



**WORLD THINKERS  
ON  
RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA**



EDITED  
BY

**Swami Lokeswarananda**





# WORLD THINKERS ON RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA

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SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA



THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION  
INSTITUTE OF CULTURE  
GOL PARK  
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## FOREWORD

Ramakrishna and Vivekananda represent one single truth, one its spirit and the other its form. What is the truth they represent ? That man can develop till he feels he is one with God. To develop to that point is, according to them, the goal of life. Every effort that man makes should be directed to that end.

Between themselves, they have done much to regenerate India. They are not just religious and social leaders, they have given back to India her lost identity by rousing her national pride. Indian renaissance can truly be said to have begun with them.

Yet Ramakrishna and Vivekananda are above all barriers of race and creed. Their concern is for mankind as a whole, for to them it is one despite its many superficial divisions. If today their influence is spreading, it is because they address themselves to entire humanity. No wonder they enjoy universal love and respect, a fact to which the following pages bear ample testimony. This small book, with tributes to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda from savants across the world, has proved immensely popular in that it has needed a second edition within a short while.

CALCUTTA  
14 NOVEMBER 1983

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA  
EDITOR

# THE HISTORY

The history of the world is a long and varied one, and it is difficult to give a brief summary of it. The world has been inhabited by many different races and peoples, and each has contributed to the development of civilization. The history of the world is a story of progress and achievement, and it is a story that we should all be proud to share.

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THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD  
BY J. H. M. J. VAN DER BEEK

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA

F. MAX MUELLER

Many times the question has been asked of late, what is a *Mahatman*, and what is a *Sannyasin* ? Mahatman is a very common Sanskrit word, and means literally great-souled, high-minded, noble. It is used as a complimentary term, much as we use noble or reverend ; but it has been accepted also as technical term, applied to what are called Sannyasins in the ancient language of India. Sannyasin means one who has surrendered and laid down everything—that is, who has abandoned all worldly affections. 'He is to be known as a Sannyasin,' we read in the Bhagavad-gita, v.3, 'who does not hate and does not desire.' As the life of a Brahman was, according to the laws of Manu, divided into four periods, or asramas—that of a pupil, of a householder, of a hermit, and of an independent sage—those who had reached the fourth stage were called Sannyasins, a word difficult to render in English, but perfectly familiar to everybody in India.... It has been denied that there are any Sannyasins left in India, and in one sense this is true. If the scheme of life traced out by Manu was ever a reality, it has long since ceased to be so....[But] we meet at all times, both before and after the Buddhist reform, with men who had shaken off all social fetters ; who had retired from their families and from society at large, lived by themselves in forests or in caves, abstained from all enjoyments restricted their food and drink to the very utmost, and often underwent tortures which makes us creep when we read of them or see them represented in pictures and photographs. Such men were naturally surrounded by a halo of holiness, and they received the little they wanted from those who visited them or who profited by their teachings. Some of these saints—but not many—were scholars, and became teachers of their ancient lore. Some of course, were impostors and hypocrites, and have brought disgrace on the whole profession. But that there were Sannyasins, and that there are even now, who have really shaken off the fetters of passion, who have disciplined their body and subdued their mind to a perfectly marvellous extent, cannot be doubted.... It is generally supposed that these same persons, these so-called Sannyasins, are also very learned and wise persons....[But] in the case of Sannyasins of the present generation we look in vain either for great learning, even learning by heart, or for original thought and profound wisdom.... There was, for instance, Dayananda Sarasvati, who tried to introduce some reforms among the Brahmans. He was a scholar in a certain sense. He actually published a commentary in Sanskrit on the Rig Veda, and was able to speak Sanskrit with great fluency. It is supposed that he was poisoned because his reforms threatened to become dangerous to the Brahmans. But in all his



writings there is nothing that could be quoted as original beyond his somewhat strange interpretations of words and whole passages of the Veda.

The late *Ramakrishna Paramahansa* was a far more interesting specimen of a *Sannyasin*. He seems to have been, not only a high-souled man, a real *Mahatman*, but a man of original thought. Indian literature is full of wise saws and sayings, and by merely quoting them a man may easily gain a reputation for profound wisdom. But it was not so with *Ramakrishna*. He seems to have deeply meditated on the world from his solitary retreat. Whether he was a man of extensive reading is difficult to say, but he was certainly thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Vedanta philosophy. His utterances which have been published breathe the spirit of that philosophy ; in fact are only intelligible as products of a Vedantic soil. And yet it is very curious to see how European thought, nay a certain European style, quite different from that of native thinkers, has found an entrance into the oracular sayings of this Indian saint....

In the extracts from Ramakrishna's teachings, some of which have been published by his pupils in their journal, the *Brahmavadin*, these ancient metaphors have for the first time been blended with European thought ; and from all that we learn of his personal influence, this blending had a most powerful effect on the large audiences that came to listen to him. He has left a number of pupils behind who after his recent death are carrying on the work which he began, and who are trying to secure, not only in India, but in Europe also, a sympathetic interest in the ancient philosophy of India, which it deserves as fully as the philosophy of Plato or Kant....

It was not easy to obtain any trustworthy information about the circumstances of the Mahatman's life, a life singularly uneventful in his relations with the outer world, though full of stirring events in the inner world of his mind....

Protap Chunder Mozoomdar, the leader of the Brahma Samaj, and well known to many people in England, tells me of the extraordinary influence which the Mahatman exercised on Keshub Chunder Sen, on himself, and on a large number of highly educated men in Calcutta. A score of young men who were more closely attached to him have become ascetics after his death. They follow his teaching by giving up the enjoyment of wealth and carnal pleasure, living together in a neighbouring Matha (College), and retiring at times to holy and solitary places all over India even as far as the Himalayan mountains. Besides these holy men, we are told that a great number of men with their families are ardently devoted to his cause. But what is most interesting is the fact that it was the Mahatman who exercised the greatest influence on Keshub Chunder Sen during the last phase of his career. It was a surprise to many of Keshub Chunder's friends and admirers to observe sudden change of the sober reformer into the mystic and ecstatic saint, that took place towards the end of his life. But although this later development of the New Dispensation,



and more particularly the doctrine of the motherhood of God, may have alienated many of Keshub Chunder Sen's European friends, it seems to have considerably increased his popularity with Hindu Society. At all events we are now enabled to understand the hidden influences which caused so sudden a change, and produced so marked a deviation in the career of the famous founder of the Brahma Samaj, which has sometimes been ascribed to the breakdown of an over-excited brain.

It is different with a man like Ramakrishna. He never moved in the world, or was a man of the world, even in the sense in which Keshub Chunder Sen was. He seems from the very first to have practised that very severe kind of asceticism (yoga) which is intended to produce trances (samadhi) and ecstatic utterances. We cannot quite understand them, but in the case of our Mahatman we cannot doubt their reality, and can only stand by and wonder, particularly when so much that seems to us the outcome of a broken frame of body and overwrought state of mind, contains nevertheless so much that is true and wise and beautiful....

The state of [his] religious exaltation...has been witnessed again and again by serious observers of exceptional psychic states. It is in its essence some thing like our talking in sleep, only that with a mind saturated with religious thoughts and with the sublimest ideas of goodness and purity the result is what we find in the case of Ramakrishna, no mere senseless hypnotic jabbering, but a spontaneous outburst of profound wisdom clothed in beautiful poetical language. His mind seems like a Kaleidoscope of pearls diamonds, and sapphires shaken together at random but always producing precious thoughts in regular, beautiful outlines. To our ears, no doubt, much of his teaching and preaching sounds strange, but not to Oriental ears, or to ears accustomed to the perfervid poetry of the East. Everything seems to become purified in his mind. Nothing, I believe, is so hideous as the popular worship of Kali in India. To Ramakrishna all that is repulsive in her character is, as it were, non-existent, and there remains but the motherhood of the goddess. Her adoration with him is a childlike, whole-souled, rapturous self-consecration to the motherhood of God, as represented by the power and influence of woman. Woman in her natural material character had long been renounced by the saint. He had a wife, but never associated with her. 'Woman', he said, 'fascinates and keeps the world from the love of God.' For long years he made the utmost efforts to be delivered from the influence of woman. His heart-rending supplications and prayers for such deliverance, sometimes uttered aloud in his retreat on the riverside, brought crowds of people, who bitterly cried when he cried, and could not help blessing him and wishing him success with their whole hearts. And he succeeded, so that his mother to whom he prayed, that is the goddess Kali, made him recognise every woman as her incarnation, and honour each member of the other sex, whether young or old,



as his mother. In one of his prayers he exclaims : 'O Mother Divine, I want no honour from man, I want no pleasure of the flesh ; only let my soul flow into Thee as the permanent confluence of the Ganga and Jamuna. Mother, I am without bhakti (devotion), without yoga (concentration) ; I am poor and friendless. I want no one's praise, only let my mind always dwell in the lotus of Thy feet.' But what is the most extraordinary of all, his religion was not confined to the worship of Hindu deities and the purification of Hindu customs. For long days he subjected himself to various kinds of discipline to realise—the Mohammedan idea of an all-powerful Allah. He let his beard grow, he fed himself on Moslem diet, he continually repeated sentences from the Koran. For Christ his reverence was deep and genuine. He bowed his head at the name of Jesus, honoured the doctrine of his sonship, and once or twice attended Christian places of worship. He declared that each form of worship was to him a living and most enthusiastic principle of personal religion ; he showed, in fact, how it was possible to unify all the religions of the world by seeing only what is good in every one of them, and showing sincere reverence to every one who has suffered for the truth, for their faith in God, and for their love of men. He seems to have left nothing in writing, but his sayings live in the memory of his friends. He would not be a master or the founder of a new set. 'I float a frail half-sunk log of wood through the stream of the troublous world. If men come to hold by me to save their lives, the result will be that they will drown me without being able to save themselves. Beware of Gurus !'

I am quite aware that some of his sayings may sound strange to our ears, nay even offensive. Thus the conception of the Deity as the Divine Mother is apt to startle us, but we can understand what Ramakrishna really meant by it, when we read his saying :

'Why does the God-lover find such pleasure in addressing the Deity as Mother ? Because the child is more free with its mother, and consequently she is dearer to the child than any one else.'

How deep Ramakrishna has seen into the mysteries of knowledge and love of God, we see from the next saying :

'Knowledge and love of God are ultimately one and the same. There is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love.'

The following utterances also show the exalted nature of his faith :

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, that he who yearns for God, finds Him'.

'He who has faith has all, and he who wants faith wants all'.

'So long as one does not become simple like a child, one does not get Divine illumination. Forget all the worldly knowledge that thou hast acquired and become as ignorant about it as a child, and then thou wilt get the knowledge of the True'.

'Where does the strength of an aspirant lie ? It is in his tears. As a mother



gives her consent to fulfil the desire of her importunately weeping child, so God vouchsafes to His weeping son whatever he is crying for'.

'As a lamp does not burn without oil, so a man cannot live without God'.

'God is in all men, but all men are not in God : that is the reason why they suffer'.

From such sayings we learn that though the real presence of the Divine in nature and in the human soul was nowhere felt so strongly and so universally as in India, and though the fervent love of God, nay the sense of complete absorption in the Godhead, has nowhere found a stronger and more eloquent expression than in the utterances of Ramakrishna, yet he perfectly knew the barriers that separate divine and human nature.

If we remember that these utterances of Ramakrishna reveal to us not only his own thoughts, but the faith and hope of millions of human beings, we may indeed feel hopeful about the future of that country. The consciousness of the Divine in man is there, and is shared by all, even by those who seem to worship idols. This constant sense of the presence of God is indeed the common ground on which we may hope that in time not too distant the great temple of the future will be erected, in which Hindus and non-Hindus may join hands and hearts in worshipping the same Supreme Spirit—who is not far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.<sup>2</sup>

ROMAIN ROLLAND

To My Western Readers,

...I present him [Ramakrishna] to you, not as a new book but as a very old one, which you have all tried to spell out (though many stopped short at the alphabet). Eventually it is always the same book but the writing varies....

It is always the same Book. It is always the same Man—the Son of Man, the Eternal, Our Son, Our God reborn. With each return he reveals himself a little more fully, and more enriched by the universe.

Allowing for differences of country and of time, Ramakrishna is the younger brother of our Christ....

I am bringing to Europe, as yet unaware of it, the fruit of a new autumn, a new message of the Soul, the symphony of India, bearing the name of Ramakrishna. It can be shown (and we shall not fail to point out) that this symphony, like those of our classical masters, is built up of a hundred different musical elements emanating from the past. But the sovereign personality concentrating in himself the diversity of these elements and fashioning them into a royal harmony, is always the one who gives his name to the work, though it contains within itself the labour of generations. And with his victorious sign he marks a new era.

The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people. Although



he has been dead forty years, his soul animates modern India. He was no hero of action like Gandhi, no genius in art or thought like Goethe or Tagore. He was a little village Brahmin of Bengal, whose outer life was set in a limited frame without striking incident, outside the political and social activities of his time. But his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods. It was a part of the very source of Energy, the Divine Shakti, of whom Vidyapati, the old poet of Mithila, and Ramprasad of Bengal sing.

Very few go back to the source. The little peasant of Bengal by listening to the message of his heart found his way to the inner Sea. And there he was wedded to it, thus bearing out the words of the Upanishads :

"I am more ancient than the radiant Gods. I am the first-born of the Being. I am the artery of Immortality."

It is my desire to bring the sound of the beating of that artery to the ears of fever-stricken Europe, which has murdered sleep. I wish to wet its lips with the blood of Immortality.<sup>3</sup>

NICHOLAS DE ROERICH

We are in the deserts of Mongolia. It was hot and dusty yesterday. From far away thunder was approaching. Some of our friends became tired from climbing up the stony holy hills of Shiret Obo. While already returning to the camp, we noticed in the distance a huge elm-tree— "karagatch," lonely towering amidst the surrounding endless desert. The size of the tree, its somewhat familiar outlines, attracted us into its shadow. Botanical considerations lead to believe that in the wide shade of the giant there may be some interesting herbs for us. Soon all co-workers gathered around the two mighty stems of the karagatch. The deep, deep shadow of the tree covered over fifty feet across. The powerful tree-stems were covered with phantastic burr growths. In the rich foliage birds were singing and the beautiful branches were stretched out into all directions, as if wishing to give shelter to all pilgrims.

On the sands, around the roots, innumerable trails made by animals were visible. Next to the broad imprints of a wolf were small hooves of the dzeren, the local antelope. A horse had also passed here and next to it was the heavy footstep of a bull. All sorts of birds had been here. Apparently the entire local population visited the welcoming shelter of the giant. The elm-karagatch especially reminded us of the huge banyan trees of India. Such trees were the meeting place of blessed gatherings. Many travellers found there both bodily and spiritual rest. Sacred narratives were chanted under the inviting branches of the banyan tree. And thus the lonely giant karagatch in the Mongolian desert vividly turned our memory to the shadow of the banyan. The mighty branches of the karagatch reminded us also of other great achievements of India. What a joy to think of India !



Thoughts turned to the radiant giant of India—Sri Ramakrishna. Around this glorious name there are so many respectful definitions. Sri, Bhagavan, Paramahansa—all best offerings through which the people wish to express their esteem and reverence. The consciousness of a nation knows how to bestow names of honour. And after all, above all most venerable titles, there remains over the whole world the one great name—Ramakrishna. The personal name has already changed into a great all-national, universal concept. Who has not heard the Blessed Name ! The conception of goodness and benevolence truly befits him. Except for petrified hearts, who would oppose the Good !

We recollect how in various countries has grown the understanding of the radiant Teaching of Ramakrishna. Beyond shameful words of hatred, beyond evil mutual destruction—the word of Bliss, which is close to every human heart, spreads widely like the mighty branches of the sacred banyan tree. On the paths of human searching, these calls of goodwill were shining like beacons. We ourselves witnessed and have often heard how books of Ramakrishna's Teaching were as if unexpectedly found by sincere seekers. We ourselves came across the book in a most unusual way.

Hundreds of thousands, even an entire million of pilgrims gather on the memorable day in the name of the Blessed Bhagavan. They gather, being called by an inner impulse of the heart, in goodwill and they become rejuvenated by blissful remembrances and strivings. Is this not a most remarkable expression of the voice of the people ! This is the nation's judgment, the reverence of the people, which cannot be compelled nor forcefully commanded. As wonderful lights they spread from one to another forming an inexhaustible flame, hence such national reverence is not dimmed, but radiates throughout the times of contemporary world commotions.

Too many crises grip the people at present. It could happen that the spirit of the people could become confused and distracted from the spiritual fundamentals. The wail about the shattering of the foundations is so often heard nowadays. But is not this million of pilgrims, who assembled by their own free will, the best living proof that above the confusions of today, there lives in the hearts an inexhaustible spirituality and striving towards the Good. We are optimists and conquer all obstacle through goodwill.

Behold, on an unbearably hot day, not being frightened of distances, pilgrims are hastening, in order to venerate the memory of Ramakrishna. Is this not a remarkable event ! For it is not an official duty which brings together all the multifarious travellers. A pure heart and a sincere striving imperatively leads them to the places consecrated by the name of Ramakrishna. Such a spiritual gathering is the most precious evidence in our days. It is wonderful that amidst the heavy labour, amidst doubts, amidst depression, people yet can be lit by the flame of gratitude and veneration. Their hearts call them together. They are gathering not for destruction, nor for quarrels, nor for insults, but in order to unite their thoughts upon the Good.



Great power is contained in a united benevolent thought. Humanity should value such sublime manifestations, which are the cause of all these unifying and constructive thoughts. Creative is the thought of Good ! The good never destroys, it untiringly elevates and builds. By commands of good are affirmed those eternal foundations, which have been ordained to humanity on all the best tables. The call of the Blessed Bhagavan for creative Good will for ever remain the great spiritual heritage of humanity.

Light is especially precious during the hours of darkness. May the Light be eternally preserved ! In his parables about the Good, Ramakrishna never belittled anyone. And not only in the Teaching, in parables, but in his own deeds he never tolerated bemeaning. Let us remember his reverent attitude towards all religions. Such broad understanding will move even a stony heart. In his broad outlook, the Blessed Bhagavan of course possessed a real straight-knowledge. His power of healing he in turn gave out freely. He never hid anything useful. He exhausted his strength in innumerable blessed givings. And even his illness of course was due to such constant self-sacrificing outpouring of his spiritual energy for the healing of others. And in these generous gifts Ramakrishna manifested his greatness.

In all parts of the world the name of Ramakrishna is venerated. Also is revered Swami Vivekananda, who symbolizes true discipleship. The names of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and the glorious host of their followers remain on the most remarkable pages of the history of the spiritual culture of India. The astounding depth of thought, which is characteristic of India, the beautiful manifestation of Guru and Chela—remind the whole world of basic ideals. Ages pass, whole civilizations change, but the Guru and the Chela remain in the same wise relationship, which was since antiquity established in India. Many millenniums ago the words of Wisdom were already recorded in India. And how many more millenniums were they preserved even before, in verbal transmission. And in this sacred mouth to ear transmission they were kept perhaps even safer than on written records. The ability to keep up the correct meaning depends on a developed wise consciousness and in this is contained the application of precious stones of the past for the radiant future.

Not only the everlasting value of the Teaching of Good affirmed by Ramakrishna, but precisely the necessity of these words especially for our time is unquestionable. When spirituality, as such, is being so often refuted through wrongly interpreted formulae, then the radiant constructive affirmation as a beacon becomes especially precious. One has but to know the colossal number of editions of the Ramakrishna Mission. One has but to remember the large number of cities in which this Mission has its branches. These figures require no exaggeration. There is no unnatural nervousness and no premeditatedness in these quiet thought-creating gatherings. Everything is deeply realized not in tumult and rush, but grows in highest commensuration.



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To the Paramhansa  
Ramkrishna Deva

Diverse courses of worship  
from varied springs of fulfilment  
have mingled in your meditation.  
The manifold revelation of the joy of the Infinite  
has given form to a shrine of unity  
in your life  
where from far and near arrive salutations  
to which I join mine own.

Rabindranath Tagore



The thoughts about the Good, which Ramakrishna so generously taught, should awaken the best sides of human hearts. Ramakrishna always preached against deniers and destruction. He was in all respects a builder for the Good, and his admirers should unfold on the examples of his Teaching the best hidden treasures of their hearts. Such beneficial creativeness is very active. And it naturally is transmuted also into best achievements on all paths of life. Gathering on the memorable day of Ramakrishna's anniversary, the pilgrims do not fear the dust of the road, they are not frightened by the fatiguing heat, but they are filled with a striving towards the Good, towards the great service to humanity. Service to Humanity—great is this ordainment of Ramakrishna !

Reverence to the Teacher !

"I recall a small Hindu who found his Teacher. We asked him : 'Is it possible that the sun would glow to you, if you would see it without the Teacher ?'

"The boy smiled. 'The sun would remain as the sun, but in the presence of the Teacher twelve suns would shine to me !'

"The sun of wisdom of India shall shine because upon the shores of a river there sits a boy who knows the Teacher."

*Timur Khada (Mongolia).*

*Aug. 7th, 1935.*

MAHATMA GANDHI

The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion. Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of godliness. His sayings are not those of a mere learned man but they are pages from the Book of Life. They are revelations of his own experiences. They, therefore, leave on the reader an impression which he cannot resist. In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light. Ramakrishna's life was an object-lesson in Ahinsa. His love knew no limits, geographical or otherwise. May his divine love be an inspiration to all....<sup>5</sup>

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

পরমহংস রামকৃষ্ণদেব

বহু সাধকের বহু সাধনার ধারা

ধেয়ানে তোমার মিলিত হয়েছে তারা ।

তোমার জীবনে অসীমের লীলাপথে

নূতন তীর্থ রূপ নিল এ জগতে ;

দেশ বিদেশের প্রগাম আনিল টানি

সেখায় আমার প্রণতি দিলাম আনি ।<sup>6</sup>







and love each other. At this supremely dangerous moment in human history, the only way of salvation for mankind is an Indian way. The Emperor Ashoka's and the Mahatma Gandhi's principle of non-violence and Sri Ramakrishna's testimony to the harmony of religions ; here we have the attitude and the spirit that can make it possible for the human race to grow together into a single family—and, in the Atomic Age, this is the only alternative to destroying ourselves.

In the Atomic Age the whole human race has a utilitarian motive for following this Indian way. No utilitarian motive could be stronger or more respectable in itself. The survival of the human race is at stake. Yet even the strongest and most respectable utilitarian motive is only a secondary reason for taking Ramakrishna's and Gandhi's and Askoka's teaching to heart and acting on it. The primary reason is that this teaching is right—and is right because it flows from a true vision of spiritual reality.<sup>8</sup>

AMAURY DE REINCOURT

Can a connection between the scientific and mystical frames of reference be established over and beyond a certain metaphysical parallelism ? The answer lies perhaps in the fact that Indian mysticism, at least as far as its leading representatives are concerned, has evolved as much in the past hundred years as the science of physics itself, in a direction that points toward an inevitable convergence of the two. From its modern awakening with Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Eastern mysticism has begun to adapt its revelations to the entirely different cultural framework provided by science and technology, without in any way sacrificing what is valid in its traditional understanding of the phenomenon itself. The true departure occurred with the life and writings of Sri Aurobindo who began to wield India's traditional metaphysics to the concept of a modified and purposeful Evolution—quite a departure for the offspring of a culture that had consistently ignored the spiritual significance of time and history.<sup>9</sup>

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

A successful growth of Sri Ramakrishna and of the Vedanta movements in the West is one of many symptoms of two basic processes which are going on at the present time in the human universe. One of these changes is the epochal shift of the creative center of mankind from Europe to the larger area of the Pacific-Atlantic, while the other consists in a double process of continued decay of sensate culture and society and of the emergence and growth of the new—Integral or Ideational—socio-cultural order.<sup>10</sup>

HENRY R. ZIMMER

To speak of Sri Ramakrishna's teaching with regard to our present world-situation means, as the wicked jester-king in *Hamlet* puts it, 'in equal scale



weighing delight and dole'. It means putting the question, what can the spiritual forces of the enlightened and perfect, of the teacher who embodies the Divine, effect in the world-wide struggle and suffering caused by the demoniac forces of man's nature ; or, in Hindu terms, what can pure *Sattva* achieve against *Rajas*, reckless lust for power, aggressive selfishness, triumphant tyranny, and against *Tamas*, beastiality and sloth of man's animal nature ?....

The actual task of the individual of to-day, in so far as he can perceive this problem at all, could be, to become, in the Hindu style, a permanent inmate of both spheres, of this phenomenal world and the supra-phenomenal reality, and 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's'. ... These two realities bar each other, — the phenomenal tangible, and the supra-phenomenal intangible ; they are as if two sides of the same and only coin. They preclude each other logically, but they are meant to be reconciled through life by each of us. That is Sri Ramakrishna's message on the lines of India's perennial wisdom.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

The Europeans who protested against the empire of mediocrity, themselves failed to attain to the springs of power. So their world of ideas went down before the steamroller. But in Dakshineswar, only a few miles outside the Victorian metropolis of Calcutta, practising his sadhana not according to enlightened, modern methods, but after the most ancient, most superstitious, most idolatrous traditions of timeless India : now hanging to a tree, like a monkey ; now posturing and dressing as a girl ; now weeping before an image : now sitting, night and day, like a stump ; six years unable to close his eyes, himself terrified at what was happening to him, swooning in the ocean of the Mother's love ; stunned by the experience of Brahman — Sri Ramakrishna cut the hinges of the heavens and released the fountains of divine bliss.<sup>12</sup>

GEORGE WILLIAMS

On the philosophical level,...in Ramakrishna [we find] a formula for adapting the philosophy of India, Vedanta, for expansion beyond the borders of India, and for serious scrutiny in the centres of philosophy and psychology around the world. Without the impulse of Ramakrishna, the great treasures of the Indian philosophical speculation might not have become so available, in the present flexible and constructive form, to the Western world.<sup>13</sup>

HARLOW SHAPLEY

The mind and heart of Sri Ramakrishna encompasses all who work and think on the problems of man's place in the scheme of things.<sup>14</sup>



E. C. BROWN

What a wonderful thing that a divine Incarnation should have attained to the highest realisation of God as Divine Mother at a time when women all over the world were struggling for emancipation ! Is it difficult to believe that the incarnation on earth of this great advocate of womanhood should have given their cause a powerful impetus ?<sup>15</sup>

MUHAMMAD DAUD RAHBAR

Jesus is remembered as the Son of Man. In the recorded history of religion, Sri Ramakrishna shines as a devotee of the Divine Mother. He should, therefore, be remembered as the Son of Woman.

Four miles north of Calcutta, in the Garden of Temples at Dakshineswar, he began his devotions to Mother Kali and went into rapture when yet only a child. His life from then on is an open book filled with a moving story of worship and adoration. His revelation of the benign Mother of the Universe is a consummation of the spiritual aspirations of matriarchical India.

Like a magnet, Sri Ramakrishna attracted ardent disciples. More than thirty of them maintained intimate association with him. Hundreds of them derived solace and blessing by beholding him and talking to him.

I have read some delightful portions of the one-thousand-page *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. This marvellous volume has extraordinary revelations. Immediately one recognizes a cherishable friend in Sri Ramakrishna. His open, passionate, and transparent devotion humbles and chastens us. He is no common mortal. He is a man of phenomenal gifts. His presence is a haven. His conversations, recorded abundantly in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by his disciple M., are charming, inspired. Their literary merit is due to the inspired goodness of Sri Ramakrishna. ...

We turn now to another genuine quality of Sri Ramakrishna : renunciation. It is perhaps the virtue most vigorously rejected by the politicized civilization of the emerging world. It is condemned by political activists as if it were an adoption of the way of unconcern. The political activists have to go through self-searching to realize that much of the fever and scramble of politics is a symptom of sick spirit. The implementation of the great movement of democratic thought in the world is not simply a matter of equal opportunity to cultivate ambition. Democratic freedom must learn to respect the freedom to renounce. Perhaps it is true to say that in America today, austere forms of creative renunciation are virtually proclaimed illegal. A mendicant spiritual would be looked upon as a vagrant and a parasite. This is tragic. The excessively politicized intelligentsia in the modern world will hastily detect in Sri Ramakrishna an "escapist quietism." An observation on those lines will be rejected by anyone who reads a substantial part of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. In him



we find a bustling renunciation full of excitement, but not escapism or quietism. His life is not one of escape for the soul, rather it is a life busy with fortification of the spirit. His ascetic exercises lead to his faith-building charisma. His experiments with psychology of religion are of both spiritual and scientific value for us. He is not running away from responsibilities in the world, he is handling them with eminent creativity. He exercises the privilege of inspired selection of occupation. He investigates the secrets of spirit and soul by turning to experienced men and women. He meditates and is an alert onlooker. He is not bookish but is assiduous in enquiries as a student of folk religion through listening to recital of sacred mythology, direct observation, rigorous introspection, conversation and, most of all, through devotion.

He does all that and does not ask anybody for a salary or a stipend as a reward. Nobody has a reasonable right to object to this arrangement.

Any society that bans renunciation and detachment of this kind is heading for impaired mental health and low level of faith. For it deprives itself of a needed source of holy contagion and vibrations of serenity. Every society needs a mixture of infection of animation and equanimity. Every society needs contagion of selflessness and meditative inspiration. ...

The soldierly masculine civilization of the West will have to go through long historical preparation to provide a natural place for the worship of Divine Mother among believers. Nevertheless the assertion of the feminine element has begun. The Western male is not yet effeminate, although perhaps the Western female has become somewhat masculine. ...

I pay tribute to Sri Ramakrishna's device to attain intimacy with Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian life. He demonstrated his own kind of desires and overtures, as against other possible ways of going about the enrichment and broadening of experience. He went about it in a certain mystical way. It is valid, interesting, and meaningful because its motivation was pure. ...

There is a great deal of power politics connected with religion. The scientists and secularists have no doubt contributed much to the removal of dishonesty in religious leadership. But now some of the presumption which used to be the trait of some priests is manifest among many secularist men of science. The autonomy of science and intellect has been overdone. The time has arrived when forces of spirit have to be released. Insight and wisdom are lacking in the intellectual world of today. The faces of secularist scientists seldom have a radiance and magnanimity.

Was not the unsophisticated Sri Ramakrishna a gifted scientist in his own right ? In his blissful life we find a happy union of religion and science. ...<sup>16</sup>

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

This is the story of a phenomenon.

I will begin by calling him simply that, rather than 'holy man', 'mystic',



'saint', or 'avatar' ; all emotive words with mixed associations which may attract some readers, repel others.

A phenomenon is often something extraordinary and mysterious. Ramakrishna was extraordinary and mysterious ; most of all to those who were best fitted to understand him. A phenomenon is always a fact, an object of experience. That is how I shall try to approach Ramakrishna.

Modern advertising has inflated our value-judgements until they are nearly worthless. Every product and person is said by its publicist to be the best. I want to avoid the competitive note here so I will say only this : Ramakrishna's life, being comparatively recent history, is well documented. In this respect, it has the advantage over the lives of other, earlier phenomena of a like nature. We do not have to rely, here, on fragmentary or glossed manuscripts, dubious witnesses, pious legends. What Ramakrishna was or was not the reader must decide for himself ; but at least his decision can be based on words and deeds Ramakrishna indubitably spoke and did. ...

I myself am a devotee of Ramakrishna ; I believe, or am at least strongly inclined to believe, that he was what his disciples declared that he was : an incarnation of God upon earth. Nevertheless, I am not writing this book primarily for confirmed believers or unbelievers. The sort of reader I am writing for is the one who is not afraid to recognize the marvellous, no matter where he finds it ; the sort of reader who is always on the lookout for a phenomenon.

I only ask you approach Ramakrishna with the same open-minded curiosity you might feel about any highly unusual human being : a Julius Caesar, a Catherine of Siena, a Leonardo da Vinci, an Arthur Rimbaud. Dismiss from your mind, as far as you are able, such categories as holy-unholy, sane-insane, wise-foolish, pure-impure, positive-negative, useful-useless. Just say to yourself as you read : this, too, is humanly possible. Then later, if you like, consider the implications of that possibility for the rest of the human species.<sup>17</sup>

#### LEO TOLSTOY

Alexander Shifman, Adviser to the Tolstoy State Museum, in his book *Tolstoy and India* writes : 'During the last decade of Tolstoy's life Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his pupil Swami Vivekananda occupied his [Tolstoy's] thoughts. ...

'On 13 February 1903, Tolstoy read the journal *Theosophischer Wegweiser* sent to him from Germany and in his copy underlined a number of Ramakrishna's aphorisms. "There is much in common with my conception"—he noted in his diary.' [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 54, p. 155]

'Later on, in February 1906, Tolstoy received from his friend and biographer, P.A. Sergeenko, the book *Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Sayings* in English



published in 1905 in Madras and read it with interest. "Wonderful sayings ! Ramakrishna died 50 [20 ?] years ago. A remarkable sage," said Tolstoy to a circle of his intimates and read aloud to them some of those sayings by the Indian philosopher.' [D. P. Makovitzky, Yasnaya Polyana notes, entry dated 27 February, 1906. The manuscript is preserved in Tolstoy's Archives.]

'From the literature about Ramakrishna, Tolstoy selected nearly a hundred sayings and parables which he intended to publish in Russia. However, this publication did not materialise and the writer after carefully working over them included some in his collections of ancient wisdom over which he was working at that time.' ...<sup>18</sup>

#### SRI AUROBINDO

When scepticism had reached its height, the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses, the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beatitude of God. This is the work whose consummation Sri Ramakrishna came to begin and all the development of the previous two thousand years and more since Buddha appeared has been a preparation for the harmonisation of spiritual teaching and experience by the Avatar of Dakshineshwar.

The long ages of discipline which India underwent are now drawing to an end. A great light is dawning in the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon ; a new day is about to break, so glorious that even the last of the *avatars* cannot be sufficient to explain it, although without him it would not have come. The perfect expression of Hindu spirituality was the signal for the resurgence of the East.... The East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. Through all these ages Asia has been seeking for a light within, and whenever she has been blessed with a glimpse of what she seeks, a great religion has been born, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Mahomedanism with all their countless sects. But the grand workshop of spiritual experiment, the laboratory of the soul has been India, where thousands of great spirits have been born in every generation who were content to work quietly in their own souls, perfect their knowledge, hand down the results of their experiments to a few disciples and leave the rest to others to complete. They did not hasten to proselytise, were in no way eager to proclaim themselves, but merely added their quota of experience and returned to the source from which they had come. The immense reservoir of spiritual energy stored up by the self-repression was the condition of this birth of *avatars*, of men so full of God that they could not be satisfied with silent bliss, but poured it out on the world, not with the idea of proselytising but because they wished to communicate their own ecstasy of realisation to others who were fit to receive it either by previous *tapasya* or by the purity of



their desires. Of all these souls Sri Ramakrishna was the last and greatest, for while others felt God in a single or limited aspect, he felt Him in His illimitable unity as the sum of an illimitable variety. In him the spiritual experiences of the millions of saints who had gone before were renewed and united. Sri Ramakrishna gave to India the final message of Hinduism to the world. A new era dates from his birth, an era in which the peoples of the earth will be lifted for a while into communion with God and spirituality become the dominant note of human life. What Christianity failed to do, what Mahomedanism strove to accomplish in times as yet unripe, what Buddhism half-accomplished for a brief period and among a limited number of men, Hinduism as summed up in the life of Sri Ramakrishna has to attempt for all the world. This is the reason of India's resurgence, this is why God has breathed life into her once more, why great souls are at work to bring about her salvation, why a sudden change is coming over the hearts of her sons. The movement of which the first outbreak was political, will end in a spiritual consummation.<sup>19</sup>

[*Bande Mataram*, March 28, 1908]

What was Ramakrishna ? God manifest in a human being ; but behind there is God in His infinite impersonality and His universal Personality. And what was Vivekananda ? A radiant glance from the eye of Shiva ; but behind him is the divine gaze from which he came and Shiva himself and Brahma and Vishnu and OM all-exceeding.<sup>20</sup>

In a recent unique example, in the life of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, we see a colossal spiritual capacity, first driving straight to the divine realisation, taking, as it were, the kingdom of heaven by violence and then seizing upon one Yogic method after another and extracting the substance out of it with an incredible rapidity, always to return to the heart of the whole matter, the realisation and possession of God by the power of love, by the extension of inborn spirituality into various experience and by the spontaneous play of an intuitive knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

The 'Utsav' of Ramakrishna Paramahansa is an event that annually stirs Calcutta to its depths. Year after year the number increases, of those who believe that the birth of the sage of Dakshineswar has been the critical event of the present age in India. Some believe this, for one reason ; others for another. The devotee sees in him the last of the Avatars. The historian sees the keystone of the idea that constitutes Hinduism. The partisan feels that he satisfies all parties and conflicts with none. The philosopher finds in him the living embodiment of the highest Vedanta. And even amongst the workers, there are some who derive from the spectacle of his birth the faith that inspires and sanctions all their struggles.



The world could not bear a second birth like that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in five hundred years. The mass of thought that he has left, has first to be transformed into experience ; the spiritual energy given forth has to be converted into achievement. Until this is done, what right have we to ask for more ? What could we do with more ?

Religion always, in India, precedes national awakenings. Sankaracharya was the beginning of a wave that swept round the whole country, culminating in Chaitanya in Bengal, the Sikh Gurus in the Punjab, Sivaji in Maharashtra, and Ramanuja and Madhwacharya in the South. Through each of these a people sprang into self-realization, into national energy and consciousness of their own unity. Sri Ramakrishna represents a synthesis in one person of all the leaders. It follows that the movements of his age will unify and organize the more provincial and fragmentary movements of the past.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa is the epitome of the whole. His was the great superconscious life which alone can witness to the infinitude of the current that bears us all oceanwards. He is the proof of the Power behind us, and the future before us. So great a birth initiates great happenings. Many are to be tried as by fire, and not a few will be found to be pure gold ; but whatever happens, whether victory or defeat, speedy fulfilment or prolonged struggle, the fact that he has been born and lived here in our midst, in the sight and memory of men now living is proof that—

God hath sounded for the trumpet  
That shall never call retreat !  
He is sifting out the hearts of men  
Before His judgment seat ;  
Oh, be swift my soul, to answer Him :  
Be jubilant, my feet !  
While God is marching on !<sup>22</sup>

In Bengal there came a flood of religious truth. Certain men were born, men whom the educated world would not have recognised if that belief, if that God within them had not been there to open their eyes, men whose lives were very different from what our education, our Western education, taught us to admire. One of them, the man who had the greatest influence and has done the most to regenerate Bengal, could not read and write a single word. He was a man who had been what they call absolutely useless to the world. But he had this one divine faculty in him, that he had more than faith and had realised God. He was a man who lived what many would call the life of a madman, a man without intellectual training, a man without any outward sign of culture or civilisation, a man who lived on the alms of others, such a man as the English-educated Indian would ordinarily talk of as one useless to society. He will say, "This man is ignorant. What does he know ? What can he teach me who have received from the West all that it can teach ?" But God knew what



he was doing. He sent that man to Bengal and set him in the temple of Dakshineswar in Calcutta, and from North and South and East and West, the educated men, men who were the pride of the university, who had studied all that Europe can teach, came to fall at the feet of this ascetic. The work of salvation, the work of raising India was begun.<sup>23</sup>

...“What was the message that radiated from the personality of Bhagawan Ramakrishna Paramahansa? What was it that formed the kernel of the eloquence with which the lion-like heart of Vivekananda sought to shake the world? It is this, that every one of these three hundred millions of men, from the Raja on his throne to the Coolie at his labour, from the Brahmin absorbed in his Sandhya to the pariah walking shunned of men, GOD LIVETH. We are all gods and creators, because the energy of God is within us and all life is creation; not only the making of new forms is creation, but preservation is creation, destruction itself is creation. It rests with what we shall create; for we are not, unless we choose, puppets dominated by Fate and Maya; we are facets and manifestations of Almighty Power.

India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal Religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. In the sphere of morality, likewise, it is her mission to purge barbarism (Mlechchhahood) out of humanity and to Aryanise the world. In order to do this she must first re-Aryanise herself. It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagawan Ramakrishna came and Vivekananda preached.<sup>24</sup>

#### SIVANATH SASTRI

The impression left in my mind by intercourse with him [Ramakrishna Paramahansa] was that I had seldom come across any other man in whom the hunger and thirst for spiritual life was so great and who had gone through so many privations and sufferings for the practice of religion. Secondly, I was convinced that he was no longer a *sadhak* or a devotee under exercise but was a *siddha purusha* or one who had attained direct vision of spiritual truth. The truth, of which he had direct spiritual vision and which had become a fountain of noble impulses in his soul, was Divine Motherhood.... Yet this conception of Motherhood stretched far beyond any idol or image into a sense of the Infinite. ...He would say, only fools make distinction between Kali and Krishna, they are the manifestations of the same Power.

Speaking of the spirituality and catholicity of his conception, one incident comes to my mind. A Christian preacher of Bhowanipore, who was my personal friend, once accompanied me on my visit to Ramakrishna. When I



introduced my friend to him, I said—"To-day I bring a Christian preacher to you, who having heard of you from me, was very eager to see you," whereupon the saint bowed his head to the ground and said, "I bow again and again, at the feet of Jesus." Then took place the following conversation :-

My Christian friend—How is it, Sir, that you bow at the feet of Christ ? What do you think of him ?

Ramakrishna—Why, I look upon him as an incarnation of God.

My friend—Incarnation of God ! Will you kindly explain what you mean by it ?

Ramakrishna—An incarnation like our Rama or Krishna. Don't you know there is a passage in the Bhagavat where it is said that the incarnations of Vishnu or the Supreme Being are innumerable ?

My friend—Please explain further ; I do not understand it quite.

Ramakrishna—Just take the case of the ocean. It is a wide and almost infinite expanse of water. But owing to special causes, in special parts of this wide sea, the water becomes congealed into ice. When reduced to ice it can be easily manipulated and applied to special uses. An incarnation is something like that. Like that infinite expanse of water, there is the Infinite Power, immanent in matter and mind, but for some special purposes, in special regions, a portion of that Infinite power, as it were, assumes a tangible shape in history, that is what you call a great man ; but he is properly speaking a local manifestation of the all-pervading Divine power, in other words, an incarnation of God. The greatness of great men is essentially the manifestation of divine Energy....

During the last few years of the saint's life, my visits became less frequent than they were before....

At last when the news of his fast declining health was brought to me one day, I left all work and went to Dakshineswar....

That was my last interview with him, after which he was removed from Dakshineswar, was placed under the treatment of the most distinguished physicians of the town, and was devotedly nursed by his disciples ; but nothing could stay the progress of his disease and he passed away, leaving behind him a memory that is now spiritually feeding hundreds of earnest souls. My acquaintance with him, though short, was fruitful by strengthening many a spiritual thought in me. He was certainly one of the most remarkable personalities I have come across in life.<sup>25</sup>

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...রামকৃষ্ণের সঙ্গে মিশিয়া এই একটা ভাব মনে আসিত যে, ধর্ম এক ; রূপ ভিন্ন ভিন্ন মাত্র । ধর্মের এই উদারতা ও বিশ্বজনীনতা রামকৃষ্ণ কথায় কথায় ব্যক্ত করিতেন । ইহার একটি নিদর্শন উজ্জলরূপে স্মরণ আছে । [ এরপর পূর্বে উল্লেখিত ঘটনাটি শিবনাথ শাস্ত্রী বর্ণনা করেন ]...

রামকৃষ্ণের সহিত মিশিয়া আমি ধর্মের সার্বভৌমিকতার ভাব বিশেষরূপে উপলব্ধি করিয়াছি ।...<sup>২৬</sup>



['After coming in contact with Ramakrishna, this idea used to come to my mind that religion is one, only its forms are different. Ramakrishna used to express this catholicity and universality of religion in every word of his. I remember very clearly one of his illustrations in this connexion. (Sastri then narrates the same incident as stated before)...

It was after mixing with Ramakrishna I have especially realised the spirit of universality of religion....]

PRATAP CHANDRA MOZOOMDAR

My mind is still floating in the luminous atmosphere which that wonderful man diffuses around him whenever and wherever he goes. My mind is not yet disenchanted of the mysterious and indefinable pathos which he pours into it whenever he meets me. What is there in common between him and me ? I, a Europeanised, civilised, self-centered, semi-sceptical, so-called educated reasoner, and he, a poor, illiterate, shrunken, unpolished, diseased, half-dressed, half-idolatrous, friendless Hindu devotee ? Why should I sit long hours to attend to him, I who have listened to Disraeli and Fawcett, Stanley and Max Mueller, and a whole host of European scholars and divines, I who am an ardent disciple and follower of Christ, a friend and admirer of liberal-minded Christian missionaries and preachers, a devoted adherent and worker of the rationalistic Brahma Samaj,—why should I be spell-bound to hear him ? And it is not I only, but dozens like me who do the same. He has been interviewed and examined by many, crowds pour in to visit and talk with him. Some of our clever intellectual fools have found nothing in him, some of the contemptuous Christian missionaries would call him an imposter, or a self-deluded enthusiast. I have weighed their objections well, and what I write now, I write deliberately.

The Hindu saint is a man much under forty. He is a Brahmin by caste, he is well-formed naturally, but the dreadful austerities through which his character has developed have permanently disordered his system, inflicted a debility, paleness, and shrunkenness upon his form and features that excite the deepest compassion. Yet in the midst of this emaciation, his face retains a fulness, a child-like tenderness, a profound visible humbleness, an unspeakable sweetness of expression and smile that I have seen in no other face that I can remember. A Hindu saint is always particular about his externals. He wears the *gerua* cloth, eats according to strict forms and is a rigid observer of caste. He is always proud and professes secret wisdom. He is always a *guruji*, and a dispenser of charms. This man is singularly indifferent to these matters. His dress and diet don't differ from those of other men except in the general negligence he shows towards both, and as to caste, he openly breaks it every day. He most vehemently repudiates the title of being called a teacher or *guru*, he shows impatient displeasure at any exceptional honour which people try to pay him, and emphatically disclaims the knowledge of secrets and



mysteries. He protests against being lionized, and openly shows his strong dislike to be visited and praised by the curious. The society of the worldly-minded and carnally-inclined he shuns carefully. He has nothing extraordinary about him. His religion is his only recommendation. And what is his religion ? It is Hinduism, but Hinduism of a strange type. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, for that is the saint's name, is the worshipper of no particular Hindu god. He is not a Saiva, he is not a Shakta, he is not a Vaishnava, he is not a Vedantist. Yet he is all these. He worships Shiva, he worships Kali, he worships Rama, he worships Krishna, and is a confirmed advocate of Vedantist doctrines. He is an idolater, and is yet a faithful and most devoted meditator of the perfections of the one formless, infinite Deity whom he terms '*Akhanda Sach-chidananda*.' His religion, unlike the religion of ordinary Hindu *sadhus*, does not mean the maturity of doctrinal belief, or controversial proficiency, or the outward worship with flower and sandal, incense and offering. His religion means ecstasy, his worship means transcendental perception, his whole nature burns day and night with the permanent fire and fever of a strange faith and feeling. His conversation is a ceaseless breaking forth of this inward fire, and lasts for long hours. While his interlocutors are weary, he, though outwardly feeble, is as fresh as ever. He merges into rapturous ecstasy and outward unconsciousness often during the day, oftenest in conversation when he speaks of his favourite spiritual experiences, or hears any striking response to them. But how is it possible that he has such a fervent regard for all the Hindu deities together ? What is the secret of his singular eclecticism ? To him each of these deities is a force, an incarnated principle tending to reveal the supreme relation of the soul to that eternal and formless Being Who is unchangeable in His blessedness and the Light of Wisdom.

Take for instance Shiva. The saint views and realizes Shiva as the incarnation of contemplativeness and Yoga. Forgetful of all worldly care and concern, merged and absorbed in Samadhi, in the meditation of the ineffable perfections of the Supreme Brahma, insensible to pain and privation, poverty, toil, and loneliness, ever joyful in the blessedness of Divine communion, calm, silent, serene, immovable like the Himalayas where his abode is, Mahadev is the ideal of all contemplative and self-absorbed men. The venomous serpents of evil and worldliness coil around his beatified form, but cannot hurt him ; the presence of death surrounds him in various form of dread and danger, but cannot daunt him. Shiva takes upon himself the burdens and cares of other men, swallows the deadliest poison to confer immortality upon others. Shiva renounces all wealth and 'enjoyment for others' benefit, makes his faithful wife the companion of his austerities and solitude, and takes the ashes and the tiger-skin as his only ornaments. Shiva is the god of the Yogees. And the good man, while expatiating on the attributes of Shiva, would be immersed in the sublimity of his ideal, and become entranced, and remain unconscious for a long time.



Then, perhaps, he would come to talk of Krishna, whom he realizes as the incarnation of love. Behold, he says, the countenance of Krishna as represented popularly. Does it resemble a man's face, or a woman's ? Is there a shadow of sensuality in it, is there a hair of masculine coarseness ? It is a tender female face that Krishna has, in it there is the fulness of boyish delicacy, and girlish grace. By his affectionateness, many-sided and multiform, he won the hearts of men and women to the religion of Bhakti. That Divine love can take the shape of every sanctified human relation is the great mission of Krishna to prove. As a loving child monopolizing all the fondness of the hearts of aged parents ; as a loving companion and friend attracting the profoundest loyalty and affection of men and brethren ; as an admired and adored master, the sweetness and tenderness of whose teaching, and whose affectionate persuasion converted girls and women to the self-consecration of a heart-felt piety, Krishna, the beauty and depth of whose character remain still beyond the reach of men's appreciation, introduced the religion of love into Hindustan. Then the good man would say how for long years he dressed himself as a cowherd, or a milkmaid to be able to realize the experiences of that form of piety in which the human soul was like a faithful wife, and a loyal friend to the loving Spirit who is our Lord, and our only friend. Krishna is the incarnation of Bhakti. Then, in the intensity of that burning love of God which is in his simple heart, the poor devotee's form and features suddenly grow stiff and motionless, unconsciousness overtakes him, his eyes lose their sight, and tears trickle down his fixed, pale, but smiling face. There is a transcendent sense and meaning in that unconsciousness. What he perceives and enjoys in his soul when he has lost all outward perception who can say ? Who will fathom the depth of that insensibility which the love of God produces ? But that he sees some thing, hears, and enjoys when he is dead to the outward world there is no doubt. Or why should he, in the midst of that unconsciousness, burst into floods of tears, and break out into prayers, songs and utterances the force and pathos of which pierce through the hardest heart, and bring tears to eyes that never wept before by the influence of religion.

Anon he would begin to talk of Kali, whom he addresses as his mother. She is the incarnation of the Shakti, or power of God, as displayed in the character and influence of woman. Kali is the female principle in the nature of the Deity. She tyrannizes over all tyrants. She brings down her husband low upon the ground, and places her foot upon his bosom. She charms and conquers all beings. Yet she is the mother of the creation. Her tremendous power is a guarantee that she can save and protect her children, those that come to her as their mother, and ask the shelter of her feet. Her motherly solicitude excites the tenderest filial affection in the hearts of her devotees, and the inspiration of Rāmaprasad Sen which expressed itself in the most



wonderful songs of filial piety ever sung, bears strange testimony to the reality and effectiveness of the worship of Kali. The adoration of Shakti (which literally means Force) is, according to our saint, a child-like, whole-souled, rapturous self-consecration to the motherhood of God as represented by the power and influence of woman. Woman, therefore, has long been renounced by our friend in every material and carnal relation. He has a wife, but never associated with her. Woman, he says, is unconquerable by man except by him who looks up to her as her son. Woman fascinates, and keeps the whole world from the love of God. The highest and holiest saints have been brought back to carnality and sin by the nameless power of woman. The absolute conquest of lust has been his life-long ambition. For long years, therefore, he says, he made the utmost efforts to be delivered from the influence of woman. His heart-rending supplications and prayers for such deliverance, sometimes uttered aloud in his retreat on the river-side, brought crowds of people who bitterly cried when he cried, and could not help blessing him, and wishing him success with their whole hearts. He has successfully escaped the evil of carnality which he dreaded. His Mother to whom he prayed, that is the goddess Kali, made him recognise every woman as her incarnation, so that he now honours each member of the other sex as his mother. He bows his head to ground before women, and before little girls ; he has insisted upon worshipping not a few of them as a son might worship his mother. The purity of his thoughts and relations towards women is most unique and instructive. It is the opposite of the European idea. It is an attitude essentially, traditionally, gloriously national. Yes, a Hindu can honour woman.

"My father," says the Paramahansa, "was a worshipper of Rama. I too have accepted the Ramayat covenant. When I think of the piety of my father, the flowers with which he used to worship his favourite god bloom again in my heart, and fill it with Divine fragrance." Rama the truthful, the dutiful son, the good and faithful husband, the just and fatherly king, the staunch and affectionate friend, is regarded by him with the love and profound loyalty of a devoted servant. As a master, the privilege of whose service is sufficient reward to the favoured faithful servant, as a master in whose dear and matchless service the laying down of life is a delightful duty, as a master who has wholly enslaved the body and soul of his adoring slave, the contemplation of whose holy and glorious worth transcends every thought of remuneration and return, is Rama viewed by Ramakrishna. Hanuman, the renowned follower of Rama, is to him a model of a faithful servitor, a being who was devoted to his master's cause inspired by such unworldly love and honour, such superhuman faithfulness as scorned alike death and danger, or hope of other reward. So the other sin which he has spent his life to be free from, is the love of money. The sight of money fills him with strange dread. His avoidance of woman and wealth is the whole secret of his matchless moral character. For a long time he



practised a singular discipline. He took in one hand a piece of gold, and in the other a lump of earth. He would then look at both, repeatedly call the gold *earth*, and the earth *gold*, and then shuffling the contents of each hand into the other, he would keep on the process till he lost all sense of the difference of the gold from the earth. His ideal of service is absolute unworldliness and freedom from the desire of gain. He loves and serves Rama, because Rama is the best and most loving master. The service of the true saint is the service of the purest affection and most unselfish loyalty. Some of the songs he sings expressive of this touching devotedness are exceedingly pathetic, and show how very negligent we often are. Each form of worship that we have tried to indicate above is to the Paramahansa a living and most enthusiastic principle of personal religion, and the accounts of discipline and exercise through which he has arrived at his present state of devotional eclecticism are most wonderful, although they cannot be published. He never writes anything, seldom argues, he never attempts to instruct, he is continually pouring his soul out in a rhapsody of spiritual utterances, he sings wonderfully, and makes observations of singular wisdom. He unconsciously throws flood of marvellous light upon the obscurest corners of the Puranic Shastras, and brings out the fundamental principles of the popular Hindu faith and notions with a philosophical clearness which strangely contrasts itself with his simple and illiterate life. These incarnations, he says, are but the forces (*Shakti*) and dispensations (*Lila*) of the eternally wise and blessed (*Akhanda Sach-chidananda*) who never can be changed or formulated, who is one endless and everlasting ocean of light, truth and joy. When this singular man is with us, he would sometimes say the incarnations forsook him, his mother the *vidya-shakti Kali*, stood at a distance. Krishna could not be realized by him either as *Gopal* the child, or as *Swami* the lord of the heart, and neither Rama, nor Mahadev would offer him much help. The *Nirakar Brahma* would swallow everything, and he would be lost in speechless devotion and rapture. If all his utterances could be recorded they would form a volume of strange and wonderful wisdom. If all his observations on men and things could be reproduced, people might think that the days of prophecy, of primeval, unlearned wisdom have returned. But it is most difficult to render his sayings in English. We here try to give some stray bits :

So long as the bee is outside the petals of the lily, it buzzes and emits sounds. But when it is *inside* the flower, the sweetness hath silenced the bee. It drinks the nectar and forgets sounds, and forgets itself. So the man of devotion.

Put your ghara (earthenpot) inside the brook of clear water. There is bubbling, there is noise, as long as the vessel is empty. When it is full, the bubbling ceases, the disturbance ceases. In silence and fulness the vessel lies in the depth of the element. So the heart in devotion.



Boil your sugar well in a living and active fire. As long as there is earth and impurity in it, the sweet infusion will smoke and simmer. But when all impurity is cast out, there is neither smoke nor sound, but the delicious crystalline fluid heaves itself in its unmixed worth, and, whether liquid or solid, is the delight of men and gods. Such is the character of the man of faith.

Through the stream of the troublous world I float like a frail half-sunk log of wood. If men come to hold by me to save their lives, the result will be this ; they will drown me without being able to save themselves. Beware of gurus.

Unshod, and with bare feet who will venture to walk upon thorn and sharp stones ? Shod with faith in Hari, what thorn or sharp stone can harm you ?

Hold the post well-driven into the ground with your hand, and then you can quickly revolve round and round without falling. Have faith in a fixed and strong principle, and then though your movements : may be many and rapid, no harm will ever befall you. Without principle every movement is a step towards fall.

Churn your pure milk before the sun rises, and the butter that is thrown up, gather, and put in clear water. There is another kind of butter that is obtained by churning whey after sun-rise, and that is allowed to float in the whey out of which it is churned. The latter kind of butter represents the religion of the Brahma Samaj, while the former is pure Hinduism.

Woman and wealth have drowned the whole world in sin. Woman is disarmed when you view her as the manifestation of the divine Vidya Shakti, power of pure wisdom, as the mother of the human race.

O Mother Divine, I want no honour from men, I want no pleasure of the flesh, only let my soul flow into Thee as the permanent confluence of the Gunga and Jamuna. Mother, I am without Bhakti, without Yoga, I am poor and friendless. I want no one's praise, only let my mind always dwell in the lotus of thy feet.

God alone is true, all else is false.

A living evidence of the sweetness and depth of Hindu religion is this holy and good man. He has wholly controlled, and nearly killed his flesh. He is full of soul, full of the reality of religion, full of joy, full of blessed purity. As a *Siddha* Hindu ascetic he is a witness of the falsehood and emptiness of the world. His witness appeals to the profoundest heart of every Hindu. He has no other thought, no other occupation, no other relation, no other friend in his humble life than his God. That God is more than sufficient for him. His spotless holiness, his deep unspeakable blessedness, his unstudied endless wisdom, his childlike peacefulness and affection towards all men, his consuming all-absorbing love for his God are his only reward. And may he long continue to enjoy that reward ! Our own ideal of religious life is different. But so long as he is spared to us, gladly shall we sit at his feet to learn from him the sublime precepts of purity, unworldliness, spirituality and inebriation in the love of God.<sup>27</sup>



In a letter addressed to F. Max Mueller in September, 1895, Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar wrote :

Both in Keshub's Life and Teachings, and in the old *Theistic Review*, I have frankly and warmly expressed my estimate of that saintly man and our obligations to him...

He was, as you say, a real Mahatman, and I would not withdraw a single word I wrote in his praise. Ramakrishna was not in the least a Vedantist, except that every Hindu unconsciously imbibes from the atmosphere around some amount of Vedantism, which is the philosophical backbone of every national cult. He did not know a word of Sanskrit, and it is doubtful whether he knew enough Bengali. His spiritual wisdom was the result of genius and practical observation. ...<sup>28</sup>

BRAHMABANDHAV UPADHYAY

সর্বৈশ্বর্যময় ! নিঃস্ব, বিরক্ত ব্রাহ্মণের রূপ ধরিয়া তুমি আসিলেও তোমার চক্ষের ঐ প্রসন্ন দৃষ্টিতে বুঝিতে পারিয়াছি—তুমি কে। তুমি নিরঙ্করতার ছলনা করিলেও অনুভব করিয়াছি, তুমিই সেই বেদগোষ্ঠা ! নহিলে কাহার বাক্যমতে বেদ ও বেদান্তবাণী এমন করিয়া নিঃসারিত হয় ? তুমি চিরশর্ত। এবার ছলনা করিলেও তোমার চাতুরী যে ধরিতে পারিয়াছি, দেবতা। তুমি রামকৃষ্ণ—একাধারে তুমিই কি রাম ও কৃষ্ণ নহ ? <sup>29</sup>

(Omnipotent—that is what you are. Although you have appeared in the guise of a penniless, ascetic Brahmin, I have been able to ascertain from the contented and serene look of your eyes the truth of your identity. In spite of your pretention of being an illiterate person, I have realised—you are that Custodian of the Vedas ! Otherwise, in whose nectar-words the message of the Vedas and Vedanta could issue forth in such a manner ! You are ever playful. You wanted to make fools of us this time also ; but we have seen through your game, O Lord, we have recognized you. You are Ramakrishna, indeed ! Are you not Rama and Krishna in One ?)

জান কি, রামকৃষ্ণ কে ?...পুরাতন যুগের অন্তিমকালে নূতন যুগের প্রারম্ভে স্বয়ং বিষ্ণু আবির্ভূত হন। এই সনাতন সত্যটি শ্রীকৃষ্ণ দ্বাপরের অন্তে কলিযুগের প্রারম্ভে আমাদের স্তনাইয়াছিলেন :

পরিত্রাণায় সাধুনাং বিনাশায় চ দুষ্কৃতাং ।

ধর্মসংস্থাপনার্থায় সন্তবামি যুগে যুগে ॥

আজ যিনি রামকৃষ্ণরূপী, তিনিই সেই যুগসম্ভাবনা ! যাহা আমরা আমাদের সাধনা ও শক্তিবলে পারি না, তাহাই তিনি কৃপা করিয়া সিদ্ধ করিতে আসিয়াছিলেন।...হিন্দুর জীবন্ত ও বহু ইতিহাস তাহার শ্রীচরণ হইতে উৎপন্ন হইয়াছে। সেই হিন্দুর আদর্শ, হিন্দুর জ্ঞান ও শিক্ষাকে পুনরায় তিনি জীবনে পরিস্ফুট, বেগবন্ত করিতে আসিয়াছিলেন।...তাই আমেরিকায় তোমার বেদান্তের ধ্বজা উড়িয়াছে। ইংলণ্ডে তোমার শাস্ত্রের মর্যাদা বাড়িয়াছে। তোমার সমাজের ছায়া অনুসরণ করিবার জন্য সেই ফিরিজি নরনারীগুলির কি প্রাণপণ আকিঞ্চন তাহা জানো কি ? কাহার কুপায় হইয়াছে ? তোমার গোষ্ঠামখানার বিদ্যায় নহে। ঐ ব্রাহ্মণের কুপায় !<sup>30</sup>



(Do you know who Ramakrishna is ? ...Lord Vishnu incarnates Himself as and when an old age ends yielding place to a new one. Sri Krishna gave us this eternal truth towards the close of Dvapara-yuga and the beginning of Kali-yuga :

*Paritranaaya sadhunam vinashaya cha duskritam ;  
Dharmasamsthapanarthaya sambhavami yuge yuge.*

[For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evildoers, and for the establishment of religion, I am born in every age.] He who is known as Ramakrishna today is the fulfilment of that great promise in this age. In His grace He came to the world to fulfil what we cannot attain through our efforts and [limited] power...Hindu culture with its long history owes its origin to His sacred feet. And he [Ramakrishna] came to manifest in his own life and thus to rejuvenate the ideal, knowledge, and culture of the Hindus...That explains why the banner of Vedanta has gone up in America. That explains why Hindu scriptures are looked upon with more and more respect in England. Do you know with what earnest craving the white men and women are striving now to toe the line of your society ? Do you know whose grace has brought about this ? No, it has not come about through your education—an education that goes to turn out mere slaves ! [Know it for certain that] behind all this is the grace of that Brahmin.)

JADUNATH SARKAR

During his[Ramakrishna's] lifetime he had shown the way to Freedom to thousands of devotees. Everyone had recognized in him one who had really seen God. Amongst those who had seen him and recognized the manifestation of the Great Power in him are to be found not only Hindus but also Brahmos like Keshab Chandra Sen, and rationalists like Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar. Whether we believe in an Avatar or not, all of us recognize that light can be transmitted through the help of sparks of fire. It is many years since the earthly life of Paramahansa Deva came to an end. But the light that he brought to this world is still burning. Even today millions of people, men and women, rich and poor, scholars and the illiterate, the happy and the miserable, the high caste and the low, reading his life and hearing his teachings, have been able to tune their life to a higher key. His life has brought solace to many a heart afflicted with sorrow and has shown that the Kingdom of Heaven can be brought to this earth.<sup>31</sup>

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa obviously was completely outside the run of average humanity. He appears to be in the tradition of the great *rishis* of India, who have come from time to time to draw our attention to the higher things of life and of the spirit. ...



One of the effects of Sri Ramakrishna's life was the peculiar way in which he influenced other people who came in contact with him. Men often scoffed from a distance at this man of no learning, and yet when they came to him, very soon they bowed their heads before this man of God and ceased to scoff and 'remained to pray'.<sup>32</sup>

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

From Vivekananda I turned gradually to his master, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Vivekananda had made speeches, written letters, and published books which were available to the layman. But Ramakrishna, who was almost an illiterate man, had done nothing of the kind. He had lived his life and had left it to others to explain it. Nevertheless, there were books or diaries published by his disciples which gave the essence of his teachings... There was nothing new in his teaching, which is as old as Indian civilisation itself, the Upanishads having taught thousands of years ago that through abandonment of worldly desires alone can immortal life be attained. The effectiveness of Ramakrishna's appeal lay, however, in the fact that he had practised what he preached and that... he had reached the acme of spiritual progress.<sup>33</sup>

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

While the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna did not penetrate so much into academic circles, they found their way into lonely hearts who have been stranded in their pursuit of pleasure and selfish desires. Under the inspiration of this great teacher there has been a powerful revival of social compassion. ...He has helped to raise from the dust the fallen standard of Hinduism, not in words merely, but in works also.<sup>34</sup>

WILLIAM DIGBY

During the last century the finest fruit of British intellectual eminence was, probably, to be found in Robert Browning and John Ruskin. Yet they are mere gropers in the dark compared with the uncultured and illiterate Ramakrishna of Bengal, who knowing naught of what we term 'learning', spake as not other man of his age spoke, and revealed God to weary mortals.<sup>35</sup>

R. C. MAJUMDAR

The truth of the theoretical speculations of Bankim was demonstrated by Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the greatest saint of the 19th century. Both by precept and example of his own life Ramakrishna brought home to an incredulous world, held under the spell of natural science, the reality of spiritual life and of the means to attain it as described in ancient Hindu scriptures, both Vedic and post-Vedic. He held that not only all the different forms of Hindu religion, including the Puranic and Tantric, but all religions,



such as Islam and Christianity, are true in their essence and may lead to salvation, if properly pursued. This he demonstrated by himself practising with success the diverse modes of *sadhana* or spiritual discipline prescribed in the different religious cults mentioned above. ...Ramakrishna proved in his own life that the worship of Puranic deities through their images was as good a means of salvation as the worship of one God without any form. He gave a moral sanction, a philosophical basis and a new spiritual significance to the neo-Hinduism which laid the foundation of Hindu nationalism on a secure foundation.<sup>36</sup>

#### AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition... was rooted in India's perennial philosophy. Truth is One ; men call it by different names : this was the Vedic view and it was carried on through the Upanishads, the Gita, and the medieval Indian sages to the nineteenth century saint Ramakrishna. Nearly illiterate but supremely knowledgeable, he not only absorbed the great Indian inheritance but accepted the revelations of other religions, mainly Christianity and Islam... [He] discarded sectarianism, used imagism in a highly symbolical and personal way, who dramatically moved from dualistic worship to monism and then to a balance of both, and finally and effortlessly emerged as a world teacher... To many of us, more important than any incident is the miracle of Ramakrishna himself, the miracle that he could be what he was and give us—for all time—his life's truth....

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement has proved... That the finest social service, concerned action and commitment spring from pure goodness, from the realization of beatitude and the divinity of life.... It must be recognized that a saintly person while not seeming to do anything utilitarian for society is actually fulfilling the highest social responsibility by igniting a moral conscience. Through precept and example he is changing individuals and therefore society. Every act of truth is also an act of service. Sri Ramakrishna transformed the hearts of men ; he gave them an exalted view of life, the fruits of which can be seen in the work done by the Ramakrishna Mission.... Thus we trace a continuous history from the Upanishads to Sri Ramakrishna, from Buddha to Gandhi and Tagore....<sup>36\*</sup>

#### LEROY S. ROUNER

Sri Ramakrishna, a nineteenth-century Indian saint and mystic, experienced God directly and immediately in the context of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam....

Sri Ramakrishna was the supreme example of a religious phenomenologist, and phenomenology is the methodology of love. It is the practical application of the New Testament injunction to lose one's life, for the sake of the



neighbour and in Christ's name, if one would truly find it. This means that neither the attack of religious imperialism, nor the defense of religious exclusivism can be a valid Christian attitude toward inter-religious relationships. The method of love in relation to the neighbour who is a religious stranger is to lay aside one's own perspective, even one's own convictions and beliefs, and to take on the life and world and beliefs of the neighbour stranger. In this context it is possible to discover the continually unfolding truth to which Christ promised the Holy Spirit would lead us. And only in this context it is possible to know the full meaning of the age-old Christian affirmation that God has not left himself without witnesses in any age or human community....

[In] Sri Ramakrishna's story... [our] fellow Christians may find the authentic Spirit of the one true God at work in their inner dialogue with this Hindu neighbour/stranger. In the midst of this meeting and knowing, that Spirit may lead us into some as yet undiscovered new truth....<sup>36\*\*</sup>

CLAUDE ALAN STARK

Sri Ramakrishna's approach to the dilemma of religious plurality has been documented as an exposition of his experiences of God-consciousness in different religious traditions. It is hoped that this exposition, in and of itself, represents a contribution to inter-religious understanding....

Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings form...an approach based on the experience of God, which is worthy of closer examination by sincere adherents of all religious traditions. One may conclude, by the details of his life, that this approach is a significant one.

The fact that Sri Ramakrishna experienced God in different religions is a matter of historical record. The fact also that God or ultimate Reality has been realized directly and immediately by many persons of diverse religious backgrounds cannot be ignored. Whole civilizations have been based on the strength of their testimony.

Sri Ramakrishna taught that any person who wishes to verify the authenticity of the experience of God may do so by raising his or her level of consciousness to a higher plane through prayer and spiritual practices. Then he or she can affirm with Sri Ramakrishna, "I actually *see* God, more clearly than I see you," or declare with Swami Vivekananda, "I have touched the feet of God."<sup>36\*\*\*</sup>



## II

### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

WILLIAM JAMES

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 Hindostan, 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 of his lectures here :

‘Where is there 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 the 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 men : all are One, and animals too, if you go deep enough, and he who has attained to that has no more delusion.... Where is there any more delusion for him ? What can delude him ? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything. Where is there any more misery for him ? What does he desire ? He has traced the reality of everything unto the Lord, that centre, that Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Bliss, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Existence. Neither death nor disease 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 deserves.’

Observe how radical the character of the 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 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 sumptuousness 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 ? Can I injure 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 insentientcy, sees that One Sentient Being ; he who in this world of shadow, catches 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 remediless and complete, I cannot help suspecting that the palpable weak places in the intellectual reasonings 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 we have 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.<sup>37</sup>

I have just been reading some of Vivekananda's address in England, which I had not seen. The man is simply a wonder for oratorical power...the Swami is an honour to humanity in any case.<sup>38</sup>

#### LEO TOLSTOY

Alexander Shifman writes : 'Among the Indian philosophers of the medieval period he studied more thoroughly Shankara and, among the more recent, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his pupil Swami Vivekananda....

'During his last years Tolstoy did not concern himself with Ramakrishna except selecting from his works passages for inclusion in his new collections of ancient sayings which he had compiled previously. At this time he was considerably more interested in Vivekananda's teachings....

'Tolstoy's acquaintance with Vivekananda's philosophy dates back to September, 1896, when for the first time he noted in his diary that he had read "a charming book on Indian wisdom" which had been sent to him. [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 53, p. 106]. This was a series of lectures on ancient Indian philosophy delivered by Vivekananda in New York in the winter of 1895-96. A. K. Datt, the Indian scholar, who sent to Tolstoy this book, wrote to him :



"You will be pleased to know that your doctrines are in complete agreement with the Indian philosophy at the period of its highest achievement, the most ancient to reach us". [The letter was not published. It is kept in Tolstoy's Archives. The name of the book is *The Philosophy of Yoga (Raja Yoga)* by Swami Vivekananda, New York, 1896. In 1911 the book was translated into Russian.]

"Tolstoy wrote in reply to this letter that he liked the book and he noted with approval the reasoning on what was man's 'self'. [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 69, p. 146]\*

'In Vivekananda's passionate tirades directed against the contemporary bourgeois civilization, in his affirmations of the priority of the spiritual essence of man over his 'material cover'. Tolstoy heard the echoes of the early teachings of the ancient Indians and particularly many motifs of the Vedas which were congenial to him.'

'The second book by Vivekananda which Tolstoy read was a collection of *Speeches and Articles* (in English) sent to him in 1907 by his acquaintance I. F. Nazhivin. When Nazhivin asked him whether he would like to have this book, Tolstoy replied on 7 July 1907: "Please send me the book by the Brahmin. The reading of such books is more than a pleasure, it is a broadening of the soul." [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 77, p. 151]

'In 1908, I. F. Nazhivin published a collection of articles, *Voices of the Peoples*, which included Vivekananda's articles "The Hymn of the Peoples" and "God and Man". The latter article made a strong impression on Tolstoy. "This is unusually good," he wrote to Nazhivin, after reading it.' [Complete collection of Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 78, p. 84]...

'Once Tolstoy praised Vivekananda for his "excellent polemics with Schopenhauer about God" and he noted the English of the Indian philosopher: "What English has Vivekananda! He has learnt all its subtleties. [D. P. Makovitsky, *Yasnaya Polyana* Notes, entry of 3 July 1908]

'In March 1909, preparing a list of new popular books for the people, Tolstoy also included in the plan of publication the Sayings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, [Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 57, p. 40] and, in April of the same year, he informed the Orientalist N.O. Einhorn: "We are preparing a publication of selected thoughts of Vivekananda whom I appreciate very much." [Works of Tolstoy, Vol. 79, p. 142] But this publication did not materialise.<sup>39</sup>

#### RABINDRANATH TAGORE

If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.<sup>40</sup>

বিবেকানন্দ বলেছিলেন, প্রত্যেক মানুষের মধ্যে ব্রহ্মের শক্তি। বলেছিলেন, দরিদ্রের মধ্যে দিয়ে নারায়ণ আমাদের সেবা পেতে চান।

একে বলি বাণী। এই বাণী স্বার্থবোধের সীমার বাইরে মানুষের আত্মবোধকে অসীম মুক্তির পথ দেখালে। এ তো কোন বিশেষ আচারের উপদেশ নয়, ব্যবহারিক সঙ্কীর্ণ অনুশাসন নয়। ছুঁৎমার্গের







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বিরুদ্ধতা এর মধ্যে আপনিই এসে পড়েছে। তার দ্বারা রাষ্ট্রিক স্বাভাব্যতার সুযোগ হতে পারে বলে নয়, তার দ্বারা মানুষের অপমান দূর হবে বলে। সে অপমানে আমাদের প্রত্যেকের আত্মবিশ্বাস।

বিবেকানন্দের এই বাণী সম্পূর্ণ মানুষের উদ্বেগজনক বলেই কর্মের মধ্য দিয়ে ত্যাগের মধ্য দিয়ে মুক্তির বিচিত্র পথে আমাদের যুবকদের প্রবৃত্ত করেছে।<sup>41</sup>

(Some time ago Vivekananda said that there was the power of Brahman in every man, that Narayana [i.e. God] wanted to have our service through the poor. This is what I call real gospel. This gospel showed the path of infinite freedom from man's tiny egocentric self beyond the limits of all selfishness. This was no sermon relating to a particular ritual, nor was it a narrow injunction to be imposed upon one's external life. This naturally contained in it protest against untouchability—not because that would make for political freedom, but because that would do away with the humiliation of man—a curse which in fact puts to shame the self of us all.

Vivekananda's gospel marked the awakening of man in his fullness and that is why it inspired our youth to the diverse courses of liberation through work and sacrifice.)

আধুনিক কালের ভারতবর্ষে বিবেকানন্দই একটি মহৎ বাণী প্রচার করেছিলেন, সেটি কোনো আচারগত নয়। তিনি দেশের সকলকে ডেকে বলেছিলেন, তোমাদের সকলের মধ্যে ব্রহ্মের শক্তি,—দরিদ্রের মধ্যে দেবতা তোমাদের সেবা চান। এই কথাটা যুবকদের চিত্তকে সমগ্রভাবে জাগিয়েছে। তাই এই বাণীর ফল দেশের সেবায় আজ বিচিত্রভাবে বিচিত্র ত্যাগে ফলছে। তাঁর বাণী মানুষকে যখন সম্মান দিয়েছে তখন শক্তি দিয়েছে। সেই শক্তির পথ কেবল একঘোঁকি নয়, তা কোনো দৈহিক প্রক্রিয়ার পুনরাবৃত্তির মধ্যে পর্যবসিত নয়, তা মানুষের প্রাণমনকে বিচিত্রভাবে প্রাণবান করেছে। বাংলাদেশের যুবকদের মধ্যে যেসব দুঃসাহসিক অধ্যবসায়ের পরিচয় পাই তার মূলে আছে বিবেকানন্দের সেই বাণী যা মানুষের আত্মাকে ডেকেছে, আঙুলকে নয়।<sup>42</sup>

(In recent times in India, it was Vivekananda alone who preached a great message which is not tied to any do's and don'ts. Addressing one and all in the nation, he said : In every one of you there is the power of Brahman (God) ; the God in the poor desires you to serve Him. This message has roused the heart of the youths in a most pervasive way. That is why this message has borne fruit in the service of the nation in diverse ways and in diverse forms of sacrifice. This message has, at one and the same time, imparted dignity and respect to man along with energy and power. The strength that this message has imparted to man is not confined to a particular point ; nor is it limited to repetitions of some physical movements. It has, indeed, invested his life with a wonderful dynamism in various spheres. There at the source of the adventurous activities of today's youth of Bengal is the message of Vivekananda—which calls the soul of man, not his fingers.)



## SRI AUROBINDO

## THE AWAKENING SOUL OF INDIA'

It was in religion first that the soul of India awoke and triumphed. There were always indications, always great forerunners, but it was when the flower of the educated youth of Calcutta bowed down at the feet of an illiterate Hindu ascetic, a self-illuminated ecstatic and "mystic" without a single trace or touch of the alien thought or education upon him that the battle was won. The going forth of Vivekananda, marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but to conquer.... Once the soul of the nation was awake in religion, it was only a matter of time and opportunity for it to throw itself on all spiritual and intellectual activities in the national existence and take possession of them.<sup>43</sup>

Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definite work he has left behind is quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, "Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children."<sup>44</sup>

The visit of Swami Vivekananda to America and the subsequent work of those who followed him did more for India than a hundred London Congresses could effect. That is the true way of awakening sympathy,—by showing ourselves to the nations as a people with a great past and ancient civilisation who still possess something of the genius and character of our forefathers, have still something to give the world and therefore deserve freedom,—by proof of our manliness and fitness, not by mendicancy.<sup>45</sup>

## BRAHMABANDHAV UPADHYAY

দিন কয়েকের জন্য আমি বোলপুর আশ্রমে বেড়াইতে গিয়াছিলাম। ফিরিয়া আসিয়া যেমন হাবড়া ইন্সটিশনে পা দিলাম অমনি কে বলিল—কাল স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ মানবলীলা সম্বরণ করিয়াছেন।—শুনিবামাত্র আমার বুকের মাঝে—একটুও বাড়ানো কথা নয়—ঠিক যেন একখানা ছুরি বিঁধিয়া গেল। বেদনার গভীরতা কমিয়া গেলে আমার মনে হইল—বিবেকানন্দের কাজ কেমন করিয়া চলিবে। কেন—তাঁহার ত অনেক উপযুক্ত বিদ্বান গুরুভাই আছেন—তাঁহারা চালাইবেন। তবুও যেন একটা প্রেরণা হইল—তোমার যতটুকু শক্তি আছে তুমি ততটুকু কাজে লাগাও—বিবেকানন্দের ফিরিঙ্গি-জয় ব্রত উদ্‌যাপন করিতে চেষ্টা কর। সেই মুহূর্তেই স্থির করিলাম যে, বিলাত যাইব। আমি স্বপ্নেও কখনও ভাবি নাই যে, বিলাত দেখিব। কিন্তু সেই হাবড়ার ইন্সটিশনে স্থির করিলাম—বিলাত গিয়া বেদান্তের



প্রতিষ্ঠা করিব। তখন আমি বুঝিলাম—বিবেকানন্দ কে। যাহার প্রেরণাশক্তি মাদুশ হীনজনকে সুদূর সাগরপারে লইয়া যায়—সে বড় সোজা মানুষ নয়। তাহার কিছুদিন পরেই সাতাইশটি টাকা লইয়া বিলাত যাইবার জন্য কলিকাতা নগরী ত্যাগ করিলাম। অবশেষে বিলাত গিয়া উক্সপার (Oxford) ও কামব্রজে (Cambridge) বেদান্তের ব্যাখ্যা করিলাম। বড় বড় অধ্যাপকেরা আমার ব্যাখ্যান শুনিলেন ও হিন্দু অধ্যাপক নিযুক্ত করিয়া বেদান্ত-বিজ্ঞান শিক্ষা করিবেন বলিয়া স্বীকার করিলেন। ঐ অধ্যাপকেরা যে সকল চিঠি আমাকে লিখিয়াছেন তাহা আমি ছাপাই নাই। ছাপাইলে বুঝিতে পারা যাইবে বিলাতে বেদান্তের প্রভাব কিরূপ গভীর হইয়াছিল। আমি সামান্য লোক। আমার দ্বারা যে এতবড় একটা কাজ হইয়া গেল—তাহা আমার কাছে তিক একটি স্বপ্নের মত। এই সমস্তই বিবেকানন্দের প্রেরণাশক্তির দ্বারা সম্পাদিত হইয়াছে—অঘটন ঘটিয়াছে—আমি মনে করি। তাই অনেক সময় ভাবি—বিবেকানন্দ কে। বিবেকানন্দ যে প্রকাণ্ড কাজ ফাঁদিয়া গিয়াছেন তাহা ভাবিলে বিবেকানন্দের মহত্বের ইয়ত্তা করা যায় না।

আর একবার বিবেকানন্দের সঙ্গে কলকাতার হেদোর ধারে আমার দেখা হয়। আমি বলিলাম—তাই চুপ করিয়া বসিয়া আছ কেন? এস—একবার কলিকাতা সহরে একটা বেদান্ত-বিজ্ঞানের বোল তোলা যাউক। আমি সব আয়োজন করিয়া দিব, তুমি একবার আসরে আসিয়া নামো।—বিবেকানন্দ কাতর স্বরে বলিল—ভবানী ভাই—আমি আর বাঁচিব না (তাহার তিরোভাবের তিক ছয় মাস পূর্বের কথা)—যাহাতে আমার মর্টটি শেষ করিয়া কাজের একটা সুবন্দোবস্ত করিয়া যাইতে পারি—তাহার জন্য ব্যস্ত আছি—আমার অবসর নাই। সেই দিন তাহার সন্ধ্যায় একাগ্রতা দেখিয়া বুঝিতে পারিয়াছিলাম যে, লোকটার হৃদয় বেদনাময়-ব্যথায় প্রপীড়িত। কাহার জন্য বেদনা, কাহার জন্য ব্যথা? দেশের জন্য বেদনা, দেশের জন্য ব্যথা। আর্ঘজ্ঞান আর্ঘসভ্যতা বিধ্বস্ত বিপর্যস্ত হইয়া যাইতেছে—তাহার স্থলে যাহা ইতর, যাহা অনার্য তাহাই সূক্ষ্মকে, উদার বস্তুকে, আর্ঘ্যতত্ত্বকে পরাভূত করিতেছে—আর তোমার সাড়া নাই, ব্যথা নাই। বিবেকানন্দের হৃদয়ে ইহার যন্ত্রণাময় সাড়া পড়িয়াছিল। সেই সাড়া এত গভীর যে, উহাতে মাকিন ও যুরোপের চৈতন্য হইয়াছিল। ঐ ব্যথার কথা ভাবি—বেদনার কথা চিন্তা করি—আর জিজ্ঞাসা করি—বিবেকানন্দ কে! দেশের জন্য ব্যথা কখন শরীরিণী হয়? যদি হয় ত বিবেকানন্দকে বুঝা যাইতে পারে।<sup>১৫</sup>

(For a few days I went on a trip to Bolpur. On my return as I stepped down at the Howrah Station, someone said, 'Swami Vivekananda passed away yesterday.' At once an acute pain, sharp like a razor—not the least exaggerated—thrust into my heart. When the intensity of the pain subsided, I wondered, 'How will Vivekananda's work go on? He has, of course, well-trained and educated brother-disciples. Why, they will do his work!' Yet an inspiration flickered in me: 'You give your best with whatever you possess by trying to translate into action Vivekananda's dream of conquest of the West.' That very moment I vowed I would sail to England. So long I never even dreamt of visiting England. But on that day at the Howrah Station I decided I must go to England and establish Vedanta there. Then I understood who Vivekananda was. He whose inspiration can drive a humble person like me across the seas, is not, really, an ordinary man. Shortly afterwards I left Calcutta and sailed for England with a sum of only twenty-seven rupees in my pocket. Finally, I reached England and delivered lectures at the Oxford and Cambridge Universities on Vedanta. Celebrated [British] scholars listened to my expositions and



expressed their desire to learn the science of Vedanta by appointing Hindu scholars. I did not publish the letters of appreciation which those scholars wrote to me. How profound was the influence of Vedanta in England could be understood if I had published those letters. I am just an ordinary man. It was all like a dream that such a great work was accomplished by me. All these were miracles brought about by the inspiration and power of Vivekananda behind me—this is what I believe. That is why sometimes I think, who is Vivekananda ? The greatness of Vivekananda surpasses my power of assessment as I think of the stupendous programme of work he had boldly initiated.

On another occasion I came across Vivekananda by the side of Hedua Park in Calcutta. I said to him, 'Brother, why are you keeping silent ? Come, raise a stir of Vedanta in Calcutta. I will make all arrangements. You just come and appear before the public.' Vivekananda's voice grew heavy with pathos. He said, 'Brother Bhavani, I will not live long (it was just six months before his death). I am busy now with the construction of my Math, and making arrangements for its proper upkeep. I have no leisure now.' At the pathetic earnestness of his words I understood that day that his heart was tormented with a passion and pain. Passion for whom ? Pain for whom ? Passion for the country, pain for the country. The knowledge and culture of the Aryans were being destroyed and crushed. What was gross and un-Aryan was deflating what was finer and Aryan. And yet there is no response, no pain in your heart ? —this [callous indifference of his countrymen] evoked a painful response in Vivekananda's heart. The response was so deep that it struck at the root of the conscience of America and Europe. I think of that pain and passion in Vivekananda, and ask, who is Vivekananda ? Is it ever possible that passion for the motherland becomes embodied ? If it is, then only one can understand Vivekananda.)

স্বামীজী ! আমি তোমার যৌবনের বন্ধু—তোমার সহিত কত আমোদ-প্রমোদ করিয়াছি—  
বনভোজন করিয়াছি—গল্পগাছা করিয়াছি। তখন জানিতাম না যে, তোমার প্রাণে সিংহবল আছে,  
তোমার হৃদয়ে ভারতের জন্য আগ্নেয় পর্বতভরা ব্যথা আছে। আজ আমিও আমার ক্ষুদ্রশক্তি লইয়া  
তোমারই ব্রত উদ্‌যাপন করিতে উদ্যত হইয়াছি।...এই ঘোর সংগ্রামে যখন ক্ষত-বিক্ষত বিশ্বস্ত  
হইয়া পড়ি—অবসাদ আসিয়া হৃদয়কে আচ্ছন্ন করে—তখন তোমার প্রদর্শিত আদর্শের দিকে দেখি—  
তোমার সিংহবলের কথা ভাবি—তোমার গভীর বেদনার অনুধ্যান করি—অমনি অবসাদ চলিয়া যায়  
—কোথা হইতে দিব্যালোক দিব্যশক্তি আসিয়া প্রাণমনকে উরপূর করিয়া ফেলে।<sup>১৭</sup>

(Swamiji ! I was your friend in youth. How much of merry-making I have enjoyed with you ! With you I went on picnics and spent hours in talks and conversations. But then I never knew that there was a lion's strength in your soul, a volcanic pain and passion for India in your heart. Today with all my humble strength I have come to follow your way....In the midst of this fierce struggle, whenever I get torn and tossed, whenever despondency comes and overwhelms my heart, I look up to the great ideal you set forth, I recollect



your leonine strength, meditate on the profound depths of your agony—then all at once my weariness withers away. A divine light and a divine strength comes from somewhere and fulfils my mind and heart.)

BAL GANGADHAR TILAK

It is doubtful if there is any Hindu who does not know the name of Sri Vivekananda Swami. There has been extraordinary advancement of material science in the nineteenth century. Under the circumstances, to present the spiritual science prevailing in India for thousands of years by wonderful exposition and then to kindle admiration and respect among the western scholars, and, at the same time, to create a sympathetic attitude for India, the mother of spiritual science, can only be an achievement of superhuman power. With English education, the flood of material science spread so fast that it required extraordinary courage and extraordinary genius to stand against that phenomenon and change its direction. Before Swami Vivekananda the Theosophical society began this work. But it is an undisputed fact that it was Swami Vivekananda who first held aloft the banner of Hinduism as a challenge against the material science of the West....It was Swami Vivekananda who took on his shoulders this stupendous task of establishing the glory of Hinduism in different countries across the borders. And he, with his erudition, oratorical power, enthusiasm and inner force, laid that work upon a solid foundation....Twelve centuries ago Sankaracharya was the only great personality, who not only spoke of the purity of our religion, not only uttered in words that this religion was our strength and wealth, not only said that it was our sacred duty to preach this religion in the length and breadth of the world—but also brought all this into action. Swami Vivekananda is a person of that stature—who appeared towards the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>48</sup>

BEPIN CHANDRA PAL

# I

Vivekananda, however, does not stand alone. He is indissolubly bound up with his Master, Paramahansa Ramakrishna. The two stand almost organically bound up, so far as the modern man, not only in India but in the larger world of our day, is concerned. The modern man can only understand Paramahansa in and through Vivekananda, even as Vivekananda can be understood only in the light of the life of his Master. The Master was a great spiritual force. He was therefore inevitably a mystery to a generation possessed by the un-understood slogans of what is called rationalism, which really means lack of that imagination which is the soul of all spiritual life. Imagination is not fancy. It is really the power to cognize, if not to visualize, that which stands above not only the sensuous but also the intellectual plane. The generation to which



Ramakrishna belonged, lacked this imagination. He was, therefore, a mystery to it. It was given to Vivekananda to interpret and present the soul of Paramahansa Ramakrishna and the message of his life to this generation in such terms as would be comprehended by them.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa belonged to no sect or denomination or to put it in another way, he belonged to all sects and denominations both Indian and non-Indian. He was a true Universalist, but his Universalism was not the Universalism of Abstraction. He did not subtract the particularities of different religions to realize his universal religion. With him the Universal and the particular always went together like the sun and shadow. He realized therefore the Reality of the Universal in and through the infinite particularities of life and thought. Vivekananda clothed this realization of his Master in the language of modern Humanism.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa's God was not the God of logic or philosophy, but the God of direct, personal, inner experience. Ramakrishna believed in his God not on the authority of ancient scriptures or traditions, nor on the authority of any Guru, but on the testimony of his own direct, personal experiences. He was a Vedantist ; because, his direct allegiance and early training was in the cult of Shakti. The Shakti cult in Bengal has been built upon Vedantism. But the Vedantism of Ramakrishna Paramahansa could hardly be labelled as Sankara-Vedantism, nor could it be labelled either as any of the different schools of Vaishnava-Vedanta. These labels are for those who borrow their theology from speculations of great thinkers. But Ramakrishna Paramahansa did not belong to this class. He was not a philosopher ; he was not a Pandit, whether modern or ancient, he was not a logician ; he was a simple seer. He believed in what he saw.

The seer is always a mystic. So was Paramahansa Ramakrishna : so was Jesus ; so were all the great spiritual leaders of men. The crowd cannot understand them ; least of all are they understood by the learned and the philosophers of their age. Yet they reveal that which all philosophies grope after. Paramahansa Ramakrishna, like Jesus Christ, needed an interpreter to explain him and deliver his message to his age. Jesus found such an interpreter in St. Paul ; Ramakrishna found him in Vivekananda. Vivekananda therefore must be understood in the light of the realizations of Paramahansa Ramakrishna.

## II

The story of Vivekananda's conversion has not as yet been told. I do not know if anybody knows how this miracle happened. Vivekananda had been a rationalist and a deist, though he fancied that he was a theist. His early religious associations were with the Brahmo Samaj. They were not very congenial to the development of faith in saints and seers. Ramakrishna



Paramahansa attracted however many members of the Brahmo Samaj by his great psychic powers and more particularly by his passionate love of God. But they never were able to open the secret springs of the life and realizations of the Paramahansa. They saw him through the prism of the intellect. The Paramahansa never really opened to most of them the secret chambers of his piety. Vivekananda was favoured by the Paramahansa in this matter.

Paramahansa Ramakrishna saw into the innermost composition of Vivekananda's nature and spirit and recognized in him a fit instrument for delivering the message of his own life. This is the real story of Vivekananda's conversion. It is the story of the conversion also of Saul, though it was set in a different psychological setting. Vivekananda felt drawn to his Master by what he hardly knew. It was the operation of what is now called soul-force. When one soul touches another on this deep spiritual plane, the two are united forever by unbreakable spiritual bonds. The two henceforth become practically one ; the Master working in and through the disciple, the disciple not even knowing that he is dancing to the tune of the Master. People call it inspiration. Vivekananda worked after his conversion under the inspiration of his Master.

### III

The message of Vivekananda, though delivered in the term of the popular Vedantic speculation, was really the message of his Master to the modern man. Vivekananda's message was really the message of modern humanity. His appeal to his own people was, "Be men." The man of religion in India had been a mediaeval man. His religion was generally a religion of the other world. It was a religion that enjoined renunciation of the world and all the obligations of the physical and the social life. But this was not the real message of Paramahansa Ramakrishna. He was as much a Vedantin as a Vaishnava. His ideal of piety was a synthesis between these two rival schools of Hindu religion. His cult of the Mother was really the cult of 'Bhakti', or love of God, realized in the terms of the human motherhood. As with the Bengal Vaishnavas, so with the Paramahansa, the Ultimate Reality was not an abstraction. It was not carnal, but therefore it was not without form. And the real form of the Ultimate Reality is the Human Form—not the sensuous form of man which we see with our eyes, but the spiritual form which stands behind it, invisible to mortal eye. Man and God are generically one.

To help man to realize his essential divinity is the object of all religious culture. This is what Vivekananda really meant when he appealed to his people to be men. In the ritual of divine worship of the Brahmin, is used the following text which says : "I am Divine. I am none other. I am not subject to grief and bereavement. I am of the form of the True, the Self-conscious and the Eternally Present. I am 'by nature eternally free.'" This was the



message really of his Master as delivered to the modern world by Vivekananda.

It is the message of freedom, not in a negative sense, but in its positive and most comprehensive implications. Freedom means removal of all outside restraint. But constituted as we are, we cannot cut ourselves off from all outside relations, whether with our natural environments or our social environments. Such isolation spells death both physically and spiritually. The law of life is therefore not isolation, but association, not non-co-operation but co-operation. And real freedom is achieved not through war, but through peace only. War or renunciation or isolation has a place no doubt in the scheme of life, but only a temporary place as a means to the attainment of the ultimate end which is not perpetuation of the inevitable conflict of evolution, but the settlement and cancellation of these conflicts in a closer and permanent union. Freedom again is one. Freedom from the domination of our passions and appetites is the first step in the realization of the ideal. Freedom from the fear of brother-man is the next step. Freedom from the domination of any external authority must follow next. In this way from personal freedom, through social freedom including political freedom, man must attain his real freedom. And when he attains it, he realizes finally that he and his God are one. This is the message of the Vedanta as interpreted by Vivekananda. This is really the message of his Master to the modern world.<sup>49</sup>

Some people in India think that very little fruit has come of the lectures that Swami Vivekananda delivered in England, and that his friends and admirers exaggerate his work. But on coming here I see that he has exerted a marked influence everywhere. In many parts of England I have met with men who deeply regard and venerate Vivekananda. Though I do not belong to his sect, and though it is true that I have differences of opinion with him, I must say that Vivekananda has opened the eyes of a great many here and broadened their hearts. Owing to his teaching, most people here now believe firmly that wonderful spiritual truths lie hidden in the ancient Hindu scriptures. Not only has he brought about this feeling, but he succeeded in establishing a golden relation between England and India. From what I quoted on 'Vivekanandism' from *The Dead Pulpit* by Mr. Haweis, you have already understood that owing to the spread of Vivekananda's doctrines, many hundreds of people have seceded from Christianity. And how deep and extensive his work has been in this country will readily appear from the following incident.

Yesterday evening I was going to visit a friend in the Southern part of London. I lost my way and was looking from the corner of a street thinking in which direction I should go, when a lady accompanied by a boy came to me, with the intention, it seemed, of showing me the way.... She said to me, 'Sir, perhaps you are looking to find your way. May I help you?... She showed me my way and said, 'From certain papers I learned that you are coming to London. At the very first sight of you I was telling my son, "Look there is



'Swami Vivekananda'." As I had to catch the train in a hurry, I had no time to tell her that I was not Vivekananda, and compelled to go off speedily. However, I was really surprised to see that the lady possessed such great veneration for Vivekananda even before she knew him personally. I felt highly gratified at the agreeable incident, and thanked my *Gerua* turban which had given me so much honour. Besides the incident, I have seen here many educated English gentlemen, who have come to revere India and who listened eagerly to any religious or spiritual truths, if they belong to India.<sup>50</sup>

MANABENDRA NATH ROY

Religious nationalism of the orthodox as well as reformed school had begun to come into evidence in the province of Bengal since the first years of the twentieth century. Although its political philosopher and leader were found subsequently in the persons of Arabinda Ghose and Bepin Chandra Pal respectively, its fundamental ideology was conceived by a young intellectual... Narendranath Dutta, subsequently known by the religious nomenclature of Swami Vivekananda. While still a student in the University of Calcutta, Dutta felt the rebellious spirit affecting the lower middle class intellectuals. It was in the early nineties. He was moved by the sufferings of the common people. De-classed socially, possessing a keen intellect, he made a spectacular plunge into the philosophical depths of Hindu scripture and discovered in his cult of Vedantism (religious Monism of the Hindus) a sort of socialistic, humanitarian religion. He decried scathingly orthodoxy in religion as well as in social customs. He was the picturesque, and tremendously vigorous embodiment of the old trying to readjust itself to the new. Like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Dutta was also a prophet of Hindu nationalism. He also was a firm believer in the cultural superiority of the Indian people, and held that on this cultural basis should be built the future Indian nation. But he was not a partisan of orthodoxy in religion : to social conservatism, he was a veritable iconoclast. He had the courageous foresight, or perhaps instinct, which convinced him that if religion was to be saved, it must be given a modern garb ; if the priest was still to hold his sway over the millions of Hindu believers, he must modify his old crude ways ; if the intellectual aristocracy of the fortunate few was to retain its social predominance, spiritual knowledge must be democratized. The reaction of native culture against the intrusion of Western education ran wild, so to say, in the person of Vivekananda and the cult of Universal Religion he formulated in the name of his preceptor, Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He preached that Hinduism, not Indian nationalism, should be aggressive. His nationalism was a spiritual imperialism. He called on Young India to believe in the spiritual mission of India....

This romantic vision of conquering the world by spiritual superiority electrified the young intellectuals.... The British domination stood in the way



as the root of all evils. Thus, an intelligently rebellious element... had to give in to national pre-occupations, and contribute itself to a movement for the immediate overthrow of foreign rule....<sup>51</sup>

MAHATMA GANDHI

I have come here [Belur Math] to pay my homage and respect to the revered memory of Swami Vivekananda, whose birthday is being celebrated today [6 February 1921]. I have gone through his works very thoroughly, and after having gone through them, the love that I had for my country became a thousand-fold. I ask you, young men, not to go away empty-handed without imbibing something of the spirit of the place where Swami Vivekananda lived and died.<sup>52</sup>

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Rooted in the past and full of pride in India's prestige, Vivekananda was yet modern in his approach to life's problems and was a kind of bridge between the past of India and her present....He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time full of a dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward. He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance, and some roots in the past.<sup>53</sup>

I do not know how many of the younger generation read the speeches and the writings of Swami Vivekananda. But I can tell you that many of my generation were very powerfully influenced by him and I think that it would do a great deal of good to the present generation if they also went through Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, and they would learn much from them. That would, perhaps, as some of us did, enable us to catch a glimpse of that fire that raged in Swami Vivekananda's mind and heart and which ultimately consumed him at an early age. Because there was fire in his heart—the fire of a great personality coming out in eloquent and ennobling language—it was no empty talk that he was indulging in. He was putting his heart and soul into the words he uttered. Therefore he became a great orator, not with the orators' flashes and flourishes but with a deep conviction and earnestness of spirit. And so he influenced powerfully the minds of many in India and two or three generations of young men and women have no doubt been influenced by him....

Much has happened which perhaps makes some forget those who came before and who prepared India and shaped India in those early and difficult days. If you read Swami Vivekananda's writings and speeches, the curious thing you will find is that they are not old. It was told 56\* years ago, and they are fresh today because, what he wrote or spoke about dealt with certain



fundamental matters and aspects of our problems or the world's problems. Therefore they do not become old. They are fresh even though you read them now.

He gave us something which brings us, if I may use the word, a certain pride in our inheritance. He did not spare us. He talked of our weaknesses and our failings too. He did not wish to hide anything. Indeed he should not. Because we have to correct those failings, he deals with those failings also. Sometimes he strikes hard at us, but sometimes points out the great things for which India stood and which even in the days of India's downfall made her, in some measure, continue to be great.

So what Swamiji has written and said is of interest and must interest us and is likely to influence us for a long time to come. He was no politician in the ordinary sense of the word and yet he was, I think, one of the great founders—if you like, you may use any other word—of the national modern movement of India, and a great number of people who took more or less an active part in that movement in a later date drew their inspiration from Swami Vivekananda. Directly or indirectly he has powerfully influenced the India of today. And I think that our younger generation will take advantage of this fountain of wisdom, of spirit and fire, that flows through Swami Vivekananda.

...Men like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, men like Swami Vivekananda and men like Mahatma Gandhi are great unifying forces, great constructive geniuses of the world not only in regard to the particular teachings that they taught, but their approach to the world and their conscious and unconscious influence on it is of the most vital importance to us....<sup>54</sup>

SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

In the eighties of the last century, two prominent religious personalities appeared before the public who were destined to have a great influence on the future course of the new awakening. They were Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the saint, and his disciple Swami Vivekananda....Ramakrishna preached the gospel of the unity of all religions and urged the cessation of inter-religious strife....Before he died, he charged his disciple with the task of propagating his religious teachings in India and abroad and of bringing about and awakening among his countrymen. Swami Vivekananda therefore founded the Ramakrishna Mission, an order of monks, to live and preach the Hindu religion in its purest form in India and abroad, especially in America, and he took an active part in inspiring every form of healthy national activity. With him religion was the inspirer of nationalism. He tried to infuse into the new generation a sense of pride in India's past, of faith in India's future and a spirit of self-confidence and self-respect. Though the Swami never gave any political message, every one who came into contact with him or his writings developed a spirit of



patriotism and a political mentality. So far at least as Bengal is concerned, Swami Vivekananda may be regarded as the spiritual father of the modern nationalist movement. He died very young in 1902, but since his death his influence has been even greater.<sup>55</sup>

I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him—even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound and complex and it was this personality—as distinct from his teachings and writings—which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen and particularly on Bengalees. This is the type of manhood which appeals to the Bengalee as probably none other. Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in his attacks but yet simple as a child—he was a rare personality in this world of ours....

Swamiji was a full-blooded masculine personality—and a fighter to the core of his being. He was consequently a worshipper of Shakti and gave a practical interpretation to the Vedanta for the uplift of his countrymen....I can go on for hours and yet fail to do the slightest justice to that great man. He was so great, so profound, so complex. A Yogi of the highest spiritual level in direct communion with the truth who had for the time being consecrated his whole life to the moral and spiritual uplift of his nation and of humanity, that is how I would describe him. If he had been alive, I would have been at his feet. Modern Bengal is his creation—if I err not.<sup>56</sup>

শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ ও স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের নিকট আমি যে কত খণী তাহা ভাষায় কি করিয়া প্রকাশ করিব? তাহাদের পুণ্য প্রভাবে আমার জীবনের প্রথম উন্মেষ। নিবেদিতার মত আমিও মনে করি যে, রামকৃষ্ণ ও বিবেকানন্দ একটা অখণ্ড ব্যক্তিত্বের দুই রূপ। আজ যদি স্বামীজী জীবিত থাকিতেন তিনি নিশ্চয়ই আমার গুরু হইতেন—অর্থাৎ তাঁকে নিশ্চয়ই আমি গুরুপদে বরণ করিতাম। যাহা হউক, যতদিন জীবিত থাকিব, ততদিন রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের একান্ত অনুগত ও অনুরক্ত থাকিব, একথা বলাই বাহুল্য।<sup>57</sup>

(How shall I express in words my indebtedness to Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda? It is under their sacred influence that my life got first awakened. Like Nivedita I also regard Ramakrishna and Vivekananda as two aspects of one indivisible personality. If Swamiji had been alive today, he would have been my Guru, that is to say, I would have accepted him as my Master. It is needless to add, however, that as long as I live, I shall be absolutely loyal and devoted to Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.)

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের বহুমুখী প্রতিভার ব্যাখ্যা করা বড় কঠিন। আমাদের সময়ের ছাত্রসমাজ স্বামীজীর রচনা ও বক্তৃতার দ্বারা যে রূপ প্রভাবিত হইয়াছিল, সে রূপ আর কাহারও দ্বারা হয় নাই—তিনি যেন সম্পূর্ণভাবে তাহাদের আশা ও আকাঙ্ক্ষাকে ব্যক্ত করিয়াছিলেন।



শ্রীশ্রীপরমহংসদেবের সহিত একযোগে না দেখিলে স্বামীজীকে যথার্থভাবে বিচার করা যাইবে না। স্বামীজীর বাণীর মধ্য দিয়াই বর্তমানের মুক্তি-আন্দোলনের ভিত্তি গঠিত হইয়াছে। ভারতবর্ষকে যদি স্বাধীন হইতে হয়, তবে তাহাকে হিন্দুধর্ম বা ইসলামের বিশেষ আবাসভূমি হইলে চলিবে না—তাহাকে জাতীয়তার আদর্শে অনুপ্রাণিত বিভিন্ন ধর্মসম্প্রদায়ের একত্র বাসভূমি হইতে হইবে। রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের যে বাণী—ধর্মসম্বন্ধ—তাহা ভারতবাসীকে সর্বান্তঃকরণে গ্রহণ করিতে হইবে।...

স্বামীজী প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্যের, ধর্ম ও বিজ্ঞানের, অতীত ও বর্তমানের সমন্বয় করিয়াছিলেন, তাই তিনি মহৎ। তাঁহার শিক্ষায় দেশবাসী অভূতপূর্ব আত্মসম্মান, আত্মবিশ্বাস এবং আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠার বোধ লাভ করিয়াছে।<sup>৫৪</sup>

(It is very difficult to explain the versatile genius of Swami Vivekananda. The impact Swami Vivekananda made on the students of our times by his works and speeches far outweighed that made by any other leader of the country. He, as it were, expressed fully their hopes and aspirations. [But] Swamiji cannot be appreciated properly if he is not studied along with Sri Sri Paramahansa Deva. The foundation of the present freedom movement owes its origin to Swamiji's message. If India is to be free, it cannot be a land specially of Hinduism or of Islam—it must be one united land of different religious communities inspired by the ideal of nationalism. [And for that] Indians must accept whole-heartedly the gospel of harmony of religions which is the gospel of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda....

Swamiji harmonized East and West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-confidence and self-assertion from his teachings.)

রামকৃষ্ণ পরমহংস নিজের জীবনের সাধনার ভিতর দিয়া সর্বধর্মের যে সমন্বয় করিতে পারিয়াছিলেন, তাহাই স্বামীজীর জীবনের মূলমন্ত্র ছিল এবং তাহাই ভবিষ্যৎ ভারতের জাতীয়তার মূল ভিত্তি। এই সর্বধর্ম সমন্বয় ও সকল-মত সহিষ্ণুতার প্রতিষ্ঠা না হইলে আমাদের এই বৈচিত্র্যপূর্ণ দেশে জাতীয়তাবোধ নিমিত হইতে পারিত না।...

রামমোহনের যুগ হইতে বিভিন্ন আন্দোলনের ভিতর দিয়া ভারতের মুক্তির আকাঙ্ক্ষা ক্রমশঃ প্রকটিত হইয়া আসিতেছে। ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীতে এই আকাঙ্ক্ষা চিন্তারাজ্যে ও সমাজের মধ্যে দেখা দিয়াছিল, কিন্তু রাষ্ট্রীয় ক্ষেত্রে তখনও দেখা দেয় নাই—কারণ তখনও ভারতবাসী পরাধীনতার মোহনিদ্রায় নিমগ্ন থাকিয়া মনে করিতেছিল যে, ইংরাজের ভারতবিজয় একটা দৈব ঘটনা বা Divine Dispensation. ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দীর শেষ দিকে এবং বিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রারম্ভে স্বাধীনতার অখণ্ডরূপের আভাস রামকৃষ্ণ-বিবেকানন্দের মধ্যে পাওয়া যায়। 'Freedom, freedom is the song of the Soul'—এই বাণী যখন স্বামীজীর অন্তরের রুদ্ধ দুয়ার ভেদ করিয়া নির্গত হয়, তখন তাহা সমগ্র দেশবাসীকে মুগ্ধ ও উন্মত্ত প্রায় করিয়া তোলে। তাঁহার সাধনার ভিতর দিয়া, আচরণের ভিতর দিয়া, কথা ও বক্তৃতার ভিতর দিয়া এই সত্যই বাহির হইয়াছিল।

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ মানুষকে যাবতীয় বন্ধন হইতে মুক্ত হইয়া খাঁটি মানুষ হইতে বলেন এবং অপরদিকে সর্বধর্ম সমন্বয়ের প্রচারে ভারতের জাতীয়তার ভিত্তি স্থাপন করেন।<sup>৫৫</sup>



(The harmony of all religions which Ramakrishna Paramahansa accomplished in his life's endeavour, was the keynote of Swamiji's life. And this ideal again is the bed-rock of the nationalism of Future India. Without this concept of harmony of religions and toleration of all creeds, the spirit of national consciousness could not have been build up in this country of ours full of diversities.

The aspiration for freedom manifested itself in various movements since the time of Rammohan Ray. This aspiration was witnessed in the realm of thought and in social reforms during the nineteenth century, but it was never expressed in the political sphere. This was because the people of India still remained sunk in the stupor of subjugation and thought that the conquest of India by the British was an act of Divine Dispensation. The idea of complete freedom is manifest only in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda towards the end of the nineteenth century. "Freedom, freedom is the song of the Soul"—this was the message that burst forth from the inner recesses of Swamiji's heart and captivated and almost maddened the entire nation. This truth was embodied in his works, life, conversations, and speeches.

Swami Vivekananda, on the one hand, called man to be real man freed from all fetters and, on the other, laid the foundation for true nationalism in India by preaching the gospel of the harmony of religions.)

#### VINOBA BHAVE

Vivekananda not only made us conscious of our strength, he also pointed out our defects and drawbacks....India was then steeped in *tamas* (ignorance and unwisdom) and mistook weakness for non-attachment and peace. That is why Vivekananda went so far as to say that criminality was preferable to lethargy and indolence. He made people conscious of the *tamasika* state they were in, of the need to break out of it and stand erect so that they might realize in their own lives the power of the Vedanta. Speaking of those who enjoyed the luxury of studying philosophy and the scriptures in the smugness of their retired life, he said football-playing was better than that type of indulgence. Through a series of *obiter dicta*, he rehabilitated the prestige of India's soul force and pointed out to the *tamoguna* (unwisdom) that had eclipsed her. He taught us : 'The same Soul resides in each and all. If you are convinced of this, it is your duty to treat all as brothers and serve mankind.' People were inclined to hold that, though all had equal right to the *tattva-jnana* (knowledge of the Spirit), the difference of high and low should be maintained in the day-to-day dealings and relations. Swamiji made us see the truth that *tattva-jnana*, which had no place in our everyday relationship with our fellow beings, and in our activities was useless and inane. He, therefore, advised us to dedicate ourselves to the service of 'Daridranarayana' (God



manifested in the hungry, destitute millions) to their upliftment and edification. The word 'Daridranarayana' was coined by Vivekananda and popularized by Gandhiji.<sup>60</sup>

#### ROMAIN ROLLAND

He [Vivekananda] was energy personified, and action was his message to men. For him, as for Beethoven, it was the root of all the virtues....

His pre-eminent characteristic was kingliness. He was a born king and nobody ever came near him either in India or America without paying homage to his majesty.

When this quite unknown young man of thirty appeared in Chicago at the inaugural meeting of the Parliament of Religions, opened in September 1893, by Cardinal Gibbons, all his fellow-members were forgotten in his commanding presence. His strength and beauty, the grace and dignity of his bearing, the dark light of his eyes, his imposing appearance, and from the moment he began to speak, the splendid music of his rich deep voice enthralled the vast audience of American Anglo-Saxons, previously prejudiced against him on account of his colour. The thought of this warrior prophet of India left a deep mark upon the United States.

It was impossible to imagine him in the second place. Wherever he went he was the first....Everybody recognised in him at sight the leader, the anointed of God, the man marked with the stamp of the power to command. A traveller who crossed his path in the Himālayas without knowing who he was, stopped in amazement, and cried, "Shiva !... "

It was as if his chosen God had imprinted His name upon his forehead....

He was less than forty years of age when the athlete lay stretched upon the pyre....

But the flame of that pyre is still alight today. From his ashes, like those of the Phoenix of old, has sprung anew the conscience of India—the magic bird—faith in her unity and in the Great Message, brooded over from Vedic times by the dreaming spirit of his ancient race—the message for which it must render account to the rest of mankind.

\*

Moving as were his [Vivekananda's] lectures at Colombo, and the preaching to the people of Rameswaram—it was for Madras that he reserved his greatest efforts. Madras had been expecting him for weeks in a kind of passionate delirium....

He replied to the frenzied expectancy of the people by his Message to India, a conch sounding the resurrection of the land of Rama, of Shiva, of Krishna, and calling the heroic Spirit, the immortal Atman, to march to war. He was a general, explaining his *Plan of Campaign*, and calling his people to rise *en masse* :

"My India, arise !"...



"For the next fifty years... let all other vain Gods disappear for that time from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race—everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears, He covers everything. All other Gods are sleeping. What vain Gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the God that we see all round us, the Virat ?... The first of all worship is the worship of the Virat—of those all around us.... These are all our Gods—men and animals, and the first Gods we have to worship are our own countrymen...."

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words !...

The storm passed ; it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities ! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving : with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life....

Did the dead arise ? Did India, thrilling to the sound of his words, reply to the hope of her herald ? Was her noisy enthusiasm translated into deeds ? At the time nearly all this flame seemed to have been lost in smoke. Two years afterwards Vivekananda declared bitterly that the harvests of young men necessary for his army had not come from India. It is impossible to change in a moment the habits of a people buried in a Dream, enslaved by prejudice, and allowing themselves to fail under the weight of the slightest effort. But the Master's rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time the heroic trumpet sounded in the midst of her dream the Forward March of India, conscious of her God. She never forgot it. From that day the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed, saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organised masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty "Lazarus, come forth ;" of the message from Madras.

This message of energy had a double meaning : a national and a universal. Although, for the great monk of the Advaita, it was the universal meaning that predominated, it was the other that revived the sinews of India.

\*

His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of books at thirty years' distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock. And what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero !



\*

India was hauled out of the shifting sands of barren speculation wherein she had been engulfed for centuries, by the hand of one of her own Sannyasins ; and the result was that the whole reservoir of mysticism, sleeping beneath, broke its bounds and spread by a series of great ripples into action. The West ought to be aware of the tremendous energies liberated by these means.

The world finds itself face to face with an awakening India. Its huge prostrate body, lying along the whole length of the immense peninsula, is stretching its limbs and collecting its scattered forces. Whatever the part played in this reawakening by the three generations of trumpeters during the previous century— (the greatest of whom we salute, the genial Precursor : Ram Mohun Roy), the decisive call was the trumpet blast of the lectures delivered at Colombo and Madras.

And the magic watchword was Unity. Unity of every Indian man and woman (and world-unity as well) ; of all the powers of the spirit—dream and action ; reason, love, and work. Unity of the hundred races of India with their hundred different tongues and hundred thousand gods springing from the same religious centre, the core of present and future reconstruction. Unity of the thousand sects of Hinduism. Unity within the vast Ocean of all religious thought and all rivers past and present, Western and Eastern. For—and herein lies the difference between the awakening of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda and that of Ram Mohun Roy and the Brahmo Samaj—in these days India refuses allegiance to the imperious civilisation of the West, she defends her own ideas, she has stepped into her age-long heritage with the firm intention not to sacrifice any part of it, but to allow the rest of the world to profit by it, and to receive in return the intellectual conquests of the West. The time is past for the pre-eminence of one incomplete and partial civilisation. Asia and Europe, the two giants, are standing face to face as equals for the first time. If they are wise they will work together, and the fruit of their labours will be for all.

This "greater India", this new India—whose growth politicians and learned men have, ostrich fashion, hidden from us and whose striking effects are now apparent—is impregnated with the soul of Ramakrishna. The twin star of the Paramahansa and the hero who translated his thoughts into action, dominates and guides her present destinies. Its warm radiance is the leaven working within the soil of India and fertilising it. The present leaders of India : the king of thinkers, the king of poets, and the Mahatma—Aurobindo Ghose, Tagore, and Gandhi—have grown, flowered, and borne fruit under the double constellation of the Swan and the Eagle—a fact publicly acknowledged by Aurobindo and Gandhi....

As for Tagore, whose Goethe-like genius stands at the junction of all the rivers of India, it is permissible to presume that in him are united and



harmonised the two currents of the Brahmo Samaj (transmitted to him by his father, the Maharshi) and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rich in both, free in both, he has serenely wedded the West and the East in his own spirit. From the social and national point of view his only public announcement of his ideas was, if I am not mistaken, about 1906 at the beginning of the Swadeshi movement, four years after Vivekananda's death. There is no doubt that the breath of such a Forerunner must have played some part in his evolution.

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I was glad to hear Gandhi's voice quite recently—in spite of the fact that his temperament is the antithesis of Ramakrishna's or Vivekananda's—remind his brethren of the International Fellowships, whose pious zeal disposed them to evangelise, of the great universal principle of religious "Acceptation", the same preached by Vivekananda....

At this stage of human evolution, wherein both blind and conscious forces are driving all natures to draw together for "co-operation or death", it is absolutely essential that the human consciousness should be impregnated with it, until this indispensable principle becomes an axiom : that every faith has an equal right to live, and that there is an equal duty incumbent upon every man to respect that which his neighbour respects. In my opinion Gandhi, when he stated it so frankly, showed himself to be the heir of Ramakrishna.

There is no single one of us who cannot take this lesson to heart. The writer of these lines—he has vaguely aspired to this wide comprehension all through his life—feels only too deeply at this moment how many are his shortcomings in spite of his aspirations ; and he is grateful for Gandhi's great lesson—the same lesson that was peached by Vivekananda, and still more by Ramakrishna—to help him to achieve it.<sup>61</sup>

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

Vivekananda was, as I said, profoundly moved by the realization of India's poverty and the state of her oppression under the British colonial rule. And he proposed a revolution. The spirit of this revolution enormously influenced Gandhi and influences Indian political thought to this day. Vivekananda in this sense is a great figure in Indian history, one of the very greatest historical figures that India has ever produced. But it must always be noted that Vivekananda's revolution, Vivekananda's nationalism, were not like the kind of revolution, the kind of nationalism, which we associate with other great leaders, admirable and noble as they may be. Vivekananda was far greater than that. In fact, when one sees the full range of his mind, one is astounded. Vivekananda looked toward the West, not simply as a mass of tyrants exploiting various parts of Asia, and other undeveloped areas, but as future partners, people who had very, very much to offer. At the same time,



without any false humility, he faced the West and said, "we have fully as much and more to offer *you*. We offer you this great tradition of spirituality, which can produce, even now, today, a supremely great figure such as Ramakrishna. You can offer us medical services, trains that run on time, hygiene, irrigation, electric light. These are very important, we want them, and we admire some of your qualities immensely."

One of the most enchanting things about Vivekananda is the way he was eternally changing sides when he was speaking to different people ; he could denounce the British in words of fire, but again he would turn on the Indians and say, "You cannot manufacture one pin, and you dare to criticize the British !" And then he would speak of the awful materialism of the United States, and on the other hand, he would say that no women in the world were greater, and that the treatment of women in India was absolutely disgraceful. And so in every way, he was integrating, he was seeing the forces for good, the constructive forces, in the different countries, and saying, "why don't we exchange ?" So Vivekananda's revolution was a revolution for everybody, a revolution which would in the long run be of just as much use to the British as to India. Vivekananda's nationalism, the call to India to recognize herself—this again was not nationalism in the smaller sense, it was a kind of super-nationalism, a kind of internationalism sublimated. You all know the story that Vivekananda was so fond of, about the lion that was brought up with a lot of sheep. Now another lion comes out of the forest and the sheep all run away, and the little lion that had been brought up thinks it's a sheep and runs away too, and now the pursuing lion grabs it, takes it over to a pool of water and says, "Look at yourself, you're a lion." This is what Vivekananda was doing to the Indian people. He remarks in one of his letters, that the marvellous thing about all of the Western nations is that they know that they are nations. He said jealousy is a curse of India. Indians cannot learn to co-operate with each other. Why can't they learn from the co-operation of Western nations with each other ? I'm quoting all this because by considering all these different attitudes that Vivekananda took, one sees the immense scope and integrity of his good will. He was really on everybody's side, on the side of the West, and on the side of India, and he saw far, far into the future ; his political prophecies are extremely interesting, and he said repeatedly, that the great force, which would finally have to be reckoned with was China. He also remarked on visiting Europe for the last time in 1900 that he smelled war everywhere, which was more than most professional statesmen did, at that time.<sup>62</sup>

WILL DURANT

He [Swami Vivekananda] preached to his countrymen a more virile creed than any Hindu had offered them since Vedic days :



It is a man-making religion that we want.... Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong.... For the next fifty years... let all other, vain gods disappear from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears ; He covers everything.... The first of all worship is the worship of those all around us.... These are all our gods—men and animals ; and the first gods we have to worship are our own countrymen.

It was but a step from this to Gandhi.<sup>63</sup>

#### C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasure we have received from him !<sup>64</sup>

#### S. RADHAKRISHNAN

We are today at a critical period not merely in the history of our country but in the history of the world. There are many people who think we are on the edge of an abyss. There is distortion of values, there is lowering of standards, there is widespread escapism, a good deal of mass hysteria, and people think of it and collapse in despair, frustration, hopelessness. These are the only things which are open to us. Such a kind of lack of faith in the spirit of man is a treason to the dignity of man. It is an insult to human nature. It is human nature that has brought about all the great changes that have taken place in this world. And if there is any call which Vivekananda made to us, it is to rely on our own spiritual resources....Man has inexhaustible spiritual resources. His spirit is supreme, man is unique. There is nothing inevitable in this world, and we can ward off the worst dangers and worst disabilities by which we are faced. Only we should not lose hope. He gave us fortitude in suffering, he gave us hope in distress, he gave us courage in despair. He told us : 'Do not be led away by the appearances. Deep down there is a providential will, there is a purpose in this universe. You must try to co-operate with that purpose and try to achieve it.'<sup>65</sup>

#### E. P. CHELISHEV

Reading and re-reading the works of Vivekananda each time I find in them something new that helps deeper to understand India, its philosophy, the way of the life and customs of the people in the past and the present, their dreams of the future.... I think that Vivekananda's greatest service is the



سیواگرام  
برائے وارڈھا (سی۔ پی۔)

सेवाग्राम  
वर्धा होकर (मध्य प्रांत)

SEVAGRAM  
Via WARDHA (C. P.)

Dear Avinashi

surely swami Viveka-  
nanda's writings need  
no introduction from  
any body. They make  
their own irresistible appeal.

22-7-'41

Yours

Babu

LETTER TO T. S. AVINASHILINGAM  
FROM MAHATMA GANDHI, DATED 22 JULY 1941



C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

60, BAZLULLAH ROAD  
TYAGARAYANAGAR  
MADRAS - 17

27th July 1962

Swami Vivekananda saved Hinduism and saved India. But for him we would have lost our religion and would not have gained our freedom. We therefore owe everything to Swami Vivekananda. May his faith, his courage and his wisdom ever inspire us so that we may keep safe the treasures we have received from him!

*C. Rajagopalachari*



development in his teaching of the lofty ideals of humanism which incorporate the finest features of Indian culture....

In my studies of contemporary Indian literature I have more than once had the opportunity to see what great influence the humanistic ideals of Vivekananda have exercised on the works of many writers.... In my opinion, Vivekananda's humanism has nothing in common with the Christian ideology which dooms man to passivity and to begging God for favours. He tried to place religious ideology at the service of the country's national interests, the emancipation of his enslaved compatriots. Vivekananda wrote that the colonialists were building one church after another in India, while the Eastern countries needed bread and not religion. He would sooner see all men turn into confirmed atheists than into superstitious simpletons. To elevate man Vivekananda identifies him with God....

Though we do not agree with the idealistic basis of Vivekananda's humanism, we recognise that it possesses many features of active humanism manifested above all in a fervent desire to elevate man, to instil in him a sense of his own dignity, sense of responsibility for his own destiny and the destiny of all people, to make him strive for the ideals of good, truth and justice, to foster in man abhorrence for any suffering. The humanistic ideal of Vivekananda is to a certain degree identical with Gorky's Man with a capital letter.

Such a humanistic interpretation of the essence of man largely determines the democratic nature of Vivekananda's world outlook....

Many years will pass, many generations will come and go, Vivekananda and his time will become the distant past, but never will there fade the memory of the man who all his life dreamed of a better future for his people, who did so much to awaken his compatriots and move India forward, to defend his much-suffering people from injustice and brutality. Like a rocky cliff protecting a coastal valley from storm and bad weather, from the blows of ill winds and waves, Vivekananda fought courageously and selflessly against the enemies of his motherland.

Together with the Indian people, Soviet people who already know some of the works of Vivekananda published in the USSR, highly revere the memory of the great Indian patriot, humanist and democrat, impassioned fighter for a better future for his people and all mankind.<sup>66</sup>

HUANG XIN CHUAN

Vivekananda stands out as the most renowned philosopher and social figure of India in modern China. His philosophical and social thought and epic patriotism not only inspired the growth of nationalist movement in India, but also made a great impact abroad. In 1893, Vivekananda visited Canton and its neighbourhood. He noted his impressions of the visit in a letter addressed to



the citizens of Madras. He had some knowledge and understanding of Chinese history and culture. He often cited and spoke highly of China in his writings and speeches. He made a prophecy that the Chinese culture will surely be resurrected one day like the 'Phoenix' and undertake the responsibility of the great mission of integrating the Western and the Oriental cultures. His biographer Romain Rolland has narrated the evolution of Vivekananda's idea on this aspect. When Vivekananda went to America for the first time, he hoped that country would achieve this mission. But during his second visit abroad, he realised that he was deceived by dollar imperialism. He, therefore, came to the conclusion that America could not be an instrument to accomplish this task, but it was China which could do it.

Vivekananda had infinite sympathy for the Chinese people living under the oppression of feudalism and imperialism : and he pinned much hope on them. After his visit to China, he made a very interesting comment. He said : 'The Chinese child is quite a philosopher and calmly goes to work at an age when your Indian boy can hardly crawl on all fours. He has learnt the philosophy of necessity too well.' This shows Vivekananda's enormous sympathy towards the miseries of the children of China in the old society.

While explaining his visionary socialism Vivekananda made an interesting 'gospel'. He said that the future society would be ruled by the labouring people and that this would first take place in China. In 'Modern India' he said : 'But there is hope. In the mighty course of time, the Brahmin and the other higher castes, too are being brought down to the lower status of the Shudras and the Shudras are being raised to higher ranks. ...Even before our eyes, powerful China with fast strides, is going down to Shudrahood,... yet, a time will come when there will be the rising of the Shudra class, *with their Shudrahood*, ....a time will come when the Shudras of every country.... will gain absolute supremacy in every society.... Socialism, Anarchism, Nihilism, and other like sects are the vanguard of the social revolution that is to follow'.

From the material cited above and his life and works, we can see at least that Vivekananda showed very much concern for, and sympathised with, the people of China who were living under the rule of feudalism and imperialism and placed great hopes on them. But we do not agree with B. N. Datta that the success of the Chinese and the Russian revolutions coming into being at concrete historical moments should be credited to the 'gospel' of Vivekananda. This would make him a divine mystique personality. We have seen that Vivekananda's approach to the laws of social developments was unscientific. However, it is not possible for any advanced thinker to make a correct prediction of the phases and events of the progress of history in every minute details. We should, therefore, appraise Vivekananda in the light of seeking truth from facts.



In conclusion, Vivekananda was the most eminent figure among the democratic patriots in India. He paid high tributes to our glorious ancient culture and loved the Chinese labouring people.

We pay homage to him.<sup>67</sup>

K. M. PANIKKAR

What gave Indian nationalism its dynamism and ultimately enabled it to weld at least the major part of India into one state was the creation of a sense of community among the Hindus to which the credit should to a very large extent go to Swami Vivekananda. This new Sankaracharya may well be claimed to be a unifier of Hindu ideology. Travelling all over India he not only aroused a sense of Hindu feeling but taught the doctrine of a universal Vedanta as the background of the new Hindu reformation... The Hindu religious movements before him were local, sectarian and without any all-India impact. The Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Deva Samaj and other movements, very valuable in themselves, only tended further to emphasise the provincial character of the reform movements. It is Vivekananda who first gave to the Hindu movement its sense of nationalism and provided most of the movements with a common all-India outlook.<sup>68</sup>

R. C. MAJUMDAR

Vivekananda championed the cause of Hinduism in the Parliament of religions held at Chicago (U. S. A.) in 1893 in connection with the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus. There, in the presence of the representatives of all the religions from almost all the countries in the world, the young monk from India expounded the principles of Vedanta and the greatness of Hinduism with such persuasive eloquence that from the very first he captivated the hearts of vast audience. It would be hardly an exaggeration to say that Swami Vivekananda made a place for Hinduism in the cultural map of the modern world. The civilized nations of the West had hitherto looked down upon Hinduism as a bundle of superstitions, evil institutions, and immoral customs, unworthy of serious consideration in the progressive world of to-day. Now, for the first time, they not only greeted, with hearty approval, the lofty principles of Hinduism as expounded by Vivekananda, but accorded a very high place to it in the cultures and civilizations of the world. The repercussion of this on the vast Hindu community can be easily imagined. The Hindu intelligentsia were always very sensitive to the criticism of the westerners, particularly the missionaries, regarding the many evils and shortcomings of the Hindu society and religion, as with their rational outlook they could not but admit the force of much of this criticism. They had always to be on the defensive and their attitude was mostly apologetic, whenever there was a comparative estimate of the values of the



Hindu and Western culture. They had almost taken for granted the inferiority of their culture *vis a vis* that of the West, which was so confidently asserted by the Western scholars. Now, all on a sudden, the table was turned and the representatives of the West joined in a chorus of applause at the hidden virtues of Hinduism which were hitherto unsuspected either by friends or foes. It not only restored the self-confidence of the Hindus in their own culture and civilization, but quickened their sense of national pride and patriotism. This sentiment was echoed and re-echoed in the numerous public addresses which were presented to Swami Vivekananda on his home-coming by the Hindus all over India, almost literally from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas. It was a great contribution to the growing Hindu nationalism.

On his return to India, Swami Vivekananda preached the spiritual basis of Hindu civilization and pointed out in his writings and speeches that the spirituality of India was not less valuable, nor less important for the welfare of humanity, than the much vaunted material greatness of the West which has dazzled our eyes. He was never tired of asking the Indians to turn their eyes, dazed by the splendour of the West, to their own ideals and institutions. By a comparative estimate of the real values of the Hindu ideals and institutions and those of the West he maintained the superiority of the former and asked his countrymen never to exchange gold for tinsels....

But Vivekananda was not prejudiced against the West nor insensible to the value of her achievements. He frankly admitted that Indian culture was neither spotless nor perfect. It has to learn many things from the West, but without sacrificing its true character.

Swami Vivekananda combined in himself the role of a great saint and fervid nationalist. He placed Indian nationalism on the high pedestal of past glory, and it embraced the teeming millions of India both high and low, rich and poor. He devoted his life to the awakening of national consciousness and many of his eloquent appeals would stir the national sentiments of India even today to their very depths....

Though an ascetic, Vivekananda was a patriot of patriots. The thought of restoring the pristine glory of India by resuscitating among her people the spiritual vitality which was dormant, but not dead, was always the uppermost thought in his mind....

This great *Sanyasin* who had left his hearth and home at the call of his spiritual *guru*, Sri Ramakrishna, and delved deeply into spiritual mysticism, was never tired of preaching that what India needs today is not so much religion or philosophy, of which she has enough, but food for her hungry millions, social justice for the low classes, strenght and energy for her emasculated people and a sense of pride and prestige as a great nation of the world. He made a trumpet call to all Indians to shed fear of all kinds and stand forth as



men by imbibing *sakti* (energy and strength), by reminding them that they were the particles of the Divine according to the eternal truth preached by the Vedanta. The precepts and example of this great *Sanyasin* galvanized the current of national life, infused new hopes and inspirations, and placed the service to the motherland on a religious level....

Swami Vivekananda thus gave a spiritual basis to Indian nationalism. The lessons of the Vedanta and *Bhagavad-Gita* permeated the lives and activities of many nationalists, and many a martyr, inspired by his teachings, endured extreme sufferings and sacrifices with a cheerful heart, fearlessly embraced death, and calmly bore the inhuman tortures, worse than death, which were sometimes inflicted upon them...<sup>69</sup>

R. G. PRADHAN

Swami Vivekananda might well be called the father of modern Indian Nationalism ;he largely created it and also embodied in his own life its highest and noblest elements.<sup>70</sup>

A. L. BASHAM

Even now a hundred years after the birth of Narendranath Dutta, who later became Swami Vivekananda, it is very difficult to evaluate his importance in the scale of world history. It is certainly far greater than any Western historian or most Indian historians would have suggested at the time of his death. The passing of the years and the many stupendous and unexpected events which have occurred since then suggests that in centuries to come he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world, especially as far as Asia is concerned, and as one of the most significant figures in the whole history of Indian religion, comparable in importance to such great teachers as Shankara and Ramanuja, and definitely more important than the saints of local or regional significance such as Kabir, Chaitanya, and the many Nayanmars and Alwars of South India.

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I believe also that Vivekananda will always be remembered in the world's history because he virtually initiated what the late Dr. C. E. M. Joad once called 'the counter-attack from the East'. Since the days of the Indian missionaries who travelled in South-East Asia and China preaching Buddhism and Hinduism more than a thousand years earlier, he was the first Indian religious teacher to make an impression outside India.<sup>71</sup>

MICHAEL TALBOT

There are many parallel concepts between the ancient philosophies of the East and the emerging philosophies of the West. Certain concepts are so similar that it becomes impossible to discern whether some statements were



made by the mystic or the physicist. Esalen Institute Psychologist Lawrence Leshan gives an example of such an indistinguishable statement : "The absolute (is) ....everything that exists. ....this absolute has become the universe ....(as we perceive it) by coming through time, space and causation. This is the central idea of (Minkowski) (Advaita). ....Time, space and causation are like the glass through which the absolute is seen and when it is seen ....it appears as the universe. Now we at once gather from this that in the universe there is neither time, space nor causation. ....what we may call causation begins, after, if we may be permitted to say so, the degeneration of the absolute into the phenomenal and not before."

The remark was originally made by mystic Swami Vivekananda in *Jnana Yoga*, but the fact that the names of the mathematician who first theorized that space and time are a continuum, Hermann Minkowski, and the greatest of the historical Brahmin sages, Advaita,\* are interchangeable, demonstrates once again the confluence of mysticism and the new physics.

Vivekananda further expresses a view that has become the backbone of quantum theory : There is no such thing as strict causality. As he states, "A stone falls and we ask why. This question is possible only on the supposition that nothing happens without a cause. I request you to make this very clear in your minds, for whenever we ask why anything happens, we are taking for granted that everything that happened must have a why, that is to say, it must have been preceded by something else which acted as the cause. This precedence in succession is what we call the law of causation."<sup>72</sup>

SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI

Vivekananda appeared to me immediately to be a man who was intensely moved by the sufferings of Humanity, and particularly of Humanity in India. Some of his tirades against middle class and upper class societies in this matter moved us to the depths of our being. He discovered for us the greatness of Man, and particularly of men in the humbler walks of life who were the despised and the denied in our Indian society. At the same time, he brought home to us the value of Indian thought at its highest and pristine best, as in the *Vedanta*. He was able to convince us that what our ancestors had left in the *Vedanta* Philosophy was of permanent value, not only for us in India but also for the rest of Humanity. This put heart in us, and made us feel a new kind of elation as members of a people who have always had a mission and a sacred task to serve Humanity. The Hindus as a race were losing their nerve, and it was Vivekananda who helped us to regain this nerve which we were losing. There was a lot of unthinking and unsympathetic criticism of our ways and our life, particularly from among Christian missionaries of the older type, and this was demolished by Vivekananda. All this made us hold him very close to our heart, and to think of him as a great master and as a new



kind of incarnation who came down to earth to lead us into the good life and the life of the strong man.

Vivekananda, in the first instance, knocked off a lot of nonsense in our Hindu social life, and drew our attention to the Eternal Verities and not to the ephemeral accidentals—social usages and such like—in our life. He was a sworn enemy of what we now call in India *Casteism*. *Untouchability* was something which he abhorred both as a *Sannyasin* and as a lay Hindu. He coined the word which is very commonly used in our Indian English—"don't-touchism". His heart overflowed with love and sympathy for the masses, whom he wanted to serve with religious zeal—serve as a believer in the *Vedanta* which sees God in all life. He coined a new word for our Indian languages—*Daridra-Narayana* or a "God in the poor and the lowly." This word has been accepted by the whole of India, and in a way it brings in a sense of responsibility for the average man. He has to look upon the poor and the humble, the suffering ones and the frustrated ones of society, as if they were deities incarnate or fragments of God, to serve whom was to serve God. Mahatma Gandhi's revival of the old expression which was used in Gujarati by the Vaishnava poets of Gujarat, namely, *Hari-jana* or "the Men of God" was a very fine expression ; but *Daridra-Narayana* implied or brought in an element of a sense of duty which was enjoined upon man to serve the poor if they wanted to serve God.

Swami Vivekananda is looked upon as a great religious teacher, and indeed he made a definite contribution to the study of both Hindu religion and philosophy, and also in spreading a knowledge and appreciation of this philosophy and religion. His great works on aspects of *Vedanta* in theory and practice still inspire hundreds and thousands of enquirers all over the world. But it has also been said that he was more a philanthropist, one who dedicated himself to the service of man, than a religious theorist or preacher. One need not seek to analyse Vivekananda's personality in this way. It is best to take the service of man as a form of serving God, for, from the point of view of all practical religion, God and Man are the obverse and reverse of the same medal. Vivekananda may be said to have been an innovator in two matters. As his great disciple Sister Nivedita suggested—he was the first to formulate the basic character of Hinduism as a system of thought and as a way of life in the modern age. This is the first great thing we as Indians may note about Vivekananda. Secondly, Vivekananda may be said to have brought before the Western World a new point of view in religious thinking—a new approach to the problems of faith—which they needed very badly. To this also might be added as a pendant that Vivekananda, as one of the thought-leaders of modern India, gave the tone to modern Indian culture. He conceived of an integration of all human religion and culture into one entity claiming the homage of all and sundry.



I consider, and many agree with me also, that Swami Vivekananda's participation and his magisterial and at the same time sweet and reasonable pronouncements at the International Congress of Religions at Chicago in 1893 form a very important event in the intellectual history of modern man. There he proclaimed for the first time the necessity for a new and an enlightened kind of religious understanding and toleration, and this was particularly necessary in an America which was advancing so rapidly in science and technology, and in wealth and power, which were not, however, divorced from altruistic aspirations and achievements. But apart from a few of the most outstanding figures, particularly in the New England orbit of the United States, generally the religious background was crude and primitive. It had pinned itself down to a literal interpretation of the Bible, and accepted all the dogmas with a conviction which was pathetic in its combination of sincerity and fanatic faith, of credulity and crudity. This very primitive kind of religion was not satisfying to those who were actuated by the spirit of enquiry in a higher and more cultured plane, and for them Vivekananda's message came like rain on a thirsty soil. ...So in this way, we might say that quite a new type of spiritual conversion has taken place in the mind of a considerable portion of intelligent men and women in the West, beginning with America ; and here we see the leaven of *Vedanta* working through Vivekananda. In a novel on Mexican life by D. H. Lawrence—*The Plumed Serpent*—where we have the picture of a revival of the pre-Catholic Aztec religion among a section of political workers in Mexico, the mentality displayed by some of the leaders of this movement is something astoundingly modern. Many of the views expressed by one of the characters in this novel, the hero Ramon talking to the Roman Catholic Bishop, might have been taken over bodily from the writings of Vivekananda. In this way, although the ordinary run of people are not conscious of it, the message which was given out by Vivekananda to America and the Western World at Chicago in 1893, and subsequently to people in America, England and India, has been an effective force in the liberalisation of the human spirit in its religious approach.

The first point in Vivekananda which I mentioned above, namely, his giving before the world a definition of Hinduism in its essence, was a service which was done not only to India but also in another way to Humanity....

Vivekananda was the lover of all those who had suffered through the injustice of others, and he tried his best to restore them to a sense of human dignity. ...It is remarkable how in India in her days of political submission and spiritual inanity, when everything seemed hopeless, and the people had lost all confidence in themselves, a spirit calling us to action like Swami Vivekananda could come into being. That such a person could come at a time when the prospect was bleak, when we seemed to have lost all hope, indicated that God



in His mercy never forsakes His people, and this in a way bears out the great idea behind this oft-quoted verse of the *Gita* that whenever righteousness is on the decline and unrighteousness is in the ascendant, God creates Himself as a great *Avatara* or Incarnation—as a Leader to guide men to the right path of salvation. And in that sense Vivekananda was an *Avatara*, a divinely inspired and God-appointed Leader, not only for Man in India, but also for the whole of Humanity in the present age.<sup>73</sup>

R. RYBAKOV

#### VIVEKANANDA'S IDEAS DEAR TO SOVIETS

The people of the Soviet Union observed the 120th anniversary of the birth of the great Indian thinker and public figure Swami Vivekananda, whose fame has twice outlived his short and dramatic life, entirely devoted to the noble cause of awakening India. ....

I have recently been to... Yasnaya Polyana, the house of Leo Tolstoy—the great writer, whose name is equally dear to the peoples of the USSR and India. I saw a group of visitors encircling a large dinner table and my mind conjured up grey-bearded Tolstoy, reading British newspapers out loud in the light of a kerosene lamp. The British Press was full of reports about Vivekananda's brilliant lectures. Sometimes, there was little truth in them, yet the powerful voice of the Calcutta Sannyasi did reach the writer's mind through the filter of the British newspapers. It stirred the writer profoundly and for a while he could not continue reading. He went to the bedroom and read Vivekananda's books all through the night. He remarked in his diary: "I was reading Vivekananda again. How much there is in common between the thoughts of his and mine."

#### NEW AGE

That epoch has long since gone. The people who come to the Tolstoy museum and listen to the guide's story were born in the age of space flights, cinema and television and they do not know what colonialism is. The material culture of that time has disappeared and so have clothes and objects of everyday life. But the spiritual culture which unites all nations is alive and continues to exert powerful influence on our contemporaries. Vivekananda's ideas were dear not only to Tolstoy. They are just as dear to the Soviet people today, primarily, because his life was filled with ardent love for India. Vivekananda had always desired to change the situation in India—the powerful and yet dependent country, fettered by the will of British colonialists, hard vestiges of the centuries-old history and rigid caste conventions and also disintegrated, oppressed and not yet strong to rebel. He had not spared efforts



to awaken his countrymen's feeling of national identity, the wish to work for the national benefit and the faith in India's bright future. Neither had he spared sarcasm to stir up the Indians' feeling of shame for their dependent and oppressed position, the shame, which, to quote Marx's apt remark, "is already revolution of a kind. Shame is a kind of anger which is turned inward. And if a whole nation really experienced a sense of shame, it would be like a lion, crouching ready to spring." However reluctant, Vivekananda was to get involved in politics, his entire activities were aimed against imperialism and colonialism and he had played an important role in India's becoming an independent state and a leading power.

The essence of Vivekananda's religion is the service to people. "I do not believe in God or religion which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth," he said. His doctrine was focussed on man. Everything for the good of man—how consonant this idea is with Maxim Gorky's words spoken at about the same time : "The name of Man rings proud." Centering his attention on the Indian reality, Vivekananda explained the national degradation by the indifference of the propertied classes to the people's needs and by the poverty and ignorance of the population. "Contempt for the masses is a grave national sin," he said.

Vivekananda had uncovered yet another cause of India's decline, namely, the country's isolated status. It is only natural that the voice of the man who asserted the idea of equality of all religions and the international fraternity of liberated peoples deeply moved the delegates of the world religious council in Chicago. He was not afraid of reason and relied on it.

#### NATIONAL SIN

"It is better that mankind should become atheist through following reason, than blindly believe in 200 million gods on the authority of anybody." The supernatural and miracles did not bother him and he refused to accept miracles ascribed to his teacher Ramakrishna. Isn't it a miracle, however that he had heard the roaring of the coming social and political events of the 20th century in the slow and serene life of 19th century Europe and had aptly foreseen that the liberation would come from Russia.

That epoch is unreachably far away. Things and kingdoms have disappeared and practically the entire colonial system has collapsed. They say there are old gramophone records of Vivekananda's ardent voice still to be found in India. His voice was admired by Ramakrishna and it produced a tremendous impression on the Chicago religious congress. Those records have not been played for a long time already, for there are no gramophones to play them on.

Still, Vivekananda's voice keeps ringing. Celebrating the 120th anniversary of his birth, we recall Rabindranath Tagore's words : "If you want to know India, read Vivekananda."<sup>74</sup>



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\*Tolstoy wrote acknowledging receipt of the book :

Dear Sir,

I received your letter and the book and thank you very much for both. The book is most remarkable and I have received much instruction from it. ....

So far humanity has frequently gone backwards from this true and lofty and clear conception of the principle of life but never surpassed it.

Yours etc.

Leo Tolstoy

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'The name of Swami Vivekananda is very popular in Soviet Russia and he is held in high esteem by our countrymen. Soviet people respect him as a great democrat, humanist and patriot who contributed immensely in the development of national consciousness and anti-colonial liberation movement in India. They also consider that his message and the message of Sri Ramakrishna, which are really one, are absolutely necessary for the survival of the human civilization which is now in great danger due to the menace of the devastating nuclear war. We believe that it is their message which can bring peace, harmony and understanding to the tormented world of today. They are not simply religious leaders, they are much more than that. They are prophets of peace, harmony and brotherhood. Their message was relevant in the past in India and in the world at large, but it is still more relevant in the present Indian context and in the context of the contemporary world. That is why a lot of Soviet research scholars and thinkers have dedicated themselves to the study of Sri Ramakrishna and particularly Swami Vivekananda. I am proud that I happened to be one of the pioneers of this study in our country and contributed an article on Swami Vivekananda to the *Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume* twenty years ago, published from Calcutta.

I consider it a great honour for me to be associated with any programme connected with Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. I and my colleagues will continue to devote to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda studies with close co-operation of the scholars of India and other countries. ...I will do my best to contribute to the development of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda studies in the progressive direction. I consider this as a service to the humanity at large.'

67. Huang Xin Chuan, a professor of history of Beijing University and Deputy Director of the Institute of South Asian Studies, Beijing, delivered a speech on 'Vivekananda and China' at the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, on 4 January 1980. The matter reproduced is the cyclostyled summary of that speech circulated among the audience. A copy of the summary signed by Professor Chuan was presented by him to Swami Lokeshwarananda, Secretary of The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park on 7 January, 1980.

Professor Chuan also wrote a book in Chinese on Swami Vivekananda, which was published from Beijing in May 1979. An autographed copy of the book was presented by the author to the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture on 7 January 1980. Professor Chuan presented a copy of the book to Mr. Nirmal Bose, Minister for Co-operatives, Government of West Bengal, in Beijing recently and observed : 'We in China do not consider Swami Vivekananda just a religious leader. We consider him one of the greatest social reformers of modern India. It is on record that in India he was the first to speak of socialism. He remained a source of inspiration for many revolutionaries in India.' (*The Statesman*, Tuesday, 8 November 1983, p. 9) Incidentally, this copy of the book has also been presented to Swami Lokeshwarananda, editor of this book, by Mr. Nirmal Bose.

The book, entitled *The Modern Indian Philosopher Vivekananda : A Study*, contains six chapters dealing with the conditions in India prevailing at that time, Swamiji's life and works, his religious and philosophical thoughts, his social and political theories, his views on China, and his contribution to the Indian liberation movement. There are some extracts from some of the important writings of Swami Vivekananda. In the appendix there is one chapter dealing in brief with the life, philosophy, and social thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna.



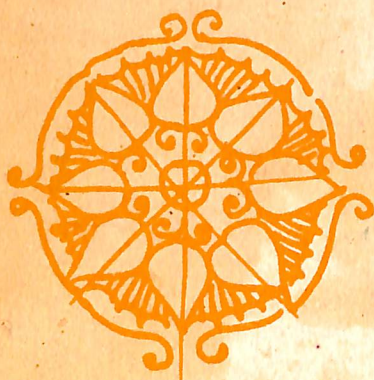
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