all to contemplate. How did she become great and what was the character of that greatness?

2. *Nivedita Hailed as Lokamata*

Nivedita's life and work have drawn homage from many a thinker and leader of our nation. The beautiful tribute paid to her by poet Rabindranath Tagore within a month of her passing away on 13 October 1911, and published in the Bengali Monthly, *Prabasi*. is indicative ot the impact of her personality on her contemporaries (English translation by Kshitis Roy and Krishna Kripalani):

'I have not seen in any one else such amazing capacity for a total dedication of self. ... To know her was to see the spirit of humanity at its best—a privilege, indeed, to be able to see the human spirit's undimmed radiance through the coarse crust of the work-a-day world. We who had this opportunity to see face to face the spirit's unvanquished splendour revealed through Sister Nivedita were thus blest.

'The gift that Sister Nivedita gave us was the gift of a great life. ...We have to understand and realize the power that was behind it, the intellect, the heart, the sacrifice, and the bright insight of genius which could make such self-dedication possible.

'What impresses one most in her life is that she was at once a profound thinker and capable of dynamic action. ... Where action springs from thought, even a small deed assumes bigness, and imperfections take a strange kind of beauty like the many-coloured rays of the sun filtered through an intervening layer of clouds. Such a beauty is revealed in the life and work of Sister Nivedita. ...

*Address at the Sri Avinashilingam College of Home Science, Coimbatore-11, on the occasion of its Sister Nivedita Centenary Celebrations on 15 February 1968

'Sister Nivedita loved India and gave herself with unreserved devotion, not withholding anything herself. ...

'She was indeed a *Lokamata*, a mother to the people. We are familiar with the mother's role in the family; but the image of a mother whose love enfolded a whole people was something we had never seen before. We have had male devotion to public duty, but never before had we witnessed such magnificent sweep of womanly devotion. When she referred to 'our people', the feeling in her voice rang more true than in the voice of any one of us.'

3. *Birth and Early Life*

Born in Ireland in 1867 as Miss Margaret Noble, she died in Darjeeling in India in 1911 as world-famous Sister Nivedita, drawing tributes from world-famous men like the one from Tagore which I quoted just now. She had to strive hard to achieve this greatness, compressed as her life was in a brief forty four years. That holds a fascination to all students of human greatness.

The early years of her life were spent in Ireland and in England. She possessed a brilliant intellect, a powerful will, rare artistic sensibility, and a deep human concern. Her most striking quality was her passion for truth and a persistent search to discover the same. She was dedicated to the service of God by her pious Christian parents in her early childhood; but as she grew up, dogmatic religion failed to satisfy her searching mind and heart; and like many others of the modern age, she soon became an agnostic, but only with respect to the prevailing formulations, continuing, however, unlike the usual run of agnostics, her quest for truth more ardently.

4. *Momentous Meeting with Swami Vivekananda*

She was running a successful educational institution for children in London. Inwardly, however, she was restless, intellectually and spiritually. Little did she then know that destiny was about to knock at her door, that the kingdom of Heaven was *at hand*. The year was 1895; after his great work of spiritual awakening in the United States in the wake of his historic speech at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893, Swami Vivekananda was giving a series of lectures on Indian philosophy and spirituality in London.

Miss Margaret Noble met him and heard him at an intimate gathering of fifteen or sixteen men and women at a parlour talk in Wimbledon, London, in November of that year. In her famous book on Vivekananda entitled *The Master as I Saw Him,* she describes her first impressions of him, the manner of his speaking, the truth he expounded, and the powerful impact of the speaker and his message on her mind and heart. She felt then and there that this was the teacher and this was the teaching that she was waiting for all these years. Very soon she gained an insight into the spirit of India and her great philosophy Vedānta; its rationality and universality, and its stress on personal verification of its truths, with no demand to believe in advance, impressed her immensely.

5. *Her First Impressions of Her Master*

Summing up her impressions of this first contact with Vivekananda, Niveditā writes in the above book *(Complete Works of Sister Niveditā,* published by Sister Niveditā Girls-School, Calcutta-3, Vol. I, p. 24):

'These then, were the things I remembered and pondered over, concerning the Swami, when he had left England that winter for America— first, the breadth of his religious culture; second, the great intellectual newness and interest of the thought he had brought to us; and thirdly, the fact that his call was sounded in the name of that which was strongest and finest, and was not in any way dependent on the meaner elements in man.'

Thereafter, it did not take her long to accept Vivekananda as her Master or *Guru*. Reflecting on these events years later she wondered how fruitless and small her life would have been if she had not met him, and she expressed these feelings in a letter to a friend written after the publication of her book *The Web of Indian Life* (quoted in *Sister Niveditā* by Atmaprana, p. 18):

'Suppose Swami had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless torso. For I always knew that I was waiting for something, I always said that a call would come, and it did. But if I had known more of life, I should, perhaps, have doubted whether when the time came I should certainly recognize. Fortunately, I knew little and was spared the torture. Now I look at the book and say, "If he had not come!" For always I had this burning voice within, but nothing to utter. How often and often I have sat down, pen in hand, to speak, and there was no speech, and now there is no end to it. As surely as I am fitted for my world, so surely is my world in need of me, waiting, ready.'

6. *Her Discipleship: Early Trials*

He gave a direction to her spiritual quest and a meaning to her life. But her discipleship was not a smooth and easy experience. She was an intellectual rebel and she vehemently questioned the truths he presented and the teachings he imparted. Later, in India, she had a hard time in her training under her Master to see India through Indian eyes, about which I shall speak in due course. She was unique in this in her whole group. And she was amazed and gratified to find that her Master never expressed dissatisfaction at this, but on the contrary, encouraged her in her critical questioning approach, saying that he himself had rebelled against his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, in the same way, and that his Master had encouraged him in the same. It is only what one accepts after thorough inquiry and questioning that becomes truly one's own. He told her that his Master had always encouraged him saying:

'Don't simply accept what I say; but test me as the money changers test their coins.'

Giving the Swami's reaction to this scepticism of hers, Niveditā refers to his assuring words (*Complete Works of Sister Niveditā,* Vol. I, p.22):

'Let none regret that they were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six long years, with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!'

7. *Her Final Acceptance*

When Niveditā finally accepted Vivekananda as her Master and his message of Vedānta as her spiritual nourishment, she asked herself how she was going to live it. She offered herself to the cause of her Master's work for Indian women. He was at first hesitant to accept her offer, firstly because of considerations of the difficult living conditions and climate in India, and secondly because of the prevailing attitude of superiority and patronage of the Western workers in India. Vivekananda, however, soon accepted her offer, impressed as he was with her dynamism, sincerity, and dedication. Accordingly, he wrote to her on 29 July 1897 (quoted in *Sister Niveditā,* pp. 28-29):

'Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially.

'India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and, above all, the Celtic blood, make you just the woman wanted.'

He later sent her the following sweet benedictory poem:

The mother's heart, the hero's will,
the sweetness of the southern breeze,
the sacred charm and strength that dwell
on Aryan altars, flaming, free;
all this be yours, and many more,
no ancient soul would dream before—
Be thou to India's future son
The mistress, servant, friend, in one.

Margaret landed at Calcutta on 28 January 1898 and was received, among others, by Vivekananda himself. The Swami wondered how to make her acceptable to the Indian people in the context of the then prevailing social exclusiveness and distrust of the Western people. He decided to introduce her to Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, believing that if, in spite of her conservative Hindu social background, she accepted her, India also would accept her. To the great satisfaction of the Swami and to the immense joy of Margaret herself, the Holy Mother accepted her with open arms and treated her as her own daughter; and to the end of her days, Margaret called herself the Holy Mother's *khooki* or little daughter.

8. *Margaret Becomes Niveditā, 'the Dedicated'*

This was followed, eight days later, by what Niveditā valued as the second great event in her life in India, namely, her initiation into spiritual life by her Master at the Ramakrishna monastery, then located in the Nilambar Mukherji's garden-house at Belur, on 25 March 1898. It was during this initiation that Margaret received her new name of 'Niveditā', 'the dedicated'. And none more truly lived a life true to one's name — and, in this case, a great meaningful name, than this worthy disciple of so outstanding a teacher.

Alluding to these two important events in her life, she wrote in a letter to Miss MacLeod, an intimate American friend and admirer of Vivekananda, on 17 March 1904 (*Sister Niveditā, p. 37*):

'Six years ago this very day, and on a Tuesday too, I saw the Holy Mother for the first time, and went home with you again to the cottage. In the cycle of years we have come round to the same days again. Friday next, March 25th, will be the anniversary of the first day I was called 'Niveditā.' We are, then, entering on the seventh year; I wish it might be unflawed, perfect, but this seems too much to ask.'

Niveditā soon plunged into the work for which she had come to India. And the remaining thirteen years of her earthly life were marked by a rare type of intensity and dedication comparable only to her own Master's. She absorbed herself in lecturing, writing, educational work, political activities, and social service, including plague relief; she encouraged and helped budding artists, scientists, journalists, political revolutionaries, and simple housewives. In our Tamilnad itself, poet and patriot Subramanya Bharati looked upon her as his *Guru*. Several aspects of the modern renaissance in India felt the wholesome impact of her powerful pen and tongue and personality. Her intense love of India flowed into an unceasing service of her people struggling to recover their ancient soul and find their firm feet in the modern transition. She exemplified the dictum of queen Viduḷa of *Udyogaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* (120, 15):

Muhūrtaṁ jvalitaṁ śreyo
na tu dhūmāyitam ciram

'It is better to flame forth for an instant than to smoke away for an age!'

9. *Niveditā as Her Master's Voice*

Till her Master's passing away in 1902, Niveditā spent many months with him either in Calcutta or on visits to various parts of India and the West. This period marked her own intense education in the Indian view of life and in the message of her own Master. As a fruit of that education, she has left a permanent literary legacy in several books, in two of which, namely, *The Master as I Saw Him* and *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda*, we have a master-mind interpreting another master-mind. We have the teachings of Vivekananda available in his lectures, writings, letters, and interviews, collected in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works*. But Niveditā provides us with an intimate and near-view of

the colossal greatness of a highly creative mind which was Vivekananda. She gives us fascinating glimpses of the personality of her great Master, the immense range of his intellectual and human interests, his fearless and refreshing views on historical and contemporary personalities, movements, and events, and valuable snatches of his strengthening and purifying message.

Referring to her own role in these books as a mere instrument of communication between a great teacher and the waiting world at large, Niveditā says (*Complete Works of Sister Niveditā,* Vol. I, p.74):

'Mine is the broken and faltering witness of one who is fain to tell — not of geography nor of politics, not yet of the ways and customs of interesting people and unknown races, but rather of the glimpse vouchsafed to her of a great religious life of the ancient order, living itself out, amidst the full and torturing consciousness of all the anomalies and perplexities of the Modern Transition.'

And speaking more explicitly about this role of hers, she says (*ibid.*, p. 76):

'My own part, throughout the years of my discipleship, appears to me to have been something like that of a thought-reader. The only claim that I can make is that I was able to enter sufficiently into the circuit of my Master's energy to be able to give. evidence regarding it from direct perception.'

And speaking of her Master's role in that Modern Transition, she says (*ibid.*, pp. 74-75):

'His was the modern mind in its completeness. In his consciousness, the ancient light of the mood, in which man comes face to face with God, might shine, but it shone on all those questions and all those puzzles which are present to the thinker and workers of the modern world. ...

'And thinking thus, I believe that each trace of those higher and uncommon modes of thought and consciousness to which he held the key, has its significance for the modern age, I believe that much which has passed myself by, uncomprehending, will fall on its proper soil in other lives. And I pray only to give always true witness, without added interpolation or falsifying colour.'

10. Vivekananda as Seen by Niveditā

I have been always fascinated by two passages in her *The Master as I Saw Him* wherein she conveys, in arresting language, Vivekananda's love of India (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 45):

'There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He never used the word 'nationality', nor preached an era of 'nation-making'. 'Man-making', he said, was his own task. But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness.'

Again (*ibid.*, pp. 47-48):

'Like some great spiral of emotion, its lowest circles held fast in love of soil and love of nature; its next embracing every possible association of race, experience, history, and thought; and the whole converging and centering upon a single definite point, was thus the Swami's worship of his land. And the point in which it was focussed was the conviction that India was not old and effete, as her critics had supposed, but young, ripe with potentiality, and standing, at the beginning of the twentieth century, on the threshold of even greater developments than she has known in the past.'

After referring to the need to make Hinduism dynamic, she conveys, in another luminous passage, her Master's vision of modern Hinduism and the ideals of the Ramakrishna Order (*ibid.*, pp. 113-114):

'The same purpose spoke again in his definition of the aims of the Order of Ramakrishna — "to effect an exchange of the highest ideals of the East and West, and to realize these in practice" — a definition whose perfection and special appropriateness to the present circumstances of India, grows on one with time. To his mind, Hinduism was not to remain a stationary system, but to prove herself capable of embracing and welcoming the whole modern development. She was no congeries of divided sects, but a single living Mother-Church, recognizing all that had been born of her, fearless of the new, eager for the love of her children, wherever they might be found, wise, merciful, self-directing, pardoning, and reconciling. Above all, she was the holder of a definite vision, the preacher of a distinct message amongst the nations. To prove her this, however, he relied on no force but that of character. The building of the Temple of his faith was all-important, it was true; but for it there was infinite time, and with it worked the tendency and drift of things. For himself, the responsibility was to choose sound bricks. And he chose, not with an eye to the intellect, or power of attraction, or volume of force, of those who were chosen, but always for a certain quality of simple sincerity, and, as it seemed, for that alone.

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'His was the modern mind in its completeness. In his consciousness, the ancient light of the mood, in which man comes face to face with God, might shine, but it shone on all those questions and all those puzzles which are present to the thinker and workers of the modern world. ...

'And thinking thus, I believe that each trace of those higher and uncommon modes of thought and consciousness to which he held the key, has its significance for the modern age, I believe that much which has passed myself by, uncomprehending, will fall on its proper soil in other lives. And I pray only to give always true witness, without added interpolation or falsifying colour.'

10. Vivekananda as Seen by Nivedita

I have been always fascinated by two passages in her *The Master as I Saw Him* wherein she conveys, in arresting language, Vivekananda's love of India (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 45):

'There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He never used the word 'nationality', nor preached an era of 'nation-making'. 'Man-making', he said, was his own task. But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness.'

Again (*ibid.*, pp. 47-48):

'Like some great spiral of emotion, its lowest circles held fast in love of soil and love of nature; its next embracing every possible association of race, experience, history, and thought; and the whole converging and centering upon a single definite point, was thus the Swami's worship of his land. And the point in which it was focussed was the conviction that India was not old and effete, as her critics had supposed, but young, ripe with potentiality, and standing, at the beginning of the twentieth century, on the threshold of even greater developments than she has known in the past.'

After referring to the need to make Hinduism dynamic, she conveys, in another luminous passage, her Master's vision of modern Hinduism and the ideals of the Ramakrishna Order (*ibid.*, pp. 113-114):

'The same purpose spoke again in his definition of the aims of the Order of Ramakrishna — "to effect an exchange of the highest ideals of the East and West, and to realize these in practice" — a definition whose perfection and special appropriateness to the present circumstances of India, grows on one with time. To his mind, Hinduism was not to remain a stationary system, but to prove herself capable of embracing and welcoming the whole modern development. She was no congeries of divided sects, but a single living Mother-Church, recognizing all that had been born of her, fearless of the new, eager for the love of her children, wherever they might be found, wise, merciful, self-directing, pardoning, and reconciling. Above all, she was the holder of a definite vision, the preacher of a distinct message amongst the nations. To prove her this, however, he relied on no force but that of character. The building of the Temple of his faith was all-important, it was true; but for it there was infinite time, and with it worked the tendency and drift of things. For himself, the responsibility was to choose sound bricks. And he chose, not with an eye to the intellect, or power of attraction, or volume of force, of those who were chosen, but always for a certain quality of simple sincerity, and, as it seemed, for that alone.

Once accepted, the ideal put before them was the same: not *mukti* but renunciation, not self-realization but self-abandonment. And this rather, again, on behalf of man than as an offering to God. It was the *human motive* that he asserted to his disciples.'

She presents vivid glimpses of the Swami's great love and concern for the welfare of women and the common people (ibid., p. 193):

'Our Master, at any rate, regarded the Order to which he belonged as one whose lot was cast for all time with the cause of woman and the people. This was the cry that rose to his lips instinctively, when he dictated to the phonograph in America the message that he would send to the Raja of Khetri. It was the one thought, too, with which he would turn to the disciple at his side, whenever he felt himself nearer than usual to death, in a foreign country, alone, "Never forget" he would then say, "the word is, 'woman and the people'!"

Conveying his vision of the woman of the future, she says (*ibid.*, p. 195):

'He could not foresee a Hindu woman of the future, entirely without the old power of meditation. Modern science, woman must learn; but not at the cost of the ancient spirituality. He saw clearly enough that the ideal education would be one that should exercise the smallest possible influence for direct change on the social body as a whole. It would be that which should best enable every woman, in time to come, to resume into herself the greatness of all the women of the Indian past.'

Again, highlighting his stress on the need for both men and women to outgrow their physical limitations by their closer and closer approach to Self-realization, the realization of the Ātman, the sexless Self of all, she remarks (*ibid.*, pp. 196-97):

'He saw plainly enough that what was wanted was a race of women-educators, and this was how he contemplated making them. Strength, strength, strength was the one quality he called for in woman as in man. But how stern was his discrimination of what constituted strength! Neither self-advertisement nor over-emotion roused his admiration. His mind was full of the grand old types of silence and sweetness and steadiness to be attracted by any form of mere display. At the same time, woman had as large an inheritance as man in all the thought and knowledge that formed the peculiar gift of the age to India. There could be no sex in truth. *He would never tolerate any scheme of life and polity that tended to bind tighter on mind and soul the fetters of the body. The greater the individual, the more would she transcend the limitations of femininity in mind and character; and the more was such transcendence to be expected and admired.*' (italics not by Nivedita)

11. Nivedita's Training by Her Master

In the opening para of her book, *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda,* Niveditā writes (*Complete Works of Sister Niveditā (ibid.*, pp. 277-78):

'Beautiful have been the days of this year (1898). In them the Ideal has become the Real. First in our river-side cottage at Belur (Bengal); then in the Himalayas, at Naini Tal and Almora; afterwards wandering here and there through Kashmir — everywhere have come hours never to be forgotten, words that will echo through our lives for ever, and, once at least, a glimpse of the Beatific Vision. ....

'We have seen a love that would be one with the humblest and most ignorant, seeing the world for the moment through his eyes, as if criticism were not; we have laughed over the colossal caprice of genius; we have warmed ourselves at heroic fires; and we have been present, as it were, at the awakening of the Holy Child.....

'We have learnt something of the mood in which new faiths are born, and of the Persons who inspire such faiths. For we have been with one who drew all men to him,—listening to all, feeling with all, and refusing none.'

Āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā — 'wonderful the teacher and talented his disciple', says the *Katha Upaniṣad.* It was such a communion of two creative minds that found expression in the education of Niveditā, under Vivekananda. Referring, with refreshing candour, to the severity of her training at Almora by her Master to fit her for her role in India, Niveditā writes (*ibid.*, pp. 289-90):

'Into these morning talks at Almora, a strange new element, painful but salutary to remember, had crept. There appeared to be, on one side, a curious bitterness and distrust, and, on the other, irritation and defiance. The youngest of the Swami's disciples at this time, it must be remembered, was an English woman, and of how much this fact meant intellectually—what a strong bias it implied, and always does imply, in the reading of India, ... the Swami himself had had no conception till the day after her initiation at the monastery. Then he had asked her some exultant question, as to which nation she now belonged, and had been startled to find with what a passion of loyalty and worship she regarded the English flag, giving to it much of the feeling that an Indian woman would give to her *Thakoor*(God). His surprise and disappointment at the moment were scarcely perceptible. A startled look, no more. Nor did his discovery of the superficial way in which this disciple had joined herself with his people in any degree affect his confidence and courtesy during the remaining weeks spent in the plains.

'But with Almora, it seemed as if a going–to–school had commenced, and just as schooling is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half–view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. It was never more than this; never the dictating of opinion or creed; never more than emancipation from partiality. Even at the end of the terrible experience, when this method, as regarded race and country, was renounced, never

to be taken up systematically again, the Swami did not call for any confession of faith, any declaration of new opinion. He dropped the whole question. His listener went free. But he had revealed a different standpoint in thought and feeling, so completely and so strongly as to make it impossible for her to rest, until later, by her own labours, she had arrived at a view in which both these partial presentments stood rationalized and accounted for'.

The end of this stress and strain of training was the descent of peace through the blessing of her Master. In her description of this event in *The Master as I Saw Him,* we get revealed the calibre of both the disciple and the Master. It holds a vital lesson for all those who desire to become fit instruments for the high and worthy cause which they may have chosen. *(The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita,* Vol.1, pp.80–81):

'My relation to our Master at this time can only be described as one of clash and conflict. I can see now how much there was to learn and how short was the time for learning to be, and the first of lessons doubtless is the destroying of self–sufficiency in the mind of the taught. But I had been little prepared for that constant rebuke and attack upon all my most cherished prepossessions which was now my lot. Suffering is often illogical, and I cannot attempt to justify by reason the degree of unhappiness I experienced at this time, as I saw the dream of a friendly and beloved teacher falling away from me, and the picture of one who would be at least indifferent, and possibly, silently hostile, substituting itself instead.

'Fortunately it never occurred to me to retract my own proffered service, but I was made to realize, as days went by, that in this there would be no personal sweetness. And then a time came when one of the elder ladies of our party, thinking perhaps that such intensity of pain inflicted might easily go too far, interceded kindly and gravely with the Swami. He listened silently and went away. At evening, however he returned, and finding us together in the verandah, he turned to her and said, with the simplicity of a child,"you were right, there must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I came back, I shall bring peace." Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exaltation came into his voice as he said, "See! The Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!" As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him. ... It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation.

'But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments. And I have told its story, only that I may touch upon its sequel. Long, long ago, Sri Ramakrishna had told his disciples that the day would come when his beloved "Noren" would manifest his own great gift of bestowing knowledge with a touch. That evening, at Almora, I proved the truth of his prophecy. For alone, in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite

Good, to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning had led me. I learnt, too, on the physical plane, the simple everyday reality of the experience related in the Hindu books on religious psychology. And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place.'

12. *Nivedita Hailed by Poet Tagore as the Modern Satī*

Nivedita's glowing life and example hold a great lesson for our people, and more especially for our women. Her love for the people and her service of them were imbued with the deepest Vedāntic spiritual vision, the vision which Sri Ramakrishna imparted in his message: *Jīva* is Śiva; and service of *Jīva* is the worship of Śiva, and which Vivekananda proclaimed in his message of *Daridra-Nārāyaṇa seva.* In that article in the *Prabāsi* referred to earlier, Tagore speaks of Nivedita as the modern Satī. Ancient Indian religious literature, including Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhavam,* refers to the severe penance of young and beautiful Satī to secure Śiva as her husband. Says Tagore (*op. cit.*):

'Satī, for love of Śiva, subjected her delicate body and mind to a fiery ordeal of hunger and heat. Nivedita too, a modern Satī, underwent a similar ordeal, with almost no food for days on end, cooped up in a small house in a narrow street where for want of air many a burning night was spent without a wink of sleep. ... It was her total surrender to the Śiva seated in the heart of man. What *sādhana* can be harder than to strive to win as one's lord and master this Śiva on his Mount Kailās hidden in the hearts of all men?

'One day Śiva himself appeared in disguise before Satī in penance and said: "Lady, is he for whose sake you are undergoing this ordeal deserving of one so beautiful as you? He is destitute, old, and ugly, and his ways are strange." Flaring up, Satī rejoined, "He may be all that you say, nevertheless my mind is wholly centred on him."

'Can a Satī so absorbed in her Śiva ever care for the outer glamour, wealth, and beauty of the material world?'.

Explaining the nature of Nivedita's penance, Tagore continues (*ibid.*):

'Sister Nivedita's heart overflowed with this deep and rare spiritual love. That is why she saw her God in the poor, and entranced by what she beheld, she put the garland of the pure, white blossoms of her deathless devotion round the neck of the people whose lack of outward elegance repels the elite.

'Witnessing with our eyes the penance of this Satī for her Śiva, our own paralysed faith was quickened into life, and we could believe that there indeed is Śiva in every man, that his radiance illumines the tumble-down huts of the poor and the slums of the *pariah* and the outcaste.'

13. Conclusion

The Indian people in general, and her women in particular, have a hoary tradition of austerity and penance and capacity for love and service. For long it had remained confined to the person and his or her family. Vivekananda has cut a new channel, the channel of service of God in man, for this current of national tradition to flow, with a view to fertilizing the national life in a pervasive way. He calls upon our men and women to grow spiritually, by transcending their physical and biological selves. This is true renunciation; this is creative austerity. The *gṛhastha* or the householder must grow into the citizen, through cultivation of ethical awareness and social concern, with service as the principle of inter-human relationships. If our women had achieved this growth in themselves in the earlier centuries, there would have been no untouchability and other social evils in our society. 'Renunciation and service', says Vivekananda, 'are the twin ideals of India; intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself.'

It was this message that found a glowing example and communication medium in Sister Nivedita. May her example be a beacon of hope and courage to you all.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND THE FUTURE OF INDIA*

1. Introductory

The 15th of August 1947, so far as India is concerned, may be said to mark the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. Foreign domination which began with Plassey in 1757 ends today—exactly 190 years later. This epoch of political slavery is but a short interregnum viewed against the background of India's long history. The real significance of this interlude in our history can be assessed only when we are at a little distance in time from it, when alone an objective consideration of events becomes possible. It is difficult for any but the greatest thinkers to view events dispassionately even while living them. Any such event, therefore, will appear to have a different value to such a thinker from what it will bear to an average person.

2. Political Freedom versus Political Subjection

Political slavery, to an average person, may mean nothing unusual, if it does not affect the routine within the little horizon of his daily life. But it becomes galling when the same person becomes politically conscious—when its restrictions impinge upon his newly acquired sense of values of freedom and self-respect. With the dawning of the consciousness of these values, he becomes a political entity—a being who values freedom above mere material and physical security. This marks the emergence of a spiritual and moral value in the life of man and the evolution of a rudimentary moral and spiritual personality. It is this rudimentary personality that, later on, through political education in life, and through the intense pursuit of the value of freedom, grows into that finished social product, the citizen. The evolution of this citizen is the end of politics, as it is also the highest *social* end.

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3. *India Stands up to the Modern Challenge*

Political subjection in the nineteenth century, with its promise of an era of peace, was more or less accepted by the vast mass of Hindus and Muslims of this country, urged by considerations of physical and material security and as an escape from the uncertainties of the earlier centuries. But this was but a phase, and a short phase at that. Political slavery becomes a challenge, as much when it tends to uproot the cultural inheritance, as when it tends to restrict the scope of functioning, of a people. A people who possess inner reserves of vitality rise to meet this challenge, while those who are bereft of it take it easy and court extinction as a people, through continuing to live as individuals with new souls and new bodies. The history of the world is not without examples of the latter type. The challenge to India came from both the fronts—cultural as well as socio-political. India rose to meet the challenge first on the cultural front, then on the political—broadly speaking the second half of the nineteenth century evidenced the first, while this century up-to-date evidenced the second—thus demonstrating the abiding vitality of the people and their legacy. In the arresting story of this double process and the phenomenal successes it has attained even in so short a period lies the romance of recent Indian history and its significance to the world at large.

One noteworthy feature of India's rise to meet the new cultural challenge from the West needs to be well emphasized; for it contains a quality of dynamic synthesis, which has also imparted its tone to her response to the second challenge, namely, to her fight for political independence, and which contains promise of fruitful application in the spheres of her domestic and foreign relations as well. ***This striking feature is the note of affirmation and synthesis, inclusion and not exclusion, characteristic of new India's awareness and activity.*** What was but re-actionary (used in the literal sense only) in the early phases, and often apologetic and negative, becomes transformed into a creative movement of thought, seeking to affirm and to synthesize any tested human value whether evolved in the East or in the West, whether scientific or religious, political or social.

4. *Vivekananda and the Modern Indian Renaissance*

Swami Vivekananda stands as the most effective spokesman and

representative of this phase of our cultural movement. He was one of those who found in the British connection a potent means for breaking our moribund society and civilization with a view to making it expansive. In his personality was fused the past and the present, ancient wisdom and modern knowledge; he knew the glory of our past; he felt intimately the degradations of our present day; he was a Hindu to the backbone; he loved and revered other religions as well. He was a lover of the social and spiritual gospel of Islam and Christianity and of their value to Indian life and thought. Above all, he was deeply imbued with the spirit of modern thought with its theoretical and practical contributions in the field of science, and political and economic contributions in the field of life and society. Last but not the least, he was fully aware of the international character of human relationships in the modern context. His was not the rôle of a reactionary patriot who would take his country away from the contamination of other peoples, or who would ride his chariot of nationalism roughly over the freedom of other nations. He loved India, but he loved humanity too, with equal passion. Says he in one of his letters affirming his faith in the glory of man as such, undivided by narrow domestic walls (*Complete Works,* Vol. 8, p. 349, Third Edition):

'What is India or England or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called *Man.*"

And we may as well add, whom the more ignorant call Hindu, Muslim, Christian, or Indian, Russian, American, etc.

Jawaharlal Nehru pays a tribute to this aspect of Swami Vivekananda's personality *(The Discovery of India,* p. 400):

'Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.'

Himself an internationalist, he quotes with deep appreciation the following statement of the unity of mankind from Swami Vivekananda's lectures delivered in 1897 (quoted in *The Discovery of India,* pp. 401-2):

'Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no longer be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international

combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows solidarity. ... There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of life, within its scope.'

Applying this criterion to the recent past of India and pointing a lesson and a warning to his countrymen, both Hindu and Muslim, Swami Vivekananda affirms (quoted in *The Discovery of India,* p. 402):

'I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness, the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one. The fact of our isolation from all the other nations of the world is the cause of our degeneration, and its only remedy is getting back into the current of the world. Motion is the sign of life.'

The words quoted above were uttered fifty years ago; they carry a freshness and a vigour even today. In Swami Vivekananda's day, India was not an active factor in world affairs. Her past glory was a subject of sympathetic comment and study with several Western scholars. But the world in general pitied her in her plight. Her own children also felt a sort of self-pity for their aged and battered mother.

But all this quickly changed. The shock of conquest and the shame of subjection were a challenge which, far from extinguishing her inner fires, as happened in the case of many other nations and as was anticipated by many even in hers, on the contrary, led to her blazing forth in an outburst of thought and activity, initiating a real process of national rejuvenation. This awakening was a process, first, of self-discovery and, second, of self-expression.

The process of self-discovery on the part of India may be said to attain its culmination today—15th of August 1947—with the attainment by her of full political freedom; the energies so released will from now onward issue forth in a more intensified process of creative self-expression.

5. *Vivekananda's 'Domestic Policy'*

Vivekananda as *person* led India into the current of world cultural forces. Vivekananda as *idea* seeks to guide India into the

world community of nations after making her a well-knit people. In Vivekananda's conception, India had in her the requisite historically acquired capacity to function as the moral leader of nations. The new world situation also demands a strong moral guidance to the energies of nations. But India, he held, could not assume that role and discharge it effectively without first effecting certain vital changes within herself. Herein lies the scope of what he characteristically termed his 'domestic policy', leading to the assumption and discharge by her of that world responsibility which he called his 'foreign policy'.

Political freedom, economic advancement, and social solidarity are the three pre-conditions of effective Indian participation in world affairs. With the accomplishment of the first item today, the second and third remain to be tackled. Vivekananda was the first to point out the harm that has been done to the spiritual and moral personality of our people by economic backwardness and social division. Involuntary poverty, to him, is unspiritual and immoral. Religion, he held, is not for empty bellies. Social inequalities and unwholesome hierarchies are a disease in the body-politic. In his wanderings through the length and breadth of India, he came into intimate personal contact with the emaciated and dismembered body and mind of India, as he had earlier come into contact with her undying and eternal unity of spirit through his contact with his master, Sri Ramakrishna, and through his own studies of her literature and history. He found the ideal and the real far apart; and he set his heart and hands to make the real approximate to the ideal. He wrestled through sorrow and anguish to lay bare the problem of modern India and to find its solution, and he worked himself to an early death in imparting to his countrymen his passion and his resolve. The mind and face of India today bear unmistakably the impress of Vivekananda's heart and resolve. To quote Sister Nivedita, Vivekananda's gifted Western disciple (*The Master as I Saw Him,* pp. 49-50):

'There was one thing, however deep in the master's nature, that he never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He neither used the word "nationality", nor proclaimed an era of "nation-making". "Man-making",

he said, was his own task. But he was a born lover, and the queen of his adoration was his motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness.'

6. *Democracy in Free India*

Today, when the country is celebrating its day of deliverance from foreign subjection, it is well for us to remember Swami Vivekananda and his conception of the future of our country. He believed that our culture is a rich mosaic containing Hindu, Muslim and other elements. He also believed that the Hindus and the Muslims have certain things to learn from each other, which would make them not merely better Hindus and better Muslims, but, what is more important, better men. *Since man-making was his religion, he exhorted his countrymen to discard narrow loves and hates and grow into that wholeness which is perfection of character.* In the same vein, he exhorted the Hindus to discard the sectional loyalties of caste and sect and grow into that fullness and wholeness expressive of the Divine in man. It is as an effective help to this religion of man-making that he upheld the modern theory and practice of democracy with its faith in freedom and equality and the sacredness of personality.

7. *Democracy and the Tragedy of Partition*

The strength of democracy lies in the citizen. Democracy in India seeks to turn Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Parsis, and others into citizens owing allegiance to certain fundamental values which are universal and human. This great process will derive ample sustenance from the inspiration of the great world religions. In fact, political, and even economic, democracy cannot go long, can also go wrong, without the guidance and inspiration that religion alone can impart. But that inspiration has to be sought not from the dogmas and creeds of religions, but from their inner core of essential truths. *This work of elevating democracy to a moral and spiritual value is the task that awaits the energies of a Free India.*

The above remarks may sound a bit strange, a bit too bold, in the context of present-day India. Our freedom has come to us with a good bit of sorrow in it; the voice that will proclaim freedom today will also be the voice that will proclaim our division into two political entities. But tragic as division is, we shall not make it more tragic by considering it as something more than political and administrative. Superficially, it appears to be a division based on cultural and religious grounds. But, on a close view, it reveals itself as a mere political division, based on political considerations only, but using cultural and religious badges. It has certainly roused religious and communal passion; it has left behind colossal material and human destruction.

8. *Social Forces to undo this Partition One Day*

But all this does not prove that Islamic culture and religion require to be protected from the contamination of Hindu religion and culture in a separate sovereign state; all that it proves is that the Muslim intelligentzia has begun to think that it required a separate state to express its political and economic personality. If and when partition will fulfil this desire, it is bound to annul itself for want of a basic urge. The people are one whether under one sovereign state or two. And, as such, there will always be a large India looming behind the states of India and Pakistan. That India is bound to impinge itself on the social constitutions and on the political states of the two parts of divided India.

The social composition of the Indian population is bound to assert itself on her social constitution and on the political state. Whatever basic urge there is, therefore, is towards unity; the social forces can move only in this direction; the minority problem in both the states, in spite of division, is a powerful factor, in spite of appearances to the contrary, that will tend to eventual unity. And this unity will be on a higher and more enduring plane than on those of political expediency and manoeuvring through pacts and deals of the past few decades.

The pressure of politics has divided us; but the pressure of sociology will unite us; and culture reinforced by social and economic forces and the realities of the world situation will speed up

the process. This process, which always goes on in a society, producing an ever-widening unity of types, had to reckon, in the case of India, with an incalculable third factor, the presence of a foreign power pursuing a policy of continual thwarting of healthy national forces in the interest of its own self-perpetuation. The elimination now of this incalculable third factor leaves the field free for the effective operation of social forces. This is the faith that sustains those who, though feeling the pang of partition, are yet not dismayed by it or confused by it. This section even now is large, comprising influential political parties and non-political groups and individuals both among the Muslims and among the Hindus. When the abnormalities of the present situation with its gushing passions and blinding hates will pass away, leaving the Indian sky clear, the country will recognize the correctness and cogency of the above faith and vision; *the faith of a steady few will then become the enthusiasm of the many, leading to a reconciliation and reunion of the sundered parts, and the unsettling of a settled fact through popular will.*

9. *Politics: A Plaything of Socio-economic Forces*

To work towards this glorious consummation silently and steadily is the task that faces the country today. We have to realize that politics is the plaything of social forces. Sociology is more fundamental than politics. In this healthy manipulation of social forces to make them tend towards social solidarity, the country will find inspiration and guidance from the personality and message of Swami Vivekananda.

Economic and cultural advancement of the Muslims and the Scheduled Castes will tend to establish a balance of social forces in the country. The impact of democracy on Hindu society will tend to the elimination of its inequalities, helping to put it on an even keel. Cultural and economic advancement will make the average Muslim less and less susceptible to communal and fanatical propaganda, and make him receptive to those aspects of his religion which are universal and human. The practice and preaching of a tolerant Islam is the task that awaits the Indian Muslim of tomorrow; its recently invoked divisive powers and negative and exclusive attitudes will have to be replaced by its sublime unifying attitudes and

programmes. In short, Islamic democracy will have to grow into human democracy. The impact of this democracy on Hindu society will be wholesome for that society and the world. Vivekananda held the view that the beauty of Hindu religion has been marred by its social inequalities. In agony he cried in one of his letters written from America to a devoted worker in India (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p.15):

> 'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of *pāramārthika* and *vyāvahārika* (absolute and relative truth).
>
> 'Religion is not at fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy—the want of heart.'

10. *Inter-action between Hinduism and Islam: Past and Present*

The history of India and the character of Indian Islam and Hindu society would have been different if Islam had come to India as a friend and in peace. It would then have contributed its egalitarian social gospel to the purification of the social edifice of Hinduism—Hinduism would have gladly learnt these lessons from it, while imparting its own tolerant outlook to the sister faith. But the fact that Islam in its most effective forms came to India through the military conquerors who professed Islam but practised their own national savagery, and who ravaged India and batterd Hinduism, made Islam an eye-sore to the Hindu mind. It is one of those sad chapters in inter-religious and inter-cultural contacts which yielded bitter fruits, but which, in a different form, would have been fruitful of great results for the religion and culture of mankind.

Yet, social forces override human frenzies and passions; for, once Islam got established in the land, the work of fusion and synthesis commenced, and the life and work of the great medieval saints of North India, both Hindu and Muslim, have added a brilliant chapter to our history. Their work, broadly speaking, bore the impress of Hinduism in the field of thought and religion, and of Islam in the field of social life. In the general framework of history,

the work of Kabīr, Nānak, Dādū, Caitanya, Sūrdās and others may appear fugitive and forlorn, but they contain a moral and an inspiration for us of this age. If isolated individuals in unpropitious times could produce such glorious results, how much greater results in the direction of spiritual stability and social solidarity and the great end of, what Vivekananda called, 'man-making' could be achieved, if the forces of both the faiths could be canalized into constructive and creative channels through deliberate and self-conscious endeavour? This endeavour, aided by the theory and practice of modern democracy, and assisted by the impact of world forces, has for its glorious consummation the evolution of an Indian polity based on spiritual foundations, and endued with the moral passion of human welfare.

11. Freedom to Release the Sociological Factor of Mutual Emulation

Is this not the end and aim of all religions? Is this not what would please the hearts of the prophets and founders of the world's great religions? Is this not the natural issue of modern world forces when directed to human ends? Will not this consummation make India prosperous and powerful and the moral leader of nations? Cannot Indian Islam and Indian Christianity, like Hinduism, issue forth as distinct world forces with characteristic individualities of their own and a message to the other peoples of the world? Religion thrives best in the Indian soil; the Indian — whether Hindu, Christian, or Muslim — is deeply religious. Allied with narrow political passions, this religious feeling has exhibited the most brutal aspects. Allied with the passion for spirituality and human service, it has exhibited the most sublime aspects as well. It is up to the Hindus and Muslims and Christians to see that their religions exhibit this latter aspect. The average Muslim must learn to consider military conquerors and fanatics as human aberrations and abnormal types, who use the name of Islam to cover their own blood-thirstiness and egoism. They can at best be military heroes and not religious heroes. He must learn to venerate more the saints and sages of his religion who have imparted cheer and hope to man. This will, in turn, help the Indian Muslim to cultivate an attitude of reverence to other faiths, and their teachers and saints. The Prophet of Islam came as a warner to man; he came to unite; he came, as he has himself affirmed, as a blessing to mankind and not as a curse. Gentle as a lamb, but strong and courageous as a lion, he bent his energies to

the moral and spiritual upliftment of his people. In his attitudes and activities, he has created a pattern of excellence which remains as a fund of inspiration to those who seek to follow him.

Mutual respect will lead to mutual emulation. *We have suppressed this great sociological factor of emulation for long;* it has led to a distortion of our religions and our personalities. It is time that we give free play to this compulsive factor of social evolution. That is the line of our future advance. It is a happy augury that Indian Christianity, overcoming its erstwhile temptations to the contrary — temptations engendered by political exigencies over which it had no control — has recognized this great truth and is consciously working towards this end. A glorious future for Indian Christianity is assured thereby. When will Indian Islam come to itself? When will Indian Muslims learn to impart their own genius to this great religion and produce a crop of saints and sages who will command the veneration of all men? The test of a living religion is this production of saints who bear witness to God and the highest in man. A too close and long association with 'real politics' can even destroy the soul of a religion.

Society expects this guidance from its leaders today. The nerves cannot stand the strain and tension of hatred and bickering for long. Free India, divided now into two sovereign states, calls for the burying of our hatchets; it demands the sending of a current of love all round.

12. Vivekananda's Vision of Eventual Hindu-Muslim Unity

Swami Vivekananda believed in this glorious destiny for India and worked unceasingly to that end. He has left it as a legacy to us. He knew what blessings would flow from a junction of religions on the soil of India. Such significant attempts at what was then called *samudrasaṅgam,* 'the confluence of the oceans', have been made by some of our far-seeing forbears in the far less propitious period of the seventeenth century. Conditions are ripe today for its successful implementation in contemporary India. Referring to the interaction of Hinduism and Islam, Vivekananda has written, what Jawaharlal Nehru calls, 'a remarkable letter' to a Muslim friend, Mohammad Sarfaraz Hussain (*The Discovery of India,* p. 403 —

tootnote). It is dated 10th June 1898. I cannot do better than quote this letter *in extenso:*

'My Dear Friend — I appreciate your letter very much, and am extremely happy to learn that the Lord is silently preparing wonderful things for our motherland.

Whether we call it Vedāntism or any *ism*, the truth is that Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love. We believe it is the religion of the future enlightened humanity. The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; yet, practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, is yet to be developed among the Hindus universally.

On the other hand, our experience is that, if ever the followers of any religion approach to this equality in an appreciable degree in the plane of practical work-a-day life — it may be quite unconscious generally of the deeper meaning and the underlying principle of such conduct, which the Hindus as a rule so clearly perceive — it is those of Islam and Islam alone.

Therefore, we are firmly persuaded that, without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedāntism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind. We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible, and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

For our own motherland, a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam — Vedānta brain and Islam body — is the only hope.

I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedānta brain and Islam body.

Ever praying that the Lord may make of you a great instrument for the help of mankind, and especially of our poor, poor motherland, Yours with love,

VIVEKANANDA

13. Conclusion

An India, spiritually united, economically strong, and socially stable, and imbued with ethical passion, will be a unique force in world affairs. This was Swami Vivekananda's dream of the future of our country. The world expects much from India. The stability of civilization depends upon the giving of a moral and spiritual direction to powerful world forces. The world calls. Will India listen and respond? Vivekananda believed that she can and will respond. Let Free India lay hold of that Faith and Vision and march forward. Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached!

20

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS CENTRAL THEME*

1. Introduction

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA can be looked upon as a great organizer or a great orator, as one whose heart bled for the poor in this country and abroad or as one who successfully carried the message of Vedānta to foreign lands; he can also be looked upon as an intellectual giant who built a bridge between the East and the West, as also between reason and faith. But behind all these, there was that fundamental basic inspiration, his spiritual realization.

2. Sri Ramakrishna's Estimate of Young Narendra

Swami Vivekananda derived all the inspiration for his work from that touch with the spiritual depths of his own being. It is this aspect of his personality that gives nourishment to all that he said and all that he did. When he came to Sri Ramakrishna as a young boy, Sri Ramakrishna marked in him the eyes of a *yogi* and told the other disciples that Vivekananda, or Naren as he was then called, was a spiritual personality of a high order. He added (Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master,* Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1952, p. 720):

'I found that his eyes were indrawn; half his mind was looking to something within and only the other half was aware of the outside world.'

This, said Sri Ramakrishna, was the characteristic feature of the eyes of great *yogis*. Naren had this characteristic of inwardness which constantly drew him close to the Spirit within. Sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, he developed this trait and became a man of the highest spiritual realization.

3. Narendra's Transformation into Vivekananda

When he had realized this spiritual amplitude and fullness, the question arose in his mind as to what he should do thereafter. As it

*Speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, on 17 February 1952, on the occasion of the celebration of the ninetieth birthday of Swami Vivekananda

often happens in the life of spiritual aspirants, when they get the vision of the spiritual ideal, they get immersed in that realization. They have little sympathy for or interest in the world of struggling souls around them. Swami Vivekananda would have become one such among the great spiritual luminaries that have come to this country. But his path was to be otherwise, and the fate of India was to be otherwise; for Swami Vivekananda appeared on the scene at a crucial period of our history as a man with a message, and with the necessary spiritual authority and power to impart that message. In that transformation of Swami Vivekananda from a self-absorbed saint to a compassionate teacher is contained the story of modern India's spiritual and cultural regeneration.

When Vivekananda wanted to enjoy spiritual bliss, it was Sri Ramakrishna who told him that he was meant for a different purpose and that he was not to be like an ordinary saint enjoying spiritual beatitude for himself. He was a person who was meant to be a source of inspiration to millions of people in India and abroad; and it was Sri Ramakrishna who gave that turn to Swami Vivekananda's spiritual energies and purposes. With this touch of his Master, Swami Vivekananda burst upon the world not as a passive saint, but as a dynamic world-mover. If Swami Vivekananda exerted so much influence on the contemporary world, and continues to exert that influence in ever increasing measure in the East and the West, it is because he realized the eternal imperishable truth in his own being, and sought inspiration from that in his work to compose the distractions of our age. The edifice of his character was built on the rock foundation of spirituality which found expression in a vigorous personality of scintillating intellect and measureless heart. I wish to emphasize this point because Swami Vivekananda was a many-sided personality and can appear to us in various hues, but his greatness had something eternal about it unlike the passing greatness familiar in the world of achievements. The flow of time affects such greatness in a strange way; it augments it instead of diminishing and destroying it. Rooted in the Ātman and drawing nourishment therefrom, the personality and work of such men and women carry something compelling in it and possess an enduring character.

4. *The Mesmerism of a Truly Spiritual Message*

Great teachers of the world like Jesus Christ, *Bhagavān*

Buddha, Sri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda derive their strength and inspiration not from the muscles or mind or intellect, but from the deepest reality in man and nature. That is why they speak a language which goes straight into the hearts of the people, not only of their own generation but for centuries thereafter. That is how they stand before us, these spiritual giants, in spite of passing time, as the timeless witnesses of what is permanent and eternal in man. It is this that flavours the message which Swami Vivekananda gave to India, on the one side, and the West, on the other.

5. *Vivekananda's Central Theme: Spirituality*

It is significant that though he had dived deep into the ocean of spiritual realization, he did not give the same message, or rather the message in the same form, to India as he gave to the West. He varied his message to suit the needs of the people; but all these variations were expressions of one central theme — spirituality. In the Indian context, he saw that the path to spirituality lay through material and social amelioration. To this end, he drew out of Vedānta a social philosophy and outlook, at once dynamic and practical. To India which sorely needed it, he gave the message of a man-making religion and a nation-making faith and resolve.

While Swami Vivekananda felt proud at the glory of old India, he was deeply afflicted to see her in the depths of degradation and misfortune. The sufferings of his countrymen, their age-old starvation, ignorance, and social disabilities, moved him deeply. Confronted with this situation, his abundant spirituality and dynamic philosophy flowed into a stream of compassion and love, into a national message of renunciation and service; Vedānta once again became dynamic and practical. It is this that makes Vivekananda not merely a great *ṛṣi* or sage but also a patriot and epoch-maker. From him proceeded a wave of national awareness and patriotism, issuing in a great struggle to improve the lot of the common man. Whatever we have achieved by way of political independence, by way of social awareness and national solidarity, has come from that orientation of the ancient message of India's spirituality given by Swami Vivekananda.

Going to foreign countries, in America and England, he was

confronted with a different situation. There were people who were lacking in nothing by way of social or material amenities; but they were lacking in something fundamental which had turned their very material advancements into ashes in the mouth. Outer wealth and glory had been achieved at the cost of inner richness and peace. The modern man was in search of a soul, a search in which his science and wisdom just failed him.

6. *Spirituality: Its many-sided Expression*

Swami Vivekananda stood before the Western world as an authentic voice of the spirit in man and the spirit in the universe. To them he went as the teacher of Vedānta, of the inward contemplative life, the teacher of active tolerance and fellowship, the teacher of universal love. There, in the West, he stood forth as the representative of the *ṛṣis* of India and imparted their ancient message in keeping with the spiritual needs of the modern West. That is why Vivekananda is respected in the Western world as a spiritual teacher and world thinker of a rare calibre. To the average youth of our country, he makes an irresistible appeal as one who taught patriotism and national service in ever-memorable words, as one who worked and asked others to work for uplifting the vast millions in this country who are sunk in ignorance and poverty. To the nation at large, he shines as the emblem of purity, spirituality, love, and energy through whose inspiration it hopes to build its body and mind anew.

These are the various aspects of his personality directly derived from the supreme strength of realized Vedānta. The richness and strength of this Vedāntic realization accounts for the many-sidedness of his character and message. He brings down Vedānta to fertilize the fields of common life, so that life may be raised to uncommon heights and made capable to taste Vedānta at its purest source. Through him once more Vedānta spoke in accents of human happiness and welfare. He keenly felt the truth that the purer delights of spiritual life can be experienced only after man has been able to meet the demands of life's immediate and pressing needs. 'Religion is not for empty bellies', he said, and he found India full of empty bellies and naked bodies; he considered it a mockery to preach religion to a hungry man. Hence he became a teacher of

love; of love of God flowing into service of man, of faith flowing into works, and both forging character which is manliness and manliness which is spirituality.

7. *Its Expression in Modern India as Practical Spirituality*

His message has great practical utility today; the political and social policy of India has to bear the impress of that spirituality which Swami Vivekananda gave to the nation out of the fullness of his realization. The nation wanted a teacher who would guide its thoughts so as to humanize its religion and spiritualize its social purposes and activities; and the nation got Swami Vivekananda at the right time. He made Indian philosophy concern itself with the problems of the common man. *But he has also warned us that all our politics* and *policies, our social developments and economic improvements, in short, all our deepest cravings for betterment, must be subordinated to the one fundamental national theme of spirituality.* In this emphasis on the fundamental theme of Indian life, Swami Vivekananda stands as a unique figure among the great leaders who have come to this country in recent times.

At the time of Vivekananda, political subjection was lying heavy on the shoulders of India. Today it has been lifted; but along with political subjection there has been social decay, and it looked as if an old and rich civilization had ceased to grow. Swami Vivekananda wanted to make this civilization take a new shape and stand forth as a fresh, energetic, and vigorous civilization before the modern world. For that purpose, he wanted India to assimilate the spirit and technique of modern science which has come to us from the West; but this capacity to assimilate the dynamic scientific culture of the West depended upon a prior energizing of the national tradition in the minds of his countrymen. Without this strengthening of the national heritage, India's response to the West, he held, will result in a patchy imitation instead of a healthy assimilation. He warned us against that temptation and danger. He visualized a new India in which the spirit of equality, social awareness, and practical efficiency of the modern West would get happily blended with the mature gentleness and tolerance of Indian tradition, with its deep spiritual awareness and passion which has made Indian history a

saga of spiritual aspiration and realization. He wanted India to be young, vigorous, and progressive; and yet he wanted all these to be achieved as the fulfilment of the spiritual ideal and purpose.

Therefore, he placed before us his great message of nation-building based on spirituality. He wanted that all improvements to be effected in this country should be effected not at the cost of the national asset which is spirituality, but as flowing from it and leading up to it. He interpreted Indian history to demonstrate to us that progress in social and other lines is the fruit of the strengthening of the nation's spirituality, whatever other lessons the histories of other nations may teach. He gave that warning because he found a tendency around him to relegate religion to second place, or even to treat it as an enemy of social progress, and concentrate on material improvement and social progress so as to lead India on absolutely secular lines. This kind of tendency, useful within limits, might yet create mischief in our country and rob the nation of its spiritual stamina. It was, therefore, necessary that the warning should be issued, and the nation got it in time through the powerful and authentic voice of Swami Vivekananda. He warned us that if India gave up spirituality and her age-old way of life, she would perish. It is this spiritual asset which has made India a continuing concern, unlike other civilizations which have passed away. Taking the lessons of world history, he told us that if India gave up spirituality and took to any other ideal of life, she would be an extinct culture in three generations. Ancient Greece and Rome and some of the European states which had flourished for a time are nowhere to be seen in the world today. Even some of the nations of the contemporary world, though lacking in nothing by way of material advancement and worldly power, are finding their foundations shaken and are struggling to discover spiritual values to stabilize themselves. They find that something fundamental is lacking in the edifice of their civilization based upon the mere intellect of man, on the achievements of science and technology, and on the advancement of material prosperity. India discovered long ago that if there is to be stability in the structure of a civilization, it shall have to seek for other forces than the forces of muscle or brain or mere intellect. That is how some of the thinkers of Europe and America today are also thinking, and they are in search of that stabilizing force of

spirituality of which they view India to be the representative and voice. We see all around us that, in spite of material prosperity, in spite of social improvements. in spite of all that are based on sense values, there are forces that are trying to destroy civilization itself. In such critical periods of world history, India has ever been a source of spiritual strength and sustenance to humanity. She has played that historic role in spite of her own disasters and sufferings and the vicissitudes that befell her. Her continued existence and vitality in spite of these national disasters, a fraction of which has wiped away other civilizations, imparts to her voice and message the compelling quality of lived and tested experience.

8. *Insufficiencies of the Modern Welfare State Ideologies*

This wisdom tells humanity today through Swami Vivekananda that man's true welfare is basically spiritual and that material and social welfare is but a means to this end. Spirituality is the fundamental good in which are true peace and happiness. There are nations in the West today who have gone far in establishing a welfare state but whose citizens are far from being happy or secure. It is a tragedy that the more advanced a state is, the more insecure and unhappy are its people.

Among modern states, Sweden may be taken as an example of a state which has gone farthest in material advancement and social progress; some have called it not merely a welfare state, but a welfarest state. According to a dispatch published recently (31 December 1951) in the American *Time* from its Stockholm correspondent, the people in this welfarest state are anything but happy. The correspondent found that the state has provision for all its citizens from the womb to the tomb, and even to salvation, for the state has provided paid preachers to care for the souls of the dead. He found the municipal services perfect, social amenities extensive, wealth plenty, and life easy, with no conceivable cause for unhappiness, insecurity, or worry. Is everything all right with the people of this welfarest state? he asked himself; and he went about to see if there was anything lacking. He found an undercurrent of unrest and unhappiness. A government official told him, 'In a country that has established an orderly society, there comes a time

when one begins to ask oneself "What next?" ' He found a lot of Swedes asking this question 'What next?' *tataḥ kiṁ*? as our own Śaṅkara expressed it long ago, and finding and receiving no answer; the resultant undercurrent of emotional unrest is giving rise to a variety of social maladies like alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, unhappy marriages, and loose morals. Sweden presents the picture of a society where man has all the good things of life and yet feels a gnawing vacancy in his heart. This inner emptiness becomes the cause of the instability of the outer structure; *for to gain the whole world by losing the soul is to lose the world so gained.* The hunger for God, the desire for spirituality, the craving for inner richness and fullness is a fundamental and basic urge in man; and a civilization that does not take note of it and provide for it will be building itself on sand. The philosophy that stands sponsor to such a civilization is naïve and shallow, having not dared to plumb man and nature to their depths.

9. *India's Vision of Total Human Welfare*

The great sages of India knew man and his possibilities and needs most intimately and fully, and provided for them in their scheme of life through the twofold values of *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* — soeial welfare and spiritual emancipation. Their maturest thought, Vedānta, is pervaded by a deep passion for truth and a deeper passion for human happiness and welfare. It takes man gently by the hand in his primitive state of childish exuberance and leads him through the delights and restraints of culture and civilization to the peace and fullness of perfection. With such a philosophy to sponsor it and sustain it, India has built an enduring edifice of culture in the life of a seventh of the human race with spiritual freedom as its watchword and tolerance and gentleness as its motto. It was this culture in all its force and charm that found living expression in our time in the lives and message of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They represent the Vedāntic passion for human welfare — human welfare in all its phases, material and moral, cultural and spiritual. This explains the variations in Swami Vivekananda's message and programme in the East and the West. To India's millions he gave out of Vedānta a message of hope through social security and welfare leading to a purer form of

renunciation and spirituality. To the materially advanced West he gave out of the same Vedānta a message of renunciation and self-realization as a value to be sought after directly and immediately.

Our country has been provided in Vedānta with a rational philosophy and religion which will answer every quest and thirst of the human intellect and heart. Swami Vivekananda preached a religion which is emotionally satisfying and rationally convincing. Its rationality is creative and inspires faith in life and its values, unlike modern rationalism which destroys hope after first destroying faith. Western man learned to swear by this rationalism from the time of the Renaissance. In the first three centuries it succeeded in withering his faith in God in the name of the faith in man. But in the first half of this twentieth century it has succeeded in whittling his faith in man also, leaving modern man like a rudderless boat in the storm-tossed sea of the modern world, without a faith to sustain him or hope to inspire him, but with enough cynicism yoked to animal vigour which seeks expression in a fantasy of self-and-world-destruction.

If the thinking people of America and England gave a spontaneous response to the message of Swami Vivekananda fifty years ago, it was because he had sensed this inner tension of the modern mind and had conveyed in his message the needed spiritual pabulum. The appeal of Vedānta to the modern man has been steadily deepening and widening since then. It inspires him with a rational faith and a realizable hope and restores to him in a purer form that zest in life which his cynicism had shattered. *To the earnest, seeking, storm-tossed souls of the modern world, a study of Swami Vivekananda's Vedānta has been, and is bound to be, like a bath in the Gaṅgā for a weary pilgrim, a refreshing experience, a spiritual rebirth.*

10. *Conclusion*

Swami Vivekananda has left us a rich legacy of thought and inspiration. If India assimilates them, she will become the hope of the nations. That is the historically acquired role of India, according to Swami Vivekananda. He preached nation-building with this world-objective in view, to prepare India to discharge her world-responsibility. *And nation-building in India, according to him, is*

the gathering up of the nation's scattered spiritual forces. And because he found her present economic and social maladjustments thwarting this higher expression of the national will and purpose, he became the first monastic advocate of what he happily termed 'a toned-down materialism' for his country. He had the fullest faith in the capacity of his people to assimilate moral and spiritual ideas. This assimilative power will gather momentum as the nation succeeds step by step in composing the distractions of its battered body-politic.

An India, physically healthy, socially stable and strong, and morally and spiritually resurgent, will confront the modern world with a challenge of goodwill and sincerity, fellowship and peace. It will be an utterly new experience to the world after centuries of experience of a different type of challenge, that of hatred, violence, and war. The world is waiting for that new experience with bated breath. And that experience will be vouchsafed to the world by an India fashioned and shaped by the ideas and ideals of Swami Vivekananda. The spirit of India brought him forth and fashioned him for this very purpose.

21

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AS A NATION-BUILDER*

1. Introduction

Each passing year finds our nation closer to the ideas and outlook of this great teacher only to discover that he had embodied its urges and expressed its aspirations in his own person six decades before the development of our national consciousness. At this time when our country is entering into a new phase of national development affecting all spheres of our life, it will be highly educative and beneficial for us to get more closely acquainted with the life and thought of one who loved our people with a pure passion rare in our long history.

2. Vivekananda's Love for India

Writes Nivedita, his Irish disciple, in a moving passage (*The Master as I Saw Him*, pp. 49-50):

'There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He never used the word "nationality", nor proclaimed an era of "nation-making"; "man-making", he said, was his own task. But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness.'

Swami Vivekananda's love for India flowed from his deep knowledge of her past history and culture and intimate acquaintance with the mind and face of the India of his time. The first gave him strength and hope in India's mission in the world, while the

* Contributed to the *Hindustan Standard* (Daily), Delhi, 3 February 1956, on the occasion of the 94th Birthday of Swami Vivekananda

second helped to make his vast spiritual and mental energies cut a new channel of national *sādhanā* through human love, fellowship, and service.

The India of history impressed him as remarkable saga of human evolution in the moral and spiritual fields of experience. In the very first public lecture in the East after his triumphal return from his mission in the West, on January 16, 1897, at Colombo, he gave expression to this conviction in his heart in these words (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, Ninth Edition, p. 105):

'If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed *punya bhūmi* (holy land), to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for *karma*, the land to which every soul that is wending its way God-ward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all the land of introspection and of spirituality — it is India. Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, east or west, or north or south. And hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualize the material civilization of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions, in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be.'

3. *Vivekananda and the World at Large*

Many a modern thinker, from the German Schopenhauer in the last century to the American Will Durant today, have echoed these sentiments of Swami Vivekananda. The international importance of the Indian cultural experiment and the significance of its striking continuity through the very long course of its chequered history are slowly attracting world attention. Referring to the dawning interest in Indian literature in the Europe of his time, Schopenhauer foretold (*The World as Will and Idea,* Vol. I, Preface):

'I believe that the influence of the Sanskrit literature will penetrate not less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century.'

About a century later, in 1942, Will Durant, in concluding the section on India in the first volume of his *Story of Civilization*, refers to the legacy of India as a continuing one, unlike those of the extinct ones of Egypt or Babylonia, Assyria or Greece, or Rome, and proceeds (*Our Oriental Heritage,* p. 633):

'It is true that, even across the Himalayan barrier, India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. As invention, industry, and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps, in return for conquest, arrogance, and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things.'

4. *Vivekananda's Three Discoveries about India*

In the personality of his master, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda found a glowing and tangible demonstration of the validity of the India of books and the India of history. Says Romain Rolland (*Life of Ramakrishna,* p. 14):

'Ramakrishna was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. ... His soul animates modern India.'

India's past enthralled Swami Vivekananda and gave him hope. That was his first discovery of India. But a second discovery was awaiting him. For, India's contemporary backwardness, apathy, and weakness greeted him at every step during his five years of wandering as a lonely pilgrim through the length and breadth of the land. Swami Vivekananda as a wandering monk, the *parivrājaka*, will ever remain an inspiring picture for mind and eye for every well-trained youth of our country. During that extensive and intensive wandering, he saw the battered and bruised mind and body of his beloved country. This second discovery was a real shock to his sensitive mind, and he has given vigorous expression to the agony of his soul in his various epistles from the West and addresses in India. Being an intensely practical visionary and creative genius, he successfully tackled, even before his voyage to the West, the staggering problem presented by the two discoveries in a third discovery which he made during his meditation at Kanyakumari towards the end of his wanderings, and which found eloquent expression in the message he subsequently preached to his own people and to the world at large.

5. *Vivekananda's Domestic and Foreign Policies*

That message had in it the ring of authority and authenticity. To the world at large, it spoke the language of a pure spirituality free from all creedal and sectarian limitations. To his own country, it spoke the language of practical spirituality, of man-making and character-building, with renunciation and service as its motto and freedom and equality as its theme. The revitalization of India on these lines with a view to building up a healthy body-politic constituted Swami Vivekananda's national domestic policy; to this end he preached his message of practical Vedānta to his own people, laying stress on the need and the means to increase the energy of personal character, on self-control through development of the will, and on the expression of this character and energy in channels of patriotic service in every field of national endeavour, be it as a private citizen or a man of any profession, a humble *gramasevika* or a high officer of the state. Alongside, he advocated the investment of national energy in a vigorous foreign policy designed to bring the modern world to an increasing awareness of its spiritual destiny and leading to international fellowship and peace.

6. *Conclusion*

After eight years of independence, we are beginning to glimpse the taking shape on the national horizon of a definition of our country's national and international mission on the lines envisioned by Swami Vivekananda. The next two decades will constitute the period of our greatest hopes and our greatest fears. The nation will get the strength to dismiss these fears and brighten these hopes by listening to its *yugācārya*, prophet of the age, Swami Vivekananda.

22

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: THE SPIRITUAL TEACHER OF MODERN INDIA*

1. *Introduction*

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA was in every sense of the term a world spiritual teacher. All his work in East or West was to summon men and women to their spiritual heritage. In line with the great sages and seers of this country, Swamiji taught men and women to realize the Divine that is embedded in man. All his activities in every part of the country and abroad have this one single objective. Whether he spoke of India's poverty, backwardness, untouchability, and the need for our industrial development, or whether he spoke in the West about the need to practise toleration in the world of religion, his primary object was to give to man the priceless gift of *ātmajñāna*, Self-knowledge, to make men realize the Ātman, the Divine that is within all. The way he developed a comprehensive spirituality out of this great Vedāntic idea is unique.

2. *Religion as Anubhava*

Religion has come to mean something very narrow in recent times. But when we speak of religion in connexion with Swami Vivekananda, there is nothing narrow or exclusive about it, nothing negative about it; it is pure spirituality. So far as India is concerned, this has been the teaching of her great masters, the sages of the Upaniṣads and the teacher of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. They taught us to view religion as a matter of *anubhava* or spiritual realization. 'Religion is being and becoming', said Swami Vivekananda. It does not consist in doctrines and creeds, dogmas and churches and temples, but it consists in a struggle to realize the Divine. This struggle and its end-achievement is religion, according to the Upaniṣads. Because

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of this broad view of religion, the Upaniṣads taught this country to practise toleration in the world of religion, toleration between people wending their way to the same goal. For the goal is one, but the paths are many, says Vedānta. The most ancient utterance which has inspired Indian culture and religion down the centuries occurs in the *Rg-Veda: Ekaṁ sat viprā bahudha vadanti* — 'Truth is one, sages call it by various names.' This great idea has rolled down the centuries, becoming strengthened, becoming expanded and reinforced by the contributions of subsequent teachers, of whom the greatest was *Bhagavan* Śrī Kṛṣṇa. His great utterance in the *Gīta* (IV. 11) has been the Magna Carta in the world of religion:

Ye yatha maṁ prapadyante tāṁstathaiva bhajamyaham:
Mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ —

'Through whatever paths men come unto me, I receive them through those very paths; all paths, O Arjuna, eventually lead unto me only.'

It proclaimed the absolute freedom of each religion to strive and develop in its own way, and to take its votary to the highest realization.

3. *India and the Principle of Toleration as Acceptance*

This has been the sheet-anchor of India's religious policy. This was amplified by subsequent teachers as well. A very pronounced utterance of this idea is found in the *Bhāgavatam*, where it is said that it is one and the same non-dual Consciousness that is spoken of as Brahman by the philosophers, as Paramātman by the mystics, and as *Bhagavān* by the devotees (1. 2. 11):

Vadanti tat tattvavidaḥ tattvaṁ yat jñānam advayam,
Brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavān iti śabdyate.

This was a remarkable utterance which, as I said before, has found echoes down the centuries; and in our time, in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings we find the gathering up of these great spiritual ideas and inspirations, to become a powerful force for harmony and goodwill in the world of religion.

These ideas did not remain merely with the saints and devotees of God. They also became the sheet-anchor of political and state

policy. Toleration and acceptance became the principle and policy adopted by the great emperors and kings of India. Among all such, the greatest, the most outstanding, is Aśoka. His famous Rock Edict XII, specially, propagates this idea of toleration:

'King Priyadarśin, the beloved of the gods, reverences persons of all sects, ascetics, and householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence.

'But the beloved of the gods does not value either gifts or reverential offerings so much as that of an increase of the spiritual strength of the followers of all religions. ... One who reverences one's own religion and disparages that of another from devotion to one's own religion and to glorify it over all other religions does, by so doing, injure one's own religion more certainly.

'It is verily concord among religions that is right and proper, as persons of other ways of thinking may thereby hear the *Dharma* and serve its cause.'

Samavāya,-concord, is alone *sādhu*, right and proper, says Aśoka in his edict.

Not merely a great emperor like Aśoka, but even lesser princes practised this idea of toleration. When Swami Vivekananda stood before the Chicago Parliament of Religions, he took the occasion to remind that august audience of his own credentials in the following significant words (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, pp. 1-2):

'I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both toleration and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. I am proud to tell you that we have gathered in our bosom the purest remnants of the Israelites, who came to Southern India and took refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I am proud to belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnants of the grand Zoroastrian nation.'

4. *Sanātana Dharma: Its Spiritual Depth and Range*

This was how Swamiji presented the broad and sweeping ideas of *Sanātana Dharma*, the great and undying spiritual heritage of India. Today, when we have achieved our political independence, we are trying to implement these beautiful ideas, to create harmony, concord, and goodwill between the followers of the various religions in our country. The inspiration for this work will come to us from our ancient heritage; but that heritage has not remained

static and finished; it has been reinforced and strengthened in the modern age by the experiences of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Everything is positive in this heritage, there is nothing negative. Swamiji taught us to create unity and strength out of the diversity which is India.

He is a spiritual teacher of a unique type. The Sanskrit word for spiritual teacher is *guru*. The finest definition of the word *guru* has been given to us in Śaṅkarācārya's *Hymn to the Guru*:

Ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjanaśalākayā;
Cakṣurunmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī gurave namaḥ —

'I salute the *guru*, who, by applying the collyrium of wisdom to the eyes of one suffering from the myopia of spiritual blindness, opens his eyes (to light and truth)'.

This is the work of the *guru*; he awakens man to the realization of truth. Śaṅkarācārya also gives another significant definition to the word in his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (verse 32): *Yasmāt bandhavimokṣaṇam* —'From whom man receives freedom from bondage.' All bondages fall away with the touch of the *guru*. We have till now viewed this conception largely in a mystical, in a religious sense. In the life of Swami Vivekananda, however, we find the infinite extension of this conception; in him the concept of the *guru* achieves many-sidedness; he is not only the destroyer of bondage in the religious sense, but also of bondages of every sort — physical, mental, cultural, and above all, spiritual. He strove to release man from all these diverse bondages so that the Divine within could manifest itself.

5. *Vivekananda's Message: 'Arise and Awake'*

It is from this point of view that he defines religion as well as education. He has given us that beautiful definition of education: 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.' Identical is his definition of religion: 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.' According to him, the destruction of bondage — external as well as internal — constitutes the whole scope of religion, and he expounds this idea in all his lectures and discourses. The eight volumes of his *Complete Works* give us the

inspiration of an ideal of religion and of education which will help humanity at large—the poor, the rich, the backward, the oppressed, one and all — to destroy its bondages and realize the freedom that is the birthright of everyone. When the Swami appeared on the Indian scene, India's condition was so different from what it is today. Many of us today cannot visualize the conditions that obtained in our country in those days; to put it briefly, the nation then was asleep. And he took upon himself to awaken it; in fact, he was born for it. Himself awakened like Buddha, he strove to awaken men and women everywhere to the highest human excellence. This was his clarion call, and adapting the verse of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, *Utthiṣṭhata, jāgrata, prāpya varān nibodhata*, he proclaimed: 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!' He saw his nation asleep for centuries, involved in all sorts of political and social bondages, hugging to itself all sorts of social injustices, and content with political subjection, economic weakness, and social backwardness. And it pained him. He pictured to himself an India awakened, free and strong, marching in step with the advanced nations of the modern world. In the lecture that he delivered at Ramnad, near Rameswaram, on his return from the West, he expressed this idea in the very opening sentences (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Ninth Edition, pp. 145-46):

> 'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, ... India, this motherland of ours — a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'

This speech was given by him on 25 January 1897. Subsequently, in several other speeches in various parts of India, particularly in Madras, Calcutta, and Lahore, he gave his message of India's awakening. He told his listeners that an awakened, self-conscious India would work wonders in the spiritual service of man, both within India and in the rest of the world. He conceived India as the spiritual *guru* of nations. As we deal with him as the spiritual

teacher of India, our *rāṣṭra-guru,* and as the spiritual teacher of humanity, the *jagadguru*, he conceived India herself as the spiritual teacher of the world. But India needed to be transformed before she could function as a spiritual teacher. To equip her for this great function in the modern world, the Swami gave his message of practical Vedānta, the message of a comprehensive spirituality, which had the power to transform India politically, socially, economically, and culturally. It was a protean message from a protean personality.

6. *'Expansion is Life, Contraction is Death'*

The Swami spoke of national awakening. He saw that man in the Indian context had lost grip on the larger plan and purpose of human life; his life had become contracted, and contracted to such an extent that the next step was death itself. And so he warned us in one of his letters (*ibid.*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 322):

"All expansion is life, all contraction is death.'

He also wrote in another letter (*ibid.*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 52):

'India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *mleccha*, and stopped from communion with others.'

The national mind, he saw, had become contracted until it could not think of great themes; it could not strive for broad human ideals; it had become reduced to the narrowest circle of existence. Religion, which is such a beautiful idea, which is such a tremendous discipline of the human mind, by which man achieves the Infinite and the Immortal, became narrowed to what he termed a kitchen-religion, to a religion of don't-touchism! What must be the degradation of the national mind, he asked, when religion could become such a flimsy affair? Says he in deep sorrow (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 167):

'Think of the last six hundred or seven hundred years of degradation when grown-up men by the hundreds have been discussing for years, whether we should drink a glass of water with the right hand or the left, whether the hand should be washed three times or four times, whether we should gargle five or six times. What can you expect from men who pass their lives in discussing such momentous questions as these, and writing most learned philosophies on them?'

Swamiji felt that the Indian mind must be liberated from this narrow mould; it must be made to function dynamically, so that it can take its place in the modern world. This liberation of the human spirit in India was what was achieved by Swami Vivekananda. And he achieved it through his teachings, conveyed through his famous lectures and also letters. These two works of his, from among his voluminous literature available in eight volumes — *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* and *Letters* — are the greatest single influence in the creation of modern India. They are the powerful creative forces behind the nation's struggle for freedom and justice. These books have inspired more than three generations of Indian patriots and social workers. They are words of power. They have in them the power to awaken man to a consciousness of his true destiny, both individual and social. About this literature, the great French thinker and biographer of Swami Vivekananda, Monsieur Romain Rolland, writes in his *Life of Vivekananda* thus (p. 162);

'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports, must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero.'

7. *Vivekananda's Message of All-round Freedom*

This is the impression which Vivekananda's words produce on the minds of sensitive men and women everywhere. And in our country, since his time, there has been an ever increasing number of men and women who have responded to the great ideals and values presented by him. Immediately after his time came the great upsurge, first in Bengal and later in the other provinces of India, of social reform and of struggle for political independence, throwing up great movements and great patriots and leaders. As a result of these activities, as a result of the wide diffusion of these great ideas, we achieved political freedom in 1947.

Freedom is a great idea and sentiment. The human heart flutters at the very suggestion of the idea of freedom. Which organism in nature doesn't like to have freedom? In fact, in the sweep of his comprehensive philosophy, Vivekananda saw that every activity in the world, every activity in nature, is motivated by the desire for

freedom. To the question, 'What is life?', put to him by the Maharaja of Khetri, he gave a very significant answer:

'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.'

The desire to express itself against thwarting obstacles is the very spirit of life itself. The Indian nation had the experience of being thwarted at every step for the last seven hundred years. In the absence of political freedom, we as a nation could not express our spirit, could not express our ideas and ideals. These centuries of servitude had created a narrowness of outlook and a sense of defeatism within us. Slavery in its turn had engendered mutual jealousies and hatreds, and an appalling amount of social tyranny. This was the spectacle that he saw when he wandered through the length and breadth of India as a *parivrājaka*, a wandering monk.

And he saw our country in a way few people have ever seen. He had seen India in all her glory in Sri Ramakrishna and in her great cultural heritage. Behind him was the experience of the India of books, of the India as expressed in Sri Ramakrishna. But in front of him he saw quite a different India — humanity reduced to dwarfish dimensions, humanity, three hundred million strong, 'crawling like worms on the fair soil of India, trying to spit their venoms on each other', to quote his own words in one of his letters. Centuries of slavery had produced social immobility, resulting in the accumulation of social problems like untouchability, social injustice, neglect of the masses and of women, and, above all, the political fragmentation of India. India as such did not find a place in the imagination of the people; that imagination was filled with caste and other divisive loyalties.

He strove to create a national consciousness, an awareness of social urgency. He worked hard to create a body-politic in which India's pure and undying soul could find a living expression. For he realized, as few had realized before, that the soul of India is sound and unharmed, in spite of the sufferings of centuries. He further realized that this soul has a message for man in the modern world. It is not for nothing that God had preserved this country through the ups and downs of five thousand years of history. He must have had a great purpose in view. And the Swami visualized this purpose to be

an international one. India has been preserved, he said, to be a witness, for all nations, to the reality of God, to the truth of the Divine in man. This is the undying legacy of the Upaniṣads to India and the world. Man has a body, he has a mind, he has the five sense organs; but he is none of these. He is the Atman, the Self, of the nature of purity, knowledge, freedom, and immortality: *Śuddha-buddha-mukta-svabhāva-paramātman*, as Vedānta expresses it.

8. *'Hear, Ye Children of Immortal Bliss!'*

To bring humanity to an awareness of this great spiritual fact was the main work of Swami Vivekananda in the East and the West. This is the work of true religion. It was done by the great sages of the Upaniṣads, by *Bhagavān* Śrī Kṛṣṇa, by Buddha, by Śaṅkara, and by the large galaxy of spiritual teachers of the Middle Ages in the past, and by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in our time. It is this role of a spiritual teacher that shone through him when he addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893; he reminded that august audience that man is not a sinner, that he is not a creature of circumstances, but that he is a spark of the Divine. This is the saving message of Indian wisdom. And so, while addressing the whole of modern humanity through that Parliament, he recited, almost in ecstasy, the famous verse from the Upaniṣads bearing this hopeful message for man (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 11):

Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ
āye dhāmāni divyāni tasthuḥ.
Vedāhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntaṁ
ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt;
Tameva viditvā atimṛtyumeti
nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya —

'Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One, who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over and over again. There is no other path to the goal.'

He continued (*ibid.*):

"Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name — heirs of immortal bliss. Yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye, divinities on earth—sinners? It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

What is the authenticity of this message? Was it got from books or hearsay? No, says the Upaniṣad. This is a message which is taken from experience. The sages of the Upaniṣads had found this truth by churning life and experience. This is how the sages of India, ancient as well as modern, speak of religion. Religion is not an opinion. It is a conviction; it is a realization. The language is *vedāhametam* — 'I have *known* this truth, I have realized this truth.' That was the ancient utterance; and it is also the modern utterance. When Vivekananda went to Sri Ramakrishna at the Dakshineswar temple and asked him, 'Sir, have you seen God?', Sri Ramakrishna did not say, 'Yes, I have read about Him, I have heard about Him'; but he said, 'I have *seen* Him, and you can also see Him.' This is the language of religion in India. When Buddha appeared before his disciples at Sārnāth, he also said: *Ehi pasya, ehi pasya* 'Come and see, come and see.'

Therefore, as already said, it was this work of awakening of the human spirit from the sleep of ignorance and delusion that Swamiji accomplished in the East and the West. But the method he adopted to achieve this end was different in the two hemispheres. In India he saw that the work of awakening was needed primarily in the socio-political field. He saw that the Indian men and women had to be educated into the values of citizenship, of social awareness, into the capacities for practical efficiency and organized co-operative efforts. The creation of such free and self-disciplined citizens was the aim of his message of practical Vedānta.

9. *India to Rise from Creature of History to Creator of History*

Virtues and graces so gained alone can become the basis of the highest spiritual development of man. Without this moral basis, religion becomes cheap and spirituality a sham. So, when he spoke of religion in India, he used a beautiful expression to characterize its

content; he called it 'man-making religion'. Similarly, he called his scheme of education for India 'man-making education'. He wanted to make men of us; he saw that the masses of India had not achieved the full glory of human beings; if the Indian people cannot co-operate with each other, if they cannot help each other, if they cannot try to bring out the best from each other, how can they achieve the glory of human existence? Manliness connotes the virtues of strength, freedom, mutual help and appreciation, and equality. Man-making education and man-making religion are meant to create a pattern of excellence in the society as well as within its individual members. *The concept of man and of his excellence in Swami Vivekananda's thought is the most progressive among such concepts today.* Thus he released the forces of manliness to compose the distractions of his ancient, battered, long-suffering, gentle nation. We had lost this sense of manliness; we had become *creatures* of history instead of becoming its *creators,* and had developed a sense of helpless dependence. Even religion had become affected by this general weakness. Swamiji taught the nation to have *śraddhā,* faith in oneself. He also taught the nation, like a true *guru,* to develop faith in oneself before having faith in God. He said *(Complete Works,* Vol. III, Ninth Edition, p. 190):

'If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and in all the gods which foreigners have now and again introduced into your midst, and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you.'

First comes faith in oneself, then comes faith in god. So he exhorted (*ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 193):

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

In the absence of this manliness, piety lost its power and meaning; and so Swamiji told us to capture first that faith which is the root of manliness. This concept of *śraddhā,* of the *Promethean* fire in the heart of man, is what Swamiji brought out of the pages of the Upanisads, of the *Gītā,* out of the great teachings of Sri Ramkrishna, and out of the heart of the modern Western culture. Manliness is the spirit of modern Western culture; manliness was the spirit of ancient Greek culture. It was there in our philosophy also,

especially in the *Gītā;* but we forgot it. We had not the energy to understand and assimilate it. When Kṛṣna tells Arjuna in the eleventh chapter to stand up and acquire the true glory of manhood, we are in the presence of this stirring message of manliness (*Gītā,* XI, 33):

Tasmāt tvam uttiṣṭha yaśo labhasva
Jitvā śatrūn bhuṅkṣva rājyaṁ samṛddham——

Therefore, stand up, O Arjuna, and acquire the glory (worthy of man): overcoming all thwarting obstacles, enjoy the wealth and welfare of your country.'

Translated into modern terms, this means that man in India shall wake up from delusion and laziness, develop manliness, overcome the thwarting obstacles of poverty, social backwardness, and ignorance, by developing his intellectual strength, power of will, and character–efficiency, and enjoy the delights of the citizenship of a free and egalitarian social order.

10. Vivekananda's Message of Practical Vedānta

This was a man-making message; it combined man-making religion with man-making education. The Swami called it 'Practical Vedānta'. Vedānta we have in our books; Vedānta we have seen in the lives of the great sages and saints of our country; but Vedānta as a sheet-anchor of nation-building, of a dynamic social policy, by which the masses become transformed into dynamic centres of all-round social development—*this type of practical application of Vedānta we had never witnessed in our country before. It was the supreme glory of Swami Vivekananda that he broadcasted this life-giving message of Vedānta to one and all.*

He himself defined his life's task thus in one of his letters (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 104):

'To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer startling psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and, at the same time, meet the requirements of the highest minds — is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living — poetic — in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology — and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. This is my life's work.'

He said in his lecture in Madras on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life' (*ibid.,* Vol. III, Ninth Edition, pp. 245-46):

'These conceptions of the Vedānta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the bar and the bench, in the pulpit and in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be. If the fisherman thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student; if the lawyer thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on. If you teach Vedānta to the fisherman, he will say, "I am as good a man as you, I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you". And that is what we want, *no privilege for anyone, equal chances for all;* let everyone be taught that the Divine is within, and everyone will work out his own salvation.'

11. Tyāga and Seva

This is the universal message of Vedānta which Swami Vivekananda proclaimed from the housetops in the East and the West. In this great message, Swamiji emphasized two values which he considered the central values of Indian culture and civilization. And they are *tyāga*, renunciation, and *sevā*, service. He gave a compressed statement of the central values of Indian culture when he said (*ibid.,* Vol. V, Eighth Edition, p. 228):

'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.'

Let the people of India today be inspired by this message of renunciation — renunciation of the little self and manifestation of the higher Self, and its positive expression in service. renounce the *kāca* ego and manifest the *pāka* ego, as Sri Ramakrishna expressed it. Then only can a man establish harmony with his fellowmen and with the rest of creation; it alone enables a man to co-operate with others and work for general welfare. This alone makes possible national solidarity and integration. National life, intensified by these two forces, will express the purest and the best in its heritage; and they will stand guarantee to the continued unity and strength of the nation.

The nation heard Swami Vivekananda; it was thrilled; the leaven started working; and immediately after him, it had suffi-

ciently leavened the body-politic to produce in all parts of the country a bumper harvest of men and women, institutions and movements, inspired by the ideal of renunciation and dedicated to the service of the people. How much renunciation the nation expressed when it was fighting for freedom! Young men cheerfully faced the gallows for the love of their country; they did not love their own little lives. All sorts of privations our men and women could undergo; because they had love for their country in their hearts and a spirit of dispassion towards their own selfish interests. *This record of renunciation and service for about fifty years brought us the political independence in 1947.*

12. *Political Freedom: What Next?*

For the past fifteen years, we have been enjoying political freedom. Can we say good-bye to these ideals today? Can the nation achieve greatness and glory without continuous inspiration provided by the values of renunciation and service? But it looks as if we as a people have begun to feel that renunciation and service were necessary only in the context of struggle for political freedom; but now that freedom is achieved, we can do without them. This grievously wrong conclusion is our biggest national problem today. *If all the problems that have been accumulating around us for the last fifteen years are analysed closely, it will be revealed that the root of all our troubles is the fading of this spirit of renunciation and service in post-independence India.* Today we need to inspire ourselves with this ideal once again. We cannot build up this great country, we cannot destroy its backwardness and make a truly progressive state, we cannot establish that hegemony of man over the environment, which is the meaning of freedom, until our people are once again inspired by this vision of renunciation and service. *The best of human achievements proceed from us when we least think of ourselves.* 'Not I, but thou' is always the law of man's higher life. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it,' says Jesus, 'and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' This has been the teaching of the great masters, both in the East and the West. Today, the country needs the ministrations of the spirit of Swami Vivekananda. Our national development plans, our various community projects, our every department of national activity, needs men and women inspired by the vision, not of their own little selves, but of the larger self of society. We have to learn to live and act in a national development awareness and perspective. In fact, when he was addressing the citizens of Madras, on his return from the West in 1897, on the arresting theme of 'The Future of India', he gave a stirring call to the nation to raise this idea of the service of man to a form of worship. Said he (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, Ninth Edition, pp. 300-301):

'So give up being a slave. For the next fifty years, this alone shall be our keynote — this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race — everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, he covers everything. All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all around us, the *Virāṭ*? ... Worship It. Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do.'

Exactly fifty years after this was uttered, the country achieved political independence. He had spoken about patriotism; he himself was a patriot of a rare order. His patriotism proceeded from the awareness of the suffering of the millions of his countrymen; the millions, as he said, who had become 'next-door neighbours to brutes', due to oppression and neglect. He was inspired to think of the fine specimens of humanity that the masses of India are, — gentle, god-fearing, hospitable, cultured, though illiterate. They needed only a little help to raise themselves to their full manhood and womanhood. With a little social sympathy, state help, educational and economic development facilities, we can make angels of humanity out of them; so far they have only experienced neglect and oppression. Says the Swami in one of his letters (*ibid.*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 255):

'We as a nation have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all the mischief in India. We have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses. The Hindu, the Mohammedan, the Christian, all have trampled them under foot.'

Says he in his famous Lahore lecture on 'The Vedānta' (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Ninth Edition, pp. 430-31):

The nation is sinking, the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads — those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past; the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in the sight of plenty. ... Wipe off this blot

"Arise and awake." What matters it if this little life goes? Everyone has to die, the saint or the sinner, the rich or the poor. The body never remains for anyone. Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere. *Our insincerity in India is awful;* what we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.'

This is true politics. Says the Swami in another of his stirring lectures (*ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 215):

'Everybody can show what evil is, but he is the friend of mankind who finds a way out of the difficulty. Like the drowning boy and the philosopher — when the philosopher was lecturing him, the boy cried, "Take me out of the water first" — so our people cry, "We have had lectures enough, societies enough, papers enough; where is the man who really loves us? Where is the man who has sympathy for us?" 'Ay, that man is wanted.'

13. *'Let New India Arise out of the Peasant's Cottage!'*

This cry from his heart found response in a powerful movement of true politics, three decades later, in the great national movement of Mahatma Gandhi. That movement touched all aspects of the national life and galvanized the masses. Through the energy so generated, it won political independence for the nation. The Swami brought to bear upon the solution of the problems of the nation the spirit of true religion, the value of spirituality. He wanted to make India spiritual; for he knew and proclaimed that religion is the backbone of India. And he found the greatest obstacles to spirituality in poverty and ignorance. Quoting his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji said: 'Religion is not for empty bellies'; and he also added, 'I do not believe in a religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears, or stop the orphan's wails'. Thus, through the ministrations of practical Vedānta, the masses of our people, he held, would once again come to their own inheritance as human beings; and so he invoked the future India into existence by a stirring call to the common man ('Memoirs of European Travel', *Complete Works,* Vol. VII, Sixth Edition, p. 327):

'Let new India arise ... out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fishermen, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.'

This is the voice of power such as one, who takes rank as the *rāṣṭraguru*, the teacher of the nation, the epoch-maker, alone can utter. We are engaged in a mighty task of nation-building today. But the Swami said that nation-building must be based on the prior achievement of man-making. A nation is built out of men and women — men and women endowed with a sense of worth and dignity within themselves. All his teaching in India has this one theme of 'nation-building through man-making'. The policy regarding education, the policy regarding social development, even industrialization through the Five Year Plans — all these things are subordinate to that one single theme of 'man-making'. And so he asked us to keep constantly this idea of man-making before ourselves; the four hundred and forty million people of present-day India must be fed, clothed, educated, and enabled to realize their true human heritage. And that means that all national activities should be inspired by the spirit of service. 'Be and make shall be our motto', said he. We shall strive to become men and help others to become men. There is no place for selfish, self-centred attitudes.

14. *Vivekananda's Warning about a New Type of Treason*

An individual or a group may have certain advantages, either of money or of power or of intelligence or of learning, but these advantages are not meant to be used for exploitation of others for selfish purposes. They are meant to be used for the good of others; and in one of his moving passages in a letter written from America, he has spoken about a type of treason which people more often indulge in than what is practised only once a while in any society. He says (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Eighth Edition, p.58):

'So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.'

He keenly hoped that the Indian youth whom he loved so much, from whom he expected so much, will not commit this treason. Today our universities turn out thousands of graduates every year. Many of them alas! answer to the above definition of a traitor. They do not cherish any sense of duty or responsibility to society. They bear no responsibility to anybody. They are always complaining that the State and the nation have not done enough for them; not

once do they think of what they owe to the nation. The nation spends millions and millions of rupees to give education to our people; to educate a boy or a girl in medicine, in engineering, or any of these special technical lines requires nearly fifteen thousand rupees per student; for other subjects, it will be about half of this; but by way of fees, a student pays hardly three or four thousand rupees. The rest is paid by the nation, by the tax-payer. The student is literally indebted to the nation in the simple language of business, and yet an average student today has become so self-centred that he does not believe that he has any responsibility to the nation, that he owes something to the nation. He, on the contrary, feels that everybody else owes him! This is the most glaring example of the wrong education that the nation receives today. This is just the opposite of the ancient Indian idea, of the idea of the threefold debts with which every person is born; it is also against the modern evolutionary idea which emphasizes the enrichment received by an individual from the community's culture and tradition. Education helps an individual to assimilate the community's culture and tradition, enrich it by his or her own life and work, and leave to posterity a richer legacy. Most people die in cultural debt, as they take in much more than they give out. It is only the outstanding individuals who live creative lives that die leaving society in debt to them. Among these, the most outstanding are the saints and the men of God.

15. The Nation in Need of Men and Women of Dedication

If our administration and the services, in the centre and the states, and the workers in the political, educational, community projects, and industrial fields, become inspired by even a fraction of the patriotism and dedication breathed into the Indian life by Swami Vivekananda, the nation will become galvanized into action, and our development plans will move with accelerating tempo. The dynamism of the Five Year Plans proceeds not from the plans, but from the people called to implement them. The files in the Secretariats are static; but the men behind the files need not be static. Everywhere we are hearing, in the reports of various inquiry and assessment committees, that the progress of the plans is not satisfactory, that man is not adequate to the machinery created for

their implementation. Whether it is community projects or national extension schemes, whether it is general administration or the management of big public sector projects, everywhere it is man that is found lacking; the machinery is there, the institution is there, but man is lacking, man, educated and trained, not only in the techniques of the jobs, but also in the social objectives of the plans, and enthused by patriotism and the glory of human achievement — such men are the products of deep convictions. Our education today arms us with only *opinions*, bundles of them, but does not fill us with *convictions*; hence the static character of the personality turned out by such education. 'Great convictions are the mothers of great deeds', said Swami Vivekananda. Hence he advocated a man-making education, a training of mind and heart, and not a mere stuffing of the brain. *It is conviction in the heart reinforcing knowledge in the head, that makes for energy, drive, and dynamism of character.* This invests even the little acts of a man's daily life with meaning and significance.

16. Work is Worship

Swami Vivekananda was a spiritual teacher of a rare type. Himself immersed in the bliss of God, he came down to the most ordinary levels of life to uplift and brighten men. To him these were not two different disciplines, but one. And he taught us this truth in the great equation: 'Work *is* worship.' He taught us a philosophy which combines external action for the enrichment of society with internal action for the spiritual enrichment of the individual. In the language of the ***Bhagavad-Gītā*** (IV. 18), action and inaction become one, *karma* and *jnāna* become one. This equation is the essence of Swami Vivekananda's spiritual message. That message has been expounded to us in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works*. It has been beautifully summarized for us by his gifted disciple, Sister Niveditā, in a powerful passage in her 'Introduction' to the *Complete Works* (Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. XV):

> 'If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray, to conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.'

Here we have power of language blazoning force of thought! It was this great thought that the Swami placed at the very basis of the life and activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, which he founded as an effective conduit for his ideas and plans: *Ātmano mokṣārtham, jagaddhitāya ca*—'For the spiritual liberation of oneself and for the welfare of the world'. No sharp distinction should be drawn between the one and the other; the word *ca*, meaning 'and', indicates their integral union. Serve humanity, and through that service, bring happiness around you, and through that very service, elevate yourself also morally and spiritually. Here is shown the technique of combining *tyāga*, renunciation, and *sevā*, service. The *Īśā Upaniṣad* opening verse itself had taught this very idea ages ago: *Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā*—'Enjoy through renunciation.'

17. *India: 'Ever Aging, but Never Old'*

Swami Vivekananda came in the unbroken line of spiritual teachers from the Vedic period to the modern age. It is they who imparted the energy and direction characteristic of Indian culture—its deep spirituality. It is because they came age after age that our nation is still alive, in spite of invasions, subjections, humiliations, and devastations, a fraction of which has destroyed many a nation and many a culture. But we still exist, not only exist but are strong and vital, thanks to the periodic touch of these master minds. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda brought youthfulness to the age-old Indian cultural experiment. By the end of the eighteenth century, India had become old and effete, broken and dispirited; but with the touch of Swami Vivekananda, old India became young once again. In the language of the late Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal, 'India is ever aging, but never old'. This is the historic and cultural significance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's statement in the *Gītā: Sambhavāmi yuge yuge*—'I shall be born again and again.' And this was what happened in India at the end of the last century. Through the touch of Swami Vivekananda, the Indian nation became youthful. And according to Indian philosophy, he who imparts youthfulness, vigour, and clarity of vision to a man or to a nation is the *guru* of that man or that nation. In this sense, the Swami was really the *rāṣṭra-guru* and also something more. He did the same service to the West as well. Through such service in both hemispheres, he united humanity through the thread of Divinity running through all existence. And he did this stupendous achievement within a brief ten years of his all-too brief thirty-nine years, five months, and eighteen days of earthly life. He became a bridge between the East and the West, the old and the new. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *Discovery of India*, discussing the contributions of Swami Vivekananda, says (p. 400):

> 'Rooted in the past, with full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems; and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.'

18. *Conclusion: The Forthcoming Vivekananda Centenary*

It is the birth centenary of such a teacher that we will soon be celebrating in 1963-64. The whole nation will be galvanized by listening to his message, through literature, through meetings, through the radio and the film, and through diverse other means. So far as India is concerned, it will provide us with a rare opportunity to intensify our national integration programmes, to strengthen the moral fibre of our nation, to intensify the tempo of our Five-Year Plans, and to define the purpose and direction of our national development policies. It is our earnest hope that much good will come to man in India and in all other parts of the world through the various programmes of the ensuing Vivekananda centenary celebrations.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS LIFE AND MISSION *

1. *Introduction*

TODAY, India is celebrating, with the rest of the world, the first birth centenary of Swami Vivekananda. He came in the unbroken line of spiritual teachers who brightened the sky of India from the Vedic period to the modern age. It is they who imparted the spiritual energy and direction characteristic of Indian culture. It is because they came, age after age, that India is still alive in spite of invasions, subjections, and devastations, while a fraction of such calamities has destroyed many a nation and many a culture in world history. The periodical touch of these master minds gave India renewed strength and hope every time.

2. *The Modern Indian Awakening*

By the end of the eighteenth century, India had become old and effete, broken and dispirited, and awaited either dissolution and death or reintegration and life. Her innate spiritual strength burst forth at the prospect of this danger, and a new life came to her by the beginning of the nineteenth century. She accepted the challenge of the age and resolved to meet the challenge in a creative, constructive manner. This rejuvenation process was spearheaded by a mighty and farsighted personality, Raja Rammohan Roy, who strove to awaken his countrymen, purify and strengthen the age-old culture of his people, and to effect a synthesis of the ancient Indian heritage and the modern Western heritage. This process of reawakening continued throughout the century, throwing up great leaders and movements. And towards the end of the century, it found its full maturity and consummation through the lives and teachings of its most dynamic and authentic representatives. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Though born in India, they represented the spiritual hopes and aspirations of all mankind. They were 'Universe Souls' in the language of Romain Rolland (*The Life of Ramakrishna*, Third Impression, p. 22).

*Talk broadcast over the National Programme of the All India Radio, on 17 January 1963, on the occasion of the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda

3. *Vivekananda and Modern India*

Vivekananda took India out of her isolation of centuries and brought her into the stream of international life and thought. He awakened the people of India to the realities and demands of the modern age. Says Romain Rolland in his *The Life of Vivekananda ibid.*, pp. 316. 18):

'So India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own *sannyāsins*; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds and spread by a series of great ripples into action. ... This "greater India", this new India... is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the *Paramahamsa* and the hero who translated his thought into action, dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilizing it.'

Swami Vivekananda was a spiritual teacher of a rare type. Himself immersed in the bliss of God, he came down to the ordinary levels of men and women. To him, these were not two separate fields, but one; and he expressed this truth in his great equation 'work *is* worship'. He taught humanity a philosophy which combines external action, in a spirit of service for the enrichment of society, with internal action, for the spiritual enrichment of the individual. In the language of the *Gītā*, action and inaction, *karma and jnana*, become one. This equation is the essence of Swami Vivekananda's spiritual message, a message which has been left to us in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works*. The spirit of that message has been beautifully summarized for us by his gifted Western disciple, Sister Nivedita in a powerful passage in her 'Introduction' to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Says she (Vol. I, 1962 Edition, p. XV):

'If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.'

4. *The Intensity of Vivekananda's Brief Life*

Swami Vivekananda's span of earthly life was hardly forty years, but within this short period, he lived an intense life, first as a student

in school and college, then as the foremost disciple of his great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, then as a wanderer across the length and breadth of India, and lastly as the spiritual teacher of West and East. His public teaching commenced with his speeches at the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893; and he passed away on 4 July 1902. He spent four intense years in the United States and England, and five equally intense years in India delivering his message of a universal and practical spirituality, and setting in motion a movement as an effective conduit for the furtherance of his message.

Everywhere, he taught man to realize his divine heritage. The innate divinity of man was the constant theme of all his teachings. *This teaching cuts across all divisions based on political or religious affiliations*. Its assimilation by man will make for a character at once deep and broad. He held that spirituality was the core of every religion; dogmatic exclusiveness and intolerance are no part of true religion. The more spiritual a man, the more universal he is. He held that the modern age stood in urgent need of this education from religion, by which men will learn to make their love of God flow into the love and service of all men. He worked hard to give this spiritual orientation to the world's religions, so that they may be transformed into wholly constructive forces and become capable of redeeming modern man from his inner impoverishment in the context of external enrichment.

5. *Vivekananda's Message in His Own Words*

While speaking on Vivekananda, it is best to let Vivekananda speak for himself. There is a beauty and a power in his words which fascinate the listener. Referring to this, Romain Rolland says in his *The Life of Vivekananda* (Third Impression, p. 62):

'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero!'

In a letter to an American lady written on 21 March 1895, Swami Vivekananda says (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, Fourth Edition, p. 211):

'My Master used to say that these names as Hindu, Christian, etc. stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. We must try to break them down first. They have lost all their good powers and now only stand as baneful influences under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed.'

The closing words of his address on Hinduism delivered to the Chicago Parliament of Religions breathe the spirit of the universal and human, characteristic not only of him and of his great Master, but also of the Indian spiritual tradition, and express his appreciation of the universality of the American mind, which conceived and realized such an international assembly of world religions. In his 'Paper on Hinduism' read at the Parliament, and addressing the American nation with deep feeling, Vivekananda said (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, 1962 Edition, p. 19):

'... If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite, like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Kṛṣṇa and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brāhmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which in its catholicity will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering by the virtues of his head and heart almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine nature.

'Offer such a religion and all the nations will follow you. Asoka's Council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's, though more to the purpose, was only a parlour-meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion.'

Pointing to the profound significance of the universal sentiments pervading Vivekananda's speeches at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, Romain Rolland observes (*The Life of Vivekananda*, Third Impression, pp.42-43):

'Each time he repeated with new arguments but with the same force of conviction his thesis of a universal religion without limit of time or space, uniting the whole *Credo* of the human spirit, from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmations of modern science. He harmonized them into a magnificent synthesis, which, far from extinguishing the hope of a single one, helped all hopes to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature. There was to be no

other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution.'

He elucidated still further his conception of universal religion in two of his subsequent lectures delivered in California in 1900. Speaking on 'The Way to the Realization of Universal Religion', at Pasadena, he said (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 377):

'I accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.

'Not only shall I do all these, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation, going on? It is a marvellous book — these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books, are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them.'

Speaking in San Francisco a month later on 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', he said (*ibid.*, pp. 387-88):

'What I want to propagate is a religion that will be equally acceptable to all minds; it must be equally philosophic, equally emotional, equally mystic, and equally conducive to action. ... And this combination will be the ideal of the nearest approach to a universal religion. Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds *all* these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man. Everyone who has only one or two of these elements of character, I consider "one-sided"; and this world is almost full of such "one-sided" men, with knowledge of that one road only in which they move; and anything else is dangerous and horrible to them. To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is *my* ideal of religion.'

6. *Vivekananda's Mission in His Own Words*

Swami Vivekananda defined his life's objective as twofold; firstly, to place before man in East and West a comprehensive message of man's spiritual development and realization in clear simple language; and secondly, to set in motion the wheel of such a spiritual message, to set in motion the wheel of *dharma, dharmacakra pravartana*, in the expressive words of Buddha.

Writing to an Indian disciple from America on 17 February

1896, Vivekananda expounded his first objective thus (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, Fourth Edition, p. 302):

'To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer startling psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds — is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living — poetic — in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering yogism must come the most scientific and practical psychology — and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work.'

Readers of Vivekananda's works know how great was his success in this field. Apart from his other books, his books on the four *yogas — Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Jnana-yoga,* and *Rāja-yoga* — have become classics on spiritual life and realization. The reader is impressed by their simplicity of language and profundity of thought. Above all, they carry the impact of the man behind the message, the powerful impact of realized truth.

On his second objective, he writes thus on 24 January 1894 in a letter from America to an Indian disciple (*ibid.*, p. 83):

'My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws.'

7. *The Sri Ramakrishna Order*

Before his passing away, Sri Ramakrishna had formed a new Order of monks out of his young disciples, with Vivekananda as their leader. The Order had taken on itself the responsibility to protect and to enhance the deep spirituality and the spirit of universality which had found such a glowing expression in the life of the Master. Vivekananda now added to the inward spiritual life of the Order an outward programme of cultural and humanitarian activities, in which the Order sought the co-operation of laymen also. These two inseparable aspects of the movement initiated by him in the name of his Master became the Ramakrishna Math (Monastery) and the Ramakrishna Mission, with their headquarters just outside

Calcutta at Belur Math, near Howrah, West Bengal. He gave the movement the inspiring motto: *Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca* — 'for the freedom of oneself and for the welfare of the world,.

8. The Vivekananda Literature

Swami Vivekananda's lectures, letters, and discourses run into eight published volumes in English. They are also being made available during this centenary year in ten-volume editions in several of the Indian languages, and selections of them in several foreign languages as well. This vast literature can be aptly described as literature immortal; it is a strengthening, purifying, broadening, and illumining literature. It will educate the youth of today in the problems of the modern world and help him to solve them in the light of the eternal elements in the spiritual heritage of the East and the West. To the Indian youth, in particular, this literature carries the message of a man-making, character-building education and religion. Says Vivekananda (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 228):

'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service; intensify her in those *channels, and the rest will take care of itself.*'

His literature will inspire our youth with these great national ideals of renunciation and service, intensifying which in their awareness and character they will acquire the necessary strength of will and purpose to build a free and egalitarian society in their beloved motherland. It will educate them in the compelling message of international fellowship, co-operation, and welfare, and shape them into world citizens.

9. 'Arise, Awake, O Man!'

This is the type of awakening that he personally imparted to thousands of spiritually sensitive souls in East and West alike during his brief earthly career. The same work of awakening he has continued to impart to an ever-increasing circle of men and women through his literature since his death. Freely rendering the message of the Upanisadic verse, *Uttiṣṭhata! Jāgrata! Prāpya varān nibodhata,* he summoned humanity to 'Arise! Awake! And stop not

till the goal is reached'. It is the awakened alert man, he said, that achieves science and civilization, morality and social welfare. It is the same awakening process carried still deeper that brings man to the feet of God and confers on him the fruit of spiritual realization and complete life fulfilment. He held this as the mission of Vedanta in the modern age.

Says he in ringing words (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, Fourth Edition, p. 193):

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

10. The Message of Eternal India.

It was this message of eternal India, the eternal music of the human soul, that Vivekananda broadcast in India and abroad. *He loved India, because he realized that India had lit the lamp of spiritual knowledge early in her history, and had kept it burning bright and pure through good and evil fortune for the service of the whole world.* A large component of India's foreign policy as revealed by her history, he held, had always consisted of this diffusion of spiritual knowledge in the contemporary world. She had conquered half the world through Buddha's wisdom and love. Her long cultural and spiritual education had so conditioned her that her expansion outside her borders can and will always be only of an intellectual and spiritual character.

In a letter from America to an Indian disciple dated 31st August 1894, we find Vivekananda referring to this conviction of his. He writes *(Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* Fourth Edition,p.121):

"The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, not in magic, mummeries and charlatanism, but in the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion — of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the time has come.'

Vivekananda summoned his countrymen to prepare morally and spiritually to render this same service now to the modern world (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, p. 277):

'Up, India, and conquer the world with your spirituality.'

And he warned his countrymen against the temptation to substitute the age-old spiritual idealism of India with the lesser ambitions for material or military glory. Says he:

'India is immortal if she persists in her search for God. But if she gives it up and takes to politics and social conflict, she will die.'

11. Conclusion

The current celebrations of the birth centenary of Vivekananda will acquaint India and the rest of the world with the life and work of one who represented in himself *a condensed India* and a synthesis of the best in the human heritage of East and West.

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THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*

1. Introduction

IN speaking on the subject of Swami Vivekananda, we are dealing with the life and thought of a rare type of personality thrown up by the modern renaissance in India. Into his short span of thirty-nine years, Vivekananda compressed an intensity of personal life and realizations and intellectual and social achievements which had a powerful impact on India and the Western world, and which have permanently affected the destiny of the Indian people and their relationship with the rest of the world.

2. Vivekananda: The Formative Influences on His Life

The earthly career of Swami Vivekananda begins with his birth in his parental home in Calcutta on 12 January 1863, and closes with his death on 4 July 1902 at Belur Math, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order established by him near Calcutta. His life coincided with the most dynamic period of the modern transition in India, which resulted from the contact of the age-old Indian culture and tradition with the youthful culture of the modern West. Out of that ferment arose the modern Indian renaissance which had already proceeded with uncertain steps for more than half a century by the time Vivekananda appeared on the scene, and which found in him its most effective representative and exponent. How he equipped himself to play this role is a fascinating and rewarding study.

The formative influences that went to the making of Swami Vivekananda were fourfold: There was, first, his mastery of the Sanskrit language and, through it, of the philosophical and spiritual legacy of India's hoary cultural past; secondly, there was his mastery of the English language and, through it, of the scientific, artistic, and social thought of the modern West; thirdly, his five

* Talk broadcast by the External Services of the All India Radio, New Delhi, on 30 December 1965

years' discipleship under Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886), the most outstanding spiritual teacher of nineteenth-century India, in whose extraordinary life and realizations Vivekananda found verification of India's age-old spiritual legacy and its close kinship with the cultural legacy of the modern West; and, fourthly, his intimate knowledge of the India of his time gained from his many years' journeys, mostly on foot, across the length and breadth of India.

3. *Vivekananda at the Feet of Sri Ramakrishna*

It was during his student days at the Calcutta University that young Narendranath Dutta — that was the pre-monastic name of Vivekananda — came in touch with Sri Ramakrishna, who was then living in the temple garden of Dakshineswar, four miles north of Calcutta, and who was attracting the attention of some of the foremost leaders of the Indian renaissance movement at the time. Narendranath then was a typical representative of the modern youth, vital and vivacious, intolerant of superstition and religious bigotry, but hungry for a satisfying spiritual faith, rational and agnostic, but unwearied in his search for truth and for a rational basis for man's quest for higher values.

Sri Ramakrishna, on the other hand, was like a full-blown lotus attracting thirsty bees to suck its honey. During his intense spiritual practices of over twelve years, he had lived in turn the spiritual life of the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian seekers of God, and realized the truths imbedded in these world religions and their fundamental unity and harmony. His universal mind and heart embraced every spiritual idea and purpose, and stimulated every spiritual aspiration and struggle. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi in his 'Foreword' to the book: *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna:*

> 'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. ... In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light.'

In the words of Romain Rolland *(The Life of Ramakrishna,* p. 14):

> 'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India.'

The coming together of the serene Ramakrishna and the dynamic Narendranath in the intimate communion of teacher-student relationship proved to be a great event in the history of modern India. Narendranath tested Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences and teachings in the crucible of reason; and Ramakrishna fully encouraged his young disciple in this process. Inspired by the three thousand year-old spiritual literature of the Upaniṣads and its philosophy known as Vedānta, India has inherited a scientific tradition in the field of religion, with its stress on experiment and experience, on the one side, and tolerance and inter-religious fellowship, on the other. Ramakrishna reauthenticated and amplified this Vedantic tradition and made it the basis of a comprehensive spirituality capable of nourishing all aspects of human life and endeavour.

4. *Vedānta and Its Message of Service of God in Man*

It was this philosophy of Vedānta that Vivekananda took upon himself to preach to the Indian people and to the people of the West. But before he entered upon this mission of his life, he decided to see for himself the mind and face of contemporary India, which was to be the laboratory for the verification of his philosophy. He, accordingly, plunged into the ocean of Indian humanity with only a staff and water-pot as his equipment, receiving the devoted hospitality of its princes and peasants, intellectuals and street sweepers, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. He shed tears seeing the dire poverty and misery of the common people; the heartlessness of the intellectuals and upper classes roused his indignation; and the various forms of social injustice and oppression which had thwarted the free development of man in India pained him in the extreme. His spiritual vision of the divinity of man received a rude jolt from this intimate contact with contemporary India, where he saw millions of fine specimens of humanity reduced to the position of being, to quote his own words, 'next-door neighbours to brutes'. Towards the end of these wanderings, in 1892, the firm decision took possession of his heart that the Vedāntic vision of human dignity should be

implemented through practical measures, and that he should dedicate himself completely to the service of man, of God in man, everywhere.

These fourfold influences made his personality a synthesis of the finest heritage of East and West. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru in *Discovery of India* (p. 400):

'Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.'

5. *Vivekananda: A Synthesis of East and West*

It was such a rich personality, so impersonal and universal, that took the universal spiritual message of Vedānta to the West and broadcasted it, first, through the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 and, later, through hundreds of lectures and discourses in the United States and the United Kingdom. On his return to India in 1897, he similarly imparted his message of practical Vedānta to his countrymen through scores of stirring lectures and talks in which he showed the way to the modernizing of the age-old Indian tradition, designed to brighten the lives of its millions and to strengthen the nation's age-old spiritual heritage as well *(Letters of Vivekananda,* p. 320, 1948 Edition):

'My ideal, indeed, may be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity and how to make it manifest in every movement of life.'

This teaching cuts across all divisions based on political or religious affiliations. Its assimilation by man will make for a character at once 'deep as the ocean and broad as the skies', as he expresses it. He held that spirituality was the core of every religion; dogmatic exclusiveness and intolerance are no part of true religion. The more spiritual a man, the more universal he is. It is only such universal men that can realize the urge of the modern age for a universal society. He held that the modern age stood in urgent need of this spiritual education from religion by which man will learn to achieve inward depth to match his wide-branching interests and activities outside. He worked hard to give this spiritual orientation to the world's religions, so that they may be transformed into wholly

constructive forces and become capable of redeeming modern man from his keenly felt inner impoverishment in the context of external enrichment.

6. *Conclusion*

His speeches and writings are available to us in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works*. In the following stirring call to man in every field of activity everywhere he has, however, conveyed the essence of his message:

'Arise, Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached!'

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE OF RENUNCIATION AND SERVICE*

1. Introduction

THE Ramakrishna Ashrama Hospital, Trivandrum, is celebrating its Silver Jubilee in January 1967. It is one of the sixty or seventy medical institutions, large and small, apart from a number of educational, cultural, and other institutions of social service, conducted by the Ramakrishna Math and Mission in various parts of India. In the context of the large number of medical service institutions, managed privately or by the state, obtaining in India, many of them of very large dimensions, and in the context also of the increasing demands for medical services in the country, the few institutions conducted by the Math and Mission appear small and inconsequential. But their significance was never intended to be quantitative. It lies in an entirely different sphere, that of quality. For *these institutions seek to embody a sublime vision of man's glory and excellence, and of his relationships with his fellowmen.* This is the vision of the divine in the heart of man bequeathed by the ancient sages of India and reauthenticated and revitalized by her modern sages, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and of service as the way of inter-personal relationships.

2. 'Jiva is Siva'

'Jīva is *Siva',* says Sri Ramakrishna in an equation; and adds, drawing its corollary: 'The service of *jīva* is therefore the worship of *Śiva*.' If the worship of God in a symbol or an image can elevate a man spiritually, how much more spiritually efficient must be the worship of Him in a man!

Swami Vivekananda was moved by the worship of *Śiva* in the Viśvanāth temple of holy Varaṇāsi; but he was appalled by what he saw of the utter neglect of Him in the millions of human beings who

* Contributed to the *Souvenir* published by the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama Hospital, Trivandrum, Kerala state, on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee celebrations on 14 January 1967

throng to the holy city. And, during his visit to the city, he had charged his young admirers to enter into this higher form of worship — the worship of God in man. A group of earnest young men caught the music of this message in their hearts and organized nursing and care of sick and suffering pilgrims, helpless and forlorn, lying on the roadside. Very soon, these sporadic acts of 'the worship of God in man', conducted till then under the name of a 'Poor Men's Relief Association', assumed the shape of an organized institution, the Ramakrishna Sevashrama or Home of Service, in 1902, which soon developed into a full-fledged hospital with over 175 beds after affiliation to the Ramakrishna Mission. Its long record of efficient, devoted service to the people and the student community of Vāraṇāsi gave it the status of a pioneer laboratory for Swami Vivekananda's message of Practical Vedānta.

Another group of Vivekananda's young followers established a similar 'laboratory' in Kankhal near holy Hardwar which soon developed into a 50-bed Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama. Similar institutions soon sprang up in Vrindaban and Rangoon, Ranchi and Calcutta, Mayavati and Shyamalatal, Delhi and Trivandrum. The 150-bed strength of the Trivandrum Ashrama hospital is soon to be raised to 250. Everywhere, it was a channelizing of India's age-old spiritual vision and urge, with its accompanying austerity and devotion, into service of man as embodiment of the Divine, and irrespective of caste or creed, race or nationality.

3. The Social Impact of Vivekananda's Message of Service

The impact of this orientation on the old Indian spiritual tradition has been slow but steady. Hindu orthodoxy in Vāranāsi and Kankhal, which had initially eyed with disfavour, and even contempt, Ramakrishna monks nursing patients and even doing the menial tasks of sweeping and cleaning the wards, and had given them the happy epithet of *bhangi* sadhus (sweeper monks), changed its attitude by the nineteen-thirties and realized the cogency and need for this practical orientation of their Vedānta as shown by Vivekananda, and began to look on the members of the Ramakrishna Order with respect and reverence. The age-old Indian method of peaceful social change through the example of a

transformed minority, as referred to by Saṅkara in the introduction to his commentary on the *Gîta*, became illustrated in this case: *guṇadhikaiḥ gṛhitaḥ anuṣṭhiyamanasca dharmaḥ pracayaṁ gamiṣyati iti.*

Service rendered in a spiritual attitude, Vivekananda held, uplifted both the giver and the receiver. Vedānta has always upheld that man must grow morally and spiritually. That, and not organic satisfactions or survival of the species, or mere numerical increase, is the evolutionary advance for man, says Sir Julian Huxley and other twentieth-century biologists. When man thus takes into account his own spiritual development in the context of his work in society, all his work turns into not only service, but veritable worship. By his work, he not only ensures the welfare and happiness of his fellow human beings, to whom he gives his service in a spirit of reverence, but also gains in spiritual stature himself. This is also the central message of the *Gîtā* and the meaning of its pregnant utterance: *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam.* This teaching ensures a double character-efficiency, namely, outward social efficiency and inward spiritual efficiency. Swami Vivekananda embodied this truth and vision of all-round character-efficiency in a brief utterance which he gave as the motto of his movement, the Ramakrishna Math and Mission: *Ātmano mokṣārthaṁ jagaddhitāya ca* — 'For one's own spiritual freedom and the welfare of the world'.

4. *Cheap Religiosity versus Robust Spirituality*

This message of a comprehensive spirituality is the central note that runs through all the music of Vivekananda's *Complete Works* available in eight published volumes. It is a music not only to soothe one's nerves as all good music is, but also to rouse one to heroic action, to calm, silent, steady work in the service of all men and women, irrespective of caste and creed and nationality. Referring to Vivekananda's speeches, says Romain Rolland in his book, *The Life of Vivekananda* (Third Impression, p. 162):

'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses'.

The central note of this music is, as mentioned earlier, a comprehensive spirituality, a double character-efficiency, leading to

true life-fulfilment for all. This music finds responsive echoes from the hearts of millions in East and West today.

For India herself, Vivekananda's message of love and service helped to open up the springs of our national life which were lying choked up during the past few centuries. Our nation lost its political freedom and social dynamism when our people became narrow and self-centred, and largely ignored the existence and claims of their fellow-man next door, in pursuit of a static piety and an otherworldly salvation. We failed to grasp the vital truth that a *cheap religiosity* is neither the nursery of, nor the subsitute for, *a robust spirituality,* yielding the fruits of manliness and strength, character and efficiency. And we paid the heavy price of our folly through repeated shocks of conquests and shame of subjections for a few centuries.

Vivekananda roused the nation from this sleep and delusion of centuries with his thundering message: 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached.' This goal he defined as the manifestation by each and every human being of his or her inborn divine nature. This is the one source of man's freedom and equality, of the artistic excellence of his life, and of the dignity and worth of his personality. Any society which upholds this truth and vision and embodies it in its body-politic is alone progressive, said Vivekananda. He saw Indian society progressive in its vision, but highly reactionary in its social embodiment. Writing in anguish from U.S.A. to a sensitive Indian youth about the prevailing callousness of the upper classes of India, he said (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol V. Seventh Edition, p. 16):

'They little dream of the ages of tyranny, mental, moral, and physical, that has reduced the image of God (that is man) to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother (that is woman) to a slave to bear children; and life itself a curse.

And he dedicated his superhuman energies to the incorporation of this glorious vision in the Indian body-politic, and summoned the youth of India to this high mission. Later in the same letter he wrote:

'I may perish of cold and hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men this sympathy, this struggle, for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. ... Vow, then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.'

This sweet and strong music energized India and taught her to forsake the path of exploitation of man by man and follow the path of service. This was the mainspring of inspiration behind her decades-long struggle for political independence and social justice. That fount of inspiration seems to have slowly dried up during these years of our post-independence existence, which alone explains the pervasive mess in which our nation finds itself today.

5. *Renunciation and Service*

The nation today needs to hearken to the dynamic message of Swami Vivekananda. That message proclaims (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 228):

'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself.'

Our mood of helplessness today is the product of the want of faith in ourselves. We are sadly missing the touch of the heroic in our life and aspirations. It is precisely here that the nation can experience the galvanic touch, or in the words of Romain Rolland (*The Life of Vivekananda,* p. 162), receive a thrill through the body like an electric shock, by its education at the feet of Swami Vivekananda today. Says the Swami in an inspiring passage (*The Complete Works,* Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 193):

'Teach yourselves, teach everyone,his real nature: call upon the sleeing 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.'

6. *Vedānta and A Universal Ethics*

'Love thy neighbour as thyself', exhorts Jesus Christ. This is the central message of ethics and morality. But the human heart always asks a counter question: Who is my neighbour? The answer to this question given by the human heart ranges from the grossly self-centred and selfish to the utterly unselfish and self-effacing. The first type sees his neighbour only in himself and the few others close to him and who subserve his own interests. This is the utterly worldly man to whom the world and other human beings are but

means to an end, that end being himself. It is consoling to realize that there are actually very few in the world who are as low as this in the moral scale.

The second type, who looks upon the whole world as his own self, stands at the other extreme end, the blazing example of spirituality, unworldliness, of what every one can be at his or her highest and best. This is also a small minority. In between lie the vast mass of humanity endowed with moral awareness in varying degrees; among them are many whose moral awareness is high, but has got stuck up in a group or a sect, a system or a creed. Their neighbourly feelings extend only to the members of their group or sect, system or creed. Beyond that limited circle, it is either apathy and indifference or hostility and aggression. His heart has answered the question to itself that the demands of the moral dictum, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', has been fully met by his sectarian and group loyalties and services. But this is the sign of moral and spiritual stagnation. Jesus did not intend that his concept of neighbourliness should be cribbed, cabinned, and confined that way.

That is the significance of his luminous parable of the good Samaritan, by which he explained and illustrated the meaning of his utterance. To be true to Jesus, accordingly, one has to break down every barrier in the way of neighbourliness, be it a sect or a creed, a political group or a nation-state ideology. It is the ethical vision and urge that sustains us in our search for finding and loving our neighbours even within our own sect or group; but the vision itself and its urge cannot be confined there; it breaks down all barriers and marches on to discover the neighbour in every being; to the heart's searching question, 'Who is my neighbour?', the heart which is freed from worldly stagnation gives the clear and convincing answer: Everyone, irrespective of caste or creed or nationality. Such a heart has broken through the stagnation of little loves and has launched itself on the current of a God-ward passion and a man-ward love, on the wings of a pure spirituality, unobstructed by any worldly considerations. Don't stop, but march on, is the clarion call of the spiritual core of all religions. Extend the range of your neighbourly love to those outside your group and sect, says the ethical urge in man; function in and through a sect or a church if you

so choose, but don't die there, whispers the spiritual urge. The soul in man is greater and more glorious than sects and creeds, says Vedānta, and exhorts man to cultivate this attitude and urge of spiritual dynamics and march on to the infinite and the universal, which is the true destiny of every individual. Says Swami Vivekananda *(Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* Fourth Edition, p. 253):

'All expansion is life, all contraction is death.'

Love is life, expansion; hatred is death, contraction; service is expansion of the inner man, exploitation is his contraction. Renounce the limited self and manifest the higher self through love and service, says Vivekananda. 'Unless he erects himself above himself, how poor a thing is man!" sings Wordsworth.

'They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive', writes Vivekananda in a letter to the then Mahārajā of Mysore in 1894 *(ibid,* p. 111).

7. *Conclusion*

Nation-building in India can be achieved only when the bricks constituted by our five hundred million population become joined to each other with the cement of love and service and stand before the world as an integrated national edifice. This is the work of education in moral and ethical vision which, having achieved a measure of national integration, will also help our people to rise above the merely national, and discover their neighbour in every member of the international community. This is the true direction and goal of Indian citizenship today. All our political and social processes, all our scientific and religious programmes, can have no nobler aims than these two. The sooner we consciously bend their energies in this higher direction, the wiser we shall show ourselves to ourselves and to the keenly observant world. It is in this high orientation of national energies and purposes that our nation will receive an invaluable education from the life and message of Swami Vivekananda.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S SYNTHESIS OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION *

1. *Introduction*

THE subjects of science and religion are getting more and more important to man in the modern age. They are two great disciplines, which, when combined harmoniously, can bring about an all-round expression of human genius. But, unfortunately, for the last few centuries, the relationship between the two has not been quite happy. In the twentieth century, however, a new approach is becoming evident, and the representative thinkers among scientists and religious people are beginning to discern a close interrelation between these two branches of human knowledge. They are slowly veering round to the point of view that science and religion can heartily embrace each other, without detriment to the cause for which each stands, and work for the good of humanity. It is being realized more and more by both that there are elements in science that religion can adopt in order to fortify itself, and elements in religion that can deepen and strengthen science. I shall here touch upon some of these points of contact, and discuss the methods and results of both the disciplines, against the background of the unity and totality of knowledge, and in the light of the synthetic approach and vision of Swami Vivekananda, who was an outstanding spiritual and intellectual luminary of the modern age and who worked successfully to bring about this great consummation. Writes Romain Rolland about him (*The Life of Vivekananda,* Third Impression, p. 310):

'In the two words equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action, from the most spiritual to the most practical. ... He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy.'

* Paper contributed to the session of the Parliament of Religions held at Calcutta on 4 January 1964, in connection with the concluding celebrations of the Birth Centenary of Swami Vivekananda

2. *The Scientific Discipline*

The civilization in which we live today is the product of the discipline of the human mind known as science. When we study science at close quarters, in the way the great scientists have applied themselves to this pursuit, we find two aspects in its discipline. The first is *pure science,* science which tries earnestly to understand the truth of experience through a dispassionate inquiry; and the second is *applied science,* in which the truth discovered by pure science flows as inventions for the technical enrichment of human life. These two, science as *lucifera* and science as *fructifera,* science as *light* and science as *fruit,* always go together. Knowledge leads to power, and power leads to control and manipulation of the forces of nature, enabling man to condition his life and environment with deliberation. Every new discovery in pure science, at some stage or other, becomes converted into applied science, into control and manipulation of the forces of nature. And the result, as revealed in recent history, is the great saga of scientific discovery and invention resulting in the world-wide technological civilization of today. It is a most fascinating study how the human mind, disciplined in this pursuit of science, develops the capacity to wrest from nature truth after truth, hidden and jealously guarded by her, leading to our extraordinary age of nuclear science and space travel.

3. *Limitations of Science*

But, when we go deeper into this subject of science, its limitations become apparent. To illustrate: two branches of science, viz. physics, including astronomy, and biology, have given us a vast body of insights regarding the nature of the universe and man. Up to the end of the nineteenth century, physics was warped in its final judgements. It saw materialism and mechanism reigning supreme in the universe. There was then a cock–sureness in its pronouncements; but, in the twentieth century, an element of humility is discernible in the attitude of the great physicists of the age. In the nineteenth century, knowledge was not deep enough, and scientists looked only at the surface of things. But, along with the discovery of such facts as radio–activity and insight into the nucleus of the atom, the realization has come that there is a severe limitation placed on

our knowledge regarding the truth of the external world. Science owns today that it deals only with the *appearances* of things and not with the *reality* behind these appearances. Some of the greatest of modern physicists tell us that what science has revealed of the world around us is only the outer aspect of things. Behind this *observable* universe, there is an *unobservable* universe. This is a great confession of the limitations of science and its methods. Science is dealing with phenomena revealed by the senses or by apparatuses helpful to the senses. But these senses reveal so little, and what they reveal only tells us that there are realities behind the sense world determining it and controlling it. Science restricts itself to the understanding of the *observable* part of the universe and to controlling its energies for the uses of man.

A similar situation obtains in the science of biology. In the last century, it was cock-sure about its pronouncements. By a study of the different aspects of the phenomena of life it arrived at the great theory of evolution, from which it drew certain conclusions which directly led to a form of materialism that equated man with the animal, and both to a machine. Today, scientists tell us that they were not happy titles that Darwin chose for his famous books *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man.* Julian Huxley suggests that these could have been more appropriately titled *The Evolution of Organisms* and *The Ascent of Man* (Sir Julian Huxley: *Evolution after Darwin,* Vol. I, The University of Chicago Press, p. 17). But then, these books appeared at a time when a fierce controversy was going on between emerging science and the entrenched Christian dogma, and this had its impact even on the choosing of the titles of great scientific books. The science of physics with its thoroughgoing materialism and mechanistic determinism, and the science of biology with its newly discovered evolutionary theory and its domination by the general materialistic outlook of science and scientists of the age, helped to shatter nineteenth-century man's faith in religion and spiritual values.

4. *Limitations of Dogma-bound Religion*

Added to this was the attack on religion from the great social idealists and revolutionary social thinkers like Karl Marx. It was the

period of the industrial revolution. These idealists asked: If God is there in an extra-cosmic heaven, why is there so much suffering in this world, why are millions starving, and why are thousands of little children made to slave in factories and workshops for the gain of a few capitalist exploiters? This kind of inequality, this kind of oppression of man by man in the presence of an all-powerful God, is something we cannot understand or bear. Marx, accordingly, characterized religion as the 'soul of soulless conditions, the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people'.

The result was that, by the end of the nineteenth century, religion and faith in God and eternal verities ceased to be the ruling ideas of modern civilization; the power of religion to influence human thinking and conduct disappeared; man lost the fear of God, and more especially the fear of the devil! Christian religious dogma had upheld the latter more than the former as conducive to moral control of human action and belief. But the scientific spirit shattered faith in the devil and, along with it, faith in God as well. These were treated as primitive superstitions unworthy of modern civilized man. Modern science treated religion as a dangerous error in the beginning and as a harmless illusion in the end.

But the two great world wars, and the various crises—economic and political—that followed the one and preceded the other in this twentieth century, brought about a certain chastening of the spirit of Western thinkers, especially of those in the scientifically advanced countries of the West. Social thinkers became less and less cock-sure of their remedies for human ills. Even great scientists began to feel and express that science, as understood and pursued by them, was not enough. Einstein said: 'Science can denature plutonium; but it cannot denature the evil in the heart of man.' That is not its function. Most scientists agree today that science alone cannot ensure human happiness; it can only create *conditions* for his happiness; but it cannot ensure that man *shall be* happy or man *shall be* really fulfilled. That is not the function of science as understood in the positive sciences of physics, biology, etc.; it is the province of another discipline, the science of the inner nature of man, which is the true meaning of religion as understood in Indian thought.

5. *Religion and Science in the Vedāntic Perspective*

Modern civilization has overrated science and technology, just as the older civilizations had underrated it. There is need today to view science in its proper perspective—the perspective of total human knowledge and welfare. ***This is one of the several vital contributions of Swami Vivekananda to modern thought.*** Dealing with the complementary character of Eastern contributions to religion and Western contributions to science, he said in his lecture on 'My Master' delivered in New York in 1896 (*Complete Works,* Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, p. 155):

> 'Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonizing, the mingling, of these two ideals. To the oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to him. To the occidental, he is a dreamer; to the oriental, the occidental is a dreamer playing with ephemeral toys, and he laughs to think that grown-up men and women should make so much of a handful of matter which they will have to leave sooner or later. Each calls the other a dreamer. But the oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the occidental, and I think it is more necessary. Machines never made mankind happy and never will make. He who is trying to make us believe this will claim that happiness is in the machine; but it is always in the mind. That man alone who is the lord of his mind can become happy, and none else. And what, after all, is this power of machinery? Why should a man who can send a current of electricity through a wire be called a very great man and a very intelligent man? Does not nature do a million times more than that every moment? Why not then fall down and worship nature?'

6. *The Spiritual Urges in Modern Science*

The universe was a mystery to man in the primitive stage; it has not ceased to be so for civilized man even in this twentieth century. We find scientists like the late Sir James Jeans writing books on the scientific view of the universe with such titles as *The Mysterious Universe.* Even after all these marvellous scientific discoveries and inventions, the scientist still treats nature as profoundly mysterious. In spite of all the knowledge that he has gained, the scientist feels that he has only scratched the surface of nature, that he is yet far far away from the heart of the problem of the universe. Says Sir James Jeans in his *The New Background of Science,* (p. 68):

> 'Physical science set out to study a world of matter and radiation, and finds that it cannot describe or picture the nature of either, even to itself. Photons, electrons, and

protons have become about as meaningless to the physicist as *x, y, z* are to a child on its first day of learning algebra. The most we hope for at the moment is to discover ways of manipulating x, y, z without knowing what they are, with the result that the advance of knowledge is at present reduced to what Einstein has described as extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible.'

If the mystery of the universe has eluded the scientist so much, the mystery of man has eluded him even more. The late Sir Arthur Eddington, the famous mathematician and physicist, concludes his book *Space, Time and Gravitation* (pp. 200-201), with a pointed reference to this predicament:

'The theory of relativity has passed in review the whole subject-matter of physics. It has unified the great laws which, by the precision of their formulation and the exactness of their application, have won the proud place in human knowledge which physical science holds today. And yet, in regard to the nature of things, this knowledge is only an empty shell—a form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form, and not knowledge of content. All through the physical world runs that unknown content which must surely be the stuff of our consciousness. Here is a hint of aspects deep within the world of physics, and yet unattainable by the methods of physics. And, moreover, we have found that where science has progressed the farthest, the mind has but regained from nature that which the mind has put into nature.

'We have found a strange footprint on the shores of the unknown. We have devised profound theories, one after another, to account for its origin. At last, we have succeeded in reconstructing the creature that made the footprint. And lo! it is our own.'

Man as thinker, man as observer, man as the self has left his 'footprints on the shores of the unknown', on the shores of the 'not-self' aspects of the universe. It is time that science tried to unravel this remarkable mystery of man. There seems to be a profounder mystery hidden within it than in the depths of outer space or of the atom. It is time that science turned its attention to tackling this mystery. All other mysteries pale into insignificance by the side of this one; it holds the key to all other mysteries.

In a talk over the B.B.C. a few decades ago, Eddington posed this great question: 'What is the truth about ourselves?', and proceeded to answer:

'We may incline to various answers: We are a bit of star gone wrong. We are complicated physical machinery—puppets that strut and talk and laugh and die as the hand of time turns the handle beneath. But let us remember that there is one elementary inescapable answer: We are that which asks the question.'

We are that which asks the question. Man is primarily a subject; man cannot be reduced to objective dimensions. He is essentially the seer, the knower, the observer; he is the *drk* or *sāksin* or *kṣetrajna,* in the language of Vedanta. Here Eddington throws a hint at 'aspects deep in the world of physics, but unattainable by the methods of physics', but containing tremendous philosophical possibilities for advancing man's knowledge of himself and of the universe; this is obviously outside the pale of investigation by the positive sciences and their methods.

Another scientist, the late Prince Louis de Broglie, an authority on quantum theory and wave mechanics, dealt with the same subject in an article on 'The Poetry of Science', contributed some years ago to the international monthly *Mirror.* Starting with a famous quotation from Blaise Pascal: 'In space, the universe engulfs me and reduces me to a pin-point; through thought I understand the universe', de Broglie concludes: 'In that sublime pun lies the beauty, the poetry, of pure science, and its high intellectual worth.

'What am I?' Physically, I am a speck of microscopic dust in the vast immensity of the universe. But *through thought I comprehend this universe.* Man as scientist comprehends, in a small formula given by his thought, the vast phenomena of nature, with its immensity and variety. What must be the profound mystery of man who, in one aspect, is only a pin-point engulfed by the spatial immensity of the universe, but yet, in another aspect, is able to compress the whole of that immensity into a few formulae given by the power and penetration of his thought?

7. *The Mystery that is Man*

So man has dimensions that cannot be reduced to the merely physical, the merely material. These latter are his 'not-self' aspects which enter into the constitution of his body, which obviously is just a speck of dust in that vast world of the not-self; but there is in him also something transcendental, which cannot be so reduced. He is the self; that is his primary, inalienable aspect. And if science is to progress further, it has to choose for investigation this field of the mystery of man which towers over its erstwhile study, namely, the

mystery of the external universe. This is a vast field of study — the field of man's awareness, the field of his consciousness, his ego, his being the *subject* and not the *object*; science will find here a vaster and more fascinating and rewarding field of study than in external nature. Already, scientists in the West are slowly turning their attention to this great mystery, the mystery of 'Man the Unknown' in the words of Alexis Carrel, apart from that of 'Man the Known', which is the subject of the positive sciences like physics, chemistry, and biology, and behaviouristic psychology.

Man is the creator of science and technology, culture and civilization; he is also today the only possible destroyer of his civilization. Everything about him is a mystery. As Lincoln Barnett says in his study of Einstein's contributions to modern scientific thought (*The Universe and Dr. Einstein,* Mentor Edition, pp. 126-127):

'In the evolution of scientific thought, one fact has become impressively clear: there is no mystery of the physical world which does not point to a mystery beyond itself. All highroads of the intellect, all byways of theory and conjecture, lead ultimately to an abyss that human ingenuity can never span. For man is enchained by the very condition of his being, his finiteness and involvement in nature. The further he extends his horizons, the more vividly he recognizes the fact that, as the physicist Niels Bohr puts it, "We are both spectators and actors in the great drama of existence". Man is thus his own greatest mystery. He does not understand the vast veiled universe into which he has been cast for the reason that he does not understand himself. He comprehends but little of his organic processes and even less of his unique capacity to perceive the world around him, to reason and to dream. Least of all does he understand his noblest and most mysterious faculty: the ability to transcend himself and perceive himself in the act of perception.'

8. *The Scientific Basis of Religion*

Here is the meeting-point of science and religion, as revealed by Indian thought; for religion, as expounded in Vedānta, takes up the investigation of the mystery of experience where the positive sciences leave off. This 'Man the Unknown', man as the *subject* of experience, is its special field of investigation. Says Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 253):

'Beyond consciousness is where the bold search. Consciousness is bound by the senses. Beyond that, beyond the senses, men must go, in order to arrive at truths of the spiritual world, and there are even now persons who succeed in going beyond the bounds of the senses. These are called *ṛṣis* (seers of truth), because they come face to face with spiritual truths.'

Indian thought upholds both religion and science as valid disciplines in the pursuit of truth. India endorses the view expressed by Eddington about the spiritual kinship of science and religion (*Science and the Unseen World,* p. 54):

'You will understand the true spirit neither of science nor of religion unless seeking is placed in the forefront.'

India's thinkers never saw any contradiction between the two, unlike the scientists and theologians of the West. Such contradiction and conflict are the result of a narrow view of both science and religion which, however, the modern West is struggling to discard. Many students of science, not to speak of laymen, have vague and rather confused notions about what science means. The same is true about religion. To the ordinary man, science means no more than the gadgets like radio or television or other material benefits conferred on mankind by scientific technology. Students of science generally identify it with the several departments of science such as physics, chemistry, etc., which they study in schools and colleges. But we have to turn to the great scientists themselves to learn what science is; and from them we learn that it is the pursuit of truth — of truth hidden in the facts of nature, in the data revealed by the senses and the data revealed by experiments. It is a sincere, critical, detached study of experience, by which confused data are reduced to meaning and orderliness and brought under control. Says Karl Pearson (*Grammar of Science,* 1900, p. 6):

'The classification of facts, the recognition of their sequence and relative significance, is the function of science, and the habit of forming a judgement upon these facts, unbiased by personal feeling is characteristic of what may be termed the scientific frame of mind.'

Science so understood is not tied up with any particular body of facts. In the words of one of the great biologists, J. Arthur Thomson (*Introduction to Science,* Home University Library Edition, p. 58):

'Science is not wrapped up with any particular body of facts; it is characterized as an intellectual attitude. It is not tied down to any particular methods of inquiry; it is simply sincere critical thought, which admits conclusions only when these are based on evidence. We may get a good lesson in scientific methods from a businessman meeting some new practical problem, from a lawyer sifting evidence, or from a statesman framing a constructive bill.'

Objectivity and precision, both as to thought and verbal formulation, are the two important characteristics of the scientific method. Any study possessing these characteristics will be science, whatever be the field of that study. Science as such is therefore not tied down to any particular order of facts, though the various departments of science like physics or chemistry, biology or sociology, are tied down to particular orders of facts. These departments have limited scope, but science itself is *unlimited* in scope; and these various departments, starting with the study of separate fields tend, in their advanced stages, to overstep their particular boundaries and merge into one converging scientific search, the search for the meaning of total experience. In this expansive context, the idea of a science of religion, the science of the facts of the inner world of man, as upheld in ancient Indian thought, and as expounded in the modern age by Swami Vivekananda, becomes a study of far-reaching significance.

9. *India's Vision of Universal Science-Religion*

Religion as developed and understood in the West was, in its aims and methods and data, opposed to this spirit of rational seeking and investigation. It was taken as something finished and ready-made, which men were asked to believe — a creed or a dogma, a frozen piece of thought, which men were called upon to accept. That was why it came into fierce collision with the advancing tide of science with its spirit of free seeking and rational inquiry. In India, on the other hand, religion has always been understood to be a matter of seeking, finding, and verification, as any of the branches of science. This is a statement that will be found corroborated in the great Upaniṣads of ancient India and in the literature of Swami Vivekananda of our own times.

Tracing the recurring conflicts of science and religion in the West to the absence of this broad approach, Vivekananda said (*Complete Works,* Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 433):

'We all know the theories of the cosmos according to the modern astronomers and physicists, and at the same time we all know how woefully they undermine the theology of Europe; how these scientific discoveries that are made act as a bomb thrown at its stronghold; and we know how theologians have in all times attempted to put down these researches.'

When religion refuses to take the help of reason, it weakens itself. Alluding to this in the course of a lecture on 'Reason and Religion', delivered in England in 1896, Swami Vivekananda said (*ibid.*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 367):

'The foundations have been all undermined, and the modern man, whatever he may say in public, knows in the privacy of his heart that he can no more "believe". Believing certain things because an organized body of priests tells him to believe, believing because it is written in certain books, believing because his people like him to believe, the modern man knows to be impossible for him. There are, of course, a number of people who seem to acquiesce in the so-called popular faith, but we also know for certain that they do not think. Their idea of belief may be better translated as "not-thinking-carelessness".'

And pleading for the application of reason in the field of religion, he continued (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 367):

'Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. I am thoroughly convinced that its destruction would be the best thing that could happen. All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be made scientific — as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry — but it will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.'

A study of the Upaniṣads reveals that the subject of religion was approached in ancient India in an objective dispassionate manner; the aim of the study was to get at truth, and not to hug pleasing fancies and illusions or to idolize tribal passions and prejudices.

In several of his lectures and discourses, Swami Vivekananda has expounded the scientific approach to religion as upheld in Indian thought. In his lecture on 'Religion and Science', he says (*ibid.*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 81):

'Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion.

As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is the same; and this becomes law. ...

'Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong book — the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion, because he too reads the wrong book — the book without.'

The Indian thinkers discovered by their investigations that there are two fields in which man functions: one, the external field; the other, the internal. These are two different orders of phenomena. The study of the one alone does not exhaust the whole range of experience. Also the study of the one from the standpoint of the other will not lead to satisfactory results. But the study of the one in the light of the conclusions from the study of the other is helpful and relevant.

In a lecture on 'Cosmology', Swami Vivekananda said (*ibid.*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 432):

'There are two worlds, the microcosm and the macrocosm, the internal and the external. We get truth from both of these by means of experience. The truth gathered from internal experience is psychology, metaphysics, and religion; from external experience, the physical sciences. Now a perfect truth should be in harmony with experiences in both these worlds. The microcosm must bear testimony to the macrocosm, and the macrocosm to the microcosm; physical truth must have its counterpart in the internal world, and the internal world must have its verification outside.'

Thus the thinkers of ancient India said: Here is the physical life of man, and here is the physical universe that environs him. Let us study both in a scientific spirit. But let us also study him in his depths, his nature as revealed by his consciousness, his awareness, his emotions, his ego, and his sense of selfhood. These latter also constitute a vast group of phenomena that need to be investigated. Every advance in this field is bound to advance also man's knowledge about the truth of the mystery of the external world. For, to quote Eddington again (*Philosophy of Physical Science*, p. 5);

'We have discovered that it is actually an aid in the search for knowledge to understand the nature of the knowledge which we seek.'

The method of investigation in the field of religion is largely the same as in the positive sciences: collection of facts, their classification, a dispassionate study of these so as to reveal the law or laws underlying them, such knowledge leading to the control over the phenomena concerned, and, finally, the application of such knowledge for the alleviation of human suffering and the enhancement and enrichment of human life. This kind of study of religion, as a thorough scientific study of the facts of the inner life, was undertaken by the great thinkers of ancient India; the insights which they gained were re-tested and amplified by a galaxy of subsequent thinkers, *leaving to posterity the invaluable legacy of a rich and dynamic scientific tradition in the field of religion*. It is because of this adamantine base that Indian spirituality has stood the test of time. That also explains its hospitality to modern science, and its pride in the remarkable achievements of this sister discipline developed by the modern West.

Says Romain Rolland (*The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 196):

'The true Vedāntic spirit does not start out with a system of preconceived ideas. It possesses absolute liberty and unrivalled courage among religions with regard to the facts to be observed and the diverse hypotheses it has laid down for their coordination. Never having been hampered by a priestly order, each man has been entirely free to search wherever he pleased for the spiritual explanation of the spectacle of the universe.'

After a thorough investigation into the real nature of man, the sages of the Upaniṣads made a fundamental discovery: Man, in his essential nature, is divine; behind the finite man is the Ātman, ever free, ever pure, and perfect. The body, the mind, and the ego are merely the externals of the real man who is immortal and divine This discovery led to the further discovery that the same divinity is the ground of the world as well. This they termed Brahman, the totality of the Self and the not-Self, which they characterized as *satyaṁ jñānam anantam* — 'Truth, Awareness, and Infinity'. In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. 1.3), we find this question put by an earnest student to a great teacher:

Kasmin nu bhagavo vijñāte sarvam idaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavati —

'What is that reality, O Blessed One, by knowing which we can know all that there is in the universe?'

Is there such a unique reality by knowing which we can understand all the manifestations of nature, internal as well as external? Is there a unity behind this diversity, a one behind the many? To this question, the teacher gave a very significant reply (*ibid.*, I, 1.4):

Dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā caiva aparā ca —

'Two are the types of knowledge to be acquired by man; so say the knowers of Brahman. One is called *parā vidyā,* higher knowledge; the other is called *aparā vidyā*, lower knowledge.'

Both these must be investigated. Of these, the lower or ordinary knowledge, says the Upaniṣad, consists of the sacred Vedas, phonetics, the code of rituals, grammar, etymology, prosody, and astronomy. In fact, it includes all the sacred books, literature, art, history, and science.

Here we have a scientific mind of the highest order — impersonal, objective, and detached. There is no desire to put forth a pet opinion; truth alone is the motive power, even if that truth goes against one's pet attachments and aversions. The teacher says that even the Vedas, the sacred books of the people, belong to the category of lower knowledge. Who would dare to say that his own sacred books are ordinary, except he who is of a detached and scientific frame of mind, and is in search of truth and not dogma — he who has no truth to hide, no opinion to uphold, no prejudices to defend, who just wants to know the truth and is prepared to sacrifice everything else into the bargain? No religion except Vedānta has practised this bold detachment. The follower of every other religion, if asked what is ordinary knowledge, would unhesitatingly reply: 'All the sacred books of all the religions except my own.' But this teacher of the Upaniṣad had the detachment and boldness, proceeding from love of truth, to say that even the Vedas, held in such veneration by himself and by his people, were secondary; all the sacred books and all positive sciences and arts are but lower knowledge — *aparā vidyā.*

What, then, is left to be included in the category of *parā vidyā*, higher knowledge? The teacher proceeds to indicate this elusive theme. There is a tremendous field of knowledge still left, he thinks; but it belongs to a different order. So he says (*ibid.*, I. 1.5):

Atha parā yayā tad aksaram adhigamyate —

'That is *para* by which the Imperishable is realized.'

Science and all the rest deal only with things that change, that are perishable. As Eddington puts it, science gives us 'knowledge of structural form and not knowledge of content'. The sacred books give us, says Sri Ramakrishna, only *information* about God and not God Himself. And yet we feel that, in the words of Eddington, 'all through the physical universe runs that unknown content.' What is that content? And how can we get at it? If the positive sciences cannot get at it, there must be another discipline, another line of inquiry, which must be able to give us this.

If the sacred books contain only *information* about God, there must be a discipline which gives us God and not merely *information* about Him. It is this inquiry that pervades the Upanisads and that has made them immortal even as literature. And the nature and scope of that inquiry and the way it was conducted have something superb about them. There is no effort to uphold an opinion, however dear; no struggle to pronounce a dogma and cling to it, and thrust it upon others; no trace of tiredness or laziness of mind seeking a resting place on the way. Truth, and nothing but truth, is the watchword. Suffused with the spirit of truth, they declared *(ibid.* III. 1.6):

Satyameva jayate nanṛtam,
Satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ —

'Truth alone triumphs, not untruth; the path to the highest excellence is spread out through truth only.'

And this path to the highest excellence is strewn with the debris of discarded opinions, pleasing dogmas, and broken hypotheses; thought was not allowed to rest on any of them for long; it forged ahead on the two wings of critical discrimination and inner detachment, wafted by the current of a single-minded passion for truth. One thinker puts forth his conclusion; another shows it as inadequate; this leads to further inquiry, leading to a deeper pronouncement. There was this graceful conflict of thought between the most gifted minds, through which thought forged ahead. There was no

national dogma or authoritarian church to suppress or arrest it. The whole process reached its consummation in the profound discovery of the imperishable Self of man, the Atman, and its unity with the Self of the universe, the Brahman. The entire process was a joyous voyage of discovery; looking back, they saw that the steps left behind were also valid and that man travels not from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher.

10. Modern Science and the Mystery of Man

Pleading for the viewing of man in his depths on the part of modern science, the eminent paleontologist, the late Père Teilhard de Chardin says (*The Phenomenon of Man,* Collins, London, 1959, pp. 35-36):

'When studied narrowly in himself by anthropologists or jurists, man is a tiny, even a shrinking, creature. His overpronounced individuality conceals from our eyes the whole to which he belongs; as we look at him, our minds incline to break nature up into pieces and to forget both its deep interrelations and its measureless horizons. We incline to all that is bad in anthropocentrism. And it is this that leads scientists to refuse to consider man as an object of scientific scrutiny except through his body.

'The time has come to realize that an interpretation of the universe — even a postivist one — remains unsatisfying unless it covers the interior as well as the exterior of things; mind as well as matter. The true physics is that which will, one day, achieve the inclusion of man in his wholeness in a coherent picture of the world.'

The Upaniṣads discovered the finite man as but the outer crust or layer of the infinite and immortal man within. In his finiteness, he enters and is entered into by the finite world around him. In this, he is a speck of dust in the vast immensity of space in which 'the universe engulfs me and reduces me to a pin-point', in the profound words of Pascal quoted earlier. But in his infinite dimension as the imperishable Self, he *understands the universe*. The inner aspect of man, and, through him, of the universe, is slowly dawning on modern scientific thought. Chardin asks: 'Up to now has science ever troubled to look at the world other than from without.' (*ibid.*, p. 52). And he proceeds to say (*ibid.*, p. 55):

'In the eyes of the physicist, nothing exists legitimately, at least upto now, except the *without* of things. The same intellectual attitude is still permissible in the bacteriologist, whose cultures (apart from substantial difficulties) are treated as laboratory reagents. But it is still more difficult in the realm of plants. It tends to become a gamble in the case of a biologist studying the behaviour of insects or coelenterates. It seems merely futile with regard to the vertebrates. Finally, it breaks down completely with man, in whom the existence of a *within* can no longer be evaded, because it is the object of a direct intuition and the substance of all knowledge.'

And Chardin concludes (*ibid.*, p. 56):

'It is impossible to deny that, deep within ourselves, an "interior" appears at the heart of beings, as it were seen through a rent. This is enough to ensure that, in one degree or another, this "interior" should obtrude itself as existing everywhere in nature from all time. Since the stuff of the universe has an inner aspect at one point of itself, there is necessarily a *double aspect to its structure,* that is to say, in every region of space and time — in the same way, for instance, as it is granular: *coextensive with their Without, there is a Within to things.*'

Says the great physiologist and neurologist, Sir Charles Sherrington (*Man on His Nature,* Pelican Edition, p. 38):

'Today Nature looms larger than ever and includes more fully than ever ourselves. It is, if you will, a machine, but it is a partly mentalized machine and,in virtue of including ourselves,it is a machine with human qualities of mind. It is a running stream of energy—mental and physical—and, unlike man-made machines, it is actuated by emotions, fears and hopes, dislikes and love.'

In a lecture on 'The Evolutionary Vision', delivered in 1959 at the closing session of the Chicago University symposium on 'Evolution After Darwin' held to commemorate the centenary of the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Sir Julian Huxley, the noted biologist, gave a spiritual orientation to the evolutionary process (*Evolution After Darwin,* Vol. III, pp. 251-52):

'Man's evolution is not biological but psychosocial; it operates by the mechanism of cultural tradition, which involves the cumulative self-reproduction and self-variation of mental activities and their products. Accordingly, major steps in the human phase of evolution are achieved by breakthroughs to new dominant patterns of mental organization of knowledge, ideas, and beliefs — ideological instead of physiological or biological organization. ...

'All dominant thought organizations are concerned with the ultimate, as well as with the immediate, problems of existence or, I should rather say, with the most ultimate problems that the thought of the time is capable of formulating or even envisaging. They are all concerned with giving some interpretation of man, of the world which he is to live in, and of his place and role in that world—in other words, some comprehensive picture of human destiny and significance.'

Further, Huxley reveals the trend of evolution towards quality (*ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 261-62):

'It (evolutionary vision) shows us mind enthroned above matter, quantity subordinate to quality.'

In his essay on 'Emergence of Darwinism', Huxley sums up the goal of the evolutionary process at the human level as 'fulfilment' (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 20):

'In the light of our present knowledge, man's most comprehensive aim is seen not as mere survival, not as numerical increase, not as increased complexity of organization or increased control over his environment, but as greater fulfilment — the fuller realization of more possibilities by the human species collectively and more of its component members individually.'

And pleading for the development of *a science of human possibilities*, Huxley further says (*ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 21):

'Once greater fulfilment is recognized as man's ultimate or dominant aim, we shall need a science of human possibilities to help guide the long course of psychosocial evolution that lies ahead.'

11. Kinship Between Vedānta and Modern Science

Swami Vivekananda has shown that Vedānta and modern science are close to each other in spirit and temper and objectives. Both are spiritual disciplines. Even in the cosmology of the physical universe, the two reveal many points of contact. The fundamental position in the cosmology of both is what Swami Vivekananda calls 'the postulate of a self-evolving cause'. Vedānta calls it Brahman which is a universal spiritual principle. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (III. 1) defines Brahman in a majestic utterance which will be welcomed by every scientific thinker:

Yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvanti; yat prayantyabhisaṁviśanti; tad vijijñāsaya; tad brahmeti —

'Wherefrom all these beings are born; by which, being born, they abide; into which, at the time of dissolution, they enter — seek to know That; That is Brahman.'

To the modern scientist, it is a material reality, the background material or stuff, as astrophysicist Fred Hoyle terms it. And both uphold the theory of evolution, cosmic as well as organic.

Referring to this spiritual kinship between modern science and ancient Vedānta, Swami Vivekananda said in his speech at the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893 *Complete Works*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 15):

'Manifestation, and not creation, is the word of science today, and the Hindu is only glad that what he has been cherishing in his bosom for ages is going to be taught in more forcible language, and with further light, from the latest conclusions of science.'

Although modern scientific thought does not yet have a recognized place for any spiritual reality or principle, several scientists of the twentieth century, including biologists like Teilhard de Chardin and Sir Julian Huxley, have endeavoured to soften the materialism of physical science and to find a place for spiritual experience in the scientific world picture. Even in the last century, Thomas Huxley, collaborator of Darwin, had protested against the association of science with any fixed dogma such as materialism, and termed materialism an 'intruder' (*Methods and Results*, Vol. I, p. 161). In this century, this protest has come from great physicists themselves. Sir James Jeans found that the final picture of the universe emerging from twentieth-century physical science was one in which matter was completely eliminated, 'mind reigning supreme and alone' (*The New Background of Science*, p. 307). Astrophysicist R. A. Millikan considered materialism 'a philosophy of unintelligence' (*An Autobiography*, last chapter). If twentieth-century physics is thus turning its face away from thorough-going materialism, twentieth-century biology is one step ahead of it in this orientation. *The whole of modern scientific thought is in the throes of a silent spiritual revolution with the emergence, on the horizon of scientific thought, of mind and consiousness, and the consequent need to develop what Jeans calls 'a new background of science'.* Julian Huxley and Chardin find the spiritual character of the world-stuff successively revealed in the course of organic evolution. Biology, in its theory of evolution, they hold, reveals what Chardin calls a *within* to nature, over and above and different from the *without* of nature revealed by physics and astronomy. Vedānta terms the *within* as the *pratyak rupa* and the *without* as the *parāk rūpa* of one and the same nature.

When the significance of this *within* of things is recognized in modern science, the scientific background material will undergo a spiritual orientation and thus come closer to the Brahman of Vedānta. The synthesis of the knowledge of the *within* and the *without* is what India achieved in its Vedānta ages ago as *samyak jñāna*, comprehensive or perfect knowledge, or philosophy. Reality itself does not know any distinction between a *within* and a *without*. These distinctions are made only by the human mind for the convenience of study and research.

As the different branches of the positive sciences are but different approaches to the study of one and the same reality, and as all such branches of study, when pursued far enough, tend to mingle and merge into a grand science of the physical universe, into a unified science of the *without* of nature, so the science of the *within* and the science of the *without* mingle and merge in a science of Brahman, the total Reality. This is how Vedānta viewed its *Brahmavidyā*, science of Brahman, the term Brahman standing for the totality of Reality, physical and non-physical; the *Mundaka Upanisad* (I. i. 1) defined *Brahmavidyā* as *sarvavidāpratiṣṭhā*, the *pratiṣṭhā* or basis of every *vidyā* or science. Says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (Xiii. 2):

Kṣetrakṣetrajñayor jñānaṁ yat tat jñānaṁ mataṁ mama —

'The knowledge of *kṣetra*, the not-self (the 'without' of things), and *kṣetrajña*, the Self, (the 'within' of things), is true knowledge according to me.'

Dealing with the all-inclusiveness of this Vedāntic thought as expounded by Swami Vivekananda, Romain Rolland says (*The Life of Vivekananda*, p. 289):

'But it is a matter of indifference to the calm pride of him who deems himself the stronger whether Science accepts free Religion, in Vivekananda's sense of the term, or not; for his Religion accepts Science. It is vast enough to find a place at its table for all loyal seekers after truth.'

In his lecture on 'The Absolute and Manifestation' delivered in London in 1896, Swami Vivekananda said (*Complete Works*, Vol. II, Ninth Edition, p. 140):

'Do you not see whither science is tending? The Hindu nation proceeded through the study of the mind, through metaphysics and logic. The European nations start from external nature, and now they, too, are coming to the same results. We find that searching through the mind we at last come to that Oneness, that universal One, the internal Soul of everything, the essence and reality of everything. ... Through material science, we come to the same Oneness.'

The *Bhagavatam* (XI. vii. 19-21) refers to this complementary character of science and Vedānta in a profound utterance:

Prayeṇa manujā loke lokatattvavicakṣaṇāḥ;
Samuddharanti hyātmānam ātmanaivāśubhāśayāt —

'In the world, men who are efficient in the investigation of the truth of nature, generally uplift themselves by themselves from all sources of evil.'

Ātmano gururātmaiva puruṣasya viśeṣataḥ;
Yat pratyakṣānumānābhyāṁ śreyo'sau anuvindate —

'For a human being particularly, his *guru* (teacher) is himself; because he achieves his welfare through (inquiring into) direct sense experience and inference based on the same.'

Puruṣatve ca māṁ dhīrāḥ sāṅkhyayogaviśāradāḥ;
Avistaraṁ prapaśyanti sarvaśaktyupabṛṁhitam—

'In this very human personality also, wise men, who have mastered the science and art of spiritual life, clearly realize Me (God, the universal Self of all) as fully manifest and endowed with all powers.'

12. The Vedāntic View of Evolution

Vedānta views the entire evolutionary process as progressive evolution of structure and form, and as greater and greater manifestation of the infinite Self within. It is evolution of matter and manifestation of spirit. Twentieth-century biology recognizes, in the first appearance of living organisms, the emergence, in rudimentary form, of the spiritual value of awareness.

This spiritual value of awareness grows, as it were, in richness and variety as we move up the evolutionary ladder. The evolution of the nervous system discloses progressive development of awareness

in depth and range, and consequent increase in the grip of the organism on its environment.

This awareness achieves a new and significant dimension with the appearance of man on the evolutionary scene. The field of awareness of all other organisms is, largely, the external environment and also, to a small extent, the interior of their bodies—the *without* of nature. Man alone has awareness of the self, along with awareness of the not-self, of both the *within and without* of nature.

That is the uniqueness of man, according to both twentieth-century biology and ancient Vedānta. Self-awareness, which nature achieved through the evolution of the human organism, is a new dimension of awareness containing tremendous implications for man's destiny as much as for his philosophy of nature.

The Vedāntic view of evolution and of man's uniqueness finds a classic statement in the *Bhāgavatam* (XI. 11.28):

Sṛṣṭvā purāṇi vividhānyajayātmaśaktyā
vṛkṣān sarīsṛpapaśūn khagadaṁśamatsyān;
Taistaiḥ atuṣṭahṛdayaḥ puruṣaṁ vidhāya
brahmāvalokadhiṣaṇaṁ mudam āpa devaḥ—

'The divine One, having projected (evolved) with His own inherent power various forms such as trees, reptiles, cattle, birds, insects, and fish, was not satisfied at heart with forms such as these; He then projected the human form endowed with the capacity to realize Brahman (the universal divine Self of all), and became extremely pleased.'

13. *India's Urge: Realization and not mere Speculation*

Evolution has revealed that the mystery of existence stirs in man as the mystery of the self. *The mystery of the universe will ever remain a mystery until this mystery of the self is cleared.* Till then,all our conclusions about the truth of the universe proceeding from science or philosophy, theology or logic, will be speculative ventures yielding mere postulates and conjectures. The Indian mind was not content to remain at the stage of speculation or conjecture in so important a field as the knowledge of the ultimate truth. Her

thinkers boldly penetrated into the world within, taking the facts of awareness and the ego as the clue, as *footprints,* in the words of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (I. 4. 7.); and when they penetrated to the depth, they discovered the infinite and the eternal behind the finite and the time-bound. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* registers this approach, and the object of its search, in another significant passage (III. 4.1):

Yat sākṣāt aparokṣāt brahma
ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ—

'The Brahman that is immediate and direct—the Self that is within all.'

'That thou art' (*Tat tvam asi*), proclaims the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. viii. 7). Again and again, the Upaniṣads reiterate this great Truth. If man as scientist has such a profound dimension that he can comprehend the vast universe in a formula given by his thought, what must be the dimension of man as the Ātman, the unchangeable, infinite Self? The mystery of the universe was finally resolved through the discovery of the solution to the mystery within man himself. *The sages of the Upaniṣads discovered the centre of the universe in the heart of man.* Through that discovery, man was revealed in his infinite dimension; and the universe was also revealed in all its spiritual glory. Realization of this truth is the only way to life-fulfilment, say the Upaniṣads. Says the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (II. 15):

Yadātmatattvena tu brahmatattvam
dīpopameneha yuktaḥ prapaśyet;
Ajaṁ dhruvaṁ sarvatattvaiḥ viśuddham
jñātvā devaṁ mucyate sarvapāpaiḥ—

'When the self-controlled spiritual aspirant realizes in this very body the truth of Brahman (absolute Existence) through the truth of the Ātman (Self), self-luminious as light, then, knowing the Divinity which is unborn, eternal, and untouched by the modifications of nature, he is freed from all sins.'

This was a profound joyous discovery, as can be seen even from the language in which it is couched in the Upaniṣads. In reaching the

ultimate Truth of the Ātman, they had reached also the ultimate of knowledge and awareness, peace and joy. Hence they communicated their discovery as the discovery of the inexhaustible mine of *satyam* (truth), *jñānam* (awareness), and *anantam* (infinitude), or of *sat* (existence,) *cit* (knowledge) and *ānanda* (bliss). In the struggle to realize this truth and the life-fulfilment it involves, they saw the true meaning of the entire course of cosmic evolution, especially of human evolution.

The organism seeks fulfilment; that is the end and aim of all its activities and processes, says modern biology. In the Upaniṣads, we have the beautiful concepts of *mukti,* freedom, and *pūrṇatā,* fullness. We are bound now; we want to become integral, we must experience fullness. Jesus Christ calls it 'perfection': 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' (Matthew v. 48) To experience the delight of freedom, to enlarge the bounds of man's awareness, to get *bodhi,* complete enlightenment, as the Buddha expressed it, is the great aim of human evolution. Education, science, culture, socio-political processes, and religion are meant to increase and enlarge the bounds of this awareness and the range and depth of this fulfilment, by increasing man's knowledge of and control over not only the outside world but also the deep recesses within himself. Knowledge is power in the positive sciences; it is still more so in the science of religion, the science of the inner nature of man, where the power that is gained is not only greater in terms of quantity but also higher in terms of quality.

While living as a prisoner in St. Helena, Napoleon made this significant confession:

'There are in the world two powers—the sword and the spirit. The spirit has always vanquished the sword.

'Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and I founded great empires. But upon what did the creation of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon, love, and to this very day, millions would die for him.'

14. Vivekananda and a Science of Human Possibilities

India developed religion as a science, as what Julian Huxley calls 'a science of human possibilities'. In this connexion, I can do no

better than quote a significant passage from Swami Vivekananda; though rather long, it is worth quoting in full in view of its relevance.

In his speech on 'The Powers of the Mind' delivered in Los Angeles, California, on January 8, 1900, Swami Vivekananda said (*Complete Works,* Vol. II, Ninth Edition, pp;. 18-19):

'Now, I shall tell you a theory, which I will not argue now, but simply place before you the conclusion. Each man in his childhood runs through the stages through which his race has come up; only the race took thousands of years to do it, while the child takes a few years. The child is first the old savage man, and he crushes a butterfly under his feet. The child is at first like the primitive ancestors of his race. As he grows, he passes through different stages until he reaches the development of his race. Only he does it swiftly and quickly. Now, take the whole of humanity as a race; or take the whole of the animal creation, man and the lower animals, as one whole. There is an end towards which the whole is moving. Let us call it perfection.

'Some men and women are born who anticipate the whole progress of mankind. Instead of waiting and being reborn over and over again for ages until the whole human race has attained to that perfection, they, as it were, rush through them in a few short years of their life. And we know that we can hasten these processes, if we be true to ourselves. If a number of men, without any culture, be left to live upon an island, and are given barely enough food, clothing, and shelter, they will gradually go on and on, evolving higher and higher stages of civilization. We know, also, that this growth can be hastened by additional means.

'We help the growth of trees, do we not? Left to nature they would have grown, only they would have taken a longer time; we help them to grow in a shorter time than they would otherwise have taken. We are doing all the time the same thing, hastening the growth of things by artificial means. Why cannot we hasten the growth of man? We can do that as a race. Why are teachers sent to other countries? Because, by these means, we can hasten the growth of races. Now, can we not hasten the growth of individuals? We can. Can we put a limit to the hastening? We cannot say how much a man can grow in one life. You have no reason to say that this much a man can do and no more. Circumstances can hasten him wonderfully. Can there be any limit then, till you come to perfection? So, what comes of it? That a perfect man, that is to say, the type that is to come of this race, perhaps millions of years hence, that man can come today. And this is what the *yogins* say, that all great incarnations and prophets are such men; that they reached perfection in this one life. We have had such men at all periods of the world's history and at all times. Quite recently, there was such a man (Sri Ramakrishna) who lived the life of the whole human race and reached the end even in this life.

'Even this hastening of the growth must be under laws. Suppose we can investigate these laws and understand their secrets and apply them to our own needs; it follows that we grow. We hasten our growth, we hasten our development, and we

become perfect, even in this life. This is the higher part of our life, and the science of the study of mind and its powers has this perfection as its real end. Helping others with money and other material things and teaching them how to go on smoothly in their daily life are mere details.

'The utility of this science is to bring out the perfect man, and not let him wait and wait for ages, just a plaything in the hands of the physical world, like a log of drift-wood carried from wave to wave and tossing about in the ocean. This science wants you to be strong, to take the work in your own hand, instead of leaving it in the hands of nature, and get beyond this little life. That is the great idea.'

15. *The Vedāntic Message of Strength and Fearlessness*

Spiritual knowledge confers on man infinite strength and fearlessness. That is the best proof of its truth and utility. Referring to this, Swami Vivekananda said in his lecture on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life' delivered in Madras in 1897 (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 237-38):

'And in my mind rises from the past the vision of the great Emperor of the West, Alexander the Great, and I see, as it were in a picture, the great monarch standing on the banks of the Indus, talking to one of our *sannyāsins* (monks) in the forest; the old man he was talking to, perhaps naked, stark naked, sitting upon a block of stone, and the Emperor, astonished at his wisdom, tempting him with gold and honour to come over to Greece. And this man smiles at his gold, and smiles at his temptations, and refuses; and then the Emperor standing on his authority as an Emperor, says, "I will kill you, if you do not come", and the man bursts into a laugh and says, "You never told such a falsehood in your life as you tell just now. Who can kill me? *Me* you kill, Emperor of the material world! Never! For I am Spirit unborn and undecaying; never was I born and never do I die; I am the Infinite, the Omnipresent, the Omniscient; and *you* kill me, child that you are!" That is strength, that is strength.'

Swami Vivekananda also gives as illustration of spiritual strength the example of a Hindu monk who was stabbed by a soldier during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. The other soldiers captured this soldier and brought him before the dying monk to be identified and, if identified, offered to kill him in revenge. But the monk, who had realized his Self and his oneness with all beings, seeing his assailant before him, broke his silence of fifteen years to say to his murderer, with his dying breath, and in a tone suffused with love: 'And thou also art He!'

The strength and fearlessness of Socrates in the face of death, and his gentleness, had its source in his spiritual knowledge. When

Crito asked him: 'In what way shall we bury you, Socrates?' Socrates answered (*Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. I, Jowett's Edition, 1953, p. 474):

'In any way you like, but first you must catch *me*, the real me. Be of good cheer, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with *that* whatever is usual and what you think best.'

If man is to live a true life, if he is to achieve real life-fulfilment, he has to manifest the infinite Self within him by controlling and transcending his lower self, his finite sense-bound nature. There is a technique for achieving this, and the religions of the world tell us about it with varying degrees of clarity. *But in India alone did this subject receive a treatment, at once scientific and thorough in its spirit and methods, and impersonal and universal in its results and applications.*

16. *Science and Vedānta Complementary*

Religion so expounded has a message for all humanity. Science through its technology may build for man a first class house, and equip it with radio, television, and other gadgets; the social security measures of a welfare state may provide him with everything necessary for a happy, fulfilled life in this world, and even, through the state church, in the world beyond; the man himself may give his house such arresting names as *Śānti Kunj* (Peace Retreat), or 'Happy Villa'. Yet none of these can ensure that he will live in that house in peace or happiness. For that depends, to a large extent, on another source of strength and nourishment, another type of knowledge and discipline—the knowledge and discipline proceeding from religion. *If man can have the help of the positive sciences to create a healthy external environment, and the help of the science of spirituality to create a healthy internal environment, he can hope to achieve total life-fulfilment; not otherwise.* This is the truth proclaimed by the Upaniṣads.

But today this is not the picture that modern civilization presents. Man in this technological civilization is feeling inwardly impoverished and empty in an environment of wealth, power, and pleasure; he is full of tension and sorrow, doubt and uncertainty, all the time. Juvenile delinquency, drunkenness, suicide, and a variety

of other maladies are ever on the increase. Why? Because man is not inwardly satisfied; he is smitten with ennui and boredom arising from the limitations of his sense–bound *Weltanschauung*. Indian thinkers foresaw this predicament of modern man ages ago. Says the *Svetasvatara Upaniṣad* (VI. 20):

Yadā carmavd akasaṁ veṣṭayiṣyanti mānavāḥ;
Tadā devam avijñāya duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati—

'Men may (through their technical skill) roll up the sky like a piece of leather; still there will be no end of sorrow for them without realizing the luminous One within.'

Schopenhauer said a hundred years ago (*The World as Will and Idea*, Vol., I p. 404):

'All men who are secure from want and care, now that at last they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves.'

Today, man is his own major burden and problem. He can tackle and solve this problem, not by going in for more positivistic science, more technology, more life's amenities, more socio-political manipulations of human conditions, but by the cultivation of the science of religion, by the understanding *and practice* of this science. Says Swami Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, p. 35):

'You must bear in mind that religion does not consist in talk, or doctrines, or books, but in realization; it is not learning but *being*.'

It is in this sense that India understood religion; and it is this idea of religion that Swami Vivekananda expounded in the West and the East through his powerful voice. The end and aim of religion, as our ancient teachers put it, is the experience, *anubhava*, of God, through the steady growth in man's spiritual awareness. *That is the touchstone of religion.* There is such a thing as the spiritual growth of the individual, step by step. We experience this growth, just as we see a plant growing up, step by step, day by day. When we live the life of religion, strength comes to us, consciousness becomes enlarged, sympathies grow and widen, and we feel that we are growing into better men. It is only the strength that proceeds from such inward growth and development that will enable man to digest

and assimilate the energies released by the progress of science. Such a man alone has the strength and wisdom to convert the chaos of life into a pattern of happiness and general welfare. If religion is taken away from society, what remains is simple barbarism. Ancient civilizations were destroyed by barbarians bred outside those civilizations. But modern civilization, if it is to go the same way, will be destroyed by barbarians bred within the civilization itself. What can save us from this predicament is a little 'Christian love' in our hearts for our neighbours, in the words of Bertrand Russell (*Impact of Science on Society*, p. 114), or a little more altruism, in the words of Pitirim A. Sorokin of Harvard University (*Reconstruction of Humanity*, especially part V). This love comes from the *practice* of religion, as defined by Swami Vivekananda and other great teachers of the world. Says Vivekananda (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, p. 358):

'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man.

Again (*ibid.*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 58):

'Him I call a *mahātman* (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *durātman* (wicked soul).'

That is the function of religion; the finite man reaches out to the infinite man. No other discipline can give this education to man.

'Now comes the question, can religion really accomplish anything?', asked Swami Vivekananda, and proceeded to answer (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 4):

'It can. It brings to man eternal life. It has made man what he is and will make of this human animal a god. That is what religion can do. Take religion from human society and what will remain? Nothing but a forest of brutes. Sense-happiness is not the goal of humanity. Wisdom, *jñāna*, is the goal of all life. We find that man enjoys his intellect more than an animal enjoys its senses; and we see that man enjoys his spiritual nature even more than his rational nature. So the highest wisdom must be this spiritual knowledge. With this knowledge will come bliss.'

17. Conclusion

Understood in this light, there is no conflict between science and religion. Both have the identical aim of helping man to grow in spirituality, of ushering in a better social order which alone can

provide him with the stimulus to total life-fulfilment. Each by itself is insufficient and helpless. They have been tried separately with unsatisfactory results. The old civilizations took guidance solely from religion; their acheivements were partial and limited. Modern civilization relies solely on science; its achievements also have turned out to be partial and limited. *The combination, today, of the spiritual energies of these two complementary disciplines in the life of man will produce fully integrated human beings and thus help to evolve a complete human civilization, for which the world is ripe and waiting.* This is the most outstanding contribution of Swami Vivekananda to human thought today. This synthetic vision of his finds lucid expression in a brief but comprehensive testament of his Vedāntic conviction (*ibid.*, Vol. I, Eleventh Edition, p. 124):

'Each soul is potentially divine.

'The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal.

'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be *free*.

'This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

Vedanta expounded by Vivekananda as the synthesis of science and religion is also the synthesis of head and heart, of the classical and the romantic in the human heritage. The erstwhile tendency in modern education to treat the humanities and the sciences as mutually exclusive disciplines is giving place to the Vedāntic awareness that they are complementary to each other. Himself 'the personification of the harmony of all human energy', in the words of Romain Rolland which I have quoted at the beginning of this paper, Vivekananda has bequeathed to man, in a moving passage, his vision of the unity and synthesis of all human energy and aspiration. Making a prophetic reference to the future religion of humanity in the course of his lecture on 'The Absolute and Manifestation' delivered in London in 1896, he said (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, Tenth Edition, p. 140):

'In Buddha, we had the great universal heart and infinite patience, making religion practical, and bringing it to everyone's door. In Sankaracarya, we saw tremendous intellectual power, throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything. We want today that bright sun of intellectuality joined with the heart of Buddha, the wonderful, infinite heart of love and mercy. This union will give us the highest philosophy. Science and religion will meet and shake hands. Poetry and philosophy will become friends. This will be the religion of the future, and if we can work it out, we may be sure that it will be for all times and peoples.'

27

THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST IN SWAMI VIVEKANANDA *

1. *Introduction*

I AM glad to be called to address this distinguished audience on the subject of this evening's talk, *The Meeting of East and West in Swami Vivekananda.* It is a great theme, a theme which can keep us engaged for days and days together. What Swami Vivekananda gave to humanity during his short life of thirty-nine years, five months, and twenty-two days, of which only a bare nine years formed the period of his public ministry, will take humanity centuries to understand and assimilate. He was a spiritual and intellectual genius of a rare order with a compelling message to modern man. That is why, perhaps, the organizers of this meeting chose this theme, a theme which is dear to the hearts of men and women both in East and West.

2. *East versus West*

The words East and West are here used to signify the Orient and the Occident and not in their contemporary cold-war contexts. During the last few centuries,these two halves of humanity had been brought together through the technological, commercial, and colonial expansion of the Occident; now that the colonial aspect of this relationship is fast coming to an end, the problem of the spiritual and human integration of the two halves is assuming special significance. The meeting of East and West is no more a theoretical question today. It was after the First World War that this problem first came to the fore and assumed importance; and the League of Nations had a department added to it charged with this mission — The Committee for Intellectual Co-operation. That did some good work in its own way, and now, since the end of the Second World

* Based on the public lecture delivered at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, 68-Duke's Avenue, Muswell Hill, London-10, on 23 April 1961, during the Swami's four-month lecture tour of seventeen European countries and later re-delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, on 9 January 1962

War, the problem has assumed greater urgency and importance in the wake of the liberation of many Afro-Asian nations from the Western colonial yoke. There is need to energetically initiate steps to bridge the gulf between man and man, between culture and culture; and this is being done today on a world scale by the U.N.O. through its general and specialized agencies, and more especially through its UNESCO, which is one of the finest international organizations ever set up by man, with high objectives and constructive programmes. The UNESCO, in my opinion, has done more creditable work than the other wings of the U.N.O. in cementing human unity.

3. *Vivekananda and the Modern World*

This great ideal of human unity is informing and sustaining several movements and institutions in the East as well as in the West. The modern world owes a deep debt of gratitude to Swami Vivekananda for having voiced, more than sixty years ago, powerfully and effectively, this deep hankering of the human heart.

After referring, in his lecture on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life', delivered in Madras, on his return from the West, in 1897, to the first blessing which the ancient Upaniṣads of India convey to modern man in their message of strength and fearlessness, Vivekananda said (*The Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 240-41):

> 'The second great idea which the world is waiting to receive from our Upaniṣads is the solidarity of this universe. The old lines of demarcation and differentiation are vanishing rapidly. Electricity and steampower are placing the different parts of the world in inter-communication with each other, and, as a result, we Hindus no longer say that every country beyond our own land is peopled with demons and hobgoblins, nor do the people of Christian countries say that India is only peopled by cannibals and savages. When we go out of our country, we find the same brother-man, with the same strong hand to help, with the same lips to say godspeed; and sometimes they are better than in the country in which we are born. ... Our Upaniṣads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know each other, love comes, must come, for are we not one? Thus we find solidarity coming in spite of itself. Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are

assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International organizations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity.'

Vivekananda not merely voiced these international aspirations, but also lived a life of that synthesis between East and West. His personality, his outlook, and his sympathies were international and human. And the way he developed into such a personality is a fascinating and rewarding study for all those who pay homage to this ideal and vision. To have the guidance of a great leader of the stature of Vivekananda, who had no provincial limits to his sympathies, whose heart embraced the whole of humanity, and who had the power, intellectual as well as spiritual, to impress himself upon the thought and culture of the modern age, is a rich and unique experience for the modern world. Nations, today, are in need of leaders of vision, of broad sympathy, and of great energy. India has been very fortunate in this field in this age of her tremendous transition. When she was entering into the modern age of her history, when she was passing through a momentous and critical period of transition, she was immensely fortunate to have had the guidance of a few great leaders who can be classed among the great leaders of mankind in virtue of their stature and attainments.

4. *The Modern Renaissance in India*

In the nineteenth century, India started writing the first pages of what we may call her modern history. This was made possible by her contact with the West through the United Kingdom. In the beginning of this contact, India experienced a period of bewilderment and confusion. But as years passed, the Western leaven began to enter into the body and soul of India stirring it to its depths. It created a ferment which soon issued forth as a national renaissance, gentle and halting in the beginning, but, gathering momentum and force as the century rolled on, became a mighty flood in the last decade of the century. In the process, it threw up two gigantic personalities, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the initiator, and Swami Vivekananda, the consummator.

Raja Ram Mohun Roy's contribution to the birth and development of this renaissance and to making it flow into constructive

channels is immense. He was a remarkable man. The whole of India today and also the West are indebted to this great personality for having voiced the aspirations of the twentieth-century man even in the early nineteenth century. He was a great man in every sense. He was born in 1774 and passed away in 1833. He hailed from Bengal, which was the first among all the regions of India to experience the impact of Western culture in a massive way, and which,as a consequence, became the pioneer of this renaissance. Ram Mohun Roy represented the synthesis of East and West in himself. He was intellectually alert and spiritually sensitive, intensely human, with vast sympathies for the freedom and happiness of man everywhere, utterly unprovincial and universal in outlook. He was an outstanding scholar, journalist, and writer with command of several languages, including English, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and his own Bengali. This modern Indian renaissance, which bids fair to affect the culture and thought not only of India but also of the modern world in a profound way, could not have had a more worthy pioneer than this manysided genius. He can be considered to be *the morning star* of this great renaissance. He was in this United Kingdom during the last year of his life to represent the interests of the then Moghul Emperor of India before the Committee of the British Parliament, when he met several distinguished leaders of thought in the U,K.; and he passed away, while still on his mission, in Bristol in 1833.

There was nothing narrow, parochial, or small about this great man. He was big in every sense; and he imparted that bigness to his country's renaissance. ***But he came a bit too early.*** Neither India nor the West was then prepared to understand or to accept the implications of his message which spoke in terms of man as man and not in terms of a section thereof, and which upheld the great ideal of equality between nations and cultures and the synthesis of the material and the spiritual.

5. *Ramakrishna and the Indian Renaissance*

But he came, lit up the torch of human freedom, fraternity, and equality, and passed it on to his worthy successors who were also great, though not so outstanding. Five decades rolled on; the torch burned brighter and brighter until it became a mighty blaze at the

end of the century in the personalities of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-86) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), in whom were gathered up and fused the rich cultural and spiritual inheritances of East and West. *We can never understand the true stature of these two master minds of modern India except in this world context.* They were not just little saints or little leaders of thought who give out a message of salvation and throw up a sect or a creed in a particular corner of the world. They were men endowed with the deepest vision and the widest sympathy, and they lived and worked for the fulfilment of human hopes and aspirations everywhere. In Sri Ramakrishna, we find the fullest expression of the eternal spirit of India. As Romain Rolland expresses it in his *Life of Ramakrishna* (1947 Edition, p. 14):

> 'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods.'

In him, India's hoary spiritual legacy became alive and vital. And this legacy had always upheld the values of the universal and human, emphasized the spiritual growth of man, and actively promoted the principle of toleration and universal acceptance; Sri Ramakrishna represented an India which remembers herself in her ancient Vedas and Upaniṣads, in Buddha and Śaṅkara, and which continues to exist as a beacon of spiritual hope for man everywhere. She has ever paid homage to the highest and best in man and endeavoured to unite man with man through the indwelling Divine. It was that India, *ever-aging but never old,* that found its form and voice in our age in Sri Ramakrishna. His advent was a great event in the history of modern India; for in him, she rediscovered herself and re-authenticated for herself the fundamentals of her culture and religion. He strengthened the tree of Indian culture by nourishing and watering its roots and thus made a lasting contribution to the energizing and flowering of that renaissance.

We find as a running theme of Indian history the struggle to realize the meaning of human existence, to clear up the mystery of

man and God. This is the meaning of religion according to Indian thought — the struggle of the human mind to peer through the mystery of existence and come face to face with truth. India did not subscribe to the idea of religion as a matter merely of creed, dogma, or conformity. Religion is the passion of the human heart to *experience* God. *In matters spiritual, India has never been lukewarm.* This passion and this earnestness pervade her ancient literature — the Upaniṣads. And these Upaniṣads put their stamp on all the subsequent philosophical, religious, and cultural developments of India. In this line of the Upaniṣadic tradition came Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the *Gītā*, Buddha, Śaṅkara, the saints of medieval India and, in our time, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. These teachers taught in unison that divinity, purity, and perfection are inherent in the human soul and that the goal of life is to manifest this divine within. Thus defining the scope of religion and the goal of human existence, these great teachers and the movements proceeding from them had educated the Indian mind in the spiritual basis of human existence. India had responded to their message and held fast to the spiritual ideal in prosperity and adversity alike. This had given her an amazing vitality which explains the arresting continuity of her culture and life. Five thousand years do not mean much in the context of evolution, even of human evolution; but in the context of the history and career of the various cultures that have come and played their part on the stage of the world, India's record is impressive both as to length and to quality. When all other cultures have played their parts and disappeared, India's culture has continued to exist, getting richer and stronger through her remarkable capacity for new assimilations and adjustments in every epoch of her history.

This arresting phenomenon is happening once again in our own time. The modern renaissance in India, which arose in the wake of her contact with the West, is infusing a new youthful vigour into her body and soul, and achieving two national purposes: Firstly, the assimilation of the spirit of the dynamic culture of the modern West, the reassessment of her own ancient heritage in the light of the total human legacy, the synthesis of the ancient and the modern in the world's heritage, and the ensuring, thus, of a dynamic national life and the thread of historic national continuity. Secondly, she is also

re-entering, after a few centuries of immobilization, into the main stream of international life and thought and pouring out her quota of light and wisdom in the service of the rest of the world. It was these two purposes that she achieved through Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

Sri Ramakrishna's life span was barely fifty years. but it was an intense life devoted to the search for spiritual truth, in the first part, and its dissemination among eager seekers, in the second. Such an intense life which re-lives the spiritual life of a whole people is the most dynamic force in history. It ceases to be just an individual life and becomes a world-moving force. Human history is the product of forces, partly arising from external nature and partly from man himself. The ratio of this combination will vary according to the stage of cultural development reached by a society. The higher the stage of development, the more the human contribution. And among such human contributions, there is one that is dynamic and significant. That comes from the hero, the specially gifted individual in society. He fuses in himself the values, aspirations, and wills of his people, and marches onward carrying other members of the society with him, immediately or in due course. And the most dynamic among such heroes are the God-men, ablaze with divinity. Indian history has felt the impact of several such heroes who became her history's epoch-makers; and the most outstanding of them all were spiritual men, men of God. Each one of them represented in varying degrees a gathering up of the past national heritage, a fusing of the historical and the contemporary urges and aspirations in themselves, and the setting in motion of a dynamic force for human betterment. Indian cultural history, in contrast to her political history, owes much to these epoch-makers. The first of such, of the pre-historic period, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose great thought and energy are palpable even today. His is the most pervasive influence on Indian culture and thought; next come Buddha and Śaṅkara, in the historic period.

And in our own time, there appeared Sri Ramakrishna. The mass of spiritual energy which he manifested in his life time did not vanish with the death of his body. Its power of impact has continued and will continue for centuries to come. Physical death has no

significance in the case of personalities such as Sri Ramakrishna; they hardly lived in the physical plane even when they were alive. Each one of them is like an atom-smashing cyclotron which generates and holds immense energies within itself, the range and quality of which cannot be explained in terms of the size of the machine itself. Sri Ramakrishna's body was frail; but within that frail body was contained enormous energy — energy which was released by his penetration into the spiritual depths of his being. It was a mass of spiritual energy consisting of wisdom and purity, love and compassion. Sri Ramakrishna was ablaze with divinity. It was the play of this tremendous divine energy that was witnessed in a little room in the temple of Dakshineswar, near Calcutta, away from the rush and turmoil of the modern civilization which was centred in that city, the then capital of India. And yet, the energies released in the precincts of that temple had their powerful impact first, on Calcutta, and, later, on other parts of India and abroad. This diffusion was accomplished by his foremost disciple, Swami Vivekananda, whose training and outlook were the opposite of his master's, and yet complementary to his, for which reason the master chose him as his effective conduit. In the words of Romain Rolland (*Life of Vivekananda,* 1947 Edition, p. 3):

> 'The great disciple whose task it was to take up the spiritual heritage of Ramakrishna and disseminate the grain of his thought throughout the world was both physically and morally his direct antithesis.'

6. *The Profile of Narendra*

Vivekananda's pre-monastic name was Narendranath Dutta, Narendranath or Naren, for short. Unlike Ramakrishna, whose wisdom and enlightenment owed nothing to institutional education, traditional or modern, Vivekananda was a full-fledged modern youth in education and upbringing, when he first met Ramakrishna towards the end of 1881. In his views and outlook, he represented young India in transition. India had, by then, been exposed to the powerful influence of modern Western culture for over half a century through the new education introduced by the British Government, which was avidly sought after by the Indian youths. Modern science, Greeco-Roman history, English literature, modern Western history, and modern socio-political thought, opened the

mind of India to the rich culture heritage of the Western peoples and roused in it a mood of questioning, self-criticism, and a general spirit of restlessness. Narendra drank freely of this education; he was a keen student of Western thought with its scientific spirit and its philosophy of rationalism and humanism. This philosophy had already dominated the Western mind for nearly a hundred years, and now it found a fertile soil in India also. At college, Narendra was a handsome youth, intelligent, vivacious, and energetic. He was a keen physical culturist, a devotee of music, a student of science, and a lover of philosophy. He opened himself up to the influences of all the best elements in the Western heritage and became a dynamic representative of that heritage. He was a picture of strength and manliness; he possessed the *promethean* spirit. And yet, this education and achievement did not satisfy his heart; it was restless with a nameless spiritual thirst and a yearning to realize truth. It was to quench this thirst that he went to Sri Ramakrishna.

His English and Indian professors as well as his fellow-students were impressed by his intellectual brilliance. His English Principal, William Hastie, a great scholar, said of him (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, Fourth Edition, p. 26):

> 'Narendranath is really a genius. I have travelled far and wide, but I have never yet come across a lad of his talents and possibilities even in German Universities amongst philosophical students. He is bound to make his mark in life.'

In spite of the intellectual agnosticism which modern education bred in him, he held fast to the ideals of purity and renunciation, which he had imbibed from his childhood days. He was a past master in meditation; and his passion for spiritual life grew with the years.

It was from a chance remark of Principal Hastie during a lesson on Wordsworth's poem, *The Excursion*, that Narendra heard the name of his future master for the first time. Explaining the poet's reference to trance, Principal Hastie had said that such religious ecstasies were the result of purity and concentration, that it was a rare phenomenon in modern times, and that he had known only one person who had experienced that blessed state, and that person was Ramakrishna of Dakshineswar.

7. *Narendra's Search for Truth*

Narendra soon realized the inadequacies of modern rationalism and humanism. Religion may have its faults; it may have blundered into dogmatism and intolerance; but it has a spiritual core which mankind cannot ignore without making itself poorer, said he to himself. The endeavours and conclusions of the sense-bound intellect cannot be the last word in man's search for truth. An intellectual approach to truth will end only in agnosticism; and often even in cynicism. But the whole being of man seeks to *experience* truth, to *realize* it. And he found that modern thought had no message to give to man on this theme. *This rising above rationalism to direct experience and realization, this growth of man from the sensate to the super-sensual dimension, is the special message of the Indian spiritual tradition*; and Ramakrishna embodied it in himself in its fullness

Man may sharpen his reason and intellect; he may have the best of wealth and power; he may enjoy the delights of art and literature; yet his heart will continue to be a vacuum, and a prey to tension and sorrow, till he discovers his own spiritual dimension, till he realizes God. This is the testament of Indian thought. Says the *Śvetasvatara Upaniṣad* (VI. 19):

> *Yadā carmavadākāśaṁ veṣṭayiṣyanti mānavāḥ;*
> *Tadā devam avijñāya duhkhasyānto bhaviṣyati —*

'Even if men (through their technical efficiency) will roll up all space like a piece of leather, they will not experience the end of sorrow without realizing God.'

Vivekananda felt the pang of this vacuum as a university student. That made him restless; he could have silenced his heart's craving for truth, learnt to live with his intellectual agnosticism, and made the best of the world with his undoubted talents. But he was made of a different stuff, and meant for a different role. His passion for truth would not allow him to compromise with a humdrum life. So like a 'hart that panteth after the water-brooks', in the words of the Psalm, his heart became restless for truth, and in this mood he went from place to place, from teacher to teacher, until an inexorable destiny took him to Sri Ramakrishna. 'Is there a God?' And, if

there is, 'Have you seen Him?' were the questions that this young seeker put to every teacher. The history of religion tells us that when this question has been seriously put by any seeker, he has received a positive answer. The very soul of religion lies in the yearning behind this question. None of the teachers gave him satisfactory replies. None, except one; and that was Sri Ramakrishna.

8. *The Profile of Sri Ramakrishna*

At the suggestion of a friend that he might get a satisfactory answer from Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda wended his way to the Dakshineswar temple on the left bank of the Gaṅgā, where lived Ramakrishna in a small room facing the holy river. He was a strange person. He had passed through a stormy period of hankering and search for God and had realized Him, first through one path, then through another, until he traversed not only all the recognized paths of the Hindu religion, but also of Christianity and Islam. He had realized that it is the same God that is worshipped in all the religions and that 'the paths are many, but the goal is one'. This realization had made him universal in outlook and sympathy with a deep love for man everywhere. He saw man in a new light; for he saw God in the hearts of all men. *He saw God both with his eyes closed and with his eyes open.* He was God-intoxicated and yet intensely human; with a smile on his face, he greeted every visitor and enfolded him in his pure love; and hundreds visited him — men and women, rich and poor, university students and pious householders, philosophers and artists, agnostics and holy men. He also, on his part, sought out the great and the holy. He conversed with all with infinite tenderness and sympathy. In the midst of serious conversations on God and the spiritual life, a chance divine suggestion would send him into divine ecstasy. Coming down from that state, he would become simple and playful like a child, and enjoy much fun and frolic with his listeners, especially the youthful ones.

This combination of the divine and the human in him fascinated all who went to him, and his words held them in thrall. His room was 'a mart of joy', in the words of 'M', the author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* . 'When the lotus opens', Sri Ramakrishna used to tell his young listeners, giving a parable to illustrate the magnetic influence of a man of God, 'bees come to it from all quarters on their own accord to seek its honey; it has not to send out an invitation'. This was literally true in his own case. He had prayed to the Divine Mother: 'Mother, don't get any creeds expounded through my mouth.' They are, as Jesus had expressed it, as *stones* to a hungry man. What he gave to all seekers without distinction was the *bread* of spirituality. The main theme of his conversations was man growing spiritually through the manifestation of the Divine within. A procession of seekers, which included such distinguished men as the great religious leader of the Brahmo Samaj, Keshab Chandra Sen, went to him from Calcutta and nearby villages; it began as a trickle in 1875 and became a flood by the time he passed away in 1886. We get an arresting account of this pilgrimage of spiritually hungry souls to this unique teacher in that great book above referred to, *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by Mahendranath Gupta, the highly gifted and intimate householder disciple of the Master, who was the Headmaster of a Calcutta school, and who hides his personality under the pseudonym 'M'.

Referring to this book and its author in his Foreword to the English edition of the book, Aldous Huxley says:

> 'Making good use of his natural gifts and of the circumstances in which he found himself, "M" produced a book unique, so far as my knowledge goes, in the literature of hagiography. No other saint has had so able and indefatigable a Boswell. Never have the small events of a contemplative's daily life been described with such a wealth of intimate detail. Never have the casual and unstudied utterances of a great religious teacher been set down with so minute a fidelity.'

9. *Narendra at the Feet of Sri Ramakrishna*

The Master gave of his realizations to all who came to him; each received according to his or her need and capacity; the central theme of all his talks was spirituality and the way to achieve it; the same teaching was not given to any two seekers. No creed was expounded; no belief was criticized; but the spiritual life of the seeker was stimulated and deepened, and his vision and sympathy broadened. Thus he poured out a stream of truth and wisdom almost eighteen hours of the twenty-four. And to him went Narendra, his steps guided by a divine destiny, who asked the question which was agitating his heart for years and for which he

could not get any satisfactory answer from any teacher till then: 'Sir, have you seen God?' 'Yes, my boy, I have seen Him', replied the Master with calm and loving assurance and added: 'I see Him more intensely than I see you here; and you can also see Him.'

This was new language indeed! It is difficult to express the powerful impact which these simple words made on the mind and heart of Narendra. He felt in the depth of his being that these words came from the depths of the Master's realization; and he decided to learn more of him and from him; every day brought him to a clearer awareness of the profound spirituality of the Master and the significance of his life and realizations.

Narendra grew into full spiritual maturity under the loving guidance of Sri Ramakrishna. Unlike other disciples, Narendra tested every word of the teachings of his Master by his keen intellect and critical reason, and literally fought every inch of his way to spiritual truth and conviction. The Master on his part encouraged his gifted disciple in this. 'Test me as the money changers test their coins', the Master used to tell Narendra.

Narendra was to allude to this fact later when, as Swami Vivekananda, he had to deal with his own highly gifted but sceptical and rebellious disciple, Miss Margaret Noble, who later became famous in East and West as Sister Nivedita. Says she in her *The Master as I Saw Him* (Sixth Edition, pp. 12-13):

'Referring to this scepticism of mine, which was well known at the time to the rest of the class, a more fortunate disciple, long afterwards, was teasing me, in the Swami's presence, and claiming that she had been able to accept every statement she had ever heard him make. The Swami paid little or no attention to the conversation at the time, but afterwards he took a quiet moment to say: "Let none regret that they were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six long years, with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!" '

This training of Narendra at the hands of Sri Ramakrishna, by which the young dynamic intellectual became a man of God, one who saw God in himself and in all beings, one who became, like his Master, universal in his sympathy for man in the East and the West, is a momentous chapter in modern history, fraught with great consequences for the future.

Vivekananda sitting at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna is an arresting phenomenon. No two people could have been more opposite in temperament, up-bringing, and mental make-up than these two; and yet no two people have been so intimate and attuned to each other as these. One was the complement of the other; the Master continuing his being in the disciple and the disciple fulfilling the life-work and mission of the Master. Before he passed away on 16 August 1886, Sri Ramakrishna banded the handful of his young disciples, fifteen in number, into a monastic order under Narendra's leadership. In due course, they assumed monastic names, he taking the name Vivekananda, meaning the 'bliss of discrimination', before his departure to the West in 1893.

10. The Meeting of Two Master-minds

Ramakrishna represented the eternal soul of India, calm and majestic, 'with a unifying, pacifying love for all living things', in the words of Will Durant. In his Foreword to the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna,* (Sixth Edition), Mahatma Gandhi writes:

'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. None can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion. Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of godliness. ... His love knew no limits, geographical or otherwise. May his divine love be an inspiration to all who read the following pages.'

Vivekananda, on the other hand, represented the modern spirit of freedom and equality, manliness and energy of action. *The intimate communion of the Master and the disciple demonstrated the basic unity of godliness and manliness.* True godliness is the very consummation of manliness; true manliness, similarly, is an expression of godliness. As held in Indian spiritual thought, Nārāyaṇa (God) is the *sakhā* (friend) of Nara (man). As held in Christian spiritual thought, the Son of God is also the Son of man. This close communion between the ancient Indian legacy of godliness and the modern Western legacy of manliness in Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is what I have taken as the theme of tonight's lecture: *The Meeting of East and West in Swami Vivekananda.*

Ramakrishna gave himself to the world in Vivekananda. The coming together of any two gifted souls as teacher and student has

always been an event of creative significance of varying measure in world history. In this case, the two souls were not merely gifted but uniquely outstanding and creatively original; each was a complement to the other, and both together represented the totality of human outlooks and aspirations, tastes and temperaments. The creative significance of such a confluence is bound to be deep, abiding, and world-wide. In the words of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II. 7):

Āścaryo vaktā kuśalosyalabdhā āścaryo jñātā kuśalānuśiṣṭaḥ —

'Wonderful the teacher and very competent the disciple; wonderful becomes the seeker of knowledge when taught by a competent teacher.'

This confluence witnessed the emergence of a glorious vision of truth, of a more perfect excellence of character than achieved hitherto in East or West, and the striving for universal human happiness and welfare. Knowledge is a powerful force. Love is another powerful force. The more universal and pure the knowledge and love, the more dynamic they become. In Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, knowledge and love shed all their limitations and became a mighty force — pure, positive, and dynamic.

This supreme consummation cannot and will not remain confined to an individual like Vivekananda. Modern world conditions and the urges and needs of modern man make its achievement in some measure, by every man and woman in the present age, a desirable ideal and an imperative necessity. *Modern education needs to be shaped to that end.* Education should convey the heritage of the whole world to every man and woman, so that unlimited character-efficiency may be achieved, and a global outlook may be realized, to complement the global physical unity achieved by modern technology. Here is the world significance of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and the movement initiated by them. They have set in motion a powerful energy of spiritual vision dedicated to the forging of human unity through God — God dwelling in the heart of man, the God in man beckoning him to continue his evolution by going beyond his sense-bound

personality to realize his divine dimension and his spiritual solidarity with all existence. *It is a vision backed by the intellectual and moral vigour of Vedānta and fulfilling the urges and aspirations of modern scientific and social thought.*

The education of Vivekananda in this universal vision and sympathy at the hands of his great master is a fascinating theme for all students of education and religion. There are two landmarks in this education which I would like specially to refer to. The first relates to the acceptance, by Vivekananda, after much struggle, of the truth of Śakti, the immanent aspect of Reality, the personal aspect of the impersonal Brahman; and the second relates to his acceptance of its positivistic corollary, namely, 'seeing God with eyes open', in the words of Sri Ramakrishna.

11. Narendra's Inner Conflicts

When he came to his master, Narendra was a votary of the personal but formless God as presented in the Brahmo Samaj, of which he was then a member. He did not relish the idea of God either as the impersonal Absolute or as the personal Śakti, the one source of all nature and its energies. These two represented the age-old conflict between the two schools of *jnana* (the path of the impersonal God) and *bhakti* (the path of the personal God), with the God of the Brahmo Samaj partaking of the abstractions of both. The first is the path of negation, while the second is the path of affirmation, which latter, in its full and robust forms, involves also the path of *karma* or action. The differences in approach between these cannot and should not annul the unity of their common goal. But this was what happened in India in later ages, weakening both the paths and narrowing the minds of their followers. This had meant in effect that there were two Gods — one that of the *jñānī*, and the other that of the *bhakta*. The *jnani* dismissed the world as *māyā*, the God of the *bhakta* as a product of this *māyā*, and the *bhakta* himself as a weak sentimentalist. The *bhakta*, on his part, dismissed the transcendent God of the *jnani* as a pure nothingness and the *jnani* himself as a dry intellectual. The modern votaries of secular rationalism and scientific humanism, on the other hand, to whom the world itself is their god and reality, dismissed both the

jnani and the *bhakta* as vain dreamers and their gods as products of a pious wish-fulfilment.

Into this murky atmosphere of contemporary thought came the luminous vision of Sri Ramakrishna, who realized the fundamental unity of the God of the *jñānī* and the God of the *bhakta*, and the complementary character of the two paths of affirmation and negation. Romain Rolland opens his preface entitled 'To My Eastern Readers' to his *Life of Ramakrishna* with the following utterance of Sri Ramakrishna suffused with this unifying vision:

'"Greeting to the feet of the *jnani*! Greeting to the feet of the *bhakta*! Greeting to the devout who believe in the formless God! Greeting to those who believe in God with form! Greeting to the men of old who knew Brahman! Greeting to the modern knowers of Truth. " (Ramakrishna, October 28, 1882).'

Sri Ramakrishna gently educated Narendra in this unifying vision during the six years of his discipleship. In the early stages, Narendra reacted violently to the concept of the impersonal and formless Brahman, as he had all along reacted to that of the personal God with form. To him and to many seekers of the personal God like him, the impersonal meant something inert and abstract, equivalent to the physicist's primordial nature, and the personal meant crude anthropomorphism and superstition. Sri Ramakrishna slowly made him understand the *spiritual* character of the impersonal Absolute through a convincing presentation of the philosophy of the path of negation. Brahman as the *Self* of all beings cannot be impersonal in the sense in which scientists present nature, or the cosmic dust, or the cosmic background material. Neither can Brahman, the One behind the many, be a person to be designated either as masculine or feminine; hence the preference of the neuter term 'It' to describe Brahman. The path to It is the path of negation, the path of *neti, neti;* by negating all objects and entities, all predicates and concepts, and even the ego, as belonging to the world of *maya*, the seeker approaches Brahman as the transcendental Absolute, the Unconditioned, 'from which all speech and thought recoil, not being able to grasp It', the experience of which is best expressed only through silence. Sri Ramakrishna had earlier followed this path under the guidance of his *guru*, Totāpuri, and attained its consummation in the experience of *nirvikalpa samādhi.*

12. *Narendra and the Critical Spirit in Religion*

Narendra soon became fascinated with this path of the 'abysmal God'. He became eager to experience *nirvikalpa samādhi*. And he had it with the gracious help of his *guru*. But when he desired to pursue this path and its bliss of the unconditioned Brahman exclusively, Sri Ramakrishna reproved him and pointed out to him the path and goal of a comprehensive spirituality, in which the paths of affirmation and negation merge, and which he was to follow, and of which he was to be the teacher and exemplar to millions of people in the modern age.

Before meeting Narendra, Sri Ramakrishna had been heard to pray: 'O Mother, send me some one who will doubt my realizations.' Narendra's arrival at Dakshineswar signified the granting of this prayer. He was unlike all his other disciples. A staunch follower of the Brahmo Samaj cult of the personal God without form, he could not tolerate the worship of the personal God through various forms upheld in the Hindu religion and practised by his own master, Sri Ramakrishna. He used to criticise even Sri Ramakrishna's visions of divine forms and his worship of Kāli, the Divine Mother, before whom Narendra not only refused to bow down himself, but also criticized other fellow disciples for doing so. Sri Ramakrishna's reaction to this critical and even hostile attitude and conduct of his disciple was unusual and refreshingly modern. He told Narendra: 'Do not accept anything because I say so. Test everything for yourself.' Further, as mentioned earlier, the Master told him: 'Test me as the money changers test their coins.' This unique relationship is revealed in the following passage of the *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sixth Edition, p.345):

'The liberty which Narendranath enjoyed in his association with Sri Ramakrishna was unusual, as will be gathered from the following incident. He often argued with the Master against image-worship. One day, when the latter could not convince him, he said: "Why do you come here if you won't acknowledge my Mother?" Narendra replied: "Must I accept Her simply because I come here?" "All right", said the Master, "ere long you shall not only acknowledge my blessed Mother, but weep in Her name." Then addressing the other devotees he said: "This boy has no faith in the forms of God and tells me that my supersensuous experiences are hallucinations; but he is a very fine boy, of pure instincts. He does not believe in anything unless he gets direct proof. He has studied much, and is possessed of great judgement and discrimination".'

13. Kālī, the Divine Mother

What did Sri Ramakrishna mean when he referred to Kālī as my 'Divine Mother'? What did he mean when he spoke about the worship of God with form? Why did he desire that Narendra should accept his Divine Mother?

To the unthinking observer, Kālī worshipped in the temple of Dakshineswar may be nothing more than an idol, like several other idols of gods and goddesses, 'superstitiously' worshipped by ignorant devotees! When such an unthinking observer becomes a thinking seeker, he will begin to discover meaning and significance behind all such worship, he will learn to pierce the outer crust and reach the inner truth visualized by the outer symbol. He will also understand that what a seeker seeks is *spiritual growth* and *realization* and not mere intellectual formulation.

14. A Fellow-Student's Estimate of Narendra

One of Vivekananda's own fellow students in college, the distinguished intellectual and scholar, and author of *The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus*, Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, felt at first scandalized when he saw Narendra, the rationalist and iconoclast, fallen under the influence of an idolatrous teacher. Says he in a penetrating article published in *The Prabuddha Bharata* five years after Vivekananda's death in 1902 (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples*, pp. 81-82):

'I watched with intense interest the transformation that went on under my eyes. The attitude of a rampant Vedāntist-*cum*-Hegelian-*cum*-revolutionary like myself towards the cult of religious ecstasy and Kāli-worship may be easily imagined; and the spectacle of a born iconoclast and free-thinker like Vivekananda, a creative and dominating intelligence, a tamer of souls, himself caught in the meshes of what appeared to me as uncouth, supernatural mysticism was a riddle which my philosophy of the Pure Reason could scarcely read at the time. But Vivekananda "the loved and lost" was loved, and mourned most in what I could not but then regard as his defection; and it was personal feeling, after all, the hated pathological element of individual preference and individual relationship, which most impelled me, when at last I went on what to a home-keeping recluse like myself was an adventurous journey to Dakshineswar, to see and hear Vivekananda's Master, and spent the greater part of a long summer day in the shady and peaceful solitudes of the temple-garden, returning as the sun set amidst the whirl and rush and roar and the awful gloom of a blinding thunder-storm, with a sense of bewilderment as well moral as physical, and a lurking perception of the truth that the majesty of Law orders the apparently irregular and grotesque, that there may be self-mastery in apparent self-alienation, that sense even in its errors is only insipient Reason, and that faith in a Saving Power *ab extra* is but the dim reflex of an original act of self-determination. And a significant confirmation of all this came in the subsequent life-history of Vivekananda, who, after he had found the firm assurance he sought in the saving Grace and Power of his Master, went about preaching and teaching the creed of the Universal Man, and the absolute and inalienable sovereignty of the Self.'

15. Sri Ramakrishna's Divine Mother

The image of Kāli worshipped by Sri Ramakrishna as *Bhavatāriṇī*, the Saviour of the Universe, is made of basalt and stands on the chest of a white marble image of the prostrate body of Her divine consort, Śiva, the symbol of the Absolute. She wears a golden garland of severed human heads, and a girdle of human arms. She has four hands. The lower left hand holds a severed human head and the upper one grips a blood-stained sword. One right hand offers boons to Her children; the other offers them protection from fear. The majesty of Her posture combines the terror of destruction with the tender assurance of motherly love. She is the primordial cosmic Power, the totality of all existence, the glorious harmony of the pairs of opposites. She creates, preserves, and destroys. She has three eyes, the third, on the forehead, being the symbol of divine wisdom. She is Nature, *apara* as well as *para*, physical as well as spiritual, cosmic as well as divine; the Universal Mother, who reveals Herself to Her children under diverse aspects and under different divine incarnations; the visible God who leads the seeker to the heart of the divine Mystery; the gracious Mother who, if it so pleases Her, takes away the last trace of the finite ego from a seeker and merges it in the infinite and absolute consciousness of Brahman, the impersonal and formless God.

Idolatry is religion that *starts* and *ends* with the worship of an idol. An idol is a form of God visible and tangible to the senses. *If such an idol, on the other hand, inspires the worshipper to go beyond the sense-bound world and realize the primordial divine spiritual energy behind the universe, it ceases to be idolatry; it then becomes the essential first lesson in the grand book of spiritual knowledge and experience.* This is the Hindu approach to image

worship; *and Sri Ramakrishna re-explored this path from the starting point to the goal, from the base to the summit.* His worship *started* with the image of Kālī ; but *it did not end* there. It soon penetrated the outer crust of reality revealed to the senses as an idol, as a sensual form, the *mrnmayī murti,* and reached the heart of reality, the *cinmayī śakti,* the supreme energy of Consciousness behind the whole universe of man and nature. Sri Ramakrishna called this Reality by the sweet name of 'My Divine Mother', whom he approached through the path of affirmation, and who, he held, is the *Sakti* or primordial divine Energy, of that Brahman, the Absolute of stillness and quiescence, which is the goal of the path of negation and which he had later attained through his *nirvikalpa samādhi* experience.

The Old Testament also sings in its Psalms the glory of this impersonal-personal God (Psalm 139, 7-10):

> Whither shall I go from Thy spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven. Thou art there; if I make by bed in hell, behold, Thou art there.
>
> If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall Thy hand lead me and Thy right hand shall hold me.

The nature of Kālī or Sakti realized by Sri Ramakrishna shines through his several expositions on the subject, as can be gleaned from the following passages of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York Edition, p. 106):

To explain the nature of Kalı to the scholar Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Sri Ramakrishna sang the following song of poet-saint Ramprasad:

> Who is there who can understand what Mother Kālī is?
> Even the six *darśanas* (Indian philosophical systems) are
> powerless to reveal Her.
> It is She, the scriptures say, that is the inner Self
> Of the *yogi*, who in Self discovers all his joy;
> She that, of Her own sweet will, inhabits every living thing.
>
> The macrocosm and microcosm rest in the Mother's womb;
> Now do you see how vast it is? In the *muladhara* (sacral plexus)

> The *yogi* meditates on Her, and in the *sahasrāra* (the brain);
> Who but Śiva has beheld Her as She really is?
> Within the lotus wilderness (heart) She sports beside Her
> Mate, the Swan (Śiva, the Absolute).
> When man aspires to *understand* Her, Rāmprasād must smile!
> To think of knowing Her, he says, is quite as laughable
> As to imagine one can swim across the boundless sea.
> But while my mind has understood, alas! my heart has not;
> Though but a dwarf, it still would strive to make a captive of
> the moon!

16. *Unity of Brahman and Śakti*

Explaining to the Brahmo Samaj leader, Keshab Chandra Sen, the difference in approaches between the paths of negation, *jñāna*, and affirmation, *bhakti*, Sri Ramakrishna says (*ibid.*, p. 134):

> 'The *jñānīs*, who adhere to the non-dualistic philosophy of Vedānta, say that the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, the universe itself and all its living beings, are the manifestations of Śakti, the divine Power (known also as *Māyā*). If you reason it out, you will realize that all these are as illusory as a dream. Brahman alone is the Reality, and all else is unreal. Even this very Śakti is insubstantial, like a dream.
>
> 'But though you reason all your life, unless you are established in *samādhi*, you cannot go beyond the jurisdiction of Śakti. Even when you say, "I am meditating", or "I am contemplating", still you are moving in the realm of Śakti, within Its power.
>
> 'Thus Brahman and Śakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognize its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire. You cannot conceive of the sun's rays without the sun, nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays. ...
>
> 'Thus one cannot think of Brahman without Śakti, or of Śakti without Brahman. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the Relative without the Absolute.'

17. *Unity of the Impersonal and the Personal*

Instructing the Brahmo Samaj leader, Vijay Krishna Goswami, in the dual nature of God as with form and without form, Sri Ramakrishna says (*ibid.*, p. 634):

'That which is Brahman is also Kālī, the Mother, the primal Energy. When inactive, It is called Brahman. Again, when creating, preserving, and destroying, It is called Śakti. Still water is an illustration of Brahman. The same water, moving in waves, may be compared to Śakti, Kālī. What is the meaning of Kālī? She who communes with Mahākāla, the Absolute, is Kālī. She is formless, and, again, She has forms. If you believe in the formless aspect, then meditate on Kālī as that. If you meditate on any aspect of Her with firm conviction, She will let you know Her true nature. Then you will realize that not merely does God exist, but He will come near you and talk to you as I am talking to you. Have faith and you will achieve everything. Remember this, too. If you believe that God is formless, then stick to that belief with firm conviction. But don't be dogmatic; never say emphatically about God that He can be only this and not that. You may say: "I believe that God is formless. But He can be many things more. He alone knows what else He can be. I do not know; I do not understand." How can man with his one ounce of intelligence know the real nature of God? Can you put four *seers* of milk in a one-*seer* jar? If God, through His grace, ever reveals Himself to His devotee and makes him understand, then he will know; but not otherwise.'

18. Narendra's Education in the Vision of the Impersonal God

Sri Ramakrishna led Narendra slowly and steadily to this truly Advaitic (non-dual) vision of the impersonal-personal God. Apart from instruction and discourse, his powerful spiritual influence helped to soften the hold of one or two obstinate dogmas over Narendra's mind and make it a free and untrammelled instrument for the vision of Truth and his mission to humanity. At the very commencement of his discipleship, during his second visit to Sri Ramakrishna, Narendra, then about nineteen, received a glimpse of the impersonal God in *nirvikalpa samādhi* through the touch of the Master. Narendra's reaction to this unexpected and unprepared-for experience puzzled Sri Ramakrishna. In the words of Narendra himself (*Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 333-34)

'I found him sitting alone on the small bedstead. He was glad to see me and, calling me affectionately to his side, made me sit beside him on the bed. But the next moment, I found him overcome with a sort of emotion. Muttering something to himself, with his eyes fixed on me he slowly drew near me. I thought he might do something queer as on the preceding occasion. But in the twinkling of an eye, he placed his right foot on my body. The touch at once gave rise to a novel experience within me. With my eyes open, I saw that the walls, and everything in the room, whirled rapidly and vanished into nought, and the whole universe, together with my individuality, was about to merge in an all encompassing mysterious void! I was terribly frightened and thought that I was facing death, for the loss of individuality meant nothing short of that. Unable to control myself, I cried out: "What is this that you are doing to me? I have my parents at home!" He laughed aloud at this and stroking my chest said: "All right; let it rest now. Everything will come in time!" The wonder of it was that no sooner had he said this than that strange experience of mine vanished. I was myself again and found everything within and without the room as it had been before.

'All this happened in less time than it takes me to narrate it, but it revolutionized my mind. Amazed, I thought what it could possibly be. It came and went at the mere wish of this wonderful man! I began to question if it were mesmerism or hypnotism. But that was not likely, for these acted only on weak minds, and I prided myself on being just the reverse. I had not surrendered myself to the stronger personality of the man. Rather, I had taken him to be a monomaniac. So what might this sudden transformation of mine be due to? I could not come to any conclusion, It was an enigma, I thought, which I had better not attempt to solve. I was determined, however, to be on my guard and not to give him another chance to exert a similar influence on me.

'... My rationalistic mind received an unpleasant rebuff at this failure in judging the true state of things. But I was resolved to fathom the mystery somehow.'

Sri Ramakrishna knew in his heart of hearts that Narendra would eventually grasp the truth of the unconditioned Brahman. He made him read books like *Aṣṭāvakra Saṁhitā* on the subject. To Narendra's mind, trained in the theology of the Brahmo Samaj, these writings appeared to be heretical. He would often rebel saying: 'It is blasphemy, or there is no difference between such philosophy and atheism. There is no greater sin in the world than to think of oneself as identical with the Creator. I am God, you are God, these created things are God — what can be more absurd than this? The sages who wrote such things must have been insane.' Sri Ramakrishna, amused at the bluntness of his disciple but desiring to lead him to a more comprehensive spiritual vision, would gently admonish: 'You may not accept the views of these seers. But how can you abuse them or limit God's infinitude? Go on praying to the God of truth and believe in that aspect of His which He reveals to you.

19. Narendra's Experience of the Nirvikalpa Samādhi

One day, the Master tried to bring home to Narendra the identity of Ātman, the Self of man, with Brahman, the Self of the universe, but could not convince him. Narendra went out of the room and discussed the topic with Hazra, another devotee of Sri

Ramakrishna; and amidst derisive laughter, both dismissed the teaching as preposterous. Hearing the remark and laughter, Sri Ramakrishna came out of his room in a semiconscious state and, touching Narendra, went into *samādhi*. That holy touch revolutionized Narendra's mind, which began to see and realize that there was nothing but God in the universe. In the words of Narendra, closing his narration of the incident (*ibid.*, pp. 344-45):

'This state of things continued for some days. When I became normal again, I realized that I must have had a glimpse of the Advaita state. Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth, I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy.'

Uptill now, Narendra had achieved the experience of Brahman through the grace of his Master, unsought and unprepared. But while, to the earlier two experiences, he had reacted, first, with fear and, then, with hostility, he reacted to the third experience with understanding and appreciation. And, during the last year of Sri Ramakrishna's life, we find Narendra consumed with a raging spiritual passion and seeking with restless yearning for this very experience of Brahman from the Master. In the words of the author of *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (p. 588):

'We have seen Narendranath's aspirations for the highest truth and his struggle to attain it. Yet, one evening, as he was meditating, it came to him quite unexpectedly. At first, he felt as if a light had been placed behind his head. Then he passed beyond all relativity and was lost in the Absolute. He had attained the *nirvikalpa samādhi*! When he gained a little consciousness of the world, he found only his head, but not his body. He cried out: "Ah, where is my body?" Hearing his voice, Gopal Senior came into the room. Naren repeated the query. "Here it is, Naren", answered Gopal. When that failed to convince Narendra, Gopal was terrified and hastened to inform the Master. The latter only said: "Let him stay in that state for a while! He has teased me long enough for it!" '

20. *'You Have the Mother's Work To Do'*

Romain Rolland narrates the same incident, quoting from a letter written to him by Swami Sivananda, a fellow disciple of Narendra, on 7 December 1927 (*Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 268):

'One day, Swami Sivananda told me, he was present in the garden of Cossipore, near Calcutta, when Naren really attained this state. "Seeing him unconscious, his body as cold as that of a corpse, we ran in great agitation to the Master and told him what had happened. The Master showed no anxiety; he merely smiled and said: "Very well!" and then relapsed into silence. Naren returned to outward consciousness and came to the Master. The Master said to him: "Well, now do you understand? This (highest realization) will henceforward remain under lock and key. You have the Mother's work to do. When it is finished, She will undo the lock." Naren replied: "Master, I was happy in *samādhi*. In my infinite joy, I had forgotten the world. I beseech you to let me remain in that state!" "For shame!" cried the Master. "How can you ask such things? I thought you were a vast receptacle of life, and here you wish to stay absorbed in personal joy like an ordinary man! ... This realization will become so natural to you by the grace of the Mother that, in your normal state, you will realize the One Divinity in all beings; you will do great things in the world; you will bring spiritual consciousness to men, and assuage the misery of the humble and the poor." '

21. *Narendra's Experience of the Personal God*

You have the Mother's work to do, said Ramakrishna. We had seen earlier that Narendra had a poor opinion of His Master's worship of Kālī and of his various spiritual visions and experiences. But his seeking for *nirvikalpa samādhi* from the Master, referred to above, had been preceded by his understanding and acceptance of Sri Ramakrishna's vision of the truth of Kālī . This transformation, though coming on gently and steadily, was registered by an important event which occurred less than two years earlier, when Narendra experienced the delight of pure *bhakti* centred in the personal God.

In 1884, Narendra's prodigal father died suddenly of heart failure throwing the family into utter financial ruin. Being the eldest son, the burden of earning for the family of six or seven fell on Narendra. This introduced him for the first time to life's alter-face of sorrow and misery, and violently upset his erstwhile convictions as to the existence and truth of the benign personal God of monotheism. His biography by his Eastern and Western disciples contains, in its chapter entitled 'Trials and Hardships,' a vivid account, much of it in his own words, of his intimate contact with the tragic element in human life and of the tremendous reactions it produced in him. Facile philosophies and shallow beliefs become shattered under its impact, leaving man, in ordinary circumstances, cynical and sour, with heart dried up and mind empty, and in extraordinary circumstances, dynamic and cheerful, with heart warmed up with love and compassion and mind steady and pure. Such circumstances refer not to the presence or absence of intellect or wealth or power, but to the presence or absence of inward spiritual resources, to the presence or absence of the spiritual

capacity to *digest* all experience. Narendra had these inner resources in abundance — he had zealously cultivated them even in the midst of intellectual storms and stresses — and he had the additional advantage of a supremely powerful resource outside of himself in the person of his extraordinary Master.

When he was in the very midst of this trial and hardship, Narendra had a transforming vision which brought him instant peace of heart and mind. To give it in his own words (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, pp. 93-94):

'The summer was over and the rains set in. The search for a job still went on. One evening, after a whole day's fast and exposure to rain, I was returning home with tired limbs and a jaded mind; over-powered with exhaustion and unable to move a step forward, I sank down on the outer plinth of a house on the roadside. I can't say whether I was insensible for a time or not. Various thoughts crowded into my mind, and I was too weak to drive them off and fix my attention on a particular thing. Suddenly, I felt as if by some divine power the coverings of my soul were removed one after another. All my former doubts regarding the co-existence of divine justice and mercy, and the presence of misery in the creation of a blissful Providence, were automatically solved. By a deep introspection, I found the meaning of it all, and was satisfied. As I proceeded homewards, I found there was no trace of fatigue in the body, and the mind was refreshed with wonderful strength and peace. The night was well nigh over.

'Henceforth I became deaf to the praise and blame of worldly people. I was convinced that I was not born like humdrum people to earn money and maintain my family, much less to strive for sense-pleasure.'

Unable to earn enough to keep his family above starvation, rebuffed everywhere, Narendra turned his mind to Sri Ramakrishna's blissful Mother and decided to ask him to intercede with Her on behalf of his starving family. To quote Narendra again (*ibid.*, p. 95):

'One day the idea struck me that God listened to Sri Ramakrishna's prayers; so why should I not ask him to pray for me for the removal of my pecuniary wants—a favour the Master would never deny me? I hurried to Dakshineswar and insisted on his making the appeal on behalf of my starving family. He said: "My boy, I can't make such demands. But why don't *you* go and ask the Mother yourself? All your sufferings are due to your disregard for Her." I said: "I do not know the Mother; you please speak to Her on my behalf. You must." He replied tenderly: "My dear boy, I have done so again and again. But *you* do not accept Her; so She does not grant my prayer. All right, it is Tuesday—go to the Kali temple tonight, prostrate yourself before the Mother, and ask Her any boon you like. It *shall* be granted. She is Knowledge Absolute, the Inscrutable Power of Brahman, and by Her mere will has given birth to this world. Everything is in Her power to give."

Narendra waited for the night. At about nine, he walked across the courtyard and reached the temple. To continue the narration in his own words *(ibid.)*:

'As I went, I was filled with a divine intoxication. My feet were unsteady, My heart was leaping in anticipation of the joy of beholding the living Goddess and hearing Her words. ... Reaching the temple, as I cast my eyes upon the image, I actually found that the Divine Mother was living and conscious, the perennial fountain of Divine Love and Beauty. I was caught in a surging wave of devotion and love. In an ecstasy of joy,I prostrated myself again and again before the Mother and prayed: "Mother, give me discrimination! Grant me renunciation! Give unto me knowledge and devotion! Grant that I may have an uninterrupted vision of Thee!"A serene peace reigned in my soul. The world was forgotten. Only the Divine Mother shone within my heart!'

He returned to Sri Ramakrishna's room. The Master asked him whether he had prayed for the removal of his worldly wants. 'No, Sir, I forgot all about it. But is there any remedy now?' The Master asked him to go again. He went; but, at the very sight of the Mother, he again forgot his mission and prayed only for love and devotion. The Master sent him a third time with the reprimand: 'How thoughtless! Couldn't you restrain yourself enough to say those few words?' He went again; but, on entering the temple, a terrible feeling of shame overpowered him when he thought: 'What a trifle I have come to pray to the Mother for! It is like asking a gracious king for a few vegetables! What a fool I am!' He prostrated again and again and prayed for knowledge and devotion. He reported everything to Sri Ramakrishna and requested him to grant the boon himself. The Master replied: 'Such a prayer never comes from my lips. I asked you to pray for yourself. But you couldn't do it. It appears that you are not destined to enjoy worldly happiness. Well, I can't help it.' When Narendra insisted, the Master said in an exalted mood: 'All right, your people at home will never be in want of plain food and clothing.'

A heavy burden was lifted from Narendra's heart; subsequent events proved the truth of the Master's blessing with respect to his family. Sri Ramakrishna was in a state of ecstasy that night, for his beloved disciple had accepted his Divine Mother. Narendra also spent the night in an ecstasy of devotion and joy singing the song on the divine Mother glorifying Her omnipresence, and beginning with

the lines: *Mā tvaṁ hi tārā*—'Mother, Thou art verily the Redeemer', which the Master had just then taught him at his request. *From that day onwards the disciple became one in spirit with the Master who, on his part, had always treated him as non-separate from himself.*

The rational mind of Narendra grasped the truth of Nature in a new dimension that night; it is not only energy—*śakti;* but also spiritual energy—*cit śakti,* of which all other energies are but manifestations. The Divine Mother of Sri Ramakrishna is this *cit śakti.* Long after, in a talk recorded by Sister Niveditā, Vivekananda confided to her his conviction in the profundity of the truth of Kālī, the Divine Mother, whose image he viewed as the symbol of the book of experience which the soul turns page after page, and, in whose name, men and women will find strength to sound many experiences to their depths (*The Master as I Saw Him,* p. 170):

'You see, I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kālī, and Mother. ... And I believe in Brahma, too.'

Goethe expresses a similar conviction when he ends his *Faust* with the words:

'The Eternal Feminine leads us on and on.'

In a few touching lines, Walt Whitman sings the invocation of the Divine Mother (*Leaves of Grass,* Everyman's Library Edition, 1927, p. 279):

Dark Mother, always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for Thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for Thee, I glorify Thee above all,
I bring Thee a song that, when Thou must indeed come,
come unfalteringly.

22. *'By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them'*

The philosophic and spiritual vision which Ramakrishna imparted to Vivekananda had a profound impact on the subsequent career of the latter and the history of modern India. For it soon began to translate itself into action with a pervasive sweep, unprecedented in the five-thousand-year history of India. As it unifies the

divergent approaches of affirmation and negation, of Sakti and Brahman, it also synthesizes the diverse paths of action and contemplation, work and worship, the secular and the sacred, in a comprehensive spirituality. In it, the God-ward passion pours out also as a man-ward love and service. 'By their fruits ye shall know them', said Jesus about the truth or otherwise of man's ideological convictions. Such convictions have produced, as history has shown, in religious, political, and other fields of human life, character-fruits of diverse quality, from the sweetest to the bitterest, with any number of strands in between. Apathetic withdrawal or energetic action, pessimistic resignation or optimistic struggle, egoistic self-assertion or spiritual self-denial, intolerance or universal acceptance, violence and aggressiveness or non-violence and gentleness, universal love or blind hatred, selfishness and exploitation or renunciation and service—all these are the character-fruits of man's philosophies, well thought-out or ill.

Sri Ramakrishna has coined a new term for this comprehensive philosophic and spiritual vision, namely, *vijñāna. The fruit of this vijñana in a character signifies the rare synthesis of the virtues and graces of the cultures of the East and the West. This was the extraordinary achievement in the character and personality of Swami Vivekananda. This explains the unprecedented sweep and range of its energy resources. This alone explains also its tremendous intensity and the explosive impact of its brief ten-year ministry.* Vivekananda was the supreme example of what Herbert Spencer *(Study of Sociology,* Eignth Edition, p. 403) characterized as *uniting philanthropic energy with philosophic calm* which, in the Vedāntic terminology, means the union of Śakti and Śiva, or Kālī and Brahman.

23. *Sri Ramakrishna: The Man And The Power*

Romain Rolland, among several other sensitive thinkers, sensed the impact of these two dynamic spiritual leaders of modern India in a profound way. Says he in his preface, entitled 'To My Western Readers', to his *Life of Ramakrishna* (p. 8):

'For a century in new India, Unity has been the target for the arrows of all archers. Fiery personalities throughout this century have sprung from her sacred earth, a veritable Ganges of peoples and thought. Whatever may be the differences between them, their goal is ever the same—human unity through God. And through

all the changes of workmen, Unity itself has expanded and gained in precision.

'From this magnificent procession of spiritual heroes whom we shall survey later, I have chosen two men, who have won my regard because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized this splendid symphony of the universal Soul. They are, if one may say so, its Mozart and its Beethoven—*Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.'

The modern West is specially noted for its power of organization, with the help of which it has developed a dynamic and progressive society. It has imbibed this power from the philosophy of man developed in the Greeco-Roman tradition, which had tested and verified its philosophy in its socio-political fields of endeavour. It was later amplified by Christianity passing through, first, the Greeco-Roman and, next, West European, experiences. *The capacity for organization is the fruit of a disciplined man-ward awareness.* This awareness gets its sustenance from a philosophy of man which treats him essentially as a member of a community or society, and which upholds the significance of that inter-acting social *milieu* for man's education, for his full growth and development.

This may be termed the *political* view of man as different from the *religious* view of him which inspired Eastern cultures generally, arising from a different philosophy of man. This philosophy, which arose out of the several world religions, all of which had their birth in the East, viewed man primarily in his relation to God, and only secondarily in his relation to brother man. These religions also view man as possessing a higher dimension over and above his physical and sensate dimension; they also relate him to an eternal order over and above the time order. The mystical aspects of the world religions emphasize this transcendental view of man. All these elements in religion tend to put increasing stress on man as an individual in search of his other-worldly aspirations and goals, and correspondingly decreasing emphasis on his man-ward awareness in a collective *milieu*. If the path of the latter is action in the world of time, in the world of other fellow human beings and in co-operation with them, which is the essential field of character training, the path of the former is contemplation and the 'flight of the alone to the Alone', which is the mother of all the gentler virtues and graces.

The impact of the mystical element in religion has been most

pronounced on India. When it had for its base a strong man-ward awareness and social feeling, India remained strong and healthy. When that base was weakened, especially during the past thousand years, she became the prey to successive foreign invasions through internal divisions and the neglect and oppression of the common man. *The philosophic and spiritual vision of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is dedicated to the strengthening of this social base through the effective organization of the nation's material, moral, and spiritual resources, with a view to enhancing the one supreme quest of the Indian mind, namely, spirituality.*

Sri Ramakrishna exhorted his disciples to avoid being one-sided and develop an all-round character, in which contemplation and action stand harmoniously reconciled. And he held before them the example of Vivekananda as the perfection of such reconciliation. *One-sidedness has been the most serious drawback of the Indian character, proceeding from the limitations of the prevailing religious outlook of her people.* Ramakrishna showed the way to the removal of this limitation and the weakness of character resulting from it. Centuries earlier, the *Gītā* had shown the way, but the people had failed even to grasp it properly, and, even more, to implement it effectively.

When engaged in the world of action, unlike in the world of contemplation, we have to reckon with other persons. A man with a purely mystical attitude becomes a failure in the field of action; he does not develop character-efficiency; for he has no place for the objective in his subjective vision; this limitation is highlighted by Sri Ramakrishna in one of his parables:

A *guru* taught his young disciples the truth that God is in all beings. One day, when the disciples were in the forest gathering fuel, a mad elephant came their way. Hearing the shout of the driver on the elephant asking all to run away for safety, all the disciples ran away for safety, except one who, remembering the *guru's* teaching of the presence of God in all, recognized His presence in the elephant and began to sing hymns of praise to the 'God in the elephant'. The elephant rushed at the youth and, taking him by its trunk, threw him aside and went its way. His fellow disciples came in search of him and found him bruised and unconscious. They

restored him to consciousness and brought him before the *guru*. When asked by the *guru* why he, like his fellow disciples, did not run for safety, the disciple replied that, following his teaching that God is in all beings, he tried to see God in the elephant. The *guru*, on hearing this, exclaimed: What a fool you are! God is certainly in the elephant; but is He not also in the driver of the elephant? And why did you not listen to 'the driver God' when he asked you to run for safety?

Sri Ramakrishna the man passed away in 1886. But Sri Ramakrishna the power, all-beneficent and luminous, continued, and still continues, to affect in a fundamental way the life and destiny of man in increasing numbers in East and West. Before he passed away, he felt the need for an organization, which would be an effective channel for the flow of his unifying vision to fertilize human life everywhere. And he set up such an organization, a *sangha*, with Vivekananda at its head. His deep concern to see that the organization remained intact is evident in his exhortation, a few days before his passing away, to Vivekananda to see that his young disciples were held together in a common dedication to the vision that he had imparted to them. To quote the biography of Vivekananda by his Eastern and Western disciples (*The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 147):

'It so happened that Naren had been called to the side of the Master some days earlier, when he was suffering intensely and could scarcely speak. The Master wrote on a piece of paper: "Narendra will teach others". Naren hesitated and said: "I won't do that". But the Master replied. "You *shall have* to do it".

'Now that the last days were approaching, the Master set himself with greater energy than ever to mould, in a calm and silent way, the spiritual life of these boys, particularly that of Naren. Every evening, he would call Naren to his room and, for two or three hours at a time, would impart final instructions to him on various spiritual subjects and advise him to keep his brother disciples together, how to guide and train them so that they would be able to live the life of renunciation.'

Referring to what Ramakrishna himself gained by coming into contact with the Brahmo Samaj and its leaders, Romain Rolland says (*The Life of Ramakrishna*. p. 186):

'It is easy to see what India gained from the meeting of Ramakrishna and the Brahmo Samaj. His own gain is less obvious, but no less definite. For the first time, he found himself brought into personal contact with the educated middle class of his country, and through them with the pioneers of progress and Western ideas. ...

'He was not a man to react like a strict and narrow devotee, who hastens to put up the shutters of his cell. On the contrary, he flung them wide open. He was too human, too insatiably curious, too greedy for the fruit of the tree of life not to taste these new fruits to the full. His long searching glance insinuated itself, like a creeper through the chinks of the house, and studied all the different habitations of the same Host, and studied all the different spirits dwelling therein, and, in order to understand them better, he identified himself with them. He grasped their limitations (as well as their significance), and proportioned to each nature its own vision of life and individual duty. He never dreamt of imposing either vision or action alien to his proper nature on any man. He, to whom renunciation both then and always, so far as he was personally concerned, was the first and last word of truth, discovered that most men would have none of it, and he was neither astonished nor saddened by the discovery.'

Pointing out the truth of the utility of organization discovered by Ramakrishna through his contact with the westernized Brahmo Samaj, Romain Rolland says (*ibid.*, p. 188):

'The ascendency he exercised over some of the best minds in India revealed the weakness and needs of these intellectuals, their unsatisfied aspirations, the inadequacy of the answers they gained from science, and the necessity for his intervention. The Brahmo Samaj showed him what strength of organization, what beauty existed in a spiritual group uniting young souls round an elder brother, so that they tendered a basket of love as a joint offering to their Beloved, the Mother.

'The immediate result was that his mission, hitherto undefined, became crystallized; it concentrated first in a glowing nucleus of conscious thought wherein decision was centred, and then passed into action.'

24. *Vivekananda: The Man And The Power*

Vivekananda was extraordinarily gifted with the powers of both vision and action. In his Master and within himself, apart from the philosophy he had imbibed, he had seen and experienced the greatness and glory of man. But within a short time after his Master's passing away, he saw, at close quarters, the tragedy of man in India when he wandered over the length and breadth of his beloved motherland, mixing with its princes and peasants, intellectuals and untouchables. On the eve of this great and unique pilgrimage, he declared at Banaras in 1890: 'I am going away; but I shall never come back until I have burst on society like a bomb, and make it follow me like a dog.' And within three years of this utterance, he had burst upon the attention of the international world through his speeches at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, followed by whirlwind lecture tours in U.S.A. and U.K., and, in another four years,

on the horizon of modern India through his famous speeches, later collected in the book *Lectures from Colombo to Almora.* About the impact of his speeches and utterances, Romain Rolland writes (*The Life of Vivekananda,* p. 162):

'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel Choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when, in burning words, they issued from the lips of the hero!'

25. *Vivekananda: A Social Revolutionary*

Upholding the supremacy of the Indian ideal of spirituality in his life and teaching, Vivekananda was yet appalled to see the poverty and degradation of masses of his countrymen; and he proclaimed in anguish: 'I do not believe in a religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or stop the orphan's wails'; and he quoted his Master's pungent words: 'Religion is not for empty bellies.' And for the first time in her long history, India got in him an outstanding spiritual leader tackling vigorously the pressing problems of the *secular* life of man, and pleading for what he terms a 'toned down' *materialism* for his country. *He traced the down-fall of India to the forcing down the throats of one and all the mystical heights of religion with its neglect of social feeling and action and emphasis only on renunciation and contemplation.* Says he (*The Complete Works,* Vol. III, pp. 149-150):

'Yet, perhaps, some sort of materialism, toned down to our own requirements, would be a blessing to many of our brothers who are not yet ripe for the highest truths. This is the mistake made in every country and in every society, and it is a greatly regrettable thing that in India, where it was always understood, the same mistake of forcing the highest truths on people who are not ready for them, has been made of late. ...There has been ample provision made for them in our books; but unfortunately, in later times, there has been a tendency to bind every one down by the same laws as those by which the *sannyāsin* (monk) is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that, a good deal of the poverty and the misery that you see in India need not have been.'

Vivekananda was not a 'revivalist', but a social revolutionary. Reporting an important conversation with him during his second voyage to the West, Sister Nivedita records (*The Master as I Saw Him,* pp. 201-202):

' "I disagree with all those", he said, "who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt, it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. *My* hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a *growth* from within.

"So I preach only the Upaniṣads. And of the Upaniṣads, it is only that one idea of *strength*. The quintessence of Vedas and Vedānta and all lies in that one word. ...

"But you may ask—what is the place of Ramakrishna in this scheme?

"He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! ...

"Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—renunciation and *mukti* (spiritual emancipation). Only *mukti* here! Nothing for the householder!

"But these are the very people whom I want to help. For are not all souls of the same quality? Is not the goal of all the same?

"And so strength must come to the nation through education."

'I thought at the time, and I think increasingly, as I consider it, that this one talk of my Master had been well worth the whole voyage, to have heard.'

26. *Vivekananda: A Practical Visionary*

Cornelia Conger, who had intimate association with Vivekananda during her childhood when her grandmother, Mrs. John B. Lyon of Chicago, had played host to him on behalf of the World Parliament of Religions, narrates an interesting incident in her memories of him, which brings out his keen desire to help the Indian people imbibe the Western talent for organization *(Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda,* 1961, p. 138):

'Once he said to my grandmother that he had had the greatest temptation of his life in America. She liked to tease him a bit and said, "Who is she, Swami?" He burst out laughing and said, "Oh, it is not a lady; it is *organization!*" He explained how the followers of Ramakrishna had all gone out alone and when they reached a village, would just quietly sit under a tree and wait for those in trouble to come to consult them. But in the States he saw how much could be accomplished by organizing work. Yet he was doubtful about just what type of organization would be acceptable to the Indian character, and he gave a great deal of thought and study how to adapt what seemed good to him in our Western world to the best advantage of his own people.'

In a letter written from Massachusetts, U.S.A., on 20 August

1893, to a disciple in India, after visiting a modern women's prison, the Swami poured out his agony at the condition and treatment of human beings in India (*The Complete Works,* Vol. V. Seventh Edition, pp. 13-14):

'They don't call it prison but reformatory here. It is the grandest thing I have seen in America. How the inmates are benevolently treated, how they are reformed and sent back as useful members of society. ... And, oh! how my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor, the low, in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up ... Religion is not at fault. On the other hand, your religion teaches you that every being is only your own self multiplied. But it was the want of practical application, the want of sympathy — the want of heart.'

It was to provide this practical application, this sympathy, this heart, that he felt the need for the Indian people to cut out a new channel of practical efficiency from their national reservoir of spirituality, to strive to achieve character, and learn the secret of organized action. In a letter written from U.S.A., on 11 July 1894, to a young disciple in India, he says:

'Go to work, my boys; the fire will come to you! The faculty of organization is entirely absent in our nature, but this has to be infused. The great secret is absence of jealousy. Be always ready to concede to the opinions of your brethren, and try always to conciliate. That is the whole secret.'

Speaking on the 'Future of India' in Madras, on his return from the West in 1897, he says (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, pp. 299-300):

'Why is it that organizations are so powerful? Do not say organization is material. Why is it, to take a case in point, that forty millions of Englishmen rule three hundred millions of people here? What is the psychological explanation? These forty millions put their wills together and that means infinite power, and you three hundred millions have a will each separate from the other. Therefore, to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills.

"Already before my mind rises one of the marvellous verses of the *Atharva Veda Saṁhitā* which says: "Be thou all of one mind, be thou all of one thought; for in the days of yore, the gods being of one mind were enable to receive oblations. That the gods can be worshipped by men is because they are of one mind." Being of one mind is the secret of society. ... And the more you go on fighting and quarrelling about all trivialities ... the further you are off from that accumulation of energy and power which is going to make the future India. For, mark you, the future India depends entirely upon that. That is the secret—accumulation of will-power, co-ordination, bringing them all, as it were, into one focus.'

Writing to the Prime Minister of an Indian princely state from Chicago in November 1894, he says (*ibid.*, Vol. VIII, Third Edition, p. 328):

'The secret of success of the Westerners is the power of organization and combination. That is only possible with mutual trust and co-operation.'

The Swami knew that over-organization was as bad as no organization. He felt that the West had inclined the former way where even religion had become overwhelmed, with ninety per cent energy spent on church organization and only ten per cent left for spiritual striving. Yet, he keenly felt the need for this faculty in the Indian context

Writing to Mrs. Ole Bull of U.S.A. on 21 March 1895 from New York, he says (*ibid.*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, p. 303):

'Organization has its faults, no doubt, but, without that, nothing can be done.'

The Swami exhorted his countrymen to learn from the English people their capacity for *obedience with self-respect,* which is the secret of collective action. Writing to his brother disciple, Swami Akhandananda, from London in 1895, he says (*ibid.*, pp. 322-23):

'Your idea is grand but our nation is totally lacking in the faculty of organization. It is this one drawback which produces all sorts of evil. We are altogether averse in making a common cause for anything. The first requisite for organization is obedience. I do a little bit of work when I feel so disposed, and then let it go to the dogs—this kind of work is of no avail. We must have plodding industry and perseverance.'

Again, writing to the same on 13 November 1895, he says (*ibid.*, pp. 350-51):

'It is not at all in our nature to do a work conjointly. It is to this that our miserable condition is due. He who knows how to obey, knows how to command. Learn obedience first. Among these Western nations, with such a high spirit of independence, the spirit of obedience is equally strong. We are all of us self-important, which never produces any work. Great enterprise, boundless courage, tremendous energy, and above all, perfect obedience—these are the only traits that lead to individual and national regeneration. These traits are altogether lacking in us.'

The modern Western *promethean* spirit of energy and progress finds shining expression in the letter he wrote from Chicago on 24 January 1894 to the group of young disciples in Madras, in which he expounds his mission (*ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 29-30):

'Caste or no caste, creed or no creed, any man, or class, or caste or nation, or institution, which bars the power of free thought and action of an individual—even so long as that power does not injure others—is devilish and must go down.

'My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody and then let men and women settle their own fate. let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws. Work hard, be steady, and have faith in the Lord. Set to work; I am coming sooner or later. Keep the motto before you—"Elevation of the masses without injuring their religon."

'Remember the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them. ... Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves, great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto. Onward, brave lads!'

Referring to the synthesis of East and West sought to be achieved for his country by Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita, his Western disciple, says (*The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 45):

'His view was penetrative as well as comprehensive. He had analyzed the elements of the development to be brought about. India must learn a new ideal of obedience. ... The energy which had hitherto gone into the mortification of the body, might rightly, in his opinion, under modern conditions, be directed to the training of the muscles.

'To the Western mind, it might well seem that nothing in the Swami's life had been more admirable than this. Long ago, he had defined the mission of the Order of Ramakrishna as that of realizing and exchanging the highest ideals of the East and of the West.'

27. *Vivekananda on Man-making Education*

It is specially in his ideas and programmes relating to the education of the Indian people that Vivekananda reveals his spiritual kinship with the finest in the traditions of East and West. His utterances on this vital subject, scattered in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works*, are available in a small book entitled *Education*, which carries the following brief Foreword from Mahatma Gandhi:

"Surely, Swami Vivekananda's writings need no introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal.'

The Swami defines education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man'. Viewing the prevailing educational system against the background of the pressing problems of his nation, he said (*Education*, p. 7):

'Getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language and stuffing your brain with them and taking some university degrees, you consider yourself educated! Is this education? ... Open your eyes and see what a piteous cry for food is rising in the land of Bhārata, proverbial for its food. Will your education fulfil this want? The education that does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion — is it worth the name?

'We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet. What we need is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language and Western science; we need technical education and all else that will develop industries, so that men, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves and save against a rainy day.

'The end of all education, all training, should be man-making. The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control, and become fruitful, is called education.'

28 *Vivekananda on Man-making Religion*

The Swami defines religion almost exactly as he defines education. Religion, to him, is 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man'. So defined, religion ceases to be a formal subscription to a creed or a dogma, or a round of rituals, or end up in the membership of a church or a congregation; it becomes an educative process; it becomes continued education.

Tracing the downfall of India to the continued sapping of the faith of the Indian people in themselves through a wrong understanding of religion, and to the sad neglect, by them, of their physical selves, he said (*ibid.*, pp. 42-44):

'The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith. It means faith in all because you are all. Love for yourself means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one. ... If the ideal of faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the

history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of great men and women, it is that faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great. ...

'Physical weakness is the cause of at least one-third of our miseries. We are lazy; we cannot combine. We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them. Speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything. We must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends, that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the *Gita*. You will understand the *Gītā* better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krsna better with a little strong blood in you. You will understand the Upaniṣads better and the glory of the Ātman, when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men.'

29. *Vivekananda's Concern for Women and the Common Man*

Vivekananda is the first monk and outstanding spiritual teacher in all history to uphold, without any reservation, the cause of women and the common people. "In India there are two evils', he said, 'trampling on the woman and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.' Revealing his resolve to undo this injustice, Sister Niveditā writes *(The Master as I Saw Him. pp. 287-88):*

'Our Master, at any rate, regarded the Order to which he belonged as one whose lot was cast for all time with the cause of Woman and the People.... It was the one thought, too, with which he would turn to the disciple at his side, whenever he felt himself nearer than usual to death, in a foreign country, alone, "Never forget!" he would then say, "the word is 'Woman and the people!' "

His far-seeing mind grasped the significance of the modern age in the sure awakening of the suppressed millions everywhere. He called the present age the age of the Śūdra, the age of the proletariat.

Stirring the conscience of his countrymen, he said about their proletariat fellow-countrymen (*Education,* pp. 73-74):

'Engrossed in the struggle for existence, they had not the opportunity for the awakening of knowledge. They have worked so long like machines and the clever educated section have taken the substantial parts of the fruits of their labour. But times have changed. The lower classes are gradually awakening to this fact, and making a united front against this. The upper classes will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much. The well-being of the higher classes now lies in helping the lower to get their legitimate rights. Therefore I say: Set yourself to the task of spreading education among the masses. Tell them and make them understand: "you are our brothers, a part and parcel of our bodies". If they receive this sympathy from you, their enthusiasm for work will be increased a hundredfold.'

30. *Vivekananda on India's British Connection*

Even while detesting the British subjugation of India, Vivekananda, in his creative role as the prophet of acceptance, as Tagore said of him, saw in it an opportunity to rescue India from its centuries-long stagnation, and utilized it accordingly. In one of his famous essays on 'Modern India', contributed to his Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* in 1899, Vivekananda said (*The Complete Works,* Vol. IV, Eighth Edition, pp. 472-73):

'The present government of India has certain evils attendant on it, and there are some very great and good parts in it as well. Of highest good is this, that, after the fall of the Pātalīputra (Maurya) Empire, till now, India was never under the guidance of such a powerful machinery of government as the British, wielding the sceptre throughout the length and breadth of the land. And under this *Vaiśya* (commercial) supremacy... the ideas and thoughts of different countries are forcing their way into the very bone and marrow of India. Of these ideas and thoughts, some are really most beneficial to her, some are harmful, while others disclose the ignorance and inability of the foreigners to determine what is truly good for the inhabitants of this country.

'But piercing through the mass of whatever good or evil there may be, is seen rising the sure emblem of India's future prosperity—that, as the result of the action and reaction between her own old national ideals, on the one hand, and the newly-introduced strange ideals of foreign nations, on the other, she is slowly and gently awakening from her long deep sleep. Mistakes she will make; let her; there is no harm in that. In all our actions, errors and mistakes are our only teachers. Who commits mistakes, the path of truth is attainable by him only. Trees never make mistakes, nor do stones fall into error; animals are hardly seen to transgress the fixed laws of nature. But man is prone to err, and it is man who becomes God-on-earth.'

31 *Vivekananda's Vision of Awakened India*

And in an inspiring poem entitled 'To the Awakened India contributed to his English monthly, *Prabuddha Bhārata,* for its first issue after its transfer from Madras to its new home in the Himalayas, Vivekananda summoned India to wake up from her long sleep and resume her march for the welfare and happiness of all humanity *(The Complete Works,* Vol. IV, p. 387)

Once more awake!
For sleep it was, not death, to bring thee life
Anew, and rest to lotus-eyes, for visions
Daring yet. The world in need awaits, O Truth!

Resume thy march,
With gentle feet that would not break the
Peaceful rest, even of the roadside dust
That lies so low. Yet strong and steady,
Blissful, bold, and free. Awakener, ever Forward! Speak thy stirring words.

Inviting the attention of the West to the new India that is rising on the horizon of the modern world out of the energy of Vivekananda's vision, Romain Rolland says (*Life of Vivekananda*, p. 316):

'So India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own *sannyāsins;* and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds, and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by these means.'

32. *Tagore on Vivekananda*

Rabindranath Tagore, himself a man of vision, recognized the depth and sweep of Vivekananda's vision and programme and its creative role in bringing out the best out of man. Pointing out the limitations of the message of the spinning wheel, which Gandhiji was then conveying to the Indian people, as a *bāhya kriyā,* 'external act', liable to be reduced in due course to a static *ācara or 'observance'*, 'which has been a recurring experience in India's past', and 'incapable, therefore, of rousing the spirit of man to full creative life and action', Tagore said (*Prabāsī,* Vol. 28, p. 286):

'In recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied up with any do's and dont's. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said: In every one of you, there is the power of Brahman (God); the God in the poor desires you to serve (Him). This message has roused the heart of the youths in a pervasive way. That is why this messge has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse forms of renunciation. His message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power '

33. *Vivekananda's Central Theme: Man's Inherent Divinity*

Anyone reading the eight volumes of Vivekananda's published works and Sister Nivedita's masterly study of him in her *The Master as I saw Him* cannot but be struck by the sweep of his thoughts and the depth of his convictions. The one running theme of all his utterances is *man*—his growth, his development, his fulfilment. Referring to this theme, in his study of Vivekananda's speeches at the World Parliament of Religions at Chicago, Romain Rolland says (*The Life of Vivekananda,* pp. 42-43):

'Each time he repeated with new arguments but with the same force of conviction his thesis of a universal religion without limit of time or space, uniting the whole *credo* of the human spirit, from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmations of modern science. He harmonized them into a magnificent synthesis, which, far from extinguishing the hope of a single one, helped all hopes to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature. There was to be no other dogma but the divinity inherent in man and his capacity for indefinite evolution.'

34. *The Greeco-Roman Cultural Legacy*

In his studies of the human cultural heritage, Vivekananda saw, what I had referred to earlier, two distinct approaches to the problem of human development, one as cultivated by the East and the other by the West. These can be broadly stated, using the language of biology, as stress on the *environment* in the West and that on the *organism* in the East.From Greeco-Roman times,the West has been specializing in the manipulation of the physical and social environments of man for ensuring his growth and fulfilment. The whole gamut of ideas and processes arising from this approach is conveyed to us by the rich modern words 'positivism' and 'humanism', which, in the wake of modern technological advances, are often qualified by the word 'scientific'. It is the conviction of positivism that human development is ensured by understanding, controlling, and manipulating the environment, natural and social, in which man's life is cast. Through technology and socio-political processes, man suitably disciplines and manipulates his environment, which is sometimes tractable, often intractable, with a view to ensuring his own self-expression. The product of such manipulation is civilization. There is, in this, a sense of a fight with an external enemy. Such a challenge calls forth from the spirit of man the qualities of courage,

faith, and confidence in himself, and the capacity for co-operation and team work. It disciplines his senses and mind in precision of observation and communication. It helps to endow him with a zest for life and for action and achievement, All these, constitute, for man, the school for the development of character and practical efficiency. Here is a distinct philosophy of man, which Vivekananda called the philosophy of *manliness* and which he saw as the fundamental stimulus of the West from the Greeco-Roman to modern times.

The Greek religion was an integral part of its positivistic philosophy, and it was essentially this-worldly and pragmatic. Though Socrates and the Greek Mystery Religions rise above the positivistic level, they were not integrated with the distinctively Greek outlook and thought, being foreign to both. This explains the disowning of Socrates by the Greek state and his trial and death. Their own great dictum, 'Man, know thyself', was not pursued by the Greeks beyond his social personality; neither did the Greeks experience the urge to subject these religious mysteries to that rational scrutiny which they so diligently and passionately applied to social and political phenomena, and in which their contributions were to become unique and lasting.

35. *The Indo-Asian Cultural Legacy*

'But what the Greeks neglected became the one ruling passion of the East and, especially, of India. This registers the other approach, which stresses the *organism* and comparatively neglects the external environment. This is the approach of religion, specially in its higher mystical aspects; and all the higher religions of the world are Eastern contributions to total human culture. It asks man to strengthen his 'within' and *bear* with the environment and, if strong enough, even to ignore it. It instills the virtues of patience and endurance in place of struggle and advance in the external world, enhances the capacity for renunciation and suffering in place of action and enjoyment, and generally upholds the line of least resistance in the external world. There is, in this also, a sense of fight with an enemy, but that enemy is within man and not outside of him. This approach gives man 'intimations of immortality': it brings him into communion with a timeless order of existence within himself and in the world outside. This

is also human fulfilment — but of a transcendental order. Its specific expression is found in the monastic life: and the mystical heights of all higher religions are monastic in mood and temper and approach. Herein is revealed another philosophy of man, the philosophy of *godliness* or *saintliness*, which Vivekananda recognized as the distinct message of the East. Asia, generally, and India, particularly, have upheld this philosophy of man and sought to nourish their cultures and civilizations with it. It has profoundly affected Western culture and civilization also, through Christianity, but has failed to become an integral part of it, just as the Western philosophy of manliness has failed to become an integral part of most Eastern cultures and civilizations. It uncovers a divine core in man, which makes him greater than all his external possessions and achievements; it reveals an inalienable spiritual focus within him, which proclaims his *intrinsic value* and dignity over and above his *value for society*. Herein is found the culmination of the Greek dictum: 'Man, know thyself'.

The dignity so revealed finds expression not only in the renunciation practised by spiritual seers and seekers, but also in the incidents of ordinary life; one such episode, relating to one of his great elder contemporaries, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, was a favourite with Vivekananda. After referring to his high regard for Vidyasagar as a hero of social reform, Sister Nivedita says in her charming book: *Notes of Some Wanderings with Swami Vivekananda* (Third Edition, pp. 35-36):

> 'But his favourite story about him was of that day when he went home from the Legislative Council, pondering over the question of whether or not to adopt English dress on such occasions. Suddenly, some one came up to a fat Mogul (Muslim nobleman) who was proceeding homewards in leisurely and pompous fashion, in front of him, with the news: "Sir, your house is on fire!" The Mogul went neither faster nor slower for this information, and presently the messenger contrived to express a discreet astonishment, whereupon his master turned on him angrily, "Wretch!" he said, "Am I to abandon the gait of my ancestors, because a few sticks happen to be burning?" And Vidyasagar, walking behind, determined to stick to the *chudder, dhoti,* and sandals, not even adopting coat and slippers.'

36. *Need for a Synthesis of Saintliness and Manliness*

As the Greeks and others specialized in the subject of man in society, man in lateral extension, India specialized in the subject of

man in depth, man in vertical elevation. Each has its glory and grandeur; each also has its limitations, which exactly render one the complement of the other.

In his own life, Vivekananda had plumbed the depths of both these philosophies; he had assimilated in his own personality the *manliness* of the West and the *saintliness* of the East. He saw clearly the excellences and limitations of each of these two human legacies which he embraced as two integral elements of a total human culture, *and proclaimed the modern age as the era of their synthesis*. In his philosophy of man, proceeding from Sri Ramakrishna's comprehensive spirituality of *vijnana* referred to earlier, they cease to be contradictory and become complementary. He comprehended the Western concept of manliness and the Eastern concept of saintliness in a newly defined philosophy of manliness, which dares to study man from his physical periphery to his spiritual core and to plumb life from the surface to the depths.

History reveals the insufficiency of each of these philosophies taken by themselves. The bitter lessons of the Eastern neglect of the *environment* are writ large in the arrested development of millions of its human beings. Vivekananda demonstrated to the people of India the lesson of their history that to neglect the body and to concentrate on the soul is to court disaster for both soul and body. On the other hand, he demonstrated to the people of the West the lesson of their own history in the reverse. Positivism and humanism, even scientific humanism, are perfectly valid, he said, if they do not reduce the human soul to a mere function of the environment, if they do not lead to the swamping of the spirit of man by worldliness, by, what one may call, over-civilization. Man has an interior depth over and above his social personality, as he has a social personality over and above his individual egoistic self. The latter has to be surpassed and the former realized in each case, if he is to achieve fulfilment. 'In the last stages of life's journey,' says Dr. Radhakrishnan, 'man walks in single file'. This surpassing of man constitutes both his death and resurrection. 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it,' says Jesus (Mathew, 10.39). So long as this is not attempted and achieved, physical death, which is inevitable, will appear to him an unpleasant enigma and an unwelcome intruder, to which he shall

ever remain unreconciled. *No philosophy can achieve depth without tackling the problem of death.* This has been the main weakness of the Western philosophy of man from Greeco-Roman times to this day. This basic tragedy of Western man is noticed by Western thinkers themselves. We have Schopenhauer telling us a hundred years ago, in what sounds as an apt critique of the modern welfare state, that the end of a sense-bound life is boredom (*The World as Will and Idea,* Translated by Haldane and Kemp, Vol. I, p. 404):

'Almost all men who are secure from want and care, now that at last they have thrown off all other burdens, become a burden to themselves.'

We have C. G Jung discussing modern man in search of a soul. Making a distinction between worldly *achievement* and inner *culture,* and showing the undesirability of the modern pursuit of the first alone throughout life, he says *(Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* pp. 118-26):

'Nature cares nothing whatsoever about a higher level of consciousness; quite the contrary. And then society does not value these feats of the psyche very highly; its prizes are always given for achievement and not for personality — the latter being rewarded, for the most part, posthumously. ...

'Achievement, usefulness, and so forth are the ideals which appear to guide us out of the confusion of crowding problems. They may be our loadstars in the adventure of extending and solidifying our psychic existences — they may help us in striking our roots in the world; but they cannot guide us in the development of that wider consciousness to which we give the name of culture. ...

'The nearer we approach to the middle of life, and the better we have succeeded in entrenching ourselves in our personal standpoints and social positions, the more it appears as if we had discovered the right course and the right ideals and principles of behaviour. For this reason, we suppose them to be eternally valid, and make a virtue of unchangeably clinging to them. We wholly overlook the essential fact that the achievements which society rewards are won at the cost of the diminution of personality. Many — far too many — aspects of life which should also have been experienced lie in the lumber room among dusty memories. ...

'The afternoon of human life must also have a significance of its own, and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage to life's morning. The significance of the morning undoubtedly lies in the development of the individual, our entrenchment in the outer world, the propagation of our kind, and the care of our children. This is the obvious purpose of nature. But when this purpose has been attained — even more than attained—shall the earning of money, the extension of conquests, and the expansion of life go steadily on beyond the bounds of all reason and sense? *Whoever carries over into the afternoon the law of the morning—that is, the aim of nature—must pay for so doing with damage to his soul, just as surely as a growing youth who tries to salvage his*

childish egoism must pay for this mistake with social failure. Moneymaking, social existence, family, and posterity are nothing but plain nature—not culture. Culture lies beyond the purpose of nature. Could by any chance culture be the meaning and purpose of the second half of life?" *(italics, not the author's)*

Treating this as the major drawback of Greek culture, which, it is being increasingly recognized, is also the major drawback of modern Western culture, Lowes Dickinson says (*The Greek View of Life,* p. 68):

'The more completely the Greek felt himself to be at home in the world, the more happily and freely he abandoned himself to the exercise of his powers, the more intensely and vividly he lived in action and in passion, the more alien, bitter, and incomprehensible did he find the phenomena of age and death. On this problem, so far as we can judge, he received from his religion but little light and still less consolation. The music of his brief life closed with a discord unresolved; and even before reason had brought her criticism to bear upon his creed, its deficiency was forced upon him by his feeling.'

In his Preface to the above book, E. M. Forster refers to Greece as the land which 'encompassed within the tiny circuit of her city states much that *affects* and *afflicts* the modern man in his relationship to society' (italics not the author's).

While welcoming the truly positive elements of modern positivism, Vivekananda protested against its exaggerations, its negative, features, in a pregnant utterance, when he said to Sister Niveditā (*The Master as I saw Him,* pp. 220-21):

'Remember! the message of India is always not the soul for nature, but nature for the soul.'

Vivekananda had noticed the Western tragedy referred to by Lowes Dickinson. Comparing it with Indian experience, he said (*ibid.,* p. 116):

'Social life in the West is like a peal of laughter, but underneath it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface; really, it is full of tragic intensity. Now, here it is sad and gloomy on the outside, but underneath are carelessness and merriment.'

Niveditā refers to another such contrast expressed by the Swami 'with some exaggerations', but which 'is nevertheless essentially correct', as she puts it (*ibid.,* p. 110):

'Nothing, said the Swami, better illustrated to his own mind the difference between Eastern and Western methods of thought than the European idea that a man could not live alone for twenty years and remain quite sane, taken side by side with the Indian notion that, till a man had been alone for twenty years, he could not be regarded as perfectly himself.'

Thus, viewing man integrally in his physical, social, and transocial dimensions, and with a view to ensuring his total fulfilment, Vivekananda expounds a philosophy of man in which man, whether eastern or Western, can feel at home and find the inspiration to achieve total life fulfilment. That philosophy finds expression in a brief statement of his, in which *even positivism and secularism become integral elements of a comprehensive spirituality* (*The Complete Works,* Vol. I, p. 124):

'Each soul is potentially divine.

'The goal (of life) is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external (by science, technology, and socio-political processes) and internal (by ethics, art, and religion).

'Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these, and BE FREE.

'This is the whole of religion.

'Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

37. *The Advaitic Vision Behind such a Synthesis*

At the back of this comprehensive spirituality stands his Advaitic vision, the vision of the unity of Brahman and Śakti, of the Impersonal-Personal God, which I had dealt with earlier. Referring to this vision and its corollary, Sister Nivedita says ('Introduction' to *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. I, pp. xv-xvi):

'It is this which adds its crowning significance to our Master's life, for here he becomes the meeting point, not only of East and West, but also of past and future. If the many and the One be indeed the same Reality, then it is not all modes of worship alone, but equally all modes of work, all modes of struggle, all modes of creation, which are paths of realization. No distinction, henceforth, between sacred and secular. To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.

'This is the realization which makes Vivekananda the great preacher of *karma* (action) not as divorced from, but as expressing *jnana* and *bhakti.* To him the workshop, the study, the farmyard, and the field are as true and fit scenes for the meeting of God with man as the cell of the monk or the door of the temple. To him, there is no distinction between service of man and worship of God, between manliness and

faith, between true righteousness and spirituality. All his words, from one point of view, read as a commentary upon this central conviction. "Art, science, and religion", he said once, "are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But, in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita."

It is this unifying vision that he imparted to India. *As the most outstanding creator of modern India, he conceived of her as a mighty human laboratory to test and verify his vision and programme of a comprehensive spirituality in the life of a seventh of the human race.* He called it his 'domestic policy'; and he called the channelling of the energy of such an India in the spiritual service of the rest of the world his 'foreign policy.'

38. *The Meeting of East and West in Modern India*

The India that has emerged during the last sixty years, since Vivekananda's passing away in 1902, bears the unmistakable impress of this great teacher. Within three years of his passing away, the first collective action of organized masses shook Bengal in the political field. The struggle for political freedom soon entered on a dynamic phase under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress, creating a tremendous political and social awakening in the nation and hastening the entering of India into the modern age. Political independence came in 1947. A Constitution for a sovereign democratic republic was proclaimed in 1950. Since then, this process has been intensified; and vast energies, long dormant in the people, have been released, and are being increasingly released, which are having their impact in all fields of national endeavour. India is steadily learning from the West, as Vivekananda had taught, the capacity for organized work, and using that capacity to remove the poverty and cultural backwardness of masses of her population. She is cultivating science and technology and modern socio-political processes in a big way. All these form part and parcel of Vivekananda's message of *Practical Vedānta;* they are part and parcel of his scheme of a *toned-down materialism to suit our purposes,* with a view to strengthening the age-old spiritual and cultural tradition of the nation.

In this mighty adventure, India, along with other Afro-Asian nations, is receiving all kinds of technical and other forms of assistance from the advanced nations of the East and West. This was one

of the aims which Vivekananda had cherished when he undertook his historic mission to the West in 1893. He had constantly emphasized, as I have mentioned earlier in this lecture, the international context and dimension of human problems and relationships in the modern age.

Vivekananda had assimilated the spirit of the West so thoroughly that any Westerner would feel quite at home in his thought-horizon. But he represented within himself something more, namely, the resolution of the ever-present inner contradictions obtaining within Western culture and thought. *This something more in him is the precious gift of his great Master, Sri Ramakrishna.* Pointing to these dimensions of Vivekananda's personality in his penetrating study of his thought, Romain Rolland says (*Life of Vivekananda,* p. 192):

> 'I shall try to show how closely allied is the aspect of Vivekananda's thought to our own, with our special needs, torments, aspirations, and doubts, urging us ever forward, like a blind mole, by instinct, upon the road leading to the light. Naturally, I hope to be able to make other Westerners, who resemble me, feel the attraction that I feel for this elder brother, the son of the Ganges, *who, of all modern men, achieved the highest equilibrium between the two diverse forces of thought, and was one of the first to sign a treaty of peace between the two forces eternally warring within us: the forces of reason and faith.*' (italics not author's)

The work which Vivekananda started in the field of dissemination of Indian spiritual thought in the West, under his programme of international commerce of ideas, has continued with icreasing vigour since his passing away. The spiritual, cultural, and humanitarian movement which he had started in 1897 in the name of his Master, the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission, upholding the twin ideals of renunciation and service, has grown and is flourishing in India and abroad as a meeting ground of the tested culture values of the East and the West. This is revealed even in the inspiring motto in Sanskrit given to it by Vivekananda: *Ātmano mokṣārtham jagat hitāya ca*—'For one's own spiritual liberation and for the welfare of the world'.

39. *Vivekananda: The Great Awakener*

What, in short, the world sees in India today is the capturing of a new youthful vitality and dynamism by one of the ancient living

nations of the world, constituting about a seventh of the human race. Therein we witness the energy of the vision of Vivekananda, expressed in his first public lecture on the Indian soil at Ramnad, near Rameswaram, on his return from the West, in 1897, getting translated into national achievement (*The Complete Works,* Vol. III, pp. 145-46):

'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, ... India, this motherland of ours, ... from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'

Opening his lecture on 'The Work before Us' delivered in Madras a few days later, Vivekananda referred to the divergent paths which two gifted peoples of the ancient world took—the one, the ancient Greek, who studied the outer world, and the other, the ancient Hindu, who studied the inner world. The first has influenced most of the subsequent developments of culture and thought in the West, and the other has done the same in the East. And drawing his countrymen's attention to the scope of the modern renaissance in India as the assimilation, by Indian culture, of the culture values of the West, with a view to correcting the imbalances in her own heritage, he said (*The Complete Works,* Vol. III, p.271):

'Today the ancient Greek is meeting the ancient Hindu on the soil of India. Thus slowly and silently, the leaven has come; the broadening, the life-giving, and the revivalist movement that we see all around us has been worked out by these forces together. A broader and more generous conception of life is before us; and although at first we have been deluded a little and wanted to narrow things down, we are finding out today that these generous impulses which are at work, these broader conceptions of life, are the logical interpretation of what is in our ancient books. They are the carrying out, to the rigorously logical effect, of the primary conceptions of our own ancestors. To become broad, to go out, to amalgamate, to universalize, is the end of our aims. And all the time, we have been making ourselves smaller and smaller, and dissociating ourselves, contrary to the plans laid down in our scriptures.'

40. *India's Spiritual Conquest of the World through Love*

In the same lecture, he declared his conviction that the undoubtedly rich Western culture stands in urgent need of the spiritual message of Indian culture (*ibid.*, pp. 276-77):

'There have been conquering races in the world. We also have been great conquerors. The story of our conquest has been described by that noble Emperor of India, Aśoka, as the conquest of religion and spirituality. ... The best work that you ever did for yourselves was when you worked for others, trying to disseminate your ideas in foreign languages, beyond the seas, and this very meeting is proof how the attempt to enlighten other countries with your thoughts is helping your own country. ... Ay, as has been declared on this soil first, love must conquer hatred, hatred cannot conquer itself. Materialism and all its miseries can never be conquered by materialism. Armies, when they attempt to conquer armies, only multiply and make brutes of humanity. Spirituality must conquer the West. Slowly they are finding out that what they want is spirituality to preserve them as nations. They are waiting for it; they are eager for it.'

Vivekananda exhorted the educated youth of India to imbibe the modern spirit, become dynamic agents of social change, and fearlessly cut out and remove all the dead wood in their national heritage. At the same time, he drew their attention to the imperishable element in their national heritage, namely, a scientific spiritual tradition, free and fearless, amplified and reauthenticated in this age by his own illustrious Master, and to the modern world's hunger for the same (*The Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p.43):

'The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, not in magic, mummeries, and charlatanism, but in the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion—of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitudes unto the present day. Now the time has come.'

41. *Vivekananda's Mankind-Awareness*

Vivekananda's love for India was the product of his love for man. To awaken men and women everywhere to their divine birthright was his life's mission. He saw man in the light of his own vision, and the vision of the Indian sages, as the Ātman, ever pure and ever free and infinite, assuring the infinite possibility of his or her growth, development, and realization. Speaking on 'The Mission of the Vedanta', at Kumbakonam in 1897, he summoned humanity to this spiritual adventure (*ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 193):

'Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. *None* is *really weak;* the soul is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you, do not deny Him! ... Teach yourself, 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.'

When pressed by his Indian disciples to return to India to serve

the cause of his own people, he replied to them from New York on 9 August 1895 in these clear words, embodying his glorious vision of human divinity and unity (*ibid.*, Vol. VIII, Third Edition, pp. 349-50):

'Doubtless I do love India. But every day my sight grows clearer. What is India, or England, or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called Man. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree?

'There is but one basis of well-being, social, political, or spiritual, to know that I and my brother are one. This is true for all countries and all people. And Westerners, let me say, will realize it more quickly than Orientals, who have almost exhausted themselves in formulating the idea and producing a few cases of individual realization.'

This vision of unity finds eloquent expression in a verse by the Indian philosopher Gauḍapāda of the seventh century A.D., in which he expounds the scope of the Advaitic vision of India's Vedānta (*Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*, IV.2):

Asparśa-yogo vai nāma sarva-sattva sukho hitaḥ;
Avivādo aviruddhaśca deśitastaṁ namāmyaham—

'I salute this well-known unifying philosophy, which teaches the solidarity of all existence, which strives for the happiness and welfare of all beings, and which is free from strife and contradiction.'

42. *Vivekananda's Vision of the Future World Order*

In a luminous passage in his lecture on 'My Master', delivered in New York in 1896, Vivekananda refers to the limitations of each of the cultural types, developed and conditioned by religion in the orient, and by the physical sciences and the positivistic outlook in the occident. *He points out their complementarity* and says that the modern age will witness the emergence of a culture, neither oriental, nor occidental, but human, through a healthy interaction and assimilation among cultures; and he presents Ramakrishna as the powerful initiator of such a process in India. Though a bit long, it bears reproduction in this context (*The Complete Works*, Vol. IV pp. 155-56):

'Each of these types has its grandeur, each has its glory. The present adjustment will be the harmonizing, the mingling, of these two ideals. To the Oriental, the world of spirit is as real as to the Occidental is the world of senses. In the spiritual, the Oriental finds everything he wants or hopes for; in it he finds all that makes life real to him. To the Occidental, he is a dreamer; to the Oriental, the Occidental is a dreamer playing with ephemeral toys, and he laughs to think that grown-up men and women should make so much of a handful of matter which they will have to leave sooner or later. Each calls the other a dreamer. But the Oriental ideal is as necessary for the progress of the human race as is the Occidental, and I think it is more necessary. Machines never made mankind happy and never will make. He who is trying to make us believe this will claim that happiness is in the machine; but it is always in the mind. That man alone who is the lord of his mind can become happy, and none else. And what, after all, is this power of machinery? Why should a man who can send a current of electricity through a wire be called a very great man and a very intelligent man? Does not nature do a million times more than that every moment? Why not then fall down and worship nature? What avails it if you have power over the whole of the world, if you have mastered every atom of the universe? That will not make you happy unless you have the power of happiness in yourself, until you have conquered yourself. Man is born to conquer nature, it is true; but the Occidental means by "nature" only physical or external nature. It is true that external nature is majestic, with its mountains, and oceans, and rivers, and with its infinite powers and varieties. Yet there is a more majestic internal nature of man, higher than the sun, moon, and stars, higher than this earth of ours, higher than the physical universe, transcending these little lives of ours; and it affords another field of study. There the Orientals excel, just as the Occidentals excel in the other. Therefore it is fitting that, whenever there is a spiritual adjustment, it should come from the orient. It is also fitting that when the oriental wants to learn about machine-making, he should sit at the feet of the Occidental and learn from him. When the occident wants to learn about the spirit, about God, about the soul, about the meaning and mystery of this universe, he must sit at the feet of the Oriental to learn.

'I am going to present before you the life of one man who has put in motion such a wave in India.'

Aldous Huxley calls the human products of the ancient civilizations 'wise fools', and of the modern civilization 'intelligent fools', and urges the need to produce *intelligent wise men and women.*

43. *Vivekananda: 'A Harmony of All Human Energy'*

The philosophy and vision represented by Vivekananda is meant to produce such fully integrated men and women. He himself was a remarkable synthesis of diverse values—ancient and modern. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru (*Discovery of India*, p. 400):

'Rooted in the past, and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.'

Rabindranath Tagore, himself a poet of international stature,

said about Vivekananda to Romain Rolland once: 'If you want to understand India, study Vivekananda; in him everything is positive, nothing negative'. In his essays written in Bengali in 1909, and published in the new 15-Volume Bengali edition of his complete works under the general title 'Samāj', Tagore greeted Vivekananda as the meeting-point of East and West (*Rabīndra Racanāvalī*, Vol. XIII, p. 55):

'The great soul whose death occurred a few years ago in Bengal, that Vivekananda also rose keeping the East to his right and the West to his left and himself standing in between. The purpose of his life was not to contract India for all time to narrow thought-moulds by excluding the West from Indian history. To accept, to mingle, to create,was, verily, his genius. He sacrificed his life to open up a communication line by which the achievements of India may be given to the West and the achievements of the West may be accepted in India.'

Let me refer to the glowing tribute of Romain Rolland in which he greets Vivekananda as the dynamic meeting point of East and West (*The Life of Vivekananda,* p. 310):

'In the two words equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four *yogas* in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth, and he travelled towards unity along them all simultaneously. He was the personification of the harmony of all human Energy.'

44. *Conclusion*

Athens, it has been said, was the school of all Hellas or Greece; and Greece, on her part, is the school of all that is essentially modern in the modern West. India, similarly, was the school of much that was distinctive of the East. And blending, naturally and gracefully, Greece and India within himself, Vivekananda today shines forth as the school of all mankind. He will educate modern man, both in East and West, so as to rescue him out of his provincialism in outlook and one-sidedness in character, and confer on him the realization of his total human excellence.

28

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: INDIA'S EMISSARY TO THE WEST *

1. *Introduction*

I AM happy to be back in Delhi once again after spending a month and a half in Europe. I returned from Athens just two days ago after spending a week in Switzerland, 4 weeks in France, one day in Belgium, 2 days in Holland, a week in Yugoslavia, and 4 days in Greece. Earlier, I had an extensive lecture tour of U.S.A., Canada, and 22 other countries of South America and Far-East and South-East Asia from July 25, 1968 to December 31, 1969. In France and Yugoslavia, I was the guest of the respective Governments and, earlier in Geneva, I was the guest of the Temple of Understanding, Washington, D.C., participating in its Second Spiritual Summit Conference in that city from March 31st to April 4th. I was happy to spend these few weeks in those countries, addressing the Universities of Bordeaux and Nancy in France, Belgrade and Novisad in Yugoslavia, and Athens in Greece, besides several public meetings and parlour groups. We have Ramakrishna Vedānta Centres in Gretz, near Paris, and also in Geneva, in both of which I spent several happy days in the company of our monastic brothers and inmates.

2. *Vivekananda: The Link between India and the West*

This evening, I am to speak to you on the subject of 'Swami Vivekananda: India's Emissary to the West'. I had several occasions to speak in Chicago and other places in the United States of America about Swami Vivekananda. He is the one person, who stands as a golden link between India and theWestern world, and who promises to be such a link between India and the rest of the world as well. It is an extraordinary link, forged in the consciousness of the spiritual unity and solidarity of humanity. It is good that we

* Speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, on 17 May 1970, and published in the *Souvenir* commemorating the dedication of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari in October 1970

try to understand the nature of this link and the way it was forged by a great personality in the context of modern world conditions.

For the first time in our history of the past thousand years, our country produced a great teacher in Swami Vivekananda who took India out of her isolation of centuries and brought her into the mainstream of international life. This is great work, whose beneficent results are slowly and steadily becoming evident as decades roll on. For centuries, we had put up a wall of custom around ourselves, never allowing ourselves or our ideas to go out and never allowing outside ideas to come in. It was Swami Vivekananda who pointed out to us that this was responsible for most of the ills of our body politic, arising from the long stagnation of our national life. Said he (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 142, Fourth Edition):

'India's doom was sealed the very day they invented the word *mlechha* and stopped from communion with others.'

3. *Alberuni on Medieval India's National Stagnation*

We did not allow new ideas to come in, we did not allow obsolete ideas to die out, with the result that we stagnated for centuries. The disastrous results of this policy began to be felt by the nation from about one thousand A.D. In the next century, we had a great visitor from Arabia, the critical and sympathetic scholar and historian, Alberuni, who had accompanied Mahmud of Ghazni on his Indian expeditions. Mahmud came to invade and to loot, but Alberuni came to study India. He knew Sanskrit and had great respect for India's culture. He has left us his impressions of India in his book *Alberuni's India*, where he has the following to say about the contemporary Indian mind and outlook (Dr. Edward C. Sachau's Translation, Vol. I, London, Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1910, pp. 22-23):

'The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. They are haughty, foolishly vain, self-conceited, and stolid. They are by nature niggardly in communicating that which they know, and they take the greatest possible care to withhold it from men of another caste among their own people, still much more, of course, from any foreigner. According to their belief, there is no other country on earth but theirs, and no created beings besides them have any knowledge of science whatsoever. Their haughtiness is such that, if you tell them of any science or scholar in Khurasan and Persis, they will think you to be both an ignoramus and liar. If they travelled and mixed with other nations, they would soon change their mind, for their ancestors were not as narrow-minded as the present generation is.'

How tragically true that observation was, was to be proved by the events of succeeding centuries, with the national mind becoming rigid, narrow, and exclusive, and incapable of grasping and gripping the nation's problems. But throughout the ancient period, India presented a different picture. She had an expansive mind and had influenced, and been influenced by, the rest of the world.

4. *Vivekananda on India's National Stagnation*

Now compare these remarks of Alberuni with the remarks of Swami Vivekananda made in a letter written from New York on 18 November, 1894, to the Chairman of the public meeting held in the Calcutta Town Hall to felicitate him on his successful mission in America (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, 1940 Edition, pp. 139-40):

'I am thoroughly convinced that no individual or nation can live by holding itself apart from the community of others, and whenever such an attempt has been made under false ideas of greatness, policy, or holiness — the result has always been disastrous to the secluding one.

'To my mind, the one great cause of the downfall and degeneration of India was the building of a wall of custom — whose foundation was hatred of others — round the nation, and *the real aim of which in ancient times was to prevent the Hindus from coming in contact with the surrounding Buddhistic nations.*

'Whatever cloak ancient or modern sophistry may try to throw over it, the inevitable result — the vindication of the moral law, that none can hate others without degenerating himself — is that the race that was foremost amongst the ancient races is now a by-word and a scorn among nations. We are object-lessons of the violation of that law which our ancestors were the first to discover and discriminate.

'Give and take is the law; and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death. Love is life and hatred is death. We commenced to die the day we began to hate other races and nothing can prevent our death unless we come back to expansion, which is life.

We must mix, therefore, with all the races of the earth. And every Hindu that goes out to travel in foreign parts renders more benefit to his country than hundreds of men who are bundles of superstitions and selfishness and whose one aim in life seems to be like that of the dog in the manger. The wonderful structures of national

life, which the Western nations have raised, are supported by the strong pillars of character; and until we can produce numbers of such, it is useless to fret and fume against this or that power.'

5. *The Lure of India for the Rest of the World In the Past*

When we study human history, we come across an arresting phenomenon in the fascination of the rest of the world for India. This is true whether it is the ancient Sumerians, the ancient Egyptians, the Greeco-Romans, the medieval Europeans, the modern Europeans, or the modern Americans and Russians. Whatever be the civilization or the epoch, we shall always find the contemporary world keenly interested in India, so much so, that to come in touch with the mind and face of India was a recurring policy with those civilizations.

Referring to the four large epochs of India's recurring cultural contacts with the contemporary civilizations, Swami Vivekananda says (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora,* p. 69):

'India's contribution to the sum total of human knowledge has been spirituality, philosophy. These she contributed even before the rising of the Persian Empire; the second time was during the Persian Empire; for the third time, during the ascendancy of the Greeks; and now for the fourth time, during the ascendency of the English, she is going to fulfil the same destiny once more.'

Greece had intimate contacts with India through the Persian Empire of the sixth century B. C. which had Indian soldiers in its army. Greek historians refer to the presence of Indians in Athens. The communications net-work opened up by that powerful empire from the seventh century before Christ had made possible the mutual contact of the two gifted peoples of the ancient world, namely, the ancient Greek and the ancient Indian, resulting in much give and take.

Referring to Indian influences on the ascetic practices in the West, the great Egyptologist, Sir Flinders Petrie says (*Egypt and Israel,* 1923, p. 134):

'The presence of a large body of Indian troops in the Persian army in Greece in 480 B. C. shows how far west the Indian connections were carried, and the discovery of modelled heads of Indians at Memphis, of about the fifth century B.C., shows that Indians were living there for trade. Hence there is no difficulty in regarding India as the source of the entirely new ideal of asceticism in the West.'

There is contemporary evidence of the presence in Athens of Indian thinkers as early as the fourth century B.C. Eusebius (A.D. 315) preserves a tradition which he attributes to Aristoxenus, who was a pupil of Aristotle and a well-known writer on harmonics and whose date is given as 330 B.C., that some learned Indians visited Athens and had discussions with Socrates (*Preparatio Evangelica,* XI. 3):

'Aristoxenus the musician tells the following story about the Indians. One of these men met Socrates at Athens and asked him what was the scope of his philosophy. "An inquiry into human phenomenon", replied Socrates. At this the Indian burst out laughing. "How can we inquire into human phenomena", he exclaimed, "when we are ignorant of the divine ones?" '

There is also mention of the visit of Indians to Athens in the fragment of Aristotle preserved in Diogenes Laertius. According to Pliny, Eudoxus, the astronomer friend of Plato, was deeply interested in Indian thought.

Strabo, the Roman historian, says, on the authority of Nicolaus of Damascus, that an Indian Embassy, including a thinker who burnt himself to death at Athens in 20 B.C., was sent to Caesar by the Indian King Poros. Plutarch also refers to the self-immolation and says that the 'Tomb of the Indian' is one of the sights shown to strangers in Athens.

Clement of Alexandria quotes the work of Polihistor who refers to an Indian Order, which included both men and women, who lived in celibacy, devoted themselves to truth, and worshipped pyramids (Buddhist *stupas*) which housed the bones of their God. According to the account of Philostratus, Appollonius of Tyana, the famous agnostic, journeyed to India and spent about four months at 'the monastery of the wise men'.

India was known to the rest of the world for two things, namely, wealth and wisdom. Wealth invited trade and wisdom invited participation in the mental life of India. Some people came to trade, some people came to learn of the wisdom of India, which latter had become, by the time Alexander appeared, proverbial. India's trade with the ancient world is well known. Many ports in the Western and Eastern coasts of India were dedicated to trading with Rome and the kingdoms of the Middle East and the Near East, to the West, besides

China and South-East Asia, to the East. Even today our archaeology digs up ancient Roman coins from various places in South India. That is an indication of the extensive trade that we had with the Roman Empire with which India traded with her items of luxury. The Roman ladies seem to have been fond of Indian luxuries and so a lot of goods were transported in Indian ships as well as in Roman ships to the Roman ports. India also imported many goods from these countries, such as metals, horses etc. According to Roman historians, this trade with India began to drain away so much of Rome's gold into India at one time that Rome put a ban on Indian trade. No nation trades with another nation in luxury goods unless it has a flourishing industrial base and a tolerable level of economic prosperity, according to contemporary standards. The people of India down the ages were intelligent and hard-working, austere and thrifty. Her artists, artisans, and craftsmen created works of beauty, and these were wanted by other nations. And this is a feature true of modern India as well.

The other picture of India reveals her as a land of wise men. Her Vedas and Upaniṣads and other literature reveal a land of philosophers and thinkers of the first magnitude, who wrestle with the problems of human life and destiny with a dedication, competence, and thoroughness rare in the history of philosophic thought.

The ancient West was lured by this wisdom of India. In the Middle Ages, it trickled to the West through the Arabs, whose empire then controlled the Middle East. The Arabs also conveyed to the West the previously acquired scientific knowledge of India. For centuries together, that empire became the clearing house for ideas between East and West. The Arabs took freely from Indian culture and Indian thought. Similarly, they took freely from Greek and Roman culture and thought and they built up a very magnificent civilization from the eighth century A.D., encompassing India in the east and Europe in the west.

6. *The Lure of India for the Rest of the World: In the Modern Age*

When that empire fell in the middle of the thirteenth century and the Turkish power rose in its place, the West was cut off from India, because the Turkish empire was not so enlightened as the

earlier Arab empire. Though thus cut off, Europe never ceased in its efforts to come in touch with India. Throughout Western history, especially Western European history, one can discern this constant desire to come in touch with India. When this desire was blocked by the Turkish power in the Middle East, the West Europeans tried to discover a sea route to India; and every student of history knows how England, France, Holland, Spain, and Portugal persistently bent their energies to finding a sea route to India and how one of them, namely, Portugal, sailing east, succeeded in finding such a route rounding South Africa, through the pioneering efforts of its Vasco da Gama, who landed at Calicut in Kerala in 1498. This event helped to take India again into the stream of international life. Similarly, the Spanish sailor, Columbus, sailing westward on the same mission, stumbled upon America in 1493, which he mistook to be India. And though the mistake was discovered later, the natives of America continue to be called Indians.

I had occasion to tell many American University audiences last year that their continent was discovered as a by-product of the search for India and that they may as well continue the search and discover for themselves the vast continent of India, geographical as well as cultural. *And this search is on in a big way on the part of the people of America since the end of the Second World War.* India is luring modern America today. This lure was there even in the nineteenth century, which finds evidence in even the titles of books such as *Passage to India* by Walt Whitman. America is experiencing in this twentieth century what Western European peoples experienced earlier.

Thus throughout the millennia of history, India's wisdom has attracted the nations of the world. India's natural resources and industrial wealth, similarly, make her an attraction for trade as well. And in the modern age, this trade has led also to her political domination and economic exploitation by the West.

7. *India's Missionary Enterprises in the Past*

But one thing we must remember when we discuss Swami Vivekananda's mission to the West in the modern age. India never sent her own accredited cultural or spiritual emissaries to the Western world throughout these five thousand years of history. India's own

activity in the field of active dissemination of ideas was confined to the eastern half of the world, including Western Asia. And this she has done even before the torrential experience of it in the wake of Buddha and his dynamic movement. Evidences are accumulating to show that Indian ideas travelled to various parts of the Asian continent even before Buddhism; but, historically speaking, the most important contact of India with those countries began in the wake of Buddha and his great movement, when India herself became active in dissemination of her spiritual and cultural treasures in these parts of the world. Buddhist emissaries scaled high mountains, sailed the oceans, braved hardships, and went over to Ceylon, South-East Asia, Middle East and Near East, China and, to a lesser extent, to Korea and Japan, carrying the message of Buddha — the message of peace, the message of love, the message of spirituality. This message had created a tremendous spiritual bond between India and the rest of Asia.

Thus India's own experience of missionary enterprise, of active dissemination of ideas, was confined to the continent of Asia throughout the historic period, and this includes the few official missions sent out by Aśoka in the third century before Christ to the sovereigns of the Middle East, namely, Antiochus Theos of Syria, Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus, according to the announcement in his *Rock Edict* XIII. These and the extensive contacts during the earlier Persian and Greek empires can claim some share in influencing the spiritual and cultural developments in the Middle East during the next few centuries.

Apart from these efforts, India did not actively participate in influencing the Western mind. She did not send out to the West any outstanding spiritual teacher or philosopher. The Western people came to India on their own and took whatever they could from India's wisdom. This does not rule out the influencing of the Western peoples by thousands of individual Indians in the course of commercial and social contacts since the Persian Empire, and their being influenced by the Greeks and others in their turn. Alexander came to the western region of India in the fourth century B.C., conquering all the countries on his way, but he had a secret desire to come in touch with the philosophic and spiritual thought of India.

Greek historians have preserved the episode of his meeting with an Indian sage in the Punjab. As narrated in the *Classical Accounts of India* by R.C. Majumdar (pp. 444-46), the Emperor went to meet him and, impressed by his talk with him, invited him to accompany him to Greece. The sage declined the invitation. The Emperor persuaded and pressed him. Still he did not accept. Then asserting his position as the Emperor, Alexander drew his sword and threatened to kill him if he did not obey his behest. At this, the sage burst into a laughter. When the Emperor asked the reason for his laughter and whether he was not afraid of his sword, the sage replied that this was the most foolish thing that he had ever said in his life; that he, the Emperor of the material world, could never kill him, since he was not the body but the spirit, eternal and ever free, which no fire could burn, no water could wet, and no weapons could pierce. And for once in his all-conquering career, the Emperor came across a person who did not fear him. The whole world feared him; the whole world bent down before him; but he saw this one man in India before him who stood calm, and fearless of all the material power represented by this Emperor.

That this episode had an impact on the Greek mind is evidenced by the fact that more than one Greek historian of Alexander's campaigns have taken pains to record it. It provided them with one out of the many windows to Indian wisdom and its quality of strength and fearlessness.

But unlike as in the case of Asia, as I mentioned earlier, India did not actively participate in influencing the Western mind. It is the Western mind that came and took whatever it could get from the Indian tradition. We are not quite sure, however, how, and how much, India influenced the West in this indirect way. We have some studies by modern scholars, both Western and Indian, on this subject. Dr. Jean Filliozat of the College de France, Paris, in his recent studies on the external cultural relations of ancient India, believes that the Upaniṣads had an influence on the thought of the Middle East in the first centuries of the Christian era. Professor E. J. Urwiek of England, in his remarkable book, *The Message of Plato*, traces the major ideas of Plato to the Upaniṣads. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan devotes several lectures of his book, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, to a masterly discussion of the spiritual

and cultural relations between India and Greece and India and Palestine.

8. *Limitations of all Recorded History*

These and other studies help to lift the veil that hides the great period of Indian cultural expansion when her ideas influenced the West. But the lack of adequate documented historical material does not disprove the fact of Indian influence on the West; for history records such influences only when accompanied by military aggressions and violent invasions. History mostly behaves like contemporary newspapers, which publish in streamer headlines the story of a family quarrel and breakup, but silently ignore the stories of millions of well-adjusted families and social groups. History has similarly no eye or ear for silent influences and peaceful spread of ideas. And India had never engaged in any foreign aggressive wars throughout her long history, even though she had several times thrown up mighty empires ruling over her immense territory.

9. *India's Impact on the World: Its Uniqueness*

Referring to this unique feature of India's impact on the rest of the world, Swami Vivekananda says (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora,* 1963 Impression, pp. 3-7):

'The debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense. Civilizations have arisen in other parts of the world. In ancient and modern times, wonderful ideas have been carried forward from one race to another. ... But mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. ... Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This, in the main, other nations have taught, but India for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist... Even earlier, when history has no record, and tradition dares not peer into the gloom of that intense past, even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, but *every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it and peace before it.* We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live. ...

'Political greatness or military power is never the mission of our race; it never was and, *mark my words, it never will be.* But there has been the other mission given to us, which is to conserve, to preserve, to accumulate as it were into a dynamo, all the spiritual energy of the race, and that concentrated energy is to pour forth in a deluge on the world whenever circumstances are propitious. Let the Persian or the Greek, the Roman, the Arab, or the Englishman march his battalions, conquer the world, and link the different nations together, and the philosophy and spirituality of India is ever ready to flow along the new-made channels into the veins of the nations of the world. The Hindu's calm brain must pour out its own quota to give to the sum total of human progress. *India's gift to the world is the light spiritual.'*

Pointing out that this silent influence is also going on in the modern age, Swami Vivekananda continues (*ibid.*, pp. 7-8):

'Those who keep their eyes open, those who understand the workings in the minds of different nations of the West, those who are thinkers and study the different nations, will find the immense change that has been produced in the tone, the procedure, in the methods, and in the literature of the world, by this slow, never-ceasing permeation of Indian thought.

'But there is another peculiarity, as I have already hinted to you. We never preached our thoughts with fire and sword. If there is one word in the English language to represent the gift of India to the world, if there is one word in the English language to express the effect which the literature of India produces upon mankind, it is this one word 'fascination'. Slow and silent, as the gentle dew that falls in the morning, unseen and unheard, yet producing a most tremendous result, has been the work of this calm, patient, all-suffering, spiritual race upon the world of thought.'

10. *Vivekananda and Modern India's World Mission*

After a few centuries of cultural and social immobilization, India resumed this silent activity within a few years of the establishment of the British Empire in her territory in the last century. The initiative was taken by the Western Orientalists, to begin with. Their translations of Indian literature into the Western languages initiated a new era in the long history of Indian influence on the West, which promises to outshine all such past eras, *and promises also to be an immense two-way traffic productive of great blessings, as much to India, as to the rest of the world.* And Swami Vivekananda's appearance on the stage of Indo-Western dialogue at the end of the last century marks the attainment of spiritual and cultural maturity on the part of modern India, even though she was still a subject nation and politically muted.

The emergence of the modern Western civilization has altered the international situation in a fundamental way. By absorbing the Greeco-Roman heritage and combining with it modern science and technology, the Western nations became, in the course of four centuries, the dynamic centres of vast energies which soon spilled

over the whole world in both creative and destructive ways. India, along with much of Asia and the whole of Africa, became the helpless victims of colonial exploitations and political subjugations of one Western nation or another. In spite of this, there was something in that Western culture which attracted the rest of the world and commanded its respect.

Out of the spiritual and intellectual ferment arising from the contact of India with the dynamic culture of the modern West, arose a renaissance of the spirit of India in the last century. Pioneered and led by the great Raja Ram Mohan Roy and other leaders in its early stages, it moved through the century with halting and uncertain steps, eventually to attain maturity and strength in the last quarter of the century in Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) and his great disciple, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902). In them,the modern Indian renaissance became an entirely positive force rooted in the spiritual core of the Indian tradition, and responding to the positive elements in the dynamic culture of the modern West, and capable of achieving a dynamic synthesis of East and West in modern India.

This renaissance made India expansive; its energy and dynamism could not be contained within the confines of India. It soon burst its national bounds and, for the first time in her long history, India herself took the initiative in, what may appropriately be called, a spiritual 'invasion' of the Western world, the dynamic centre of the modern age, through her own anointed son, Swami Vivekananda. He had a fourfold training which equipped him for the successful invasion of the powerful citadels of modern Western thought and culture. Firstly, his education in modern Western science, literature, and history; secondly, his assimilation of the positive elements in the Indian culture and tradition; thirdly, his discipleship at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, the very personification of the Indian spiritual tradition; and fourthly, his intimate grasp of the realities of contemporary India during his life as *Parivrājaka* or wandering monk for six long years. As a result of this fourfold training, Vivekananda had become, for the first time in Indian and Western history, an embodiment of the East and the West. In the words of Romain Rolland (*Life of Vivekananda,* Sixth Impression, p. 281):

'In the two words equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit; the four *Yogas* in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action, from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth, and he travelled towards unity along them all simultaneously. He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy.'

Says Jawaharlal Nehru about Swami Vivekananda, (*Discovery of India,* p. 401):

'Rooted in the past, and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.

Speaking to Romain Rolland, Rabindranath Tagore said:

'If you want to understand India, study Vivekananda; in him everything is positive, nothing negative.'

Confessing his admiration for Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda among the leaders of the modern Indian renaissance, Romain Rolland says, (*Life of Ramakrishna,* p. 8):

'From this magnificent procession of spiritual heroes whom we shall survey later, I have chosen two men, who have won my regard because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul. They are, if one may say so, its Mozart and its Beethoven—*Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.'

During his wanderings in western India, Vivekananda heard of a World Parliament of Religions being organized in Chicago in 1893 as part of a Columbian Exposition in celebration of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America by Columbus in 1493. Earlier, a great scholar at Junagadh, impressed by his vast learning and restless energy, had told him to go to the West where 'your thoughts would be better understood than in this country', and had exhorted him: 'Go and take it by storm and then return.' While at Bangalore about October 1892, he specifically declared to the Maharaja of Mysore his intention of going to the West 'for finding means to ameliorate the material condition of India', and to take to it, in exchange, the Gospel of the Vedānta. But he waited till he could complete his pilgrimage of India by visiting Rameswaram and Kanyakumari in the far south.

11. *Vivekananda's Meditation at Kanyakumari: Its Uniqueness*

Towards the end of 1892, after visiting Rameswaram, he reached Kanyakumari, India's 'Land's End' at the far south, where the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea merge in the Indian Ocean. After worship at Mother *Kumāri's* temple on the mainland, he swam over to a rock jutting out of the ocean, about 200 yards from the shore and, sitting on it, he plunged into a deep meditation for several hours. *And for the first time in the history of religion, the subject of meditation of a great monk was Man, the God sleeping in man, and not any far-away deity.* He had known of the glory of man as the Atman, the eternal and everfree Self of man, in India's spiritual tradition. He had seen in his own Master, Sri Ramakrishna, the very embodiment of that eternal glory of the human spirit. He had realized that glory in himself. But in his wanderings in India, he failed to see that glory manifested even faintly in the millions and millions of his fellow-countrymen. Crushed by poverty and social oppression, bereft of faith in oneself, and reduced to utter helplessness and despair, he saw man in India long alienated from the divine within, and the Indian society long divorced from the spiritual vision of her Vedāntic sages. And he decided to dedicate his energies to the reinstatement of man to his pedestal of glory; for this, he felt the need to combine the energies of modern Western science with the energies of the Indian spiritual tradition. He felt the need to rouse the Indian masses to an awareness of their own inherent strength, with a view to freeing them from grinding poverty and social oppression first, before inviting them to scale the spiritual heights of their eternal religion. Dealing with Vivekananda's meditations at Kanyakumari, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples, says (pp. 254-55):

> 'Ay, here at Kanyakumari was the culmination of days and days of thought on the problems of the Indian masses. Here was the culmination of hours of longing that the wrongs of the masses might be righted. His eyes looked through a mist of tears across the great waters. His heart went out to the Master and to the Mother in a great prayer. From this moment, his life was consecrated to the service of India, but particularly to the outcast Narayanas, to the starving Nārāyaṇas, to the millions of oppressed Narayaṇas of his land. ... And he saw that the *dharma,* and even the Vedas, without the people, were as so much straw in the eyes of the Most High. Verily, at Kanyakumari, the Swami was the patriot and prophet in one!'

Out of the meditations at Kanyakumari arose the conviction in

him of the nature and scope of that world mission which Sri Ramakrishna had entrusted to him before he passed away six years earlier. He would go to the West and preach to its highly individualistic and intellectually self-conscious peoples the message of Eternal India, the spiritual message of *Sanātana Dharma,* the rational and universal message of Vedānta, and win their support for the material redemption of his own people. He would preach to his own people the message of Practical Vedānta, the message of the application of the Vedāntic message of the Ātman, coupled with the message of Western science and technology and social ethics, to the practical problems of the Indian society, with a view to the eradication of ignorance and apathy, poverty and social injustice, by awakening and energizing them with faith in themselves, with faith in the Ātman sleeping within themselves.

The rock on which Swami Vivekananda meditated at Kanyakumari has since become known as the *Vivekananda rock,* and a grateful nation, irrespective of caste, creed, and political affiliations of the right or the left, has now erected an impressive national memorial to him as a loving tribute to him as the awakener and *yugacarya* or epoch-maker of modern India, and as the intrepid and farseeing poineer in the building of a bridge of understanding between East and West.

Like a second Buddha arising from his meditations at Buddhagaya and proceeding to Varanasi, Swami Vivekananda rose from his meditations at Kanyakumari and reached Madras, with the same resolve of *bahujana hitaya, bahujana sukhaya,* 'for the welfare of the common masses', 'for the happiness of the common masses'. At Madras, he attracted the attention of a group of brilliant students of its university, who energetically took steps to organize the ways and means of his going to America to represent Hinduism at the proposed World Parliament of Religions at Chicago. With the help of these students, who represented the emerging spirit of young India, and aided by a few of the enlightened native princes, and armed with blessings of Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda set sail for the United States of America from Bombay on 31 May 1893.

12. *Vivekananda Becomes the Conscience of India*

The expanding spirit of India could not have a more worthy or competent emissary to send abroad than Swami Vivekananda. In his awareness and sympathies, he had become, as he said of himself later, a *condensed India.* No nation in world history has ever sent abroad so unique and world-moving a representative as Swami Vivekananda. ***The Life of Swami Vivekananda*** by His Eastern and Western disciples contains the following passage from a well-known writer, presumably Sister Niveditā, recording how well the Swami had fitted himself for his glorious mission (p. 285):

'During his travels, by turns he realized the essence of Buddhism and Jainism, the spirit of Rāmānanda and Dayānanda. He had become a profound student of Tulasidās and Niścaladās. He had learnt all about the saints of Maharashtra and the Alwars and Nayanārs of Southern India. From the *Paramahamsa Parivrajakacharya* to the poor *Bhangi Mehtar* disciple of Lalguru, he had learnt not only their hopes and ideals, but their memories as well. To his clear vision, the Moghul supremacy was but an interregnum in the continuity of Indian national life. Akbar was Hindu in breadth of vision and boldness of synthesis. Was not the Tāj, to his mind, a *Sakuntala* in marble? The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Mīrābai and Tansen on his lips. The stories of Prithvi Rāj and Delhi jostled against those of Chitore and Pratap Singh, Śiva and Uma, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Sītā-Rāma and Buddha. Each mighty drama lived in a marvellous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was the burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name. He held in his hands all that was fundamental, organic, vital; he knew the secret springs of life. There was a fire in his breast, which entered into him with the comprehension of essential truths, the result of spiritual illumination. His great mind saw a connection where others saw only isolated facts; his mind pierced the soul of things and presented facts in their real order. His was the most universal mind, with a perfect practical culture. What better equipment could one have who was to represent, before the Parliament of Religions, India in its entirety—Vedic and Vedāntic, Buddhistic and Jain, Shaivic and Vaishnavic, and even Mohammedan? Who else could be better fitted for this task than this disciple of one who was in himself a Parliament of Religions in a true sense?'

Vivekananda as the first great Emissary, to the West, of an expansive modern India discloses a significant characteristic of the Indian tradition, and of the Indian political state as well. One of the favourite utterances of Vivekananda was: *All expansion is life, all contraction is death.* He saw the past few centuries of Indian history as a period of steady contraction; it was a grim struggle for national survival against overwhelming external political and cultural forces; it was steadily putting out the nation's creative fires. When the national life had thus reached its lowest ebb in the eighteenth century, there came the political and cultural domination of the dynamic West, through the British subjection. But this final act in the tragic drama of national contraction did not lead, as was expected by many Western people, and even by some Indians themselves, at the time, to the final death of the hoary Indian cultural tradition; on the contrary, the shock of the new conquest and subjection helped only to stir up and ignite the unsuspected energy reserves of the tradition, and turn its course, from contraction and death to expansion and life, in the next century. And India's long historical conditioning produced leaders of the stature and quality of a Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, both as products of this modern national life expansion and as its harnessers and harvesters, as its leaders and guides.

13. *National Expansion: Its Frightful Face*

Welcoming this spirit of expansion of modern India, of which he was himself the spearhead, Swami Vivekananda said on his return from the West in 1897 (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, pp. 170-71):

'The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead. I went to America and Europe, to which you so kindly allude; I had to, because that is the first sign of revival of national life, expansion. This reviving national life, expanding inside, threw me off, and thousands will be thrown off in that way. Mark my words, it has got to come if this nation lives at all. This question, therefore, is the greatest of the signs of the revival of national life; and, through this expansion, our quota of offering to the general mass of human knowledge, our contribution to the general upheaval of the world, is going out to the external world.'

National expansion is a phrase with frightful associations in the modern age. When the national life of a country expands, its energies spill over its own boundaries and adversely affect other countries far and near, politically, militarily, or commercially. While it undoubtedly ignites the creative fires within its own boundaries, it often spells disaster and despair, shock and shame, to other countries. This is the nature of all national expansions of a *political* kind. The expansion of Britain, for example, from the sixteenth century onwards found expression not only in creative thought and achievements in science, politics, industry, and social thought

within Britain, but also spilled over as colonialism and imperialism, conquest and war, affecting the lives of other people outside. This is true of all Greeco-Roman and modern Western nations in general, as it is true also of Japan and China in Asia. National expansions in all these cases have affected, and still affect, other nations politically and militarily, in varying degrees.

India is the only country in the world whose periodic expansions have not affected other nations militarily or politically. This is because her expansions have not been of the *political* type, but have been of a uniquely cultural or ideological type. In her long history of over five thousand years when, often, she had thrown up mighty empires with impressive military strength, she has never practised military aggression on countries outside her borders, has never tried to influence the course of the lives of other nations *politically*. The philosophic and spiritual conditioning of her culture and outlook has precluded the possibility of her throwing a military or political challenge to other nations, even if she has developed political and military strength within her own borders. And yet, she has often experienced national expansions which have influenced other nations in the *non-political* fields. These expansions are of the *cultural* type, entirely non-political and therefore non-violent, being guided by her philosophic and spiritual vision of unity and universality.

The long history of India has shown that peaceful cultural expansions can be more dynamic, and enduring, than aggressive political or military ones. The history of the world demonstrates, through India's long history, that the world in the end belongs to the unworldly, and that the meek shall inherit the earth.

It is no wonder, therefore, that in the light of this historical experience and conditioning, the expansion of modern India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has entirely been of the *cultural* and not of the *political* type. The great leaders of her modern renaissance, including the ones who worked in the political fields, were cultural leaders, *whose national vision ever strove to reach out to the international and human.* They never strove to take India on the road of political aggression and expansionism. Ram Mohan and Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Gandhi, Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru were leaders of universal vision and sympathies. They spoke the authentic voice of India in the fields of philosophy and religion,

or culture and international life; even the politics which some of them handled, namely, that of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, were powerfully influenced by the traditional national vision, and bore the stamp of universality and humanism. *Through them, India seeks to demonstrate to the world that to be strong need not mean to be fearful, to be peaceful need not mean to be weak, but that strength and peacefulness can co-exist as much in a nation as in a person.*

This explains the fact that, even when she was a victim of British subjection, even when she was politically immobilized by foreign overlordship, India could still develop her national energies of culture and spirituality in the nineteenth century, and burst upon the international scene with a dynamic force, unique in world history, through an outstanding personality such as Swami Vivekananda, initiating, thereby, a new era of dynamic expansion of the *cultural* type, entirely positive, peaceful, and friendly, characteristic of her national genius.

14. India's Impact on the world: Entirely non-political

It is also significant that, even after the attainment of political freedom in 1947, and the establishment of a sovereign democratic republican state, deriving its strength from a population constituting a sixth of the human race, in 1950, India exerts no influence of a *political* kind on the rest of the world, not even on her neighbour and sister state, namely, Pakistan, does not strive to thrust her own political ideology to influence, by force or even silently, the political life in other countries. *On the other hand, in the political field, she is at the receiving end.* She has been constantly under pressure of political ideologies emanating, first from Britain and France, then U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., and now, Communist China. And she is trying to handle these foreign influences in the light of her own vision and need. *If political influence had been India's field of action, she should have exerted her influence on the political fortunes of these and other nations. But she has not done any such thing.* The only political influence that modern India exerts on the contemporary world *is the singularly non-political force* emanating from Mahatma Gandhi's vision and technique of *satyāgraha*, the method of non-violent resistance to evil. The late Bertrand Russell used this technique in England in 1950 to try to force her to go in for

nuclear disarmament. An influential section of Negroes in U.S.A. adopted and still adopts this method for securing civil rights. The latest example of a successfully concluded *satyāgraha* campaign in U.S.A. is the struggle of the grape-pickers in southern California under its leader, Mr. Ceasar Chevez, who has a photo of Mahatma Gandhi hanging from the wall of his office.

India's expansion, therefore, is ideological and not physical; it is philosophical and spiritual and not political and military. This has been imprinted upon India by her own philosophical and cultural development and, more especially, by the powerful example of Emperor Aśoka who had, in the third century before Christ, proclaimed, through his edicts and glowing example, the Indian national policy of 'silencing the war drums' of hate and aggression in international relations and sounding the 'drums of *dharma*', proclaiming the soothing message of co-existence, friendship, and peace.

Swami Vivekananda was to warn his countrymen later on: (*Complete Works* Volume V, p. 352, Eighth Edition):

'India will be raised, not with the power of the flesh, but with the power of the Spirit; not with the flag of destruction, but with the flag of peace and love. '

15. *Vivekananda: India's Unique Emissary to the Modern West*

When we speak of Swami Vivekananda going forth as India's Emissary to the West, we have to keep in view the above significant factors, which had two important bearings on his Mission; first, he was not being sent abroad by a free political Indian State; for India was then lying under the heavy weight of British political subjection. Second, he was not being sent abroad by a central Indian religious authority or church; for, the Indian spiritual tradition, with its emphasis on freedom to experiment and experience, did not permit the development of an all-powerful church or an authoritarian central creed, finished and final. This latter phenomenon was to cause serious difficulties for Swami Vivekananda to gain admission, as a delegate, to the Chicago Parliament of Religions, and which he was to overcome by the compelling force of his personality. He was sent abroad by the *expanding spiritual consciousness of India* in its wholeness, through the instrumentality of a group of nationally sensitive Indian people. He had told his devoted disciple, Alasinga

Perumal, who was the head of the group of youths in Madras constituting a committee to raise subscriptions for the Swami's voyage to the West:

'If it is the Mother's will that I go, then let me receive the money from the people! Because it is for the people of India that I am going to the West — for the people and the poor!"

16. *Vivekananda's Early Trials and Hardships in America*

Swami Vivekananda left Bombay by steamer on 31st May 1893 and, passing through Colombo, Penang, Singapore, Hongkong, Canton, Nagasaki, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, Tokyo, and Yokohama, he landed at Vancouver and thence reached Chicago by train by the middle of July 1893. From then on upto his first speech at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago on 11 September 1893, he had to face many hardships and sharp moments of despair. Referring to the initial difficulties which this Emissary of India had to face, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples* says, (p. 292):

'Burdened with unaccustomed possessions, not knowing where to go, conspicuous because of his strange attire, annoyed by the lads who ran after him in amusement, weary and confused by the exorbitant charges of the porters, bewildered by the crowds, chiefly visitors to and from the World's Fair, he sought a hotel. When the porters had brought his luggage and he was at last alone and free from interruptions, he sat down amidst his trunks and satchels and tried to calm his mind.'

More difficulties and disappointments lay ahead. The rudest shock came when he learnt from the Parliament's Information Bureau that the sessions were to commence only in September, that none could be admitted as a delegate without proper credentials from some organization in India, and that even the time for such admission had gone by. Nothing illustrates the unorganizedness of Hinduism better than the manner of this going forth of Vivekananda. He wondered why he had been so foolish as to have listened to those 'sentimental school boys' of Madras, who were *ignorant of the necessary steps to be taken in order to get any one admitted as a delegate! In the words of Sister Nivedita*, (quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, p. 294):

'To their unbounded faith, it never occurred that they (the disciples) were demanding what was, humanly speaking, impossible. They thought that Vivekananda

had only to appear and he would be given his chance. The Swami himself was as simple in the ways of the world as these his disciples; and when he was once sure that he was divinely called to make the attempt, he could see no difficulties in the way. Nothing could have been more typical of the unorganizedness of Hinduism itself than this going forth of its representative unannounced, and without formal credentials, to enter the strongly-guarded doors of the world's wealth and power.'

Added to this desperate situation was the other worry of a lean purse. But in spite of all these trials and hardships, he was determined not to give up, but to make every attempt to succeed in America; if he failed there, he would try in England, and if he failed there too, he would go back to India and wait for further commands from on High.

17. Divine Help through Distinguished Americans

In order to save money, he decided to move to the less costly city of Boston. In the train to Boston, he struck friendship with a fellow passenger Miss Kate Sanborn who, deeply struck by his personality, invited him to be her guest. He consented and became her guest at her beautiful house called 'Breezy Meadows' in Metcalf, Massachusetts. By this arrangement, the host had the advantage of showing her friends a *curio from India,* and the guest had the advantage of saving his lean purse, though he had to experience hooting in the streets on account of his foreign dress and to answer queer and annoying questions from visitors. He was invited to address a large local women's club. The lecture was a success. Slowly some persons became interested in him and his work. Miss Sanborn introduced him to Dr. J. H. Wright, Professor of Greek at the Harvard University. Professor Wright was immediately struck by the genius of this young Hindu after a four-hour conversation and insisted that he should represent Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, adding that that was the only way he could be introduced to the nation at large. When the Swami told him that he carried no credentials as was required to be a delegate, Prof. Wright made a remark which has become famous: 'To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the sun to state its right to shine!' Prof. Wright did not just utter flattering words, but immediately wrote a letter introducing the Swami to the Chairman of the Parliament Committee on the selection of delegates, stating, 'Here is a man who is more learned than all our learned professors put together.' He

also kindly presented the Swami with a rail ticket to Chicago and also letters of introduction to the Committee which had charge of housing and providing for Oriental delegates.

The Swami rejoiced at this literal manifestation of Divine Grace; he felt that the mission for which he left India was going to be fulfilled. Alighting at the Chicago railway station he found, to his dismay, that he had lost the address of the Chairman of the Parliament Committee. He tried to seek guidance from passers-by, but could not make them understand, it being the German quarter of the city. At length, he lay down to sleep in a huge empty box in the railroad freightyard, and trusting to the guidance of the Divine, he soon freed himself of all anxieties and fell asleep. On the morrow he was to shake America with his brief address at the Parliament of Religions! But now, as the Lord had willed, he should lie like an unknown and despised outcast, or more truly speaking, like a wandering monk in his own land, sleeping where the evening found him.

Morning came; he moved out and soon found himself on the Lake Shore Drive of the city where millionaires and merchant princes dwelt. Being extremely hungry, he commenced begging from house to house, asking for food and to be directed to the quarters of the Parliament Committee. Because of soiled dress and travel-worn appearance, he was rudely treated at some houses and insulted by servants in others. At length, exhausted, he sat down quietly on the roadside, resigned to the will of God. Presently, the door of a fashionable residence opposite opened and a woman of regal bearing came out and approached him; she asked him tenderly in accents of high refinement, 'Sir, you seem to be in some trouble; are you a delegate to the Parliament of Religions? Can I be of any help to you?' The Swami told her his difficulties. She immediately took him to her house and, after bath and breakfast, conducted him to the offices of the Parliament and had him admitted as a delegate on the strength of the letter of introduction.

The woman who became the ministering angel to Swami Vivekananda at that critical hour was Mrs. Mary W. Hale; she and her husband and children, the Hale family, became his warmest friends, and their house became his permanent home in Chicago.

18. The Chicago World Parliament of Religions

The holding of the Parliament of Religions, as part of the Columbian Exposition, was one of the greatest events in the history of the world, an important milestone in the history of inter-religious relationships. It also marked a new era in the millennial history of Hinduism. Its full significance will be unveiled only with the lapse of time. Delegates representing diverse forms of organized religious belief came from different parts of the world. It helped to unify the religious vision of humanity, to broaden the outlook of religions, and to initiate an era of dialogue among them, which had largely functioned till then in isolation or at cross purposes. And it did something more; it made the West conscious of the rich spiritual heritage of the East, particularly of India. In the words of the Hon. Mervin-Marie Snell, President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament (quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* p. 300):

'One of its chief advantages has been in the great lesson which it has taught the Christian World, especially to the people of the United States, namely, that there are other religions more venerable than Christianity which surpass it in philosophical depth, in spiritual intensity, in independent vigour of thought, and in breadth and sincerity of human sympathy, while not yielding to it a single hair's breadth in ethical beauty and efficiency. Eight great non-Christian religious groups were represented in its deliberations — Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Mohammedanism, and Mazdaism.'

The Parliament was a great concourse of some of the most distinguished personages of the world; a great mass of humanity, varying from seven to ten thousand in number, attended its sessions; it included many of the great philosophers of the world. More than one thousand papers were read by the different delegates. There were several sections, including a scientific section.

19. Vivekananda at the Parliament

A noted American writer referring to the Parliament and Swami Vivekananda, says (Quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* p. 301):

'Prior to the convention of the Parliament of Religions, adjunct to the world's Columbian Exposition in 1893, which was convened in Chicago, little was known of Vivekananda in this country. On that auspicious occasion, however, he appeared in all his magnificent grandeur. It was on Monday, September 11. at 10 a.m., when the opening address was delivered at the Art Institute, Chicago, by Dr. Barrows, from whence the following few words: 'Since faith in a Divine Power, to whom men believe they owe service and worship, has been like the sun, a life-giving and fructifying potency in man's intellectual and moral development; since religion lies back of Hindu literature with its marvellous and mystic developments, ... it did not appear that religion, any more than education, art, or electricity, should be excluded from the Columbian Exposition.'

'On that memorable Monday morning, there sat upon the platform of the great Hall of Columbus representatives of the religious hopes and beliefs of twelve hundred millions of the human race. It was indeed impressive. In the centre sat Cardinal Gibbons, highest prelate of the Roman Catholic Church on the Western Continent. He was seated upon a Chair of State and opened the meeting with prayer. On the right and left of him were gathered the Oriental delegates, whose brilliant attire vied with his own scarlet robes in brilliancy. Conspicuous among the followers of Brahma, Buddha, and Mohammad was an eloquent monk from India, Vivekananda by name. He was clad in gorgeous red apparel and wore a large yellow turban, his remarkably fine features and bronze complexion standing out prominently in the great throng. Beside him sat Nagarkar of the Brahmo Samaj, representative of the Hindu Theists; next was Dharmapala, Ceylon's Buddhist representative; next came Mazoomdar, leader of the Theists in India. Amongst the world's choicest divines, these and many more, whose names would be more or less familiar, must be left out for want of space. This will suffice to show the setting with which our subject was surrounded. "In contact with the learned minds of India we have been inspired by a new reverence for the Orient." In numerical order, Vivekananda's position was number thirtyone.'

20. 'Sisters and Brothers of America!'

On the opening day, the Chairman had called Swami Vivekananda several times to speak, but he had said, 'No, not now', until the Chairman was puzzled and wondered if he would speak at all. At length in the late afternoon, when the Chairman insisted, the Swami rose and surveyed in a sweep the large assembly before him. The whole audience grew intent; there was pin-drop silence. Bowing to *Devi Saraswati,* the Goddess of knowledge, he addressed his audience as 'Sisters and Brothers of America'. Before he could utter another word, the whole Parliament was caught up in a great wave of enthusiasm, and hundreds rose to their feet with shouts of applause. There was cheering, cheering, cheering for full two minutes! The Swami was bewildered.

When silence was restored, the Swami continued his speech, replying to the words of welcome, by thanking the youngest of nations, namely, America, in the name of the most ancient Order of

monks in the world, namely, the Vedic Order of *Sannyāsins*. He introduced Hinduism as the 'Mother of Religions', which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. He illustrated this by referring to the welcome and protection accorded by the Hindus to the Jewish refugees in the first century A.D. and the Zoroastrian refugees in the Eighth century A.D. And he ended by quoting two illustrative passages from the Hindu Scriptures: 'As the different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take, through different tendencies, various though they may appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee!' 'Whosoever come to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me!'

It was a brief but intense speech. Its spirit of universality, earnestness, and breadth of outlook completely captivated the whole assembly. He cast off the formalism of the Parliament and spoke to the people in the language of the heart. The phrase of five words which he initially uttered: *Sisters and Brothers of America,* was a tongue of flame which set aflame the hearts of his listeners. Each orator had spoken of *his* God, of the God of *his sect.* He alone spoke *on behalf of all their Gods, and embraced them all in the Universal Being.* It was the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna breaking down the barriers between religions through the voice of his great disciple.

The Parliament gave him a tremendous ovation that afternoon, and the American nation, informed, by the streamer headlines of the newspapers, of his contribution at the Parliament, gave him its silent ovation the next morning.

During the ensuing session, he spoke on *Why We Disagree* on 15 September, when he denounced the insularity of religions and narrated the illustrative parable of the 'Frog in the well', read his celebrated paper on *Hinduism* on 19 September, followed by a talk on *Religion not the Crying Need of India* on the 20 September, when he exhorted the Christian nations not to waste their resources on saving the *souls* of the heathens but to concentrate on saving their *hungry bodies,* on *Orthodox Hinduism and the Vedānta Philosophy* and *The Modern religions of India* on 22 September, on *The Essence of the Hindu Religion* on 25 September, on *Buddhism: The Fulfilment of Hinduism* on 26 September, and gave his *Address at the Final Session* on 27 September. Besides these, he addressed the Scientific Section and also gave four other lectures.

21. *The Music and Magic of Vivekananda's Words*

His paper on *Hinduism* is the most outstanding definition of the complex Hindu religion in all its comprehensiveness. The central import of this address is described with great insight by Sister Nivedita in her 'Introduction' to Volume One of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda:* (pp. x-xiv):

> 'Of the Swami's address before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that, when he began to speak, it was of "the religious ideas of the Hindus"; but when he ended, Hinduism had been created. ...
>
> 'For it was no experience of his own that rose to the lips of Swami Vivekananda there. He did not even take advantage of the occasion to tell the story of his Master. Instead of either of these, it was the religious consciousness of India that spoke through him, the message of his whole people, as determined by their whole past. And as he spoke, in the youth and noonday of the West, a nation, sleeping in the shadows of the darkened half of the earth, on the far side of the Pacific, waited in spirit for the words that would be borne on the dawn that was travelling towards them, to reveal to them the secret of their own greatness and strength.
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> 'Others stood beside Swami Vivekananda, on the same platform as he, as apostles of particular creeds and churches. But it was his glory that he came to preach a religion to which each of these was, in his own words, "only a travelling, a coming up, of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances, to the same goal." He stood there, as he declared, to tell of one(Śrī Kṛṣṇa) who had said of them all, not that one or another was true, in this or that respect or for this or that reason, but that "All these are threaded upon Me as pearls upon a string. Wherever thou seest extraordinary holiness and extraordinary power raising and purifying humanity, know thou that I am there." To the Hindu, says Vivekananda, "Man is not travelling from error to truth, but climbing up from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher." This, and the teaching of *mukti*—the doctrine that "Man is to *become* divine by *realizing* the Divine", that religion is perfected in us only when it has led us to "Him who is the one life in a universe of death, Him who is the constant basis of an ever-changing world, that One who is the only soul, of which all souls are but delusive manifestations"—may be taken as the two great outstanding truths which, authenticated by the longest and most complex experience in human history, India proclaimed through him to the modern world of the West.

'For India herself, the snort address forms, as has been said, a brief Charter of Enfranchisement. Hinduism, in its wholeness, the speaker bases on the Vedas, but he spiritualizes our conception of the word, even while he utters it. To him all that is true is Veda. "By the Vedas" he says "no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times." Incidentally, he discloses his conception of the *Sanātana Dharma*. ... To his mind, there could be no sect, no school, no sincere religious experience of the Indian people—however like an aberration it might seem to the individual—that might rightly be excluded from the embrace of Hinduism. And of this Indian Mother-Church, according to him, the distinctive doctrine is that of the *Iṣṭa-Devatā*, the right of each soul to choose its own path and to seek God in its own way. ...

'Yet would not this inclusion of all, this freedom of each, be the glory of Hinduism that it is, were it not for her supreme call, of sweetest promise, "Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that dwell in higher spheres! For I have found that Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion. And knowing Him, ye also shall be saved from death!" Here is the word for the sake of which all the rest exists and has existed. Here is the crowning realization into which all others are resolvable.'

In conclusion, he presented his idea of a universal religion without temporal, spatial, or sectarian bounds, and declared:

'Offer such a religion, and all the nations will follow you. Aśoka's council was a council of the Buddhist faith. Akbar's, though more to the purpose, was only a parlour-meeting. It was reserved for America to proclaim to all quarters of the globe that the Lord is in every religion.

'May He, who is the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehovah of the Jews, the Father in Heaven of the Christians, give strength to you to carry out your noble idea. The star arose in the East, it travelled steadily towards the West, sometimes dimmed and sometimes effulgent, till it made a circuit of the world; and now it is again rising on the very horizon of the East, the borders of the Sanpo, a thousandfold more effulgent than it ever was before.

'Hail Columbia, motherland of liberty. It has been given to thee, who never dipped her hand in her neighbour's blood, who never found out that the shortest way of becoming rich was by robbing one's neighbours, it has been given to thee to march in the vanguard of civilization with the flag of harmony.'

And in his *Address at the Final Session,* the Swami rose to luminous heights and, highlighting the achievements of the Parliament, uttered these prophetic words of hope:

'If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that, upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: "Help and not Fight", "Assimilation and not destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension."

'His words are great music', says Romain Rolland about Vivekananda's utterances (*Life of Vivekananda,* p.146). *Vivekananda set to music the tune that was haunting the hearts of millions in the modern world—the tune of unity and harmony, of love and peace, the tune of the divine in the heart of man.*

22. *His Impact on the American Mind and Heart*

With his appearances in the Parliament, the unknown monk blossomed into a world-figure, the obscure wandering monk of India became the prophet of harmony and peace and of East-West unity. His name resounded on all sides. His life-size pictures were seen posted up in the streets of Chicago with the words 'The Monk Vivekananda' beneath them, with passers-by doing reverence with bowed head. The press extolled him as a Prophet and Seer. *The New York Herald* spoke of him in these words:

'He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions. After hearing him, we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation!'

The Boston Evening Transcript wrote of him:

'He is a great favourite at the Parliament from the grandeur of his sentiments and his appearance as well. If he merely crossed the platform, he is applauded; and this marked approval of thousands he accepts in a child-like spirit of gratification without a trace of conceit. ... At the Parliament of Religions, they used to keep Vivekananda until the end of the programme to make people stay till the end of the session. On a warm day, when a prosy speaker talked too long and people began going home by hundreds, the Chairman would get up and announce that Swami Vivekananda would give a short address just before the benediction. Then he would have the peaceable hundreds perfectly in tether. The four thousand fanning people in the Hall of Columbus would sit smiling and expectant, waiting for an hour or two of other men's

speeches, to listen to Vivekananda for fifteen minutes. The Chairman knew the old rule of keeping the best until the last.'

The Review of Reviews described his address as 'noble and sublime'. Among personal appreciations, the one by the Hon. Merwin-Marie Snell is specially noteworthy (quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* p. 312):

'No religious body made so profound an impression upon the Parliament and the American people at large as did Hinduism. ... And by far, the most important and typical representative of Hinduism was Swami Vivekananda who, in fact, was beyond question, the most popular and influential man in the Parliament. He frequently spoke, both on the floor of the Parliament itself and at the meeting of the Scientific Section, over which I had the honour to preside, and on all occasions he was received with greater enthusiasm than any other speaker, Christian or Pagan. The people thronged about him wherever he went and hung with eagerness on his every word. ... The most rigid of orthodox Christians say of him, "He is indeed a prince among men." '

Vivekananda had often to deal with religious bigotry or wilful misrepresentations of India. An incident that occurred in the Parliament, as told in the second volume of the *Historians' History of the World* (pp. 547-48) by *The Times,* is illustrative of the boldness and self-confidence of this great Emissary of India (quoted in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda,* p. 314):

'A striking illustration of what in another case would be termed insularity of outlook was brought to view by a noted Hindu when addressing a vast audience at the World's Congress of Religions in America, in the city of Chicago, in 1893. Pausing in the midst of his discourse, the speaker asked that every member of the audience who had read the sacred books of the Hindus, and who, therefore, had first-hand knowledge of their religion, would raise his hand. Only three or four hands were raised, though the audience represented, presumably, the leading theologians of many lands. Glancing benignly over the assembly, the Hindu raised himself to his full height, and in a voice, every accent of which must have smitten the audience as a rebuke, pronounced these simple words, "And yet you dare to judge us!" '

23. *Vivekananda's Unique Response to World Fame*

Though he was acclaimed by press and people, and though the mansions of some of the wealthiest of Chicago society were open to

him, his heart bled for the poor of his distant land. On the very day of his triumph, he was the guest of a wealthy Chicago citizen. In the princely room allotted to him, he could not sleep at night when he thought of the terrible contrast of the opulence of America and the poverty of his own people. His bed of down seemed to him a bed of thorns. His pillow was wet with his tears. He gazed in sorrow through the window into the darkness outside. Overcome with emotion, he fell to the ground crying out, 'O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty! To what a sad pass have we poor Indians come when millions of us die for want of a handful of rice, and here they spend millions of rupees upon their personal comfort! Who will raise the masses in India? Who will give them bread? Show me, O Mother, how I can help them.'

Surely was he the Emissary of India, of the *people* of India, whose weal and woe was uppermost in his mind even when lionized by the most affluent nation on earth!

24. *America's Spiritual Mood at the Time of Vivekananda's Visit*

He intended his work in America to have a twofold effect, namely, educating the American nation in the rational and universal spiritual message of India's Vedānta, and eliciting its sympathy and help, and its scientific know-how, for the material redemption of India.

America at the time of Vivekananda's visit was celebrating, through the Columbian Exposition, her great achievements in science and technology, industry and social progress. Side by side, America had been experiencing a spiritual hunger which industry and wealth could not extinguish. Religion has been one of the prominent urges of America from the time of its founding fathers, along with the spirit of liberty and human dignity. The American Constitution made the state secular, separating the church from the state. American religion, centred in the churches, was riddled with bigotry and intolerance, sectarianism and denominational exclusiveness. This was in contrast to the liberty and tolerance of its political state. Apart from the denominational religions, the state

had cultivated, from President Washington in 1776 onwards to President Nixon in our time, what American historians call 'a civil religion' of its own, but without any mystical elements. It was the religion that the American Presidents, and other high state dignitaries, invoked on state occasions, with a general commitment to God, but not any denominational God, not even the Christian God. The universality and tolerance of this civil religion, which embraced all Christian and non-Christian denominations within the vast United States of America, stood in sharp contrast to the exclusiveness and intolerance of its several denominational churches.

The progress of science and rationalism in the nineteenth century steadily undermined the foundations of all Christian denominations. Humanism, which rationalism offered as a substitute, could not, however, quench man's spiritual thirst. In the third decade of the nineteenth century, America threw up several religious movements which, while tending to uphold reason, sought to fulfil also man's hunger for spiritual *experience*. Christian Science, New Thought, and, a few decades later, Theosophy, were such movements, which drew to themselves the more vigorous 'dropouts' from the denominational churches. They were, however, largely pseudo-science and pseudo-Christianity. They had been influenced in varying degrees by Indian thought which had started percolating to the West through translations of the Hindu sacred books by the Orientalist scholars. *The American spirit was thus getting impregnated by the infiltration of Hindu thought.* This process became intensified when the three American stalwarts emerged on the scene, namely, Emerson, Thoreau, and Walt Whitman. From 1830 onwards, references to Hindu religious texts began to appear in Emerson's *Journal*. Thoreau's work, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, is an enthusiastic eulogy of the *Gītā* and some of the great poems and philosophies of India. He took for his motto *Ex Oriente Lux* — 'Light from the East'. Walt Whitman, who died only a year before Vivekananda's arrival in America, had expressed Vedāntic ideas and sentiments in his books, especially in the *Leaves of Grass*. His book, *Passage to India*, bears a highly symbolic title. His '*A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*' contains his admission of Hindu influence on him.

25. *Vivekananda at the Parliament: The Meeting Point of India and America*

These various spiritual influences, fermenting and working for half a century, added to the rational spirit engendered by the contemporary scientific revolution, predisposed the American spirit to Vedānta. When Vivekananda stood before the Parliament of Religions on its opening day, the moment was ripe with this potentiality. *There was discernible the expectation of a message and not mere oratory.* In the highly inspiring presentation by Sister Niveditā, in her penetrating 'Introduction' to Vivekananda's *Complete Works*, Vol. I:

> *'The vast audience that faced him represented exclusively the Occidental mind,* but included some development of all that in this was most distinctive. Every nation in Europe had poured in its human contribution upon America, and notably upon Chicago, where the Parliament was held. Much of the best as well as some of the worst of modern effort and struggle is at all times to be met with within the frontiers of that Western Civic Queen, whose feet are upon the shores of Lake Michigan, as she sits and broods, with the light of the north in her eyes. There is very little in the modern consciousness, very little inherited from the past of Europe, that does not hold some outpost in the city of Chicago. And while the teeming life and eager interests of that centre may seem to some of us, for the present, largely a chaos, yet they are undoubtedly making for the revealing of some noble and slow-wrought ideal of human unity, when the days of their ripening shall be fully accomplished.
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> 'Such was the psychological area, such the sea of mind, young, tumultuous, overflowing with its own energy and self-assurance, yet inquisitive and alert withal, which confronted Vivekananda when he rose to speak. Behind him lay a world that dated itself from the Vedas and remembered itself in the Upaniṣads, a world to which Buddhism was almost modern; a world that was filled with religious systems of faiths and creeds; a quiet land steeped in the sunlight of the tropics, the dust of whose roads had been trodden by the feet of the saints for ages upon ages. Behind him, in short, lay India, with her thousands of years of national development, in which she had sounded many things, proved many things, and realized almost all, save only her own perfect unanimity, from end to end of her great expanse of time and space, as to certain fundamental and essential truths, held by all her people in common.
>
> 'These, then, were the two mind-floods, two immense rivers of thought, as it were, Eastern and Modern, of which the yellow-clad wanderer on the platform of the Parliament of Religions formed for a moment the point of confluence. The formulation of the *Common Bases of Hinduism* was the inevitable result of the shock of their contact, in a personality so impersonal!'

26. *Whirlwind Tours through America*

After this tremendous stir in Chicago, Vivekananda spent three

years in America, undertaking whirlwind tours through its cities and towns, lecturing and teaching, correcting false ideas about India sedulously spread by bigoted Christian missionaries, and combating the bigotry and intolerance of the churches. He also received warm support and encouragement from hundreds of liberal Christians and from several agnostic and rationalistic people of America.

He soon began to concentrate also on training an intimate band of disciples, who would have a deeper insight into the broad spirituality of Vedānta, and on publishing a few books on important aspects of Vedānta. His young American disciple hailing from Detroit, Miss Christina Greenstidel, was later to go to India to help his mission there as Sister Christine. Important books like *Karma Yoga,* and *Rāja Yoga* came out in quick succession. He started the first Vedānta Society in America in New York in 1896, and spoke for the first and only time on his great teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, in New York, in his famous lecture entitled '*My Master* .

In the meantime, news of his tremendous success in America reached India and roused a wave of national pride and enthusiasm. His fellow disciples in Calcutta remembered Sri Ramakrishna's prophecy that Naren (Vivekananda) would shake the world. And he kept writing a barrage of epistles to his young friends, spiritual brothers, and distinguished personalities in India, exhorting them to be up and doing to raise the condition of the common people and the women of India, and bridge the gulf between Hindu philosophic vision and Hindu social practice. He guided his disciples and brothers in India to organize themselves for the service of the nation, to start journals, and publish books conveying the message of Practical Vedānta, the message of the new *yuga-dharma,* all of which were to become galvanized when he would be returning to India early 1897, to burst upon it like a spiritual avalanche, giving a stirring message of man-making and nation-building to his people, in a series of lectures which now comprise the well-known book *Lectures from Colombo to Almora.*

27. *Vivekananda in Europe*

He broke his stay in America by a first visit to England from

August to December 1895. He again visited England from April to July 1896, and again from October to December 1896, on his way back to India. He delivered several lectures in England, including the famous lectures on *Jñāna Yoga.* He also met distinguished Orientalists like Max Muller in England and Paul Deussen in Germany. England gave him four of his greatest disciples, namely, J J. Goodwin, his devoted stenographer in America, to whom the world owes the preservation of much of Vivekananda's speeches in the West and in India, Miss Margaret Noble, who later came to India to carry on his mission there as Sister Nivedita, and became his best interpreter to the world, especially in her famous book, *The Master As I Saw Him,* and Captain and Mrs. Sevier, who also later accompanied him to India and founded the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati in the district of Pithorogarh in the Himalayas. He met several distinguished thinkers in England and the continent, as also in the United States, where, among others, the philosopher and psychologist William James and physicist Nicolas Tesla showed very keen and sympathetic interest in him and in his thought.

28. *Consolidation of Vedānta Work in America*

Before returning to India at the end of 1896, the Swami had consolidated his American work by getting two of his brother-monks to continue the work in his absence, namely, Swamis Saradananda and Abhedananda. After completing the first stage of consolidation of his work in India from January 1897 to June 1899, the Swami left India in June 1899 on a second tour to America and Europe, when a second Vedānta Society was started in San Francisco and Swami Saradananda, who was recalled to India from America for the Indian work, was replaced by another brother-monk, Swami Turiyananda. In 1900, Swami Vivekananda addressed the Congress of Religions in Paris and travelled through several European countries, before he returned to India towards the end of 1900. And he passed away on 4 July 1902, at the young age of 39 years, 5 months, and 22 days.

29. *Vedānta and the Spiritual Crisis of the Modern West*

Swami Vivekananda was a great admirer of the Western spirit

and achievements. He admired its science, its technology, its industrial efficiency, and its humanism. And he also told his Indian followers that the Western connection of India through Britain had helped to break India's ossified and stagnant society and civilization, throwing open the possibility of building up a more dynamic and creative society and civilization in its place in the modern age (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* Second (New) Edition, p. 45). But he found the Western philosophy of man shallow and harmful, and unfitted to lead man to total fulfilment. Modern Western civilization is frankly materialistic and secular. It neither seeks, nor derives, any inspiration from Western religion, which had functioned as its antagonist from the sixteenth century. Its concept of man is merely as a biological organism seeking organic satisfactions and organic survival. Such a philosophy may be a dynamic progressive force *in the short run;* but it is fraught with evil *in the long run,* firstly, because it falls far short of the truth about man as ascertained by a scientific and penetrating study of man in depth such as was undertaken by the Vedānta in India; secondly, because it does not explain, or sustain, ethical or aesthetic phenomena or spiritual experience, which involve a view of man deeper than the ego centred in his organic individuality. Swami Vivekananda foresaw that these severe limitations in its philosophy of man were bound to turn its successes into ashes in its mouth at no distant time. He warned often, while he was in the West, that the West was sitting on a volcano, and pointed it out in the clearest tones on his return to India. Says he (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora,* p. 57):

'The whole of Western civilization will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation. It is hopeless and perfectly useless to attempt to govern mankind with the sword. You will find that the very centres from which such ideas as government by force sprang up are the very centres to degrade and degenerate and crumble to pieces. Europe, the centre of the manifestation of material energy, will crumble into dust within fifty years if she is not mindful to change her position, to shift her ground, and make spirituality the basis of her life. And what will save Europe is the religion of the Upaniṣads.'

The Upaniṣads speak of man as essentially divine; and Vivekananda defined religion as *the manifestation of this divinity already within man.* It was this vision of man that he presented with telling effect, first, during his addresses at the Parliament of Religions, when he had called humanity 'Children of Immortal Bliss', and, next, in his subsequent lectures and discourses, including those on the subject of *Rāja Yoga,* the exposition of which by him, with all its experimental approaches and attractions, is a masterly presentation of India's scientific approach to religion. In the flysheet to the edition of his *Rāja Yoga* is contained his testament, in a brief utterance, of a practical spirituality comprehensive of man's external and internal life, of his twin search for *abhyudaya,* or socio-political welfare in the external field and of his search for *niḥśreyasa* or spiritual emancipation, through moral and spiritual growth, in the inner field, leading to total human fulfilment:

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal (of life) is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external (through physical science, technology, and the socio-political processes), and internal (through the science of religion). Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and *Be Free.* This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

Since Swami Vivekananda uttered that warning in 1897, the West has experienced two world wars, the second more shattering than the first, with recurring political and economic crises in between. The end of the Second World War found Europe disillusioned and at the end of its tether, but America at the height of its power and glory, with disillusionment two decades away. But the twenty-five years of post-war history of America has only confirmed Vivekananda's diagnosis of modern Western man's ailments. Modern man's material affluence stands in sharp contrast to his inner poverty and insufficiency. His puny ego is a fugitive entity ever at the mercy of the pulls of his sensate nature and ever a prey to tensions, leading to increasing ailments, both psycho-somatic and psychic. Western thinkers are becoming more and more alive to this problem. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* is how the late Zurich psychologist Jung characterized him in his book of that title. Modern man is 'alienated' from his own true self, declare other psychologists. In the meantime, the crisis deepens with every passing year; and the younger generation is dazed and bewildered.

Western Society wobbles from crisis to crisis with its sex explosions, crime explosions, drug explosions, and other similar distortions of the human psyche. And these ailments of the West tend to

affect the whole world. After the First World War, and the trade depression that followed in the wake of the Wall Street collapse in America, it used to be said that if America sneezed, Europe caught cold. Today, however, if America sneezes, the whole world is likely to catch cold, and not merely Europe. The spiritual health of a powerful nation like America is necessary for the spiritual well-being of the whole world as much as of America.

While some of the Western thinkers are achieving a correct diagnosis of the modern ills on the lines seen by Swami Vivekananda, very few have the *insight* into the problem to be able to prescribe the correct remedy. In fact, it is generally the case that most of the remedies proposed, and even applied, are worse than the disease. That is because the diagnosis and the remedy are based on the same discredited philosophy of man as merely an organic entity seeking organic satisfactions. The deeper spiritual dimensions of man remain increasingly ill-nourished. As a result, mere pursuit of false values of material success and affluence have begun to repel thousands of the sensitive young minds, as also some thinkers, in Europe and America today. Vedānta and the spiritual core of all religions have always maintained that worldliness is a spiritual disease and that 'living in the world' is not the same as 'being worldly'. While living in the world, man has to strive to achieve awareness of his true spiritual nature. If this is not done, his life becomes a false life and his living in the world becomes his living in worldliness. The so-called 'normal' 'adjusted' life is truly the abnormal and false life. What Vivekananda conveyed as the Vedāntic conviction over seventy years ago is being echoed by some Western thinkers themselves today. Says the English Psychiatrist R. D. Laing in his *The Divided Self* (Preface to Pelican Edition, 1964):

'Thus I would wish to emphasize that our 'normal' 'adjusted' state is too often the abdication of ecstasy, the betrayal of our true potentialities, that many of us are only too successful in acquiring a false self to adjust to false realities.'

For want of the guidance of an authentic spiritual tradition, post-war Western youth are taking to easy and dangerous ways of achieving this ecstasy and transcendence through drugs and other harmful media. Many turn to India, not to grasp the Vedantic vision of the divine in the heart of man and to take authentic steps towards

its realization, but to search for means to achieve some psychic 'trips', remaining, however, tethered to their organic dimension. The minority of truth-seeking groups among them, however, become drawn to the spiritual beauty and rational strength of Vedānta. In a letter written in 1894 from America about the best gift that India has to give to the waiting world of such seekers, whose number has been steadily on the increase since his time, Swami Vivekananda says (*Complete Works,* Vol. V, p. 43):

'The whole world requires Light. It is expectant! India alone has that Light, not in magic, mummeries, and charlatanism, but in the teaching of the glories of the spirit of real religion—of the highest spiritual truth. That is why the Lord has preserved the race through all its vicissitude unto the present day. Now the time has come!'

In his illuminating lecture on 'The Mission of the Vedānta' delivered in India in 1897, Vivekananda predicted, on the basis of his mastery of *adhyātma-vidyā*, of the science of man in depth, the disillusionment in store for the West (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, Ninth Edition, pp. 181-82):

'There are times in the history of a man's life, nay, in the history of the lives of nations, when a sort of world-weariness becomes painfully predominant. It seems that such a tide of world-weariness has come upon the *Western* world. There, too, they have their thinkers, great men. And they are already finding out that this race after gold and power is vanity of vanities; many, nay, most of the cultured men and women there, are already weary of this competition, this struggle, this brutality of their commercial civilization, and they are looking forward towards something better. There is a class which still clings on to political and social changes as the only panacea for the evils in Europe, but among the great thinkers there, other ideals are growing. They have found out that no amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. It is a change of the soul itself for the better that alone will cure the evils of life. No amount of force, or government, or legislative cruelty will change the conditions of a race, but it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better. Thus these races of the West are eager for some new thought, for some new philosophy; the religion they have had, Christianity, although good and glorious in many respects, has been imperfectly understood, and is, as understood hitherto, found to be insufficient. The thoughtful men of the West find in our ancient philosophy, especially in the Vedānta, the new impulse of thought they are seeking, the very spiritual food and drink for which they are hungering and thirsting. And it is no wonder that this is so.'

30. East and West Need Each Other

The West is responding to the call of the East, especially of

India, in a big way today. Vivekananda's message has continued to be spread in the West by the growing Vedānta movement conducted by his Ramakrishna Order, which conducts its work in the West depending entirely on the people of the West for its finances, and never on India. It is also being spread by several Western personalities and groups, students and writers. Max Muller wrote his *Ramakrishna : His Life and Sayings* during Vivekananda's own lifetime. Western books on Hinduism and Indian culture are a legion. And within twenty-six years of Vivekananda's passing away, there appeared the most remarkable Western response to his and his Master's message in Romain Rolland's *Life of Ramakrishna* and *Life of Vivekananda.*

In his *Life of Vivekananda,* Romain Rolland summons the West to grasp the hand of friendship extended by India through Vivekananda and others (p. 295):

'And that is where we find the hand of our allies, the thinkers of India, stretched out to meet us: for they have known for centuries past how to entrench themselves in this *Feste Burg* (a stronghold sure) and how to defend it while we, their brethren of the Great Invasions, have spent our strength in conquering the rest of the world. Let us stop and recover our breath! Let us lick our wounds! Let us return to our eagle's nest in the Himalayas. ...

'Among the spiritual ruins strewn all over Europe, our "Mother India" will teach you to excavate the unshakable foundations of your Capitole. She possesses the calculations and the plans of the "Master Craftsman". Let us rebuild our house with our own materials.'

And Rolland concludes his *Life of Vivekananda* with an invitation to the West (which is what he means when he addresses the Europeans, since he was writing in French) to respond to the message of the East through Vivekananda, the great Emissary of Modern India, the message of the spiritual awakening of modern humanity, for which Vivekananda has sounded his clarion call: 'Arise! Awake! and stop not till the goal is reached' (p. 315):

'The work begun by the two Indian Masters will be carried on resolutely by other workmen of the spirit in other parts of the world. In whatever tunnel a man be digging, he is never out of sound of the sap being dug on the other side of the mountain. ...

'My European companions, I have made you listen through the wall, to the blows of the coming one, Asia. ... Go to meet her! She is working for us. We are working for her. Europe and Asia are the two halves of the Soul. ...'

31. Conclusion

Out of the nine years of his public ministry, from the Parliament of Religions in 1893 up to his death in 1902, he gave over four most intense years to the West. The intensity of his nine years of work in the West and in India, the output of spiritual, intellectual, literary, and organizational work, besides the travelling involved during the period, is unprecedented. *As a teacher of modern India and as her cultural and spiritual Emissary to the West, Vivekananda has illumined the horizon of national and international life, which has no parallel in world history. He was a man with a message and he* delivered it fearlessly and intensely. He had said of himself: *Buddha had a message to the East; and I have a message to the West.* The West will one day learn to feel proud of this Emissary of modern India and learn from him the philosophy of a comprehensive spirituality and of total life-fulfilment and the way to its own redemption from a soul-killing materialism. When that response comes from the West, the tunnel connecting East and West would be complete, and a new culture, neither Eastern nor Western, but just human, would be evolved, making for the spiritual growth of man everywhere and tending to develop a 'mankind-awareness' in all nations; and that will mark the fulfilment of the purposes of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the modern age.

29

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S MESSAGE TO OUR WOMEN *

1. Introduction

I AM very happy to have this opportunity to come to this Home Science College once again and meet you all in the course of my present visit to Coimbatore in connexion with the Vivekananda Centenary Celebrations in the city. You have invited me to address you. What topic shall I speak on? During this Vivekananda Centenary year, the theme that comes uppermost to my mind is the subject of Swami Vivekananda; and standing before an audience of girl students, I am inclined to dwell on his contribution to the growth and development of Indian womanhood. During this tour of the South, I had occasion to visit several women's colleges in the city of Madras last week and address thousands of women students. When they listened to the exposition of Swami Vivekananda's message, I saw joy beaming from their faces; this was proof that this message was a message of strength and hope and joy. What, then, did Swamiji do for our women? What priceless legacy did he leave for them? When a father dies, he often leaves some property for his children. Has Swami Vivekananda left anything for the youth of India which, if appropriated by them, will enrich and ennoble them?

A study of his life and work will convince anyone that he has left an immense legacy for our youth, whom he loved as his spiritual children. And what he has left is a more permanent and substantial wealth than what any father leaves to his loving children. And the women of India can claim a large share of his love and concern. He had full confidence in our women, and great respect for what they had done for the enrichment of our culture.

* Speech at the Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore, on 9 February 1964, on the occasion of its Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Celebrations

2. Low Status of Women in Medieval India

I shall try to tell you what he has left for you, and for millions of other girls in our country. Reading a book recently, with the title *Condition of Bengali Women around the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,* by Srimati Usha Chakravarty of Calcutta, I was struck by the immensity of the sufferings and privations of our women, both of the higher and of the lower social ranks. They did not get the light of education; they were steeped in superstition; they did not have faith in themselves; neither did they evoke respect from the men-folk, who treated them as far less than their equals. The picture was true not only of Bengal, but also of all parts of India. It was the surest index of the low state of Indian civilization and culture during the last and a few preceding centuries.

But soon light shone into this dismal atmosphere. Great men and movements arose to bring cheer to our women's hearts and lives. Men like Raja Rammohun Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar worked tirelessly to change the outlook of society towards women, and remove the chains from their minds and feet. Out of their efforts came greater freedom and opportunities for our women through education and social reform. Swami Vivekananda, who appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century, followed in the wake of these earlier benefactors and became a powerful champion of women's education and all-round development, and their freedom of self-expression in home and society. He restored to our women confidence in themselves, a mood of fearlessness, and a consciousness of inner strength.

3. Vivekananda's Stress on Four Values in Education

The greatest blessing to man or woman is the light of knowledge coming from education. Where there is darkness, there is fear, and fear is the mother of superstition and little-mindedness. The human mind, if enlightened, will experience no fear or superstition. Swamiji said to our women: Light the lamp of knowledge within yourself; gain the strength arising from knowledge; and become fearless, compassionate, and large-hearted; acquire practical efficiency. These were the four values proceeding from education that

Swamiji emphasized again and again: *knowledge, strength and fearlessness, compassion and large-heartedness,* and *practical efficiency.*

Swamiji felt that all the problems of the Indian woman would be solved, largely by herself, as soon as she received education on the right lines. For a woman, the heart is the essence of personality. Education, apart from imparting information and ideas, should help to expand her heart, to strengthen her capacity to love, cherish, and protect. Out of this will flow the virtues of fearlessness and practical efficiency.

Such an education cannot be secular; it has to be spiritual. Secular education, narrowly conceived, makes for selfishness and exploitation. It ends up in bread-winning and money-making. Education is meant for the spiritual development and enrichment of man. It is that which liberates the human spirit from the limitations of finitude: *sā vidyā yā vimuktaye.* This is possible only when education is conceived on spiritual lines and imbued with spiritual purposes. Bread-winning is not neglected in such an education; it forms a small part, though an essential one, of such an education, which is the education of the whole man.

Education so conceived cannot be confined to the period of formal schooling. It begins in early childhood and continues throughout life. 'As long as I live, so long do I learn', said Sri Ramakrishna.

4. *Fearlessness: Its Pre-eminence*

The first great virtue derived from education is fearlessness. Knowledge destroys fear. Physical science destroys fear proceeding from the external world; spiritual science destroys fear proceeding from within. Fear is the great enemy of the moral life. Truth and honesty, purity and love, cannot abide where there is fear. Moral virtues can flower and flourish only in a context of fearlessness. The mothers of the nation should especially be fearless and morally strong. A timid mother cannot inspire her children to greatness. Where there is no knowledge, there is fear. Our lives show the truth of this. The child of an illiterate mother falls ill; the mother does not

know what to do; she gets frightened and upset. But if she was one who had studied a little of the science of the body, she would have known what was wrong with the child, and calmly set about to find a remedy. Fearlessness comes from knowledge of the laws governing the world. For knowledge is power. Still greater is the fearlessness that comes from the knowledge of God, of the immortal divine Self that is the Self of all.

Our earlier generations during the last few centuries had lived in fear. The children of today are more fearless. I have marked this fearlessness in our little boys and girls all over India. In them we see manifest the spirit of Swami Vivekananda. The first in the list of spiritual virtues enumerated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (XVI. 1) is this virtue of *abhaya,* fearlessness:

Abhayaṁ sattva-saṁśuddhiḥ jñānayoga-vyavasthitiḥ;
Danaṁ damaśca yajñaśca svādhyāyastapa ārjavaṁ.

The highest form of fearlessness is reached when we realize God. The Upaniṣads even define God as 'The Fearless' *(abhayaṁ Brahma),* and add that one who realizes Brahman, the Self of all, becomes fearless. This fearlessness comes from infinite knowledge, from knowledge of our oneness with all; this infinite knowledge connotes also infinite love; and where there is love, there is no fear, says Swami Vivekananda; where there is no fear, there will be no superstition either.

To free men and women from superstition, fear, wickedness, and narrowness, and help them realize their inborn divine nature, Swami Vivekananda advocates an educational programme, in which science and religion shake hands. To put it in his own words ('Conversations and Dialogues', *Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p.366):

> 'What we want are Western science coupled with Vedānta, with *brahmacharya* as the guiding motto, and also *śraddhā* and faith in one's own self.'

5. *Education to Remove Three Kinds of Darkness*

Such a combination will result in all-round human development and welfare. There will ensue the full manifestation of the glory of

human nature, lighting up every aspect of human life, individual and collective.

Education is to dispel three kinds of darkness. The first is *physical darkness,* the darkness which obstructs man's physical movements. The next is *mental darkness,* proceeding from ignorance about the physical and the social world and their laws. And the third is *spiritual darkness,* proceeding from ignorance about the laws that govern the spiritual world, the inner world of man.

The first darkness is removed by health and wealth; the second is removed by secular education. And the third is overcome only through religion, which comprises spiritual knowledge accompanied by striving. This *striving* or *sādhanā* is the very essence of religion. Temples and churches, rituals and ceremonies, etc. constitute but the externals of this *sadhanā.* The inner core of this *sadhana* consists of discipline and control of mind, loving remembrance of God, and meditation. All such *sādhanā* is a movement of the finite to the Infinite. Strive towards the Infinite, say the Upaniṣads, for therein alone is bliss. There is no bliss in the finite. Attachment to the finite is worldliness; and this worldliness is what obstructs the growth of the soul. Education must remove this obstruction; for all education is a movement from darkness to light. This is the deepest prayer of the human heart, and, as voiced by our *Bṛhādāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (1.3.28): *Tamaso mā jyotirgamaya*— 'Lead me from darkness to light.' Through such education, the home becomes a centre of delight, where each heart opens to the other and all open to the world of man outside. This is the achievement of true universality. The mother is the symbol of this universality in the limited sphere of the family. She accepts every one in the family and rejects none.

But this quality has to transcend the limits of the family. It should also manifest in every member of the family, in every citizen of the country. Our hearts have to embrace not only the children of our own homes, but also the children of all homes. This is the true education of the citizen in whom is developed the urge to protect and to cherish, which is the characteristic of the mother-heart. India recognized the infinite reach of this mother-heart in her conception of God as the Divine Mother.

During the past few centuries we in India tended to be narrow and selfish; our social feeling became dried up. Our religious life became cramped by formalism and static piety. Professing to be formally religious, we became thoroughly worldly. This rank worldliness infects every aspect of our outlook and behaviour, making us unworthy as citizens of a free society. Our mothers' concern for children stop with their own children; and yet, they are not wanting in piety. Our men and women had little concern for the happiness of the other individual.

Our society became a fine example of static piety baptizing active worldliness. We invented cheap means to remove this worldliness; we dipped ourselves in holy rivers and performed rituals and other acts of piety. But *saṁsāra* or worldliness stuck to us all the same. Our pettiness and meanness inflicted much avoidable suffering on the weaker sections of our society, especially on the women and the masses. Our women, again, suffered more from each other than even from our men!

6. *Need for Dynamic Spirituality, not Static Piety*

Into this dark and dismal world of our social life penetrated shafts of light from the spiritual message of Swami Vivekananda, who taught us that the cure for worldliness is not a *static piety,* but a *dynamic spirituality* whose first step is the development of heart, of social feeling, the love and service of man in the light of the indwelling Divine. So expressed, religion becomes an education for character. He and his master, Sri Ramakrishna, taught us to live in the world as free beings, but not to allow worldliness to live in us. As Sri Ramakrishna aptly puts it: 'The boat will be on the water, but water should not be in the boat; that is dangerous for the journey.' And life is a journey to truth and excellence. Through discrimination and detachment, the mind develops the capacity to cut down the jungle of worldliness. Relieved of this burden, life progresses faster towards truth and excellence. In this process, education and religion flow into a single unified discipline of life-fulfilment.

7. *The Sri Ramakrishna Temple in this Campus: Its Significance*

Our philosophy teaches us that women are manifestations of the

Divine Mother. Men are taught to look upon women in this light. Women also are taught to be aware of this divine heritage of theirs and strive to manifest the divine in their life and behaviour. Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi or the Holy Mother came specially to help men and women to manifest their innate divinity. They saw God in the hearts of all men and women, irrespective of creed or sex. Your Home Science College is sanctified by a beautiful temple dedicated to them. This temple welcomes men and women of all religions, for it is the symbol of the vision of unity and harmony which was realized by Sri Ramakrishna. He taught that every religion is a pathway to God. It is for this universality of spirit that 'the whole world', as sung by the contemporary Muslim poet of Bengal, Kazi Nazrul Islam, 'has fallen at Sri Ramakrishna's feet'.

Yours is a good institution with noble ideals and objectives. It has the special aim of bringing godliness into your lives and into your homes. Love of God will flow into love and service of man, for God dwells in the heart of man. With love in your heart, all your work will bear the impress of a rich and elevated heart. Love converts little actions into big and meaningful accomplishments. Without love, even big actions become trivial and meaningless. As Sri Ramakrishna said: 'All the various pursuits of life are so many zeros. Zeros have no value in themselves, but when the figure '1' is put behind them, they become full of value. That one is God. First God, then the world.' Then everything in the world becomes significant — wealth, power, or pleasure. It is of this that Sri Ramakrishna, quoting a poet, sang: 'this world is a mansion of mirth—*e saṁsār majār kuṭi.*'

8. *Conclusion*

This is the true criterion of the success of all education, especially of home science education. It is up to you, students and teachers, to give yourselves such an education, by which joy will abide in your lives and in your homes. You have my best wishes.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND MODERN INDIA

1. *Introduction*

I AM very thankful to the Vivekananda Kendra for inviting me to participate in today's celebration in this city. Swami Vivekananda's birthday is being observed here, and in the whole of Kanyakumari district. This birthday has assumed a great national significance in this district with the inauguration of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in 1970, through the devoted activities of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee.

2. *Kanyakumari: Its New National and International Importance*

Today, this district is prominent not only on the map of India, as it is certainly on the map of Tamilnadu, but has come up on the map of the world as well, by uniting this far away corner of India with the great currents and cross currents of thoughts and aspirations of the whole world. That has been possible through the association of this Kanyakumari area with Swami Vivekananda. It is a great event in India's modern history. Here is Kanyakumari in the far south of India; 2,000 miles to the north, we have the great Himalayas, which have played a tremendous part in the history of Indian culture, religion, and philosophy.

And, today, we have this Memorial at Kanyakumari, due to which the whole district has become a source of national inspiration. When the people of this district, to whatever creed or community they may belong, will realize the national and international importance of this Vivekananda Rock Memorial and the activities conducted by the Kendra, it will bring about a tremendous awakening among them. This celebration is meant to focus attention on the significance of the activities that are being carried on here in the name of Swami Vivekananda, through the last fourteen or fifteen

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*Speech delivered at the 113th birth anniversary celebrations of Swami Vivekananda, held in Nagercoil (Tamilnad) on 11-1-76 in the S.L.. Govt. High School hall under the auspices of the Vivekananda Kendra. Kanyākumari

years. How many thousands of people are coming from all parts of India and the world to Kanyakumari district ever since the Rock Memorial was erected! People from all parts of the world are drawn here by their love for India, love for her culture and religion, love for Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. It is a procession of humanity, increasing year by year. We can visualize what a transformation will come over this district of Tamilnadu a hundred years later. It is for the people of this district at the present time to have that far-sight and foresight, to visualize the great importance that their district will enjoy, not just in Tamilnadu, not just in India, but in the whole world, and to rise to the occasion to strengthen these activities, which are designed to bring to us a new message of national and human fulfilment.

3. *Swami Vivekananda and Kanyakumari*

Swami Vivekananda's name is getting very very familiar with people in all parts of the world today. In India, we need Swamiji's message, Swamiji's spirit, to help us to face the various challenges that the modern period is throwing at us. Very few nations can get that privilege of having a national leader of the type of Swami Vivekananda, not only intellectually great, not only a man of tremendous character and will, but a man of supreme spirituality. He imbibed the entire spiritual history of India, the spirit of our culture, into himself, and then he went forth as India's ambassador, spiritual and cultural, to the Western world. It was the first time in some hundreds of years that our India herself spoke to the world the authentic language of our own culture and spirituality. Swami Vivekananda decided to do this great work in the modern world after he had sat in meditation on the Rock at Kanyakumari, and discovered his mission in life. This Rock has, therefore, acquired a special significance. The Swamiji himself has said in his letters: 'Sitting on the last bit of Indian Rock near Mother Kumari's temple, I hit upon a plan'. These are his words.

That plan was two-fold. To preach a man-making, nation-building philosophy and religion, with a view to helping our own people to banish poverty and backwardness, social injustice and oppression, from our own society; and to preach those tested,

universal, rational truths of Vedānta, of our own ancient *Sanātana Dharma*, to the rest of the world. These are the two great activities that demanded Swami Vivekananda's attention after he rose up from his meditation at Kanyakumari. And history knows that, during the rest of his life — it was only a brief ten years — what an intense life he led, what a great upheaval he brought about both in East and West, and what an impact he made on our own history and the history of the modern West. In ten intense years, Swami Vivekananda really transformed our thinking and our outlook here as well as elsewhere. Many of us may not yet know what impact he had on Western thinking, particularly in the world of religion.

4. *India Conveys to the West Her Message of Harmony and Peace through Swami Vivekananda*

In America, there is plenty of religion, the Christian religion, divided into many denominations, most of them hostile to each other, and all of them hostile to non-Christian religions. Into that America, Swami Vivekananda took the great message of our Indian sages from the Vedic times to Sri Ramakrishna, the message of harmony, the message of love and co-operation. In his Chicago Parliament of Religions address, in 1893, towards its end, he pronounced these prophetic words, words, which are getting realized today in actual inter-religious relationship in the Western world: "Upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance, "Help and not fight," "Assimilation and not Destruction", "Harmony and Peace and not Dissension". The religions of the world must help each other, co-operate with each other, not fight with each other, not hate each other. For centuries, the idea of religion in the West was vitiated by too much of hostility, among themselves and for others, too much of persecution, until, in the modern period, the Western people began to forsake religion itself. Into that dismal atmosphere, Swami Vivekananda brought this eternal message of India, beginning from the *Ṛg-Veda* upto our own time. What a beautiful expression has the *Bhagavad-Gītā* given to this idea of harmony in the world of religion! (4.11):

Ye yathā mām prapadyante
tāṁstathaiva bhajāmyahām

Mama vartmānuvartante
manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ —

'Through whatever paths men come unto Me, I receive them through those very paths. All paths eventually come unto Me only.'

Our own great book of *bhakti*, the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, also elaborates on this great theme (2-2-11):

Vadanti tat tattva-vidaḥ
tattvaṁ yat jñānamadvayam;
Brahmeti paramātmeti
Bhagavan iti śabdyate —

'One and the same non-dual Pure Consciousness is spoken of as *Brahman*, the Absolute, (by the philosophers), as *Paramatman* the Supreme Self, (by the mystics), and as the *Bhagavān*, the all-loving personal God (by the devotees).'

Truth is one. We approach that Truth in different ways. That is how India was taught the profound message of harmony, co-operation, and goodwill in the world of religion — a message that inspired not only the saints and sages of India, but also the common people, and also the political state. This land has been a land of active toleration. It is this spirit of Indian culture, Indian spirituality, that Sri Ramakrishna experimented with, re-authenticated, and gave forth as a great positive message for the modern world — the message of harmony.

This was the message, this was the vision, that Swami Vivekananda took to the West. And there are Western leaders today, among the leaders of the churches and among the lay people, who tell us that it was Swami Vivekananda who helped to make religion in America liberal. The political and social thought of America is liberal. But its religion was very very dogmatic, bigoted, and intolerant. Vivekananda's message made Americans realize that their religious ideas must be as broad and generous as their socio-political ideas. This work has resulted, in the modern period, in developing, what they call today a desire to communicate with other religions, a desire to have dialogue with every religion in the world. This is a new atmosphere in the Western world, in its world of religion.

India's great philosophy and thought have permeated the Western mind during the last hundred years, and today you notice the impact of India on the Western mind, particularly in the world of religion.

5. *Vivekananda's Message to India: Man-making and Nation-building*

Swamiji wanted that India should develop into a new nation, a new society, based upon this great vision of the Indian sages. His domestic policy, as he puts it, is to create a new Indian society inspired by the Vedāntic vision of the dignity of man, his freedom and individuality, his strength, and his capacity to love and serve other human beings — a thoroughly egalitarian society, free from casteism and untouchability, free from the notions of high and low, realizing the vision of the Ātman in every human being. He has also quoted this verse of the *Gītā* in his lectures several times (5-19):

Ihaiva tairjitaḥ sargo
Yeṣām sāmye sthitam manaḥ;
Nirdoṣaṁ hi samaṁ brahma
tasmāt brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ —

'He whose mind is established in equality, he who sees the same Ātman in every being, he has conquered relativity in this very life; for Brahman is free from all evil and is equal in all, therefore, such are said to be established in Brahman.'

With that vision, only love and service can come out of a human being, without any distinction of caste and creed and sex and colour. We can realize human unity through this great vision of man as the Ātman, the one infinite Self that is the Self of all, the one thread of Being running through all of us, as Kṛṣṇa puts it in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (7-7):

Mayi sarvamidaṁ protam
Sūtre maṇi-gaṇā iva —

'This entire world is threaded in Me like the thread uniting the pearls in a garland.'

That is the vision of the Indian sages, past and present. But our own society does not show the mark of that vision. Our society is so

cut up into tiny bits, hostile to each other, exclusive of each other, for centuries together.

6. *Swami Vivekananda as a Parivrājaka*

Swami Vivekananda's meditation at Kanyakumari, and his final decision to work for the spiritual awakening of man in India and the rest of the world, was preceded by his actual and intimate contact with the contemporary Indian society. After the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, at whose feet Swami Vivekananda learnt and realized the great truths of religion, philosophy, and spirituality for five years, Swamiji plunged into India, as a wanderer, as a *Parivrājaka,* living with our princes and our peasants, our intellectuals and our common people — Hindu, Muslim, Christian, untouchable, and others. He loved all the people of India. And he saw India fallen and broken, bereft of social sympathy and human concern. Our religion had become encrusted with superstition, and our people had become immersed in *tamas*, or inertia, as he called it. He saw the contrast between the rich and beautiful ancient culture of India, its high philosophy and spirituality, and its great representatives like Sri Ramakrishna, on the one side, and the low state of the people, sunk in ignorance, poverty, backwardness, social injustice, and oppression for centuries together, on the other.

It was this experience of his that brought out that tremendous humanistic and patriotic element in Swami Vivekananda — the infinite love for man. And it was that element that found expression during his meditation at Kanyakumari. Why should India remain a *creature* of history these few hundreds of years? For thousands of years, she had created history, she had created great thoughts and radiated great inspiration, to all parts of the world. But during the last few centuries, the Indian mind had become narrowed down, it had lost all creativity. It was on the verge of extinction. It was out of that impending death that India was saved by the great teachers of the nineteenth century, among whom Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda stand foremost. And so, with this vast thought-background, with this deep love for the people, with this deep comprehension of the meaning of Indian history, with this keen understanding of the challenge of the contemporary world, Swami

Vivekananda emerged from his long meditation at Kanyakumari with a tremendous desire to do good to one and all, to be the servant of man everywhere — India, America, Europe, or elsewhere. It was such a representative of India, such a real embodiment of the spirit of India, that the Western people saw in Swami Vivekananda.

7. *Indian National Awakening and Swami Vivekananda*

After his glorious work in the West for four years, he came and landed on our soil in 1897. That chapter of Indian history in the modern period will ever remain a history of great inspiration for our people. Landing at Ramnad from Jaffna in 1897, January 25th, where he was received with honours by the prince and the common people, Swamiji gave his first great stirring message of the awakening of this vast country. For, he saw India as asleep for some centuries. We were asleep, we had no energy. We then allowed all evils to come and subdue us — foreign invasions, subjections, and foreign and native oppressions. Swamiji stood on that platform at Ramnad on that memorable day, and announced that this country was going to be awake, and that that awakening was going to be tremendous. His words ring so true, so prophetic, even today (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora, Reply to the address at Ramnad: Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 145-46):

> 'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, ... India, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet.'

What a prophetic utterance! During the last seventy or eighty years, what else have we been witnessing except the realization of this prophetic vision? — a mighty giant of a nation rising to its feet.

After a few decades of political and social struggles, in the wake of that initial awakening, we became politically free in 1947. We gave ourselves a free Constitution, democratic and republican, in 1950. That freedom has come as a challenge to India, to the educated people of India, who are proud of their country, proud of their culture. They have to carry forward this great awakening, so that our entire people may soon become inspired by a new vision of

human dignity, human equality, human freedom. That is true national work. This message Swamiji delivered through inspiring letters and through hundreds of lectures in different parts of India, lectures which have come down to us in book form with that familiar title referred to above, *Lectures from Colombo to Almora.* That is an inspiring book. That book and the *Letters of Swami Vivekananda,*—these two have created most of the Indian awakening in the modern period. They have inspired batches and batches of patriots in India, great and small, to dedicate themselves to the service of this nation. Out of the activities proceeding from that inspiration, we have achieved political freedom. Out of further activities from the same inspiration, inspiring millions hereafter, we shall be able to rebuild India into a strong, progressive, modern nation.

8. *Vivekananda Literature*

Vivekananda literature is a unique type of literature. Even today, there are millions of people in India, young and old, who have not had the blessing of the galvanic touch of that literature. That is unfortunate for, the touch of that literature is truly galvanic. That is the correct English word—*the galvanic touch.* This is the way the French biographer of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Romain Rolland, expresses his reaction. In his *Life of Vivekananda,* he tells us about the impact of Vivekananda literature on his own mind,—a far-away Frenchman, who did not even know English. He had to get it translated from English into French. Even then, he experienced a tremendous galvanic touch. When our own children will get this touch, what energies will become released in our country! (p. 162):

> 'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses.'

Beethoven and Handel are great music composers of Germany. Millions of Europeans and other Western people are inspired by the music of Beethoven and Handel. Swamiji's speeches are like music, the music of human love, the music of human unity, the music of human service. It inspires one and all. Saying this, Romain Rolland continues:

> 'I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks and transports must have been produced when, in burning words, they issued from the lips of the Hero!'

That is Vivekananda literature. We have too much of complacency in India even today, too much of weakness and self-centredness. We want something to inspire us, something to make us live and work at our highest and best, something which can flow out with our energy, emotional and physical, into channels of service and dedication for the good of man. For, nation-building is not possible without the educated citizens of India becoming inspired by a national passion, by a patriotic dedication. We have mounting problems around us. Three hundred million people, out of our five hundred and fifty million, live below the poverty line. What a tremendous challenge it is to the intelligence and wisdom of the people of India! Our people have great need for spiritual strength and sustenance. To respond to this challenge and to solve the problems of India, they need this inspiration that is contained in the eight volumes of Vivekananda's *Complete Works.* It is a literature of strength, a literature of tremendous inspiration. Today, that is the one precious gift that we have to give unto ourselves, and to give unto our children when they are young and as they grow up in body and mind, so that they may develop into worthy citizens of this great country, endowed with broad minds and healthy attitudes and with intense practicality.

9. *Vivekananda's Message of the Innate Divinity of Man*

Vivekananda wanted our children to develop the scientific mind and attitude and the scientific efficiency of the modern period. We were thoroughly inefficient in the field of action. We were good only in talking. But the modern age demands, he said, that we develop practical efficiency, develop the capacity to convert energy into creative thoughts and actions. That is scientific efficiency. Clear thinking is the most important mental wealth to be acquired by our people. Our thinking is a tissue of confusion, our religion is so vast and varied and rich, that we are not trained to grasp its essentials. We need a scientifically trained mind to take out of our rich heritage the essence of religion, the essence of spirituality, and

develop character centred in a socially oriented will and practical efficiency, and thus create a progressive social order in this our great country.

That kind of education must come to all of us. Vivekananda literature is such a school of fundamental education. I have seen what a wholesome impact a study of that literature has on the human mind. At the time when our youths are in schools, in the fourth, fifth, and sixth forms, what a tremendous influence the study of such a literature will exert on their minds! For the rest of one's life, he or she will have something high and noble to live for, to live by, some inspiration to express in one's life. This inspiration must be given by the parents and teachers to every child in our country.

The Kanyakumari district can do nothing better than for the parents here taking steps to introduce their children into this rational universal inspiration. That is India's educational vision. There is nothing narrow in the core of Indian thought. Everything is universal; it upholds the vision of man as man, and not as cut up into white and black, or Hindu, Muslim, and Christian. The spark of the Divine is in every human being. Therefore, this message must come to every child in order to bring out the best out of him or her. It is our responsibility; it is our duty; it is our opportunity and privilege.

10. Vivekananda's Message of Tyāga and Seva

Vivekananda sought to combine two energy resources in our education: one is the energy of the Vedāntic vision of the spiritual nature of man and the possibility of its manifestation. The second is the energy of the scientific vision of clear thinking and practical efficiency — the capacity for penetrative thinking and the discovering of the truths hidden in nature. India must become a great nation of spiritual and scientific students and teachers. One is the ancient India and the other is the modern India. Combine these two energies and we will create a new India out of the process, unprecedented in our long history.

Here is Swami Vivekananda's central message; to implement it, we need a new approach, a new understanding. He exhorted us to

develop two great values in our character: one is *tyāga,* renunciation, the other is *seva,* service. *Tyāga* is renunciation — renunciation, not of this woman or that man, not of this item of food or other objects, but renunciation of the flimsy little ego that is within us which distorts everything, which makes man selfish and exploitative. Manifest the divine that is within you, express the larger Self by knocking away the tiny ego. Grow beyond the ego into the trueSelf That is renunciation, *tyāga,* the central teaching of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. When this *tyāga* comes, we shall express ourselves in natural and spontaneous *seva,* as a by-product of that *tyāga.* So Vivekananda said: (*The Complete Works,* Vol.V, p.228):

> 'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.'

Ours is a nation which has known only exploitation for several centuries — exploitation not only by foreigners, but also by our own people, exploitation of the weak by the strong — economic, social, political and intellectual. To that nation, Vivekananda gave this great message of *tyāga* and *seva*. Rise to higher levels of thinking and action; manifest your own higher nature and express your energy in forms of service and dedication for the good of all. In several letters written from America, he has pointed out this weakness of our people, this motive of exploitation and its evil consequences. In one letter, he writes:

> 'So long as the millions live in hunger and in ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.'

He wrote it about 1894; how true it is of the Indian scene even today! To educate a child today to be a doctor or an engineer, to be a M.Sc. or a B.Sc., the state has to spend between fifty thousand to a hundred thousand rupees. The student pays hardly three thousand or four thousand rupees as fees. How much the state does for us from out of the people's revenues? Yet we forget the nation, we forget the people, after getting such a costly education at the cost of the nation; we only run after our own profit and pleasure. This is called *treason* by Vivekananda. This sentence of his is an eye-opener to us today.

11. *Vivekananda's Vision of India as a Laboratory of Human Development*

During my visit to countries like Zambia in Africa two years ago, on a cultural tour organised by the Govt. of India, when I quoted this sentence of Swamiji in the television, radio, or newspaper interviews, and at the gatherings of students in the schools and colleges, there was instantaneous response. What a meaningful observation! And how relevant to all the developing countries today! The tendency of an educated individual in many of these developing countries is to become selfish; never care for others, but follow the path of fattening oneself. And Vivekananda calls this treason; they are all traitors to the nation concerned. This truth must be burnt into the minds of our people today. Then only will a new energy become available to our people, namely, character-resource. We are spending millions for the development of the nation. But for want of character, we are not able to bring corresponding benefits to the millions of our people. It is character that transforms one input into ten outputs, by way of benefits. That is real welfare activity. That is national growth and development. That can come only through men and women with a dedicated mind, with an integrated character. This is his message of man-making; this is also his contribution to our nation-building programme. If India has achieved anything great so far, if she has solved some national problems in this modern age, it is due to some of our people getting inspired by this vision. They worked hard, they worked with dedication, they worked with great efficiency. But it is not enough that a small minority of our people are so inspired; we want millions and millions of our people to be inspired by this vision.

Swamiji visualised India to be a tremendous laboratory for human development. And when I say human development, it means a sixth of the human race. For, every sixth man in the world is a citizen of India. There is the vastness of the country; there is the immensity of its population; and there is the impressive variety of religion and culture and human types. We have all these resources. What we need today is only one more resource, namely, character-resource. Where there is character, all these things become constructive and creative. If there is no character, all these become our

undoing as well. That is why, today, we need the message of Swami Vivekananda much more than at any other time. If during the next twenty-four years, before we come to 2000 A.D., we can reverse the current dismal trends towards selfishness, exploitation, corruption, and bribery, into a steady movement towards light, towards progress, towards mass human fulfilment, our country will achieve a great measure of economic strength, social and political stability, and international recognition. That must be the aspiration and endeavour of every one of our citizens today. They will get initiated into this, when they just take a dip in the *Ganga* of inspiration which is the strengthening and purifying Vivekananda literature.

12. *Vivekananda and the Indian Youth*

Vivekananda had great hopes in the young people of India. All his message, you find, is addressed to the young people of this country. He himself was young. His great master Sri Ramakrishna chose this young disciple of his to be the instrument of our modern renaissance. Narendra, the young disciple, who later became Vivekananda, was only 19 or 20 years old when he came to Sri Ramakrishna. So also were another dozen of his other disciples. They were all college and school students. Ramakrishna had great love for these fresh minds, into which, he felt, new ideas could be put, with the hope of a rich harvest of action. And what a tremendous amount of work they have done after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna, a work which is still carrying us onward, and will continue to carry us on for centuries together.

Vivekananda, like his master, addressed his message to the young people. Read his *Lectures from Colombo to Almora.* You find, 'Young men of Madras', 'Young men of Lahore', 'Young men of Calcutta', in many of these speeches. 'My hope lies in you', he iterates again and again. He hoped that our youths would assimilate the spirit of Indian culture, and, through that strength, assimilate also the best of modern Western culture. *We cannot assimilate another culture unless we are rooted in our own culture.* There are people today who have no Indian culture in them. They try to take in Western culture. But they succeed in taking in only the weaker side of Western culture, the trivial aspects, the cheap elements of

that great Western culture. This is a supreme lesson for us all to learn; the more Hindu, the more Indian, you are to the backbone; the more you become capable of assimilation, not just imitation, of other cultures and other religions. And what you so take in will be vital, will be dynamic. That is what is lacking in many young people in India today. Therefore, he exhorted us to stand firm in our faith and in our national heritage. We have such a glorious history; the world has gratefully taken from our spiritual resources in the past, and will continue to do so in the present and future as well.

13. *India: A Fascination to the Rest of the World*

Even today, India's cultural and spiritual influence is great in all parts of the world. They have more faith in our nation and its ideals than many of us here in India have. Vivekananda exhorted us to have faith in our own culture, for though we have blundered, though we have committed mistakes, though we have failed to work out all the humanistic and social visions of our philosophy, the basic foundations of our culture are entirely sound, entirely human, entirely universal. It is for this that, as I have seen, India is respected by thinking people abroad, for her age-old culture, age-old spirituality. In university after university in the United states and European countries, I saw people listening with the utmost respect and reverence to the eternal message of India, the message of the Upaniṣads, of the *Gītā*, of Buddha, of Sri Ramakrishna. People sit for hours together to listen to the exposition of this great message. That is how India is viewed in the rest of the world. Love for Sanskrit is so pervasive in the Western world that after every lecture, there is express request to recite a few verses in Sanskrit, and, as they are being recited, the whole audience listens with the utmost attention and reverence. That is the love for Eternal India, for *Amar Bhārat,* for its culture, for its spirituality, and for the wonderful language which has transmitted it. That is the India that the world sees from the outside.

There is the other India, our own economically and socially weak India, that we see from within the country. We quarrel; we despise ourselves; we do all sorts of things that weaken our nation. That contemporary India also is there, coming to the attention of

the outside world through newspapers, journals, and books. But that eternal India commands attention, commands respect, from thinking people all over the world. Can we change that contemporary India into the pattern of that eternal India? That, I feel, is the challenge that faces us today. All over the world, even in Communist countries, there is much respect for the ancient tradition and culture of our country; the philosophy of our Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* is respected everywhere; the teachings of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna are listened to with great respect in all parts of the world. We in India have to assimilate these so that we may capture the vision and the strength to create a really healthy, progressive, social order in our great country. Our problem is entirely physical. our problem is merely socio-political. Our national soul is strong, bright, and pure—it is immortal. But our body, our society, is weak. We are only to change our body-politic to fit in with the ever-healthy eternal soul of India. This cannot be said with regard to any other nation in the world.

In the Western countries, you find that they have a fine body-politic, a developed society, plenty of knowledge, wealth, and power, but they have lost their soul. They are in search of a soul; we are in search of a body. It is obvious that it is easier to find a body than to find a soul. Our work, therefore, is really easier. If only we are rooted in that eternal, pure, and dynamic soul of our nation, and work hard with the strength arising from that faith in our heritage, we can create, in two or three generations, a new healthy body-politic in our country, where men and women will breathe the air of freedom, dignity, and equality. That is the aim of that message of Practical Vedānta that Swami Vivekananda conveyed to us.

14. *India Awakens from a Victim of History to a Creator of History*

There is a sense of defeatism among our people today. It is unfortunate; it is tragic; because the msot exciting period of our national history is now unfolding before us. We were a *victim* of history for the past one thousand years; but now we have ceased to be a *creature* of history and have become the *creator* of history; and this new history of India will have an impact not only in every nook and corner of our country but upon the rest of the wide world as

well. This is the significance of modern India's throwing up a dynamic and creative personality in Swami Vivekananda even when the nation was deep in political subjection, and of his taking by storm, intellectually and spiritually, the powerful, modern, developed United States at Chicago, in 1893, and his own motherland on his return from U.S.A. in 1897. By his work in India and abroad, he has thrown a mighty challenge to our people and also a tremendous opportunity, to re-create the destiny of their ancient motherland. And, for this, he has also shown us that we have the necessary inspiration in the great philosophical and spiritual heritage of our own country and in the most remarkable Western heritage, namely, modern physical science. Combine these two, and we have a wonderful resource to build a strong, progressive, and prosperous India in our own time.

This challenge must inspire every young man and woman in India today. Then, that kind of weakness, that defeatism, that purposelessness, that want of direction, which currently find a lodgement in the hearts of our people, will vanish in no time. There are difficulties, insuperable difficulties, in our way; but, to the young, these become, not dampers, but stimulators, to enthusiasm. That is the spirit of youth. It is that spirit that Vivekananda has injected into our body-politic; and it is that spirit that our young people must imbibe by studying the strength-giving positive literature of Swami Vivekananda. Get a touch of that literature; get galvanized and shocked by that literature—shocked out of our complacencies, out of our weaknesses. That is the call of the spirit of the times in which we are living.

Not only do we need to rouse and raise our own people, but also extend the hand of spiritual help to other nations. Apart from Swami Vivekananda's own testimony in this matter, I am telling you what I have, personally, seen all over the Western world, that many thinking people in those countries desire and expect India to send them a saving message out of her own philosophical and spiritual heritage, ancient and modern. There is thus a double reason for our people to understand and assimilate our spiritual heritage—for our own good, and for the good of others. Every type of people, not in nooks and corners, but in universities—professors and students—come to you, saying: 'Tell us something about your philosophy. We

want to know it and benefit from it'. Very recently, I was invited by the Bonn and Heidelberg Universities in West Germany and by the Leeds and other Universities in England, last April-May. And I was deeply impressed with this spiritual quest everywhere. If India does not culture this knowledge and wisdom, how are her people, and the rest of the world, going to have it? Are we going to lose our hold on the spiritual treasures that we have had all these thousands of years?

15. Modern India to respond to a Double Challenge

That is why we are facing a double challenge — a challenge to remake India in her real image and a challenge to send out something of the inspiration of that India to the rest of the world, in all humility, in the attitude of doing some good to them in return for the good that they are doing to us by giving us the blessings of the strength of modern physical science, which we stand so much in need of to build up our own nation in such fields as agriculture, industry, sanitation, and health. These things cannot be done by the spirituality of religion. They can be done only by the spirituality of physical science. We never recognized any wide difference between physical science and religion. *Vidyā*, or science, is one; it is classified into *aparā vidyā* and *parā vidyā* in our Upaniṣads. *Aparā vidyā* consists of physical sciences, economics, politics, and sociology, and all that second-hand religious knowledge contained in all the scriptures of the world. *Parā Vidyā* constitutes the experience of soul and God, the eternal and immortal; all the ethics and aesthetics also constitue the early steps of this very experience. This unity of all *vidyās* or sciences is proclaimed in the Indian concept of *Sarasvati*, the one Goddess presiding over all knowledge.

So we are taking from the West, modern science, modern technology, modern socio-political processes to remake our country. We thank them for what they have given to us. We return to them something which they need and which we have in our country. Give and take shall be the law among nations, said Swami Vivekananda, and added, 'If you only take all the time, you become a beggar. India has been a beggar before the world these few decades. Today, we need to become a giver also; then only will respect come. When

Vivekananda went to America and presented to the people there the message of Vedānta for four years, what respect India gained by that one act of his. Today, there is real spiritual hunger in the rest of the world, and there is that treasure with us which we can share — something rational, something pure, something eternal — our Vedānta. Sri Ramakrishna represented this Vedānta in fullness, in all its universality, rationality, practicality, and humanistic intensity. Such is the great opportunity that is opening up before our people today.

Within the next twentyfour or twentyfive years, 1976 to 2000 A.D., if we can reverse the current trend towards darkness and despair, and take the nation one step ahead, year by year, towards light and hope, what a great achievement it will be! That strength is lying in wait for our people in the personality, in the teachings, of Vivekananda. The people of Kanyakumari have this available to them so close by. People come here from even 2000 miles away in the remote corners of our vast country, spending so much money, to have a look at his great memorial in Kanyakumari, and to get inspiration from it and from the Mother's ancient temple here. Till now, we used to go mainly to the Himalayas for such inspiration. Now, after Vivekananda's sitting on the rock at Kanyakumari, this area has also become a great centre of inspiration for our people and for the people of the rest of the world. Let the people in this district realize the significance of this new development, rise to the occasion, and make their district healthy in every sense of the term— economic, social, sanitary, educational, cultural, and spiritual. Such all-round development must come to our people in all parts of India. It will not come from outside, it will not come as a gift from America, China, or Russia. It will come from ourselves, from our self-reliance, by our having faith in ourselves—*ātma-śraddhā* and *ātma-nirbharatā*. Vivekananda therefore said: 'We have wept long enough; no more weeping now,but stand on your feet and be men.' That is the messge of Vedānta, the message of the Upaniṣads, of the *Gītā*, of Swami Vivekananda. He gave us a man-making, nation-building, faith and resolve. It is that faith that must enter into the hearts of the children of the whole of India, and particularly, of this southern-most district of Kanyakumari.

16. Conclusion

I am extremely happy to participate in your celebration of Swami Vivekananda's birthday this evening, during my annual week of teaching at the Kanyakumari Vivekananda Kendra. I am also happy to be called upon to release a biography of Swami Vivekananda by Prof. Sailendra Nath Dhar of Calcutta. He wrote to me one or two years ago that he was working on a biography of Swami Vivekananda, dealing with him as a human-being,without going into high mystical things. I suggested to him to get it published by the Vivekananda Kendra of Kanyakumari. I am glad that Part One of that book is being released today. It is a big volume. The Kendra hopes to bring out its Part Two a few months later. This book presents another approach to Swami Vivekananda. He is so universal that you can present him through several approaches, and yet he will be inexhaustible. True Greatness is always like this. The more you study, the more new dimensions of greatness come into view. I am very happy, therefore, to release this book this evening before this distinguished gathering in this historic town, in this head-quarters of the now international Kanyakumari district of our state of Tamilnadu.

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VIVEKANANDA AND THE SERVICE OF THE COMMON MAN*

1. *Introduction*

I AM thankful to Sri Eknath Ranade for inviting me to participate in this important function of the Vivekananda Kendra of Kanyakumari. This is my last engagement during my present *navarātri* visit to Madras. And no other more auspicious engagement than this would have been as attractive to me for concluding my spiritual and cultural work in the city. Throughout these nine days, I was addressing various audiences, and discussing with various groups of the citizens of Madras, on diverse topics, of which the main themes were a God-ward passion and a man-ward love, which were the themes of Swami Vivekananda.

2. *The 'Vivekananda Kendra Patrika'*

We are here this evening for a real involvement in one of the many momentous problems of our nation, namely, the problems of our people living in the tribal areas and how we can serve them, — an involvement which should suck in not only you who are present here but also the thousands who are not present here. And I am here in this connection to release the *Hill India* number of the *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika.* I have gone through this issue of the *Patrika* and I am happy to find that it concentrates our attention on this important problem of modern India involving about 40 millions of our fellow-citizens living scattered in the hills and forests of our vast country. Can we make them march in step with the rest of our population? Our nation can come to itself only when these, our tribal fellow-citizens, and the millions of our other backward communities also, are given the economic, social, and cultural blessings of our freedom.

*Speech on the occasion of the release, at Madras, of the *Hill India* number of the *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika* of the Kanyakumari Rock Memorial Vivekananda Kendra, on Sunday 20 August 1972, and brought out, later, as a booklet by the Kendra under the title: *The Need of the Hour: A Non-Sannyasi Order of Dedicated Workers*

And this issue of the *Patrika* gives us, within about three hundred pages, a vast amount of information about these fellow-citizens of ours. They are intensely human, sometimes more human than what we are in our towns and cities. But they have been neglected, they have been exploited, and they have suffered much. When our country entered into its bright era of political independence in 1947, when, on that midnight, the bell tolled proclaiming the independence of our great country after centuries of political subjection, a silent thrill of joy and hope passed through these oppressed and neglected peoples of our country. The days of their suffering are ended; the dawn of a better and happier life has come. And our new independent Indian State proclaims, in its Constitution, its supreme concern for the welfare and happiness of the millions and millions of the hill tribes, forest dwellers, and other backward sections of our population.

3. *The Humanistic Vision in The Indian Constitution*

If there is any single idea that can inspire a humanist and a lover of God in India today, it is this great vision embodied in our Constitution and getting steadily realized in our State policies and programmes, namely, the redemption of the millions of these people who have been exploited throughout the centuries because of their weakness, because of their backwardness. The free State we have founded in India today has no meaning except as the instrument for the welfare of the common people of India. Our Constitution is a noble document enshrining a high vision of human excellence and the will of our people to establish that excellence of human dignity, freedom, and equality in our country. Our State is the instrument of its implementation. And we can be proud of the fact that our State has done commendable work in this field during the last 25 years. But the citizens of India, especially those citizens who have the blessings of education, culture, and economic resources, have also a vital responsibility in this field.

4. *'Let New India Arise!'*

Swami Vivekananda's name is associated with this journal and with the Kendra or Centre of which it is a mouthpiece. I have also

taken him as the theme of my address. What a great name to associate with for our people today! One who summoned the new India into existence and proclaimed that that India is the proud home not only of the advanced sections of our society, but also of its neglected backward sections! His clarion call, sent out nearly 76 years ago when our country was deep in subjection, was on behalf of man, irrespective of caste, creed, sex, or socio-economic development, on behalf of the God sleeping in all men. There was so little hope of political freedom at that time; but even then, this great prophet and patriot hailed the birth of new India — free, egalitarian, and progressive — in these words ('Memoirs of European Travel', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. VII, 6th Edition, p. 327):

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

This is the new India that we have embodied in our Democratic Republican Constitution. But that vision of the Constitution needs to be implemented and not merely kept in the pages of the Constitution. The citizens of India have this unique privilege and responsibility; they have to make their own contribution in this field, to supplement the energetic efforts which our free State is making for bringing the blessings of our national freedom to the millions of these people. In one of his inspiring letters from U.S.A. written in 1894, Swamiji told us (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* 1948 Edition, p. 111):

'This life is short, the vanities of the world are transient, but they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.'

5. *God-ward Passion and Man-ward Love*

The whole of India today must respond to that great sentiment. We want men and women who will live and work to bring happiness and cheer and hope to the poor and the oppressed. Cannot our country produce millions of such young men and women — intelligent, educated, dynamic, and with this noblest of motivations for human action? Swamiji had great faith that our people would rise to

the occasion. There is a fund of idealism in our youths; there is a rich reservoir of emotion in our people. Our great *bhakti* tradition has made for the richest emotional constitution in our people among the peoples of the world. But, till now, we expressed this rich emotion mostly in narrow moulds of an other-worldly piety, in weeping and wailing before gods and deities for selfish worldly benefits or for personal salvation. Just like our Bhagīrathā of old who brought the river *Gaṅgā* from the heaven to the earth as a source of holiness and material prosperity to our people, Swami Vivekananda today has cut a channel out of our rich reservoir of *bhakti mysticism,* into which had always flowed, inwardly, our nation's *God-ward passion,* and created *a powerful stream of a man-ward love and concern and service,* for fertilising human life in India in a fundamental way. He made Vedānta practical; he taught us to look upon man as a spark of the Divine and to serve him in that spirit.

This is the greatest work that Swamiji did in our country, by which our religion and philosophy became purified, and were made dynamic and practical and capable of meeting the challenge of the problems of man in the modern age. He built his philosophy of inter-human relationship on the central vision of *Sanātana Dharma,* namely, the divinity of man. Sri Ramakrishna, who embodied in himself the entire theme of *Sanātana Dharma*, expressed this central vision in a very simple beautiful equation:

'Every *Jīva* or soul is *Śiva;* service of the *Jīva* is therefore worship of *Śiva.'*

It is this message that has electrified our youths since the beginning of this century. As poet Rabindranath Tagore appreciatively expressed it (*Prabāsi*, Vol. 28, p. 286):

'In recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied to any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said: 'In every one of you there is the power of Brahman (God); the God in the poor desires you to serve (Him).' This message has roused the heart of the youths in a pervasive way. That is why this message has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse forms of renunciation. His message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power.'

Swamiji himself has conveyed this message in a moving verse of his poem *Sakhār Prati* (To a friend) *(The Complete Works,* Vol. IV, 4th Edition, p. 496):

These are His manifold forms before thee;
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for God?
Who loves all beings without distinction,
He indeed is worhipping best his God.

6. Western Culture: Its Great Humanistic Impulse

We need to capture this inspiration in the diverse fields of our national activity. *Humanism is the great message that we have received from the modern West.* Great humanists have appeared in Western countries, men and women, who felt deeply for other human beings. In the earlier centuries, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth, the Western colonial nations started the slave trade, hunted and captured millions of men, women, and even children from Africa, and sold them in the new continent of the Americas. But in the nineteenth century, these same countries were compelled to abolish this abominable and inhuman slave trade, and also slavery itself, by the energetic work of a band of humanists. Moved by that same humanist impulse, other great humanists struggled successfully to soften the rigours of human life in other fields, including the prisons. Some of these humanists have gone to the prisons by committing formal crimes, observed and studied the appalling conditions obtaining within the prisons of U. K., France, and other countries, written books on the subject, carried on effective educational campaigns throughout the countries concerned, roused public opinion, and finally compelled the Parliaments to enact reform legislations.

This humanist impulse is one of the most precious values of Western culture which we appreciate in India, and which we will do well to welcome and assimilate in a big way today. *The other value of Western culture which we have welcomed is modern physical science.* We have these various currents of inspiration from abroad to inspire us, along with the currents of our own ancient spiritual traditions, re-authenticated and amplified in our time by Sri Ramakrishna. *In Swami Vivekananda was achieved that synthesis of these tested values of the Eastern and Western cultural traditions,* a synthesis which is going to play a great part in the shaping of the India of the future. In the socio-political field, we had Mahatma Gandhi embodying the synthesis of Western humanism and Indian spirituality. And, move-

ments which will be inspired by these great sources of inspiration, which will bring the light of life and freedom to millions of our people — such movements are in great need in our country. *The Second Phase of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee's programme of action is such a movement which is timely.*

7. The Strength Behind Our Democratic State

We are celebrating the silver jubilee of our Independence this year. We can derive satisfaction from some of the achievements of our new democracy. First of all, it has shown its strength, its resilience, its capacity to stand internal trials and external shocks. Today India stands strong as a democratic political state deriving its strength from the people of India. This is a great thing in our history. Throughout the ages, we had small states and big empires, but not one of them was founded upon the strength and consent of the *people* of India. They were all founded on the strength of a king or an emperor or a commander-in-chief. We have this democracy today, the largest democracy in the world. But there are many challenges to our democracy which we have to face as citizens. The political structure has stood the test of 25 years. We are strong there; and we have overcome that challenge. But we have more serious challenges to face and to solve, namely, poverty, illiteracy, exploitation, and the general mood of apathy. These provide an immense field of work for the awakened citizens of our nation. It is through the conjoined efforts of the state and such citizens that we can transform our political democracy into economic and social democracy. That is the task, that is the privilege, before the citizens of India. Our state rests on our shoulders. We have to bear it up. We have to strengthen it and hasten the pace of our human development.

It is this awakened sense of citizenship and its responsibilities that are seeking expression through this new channel of human service, namely, the Vivekananda Kendra at Kanyakumari, started by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, as a tribute to, and under the inspiration of, Swami Vivekananda. There is no better way of worship of this great teacher, no better homage to this great lover of man, than the initiation of a network of service institutions manned by batches and batches of trained men and

women endowed with dedication, efficiency, and character. These are irresistible forces, says Swami Vivekananda, at whose touch the world moves onward. 'A hundred such, and the world becomes revolutionized', he adds. Our nation needs not only a hundred such but a few thousands,and that too within the shortest time possible.

8. Indian Monasticism: Its Positive and Negative Contributions

The Ramakrishna Order of monks, founded by Swami Vivekananda for purifying and strengthening the spiritual traditions of our country and for channelizing that strength to human service both in India and abroad, to which he gave, as its ideal and motto, the great *mantra* of *Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca* — 'for one's own spiritual liberation and for the welfare of humanity', has been working in this great field as a pioneer for the last over seventy-five years. But we cannot expect a monastic Order such as this, including the Ramakrishna Sarada Order of nuns started later, to expand enormously and serve the needs of so vast a field of activity. A monastic Order will always be a small group; *neither is it desirable to see India again flooded by monastic movements.* We did this once before in the wake of the essentially monastic religious movements of Buddhism and Jainism, and brought much harm to the nation at large, along with some solid blessings as well. During the Buddhistic and Jain periods, the whole nation became monastic in attitudes, and very monastic in social composition. The presence of a large number of Buddhist *vihāras* or monasteries lies behind the very name of our modern state of Bihar. And many of the problems that affect and afflict that state, and our nation as a whole, today, are the by-products of that monastic flooding of our country, when the citizenship virtues and graces, centred in the *gṛhastha* or householder, were increasingly neglected, and that too for centuries together.

Too many monks in a society is not healthy for that society. First of all, there will be decay of the monastic Order itself, by all sorts of people, bereft of the spiritual competence, rushing into it. Secondly, it weakens the resolve of the citizen or *gṛhastha* to work for a progressive socio-economic order and to defend the political freedom of the State, and ends up with infecting the monastic movements in particular, and the whole society in general, with the two

vices of *luxury* and *laziness*. What we see as the beggar problem in modern India, and the general lack of public spirit in our people as a whole, are largely the long-term legacy of indigestion of so lofty an ideal by our people. All monks are beggars; but all beggars are not monks; and we have a large percentage of real beggars among the monk-beggars of our country. There are among them groups of the unemployed and the unemployable, and those who are drop-outs from family maladjustments and social failures — all gravitating towards the monk's garb for the esteem and service it commands from society. But, in the India of tomorrow, with its wide economic and social opportunities, we can expect that all such people will be saved from gravitating to beggary or monkhood; only those who feel the spiritual competence will enter the monastic Order; and they will always be a small but valuable minority.

9. Tyaga-Seva: Its Message of Human Growth

But the great ideal of *tyaga* and *seva,* renunciation and service, are not meant to nourish only a small minority of a society in its monks and nuns. They need to be the bed-rock on which the general body of citizens will raise the edifice of their character-efficiency and citizenship-personality. They will stimulate the *gṛhastha* or householder *to grow spiritually into the citizen,* by expanding his or her awareness and sympathy beyond the confines of his or her genetic limitations. This is the line of human evolution, or evolution at the human stage, says twentieth-century biology; it is *organic* evolution rising to the level of *psycho-social* evolution. Swami Vivekananda summoned Indian humanity to march ahead on this road of *psycho-social* evolution, on this path of spiritual growth when he proclaimed 70 years ago (*Complete Works,* 8th Edition, p 228):

> 'The national ideals of India are *renunciation* and *service.* Intensify her in those channels, the rest will take care of itself.'

That is the kind of human growth, through renunciation of the small ego, imprisoned, in its interests and outlook, in the organic system, and the manifestation of the larger self, the by-product of which growth is the mood and act of service. And modern India offers a vast field for the service of man, and calls for this human touch from armies of dedicated citizens. Vivekananda dealt with

this subject in his lectures in Madras, Calcutta, and Lahore in 1897. Speaking in Madras, he said: (*The Complete Works,* 8th Edition, p. 303):

'That is my plan. It may appear gigantic, but it is much needed. You may ask, where is the money? Money is not needed. ... Money and everything else I want *must* come, because they are my slaves, and not I theirs. ... Where are the men? That is the question. Young men of Madras, my hope is in you. Will you respond to the call of your nation?"

10. *The Vivekananda Rock Memorial Project: Its Two Phases*

The Kanyākumāri Vivekananda Kendra's project of a lay Order, of a non-monastic group of dedicated workers, both men and women, represents a sincere organized response to the above call of Swami Vivekananda. The project envisages taking in our young people, training them, and sending them out to work in various fields of human service, philanthropic and cultural, in India and abroad. These workers may later marry, and the project envisages the assimilation of the life-partner also in its activities. These will be *grhasthas* or householders, whose interest will not be tied up exclusively with the little biological and genetic group called the family, but will extend to society as a whole. The welfare of the workers and their families, including the education of the young, I learn, will be looked after by the Kendra. Whether married or single, the workers will combine dedicated service of the people, without, with spiritual life, within, thus breaking the long-standing barrier between life and religion, between work and worship, in the spirit of the yoga of the *jnāna-karma-bhakti* synthesis of the *Gītā*.

Swamiji had visualized such a movement even when he was in the West where, in the midst of his stormy life and work in the U.S.A., he devoted a good deal of his time and energy to the problems of his people at home, and conveyed his ideas in his inspiring letters to friends, disciples, and patriots in India. In one such letter, he refers to the need and urgency for such a movement (*The Complete Works,* Vol. V, Eighth Edition, p. 15):

'A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up — the gospel of equality.'

It is that clarion call of a great teacher, who had the heart of a Buddha along with the intellect of a Śaṅkarācārya, who wept for the poor and the downtrodden people of our country and of all other countries, that has now struck the heart-chords of the sponsors of this movement. This Vivekananda Kendra project carries the blessings and good wishes of the elders of the Ramakrishna Order. Personally, I have been in touch with it, and with its energetic Organizing Secretary, Sri Eknath Ranade, from the very formation of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, nine or ten years ago. It has been slowly taking shape in the minds of its sponsors, and as Sri Eknath Ranade told us in his welcome speech a while ago, the establishment of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyakumari was conceived as the first phase of a great venture, of which this Kendra and its Lay Order project were to be the Second Phase, both together to constitute a worthy memorial to Swami Vivekananda — one in brick and stone and the other in dedicated men and women workers.

11. *The Significance of Kanyākumārī*

Kanyākumārī is the source of inspiration for both — the beautiful spot at the southern tip of our country, where the three oceans meet; standing there, looking to the far north, one can see, in imagination, the other great centre of inspiration for our country, namely, the Himalayas. In the far north, the Himalayas; in the far south, this great Kanyākumārī; and in between lies our India of continental dimensions. Swamiji meditated at Kanyākumārī at the end of his pilgrmages and wanderings in the Himalayas and the plains; and for the first time in the history of religion, the subject of meditation of a great monk was not God but Man — Man, the esentially divine but, in the Indian context, fallen and trampled over, dismembered, distorted and made ugly, by the heartlessness of man himself. *He wanted modern India to wipe off this blot.* He dedicated his own energies for this purpose. And he imparted his message of a man-making religion and a man-making education to his people — a vital message available today in the eight volumes of his *Complete Works.*

12. *The Second Phase of the Project: A Lay Order*

And so, along with the dedication of the Vivekananda Rock Memorial at Kanyākumarī on 2nd September 1970, the Second Phase also started straightaway with the starting of the Vivekananda Kendra in its own spacious premises on the mainland facing the memorial. And it is a matter of satisfaction and encouragement to the sponsors of the Kendra that its programme of the Second Phase has received the blessings also of the Prime Minister of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi. She came to Kanyākumārī dedication function on the 16th September 1970, visited the Rock Memorial, went round the very inspiring exhibition that the Kendra had organized near the venue of the meeting on the mainland, gave an inspiring speech to the large gathering that had assembled in the meeting *pandal,* on the subject of Swami Vivekananda and what he means to her and to our nation, and entered the following words of appreciation in the visitors' book of the Kendra:

'It is a moving experience to come to Kanyākumārī and see how the faith of thousands in Swami Vivekananda's message has made possible this Memorial. May it inspire all who visit it and give them the courage to live up to Swamiji's great and timeless teachings. The Second Phase of the programme for establishment of a lay Order is no less important and will give practical shape to Swamiji's Message of Service.'

These words of blessings from the Prime Minister and similar blessings from the elders of the Ramakrishna Order, and from several other national leaders, constitute an invaluable asset to the movement. Its next great asset will be the hundreds of young men and women, educated, dynamic, and dedicated, who will be joining it, in days to come, to offer their services. They won't be monks; they won't be nuns, as referred to earlier. They will be simple householders, but householders who, in their desire to grow spiritually, *have responded to Swami Vivekananda's message of the God-ward passion flowing as a man-ward love and service.* This is a great project; it is a real venture; it is the implementation of a great vision.

I can just visualize in my mind's eye that, within a few decades, trained men and women of this movement will be doing meritorious work in the tribal areas, in the backward areas, and in other vital areas of human concern. Wherever there is suffering, wherever there is distress, we can expect to see the hands of the ministering

angels of this movement. I have no doubt of this, not only because the ideal behind it is great, not only because free India affords the finest venue and stimulus for such a venture, but also because the men and women — the sponsors — behind this venture are not ordinary men and women. *A man like Ekanth Ranade is an asset to any movement in any country.* I have known him very intimately, and I have admired his energy, his quiet dedication, his capacity for calm, silent team-work, and a rare capacity to influence, favourably, persons and every intractable circumstance! No difficulties can thwart him. Mountain-high obstacles he will face with a calmness and gentleness suffused with determination. In the meaningful words of Sri Ramakrishna: the *kāca ami,* unripe 'I' or ego, has been replaced by the *pāka ami,* ripe'I' or ego. With him and with his other dedicated colleagues behind the movement, it can look forward to a rich harvest of useful work for the good of man. The situation answers Vivekananda's criterion when he said about all social service programmes: Money is nothing. But where are the men?

We need dedicated monks; we need dedicated nuns; but we need a hundred times more of these dedicated lay missionaries, *who are there not to preach any creed or dogma, but to rouse, in all people, the awareness of the ever-present focus of human dignity and glory, namely, the Atman, the divine spark, in all men and women, as expounded in Indian Philosophy, and to help our people to manifest that glory in every movement in their life.* This inherent glory of man has been tarnished and long submerged in India by poverty, ignorance, and social oppression. It was not only the millions of the oppressed and the exploited that became denuded of this human glory, but the top few oppressors and exploiters as well. The selfishness and harshness and utter social unconcern of the latter pained Swami Vivekananda, and he painted, in one of his letters from U.S.A., the human situation in India, as he saw it with his own eyes, in these moving words (*The Complete Works,* Vol. V, VII Edition, p.16):

'They little dream of the ages of tyranny — mental, moral and physical — that has reduced the image of God (which is man) to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother (which is woman) to a slave to bear children; and life itself, a curse!'

The most glorious work that the people of India are engaged in, since Vivekananda's time, is the lifting of that heavy weight of social tyranny from the common people of India, through the steady implementation, by the Indian State, and by the enlightened section of the people of India, of his message of *renunciation and service.* The only valid form of inter-human relationship today is service, and never exploitation. *It is this responsibility of enlightened citizenship in a free democracy that the Vivekananda Kendra is seeking to shoulder and to discharge.* The journal which I have the privilege to release today focuses our attention on the problem of our fellow-citizens living in the tribal areas. The Government of India has been discharging its constitutional obligations in this field in a massive way, since India became free. But there are areas in this field, where the work by the State agencies have limitations and which call for the dedicated contributions of patriotic and broad-minded voluntary agencies.

13. *The Ramakrishna Mission's Work For The Tribals*

The Ramakrishna Mission has been engaged in substantial educational and cultural work in Cherrapunji area of Meghalaya for over forty-five years, and since the last six years, in response to persistent request from the Government of India, in Arunachal Pradesh as well. It has also been conducting hostels for tribal students in its Silchar, Shillong, Puri, Kalady, and other branch centres. I have seen the two residential schools of the Mission in the Siang and Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh. They are very popular with the tribal children and their parents. The tremendous hunger for education is a very inspiring and promising feature of these tribal areas today. I have seen with my own eyes, and the Government also recognizes the truth of it, that what official agencies take 25 years to achieve, a patriotic voluntary agency can achieve in five years — not only in developing educational institutions, but also in winning the hearts of the tribal population and in giving them the best of Indian and Western cultures, which they, on their part, are also very eager to absorb. And the result is that, today, wherever in Arunachal Pradesh and South Meghalaya the monks of the Ramakrishna Order go, they are besieged by the tribals of the area concerned pressing them to 'start a school here' or 'start a school there', for 'we do not want our children to remain ignorant and illiterate as we are'.

14. *The Inspiring Touch of Eternal India*

This is a wonderful and promising picture of 'India on the march'. The citizens of India must realize that millions of such people are waiting in the various parts of our country to get that enlivening touch from our nation and its freedom. Between our Government and our enlightened citizens, we have to fulfil that great expectation. I have travelled in many parts of the areas where our tribals dwell. I undertook a long tour of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura and Cachar (in Assam), under the auspices of the Government of India in 1966. And what heartening response I marked, in their hearts and in their faces, to the higher message of India, to the universal message of her philosophy and spirituality! They had very little opportunity till now to come in touch with the great culture of this higher India, the *Eternal* India, the *Amar Bhārat.* They had felt the impact of only the other India — the India of exploiters and money-lenders, and had naturally been repelled by that India like the rest of the common people of our country. They were attracted by the high idealism of our national movement and by the Gandhian vision of *swarāj* as *Rām Rāj,* and were inspired by the noble humanistic sentiments of the Indian Constitution which bear the impress of the soul of that *Eternal* India.

But, their first experience of our newly independent State was not very encouraging. *They were repelled by the arrogance and crudeness and worldliness of some of the first officers of the Government of India,* who had none of the virtues of the British or Indian cultures, but had the vices of both, including sex and drink. I have myself heard some of our Nagas in Kohima telling me that, when independence came to India in 1947, they were all expecting and hoping for the advent of *Ram Rāj;* but that what they actually saw was *Rum Rāj!* Fortunately, the situation improved after the first few years, and I am glad to say that when I visited Kohima in 1966, I found a set of officers who were patriotic, dedicated, and intensely human, besides being efficient, and who were respected by the people. That has helped to correct that earlier unhappy impression.

15. *My Experiences in our Tribal Areas*

Winning over the people in these tribal areas, as also in all rural areas, is a work that calls for a democratic attitude and approach in our officers, and not one of superiority and condescension. The former alone is relevant in the context of our new Constitution and its political State, which derives its sanction and strength from the people alone; and not as hitherto, from any other sources, of which the people became only the objects of domination and exploitation. The touch of our free State, through its agents, on our people, is meant to enhance the dignity, freedom, and individuality of each of our citizens everywhere in our vast country. And that touch always receives the instant and heartiest response from the people. I saw this response in Nagaland and Manipur during my tour of 1966. An over-flow audience listened attentively to my speech at the meeting in the town hall of Kohima, presided over by the then Chief Minister of Nagaland. Later, at the end of a two-hour parlour discussion with a Naga group, including political activists and church leaders, they told me, while taking leave: Please come again; we need you!

During that tour, I visited the small Naga village of Churachandpur in the Manipur state. It is the headquarters of the sub-division of that name and borders Burma. Its breath-taking natural beauty reminded me of Kashmir. Its population is mostly Christian Naga. The Sub-Divisional Officer who received me told me that he expected hardly ten or twelve people at the meeting, it being Sunday, when the people go to Church three or four times. But as we entered the local college hall, which was the venue of the lecture, we were agreeably surprised to see that a crowd of about two thousand people had filled the hall, verandahs, and the lawns. There was a festival atmosphere. My speech on *The Spirit of Indian Culture* was translated, sentence by sentence, into the local Naga dialect by a competent and dedicated teacher. I had with me a copy of Bimal Roy's documentary on Vivekananda, produced by the Government of India, with Assamese commentary. The Officer of the Government of India travelling with me had brought it with him. This was screened after the lecture. It was a new experience to them. The vast audience immensely enjoyed the lecture and the film. As these two programmes ended, the Police Band, assembled in the lawns,

struck up, as we came out of the hall, adding to the festive atmosphere. It was an impressive experience with significance for our nation's human integration.

Some of these tribal fellow-citizens of ours have been wrongly conditioned by some anti-India motivated foreign missionaries, who are not missionaries of true Christianity, but the political agents of a colonial brand of that religion; these had instilled into their minds very many wrong ideas about Hinduism and Indian Culture. In my lecture, I had told the gathering that India has always been a tolerant land of many religions and that Christianity in India was older than the European Christianity which these missionaries had brought with them, and that I hailed from that state of India, namely, Kerala, the Christianity of which traces its origin to one of the apostles of Jesus himself, namely St. Thomas. And, for the first time, they saw amidst them a Hindu monk who treated them and their religion as his own and showed keen interest in their welfare; they were agreeably surprised. Then I told them:

'Yes, that's the new free India. You are our own, flesh of our flesh and blood of our blood. And that India is based upon you, and upon me, and upon millions of common people like you. No one part or group is ruling over another part or group. India is a democratic republic; it strives to raise all its people to economic strength and social dignity. And I represent that India.'

Last March, I went on a lecture tour of Arunachal Pradesh as the guest of its administration. After addressing crowded meetings in Along and Pasighat in its Siang district and in Khonsa in its Tirap district, and watching the fine educational and cultural work done by the Ramakrishna Mission's two residential schools in the two districts, I spent two days in Dimapur in Nagaland as the guest of its local Ramakrishna Society and addressed several public gatherings, including the Nagaland Police Training School and the Indian army officers and jawans at the Cantonment. Impressed by the ideas of Vedānta and of Swami Vivekananda, the Chairman of Dimapur township, Mr. Angami, a Naga, in his vote of thanks, said, with much feeling: 'I am going to request the Nagaland Chief Minister to invite you, Swami, to Nagaland again and again; we want you here; we want these ideas.' That is the type of welcome surprise awaiting

as much all of us in the rest of India, as the people of the tribal areas themselves. If Vedānta can inspire Americans, Europeans, Australians and others abroad, why would it not do the same with our own people? But its strengthening, purifying, and rational ideas were not presented to our common people till now. And Swami Vivekananda felt deeply about our upper classes passing on the weakening superstitions to the people and keeping back the strengthening philosophical and spiritual ideas of Vedānta from them, — never themselves living up to them, but adopting the dog-in-the-manger policy, as he characterized it. And hence he said in his speech on *Vedānta* delivered in Lahore in 1897 (*The Complete Works*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p.429-431):

'Ay, in this country of ours, the very birthplace of the Vedānta, our masses have been hypnotised for ages into that state. ...

'Young men of Lahore, understand this, therefore, this great sin, hereditary and national, is on our shoulders. You may make thousands of societies, twenty thousand political assemblages, fifty thousand institutions. These will be of no use until there is that sympathy, that love, that heart, that thinks for all. Until Buddha's heart comes once more to India, until the words of the Lord Krishna are brought to their practical use, there is no hope for us. ...

... Raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita, for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love, until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached! Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go. In the words of the Christians: You cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time. Have *vairāgya* (renunciation). Your ancestors gave up the world for doing great things. At the present time, there are men who give up the world to help their own salvation. Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others. ... Give up this little life of yours. What matters it if you die of starvation — you and I and thousands like us — so long as this nation lives? The nation is sinking; the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads — those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past; the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita, and whom we have hated with all our strength. ... *Wipe off this blot.* ... What we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.'

This is the touch of free India, of the caste-free Hinduism, of the dynamic humanistic Indian culture, that will enliven and energize the entire body-politic of India, rousing the national consciousness of every group, every tribe, and making their members privileged

participants in the Indian national experiment. They need to be inspired by Vivekananda's vision of India as a mighty anthropological laboratory energetically engaged in the evolution of a free, egalitarian, and spiritually oriented society out of a sixth of the human race.

16. India: Ever-aging But Never Old

The Vivekananda Kendra must consider itself highly privileged to be one such medium to carry to all our people the energy resources of such a lofty vision and programme and of the great personality behind it. Knowing fully well that such work, if and when efficiently implemented, is going to have a mighty and highly beneficial impact on India's human situation, I welcome this movement and convey my love and best wishes to Sri Eknath Ranade and his colleagues. And the special number of the *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika,* which I have just released, gives you an insight into the problems and prospects of our tribal population. The citizens of India must involve themselves in the problems and tackle them through the legislature, through books, through the news media, and through intensive field work. This journal is seeking to alert our citizens to this and to other pressing problems of our nation. And Kanyākumarī will provide the Kendra with a venue of great inspiration, with the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in the sea, and the ancient temple of Mother Kumārī on the mainland shore, facing it. The Goddess in this *Kumarī* temple — a *Kanyā,* or maiden, of 16 years, in the freshness and vigour of youth — is a beautiful and meaningful symbol of our *Eternal India* which is, in the words of one of our philosophers, the late Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, *ever-aging but never old.*

17. Vivekananda and the Humanistic Passion

Movements like the Vivekananda Kendra derive their strength from the people and give back that strength to the people in ten-fold or hundred-fold measure. Our Union and state governments have their own functions, their own fields of work, and they are rendering their due. But the social health and strength of a democracy is best assured by the active social concern and social vision of enlightened citizens channelled through hundreds of voluntary organiza-

tions. And our country provides plenty of scope for such voluntary work and for exercising the public spirit behind it, and justifies what Jesus said, looking around him: 'The harvest truly is plenteous; but the labourers are few!' That is literally true about our country today; it calls for the services of thousands of hearts with the passion that found utterance from the heart and lips of Saint Rantideva in our *Purāṇās:*

Ko nu na syāt upāyo'tra
Yenāhaṁ sarvadehinām;
Antaḥ praviśya satatam
bhaveyaṁ dukhabhāvabhāk —

'Is there any means in this world, whereby I can enter the hearts of all beings, and always take over, and experience, their sorrows myself?'

And in the words of Swami Vivekananda (*The Complete Works,* Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p.136):

'May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls — and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.'

We have the inspiration of such beautiful and powerful sentiments and examples behind us. We have to capture it and ignite, through it, the fire of renunciation and service, and its offshoots of character and dedication and efficiency, in thousands of our youths, who will then set fire to the thicket of misery that has spread over India for ages, and it *shall be burnt down,* in the very words of Vivekananda. It is with this resolve that you, who are assembled here this evening, should leave this meeting and, thereafter, constantly keep in touch with the activities of the Kendra, helping it in every way possible, with men and with money.

18. *Indians Abroad*

This issue of the *Vivekananda Kendra Patrika* has dealt with our tribal population. The next number, I am told, will concentrate on the problems of Indians abroad. There are a few millions of our countrymen abroad. Some of them went out of India several decades ago as indentured labourers under the aegis of British colonialism and have now become free citizens of their respective countries, while others had gone abroad on their own account to seek their fortunes. I have come across them in various parts of the world. And I am impresssed with their love of their ancestral religion and culture, while remaining loyal citizens of their respective States. The next issue of the journal will give us an authentic information about them and their problems, from all parts of the world.

When our country was in subjection, we were in no position to help them much. But now that our country is free, we are in a position to help them spiritually and culturally, and they also look to us of India to render this service to them.

19. *Vivekananda on India's Expansion*

There is thus much beneficient work to be done in India and outside. Political subjection had contracted our national personality and made our culture stagnant for some centuries. The impact of Western culture, through the British connection, in the modern period, made for the ignition of the smouldering fires of our ancient culture, which were then tended and augmented in the last century by powerful personalities like Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayananda, Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. This resulted in an expansion of the national energies which could not long be contained within the national boundaries. It was that expanding national energy that threw off Swami Vivekananda from India into the Western world with an explosive impact, as he has described it himself in his lecture on 'The Work Before Us' delivered in Madras in 1897 (*The Complete Works,* Vol. III, EighthEdition, p. 272-3):

'The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand, if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead. I went to America and Europe, to which you so kindly allude; I had to, because that is the first sign of revival of national life, expansion. This reviving national life, expanding inside, threw me off, and *thousands will be thrown off in that way.* Mark my words, it has got to come if this nation lives at all. This question, therefore, is the greatest of the signs of the revival of national life, and through this expansion, our quota of offering to the general mass of human knowledge, our contribution to the general upheaval of the world, is going out to the external world.'

That is the story of India, past, present, and future. The expansion of India is always a non-political and non-military expansion; and hence it does not, and will not, destroy the happiness and welfare of other people. On the contrary, on account of being spiritual and philosophical, its impact on the world outside has always been wholesome, and has been welcomed before, and is being welcomed today, by the concerned peoples of the world. Five thousand years of our history are there behind us, without any instance of tarnishing, by political or military aggressions abroad, of her creative message, but carrying only this blessing for us and for the rest of the world. The present national expansion carries the same blessing. This is specially emphasised by the fact that the first man who represented this contemporary expansive India was a monk — a luminous beggar monk, Swami Vivekananda—whose outlook and sympathies were human and not just national, and who, and whose master, Sri Ramakrishna, in the words of Romain Rolland (*Life of Ramakrishna*, p. 8):

'have won my regard because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul.'

Vivekananda went to America with only one strength with him — his shining intellect and his pure life. He illustrates what impact an expanding India will have on the outside world in the decades and centuries to come. When the quality of human life in our nation will match and over-match its quantity, as a result of our measures to raise the economic and cultural level of the 300 million, out of our 550 million, people who are very much below the poverty line, we shall see the sleeping leviathan of our nation becoming fully awakened and becoming a creative force in the modern world.

20. Good-bye To All Violent Politics

The Vivekananda Kendra Project for a Lay Order offers a timely opportunity for the healthy and creative self-expression of this idealism of our youths. It is time that all of them forsake the *wasteful and nationally suicidal paths of petty political quarrels and violent and destructive activist programmes,* in favour of a sane non-violent political self-expression, and also that some of them throw their youthful energies into these non-political constructive

national movements, as well. We have great examples of such movements in our modern period. There is the Servants of India Society; there is the Servants of the People Society; there is the Sarvodaya movement. And now there is this Vivekananda Kendra Project. All these are lay Orders drawing some of our energetic, idealistic, and educated youths to the vital non-political fields of silent constructive national service. This is also politics — grassroots politics — meant to strengthen the national body-politic in a fundamental way. And this is also religion—Practical Vedānta — according to Swami Vivekananda.

21. Conclusion

My good wishes to all of you. I thank the organizers, especially Sri Eknath Ranade, for giving me this opportunity, on this last day of my Madras visit, to be associated with the release of this *Hill India* issue of the journal and with the problems highlighted by the journal, namely, the problems of our tribal fellow-citizens.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND OUR YOUTHS *

1. *Introduction*

A teacher like Swami Vivekananda, such a universal personality, shines better, when several minds present his greatness. That is what we have today most unexpectedly. Principal Amiya Kumar Mazumdar, President of the Mahamandal, Swami Vishwashrayananda, and Swami Smaranananda have presented Swami Vivekananda's several facets of greatness. I shall try to present before you now some other aspects of the Swami's greatness, particulary with reference to the young minds who have collected together here in the name of Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal. Here we have a group of young people, inspired by Swami Vivekananda, not only belonging to our own state of Bengal, but also to our neighbouring states, who are trying to work out his ideas in our society. That is the purpose of the Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal. Behind this Mandal are men of sterling virtues, patriotism, dedication, keen intelligence, and understanding. I know them for several years, and have been very much attracted to them. We can, therefore, expect this Yuva Mahamandal to slowly gather strength, and draw more and more young people into it, and give to the society what Swamiji has left as a great treasure to all of us.

2. *Political Vision*

To see India through the eye of Swami Vivekananda is a great experience in itself. The whole of Indian politics, which is sufficiently dismal today, will become completely transformed, if our politicians study a bit of Swami Vivekananda and acquire a little of the love for the common man which is the central theme of Swamiji's teachings. That is why, today, we need much more emphasis on the study of Vivekananda literature and an effort to see India

*Based on the address to the special meeting of the members and well-wishers of the *Akhil Bharat Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal*, held at the Vivekananda Society Hall, Calcutta, on 11 June 1973

through the eyes of Vivekananda. Let us develop a little bit of that vision which Swamiji had, and see from that light how to build up our country.

Great problems are there — huge population, unemployment, acute poverty, and so on. An ordinary mind cannot deal with these problems; ordinary political cajolings cannot solve them. We need knowledge, we need dedication. Both these are necessary today. In a sense, it was this that Swamiji said when he was in America: What do we want in India? We want to *change* India. We don't want to continue that old India—so weak, so broken, so dis-spirited. We want to change India into a progressive healthy nation.

So, he was not a mere philosopher just contemplating reality. He was a man who wanted to *change* our society, change the human situation in our country. That is the revolutionary approach that Swamiji presented to us. We must know this when we speak of revolution today. He spoke of the same idea of revolution more than seventy years ago, when he addressed our people in inspiring lectures now collected in the book: *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*.He said: 'I want root and branch reform' in India. He didn't want some titbits, a little patch-work here, a little patch-work there. A patch-work cannot do, because our society needs complete reconstruction. That is his language: 'Put the fire there (at the bottom), and let it burn upwards and make an Indian nation.'

3. *Man-making*

He intended to create a new type of man who is aware of his own spiritual nature. Religion ceases to be a mere static piety in the hands of Vivekananda.It becomes a dynamic spirituality, a great source of strength of character, work-efficiency, and concern for all human beings. That is the purpose of religion, according to Swami Vivekananda. The social workers in our nation will become aware of their own spiritual nature, they will be able not only to educate the people, but also to inspire them. They will be able to rouse the spiritual consciousness of the people, and to awaken them to a sense of their own human dignity and worth. A man may be a mere stone-cutter, but that does not mean that he should feel that he is only a small person. He has the same Ātman within him that is within all. This is the focus of the

dignity and worth of man, says Vedānta, which presents it as the birthright of every human being. A political, educational, and social programme that will bring this message to all the people is what can make India truly great. You cannot make all people equal as regards money, intelligence, power, etc. They will all be unequal in these fields. But in one thing they can all be equal, and that is with respect to the truth of the Ātman within all. This is the basis of mutual respect in a democracy, not because you have money, not because you are sitting on a high chair holding power and authority. No; I respect you because you are a man. You respect me because I am a man. That is enough for me and for you. You may be poor. You may be backward. You may be even ignorant. What does that matter? I respect you as a man. That is the practical Vedānta Swamiji preached, for the implementation of which he coined a new phrase: *Man-making Education and Man-making Religion.* Again and again, he exhorted us to stand on our own feet and to extend the hand of fellowship to the next man. That kind of strength he wanted to bring to our people. A politics which does not help man in acquiring this strength to himself is a dismal politics. Today, our political atmosphere can be changed, completely transformed, if there is this injection of Swami Vivekananda's mind and spirit into our national life. The more we spread his literature, the more we spread his message, the better for us and the better for the world.

4. *Total Integration of Personality*

He combined in himself the ancient and the modern, the East and the West, the sacred and the secular. This is the appreciation of great thinkers who have written on Swami Vivekananda. Whether it is Tagore, or Jawaharlal Nehru, or Romain Rolland, all of them have said that in Swami Vivekananda you see the synthesis, the harmony, of all human energy. Such a great leader and teacher, full of love, full of human concern, full of patriotism, was with us, and is still with us in ideas and inspiration, yet finds no place in the thinking of many of our political and social leaders today; and they hope to solve the problems of India! It is impossible. Till now, we turned first to England, then to European countries, then to America, then to Russia, then to China, for inspiration. But now it is a healthy sign that our nation is slowly realizing that those countries

cannot guide us today. They are themselves in a mess. They are themselves faced with serious problems. We must turn to our own inheritance, to our own country's wisdom. This wholesome change is slowly coming on the horizon of India today. Within the next few years, I surely expect that the national mind will turn to this great national storehouse of inspiration, both ancient and modern, and, with that strength, gain the capacity to appreciate and assimilate the great storehouse of modern Western knowledge and experience as well. Then shall we gain true national greatness. This change will be a great change for India. Then we shall discover the unique greatness of our Vivekananda. *That change will come within the next decade or two.* Your Mahamandal is meant to be an agency to bring this awareness gently to the people of Calcutta, the people of Bengal, and later on, to the people of other states. That is the purpose of this Yuva Mahamandal. It bears Swami Vivekananda's name. What beautiful ideas are there in Swami Vivekananda — ideas which can transform human character, make man truly big in a big way! The teaching he gave us all is: Don't think we are small, don't think we are poor; we have the infinite Ātman as our real nature.

5. *Youth and New India*

Our creative energy is in our young people. Our old people will want to retain the present India. They have been accustomed to it. They may not want to change it. But we have to change our India, we have to create a healthy new India. Therefore, Swamiji put his faith in the young people; and his own teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, also put his faith in young people. He did not put his faith in the old, because he also wanted a new India to emerge which is truly spiritual, not just pious, not just religious; that can be done only by the young, the vigorous, the vital. He saw such minds among our young people, the young who are not mere talkers, but who are devoted, sincere, energetic, and pure. This is the type of young people whom Swamiji repeatedly mentioned in his lectures in Calcutta, Madras, and elsewhere — young, vigorous, dedicated, full of hope. This kind of mind can change India. That is a great need in Calcutta, in Bengal, all over India. That is the genesis of this Vivekananda Yuva Mahamandal.

6. *Organization*

He saw in America the power of organization, the power of collective action. Swamiji wanted that power to be acquired by people in India. That is why there is this Yuva Mahamandal here, and similar groups also here and elsewhere. Swamiji started the Ramakrishna Order also only with this object in view — how to organize our youths to serve God in man. Here is a holy man, there is a holy man, so many holy men or *mahātmas* we have, who teach religion and do good. But we want to have more energy, more power. For that, let us bring all these *mahātmas* together in a brotherhood and then let them work together; that will have a tremendous impact on society, he felt. That will do wonders. That is why he said in his Madras lecture (*The Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 299-300):

> 'Why is it that organizations are so powerful? Do not say organization is material. ... Therefore to make a great future India, the whole secret lies in organization, accumulation of power, co-ordination of wills. ... For mark you, the future India depends entirely upon that. That is the secret — accumulation of will-power, co-ordination, bringing them all, as it were, into one focus.'

Work together, put your wills together, put your little self behind, manifest your large self by putting the nation in front, its interests, its welfare. Then we can transform our politics and public life from ill-health to health. Surrender your little self, the little ego, for the cause of the good of millions before you. If the mounting problems of India are to be solved by us, it is only by our acquiring character and developing this power of organization.It is the power of character that gives us the capacity for team-work. This capacity must come to us, all over India today. This suffering, this mass poverty, these dismal slums and dirty roads of Calcutta and Howrah — all these things — they are with us for years together. And the condition everywhere is getting only worse year by year. Why? We are so many people here, but this character-energy behind all efficient work has not been acquired by the nation. We have political and other organizations, but behind them we miss the presence of this character-energy and work-energy and the inspiration of this vision of human dignity. In the absence of these high motivations, organizations become ineffective everywhere. We see it every day. That is why, today, there is need for a re-education of our youths in

the great ideas and ideals of Swami Vivekananda. If this Yuva Mahamandal can become that kind of a small nucleus where these ideas are found expressed in life and work, we shall create a new force for gently and steadily working upon the national problems. This way would Swami Vivekananda ask us to live and to work. Active politics is not everybody's work. Only a few people should enter the active political field. Our misfortune in India today is that most of our people want to be politicians, including the teachers and students; whereas, before independence, all politicians were essentially educators and teachers!

7. *'Be and Make'*

Swamiji said: Be and make, that shall be our motto. Be men yourselves and help others also to become men. That kind of educational work must come out of our politics, society, and education. That is why an organization like this Yuva Mahamandal has a great responsibility, a great privilege, to assimilate the spirit of Swami Vivekananda and radiate it around. Without criticising, without abusing any other organization, just try to live up to his ideas and be good and do good. Swamiji repeatedly said: Don't criticize. Everybody is doing some good. But give what little you can to improve the human condition around you. Don't curse darkness; but bring in a little light. That is the surest way to destroy darkness.

In this way, a constructive creative approach to national problems is to be adopted by an organization like this Yuva Mahamandal. We need politics to handle the political power of the nation; so political parties will be there. They will be struggling against each other in order to capture political power. But once they get the power, to make that power really useful to the people,we need a new attitude. That attitude will come to the nation from Swami Vivekananda today. But a much higher attitude is there, and also a greater power, which Swamiji and later, Mahatma Gandhi, presented to our nation and that is: when power is misused by the political parties or Government, people must be able to correct it. Public opinion — awakened, enlightened, energetic, patriotic, public opinion — is the strength of democracy. Democracy is not strong

because politicians or administrators or ministers have power in their hands. A democracy is strong because the people are educated, are conscious of their power that they are citizens, that all power is ultimately derived from them. This strengthening of people is the basic work in a democracy. An organization like the Yuva Mahamandal is primarily to engage itself in educating the people about their democratic dignity as free citizens, about their democratic rights, and democratic responsibilities as well. Therefore, today, there is such a vast field of useful work but, unfortunately, the number of workers is very small.

8. *Vivekananda's Clarion Call*

Swamiji himself said in one of his letters: *(The Complete Works,* Vol. V, p.15):

> 'A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor, the fallen, and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social rising up — the gospel of equality.'

That is the type of youth and the type of work we need in abundance in India to work silently for building up the nation. This Yuva Mahamandal is meant to be one such nucleus of efficient, dedicated, silent workers.

Let young people, inspired by this message of *tyāga* and *śeva*, work in any field — in a small shop or in offices or in colleges, anywhere, but let them be inspired by this great vision, by this ideal, and then they will do immense good to themselves and to the nation. Then will India have an impact upon the rest of the world. The whole world is waiting for the healing touch of awakened India.

9. *Conclusion*

That was what Swamiji did earlier, and what we all can do, and will do, today and tomorrow. That is the India of the next century. To complete this century there lie only another thirty years more. Work hard to create that kind of strong stable India where all our men and women will live dignified human lives. This is the most

progressive national vision and dedication that our people must get from this Yuva Mahamandal.

I was glad to see some of the centres of nation-building work of the Yuva Mahamandal in other parts of Bengal and elsewhere. I am very happy to come and join you all this evening. Thank you.

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA: HIS HUMANISM *

1. Introduction

I AM very thankful to you for inviting me to the U.S.S.R. and to address you this morning. I am on a brief five-day visit to Moscow, after completing my five-day lecture tour of Teharan. Day after tomorrow, I shall be flying to Amsterdam on my annual three-week lecture tour each of Holland-Belgium and Australia, with the annual 2-week tour of U.S.A. in between, and a three-day tour of Singapore.

I had spent nine days in the U.S.S.R. in August 1961, during my four-month lecture tour of seventeen European countries, including Poland and Czechoslovakia, and had visited on that occasion Moscow, Leningrad, and Tolstoy's birthplace — Yasnaya Palyana. I have made some modest study of Marxist literature, including works by and on Lenin, and also of the unique political and social experiment of the U.S.S.R. in the field of human development that is being worked out, in this part of the world in the modern age, in the light of the Marxist ideology.

When I was about 14 years old, I read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and the works of Vivekananda by chance, which inspired me to dedicate my life to the love and service of God in man in India and everywhere; and, accordingly, I joined the Ramakrishna Order of monks, started by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in 1886, at the age of seventeen and a half, and have been working in its various fields and in its various centres, in India and abroad, these fifty-one years.

My life and work in the Ramakrishna Order has taken me to all parts of India and to many parts of the world, to about fifty-one countries, including the U.S.A. where I spent a year and a half in

* Based on the tape-record of the lecture delivered at a special meeting of the students, professors, and research scholars at the Moscow State University on 10 October 1977, during the Swami's five-day lecture tour of Moscow

1968-69, again eight months in 1971-72, and again two months in 1976, addressing its universities, colleges, churches, and cultural institutions. These tours have covered also countries like Cuba, Yugoslavia, Japan, and many Central and South American states. Many of these tours have been sponsored by the countries concerned and the Government of India. That is, briefly, my background.

So when I come here, I feel intellectually and culturally at home, as I feel when I visit U.S.A., France, Holland, Australia, Japan, or other countries, because I have a feeling of belonging to the whole world of man and not to any particular segment of it. This mankind-awareness came to me through my study of Swami Vivekananda. I am, therefore, thankful to you for suggesting to me to speak to you on this fascinating theme of *Swami Vivekananda: His Humanism.*

2. Vivekananda: A Universal Phenomenon

This is certainly not only a fascinating theme but also a greatly relevant theme; Vivekananda was an extraordinary personality and a modern personality. When we speak of him, we are not dealing with some ancient mythical god or legendary hero, but with one who lived in our own time and acted and reacted with the modern world with all its problems and prospects. He was not only intensely modern but had also assimilated the past historical human developments and was at home both in the Orient as well as in the Occident. He combined in himself high idealism with intense practicality. These traits of his personality, along with his rational and universal teachings, make the study of Vivekananda very inspiring and rewarding for people in all parts of the world.

The Americans study Vivekananda because of his intimate association with their country for over four years, in the last decade of the last century, in an intense and dynamic human and thought situation, which has left its indelible mark upon the American mind and spirit. He worked also actively in England and had visited Germany and some other European countries, including Greece. His writings began to be studied here in Russia within three years of his passing away in 1902. Among Russian thinkers, Tolstoy ex-

perienced Vivekananda's influence most, and of his Master Sri Ramakrishna too, and has given expression to the same in various notings in his copy books and in the books about them in his library.

Vivekananda thus is a universal phenomenon and, when we study him, we are amazed to find his tremendous grasp of contemporary human problems and aspirations. He lived only a very brief life of thirty-nine years, five months, and 22 days, from 1863 to 1902; but within that brief period, he lived an intense life, first inwardly and then outwardly, which has left an indelible mark on human history, Eastern as well as Western. None can remain unimpressed at the tremendous energy and dynamism manifested in his life, which affected the thinking of millions of people in India and in the Western world, while he was alive, and continues to inspire millions of people everywhere, since his passing away. He, along with the greatest Indian philosopher Saṅkaracarya of the ninth century of the Christian era, who also lived only a brief life of thirty two years, illustrated the *Mahābhārata* dictum (*Udyoga-parvam*,131-13, *Bhandarkar Edition):*

Muhŕtaṁ jvalitaṁ śreyo
na tu dhūm āyitaṁciram—

'It is better to *flame forth* for one instant than to *smoke away* for ages!'

With his keen interests, as a youth in physical culture, such as boxing, and with his vast intellectual and spiritual and aesthetic interests and attainments, there was a many-sidedness to his personality, which elicited the whole-hearted appreciation of his Master Sri Ramakrishna, who recommended this trait in him to his other disciples.

3. *Vivekananda's interest in Total Human Development*

What is unique about him as a spiritual teacher of mankind, however, was his deep interest in man and his untiring work for total human development and fulfilment everywhere. And this interest and work, we should not fail to note, is not just religious, in the narrow sense of that word, just helping men and women to secure

the salvation of their souls, as all other spiritual teachers have done, but covered all aspects of human life, as much economic and social as moral and religious. In fact, this all-round human interest forms the central theme of Swami Vivekananda's life and work.

After his discipleship at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, followed by his wanderings through the length and breadth of his vast motherland as a wandering monk, as a *parivrājaka*, when he sat down to meditate on the rock which rises from the sea off Kanyākumārī, at the southern extremity of India, where the three oceans meet, and which is now known as the Vivekananda rock bearing a magnificent memorial to him, the main subject of his meditation was not, as it was in the case of all past religious teachers, a god sitting above or in one's own heart, or any other transcendental reality, but man below on earth, his problems and prospects, and how to restore him to his dignity and glory as man, as a 'child of immortal bliss' — *amṛtasya putra* — as the Indian sages had realized and experienced the truth about man.

It is this that makes Vivekananda a vast and deep and challenging subject of human interest for study and research by modern man everywhere. I shall, however, restrict myself, during the brief fifty minutes available for my speech, with the remaining ten minutes for questions, to deal with the salient aspects of this theme of Vivekananda's humanism. I have seen keen interest in the theme of Vivekananda among the students and staff of the universities in India, U. S. A., Japan, Central and South America, Australia, and Indonesia

4. *'The Splendid Symphony of the Universal Soul'*

Among the great biographers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda was Monsieur Romain Rolland, a Nobel Prize winner for literature. In his famous books: *Life of Ramakrishna* and *Life of Vivekananda,* which are systematic, critical, and insightful studies, published during the crisis-ridden inter-war years, Rolland presented these two outstanding teachers to his Western readers as *the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul.* They exemplified man in his universal aspect, and not in the narrow racial, national, or sectarian aspects. That universal dimension expressed itself in a

deep concern for man everywhere and in every field of his life; it made them the exponents and exemplars of a humanism, as much deep as wide, as much intellectually stimulating as spiritually inspiring. And behind that exposition of humanism lie their deep penetration into the depth of the human spirit and their experience of the true greatness and glory of man as the ever-free, ever-awake, and ever-pure Ātman, the infinite Self behind his tiny and fleeting ego, revealing the infinite possibilities that lie hidden in every human being and that need to be unfolded and manifested in the course of man's life and work.

5. *Vivekananda's Humanism Derives from India's Adhyātma-Vidyā*

It was this philosophy of man in depth, *Adhyātma-vidyā* as Vedānta calls it, this *science of human possibilities,* to use a fine phrase that biologist and humanist, the late Sir Julian Huxley, coined to express what he wanted modern Western physical science to develop into, that Vivekananda made the core of his humanism. It is a science of man that India investigated and developed over three thousand years ago in her immortal literature, the Upaniṣads. The creators of this unique science were great sages, among whom were men, women, and even children, intellectuals, kings and students, whose only passion was truth and human welfare; their attitude, outlook, and temper bear a close kinship with the physical scientists of the modern age, except that our modern Western scientists explore the outer world of physical nature while these ancient Indian sages explored the mysterious world of the inner nature of man, but with the same thoroughness and critical spirit. They penetrated into the human personality to the very depths and revealed, behind his physical body, behind his nervous system, behind his psychic system, a spiritual focus of an infinite and immortal dimension, forming its *pure science,* and the technique of its manifestation in life and work, forming its *applied science.* Out of these discoveries, they developed their great philosophy, the Vedānta. The line of investigation of these sages of the Upaniṣads can be briefly described thus:

Here is a new-born baby, so weak and tender physically that a little extra heat or cold can destroy it. But we suspect many possibilities hidden within that baby and many dimensions of energies. Unlike the eyes of a doll-baby which show up only its blank surface and no depth, the eyes of any living baby reveals some depth dimensions to its personality. How shall we discover them and help the baby to manifest those possibilities and energies, and how to process them so as to humanize them? This is the main problem before man, the problem of the education of the human baby, so as to help it to achieve maximum growth, development, and fulfilment.

All human development is based upon the discovery of some or more of these profound possibilities hidden within every human child and of the methods and techniques adopted to bring them out. Behind those eyes of the child lurk energies and talents that will come out later as an Olympic champion, a great scientist, a wise statesman, a creative artist, or a great saint. But none of these possibilities can be detected or felt by our sensory system, or by our mind dependent on that system. They exist in a dimension beyond man's sensory verification, just like the possibilities of a big tree lying, beyond our sensory grasp, in the depth of its tiny seed, where they remain hidden, 'coiled up', as India's *Kuṇḍalini yoga* expresses it. But they manifest steadily to our sensory verification from the first appearance of the sprout, and thereafter, as it grows into a large tree.

Similarly, all the human possibilities, including the spiritual, lie hidden, lie asleep as it were, in the child. We want to help the child to bring out these enormous possibilities, says Vedānta. In the words of the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* which Vivekananda loved most among the Upaniṣads (3.12):

Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu
gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate;
Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā
sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ —

'The (infinite) Ātman is present in every being, but lies hidden and (therefore) is not manifest; but It can be realized by the subtle and penetrating reason of those who are trained to perceive subtler and subtler truths.'

6. *Education as the Science and Technique of Total Human Unfoldment*

In dealing with this profound truth about man, Vedānta, therefore, prefers to use the term *unfoldment;* and that, says Vedānta, is the true meaning of education, secular as well as spiritual — education in *aparā vidyā,* or ordinary knowledge, and education in *parā vidyā,* or extra-ordinary knowledge, in the terminology of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad.* Vedānta does not see any gulf or break between the two; it is a continuous unfoldment, unless one stops at a particular point and stagnates there. Secular education continued to our deeper dimensions is spiritual education, says Vedānta. That is how Vivekananda defines the roles of the physical sciences, politics, and economics, on the one side, and of art, ethics, and religion, on the other. He would even say that all human education is spiritual, since all such education is designed to bring out the spiritual possibilities within man: *They constitute the science and technique of total human development.*

Broadly speaking, these possibilities belong to three categories: First, there are the physical possibilities which find manifestation in the development of the muscles and the nervous system, and which produce physically strong and well-built men and women. Second, which is more subtle and more deep, constitutes the mental possibilities, which find expression in the development of the power of thought, reason, will, and feeling, producing an intelligent and sensitive human being who understands the world around, has a grip on it, and uses it for further human development. And the third, which is most subtle and deep, constitutes the divine possibilities in man centred in his infinite and immortal dimension, with its own unique and enormous energy resources; and this finds expression in the taming and creative use of the other energy resources, so that he does not use his strong body, or trained mind, orpowerful will, to exploit others or to harm others, but to love them and serve them and help them to achieve life fulfilment.

That third attainment is the highest growth of man, crowning his physical and mental growths, not contradictory to them or opposed to them, as in some systems of philosophy or theology, but consummating them, so that man liberates himself from external dependence and achieves peace and integration within and radiates the same around him. Vedānta warns man, and Vivekananda emphasizes the same today, that if man grows only physically and mentally, but does not, side by side, grow also spiritually, he will actually use his strength to exploit others, to express himself in violence and war, to harm and destroy others, and to harm and destroy even himself. But when he grows spiritually also, and manifests his ever-present divine dimension, he becomes capable to express himself in love and compassion, becomes capable to radiate humanistic impulses towards not only other human beings but also animals. That is the type of spiritual energy manifestation that the world witnessed in a Buddha, in a Jesus, in a Sri Ramakrishna, and in a Vivekananda. They conquered hatred through love and gave peace to the peaceless and joy to the grief-stricken; and they gave these to people out of their abundance.

7. *Need for Knowledge to Mature into Wisdom*

Today, the whole world is seeking for, is in need of, this kind of spiritual growth which releases that type of divine energy resource to match with, and to digest, the energy resources released by modern physical science and technology. The latter has annihilated physical distances between man and man, but the problem of annihilating the mental and emotional distances between man and man remains to be solved. On the other hand, that mental distance is increasing, not diminishing, in spite of scientific knowledge and technical power. This is revealed in the ever-increasing violence, crime, and delinquency, even juvenile delinquency, in all parts of the world, and in the sex and drug explosions rocking modern society.

What is the reason for these highly disturbing social phenomena? Certainly, these are not physical maladies. Modern man has better physical bodies and health than in past ages, thanks to his knowledge of the science of nutrition and his vastly improved techniques for increased food production. He is also immensely nourished mentally and intellectually compared to his predecessors, thanks to the explosive output of scientific knowledge; and yet, we find modern man getting increasingly alienated both from

himself and from others. He is unhappy, tense, peaceless, given often to inflicting violence on others or suicide on himself.

Vivekananda spent four intense years in the West preaching Vedānta and helping to broaden and deepen its religion and inter-human relations. He saw the above tragic situation developing even in his time, towards the end of the last century; and he warned of its intensification in the decades ahead, and emphasized the need for modern civilization to change its direction *from human sensuality to human spirituality*. And he preached the philosophy of Vedantic humanism, with its vision of the infinite divine possibilities in man, and man's organic capacity to realize these in his life. This is wisdom, this is knowledge maturing into wisdom, that India developed in her ancient Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and which got re-tested and re-authenticated in succeeding ages by Buddha, Śaṅkarācārya, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and many other luminous sages, possessed of brilliant intellects and universal hearts. They never thought or taught in narrow terms of sects or creeds or races or nationalities. They saw man as man, saw his infinite divine possibilities, felt compassion for the tragedy of his creatureliness and unfulfilments. They thus became the bearers of a luminous philosophy of humanism, at once rational, universal, practical, and dynamic. And Vivekananda expounded that Vedāntic humanism in India and in the West, in the context of modern thought and modern needs.

The late Bertrand Russell emphasised the need for knowledge to rise into, to mature into, wisdom, and warned modern man (*Impact of Science on Society*, pp. 120-21):

'We are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends. Given sufficient folly as to ends, every increase in the skill required to achieve them is to the bad. The human race has survived hitherto owing to ignorance and incompetence; but given knowledge and competence combined with folly, there can be no certainty of survival. Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil as much as for good. It follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.'

8. *Humanism in Western History*

The History of Western humanism makes an interesting study in the light of the above-discussed Vedāntic humanism. Western

humanism traces its ancestry to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Greek humanism was limited to its own citizens, and excluded the non-Greeks and the slaves from its blessings. Roman humanism was broader, but did not also extend to the slaves. Both were secular and non-religious. Then came Christianity, preaching its own humanism, based on its narrow theology, first to the peoples of the Roman Empire and, later, to peoples of Europe as a whole. But this Christian humanism also was exclusive; it was limited to the believers in its own narrow creed and dogma; it did not extend not only to non-Christians, but also to its own dissidents in creed and to all scientists and rationalists.

Western humanism in general, and Christian humanism in particular, received their most serious shock from the very violent Thirty-Years' War between the protestants and the Catholics in Germany. Man killed man in the name of a common god and religion, reducing the population of Germany, according to historians, from 25 to 5 million. This was a traumatic experience for all thinking Europeans who said to themselves and to each other: We believed in the Christian god and creed; and yet, how could we fight such a devastating war with each other in the name of that one god sitting in his kingdom of heaven far away. We shall not believe in that god hereafter; we shall not need him either; we shall become completely secular and put our faith *in man below* instead of *a god above*. As remarked by historian Arnold Toynbee of England (*An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 184):

'In the eyes of Western Man in the late decades of the seventeenth century, to try to create an earthly paradise looked like a more practicable objective than to try to bring a Kingdom of Heaven down to Earth. Recent Western experience had shown that the specifications for a Kingdom of Heaven on Earth were a subject of acrimonious and interminable dispute between rival schools of theologians. On the other hand, the differences of opinion between practical technicians or between experimental scientists would be likely to be cleared up, before long, by the findings of observation, and of reasoning about the results of observation, on which there would be no disagreement.'

This shift of faith from god to man was helped by the European's discovery of Greek humanism, in the wake of its contact with the thought and culture and literature of classical Greece in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; this modern Western humanism, stengthened later by physical sciences and technology, held out

amelioristic hopes of full human development in peace and plenty all over the world. It steadily gained strength and prestige for three hundred years, up to 1914. Then came the devastating First World War, when the Western man hated and killed brother Western man to an extent unprecedented in history. This was followed by the continuous tensions of the post-war years, to culminate in the more devastating Second World War, with its additional Nazi brutalities and gruesome murders of millions of Jews. These traumatic experiences shook to the very foundations Western man's faith even in man, just as the Thirty Years' War earlier had destroyed his faith in god. They shattered his faith even in humanism itself.

The Second World War has left the Western man with no focus of faith and loyalty either to a god above or man below, breeding in him a cynical attitude with respect to all values — religious and other-worldly, or human and this-worldly, or ethical and moral; and it has led him to opt for a plunge into a crude materialism and to bend his efficient technology for the satisfaction of his organic cravings during the short span of his physical existence. This has, in turn, resulted in generating in him inner tensions, privations, and psychic distortions to an alarming degree.

Into this Western human context came a new challenge, in the form of the Bolshevik Revolution and the hope of a new human civilization, led by the U. S. S. R, promising peace and plenty round the world. After impressive achievements in the field of mass human developments during its first four decades, this new experiment also is showing severe inner tensions within the individual man and woman in the U.S.S.R. in the form of increase in crime, drunkenness, and other psychic distortions, and intense conflicts between one Marxist state and another. Marxist humanism goes far, but not far enough, to ensure human fulfilment. Vedānta helps Marxism to carry its study of man into the depth of the human spirit and to base its undoubtedly promising human experiment on the *rock* of the divine in man and not on the *sands* of his physical and organic system.

9. *Defect of Materialism as a Philosophy of Life*

Whether it is Euro-American materialism or Marxist

materialism, it is just materialism; and all materialism is only an intellectual tool useful in the study of physical nature. Even there, it is successful only in the short run when that study is concerned only with the surface aspects of nature, but breaks down completely, and becomes a distorting tool, when it deals with man and the human situation. *It is futile to derive humanism from materialism.* Even an agnostic like Thomas Huxley, the collaborator of Darwin, had discovered these limitations of materialism as a philosophy of life and uttered this warning a century earlier (*Methods and Results,* pp 164-65):

> 'If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former, and no harm can accrue so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols. ...
>
> 'But the man of science who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulae and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the x's and y's, with which he works his problems, for real entities, and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyse the energies and destroy the beauty of a life.'

Modern materialism, whether Euro-American or Marxist, according to Vedāntic analysis, is only a reaction against the rigid anti-rational and anti-scientific theologies, and their organization in a long-established militant church, of the West. But when we turn to Vedānta, and to the long Indian experience of the inter-relations between physical sciences and religion, we do not find these conflicts. The Upaniṣads commence their enquiry into reality with matter as the starting point, and not with an extra-cosmic god in the sky. *Annaṁ brahmeti vyajānāt*—'(The student) understood *annam,* i.e. food or matter, as Brahman (the highest Reality, as the meaning of the words of his teacher)'— says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.2). Deeper inquiry takes the student successively to *prāṇam,* energy, *manaḥ,* mind, *Vijñanam,* reason, and then *ānandam,* bliss (beyond the dualities of thought). Reality is finally realized by the student, with the help of the gentle hints and suggestions of the teacher, as the one undifferentiated Pure Consciousness-Field, out of which come all *annam,* all *prāṇam,* all *manaḥ,* all *Vijñānam,* and all

ānandam; and the *Chāndogya Upanisad* reveals the further profound truth (6.9.4):

Aitat ātmyamidaṁ sarvam, tat satyaṁ, sa ātmā, tat tvaṁ asi Śvetaketo --

'This whole manifested universe has this (Reality) as its Self; that is the Truth; that is the Atman (the Self); and thou art That, O Śvetaketu.'

This is the vision of the One behind the Many, the one that never changes, that never dies, behind the many that change and die. *Tat tvam asi* is the profound truth about man, the truth of the infinite possibilities lying behind him, just as $e=mc^2$ is the truth that modern physics conveys about the infinite energy possibilities lying behind any lump of matter. Marxian humanism as well as Euro-American humanism, says Vivekananda's Vedanta today, need to take into account this profound Upaniṣadic truth of *Tat tvam asi,* and the humanism developed in its light.

10. *Vivekananda's Estimate of India's Failure to Evolve a fully Humanist Society.*

In spite of being the home of this profound vision of man, India herself, Vivekananda declared, had failed to apply this Vedāntic humanism energetically and extensively to solve her own human problems. She had failed to evolve a fully humanist social order, upholding the glory of man, and his freedom, equality, and dignity as the Ātman. Through continuous exploitation and oppression by the higher classes, he found millions of the common people of India reduced to the status of 'next-door neighbours to brutes', in his own agony-filled language. Pouring out this agony, he wrote in one of his letters from America (*Complete Works,* Vol. V. pp. 15-17, 1959 Edition):

'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism. The Lord has shown me that religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and Sadducees in Hinduism, hypocrites, who invent all sorts of engines of tyranny in the shape of *Pāramārthika* (highest truth) and *vyāvahārika* (what is applicable to daily life in the world). ...

'I pity them. ... Their sleep is never disturbed. Their nice little brown studies of lives never rudely shocked by the wail of woe, of misery, of degradation, and poverty, that has filled the Indian atmosphere — the result of centuries of oppression. They little dream of the ages of tyranny, mental, moral, and physical, that has reduced the image of God (that is man, according to Vedānta) to a mere beast of burden, the emblem of the Divine Mother (that is woman), to a slave to bear children, and life itself a curse. But there are others who see, feel, and shed tears of blood in their hearts, who think that there is a remedy for it, and who are ready to apply this remedy at any cost, even to the giving up of life. ...

'Trust not the so-called rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you — in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. ... I may perish of cold and hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle, for the poor the ignorant, the oppressed. ...Vow, then, to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.'

The establishment of the British Empire in India in the last century, preceded by a century of British commercial rapacity, saw the human situation in India at its lowest ebb. The shock of foreign conquest, and contact with the virile culture of the West through the British connection, instead of destroying India, as had happened in the case of many other cultures under similar circumstances, only helped to ignite the ever-present fires at the depth of India's soul, and make them flame forth in a great national renaissance which produced great personalities, among whom the greatest, the most authentic, and the most representative of Indian culture as a whole, were Sri Ramakrishna, the teacher, and Swami Vivekananda, the disciple.

11. Vivekananda: the Formative Influences on His Life

It is interesting and rewarding to study the formative influences on Vivekananda's life that made him the unique meeting point of the Orient and the Occident, of the ancient and the modern. These influences were four: Firstly, his assimilation of the rich spiritual elements of Indian culture in his early life through the informal education received from his mother and from his own studies; secondly, his assimilation of the energy and spirit of Western culture through his formal modern education in school and college as a youth; thirdly his silent spiritual training under his guru, Sri Ramakrishna, whom Romain Rolland presents to his Western readers in his *Life of Ramakrishna* as 'the consummation of two

thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although he has been dead forty years, his soul animates Modern India.' And fourthly, his intimate acquaintance, through his extensive travels across the length and breadth of his vast country as a *parivrājaka,* or wandering monk, just prior to his historic journey to the West, with the living pulsating India of peoples and their problems, as much economic, as social, political, and spiritual.

This fourth formative influence had contributed substantially to the shaping of Vivekananda's humanism. Sri Ramakrishna had foretold, according to Swami Saradananda, one of the brother-disciples of Vivekananda, that, when Narendra (the pre-monastic name of Vivekananda) would come into intimate contact with human suffering, his energy of pride would melt into the energy of human compassion (*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master,* p. 753, Fourth Edition):

'Ordinary people, contented with walking along the beaten track, happened very often to regard Narendra as arrogant and insolent and of improper conduct, when they saw his external behaviour; but the Master never fell into that error. From the very start of their acquaintance, he could understand that Narendra's "arrogance and insolence" arose from his self-confidence, which was the result of the extraordinary mental power hidden within him, that his absolutely free behaviour indicated nothing but the self-control natural to him, and that his indifference to the respect shown by people arose from self-satisfaction due to his pure character. He had the conviction that, later on, the extraordinary nature of Narendra could fully blossom like a lotus of a thousand petals and would be established in its own incomparable glory and greatness. *Coming then into collision with the world scorched by miseries, that arrogance and insolence of his would melt into infinite compassion,* his extraordinary self-confidence would re-instill hopes in the broken hearts, and his free behaviour, remaining within the bounds of control in all respects, would point out to others that self-control alone was the path to real freedom.' (italics not by the author)

This remark of his Master finds its complement in Vivekananda's own admission to his brother monk, Swami Turiyananda, when he met him at Abu Road Station on the eve of his departure for the West (*Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern & Western Disciples, Fourth Edition, p. 285):

'Of his meeting with the Swami at Abu station, Swami Turiyananda said later on:

"I vividly remember some remarks made by Swamiji at that time. The exact words and accents, and the deep pathos with which they were uttered, still ring in my ears. He said:

'Haribhai (brother Hari), I am still unable to understand anything of your so-called religion.' "

'Then, with an expression with deep sorrow on his countenance and intense emotion shaking his body, he placed his hands on his heart and added:

'But my heart has expanded very much and I have learnt to feel (the suffering of others). Believe me, I feel intensely indeed.' "

"His voice was choked with feeling; he could say no more. For a time, profound silence reigned, and tears rolled down his cheeks."

'In telling of this incident, Swami Turiyananda was also overcome. He sat silent for a while, his eyelids heavy with tears. With a deep sigh, he said:

"Can you imagine what passed through my mind on hearing the Swami speak thus? 'Are not these', I thought, 'the very words and feelings of Buddha? ... I could clearly perceive that the sufferings of humanity were pulsating in the heart of Swamiji; his heart was a huge cauldron in which the sufferings of mankind were being made into a healing balm."

Sri Ramakrishna lived from 1836 to 1886. His deep spirituality and wide catholicity and intense humanism drew to him a wide spectrum of humanity – believers and agnostics, intellectuals and common people, old people and youths. His gentle education of young Narendra in a universal humanism based on the profound Vedāntic vision of the divine spark in man, and as the messenger of strength and fearlessness and hope to all humanity, constitute an inspiring and impressive episode in modern human history. I have tried to expound this training of his, in some detail, in my small book entitled *The Meeting of East and West in Swami Vivekananda.*

Swami Saradananda refers also to Sri Ramakrishna's intense humanistic orientation after his years of high spiritual ecstasies (*ibid.*, p.360):

'The Master himself said to us on many occasions:

"The natural tendency of this mind is upwards towards the *Nirvikalpa* plane. Once in *Samādhi,* it does not feel inclined to come down. It has forcibly to be brought down for your sake. This force is, moreover, not sufficient for bringing me down, so I catch hold of some trifling desires of the lower plane as, 'I will smoke tobacco', 'I will drink water', 'I will take this', 'I will see so and so' 'I will talk'; these also have to be retained in the mind by effective repetition. It is only then that the mind gradually comes down to the state of body-consciousness. Again, when coming down, it flies off in that (upward) direction. It has to be brought down again by means of such desires."

'What a wonderful phenomenon!'

12. *Vivekananda: 'The Harmony of All Human Energy'*

The Vivekananda who emerged out of these fourfold influences, and who burst upon the modern world with his Vedantic lion-roar, proclaiming the innate divinity of man and the glory of the human spirit, at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1983, was a unique personality, not only from the point of view of the history of religion, but also of the history of man and his development. Referring to him as 'Napoleonic in the spiritual realm', Romain Rolland describes the universal sweep of his vision in these words (*Life of Vivekananda.* 1947 Edition p. 310):

'In the two words, equilibrium and synthesis, Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit: the four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action, from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he held the reins of all four ways of truth, and travelled towards Unity along them all simultaneously. He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy.'

13. *Vivekananda: The Awakener of Souls*

After his four years of strenuous spiritual and cultural work in the West. where he gave a spiritual orientation to Western humanism and raised it above racial and sectarian limitations, Swami Vivekananda returned to India in 1897 and received a rousing welcome from his awakened countrymen—a welcome, the type of which, in intensity, spontaneity, loftiness, and pervasiveness, no military conquerors or other heroes in history have received. And, in response to that tumultuous national welcome, he gave to his people his stirring Vedantic message to awake them from their centuries-long sleep and build up their country on humanist lines. In East or West, he was always the awakener of souls. The central theme of his inspiring Indian speeches was man—his growth, development, and fulfilment. As remarked by Mahatma Gandhi (Foreword to ***Education*** by Swami Vivekananda):

'Surely, Vivekanada's writings need no introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal.'

And as observed by Jawaharlal Nehru (***Discovery of India.*** p. 400):

'Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.'

Vivekananda's lectures from Colombo in Sri Lanka in the far south, to Almora in the Himalayas in the far north, created a great national awakening. For, his main theme was the awakening of the Indian humanity and strengthening it to meet the modern challenges, and utilize the vast opportunities of the modern age to evolve a truly humanist social order. We catch this theme in the very opening sentence of his first speech on the Indian soil, in Ramnad, near the ancient sacred pilgrim town of Rameshwaram in the far south, in 1897, delivered just fifty years before India achieved her political independence in 1947 (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, 1960 Edition, pp. 145-46):

The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, and a voice is coming to us—away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected, as it were, from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours—a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep.

'None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet!'

'Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words,' remarks Romain Rolland, and adds (*Life of Vivekananda, pp. 124-25):*

'From that day, the awakening of the torpid colossus began. If the generation that followed saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organized masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty 'Lazarus, come forth!', of the message from Madras.'

This awakening led, within less than a decade, to political awakening and the initiation of the peoples' struggle for political freedom. It started with the Swadeshi agitation in Bengal in 1905, passed through the violent anarchist revolutionary movement thereafter, and culminated in the non-violent mass Gandhian

Satyagraha and 'Quit India' movements from 1920 to 1947. Says Romain Rolland on the impact of Vivekananda on the Indian nation (*ibid.*, pp. 314-16):

'He had a genius for arresting words and burning phrases hammered out white-hot in the forge of his soul, so that they transpierced thousands. The one that made the deepest impression was the famous phrase: *Daridra-Nārāyan* (the beggar-god).

'So India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation, wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own sannyāsins; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds, and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by these means. ...

'Whatever the part played in this re-awakening by the three generations of trumpeters during the previous century—(the greatest of whom we salute, the genial Precursor: Ram Mohun Roy), the decisive call was that trumpet blast of the lectures delivered at Colombo and Madras.'

Since I am scheduled to speak on *Vivekananda's Impact on Modern India* tomorrow at the Institute of Oriental Studies, I do not wish to elaborate on this theme further today.

The intensity of Vivekananda's humanistic impulse is particularly revealed in the course of the following letter written to Miss Mary Hale of Chicago on 9 July 1897 (*Complete Works*, Vol.V, pp. *135-36):*

'I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep, without caring what will be next. And may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls—and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my **worship**.'

14. Vivekananda's Humanism: Its Uniqueness

The humanism expounded by Vivekananda is intensely human and universal. But it is also something more than human; for it derives its strength and sanction, as I said earlier, from the ever-present and inalienable divine spark in all men and women. *And that constitutes its uniqueness.* Man's strength and knowledge can be either destructive or constructive: they can give him and his

fellow human beings life and love, and joy and peace, or death and hatred, sorrow and unfulfilment. Which of these two a man will choose will primarily depend on the spiritual development, the consciousness level, that he has attained, and only secondarily on his economic and social environment. It is obvious today that economically highly developed societies can foster, cannot escape from, alienation, loneliness, and crime; but the other truth is not so obvious, yet India's experience demonstrates it, that poverty and crime need not go together, that poverty of the pocket need not always mean poverty of the heart. If the human consciousness functions at the sensate level, and at the level of the ego presiding over man's organic system, man can scatter only tension and peacelessness around him. But if it functions from the deeper level of his divine dimension, or from layers close to it, he will become, naturally and spontaneously, a focus of love and peace and fearlessness around him. *A humanism that is strengthened and sustained by the ignition of the divine spark in man is far different from the current humanism of the West, including its scientific humanism.* There is a universality and dynamism in the former, and its energies are entirely positive and never negative.

That is the strength and range and relevance of Vivekananda's Vedāntic humanism. He accepts the human situation, man as we find him in society. He also accepts the need for the manipulation of his socio-political conditions, up to a point, to ensure his growth and development. But he will insist that man must develop and grow further, that he must evolve and steadily unfold also the higher divine possibilities hidden within him. This is echoed in modern biology in the concept of *psycho-social evolution,* of evolution rising from the organic level to the ethical and moral levels. Vivekananda would appreciate the remark of the Western thinker, it may be Victor Hugo, that we are not men yet, but only candidates to humanity! If man's inside is tense and tumultuous, it means that he has not overcome fear; it means further that he cannot be a guarantee for the peace and fearlessness of the rest of the world.

Just on the eve of the Second World War, an English intellectual, Dr.Josiah Oldfield, in the course of a speech on 'War and Internationalism', said, apparently referring to the Treaty of Versailles:

'More wars are caused by bad-tempered people seeking to discuss peace measures than by good-tempered people seeking to discuss war measures!'

The UNESCO Preamble embodies this very sentiment:

'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.'

Vivekananda's humanism fully endorses this sentiment. The world knows that the Treaty of Versailles was drawn up by people who were full of tempers compounded of nationalistic violence and colonialistic exploitation. How could such minds bring peace? On the contrary, as later events proved, they were sowing seeds of a more devastating war in the name of peace, along with the seeds of much tension and fear in the inter-war years. Beasts of prey cannot ensure peace and fearlessness in the forest-world around them, in spite of long discussions and solemn decisions in their peace conferences! What is needed for the establishment of world peace and the functioning of a universal and dynamic humanism is the overcoming of this beastliness in man, through his education being carried beyond the intellectual to the spiritual dimensions of his being. This is what Vivekananda calls true religion, which he defines as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man'. The Atman, the one divine and immortal Self in all, is the only rational sanction, says Vivekananda, for all ethical and moral life and action, for all humanistic impulses and behaviour. When a human being manifests the Atman in his or her life and behaviour even a little, he or she becomes fearless and at peace with oneself and at peace with the world, for he or she realizes his or her spiritual oneness with all.

The Upanisads, therefore, describe the Atman as all peace —*śānto yam atma*. All the tensions of man's physical life, all the complexes of his mental dimension, become gently resolved in this higher dimension of the human personality. *This is humanism with the deepest spiritual import and, therefore, with the widest social relevance, most stable and steady and, therefore, beyond the reach of the pressures, narrow and violent, of all political, racial, and religious prejudices, frenzies, and passions.*

15. Indian History: Its Impressive International Humanist Record

This is the uniqueness of the Indian outlook, and of the Indian approach to inter-human and international relations, as interpreted by Vivekananda. We may consider India's history from two points of view: firstly, its successes; secondly, its failures. It has failed in certain fields, but has registered success in certain other fields. It has so far failed to evolve a truly egalitarian social order, as pointed out by Vivekananda in his letter referred to earlier; and it is treating this as its supreme national objective in this modern period of her long history. But it has succeeded in developing and maintaining a uniformly peaceful attitude and policy in its inter-national and inter-religious relations. It is impressive that, during her long history of about five thousand years, India has never gone outside her boundaries to conquer and enslave and exploit other nations, even when she had the political and military power to do so. This is the sweet fruit of her philosophy of man in depth, of her vision of the One Self in all, which made her evaluate man as man, and not as conditioned by his external variable factors such as race, creed, or political nationality. *Universal peace and toleration can derive only from a universal vision.*

Vivekananda's humanism is based on this universal Vedāntic vision of man as the Ātman. This vision of India's sages and philosophers did not remain as a vision, but was given unique political expressions by several Indian political states at the all-India as well as provincial levels, among whom the most outstanding example was the policy and programme of the Mauryan Emperor Asoka of the third century before Christ. Experiencing remorse after his successful but bloody war with his neighbouring Kaliṅga state, Aśoka renounced all wars as the instrument of state policy and, as proclaimed through his numerous rock and pillar edicts, many of which still exist, he silenced all war drums, *yuddha-bheri*, and struck the kettle-drums of truth and justice, *dharma-beri*; and this, not only in the political and inter-national fields, but also in the fields of inter-religious relations. This wise policy of non-violence, active toleration, and international understanding was taken up by his successors also at the all-India and provincial levels, who extended welcome and hospitality to successive foreign racial and religious groups, and refugees fleeing from persecution from their own countries, like the Jews and the early Christians from West Asia and the Zoroastrians from Iran.

In several of his speeches, Vivekananda has referred to this peaceful character of India's international relations. Said he in his 'First Public Lecture in the East', delivered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in January 1897 (*Complete Works*, Vol.III, pp.105—06):

'The debt which the world owes to our motherland is immense. ... "The mild Hindu" sometimes is used as an expression of reproach; but if ever a reproach concealed a wonderful truth, it is in the term "the mild Hindu", who has always been the blessed child of God.

'Civilizations have arisen in other parts of the world. ...In ancient and in modern times, seeds of great truth and power have been cast abroad by the advancing tides of national life. But mark you, my friends, it has been always with the blast of war trumpets, and with the march of embattled cohorts. Each idea had to be soaked in a deluge of blood. ... Each word of power had to be followed by the groans of millions, by the wails of orphans, by the tears of widows. This, in the main, other nations have taught. But India has for thousands of years peacefully existed. Here activity prevailed when even Greece did not exist, when Rome was not thought of. ... ; even from then until now, ideas after ideas have marched out from her, *but every word has been spoken with a blessing behind it, and peace before it.* We, of all nations of the world, have never been a conquering race, and that blessing is on our head, and therefore we live.'

Again (*ibid.*, p. 222):

'Gifts of political knowledge can be made with the blast of trumpets and the march of cohorts. Gifts of secular knowledge and social knowledge can be made with fire and sword. But spiritual knowledge can be given only in silence, like the dew that falls unseen and unheard, yet bringing into bloom masses of roses. This has been the gift of India to the world again and again.'

Vivekananda pointed this out as one of the sweetest fruits of India's humanism. It is also illustrated by the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia in a uniformly peaceful manner. *Humanism cannot coexist with any predatory attitude or behaviour; it cannot coexist also with any intolerant attitude and behaviour.* India's failure in upholding her humanism has been, as I said earlier, in her own national society. And Vivekananda's contribution to correct this failure and evolve a human social order in India in this modern age is immense. And he took India out of her isolation of centuries into the main stream of modern international life, in order to achieve this very objective. He was, as I have said earlier, deeply imbued with the humanistic and intellectual riches of modern Western thought, with its theoretical and practical contributions in the fields of science, and political and economic contributions in the fields of

society. He was fully aware of the international character of human relationships in the modern context. His was not to be the role of a reactionary narrow patriot who would take his country away from the contamination of other peoples, or ride his chariot of a jingoistic nationalism roughly over the freedom and dignity of other nations. He loved India deeply; but he loved humanity at large also with an equal passion.

16. Vivekananda: A Teacher of Internationalism

Vivekananda's programme of human development in his own country was thus designed to be achieved, not in an isolated exclusive national context, but in the broadest context of international cooperation. He advocated internationlism and international cooperation long before that concept became an international reality. In his lecture on 'Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life', delivered in Madras in 1897, he upheld this vision of human solidarity as taught in Vedānta (*Complete Works*, Vol.III, pp. 240—41):

'The second great idea which the world is waiting to receive from our Upaniṣads is the solidarity of this universe. The old lines of demarcation and differentiation are vanishing rapidly. ... Our Upaniṣads say that the cause of all misery is ignorance; and that is perfectly true when applied to every state of life, either social or spiritual. It is ignorance that makes us hate each other, it is through ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know each other, love comes, must come, for are we not one?

'Thus we find solidarity coming in spite of itself. Even in politics and sociology, problems that were only national twenty years ago, can no more be solved on national grounds only. They are assuming huge proportions, gigantic shapes. They can only be solved when looked at in the broader light of international grounds. International orgainzations, international combinations, international laws are the cry of the day. That shows the solidarity.

'In science, every day, we are coming to a similar broad view of matter. You speak of matter, the whole universe as one mass, one ocean of matter, in which you and I, the sun and the moon, and everything else, are but the names of different little whirlpools and nothing more. Mentally speaking, it is one universal ocean of thought, in which you and I are similar little whirlpools; and, as spirit, it moveth not, it changeth not. It is the one unchangeable, unbroken, homogeneous Ātman.

'The cry for morality is coming also, and that is to be found in our books. The explanation of morality, the fountain of ethics, that also the world wants; and that it will get here.'

Romain Rolland concludes his *Life of Vivekananda* with an invitation to the West to respond to the work of human unity initiated by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda (pp. 344-48):

'Even when they speak to themselves, the Vivekanandas speak to humanity. ...

'The work begun by the two Indian Masters will be carried on resolutely by other workmen of the spirit in other parts of the world. In whatever tunnel a man may be digging, he is never out of sound of the sap being dug on the other side of the mountain. ...

'My European companions, I have made you listen through the Wall, to the blows of the coming one, Asia. ... Go to meet her! She is working for us. We are working for her. Europe and Asia are the two halves of the Soul. Man *is not yet*. He *will be*.'

I am glad to have been given this opportunity and privilege to speak to you on this profound theme of Vivekananda, so contemporary in relevance.

(At this stage in the Swami's talk, a member of the audience referred to Leo Tolstoy's interest in Swami Vivekananda.)

17. Tolstoy and Vivekananda

Yes, that is right. It was probably in 1905 that Tolstoy first studied Vivekananda, his book *Raja-Yoga*. He was deeply affected by Vivekananda's spirituality and humanism, because that humanism was so universal, and was based on a profound philosophy of man in depth as deriving from Vedānta.

I have seen in Tolstoy's library in yasnaya lobyana a book by his Secretary, Bulgakov: *The Descriptive Catalogue of Tolstoy's Library*, prepared between 1911 and 1916, that is, immediately after Tolstoy's death. I have recorded a reference to some of the interesting contents in this catalogue in relation to Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna, in my book: *A Pilgrim Looks at the World* (Vol. 1, pp. 468-69):

'Against the book *Sayings of Paramahamsa Sri Ramakrishna*, from the journal the *Brahmavadin*, Madras, the entry of his Secretary reads:

"There are remarks by Tolstoy in black pencil; the book was read by Tolstoy probably in 1910 when it was sent to Yasnaya Polyana by the author who, at that time, had planned to visit Tolstoy in person. There is the following evidence about it given by Tolstoy's doctor and friend, Makovitzki:

"On 6th February 1906, Tolstoy writes to Sergeenko (a Russian writer whose son was a friend of Tolstoy):

' "I know Ramakrishna from Theosophical journals. There are nowhere such beautiful ideas as you wrote out for me. Where have you taken them from?" '

'After this, the next few pages of the catalogue are devoted by Bulgakov to record the pages and paragraphs (practically of the whole book of over 1,000 sayings) of the *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, in which Tolstoy has entered his comments.

'From the large number of books on Indian philosophy, literature, and religion in his library, and the marginal comments he has entered in many of these, it becomes evident that Tolstoy was deeply fascinated by Indian thought. The Upaniṣads, the *Raṁayaṇa*, and the story of Buddha deeply moved him.

'According to Bulgakov, Tolstoy used to study the writings of Vivekananda, who was his contemporary, with great attention and interest. He adds that, after reading the Swami's writing: 'God and the Soul', Tolstoy wrote in his diary on July 4, 1908:

"I read the wonderful writing of Vivekananda on God; this should be translated; intend to do this myself."

'Tolstoy had himself translated into Russian *The Way to Blessedness* by Swami Abhedananda. (This is more likely to be Swami Vivekananda's lecture on the subject appearing now in his *Complete Works*, Vol.II, pp.406—15).

'One of the books in his library is a collection of I.F. Naszhivin's *Voices of Peoples* in Russian. Two of Vivekananda's writings are included in this collection: 'God and Man' and the poem 'The Hymn of Creation'.

'Bulgakov's article on 'Books about India in Tolstoy's Library', published in the collection *Brief Reports of the Institute of Orientology* (301: India and Pakistan, Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1959) contains much interesting information on the subject. .

'Tolstoy may well become the link between Soviet Russia, which has forsaken religion but is in search of spiritual values, and India and her hoary spiritual thought, which has moved Tolstoy as well as Goethe and other free thinkers of the West. ...

'There is a book in Russian by Shifman entitled *Tolstoy I Vostok* ('Tolstoy and the East'), in which Tolstoy's relations with India, including Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, are discussed in ten pages (pp. 190 to 200).'

18. 'Arise, Awake!'

When I speak tomorrow, some of these other aspects of the subject will be dealt with. Since our time is very very limited today. I have discussed only some facets of Vivekananda's multi-faceted teachings, with special reference to his humanism and its national and international bearings. There is one beautiful exhortation in his

literature which I wish to convey to you in this connection; it occurs in his lecture on 'The Mission of the Vedānta' (*Complete Works*, Vol.III, p.193):

'Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under foot, till they became helpless, till, under this torment, the poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. ...

'Our poor people, these downtrodden masses of India, therefore, require to hear and to know what they really are. Ay, let every man and woman and child, without respect of caste or birth, weakness or strength, hear and learn that behind the strong and the weak, behind the high and the low, behind everyone, there is that infinite soul assuring the infinite possibilities and the infinite capacity of all to become great and good. Let us proclaim to every soul: *Uttiṣṭhata, jāgrata, prāpya varān nibhodhata*—'*Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!*

Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak. The soul is infinite, omnipotent, omniscient. Stand up, assert yourself; proclaim the God within you: do not deny Him. ...

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

Vivekananda sends out his call to man everywhere to awake from his hypnotism of weakness. You will find this one clarion call to ***arise and awake*** in many of his writings. It is a free translation by him of a famous verse of one of the Upaniṣads, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.14) In the original Sanskrit, it sounds a powerful utterance: *Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata, prāpya varān nibodhata;* its literal translation is: 'Arise awake, and, approaching the great ones, enlighten yourself.' What is the goal?—The realization by every man and woman of his or her universal spiritual nature, and the projecting, out of the fullness and richness within, that universal humanistic impulse into the outside world. *That is the awakening which the peoples of the world will have to experience in this modern age, if they are to achieve international peace and a crime-free social order.* And Vivekananda spent every ounce of his energy to educate modern humanity in this great vision of human excellence and its implementation. Though born in India, he was not a mere Indian. He was international in his sympathies and outlook.

19. *America and Vivekananda*

When he was working in America for four years, an English friend wrote to him so as to say: How long will you be there? Please return to your own Mother India; there is plenty of work for your nation awaiting you. To this, he sent a reply on 9 August 1895, which breathes his international interest and sympathies and his broad spiritual humanism (*Complete Works*, Vol.VIII, 1959 Edition, pp. 349—350):

Doubtless, I do love India. But everyday my sight grows clearer. What is India or England or America to us? We are the servants of that God who by the ignorant is called *Man*. He who pours water at the root, does he not water the whole tree?

'There is but one basis of well-being—social, political, or spiritual—to know that I and my brother are *one*. This is true for all countries and all people. And Westerners, let me say, will realize it more quickly than Orientals, who have almost exhausted themsleves in formulating the idea and producing a few cases of individual realization.'

That is a beautiful idea. Though deeply Indian, he did not become exclusively Indian. Therefore, today, you will find many Americans accepting Vivekananda as part and parcel of America itself. Last year I was in America on a lecture tour. That nation was celebrating its bicentenary—two centuries of independence—1776-1976. On that occasion, for the first time, the American political state recognized the importance of Vivekananda in American history, recognized the importance of Vivekananda as a link in Indo-American cultural and spiritual relations. This is revealed in the interesting book published by the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.: *Abroad in America: Visitors to the New Nation*—1776-1914. When I came across this book in Washington, I was fascinated and impressed. The book contains interesting accounts and impressions of twenty-nine people, from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Cuba, France, England, China, and some other countries, who visited the U.S.A., during that period. There is also one from Russia, Pavel Svin' in, Secretary to the Russian Consul-General in Philadelphia, 1811-1813.

The one from India the only one, is Vivekananda, who is the twenty-fourth in the book. Apart from the book, I saw also the bicentenary exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery, organized by the Smithsonian Institution, featuring, with photos and write-ups, these twentynine visitors. Below Vivekananda's photo on page 238 in the book are inscribed the following words:

'Travelling in the early 1890s through the 'Yankee-land', as he called it, Swami Vivekananda passed a mystic's judgement on a materialist society and captured the imagination of his American audience.'

These are significant landmarks in the first inter-twining processes of Indo-American history. Students in American universities are already writing Ph. D. theses on Vivekananda's contribution to America, on his Vedānta movement in their country.

The following words, from a letter written by him from Chicago to India on 2 November 1893, convey Vivekananda's appreciation of the American human experiment *(Complete Works* Vol.V,1959 Edition, p.23.):

'The Americans have their faults too, and what nation has not? But this is my summing up. Asia laid the germs of civilization, Europe developed man, and America is developing the woman and the masses. It is the paradise of the woman and the labourer. ... The Americans are fast becoming liberal; and this great nation is progressing fast towards that spirituality which is the standard boast of the Hindu.'

20. *Conclusion*

Slowly, the rest of the world also is realizing the importance of Vivekananda's contribution, not only to the people of India, but also to all humanity. Vivekananda worked hard to deepen the spiritual life of humanity everywhere and to bring harmony between the Orient and the Occident at a high level.

I thank you for your kindness. [Loud applause.]

QUESTION-ANSWER SESSION

1. *Question:* Can we have your views regarding the relationship between the work of Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the father of the Arya Samaj?

Answer: There are many things common between Swami Dayananda and Swami Vivekananda. Both were devoted to making India dynamic and progressive in the modern age. Both drew inspiration from the ancient Indian culture and traditions. But there is a slight difference in approach and that makes a little difference also in the range and scope of the work of each. Vivekananda accepted fully the past of India, Vedic and post-Vedic, and also the modern contact of India with the West. But Dayananda did not accept the post-Vedic Indian developments nor the modern Western contributions. He was solely looking back to India's far past to receive inspiration to work and to reshape modern India. Vivekananda, on the other hand, accepted the entire past of India, including the Islamic and other later contributions, and the modern Western contributions. He sought and worked hard to build a bridge between ancient India and modern India, and between East and West, and was himself such a synthesis. In his essays written in Bengali in 1909, and published under the general title *Samaj* in the fifteen-volume Bengali edition of his complete works entitled *Rabindra Rachanavali,* poet Rabindranath Tagore greeted Vivekananda as the meeting point of East and West. What really impressed Tagore in Vivekananda, in comparison with other contemporary leaders, was his positive mind and attitude (Vol. 13, p. 55):

'The great soul whose death occurred a few years ago in Bengal, that Vivekananda also rose keeping the East to his right and the West to his left and himself standing in between. The purpose of his life was not to contract India for all times to narrow thought-moulds by excluding the West from Indian history. To accept, to mingle, to create, was, verily, his genius. He sacrificed his life to open up a communication line by which the achievements of India may be given to the West and the achievements of the West may be accepted in India.'

And some years later, writing about the depth and the sweep of Vivekananda's vision and programme of human development and its creative role in bringing out the vast hidden possibilities in man, unlike the limited do's and don'ts of contemporary Indian leaders, Tagore said (*Prabāsi,* vol. 28, p.286):

'In recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied up with any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said: In every one of you there is the power of Brahman (God): the God in the poor desires you to serve (Him). This message has roused the hearts of youths in a pervasive way. That is why this message has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse forms of renunciation. His message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power.'

When Tagore met Romain Rolland in Europe in the early 1920's, Tagore told him:

If you want to understand India, study Vivekananda. In him, everything is positive, nothing negative.'

That impressed Rolland, and he studied Ramakrishna and

Vivekananda, became deeply impressed with the depth and sweep of their life and thought, and produced the best scholarly and critical and sympathetic biographies on them, in which he presented both, as referred to earlier by me, as *the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul.*

This sweep and range of thought cannot be said of Dayananda. But both were steeped in India's ancient culture. Both lived pure and holy lives and gave new strength to India's ancient Vedic monasticism; and both preached a dynamic humanism, worked hard to eliminate caste exclusiveness and untouchability, and oriented Hinduism towards the service of man along with worship of God. India loves and honours both of them. Romain Rolland has devoted a long chapter entitled 'Builders of Unity' in his *Life of Ramakrishna* in which he has made critical study of Ramakrishna's predecessor Ram Mohan Roy, and Ramakrishna's important contemporaries, including Dayananda.

2. *Question:* Swamiji, what is your experience about the latest situation in India, and how do you interpret Vivekananda's teaching about the coming of the Śūdra dominance in the modern age?

Answer: I was thinking that I would be dealing with that aspect tomorrow. But, since you have asked about it, I shall deal with it now, though only briefly.

Swami Vivekananda has spoken about human social evolution, particularly in the context of Indian social thought and terminology. When you study human history, he says, you find first the Brāhmaṇas, or priests, dominating society and history; later on, you find the Kṣatriya, or military power, dominating history. When we come to the modern period, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, we find the Vaiśya, or merchant class, dominating society and history. That is the commercial civilization of the modern West. But,in this twentieth century,you find the last of the four social classes, the Śūdra, the proletariat, the working class, coming up to power and dominance. And Vivekananda proclaimed the modern age as the age of the Śūdra; all the other three classes will remain, but the Śūdra will become dominant.

And he also predicted in 1896 this coming of the Śūdra age, as

recorded by his American disciple, Sister Christine, in her memoirs under the title, 'Swami Vivekananda as I saw Him' (*Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda,* Second Edition, p. 203):

'Sometimes, he was in a prophetic mood, as on the day when he startled us by saying, 'the next great upheaval which is to bring about a new epoch will come from Russia or China. I can't quite see which but it will be either Russia or China.'

'This he said thirty-two years ago, when China was still under the autocratic rule of the Manchu Emperors, from which there was no prospect of release for centuries to come, and when Czarist Russia was sending the noblest of her people to the Siberian mines. To the ordinary thinker, those two countries seemed the most unlikely nations in the world to usher in a new era.'

He was fully aware of the varied forms of exploitation of the common people of India by her wealthy and landed and intellectual aristocracies. He spoke against this exploitation in a powerful sentence in the course of a lecture in Madras in 1897 on 'The Future of India' (*Complete Works,* Vol.III, Eighth Edition, p.279):

'The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave; and the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it shall fester, and the worse death it will die.'

In his *Memoirs of European Travel,* written in 1900 in the form of letters to Swami Trigunatitananda, editor of the Bengali monthly *Udbodhan,* Calcutta, Vivekananda has given a touching tribute to the 'ever-trampled labouring classes of India' (*Complete Works,* Vol.VII, 1958 Edition, pp. 358—59):

Those uncared-for lower classes of India—the peasants and weavers and the rest, who have been conquered by foreigners and are looked down upon by their own people—it is they who, from time immemorial, have been working silently, without even getting the remuneration of their labours! But what great changes are taking place slowly, all over the world, in pursuance of nature's laws! Countries, civilizations, and supremacy are undergoing revolutions.

'Ye labouring classes of India, as a result of your silent, constant labours, Babylon, Persia, Alexandria, Greece, Rome, Venice, Genoa, Baghdad, Samarqand, Spain, Portugal, France, Denmark, Holland, and England have successively attained supremacy and eminence! and you?—Well, who cares to think of you! My dear Swami, your ancestors wrote a few philosophical works, penned a dozen or so epics, or built a number of temples—that is all, and you rend the skies with triumphal shouts; while those whose heart's blood has contributed to all the progress that has been made in the world—well, who cares to praise them?

'The world-conquering heroes of spirituality, war, and poetry, are in the eyes of all, and they have received the homage of mankind. But where nobody looks, no one gives a word of encouragement, where everybody hates— that, living amid such

circumstances and displaying boundless patience, infinite love, and dauntless practicality, our proletariat are doing their duty in their homes day and night, without the slightest murmur—well, is there no heroism in this? Many turn out to be heroes, when they have got some great task to perform. Even a coward easily gives up his life, and the most selfish man behaves disinterestedly, when there is a multitude to cheer them on; but blessed indeed is he who manifests the same unselfishness and devotion to duty in the smallest of acts, unnoticed by all—and it is you who are actually doing this, ye, the ever-trampled labouring classes of India! I bow to you.'

This Marxist idiom was used by him at a time when Marx was practically unknown in India, and Marxist ideology had established no firm hold on any political state in the world

Vivekananda prescribed education as the sure means for bringing about the awakening of the Indian masses. Says he in a letter written on 24 April 1897 (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* 1976 Edition, p.328):

'From the day when education and culture etc. began to spread gradually from patricians to plibeians, grew the distinction between the modern civilization as of Western countries and the ancient civilization as of India, Egypt, Rome, etc. I see it before my eyes, a nation is advanced in proportion as education and intelligence spread among the masses. The chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolizing of the whole of education and intelligence of the land, by dint of pride and royal authority, among a handful of men. If we are to rise again, we shall have to do it in the same way, i.e., by spreading education among the masses.'

From that point of view, he spoke of India's need of socialism for the development of her millions of oppressed humanity and expressed his own faith in socialism.

In a letter written to Miss Mary Hale of Chicago on 1 November 1896 from London, Vivekananda gave expression to these thoughts (*Complete Works,* Vol.VI, 1956, pp. 380—82):

'Human society is in turn governed by the four castes—the priests, the soldiers, the traders, and the labourers. Each state has its glories as well as its defects.

'When the priest (Brāhmin) rules, there is a tremendous exclusiveness on hereditary grounds; the persons of the priests and their descendants are hemmed in with all sorts of safeguards—none but they have any knowledge—none but they have the right to impart that knowledge. Its glory is that at this period is laid the foundation of sciences. The priests cultivate the mind, for through the mind they govern.

'The military (Kṣatriya) rule is tyrannical and cruel, but they are not exclusive; and, during that period, arts and social culture attain their height.

'The commercial (Vaiśya) rule comes next. It is awful in its silent crushing and blood-sucking power. Its advantage is, as the trader himself goes everywhere, he is a good disseminator of ideas collected during the two previous states. They are still less exclusive than the military, but culture begins to decay.

'Last will come the labourer (Sūdra) rule. Its advantages will be the distribution of physical comforts—its disadvantages, (perhaps) the lowering of culture. There will be a great distribution of ordinary education, but extraordinary geniuses will be. less and less.

'If it is possible to form a state in which the knowledge of the priest period, the culture of the military, the distributive spirit of the commercial, and the idea of equality of the last, can all be kept intact, minus their evils, it will be an ideal state. But is it possible?

'Yet the first three have had their day. Now is the time for the last. They must have it—none can resist it.

'I am a socialist, not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread.

'The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing. A redistribution of pain and pleasure is better than always the same persons having pains and pleasures. The sum total of good and evil in the world remains ever the same. The yoke will be lifted from shoulder to shoulder by new systems, that is all.

'Let every dog have his day in this miserable world, so that, after this experience of so-called happiness, they may all come to the Lord and give up this vanity of a world and governments and all other botherations.'

3. *Question:* Swamiji, you referred in your lecture to Vivekananda's teaching about the divine in the heart of man. Is there such a divine focus in man? I am much interested in the idea. Please tell me more about it.

Answer: Yes, that is the fundamental truth expounded by Vedanta and forms the central theme of all Vivekananda's lectures and writings. He expounded this Vedāntic truth for the first time in a great passage in his lecture at the Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 (*Complete Works,* Vol. I, 1962, pp. 10-11):

'Is man a tiny boat in a tempest, raised one moment on the foamy crest of a billow and dashed down into a yawning chasm the next, rolling to and fro at the mercy of good and bad actions—a powerless, helpless wreck in an ever-raging, ever-rushing, uncompromising current of cause and effect; a little moth placed under the wheel of causation which rolls on crushing everything in its way and

waits not for the widow's tears or the orphan's cry? The heart sinks at the idea, yet this is the law of Nature. Is there no hope? Is there no escape?—was the cry that went up from the bottom of the heart of despair. It reached the throne of mercy and words of hope and consolation came down and inspired a Vedic sage, and he stood up before the world and in trumpet voice proclaimed the glad tidings:

"Hear, ye children of immortal bliss! Even ye that reside in higher spheres! I have found the Ancient One who is beyond all darkness, all delusion; knowing Him alone you shall be saved from death over again."

"Children of immortal bliss!" what a sweet, what a hopeful name! Allow me to call you, brethren, by that sweet name—heirs of immortal bliss—yea, the Hindu refuses to call you sinners. Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings. Ye, divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so: it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are souls immortal, spirits free, blessed, and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter.'

To the large enlightened audience in that Parliament, who had till then heard only, who had been taught only, the Christian dogma of man's inborn depravity and original sin, the masterly presentation of this Vedāntic truth was like the bursting of a bombshell in their midst; and the enlightened and rational among them heartily responded to this luminous truth. In the opening page of his book *Raja-Yoga,* Vivekananda has given a condensed presentation of this Vedāntic truth in four propositions:

"Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

Man controls external nature through his knowledge and application of physical sciences, politics, and economics. This lifts his life from the primitive to the civilized level. But this control of external nature alone cannot help him to handle and resolve the tensions of his civilized state which overwhelm him and threaten to destroy him and his civilization. 'Science can denature plutonium, but it cannot denature evil in the heart of

man,' said Einstein. Recognizing this insufficiency of the external approach, the sages of India investigated the internal nature of man and discovered the infinite and immortal dimension behind the finite man—*Vedāhametam puruṣam mahāntam*—'I have realized this infinite Man (behind the finite man which alone the senses reveal), beyond all darkness and delusion of ignorance', as the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* verse quoted above by Vivekananda proclaims. Out of these investigations, they developed, what I explained in the course of my lecture, the science of man as the Atman—the *Adhyātma-vidyā*. This science of man in depth, this science of human possibilities, proclaims that energy resources in man are organized in an ascending scale of subtlety, immensity, and inwardness—*sūkṣmā, māhantaśca, pratyagātma-bhūtāśca*—beginning from the gross muscular system of his outer physical body, through the more and more inner and subtler nervous and psychical systems, to the innermost and subtlest Self of man, the Ātman, which is an ocean of infinite and pure spiritual energy resource. And this science of *Adhyātma-vidyā* also adds that this Ātman is one and non-dual. In his lectures on *Jñāna-Yoga,* Vivekananda has pointed out the high glory of man as presented in these discoveries of the Upaniṣads *(Complete Works,* Vol.II, 1958, p. 250):

'No books, no scriptures, no science, can imagine the glory of the Self that appears as man, the most glorious God that ever was, the only God that ever existed, exists, or ever will exist.'

Again, in contrast to the *speculative* and *belief-based* extra-cosmic god of all speculative philosophies and Semitic religions, he presents the Vedāntic vision of God as the Ātman, as a truth *given in experience* itself (*ibid.*, p. 279):

'In worshipping God, we have been always worshipping our own hidden Self.'

Further, giving the Vedāntic definition of theism and atheism, Vivekananda says *(ibid.*, pp. 301-02):

'The ideal of faith in ourselves is of the greatest help to us. If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practised, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished. Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than any other in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. ... The old

religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself. But it is not selfish faith, because the Vedānta, again, is the doctrine of oneness. It means faith in all, because you are all. ... Do you know how much energy, how many powers, how many forces, are still lurking behind that frame of yours? ... Therefore, you must not say that you are weak ... For behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness.'

Romain Rolland puts the following sentence from Vivekananda's *Jnāna-Yoga* lectures in the opening page of his *Life of Vivekananda:*

'Never forget the glory of Human Nature! We are the greatest God. ... Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which I AM.'

Tolstoy wrote his book: *The Kingdom of God Is within You,* presenting this Vedāntic truth as the central truth of Christianity, in place of original sin and the devil.

If that is the true nature of man, his education must help to manifest, to unfold, that truth. Its impact on a Marxist State such as the U.S.S.R. will be a new emphasis on the inward penetration, by men and women, to the centre of their being through meditation and other relevant techniques, over and above the external life of work and art and comfort and organic satisfactions, and the socio-political conditionings of his external life. Without that new emphasis, human problems in the U.S.S.R. will continue to follow the pattern of the U.S.A. and other societies, in spite of Marxism; and the Marxist goal of the eventual withering away of the State itself will recede further and further away. For, if crime, drunkenness, delinquency, interpersonal and inter-state tensions and wars increase, the power of the State will also increase to check them; the power of the State will lessen only if the citizens learn to check and discipline their anti-social impulses by drawing on the ever-present spiritual energy resources within themselves. *Sensuality can be conquered only by spirituality.* And that is the true measure of human progress, says Vedānta.

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THE RAMAKRISHNA–VIVEKANANDA MESSAGE AND OUR YOUTHS*

1. *Introductory*

We have assembled here for a unique purpose—participation in a Youth Convention under the inspiration of Sri Ramakrishna and **Swami Vivekananda. I have come all the way from Hyderabad,** on invitation of the Delhi Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission, to participate in it as well as to inaugurate it. The life and message of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna have direct relevance to our young people. Most of our young people do not know what that relevance is; but when they get an opportunity to hear about it, they respond heartily. I sometimes get letters on this subject from our young people. After hearing a lecture on the message of Swami Vivekananda, they write: 'We never knew that such a profound message was there. How fascinating it is, how rational and practical!' Such remarks show that that message is going to play a great part in moulding the life and character of our young people on healthy lines, when it becomes more and more known by our people in the coming decades. This Convention is a small effort in that direction and I am glad to participate in it and inaugurate it.

Swami Vivekananda had tremendous faith in the young people of our country. Generally, many of our young people have a spirit of idealism and, now, tremendous energy and education as well. Swamiji felt they would be able to build India anew and he often used the words 'man-making and nation-building'. A small book was brought out some time ago by the Ramakrishna Mission, containing hardly 50 or 60 pages but full of inspiring ideas, with the title *Rebuild India.* Lakhs of copies were sold all over India; and this work of rebuilding India is the special privilege and responsibility of our young people.

*Based on the tape-record of the inaugural address delivered by Swami Ranganathananda at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Youth Convention held at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, on 9, 10, 11 September 1982

2. *Youth and the Rebuilding of India.*

So many of you from all over Delhi have gathered here as delegates—some 500 to 600— and you are all young people below 30. Imagine what it means when you realize that, for the next 50 years, you have such a tremendous opportunity to live and work for the rebuilding of your India. Once you yoke your minds to this purpose, one question arises--what are the plans for rebuilding India? When you want to build a house, you feel the need for a plan. You approach an architect who knows all about the subject. So when you set about to rebuild India as a youth, you should certainly ask this question: What is the type of India we need? What is the nature of the architecture of that structure? And this is a very important question with respect to our country, because we are not starting from a scratch, like some other modern countries.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in America, for example, there were no such questions to ask. They were building an entirely new culture, a new homogeneous civilization, on a sparsely populated continent. But India is quite different. We have five thousand years of history behind us, and a large population of a heterogeneous nature. A long period of history, and much of it extraordinarily glorious, lies behind us. And this our long history has touched the life of almost all the contemporary civilizations during that long period. We have contributed our share to the common inheritance of all humanity--in the fields of the physical sciences; of political and economic thought; of the arts, and, above all, of pure religion and philosophy. These are the great contributions of our past history; and in the modern period also, India has produced a galaxy of sages, thinkers, and leaders. And, in rebuilding the future India, our youth must take into account this glorious work of our great ancestors, old and recent. We have to continue their work and build a greater and healthier India. Naturally, such a work cannot be just *building* a nation, but *re-building* a nation. And in that process, we may have to cut out some parts of that heritage which have become irrelevant, obsolete, and obstacles to our progress. To do this, we need clear thinking, discrimination, and courage; but while doing this, we have also to preserve and strengthen the fundamentals of our national culture and life; and we have also to take advantage of the achievements of the modern period, both

Indian and Western, and assimilate those elements in them which are healthy and strong; then we shall rebuild India in the light of all these.

We need guidance in this matter. We need to seek the help of a great and far-seeing architect, possessing the historical vision and perspective, to draw up the plans, which our young people must then execute with efficiency, energy, and dedication. Such an architect is Swami Vivekananda. Please listen to what Swami Vivekananda says on this subject in his lecture on the *The Mission of the Vedānta (The Complete Works,* Vol.III, p.196, 1960 Edition):

'I am no preacher of any momentary social reform. I am not trying to remedy evils. I only ask you to go forward to complete the practical realization of the scheme of human progress that has been laid out in the most perfect order by our ancestors. I only ask you to work to realize more and more the Vedāntic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature.'

3. *Sri Ramakrishna's Role in Shaping the Modern Age*

It is when you think and question on these lines that you find the significance of the life and message of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Great teachers, great thinkers, great writers, both Indian and foreign, have spoken highly about the contribution of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda for the reshaping of this modern age. We must understand all this. And some of the remarks of these great modern thinkers are also great tributes to our nation and its role in re-shaping the modern age. How many tributes you read in the press today to Gandhiji, to Nehru, to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda! They tell us that, from Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, not only India but the whole of modern civilization also have much to gain by way of ideas and ideals and inspiration for human development and fulfilment.

The great British historian, late Arnold Toynbee, had come to Delhi some years ago, in the 1950's, and had addressed, at my invitation and under my presidentship, in this very auditorium, an overflow meeting. He had gracefully accepted from me then the present of a copy of the great book: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.* A few years later, in 1964, he had made a beautiful remark on India and Sri Ramakrishna in a Foreword he contributed to the book: *Sri Ramakrishna: His Unique Message,* written by the late Swami

Ghanananda, the then Head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London, and published by it; and we as a nation can be justifiably proud of that remark. But what a tremendous responsibility it throws on us to deserve it! While dealing with Sri Ramakrishna, and discussing the need to strengthen the spiritual life of modern man and to disseminate and implement Sri Ramakrishna's living example and teaching about the ideal of harmony among religions in this modern world, Toynbee says (*ibid.*, 1970 Edition):

'Sri Ramakrishna's message was unique in being expressed in action. The message itself was the perennial message of Hinduism. ... Religion is not just a matter for study; it is something that has to be experienced and to be lived, and this is the field in which Sri Ramakrishna manifested his uniqueness. He practised successively almost every form of Indian religion and philosophy, and he went on to practise Islam and Christianity as well. His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere.

'Sri Ramakrishna made his appearance and delivered his message at the time and the place at which he and his message were needed. This message could hardly have been delivered by anyone who had not been brought up in the Hindu religious tradition. Sri Ramakrishna was born in Bengal in 1836. He was born into a world that, in his life-time, was, for the first time, being united on a literally world-wide scale. Today, we are still living in this transitional chapter of the world's history; *but it is already becoming clear that a chapter, which had a Western beginning, will have to have an Indian ending, if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race.*

'*At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only salvation for mankind is an Indian way.* The Emperor Aśoka's and the Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions: here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family--and, in the atomic age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.' (italics not by Toynbee)

4. *Vital Role of Character-energy in Nation-building*

This is an extraordinary tribute to our country, to its past and its present. We must understand what he meant by such a tribute. He meant that India has a solution for the distractions of this modern world. But, remember, she is herself in the midst of these very distractions. We are also faced with the problems of violence, crime, corruption, selfishness, communal conflicts. What a challenge these pose to our young people! What should be the reaction of every young man and woman today to these challenges? How are they going to face them? I can assure you that, in this age,

along with the education that you have or had in the universities and colleges — they are all defective, you know it very well — if you can give yourself an education in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, you will achieve that tremendous clarity of thinking and strength of the humanistic passion that will equip you to meet these challenges and rebuild your nation on the most healthy lines. Clear thinking, love for the people, especially for the poorest and the weakest, without regard to caste and creed and sex — you will find plenty of this inspiration in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. That would be a tremendous education for our young people today. It is during young age that you should inspire yourself with these national and human ideals and values. Before 30, from the age of 5 to 30, one should read inspiring literature, and develop the tremendous energy resources hidden within oneself, and give them a humanistic direction. The whole world needs today this kind of youth-energy; it is called character-energy. It has a vital role to play in nation-building. We have money energy, solar energy, nuclear energy, and so many other types of energies; but the one energy that can really bring out the fruits of all these other energies — the vital one which we tended to neglect so far — is character-energy, which is, according to Vedānta, the energy of spirituality.

Character contains two great sources of strength. One is clear intelligence yoked to a powerful will. The second is the human orientation to that will. That is what makes for all character-energy. Character is centred in a humanly oriented will. When you read Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, and when you give yourself an education which builds up this kind of personality structure, you develop a tremendous store of creative and positive energy within you; and when you combine, along with it, the knowledge of what India is, what India was, and what India shall be, you become transformed, from a static individual, into a dynamic person, into an efficient soldier in the great war for human development in your country. This is how you can rebuild India. Swami Vivekananda's word is *re-build*. Our ancestors have built it; but some parts are broken down; some parts are worn out and useless today. We have to cut off all these, and add new dimensions to this building, commensurate with the knowledge and needs of the modern age.

That is the type of education that is required in our country. Much knowledge is needed for that rebuilding, much energy, and much thinking. The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature is a storehouse of such knowledge, inspiration, and energy of action.

5. *'Your Country Needs Heroes: Be Heroes!'*

This Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Youth Convention is meant to mobilise the youth of our great capital city for waging this great war of human development and fulfilment. You are scattered all over this city. When some of you are in this Convention, you represent not only yourselves but also so many others who could not come to the Convention. You are to take the inspiration of this Convention and go back and share it with other young people in your own areas. In this way, beginning with our capital city, we help to generate a new creative wave of youth energy with a humanistic direction — national and international. That will be a great gain for us and for the rest of the world, because young people like you will not always be in Delhi; you may be going to various parts of India or the rest of the world. And when you go anywhere, you carry something very precious with you — this knowledge, this dedication, this tremendous determination. In whatever profession you enter — may be journalism, may be scientific research, may be hotel management, may be administration, may be politics — wherever you enter, you carry something precious and inspiring with you, something which we now miss very much in our country, namely, faith in oneself and faith in one's nation, character-energy, and a true knowledge of India and how to rebuild her. That will be the best preparation to silently rebuild India. It is a huge task; we need a lot of courage, a lot of inner resources, to undertake this. Every day we listen to talks and read the writings about the problems and troubles and the dismal conditions around us in India, about everything that is going wrong with us and our country. That is weakening us further. For want of a positive attitude, national problems are multiplying daily and overwhelming our nation. We need to develop character, public spirit, citizenship awareness, dedication, and hard work.

Remember, every nation must save itself. Nobody from outside is going to save this nation. We have to save it ourselves. Here we can teach our children that great message which Śrī Kṛṣṇa has given

in the sixth chapter of the *Gītā*. It is a remarkable message. 'Stand on your feet and be men', says Swami Vivekananda in our time, echoing the ancient message of the *Gītā*. (6.5):

Uddharet ātmanātmānam
nātmānam avasādayet;
Ātmaivahyātmano bandhuḥ
ātmaiva ripurātmanaḥ —

'Raise yourself by yourself. Do not let yourself down. For you are your own friend, you are your own enemy'.

How well it supplies the remedy for the toxic conditions in our country today! We have been our own enemy in many national fields since we became free; we have to learn to be our own friends now.

We must accelerate human development in India. We have to do it ourselves; it is our own responsibility, our own privilege. How shall we become our own friends and thus fulfil the hopes of the nation?

The next *śloka* elucidates this great idea:

Bandhurātmātmanastasya
yenātmaivātmanā jitaḥ,
Anātmanastu śatrutve
vartetātmaiva śatruvat —

'When you discipline the tremendous psycho-physical energies within you (and give them a human orientation), you become your own friend. When you don't do so, you become your own enemy (and the enemy of the people as well).'

That is the message that this great teacher of the *Gītā* gave to us for all times. We did not heed that message. We have youth energy; but we do not know how to discipline it, how to develop character-energy out of that raw human energy. Today we have to learn it. This is the lesson we can learn from Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature today. The tremendous message of an unfettered humanistic impulse that you find in this literature, you will find only in the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, the great message of Buddha, and in the great *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*. We need to assimilate that message

today, so that young people will get a new education, apart from the scrap of knowledge and information we get from the schools and colleges, that will fuse all the knowledge into high character and practical efficiency. This Convention is an occasion to help you to give that orientation to your youthful energy. Before independence, we utilised the youth energy in our country, under the inspiration of a tremendous patriotic dedication, to fight for national freedom and finally to achieve it as well. Thousands of our young people have done it in the pre-independence period. Millions of our young people have to capture the heroic spirit and do the same thing in this post-independence period as well, so as to make that political freedom meaningful to millions and millions of the oppressed and undeveloped humanity of India. 'Your country needs heroes, be heroes!', exhorts Swami Vivekananda. Every young boy and girl must treat it as a tremendous national and human responsibility placed on oneself. When that feeling of responsibility will come, he or she will find the best help and guidance, in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, to channelize his or her energy to the rebuilding of their ancient motherland; these teachings are universal in scope, pure, and possessed of tremendous practical implications.

6. *Practical Vedānta*

Whenever we speak of religion, we generally remember only some superstitions, some obscurantist ideas, and very often also some anti-human practices like untouchability and casteism. When you read Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, on the other hand, you will be so thoroughly and agreeably disillusioned with that sort of impression about such a great subject; you will understand that that is not religion. Real religion is a profound message of total human development and the unfolding of the spark Divine within all. That is spirituality, the essence of religion, according to the science of religion developed by our Vedānta. We shall thus achieve a tremendous strength by spiritual growth, through the study and assimilation of the meaning of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

I wish to refer to a third personality as well, whose picture also you see decorated on the platform — Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy

Mother. Hers was an extraordinary personality, simple and unostentatious, combining strength with gentleness, with a mother-heart full of pure love, which made no distinction between man and man, between Hindu, Muslim, or Christian, between Indian or foreign.

A fund of inspiration proceeding from these three personalities is behind every one of our citizens today. It is when we are young that we should open ourselves to this kind of inspiration. We have then time ahead to assimilate ideas and to work them out in a practical way. Our great philosophy of Vedānta must be made practical. Fifty or more years lie ahead of each of you. How many great things you can do during that period, after you have filled your heart with this inspiration! A thorough study of this literature is the best education, and re-education, that our nation needs and can obtain today. Listen to what Vivekananda says in his lecture on *Vedānta and Its Application to Indian Life* (*The Complete Works*, Vol. III, p.247):

'Bring all light into the world; light, bring light! Let light come unto every one; the task will not be finished till every one has reached the Lord. Bring light to the poor; and bring more light to the rich, for they require it more than the poor. *Bring light to the ignorant, and bring more light to the educated,* for the vanities of the education of our time are tremendous!'

He had said earlier (*ibid.*, pp. 245-46):

'These conceptions of the Vedānta must come out, must remain not only in the forest, not only in the cave, but they must come out to work at the Bar and the Bench, in the Pulpit, in the cottage of the poor man, with the fishermen that are catching fish, and with the students that are studying. They call to every man, woman, and child, whatever be their occupation, wherever they may be. And what is there to fear! How can the fisherman and all those carry out the ideals of the Upaniṣads? The way has been shown. It is infinite; religion is infinite, none can go beyond it; and whatever you do sincerely is good for you. Even the least thing well done brings marvellous results. Therefore, let every one do what little he can. If the fisherman thinks that he is the Spirit (the Ātman), he will be a better fisherman; if the student thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better student. If the lawyer thinks he is the Spirit, he will be a better lawyer, and so on. ... If you teach Vedānta to the fisherman, he will say, I am as good a man as you; I am a fisherman, you are a philosopher, but I have the same God in me as you have in you. And that is what we want; no privilege for any one, equal chances for all. Let every one be taught that the divine is within, and every one will work out his own salvation.

'Liberty is the first condition of growth.'

7. *East and West to be Harmonized in our Character*

Swamiji's literature is full of such wonderful ideas. He mentions in one letter about two types of character-energies — one, what we have nationally inherited, and two, what the West has demonstrated in its own great achievements in the modern period. Two character energies are there behind these two achievements. We have to combine them in our national character. What are these? Swami Vivekananda gives us the following exhortation in a letter written to his 'Madras Disciples' from Chicago in 1894 (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* pp. 83-84):

'With the question whether caste shall go or come I have nothing to do. My idea is to bring to the door of the meanest, the poorest, the noble ideas that the human race has developed both in and out of India, and let them think for themselves. Whether there should be caste or not, whether women should be perfectly free or not, does not concern me. "Liberty of thought and action is the only condition of life, of growth, and well-being." Where it does not exist, the man, the race, the nation must go down.

'Caste or no caste, creed or no creed, any man or class, or caste, or nation, or institution which bars the power of free thought and action of an individual—even so long as that power does not injure others — is devilish and must go down.

'My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallization will be done by nature according to her laws. Work hard, be steady and have faith in the Lord. Set to work, I am coming sooner or later. Keep the motto before you: "Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion."

'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But alas! nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course,I am a sympathiser in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but upon the *condition of the masses.* Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature?

'Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it.* You are all *born to do it.* Have faith in yourselves; great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto.

'Onwards, brave lads!

Yours affectionately,
Vivekananda'

Life has a profound spiritual meaning. It has a spiritual dimension. It is not merely the world which you see through the five senses. Something there is that is transcendental — that lies beyond the sensory dimension. Vedānta and Buddhism call these two dimensions of reality *loka* and *lokottara. Loka* is what you experience through the five senses. That is what you handle in the physical sciences, politics, economics, and other social sciences. Material prosperity comes through the handling of that dimension of reality. But ethical, aesthetic, and all higher spiritual values and human development and fulfilment come from the *lokottara* or trans-sensory level — from the infinite Ātman, the divine spark hidden in all of us. To achieve life fulfilment, individual and collective, we have to combine the energies from the one with the energies from the other. Our nation has been educated in the *lokottara* dimension of reality by a succession of brilliant sages right from the ancient Vedic age to the modern age of Sri Ramakrishna. We have to keep our firm hold on this and then stretch out our hand to receive the sterling virtues and graces arising from the efficient handling of the *loka* dimension of reality by the modern Western people, which Swamiji refers to as *the spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy.* With the combined strength of these two, Vivekananda says, we can rebuild India in the Indian way. We will make our future brighter than our past.

8. *Vivekananda and Our Youths*

That is the challenge he has placed before the youth of our country. Like his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, he also had tremendous faith in our youth. You will mark this in his lectures in Madras, Calcutta, and Lahore. Speaking, in the course of his lecture in Madras in 1897 on *The Future of India*, about his plan for rebuilding Inida, Swamiji said (*The Complete Works,* Vol. III, pp.303, 1960 Edition):

'This is my plan. It may appear gigantic, but it is much needed. You may ask, where is the money. Money is not needed. Money is nothing. For the last twelve years of my life, I did not know where the next meal would come from; but money and everything else I want *must* come, because they are my slaves, and not I theirs. Money and everything else must come. Must — that is the word. Where are the men? That is the question.

'Young men of Madras, my hope is in you. Will you respond to the call of your nation? Each one of you has a glorious future, if you dare believe me. Have a tremendous faith in yourselves, like the faith I had when I was a child and which I am working out now. Have that faith, each one of you, in yourself — that eternal power is lodged in every soul — and you will revive the whole of India. Ay, we will then go to every country under the sun, and our ideas will before long be a component of the many forces that are working to make up every nation in the world. We must enter into the life of every race in India and abroad. We shall have to *work* to bring this about. Now for that, I want young men. "It is the young, the strong, the healthy, of sharp intellect, that will reach the Lord", says the Vedas! This is the time to decide your future — while you possess the energy of youth, not when you are worn out and jaded, but in the freshness and vigour of youth. Work; this is the time; for the freshest, the untouched, and unsmelt flowers alone are to be laid at the feet of the Lord, and such He receives.'

And replying to the address of welcome in Calcutta a few days later, he said (*ibid.*, pp. 818-19):

'Young men of Calcutta, arise, awake, for the time is propitious. Already, everything is opening out before us. Be bold and fear not. It is only in our scriptures that this adjective is given into the Lord — *Abhiḥ, Abhiḥ*. We have to become *abhiḥ*, fearless, and our task will be done. Arise, awake, for your country needs this tremendous sacrifice. It is the young men that will do it. "The young, the energetic, the strong, the well-built, the intellectual" — for them is the task. And we have hundreds and thousands of such young men in Calcutta. If, as you say, I have done something, remember that I was that good-for-nothing boy playing in the streets of Calcutta. If I have done so much, how much more will you do! Arise and awake, the world is calling upon you. ... Therefore arise, young men of Calcutta, with enthusiasm, in your blood. Think not that you are poor, that you have no friends. Ay, who ever saw money make the man? It is man that always makes money. The whole world has been made by the energy of man, by the power of enthusiasm, by the power of faith.'

And addressing a large public meeting in Lahore on *The Vedanta* on 12 November 1897, Swamiji exhorted the youth of the Punjab in these fiery words (*ibid.*, pp. 429-31):

'Young men of Lahore, understand this, therefore, this great sin, hereditary and national, is on our shoulders. There is no hope for us. You may make thousands of societies, twenty thousand political assemblages, fifty thousand institutions. These will be of no use until there is that sympathy, that love, that heart, that thinks for all; until Buddha's heart comes once more into India, until the words of Lord Krsna are brought to their practical use, there is no hope for us.

'You go on imitating the Europeans and their socieities and their assemblages. ... Where is the heart to build upon? ...

'Therefore, young men of Lahore, raise once more that mighty banner of Advaita (philosophy of oneness), for on no other ground can you have that wonderful love, until you see that the same Lord is present everywhere. Unfurl that banner of love! "Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached." Arise, arise once more, for nothing can be done without renunciation. If you want to help others, your little self must go. ... Throw away everything, even your own salvation, and go and help others. Ay, you are always talking bold words, but here is practical Vedānta before you. Give up this little life of yours.

'What matters it if you die of starvation — you and I and thousands like us — so long as this nation lives? The nation is sinking; the curse of unnumbered millions is on our heads — those to whom we have been giving ditch-water to drink when they have been dying of thirst and while the perennial river of water was flowing past; the unnumbered millions whom we have allowed to starve in sight of plenty; the unnumbered millions to whom we have talked of Advaita and whom we have hated with all our strength; the unnumbered millions for whom we have invented the doctrine of *lokācāra* (usage), to whom we have talked theoretically that we are all the same, and all are one with the same Lord, without even an ounce of practice! "Yet, my friends, it must be only in the mind and never in practice!" *Wipe off this blot!* "Arise and awake." What matters it if this little life goes? Everyone has to die, the saint or the sinner, the rich or the poor. The body never remains for any one. Arise and awake and be perfectly sincere. Our insincerity in India is awful; what we want is character, that steadiness and character that make a man cling on to a thing like grim death.'

9. *Sri Ramakrishna and Our Youths*

Sri Ramakrishna deeply loved young people. That love was based on the Vedantic depth view of man and his or her divine possibilities. He has given expression to this depth vision in his conversations with the devotees who visited him and which one of his householder disciples, the school-master Mahendra Nath Gupta, who calls himself 'M' to hide his identity, has collected and published as a book, now the world-famous *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Vol. I, pp. 230-31, 1980 Edition):

'Master: "Now and then Hazra comes forward to teach me. He says to me, "Why do you think so much about the youngsters?" One day as I was going to Balaram's house in a carriage, I felt greatly troubled about it. I said to the Divine Mother: "Mother, Hazra admonishes me for worrying about Narendra and the other young boys. He asks me why I forget God and think about these youngsters." No sooner did this thought arise in my mind, than the Divine Mother revealed to me in a flash that it is She Herself who has become man. But She manifests Herself most clearly through a pure soul. At this vision, I went into *Samādhi*. Afterwards I felt angry with Hazra. I said to myself, "That rascal made me miserable." Then I thought: "But why should I blame the poor man? How is he to know?"

'I know these youngsters to be Nārāyaṇa Himself. At my first meeting with Narendra, I found him completely indifferent to his body. When I touched his chest with my hand, he lost consciousness of the outer world. Regaining consciousness, Narendra said: "Oh, what have you done to me? I have my father and mother at home!" The same thing happened at Jadu Mallick's house, As the days passed, I longed more and more to see him. My heart yearned for him. One day, at that time, I said to Bholanath: 'Can you tell me why I should feel this way? There is a boy called Narendra, of the Kāyastha caste. Why should I feel so restless for him? Bholanath said: "You will find the explanation in the *Mahābhārata*. On coming down to the plane of ordinary consciousness, a man established in *Samādhi* enjoys himself in the company of *sāttvik* people. He feels peace of mind at the sight of such men." When I heard this, my mind was set at ease. Now and then I would sit alone and weep for the sight of Naren.

'The youngsters' minds are not yet coloured by worldliness. That is why they are so pure in heart. Besides, many of them are eternally perfect; they have been drawn to God from their very birth. It is like a garden in which, while cleaning it, you suddenly discover water-pipes. The water gushes forth without any effort on your part.

'Balaram: "Sir, how was it possible for Purna to know all of a sudden that the world is illusory?"

'Master: "He has inherited that knowledge from his previous births. In his past lives, he practised many disciplines. It is the body alone that is small or grows big, and not the Ātman.

'Do you know what these youngsters are like? They are like certain plants that grow fruits first and then flowers. These devotees first of all have the vision of God; next they hear about His glories and attributes; and at last they are united with Him. Look at Niranjan. He always keeps his accounts clear. He will be able to go whenever he hears the call. But one should look after one's mother as long as she is alive. I used to worship my mother with flowers and sandal-paste. It is the Mother of the Universe who is embodied as our earthly mother.'

10. The Unique Quest of the Modern Period of Human History

It is a tremendous period of history in which we are living. We have to assimilate the best that humanity has to give. That creates a new character-energy, with which alone can we write a more glorious chapter in our nation's long and glorious history.

Assimilate the best of what the West has to give us, and not what is cheap in that culture. What is cheap in it is even bad for them, and they are eager to get rid of it. Let us not therefore take from the West what is cheap and flashy. I call it the *coca cola aspect* of Western culture. Unfortunately, that is what some of our people

seek. But it is their scientific temper, their practical efficiency, their humanism, their spirit of enquiry, their energy, which we have to assimilate, and join with it the inherited virtues and graces of our own spiritual attitude to life. Combine these two and you develop a tremendous character-efficiency, unprecedented in world history. The whole world seeks it today. The modern West is also seeking to combine, with their own inheritence, the spiritual inheritence of India and the East. *This is the unique quest of the modern period of human history*. Toynbee's remark, referred to earlier, is only one among the remarks of many modern thinkers of the West. They all want the ancient spiritual heritage of India to become the heritage of all humanity. India has that responsibility. How can we discharge it when we have not brought health to our own body-politic? Our domestic policy must be strengthened to strengthen our foreign policy. Our nation must be stronger, more united, free from all these dismal economic and social conditions which you find today, before it can make the wholesome and hoped-for impact on the rest of the world. That is the great privilege and opportunity before the young people of modern India.

And this Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Youth Convention is meant to focus your attention on this wonderful new challenge before our five-thousand-year history. The modern period is the most challenging part of that history. We must reckon with it. For the last five hundred years, we did not create history. We went to sleep and we became *victims* of history, *creatures* of history. We started creating history in the modern period when India awakened herself in the nineteenth century, the expansive creative energy of which sent a Vivekananda to the great American nation and which produced a tremendous impact on the people of that highly developed country. That is the beginning of this creative period of modern Indian history. We are now living in that period. Let us capture a little of that creativity in our lives. Let us not only *study* history, but also *create* history. Today this is what is most important. Do it by becoming a great scientist, a great humanist, a great statesman, a great adminstrator, an original thinker, a great citizen, a great religious genius. There are a thousand ways by which this re-creation of our history can be done. These are only some of the ways to do it. That is the way to go about to rebuild India. Let

young people be creative first, and banish the centuries-long national stagnation from their minds and lives, and grasp the truth that there are great possibilities for human development, individual and collective, national and international, in this modern period of their nation's history. Then let them put themselves into that tremendous role of history-makers, creators of history, instead of remaining creatures of history.

11. Conclusion

That is the glorious situation in which you are all placed today. Young people all over India have this great privilege and responsibility. This capital city of India must be a model for the rest of India. At present, it is not. There is more crime, more drunkenness, more drug addiction, and more corruption, here in Delhi, than in the rest of India. Today it is not a model, but it should be made a model for our nation.

This capital city of ours must be able to generate healthy blood and pump it to all the farthest peripheral parts of our body-politic. Young people in this capital city must take that responsibility on themselves. Then we shall see the rebuilding of India getting an acceleration which we never had since independence. The remaining years of this amazing century must be devoted to this positive science. What we are doing now is negative science. This is positive science — not shouting about the nation's evils, but silently finding and effectively applying remedies for them. Let all our youth inspire themselves with that clarion call of the sages of our ancient Upaniṣads, as freely rendered by our modern sage, Vivekananda: *Uttiṣṭhata, Jāgrata prāpya varān nibodhata*—Arise, Awake, and stop not till the goal is reached!'

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND PRACTICAL VEDĀNTA *

1. Introductory

The subject of *Practical Vedānta* has been very much highlighted in the modern age by Swami Vivekanada. It is derived from our philosophical and spiritual tradition arising from the realizations of the sages of the Upaniṣads, which proclaim the profound truth that, behind the changing aspect of man and the universe, there is the unchanging divine reality which the Upaniṣads call Ātman or Brahman. This vision of the innate divinity of every being is the profoundest vision of human excellence you will find in any literature. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,* a sage gives expression to this great vision (4.3):

Tvaṁ strī tvaṁ pumanasi
tvaṁ Kumāra uta vā kumārī;
Tvaṁ jīrṇo daṇḍena vañchasi
tvaṁ jāto bhavasi viśvato-mukhaḥ—

'Thou art the woman, Thou art the man, Thou art the boy, and Thou art verily the girl; Thou art the old man tottering on his stick, Thou art born in multiform ways.'

The infinite Ātman, of the nature of pure and non-dual Consciousness, which he realized in the depths of his being, he found in front of him in the form of women, men, youths, and old people; he found that Reality filling this universe. This realization, first attained by one sage and later by others, became the greatest theme of the Upaniṣads. In the first Upaniṣad, the *Īśāvāsya,* the opening verse itself gives expression to this realization:

Iśavāsyamidaṁ sarvam
yat-kiñca jagatyāṁ jagat;

*Edited version based on the tape-record of the keynote address at the Fourth Session of the7-day Second Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Convention, held at the Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, District Howrah, West Bengal, on 24th December 1980

Tena tyaktena bhuñjithāḥ
mā gṛdhaḥ kasyasviddhanam—

'Whatever changeful (beings and things) there are in this manifested changeful universe must be filled with (the infinite and eternal) God. By that renunciation (of the changeful and affirmation of the changeless), nourish (your life). Do not covet the wealth of any one else!'

2. *'Hear, Ye Children of Immortal Bliss!'*

In the Upaniṣads, the extra-cosmic god sitting somewhere in the sky—the conception of God found in all monotheistic religions, including in some of the earlier parts of the Vedic literature—has no place at all. The Upaniṣads present God as the one Reality that is present in all of us, in every being in the vast universe. This realization had been with us for ages, and a few gifted sages and saints had realized this great truth that man is essentially divine, that divinity is the true nature of all beings. But this vision remained the prerogative of a select few. To millions of people, religion was, and is, nothing better than a static piety or a piety-fringed worldliness. We are essentially worldly; our religion consists in a little ritual, a little going to church or temple, and a few do's and don'ts. That is all what is called religion as understood by many people and as presented to them. Yet this tremendous Himalayan vision of the sages had been there for centuries. But very few cared to make any use of it.

In the modern period, Swami Vivekananda found the need for preaching this profound Advaitic truth to the whole world and for showing its practical application as well. He saw that the decline of religion in this modern age was due to the misunderstanding that a static piety constituted the meaning of religious life. In a letter, Swamiji wrote (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, pp. 320—321, 1949 Edition):

'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. ...

'One idea that I see clear as daylight is that misery is caused by *ignorance* and nothing else. Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of the many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like a thunderbolt.'

It is character that Swamiji recognized as the intense need of the modern age, as he wandered throughout the length and breadth of India and journeyed to foreign countries—Character built on the rock-foundation of the Divine spark in man. He gave voice to this great vision of the Upaniṣads, for the first time, at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, when he spoke of humanity, not as a mere creature of nature, not as a product of matter, but as 'Children of Immortal Bliss', as the eternal, immortal, divine Ātman. This message fell as a welcome bombshell on the audience, for it presented a vision of human excellence which can be realized here and now. (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 2.5 and 3.8):

Śṛiṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ
āye dhāmāni divyāni taśthuḥ;
Vedāhametaṁ puruṣaṁ mahāntam
ādityavarṇaṁ tamasaḥ parastāt;
Tameva viditvā atimṛtyumeti,
nānyaḥ panthā vidyate' yanāya —

'Hear, Ye Children of Immortality; even those who reside in the heavenly spheres!

'I have realized the infinite Man (behind the finite man), luminous like the sun, beyond all darkness (and delusion); By realizing Him alone will (man) transcend death (and delusion); there is no other way to freedom and fulfilment.'

Swami Vivekananda was in an inspired mood when he expounded this great passage from the Upaniṣad at that great international forum; for it is not a mere verse, but a message, a gospel, to all humanity. The word 'gospel' means 'good news'. If a prisoner is in prison for a number of years and I go and tell him, 'I have some good news', he will ask, 'What is that?' If I say, 'I am going to give you a delicious sweetmeat', that is not a good news to him. The only good news that would enthuse and please him most is freedom. Similarly, man asks: 'Can I be free? I am bound in this body-mind complex. I want to break out from this slavery and be free.' That is the most welcome message that this passage conveys to humanity,

not to Hindus only, not to the people of India only, but to the entire world.

'Hear me, Ye Children of Immortality! and even whatever gods and angels there be in heaven!' Even gods and angels will benefit from this redemptive message, says the verse. What is that message? Is it taken from books, or from hearsay, or concocted by a fertile brain? No, says the verse. *Vedāhametam*— 'I have *known, realized,* this truth.' Here we find a language of spiritual experience for the first time. A God sitting in the far-away sky can never be experienced by us. We can believe in him, fear him, obey him, even flout him; but we can never realize him, since he is far far away from experience. But here the teaching is different: *vedāhametam*— 'I have realized this (profound truth).' What is the truth? *Puruṣam mahāntam:* 'The infinite man (behind this finite ego, behind this organically-conditioned individuality). There is such an infinite and immortal dimension to every one. That is the truth that the sage realized. *Ādityāvarṇam:* '(He is) luminous like the sun.' *tamasaḥ parastāt:* 'beyond all darkness and delusion.'

Then follows a wonderful remark which is thoroughly scientific in spirit, in that *it does not ask you just to believe* on his authority, *but invites you to verify the truth for yourself.* You can test the sage's finding for yourself. That is the way science approaches the subject of truth. These Upaniṣadic sages approached the subject of man and his nature and destiny from such a scientific point of view. They said: 'I have seen, and you can also see.' They did not say, 'I have seen, but you only believe in what I say.' So said Sri Ramakrishna also in the modern age, in answer to the question: 'Sir, have you seen God?', put by young Narendra, the later Vivekananda: 'Yes, my boy. I see Him more clearly than I see you here; and you can also see Him! So this sage said: *Tameva viditvā atimṛtyumeti:* By realizing this (truth of the) Atman alone can you transcend death and delusion.' *Nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ayanāya:* 'There is no other way to freedom and fulfilment.' Swamiji presented this great message to the modern age, to all of us, whether we are Hindus, Christians, Muslims, or followers of any other religion, and even to all non-believers. This is the profound spiritual message which Vedānta conveys to all men and women.

3. *Static Piety versus Dynamic Spirituality*

We should distinguish between mere ethical religion and spirituality, between static piety and dynamic spirituality. Religion as static piety means only that our name will appear in a particular column of the census register, as a member of a particular religious community, for instance, as a Hindu, a Muslim, or a Christian. We can all become this without any effort; we are all merely born into such religious communities. But so far as spirituality is concerned, we obtain it by *seeking* and *inquiry;* by such seeking, we grow, we develop, we unfold some profound truth hidden within us. This is what makes religion a science; nobody is born into physics or chemistry or other sciences; we seek it and achieve it. As remarked by mathematician-astronomer late Sir Arthur S. Eddington *(Science and the Unseen World,* p. 54):

> 'You will understand the true spirit neither of science nor of religion, unless seeking is placed in the forefront.'

This spirituality, Vivekananda said, is the birthright of every child in this world. In every one of us, there is that profound truth, but lying hidden. Vedānta exhorts us to so live our lives that this seeking for truth permeates our life, our work, and our inter-human relations. It is thus that this ever-present truth will become more and more manifest in us, and not remain hidden. Spirituality, says Vivekananda, is the privilege, not only of sages and saints and ascetics in the monasteries and forests, but of one and all. It is the birthright of every human being. The Upaniṣads or Vedānta also proclaim that nature has provided man with the organic capacity to realize this truth. Only we must have faith in ourselves, utilise this capacity, and so live our life that, year by year, we grow spiritually. Then we shall understand more and more that what the sage of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* described us as 'Children of Immortality' is really the truth. And through all our actions, we are to proclaim and verify this truth. As proclaimed by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (3.12):

Eṣa sarveṣu bhūteṣu
gūḍho ātmā na prakāśate;
Dṛśyate tvagryayā buddhyā
sūkṣmayā sūkṣma-darśibhiḥ—

'This (infinite and immortal) Atman (is present) in all beings, but

lying hidden, and therefore is not manifest. But It *can be* realized by those who have a subtle and one-pointed reason which has been trained to perceive subtle and still more subtle truths.'

This is the practical orientation of the Vedāntic truth, only slightly hinted at in the Upaniṣads, since the ancient seers of the Upaniṣads had no time to work out all the technical implications of this profound vision. They were busy investigating this science of man in depth, discovering this profound truth, and living in an ecstasy of its vision. It is as if they were standing on the summit of the Mount Everest of thought and experience, and inviting all humanity to come up to the peak. But how can I go there?, asks the average man or woman. I do not have the strength to climb so high a peak. I can only salute it from this distance where I am tied up in this body-mind complex.

Fortunately, this profound vision became the basis of a supreme dynamic, practical, and comprehensive spirituality expounded by Śri Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* the perfect teaching on Practical Vedānta, according to all our traditional spiritual teachers. We do not need any new commentary on the Upaniṣads; once for all, such a profound commentary has been written, and that is the *Bhagavad-Gītā,* says Swami Vivekananda in our own time. The word 'Practical' in the phrase 'Practical Vedānta' has got tremendous significance to all men and women. By 'Practical Vedānta' is meant Practical Advaita Vedānta, using the word *advaita* without any of its *sāmpradāyik* or sectarian limitations. Advaita Vedānta was considered suitable only for sages, saints, and ascetics in the forest. But can you and I live it? Can the housewife live it? Can the industrial worker, the management executive, the administrator, live it? Here comes the challenging answer from Swami Vivekananda: Everyone can live this spiritual life; its scope is infinite. This is his message to all humanity. Once he said, referring to the Hindus who have been guarding this philosophical and spiritual treasure for centuries: 'I do not call a man a Hindu if he or she is not spiritual.' If we are religious, that is not enough. We must ask ourselves: Are we spiritual?

4. Religion as the Science of Spiritual Growth

When we ask that question, we give to our life, as much as to religion, a profound new orientation, a scientific orientation,

namely, spiritual growth. Have we grown spiritually? We grow physically. A child is born weighing about three kilograms. We give it nourishment and take its weight week after week— 3 kg., 4 kg., up to 90 kg. Beyond that we do not want the child to grow physically. More than 90 kg. is dangerous physical growth. Similarly, the mental growth of the child needs to be taken into account. We can watch the child growing mentally day by day, achieving increasing grip over its environment and its own body. It is able to comprehend and control the world around it; its mind develops stage by stage. Is there any other growth besides these two, the physical and the intellectual? Modern science and modern thought have no answer to this question; it does not even occur to them, though some aspects of them will even positively assert that there is nothing else besides these two. They know only these two types of growth: physical and intellectual.

But it is precisely beyond these two dimensions that the supreme truth about man, his supreme glory, resides. This is the spiritual growth of man, growth in the spiritual dimension of his personality, the manifestation of the Divine that is within him. This is a growth by which one sees the world, and also one's own life, in new light, and establishes healthy and happy types of inter-human relationships. With the onset of this growth, human interactions become completely transformed. It is this transformation and the spiritual growth behind it, that modern man is seeking everywhere. There are plenty of religions, and millions of followers of these religions. But what is needed is the spiritual growth of man. Are we growing? That is the question. One is religious as a child; when he or she becomes old, he or she is still religious, but there has been no spiritual growth; essentially he or she is the same individual, with the same weaknesses and even wickedness that he or she had as a youth; they are still there in his or her old age: and yet the individual is called religious. Religion so understood is nothing but a *static piety*, or a *piety-fringed worldliness.* But in the science of religion, we come in touch with a dynamic spirituality. Its key word is *growth*, spiritual growth, *ātma-vikāsa.*

We grow a plant; on the first day, it has two leaves; we put manure, water, and other nutrients. After six months, we still find it has only two leaves. After twenty years later, still two leaves. We

then conclude that something is wrong with the plant. If the science of growth had worked out in that plant, it would have put out more leaves, twigs, branches, flowers, and fruits. We understand the law of growth with respect to plants, with respect to agriculture. But we have not understood the law of growth with respect to man and his or her religion; hence we get only a piety-fringed worldliness, which can co-exist with selfishness, violence, and intolerance, in the context of, and along with, physical and intellectual growth. Vivekananda saw the supreme necessity for man, in this highly technological age, to grow beyond the physical-intellectual dimension and to unfold, to manifest, the ever-present Divine within, so that modern man would be able to digest, and properly direct to human ends, the vast powers that modern science and technology have placed in his hands. If this is not done, man will destroy himself. In fact, you find fear, in the form of various types of anxiety, reigning everywhere today. This is why the science of religion, and its fruit of spirituality and spiritual growth, are the supreme need of the modern age; we need physical science for the physical and mental growth of man, individual and collective. And we need spirituality for the inner growth of man, for his expansion in understanding, sympathy, love, and service, beyond his organic limitations. It was all these ideas and techniques of total human growth that Vivekananda combined together and brought under the theme of his *Practical Vedānta.*

5. *Renunciation and Service*

One great idea that Swamiji presented on this subject of Practical Vedānta is that, through spiritual growth, a spirit of service will inspire man all the time. He emphasized *tyāga* and *seva,* renunciation and service, as the warp and woof of practical Vedānta; it is renunciation of the lower self, and manifestation of the higher self. Man grows spiritually beyond his organic limitations by converting all work into service—service of man, service of all beings. Through such service, the ego becomes transformed. Sri Ramakrishna uses two significant expressions in describing the ego and its spiritual transformation. The former he calls the *kāca āmi,* the 'unripe ego', and the latter the *paka ami,* the 'ripe ego'. The 'Unripe I' we all have; we all begin with it. It is assertive, aggressive. Out of it comes

all kinds of selfishness, violence, exploitation of man by man. That 'unripe I' must be transformed into the 'ripe I'. How? By making it the *dās āmi,* the 'servant I', the *bhakta āmi,* the 'devotee I', says Sri Ramakrishna.

When this transformation begins, we shall find a new man emerging, the spiritual man. Thereafter, it will be a continuous spiritual growth. Once we rise beyond our tiny ego, everything that we do, every worship, every meditation, every work, even the so-called worldly work like looking after one's own family, become a stimulus for our spiritual growth. It is on this basis that Swami Vivekananda presented the universality of Practical Vedānta, its being as the basis of all religions and relevant to all peoples. By discharging their responsibilities and facing the challenges of life, and keeping in view the steady unfolding of spiritual growth through them, all can realize the highest goal. That is why his *yoga* is defined by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the second chapter of the *Gītā* as *yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*— 'Yoga is efficiency, dexterity, in action'. Through this efficiency, man increases the material welfare and happiness of society, outwardly, through his productive labour; and achieves his or her own spiritual growth as well, inwardly. When we find that our actions result in the economic, social, and cultural growth outside and our own spiritual growth within, we shall know that we are implementing the message of Yoga of the *Gītā,* that we are approaching religion as a science of spiritual growth and fulfilment. The last *śloka* or verse of the *Gītā* proclaims that the happiness and welfare of man, individually and collectively, will result when the message of the *Gītā* is properly understood and implemented:

Yatra yogesvarah Krsno, yatro Pārtho dhanurdharaḥ;
***Tatra srīḥ vijayo bhūtiḥ** dhruvā nītiḥ matirmama—*

'Wherever there is Kṛṣṇa, the master of yoga, wherever there is Arjuna, the wielder of the bow (the hero of action), there (in that society, in that individual) will be found, wealth and welfare, victory, general prosperity, and unwavering justice and righteousness; such is my conviction.'

This *śloka* says that wherever there is Śri Kṛṣṇā, the master of yoga, and Arjuna, the hero of action, that is, wherever contempla-

tion and action, vision and implementation, are combined together in one character or in one society, what will be the result? *tatra śrī*, wealth and welfare will be there; *vijaya*, victory; success in all undertakings will be there; *bhūti*, general prosperity, an expansion of opportunities for self-expression for all people, will be there; and *dhruvā nītiḥ*, constant ethical awareness and consequent reign of *justice and righteousness, will be there. This is the fruit of the yoga of the Gītā*, of the science of human possibilities.

One meditates on God, the innermost Self of all, and then serves Him in the context of his or her work and inter-human relations—meditation and action reinforcing each other. *Mām anusmara, yuddhya ca* — 'meditate on Me, and carry on the battle of life', exhorts Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā* (8.7). The good arising from our prayers and worship and meditation are frequently nullified by the wrong actions we perform. In such a context, our life and action do not aid our spiritual development; whereas, in the yoga of the *Gītā*, action and meditation becoming integral parts of the spiritual process, both cumulatively and harmoniously promote the spiritual growth of the individual concerned, while promoting also the welfare of the collective.

6. *Sri Ramakrishna and the Universality of His Mission*

This is the universal message for humanity today. Those who are devoted to Sri Ramakrishna and his ideals must realize that great teachers come, not just to teach a religion and to form another sect, but to inspire men and women everywhere with a new vision, to make them grow and unfold the spirituality that is within them. That is how the great Śaṅkarācārya (788—820 A. D.) describes the meaning of Srī Kṛṣṇa's incarnation in the course of the profound introduction to his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Says he:

Sva-prayojanābhāve'pi, bhūtānujighṛkṣhayā, vaidikaṁ dharmadvayam Arjunāya, śoka-moha-mahodadhau nimagnāya, upadideśa—

'Though Śrī Kṛṣṇa had no purpose of His own to serve, yet, with the sole desire of blessing all beings, He taught this two-fold Vedic *dharma* (action and contemplation) to Arjuna, who was deeply sunk in the ocean of grief and delusion.' Although, as the very incarnation of the Divine, Krsna had nothing to gain for Himself,

yet he imparted the message of a comprehensive spirituality to Arjuna, who was completely dis-spirited, frustrated, and sunk in sorrow on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. Sri Krsna wanted to bless all humanity and made Arjuna the instrument thereof. Therefore, in the next line, Saṅkaracarya says:

Guṇadhikaiḥ gṛhītaḥ, anuṣṭhīyamānaśca, dharmaḥ pracyaṁ gamiṣyati iti —

'For a philosophy grows and spreads when accepted and practised by persons of more than ordinary virtues and graces.' By communicating this profound vision to one capable individual of high character, by planting the seed of spirituality in his or her heart, it will grow, expand, become strong, and gradually reach other peoples, other societies. Thus there will be a general growth of spirituality in society; a little leaven leavens the whole bread, in the language of Jesus.

That is a truth that was verified when, two thousand five hundred years ago, Buddha conveyed his message to only five disciples at Sārnāth, near Vāraṇāsi; and in five centuries, that message had enriched and elevated millions of people in Asia. And it is being verified also in our own time in the message of Sri Ramakrishna. He conveyed some truths and a fund of inspiration to a few young gifted people, including Narendra, the later Swami Vivekananda, in a small room in the temple of Dakshineswar. That message became sounded through a thousand platforms in West and East by Vivekananda and other disciples within ten years of the Master's passing away. And, today, we are all listening to it here, through the sessions of this Convention. But how shall we utilize it, implement it? It is here that the greatest challenge comes to us, that we come face to face with the problem of Practical Vedanta. What shall we dō with this great new message? Shall we just do with it what we did before with the *Gītā*? The *Gītā* is compared to milk in that well-known verse of the *Gītā meditation verses*, drawn from the cow of the Upaniṣads, by Kṛṣṇa, the milkman, through Arjuna, the calf. It is the nectar of pure spirituality to nourish all men and women. But what did we do with that milk? We took the vessel containing the milk, namely *Gīta* the book, placed it on our head, and sang its glories. We did not have the wisdom to drink it and get spiritually nourished by it. Says Sri Ramakrishna accordingly:

'Some have heard of milk, some have seen it, some have shouted about it, and some have drunk it. The last alone have profited from the milk.'

That last method is the correct way to deal with a great spiritual message—grasping it, becoming rationally convinced of the truth of it, and living it according to one's strength and capacity. Today, for the first time, through the stimulus given by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, we have the opportunity to live Vedānta and evolve a healthy body-politic, based on its teachings of the dignity of man, his freedom and equality, his innate divinity. We are to inspire the whole nation with the message of renunciation and service, which Vivekananda called the twin ideals of India. Renunciation does not mean running away from wife or husband, children or fellow human beings; neither does it mean the cheap ideas we have wrongly associated with it, such as refraining from eating potatoes or fish or meat! but it is renunciation of the 'unripe ego' and unfolding of the higher self, with the natural and spontaneous manifestation of the mood and acts of service and dedication as its by-product. As soon as we do so, every action becomes service. 'What can I do for you? How can I help you?—this attitude becomes a spontaneous, natural, spiritual trait when we go beyond our tiny, truncated, unripe ego.

Sri Ramakrishna has given us a beautiful parable illustrating how man's 'unripe ego' hinders human development, the infinite expansion of his love and compassion, in spite of his religious practices:

One night a number of drunkards went to a bar and had a good drink. Having got thoroughly drunk, they went outside and found that it was a beautiful moonlit night, a lake was nearby, and there was also a boat. They said to themselves: 'Let us enjoy boating in this beautiful moonlight.' So they ran to the boat, sat in it, and immediately started rowing. They rowed vigorously the whole night. By morning, their minds had become slightly normal and, to their surprise, they found that the boat was still on the shore! Then they discovered further that they had forgotten to weigh the anchor! Unless you raise the anchor, what is the use of all this rowing?

7. *Conclusion*

This is a profound message to every man and woman today, particularly for those who are spiritual seekers. Have we lifted the anchor of our ego tying the boat of our life down to worldliness? Then only shall we grow spiritually, progress in religion, achieve spiritual growth. *Growth* is the key word, *progress* is the key word. What the world needs is human growth; it is progress, development, realization. Give all children the elements of this practical dynamic spirituality. They will welcome it enthusiastically. *There are no children who will not respond to the message of human growth.* Demonstrate this great message of Practical Vedanta to all children through your own life; and our society will become completely transformed. The whole world will become transformed. Peace and fulfilment and the welfare of all will become an accomplished fact. This is the challenge before us today. Swami Vivekananda knew that this challenge would become more and more compelling in the modern age as decades roll on. Physical sciences and the science of spirituality have this one common goal of total human development. Vedānta emphasizes the harmony, the complementarity, between the two. And, towards the end of the last century, Vivekananda, who was the first to emphasize the need to cultivate the scientific spirit and temper by our Indian people, also raised his voice on behalf of *the confluence of these two energy streams* into a rational, universal, practical, and comprehensive spirituality, which he called *Practical Vedanta.*

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VISION OF FREE INDIA*

1. Introductory

IT is very kind of the members of the Chinmaya Mission of this town to ask me to come and spend a whole day here during my this year's annual Kerala tour of fifteen days. When I received their invitation, I requested Swami Sakrananda, of the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, who was organizing my Kerala tour, to accommodate Palghat somehow in my programme; and I am glad that he did it. I am happy to meet all of you here this evening. Tomorrow morning, at the conclusion of my Kerala tour, I am flying to Hyderabad. I have been meeting with, and addressing, crowded audiences, beginning with Kanyakumari and Nagarkoil in Tamilnadu, and from Trivandrum in the south to Calicut in the north in Kerala -- a cross section of Hindu, Muslim and Christian intellectuals, in Trivandrum, Alleppey, Ernakulam, Kalady, Trichur, Shoranur, and Calicut, besides simple rural people in the Kayamkulam and Ambalapuzha areas of central Kerala, students and teachers in the Medical College in Calicut, and the participants of the annual spiritual retreat at the Ramakrishna Math, Puranattukara, Trichur. That stimulating experience is continued in this town of Palghat today, on the last day of my tour.

2. Our Mounting Human Problems

All these more than thirty years, this has been my experience throughout India, in fact, throughout the world; meeting with thinking people and engaging in think-together sessions with them on the human problems that are affecting and afflicting the whole world. Outside India, people want to know whether solutions to the current human problems exist; it is the same story all over India also. Current human problems, individual and social maladies, are of extremely serious nature. Our great country is also beset with

* Based on the tape record of the speech delivered at the public meeting in the town hall of Palghat, Kerala state, organized by the Chinmaya Mission, Palghat, on 30 December 1983

many problems, and even our national leaders are at a loss to deal with them effectively. At this critical time, there is the greatest need for all thinking people to come together to discuss these problems and to try to find solutions.

3. The Wisdom of India

When we engage ourselves in this kind of work, we need guidance; and that guidance is available to us from what various writers, of East and West, have referred to as *the wisdom of India.* You may have heard of the Chinese writer of the pre-Second World War period, Lin Yutang, and of his two books: *The Wisdom of China* and *The Wisdom of India.* When one lives a long life, one certainly gets some wisdom but, in a short life, due to limited experience, life often misses that wisdom. Similarly, nations which have a history of only 200 to 500 years may not have that wisdom; but the two countries, China and India, which have a history of over 4000 to 5000 years, which have seen the ups and downs of life, which have had great sages and thinkers to guide the people, and which have, consequently, withstood all these and have continued to live, have matured their knowledge and experience into wisdom. Our people in India must learn to see their motherland in this light. And we must also remember that our country is not, what they call today, a small *banana republic* of a few thousand people, but is a huge continent inhabited always by millions and millions of people of diverse races, diverse religions, diverse languages, and diverse cultural levels. It has produced great thinkers, great philosophers, great scientists, great poets, great artists, and great spiritual teachers. Through these millennia of history, India has matured knowledge and experience into wisdom which teaches us how to live at peace with ourselves and others. And today, our people must comprehend this truth, that their country has not only maladies but also remedies, in the form of that wisdom of India, that these remedies are of relevance not only to us but also to the people of the whole world, and that we need to seek and find guidance from that source.

In the words of Vivekananda *(Complete Works,* Vol. V, p. 355, Seventh Edition):

'From time immemorial, India has been the mine of precious ideas to human society; giving birth to high ideas herself, she has freely distributed them broadcast over the whole world.'

4. *The West's Oriental Heritage*

Many modern writers have referred to this wisdom of India; and I wish to refer to one of the most outstanding among them who passed away about a year ago, Will Durant of America, the author of several books, of which the most outstanding is the ten-volume edition entitled: *The Story of Civilization.* Its first volume is entitled: *Our Oriental Heritage,* in which he tells the Western world that they have an Oriental heritage, apart from the more obvious Greeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian heritage, and that the most important ingredient of that Oriental heritage is from India. In that first volume, he refers to the cultural heritage of India as a continuing one, unlike those of the extinct civilizations of Egypt or Babylon, Greece or Rome. Says he in the last section on India entitled *Farewell to India (Story of Civilization* . Vol. I, *Our Oriental Heritage,* p. 633):

'It is true that, even across the Himalayan barrier, India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and, above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. As invention, industry, and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps, in return for conquest, arrogance, and spoliation, *India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things.*' (Italics not by the author).

5. *Swami Vivekananda: The Embodiment of India's Universality*

We need to rediscover today that wisdom of our country. We have lost touch with it during the last few years, during which we were swept away by other cultural currents and accumulated only knowledge but not wisdom; and this has resulted in the multiplication of our intractable problems. In this modern period of our long history, it was Swami Vivekananda who pointed out to us this precious heritage of the wisdom of India. He himself was an embodiment of that wisdom, its rationality and universality and humanism. The universal dimension of this great personality has been presented to us by great writers, including Romain Rolland, the French winner of Nobel Prize for literature and the biographer of Beethoven, Gandhi, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda. Introducing Ramakrishna and Vivekananda to his readers, Romain Rolland says *(Life of Ramakrishna, 'To My Western Readers'*, p. 8):

'For a century in new India, Unity has been the target for the arrows of all archers. Fiery personalities throughout this century have sprung from her sacred earth, a veritable Ganges of peoples and thought. Whatever may be the differences between them, their goal is ever the same—human unity through God. ...

'From first to last, this great movement has been one of co-operation on a footing of complete equality between the West and the East, between the powers of reason and those—not of faith in the sense of blind acceptance, ... but of vital and penetrating intuition. ...

'From this magnificent procession of spiritual heroes whom we shall survey later, I have chosen two men who have won my regard because, with incomparable charm and power, they have realized this splendid symphony of the Universal Soul. They are, if one may say so, its Mozart and its Beethoven—*Pater Seraphicus* and Jove the Thunderer—Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.'

Mark the words he uses to describe Ramakrishna and Vivekananda: *the splendid symphony of the Universal Soul.* The whole range of Indian wisdom got embodied, in this modern period, particularly in these two great personalities. This evening, we shall study that second great personality, Swami Vivekananda, and discuss the theme of *Swami Vivekananda's Vision of Free India.* When we study Vivekananda, we also study Ramakrishna. There is the unity of ideals and theme between the one and the other.

6. *Vivekananda's Humanism*

The subject of this evening's lecture is a rewarding study for all our people today. *It will be a great national re-education to our educated people to study and discuss Vivekananda's vision of free India and, with that inspiration, to resolve to work to implement that vision in the body-politic of free India.* Any student of Vivekananda literature will realize that Swamiji had a vision of free India. But when he was alive, India was not free. She was under the British

subjection and most of our people were then happy to be under that subjection. But dissatisfaction with that subjection was beginning to emerge, just a little of it. The Indian National Congress had been started a few years earlier, in 1885-86. In 1897, on his return from his four years of glorious spiritual and cultural work in America and Europe, Vivekananda burst upon the Indian scene with a tremendous force, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, and conveyed to our country a dynamic message of humanism based on the Vedāntic vision of the innate divinity of man. In the whole literature of Vivekananda, we get this wonderful idea and sentiment of humanism brightening all inter-human relations.

When I was invited to address the Moscow State University in October 1977, the University gave me this subject to speak on: *Swami Vivekananda: His Humanism*. It is obvious from this that Vivekananda's philosophy of humanism attracts all types of minds, Marxist or democratic, Eastern or Western. I cannot forget the wonderful reception the subject and the speaker received from that university audience, consisting of Marxist intellectuals, research scholars, and students. I found that I was dealing with a theme which was universal in relevance and scope. We are over four billion human beings living on this planet called our earth. We all face the problem as to how to live on this tiny planet in peace, harmony, co-operation, and fellowship, how to love each other and not to hate each other, how to behave not as colliding units like billiard balls but with the capacity to communicate with each other, to enter into the hearts of one another. Vivekananda's humanism conveys to all humanity such a philosophy of human growth, development, and fulfilment. He derives it from the great Vedāntic vision of the spiritual nature of man, of the Advaitic vision of the one divine thread that runs through all man and nature. It was a great experience to me, therefore, to speak to that distinguished gathering on this aspect of Vivekananda's message and to answer questions at the end. The divine spark in every human being is the central teaching of the Upaniṣads, and of all the mystics of the world—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist. In everyone of them, there is this same teaching that there is a profound spiritual dimension in every being which needs to be unfolded in the course of man's life and work; and that all ethical, moral, and humanistic values manifest spontaneously as a by-product of that unfoldment. This is the *spiritual growth of man,* which is the goal of the *science of religion,* according to Swami Vivekananda.

At the end of the lecture, at the question-answer session, the most important question, among the three questions put by the audience, was on this subject by a professor:

'Swamiji, you spoke about the divine spark in every human being. It is a wonderful idea. I want to know more about it. Will you please expound the subject in greater detail?'

I spent ten minutes to expound this great Vedantic truth in greater detail, and the questioner thanked me at the end. At the end of the session, a professor of the university, by name V. S. Kostyuchenko, came forward and shook hands with me and handed over to me his book on *Vivekananda* in Russian, carrying a photo of the Swami on the front cover.

I had a similar experience in West Berlin about four years ago after my public lecture on the subject of *Vedānta and Modern Scientific Thought.* In the course of my lecture, I had spoken about this central Vedāntic teaching of man's innate divinity. A German youth came up to me at the end of the lecture and said, with much feeling:

'Swamiji, you spoke about the divine spark in every human being. I have never heard about it before; but it is such a fascinating idea and I would like to know more about it.'

This is the type of reaction from people all over the world to this central truth of Vedānta and the humanism which Swami Vivekananda derives from it. It is a profound message, out of which alone can come fruitful and happy inter-human relationships, which is the most urgent need of the modern scientific age. Vedānta will help to bring out, from out of the social and cultural and religious diversities and contradictions, this central truth about man, and its unifying, strengthening, message of man's spiritual growth and fulfilment, the message of the universal *spiritual dimension* of religion as different from its narrow and merely *ethnical dimension.*

7. The Two Dimensions of Religion: Ethnical versus Spiritual

Every religion has two dimensions; first, the ethnical, or tribal or socio-political, and the second, the spiritual or the scientific. It is good for our people to understand the nature and scope of these two dimensions of religion. Different results flow from each of these dimensions. When we use the words 'Hindu', 'Muslim', 'Christian', 'Buddhist', 'Jain', 'Sikh', etc., we refer to the ethnical dimension of religion. It is the dimension of religion in which you are born. You had no say in the matter. And you can remain in that dimension — virtuous or wicked, good or evil, peaceful or violent, unselfish or selfish. But when you come to the second dimension of religion, namely, the scientific, you find a slow but steady spiritual growth in man, the steady manifestation of the divine within, out of which goodness, purity, love, and service alone can manifest. Religion becomes a science only when you *seek it*, and *not merely* when you are *born in it*. This is the characteristic of the scientific temper. *Nobody is born into physics or chemistry, zoology or botany. One seeks* to be a scientist in any of these fields. *Without that seeking, there is no science.* Science does not brook any ethnical limitation. Similarly, we are *born into* religion of the ethnical dimension but we come to the science of religion only *by seeking* it and by achieving spiritual growth. *There is such a thing as the spiritual growth of man,* as there is such a thing as the physical and intellectual growth of man.

All the great mystics of the world's religions are scientists in religion in this sense; they sought, experimented with, and experienced, religion, they achieved spiritual growth. They started their religious life, like any other person as belonging to this or that ethnical religion; but their spirit of seeking and experiment took them beyond that ethnical dimension which is exclusive and narrow, to the spiritual dimension which is universal. Except the ones who have remained narrow, by yielding to the authoritative and coercing power of the narrow dogmas of the ethnical dimension of their religion, every mystic has manifested this universal dimension through the *experience* of God — not a God sitting far away in the sky but the one God hidden in man and nature. Man has the organic capacity to realize, to experience, God in that sense. Such realization takes him or her beyond his or her sensory limitations to the transcendental, infinite, and immortal dimension. This is what the scientific and spiritual dimension of religion means. Once you have a touch of that infinite immortal dimension, your every word, your every act, will be suffused only with love and peace.

This is the beauty and relevance of the scientific and spiritual dimension of religion over and above its ethnical dimension. Instead of remaining satisfied with belonging to a particular ethnic religious group, and getting comfortably stagnant there, the spiritual temper of religion, like the scientific temper, makes you dissatisfied with that stagnation and leads you to seek knowledge and experience beyond the sensory level, leads you to knock at the door of the deepest truth hidden in nature through nature's finest product, namely, man, and to get at that truth by a penetrating search within. This is the scientific temper of the human mind, this knocking at the doors of hidden mysteries, whether in outer nature or inner nature. That is what transforms religion into a science, as developed and upheld in India throughout the ages, from the ancient Upaniṣads to Sri Ramakrishna in our own time. The Upaniṣads or Vedānta present religion as *anubhava*, experience, realization. It is not second-hand knowledge like theology or mere rituals, but first-hand experience. This wonderful vision of the ancient sages of India, exemplified in the great mystics of every religion, contains a profound message of the scientific dimension of religion which our country must try to understand and cultivate in the modern period, *with a view to achieving the fullest development of man and the happiest of inter-human relations.* This cannot be done by merely stressing, and over-stressing, the ethnical aspect of any religion. In a letter written to Sister Niveditā from London on 7 June 1895, Swami Vivekananda has pointed out the evils arising from religions keeping their followers stagnant at their ethnical level and failing to stimulate them to rise to their spiritual dimension **(*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. VII, p.489, 1958 Edition):**

'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. ...

'Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is

character. The world is in need for those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.'

Again, writing to the American friend, Mrs. Ole Bull, on 21st March 1895, Swamiji says (*ibid.*, Vol.VI, p.303, Sixth Edition):

'My master used to say that these names as Hindu, Christian, etc., stand as great bars to all brotherly feelings between man and man. *We must try to break them down first.* They have lost all their good powers, and now stand only as baneful influences, under whose black magic even the best of us behave like demons. Well, we will have to work hard and must succeed. ...

'Those that want to help mankind must take their own pleasure and pain, name and fame, and all sorts of interests, and make a bundle of them, and throw them into the sea, and then come to the Lord. This is what all the masters said and *did*.'

Why has there been, and still is, so much violence, war, and persecution in the name of religion, apart from violence from racial and political sources? All these proceed from stagnation at the genetic dimension of man and at the ethnical dimension of his or her religion. Religion, especially the great world religions, are meant to lift man above his or her genetic, tribal, and socio-political limitations. And yet the world has seen plenty of these evils coming out of religion and, due to it, in the modern period, there has been a revulsion against religion, especially when it was viewed against the background of modern science with its love of truth and the spirit of free inquiry. Accordingly, there has been a tremendous growth of agnosticism and atheism, all over the modern world, not because people do not want spirituality, but because they do not know what it is, and what they currently see as religion holds no spiritual appeal. Stagnant ethnical religion has always been a net negative force.

Western and West Asian history is full of violence, war, and persecution between religions and between the denominations of one and the same religion, on the one side, and between religion and science, on the other. And thinking people have begun to ask: Is this all of religion, all these bitter fruits, or is there a higher dimension to religion? The bitter fruits of such static ethnical religions include also the evil practices of untouchability and caste persecutions in India, and the persecution and killing of some of the most lovable Christian and Muslim Sufi mystics, and of millions

of innocent and gifted men and women branded as witches outside India. Many of these mystics had to be very very guarded in reporting their mystical experiences, because of the fear of the power of that ethnical dimension of religion organized as the militant church or other forms of collective religious authority. In all Semitic religions, there is this controlling and distorting of the mystical, scientific, and spiritual dimension of religion by their ethnical dimension.

If there is one country where the higher spiritual dimension of religion has not been suppressed by its ethnical dimension, but has been given the freest expression, it is our country, India. Religions that developed in India — Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, or Sikh — all insist that people should not stagnate at the ethnical dimension of religion, but take it only as a starting point, to rise from belief in, to the experience of, God, to realize God. They all proclaim that *anubhava*, experience, is the true test of religion. This has been stressed in India throughout the ages. So India does not persecute or kill her mystics or any other mystics; never. On the other hand, our people stand firm in reverence before every mystic, not only belonging to Hinduism but to whatever other religions he or she may belong. The attitude in which our people in India have been educated by our religion and philosophy is: If you have an experience of God, have realized God, we salute you. Nowhere else in the world will you find this attitude, *this dominance of the spiritual over the ethnical dimension of religion*. It is a unique feature of our great country and we must cherish it and preserve it.

Swami Vivekananda came in the modern period and observed the mockeries of all the ethnical religions; but he did not say that, therefore, let us banish all religion; but he asked people in every religion to try to understand the true dimension of their religion by presenting to them the scientific approach to religion. This scientific approach to religion was not available in the modern West. Seeing the dogmatic irrational manifestations of religion and experiencing persecution from it, modern physical science in the West condemned all religion as primitive superstition. Western social thought also condemned all relgion, witnessing the intolerant and fanatic aspect of religion in Europe and its exploitation of the common people by aligning itself with the iniquities of the early

phase of the Industrial Revolution. Accordingly, we find Karl Marx reacting violently against religion in the famous utterance: 'Religion is the soul of soulless conditions, the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people.'

Swami Vivekananda found this criticism applicable to much of religion functioning in India also. Our religion, in its stagnant ethnical form, had functioned as the hand-maid of a feudal order to exploit and keep down millions of our common people. It had encouraged caste exclusiveness, untouchability, and other pernicious anti-human attitudes and practices, along with the cherishing of a bundle of superstitions and weakening ideas, and the divorcing of moral attitudes and acts from religion reduced to mere noisy and showy rituals. While reacting against this distortion of religion, Swami Vivekananda also educated our people to view religion as it is truly, *as the science and technique of man's spiritual growth.* Ethnical religion, with its do's and don'ts, can remain as a base, but we have to build the super-structure of spirituality on it. India, as enlivened by Vivekananda, gently whispers today into the ears of everyone of us — Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh or others: You may start at the ethnical dimension; but try to grow beyond it to the spiritual dimension: approach religion as a science of human growth, development, and fulfilment, and as a means of happy and fruitful inter-human relations.

Defining the spirit of true science and true religion in his Swarthmore Lecture in 1929, the British mathematician-astronomer, late Sir Arthur S. Eddington said (*Science and the Unseen World*, p.54):

> 'You will understand the true spirit neither of science nor of religion unless seeking is placed in the forefront.'

In the light of this, and with a view to making religion into a science, the follower of every religion should ask himself or herself: Do I *seek* religion, or *am I satisfied with a stagnant religiosity and piety*, with a set of do's and don'ts? Such a stagnant piety, or piety-fringed worldliness, has done immense harm to humanity. But, by seeking religion, we grow spiritually, we unfold the divine that is within. The sages of the Upanisads discovered ages ago, by an inner penetration, the Atman, the divine Self, in every being. And

Swami Vivekananda today defines religion, in a precise scientific language, *as the manifestation of the divinity already in man.* In the new Testament, we have a similar teaching by Jesus: 'The Kingdom of God is within you'. The same truth is expressed in the language of the Gospel, according to St. John, *as the light that lighteth every soul that cometh into the world.* That truth about God, one and non-dual, and hidden in the heart of all, in nature and in man, is expounded by the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* in the following verse (6.11):

> *Eko devaḥ sarva-bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ*
> *sarva-vyāpī sarva-bhūtāntarātmā;*
> *Karmādhyakṣaḥ sarva-bhūtādhivāsaḥ*
> *sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca --*

'The One Luminous Reality, hidden in all beings, pervading everything, the innermost Self of all; He presides over all the actions and processes of man and nature, living within the innermost recesses of all beings, the Witness of the universe, of the essence of Intelligence, the One and non-dual, and beyond all the qualities of nature (the qualities of *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*).'

The science of religion makes for spiritual growth, through the unfoldment of this one divine reality hidden in all beings. Through such spiritual growth, man transcends the limitations of the tribal or ethnical dimensions of religion; his sympathies and interests widen, to include people of all religions, people without any religion, and the sub-human species as well. This universality of sympathy and understanding is the product of the spiritual and scientific dimension of religion. 'And even a little of this *dharma* (i.e. philosophy) will save man from immense fear', assures the *Gītā* (2.40).

In the history of religion, there has been another method adopted by religion to achieve universality. That is the method of violence and war and genocide. Every tribe has a tribal god or gods. When one tribe conquers another tribe, it destroys not only the people of the other tribe but also its god or gods, and proclaims its own god as the god of all other gods. This is the origin of all the boasted monotheism, the one-god theory, of all Semitic history. That is why that monotheistic god is always jealous, and religions based on that conception have always been intolerant and aggres-

sive. Only in India, the history of religion took a different turn, from the very early Vedic period itself; India did not pursue the Semitic way of universality by stress on *uniformity* through destruction, but reached the ideal of Divine Unity by stress on *unity in diversity* through open-minded and rational understanding and inward experience. That vision of Divine Unity is not of a god far away, not an extra-cosmic deity, but of an In-dwelling Divine Reality, within man, within nature. According to the verse of the Upaniṣad quoted earlier, it is: *eko devaḥ sarva bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ.*

The Indian sages studied the various phenomena of religion and discovered, first, the universality of the phenomenon of religious consciousness, and second, the unity of spiritual striving and spiritual awareness through different religious paths. The first is the truth arising from the science of comparative religion which developed in the West only in the last century, after the West's coming into contact with Indian religious thought; but, in India it is as old as the Vedas. By such a scientific study of the diverse phenomena of religion, the Indian sages discovered the unity and universality of religious consciousness, in spite of the variety of its expressions. Their problem was how to retain this wide variety, which nourishes freedom in religion and also makes for richness and beauty, and, at the same time, to make this variety conducive to harmony, peace, and cooperation, how to make it creative, constructive, and wholesome. It is out of this tremendous search that they rose above the exclusiveness and limitations of ethnical religion and developed the science of religion, and discovered the truth of unity in diversity. This truth is proclaimed in a famous utterance in the earliest human book, the *Ṛg-veda* (1.164.46):

Indram mitram, varuṇam, agnim āhuḥ
atho divyaḥ sa suparṇo garutmān;
Ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti
agnim, yamam mātariśvānam āhuḥ --

'They call that Reality by the names of Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, as also the luminous Garutmān; Truth is one, but sages call it by various names, such as Agni, Yama, Mātariśvān.

The sages taught man to rise to the level of the universal dimension of religion, in and through its ethnical dimension as a base, by approaching religion as a science; they exhort man to understand the spiritual dimension of religion and achieve spiritual growth by unfolding the divine within. Vedānta characterizes this as the science of religion, as the *adhyātma-vidyā*, the science of spirituality; and throughout the succeeding centuries following the age of the Upaniṣads, India produced a galaxy of sages endowed with this universal vision and sympathy and making for harmony, peace, and cooperation between the different religions. This entire spiritual heritage of India, which is the central ingredient of the *Wisdom of India,* found its glorious embodiment in our modern period in Sri Ramakrishna, as also in Swami Vivekananda. In the words of Romain Rolland (*Life of Ramakrishna,* p.14):

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people.'

8. *Vivekananda's Vision of Free India*

While dealing with Vivekananda's vision of free India, it will be instructive to hear two passages from his famous lecture on *The Future of India* delivered in Madras in 1897. The first deals with the historic profile of India, while the second refers to the challenge of her infinite complexity and variety. Referring to the first at the very commencement of his lecture, he says (*Complete Works*, Volume 3, p. 285, Eighth Enlarged Edition):

'This is the ancient land, where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country; the same India whose influx of spirituality is represented, as it were, on the material plane, by rolling rivers like oceans, where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snowcaps, look, as it were, into the mysteries of heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. Here first sprang up inquires into the nature of man and into the internal world. Here first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a supervising God, an immanent God in nature and in man; and here the highest ideals of religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points.

'This is the land from whence, like the tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world; and this is the land from whence, once more, such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigour into the decaying races of mankind.

'It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions, of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour,

indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country.

'Children of India, I am here to speak to you today about some practical things, and my object in reminding you about the glories of the past is simply this: Many times have I been told that looking into the past only degenerates and leads to nothing, and that we should look to the future. That is true. But, out of the past is built the future. Look back, therefore, as far as you can, drink deep of the eternal fountains that are behind, and, after that, look forward, march forward, and make India brighter, greater, much higher, than she ever was.

'Our ancestors were great. We must recall that. We must learn the elements of our being, the blood that courses in our veins. We must have faith in that blood and what it did in the past. And out of that faith and consciousness of past greatness, we must build an India yet greater than what she has been.

'There have been periods of decay and degradation; I do not attach much importance to them; we all know that. Such periods have been necessary. A mighty tree produces a beautiful ripe fruit. That fruit falls on the ground, it decays and rots, and out of that decay springs the root and the future tree, perhaps mightier than the first one. This period of decay through which we have passed was all the more necessary. Out of this decay is coming the India of the future. It is sprouting; the first leaves are already out; and a mighty, gigantic, tree, the *Ūrdhva-mūlam* (of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* and the *Gītā),* is here, already beginning to appear; and it is about that that I am going to speak to you.'

Then, dealing with the second theme, he continues immediately after:

'The problems in India are more complicated, more momentous, than the problems in any other country. Race, religion, language, government — all these together make a nation. The elements which compose the nations of the world are indeed very few, taking race after race, compared to this country. Here have been the Āryan, the Dravidian, the Tārtar, the Turk, the Mogul, the European -- all the nations of the world, as it were, pouring their blood into this land. Of languages, the most wonderful conglomeration is here; of manners and customs, there is more difference between two Indian races than between the European and the Eastern races.'

It is the greatest privilege of the people of free India to face and overcome these challenges today, with the help of what I referred to earlier as *the Wisdom of India,* ancient and modern, and achieve success in the greatest democratic experiment in world history which we are engaged in. The Bengali Muslim revolutionary poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, who died four or five years ago, has presented Sri Ramakrishna, in one of his songs beginning with: *Parama Guru, siddha yogi, matr-bhakta yogāvatār; Paramahamsa Sri Ramakrishna, loho praṇām, namaskār,* as the harbinger of the *satya yuga,* golden age, in this modern age:

Satya yuger puṇya-smṛti kalite ānile tumi tāpas --

'O great Ascetic, you have brought the memory of the *Satya yuga* in this *kali yuga.*'

In a public lecture in Patna, at which I was present, in 1973, India's then Defence Minister, Sri Jagjivan Ram, while paying his tribute to Sri Ramakrishna, had said with much feeling: 'It is my firm conviction that, if Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings are spread widely in the world, there will be no need for having defence ministers like me in any country!' Swami Vivekananda had the same conviction. Writing from America in 1895 to Swami Brahmananda in Calcutta, he says (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* p.252, Fourth Edition):

'From the day Sri Ramakrishna was born dates the growth of Modern India and the Golden Age. And you are the agents to bring about this Golden Age. To work, with this conviction at heart!'

It is good for our people today to see India through the eyes of Swami Vivekananda, such as is given above. His life and personality constitute *a condensed India.* Swamiji understood India with all its greatness and successes, and with all its pettiness and failures. He looked with great veneration at the impressive, millennia-old, historical evolution of India. We must remember that India means one-seventh of humanity. Swamiji saw that the India of the past was great; and he had assimilated that greatness into himself during his discipleship under Sri Ramakrishna. But he wanted to know the India of today. And so, immediately after the passing away of Sri Ramakrishna in 1886, Swamiji undertook a walking tour of our vast continent from north to south, east to west, for 5 to 6 years, like our great Śaṅkarācārya 1100 years earlier, like our *Bhagavān Buddha,* in a lesser area, 1300 years earlier still.

This chapter of Swami Vivekananda's life as a wandering monk in India, as a *parivrājaka,* as we refer to it in Sanskrit, has immense significance for the reshaping of India's destiny in the modern age. During these wanderings, he saw the real India, the India that lives her dismal life in the millions of the cottages of our poor in our

plains, hills, and forests, in ignorance and privation, on the one hand, and the India that lives in mansions and palaces bereft of all compassion and the humanistic impulse, on the other. He saw millions of our people bereft of all human dignity; and he observed that, in such a situation, not only the oppressed but also the oppressor, not only the exploited but also the exploiter, become bereft of human dignity. And he resolutely resolved to restore human dignity to man in India, through making dynamic the wisdom of our eternal India, in its message of total human development which he called *Practical Vedānta.* Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister of free India, refers to this universal dimension of Vivekananda in a brief utterance (*The Discovery of India*, p.400):

'Rooted in the past, and full of pride in India's heritage, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present.'

These few words, presenting the comprehensiveness of Vivekananda's personality, come from a critical mind, an agnostic mind, not affiliated to any religion, but revealing the capacity to appreciate high spiritual greatness. *It is urgent that our people try to understand that mind and heart of their Vivekananda.* Such a study will be a tremendous source of strength to our nation.

We are all baffled by what we see in our country today. It makes us desperate and even hopeless. Why? Because we do not know our India well. We do not know the nature of the deeper forces shaping it from within, and the forces acting on it from without. We do not accordingly know how to handle these forces and how to deliberately set about to shape the destiny of our nation. But when we learn to see India through the eyes of Vivekananda, we shall get a grip on these forces and develop the vision and the courage and the hope to work for the reshaping of our national destiny. What we see in India as its evils will not then baffle us. All our young people, all our educated people, need to get this *re-education* from Swamiji. It is in the light of Vivekananda's vision alone that we can get strength, courage, and hope. I have discussed this on several occasions while addressing various groups in India -- administrators, businessmen, industrialists, and our youths, who are all appalled at the widespread mood of dissatisfaction, indiscipline, communal violence,

crime, bribery, corruption, and social malpractices. And they ask themselves: What has happened to our freedom and democracy? We find dissatisfaction everywhere. We find people deeply concerned with how to hold free India together, how to make our future bright.

9. *Our Baffling National Problems in the Light of Vivekananda's Vision*

While trying to look at India in the light of Vivekananda's vision of free India, let us look at one of our many baffling problems through his eyes: Increasing crime in our country. We read in the life of Vivekananda an incident relating to this subject, which will help to put us in a proper perspective with regard to the problems thrown up by our national awakening.

He was returning to India in 1897 after four years of great work in the United States and England. One fellow passenger in the same ship, who was a lover of India, told Swamiji:

'Swamiji, your country is very moral, very ethical'. 'How do you say so?', asked Swamiji; and she replied: 'Because there is no crime in India, whereas, in our countries like England or America, there is so much of crime.'

Any Indian patriot would have been very happy to receive such a tribute to his or her country, but not Vivekananda. On hearing this tribute, he heaved a little and then said to that lady:

'I wish it were otherwise; I wish there is some crime in my country!'

What does that mean? Looking at it in the light of Indian psychology, Swamiji saw India sunk in deep *tamas* or inertia. There was no life, there was no energy, no power to do good or commit evil. Everything was static and stagnant -- the exploiters sitting on the top and the exploited getting crushed below without the energy to protest, and the whole society stagnant. Whatever goodness was there was largely formal, caste-dictated goodness, without the power of conviction behind it. He could find no sign of true ethics or morality in such a situation; these are made of sterner stuff, and Swamiji wanted our people to achieve that dynamism of true ethical

and moral life. It is at the level of *sattva* that we can see morality and ethics in their true forms; and *tamas* looks like *sattva* from the outside, but both are far different from each other like sleep and *samadhi*. For *tamas* to rise to *sattva,* it must first rise to *rajas* -- energy, activity, dynamism. He wanted, therefore, the people of India to be awakened, first, from that state of *tamas* or inertia. There is no immorality or crime in sleep or death; nor is there morality or goodness in it. Let people be awakened, Swamiji said, let them get quickened by the energy of *rajas,* and thus manifest dynamism, strength, and vigour. When that happens, that strength and energy may sometimes express as crime and violence also, but it is a sign of the awakening from the inertia of *tamas,* and there is nothing to be frightened at that. And he himself had burst upon India, on his return from the West in 1897, as a great teacher of awakening, with the Vedāntic message of *uttiṣṭhata jāgrata* -- 'Arise and awake!' It is after that awakening only that energy will begin to flow through the mind and the body -- energy for work, energy for human love and service, energy for resistance to oppression and exploitation, as well as energy for crime and evil. He gave the nation this message of awakened functioning, this message of man-making and nation-building.

That message is contained in three of his great books: *Letters of Swami Vivekananda, Lectures from Colombo to Almora,* and *Talks with Swami Vivekananda.* And since his time to this day, we have been witnessing the slow and steady awakening of a mighty leviathan of a country which our India is -- first one region or group, then another, and this awakened energy flowed, first, in the nation-wide struggle for political freedom. Within exactly fifty years of his mighty call of *arise and awake* in 1897, the nation achieved political freedom in 1947. That freedom soon energized our various groups and sections who had been asleep and submerged for centuries -- the workers, the peasants, the tribals, the scheduled castes, and our womanhood. These awakened national energies are demanding to be recognized and given a place of honour and freedom and dignity in the national life. And these awakened energies are bound to come into clash with each other -- that is the nature of energy at the level of *rajas* -- resulting in much good work and much crime as well, until they are disciplined and humanly channelized by the energy of

sattva into high character-energy by the science and technique of spirituality. And Swami Vivekananda will tell us today that our country is passing through that necessary phase of human development, and that it is a phenomenon to be welcomed and not to be deplored. If Swamiji were to come to India today, and witness, what Pakistan's late President Bhutto appreciatively described as *The noise and chaos of Indian Democracy*, he would tell all our people:

You have done well; you have manifested energy, *rajas*. You are no more asleep in *tamas*. You are doing wonderful work in the service of the weaker sections. You are also committing various types of crime, like throwing stones on running trains or burning buses and indulging in much bribery and other social malpractices. You have proved that you are no more asleep or inert or dead!

Then he would gently whisper to all our people: Now that you have achieved a good measure of *rajas* energy, give a discipline to this energy, make it creative and constructive, channelize it to man-making and nation-building purposes.

That is the way to be truly ethical and moral. Disciplining and channelizing of energy, whether in nature or in man, has meaning only when there is energy available. We put a dam across a river to generate electricity and create irrigation channels, only if there is water flowing in the river. Otherwise, it is meaningless. Similarly, when men are in a state of *tamas* and have no energy, they do no crime, nor do they do any good. There is no morality involved in it. But if they rise to *rajas,* and manifest energy, and that energy is disciplined and directed to the good of the many, there is morality and ethics, which arise from that *rajas* coming under the control of *sattva.*

River-training schemes applied to mighty or ordinary flowing rivers make the nation richer and richer. What is the science and technology of river-training, and other allied processes, with respect to physical nature's energies, is character-training with respect to the muscular, neural, and mental energies in man. So Swamiji will exhort our people today *to march onward still further,* and *discipline* their energies, *refine* them, and *direct* them *to the great task of total human development in their motherland.*

It is character-training, through intelligent self-discipline, that makes human energy socially oriented. Then that energy becomes positive and creative; otherwise, it becomes negative and sterile and finds expression in crime and all forms of anti-social practices. We have taken the first step in human development -- acquisition of energy, rising from *tamas* to *rajas;* we should not tarry there long; we should take the next, and the most important, step, in human education, of bringing *rajas* under the discipline of *sattva,* and thereby achieve a fuller human development, a development which only man alone, no animal, can achieve. Swami Vivekananda is the greatest awakener of modern India, and the greatest expounder and exemplar of this unique science and technique; and his message of awakening stresses these two levels of human development. He gave the name of *Prabuddha Bhārata,* 'Awakened India', to the monthly journal he started, first in Madras, and later, and even now,in Mayavati in the Himalayas. And the first speech he delivered on landing on the soil of India at Ramnad in the south, after his great four years' work in the West, on 25 January 1897, in response to the first of a series of tumultuous national welcome programmes, contained this Vedāntic message of awakening (*Lectures from Colombo to Almora, Complete Works,* Vol.3, pp.145-46, 1960 Edition):

'The longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be awaking, and a voice is coming to us -- away back where history and even tradition fails to peep into the gloom of the past, coming down from there, reflected as it were, from peak to peak of the infinite Himalaya of knowledge, and of love, and of work, India, this motherland of ours -- a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances, and is gaining volume as days pass by, and behold, the sleeper is awakening! Like a breeze from the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away, and only the blind cannot see, or the perverted will not see, that *she is awakening, this motherland of ours, from her deep long sleep.* None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet!'

10. Self-discipline with a view to Refining Crude Human Energy

This awakening that Swamiji initiated in modern India consists of the two steps referred to earlier, namely, the awakening from *tamas* to *rajas;* and the consequent release of tremendous energy,

and bringing that *rajas* energy under the discipline of *sattva.* We have to discipline all energy, physical or psychical, if we wish to raise its quantity and quality levels. It is like the great Malampuzha River project, not far from this Palghat town; that project is meant to discipline and to refine the energies of the Malampuzha River of this part of Kerala -- energies, which have been going waste after destroying crops and houses, are now being disciplined through the dam and channelled for hydroelectric and irrigation purposes. When we so train a river for positive and creative purposes, it becomes a blessing; and we are now engaged in taming and training the energies of many of our rivers all over India through our five-year plans. Much has been done and much more remains to be achieved.

But it is unfortunate that we have not taken up, we have not applied, the same principle of disciplining energy with respect to our vast human energies, in our free India. Through our educational, economic, and political programmes, we have roused the energies in our people; that is a blessing; but that rousing can become a true blessing only when we take the second step of disciplining these energies, refining them, and channelizing them to full human developmental purposes. *Only because our education does not do this second service to our energies that we are in trouble today.* Disciplining human energies is not an end in itself; *it is only the necessary condition for the next important step of refining them and making them the instrument of total human development.*

After my five-day government-organized lecture tour of Arunachal Pradesh in March this year, I was returning to Dibrugarh to catch my plane to Calcutta via the Duliajan Oil Refinery township in Assam. Hearing of this, the staff of the refinery wanted me to address a meeting in the Refinery club. When I agreed to spare only 20 minutes for the same, since I could not spare more time, in view of the flight schedule ahead, the staff was satisfied. I went to the club and saw assembled there a select gathering of engineers, officers, and other staff.I was wondering on what subject I should speak at such a meeting suddenly called. Then spontaneously an idea struck me. I decided to deal with the wider significance of the concept of refining. What do you do here in this refinery? I asked,

and I myself developed the answer. You bring out crude oil from the bottom of the earth, refine it, and produce beautiful and useful petroleum products. The science of geology and other relevant techniques help us in this. But have you given thought, I asked, to another science and technique, the science and technique of spirituality, the central theme of all human education, by which you handle crude human energy and refine it into beautiful character-products, making for love, dedication, service, and peace, in the context of all human interactions and inter-human relations?

Crude or raw human energy is like bull power. We have plenty of such raw bull power in India of different types. We have political power, administrative power, money power, youth power, labour power, women power, and many other types. All this energy and power are by themselves crude, like your crude oil; they are waiting to be refined, waiting for the release of the beautiful and useful character-products hidden within them. All *rājasic* human energy is crude energy, hiding within it beautiful character-energy products. All human energies in their crude unrefined state are often self-cancelling in their functioning; they weaken the nation, weaken its infant democracy. But once we refine all these energies, after subjecting them to a measure of self-discipline, they become tremendous sources of unity, strength, progress, and prosperity for the nation. When human energy is disciplined, refined, and purified, it becomes character-energy -- energy of not only efficient work, but also team-work, for the all-round growth and fulfilment of the people. We have unfortunately allowed our accumulating human energies to function in their crude forms too long, since independence.

We have, all around us, plenty of evidence of the havoc being done by our crude, unrefined, human energy to our nation: Doing injustice to people, especially the weaker sections, through misuse of political and administrative power; every type of misuse of money power; running riot of youth power; communal frenzy and riots and killing and looting of innocent people belonging to another community; the bridegroom's power to cause dowry death to his newly-wed bride, revealing the crudest attitude, of even some of our so-called educated men arising from their crude propensity to love or to marry not the woman but the dowry!

It is high time that we now transform that crude human energy into refined and purified energy, into *man-making and nation-building energy* in the words of Vivekananda.

Is there that wisdom in our nation to help us to achieve this? That is the question each one of us has to ask. We do not find evidence of the touch of that wisdom in our nation today. But that wisdom is there in our rich cultural heritage, ancient and modern. *It is unforunate that most of our educational institutions, especially those run by our Union and State governments, do not give us an insight into this Wisdom of India.* Most of our people, including many politicians, judges, administrators, industrialists, and teachers, do not know anything about this national heritage of wisdom. When our people will discover it and make use of it, something great will happen to our nation; great possibilities of human development and happy inter-human and inter-group relations will then be achieved, making for the evolution of a healthy body-politic. And so the next step, the real step, according to Swami Vivekananda, is education in self-discipline and character-development. What is character? It is psychic energy, and all forms of power, disciplined, organized, and refined, and given a humanistic direction.

Character is centred in a socially oriented will. When that socially oriented will controls and guides all forms of power, you achieve a heaven on earth. What a beautiful idea? There is nothing utopian about it, if one looks at it in the light of *the science of human possibilities,* which is Vedānta. This is a spiritual marvel, very consistent with, and relevant to, the technological marvels of our space age. My will can be a source of weakness, exploitation, or suffering to other wills in society; or it can be a source of strength, development, and joy to other wills in society. Character-development consists in orienting one's energy of will, intellect, money, and power to the good of all other beings. *That is real education as well as real religion.* Vivekananda had termed it man-making, character-building and nation-building education and religion. Religion, to him, is only continued education from the level of the sensory to the super-sensory, but not to the super-natural; there is no place for the

unscientific notion of the super-natural in Vedānta, for its concept of nature is all-inclusive. The time has come for all our people to understand and to assimilate these wonderful ideas; ***that is the re-education that our educated people stand in urgent need of today.***

One hopeful sign on the national horizon is that our people have started thinking about these matters, listening eagerly and attentively to expositions of these ideas, and to question themselves and their easy ways and the emptiness of their selfish wasteful lives. They have become conscious of the utter irrelevance of our current education to meet the challenges facing our nation. We have to transform it into a national education oriented to national will and purpose, by inspiring it with our national heritage of wisdom. Without that national orientation, our education and our educated people have become the most serious burden and problem for the nation. All the wickedness and evil, all corruption, bribery, smuggling, and other social injustices and malpractices, come from our educated sections. A free nation depends on education for its development, for the solution of its human problems; but our education not only does not solve human problems, but itself becomes an intractable national problem! There is widespread dissatisfaction with our education today and a probing, by various groups and agencies, into the ways and means to make it oriented to national purposes. When we seriously ask this question and seek an answer for it, we shall find the entire literature of Vivekananda throwing a wonderful light on the subject and providing guidance and inspiration to relate it to our national heritage of wisdom.

11. The Harmony of the Secular and the Sacred in Vedānta

We have been spreading secular education since independence through schools, colleges, and universities. I referred earlier to the wisdom of India. It is good for us to realize that Indian wisdom is never afraid of the word 'secular'. To us, secular merely means what concerns human life at the physical and sensory level; and the sacred, which is the province of the scientific dimension of religion, means education beyond that sensory level. *And our Indian Wisdom tells us that the secular and the sacred form integral parts of one continuous education of man.* All education — whether secular or

sacred, is spiritual, according to Indian wisdom. Vedānta sees no conflict but only harmony between the two. All knowledge is sacred, including the most secular type of knowledge like carpentry or other kinds of arts and crafts, as well as the physical sciences. One and the same goddess, namely, *Sarasvati,* presides over every type of knowledge and talent and work-capacity. Indian wisdom achieved this unification of all knowledge, and bridged the gulf between the secular and the sacred quite early in our history. Accordingly, after the first three years of life spent in comfort, pleasure, and security, the human child gets its second birth — it becomes a *dvija,* a twice-born, in the language of Indian culture — when it becomes a *vidyārthi* or student, and enters into the vast world of knowledge, sensory and super-sensory, *aparā vidyā* as well as *para vidyā. The first birth from the mother's womb is physical or genetic, while the second constitutes the spiritual birth of man, of man alone among all species of living beings.*

The human child's search for knowledge begins with secular education, but it does not, should not, stop or end there. It continues its education by carrying on its search for truth in the inner world, *with a view to maturing knowledge into wisdom.* Indian wisdom considers the spread of secular education as essential to human development. It opens up the door to the vast world of knowledge, by first giving man a knowledge of his or her external physical environment. In the absence of this knowledge, man becomes ignorant and remains helpless; and often superstitious. The present weakness and helplessness and widespread underdevelopment of our common people is due to this lack of secular education, this lack of knowledge of the world in which they live. It is only through this knowledge that man gets a grip on his or her environment and raises himself or herself, by himself or herself, to higher and higher levels of human freedom, dignity, strength, and fearlessness. It is because of the lack of secular education that millions of our people are lying submerged in society, submerged in the collectivity. As soon as such people get a little knowledge of geography, history, civics, and physical science, they become strong, confident, and self-reliant. They become awakened from their collective or mass submergence and develop a sense of their

own identity and destiny. They develop a sense of their own individuality, in the language of Swami Vivekananda. It is through such widespread secular education that strength, through increasing mental energy resources, comes to the nation.

Along with this strength of individuality, we have to take steps to humanize it, to make it capable of living at peace and harmony and fellowship with other individuals in society. This is the beginning of that more subtle and more important spiritual education of man through which character-energy, spirit of service, and capacity for teamwork, come to the people. Everyone must be made to realize that the possibility of the highest spiritual growth is available to all, after once one achieves the strength of individuality through secular education. Without this further growth, that first step in education may make one selfish or arrogant, and inclined to misuse all forms of power, inclined to exploit others, and liable to collide with others like billiard balls. That is what is happening in our country now. But when education is continued from the secular to the spiritual dimension, man grows from *individuality, from vyaktitva,* to *personality,* to *vikasita vyaktitva,* from a self-centred will to a socially oriented will, with the spirit of cooperation and team-work, harmony and peace, dedication and service, as its by-products. Swami Vivekananda refers to the fruits of this second stage of education as renunciation and service, *tyaga* and *sevā*. First comes the development of the freedom of individuality through the strengthening of the ego; this is followed by the growth of individuality into the freedom and responsibility of personality by the *renunciation* of that genetically limited ego through identification with the larger self of society, and the spirit of *service,* as the spontaneous by-product of that spiritual growth from individuality to personality.

12. *Swami Vivekananda's Three 'Mantras' for Our People*

Swami Vivekananda expected that our educated people, millions and millions of our men and women, will take it as their mission to uplift the weaker, exploited, neglected sections of their motherland. To help them to achieve it, he gave them three *mantras* to read or hear, meditate upon, and implement. Here is the first of

these *(The Complete Works,* Vol.V, p.228, 1959 Edition):

'The national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service. Intensify her in those channels, and the rest will take care of itself.'

It is this spirit of service and dedication that has not been nurtured in our people through our education. It still continues largely on the lines, and in the spirit, of the colonial system established by Macaulay in the last century. Swami Vivekananda will help us to get it transformed into a nationally oriented education, oriented to the service of man without respect to caste, creed, colour, sex, or social status. The inspiration for such an education is further contained in the second and third *mantras,* which say *(ibid.,* Vol. 4, p. 363, 1962 Edition):

'This life is short, the vanities of world are transient, but *they alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.*'

And *(ibid.,* Vol.5, p. 58):

'Him I call a *Mahātman* (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor; otherwise, he is a *Durātman* (wicked soul). ... My heart is too full to express my feeling; you know it, you can imagine it. *So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.*'

Much good will come if these three passages are studied and discussed by our students and teachers from primary to the university level from every point of view. Today, there are millions of *traitors* and millions of *dead* people among our educated, if we apply the above criteria of Swami Vivekananda. Through study and discussion of the subject, our students will become convinced of the desirability of becoming *patriots,* instead of *traitors, live* people instead of *dead* ones. Everywhere we come across such 'dead' people in our Union and State Secretariats, in our banks, insurance companies, airline offices etc. Most of the staff are not concerned with the nation or its problems. They are concerned only with their own salary and allowances. They will consider it still better if they can get their salary even without having to do any work! *And these are the so-called educated people coming out of our schools and colleges and universities!* That education, obviously, has not made them humanly oriented, has not made them grow from *vyaktitva* to *vikasita vyaktitva,* but has left them stranded in selfish, petty and

stagnant attitudes, left them stranded at the genetic level. They are inwardly unfree, though outwardly free simply in view of our nation's political independence. Consequently, the only motivation of most of our youths is personal ambition, and how to use this intellectual education to fulfil that ambition. There is no ambition on behalf of the nation or on behalf of the millions of the weaker sections of their motherland.

13. The Influence of Vivekananda on Great Minds

If only our students, in their school and college days, are introduced to the study and assimilation of the little book on *Education* by Swami Vivekananda, and another small book: *Vivekananda on Universal Ethics and Moral Conduct,* what a wonderful tonic it would be. Gandhiji, who affirmed publicly that 'the study of the Swami's books had been a great help to him, and that they had increased his love and understanding of India', introduces the first book in two brief sentences:

'Surely, Vivekananda's words do not need introduction from anybody. They make their own irresistible appeal. Yours, Bapu.'

How beautiful is that brief introduction! Most of our young people will develop into fine lovers of man, if they are given these ideas of Vivekananda in their student days. They will then be inwardly nourished spiritually and humanly. Vivekananda's ideas will make their own *irresistible appeal* to our fine young boys and girls. When they are thus nourished spiritually and intellectually, they will become instruments of healthy and vast social changes in India. Wherever I have gone in India, I have seen this spontaneous response of our young people to Swami Vivekananda's ideas. They are seeking for this type of nourishment but they get very little opportunity to get it from our educational institutions, especially the government-run ones. So, I tell them everywhere:

'Do not expect this blessing, this inspiration, to come to you through institutional education for some time more; but you go to Vivekananda literature direct; study that strengthening and purifying literature. Something wonderful will happen to you then.'

This is how poet Rabindranath Tagore inspired the French

thinker Romain Rolland to study and write on Vivekananda with the words:

'If you want to understand India, study Vivekananda. In him, everything is positive, nothing negative.'

And as a result of this stimulus from Tagore, Romain Rolland made a deep study of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and produced the two most beautiful, critical, biographies: *Life of Ramakrishna* and *Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* during the 1920s.

I was in Indonesia on a lecture tour in connection with the Vivekananda Birth Centenary celebrations in November–December 1964. President Sukarno of Indonesia spent a special one hour TV session, (originally fixed appointment was only for 20 minutes) with our Indian Ambassador Sri Apa B. Pant and me, in the Presidential Palace in Jakarta, on 2 December, in connection with the release, by the President, of a book: *Voice of Vivekananda* in English (2,000 copies), and *Suara Vivekananda* (*Suara* means *Swara,* sound or voice) in Bahasa Indonesia (20,000 copies). The Indonesian language is about 50% Sanskrit. It is a beautiful country with more than 120 million population, mostly Muslim in religion, but Hindu in culture. The people are gentle, artistic, and lovable. *The Rāmāyaṇa* and *The Mahābhārata* are their great books and their arts such as dance, drama, and painting are mostly based on these two ancient Hindu Epics. President Sukarno had written a brief introduction to that *Suara Vivekananda* in which he had said:

'Swami Vivekananda! What a name! He was one of the men who gave so much inspiration to me—inspiration to be strong, inspiration to be a servant of God, inspiration to be a servant of my country, inspiration to be a servant of the poor, inspiration to be a servant of mankind. He it was who said:"We have wept long enough, no more weeping now, but stand on your feet and be *men*"!

What a beautiful introduction by the President of Indonesia! The President ended his speech, after releasing the book, with the words: 'I keep the Swami's *Complete Works* volumes in my bedroom and read at least a page or two every night before going to bed.' The Ambassador informed me that the Indonesian Ministry of Information had instructed its Radio Indonesia to broadcast all my lectures in Jakarta and Bandung. And, accordingly, all my speeches from then onwards were duly broadcast. One day, the Minister of

Education told me of a conversation he had with the President. He told the President that he was going to a neighbouring town. For what purpose? asked the President. To address an educational conference, he replied. What do you know of education? The President asked, and advised him: Read Vivekananda first, and then address any educational conference. The Minister said that he then read some books of Swamiji and then went and spoke at the conference, and he gave me a copy of that lecture.

When I went to the beautiful town of Bandung in Indonesia to address the 300 and odd trainees and staff of its Teachers' Training College of the University of Bandung, the Dean requested me to speak on *The Spiritual Message of Swami Vivekananda to the Youths*. I spoke and answered questions and, while thanking the speaker, one of the students said, on behalf of the entire college: 'Please come and stay with us for a whole month and speak to us on Swami Vivekananda and his ideas on Education.'

14. *A Great Nation to Emerge only out of Great Minds and Hearts*

I mention all this only to tell you about the wide appeal of Vivekananda and that there is plenty of Indian wisdom available to us in the literature of Swami Vivekananda for building up the manhood and womanhood of our nation. It is high time that we avail ourselves of this tremendous fund of strength and illumination. What a universal mind, what broad attitudes, and what deep human love and broad human sympathy, we find in Swami Vivekananda! Which nation has the privilege to produce such an all-round personality like Vivekananda? Which nation has leaders and teachers of the type of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Gandhi? It is modern India's unique privilege to have produced, like ancient India, a galaxy of universal minds and hearts. What a rich source of education and inspiration this is for our people today!

Swami Vivekananda's vision of future India is of a country free from the exclusiveness and inequalities of caste and the narrowness and intolerance of creed, and all our men and women installed on the pedestal of human dignity, freedom, fearlessness, and equality, through widespread education and economic and cultural opportunities. In Swami Vivekananda's literature, you will come in touch

with a dynamic expression of this wisdom of India, its getting strengthened with Western science and the socio-political knowledge and experience of the modern age, and the means of translating that integrated wisdom into human terms. India is the home of many religions, and the follower of every religion will live here in dignity and freedom and fearlessness, in close cooperation with people belonging to other religions. *Unity in Diversity* is and has been, for thousands of years, the social and cultural *policy* of India, deriving from the *principle* of her spiritual vision.

Vivekananda presents before all of us the vision of modern India as a mighty anthropological laboratory to experiment on total human development, and happy and peaceful inter-human relations, among our vast population, constituting a seventh of humanity and belonging to different languages, religions, cultures, and social levels. He will help us to bring harmony and concord in our nation. He loved India and her people, irrespective of creed, caste, sex, or economic and cultural levels, with a passion rare here or anywhere else; and that passion was specially extended to all our poor, exploited, and weaker sections. A study of his literature will help our students to inspire their own hearts and minds with this humanistic passion of Vivekananda. Even Mahatma Gandhi had said that, by reading Vivekananda, his own love for India had increased a hundredfold.

During this tour of Kerala, I had said everywhere that ours is a big country of infinite diversity and, therefore, *we need to develop big minds and hearts*. We cannot handle the problems of a big country with small minds and hearts. Swamiji's literature will help us to develop this big mind and heart, whether we are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, or communists, socialists, or democrats. When we develop such a great mind and heart, we will also develop the capacity to make all the divergent social, religious, and political energy streams to flow in a single national direction. India had the sense of cultural national unity imprinted upon her by her great thinkers and sages, including your own Kerala's Śaṅkarācārya, since the last 2000 years. That cultural sense of national identity has developed into a political national unity as well, in the modern period, since we began our freedom struggle and achieved independence.

We are all citizens of free India. That is our common personality, to whatever religion or region or political party we may belong. When the British were here, we were all known as the *subjects* of the British Empire. After they left, we became *free citizens* of free India. After centuries, we have now become sovereign and free, with nobody ruling over us from outside. This is our democracy, the largest in the world, and we have to be proud of it, we have to cherish it, and we have to strengthen it. It is a tender plant at present. Too much rough handling will retard its growth and even destroy it. By breathing the spirit of freedom, equality, humanism, and self-discipline, we can strengthen our national unity and transform the tender plant of our *largest* democracy into the vigorous and fruitful tree of the *greatest* democracy. That is the modern application of the Wisdom of India.

15. *Swamiji's Advocacy of Revolutionary Social Changes*

Swamiji had the vision of revolutionary social changes taking place in modern India, and not just a few cosmetic reforms and adjustments. He also foresaw that that was going to be a tumultuous experience, and not an easy change-over. And he welcomed that prospect, for he knew that, for achieving nation-wide and total human development, that was vitally needed. In the course of his lecture on *My Plan of Campaign,* delivered in Madras in 1897, he specially referred to this prospect of revolutionary change ahead (*Complete Works,* Vol.3, pp-213.16):

'To the reformers I will point out that I am a greater reformer than any one of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root and branch reform. ... I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth. ... This wonderful national machine has worked through ages, this wonderful river of national life is flowing before us. ... Who dares command its motion? ... Feed the national life with the fuel it wants, but the growth is its own; none can dictate growth to it. Evils are plentiful in our society, but so are there evils in every other society. Here, the earth is soaked sometimes with widow's tears; there, in the West, the air is rent with the sighs of the unmarried. Here, poverty is the great bane of life; there, the life-weariness of luxury is the great bane that is upon the race. Here, men want to commit suicide because they have nothing to eat; there, they commit suicide, because they have much to eat. Evil is everywhere. ...

'The whole problem of social reform, therefore, resolves itself into this: Where are those who want reform? Make them first. Where are the people? The tyranny of a minority is the worst tyranny that the world ever sees. A few men who think that certain things are evil will not make a nation move. Why does not the nation move? First educate the nation, create your legislative body, and then the law will be forth-coming. First create the power, the sanction, from which the law will spring. The kings are gone; where is the new sanction, the new power of the people? Bring it up. Therefore, even for social reform, the first duty is to educate the people. ... You must go down to the basis of the thing, to the root of the matter. That is what I call radical reform.

'Put the fire there, and let it burn upwards and make an Indian nation.'

Again, in his lecture in Madras on *The Future of India (ibid.,* pp. 294-97):

'The days of exclusive privileges and exclusive claims are gone, gone for ever from the soil of India. ...

'The duty of every aristocracy is to dig its own grave; and the sooner it does so, the better. The more it delays, the more it will fester and the worse death it will die.'

This modern chapter of Indian history is significant precisely for this— that it provides the opportunity and the technical and scientific facilities to our people and leaders of India to energize their centuries-long moribund society; to remove all its human injustices and exploitations; and to establish a progressive socio-economic and political order, through revolutionary transformation in the light of Indian wisdom and the modern democratic process. He could foresee the people welcoming such revolutionary social changes because of his understanding of, and insight into, the age-old wisdom of India.

That wisdom finds one of several expressions in the traditionally accepted distinction between the *Śruti* and the *Smṛti* and the dominance of the *Śruti* over the *Smṛti,* in the Indian tradition. This is not understood or accepted in any other culture or tradition. *Śruti* stands for the eternal values of human freedom, dignity, equality, and fearlessness, irrespective of caste, creed, colour, or sex; whereas the *Smṛtis* have been riddled with human inequality and caste and class hierarchy. He wanted the new India to draw her inspiration from the *Śruti,* to cast away all that is anti-*Śruti* in our society, and evolve a new *Smṛti* and a new society in India, in tune with the universal spirit of the *Śruti* and the progressive humanistic values of the modern age. Indian tradition has always upheld that the *Smṛtis* come and go; they change, have to change, in response to changing

social situations, whereas the *Śruti* alone is eternal, because it deals with eternal verities, universal and human. That is why, in our long national history, we had many *Smṛtis* but only the one *Śruti* —the immortal Vedas, more particularly their spiritual and philosophical portions, the Upaniṣads. The message of the Upaniṣads is, therefore, called the *Sanātana Dharma,* Eternal *Dharma,* or perennial philosophy, as different from the teachings of the *Smṛti,* which constitute only the *yuga dharma,* the *dharma* for a particular *yuga* or age. The *Smṛti* which is relevant in one age, or in one country, has no relevance in another age or another country; and all social changes involve abrogation of the current *Smṛti* and adoption of a new *smṛti* relevant to the new times. This far-seeing and orthodox national wisdom finds beautiful expression in a pithy saying of Sri Ramakrishna:

'The Moghul coins have no *currency* under the (East India) Company's rule!'

Vivekananda's teachings inspired India to fight for political freedom, and continues to inspire all people to make that freedom meaningful to the people at large. This wisdom of India, and the eternal message of human dignity and freedom of the *Śruti* constituent of the Indian tradition, has found expression in the Preamble of the secular Constitution that free India proclaimed for herself in 1950. The Constitution proclaims India as a sovereign democratic republic; abolishes inequalities of caste and untouchability; gives freedom to every religion to express its highest and best; and promises all-round redemption of the millions and millions of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes and the backward sections of our immense population. Even before freedom, India saw the inspiration of the *Śruti,* and the abrogation of the old *Smṛtis,* in many revolutionary social changes, including the famous proclamation in 1936 allowing free access to the Hindu untouchables into the Hindu temples.

Even though it contains noble ideas, the Indian Constitution is only a document; it contains only a vision and a resolve and many promises. But their implementation depends upon hard, efficient, and cooperative work done by the alert citizens of India. They need to develop an insight into the historical evolution of India and the

immense possibilities of the modern age. This is to grasp India in her wholeness, in her completeness, in her tremendous spiritual vision and human cultural experiment, from the most ancient times to the modern times. This is what Swami Vivekananda achieved in himself, by which he himself became a *condensed India.* Sister Nivedita's characterization of this dimension of Swamiji's personality, in her *The Master as I Saw Him,* is very illuminating in this context *(Complete Works of Sister Nivedita,* volume 1, p. 45, sec.2):

'There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love for his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He never used the word "nationality", nor proclaimed an era of "nation-making"; "Man-making", he said was his own task. *But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her.* Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortifications, that he had not known or understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness'. (italics not by the author).

16. *'Let New India Arise!'*

Accordingly, in spite of his great admiration for the past glory of India, Vivekananda did not want to take modern India back into that past. The past was great, he said, but added that the future would be greater still. In a famous passage of his writings, he foresees decadent old India vanishing into nothingness, and summons new India into existence through the awakening of the common man *(Memoirs of European Travel, Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* Vol. 7, pp. 326-28):

'However much you may parade your descent from Āryan ancestors and sing the glories of ancient India day and night, and however much you may be strutting in the pride of your birth, you, the upper classes of India, do you think you are alive? You are but mummies ten thousand year-old! It is among those whom your ancestors despised as "walking carrion" that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found; and it is you who are the real "walking corpses". Your houses, your furniture look like museum specimens, so lifeless and antiquated they are. ... You represent the past tense. ... You are the void, the unsubstantial non-entities of the future. Denizens of the dreamland, why are you loitering any longer? Fleshless and blood-

less skeletons of the dead body of Past India that you are, why do you not quickly reduce yourselves into dust and disappear in the air? Ay, on your bony fingers are some priceless rings of jewel, treasured up by your ancestors, and within the embrace of your stinking corpse are preserved a good many ancient treasure chests. Up to now, you have not had the opportunity to hand them over. Now, ... pass them on to your heirs, ay, do it as quickly as you can. You merge yourselves in the void and let New India arise in your place!

'Let her arise — out of the peasant's cottage grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fishermen, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains.

'These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years — suffered it without a murmur and, as a result, have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. Living on a handful of grain, they can convulse the world; give them only half a piece of bread, and the whole world will not be big enough to contain their energy. They are endowed with the inexhaustible vitality of a *Raktabīja* (a mythical demon described in the Hindu sacred book *The Devī Māhātmyam*, every drop of whose blood shed in battle produced another demon like himself). And, besides, they have got the wonderful strength that comes of a pure and moral life, which is not to be found anywhere else in the world. Such peacefulness, such contentment, such love, such power of silent and incessant work,and such manifestationof lion's strength in times of action — where else will you find these!

'Skeletons of the past, *there, before you, are your successors, the India that is to be!* ... No sooner will you disappear than you will hear the inaugural shout of Renaissant India, ringing with the voice of a million thunders and reverberating throughout the universe: *Wah Guru ki Fateh -- Victory to the Guru!*'

The creation of that new India depends upon the work of millions of our educated citizens, educated in schools and colleges and universities, *but re-educated in the inspiring literature of Swami Vivekananda.* He will educate our people in the meaning of true religion as the science of spirituality, as the science of character-development, as the technique of practical efficiency. He will educate our people in the meaning of true science as the search for truth and the work for human happiness and welfare. That re-education will endow our people with big minds and hearts. Today, many in India are full of petty minds, narrow hearts, and limited sympathies. 'We call ourselves Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, etc., but our minds are small, our hearts narrow; we are little pools of stagnation. Vivekananda's inspiration will change all this in our nation. We have been that stagnant feudal society for

centuries. Swamiji rang the death-knell of that stagnant feudal order in many of his speeches and writings, some relevant passages from which I had quoted earlier.

17. *Social Change versus Social Direction: The Brahmaṇa Ideal*

A static religiosity and a stagnant society, which we had these past few centuries, are giving place to a dynamic spirituality and a progressive human social order. Only free-minded men and women, democratic and modern and endowed with character efficiency, can accelerate that revolutionary process. This is the type of men and women who are truly spiritual, who have achieved spiritual growth. Swamiji spoke of this as the true meaning of religion, this growing and expanding beyond one's organic limitations. To express it in his own words: 'All expansion is life; all contraction is death.' After centuries of contraction, we have started expanding in the modern period. Behind these revolutionary transformations, in modern India, there is the eternal Vedāntic vision of the infinite and immortal Divine in man, and its continuous unfolding in the context of one's life and work. *That provides a spiritual direction and goal to all social changes.* Vedānta holds that whatever changes are taking place, or are introduced into society, must subserve that great end, *namely, spiritual freedom and fulfilment, the one direction of human evolution, according to Vedānta.*

Indian sociology, under the inspiration of her comprehensive science of man, has presented to us a goal to the social evolutionary process, namely, the *Brāhmaṇa,* in whom all worldliness is eliminated and abundant spirituality is present. This is a rare, but universal, human type, found in all societies, It is utterly different from the genetically-conditioned *brāhmaṇa,* as the priest, of the current obnoxious caste system. It is the claiming of special privileges for oneself, and lording it over the rest of the community, that made the *brāhmaṇa* of the later post-vedic caste system the blot on Indian society. On the other hand, the *Brāhmaṇa,* who claims no special privileges for oneself, who is illumined and has risen to the level of *sattva,* and who is consequently dedicated to renunciation and service, has been highly commended by even Buddha and Swami Vivekananda.

The best definition of *Brāhmaṇa* as the highest human ideal is found in the Upaniṣads. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,* sage Yājnavalkya, addressing the nun-philosopher Gārgi in a debate, says (3. 8. 10):

Yo vā etadakṣaram, Gārgi, aviditvā asmāt lokāt praiti, sa kṛpaṇaḥ; atha ya etadakṣaram, Gārgi, viditvā asmāt lokāt praiti, sa brāhmaṇaḥ—

'Whoever, O Gārgi, leaves this world (of physical life) without realizing this Imperishable (Brahman), he or she is a *kṛpaṇa,* or a small-minded miserable person; whoever, on the other hand, O *Gārgi, leaves this world after realizing this Imperishable (Brahman), he or she is a Brāhmaṇa.*'

Vivekananda presents the Advaitic vision of non-separateness of the Vedānta philosophy as the breaker of all special privileges. Says he in the course of the lecture on *Vedānta and Privilege* delivered in London *(Complete Works,* Vol. 1, pp. 423-25, Eleventh Enlarged Edition):

'The work of the Advaita, therefore, is to break down all these privileges. It is the hardest work of all and curious to say, it has been less active than anywhere else in the land of its birth. If there is any land of privilege, it is the land which gave birth to this philosophy -- privilege, for the spiritual man as well as for the man of birth. There they have not so much privilege for money (that is one of the benefits, I think), but privilege for birth, and spirituality, is everywhere.

'Once a gigantic attempt was made to preach Vedāntic ethics, which succeeded to a certain extent for several hundred years, and we know historically that those years were the best times of the nation (India). I mean the Buddhistic attempt to break down privilege. Some of the most beautiful epithets addressed to Buddha that I remember are: "Thou, the breaker of castes, destroyer of privileges, preacher of equality to all beings".

In the medieval period, India produced a Guru Nānak and, in the modern period, a Mahatma Gandhi, as the most outstanding representatives of this ideal *Brāhmaṇa* type, along with a large number of unknown and less known ones.

All through the ages, all sections of the Indian society, including shoe-makers, barbers, sweepers, tailors, traders, housewives, and farmers, have risen to the eminence of this highest class of humanity. They all overcame *rajas* and *tamas* and shone in *sattva.* The very

popular Buddhist book: *The Dhammapada,* contains Buddha's words in praise of this type of *Brāhmaṇa* as the ideal man, in the chapter entitled: *Brāhmaṇa-Varga.* Here are five verses from out of the forty-one, of the last chapter of *The Dhammapada* (Chapter 26, verses 3,4,23,40):

Yassa pāram apāram vā
pārā-pāram na vijjati;
Vītaddaram visannuttam
tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam --

'Him (or her) I call a *Brāhmaṇa* for whom there is neither this shore nor that shore, nor both, who is free from fear and free from shackles.'

Jhāyim viraham āsīnam
kaṭakiccam anāsavam;
Uttamattham anuppattam
tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam --

'Him (or her) I call a *Brāhmaṇa* who is meditative, free from passion, settled, who has done what ought to be done, free from taints, and who has attained the highest state of freedom from re-birth.'

Nidhāya daṇḍam bhūteṣu
tasesu thāvaresu ca;
Yo na hanti na ghāteti
tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam --

'Him (or her) I call a *Brāhmaṇa* who lays aside the rod of chastisement with regard to creatures, moving or unmoving, and who neither kills nor causes to kill.'

Usabham pavaram vīram
mahesim vijitāvinam;
Anejam nahātakam buddham
tam aham brūmi brāhmaṇam --

'Him (or her) I call a *Brāhmaṇa* who is fearless like a bull, noble, heroic, the all-wise, who has overcome (death), who is sinless, who has accomplished his search for knowledge (in wisdom), and is illumined.'

The great Hindu law-giver Manu describes the glory of such a *Brāhmaṇa* in a famous verse which Vivekananda has quoted approvingly *(Manusmṛti,* 1. 99):

Brāḥmaṇo jāyamāno hi
pṛthivyām adhijāyate;
Īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām
dharma-kośasya guptaye --

'*The Brāhmaṇa,* when he (or she)appears in society, stands as the crown of that society; he is verily capable to protect and cherish the treasury of *dharma,* i.e. goodness and virtue of all beings.'

Speaking in Kumbakonam in February 1897 on *The Mission of the Vedānta,* Vivekananda expounded this Indian concept of the Brāhmaṇa as the ideal man *(The Complete Works,* Vol. 3, pp. 196-99):

'I am no preacher of any momentary social reform... I only ask you to work and realize more and more the Vedāntic ideal of the solidarity of man and his inborn divine nature. Had I the time, I would gladly show you how everything we have now to do was laid out years ago by our ancient law-givers, and how they actually anticipated all the different changes that have taken place, and are still to take place, in our national institutions.

'The ideal man of our ancestors was the Brāhmaṇa. In all our books stands out prominently this ideal of the Brāhmaṇa. In Europe, there is my Lord the Cardinal, who is struggling hard, and spending thousands of pounds, to prove the nobility of his ancestors, and he will not be satisfied until he has traced his ancestry to some dreadful tyrant who lived on a hill and watched the people passing by and, whenever he had the opportunity, sprang out on them and robbed them. ... In India, on the other hand, the greatest princes seek to trace their descent to some ancient sage who dressed in a bit of loin cloth, lived in a forest, eating roots and studying the Vedas...

'Our ideal of high birth, therefore, is different from that of others. Our ideal is the *Brāhmaṇa* of spiritual culture and renunciation. By the *Brāhmaṇa* ideal what do I mean? I mean the ideal *Brāhminness* in which worldliness is altogether absent and true wisdom is abundantly present. That is the ideal of the Hindu race. ... If the *Brāhmaṇa* is he who has killed all selfishness and who lives and works to acquire and propagate wisdom and the power of love -- if a country is altogether inhabited by such *Brāhmaṇas,* by men and women who are spiritual and moral and good, is it strange to think of that country as being above and beyond the law? What police, what military, are necessary to govern them? Why should any one govern them at all? Why should they live under a government? They are good and noble, and they are the men of God. ... We read in The *Mahābhārata* that the whole world was, in the beginning, peopled with *Brāhmaṇas* and that, as they began to degenerate, they become

divided into different castes, and that, as the cycle turns round, they will go back to that *Brāhmanical* origin.

'This cycle is turning now, and I draw your attention to this fact. ... There is a law laid on each of you in his land by your ancestors. ... The command is the same to you all, that you must make progress without stopping and that, from the highest man to the lowest *Pariah,* everyone in this country, has to try to become the ideal Brāhmaṇa. This Vedāntic ideal is applicable not only here but over the whole world. Such is our ideal of caste, as meant for raising all humanity, slowly and gently, towards the realization of that great ideal of the spiritual man, who is non-resisting, calm, steady, worshipful, pure, and meditative. In this ideal there is God. ...

'Remember always, that there is not in the world any other country whose institutions are really better in their aims and objects than the institutions of this land.'

This Indian vision of *Brahamaṇatva* or *Brāhmaṇahood* as the direction and goal of human evolution is re-inforced by the complementary Vedāntic teachings of the four *puruṣarthas,* or the totality of valid human urges and satisfactions, namely, *dharma,* ethical sense, *artha,* wealth, *kāma,* sensory satisfactions, and *moksa,* spiritual liberation. These four are also covered by another classification, namely, *abhyudaya,* collective social welfare, and *niḥsreyasa,* spiritual liberation. Indian sociology upholds that, that society is the most healthy where every member will receive unfettered opportunities to experience *kama* and *artha,* which always needs the pervasive influence of *dharma,* or ethical sense, in the community; this will make possible for a spontaneous rising to the pursuit of the fourth *puruṣartha;* these three are collectively called the *trivarga* or triple group, since they always have to go together in any ordered human society; and they constitute, what in modern language is called, the 'secular dimension of human growth and development'. Vedānta, however, treats them as the secular dimension of spirituality itself, while the fourth, namely, *mokṣa,* constitutes the fullness and efflorescence of that spirituality. By proper implementation of this scheme of the four *puruṣārthas,* a society gets oriented to the *Brāhmaṇa* ideal, produces more and more of that type of people, and achieves individual and collective health and well being and, consequently, a non-violent and humanistic social order.

18. *The Brāhmaṇa Ideal in the Light of Twentieth-century Biology*

This Indian vision of human development and social direction

find its echo in the reformulation of the theory of evolution in twentieth-century biology. It is instructive to study this *Brāhmaṇa* ideal in the light of this twentieth-century biology. Evolution at the human stage, says today's biology, *is not organic, but has risen to the higher level of psycho-social evolution.* Nature has already given man the finest and the most versatile organ, namely, the cerebral system, with the help of which he or she can invent any organs one needs. Evolution, at the human stage, says biology, must therefore rise above the organic level to the *psycho-social level.* It must help the human being to detach one's psyche from its thraldom to the limited organic or genetic system and expand in ethical awareness and social feeling, expand in sympathy, understanding, love, and human concern, to encompass all other beings -- human and sub-human. This is psycho-social evolution. What a beautiful concept of evolution, and how well is it in tune with the concept of man's spiritual growth as expounded in Vedānta! Though genetically and physically limited, man has the inherent capacity to grow inwardly into an immense dimension, so as to enter into the hearts of millions of people, breaking down physical, racial, religious, linguistic, and other barriers. In the pre-human phase of evolution, *quantity* was the criterion, but at the human phase of evolution, *quality* becomes the criterion, says today's biology. It is not how much you can own, but how and what you are and how you relate to others, that matters. As the late Sir Julian Huxley said, during his lecture at the Darwin Centenary Congress of scientists at the Chicago University in 1959 *(Evolution after Darwin,* Vol. III, Chicago University Press, page 258):

> 'Once we truly believe ... that man's destiny is to make possible greater fulfilment for more human beings and fuller achievement by human societies, utility in the customary sense becomes subordinate. Quantity of material production is, of course, necessary as the basis for the satisfaction of elementary human needs-- but only upto a certain degree. More than a certain number of calories or cocktails or TV sets or washing machines per person is not merely unnecessary but bad. Quantity of material production is a means to a further end, and not an end in itself.'

Physical science here speaks a language which has always been the language of the science of religion. The whole world is seeking a *qualitative* enrichment of human life today, after it has achieved, or is on the way to achieving, a *quantitative* enrichment given by modern physical science. That is why we have to rise, from the static

stagnant piety, of the ethnical dimensions of religion, to the dynamic spirituality of the science of religion, which alone can impart that qualitative richness. This spiritual dimension of the science of religion must therefore dominate the ethnical dimension of all the religions of the world.

India is the only country, as I said earlier, where this has been recognized and respected since the age of the Upaniṣads, where the ethnical, the *Smṛti,* is not allowed to dominate the spiritual, the *Śruti,* but must remain subordinate to it. Tolerance and understanding between religions, and peaceful inter-human relations in society, can proceed only from the scientific and spiritual dimension of religion. It is this dominance of the spiritual over the ethnical that makes the Hindu to love, revere, and salute the holy and the saintly people belonging to any religion. It is this that has made the Hindu give the greatest honour and respect, not to any intellectual, not to any king or emperor or man of wealth, and never to any military conqueror, or to any religious missionary who robs and kills people belonging to other religions with a view to extending the empire of 'the one true god' of his own religion, but to a saint, to a man of God, to whatever religion he or she may belong and however poor and ordinary he or she may be in social status. *That is Indian Wisdom, matured by thousands of years of experience, and that is the uniqueness and richness of India's culture.* In the modern period, we saw the tremendous response that Mahatma Gandhi received from all our people. He was not a mere politician though he worked in the field of politics. This universal dimension of Gandhiji has been captured by Attenborough's film which has captivated millions of people all over the world.

I was in the United States during the Gandhi-Week celebrations, this October. Imagine a situation when Governors of States, city Mayors, and Presidents of Universities in that great country declare with one voice that *Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest moral force in the world today,* and universities propose to start Chairs of Gandhian studies! His greatness provoked some U. S. youths to even ask the question: Did a man like Gandhi really exist? or is he only the creation of some artist? They cannot imagine that any man can achieve what Gandhi achieved, only love for all, no hatred for

anyone, not even to the white police who hammered him in South Africa! The film exhibits this *Brāhmana* quality of Gandhiji's superhuman courage and compassion. What a tremendous refining and processing factory was that heart of Mahātma Gandhi which purified and transformed hatred into love, violence into non-violence, just as, in physical technology, we refine and transform crude oil into beautiful petroleum products!

The science of religion gives us this message of refining crude experiences into beautiful products of happy, peaceful, inter-human relationships, inspired by love, service, and dedication. This whole process of such refining of crude experience, and the energy of that refining technology, lies above the sensory level, and, therefore, above all physical sciences and technology. We get the insight into this trans-sensory and transcendental dimension of the human personality, through the Vedānta philosophy developed by India as the essence of her culture, in the Vivekananda literature. That constitutes the wisdom of India which is sought after by the whole world today. In no other part of the world do you find this deep understanding and appreciation of, and welcome to, this trans-sensory and transcendental dimension of man and its wholesome impact on human life and society.

That is why, when a new teacher of religion appears before us in India, we do not persecute him, crucify him, or destroy him, but welcome and revere him. This is not the case in many other parts of the world. Jesus, who was a divine personality, was crucified in Palestine; this was followed by the killing of St. Stephen, St. Paul, St. Peter, and several others. Earlier, in Athens, the wise and lovable Socrates was killed with poison. When the new teacher Bahaullah arose in Iran in the last century to reform Islam, he was promptly killed and his sect, the Bahai, was persecuted, and that genocide is still going on even today. In Pakistan, an entire Muslim sect, the Ahmediyas, which has produced distinguisued personalities including one Nobel Prize winning scientist, was violently persecuted several times and finally declared a non-muslim minority by an act of Pakistan Parliament! *And yet, the Bahais and the Ahmediyas live peacefully in India as integral parts of her multi-religious population!* If some Sikhs in India today persecute the Nirankari denomination of the Sikh religion, and kill its religious head, it is against the very spirit of their own age-old national culture and tradition. The very emergence and free functioning of reform movements like that of Guru Nanak was possible only because the age-old *Sanatana Dharma* tradition actively promoted freedom of religion, stressed spiritual experience, and not belief, as the soul of all religion, and did not allow for the development of a monolithic central religious authority.

All these great teachers like Jesus, Socrates, Mohammed, and Bahaullah would have been honoured and respected, if they were born in India. (Some one from the audience: What about Gandhiji? Was he not murdered here?) That is a very relevant question; its investigation will strengthen the truth of what I had just said about India. Yes, Gandhiji was killed; by whom and what happened thereafter? He was killed by one fanatic individual; but the whole of India rose like one man to weep for him and honour him; and this response was there not only in India, but also in Pakistan. I was in Karachi, the then capital of Pakistan, at that time. As soon as the radio brought the news of Gandhiji's assassination, I saw Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, and all else, weeping for him. That was Gandhiji; that is the uniqueness of India's culture. Only India could not only produce a Gandhiji, a Buddha, or a Vivekananda, but also understand and welcome them, in spite of their being teachers of radical ideas. A teacher like Vivekananda, who has criticized caste-ridden Hindu orthodoxy and its religious and social evils more strongly than any foreign missionary critic, was and is yet welcomed and appreciated by the Hindu people, including its orthodox sections! If he were born in any other country, he would have been killed several times over! When Jesus was crucified, nobody was there with him except a disciple or two, he was forsaken by the world and by most of his disciples. Socrates was killed by the Athenian democracy with the accusation of misleading the youth of Athens!

So, we cannot compare the death of Gandhiji here with the death of Socrates or Jesus elsehwere. In no other country and religion can you see this spectacle of a spiritual teacher or social reformer rising and reforming the existing religion and society, and receiving welcome, honour, and worship from the people. That phenomenon has been found, and is possible, only in India, *only because India alone achieved the dominance of the Śruti, or the scientific and the*

spiritual, over the Smrti, or the ethnical and the socio-political, in her tradition.

From the eighth to the fourteenth century, the whole of Spain and Portugal were Islamic and were governed by the highly cultured Islamic Moors. Those countries then were great centres of intellect and culture where many European Christian scholars also had their education. Later, the Catholic Christian rulers and the Church became politically powerful, and they destroyed everything Islamic in Spain and Portugal, and committed genocide of the Muslims. The same Portugal and Spain and the Church, went soon after, to Central and South America and destroyed the native religions and cultures and massacred millions and converted other millions to Christianity. These are all historical facts.

19. *'Samavāya eva Sādhuḥ'*

Such phenomena have not happened in India, and cannot happen, because of that Indian wisdom with its wide tolerance referred to earlier. The culture and religion developed in India has a mother-heart which embraces people belonging to every religion and culture. Our age-old tradition is *samanvaya* or *samavāya,* synthesis and harmony. This inspiring idea is the theme of one of the inscriptions of our Mauryan Emperor Aśoka of so early a period of history as the third century B. C. That empire stretched from the Tashkent area of today's U. S. S. R. in the north, through Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Punjab, and North India, upto Mysore in the south. In this vast empire, he spread his message of peace, love, and tolerance through rock and pillar edicts, and sent this message to many neighbouring nations reaching up to Greece and Alexandria: we shall silence all war drums and sound the kettle drums of peace! In one of his rock edicts, located in our Saurashtra region, occurs this great sentence:

'Samavāya eva Sādhuḥ' --'(in the field of religion and culture) concord is the correct way and attitude.'

I was very much impressed when I read, about ten years ago, of an incident mentioned in a research booklet, written by a Christian scholar of Kerala, on the origin and development of Christianity in Kerala. I have by now forgotten the exact title of that booklet and the name of its author. The booklet says that a Christian missionary

teacher came from abroad to Quilon, I believe, where the Hindu king welcomed him and helped him to carry on his Christian preaching. Finding that he was alone and nobody to help him, that Hindu king asked one of his Hindu subjects to become initiated into the Christian faith at the hands of that missionary teacher, so that he could be helped in the running of his Church!

That is the unique glory of India, of Hinduism, and of the Hindu spirit and attitude, the pulse of its mother-heart, with an impressive continuity of nearly 5000 years. *But, alas, this is not only not understood or appreciated by the other religions, but even considered as a weakness to be exploited!* The welcome that the Hindus gave to the Jews, who came to settle in Kerala when their temple in Jerusalem was shattered by Roman tyranny in 70 A.D., is well known; so also the welcome given to the Zoroastrians, or the Parsis, from Iran, who had a glorious history and civilization of over 1000 years, and who came as refugees in the eighth century A. D. when their home country was conquered by aggressive Arab Muslim armies and their religion destroyed and people massacred.

In this connection, it will be educative to study the Parsi account of this historic experience *(The Parsis* by Piloo Nanavutty, National Book Trust of India, 1980 Edition, pp. 38-40):

'Although the present-day Parsis are descendants of the Persian refugees who came to Gujarat some time after the fall of the Persian Empire to the Arabs in A.D. 651, theirs was not the first Iranian emigration to India. ...

'Under the Arabs, Iranians were forcibly converted to Islam. Those who clung to their ancient faith were persecuted and fled to the mountains of Kohistan in Khorasan. According to tradition, they stayed there a hundred years. Then they went to the Persian Gulf port of Hormuz where they are said to have remained for fifteen years. From there, they set sail 'in seven junks', according to the reverend Henry Lord ... and arrived at Div, an island off the southern extremity of Kathiawar. They stayed there for nineteen years and then, again, set sail, this time for Sanjan, a small fishing village on the west coast of Gujarat, where they landed around 785, and where the local Hindu Raja, Jadi Rana, or Jadhav Rana, gave them shelter. ...

'According to Behman Kaikobad, when the Parsis approached Jadi Rana ... for permission to settle there, he imposed five conditions on them. These were: The explanation of the Zoroastrian religion to the Raja by the Parsi High Priest who accompanied the refugees and had safeguarded the sacred fire all the way from Iran to India; the adoption of Gujarati as their mother tongue; the adoption of the *sari* by Parsi women; the surrender of all weapons; and, finally, that Parsi wedding procession to be held in the dark. This last may have been a request from the refugees

themselves, a protective measure to avoid the attention of other communities to an alien community in their midst. ...

'A far more vivid account of the meeting between the Persian refugees and Jadhav Rana, than that in the *Kissa,* is given in the Gujarati *Garbas,* group songs and dances, composed by the Parsis and sung by Parsi woman on such happy occasions as *Navjotes* and weddings. I give the story in prose which was once sung in verse.

'Jadhav Rana issued a proclamation inviting all citizens to assemble in open *maidan* (meadow). On a throne covered with rich drapes, the Raja took his seat. He was dressed in royal robes, wore a magnificent turban, and embroidered velvet slippers. Ranged round him were his mounted bodyguards, dressed in white, holding glittering spears.

'At a signal from Jadhav Rana, the Persian refugees were brought into the centre of the assembly. Their frail old priest, hiding a small *Afarghan* with the sacred fire, was the spokesman for the group, through an interpreter.

' "What is it you want from us, O strangers from a far land?", asked Jadhav Rana.

' "Freedom of worship, Sire", replied the old priest.

' "Granted. What else do you wish?"

' "Freedom to bring up our young in our own traditions and customs."

' "Granted. What else do you wish?

"A small piece of land that we could cultivate, so that we may not be a burden to the people among whom we live."

' "Granted. In return, what will you do for the country of your adoption?"

'The old priest asked for a brass bowl to be filled with milk and brought to the assembly. This was done. He then stirred a spoonful of sugar in the bowl and, holding it up in his trembling hands, asked:

' "Does any man see the sugar in this bowl of milk?" All shook their heads.

' "Sire", said the priest, "we shall try to be like this insignificant amount of sugar in the milk of your human kindness."

'There were murmurs of approval from the crowd. Then, at a signal from the priest, all the refugees--men, women, and children--prostrated themselves full length on the ground. Each picked up a handful of earth and, with tears streaming down heir faces, they pressed it to their eyes and forehead.

'Then, after washing their hands and faces, the refugees turned their faces to the sun and recited the *Kusti* prayers, and performed the *Kusti* ritual.'

This is what happens when two highly cultured peoples come face to face with each other; this is what happens when the scientific and spiritual dimension of religion dominates its exclusive ethnical dimension. What an inspiring romance of poetry and humanism pervades the historic event and its narration! The long history of Hindu tradition is full of such touches of poetry and humanism, which need to be zealously cherished and nourished by all our people today.

Can you find such inspiring events anywhere else except in this land of yours, the land of the highest culture of universal love and peace? *All our children in India today--Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, and others--should be brought up in this inspiring tradition of this Indian wisdom.* Then will India rise to the highest level of all-round greatness and glory. In 1961, during my four-month lecture tour of seventeen European countries, under the auspices of the Government of India, I was addressing a select gathering of Polish intellectuals at the Polish Institute of International Affairs in Warsaw, capital of Poland, on *The Spirit of Indian Culture.* In the course of the lecture, I referred to this tolerance and understanding of the Indian mind from the Vedas to the present times, and, as an illustration, I pointed out that the Jews, now returning to Israel from various countries of the world, comparing notes about their treatment by the people of the various host countries, discovered that the only host country where they were treated well, and with honour, was India and that everywhere else they were hated, humiliated, persecuted, and killed; and I referred to this as the unique characteristic of India's age-old culture, a characteristic which, in the modern age, Swami Vivekananda stressed with pride as the very heart of the Wisdom of India.

After the lecture and the question-answer session, while I was returning with the Indian Ambassador to his house, he told me that that reference to India's benevolent treatment of the Jews had gone into the heart of the audience, since most of the listeners were Jewish communist intellectuals who had experienced, in their own life, their six million Jewish population before the war becoming reduced to three million after the war, due to merciless liquidation by Hitler and his Nazi ideology!

In many of his speeches, Swami Vivekananda refers with great appreciation to this spirit of acceptance and harmony of the Hindu tradition, against the background of the dismal history of Semitic tradition in this field. Speaking on *The Mission of the Vedānta* at Kumbakonam in 1897, he says (*Complete Works,* Vol.III, pp.187-88):

'Therefore, the world is waiting for this grand idea of universal toleration. It will be a great acquisition to civilization. Nay, no civilization can long exist unless this idea enters into it. No civilization can grow unless fanaticism, bloodshed, and

brutality stop. No civilization can begin to lift up its head until we look charitably upon one another; and the first step towards that much-needed charity is to look charitably and kindly upon the religious convictions of others. Nay more, to understand that, not only should we be charitable, but positively helpful, to each other, however different our religious ideas and convictions may be. And that is exactly what we do in India as I have just related to you.

'It is here in India that Hindus have built, and are still building, churches for Christians and mosques for Mohammedans. That is the thing to do. In spite of their hatred, in spite of their brutality, in spite of their cruelty, in spite of their tyranny, and in spite of the vile language they are given to uttering, we will and must go on building churches for the Christians and mosques for the Mohammedans until we conquer through love, until we have demonstrated to the world that love alone is the fittest thing to survive and not hatred, that it is gentleness that has the strength to live on and to fructify, and not mere brutality and physical force.'

As I said earlier, every world religion has an exclusive ethnical dimension as its base and an inclusive universal dimension at its higher levels. All the religions in our country must learn to emphasize these universal dimensions and soft-pedal the exclusive ethnical dimensions. This alone will make religion the instrument of true national integration and the source of the spiritual strength of our secular state. When our religions succeed in thus soft-pedalling their ethnical dimensions, they will appreciate the provision in our Constitution, designed to create an integrated nation out of our diverse elements, for enacting a Common Civil Code for all the citizens of India, just as there is already a Common Criminal Code. It is an anachronism to have different personal laws in civic life for different communities,in a secular democracy like ours. Most of our communal conflicts and communal suspicions will be eliminated, once we adopt such a Common Civil Code; this has to be re-inforced by the elimination, voluntarily or by suitable Constitutional amendment, of all communally oriented politics. No such communal politics can protect any religion or community. It can and does, however, harm that religion, by making it a hand-maid of a narrow, often violent, political policy and programme. The best influence on politics can come only from the spiritual dimension of religion.

Our people have to realize that communal politics and a secular democratic state ill go together; democrary works for national integration, while communalism in politics works for national disintegration. Both before independence as well as after independence,

we have had the sad experience of the influence of ethnical religion on our politics, resulting only in much communal violence and in the tragic partition of our country, first, and all sorts of communal conflicts and threats and dangers of national disintegration, thereafter. This is the poisonous fruit of that exclusive ethnical dimension of a religion dominating its inclusive, universal, and humanistic dimension. That universal dimension, when activated, will release positive and creative spiritual energies from our Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and other religions, making for increased character-energy—the energy of love, service, dedication, and work-efficiency,and the steady development and strengthening of a common democratic citizenship awareness in all our people. This will make for that 'union of her scattered spiritual forces', as described by Swami Vivekananda, leading to the achievement of true national integration, based on India's age-old vision, philosophy, and socio-political policy of *Unity in Diversity*.

Swami Vivekananda has given a beautiful statement of the Indian conception of religious universality, in his famous lecture at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions in 1893 (*Complete Works*, Volume I, p.19, Eleventh Edition):

'If there is ever to be a universal religion, it must be one which will have no location in place or time; which will be infinite like the God it will preach, and whose sun will shine upon the followers of Kṛṣṇa and of Christ, on saints and sinners alike; which will not be Brāhmanic or Buddhistic, Christian or Mohammedan, but the sum total of all these, and still have infinite space for development; which, in its catholicity, will embrace in its infinite arms, and find a place for, every human being, from the lowest grovelling savage not far removed from the brute, to the highest man towering, by the virtues of his head and heart, almost above humanity, making society stand in awe of him and doubt his human nature. It will be a religion which will have no place for persecution or intolerance in its polity, which will recognize divinity in every man and woman, and whose whole scope, whose whole force, will be centred in aiding humanity to realize its own true divine nature.'

And when more and more of our people, belonging to our various religions, rise to this universal level, they will joinVivekananda in affirming the following inspiring testament of his (*ibid.*, Volume 2, pp.373-374):

'Our watchword, then, will be acceptance, and not exclusion. ... Why should I tolerate? Toleration means that I think that you are wrong and I am just allowing you to live. Is it not a blasphemy to think that you and I are allowing others to live?

'I Accept all religions that were in the past, and worship with them all. ... I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian church and kneel before the Crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law; I shall go to the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of everyone.

'Not only shall I do all these, but I shall keep my heart open to all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book--these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books, are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. ... Salutations to the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!'

This attitudinal change in our people will, as I had referred to earlier, make for the development of big minds and large hearts in our people, which alone will make our nation great; this alone will ensure that the demographic bigness of our country will be matched by true national greatness. This alone will prevent that cynical situation developing in our country in the modern period which enveloped the Roman Empire in the past, and which, as described by Edward Gibbon, in his famous *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* serves as a warning to us: 'The various cults and religions in the Roman Empire were considered equally true by the people, equally false by the philosophers, and equally useful by the magistrates!'

20. *Conclusion: The Modern World and India's Awakening*

As I said earlier, Vivekananda awakened India. Romain Rolland compared this work of Swamiji, with respect to India, to Jesus Christ's calling the dead Lazarus to life from the grave. Says he (*Life of Vivekananda,* pp. 124-25):

'I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving; with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life. ...

'Did the dead arise? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald? ... From that day, the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed, saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organized masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty "Lazarus, come forth!", of the Message from Madras.'

Sri C.Rajagopalachari, Dr.S.Radhakrishnan, and several others have said that Vivekananda awakened India and inspired her to fight for and secure political freedom, and will now help the country to utilise that political freedom for the good of all people within India and outside. A bath in the *Gaṅgā* of Vivekananda literature will purify all our people today. We shall then learn to live, and work out, his message to us, conveyed in his *Reply to the Madras Address (Complete Works,* Vol.4, p.351):

"Be and Make", Let this be our motto.' First let us be gods, and then help others to be gods.'

Though we are politically free, many of us in India have still slavery in our blood and mind. We are largely selfish and self-centred, with how to make money, and live a comfortable life, as the only aim of life. Swamiji's literature will help to remove the toxin of slavery within us, and its concomitant of jealousy, and callousness to human problems, and make us true citizens, with love in our hearts for everyone in India, irrespective of caste, creed, or social status. The soul of India has always been healthy, pure, and strong; that is the *Amar Bhārat,* Eternal India; but her body-politic has been weak, broken, and fragmented. We have a tremendous opportunity in the modern age to develop a healthy body-politic, suffused with the great values of human dignity, freedom, fearlessness, and equality, worthy of that luminous soul of *Amar Bhārat.* That is the greatest dedication our people must capture today; and we will find the inspiration for it in the life and literature of Vivekananda.

Let us not forget that our building up of a healthy body-politic for the ever-healthy soul of India is going to be a tremendous concern, not only to our own people, but to the rest of the world as well. The rest of the world is looking for philosophic and spiritual guidance from the wisdom of India. Our younger generation must experience and respond to this situation with a sense of national as well as international responsibility. The British Historian late Arnold Toynbee referred to the India of Buddha and Asoka, Ramakrishna and Gandhi in glowing terms. He voiced the feelings of millions of people in the West when he said, in the course of writing an introduction to *Sri Ramakrishna and His Unique Message* by the late Swami Ghanananda of Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of London:

'This twentieth century had a Western beginning; but if the world is to survive, it must have an Indian ending.'

Thank you all.

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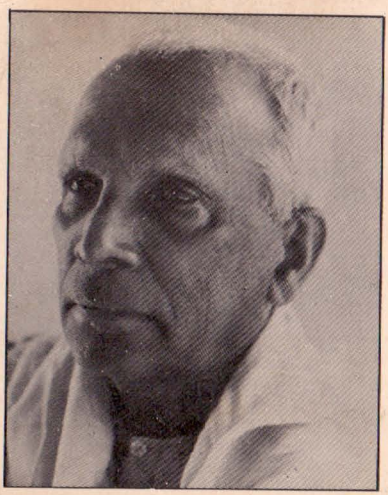

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