Vivekananda

The Man and His Message

A Closer look at his Personality as a Monk, a Teacher and a Leader, an Artist, a Mystic and Philosopher, a Conversationalist, the Patriot-Saint of modern India, and other aspects of his many-sided genius.

by **HIS EASTERN AND WESTERN DISCIPLES**

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE PRESENT BOOK, *Vivekananda: The Man and His Message*, constituted previously a part of *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western disciples first published during the years 1914 to 1918, originally complete in four volumes. Written in graceful style with meticulous care to ensure correctness of facts and explanations, the book at its first appearance was warmly received and acknowledged by scholars and general readers as the only authoritative and comprehensive biography in English of Swami Vivekananda. Since then the popularity and importance of the book among its readers have never abated.

However, the voluminous size of the book running over a total of roughly seventeen hundred pages stood in the way of its wider circulation. Therefore, for the benefit of the general reader lacking time to go through the lengthy volumes, the book was much reduced in size in 1933 by way of abridgement of most of the sections and omission of certain others. But

earnest readers of Swami Vivekananda keen to know the detailed accounts have been requesting the Advaita Ashrama to republish the omitted sections. Considering this and other relevant factors some of the previously omitted material was restored in the appropriate places, and newly discovered material was added to the *Life* in its fifth edition, which was published in two volumes in 1979 and 1981.

We now take great pleasure in placing before the interested reader the relevant chapters of a section of the fourth volume of the first edition of the book, entitled *Vivekananda: The Man and His Message* as a separate book. This new book gives a closer look at Swami Vivekananda's personality as a monk, a teacher and a leader, an artist, a mystic and philosopher, a conversationalist, the patriot-saint of modern India and other aspects of his many-sided genius.

We earnestly hope that this overview of the Swami's life with its in-depth study of his personality by his direct disciples, who lived with him for long periods, who knew him most intimately and heard from him directly about many incidents of his life will be read by readers with absorbing interest and much profit.

Calcutta PUBLISHER
23 January 1995

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

(First Edition 1918)

AS THE curtain falls on the final scene of the life of the Swami Vivekananda, that *Leela*, that great drama of his soul manifested on the stage of mortal life, one gathers, for a final time, in the general perspective of his career, glimpses of that Power and Character which he was. Though many traits thereof have already been dwelt upon in their places as occasion arose, and though the facts and episodes of his life are the most eloquent and touching illustrations of them, it is best to leave with the student of his life a general summary of those characteristics that made the Swami what he was, and also of his teachings and message to the world at large, and to his country in particular. ❐

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AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MAN

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA was, at many times, a man of inconceivable attitude of thought, and often to all appearances a living paradox; but beneath the surface of appearance he was clearly the living explanation of the spiritual life. And the understanding of the man, seemingly almost impossible, becomes almost simple when one remembers that he was a man of manifold realisation. Thus all the apparent paradoxes of his thought were reconciled by the greatness of his heart and by the consistencies of his emotional consciousness. He was intellectually like a great hammer mercilessly beating down the structures of complacent belief. Even with regard to his own mind he was an eternal iconoclast, always searching for and demanding a sounder, saner and a more comprehensive basis. He never allowed himself any intellectual ease. He peremptorily refused to be satisfied with a finality in thought and ideas which by their very nature connote limitation and imperfection. Therefore he was always on the watch-tower of

thought, straining his personal vision to discern the contents of an ever winding horizon. He was ever ready and bold enough to throw away the theories and explanations on life, soul and the cosmos offered by the Vedanta and other schools of Hindu philosophic thought, aye, his very realisations, if he could find another solution more satisfying and inclusive for his acceptance. If he dreaded anything more than bondage, it was the idea of putting a limit to the infinite conceptions of God and the endless ways of realizing Him. To him, one who says that 'God is *this* and *this* only,' was the vilest blasphemer, and he repeatedly warned his disciples against such narrow thought. In his widest generalisations, all clinging to fondest individual beliefs which make for exclusion, would be swept away with a merciless hand. Those who were below his own standing-place and who could not see because of their relative view-point, were often shocked by the words of authority that came from him, seemingly as the language of egotism or scepticism, but in reality of an impatient spirit always eager to destroy the edifices of mere belief and place in their stead the temples of unshakable vision. Now the Swami would turn over the fabric of devotional faith, now he would silence the scholastic arguments of the Jnanin, pitching one against the other, in a storm of contradiction and uncertainty. But there was a *reason.* He desired to *test* the bottom-rock foundation of the belief of those to whom he spoke. He would turn them out of their self-satisfied

and stagnant spiritual condition and make them *think*. He was anxious that there should be no standing-still. Onwards and ever onwards must be the march of the soul, out of a lesser light, perhaps through the darkness of a temporary spiritual confusion, but surely in time into the radiance of a greater illumination.

It was a terrible training, and the Swami was known as 'the terrible *guru*.' As he was a preacher of worshipping the good for its own sake, he was likewise for worshipping the terrible for its own sake, and misery for its own sake. One who runs away from fear, he used to say, cannot be *Abhi*, the fearless, which is according to the Upanishads one of the attributes of the Self. One who cannot meet death face to face is not fit for Immortality. One who has not passed through the hell of intellectual doubt, confusion and agony cannot reach the heaven of supreme insight and beatific vision. It is doubtful if any other teacher in the history of the world ever goaded his disciples to such a powerful self-exertion, in which agony combined with ecstasy in the increasing unfoldment of the spiritual vision. He created tempests of thought about him. One can almost hear him say, 'None of that jelly-fish existence! Arise, awake! Better to be a true agnostic than a man who blinds himself in the determination not to see beyond a certain point for fear of getting unsettled! A fanatic's faith is the worst of all types of spiritual blindness, the greatest of all superstitions!' Therefore, the Swami literally threw his disciples, and sometimes, indeed, even his *gurubhais*

(brother-disciples)—into the open sea of personal effort, far removed from the shores of authority; and spiritually speaking, it was a question of sink or swim. He counted those as unworthy of a great trust who could not stand on their own feet, who constantly asked for support and protection, having no faith in themselves, and who had built their faith on the sands of a sentimental self-satisfaction. He wanted to know the worth of a man and for that reason he would pound away at the fortress of his soul, harass all his convictions and *find him out.* He knew instinctively that those who might be *shaken* in their faith, had never known *real* conviction. He was outspoken himself and even would express his own doubts at any time before any one.

And for those who defied him he had great respect, as in the instance of Girish Babu, the man of great faith, who would speak out with the fire of his soul at the end of some lengthy discussion, saying, 'What do I care for all your philosophic arguments! I know! My faith is surest knowledge, for it illumines my heart and strengthens my soul!' This would delight the Swami. He reverenced such vital realisation. He rejoiced to try his strength with one worthy of his steel, opposing him tooth and nail. After a furious tempest of light and darkness of thought, which would be hurled upon Girish Babu by the Swami, though under a vigorous protest from him, he would descend from the icy mountain-tops of pure thought down to the warm valley of spiritual perception. He would descend from thought to

feeling. He would lay aside the scourging whips of thought and be himself, the monk, the devotee, but always the Jnani at heart.

Sometimes he would rant against Sri Ramakrishna himself, saying, 'My whole life has been ruined by a mad man's teaching.' He would say that worship is all nonsense, that no one can be a devotee who has not got something wrong with his head, and so on. But when he saw the effect of his words as they stupefied or perplexed his listeners, he would come out of those moods during which he felt a peculiar super-exaltation of personality. It was not that for one moment he disbelieved either in Sri Ramakrishna or in worship and devotion. He could, indeed, criticise his Guru or an Avatara without losing the least particle of his unsurpassed love and reverence for him,—a most uncommon phenomenon with the devotees of the Lord. He had once written in a fit of supreme passion a letter of flaming words glorifying his Master and rating one of the monks when the latter's faith in Sri Ramakrishna wavered. Then, at other times also he would speak of the Master, as the greatest of the Saviours of the world. And in a letter to a disciple one reads the opening words, in a *sloka*: 'Constant salutation be to Sri Ramakrishna, the Free, the Ishvara, the Shiva form, by whose power we and the whole world are blessed!'

In these sublime moments of criticism he was wandering near the region of the Absolute, beyond all personality, beyond all worship. Sometimes he would

denounce philosophy as mere intellectual abstractions, calling upon his listeners to bear in mind that God could be realised only through the heart. Again at other times he would point out that without the culture of philosophy nothing of religion would be left except diabolical fanaticism and sentimental nonsense! Those to whom he spoke thus, would wince under his fierce denunciation. Some would become Bhaktas. That was because they had been on the wrong path before. Some were confirmed in their habit of philosophical study and culture. But in the case of both there would come an expansion of vision and a partial interchange of ideals in harmony with their nature. When he visited the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas he became almost a fury on discovering that some of the inmates had been conducting external worship of Sri Ramakrishna when he intended to make that centre a purely Advaita monastery. He was afraid lest the performance of external worship with the ever increasing paraphernalia of rituals and ceremonies, predominate in the course of time over the principles and practice of the Advaita for which the Ashrama was founded. He foresaw the danger to the training of pure Advaitins in an atmosphere of Dualistic worship and hence expressed his strong disapproval of the course allowed, in contravention to the scope and ideal of the Ashrama formulated by himself at the time of its inception. After a while, however, he turned and said wonderful things of the Master.

This strange paradox had a great meaning. It was

because he wanted to include *all* religious ideals in his life's work, even as Sri Ramakrishna had done. He wanted each to *realise* the particular religious ideal for which he was fit having at the same time a full knowledge of the strong and weak points of his own position and those of others, so that they might not drift into fanaticism. And for this reason, in his forceful presentation of them he spared no words or theories. And he would neither spare himself. He turned everything upside down. He analysed and criticised everything at various times and to various disciples. There was only one point at which he stopped—REALISATION. Wheresoever he saw the living truth, the actual personal experience, he stood in reverence and in awe. The grandeur of real insight, the sublimity of true realisation—these were his own personal characteristics and the true basis of all his criticism. He had *realised*, he *saw*, he *knew*. Everything pertaining to the soul and the spiritual consciousness of the disciple, he knew, required constant discrimination and readjustment, and his very soul was a demon in its delight in breaking the fabric of an indolent, hypocritical, or a conceited faith. This was the secret of all the seeming paradoxes of his thoughts. He desired that all should rise, each in his own way and by his own path, to the vision of the unity in diversity. He demanded of his disciples the faith which removes mountains and the spiritual consciousness which overleaps the boundaries of sects and creeds and personal and racial instincts in its contents, leading

to the end of dreams.

Well has it been said by one of the monks to a Western disciple, 'Vivekananda was a man of multiple personality. When you have got what you want from him, go and *realise* it. Otherwise he will confuse you.' But then, he was also a man of wonderful reconciliation of conflicting views. No doubt, to the outside world, Swami Vivekananda will ever remain a standing paradox, undefinable and incomprehensible, as his Master had said of him.

What a man he was! What divinity shone forth through him! ❐

THE MONK

SRI RAMAKRISHNA was accustomed to speak of his chief disciple in an endearing way as 'my Suka,' meaning the great sage, Sukadeva, and say that he was a born Brahmajnani. He would add that he was a born monk as well, pure and spotless, untouched by worldliness, for even from his very boyhood the Swami revealed himself as such in the heart of his heart. Did not Sri Ramakrishna pray to the Divine Mother to send him someone with whom he could find satisfaction in talking, as his lips burnt, he said, by talking with worldly-minded people? And he felt his prayer answered when he met the boy Naren, as the Swami then was.

O the memories of those wondrous days in Dakshineswar and Cossipur and in the monastery at Baranagore! O the ecstasy and the spiritual fervour of those times! Can time itself engulf those eternal hours of ecstatic prayer and exaltation which the Swami, as the Parivrajaka, passed! What shall the monk care for the world? He who has seen the Reality cares nothing for the attraction of lust and gold. The monk who has possessed himself of the Riches of the Infinite cares

nothing for all the joys and treasures of the world, which are even as dust and ashes to him. Great is the world; great is the life of the righteous householder; great are the civic ideals; verily, the progress and the revelations of society are sublime. But in comparison with the monastic life these shine as the stars before the sun. The monastic life is in and of the Divine Life; and the spirit dwelling within it is verily the Lord Himself. This is the life of the freedom of the soul, the life of the breaking of all bonds, the life of the intense love for God, which was Swami Vivekananda's. The wealth of the world, its pomp, its power, its attractions cannot deceive the monk. They never deceived the Swami Vivekananda. In the midst of the surroundings and opportunities of princes, it was more and more the monk that stood revealed in him. Moving in the midst of luxuries, as he had to do in the West, he never for one moment forgot that he was the Monk, that he was the disciple of the Man of Renunciation; and he looked back upon his Parivrajaka days with a passion akin to that of a lover. His was constantly the life of the Awakened Soul to which the world was but a name, and work as an accident, or as the discharging of his debt to his divine Master. Renunciation was the keynote of his life. His *vairagyam* has no parallel except in the great Acharyas and Avataras of bygone India. The only true picture of him is in the gerua, and this represents him as he was, the man with super-social interests, who stood at all times upon the borderlands of the Highest

Revelation, who with a simple touch or a wish, or by his mere presence could destroy the Maya in a disciple's heart. His very presence wrought in the disciple a certain silent change unawares. It was often in this way, as says the Sister Nivedita, 'one's whole attitude to things was reversed; one took fire, as it were, with a given idea; or one suddenly found that a whole habit of thought had left one, and a new outlook grown up in its place, without the interchange of a single word on the subject. It seemed as if a thing had passed beyond the realm of discussion, and knowledge had grown, by the mere fact of nearness to him. It was in this way that questions of taste and value became indifferent. It was in this way that the longing for renunciation was lighted, like a devouring flame, in the hearts of those about him.' It is the picture of him as the saint and the prophet in whose heart the Supreme Consciousness was always present, that the disciples cherish and adore. The very thought of him reminds one that everything is the sowing of wild oats compared with the struggle for the Highest Truth. A prophetic atmosphere lingered about him, verily, the holiness of a sanctuary.

Though he was a gigantic worker with endless plans of raising mankind in all stations of life, in his heart he was free. He cared nothing for name, or fame, or success, or money wherewith to build up even the structure of his work. On many occasions, even when he worked, or even when he was the patriot and Indian, it would seem as if he would at any time throw off

everything and run away into some cave where in the stillness he could meditate. As once stated, he would have liked, he said, to meet death lying on a ledge of cool rock in the Himalayas, listening to the roaring of the waterfall, whose music spelled to his spiritual imagination the notes of highest freedom and reality—'*Hara! Hara! Vyom! Vyom!*'

The heart of the Swami was given over completely to the Lord. The Mother alone concerned him, and his Master, between whom he saw no difference. Thinking of Sri Ramakrishna he would oftentimes recite the Gurustava in which occurs the *sloka,* 'The Guru is Brahma, the Guru is Vishnu, the Guru is Deva Maheswara. Verily the Guru is Para-Brahman. Unto Him, the Guru, my salutations!' He was always the Boy of Dakshineswar, untutored in the intricate ways of the world, the monk filled with a radiant innocence, who had 'vomited out' the pleasures of the senses and who loathed their vulgarity. Oftentimes he was as a child, crying with longing for the cessation of all dreams and to have the Book of Experience closed for him so that he might awaken in the Mother's arms. He had little use for the world himself. His soul had turned page after page of the Book of Experience only to find that there was nothing in it, after all. He was a man of such *passionate purity* that he could associate with all peoples and live on any food regarded as 'forbidden' or 'tainted', and yet remain untarnished, for he was, as his Master had said, 'the roaring fire of spirituality.' About him were

the lights of illumination and the spirit of Eternal Meditation. For him the monastic life was solemn and sublime; and sometimes when he himself revealed its grandeur, the gateways of vision were thrown open by the thought and he stood before his fellow-monks and disciples as *transfigured.* Through the bondages of the body which he wore, they often saw the world-shaking dance of the Spirit within. Verily they saw,—the Radiance of Shiva.

He had a wonderful pride in that he was a monk. In these days of materialism when monasticism is either ignorantly misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted, he stood forth on the highways of the world challenging all passers-by as to their right to criticise. He held that the one message of all religions lay in the call to renunciation. He extolled celibacy; he denounced the prevailing tendency to follow the life of the senses. He looked upon the latter as one looks upon a rotten corpse covered with roses, or a filthy sore concealed by a cloth of gold. He warned his disciples again and again, with all the fire of his soul, to cling to the vow of Sannyasa as a miser clings to his hoarded treasure. He himself was rigid in this respect, believing that without purity and renunciation the higher spiritual life was impossible. He held that the energy of sex-impulse could be transmuted into spiritual power of the highest order. True, he was himself a man who often played with fire. While in the West, temptation was to his right and left, before, behind and everywhere. Opportunities were

rampant and unique. But the man was unique also. He was proof against all allurements of the flesh and the devil. Those who came to tempt him returned as disciples with changed outlook on life, or with a heart full of bewilderment saying, 'Who ever saw a man like this to whom women and money mean nothing!' Sri Ramakrishna had said, 'Noren *can never* succumb to lust. Even if he desired to deviate from his monastic vow for a single moment the Mother Herself would throw him back!' The Swami never met a woman save as mother, sister or a daughter. Purity was instinct with him. The struggling flame of chastity had long become the leaping flame of purity. His mind moved clockwork-like in the ways of the highest life. He hated sex-consciousness as he hated poison. He hated all exaggerated sentiment and the unrestrained admiration for the physical aspect of things. By some he was accused of dressing well. But that was merely out of regard for the society in which he had to move, and on lecture platforms. Nothing pleased him more than to throw away his cuffs and collars, his turban and long robe, his shoes and socks, and go about in *kaupina* or a piece of loin-cloth, as he did in the Math and other places in India. He was, personally, most indifferent with regard to his clothing and appearance. At times in America, he would cry out in agony for having had to 'defile' himself with the touching of money for the sake of his work, and to conform himself to social conventionalities, and would passionately pray for deliverance from such 'terrible bondage.'

Swami Vivekananda was a monk, true, with a resurrecting message to society, but he himself was not of it. If he preached the social aspect of the Sanatana Dharma, and pointed out that the ideal state of society should have its basis and structure on the principles of the Vedanta,—he intensified the vision of monasticism, both in India and in the West a thousandfold more than it had been known before. In this respect he showed himself to belong to the order of those Rishis who gave laws to society whilst they themselves remained steadfast in the meditative life. In the monastic vision his soul soared above the world, beyond all laws and limitations, making its abode in the Eternal. He was a monk in an uncompromising sense. He lived in the silence of his soul, occupied with the thought of his Guru and the Mother of the universe, though the message which he uttered was tumultuous with vibrating strength to the Indian consciousness. He often turned aside, seeking the solitude and the grand aloofness of the 'inner life.' He was more proud of his *gerua* than if he had worn the purple garments of a king. Indeed, he said, 'India will be raised by the power of the beggar's bowl.' And it is not strange that in the begging-bowl which he carried from door to door bearing his message, India should have found priceless treasure wherewith to redeem her ancient greatness and power. Beggar-monk though he was, in his writings and speeches he has left unto the Indian Future the ransom of a nation's life.

Had Swami Vivekananda not been a true monk,

his message would have been worthless, and his work a mere mushroom growth to die tomorrow. He was a monk and preacher of the type of Sankaracharya—pure, radiant, luminously intelligent and possessed of the knowledge of Brahman. He was the singer of sacred and inspiring songs calling unto nations for a retreat from *Kama-Kanchana* to the presence of God. One cannot think of him save as the monk. His very countenance spoke volumes as to the glory and the spiritual power of *Tyaga.* Here and there he came forth with a message to society, but his *gurubhais* and disciples always think of him as the monk of monks, the man of Realisation, the awakener of souls, the complement of Sri Ramakrishna, and the bearer of the Message of his Master, which is the Message of India and of the Sanatana Dharma to herself and to the rest of the world. The *gerua,* the deep, inquiring solemn look within his eyes, the lineaments of his countenance constantly suggesting the highest meditation, the gentle loftiness and childlike simplicity of his personality, his freedom with the monks, the hours of prayer and song, his purity and insight, his austerity and reserve, his room and his silence, his eloquence and his work, his intuitive penetration into the essence of things, and every detail of his wonderful life, revealed him, in very truth to be the Prince of Monks. And in the West he revealed himself on all occasions as the monk, denouncing like another Savonarola the claptrap framework, the ravenous greed and lust and wolfish commercial rapacity of

so-called civilization, announcing with clarion voice the message of the Modern Gospel, calling for a retreat from the senses and keeping the lights of his love for India, for his Master and for the Mother of the Universe, burning always as a bright flame on the altar of his life. ❐

THE ASCETIC AND YOGI

That Swami Vivekananda was an ascetic goes without saying. He was an ascetic in a larger definition than the word is ordinarily conceived of to mean. With him asceticism was not a constant and conscious striving, but a natural state. He had undergone a severe ascetic discipline at the Feet of Sri Ramakrishna, and he fully developed it in the days at Baranagore and when he was the itinerant monk. With him the ascetic life was the constant demonstration of *conquest* over the sense propensities, which makes a perfected monk; and he *was* that. Purity with him included not only the triumph of chastity but the fulfilment of the Dharma in every respect. Anything which blights the heart and distorts the spiritual vision was to him Adharma. It was thus that he spoke of pride, anger, hatred and covetousness in any form as impurity, and to the ethics of social life he added the strenuous morality of the monk, which was nothing short of the obliterating of even a shadow of 'Lust and Gold.' All desire must be made subservient to the highest purpose. The true teacher must radiate purity, for in him all signs of struggle must have ended.

So thoroughly was the Swami's mind saturated with ascetic ideas that he could not tolerate even artistic excitement or any overflow of the senses, which he regarded as vulgar. Ever to be the witness of the changing panorama of life, and to be always recollected in soul in the presence of the Beautiful and Sublime, that was his ideal. 'See it from within,' he would say. 'Behold Beauty through the spiritual perspective with the idea of sex and sense totally eradicated. Stand aside! Be the witness! Do not seek to possess.' And knowing that real beauty is subjective, being in the vision of the seer, he would say in certain moments of exaltation. 'It is I who give beauty to all this. If this external is so beautiful, how much more beautiful is the *Reality* behind! And "Thou *art* That"!'

The Swami's conception of the ascetic life did not consist in repelling or being repelled; it did not express itself in an aversion of what is beautiful and pleasant to the senses but in a *deification* of all this. He did not denounce nature. But he did say, 'Not the Soul for the Nature, but the Nature for the Soul.' Herein lies his whole interpretation of asceticism, which consisted in a discipline of the mind, not in a crucifixion of the flesh. He never denounced 'women', because he knew that sex was in the mind and not external; therefore, instead of avoiding woman he refrained from *thinking* evil. He made the whole matter of overcoming temptation entirely a subjective process; and he developed such a vigilance over his nature that even if the slightest

impure thought entered the mind, the mind itself would give itself a blow, as it were. Indeed, his asceticism was *instinctive.* To one possessed of the Swami's temperament, the ascetic habit had moulded into shape his spiritual consciousness. To him the constant dwelling on the divine, of itself implied the blotting out of all images of sense. Dwelling constantly in the Light, he had not to struggle with the Darkness. In this he was far distinct from the type of the saint whose life is one unintermittent warfare with the rebellious nature of the beast within. Did the forces of evil or temptation assail his soul at any time, one upraising of his spiritual consciousness was sufficient to vanquish them. Above all things he was *strong* spiritually. For this reason he was not *afraid* of the world or of worldly people. He took possession of them with a fearlessness that confounded many of his worldly-wise critics, for in the fullness of youth he mixed freely with all classes and characters and both sexes, but with a complete Self-possession. To use his own language, at twenty he was a most unsympathetic and uncompromising fanatic who would not walk on the theatre side of the streets of Calcutta. He would either fight with or fly from evil. But by thirty-three, he realised that evil was a delusion and hence could not blame or condemn anybody, for he saw the Lord Himself in every being. 'At thirty-three,' he wrote to friend, 'I feel I could live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them.' His mental make-up was pre-eminently that of an

ascetic and a man of meditation. Hidden though it was behind the exterior of a man of action, it was ever struggling to force itself out into expression. This habit he had to control for the sake of giving his message to the world. Writes Sister Nivedita:

> He never appeared to be practising austerity, but his whole life was a concentration so profound that to anyone else, it would have been the most terrible asceticism. The difficulty with which he would stop the momentum that would carry him into meditation had been seen by his American friends, in the early days of his life in that country of railroads and tramways and complicated engagement-lists...At first, his lapses into the depths of thought, when people were perhaps waiting for him at the other end of the journey, caused him much embarrassment....
>
> Apart altogether, however, from meditation, he was constantly, always, losing himself in thought. In the midst of the chatter and fun of society one would notice the eyes grow still, and the breath come at longer and longer intervals; the pause; and then the gradual return. His friends knew these things and provided for them. If he walked into the house to pay a call, and forgot to speak; or if he was found in a room, in silence, no one disturbed him, though he would sometimes rise and render assistance to the intruder, without breaking his silence. Thus his interest lay within and not without.

What a Yogi he was! His life was one of interminable concentration, the hundredth part of which would have wearied any ascetic in the monastic life. He had undergone the most austere religious practices and had lost himself in the Ocean of the Higher Consciousness. He could in any environment empower his will with such a dynamic vitality that the whole psychical and physical personality responded instantaneously. What would ordinarily take the Hatha Yogi or the Raja Yogi years of effort in the taming of the body and mind he could accomplish spontaneously. His mind was so perfectly under his own control that he could at any moment plunge himself into a mood of sublime concentration and remain at will without the least possibility of distraction and unexpected return to the sense plane. His command over the self was so paramount that he could, at will, transcend thought itself or direct it into any channel. His body was as subservient to his mind as the latter was to his will. That is the state of perfection in Yoga when the mind is not scattered by the heaviest winds of passion; and then, when it is focussed to a certain purpose, its power becomes almost omnipotent in nature. And such concentration, such power of focussing the will, comes only when one is able to overcome and forget the body consciousness. It is for this purpose that Yoga is practised and asceticism and austerities are undergone. This is the ideal of all the Indian ascetics. The sole business of Yoga is will-development and mind-culture of the above nature. One as it were

hammers thought into certain definite shapes and drives the will to run into certain currents of expression—and the aim is not only the making of character, but the exaltation of personality. The attainment of these was the whole secret of the immense power wielded by the Swami over men and women everywhere, and the air of authority and assuredness that he had about him and which expressed itself in all his deeds and words. So dominant was his mood over others that he could so charge his environment with it that, for example, when he observed a day of fast, those about him found that during that time the very thought of food repelled them. The same held true of purity. It was impossible in his presence to think impure thoughts. In meditating with him one would be caught up into the state of concentration without effort, so powerful were thought-currents emanating from him. Sometimes, while teaching others to meditate he would be lost in Samadhi himself. And in America he had to restrain himself constantly from merging in the super-conscious state. Oftentimes so intensely abstracted in thought he would be as to be quite oblivious of those about him. At any moment he could tear off the mask of fun or relaxation or even of philosophy and stand before his disciples and friends as the throbbing, living Personification of spirituality. He could make one see the Reality of religion. He could make one perceive the psychic workings of Yoga. All that was required was *to be himself*, to put aside the veils of ordinary consciousness and to

manifest himself in the all-revealing glory of the highest Consciousness. Indeed, he was the ascetic of ascetics, the Yogi of Yogis, the Man of Beatific Vision.

Through the perspective of his personality one becomes aware of the severity of his devotional practices, the days and hours spent in meditation and Yoga, and the refraining from food and sleep in a prolonged spiritual watch. One realises the intense agony of soul and forlornness in the constant warfare with the internal nature and the meaning of his resolves to take recourse to extreme steps in the mortification of the body, during his Sadhana state. How many times did he not think of ending his life by starvation if the highest realisation was not reached. And there was one time, writes Sister Nivedita, when for twenty-five days he allowed himself only half-an-hour's sleep in twenty-four hours, and from that half-hour he awoke himself! As the background of his personality one saw the Dhuni fires of Dakshineswar and Cossipore, and the glaring lights of the Baranagore burning-ghat whither he used to go for Sadhanà at night, and the lonely places by the riverside, or in far-off mountains. And in the shifting phases of his life one would see the years upon years of asceticism of the Master, in those of the Baranagore monastery or those of his own Parivrajaka days; and one would realise the depths of his asceticism when he said, 'I am a man who has met starvation face to face for fourteen years of life, and have not known what to eat the next day or where to sleep, a man who dared to live

where the thermometer registered thirty degrees below zero, almost without clothes.' And the whole meaning of asceticism dawned on the hearer's mind; and the words of Jesus the Christ that one should take no thought of the morrow became luminous, and the great desire rose in the hearts of his devotees to plunge with him into the great freedom of the monastic life, to meet life in all its uncertainties with pleasure, to roam as an itinerant monk beneath the silent stars, or to dwell in forest caves, or meditate at dawn or even tide by the Ganges side and live constantly in the Vision of Lord. ❐

THE TEACHER AND LEADER

THE REAL *Guru* is one in a million. Rare, indeed, are the teachers of the soul, those who lead the disciples from out of the ways of ignorance into knowledge. As a *Guru* Swami Vivekananda was indeed wonderful. He was a teacher who not only practised what he taught, but who was verily the teaching incarnate. The relationship between the *Guru* and the disciple has all the sweetness, the tenderness, the rapture, the blessedness, the sense of oneness and the divine which is manifested in the greatest of human loves. It in no way blinds or seeks to possess. Its nature is to give, and to give without seeking return. The real *Guru* gives *all* to the disciple unreservedly. This sort of *Guru* was Vivekananda.

No words can paint the love which Swami Vivekananda had for his numerous disciples. He made no distinction amongst them, whether they were rich or poor, high or low, learned or ignorant, young or old, men or women. If he did, it was always in favour of those that were the less privileged in position. But such was the beauty of it that each one thought that he or she

was one of the most favoured ones. Did he accept them spiritually, he loved them humanly as well. Once he gave himself to them it was forever. He would stand by anyone of them unto death! He was accustomed to quote the Hindu proverb in illustrating the irrevocable moral obligation between *Guru* and disciple: 'The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back. Even so are the words of a MAN!' Or he would say with the deepest spiritual emotion, 'I will give everything I have of the best to you, everything that I am! If I have any spiritual realisation, it is yours. I will be with you FOR-EVER! If need be, I shall go through a thousand deaths and a thousand hells for you!' And the Hindu believes that the *Guru* has to be born again and again until the disciple has attained liberation. It mattered not to the Swami whether the one desiring to be his disciple was deserving or not, so long as one came with a sincere and earnest spirit. It mattered not to him whether such a one should even give up the teaching or desert him personally, or even be his violent opponent later on. This accounts for the several desertions from the ranks of his Western disciples. But he knew these to be the will of the Mother, who had had Her work done by them so far and so long as it was needed. They had played their part in the work as much as they were destined to do. So there was no bitterness in his mind about it all. He knew he had given them of his very best, and that it was their *karma* to determine if they could assimilate his teachings or not. Anyhow he rested in the firm assurance that if

they had done so even to a small degree, it would bring them nothing but good. Or he would see in his deepest vision that *he* was not *their* real *Guru*. So there were neither hopes nor regrets. The ideal *Guru* cannot turn back upon the disciple, even though the latter curse or injure him. Such was the Swami.

The very personality of the man or, better said, his realisation was dominant,—in this relationship. His mere presence, even his silence was as effective as his most eloquent utterances. He and his Master were of the type which actually *transmitted* spirituality. With a glance, or with a gesture he would throw a world of light and revelation, for he actually visualised spiritual statement and ideas. Where others would talk of ways and means he knew how to light a fire. Where others gave directions, he would show the thing itself. He was a great flame of spiritual illumination, and those who came near could not help absorbing the light. There were many who had their lives transformed from sin to saintliness, or from vicious and narrow bigotry and prejudices to broad-mindedness. All the burning grandeur of his personality was as the perspective through which they saw the facts and visions of the spiritual world. His whole personality, his thought, his heart, his body, his love, his realisation were spent unremittingly and unreservedly in the task of training his disciples. He regarded all of them as his very own, and for many he felt a real responsibility even in their domestic or personal affairs. His disciples knew the manner in

which he loved them and the measure of the responsibility which he felt for them. And they returned that love; they relieved the burden of his responsibility in fulfilling each and every wish of his heart. Some were devoted to his philosophy, others to his work, whilst still others in attending to his physical needs and comforts with untiring devotion, or in serving and helping him and his cause in various other ways.

The Swami was remarkable in the freedom which he accorded to his disciples. He believed in freedom even to the seemingly paradoxical extent that he would not even aid them at times in their struggle at clearness of perception. They must work out their own problems. They must think for themselves and find out for themselves. He knew that it was better to make mistakes in an effort to understand than to believe without knowing. 'Why'! That would establish self-confidence in them; and if Vivekananda believed in anything it was in self-confidence. Of course, the majority of his disciples were not confronted with intellectual problems and perplexities as he had been in the days of his life-in-the making. His illumination was an invaluable heritage to them, and they accepted him in love and in faith. It was especially the Western disciples who had to 'find their way' into Hinduism. Naturally; for, bounded with the presuppositions of Western culture and learning, they had a long array of difficulties to overcome. That they came to understand was because his personality breathed forth, as it were, the power of understanding and

insight, and because, both consciously and unconsciously, he *transmitted* spirituality. Whether in religion, in philosophical thought, in social matters, or in personal life, he himself believed in and demanded freedom, and he gave the same liberty to all others. He would discourage any *dependence* on their part even to him. His first and last advice was, 'Stand on your own feet!' He became downright emphatic on this point, believing that ignorance, thirst for name, fame and power, and spiritual conceit often lurk behind the craving for authority. He was singularly devoid of such weakness. He would not be an authority to anyone. In his letters from America to his *gurubhais* and Indian disciples he wrote asking them to remember, that he wanted to be 'a voice without a form', that they must not look up to him, but look to themselves. They must try to think, he wrote, as if 'Swamiji' was dead and gone and they had to work without him. Moreover, they must work for the *principles* he preached, and not in their zeal put the *person* foremost, either be it himself or even his Master. He pointed out as a warning, that the disciples of all the prophets had always inextricably mixed up the ideas of the Master with the *person*, and at last killed the ideas for the *person*.

He repeatedly cautioned his disciples not to try to rule over others. Those who were to take charge of the different centres and works of the Movement must do so 'not as a *leader*, but as a *servant*', for, 'the least show of leading destroys everything by rousing jealously.' As

for himself he was, in very truth, a *born* leader. From his boyhood to the last day of his life, in whatever position he might have been placed, he found himself leading men everywhere; he found that leadership was thrust upon him without his seeking, or rather in spite of his avoiding it. Standing in the monastery-grounds or in the parlours of Western residences,—he was always the Master, the teacher. Well has it been said by an Englishman who knew him well, 'The Swami's genius lay in his dignity. It was nothing short of royal.' And an English lady who travelled with him to England and America said, 'He never met any foreigner save as the Master!'

But, on the other hand, the faculty of personal service and of self-sacrifice for those who looked up to him, was also instinctively ingrained in his nature even from his very boyhood, as the many acts of that period testify. And in his youth and later days, if his *gurubhais* and disciples abandoned themselves to him, he more than abandoned himself to them, aye, sacrificed himself for them. Many were the occasions, in the years following the passing of his Master, when all his firm resolve for performing austere *sadhanas* in the Himalayas or in some lonely retreat elsewhere, aloof from the world, was swept away by seeing or hearing that a brother-monk was lying ill, as was the case with Swami Yogananda in Allahabad, Swamis Abhedananda and Sadananda in Hrishikesh, and Swami Akhandananda in the Himalayas. For the latter he begged from door to door at Dehra Dun, seeking for a shelter and proper

diet for him. And when he found it advisable to take Sadananda down to the plains for treatment and nourishing food, he himself carried on his shoulder his disciple's bundle of clothes and blankets and his *shoes!* For them he would do anything—even steal, as he said once in his intense mood. He was a slave of Sri Ramakrishna, to whom his body and soul were sold for ever, and hence his spiritual children who were left to his keeping by the Master were objects of his constant care and service. He would serve them as a slave, come heaven or hell, freedom or bondage! Those were his very words, and they were proved by his action.

And his attitude to disciples was also one of constant care and self-sacrifice. This was the secret of their implicit love and allegiance to him, and of the unbounded power that he unconsciously exercised over them all. 'The test, the real test of a leader,' he said once, 'lies not in his power of organization, or in his setting forth high and original ideas and methods of their realisation, but in holding widely different people together, along the line of their common sympathies. And this is done by him unconsciously, and not by trying.' And no leader in the history of the world had the occasion of doing so as the Swami who knitted together in a bond of common sympathies and aspirations a vast number of disciples of all ranks, sects and nationalities bearing the most divergent characters and temperaments, all looking up to him as their blessed and beloved Master.

Like the true father, *guru* and leader that he was, he

could brook defeat from none except his disciples, his spiritual children. He wished them even to outshine him, to do greater things than he had been able to accomplish. In a letter to a disciple he wrote: 'I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Everyone of you must be a giant—*must*, that is my word.' And he sincerely believed that they were capable of being that, if only they had faith in themselves, and faith in their *Guru* unto death. He had unbounded faith in them. He would send them out as his ships, as it were, on the great sea of experience; and intuitively he knew that however wild the winds and waves might be, they were sure to reach the haven on the other shore. He made them his very own *in the sense of a personal possession* so that he might *experiment* with them in his work and in his message, and transmit spirituality to them which is possible only when the *guru* possesses the disciple's soul. His stern questions, noted previously, to one about to receive *sannyasa* at his hands illustrate the character of the discipleship he demanded. Of course he never availed himself of such abandonment to his personality on the part of his disciples to serve any personal ends. Only he wanted to test them, and to impress upon them the need of cultivating the instinct for obedience and loyalty in the life of discipleship. And he was always ready to be of any help and service to them. They had constant accession to his personality. He spoke freely with all of them with equal affection, and regarded each of them, however humble

and insignificant he might seem to be, as indispensable to him and for his work. Some he really *hammered* into shape. He felt free to do as he liked with them in the training which he gave them for the good of their souls. Oftentimes they feared his dread outspokenness, but *always* they loved him. He felt concerning them, even as Sri Ramakrishna had felt concerning him. The result of it all was, that everyone of his intimate disciples has fulfilled a certain mission. Some, it may be, only to lead the simple life of prayer and meditation, whilst others, as time has revealed, were to found institutions, or to become masters in literature and thought, or powerful preachers and teachers of religion; or again others, to nurse the sick, or help the poor, and so on. Whatever the outcome, the work was only *by the way*. In the heart of all alike dwell indelibly and imperishably the name and personality of their Master—and they speak and meditate on that with which their hearts are full to overflow—the greatness and the love and the wonderful life of the MAN who revealed the Shining Lights of the Soul—Swami Vivekananda. ❐

THE ARTIST

THOUGH THE SWAMI was a man of the supersensuous mould, he was never out of touch with the ordinary facts or the purely human elements of life. This was because he could interpret everything in the light of the realisation of Brahman. Even physical experience was translated by him into spiritual terms. This constituted the artist in him, in the highest sense of the word, for he was certainly so in so far as he re-interpreted the experience of the senses in the lofty forms and language of the soul. His poems are replete with an intimate communion with the very soul of nature, with the spirit that dwells in the rivers, forests, seas, mountains, suns and stars, commingling to produce the most exquisitely artistic and yet spiritual expression. He was ascetic and artist in one. He never merged his nature in physical experience; he was constantly the witness, the poet, the great dreamer who *meditated* on the phenomena of experience and saw the spiritual even in the physical. Music, art and language were, to his mind, so many methods for the re-interpretation of physical nature, so that the spirit stood, in the revelation, superior to the form.

He was an exceptional musician, in so far as the music of his own country was concerned, and he knew also, theoretically, the general technique of European music, particularly that of the French. And he was himself a most charming singer. A critic has said, that being himself a great lover of music, and having known many first-rate musicians, he was still of opinion that of all he had heard, none excelled Swami Vivekananda as a highly accomplished master of the art. He writes further: 'When the Swami sang, the melodiousness of his voice, harmonizing with the outpouring of his innermost spirit, so powerfully enchanted his hearers that they were transported, as it were, for the time being, into a higher sphere.' And hundreds of other critics have also corroborated the same opinion in unreserved terms. Music used to stir his soul into ecstasy and rouse in him an ocean of divine feeling. Often he would be so merged in singing that he would forget food, sleep and everything. He could sing for hours upon hours together without showing the least sign of exhaustion.It was his singing which sent his Master into *samadhi.* Though his voice for singing had become deteriorated, as he said, by constant lecturing in the West for several years, it had still a wonderful depth and sweetness which thrilled the heart-strings of his Indian hearers whenever he sang. He was an accomplished master of the sciences of vocal and instrumental music. In the days of his youth when he was known as Narendra Nath Dutta, a poor printer begged of him to help him in publishing a

book of one thousand songs. He did so gladly by editing the whole work and writing an elaborate introduction of some ninety pages on the science of music, in which he pointed out its derivation from nature and its divineness as the expression of Absolute Reason. He said on one occasion, 'If one cannot appreciate the harmony in nature, how can one appreciate God, the summation of all harmony, sublimity and beauty!' He could sing a love-song with as much abandonment as a song of prayer to the divinity or one setting forth the impersonal aspects of Brahman, for in the former his thoughts were directed to the Lord as the Eternal Beloved, the Lover of his soul. He who would not at first hear Sri Ramakrishna talk of the Gopis of Vrindavan, would lose himself in later days in singing the exquisite psalms of Jayadeva's 'Gita Govindam', and of other lover-poets! At one time, he remarked, 'I would not give one straw, you know, for the man who was incapable of appreciating a love-song!' for he knew how important a phenomenon emotion was in the transfiguration of the human consciousness from the animal to the divine. Thinking of the Lord, he once quoted from the Persian poem which says, 'For one mole on the face of my beloved, I would give all the wealth of Samarcand!' In such moods he was like another Saint Francis of Assisi who found God even in the humorous and the trivial and compared himself to a mote dancing in the sunbeam of the Divine Grace. And the Swami, even as that great Western monk, could *dance* with joy unto the Lord.

If one conceives of the artistic instinct as a unit, then it is easily understood how poetry, art so-called, music and oratory are so many aspects thereof. In Swami Vivekananda the various aspects of this unit genius expressed themselves in a unit personality. The artistic instinct itself was saturated with the experience of the Highest Consciousness, so that it became transfixed, transfigured and rendered altogether divine. Again, as for poetry, even his ordinary conversation and even his philosophy were that. In all his discourses and writings on religion and philosophy, he combined the boldest sublimity of conception with an incomparable simplicity of expression. Himself writing to a disciple from America he observed:

> 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—this 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. That is my life's work.

Even a casual reader of his Works will realise how beautifully the Swami has succeeded in his great mission of his life as a teacher. A learned lecturer has remarked:

> Another aspect of his genius...is his poetic gift—I refer to those wonderfully imaginative passages, those magnificent poetic outbursts that adorn his speeches and writings. His was a poet's soul, which perceived hints of beauty and divinity where the ordinary man perceives nothing, and revealed them to the world in language clothed with beauty as well as grace.

Once explaining his standpoint in the course of a discussion with a disciple, the Swami exclaimed, 'Don't you see, I am, above all, a *poet!*' And the Swami, realizing himself the underlying spirituality in poetry and art, said in a certain mood, 'That man cannot be truly religious, who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of art.' Sometimes, after showing the religious aspect in art, the Swami would say: 'It is blasphemy to state that art is merely pleasing to the senses. One who has the mastery over the senses, who has overcome the body-idea, can alone appreciate true beauty, be it masculine, or feminine, or purely physical. We must see everything from the spiritual view-point. Nature is the manifestation of God. Ugliness and impurity are in the mind of him who sees ugliness and impurity. Non-

appreciation of art is crass ignorance True art, true poetry, true music must always be spiritual.'

Perceiving the relationship between religion and art in his own land, the Swami used to say, 'Hindus live in religion, and Hindus live in art. Religious culture cannot but lead to the culture of art and *vice versa.* When the true history of India will be discovered, it will be proved that as India is the first teacher of man in the domain of religion, so she is also the first teacher in art.' In Sri Ramakrishna he had seen the artistic faculty very highly developed. All his daily actions were marked with an artistic grace which was a part of his being. As a student of history the Swami had observed that wherever there was a renaissance of religion, there was in its wake a renaissance in arts, sciences and literature as well. Thus, after the advent of Buddha, the arts of sculpture and architecture received a new stimulus. Sri Chaitanya gave birth to the soul-stirring music known as *Sankirtana* accompanied by *Mridanga.* Believer as the Swami was in Sri Ramakrishna as the originator of a huge wave of spiritual revival which was destined to carry humanity in its resistless flood to the realisation of the living truths of religion, he was hopeful of the birth of a new era of progress in all branches of higher knowledge in his country, and consequently he charged those who believed in the mission of Ramakrishna to take care how they fostered this. During his travels all over the world he was a keen observer of the artistic development of every nation, and deplored the degeneracy

that had come upon it everywhere owing to the lack of originality. Whatever was done now, he found, was merely an attempt at imitation. As regards India, he pointed out that an immense field lay before the artists of the soil in portraying the images of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses, making them expressive of the symbolic conceptions which they stand for, and in illustrating on canvas the sublime and instructive episodes of the Upanishadic and Pauranic stories, and he communicated some of his ideas on them to his artist-friends. So far the attempts made in these directions seemed to him to have been inadequate and unsatisfactory. It is gratifying to note, however, that in recent years a new school of painting has arisen in Bengal, with the promise of an advanced outlook, depth of vision and a certain originality of conception.

The Swami was an artist through and through even in the simple acts of his life. He excelled in the art of cooking and had the delicacy of an epicure. In India kitchens are regarded as sacred places and cooking as an honourable accomplishment. The Hindu must offer his food to God in the Image, or mentally to Him as residing in the heart, before partaking of it. Therefore, the cooking is done in a religious spirit. The Swami's rigorous counsel to his followers concerning the religious element in the art of cooking teemed with representations of the necessity and the advantages of pure food.

He was also an eminent art critic. How well one

remembers his criticism of a particular piece of sculpture at the Paris Exposition in 1900! There were two figures, one that of a man, the other of a beautiful woman. The former, representing a sculptor, or more properly an artist, placed his right hand with his tools on the lap of the woman; with his left hand he was represented in the act of unveiling her face, while on his own countenance shone forth the ecstasy of art. Underneath the figures was inscribed the title of the subject, 'Art et Nature.' The Swami, pointing to this picture in a copy of the illustrated report of the Exposition, remarked, 'The inscription is wrong. It should be "Art unveiling Nature!"' He then dilated on the functions of art in general and on the necessity of discovering the links between the subjective world of interpretation and the objective world of experience, expression and phenomena. He said in purport as follows, as recorded by one of his artist disciples:

> The artist unveils the beauty of nature to the uninitiated gaze. Just as the human face mirrors different expressions according to the inner feelings of the heart, so the same landscape wears different aspects and reveals different hidden ideas to the artist. To her beloved worshipper, the artist, Nature yields up the treasures of her infinite beauty. The artist catches some of the fleeting graces of coy Nature and gives them permanence. This is the initiative work of an artist. The worshipful gaze, the inclining

posture, the poise of the head and the position of every limb of the man referred to in the above sculpture, speak of the sacred relation of the artist and his goddess. Whoever thus finds out the links of the inner and the outer world is alone able to give a perfect expression to them. And thus from the outflowing of eternal beauty from the inner to the outer world, the poet, the painter, the sculptor makes his conceptions, and concretises and expresses them for the benefit of humanity. This is the highest and noblest mission of the artist.

Speaking of his art criticisms, it must be mentioned that he had little admiration for English art. He held that the Englishman's efforts to imbibe art in daily life originated by his contact with the Asiatic, with whom art is a part of his being. Too much of English art had been devoted to animal life, landscapes and mere form, whereas the old Indian votaries of art centring their energies exclusively to give expression to the idealities of conceptions at the sacrifice of the form, had degenerated art into what often approaches the grotesque. What was really desirable was a uniform fusion of the two functions of art, namely, that of embodying transcendental ideas, and yet remaining in harmonious touch with external nature. He used to illustrate this point by saying that, as the lotus plant grows in a muddy pool and rears its flower above the water, the stalk remaining in the water, so art, though having its origin

in the gross realities and experiences of the objective world, nevertheless rises above the sensuous plane. And at one time he was heard to exclaim, 'Verily, art *is* Brahman!' To appreciate such outbursts of insight requires a remarkable synthesis of the spiritual outlook, and that he fully possessed.

With reference to Indian arts and sciences the Swami was constantly on the defence, an instance of which was noticed in his address before the Paris Congress of the History of Religions. In his conversation with Professor Max Muller in England, Greek influence on Indian architecture was one of the topics, which was, however not mentioned at the time of recording it. The Swami contended by pointing out to him the contrast between Greek and Indian art, which proved to his mind the far-fetchedness of the theory of Greek art influence on India. The sculptures of the Buddhist period had no resemblance to those of the Greeks. The Greek sculptor was very exact in the details of anatomy, while the Indian almost completely overlooked physical details in his endeavour to portray mental aspects. In India, every good sculptor was a skilled mason. The Swami regarded the Gandhara sculptures as degenerate forms of art. Indian architecture, he believed to be far superior to that of Greece, because it invariably expressed some definite idea; Greek architecture, on the contrary, did not.

In India, the Swami always detected in all architecture and even in commonplace rural cottages, an

accurate expression of some idea or other. To quote the writer above referred to:

> While travelling in Rajputana, Swamiji was very much struck with the beauty and the perfect expression of a tomb at Alwar. While visiting the Taj at Agra he remarked, 'If you squeeze a bit of these marbles, it will drip drops of Royal Love and its Sorrow. People say, Calcutta is a city of palaces, but the houses look like so many boxes placed one upon other. They convey no idea whatever. In Rajputana you can still find much pure Hindu architecture. If you look at a Dharmasala, you will feel as if it calls you with open arms to take shelter within and partake of its unqualified hospitality. If you look at a temple, you are sure to find divinity blooming in and about it. If you look about a rural cottage, you will at once be able to comprehend the special meanings of its different portions, and that the whole structure bears evidence to the predominant ideal of the owner thereof. This sort of expressive architecture I have seen elsewhere only in Italy.' He had a great admiration for Italian art.
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> About Greek representations of Jesus he remarked that the Greeks had never appreciated the internal development of Christ; if they had, they could not have portrayed Him as a being so muscular in appearance. For, a highly advanced spiritual person can never have a muscular body. In this respect

the statues of Buddhadeva are very praiseworthy. One can at once gauge the spiritual development of a nation by studying its art...

The Swami's mind was thoroughly imbued with the mystical experience. For this reason, his music, his art criticisms, his poetry, his philosophy were overshadowed with the spiritual consciousness. To him every atom teemed with the Life of the Whole, every form was a manifestation of the Eternal Beauty, a semblance of the Eternal Reality. As is often the case, though in a lesser degree with great authors and thinkers, that when writing they are in such intimate contact with their subject as almost to visualise it, so the Swami in composing his poems would mystically discover the *personality* and the *spirituality* of his subject. The same writer quoting the Swami's poem on the point says:

...These things were indeed the fruits of his realisation and not flights of imagination like those of a poet. In 1891 he was travelling on foot in the Himalayas with Swami Akhandananda, one of his *Gurubhais*. One night, when all was calm, he went alone to the side of the Ganges to meditate and commune with Nature. Coming back after a long time he exclaimed to his Brother, 'Look, tonight I have heard the Ganges streaming in *Kedar Ragini!*' He would often sit by a cascade and find out the particular kind of music arising therefrom, e.g. in *Gouri Ragini* etc., and

at times accompany it with his voice. Sometimes he would hear the song of a bird and find out the exact key in which it sang. Only very slight touches of all these are to be found in his poems....This was not impossible for one who could hear the *Omkara-dhavni*, the un-vibrated sound of the Life vibration of the universe. Sometimes he used to perceive one ceaseless Beauty in sound, taste and space. In the realisation of that infinite Beauty, at the dawn of which the poet is struck dumb, the painter's pencil drops from his hand, and the sculptor stands motionless, the Swamí would sing with proud elation:

Calmed are the clamours of the urgent flesh;
Hushed is the tumult of the boastful mind;
Cords of the heart are loosened and set free;
Unfastened are the bondages that bind;
Attachment and Delusion are no more!
Aye! There sounds sonorous the Sound
Void of vibration! Verily, Thy Voice!
(From 'A Song I Sing to Thee', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1989), vol. 4, p. 511.)

Speaking of the art of poetry the Swami would say, 'Poetic suggestion is the highest poetry.' There should not be too much detail in the depicting of an ideal. The poet gives a few touches of an ideal at its highest glimpses. A poem should act as a stimulus, flooding the heart and mind with light, waking up a sea of emotions.

Like many gifted artists, he could descend of a sudden from the most serious to the most playful, as his many letters, at once so literary and so human, attest. Verily, from the very highest insight and erudition to the commonplace incidents of life—under his Masterly artistic touch all became magnetised with a certain richness of personality, directness of appeal and literary beauty. ❐

THE MYSTIC AND PHILOSOPHER

That the Swami was an artist was because he was, first of all, a mystic. With him spirituality entered into everything. Had he painted, he would have painted like Raphael on his knees. And as a philosopher he was more than Saint Thomas of Aquinas, who never wrote a line without first praying on his knees before the Crucifix. The description of the Swami as an artist showed how the spiritual instinct had re-interpreted for him the functions of art and entirely remodelled its domain. He was the man of Realisation, the Yogi, the Mystic, in all attitudes of life. His whole career has spoken of the dominant note and of the influence of Realisation. His experiences in Raja Yoga had transmuted the normal functions of his consciousness into finer perceptions. Thus even his intelligence was thoroughly spiritualised. Indeed, so great was his power of Realisation at one time that with but a touch he could have conferred Samadhi. But he said after his first return from the West, that constant lecturing and overwork hnd made dominant the Rajasic over the purely Satvic quality, and hence that power was lying dormant in

him. 'Nevertheless,' he added, 'it is always in my power to revive it. A short stay in the Himalayas in deep meditation, free from all public work and activity, can at any moment bring it back!' And in his latter days when he led a comparatively private and a meditative life, he told one of his Sannyasin disciples that he could show him the tangible workings of the psychic nerves of *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Sushumna* in the body. This means, no doubt, quickening them into action which leads to the highest realisation of the Yogi,—the beatific union of the awakened Jivatman with the Paramatman. A great Yogi as he was, among the many vibhutis or powers that came to him, he could see, if he so willed, the mental make-up and the past or future of any personality. On one occasion he had told two of his English disciples that in a previous life they had been Buddhists; and to an American, meditating a return to his own country from England for professional reasons, he remarked, 'If you go to America it will fare ill with you financially. If you remain here, you will receive some slight injury to your foot, but professionally you will do well.' The man having faith in the Swami's words preferred to remain in London; and as was spoken by the Swami, even so did it come to pass! But it must be borne in mind that except in rare cases, as for the benefit of those for whom he felt deeply, the foretelling of events, and any manifestation of psychic powers in and for themselves, were held by him to be an obstacle in the spiritual path.

If he was a great philosopher, it was also because he

was a great mystic. Indeed, speaking of his own experiences as a lecturer in America, when he incessantly gave out his marvellous philosophical ideas, he said later on, 'When I was to lecture, all that pertaining to the subject would pass through my mind in picture forms. I had only to give expression to them, and nothing else.' One sees in this remark how a certain distinctive spiritual faculty of his Master, to whom somewhat similar experiences had occurred when he instructed the people, became the Swami's very own. Again he said of himself, 'It was as if another were the lecturer and I the witness! It was as though I heard my own voice as that of another!' And telling of the Power he often felt descending upon him when he lectured, he would say, 'When I stand on the platform, a Power comes over me which makes me feel as though by one word I could carry the whole audience of thousands across Maya and make them break the prison-walls of *"I"* and *"Mine"*!'

His philosophy cannot be separated from his spiritual experience, for it is the language thereof. It was a school of its own, gained from observations along all lines of human speculation and realisation concerning the Divine Nature. To him religion and philosophy were controvertible terms. He made poetry of philosophy, for as the background of ideas was an ocean of spiritual emotion, lashed into waves by the winds of his realisation. To his poetic vision, the Upanishads were the greatest poems ever given out by man to man. Incomparably different from mere scholasticism and

professorial philosophy, his thought-system, emanating like sparks from the anvil of his soul, set souls afire and brought on the greatest longing for renunciation and spiritual experience. His audiences were always transformed into a state of heightened passivity. He spoke as saints speak. He desired that man might understand what angels knew. He wished to share his realisation with others. Behind his philosophy was the spiritual temperament and his character was the test of his intellectual assertions. It was therefore that his philosophy aroused in men not one, but all the faculties of consciousness in a new and spiritual awakening. Jnanam became mixed with Bhakti; and the path of work, it became clear, was a form of the Raja Yogi's meditation. To him there was no difference between the service of man and the worship of God. While he spoke, oftentimes a consciousness of *what he was* came over him; and then he would literally shake big audiences into a strange spiritual oneness with his own spirit. His personality, his bearing, the romanticism imprinted on his countenance, the spiritual luminousness of his eyes, all these spoke as eloquently as his words. Years of meditation and spiritual austerity were behind him, and hence his very words were living potencies. His logic and reasoning were so accurate because of the shining light of his spiritual experiences. Theory had become subordinated to the spiritual fact, for he had plunged the ploughshare of his thought into the very Bowels of Being. He had undermined all appearance in his discovery

of Reality. The greatest worldly learning, the highest philosophical flights he included in the larger synthesis of the spiritual realisation that flamed forth in his every utterance. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, the Upanishads, and the Vedanta Sutras rang with new meaning as he spoke of them. Kant and Sankaracharya were discussed from the point of view of a higher and more immediate knowledge of that concerning which they had philosophised. Even his comments on the Jnana-kanda of the Vedas became Vedas themselves in the strong light of his newer and fuller definition.

His philosophical forms were throughout synthetic. And had it not been for the simplicity of his diction and the powerful lucidity of his interpretation, the new synthetic school of thought to which he gave birth would have been hopelessly beyond the ken of normal understanding. The theories of Maya and of Cosmos which confound the student of the Vedanta philosophy were, as expounded by him in his London lectures, a marvel of lucidity and insight. He did not profess to have found a new solution to them, for the solution had been found thousands of years ago by the Aryan Sages in the unassailable proof of their super-conscious realisation of Truth. The Mission of the Swami as the apostle of religious philosophy and philosophical religion was, as had always been that of the prophets and Acharyas, to restate, re-illustrate, and give them expression so as to make them clearer to the contemporary intellect. In his lecture on 'The Cosmos' he says:

> We do not pretend to throw any new light on these all-absorbing problems, but only to put before you the ancient truth in the language of modern times, to speak the thoughts of the ancients in the language of the moderns, to speak the thoughts of the philosophers in the language of the people, to speak the thoughts of the angels in the language of man, to speak the thoughts of God in the language of poor humanity, so that man will understand them; for the same divine essence from which the ideas emanated, is ever present in man, and therefore he can always understand them.

Though his teaching was throughout highly philosophical it was substantiated by an eminent practicality. His dominant desire was to make the Vedanta practical, so that instead of remaining a mass of mere abstractions it might interpenetrate society and be a living religion, a living fact in the everyday life of the individual in every station of life, as it was in the glorious days of the Upanishads. In all the principal lectures that he delivered in India, he laid special emphasis on the intense practicality of the Vedanta, and showed with his convincing power of reasoning that it was not a dreamy philosophy, and that its practical effect on human conduct was not to induce inaction and indifference, tending to weaken the motive for human exertion, as is often alleged through ignorance or bigotry, but that it was the very reverse of it. And, moreover, he adjusted new spheres

of functions and activities into it in the logical application and extensification of its intrinsic principles, in consonance with the changed conditions and needs of the times.

Unity was the secret of his spiritual experience; unity was the background of his philosophical learning. Thought-systems, in his statement, were to be regarded not in their isolated, but in their comparative or complementary relations. All were methods of perceiving reality; and none were true unless perception itself had been attained. He laboured for reconciliation amongst all conflicting camps of thought. The great character of his philosophy was its spiritual and emotional worth. It was throughout pragmatic, and while predominately monistic, it was inclusive, as well, of all pluralistic statement. To him the 'many' and the 'One' were the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes. The pluralistic must end in the monistic vision. With the eyes of a seer he demonstrated in a most convincing manner the grand truth of the warring sects of India, that the Dvaita, the Visishtadvaita and the Advaita were but three phases or stages in the development of the soul, which reaches the highest goal in the perception of Oneness. Such a one does not discard the Dualistic outlook, but deifies it by seeing unity in diversity, by seeing God, his self and the universe as one. Reconciliation of opposites was the Swami's main labour in the philosophical field, and this was because, spiritually, he was a monist. Reality, he

knew, might be reached either by an ineffable perception thereof, or through a multiplicity of forms. But the main theme in all his philosophy was character. That was the guarantee of any mystical experience that might transpire.

Thus the Swami as a philosopher combined logical presentation with the unimpeachable self-evidence that Realisation brings. The pros and cons of logic were so dovetailed one into the other as to make the unassailable synthesis which declared that all religions were true, and all philosophies different diagrams of the same reality. His was the synthetic mind, always a rare instance. He perceived Truth at all angles and through all perspectives. And this was because he had had, like his great Master, the all-reconciling genius that the realisation of the Absolute Truth in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi induces. Though he perceived the grandeur of the ancestral inheritance of Hinduism, he bowed his head with equal reverence before those other forms of Religion, like Buddhism and Roman Catholicism, which had Truth and Sadhanas, Devotion and Renunciation, as pillars to support them. With equal enthusiasm he could speak of Guru Nanak and Buddha, of Krishna and Mohammed, of Sri Chaitanya and Jesus the Christ, for he had realised the Divinity of these. That is why different persons saw him through different lenses. Some saw a Buddha in him, others a Sankaracharya and so on, because of his intimate acquaintance with the respective realisation of each, as stated in the Gospel of

the former and the Commentaries of the latter.

It must always be remembered that the Swami's was a unit mind. Art entered even into his philosophy, and dry history or philosophy he animated with an emotional and a visualising power that was his very own. He could show the inter-relationship of history and religion, and would speak of Shivaji as the disciple of a saint, of Omar as the devotee, of the great Emperor Asoka as Asoka the monk. And then *vice versa*, he would show the maker of history and remoulder of a national consciousness in the Buddha, and the statesman and political seer in Mohammed. In the make-up of the Swami's temperament, one saw glimpses of the intellect of Sankara, the heart of Buddha, the realisation of Sri Chaitanya, and the spiritual fire of Guru Nanak combined with the mildness of Jesus the Christ and the apostolic eloquence of Saint Paul. As a thinker he was possessed of a great catholicity, and yet he was firm with reference to his own conclusions. He could see the genuineness of another's point of view, but denounced any 'vicious intellectualism' in scathing terms. As the artist is passionately in love with his ideal, so was the Swami both artistically and passionately in love with Truth. His very philosophy was artistic, both in arrangement and in statement. To read his utterances requires no preliminary schooling in logic. They stand to evidences and natural intelligence as the visible universe about one. For in the deepest meaning of the phrase, it was all living fact to him and not fancy. It was realisation, not

speculation. It was mysticism, more than logic; Vision of spiritual reality, more than philosophical form. It was characterised by consecutiveness of idea, logical accuracy, clear conception and lucid statement; but above and beyond these, it was the Personal Experience of the Divine Life.

There is no greater summing-up of the general impression upon the thoughtful world of the greatness of Swami Vivekananda as a philosopher and as a mystic than that which was made concerning him by the late Professor William James, whose own utterance may be taken as the utterance of the superior understanding of the Swami by those who knew him both in the East and the West. Writing in much later years, in his book entitled *Pragmatism*, in which he quotes two striking and illustrative passages from the Swami's lectures, he says:

> To interpret absolute monism worthily, be a mystic. Mystical states of mind in every degree are shown by history, usually though not always, to make for the monistic view...The paragon of all monistic systems is the Vedanta philosophy of Hindusthan, and the paragon of Vedantist missionaries was the late Swami Vivekananda who visited our land some years ago. The method of Vedantism is the mystical method. You do not reason, but after going through a certain discipline *you see*, and having seen, you can report the truth. Vivekananda thus reports the truth in one on his lectures here:

'Where is then any more misery for him who sees this Oneness in the universe, this Oneness of life, Oneness of everything?....This separation between man and man, man and woman, man and child, nation from nation, earth from moon, moon from sun, this separation between atom and atom, is the cause really of all this misery, and the Vedanta says this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent, on the surface. In the heart of things there is unity still. If you go inside you find that unity between man and man, women and children, races and races, high and low, rich and poor, the Gods and man: all are One, and animals too if you go deep enough, and he who has attained to that has no more delusions...Where is there any more delusion for him? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything. Where is then any more misery for him? What does he desire? He has traced the reality of everything, the secret of everything unto the Lord, that Centre, that Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Bliss, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Existence. Neither death nor desire nor sorrow nor misery nor discontent is There....In the Centre, the Reality, there is no one to be mourned for, no one to be sorry for. He has penetrated everything, the Pure One, the Formless, the Bodiless, the Stainless, He the Knower, He the great Poet, the Self-Existent, He who is giving to everyone what he desires.'

Observe how radical the character of monism here is. Separation is not simply overcome by the One, it is denied to exist. There is no many. We are not parts of the One; it has no parts; and since in a sense we undeniably *are*, it must be that each one of us *is* the One, indivisibly and totally. *An Absolute One, and I that One*—surely we have here a religion which emotionally considered, has a high pragmatic value; it imparts a perfect sumptuosity of security. As our Swami says in another place:

'When man has seen himself as One with the infinite Being of the universe, when all separateness has ceased, when all men, all women, all angels, all gods, all animals, all plants, the whole universe has been melted into that oneness; then all fear disappears. Whom to fear? Can I hurt myself? Can I kill myself? Do you fear yourself? Then will all sorrow disappear. What can cause me sorrow? I am the One Existence of the universe. Then all jealousies will disappear; of whom to be jealous? Of myself? Then all bad feelings disappear. Against whom shall I have this bad feeling? Against myself? There is none in the universe but me. Kill out this differentiation, kill out this superstition that there are many. He who in this world of many, sees that One; he who in this mass of insentiency, sees that One Sentient Being; he who in this world of shadow, holds on to that Reality, unto him belongs eternal peace, unto none else, unto none else!'

> We all have some ear for this monistic music: it elevates and reassures. We all have at least the germ of mysticism in us. And when our idealists recite their arguments for the Absolute, saying that the slightest union admitted anywhere carries logically absolute Oneness with it, and that the slightest separation admitted anywhere logically carries disunion, remissless and complete, I cannot help suspecting that the palpable weak places in the intellectual reasoning they use are protected from their own criticism by a mystical feeling that, logic or no logic, absolute Oneness must somehow at any cost be true. Oneness overcomes *moral* separateness at any rate. In the passion of love one has the mystic germ of what might mean a total union of all sentient life. This mystical germ wakes up in us on hearing the monistic utterances, acknowledges their authority, and assigns to intellectual considerations a secondary place.

No better definition could be given of Vivekananda as the philosopher-mystic than this. He thoroughly mastered the meaning and spirit of his philosophy and was conscious of the power of his message, and that is why Professor James appreciated him so highly. The Swami knew that as a *rational* religion Vedantism was supreme in the world, and was going to be the religion of the future humanity. He admired the great religious idealism embodied in

several of the Western thought-systems. He had once gone so far as to say that Kant was, in certain respects, even more transcendental then Sankaracharya; but he also always knew that *realisation* stood behind the ideals of Indian philosophies. These were the utterances of the direct perception of the Reality. These were the thoughts of men who had *felt* and *seen* that which they gave forth in the form of philosophy, thus uniting religion and philosophy.

Underlying the whole message of the Swami Vivekananda, underlying his brilliant philosophical epigrams, underlying the eloquence of his lectures, one always remembered that 'Here is a man of Realisation!' ❐

THE BHAKTA AND KARMA-YOGIN

VERILY, SWAMI VIVEKANANDA was like a Great Jewel scintillating in innumerable facets of thought and soul. He seemed to have literally appropriated within his nature all the essential elements of Indian race culture, and particularly of Hinduism. He was, in the very heart of things, the Incarnation of the Spirit of the Land.

One need not wonder, then, that he was as great a Bhakta as a Karma-Yogin, even as he was a Raja-Yogin and a Jnana-Yogin. His soul performed innumerable rhapsodies and variations upon the great musical notes of the Indian spiritual experience. He was a man of prodigious thought and a man of prodigious feeling. As in the museums and galleries, the invaluable objects of art are oftentimes placed on movable pedestals, so as to be turned to any angle for the observation of the critic, so was the soul of the Swami placed in this museum of the world and in this gallery of human and historic experiences in such a way that his nature moved to all attitudes

and moods of the human spirit to any angle in the human perspective, on the revolving pedestal of an All-inclusive Greatness.

Many times it seemed as if his heart would burst with the torrents of his love for God and Man. He not only penetrated into the Fathomless Abyss of the Eternal Wisdom but he lost himself, as well, in the Ocean of Eternal Love. His whole frame often gave way with the burden of his emotions, and he would weep, or he would give vent to ecstatic joy with the varying moods of his soul. He could throw himself into an idea until it became so tinged with his heart's blood and coloured with the vitality of his whole personality, that it was no longer an intellectual but a spiritual reality. If he was a great Jnani and a great Yogi he was no less a Bhakta and a Karma-Yogin. Indeed, he was spoken of even as a flame of Love, shrouded by great clouds of Wisdom.

The Swami believed in a Personal God as well as the Super-Personal Divinity of the Pure Brahman. He believed that there was a Great Guiding Intelligence, loftiest in Wisdom, deepest in Love, omnipotent in Power and Present Universally, of which human personality is, verily, in essence, the image and the likeness. He believed in some transcendent manner of personal reconciliation and because of his own spiritual experience that the Image of God, which is the soul, when perfected, merges in That which is True Individuality, which is the Grand Super-Personal Individual of the Universe, the Unifying Self of all selves. He believed

that the Personal God is the Highest form of the Substance of Divinity, the highest reading of the Absolute by the human mind, and that God is ever nearer than the nearest, and ever-loving. At times he felt this closeness with God, this superior existence of the soul and the consequent relativeness of all temporal concerns in an intense way. And his heart would pour forth all its contents in his feeling. He would lose himself to his environment, becoming filled with Bhava or Ecstatic Love. He would shed tears of blessedness and joy and sometimes fall prostrate before the Images of the Lord or before the Glory of the Soul, as the Self Divine. He realised that Divinity is both outside and inside, that it is both psychically and spiritually omnipresent. Sometimes, taking up a certain definite ideal, he would worship the Divinity in that form. Sometimes going beyond forms, he would worship the Formless Divinity which is everywhere and in every thing. Sometimes he would see Divinity in a man or a woman, sometimes in Nature, sometimes in an Image, sometimes in the power of spiritual thought. He did not care whether Love was external or internal. He knew that Love Is. So he worshipped it on all occasions, and under all forms. He would see even the Terrible as manifesting Love. He would sometimes realise that he was a part of Nature and Time, and so he would often feel his Oneness with all life, under whatever appearance it revealed itself. The worm and the Highest God, God Himself and a blade of grass, the whirling motion of suns and the slow

movement of a snail, the least and the greatest, the highest and the lowest, the saint and the sinner, the most distant past and the most distant future, the most wicked spirit and the purest soul—somehow, in his perception of ubiquitous Divinity, he realised that all of these were indissolubly woven into one great pattern of the Spirit, and that the threads of that pattern were those of irresistible Attraction and unspeakable Love. And Jnana Yoga being the Path to the Seeing of Oneness in manifoldness, and Raja Yoga being the mental and spiritual discipline for that realisation, he saw that Bhakti or Love, also, had as its final purpose the sensing and the realisation of Oneness. And in this light the wisest of the wise and the most ignorant, the lowest and the highest of human beings he made equally his God, bowing down to the absolute Divinity in each. Even in the tiger, he said, one must see that Love, just as Lord Buddha saw it, in a previous incarnation, when he gave his body to the starving tigress. And Love knows no sacrifice which is too great, and Love knows no bargaining. It is active; it is passionately self-surrendering. Even such was the Love of the Swami for humanity and Nature and God and All That Is. In this he was a follower both of the Divinity that is embodied and the Divinity of the formless Brahman. Indeed, he would even make the Abstract Truth an Idol of Love. He would realise Truth as Beauty and Beauty as Truth and both of these as Reality, and his whole being would yearn to become merged in Truth.

Indeed, the Swami felt that the Beneficent Power and the Intelligence of the Universe were close to the human heart, that one need but realise the Nearness of God as a Living Presence, and then all evil, all terror, all sorrow, all weakness and all bondage would vanish. At such hours of blessedness the Swami would repeat in the form of intonation the prayer: 'O Lord! Thou art our Father; Thou art our Mother; Thou art our Beloved Friend. Thou art the source of all strength; give us strength! Thou art the young man walking in the pride of youth; Thou art the old man, tottering on his staff. Thou art all things. Sin and virtue, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the pleasing and the terrible are all united in Thee. Thou the All-wise. I see me in Thee, and Thee in me, and me and Thee as one!' It must always be remembered that the Swami's was Bhakti-mixed-with-Jnanam, a type of Bhakti which was as much transcendental as emotional, a Bhakti in which the Personal and the Impersonal played 'hide-and-seek', as it were.

In all matters of vision and of life and realisation the Swami strove to find the Oneness. The idea of a unifying oneness, a harmonizing oneness, literally possessed him, and whensoever difficulties arose in the realms of thought or of soul, if ever he found ideals apparently conflicting with each other, he invariably succeeded in discovering the third factor, the background, which made them complementary and mutually explanatory—and this was inevitably the vision of Oneness. This was the Sankaracharya type of mind

revealed pragmatically. Sankara's vision of Oneness was only through the spiritual. But here was a type of mind which sought for the inclusion of all facts and relations, and which made endeavour to perceive sanctity and divinity and greatness of human and spiritual experience in everything. And those who would understand the seemingly irreconcilable complexities of the Dharma and of the Man and Teacher, Vivekananda, must arrive at this same vision of Oneness, intellectually it is true, but more specifically, he must perceive this spiritually and intuitively. For the Vision of Oneness is the root of all spiritual facts, the very basis of the higher life and the foundation of the highest Universal Law which declares, 'All this is One.'

The Swami would take up any religious ideal, any Personification of Divinity and see in it, the different forms of manifestation of God. It is told of him how he worshipped the Divinity in the Virgin Mary of Roman Catholicism, how he worshipped and loved the Christ as the Oriental Teacher. And all his disciples know how he was accustomed to worship and love his Master, or Buddha or Sri Krishna, or Rama, or the Mother under all Her Forms, or Shiva, the Lord of Monks, or the God-intoxicated Saints.

But, none the less, he loved man. And for this reason he preached Karma Yoga, or the Yoga of Work and Service. And how overwhelming was the personal realisation of the Swami with regard to work! He worked day and night, and night and day, for the idea

he had in mind. He worked in spite of success and in the radiance of defeat. He worked with no will of his own, always declaring, 'Lord, Thy will be done! Who am I, O Lord, to impose my will on others!' And with the Royal Psalmist of Judaea he exclaimed, 'Not unto ourselves, O Lord, not unto ourselves, but unto Thy Name be glory!' He travelled the whole world over in the giving of his message, facing the hardships and difficulties of new lands, meeting with strange peoples, always preaching only the highest truth, his whole life exemplifying the greatness of his teaching. And preaching and teaching became like breathing to him, as he once expressed it in a letter. And in India he literally thought and worked himself to death, hoping, praying for India, meditating on her problems, solving them, striving for the realisation of Indian ideals, and ready at any moment to lay down his life for the Cause. And yet he took no credit unto himself, remembering the words of the Lord in the *Gita*, 'It is I, O Arjuna, Who performs everything. Thou art only an instrument. It is I who am the doer!' 'To work you have the right, and not to the fruits thereof.' And filled with this spirit, alike in fortune and in misfortune, he endeavoured at all times to possess equanimity of mind, always loving his God, always following the path of Jnana Yoga, or discrimination between the real and the unreal, always thinking for others, living for others and working for work's sake. And the Name of the Mother was ever on his lips, and the Spirit of the Master ever in his heart. And over

and above the giving of his message, the doing of his work, the performance of his spiritual austerities, and the love of his God, ring out those notes of a child, crying for guidance and for strength, 'Mother! Mother! Thou art the doer, I am Thy slave! Thou dost push me on; Thou dost lead me; Thou art all in all; I am only a child! I am not great, Thou alone art great! In this world Thou art doing Thy work. Thou art playing with Thy children. When my play is done, do Thou take me in Thy arms. Thou knowest best. Mother! O Mother Divine, I want no honour or praise from men; I want no wealth or pleasures of the flesh. Only let my soul flow into Thee as the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna. O Mother, grant that my mind may always dwell within the Lotus of Thy Holy Feet!'

Such was the Swami Vivekananda, the Jnani, the Yogi, the Bhakta, and withal, the greatest worker—the lover, the friend, the servant of man! ❐

THE CONVERSATIONALIST

A REMARKABLE characteristic of the Swami was his all-sidedness. His public utterances were composed of words that seemed red-hot from the furnace of his intellect, heated by the fire of his emotions and distinguished with a marvellous directness and inexpressible force. Each sentence he uttered came thundering on the audience, between the flashes of the revealed spirit. His gestures themselves were eloquent, and whole audiences were often so stirred that, had he required it, all would have risen as one man to do his bidding. Yet this same 'Lightning Orator' and 'Hindu Cyclone', as the American papers had characterised him, could be silent as unspoken thought, when in the meditative state. His conversational powers revealed the most universal aspect of genius; and yet by his mere presence he could voluminously convey the most complex thought. His practical commonsense was enormous, and yet no one possessed greater intuitive insight than he. As one has truly remarked, 'He never struck one as a loiterer on the way. In whatever he did he took a decisive step towards his goal. That is why his very talk was so inspired, that is

why his speeches were so telling, his works so luminous, and his teachings so full of practical wisdom.'

If he was known publicly as a genius, he was known as such even better privately. One disciple has written, 'All who knew Swamiji on the lecture platform only, had but a small measure of his true power and greatness. It was in familiar conversation with chosen friends and disciples that came out his most brilliant flashes of illumination, his loftiest flights of eloquence and his utterances of profoundest wisdom.' He often passed such striking remarks in private conversation as would seem at first sight to have no connection with the general subject. But to understand such epigrams it would be necessary to see from his point of view, to possess his vision, which had soared between his talks, with lightning rapidity, beyond the plane of immediate and particularised deductions and applications, into the highest flights of the universal. So instructive and interesting were his talks that one could hear them for hours without being wearied. His conversations were not always religious or even serious. Often they would be frivolous, but invariably delightful and fascinating. His letters, in which he leaps, as it were, from solemnity to fun, and from fine intellectualism to exquisitely human touches, and *vice versa*, best reveal the varied character of his personality. He could deal light-heartedly with a serious subject without making it appear light and trivial. Such was the charm of his personality that he could fulminate against those whom he loved, without

provoking any feeling of bitterness. In this quality, of leaving no sediment of disagreeableness in the hearts of his hearers, his criticism was unique. They knew that his heart was as sound as ever and that he only chastened those for whom he felt deeply. This accounts for his violent denunciations of his countrymen for their religious apathy, sloth, lack of unity and practicality. He wanted them to rouse themselves once more to the consciousness of the great destiny of their religion and country, and he laid down methods, which were constructive and not destructive, for its fulfilment. He knew how to touch the heart-strings of millions, and his fiery words have caught the soul of his people and brought on a transformation in the form of the New Spirit visible everywhere.

Whatever subject he touched upon he spoke like one inspired. And every time he spoke on the same subject he treated it from a different standpoint throwing some new light upon it. Unconventional though his language sometimes was in private conversation with friends and fellow-monks, he was singularly free from vulgarity. He was frank to the extreme and fearless of criticism. He would even sacrifice his friends for the sake of speaking out an unpleasant truth when it touched some vital point, as the well-being of his own religion, or his country.

In argument he was invincible. Rare, indeed, was the man who could withstand the force of his rigorous reasoning and proofs, put forward by him in vindication of his position, or in vanquishing an antago-

nist. Though eloquent and overwhelming in argument, he had the characteristic of being supremely patient with the views of others. Yet he was not less the enthusiast because of this courteous deference even to the impatient arguments of others. In matters religious he was nothing short of a born educator, a teacher allowing infinite freedom of thought and expression to the taught. His liberality in allowing others to battle with him intellectually was pronounced. He never exhibited annoyance at being interrupted, either in the course of his private talks or class teaching, when he perceived that the questions were asked in an inquiring spirit. Dissatisfied he always was with bigoted, self-centred or egotistic reasoning. Then his combative spirit would be roused and he would fall upon his opponent like a thunderbolt. This phase of his nature was most predominant in him when in America he had to wrestle with bigoted and orthodox Christian divines and religious fanatics who stupidly contradicted him on his own ground. One of the American papers remarked very truly:

> But woe to the man who undertook to combat the monk on his own ground, and that was where they all tried who tried it at all. His replies came like flashes of lightning and the venturesome questioner was sure to be impaled on the Indian's shining intellectual lance. The workings of his mind, so subtle and so brilliant, so well-stored and so well-trained, dazzled his hearers, but it was always a most interesting study...

In arguing with an opponent, after hearing a few words, he could catch the whole drift of the reasoning that the other was going to offer in support of his position, and he would at once meet him half-way and confound him by cutting the ground from under his feet. Or when challenged to defend himself he would naively turn the table upon his adversary and silence him. But even when provoked, his language was dignified, and he was never otherwise than courteous and generous to his opponents, unless they grossly abused and vilified him. He was never found hesitating for a crushing or an illuminative reply. So well-reasoned out had been his thoughts and ideas on all vital problems of human interest, in their pros and cons, that he was never at his wits' end, and his replies came sharp and quick, coloured with his ready wit and shining with a vigour of expression which made them irresistible. He never cared to argue for argument's sake. He detested loud and violent argumentation. There was one occasion when persons were quarelling and disputing about him and he sat seeming as if he scarcely heard them, an empty tumbler in his hand was crushed into pieces—the only sign he ever gave of the mortification caused to him by the discussion. A learned writer says:

> When he spoke, the words came with the force and conviction that is born of a fervid patriotism and the power of a man of action...
>
> Swami Vivekananda was at his best in

conversation. His learning, his dialectical skill, the readiness of his resources, his large sympathies which were not confined to particular races or nations, his keen observation of men and manners, and his strong patriotism made his talk brilliant, instructive and inspiring. His presentment of ordinary historical events so as to reveal their deeper meanings was matchless.

To gain a still clearer view of this phase of his character, it is well to quote at length a few of the reminiscences of Sister Nivedita from *The Master as I Saw Him*:

To our cottage (at Belur) came the Swami daily, at sunrise, alone, or accompanied by some of his Brothers. And here, under the trees, long after our early breakfast was ended, we might still be found seated, listening to that inexhaustible flow of interpretation, broken but rarely by question and answer, in which he would reveal to us some of the deepest secrets of the Indian world. I am struck afresh whenever I turn back upon this memory, by the wonder as to how such a harvest of thought and experiences could possibly have been garnered, or how, when once ingathered, could have come such energy of impulse for its giving-forth. Amongst brilliant conversationalists, the Swami was peculiar in one respect. He was never known to show the slightest impatience at interruption. He was by no means indifferent as to

the minds he was addressing. His deepest utterances were heard only in the presence of such listeners as brought a subtle sympathy and reverence into the circle about him. But I do not think he was himself aware of this, and certainly no external circumstance seemed to have power to ruffle him. Moods of storm and strength there were in plenty; but they sprang, like those of sweetness, from hidden sources; they were entirely general and impersonal in their occasion.

To the scale and range of his thought, his conversation was of course our only clue. His talk was always of the impersonal. It was not always religious, as that word goes, any more than his own Master's had been. It was very often secular. But it was always vast. There was never in it anything mean or warped, or petty. There was no limitation of sympathy anywhere. Even his criticism was felt merely as definition and analysis. It had no bitterness or resentment in it...No sentiment of dislike or contempt remained from his analysis, in the mind of the listener.

The Swami's thoughts soared as he talked...Ideals were the units of our Master's thoughts, but ideals made so intensely living that one never thought of them as abstractions. Men and nations alike were interpreted by him through their ideals, their ethical up-reaching...Recognizing the two extremes of a quality, he never failed to discriminate also that point of junction between them,

where, being exactly balanced, both might be said to be non-existent...One never knew what he might see in a thing, never quite knew what might appeal to him. He would often speak in answer to thought, or respond to a thought more easily and effectively than to words. It was only gradually, from a touch here and a hint there, that one could gather the great pre-occupation, that all words and thoughts were designed to serve...

Constant devotion, then, was the means by which he maintained his unbroken concentration. Concentration was the secret of those incessant flashes of revelation which he was always giving. Like one who had plunged his cup into a deep well, and brought up from it water of a sparkling coldness, was his entrance into conversation. It was the quality of his thought, quite as much as its beauty or its intensity, that told of the mountain-snows of spiritual vision from which it had been drawn.

He was very quick to recognise in others those seemingly instinctive actions that were really dictated by the higher wisdom of super-consciousness. The thing that was right, no one could tell why, while yet it would have seemed, judged by ordinary standards, to have been a mistake—in such things he saw a higher impulsion. Not all ignorance was in his eyes equally dark. ❐

THE MAN WITH A MESSAGE

FROM HIS very youth the Swami had the intuitive knowledge of his high destiny, and he spoke to certain college-mates that he would chalk out a new path for himself. But it was after his training under his Master and after his first experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi in the Cossipore Garden, that he became convinced that he had a message to deliver and a mission to fulfil. By the term 'mission' is meant a call coming not from an external agency. But proceeding from the inmost self which had realised itself, a call heard faintly by few saintly souls, and recognised in its true nature perhaps by one in a century, a call in which the man of genius finds his destiny determined and throws himself with all the force of his personality to make others share the vision vouchsafed to him. Such a one works not like the slave but like the Master. 'He speaks like one having authority and not as the scribes.' He literally transmits spirituality and his own fire to other souls. Such, indeed, have been the prophets of the world, and such, indeed, was Swami Vivekananda.

The chief formulative influences that went to the

determining of his vision may be classified generally under the following heads: His Master's great prophecies regarding him; his training and his Realisations; his knowledge of Western philosophies, history and Sanskrit scriptures; the constant study of the divine life of his Guru before him, in which he found the key to life and the verification of the Shastras; his travels all over his motherland during which he availed himself of the constant opportunities of comparing her with what she had been and was, and of studying the life and thoughts of the people, their needs and possibilities, and the diversities of their customs and faiths; and mixing with princes and peasants, saints and scholars, he 'grasped in its comprehensiveness,' as Sister Nivedita says, 'that vast whole of which his Master's life and personality had been a brief and intense epitome. These, then—the Shastra, the Guru, and the Motherland—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda. These are the treasure which it is his to offer.'

As soon as the Swami found clear as noonday which way the path lay before him for the fructification of his ideas, he was seized with such a paroxysm of intense *rajas*, such a tremendous force surging within him and struggling for an outlet, that he felt as if he would burst, as he said to one of his *gurubhais*. It was this mighty force that fell upon the world in its flood-tides of spirituality, destined to sweep away all that was weak and debasing, and bear in its contents all that was ennobling and life-giving. His extraordinary

achievements bear eloquent testimony to the divine grace and power which he possessed, to the presence and working in him of that Unknown and Unknowable Power which shapes and controls the destinies of the world.

Of the significance of his advent at a critical moment of the world's religious history—when materialism reigned supreme in the West and the prevailing forms of religion did not satisfy the yearning souls of advanced thought, and when in India Occidental thought and ideals forced themselves more and more irresistibly on the English-educated minds, shattering their faith in the race-culture and national heritage—we need not dilate here. Suffice it to say that what Hinduism needed was the organising and the consolidating of itself to meet the situation, and what the outside world stood in need of was a religion universal in its ideals and practice, which should embrace all the different types of minds and methods. As had happened many a time in the history of the world, with the need for this cosmic re-adjustment came the man, and with the man came the opportunity of voicing forth the universal and the national consciousness. One signing himself 'A', writes in *The Brahmavadin* as follows:

> Certainly such a state of things could not last long and it called forth the Divine interference to set matters right and re-establish Dharma. Of course this is done through prophets and saints. The prophets and saints that came in the past served a particular

section or community of people according to the then needs. But this time the case was different. The spread of Western education and the easy means of communication having knit the whole world together, a stronger and a more energetic person with sympathies as broad as the heaven, also was wanted. Again, with the advent of such a man an opportunity was also wanted, and fortunately the famous Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 presented itself as the best and the fittest opportunity.

It was a remarkable assemblage of great men, of not one country or continent but of the whole world. As such an assemblage was rare in the history of the world, so was a rare man from the far East who was destined to be present at it. It was there, the Swami was called to fulfil his extraordinary mission by proclaiming to the world the truth of what the seers of the Upanishads declared: 'That which exists is One; Sages call It variously.' Never did man proclaim this truth in a bolder language as the Swami did, and the effect which it produced was marvellous. This teaching aimed a blow at religious bigotry while tending to smoothen the 'friction of religions' with which the world was oppressed. The healthy and loving feeling which we enjoy at the present moment for each other's religion is not a little due to it.

In that one address of his on Hinduism before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that Hinduism as

defined by him in the language of the moderns, was invested with a new life. When he rose to speak invoking the blessings of the Supreme on himself and the vast audience, he found himself addressing the entire Occidental mind representing the modern consciousness. While behind him lay India, the Mother of religions, with her thousands of years of spiritual development and civilisation—a world which had heard the hymns chanted by the Vedic Rishis in the dawn of time, a world to which all other religions and civilisations were almost as yesterday-born! And within him, these two gigantic rivers of thought mingled their waters, as it were, forming the point of confluence.

Such was the psychological area in which the Swami delivered the message of India to the world, a message of Universal religion to which every religion was 'only a travelling, a coming-up, of different men and women through various conditions and circumstances to the same goal'—a religion which proclaimed that 'man is to become divine by realising the divine'. How all-inclusive was the idea of Hinduism he preached! 'From the highest spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the lowest ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.' And even as he voiced forth the message of his people, 'in the youth and noonday of the West,' in the words of Sister

Nivedita, '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.'

The message that the Swami delivered to the modern world of the West and to India, was his own interpretation of the philosophy and religion as embodied in the Sanskrit scriptures in the light of his own realisation, or to put it more definitely—in the light shed upon them by his Master, who had attained the ultimate goal of each and all religions by going through the means and methods of each severally, and which light the Swami had assimilated in his own life by making it his very own. Thus it was that he wrote in a letter to a friend: 'I have a message and I will give it after my own fashion. I will neither Hinduise my message, nor Christianise it, nor make it any "ise" in the world. I will only my-ise it, and that is all.'

In certain moods, when his consciousness bordered on the very highest realisation, or when in the more astonishing aspects of his personality as the Prophet, conscious of his Divine Mission, he might make such startling statements as to overawe the intellectual audience before him. As for example, in Madras, when he was assailed with the question, how he could possibly reconcile the philosophical creeds of the Dvaita, Visishtadvaita and the Advaita, to accentuate the differences between which such great Acharyas as

Madhva, Ramanuja, Sankara and others had to resort to text-torturing, he thundered forth on the questioner with the words, 'Because it was left for me to do it! Because I was born to show this to the world!' And the hushed audience felt the power of these words, as it heard the enunciation of the gradual stages of development in the three respective paths, and how they all converged into the effulgence of the Advaita consciousness. Once again, in the course of a debate with the Pandits at the court of the Rajah of Ramnad he declared, when challenged by them, 'I *have* realised the Absolute in the superconscious state. I am the proof of the Vedas!'

His manliness was perfect and a veritable shining forth of strength. Once when an Englishman, thinking him a common Sadhu, abused him, his sole reply was, 'I am Vivekananda! Who are *you*?' These words were spoken with such majesty that the man, overawed, hung his head in shame. The power he had used to silence the impertinent Englishman had been this startling power of the manifested spirit.

All throughout his life as the Teacher, the Swami felt in the heart of his heart that the Lord was working through him for the fulfilment of a certain Divine Dispensation. Towards the end of the summer in Kashmir, he told some of his lady-disciples who were travelling with him, that he was always conscious of the form of the Mother, as a bodily presence, visible amongst them. Again, in his last winter, he told Swami Swarupananda

that for some months continuously, he had felt two hands always holding his own in their grasp.

And once he wrote to his *gurubhais* at the Math from America, 'So long as you have the faith that the Lord is working through me, and will work through me, so long as I am in this body, you need have no fear of anything, no evil will befall you!' This consciousness made him dauntless in the face of difficulties and opposition, and made his faith unshakable in the ultimate triumph of the gospel of Truth and Realisation he preached. He knew that kicks and blows were inevitably the lot of those who went against the prevailing current and who embodied new ideas. But these oppositions only brought out the Man in him, and sometimes led him on, unconsciously, to make confidential revelations of his inmost personality and its realisations to his intimate friends and disciples. As for example, when an organised campaign of a virulent and malicious type was set on foot in the American organs chiefly by the Missionary bodies, after his return to India he wrote a letter in a prophetic mood to an American disciple who had drawn his attention to the fact, and in sublime scorn of the world and its ways said among other things:

> What are men? He is with me, the Beloved. He was with me when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about unknown from place to place in India. What do I care about what they talk—the babies, they do not know any better. What! I, who have realised the

Spirit, and the vanity of all earthly nonsense, to be swerved from my path by babies' prattle?...

...I feel my task is done—at most three or four years more of life is left. 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.

He who is the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, the God and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the Omnipresent, and break all other idols.

In whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going nor coming, in Whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship, and break all other idols.

My time is short. I have got to unbreast whatever I have to say, without caring if it smarts some or irritates others. Therefore, my dear M—, do not be frightened at whatever drops from my lips, for the power behind me is not Vivekananda but He the Lord, and He knows best....

Verily, the West saw in him a new type of man, and India a new type of the Sannyasin! No wonder that there were in the beginning strenuous opposition from a certain section of the one and gross misunderstanding from that of the other. But notwithstanding these there were hundreds and thousands who were yearning to have the thirst of their souls quenched by the waters of life, such as he carried unto them. To them he came as one of those rare souls who are born once in several centuries at critical periods of the world's religious history, to deliver the message of salvation to nations and individuals. His prophetic utterances and revelations coming out of the effulgence of the Soul remodelled Hinduism, created a revolution of thought in the religious world, and infused a new spirit into his countrymen awakening them to the consciousness of the glory and the greatness of their national ideals.

He never dreamt of failure or weakness. Succeed he always must, he said once, but before he achieved a success he had to pass every time through a valley of death. Conscious of the infinite power of the Spirit within, he moved among men a lordly soul, free and fearless, the bearer of a distinct message unto the modern world, and all-round character of the highest type whose genius shone forth in multiform ways, 'the like of which,' as his Master said, 'had never visited this planet of ours!' ❐

THE PATRIOT-SAINT OF MODERN INDIA

That Swami Vivekananda will be regarded by posterity in India as the patriot of a unique type, must have been borne in upon the minds of those who have studied his life deeply. Even in his very boyhood he had a sort of intuition which prompted his soul that he was born to help his country and his fellowmen. Even then he insisted, against the threats of his family, to go into the slums and help the poor, the ignorant and the outcast. Then in his youth came the conflict of the soul, and he passed through a terrible tempest of thought in quest of the realisation of the Supreme Reality, the ultimate goal of human existence, without knowing which life was not worth living. For several years his whole soul was consumed with this one idea. How he came out of the conflict victorious and gained the superconscious vision of the Reality, how he was made aware thereupon by his Master that he was born for even higher things than to remain immersed in Samadhi as the saints did, for like a huge baniyan tree he

was to give shade and repose to thousands of weary travellers on their journey through the parched pathway of the *Samsara,*—are well known to the readers.

Subsequent to his Master's *Mahasamadhi,* he travelled all over India with a burning heart seeking for higher realisations, if there were any, and restless to find out for himself the form of the work that was to be his for the carrying out of the great trust imposed upon him by his Master. His vision widened, revelation came, he found the field of work opening out before him in a way he had never dreamt of before. He read the meaning of his master's message to him in a light which assumed new and newer proportions with added knowledge and constant thought and meditation. Yes, his was no doubt the spiritual mission, but how to practicalise it? Before him lay India dethroned from her past glory, with her three hundred millions sunk in poverty and ignorance, a hopelessly enervated and disorganised mass, lost to all faith in the future. His heart was rent in agony pondering over the deplorable condition of the masses,brought on mainly by the tyranny of priestcraft and the despotism of caste and custom. How to give them back their lost individuality and make them stand on their own feet again, with a new life and vigour pulsating through their veins, became the burden of his thought, the goal of his *sadhana.* It consumed him like a fever. It made him restless. He could not even sleep. He must find some practical ways and means of rousing them out of this living death.

At last, sitting on the last stone of his motherland in the temple of the Mother Kanyakumari at Kanyakumari, and brooding for hours on the present and the future of his country, the great light of inspiration came. In the anguish of his soul he asked himself the question, 'What have we, several millions of Sannyasins, been doing for the masses? Teaching them metaphysics! It is all madness! It is a mockery to offer religion to a starving man. How can the millions rise, how can they be a power for good to society when they are starving?' Under the circumstances, the first thing necessary, he thought to himself, was to improve their material condition and give them education along this line. The second thing is, 'We as a nation have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. The tyrants, and worst among them the priests, have sucked their life-blood and trampled them under foot for ages upon ages, till they have forgotten that they are men like ourselves, and the inevitable result is the slavery of a thousand years. Again, the force to raise them must come from inside, that is, from the orthodox Hindus. In every country the evil exists not with but against religion. Religion, therefore, is not to blame, but men. In order to remedy this evil, the first thing wanted is men, the second, money.' He was confident that by the grace of his *guru*, who had laid upon his shoulder a great mission—that of helping his fellowmen—he will get workers by the hundreds, fired with his own zeal of laying down their lives in this great cause. But who

would give him money? He had gone to the rich and the princes seeking for aid and received only lip sympathy. He determined not to depend upon any one in India, but to cross the ocean and go to the West in the name of the poor, the low and the downtrodden masses of his country. There he would earn money by the power of his brain, and in exchange give spirituality to the men and women there, and returning to his country would devote the rest of his days to the realisation of this one aim of his life.

Thus argued Swami Vivekananda in that hour of supreme insight, sitting on the last stone of his motherland, after fulfilling his vow of making the pilgrimage of India from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari! Verily, in that hour of inspiration he found his mission at last, and felt a call from on High to consecrate his life, his realisation, his all and everything to the spreading of the Light of the Sanatana Dharma for the good of the world at large, with a perfect assurance that it was destined to react on his motherland in the form of a reborn Self-consciousness, and above all, make the path clear and practical for him to carry out his plans for the amelioration of the condition of the masses, who are the backbone of the nation. Before that prophetic vision of his, at Kanyakumari, of India crowned with a greater glory than she had ever been, even the desire for Mukti, or the bliss of Brahman was rejected. In that moment of supreme compassion and infinite anguish over the lot of India's poor, he was like another Buddha, ready to

give up his life for the meanest of his countrymen. To him the poor and the distressed were the only visible, the only tangible God to be served with his life's blood in the spirit of worship. Verily, the Swami was a patriot and a saint in one, the like of which had never been known in India! In him, patriotism was indeed, deified into the highest saintship, and loving service to fellowmen, into true worship. Patriotism with him meant the transfiguration or merging of one's whole personality into the soul of his people, rising or sinking with them. In his famous lecture on 'My Plan of Campaign', in stating his ideal of patriotism he gave an insight into what mental sufferings he had himself experienced in thinking of the present condition of the masses, and what course he had adopted to be of help to them, in these burning words:

> They talk of patriotism. I believe in patriotism, and I also have my own ideal of patriotism....First feel from the heart....Through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers, my would be patriots! Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of Gods and of sages, have become next-door neighbours to brutes? Do you feel that millions are starving today, and millions have been starving for ages? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud? Does it make you restless? Does

it make you sleepless? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heart-beats? Has it made you almost mad? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, your fame, your dearest ones, your property, even your own bodies? Have you done that? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step. I did not go to America, as most of you know, for the Parliament of Religions, but this demon of a feeling was in me and within my soul. I travelled twelve years all over India, finding no way to work for my countrymen, and that is why I went to America. Most of you know that who knew me then. Who cared about this Parliament of Religions? Here was my own flesh and blood sinking every day, and who cared for them? This was my first step.

His letters from America to his Indian disciples, before and after his brilliant triumph at the Parliament of Religions, reveal to some extent the passionate ardour and the intensity of his feelings for the sinking masses in India and his stirring charge to his countrymen, and his disciples in particular, to do something practical for their betterment. Several extracts from these epistles may be quoted here to show the heart of the man and his indomitable faith in himself. That written from Metcalf, Mass., U.S.A. dated 20th August 1893, reads as follows:

...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, should 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....

Despair not....Gird up your loins, my boys. I am called by the Lord for this. I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures. I have seen the nearest and dearest die almost of starvation. I have been ridiculed, distrusted, and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn. Well, my boys, this is the school of misery, which is also the school for great souls and prophets for the cultivation of sympathy, of patience, and above all, of an indomitable iron will which quakes not even if the universe be pulverised at our feet...

Trust not to the rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Have faith in the Lord; no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—*it shall come.* I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great, but they heard me not. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land

seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go now, this minute, to the temple of Parthasarathi, and before Him who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gokul, who never shrank from embracing the Pariah Guhak, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His Incarnation of Buddha—yea, down on your faces before Him and make a great sacrifice—the sacrifice of a whole life for them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all, the poor, the lowly, 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.

It is not the work of a day, and the path is full of deadly thorns. But Parthasarathi is ready to be our Sarathi, we know that; and in His name and with eternal faith in Him, set fire to the mountain mass of misery that has been heaped upon India for ages—and it shall be burned down. Come then, look it in the face, brethren, it is a grand task and we are so low. But we are the sons of Light and children of God. Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed....I may die here unsuccessful, another will take up the task....Faith—sympathy, fiery faith and fiery sympathy! Life is nothing, death is nothing—hunger nothing, cold

nothing! Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General....

Mark the inherent faith and the indomitable hope of the man voiced forth in his utterance in the above letter, written amidst the temporal vicissitudes of his early days in America before his epoch making appearance at the Parliament of Religions, when sometimes he did not know where to turn for shelter or his next meal! Such an unwavering assuredness of the ultimate success even when everything about one seems dark, such a deep unspoken consciousness of greatness shines only in those souls who are born to fulfil a certain mission for the uplifting of humanity. This letter is a valuable document in vindication of the fact that the Swami's faith in the regeneration of his people, and in the part he was to play in it, was something innate, intuitive and unshakable, proceeding from the firm conviction or rather prophetic vision, that it was the will of the Lord and hence inevitable, and that he was called upon by Him to accomplish it. In his letter from Chicago, U.S.A., dated 24 January 1894, Swamiji writes:

...Remember, the whole gist of our force is—the elevation of the masses without injuring 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 re-marriage. 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. Onward, brave lads!

Preach the idea of elevating the masses by means of a Central College, and by bringing education as well as religion to the door of the poor by means of missionaries trained in this College.

In a letter from Washington, U.S.A., on 27 October 1894 to a disciple he writes:

Do you love your fellowmen? Where else should you go to seek for God? Are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak—Gods? Why not worship them first? Why go to dig a well on the shores of the Ganges?....Have you love? You are omnipotent. Are you perfectly unselfish? You are irresistible....Your country requires heroes. Be heroes....My son, I

believe in God and I believe in man. I believe in helping the miserable. I believe in going even to hell to serve others.

To quote from one more letter:

Let each one of us pray day and night for the downtrodden millions in India, who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny. I do not care to preach religion to the high and the rich. I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor....They cannot come to light, to education. Who will bring the light to them—who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these be your God—think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly—the Lord will show you the way. Him I call a *Mahatman,* whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a *Duratman.* Let us unite our wills in continued prayer for their good. We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything; but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect sooner or later. 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. I call those men—who strut about in their finery having got all their money by grinding the poor—wretches, so long as

> they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages! We are poor, my brothers, we are no-bodies, but such have been always the instruments of the Most High.

From the foregoing it will be seen that the Swami was not fired with patriotism bv his residence in, and contact with, the West, howsoever these might have widened his vision and suggested to his thoughtful mind some of the practical applications of his plans for the uplifting of the Indian nation through its own national ideals and purpose, which have been ever spiritual, and not political or commercial like those of the West. Indeed, the Swami's great love for his country has been witnessed throughout his life, and even long before his public career; only, later on, this love took a practical as well as learned turn. His whole life speaks of a passionate love of his country and a worshipping of his country even as his God. The whole character of his Mission to India was the amelioration of his country's condition, so that it might again become the teacher of the world in spirituality. 'Woman and the People!' was his cry. His heart and mind were with the great poverty-stricken, ignorant and afflicted masses. For their sake he said he would die in harness, working to the end for their good. Verily to the Indian, there was to be nothing so glorious as the Mother Herself, separated from all others by the highest mountain walls and by the expansive seas, and yet the Teacher of the World. What a

commingling of agony and ecstasy is seen in his life and words as he views respectively the present misery and the future brightness of the land! Verily, like unto him there have been few patriots. He himself said that he had to make mortar of his very blood, as it were, for the laying of every brick in the building of the monastery at Belur. True, but it is still more true that his life's blood, his body, brains and his very self had been offered up to the Spirit of India itself in that Yajna, in connection with which the powerful *mantras* used are already bringing into being the form and spirit of a *Prabuddha Bharata* or Awakened India.

To him everything Indian was holy. There were times when the Swami's patriotism and his interpretation of the customs of his people were touched almost with tears. A notable incident was when he rebuked a Western disciple who had told him that the Christian Missionaries were displaying, aboard the vessel in which he made his second trip to the West, some silver wedding-bracelets they had purchased from famine-stricken Tamil women, and who incidentally spoke of the superstition current both in the East and West about parting with the wedding ring. 'You call it superstition?' the Swami asked in a sad and astonished tone. 'You cannot see the great ideal of chastity behind!' In the same way he would explain the so-called idolatry, Man-worship and even fetishism with such a convincing force of reasoning and insight as to give a new revelation on the subject discussed, always siding himself with

the criticised and the condemned. Once when it was suggested to him that he did not surely approve of the fetishism of the aborigines, he answered, 'I do not know what fetishism *is*!' When the questioner mistaking his reply for ignorance pointed out that the object is alternately worshipped, beaten and thanked, he exclaimed:

> I myself do that! Don't you see that there is no fetishism. Oh, your hearts are steeled, that you cannot see that the child is right! The child sees persons everywhere. Knowledge robs us of the child's vision. But at last, through higher knowledge we win back to it. He connects a living power with rocks, sticks, trees and the rest. And is there not a living Power behind them? Can you not see, it is symbolism, not fetishism.

'To the customs of his own people,' says Sister Nivedita, 'he brought the eye of a poet and the imagination of a prophet....The plain white veil of the widow was to him the symbol of holiness as well as sorrow. The *gerua* rags of the Sannyasin, the mat on the floor for a bed, the green leaf instead of a plate, eating with the fingers, the use of the national costume, all these things he appeared to regard as a veritable consecration. Each of them whispered to him some secret of spiritual power of human tenderness.'

And one remembers in this connection the passionate exhortation to his countrymen that he made in the

concluding words of his book called *Modern India*, which reveal at once the idealistic devotion with which he held his motherland and her time-honoured institutions and ideals, and also his love for his poor, ignorant and destitute brother-Indians:

> Oh India! Forget not—that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not—that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Sankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not—that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure—are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not—that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not—that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood; forget not—that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian—and proudly proclaim—'I am Indian—every Indian is my brother.' Say—'The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahmana Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.' Thou too clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice—'The Indian is my brother—the Indian is my life, India's Gods and Goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred haven, the *Varanasi* of my old age.' Say,

brother—'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good,' and repeat and pray day and night—'O Thou Lord of Gouri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me! O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and —MAKE ME A MAN!'

It would be well to conclude this chapter by taking some lengthy extracts from Sister Nivedita's book in which, from the unique opportunities that presented themselves to her, she closely analyses the dual aspect of the Swami's genius as a lover of his country and as a teacher of the highest religion, with the inevitable struggle it meant to a Sannyasin like him to reconcile both these conflicting ideals in his realisation of a new order of things. She writes in part as follows in *The Master As I Saw Him:*

In the West, the Swami had revealed himself to us as a religious teacher only....It is true that in a flash or two one had seen a great patriot....It was as the apostle of Hinduism, not as a worker for India, that we saw the Swami in the West....

From the moment of my landing in India, however, I found something quite unexpected underlying all this....It was the personality of the Master himself, in all the fruitless torture and struggle of a lion caught in a net....But wherein lay the struggle?

Whence came the frequent sense of being baffled and thwarted? Was it a growing consciousness of bodily weakness, conflicting with the growing clearness of a great purpose? ...Banished to the Himalayas with shattered health, at the very moment when his power had reached its height, he had written a letter to an English friend which was a cry of despair.

To what was the struggle actually due? Was it the terrible effort of translating what he had called the 'super-conscious' into the common life? Undoubtedly he had been born to a task which was in this respect of heroic difficulty. Nothing in this world is so terrible as to abandon the safe paths of accepted ideals, in order to work out some new realisation, by methods apparently in conflict with the old....Certainly in years to come, in the last five and a half years, particularly, which were his crowning gift to his own people, he stood for work without attachment, or work for impersonal ends, as one of the highest expressions of the religious life. And for the first time in the history of India an order of monks found themselves banded together, with their faces set primarily towards the evolution of new forms of civic duty. In Europe...such labour ranks as devotional in the common acceptance. But in India, the head and front of the demand made on a monastic order is that it produce saints....

In the Swami's scheme of things, however, it would almost seem as if such talks were to take that

place in the spiritual education which had previously been occupied by systems of devotion.... Worship is thus regarded as the school, or preparation, for higher stages of spiritual development. But the selfsame sequence would seem to have held good in the eyes of the Swami, with regard to work, or the service to man....Thus he hallowed the act of aid, and hallowed, too, the name of man.... The nursing of the sick and the feeding of the poor, had indeed from the first been natural activities of the Children of Ramakrishna. But when the Swami returned from the West these things took on a larger aspect. They were considered from a national point of view. Men would be sent out from the monastery to give relief in famine-stricken areas, to direct the sanitation of a town, or to nurse the sick and the dying at a pilgrim centre....These (workers) were, said the swami, the 'sappers and miners' or the army of religion. His schemes however went much further. He was consumed with a desire for education of Indian women, and for the scientific and technical education of the country. How the impersonal motive multiplies the power to suffer, only those who have seen can judge....

His view was penetrative as well as comprehensive. He had analysed the elements of the development to be brought about. India must learn a new ideal of obedience. The Math was placed therefore, on a basis of organisation which was

contrary to all the current ideas of religious freedom....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.

...Long ago, he had defined the mission of the Order of Ramakrishna as that of realising and exchanging the highest ideals of the East and of the West. And assuredly he here proved his own power to engage in such an undertaking as much by his gift of learning as by that of teaching. But it was inevitable that he himself should from time to time go through the anguish of revolt. The Hindu ideals of the religious life, as a reflection on earth of that of the Great God in the Divine Empyrean—the Unmoving, the Untouched, 'pure, free, ever the Witness'—is so clear and so deeply established that only at great cost to himself could a man carry into a fresh channel...occasionally to one who was much with him, a word, let fall unconsciously, would betray the inner conflict....'—I have become entangled,' he said simply, to one who protested that to his mind the wandering Sadhu of earlier years who had scattered his knowledge and changed his name as he went, had been greater than the Abbot of Belur, burdened with much work and many cares. 'I have become entangled.' And I remember the story told by an American woman, who said she could not bear to remember his face, at that moment when her

husband explained to this strange guest that he must make his way from their home to Chicago with money which would be paid gladly to hear him speak of religion. 'It was,' she said, 'as if something had just broken within him, that could never again be made whole.'...

And so, side by side with that sun-lit serenity and childlike peace which enwrapped the Swami as a religious teacher, I found in his own country another point of view, from which he was very, very human. And here, though the results of his efforts may have been choicer, or more enduring, than those of most of us, yet they were wrought at the self-same cost of having to toil on in darkness and uncertainty, and only now and then emerging into light. Often dogged by the sense of failure, often overtaken by a loathing of the limitations imposed alike by the instrument and the material, he dared less and less, as years went on, to make determinate plans, or to dogmatise about the unknown. 'After all, what do we know?' he said once, 'Mother uses it all. But we are only fumbling about.'

This has not perhaps been an element in the lives of the great teachers on which their narrators have cared to dwell much. Yet one catches a hint of it in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, when we are told how he turned on God with the reproach, 'Oh, Mother! What is this You have brought me to? All my heart is centred in these lads!' And in the eleventh chapter of

the *Dhammapada* one can see still, though twenty-four centuries have passed since then, the wave-marks of similar storms on the shores of the consciousness of another Teacher.

There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was the 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 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 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. To him, she appeared as the giver of English civilisation. For what, he would ask, had been the England of Elizabeth in comparison with the India of Akbar? Nay, what would the England of Victoria have been,

without the wealth of India behind her? Where would have been her refinement? Where would have been her experience? His country's religion, history, geography, ethnology, poured from his lips in an unbroken stream....One might note the unwearied stream of analysis of the laws regarding female inheritance, or the details of caste customs in different provinces, or some abstruse systems of metaphysics or theology, proceeding on and on for a couple of hours longer.

In these talks of his, the heroism of the Rajput, the faith of the Sikh, the courage of the Maratha, the devotion of the saints, and the purity and the steadfastness of noble women, all lived again. Nor would he permit that the Mohammedan should be passed over. Humayun, Sher Shah, Akbar, Shah Jahan, each of these, and a hundred more, found a day and a place in his bead-roll of glistening names....

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 centring upon a single definite point, was thus the Swami's worship of his own 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 had known in the past. Only once, however, do I remember him to have given utterance to this thought. 'I feel myself,' he said in a moment of great quiet, 'to be the man born after many centuries. *I see that India is young.*' But in truth this vision was implied in every word he ever spoke. It throbbed in every story he told. And when he would lose himself, in splendid scorn of apology for anything Indian, in fiery repudiation of false charge or contemptuous criticism, or in laying down for others the elements of a faith and love that could never be more than a pale reflection of his own, how often did the habit of the monk seem to slip away from him, and the armour of the warrior stand revealed!

But it is not to be supposed that he was unaware of the temptation which all this implied....As one who has forsworn them will struggle against thoughts of home and family, he would endeavour, time and again, to restrain and suppress these thoughts of country and history, and to make of himself only that poor, religious wanderer, to whom all countries and all races should be alike....

He was always striving to be faithful to the banner of Ramakrishna, and the utterance of a message of his own seemed often to strike him as a lapse. Besides, he believed that force spent in mere emotion was dissipated, only force restrained being conserved for expression in work. Yet again the impulse to give all he had would overtake him, and before he

> knew it, he would once more be scattering those thoughts of hope and love for his race and for his country, which, apparently without his knowledge, fell in so many cases like seed upon soil prepared for it and have sprung up already, in widely distant parts of India, into hearts and lives of devotion to the Motherland. Just as Sri Ramakrishna, in fact, without knowing any books, had been a living epitome of the Vedanta, so was Vivekananda of the national life. But of the theory of this he was unconscious. In his own words, applied to his Master, 'He was contented simply to live that great life, and to leave it to others to find the explanation.'

May one never suppose, from certain portions in the above extracts, that the Swami betrayed moral weakness by holding on to something which he sometimes regarded, what the Sister says, 'as a lapse' from his Master's teachings, and which he himself never knew how to adjust. The Swami was veritably a living paradox. It was most difficult to understand him in his varied moods, or the true purpose of his utterance sometimes let fall in private circles, which were contrary to his ideas spoken in public. In certain moods he would burst out into an open revolt even against Sri Ramakrishna, but that did not mean that he had lost the least bit of love and faith in him. In certain moods when he would be seized with a passionate longing to break all bonds and fly unto the Highest, he would say that his

works and activities as a religious teacher and preacher were all vanity, and superimpositions upon his true nature. But that did not unnerve his spirit of work and lead him to retire into a cave. Viewed from the highest standpoint, all work, even that of doing good to others, is no doubt Maya, a hindrance to personal Mukti. But illumined souls like Vivekananda who belong, in the words of his Master, to the class of *Acharyakotis* or World-Teachers, are born to take upon their shoulders the burden of a whole world. They care not for their own Mukti, or for remaining merged in the bliss of the Absolute, though these are within their reach. They would of their own free will be born again and again to help their fellowmen realise the Supreme, themselves ready to undergo untold sufferings for the latter's sake. When Sri Ramakrishna experienced the conflict in his soul, though for a few moments only, in his perplexity to reconcile his superconscious realisations with his heart being 'centred in these lads,' he found the solution in his vision that it was because he saw Narayana Himself in them and exclaimed in triumph, 'The day I shall not see Narayana in you, I shall not look upon your faces again.' The same might be said with regard to Swami Vivekananda. Because he saw Narayana in the poor, the lowly, and the distressed, therefore he could give away his life for their regeneration. Besides, he not only felt instinctively that it was the work of the Lord, but he knew intuitively from his deepest realisations, that he was called upon by the Lord for the fulfilment of a

higher destiny for his country, in the wake of which the divine Message of his Master, the vitalised gospel of the Sanatana Dharma, would spread, as it would in no other way, uplifting the whole human race. And we find him writing, with the same patriotic zeal as ever, towards the end of his life: 'My life's allegiance is to this my Motherland, and if I had a thousand lives, every moment of the whole series would be consecrated to your service, my countrymen, my friends.'

The great motto of the Swami was 'Renounce and Serve!' Renunciation of personal advantage and comfort, renunciation even of life, renunciation even of salvation, so long as the NATION lives. Everything must be done for the masses. The unnumbered suffering millions cry out for help. Responsibility points to the task of aiding and relieving the dread misery. The true Indian, the Swami held, is he who knows the greatness of his land, its culture, its beauty, its oneness, its potentialities, its realities, who has made himself useful in its cause, who feels himself at oneness with the millions, who makes their sufferings, their joys and their aspirations his very own, who is proud of his birth, versed in the history of the past, confident in its present and its future, bold and courageous in the cause of righteousness, defiant in the defence of the traditions of the forefathers, whose God is his country, whose country is his God, and the watchword of whose heart is, 'INDIA, INDIA, INDIA!'

Thus in Swami Vivekananda we find a truly

inspired patriot-saint, who deserves to be ranked as the foremost among the national workers of the modern age. He was an interpreter of the Soul of India to her own children and to the World—the bearer of the message of ancient India to new Western nations, and the bearer as well of the message of India that-is-to-be to India as she is at present. In his ideal and practice of patriotism there was no place for the elements of hatred and distrust of the alien and its culture. In his vision he saw the day must come when India will rise, self-conscious of her high destiny, to fulfil the great mission of spiritualising the whole human race, making of man the animal into man the divine, and to the realisation of that end he devoted his whole life and soul, moving among the nations of the world as the herald of Light, Love, Peace and Harmony. ❐

THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LIFE AND WORK—I

'Swami Vivekananda was,' says an eminent writer, 'the choicest product of the age, one of those distinguished sons of India, who are bound to appear time after time for keeping up the spiritual dignity of the land of sages. He was Nature's device for the readjustment and reinvigoration of the Indian national life.' 'He has his best memorial,' says a lecturer, 'in the newborn love for the things of the Spirit which, through his efforts, characterises Hindu society at the present day.' Even a foreign critic as the Special Commissioner who was deputed by *The Daily News* to study the situation in India a few years ago wrote to that paper, 'In Vivekananda, famous on both sides of the Atlantic by his lectures, we have a singularly powerful embodiment of the renascent Indian Ideal.' When there was a confusion of ideals, when the sons of India were losing faith in their mission in life and abandoned themselves to the mercy of the surging tide of materialism, when the proud nations of the West came to dictate civilisation to

India and lead her to light, the ever-watchful Lord of compassion sent forth His messenger once more, to awaken her to her glorious heritage and spread her unquenchable light of truth to humanity at large.

Before the Swami's appearance as the apostle of Hinduism, Europeanism was hailed as the sole salvation for India. India's literature, India's civilisation and India's religion were alike regarded by the lovers of India as a dried-up and exhausted fountain. The best minds of the land, who were fired with the zeal of doing good to her, turned for their inspiration to the oracles of the West, and tried in frantic despair to inoculate themselves and others of their countrymen with the Western culture. If there was any one who strove to reveal the spirit of Hindu civilisation and undertook the arduous task of restoring to the Hindus self-confidence and self-reliance, and also of appealing to their philosophy and religion for the reconstruction of themselves and the nation, it was Swami Vivekananda. He unearthed and laid bare before India's sons the inestimable treasure-chests of their ancient spirituality, and acquainted them with the intricate workings of their keys, calling them to their guardianship.

Intensely patriotic, yet not blind to the demands of the larger humanity; full of reverence for the past, yet keenly alive to the changed circumstances of the present, lion-hearted and yet generous, gifted with a genius at once versatile and prophetic, the Swami was the discoverer of India's long-lost mission in the world.

Steeped in all the rationalist ideas of the day, fully imbibing the selflessness preached in the *Gita*, and laying down his whole life at the altar of service for his country in whose destiny he had an unbounded faith, Swami Vivekananda stands out as a valiant patriot, championing India and her religion to the world. To what extent one great soul can be the saviour of one's own country, is more than illustrated in him.

These are some of the views recorded by his own countrymen in their writings and lectures.

What tremendous conflict of ideals the Swami encountered in his soul to realise the truths of Hinduism, what wonderful preparations he passed through in finding the mission of his life, what part Sri Ramakrishna played in making of the Vivekananda and giving him to the world, what unique opportunities the Swami had in studying the mission of his country and its problems—all these are well known to the readers of his life. To point out their national significance, however, within a short compass here, we cannot do better than to reproduce the following portions from a beautiful article which appeared in the *Prabuddha Bharata* in its issue of February–March 1914:

> It was in the fitness of things that in Swami Vivekananda a divine messenger was given to India in modern times. The Swami loved his country from his boyhood, and it was a love such as only a heart like his, quite an ocean in its depth and sweep, was

capable of. Such patriotism can never be the outcome of any training; it is inborn. Such perfect identification of self with the country can be accounted for only when we understand how in the birth of a Vivekananda, the very soul of his country finds itself bodied forth. In the episode of such a life, the achievement, the promise, the hope and the mission of a Vivekananda may well be said to have carried and embodied within himself from his birth the collective Indian consciousness. So it was really through Narendra, when sitting at his feet, that his Master got hold of the whole of India and through India the whole of mankind.

In his Master again, Naren found the India of his heart interpreting herself. All his college study in history, all his participation in public life, had never conjured up in his mind a vision of India so real, so brilliant, so glorious as that which shone forth through his Master. Oh! Here was India seated in all her glory, the Mother of religions! Here through this wonderful drama of his Master's life, she was recounting and generalising her past experiences and achievements such as only and really counted with her through centuries and centuries of surface-waves on Time which we call history. Here India was recording in living, tangible, indelible character her real history in the past and her destined role in the future. This vision smote Narendra's soul with the fire of prophesy and henceforth the consciousness

grew in him that he had a message to bear to India and also to mankind on her behalf. And we all know how as the necessary outfit, the divine messenger obtained, along with his high commission, the highest and heartiest gift which Mother India makes to her son, the gift of the Vedic salvation.

The vision of India deepened in colour and expression before the mind of Swami Vivekananda through all the years of travel over his country and the impulse to serve and worship her deepened as well. During these travels as an itinerant monk, the sights of distress, misery and ignorance tapped the inmost springs in his heart of love and sympathy for the Indian masses, and the realisation of God as manifested in his fellow-creatures came to him with a force that spurred on the mightiest impulse for service. Oh! For a proper opening to be vouchsafed to him now that he might set to work for his beloved people! His whole soul was burning with anguish and impatience when he received the call to go over to the West....

We have seen above that the very first step in this great preparation of one who was to be the truest messenger from On High to his country, was the acquisition of the spirituality and wisdom which India stands for in the world and which define and interpret her mission and life-history. The second step was a wonderful widening of the heart and quickening of the noblest impulses, and the third

step would be a clear understanding and discrimination of the methods, the ways and means. This last step Swami Vivekananda was enabled to take through his direct experience of the world, its many nations and their peculiarities of thought and action.

So after all this thorough preparation, when on the 15th of January 1897, Swami Vivekananda landed in Colombo and stood before his countrymen, the hero of the Chicago Parliament of Religions and the greatest modern prophet from India to the world outside, the time was full when his message to his country was to be unburdened. And in speech after speech informed with nothing short of divine inspiration and unparalleled in their depth and earnestness of thought and expression, the message went forth from that 'orator by divine right,' ringing clear and straight to the dormant hearts of his countrymen.

If one wants to know the trend of things in Modern India, if one wishes to sound the heart of India of today, it is imperative for him to acquaint himself with Swami Vivekananda's *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, especially those delivered in Madras. It was at this city where the pitch of enthusiasm was aroused by him in the long march of triumph from Colombo to Almora. Like the embodiment of the nation itself, bursting with the effort to express its insight and potentialities, was the spirit of Swami Vivekananda in Madras. What the

success at the Parliament of Religions was to his American work—that and much more was his campaign in Madras to his work in Hindusthan. His ideas at the Parliament had electrified the Western world; his ideas given out in Madras aroused the latent energies of the Indian nation. Recognised in the West as the arch-prophet of Hinduism as a religion, he was much more recognised in Madras as the arch-prophet of Hinduism in its birth in a new era of citizenship and nationality. Like some God above the masses of his people inspired, as it were, by the spirit of India itself, he is seen in Madras thundering forth to Indians their greatnesses and their weaknesses as well—now reminding them of their glorious heritage and the still more glorious destiny they were to fulfil in the future, now admonishing them like a Guru, like a father, ever jealous of guarding the interests and well-being of disciples and children, and pointing out the evils of their mistaken course, the dangers ahead and the path to their salvation as a nation. He endeavoured to rouse them into supreme activity and raise them in the estimation of the nations of the world. He made them self-conscious, proud of their past, and hopeful of their future. He was unsparing in pointing out to them their faults and defects, he made them ashamed of their weakness and impotency, and bade them gird up their loins. He it was who blew into a flame the dying embers of spirituality in the drooping spirits of his people, ushering in a religious as well as a national awakening, reminding them of the

historical fact that in India no great national development was possible without a spiritual awakening of the race.

In the making of Modern India, in the welding together of a unity in this country, no one has played so great and so inspiring a part as Swami Vivekananda. Returning from America, he recast the contents of Indian philosophy so as to meet the present-day needs and difficulties. Even those who were antagonistic to him admitted that he was a man with consummate genius for national reconstruction. He interpreted the principles of the Vedanta not in the light of the seventh or eleventh century, or of the Shastris and Pandits, but in the light of the nineteenth or twentieth century or to be more definite, in the light of the needs of his people, as was the way with the prophets and Acharyas of old.

It was the Swami who pointed out that the hypnosis of centuries of subjection had led India into such weakness that her great strength had been quite forgotten in self-commiseration. His call to the Indian peoples rang out: 'Back to the Upanishads!' 'He who thinks that he is weak is weak; he who believes that he is strong is already invincible!' 'Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!' Having assimilated the *strength* of the Upanishads, Indians would arise anew. The sense of the superiority of their culture would re-energise their faculties, abolish the hypnosis that had come by overwhelming foreign contact and create a point around which all India could rehabilitate itself.

His watchword was, Dynamic Religion and United India. 'The common ground that we have is our sacred traditions, our religion.' With this in mind he proclaimed the necessity of a United India, and he said, 'National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.' To such an ideal as this, politics was exceedingly relative. The very life of India was its spirituality; that revived, details would take care of themselves.

Nationality, to the Swami's mind, was not a political supremacy, or the acquisition of rights and privileges, to have a voice in the government of the country, but a sacred ideal, 'whose inmost striving was to express its own conception of ideal manhood.' In this sphere, man-making, he said, was all the task to which he wanted to devote himself. Aloof as he stood from the political significance of Nationality, the picture that it called up to his mind was a unity to be realised more of heart and spirit than of the mind, a unity which he found already existing, though it had to be corradiated to a common and practical purpose for the fulfilment of the Indian national ideal—which had ever been, and should ever be, spirituality. He never preached nationality, but he was the very personification of its true Indian spirit.

Strength, courage, fearlessness, and service, with the Lord as the magnet of all work, which characterise true Manhood and true Womanhood, were Swami Vivekananda's ideals for the peoples of India. It was a

wonderful discovery of his that manliness might be the whole of piety. It was a survey of life, most comprehensive and far-reaching that he offered to the Indian peoples as a veritable treasury of religious truth. This manliness is Dharma, or righteousness itself, which is the natural blossom of a life expressing itself in all circumstances as strength and fearlessness to follow and uphold whatever is true and uplifting. Not to grovel on the dust with the debasing idea of one's weakness and impotency, but to rise like a lion, and exert oneself to be a man with an omnipotent faith in himself to reach the highest.

In his scheme of an awakened India he did not aim at bringing about a mere revival or restoration of the Indian past. That might be a selfish dream dear to those who took only an academic interest in her, 'like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt.' They little knew that such a life would be short-lived, 'like a fire of palm leaves,' in an age so different as the present. The Swami wanted to see India free from the elements of decadence and reaction, spiritually strong and vital as of old, but with an intense *Rajas* or energy coursing through her every vein like the electric flow of a tremendous power, expressing itself in an ever-expansive vision infinitely projected forward, and finding new application and undreamt-of expression in the new age. Special questions concerning beliefs, customs and usages should have to be solved not from the standard of mere conservatism or reform, but from that of the recapture

of the ideal and its identification with India. Whatever was weak and corrupt would die out; who or what could stop that? Whatever was truth and strengthening would live immortal; who or what could destroy that? All that was required of modern India was not to change her social or religious institutions, but to put them in a position to work out the modern problems in the light of the national ideal. Once when asked by Sister Nivedita what he felt to be the points of difference between his own schemes for the good of India and those practised by others, the Swami after expressing appreciation of certain personal characteristics and lines of conduct adopted by some of the leaders of other schools, made the following noteworthy declaration as recorded by her:

> I disagree with all those 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 Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea, *strength.* The quintessence of Vedas and

Vedanta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was of Non-resistence or Non-injury. But I think this is a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that Non-injury lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceives the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now I would make all injury like that. Strength and fearlessness! My own ideal is that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke his silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And Thou also art He!'

But you may ask—what is the place of Ramakrishna in this scheme.

He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England or the English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life—and I read the meaning. Never a word of condemnation for any!...

Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—renunciation and *Mukti*. 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.

In India his aim was, 'to make Hinduism aggressive.' The Eternal Religion must be bold and strong, conscious of itself as an organised unity, and become active, dynamic and proselytising. It must be capable of sending out special missions, of assimilating new elements, of making converts, and of taking back into its fold those of its own who had been perverted from its faith. He felt that the consciousness of its strength and power to fulfil its mission will come when it seeks and reasserts its common basis and makes its stand upon the essentials of the national life. If Hinduism is to be a force in the life of its peoples, it must seek 'to effect an exchange of the highest ideals of the East and the West, and to realise these in practice;' and it must prove itself, by the force of character, capable of dictating its own culture upon, and welcome and embrace, the whole modern development. The mission of Swami Vivekananda was to rouse the historic consciousness of India, so that she may feel strong again to deliver her divine spiritual message to the needy West, pouring forth into her the mighty currents of her thought. The mission of spreading Eastern ideas and culture to the West he considered a part of his scheme of national regeneration.

In the contact between the East and the West, it should not be that either would lose its own individuality. That would he exploitation of the one by the other and not exchange of ideals. Before the advent of Vivekananda there was the danger of the East being exploited by the West in the realm of ideals—the danger of

Hinduism losing its balance under the pressure of Western culture and civilisation. That tide of Western invasion of Hindu culture was stemmed by the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, who were living examples of the possibilities and powers and of the greatness and realisations of the Hindu consciousness. Vivekananda taught the Hindus that there was no need for them to apologise to the West, as they were in the habit of doing, for having entertained the highest religious outlook on life that man could conceive.

India, the Swami emphasised, had much to teach and much to learn. She might sit at the feet of the West and learn practical sciences, but India was no beggar. She had priceless spiritual treasures to give to the West in exchange for the secular knowledge. Though she might learn from the West, any servile or ape-like imitation in learning, in religion or in manners was deadly demoralising. And it was always to be remembered that, 'Not by the help of others, but by the energy of Indians themselves should India rise!'

Europe and America, he said, were thirsting for spiritual ideas from India. Therefore let Indians, saturating themselves with the ideas of Vedanta travel all over the world preaching and teaching its gospel. National life and expansion depended entirely on 'the conquest of the whole world by Indian thought and spirituality.' Already in the high places of European intellectual life traces of Indian influence were

recognisable. Aye, India should be recognised; not alone that, for his prophetic vision saw India take its place as the highest spiritual authority before the nations of the world. He said, 'The fiat of the Lord has gone forth. India must rise....The flood of spirituality has already arisen. I see it rolling over the land resistless, boundless, all-absorbing....' Says Sister Nivedita:

> Again the trumpet blast of truth has been sounded in our midst. Once more is our country awakening to that renewed apprehension of her religious wealth which has been the forerunner of every impulse known to our history. In Vivekananda we have a reformulation of the Vedas and Upanishads, suited not only by its quality to meet the needs even of modern incredulity, but also universal enough in its appeal to be capable of opening the treasures of our literature to foreign peoples. The time may seem slow in coming, but it will assuredly arrive, when the influx of Oriental thought upon the modern consciousness will seem to historians and critics the great event of these passing centuries.

What would be the political significance of this exchange of the highest ideals of the East and the West? In one word, as the Swami put it, 'We shall conquer our conquerors!' The tremendous power which the West exerts over the world lies in its material development of the forces of nature through the application of science,

in its power of organisation and co-operation, in its dexterity in action, and in its intense energy. The East, on the other hand, bent on the realisation of the transcendental verities of life, never developed the above traits to an appreciable extent and can never combat the West on its own grounds, as the latter cannot approach the East in the spiritual sphere. The salvation of the West depends as much upon the acceptance of the highest rationalistic principles of the Vedanta, as that of the East upon the learning and the practical application of sciences from the West. 'Science coupled with Vedanta' was the ideal. Thus India would ever be the acknowledged *guru* to the West in religion and the latter would be the teacher to India in material science, and mutual respect, faith and sympathy for one another would prevail. It is through these bonds of equality alone that India would rise spontaneously, her political demands would receive respectful attention and compliance of the ruling powers, and not by mendicant policy and frothy agitation through lecturing and writing in the newspapers.

It is through the work of Swami Vivekananda that India sees for the first time in her midst people from the distant West as converts to the Vedanta. And from Ceylon to the Himalayas, India hears a voice thundering the greatness of Bharatavarsha, the grandeur of Hindu ideals, the glory of the Indian past and the superiority of her civilisation over the whole world. Through the preaching of Vivekananda new

conceptions are being introduced into India—conceptions of Service, of nation making, or constructive reform, and of revival of Hinduism. Through the insight of Vivekananda, India is, as it were, growing self-conscious. A new spirit is moving over the land. A great spirit is at work, a spirit of which Sri Ramakrishna said, 'It shall move the world.' ❐

THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LIFE AND WORK—II

IN THIS chapter it is intended to put on record two excellent articles bearing on the national significance of the life and work of Swami Vivekananda written by two of his disciples, as these bring out in bold relief some of the psychological phases of his character and mission described in the last chapter. The one quoted in extracts below appeared in the *Brahmavadin*, under the heading:

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE MEANING OF HIS SANNYASA

Greatness is interpretation—Great movements are an integration of national life. What then is the function of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement? What is its place in the history of the Hindu nation? Is there anything out of joint in the nation, any unfulfilled national task which it came to fulfil? What note does it contribute to the universal symphony? An answer to these

questions will enable us to understand the full meaning and message of Swami Vivekananda's life. In relation to that message his whole life stands explained and radiant.

Two currents of thought, two powerful currents, have flowed down and divided the world's civilisation into the Eastern and the Western. Whenever these two currents met, mighty characters have risen, changing the course of life and filling the earth with the power of the Spirit. With the establishment of the British Government and the introduction of Western Ideas, there has grown up in the Indian people the impulse to re-assert its own individuality, while the Occidental thought began to force itself more and more on the Oriental mind. The crystallised civilisation of India received a severe shock and the English-educated classes began to drift in a sea of doubt and restlessness, cut away from their ancient moorings. National continuity was blurred; race-culture and national heritage ceased to inspire the people; and the Western science stood lifeless and unassimilated. No nation has the right to live which has not a message to deliver to humanity. Once more India began to throb with life, to seek her innate unity and strength, to define the vague aspirations of her soul. There was a yearning of the Spirit without the power of positive achievement; an indefinite sense of innate strength without the means of giving it a concrete expression. All the movements of this transition period are the confused expressions of an awakened sense of latent capacities. Some worshipped the relics of

bygone ages and attempted to reconstruct Indian life on the basis of ritualism. Others made an intellectual analysis of facts without the spiritual power of synthetical expression. Amidst all these uncertain and exclusive efforts of a reawakened consciousness, the glory of the Atman, the solidarity of the universe and the oneness of India came out as the ruling ideas. This unknown power was driving the Indian intellect reconsecrating it to Mukti by declaring that the universe is thine own. Utterly insufficient to appease the demands of a growing generation, science, art, religion, and every department of human development awaited the coming of one who should link and unite them all in a single national idea and concentrate them all in one sole idea of spiritulising humanity. To assert what is India's soul, and to collect the whole national being and swing it in a single act of self-realisation and universal redemption was the purpose of Swami Vivekananda's life. This is the function of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Mission also.

Sri Ramakrishna summed up the whole religious life of India. His message is the message of Ancient India to the modern nations of the world. But the mission of Swami Vivekananda is the practical. This young visionary from his very boyhood felt that Indian men and women must grow in moral worth and strength, that only in a great, free and united India would Indians find light and life for the service of humanity,'—an India free from corrupting facts, from a crushing materialism and passion of the finite, and united by a roused

historic consciousness, united in the presence of an age-long spiritual culture—and that only in such an India would the message of his Master be a living force to make her stand before the world as the spiritual teacher of humanity. This young idealist felt that the day must come when India, self-conscious, radiant and purified by suffering would move among the nations of the world as an angel of light, love and peace. India has always been the preacher of the universal religion to humanity. Her deathless soul quickened the decaying pulse of Europe many a time before. In the prosperity of Persia and Egypt she laid the foundations of the Greecian and Roman civilisations; through political Greece, she gave Europe Christianity; and through the world-conquering Arab she was the mother of the Renaissance, of the Reformation and of the scientific and humanistic movements that followed it. If she is destined to do so again she must help develop a power strong in unity, she must become self-conscious and realise herself. This is the greater message of Swami Vivekananda. If Ramakrishna is the Indian solution of the many complex problems of life, Swami Vivekananda is the energy of that solution, that ideal.

Sri Ramakrishna came to establish Dharma in the world. But Dharma has no meaning outside of society. The spiritual and the social must become identical. The spiritual must comprehend the whole man—his head, heart and will, his art and industries. Even our microscopic tasks must be brought into the Temple of

contemplation, into the presence of God and plied there. Our little share in life must be interfused with the power of the Spirit. This is the secret of India's spiritual power; and it must be made living in the world. As Buddha tried to Aryanise Asia, so Swami Vivekananda tried to Indianise the world. This great task demanded the energy of a whole nation. He therefore exerted himself to rouse the nation to the full height of its manliness to fulfil this divine purpose of India's existence. All castes and creeds, the Brahmana and the Pariah, were called upon to contribute their best in spiritualising the world. As Krishna preached the Gospel of Strength to Arjuna, so the Swami preached it to India and to the world, to create an India greater than ever and dedicate her to the service of humanity.

Therefore the national significance of Swami Vivekananda's yellow garb is very great. In one luminous moment his soul caught the national cadence and began to vibrate in unison with the mother-heart. The melting rhythm of the song of Rishis filled his soul. An unknown voice cried out, 'My son! My son! Fulfil the purpose of thy life, thy great renunciation.' The vision of a future India filled his being. 'Lead on, Thou Friendly Light, lead on and show me the way out,' he cried out. A great love for the country, for the downtrodden and the suffering, burnt into him.

The Swami said in his later days that sometimes he used to get such tremendous powers that he felt as if by a single touch he could send the whole world into

Samadhi, as if by a single word he could carry whole audiences across the ocean of *Maya*. At these moments of spiritual exaltation he would either cut himself away from the world or spend his energy by wrestling with those who had the purity and strength to bear the power of his contact....

Suddenly the Swami had a call and a new spirit possessed him. His work as the Guru and saviour of humanity began...In such a man the national destiny fulfilled itself and a new wave of consciousness passed over the world. New hope and faith were born.

If the Vedanta is to become dynamic, if the message of Ramakrishna is to be a living force in society, India must grow strong and united. The purpose of her life must be brought out to rejuvenate the world. Is there then such a purpose? Is there a centre to which the collective inspiration of the race may ascend? Is there a core to manifest which all the diverse castes and creeds can function? For about six years this young Sannyasin wandered about the land in search of this unifying principle, which would enthuse his people, animate them to a fresh dynamic outburst, and would give them the energy to create a new constructive epoch.

The life of this born Sannyasin is a life of continuous initiation. With his tremendous insight and powers, 'throwing himself into the object', effacing his self in the presence of the thing to be understood and assimilated, he passed these years of wanderings full of divine afflatus leading him nearer and nearer to the horizon of

his dreams. He realised more and more his Master in himself. Fresh intuitions flowed into him. Everywhere he learnt something broadening the horizon of the synthesis that was to be...Amidst the existing diversities he caught the essence, all that is fundamental and vital, harmonised his experiences and realised them as the varied moods of a single personality....He declared that Hinduism has an individuality....Its goal is Mukti and its means is Renunciation....

Behind castes and creeds, behind the Hindu and Mohammedan, behind all alike, there is the same Indian spiritual heritage, the same love of renunciation, the same beautiful ancestral civilisation, the same motherland and an imperative necessity teaching common love. When the central purpose of national life is realised varieties of forms serve to reveal the richness of the Hindu ideal to enlist the manifold interests of social life and to combine freedom in worship and a common goal. In the harmony which will result from India's free adhesion and voluntary submission to the common ideal, which was his Master's message, he hoped to see the rise of a new moral world. In that purpose varieties must give an unknown power and beauty. India has a nationality, a central spiritual purpose; she must be roused to self-consciousness and assert what is her own. It is for this purpose the Swami incarnated, this soul of the nation; it is this purpose that led him to Ramakrishna and urged him on to a burning *tyaga*. It is this same purpose that led him also to foreign lands.

Hinduism is a religion without a definition in time and place. But whenever the times demanded of her to yield her life secret, to create a new moral order for humanity, she became defined; and the whole community, strong, happy, bound in a solemn concord, then stood on earth as in a temple built to virtue and liberty, harmony and peace. One such definition was Swami Vivekananda. When at the Parliament of Religions this great Parivrajaka declared that all forms from the lowest fetishism to the highest Absolutism have a place in Hinduism...that very day the seeds of the higher nationalism were sown broadcast, that moment Hinduism was defined once again. The Swami unconsciously sang the very theme of his life and struck the harp of nationalism with a hero's strength and grace, with soul-thrilling harmony, in that grand symphony of his lecture on Hinduism. His was the soul of the most universal synthesis. In him, the Vedanta became dynamic, the accumulated culture of centuries became aggressive; Indian renunciation marked out new areas of life for conquest. This is the meaning of his Sannyasa. His was a Sannyasa of broader synthesis and larger service—not a Sannyasa of cold renunciation or of the luxury of a contemplative life, but a *Nyasa* or self-surrender for the well-being of humanity.

By his burning *Tyaga*, this great awakener awakened the nation to the consciousness of its manhood; converted the latent energies of the nation into a potent power for the good of the world. Unlike the modern

reformers, he roused the world and the nation only to the glory of the Atman, to the joy of Mukti....

Swami Vivekananda was a child of the Vedic age. He always carried about him his native atmosphere, full of purity and power, full of the gladness of liberty. His vision was clear. His note was penetrating. Like the Aranyaka recluse he cried out to his countrymen:

'Enter ye the citadel of the Soul. O Bharata arise, sleep no more, seek the fire bearing the burden on your shoulders, you who have drunk deep that prince of beverages, the immortality of the gods. With your minds controlled seek the God of the nation—the Virat.

'May Savitri give you beautiful hands, powerful minds and world-embracing heart. Then Hero! Awake, arise, expand, be steady and become great.'

The following character sketch of the Master written by Sister Nivedita appeared, shortly after the Swami's passing, in the *Hindu* of Madras, bearing the title of:

THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Of the bodily presence of him who was known to the world as Vivekananda, all that remains today is a bowl of ashes. The light that has burned in seclusion during the last five years by our river-side, has gone out

now. The great voice that rang out across the nations is hushed in death. Life had come often to this mighty soul as storm and pain. But the end was peace. Silently, at the close of evensong, on a dark night of Kali, came the benediction of death. The weary and tortured body was laid down gently, and the triumphant spirit was restored to the eternal Samadhi.

He passed, when the laurels of his first achievements were yet green. He passed when new and greater calls were ringing in his ears. Quietly, in the beautiful home of his illness, the intervening years with some few breaks, went by amongst plants and animals, unostentatiously training the disciples who gather round him, silently ignoring the great fame that had shone upon his name. *Man-making* was his own stern brief summary of the work that was worth doing. And laboriously, unflaggingly, day after day, he set himself to man-making, playing the part of Guru, of father, even of schoolmaster by turns. The very afternoon of the day he left us, had he not spent three hours in giving a lesson on the Sanskrit Grammar? External success and leadership were nothing to such a man. During his years in the West, he made rich and powerful friends, who would gladly have retained him in their midst. But, for him, the Occident, with all its luxuries had no charms. To him, the garb of a beggar, the lanes of Calcutta, and the disabilities of his own people, were more dear than all the glory of the foreigner, and detaining hands had to loose their hold of one who passed ever onward toward the East.

What was it that the West heard in him, leading so many to hail and cherish his name as that of one of the greatest religious teachers of the world? He made no personal claim. He told no personal story. One whom he knew and trusted long had never heard that he held any position of distinction amongst his *gurubhais*. He made no attempt to popularise with strangers any single form or creed, whether of God or Guru. Rather, through him the mighty torrent of Hinduism poured forth its cooling waters upon the intellectual and spiritual worlds, fresh from its secret source in Himalayan snows. A witness to the vast religious culture of Indian homes and holy men he could never cease to be. Yet he quoted nothing but the Upanishads. He taught nothing but the Vedanta. And men trembled, for they heard the voice for the first time of the religious teacher who feared not truth.

Do we not all know the song that tells of Shiva as He passes along the roadside, 'Some say he is mad. Some say he is devil. Some say—don't you know?—He is the Lord Himself!' Even so India is familiar with the thought that every great personality is the meeting place and reconciliation of opposing ideals. To his disciples, Vivekananda will ever remain the arch-type of the Sannyasin. Burning renunciation was the chief of all the inspirations that spoke to us through him. 'Let me die as a true Sannyasin as my Master did,' he exclaimed once, passionately, 'heedless of money, of women, and of fame! And of these the most insidious is the love of

fame!' Yet the selfsame destiny that filled him with this burning thirst of intense *vairagya* embodied in him also the ideal householder, full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganisation and reordering of life. In this respect, indeed, he belonged to the race of Benedict and Bernard, of Robert de Citeaux and Loyola. It may be said that just as in Saint Francis of Assisi, the yellow robe of the Indian Sannyasin gleams for a moment in the history of the Catholic Church, so in Vivekananda the great saint-abbots of Western monasticism are born anew in the East.

Similarly, he was at once a sublime expression of superconscious religion and one of the greatest patriots ever born. He lived at a moment of national disintegration and he was fearless of the new. He lived when men were abandoning their inheritance, and he was an ardent worshipper of the old. In him the national destiny fulfilled itself—that a new wave of consciousness should be inaugurated always in the leaders of the Faith. In such a man it may be that we possess the whole Veda of the future. We must remember however that the moment has not come for gauging the religious significance of Vivekananda. Religion is living seed, and his sowing is but over. The time of his harvest is not yet. But death actually gives the Patriot to his country. When the Master has passed away from the midst of his disciples, when the murmurs of his critics are all hushed at the *burning-ghat,* then the great voice that spoke of

Freedom rings out unchallenged and whole nations answer as one man.

Here was a mind that had had unique opportunities of observing the people of many countries intimately. East and West he had seen and been received by the high and low alike. His brilliant intellect had never failed to gauge what it saw. 'America will solve the problems of the Sudra, but through what awful turmoil!' he said many times. On a second visit, however, he felt tempted to change his mind, seeing the greed of wealth and the lust of oppression in the West, and comparing these with the calm dignity and ethical stability of the old Asiatic solutions formulated by China many centuries ago. His great acumen was yoked to a marvellous humanity. Never had we dreamt of such a gospel of hope for the Negro as that with which he rounded on an American gentleman who spoke of the African races with contempt. And when, in the Southern States he was occasionally taken for a coloured man, and turned away from some door as such (a mistake that was always atoned for as soon as discovered, by the lavish hospitality of the most responsible families of the place), he was never known to deny the imputation. 'Would it not have been refusing my brother?' he said simply, when he was asked the reason of his silence. To him each race had its own greatness, and shone in the light of that central quality. There was no Europe without the Turk, no Egypt without the development of the people of the soil. England grasped the secret of obedience with

self-respect. To speak of any patriotism in the same breath with Japan's was sacrilege.

What then was the prophecy that Vivekananda left to his own people? With what national significance has he filled that *gerua* mantle that he dropped behind him in his passing? Is it for us perhaps to lift the yellow rags upon our flagpole, and carry them forward as our banner? Assuredly. For here was a man who never dreamt of failure. Here was a man who spoke of naught but strength. Supremely free from sentimentality, supremely defiant of all authority—are not missionary slanders still ringing in our ears? Are not some of them to be accepted with fresh accessions of pride?—he refused to meet any foreigner save as the Master. 'The Swami's great genius lies in his dignity,' said an Englishman who knew him well, 'it is nothing short of royal!' He had grasped the great fact that the East must come to West, not as a sycophant, not as a servant, but as Guru and teacher, and never did he lower the flag of his personal ascendancy. 'Let Europeans lead us in Religion!' he would say, with a scorn too deep to be anything but merry. 'I have never spoken of revenge,' he said once. 'I have always spoken of strength. Do we dream of revenging ourselves on this drop of sea-spray? But it is a great thing to a mosquito!'

To him, nothing Indian required apology. Did anything seem, to the pseudo-refinement of the alien, barbarous or crude? Without denying, without minimising anything, his colossal energy was immediately

concentrated on the vindication of that particular point, and the unfortunate critic was tossed backwards and forwards on the horns of his own argument. One such instance occurred when an Englishman on boardship asked him some sneering question about the Puranas, and never can any, who were present, forget how he was pulverised by a reply that made the Hindu Puranas not only compare favourably with the Christian Gospels, but planted the Vedas and the Upanishads high up beyond the reach of any rival. There was no friend that he would not sacrifice without mercy at such a moment in the name of national defence. Such an attitude was not, perhaps, always reasonable. It was often indeed frankly unpleasant. But it was superb in the manliness that even enemies must admire. To Vivekananda, again, everything Indian was absolutely and equally sacred—'Of this land to which must come all souls wending their way Godward!' as his religious consciousness tenderly phrased it. At Chicago, any Indian man attending the Great World Bazar, rich or poor, high or low, Hindu, Mohammedan, Parsi, what not, might at any moment be brought by him to his hosts for hospitality and entertainment, and they well knew that any failure of kindness on their part to the least of these would immediately have cost them his presence.

He was himself the exponent of Hinduism, but finding another Indian religionist struggling with the difficulty of presenting his case, he sat down and wrote his speech for him, making a better story for his friend's

faith than its own adherent could have done!

He took infinite pains to teach European disciples to eat with their fingers and perform the ordinary simple acts of Hindu life. 'Remember! If you love India at all, you must love her *as she is*, not as you might wish her to become!' he used to say. And it was this great firmness of his, standing like a rock for what actually was, that did more than any other single fact, perhaps, to open the eyes of those aliens who loved him to the beauty and strength of that ancient poem—the common life of the common Indian people. For his own part, he was too free from the desire of approbation to make a single concession to new-fangled ways. The best of every land had been offered him, but it left him still the simple Hindu of the old style, too proud of his simplicity to find any need of change. 'After Ramakrishna, I follow Vidyasagar!' he exclaimed, only two days before his death, and out came the oft-repeated story of the wooden sandals coming pitter-patter with the *chudder* and dhoti, into the Viceregal Council Chamber, and the surprised 'But if you didn't want me, why did you ask me to come?' of the old Pundit, when they remonstrated.

Such points, however, are only interesting as personal characteristics. Of a deeper importance is the question as to the conviction that spoke through them. What was this? Whither did it end? His whole life was a search for the common basis of Hinduism. To his sound judgement the idea that two-pice postage, cheap travel, and a common language of affairs could create a

national unity, was obviously childish and superficial. These things could only be made to serve India's turn if she already possessed a deep organic unity of which they might conveniently become an expression. Was such a unity existent or not? For something like eight years he wandered about the land changing his name at every village, learning of every one he met, gaining a vision as accurate and minute as it was profound and general. It was this great quest that overshadowed him with its certainty when, at the Parliament of Religions, he stood before the West and proved that Hinduism converged upon a single imperative of perfect freedom so completely as to be fully capable of intellectual aggression as any other faith. It never occurred to him that his own people were in any respect less than the equals of any other nation whatsoever. Being well aware that Religion was their national expression, he was also aware that the strength which they might display in that sphere would be followed before long, by every other conceivable form of strength.

As a profound student of caste—his conversation teemed with its unexpected particulars and paradoxes!—he found the key to Indian unity in its exclusiveness. Mohammedans were but a single caste of the nation, Christians another, Parsis another, and so on. It was true that of all these (with the partial exception of the last), non-belief in caste was a caste distinction. But then, the same was true of the Brahmo Samaj, and other modern sects of Hinduism. Behind all alike

stood the great common facts of one soil, one beautiful old routine of ancestral civilisation, and the overwhelming necessities that must inevitably lead at last to common love and common hates.

But he had learnt, not only the hopes and ideals of every sect and group of the Indian people, but their memories also. A child of the Hindu quarter of Calcutta, returned to live by the Ganges-side, one would have supposed from his enthusiasm that he had been born, now in the Punjab, again in the Himalayas, at a third moment in Rajputana, or elsewhere. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Meera Bai and Tan Sen on his lips. Stories of Prithi Raj and Delhi jostled against those of Cheetore and Pratap Singh, Shiva and Uma, Radha and Krishna, Sita-Rama and Buddha. Each mighty drama lived in a marvellous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name.

Seated in his retreat at Belur, Vivekananda received visits and communications from all quarters. The vast surface might be silent, but deep in the heart of India, the Swami was never forgotten. None could afford, still fewer wished, to ignore him. No hope but was spoken into his ear—no woe but he knew it, and strove to comfort or to rouse. Thus, as always in the case of a religious leader, the India that he saw, presented a spectacle strangely unlike that visible to any other eye. For he held in his hands the thread of all that was

fundamental, organic, vital; he knew the secret springs of life; he understood with what word to touch the heart of millions. And he had gathered from all this knowledge a clear and certain hope.

Let others blunder as they might. To him, the country was young, the Indian vernaculars still unformed, flexible, the national energy unexploited. The India of his dreams was in the future. The new phase of consciousness initiated today through pain and suffering was to be but the first step in a long evolution. To him, his country's hope was in herself. Never in the alien. True, his great heart embraced the alien's need, sounding a universal promise to the world. But he never sought for help, or begged assistance. He never leaned on any. What might be done, it was the doer's privilege to do, not the recipient's to accept. He had neither fears nor hopes from without. To re-assert that which was India's essential self, and leave the great stream of the national life, strong in a fresh self-confidence and vigour, to find its own way to the ocean, this was the meaning of his Sannyasa. For his was pre-eminently the Sannyasa of the greater service. To him, India was Hinduistic, Aryan, Asiatic. Her youth might make their own experiments in modern luxury. Had they not the right? Would they not return? But the great deeps of her being were moral, austere, and spiritual. A people who could embrace death by the Ganges-side were not long to be distracted by the glamour of mere mechanical power.

Buddha had preached renunciation, and in two

centuries India had become an Empire. Let her but once more feel the great pulse through all he veins, and no power on earth would stand before her newly-awakened energy. Only, it would be in her *own* life that she would find life, not in imitation; from her own proper past and environment that she would draw inspiration, not from the foreigner.

For he who thinks himself weak *is* weak; he who believes that he is strong is already invincible. And so, for his nation, as for every individual, Vivekananda had but one word—one constantly reiterated message:

Awake! Arise! Struggle on! And stop not till the goal is reached! ❐

SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF HIS GENIUS

WHAT A WONDERFUL personality was that of Swami Vivekananda! What an all-round character of the highest type was his! As the many torrents of rivers flowing from various sources mingle their waters in the ocean, so in him were fused into a perfected whole all the life-giving thoughts and ideas ever conceived by man. In him were harmonised and unified in a charming manner the truths of all the opposing doctrines such as, the fierce transcendentalism of the Advaita and the love and devotion to a personal God, the Gospel of meditation and service to humanity, the love of the Universal and the love of the Particular, God and the world, unity in variety, religion and science—and all these were made the moods of a single being! Hence it was that he could play with any mood with perfect abandonment, retaining at the same time an awakened self-consciousness. Truly has it been said, 'Vivekananda was a soul of immortal germs which may be said to contain within itself what endless ages are to unfold.'

The purity and the sublimity of his character, the brilliancy of his intellect, the subtle workings of his soul, the greatness of his heart which recognised a brother in every individual, and the universality of his teachings which embraced all religions—all these made up a unique personality and contributed to make an indelible impression on the minds of his brethren of the West, as it did on those of his countrymen, and transformed the world by his tender but mighty touch.

His brilliant intellectuality and his vast learning and erudition, which showed forth in his eloquence, and above all, his personal magnetism acted like a charm upon people wherever he went. There was a certain irresistible force about his personality which carried everything before it. He was a great debater and argumentator. He was never known to have been vanquished in argumentation by anyone, save by his Master on a few occasions. As a strong man holding strong views on subjects and expressing himself in strong language, he could not help making enemies, but even they could not withstand him face to face. He was conscious of his power over men, and once in a heated moment of discussion, he told some of his *gurubhais*, 'Do you know, I can make you see black as white and white as black, make you taste a bitter thing as sweet, and sweet as bitter!' He was conscious of an Invincible Power working in and through him. As regards the rival sects and his combatants he felt the sense of the words of Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the *Gita*—'Verily by Myself

have they (thy enemies) been already slain; be thou merely an apparent cause, O Savyasachin (Arjuna).' He had the purified intellect and moreover he knew that he was an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Said the late Hon'ble Mr. Anandacharlu in a lecture at Bangalore:

> The swami's face had a fascination for everybody. There was about him some magnetism which moved the dullest stupid. An American critic has said, 'He had oratory by divine right.' Nay, there was more behind it all, there was a fervour of divine fire. That accounts for his having conquered all obstacles before him....All that was due to the divine power that burnt in him. Every word that he uttered was powerful, and his face looked divinely beautiful when he spoke. This son of India, like another Asiatic son of God of Christendom, arose in the East but did not set in the West as the latter did. He stood there on his native soil to spread light and illumine everybody and prevent darkness....He was one of the greatest leaders sent by God Almighty to dispel darkness and illumine Indian wisdom....

The Swami's studies were vast and all-comprehensive. But the beauty of his studies was that they were often not in the attitude of a learner, but in the spirit of a thoughtful and open-minded critic, agreeing or disagreeing with the author—be they Rishis, Acharayas or savants—according as they proved or disproved his

lines of thought and researches, or his realisations. History was one of his favourite subjects for study, and he would philosophise upon the significance and far-reaching outcomes of the epoch-making incidents, and upon the subtle causes that lead to the rise and fall of nations and civilisations, invariably imprinting his own originality of thought upon them. 'His mighty genius,' says a writer, 'revealed in studying the brilliant epochs in the history of the world. He would advise young Indians to read the story of nations, specially those periods in which great events, titanic struggles and mighty revolutions, mental and moral, changed the face of society and brought out the divine spark within whole peoples.' The East stirred in him the very depths of his soul, for it was to him not only the mother of religions, but of civilisation as well, of which there is to be found elsewhere only a shadow.

The Swami was a man of wonderful versatility. He could speak on any subject with authority, invariably throwing new light on it—be it religion, philosophy, history, science, art, literature, philology, sociology, and what not! He could clothe any dry subject with such a beauty and grace that it became a most interesting study and roused the keenest desire for further knowledge. One wondered as to how he could have garnered all this diverse knowledge, how he could have exercised his thinking and analytic mind in such a masterly way over them, especially those which were outside his sphere of study as a Sannyasin, and how without a moment's

hesitation he could give them out, enriched with his own original comments and conclusions! No wonder that a famous Harvard University professor had spoken of him, 'Compared to his learning all our University professors are as mere children. He is more learned than all of us put together!'

The Swami was a born orator. His power of oratory showed itself even in his youth in the circle of his friends, when in the course of a talk he would be so overcome with feeling and ideas that he would rise to the highest flights of eloquence, keeping the group around him spellbound. Though with perhaps one exception at Hyderabad he had never before spoken from a public platform, the address he delivered at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago was described by the Press of America as 'the most brilliant speech of the Parliament,' and even the most bigoted had to admit that, 'This man with his handsome face and magnetic presence and wonderful oratory is the most prominent figure in the Parliament.' That one speech made him famous all over the world. The subsequent lectures that he gave in America were some of the masterpieces of the world's religious literature. Not only Chicago, but every city that he visited, was galvanised by his thrilling speeches, and the great apostle of Hinduism commanded vast audiences. *The New York Critic* remarked, 'He is an orator by divine right.' After he had passed through Detroit a local paper wrote, 'This great Hindu cyclone has shaken the world.' Those who had heard him once,'

wrote Dr. H.W. Thomas of Chicago, 'were so impressed by the magnetism of his fine presence, the charm and power of his eloquence, his perfect command of the English language, and the deep interest in what he had to say, that they desired all the more to hear him again.'

It is superfluous to quote authorities to prove that he was an orator of the highest type. His passionate representation of whatever he spoke upon, his vigour of language and felicity of utterance, his gift of expression, his powerful and melodious voice, and above all, the never-failing charm of his personality, fascinated all who were privileged to hear him. He was gifted with 'a voice that had a richness and musical quality rarely found among men.' His speeches were all extempore. He never prepared them, and he invariably spoke without notes. The stream of his eloquence flowed from his heart and the spontaneity of his utterances lent an added force and appealed direct to the heart.

When he spoke he looked like one inspired. The Swami himself had said that whenever he stood on a public platform, a power came upon him which made him feel that with one word he could carry the whole of his audience across the ocean of Maya. And instances there were when at the climax of his power as a religious preacher it seemed as though all details and personalities were lost and merged in the spiritual radiance which emanated so powerfully from him, and only the Spirit remained, pervading all, uniting speaker, hearer and spoken word.

The Swami was a man of charming wit and humour, and his lectures as well as talks would be interspersed with bon-mots and light-hearted remarks even in the midst of serious philosophical dissertations. His ready wit and presence of mind saved him from many an awkward situation and relieved the intellectual tension of his audience with whom he sometimes joined in a hearty laugh. His wit though incisive at times was for the most part playful and generally pointed to a moral or to the exposition of a plague-spot in society, but was never sardonic. 'Although his knife cuts deep sometimes,' said *The New York Critic*, 'it is like that of the surgeon, in that it cuts only to be kind.'

As a writer, Swami Vivekananda was master of a clear, simple and forcible style. His erudition in ancient and modern literature was never equalled by the best Western savants. His writings display the breadth and catholicity of his views, poetic imagination, an intense patriotism, a well-balanced judgement and sympathetic attitude with regard to the beliefs and customs of peoples, remarkable observations on the gradual evolution of society, civilisation and religion and their interrelative scopes and purposes, and include a wide range of general knowledge, which make their reading a delightful and illuminative study.

'There is in the writings of the Swami,' says a writer, 'a spirit of catholicism and charity which is in refreshing contrast to the rigid formalism and illiberal literalism of the Pandit expounders of the Hindu

scriptures.' 'His was a poet's soul,' says another, 'to which the world had messages unknown to ordinary man, and which revealed them in words of imperishable loveliness. He wrote very few poems. But his great poetic gift finds its best expression in the wonderfully imaginative passages which illumine his speeches and writings.'

His language though easy and simple was vigorous, though artistic and imaginative was profoundly thoughtful, though concise and epigrammatical was clear and suggestive, though sharp and pliable like the edge of a fine steel which cuts through stone, touched the heart with the delicacy of a flower. His language was never laboured and twisted, which is mistakenly done to create an effect or to show off one's learning. It was the faithful mirror of his thoughts and feelings, and hence it was so telling and vibrant with life.

As a thinker, perhaps, the Swami will continue to exercise the most abiding influence on, and be a constant source of inspiration to, the minds of those sincere seekers of Truth who had not the good fortune of coming into direct contact with him, and also of future generations. Such will find in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* a New Gospel, a Message of Hope and Salvation, a living commentary of the Vedic religion in its universal and particular aspects. They are a storehouse of the richest and priceless gems. Therein are embodied his great realisations, his insight and introspection, his bold speculations and analyses, his

masterly grasp of the conclusions of thought in other countries, his cogent reasoning and striking deductions, his reconciliations and harmonising of warring religious sects and doctrines, his solutions of the intricate problems of life, and above all, his ideals and the practical methods of their attainment. His lectures and discourses deserve to be ranked among the noblest productions of spiritual eloquence. They surpass anything yet known in their simplicity and vigour of thought for the illustration of spiritual truths. The mastermind who conceived all these, is entitled to be regarded as the greatest thinker of his age. And how much greater was the man himself than all his works! In studying them one feels, as says Sister Nivedita, that 'Behind all his books, all his utterances, stands the man himself, different from each, and only partially expressed through the whole mass.'

It was the unique combination of all these various aspects of his genius that gave such currency to his teachings and made him the powerful teacher and leader of nations in religion. ❐

A COMPLEX CHARACTER

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S was a life of striking contrasts and moods of infinite variety, which confounded even his friends at times as has been stated before. he was at once the greatest Karma-Yogin and Raja-Yogin; and in him both a Jnani and a Bhakta were combined. His intellectual sympathies were generous and broad, and yet so intense that he could represent almost fanatically any given idea to the exclusion of all others. As an instance, on his last visit to New York, in a lecture he glorified the ideals in marriage in such an exalted way as to induce a certain monastically-minded admirer among his audience to ask him later on privately, 'But, Swamiji you do not really exalt marriage above monasticism, do you?' His reply was at once luminous and brief, 'Do you not know I *am* a monk!' Though a poet and philosopher, he could set himself joyfully to such tasks as sweeping the monastery at Belur and hoeing the fields. Though one of the keenest students of the manners, customs and faith of his own people, the Swami often said, 'In India I have looked for nothing save the cave in which to meditate.' Though perfectly

unattached to the world, he wore his life out working for the good of the world. Though an unparalleled Advaitin, so eloquently did he lecture in America on Sri Krishna that, as one among many other effects, a lady of vast wealth retired, with the *Bhagavad Gita*, to a distant island, there to meditate. This incident also gives a rebuke to such of the Swami's critics, who mentioned that in the West, he did not preach popular Hinduism. A man of innumerable spiritual experiences, he was nevertheless a most careful analyser of mystic states. Most others regard mystical experiences objectively, but the Swami dared even classify his own as subjective. This, to his mind, strengthened, and never weakened, their accuracy. Though an ardent Hindu, so beautiful and deeply religious was his attitude to Jesus that, when Christian missionaries once visited the Baranagore Math they said, 'These people are already Christians!' Indeed, they saw the Swami had a picture of the crucified Christ in a prominent place in the building, with sandal-wood paste at the feet, as the mark of worship. He was far from being political, and yet the Indian princes with whom he came into intimate touch during his sojourn with them in his *parivrajaka* days sought his sound advice on statecraft, and the greatest Indian statesmen revered him and his name and were zealous students of his ideas.

A man of the supersensuous mould and teacher as he was, with huge interests the world over, the Swami was nevertheless interested in the minutest details of

work concerning his centres. For example, when he heard that one of his *gurubhais* had planned a corrugated iron roof over the stairs that lead to the *Thakurghar* (shrine) in the monastery at Belur, he wrote a strong protest against such a desecration, both of religion and art. His manliness was perfect and a veritable shining forth of strength, and yet he was at heart as soft as a woman. Though as a thinker and a philosopher he was a stern rationalist, emotions and feelings touched the inmost chords of his heart. Though intellectuality was the predominant trait of his character, in his dealings with men he always let the heart guide him rather than the head, let instinct determine his decision rather than reason, and he seldom had occasion for regret. Though perfectly unattached to the world, so intensely did he feel for humanity that he spurned the bliss of Brahman and joyously worked his whole life out for its sake. Though he had the greatest love for his disciples he would send them out to nurse plague-stricken patients, knowing full well the risk of fatal contagion, as nothing would please him more, he said, than seeing his own people die in the service of their suffering fellow-beings. And again, exceedingly unselfish as he himself was, he become most selfish when to be so was for the benefit of those whom he had taken into his charge.

Always busy with plans and works that would have crushed any other less gifted individual, the Swami never seemed overburdened with work. Even in the midst of his strenuous labour he took things as they

came, kept up an unclouded serenity, and enjoyed the changing panorama of life as the witness. Even when engrossed in some serious occupation, as reading or writing, he would be found always accessible for conversation—which would sometimes last for hours—without breaking the thread of his thoughts. He disliked routine work, or making engagements, or having appointed hours for interviews for receiving visitors, and the like, though in the West he had to conform to them. True, he formulated a routine with strict rules and regulations for the guidance of his disciples as a disciplinary course, but he would himself break it and call them from their work to his side to hold a religious talk or question-class, or it might be to give them a lesson in music and singing, or even simply for the sake of company. Though an upholder of organisation, he did not believe in making machines of men, and thereby killing out their individuality. He would let them occasionally feel the air of freedom, and demonstrate even their power of breaking or changing laws.

Notwithstanding that the Swami was against making a fetish of book-learning, he had an insatiable desire for knowledge and was a diligent reader of books of all descriptions. Once while the Swami was the wandering monk, Swami Trigunatita who chanced to meet him, found him intently studying French Primers, which he kept with him during his travels at the time. Even in the days of his discipleship he had brought his college books to Dakshineshwar and to Cossipore. Though he was

most liberal-minded, even to the extent that some criticised him as unorthodox, he was at heart orthodox, in its true sense, and also encouraged his monastic disciples to be so. He had a sincere respect for orthodox Pandits and Sadhus if they were not bigoted, and had many admirers from among them. Such an intellectually distinguished and supremely orthodox person as the late Swami Vishuddhananda of Benaras, who would not as much as look at a Sudra, regarded him with great respect. And the well-known Swami Bhaskarananda of Benaras expressed his earnest desire to see Swamiji, and requested two of his fellow-monks to write to him about it. But Swamiji's health at the time not permitting him to meet the great ascetic, he wrote a charming letter to him in Sanskrit, full of humility, expressing his inability. Though he was an artist, a great aesthete, and, in everything he did, a veritable Grand Seignior he would sometimes shock his hosts ansd friends with his supreme indifference to social conventionalities. Though he did not countenance asceticism, so great was his ascetic spirit that once or twice he even had recourse to violence to demonstrate his mastery over the body, and crush out any exaggerated physical sensation. And in this respect, though he taught severe control of the senses by any and by every means, he emphasised especially resignation to the Lord.

What a complex man he was! Sister Nivedita has well expressed it when she said, 'Burning renunciation was the chief of all the inspirations that spoke to the

world through him. Yet the same burning thirst of intense renunciation did not exclude the ideal householder in him, full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganisation and reordering of life.' And how childlike and yet how courageous was his resignation to the Lord! He once mentioned that in the West he had led a purely *Prapatti* life, that is, a life of utter dependence upon God. Success he knew must come to him, but in each instance, he said, it was necessary to first pass for a time through a valley of death. And yet this same man, whose spiritual self-consciousness soared into the Very Highest, would often manifest as equally surprising a humility, as when on one occasion he hastened to wash the mud-soiled feet of a guest in the presence of his disciples.

It is impossible to give an adequate picture of his sublime character, so potent, so complex, so all-comprehending, with infinite facets, each facet representing a variation of the light within. His was a harmonious development of all sides of nature, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, to perfection, which is seldom found in man, and which drew men to his feet in love and adoration. ❐

IN THE GENERAL PERSPECTIVE

WHEN ONE considers the Swami's character in the general perspective, what strikes one most is his gift of vision, his power of perceiving the heart of things and making others perceive it, his genius in unravelling the harmony in the soul of things, and his ability to make others realise the scheme of the universe. And these are the qualities which, above all, entitle him to rank as one of the greatest prophets of the world.

Much has already been written about the Swami's meditative moods into which he would drift irrespective of time or place. And here is another instance which reveals this quality. During his tour on the Continent, going out for a walk once with an English disciple, he entered a secondhand bookseller's shop and inquired if a copy of *Sakuntala* could be had. Having procured it he became so absorbed in reading it then and there, that the disciple could with difficulty and after repeated reminders of his engagements rouse him from his study. He then bought the book and presented it to her, and later wrote in it, 'To My Mother in the Himalayas.'

'I went into Samadhi at the age of seven,' once said

the Swami to his Brahmana boy-friends. 'You are Brahmanas and yet you cannot meditate for five minutes, while I can sit for hours together. You do not therefore deserve the holy thread you wear.'

In the Swami was combined the meditative nature of a Hindu saint with the dash and energy of a Westerner. He was a militant yogi, a Brahmana and a Kshatriya, a monk and a warrior, in one. He was the personification of that which is the present need in India—the Kshatriya force—that force which distinguished the Kshatriyas of those days when they were the revealers of divine wisdom, the producers of the Upanishads and the preachers of religion to all castes, as well as the upholders of their faith, honour and national integrity, patrons of science, arts and learning, and defenders of the weak. 'Can you become,' asks the Swami of his countrymen, 'Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy and at the same time be a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it.* You are *born to do it.*' In him, indeed, met the two mighty streams of the idealistic East and the scientific and practical West. He was a dreamer of Infinite Dreams, but a breaker of Dreams as well. From the deeps of his meditation comes thundering the voice:

Awake, arise, and dream no more!
...Be bold, and face

The Truth! Be one with it! Lest visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.

Like all great masters of the past he absorbed all that was vital and enduring in his own times. His call was sounded in the name of all that was great and good, all that was manly, life-giving, and God-making. His was an appeal to all sects, all nations, in fact, to the whole world. He was the self-expression of all that was spiritual and idealistic, all that made for unity and illumination. Science, art, philosophy, religion, in short, all the revelations in the domain of thought and human experience, were like an open book to him. The voices of nature spoke out their secrets to him. His life was a continuous initiation into the mysteries of Being, his soul finding its recreation in them in all its varied moods. Verily, all the great ideals of humanity he made his own.

The rock on which the Swami built up the structure of his message was Truth, Love and Toleration, which are the three principal essentials of religion, three inseparable entities, one presupposing the other two. He was a teacher of Synthesis, not only spiritual but national as well, viewing it from a universal standpoint. His interests were not only spiritual but material also, not only Indian but international as well. His was a soul of Synthesis. His mission was to show that unity in variety is the plan of the universe, that man becomes divine when he sees the One manifesting Itself in all these

manifold forms. With the fire of a prophet in his eyes he proclaimed before the greatest of the religious assemblies of the modern world his message of the harmony of religions—that there is one Religion of which all the different forms of religions are but different readings of the same Truth from different standpoints by human minds, that man travels from truth to truth, from lesser truth to higher and the highest Truth and never from error to truth. He believed not in universal toleration only, but also in the acceptance of all religions as true. If one religion is true, he said, then all other religions must be true in their own planes of realisation. Therefore, let there be 'Harmony and peace and good-will, and no more bigotry, fanaticism, fights and dissensions!' And at the sound of his magic voice, the world awoke to a life of new Synthesis, and a new vision of life. It may be said that from the day he spoke from the platform of the Parliament of Religions, was inaugurated a new era in the history of religions. True, other voices before him had declared the same truth, but they had done it feebly, hesitatingly, with certain reservations, looking through the smoked glass of reason and intellectual analysis, and not through the eye of a seer who had come face to face with Truth. It was reserved for Swami Vivekananda to deliver to the world with an apostolic authority that message of harmony of all religions, the realisation and the embodiment of which in its perfection he had seen in his divine Master's life and had made them his very own. It has been well said that in him we have the synthesis of

the higher Hinduism.

Like all great Masters of the past the Swami ushered in a new cycle of thought, a new ideal of life wherever he worked, and inspirited the ideals and aspirations of the times with a new strength and vigour for the fulfilment of the highest aims and purposes of human existence.

All who came within the shadow of the Swami's personality borrowed from his greatness. He emanated a joyous robustness, a courage, love and purity, nothing short of contagious, for he was 'a roaring fire of spirituality.'

Napoleon had once said that he attributed his superiority over men to the fact that his brain possessed unusual power for performing arduous and long-continued work at any time his will should dictate. The same may be said of the Swami. He knew no limits in intellectual work. His head never tired. His mind, one might say, worked *extempore* and at the highest pitch on all occasions. It was this velocity and spontaneity of mental energy, embodied, with other spiritual elements, in his Parliamentary address, that had moved the Parliament of Religions' Committees to vote his speech as the very best of all those rendered before that most distinguished of all religious gatherings in the history of the world. His very personality bespoke this mental energy, commingled as it was with the highest spiritual insight. On merely seeing him, Professor Max Muller, already a sincere and great admirer of Sri

Ramakrishna, had said, both in compliment to him and to his Guru, 'It is not every day that one meets with a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna!'

What caused great admiration among those who were fit to judge, was that the Swami never indulged in theory-making. His was an eminent practicality of mind. Whenever he reasoned, he thought of the practical side as well, as was evidenced in his actual and intended labours and in his decisions—though because of his early demise not carried out—of founding a religious university for Sannyasins in Madras, an industrial colony in the Central Provinces as a scientific experiment, and also a women's college in Calcutta and in Poona, where Indian women might be trained as future abbesses and teachers and, indeed, even as the *Bashi Bazouks* of religion. The practicality of his mind was manifest also in the soundness of his logic and in his capacity for synthesis, evident, among various other ways, in his ideas concerning divergent social and religious problems, when he showed that in their respective spheres they were not antagonistic but complementary to each other. Then, also, his mind possessed a highly scientific turn, as is instanced in his lectures and in such of his sayings as, 'The Avatara is indeed in the world of spiritual things the equivalents of the Hydrostatic Paradox in the world of physics!' And he was logically scientific when he made such statements as, 'Buddha saw through a negative what Sankara saw through a positive perspective.' Though intellectually

powerful the Swami was never destructive. He had indeed stormed at and uprooted *Churchianity* wheresoever he found it, but in its stead he ever offered the constructive ideals of practicalising the higher spiritual consciousness.

His heart was as large as his intellect was high. His heart throbbed for human suffering wherever he met it. He could have returned from the West laden with money if he had not given away freely of what he received from his lectures and other sources, to anyone, whether American, or English or Indian, who had applied to him in distress. It was the greatest difficulty with him to keep money, and well nigh impossible when he found he could help someone with it. The needs and sufferings of every individual he felt in himself. His deepest thoughts were to find out practical ways and means for raising humanity. It was this profound love and sympathy for mankind in general, and an overmastering desire to make the whole world participate in the life of the Spirit and its Infinite Bliss that induced him to cross the ocean carrying his God-appointed message to millions far away, and to devote the best of his powers and energies till the very last day of his life to the work of the regeneration of mankind.

His grace was *ahetuki*, without reason. It could not bear making discrimination of *adhikari*, or the deservedness of the recipient. It made no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner. It uplifted all and inspired courage and hope in every heart. A beneficent force emanated from him

filling everyone with joy. His love was spontaneous and flowed freely. It stopped at nothing, even the unreasonable. In his second voyage to the West, when he reached Madras he asked one of his Madras boys to accompany him as far as Colombo. The steamer was in quarantine and no one was allowed to land. An European friend of the Swami got the permission of the captain to take him into the city. But the Swami refused to go unless his Madras boy was also taken with him. 'Do you wish to evade the plague regulations, Swamiji?' asked the English disciple. 'Yes,' was his calm reply. Later on, however, at the earnest entreaties of his old friends at Colombo, he went into the city and had a most enthusiastic reception.

He was grateful to a fault for the least kindness done to him or to his *gurubhais*, and would repay it a hundredfold when occasion arose. He was too lenient with such benefactors, especially those of the old days of poverty and unkownness, and would bear with them patiently if they took any undue liberty with him. And to his impatient *gurubhais* he would point out in persuasive words, how invaluable the little services of these friends had been to them at a time when they needed them most, and when they were 'no-bodies' in the eyes of the world.

Conscious of the strength of the Truth he embodied he was fearless of criticism. He had a mighty contempt for the seeking of name, fame or wealth, or the favour and approbation of the public mind. He did not care to have an army of followers and admirers, or

to please the world by telling sweet and pleasant things, like a religious hypocrite. He would speak out the truth, however unpalatable, whatever it might cost him. He would consider his life-work amply rewarded, he used to say, if he could find in all his life only half-a-dozen men and women to follow him—real men, and women, pure and sincere, bold and unselfish to the core of their heart, with indomitable faith in themselves, in their guru and in God—for such have always been the world-movers and the makers of the history of the world.

Like his great Master, the Swami did not care for the rich and the learned and for persons of power and position, if they did not utilise their scope and opportunities for the good of society or the nation to the best advantage, or if they did not meet him in the spirit of an inquirer. Many were the occasions when his hosts and friends were put in an uncomfortable position for their having introduced him to such persons, expecting to have an interesting meeting or a profitable result. But beyond the exchange of formal courtesies they could not get one word out of him. Sometimes he would not want even to see them when they came on a visit to him, or he would ignore their presence and prefer to talk with the lowly and the humble. Then again, in another mood he would talk with the aristocrat or the millionaire, as with the lowly and the oppressed, with equal ease and freedom, and with a directness of appeal to that Divine-within-man, in which he had the perfect confidence. He never doubted the efficacy of his influence on others.

A hater of money though he was, he once prayed to Sri Ramakrishna for it, or rather demanded it with a threatening test. During his travels in Upper India, after his return from the West, when he had in mind many schemes for the benefit of his country, he found himself hampered in their fruition owing to the want of money. Foiled in his attempt he became impatient with himself and his divine Master and prayed to him saying, 'Lord! If money be not forthcoming, I will give up the Path and abandon myself to a life of debauchery!' And money did really begin to flow from unexpected quarters! But it is to be remembered that this was the only occasion, within the knowledge of his disciples, when he made such an extreme test, and that was solely from a burning desire for the furtherance of the welfare of his country. Oh, how passionately he loved his Motherland! Did he not say, 'If I do anything for others, may it react on India!'

Unlike most of his countrymen he was singularly devoid of jealousy, so much so that he would go even to the extent of helping a competitor in the same field and rejoice at his success. Such was the magnanimity of his heart that though he went to preach Hinduism before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, he wrote at the request of another Oriental delegate his thesis, and 'made out a better case for his friend's creed than its own advocate could have done!' He would do anything to help a countryman in a foreign land, and stand by him, even if the man proved to be a rogue.

In America there were some who criticised the Swami for not paying more attention to his health. They said, 'You are ill! You are a great Yogi. Why not cure yourself?' His reply was like that of his Master, 'Why put all one's mind on this cage of bones!' The Swami had no fear either of death or disease. The only thing he feared was, that his work might suffer thereby. 'The Work is always my weak point,' he said a few days before his passing. 'When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!' Then, again, in a mood of deeper insight he would exclaim: 'To work for the good of humanity has been my motto all through life. Even though I die I shall still work for the salvation of India, for the salvation of mankind!'

Though he was jovial and fun-loving like a child, none failed to notice that behind the merry and sociable exterior he hid a mighty fire. And few would be prepared for those sudden outbursts of the highest philosophical truths that poured forth from his lips between the commonplace acts and talks of daily life, sweeping his listeners off their feet. He could set himself to any task, or engage himself in secular occupation with as much habit of concentration as he would apply to a religious act. But nothing was commonplace about him.

His frankness was as pronounced a phenomenon of his personality as his sweetness. Once he told some American friends with whom he was staying in their country-house for the recuperation of his health, 'What! See the same faces day in and day out for six

weeks!' His face wore a bored look. The old Sadhu's spirit of restlessness was upon him; he was impatient to go out into the whirl of work again, from his enforced rest. But to his friends these words caused amusement only, as they knew his sweet, childlike wilfulness and loved him for it. To his *gurubhais* he was equally frank. He could be himself with them. And all loved him, though to all he had sometime or other shown the strenuous side of his nature, even as he had actually chastised Swami Akhandananda who, not heeding his command at Alwar that he be left alone, had followed him to the town of Mandavi, where he had become the guest of a rich and pious lady, in his *parivrajaka* days. And, again, when Swami Trigunatita, disobeying his injunction not to follow him, traced him to Porbandar and got himself admitted to his presence, he bid him quit the place at once, threatening to drive him out as a madman! Though he had unbounded love for his *gurubhais*, he steeled his heart against it so as to free himself from 'the last and the greatest of his bondage in the Sannyasin life,' as he termed it. Moreover, a mighty struggle was raging within him, as he was then trying to find out finally for himself the nature of the Mission entrusted to him by his Master, and was equipping himself for it. His *gurubhais*, however, unshakable in their faith towards their leader, never misunderstood him, and though pained at heart, always submitted to his bidding, even if it seemed unreasonable and unjustified.

Serious at times, to the point of being almost

unapproachable, the Swami could be as jolly as a sprightly boy; and he enjoyed nothing so much as talking freely to simple-minded folks and listening to their tales. In the Punjab, after his first return from the West, he chanced to be travelling in a bullock-cart and entered into conversation with the driver. He soon learned that the latter in common with many ignorant people in the upper Provinces, suspected the Bengalis as a race of magicians. The man, thinking the Swami to be an up-country Sadhu, took him into his confidence and said, 'Baba, never go to Bengal! They are a dangerous lot there! They are magicians. They will bewitch you!' The Swami chuckled with merriment over this remark, and repeated it on several occasions to his friends and *gurubhais.*

Much has already been written of the Swami's readiness at repartee. But there is one among innumerable instances on the point that may be recorded here. While in America he was once, without being aware of the character of his host, the guest of a fanatical temperance agitator, who abhorred smoking as much as drinking. His dinner finished, the Swami drew from his pocket his pipe, filled it with some excellent tobacco and commenced enjoying it. Entering the room, his host broke out in a fury shouting, 'Well, Sir, if God intended that man should smoke, don't you think He would have furnished him with a chimney!' The Swami replied gently, 'He has done better! He has given man the brains to invent a pipe!'

The Swami, however, could occasionally be even obstinate. It was not a reprehensible obstinacy, but rather a marked decidedness to have his own way in things, and to follow his own convictions unless shown a better reason, to which he was always open. In his youth there were instances of this, even in his dealings with Sri Ramakrishna. So greatly did he feel for the sufferings of those who were laid under a social ban, that he would not mind incurring the displeasure of any one, even of his own Master, by showing his practical sympathy with their lot. As for instance, once when Sir Ramakrishna had for certain reasons, forbidden all his boy-disciples, except Naren, to eat food cooked by one of his women disciples, and the Swami heard of the anguish caused to her by such an interdict, he went to her house and brought comfort to her by partaking of his meal cooked by her. In his dealings with men he was as free as a child, as loving and sympathetic as a brother, as forgiving and ever ready to overlook faults and weaknesses as a mother, and again, he was like a prudent father admonishing his children for their failings and lapses, and like a schoolmaster severely rating people for their perverted ways, and so forth. He was indeed a stern preacher of Eternal Truths, a born leader of men, and withal, a kind friend, a loving companion, and a willing servant, all in one.

In him all the faculties of head, heart and mind were balanced in a harmony of power and perfection. Religiously, he emphasised the spirit, rather than the

ecclesiastical form; and, nationally, he preached Man-Making, leaving the details of nationality and nation-making to take care of themselves. In a still larger perspective the Swami's thought embraced the whole of Humanity. Humanity to him was God embodied; service to Humanity was therefore worship; and in the Grand Revelation, all the activities of man, whatever their character, be it the lowest or the highest, the most artistic or the most commonplace, were as so many rays through which the Spirit manifested Itself. Humanity was an all-comprehensive Unit, whose Spirit and Self was God. To be truly Human was, to the Swami's mind, to be, indeed, divine.

None could measure the charm of his personality. It was inexplicable, for the light in his eyes, the music of his voice, the beauty and the majesty of his physical appearance, combined with numerous godly virtues of mind and heart and soul, rendered it difficult to touch upon any one attractive element as supreme—and all made him irresistible as a Man, as a thinker and as a Teacher.

Faults and weaknesses he had, no doubt; and what saint had them not? In his case those were, in the eyes of his disciples and followers, as ornaments, like the ashes, the snakes and the blue poison on the body of Shiva Mahadeva. Moments of stress, passion and desire he had surely; and what saint had them not? They were of the body and they died with the body. They were, in the words of his Master, 'put upon him by my Divine

Mother like a thin film of Maya (which can be rent at any moment), so that his body may last and he may be able to work,' and fulfil his mission of disseminating life and light to struggling humanity. Otherwise, 'he would fly unto the very Highest and be merged in the Absolute.'

Of him one has truly said: 'Such a wonderful combination of beauty of form, talents, learning, oratory, interpretation of the Shastras, working for the good of others, Sadhana, control over the passions, in one person, was a unique phenomenon! Only those who lived with him could understand. He was verily Sankara in wisdom, Buddha in large-heartedness, Narada in Bhakti, Sukadeva in the knowledge of Brahman, Brihaspati in argumentation, the God of love Himself in beauty of form, Arjuna in courage, and Vyasa in the knowledge of the Shastras!' Of him it can be truly said by his disciples what was told by him with regard to his Master: 'His character was so great that if I or any other of his disciples spent hundreds of lives, we could not do justice to a millionth part of what he really was.'

What a luminous personality was his! What a divine character shed its brilliance over the world for a time before our very eyes! How tragic a calamity, therefore, from a mortal viewpoint, his passing from the world at a comparatively early age! But it was only the culmination of Life—victory unto the very end!

Wah Guruki Fateh!

HARI OM TAT SAT!

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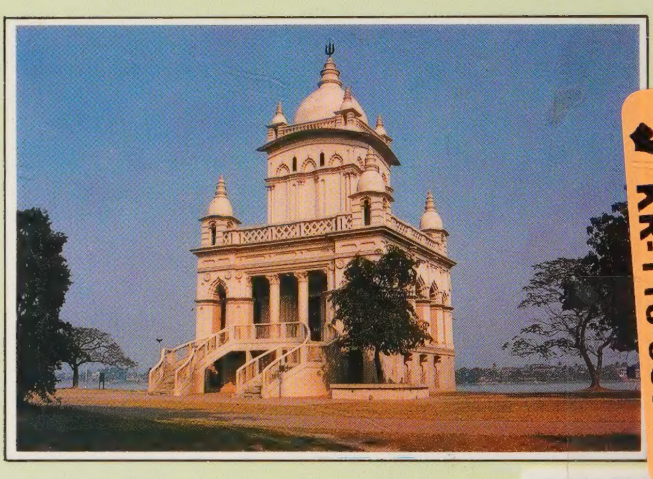

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