ETERNAL VALUES

for

A CHANGING SOCIETY

Swami Ranganathananda

ADVAITA ASHRAMA

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SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

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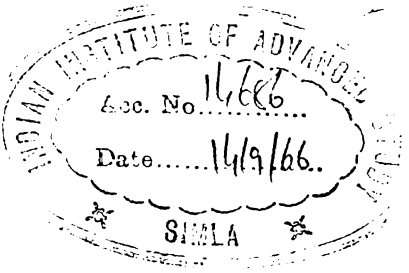

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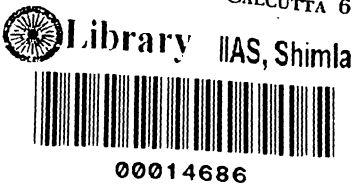

PREFACE

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

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

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

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PART ONE

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ETERNAL RELIGION[1]

The religion preached by the sages of India is known by a significant title—the Sanâtana Dharma, or the eternal religion. The conclusions of the Vedanta form its philosophical basis. It justifies this high title by its dispassionate study of life and experience in their wholeness and totality, and by a persistent effort to evaluate all bits of life and experience against the background of that *Weltanschauung* or world-view. The sole aim of the thinkers of the Vedanta was to see into the truth of things. And they pursued this aim with a passion, vigour, and objectivity, rare in the history of philosophic thought. This spirit of the Vedantins has elicited unstinted praise from modern thinkers. 'Much of the excellency of the ancient Sanskrit philosophers,' says Prof. Max Müller, 'is due to their having been undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease. They thought of nothing but the work they had determined to do; their one aim was to make it as perfect as it could be made. . . . Need we wonder then that their work was done as well as it could be done, and that it has lasted for thousands of years?'[2] On the nature of the edifice of thought so built and the courage of

[1] Talk over the All India Radio, Delhi, on February 17 and 24, 1950.

[2] *Three lectures on Vedanta Philosophy*, pp. 39-40.

the builders, he remarks : 'It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedanta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India, thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of an ancient Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone in regular succession after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but One, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Âtman or Brahman.'[1]

This passion for the highest Truth, coupled with a deep interest in human happiness and welfare, has transformed a metaphysics into a living faith, a world-view into a social philosophy. An idea and a vision become transformed into a 'lamp unto our feet and a light unto our soul' ; the Vedanta emerges as the Sanâtana Dharma. The book that registers this extension of the pure passion for truth into the wide channel of collective human welfare is the Bhagavad-Gita ; and its teacher Shri Krishna stands as the centre of this mighty change. This mood of the Upanishadic sages has been well expressed by a celebrated Vedantic thinker of the eighth century A.D.

[1] Max Müller : *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, p. 182.

Says Gaudapâda in his *Mândukya-Kârikâ* (IV. 2): 'I salute this Yoga taught by the Vedanta which proclaims the unity of all existence, which promotes the happiness and welfare of all beings, and which is free from strife and contradiction.' The Bhagavad-Gità brings out of the deep spirituality of the Upanishads an emotionally satisfying religion centred round a Personal God, a personal morality leading to purity, strength and gentleness of character, and a social ethics inspired with a passion for *bhuta-hita* (good of all beings) and *loka-samgraha* (social stability).

The Sanâtana Dharma is based on the Upanishads. The Gita is the exposition of this Sanâtana Dharma by a master mind who was *vedântakrit* and *vedavit* in the words of the Gita, one who had digested the thoughts of the Upanishads, the scope and meaning of which find embodiment in the Gita in a complete philosophy of life. An old verse[1] compares the Upanishads to a cow, Shri Krishna to the milkman, Arjuna to the calf and the Gita to the milk that is drawn. And the verse significantly adds that the milk so drawn is the nectar that will nourish the spiritually hungry of the world.

These Upanishads mark the highest development of Vedic thought in philosophy and spirituality. On account of this, and also on account of their being the concluding portions of the vast and varied

[1] सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥

Vedic literature, the Upanishads are also called the Vedanta, the end or fulfilment of the Vedas, both as books, the more important of which are ten in number, and as thought which is pervasive of them. The Vedas are called Shruti, a term which expresses their supreme trustworthiness in spiritual matters, being impersonal in spirit and universal in scope. The term Veda, according to Shankarâchârya, primarily means Knowledge, beginningless and endless, capable of leading to liberation, and verifiable by one and all. 'By Vedas no books are meant,' says Swami Vivekananda, addressing the Chicago Parliament of Religions, 'they are the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times..... The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very greatest of them were women.'[1]

The Vedanta is both philosophy and religion. The Absolute of the Vedanta is not a mere logical postulate. It is a given fact of experience, an actuality, the basis of all presuppositions of logical thought and common experience, but ever beyond the grasp of both. It is that 'which speech and thought fail to express but through which speech and thought themselves express words and ideas'.[2] It is the seer of thought and the witness of the universe. The highest Reality it teaches is at once the Absolute

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. I, pp. 4-5.
[2] Kena Upanishad, I. 5-6.

of metaphysics and the God of religion. It is the unity of reason and faith. It is the reality in man, the Âtman or the real Self behind his ego or apparent self. As Ishvara it is the Personal God of religion, the highest reading of the Absolute by the human mind, the sum total of all souls, human and non-human, whose limited expression in time and space is this world. Thus Vedanta speaks of one and the same reality as Brahman in its metaphysics, as Âtman in its epistemology and mysticism and as Ishvara or Bhagavân in its religion. It is the One in the many, and, though One, sages call it by various names. This great idea of divine Unity is beautifully expressed by the *Bhâgavata* (I. ii. 11) :

वदन्ति तत्तत्त्वविदस्तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।
ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्द्यते ॥

'Knowers of Truth declare that it is one and the same non-dual Reality that is variously called Brahman, Paramâtman, and Bhagavân.'

Brahman as Âtman, as the Reality behind the ego, gives us a God who, unlike the extra-cosmic God of monotheism, is not outside of us nor we of Him. He is the Soul of our soul, our very Self. He is the *pratyagâtman,* the Inner Self ; He is the *antaryâmin,* the Indwelling One, the Inner Ruler. The finitude of man is underwritten by the Infinitude of God ; man is divine and his redemption, therefore, is implicit in his very being. He is not sinful or wicked

by nature. He is the child of Immortal Bliss (*amritasya putrah*).[1]

But this divine nature is remaining covered, lying forgotten. In nature as well as in man, there is this mantle of darkness that covers Reality, this *avidyâ* or *ajnâna* which has made us forget our real nature. This veil of ignorance is thick or thin as the man is impure or pure. Its complete destruction is illumination or perfection. 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.'[2] Every advance in purity is a step in the tearing of this veil, while every impure thought or act thickens the veil, and deepens the darkness. Herein lies the meaning of ethics and morality. Every moral action is, as it were, a blow struck on the citadel of our false self, and is a step towards the awareness of our true Self. Man is painfully aware of the bondage of finitude and the limitations of becoming; but in him is also a longing for freedom and the infinitude of being. The Vedanta teaches that the soul is divine, only held in bondage by matter; perfection will be reached when this bond will burst, and the word it uses for it is, therefore, *mukti*—freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery. Man is thus a complex of freedom and bondage, of the infinite and the finite, of light and darkness. The awareness of the possibility of freedom by the side of the actuality of bondage makes man a restless pilgrim

[1] Shvetâshvatara Upanishad, II. 5.
[2] Matthew, V. 8.

among God's creatures, and converts his heart into an abode of constructive peacelessness. Accordingly, his heart has been the venue of a great struggle between these two forces ever since he emerged into self-conscious activity; and the history of human civilisation is the arresting story, with its ups and downs, of this great struggle, occasionally projected on to the plane of his material environment with a view to change and mould it, but largely conducted in the field of his mental being, for fusing it and for forging ahead.

This truth of the ever present purity and perfection and freedom of his being, on the one hand, and his apparent alienation from it due to the veil of *avidyâ* or spiritual blindness, on the other, has been the one motive force in history, according to Vedanta, behind man's spiritual adventures, his hunger and thirst after righteousness, his struggles for the realisation of political liberty and social justice, in short, behind all his endeavours to achieve civilisation and culture. The brooding of the Spirit over the waters of Life produces social and political upheavals as much as scientific discoveries, moral achievements and spiritual realisations. This is the meaning of history in its comprehensive sense, the stirring of the universal in the particular, the vibrations of the infinite in the finite, the struggle of eternity in the meshes of time. To the question as to the origin and nature of the universe, the Upanishads give the significant answer: 'From Freedom' it

comes, in Freedom it rests, and unto Freedom it returns.'

From the philosophical *Weltanschauung* of the Vedanta flow certain important corollaries which have become fundamental features of the Sanâtana Dharma and the source of its spiritual vitality down the ages. They form the inspiration behind the Hindu view of life and explain its appeal to rational minds in all ages.

The first impact of this view is on religion; it becomes a matter of experience and not one of mere dogma or creed. The test of religion is *anubhuti*, realisation. *'Âtmâ vâ are drashtavyah*—The Âtman is to be seen', say the Upanishads.[1] Spirituality is the core of religion, the living and moving and having our being in God, as St. Paul puts it. If the divine Reality is our true nature, if it is not extra-cosmic and, as such, alien to us, man's hope for a fuller and better life becomes well founded; for, he can become the Divine by realising the Divine; and this is the purpose and goal of life, according to Vedanta. If God were outside of us and far away, we could content ourselves with just a belief in His being and conduct our life as best we may in its light. Such a faith, while inspiring us with a moral fervour or a group discipline, may also breed narrowness of outlook and active intolerance. While proclaiming itself as a universal religion it may function as no better than a tribal faith. It is more fitted to sustain man

[1] Brihadâranyaka Upanishad, II. iv. 5.

in his national egoisms and group loyalties than to inspire him with a Godward passion and a manward love. Religion at this level is a matter of injunctions and prohibitions, of belief and conformity. It does not light the inner fire nor appease the hunger of the spiritual heart for the Bread of Life. Such a view of religion cannot explain the supreme phenomenon in history of men and women being moved by a strange hunger for spiritual awareness and certitude, by a feeling of homesickness for the infinite and the transcendental. The awakening of this hunger is the very beginning of religion, according to Vedanta ; religion ceases to be a pious belief or a matter of conformity and convention at this stage ; it becomes a spiritual adventure, with the delights and perils attendant on an adventure, and man enters into a world of wider horizon, larger perspective, and deeper meaning than what the low-roofed world of monotheism could provide. A hungry man cannot live on words, or even on a faith in food ; he eagerly desires to get at the food and eat it ; he will strain every nerve in that direction, and even court death in the attempt. The conception of religion as an awakening of the spiritual hunger involves also the conception of the struggle to satisfy that hunger. We are at once introduced to the concept of *sâdhana,* spiritual practice, which converts religion from a thing of opinion and assent to a matter of conviction and endeavour. The spiritually awakened, says the Gita, transcend the sphere

of the words of scripture ;[1] to them creeds and formulas are as stones to a hungry man. The statement of Jesus that the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life conveys a meaning only to them. How can the words of scripture satisfy us when what we seek is the meaning behind all words and all thought ? The Spirit, in forging ahead, leaves all these familiar landmarks far behind. The conception of *sâdhana* is thus fundamental to the Hindu view of religion ; it is the dynamics of religion.

Infinite become the scope of religion so defined and diverse the forms in which it finds expression. The meaning and scope of religion so understood have been embodied by Swami Vivekananda in the following well-known statement of Vedantic faith : 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.'[2]

The whole object of Sanâtana Dharma is to help man by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes religion according to the Hindu sages. Religion, they hold,

[1] Gita, VI. 44.

[2] *Complete Works,* Vol. I. p. 257.

involves a ceaseless struggle, largely moral and spiritual, to purify one's emotions and thoughts, to compass, in the language of Christian mysticism, the death of the 'old man' within us. It is the *practice* of religion that is here insisted and not merely the *profession* of it. In the absence of this struggle, the Hindu sages find nothing to choose between the profession of the faithful and the denial of the faithless. This insistence on *sâdhana* makes religion for the Hindu a spiritual adventure here and now, and not a cheque for post-mortem cashing. It rules out at once mere belief and conformity as tests of faith. The only genuine test of faith is its capacity to set the soul on fire. The soul afire with faith and hungry for God cannot live on the air of professions or the stones of dogmas and creeds. Its bread is spiritual realisation, and its way, the way of restless longing, ceaseless struggle.

There is one rich word in Indian thought which expresses the entire gamut of this longing and struggle. That word is Yoga, the way of union with the Divine. As understood in the Vedanta, this word conveys the simple and clear meaning of spiritual practice in its various forms, as well as its temper and approach, all worked out with the precision and clarity of a science. There is nothing mystical in the sense of misty or mystifying about Yoga, though it cannot be denied that the handling of it by charlatans and quacks has resulted in giving it a bad odour. But sages like Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have appeared in recent times and restored

to it its ancient dignity, purity, and appeal—so much so that Yoga today means, in its various expressions, the science of religion, the art of the spiritual life.

This view of spiritual realisation as the aim of religion as distinct from belief or scholarship, and this insistence on *sâdhana* as the means thereto, has saved religion in India, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, from the vice of snobbery.[1]

The second impact of the Vendantic world-view on life is harmony and positive fellowship. The Sanâtana Dharma teaches not mere toleration but universal acceptance. The Hindu dislikes the attitude of superiority and patronage implied in the idea of toleration. He has learned the art of sympathy unspoilt by the vice of patronage; he has understood the meaning of fellowship. 'To him,' says Swami Vivekananda in his Chicago speech, 'all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the glorious sun.'[2] This is acceptance or active toleration based on understanding, sympathy, and reverence, and leading to

[1] 'The emphasis on the goal of spiritual life bound together worshippers of many different types and saved the Hindus from spiritual snobbery.' Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, p. 322.

[2] *Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 15.

harmony and active fellowship, unlike the usual variety of tolerance proceeding from pride or indifference or both, and leading to contempt or sufferance.

The third fruit of the Vedanta has been its liberating influence on mind and thought. Itself the product of a rational endeavour, it has released the human mind from credal anchors and allowed it to reflect on life and experience and find truth. Its terms of reference for thought is not a set dogma or a few untested assumptions but experience itself, the totality of all actual and possible experiences which it classifies into three categories of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. The reality it preaches is what it finds in experience after a sifting inquiry, the reality of the pure and changeless Self beyond all cause and effect. The presence of the Divine in man and nature makes life a travelling not from error to truth but from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher. All knowledge, therefore, is within the province of Vedanta, be it secular or sacred, material or spiritual. It actively promotes natural science as much as religion, itself being the consummation and synthesis of both. Philosophic knowledge is the synthesis of the knowledge of the Self and the not-Self, says Shri Krishna in the *Gita*.[1] The Upanishads treat *brahma-vidyâ* or philosophy as *sarva-vidyâ-pratishthâ*[2] or the Science of sciences.

[1] Gita, XIII. 2.

[2] Mundaka Upanishad, I. i. 1.

THE SPIRIT OF THE UPANISHADS[1]

The closing period of the Vedic age in ancient Indian history is marked by an intense activity on the plane of thought when some of the greatest of our thinkers and sages, individually and in groups, wrestled with the problems of life and experience. The impressive record of these endeavours has been preserved for posterity in the Upanishads which form the closing portions of the vast and varied Vedic literature. Containing as they do the quintessence of the Vedas, the Upanishads are also known as the Vedanta.

One of the most important features of the Upanishads is the fearless quest of truth characteristic of them. We come across students and teachers discussing and expounding basic problems of religion and philosophy, 'undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease'[2] as Max Müller terms it, and with an earnestness and thoroughness rare in the history of philosophic thought. They considered no sacrifice too great in their search for truth. Not to speak of earthly pleasures and heavenly charms, they dared to achieve the still more difficult and rare sacrifice which the seeker after truth is called upon to make—the sacrifice of pet opinions and pleasing prejudices.

[1] Speech broadcast over the Delhi Station of the A. I. R. on December 21, 1950.

[2] *Three Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy,* p. 39.

A second important feature of these Upanishads is the atmosphere of freedom pervading its quest of truth. Thought forges ahead from step to step under the stimulus of a passion for truth and in an atmosphere of perfect freedom; and in the process of a graceful conflict and exchange of views and theories unhampered by fear of authority and love of dogma, there emerges the beautiful edifice of thought known afterwards as the Vedanta whose rationality and spirituality have made it a synthesis of philosophy and religion in one.

An arresting procession of students and teachers, an impressive record of their dialogues in small groups and large assemblies, a flight now and then into the regions of the sublime recorded in songs of freedom, graceful and direct, an array of beautiful metaphors and telling imageries serving as feathers to its arrows of thought in flight—these varied features invest the Upanishads with the beauty and charm of enduring literature and the greatness and strength of lived philosophy.

The principal Upanishads are accepted as ten in number. They are : Ishâ, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mândukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chhândogya, and Brihadâranyaka. Among these, the Brihadâranyaka and the Chhândogya are the two longest ones. The Kena, Mândukya, and Taittiriya are specially important, each of them expounding an essential aspect of the Upanishadic thought.

The Ishâ Upanishad provided the fundamental theme of Vedantic thought—the divinity of man and

nature and the inherent spirituality of life when, in its very opening verse, it made the famous proclamation :

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ॥

—'Whatever there is in this world should be enveloped with God.' The Aitareya contains a discussion leading to the spiritual character of the Absolute. The Prashna, as its name implies, deals with philosophical problems in a general way through the medium of a dialogue, while the Mundaka, after analysing knowledge into the higher and the lower (*parâ* and *aparâ*) bursts into songs of freedom and delight as it soars into the region of *parâ vidyâ*.

The Katha Upanishad stands in a category all alone. Blending in itself the charm of poetry, the depth of mysticism and the strength of philosophy, it contains a more unified exposition of Vedantic thought than is found in any other Upanishad. Its appeal is heightened by the two characters that adorn its dialogue, young Nachiketâ, the student, and old Yama, the teacher. It is an arresting instance of young pulsating life, inquisitive and fearless, knocking at the doors of Death the terrible and extracting from him wisdom that lies beyond life and death.

The Brihadâranyaka Upanishad is a veritable forest of thought and inspiration. Four illustrious personalities stand out prominently from its pages—two men and two women—Janaka, the philosopher king; Yâjnavalkya, the philosopher sage; the highly spiritual Maitreyi who was Yâjnavalkya's wife, and

the gifted woman philosopher Gârgi who appears as Yâjnavalkya's prominent opponent in debate. This great Upanishad majestically expounds with much rational argument and telling illustration, through the mouths of these personalities, the central theme of Vedantic thought—the Unity of Being and the inherent divinity and purity of the human soul. It dares to characterise the Absolute as the Fearless and describes its realisation as the attainment, here and now, of the state of absolute fearlessness and fullness of delight.

In the Chhândogya Upanishad we are introduced to lovable truth seekers like Satyakâma, Shvetaketu, and Nârada and great teachers like Âruni and Sanatkumâra. Through a masterly and detailed exposition, this Upanishad distinguishes the appearance of becoming from the reality of being and sings in refrain the identity of the individual with the universal. It also prescribes a knowledge of the true nature of the Self as the panacea for all the ills of life : *'Tarati shokam âtmavit*—the knower of the true Self crosses all sorrow'. Through the deeply human story of the discipleship of Indra and Virochana under Prajâpati, this Upanishad also helps to distinguish materialism and its bitter fruits of selfishness and strife from spirituality and its elevating results of peace and fellowship. It summons the human understanding to an adventure after the latter, warning it at the same time against the pitfalls of the former.

The Taittiriya Upanishad discusses the nature of

individuality through a thoroughgoing study of personality which it analyses into five *koshas* or sheaths —the material, the vital, the psychical, the intellectual, and the intuitive—in the innermost core of which it finds the real Self of man, the Âtman, ever pure, ever free, and of the nature of *sachchidânanda.* In an earlier chapter, after introducing the absolute Reality as the origin, ground, and goal of the world of experience, it proclaims the identity of the world with that Reality.

The Kena Upanishad takes up this notion of the ultimate Reality as the origin, ground, and goal of the world and purifies it of all touch of relativity and finitude by revealing its character as the inner Self behind all perception and thought. In so doing it also reveals the ultimate Reality of the Upanishads as a *given* fact of experience—the ever present subject of all experience and not as a mere speculative or logical presupposition.

And lastly, when we come to the Mândukya Upanishad—the shortest of the Upanishads, with only twelve verses, amplified and expounded by two great philosophers of a later day, Gaudapâda and Shankara, we seem to be gathering up the results of all these various investigations in a brief and sweeping effort at a rational synthesis of all experience—physical or vital, mental or spiritual—to arrive with a fresh certitude, following the royal road of rational enquiry, at the selfsame truth of the divinity of man and the solidarity of existence.

Astounded by the boldness and sweep of thought

of the Indian sages, Max Müller, after giving expression to his feeling of reverent admiration for the lofty and enduring edifice of thought which they built, remarks as follows : 'And this is the feeling which I cannot resist in examining the ancient Vedanta. Other philosophers have denied the reality of the world as perceived by us ; but no one has ventured to deny at the same time the reality of what we call the ego, the senses, and the mind, and their inherent forms. And yet, after lifting the Self above body and soul, after uniting heaven and earth, God and man, Brahman and Âtman, these Vedanta philosophers have destroyed nothing in the life of the phenomenal beings who have to act and to fulfil their duties in this phenomenal world. On the contrary, they have shown that there can be nothing phenomenal without something that is real, and that goodness and virtue, faith and works, are necessary as a preparation, nay as a *sine qua non* for the attainment of that highest knowledge which brings the soul back to its source and to its home, and restores it to its true nature, to its true selfhood in Brahman.'[1]

The Upanishads view life as an adventure of the spirit in the world of time and space. In a famous passage of the Katha Upanishad this is elaborated with the help of a significant imagery—the imagery of the chariot.[2] Man, with his equipment of body, the senses, mind, and intellect finds his

[1] *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy,* (1919 edition), p. 183.

[2] Katha Upanishad, I. iii. 3-4.

best symbol in a chariot with its horses, reins, charioteer, and the rider. Such a chariot is meant to be put on the road and driven to its appointed destination. The success of the journey depends less on the smoothness of the road than on the strength of the chariot, the vigour of the horses, the toughness of the reins and the discernment of the charioteer. Weakness in any of these links will spell disaster for the whole venture. Life is a creative adventure. It finds its fulfilment in the course and at the end of a dynamic process and not in the context of a static complaisance. 'All expansion is life; all contraction is death', says Swami Vivekananda. In its long journey to the temple of the unity of being, man experiences varying stages of excellence of truth, beauty, and goodness, physical or mental, individual or social. At the summit he is promised the *summum bonum* or what the Upanishad terms as *tadvishnoh paramam padam,* the highest state of Vishnu or Brahman. But this long and arduous journey through life needs for its success an effective training of the personality. And that training is indicated in a memorable verse of this Upanishad where we are asked to combine strength of the body and vigour of the senses with force of will and conviction, clearness of vision and calmness of judgment :

विज्ञान सारथिर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान्नरः ।
सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥

"He attains the highest excellence who has an en-

lightened intelligence as charioteer and a tough determination as reins.'[1]

The Mundaka Upanishad, in a similar strain, summons us to the battle of life, equipped properly. Take up the armoury of Upanishadic thought, it says, and sharpening the arrow of self by thought and meditation, shoot at the target of excellence with unerring precision :

धनुर्गृहीत्वौपनिषदं महास्त्रं
शरं ह्युपासानिशितं सन्दधीत ।
आयम्य तद्भावगतेन चेतसा
लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि ॥[2]

And the Upanishad significantly bids us God-speed in our arduous journey from darkness to light : *Svasti vah pârâya tamasah parastât*.[3]

The Upanishadic search for the meaning of life and experience, guided as it was by a pure passion for truth untarnished by the predilections of personality, has imparted the quality of universality to its philosophy and perenniality to its message. Unlike philosophies elsewhere and other systems here, the Vedanta is a living philosophy ; and from the time it was first expounded in that dim antiquity down to our own times it has been the spiritual inspiration behind the movements of India's soul. The presence of that

[1] Katha Upanishad, I. iii. 9.
[2] Mundaka Upanishad, II. ii. 3.
[3] Ibid., II. ii. 6.

inspiration in a concentrated measure has ushered in memorable creative epochs in Indian history. The ages of the Gita, Buddha, and Shankara in the past and of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the present are such landmarks in our ancient and modern history. The Upanishads are not interested in forging rules and laws for the conduct of our daily lives. If they had done so, they would have reduced themselves to the level of systems that have their day and then disappear; for rules and laws that nourish one age tend to choke a later age.

The Upanishads addressed themselves to the discovery of the timeless Reality in man and nature and to providing the food of spirituality to him to quench his nameless and perennial thirst for the eternal. The work of forging laws and rules to guide man's daily conduct and behaviour it left to the Smritis and Dharma Shâstras in the past as it would leave it to the constitutions and social consciences today. Its theme is freedom and its message fearlessness. It summons men and women to the mighty adventure of the spirit in all its phases, to the realisation by each one of his or her essential spiritual and divine nature and the transcendence of the limitations of finitude. It explains every great movement—social, religious, or political—nay, the phenomena of life itself, as an expression of the urge to freedom inherent in every organism—the infinite caught in a cell or a body, a social scheme or a political system, in a texture of relations or in the network of relativity. Freedom is the ground and freedom is the

goal of all life according to Vedanta and its constant refrain therefore is, in the words of the Katha Upanishad :

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ॥

'Arise and awake and, approaching the great ones, enlighten yourself' (I.iii.14).

In thus placing emphasis on the fundamental and the perennial and wisely relegating to the Smritis the temporal and the parochial, the Upanishads not only ensured for themselves an immortal hegemony over human life and destiny but also imparted to the Indian cultural experiment a resilience and adaptability which has ensured its immortality as well. To the Upanishads we owe that impressive record of toleration characteristic of our cultural and religious history. To them we owe the periodical renewal of our springs of life when they seem all but choked and about to dry up. To them also we owe the absence of the heavy hand of an all-powerful Church and an infallible dogma on the national life and mind, allowing for the emergence and unhampered functioning, in succeeding eras, of free spirits whose procession down the ages is an impressive feature of India's long history.

THE CHARM OF THE GITA[1]

The Song Celestial, as Edwin Arnold has called the Bhagavad-Gita, has exercised its fascination on the hearts of men and women ever since it was first sung on the battle-field of Kurukshetra, a place hardly eighty miles from Delhi, the city from where I am addressing you now. Many famous books of the world have exercised their fascination on the human mind, some of them deeply and abidingly. They belong to the class of 'Literature Immortal'. But among all such the Gita holds a unique position ; for, its appeal has a universality not found elsewhere. If a book appeals to a scholar and thinker, it may not appeal to the common man ; if it appeals to both, it may fail to evoke the response of a man of affairs. What stirs the feeling and emotion of one may leave the intellect and reason of another cold, and vice versa. The universality of a book or of anything else consists in its appeal to different types and grades of mind and mood, irrespective of race or creed. And the Gita precisely belongs to this category. If we take a cross-section of humanity which has responded to its charm, we shall find in it a cross-section of human temperaments, endowments, and moods ; among its votaries can be found intellectuals of a high order, simple men and women of piety and faith, and prac-

[1] Talk over the All India Radio, Delhi, on February 10, 1950.

tical men of affairs, as also men and women drawn from a variety of races and creeds. Vyâsa, Shankara, and other Âchâryas of ancient India, and Swami Vivekananda, Lokamanya Tilak, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi in our own time have responded to the intellectual vigour, emotional appeal, and spiritual depth of this great book. As in the past, so in the present, it continues to draw the hearts of millions and millions of Hindus of all sections and sects. In modern times, its empire in the hearts of men and women has extended beyond the geographical limits of India ; men of the calibre of Emerson and Carlyle, Walt Whitman and Thoreau, and an ever-increasing circle of the common man and woman of the modern West have come under the spell of this music of ancient India.

It was a prophecy that Warren Hastings, the first British Governor-General of India made in the eighth decade of the eighteenth century when he entered the following remarks in his introduction to the first English translation of the Gita by his friend, Sir Charles Wilkins. 'The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive,' says Warren Hastings, 'when the British Dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist, and when the sources which it yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance.' Exactly two weeks ago,[1] that perishable empire founded by him in India ceased to be, as anticipated by him. The

[1] January 26, 1950, when the Indian Constituent Assembly proclaimed India a Sovereign Democratic Republic.

empire of the sages of India, on the other hand, has been widening ever since he wrote those fateful lines. The love of truth and intellectual energy of the modern West have contributed much to the wide diffusion of these thoughts in the modern world. The activity of renascent India in this line begins with the historic appearance of Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893. Since then that empire has been making spiritual conquests in many a heart and intellect of the modern world, including the England of Warren Hastings himself. The march of this empire needs no armies in its front, nor diplomats in its rear ; for, it is the march of the 'Wheel of Dharma' which silences, according to the Ashokan inscriptions, the war drums of human separation and sounds the music of human unity. 'Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world.'[1] This is the real India with a continuity and persistence all its own, and it has exercised a mesmerism on the contemporary world at every epoch of her long history. With the peaceful ending of that empire of Warren Hastings, this India has a chance to come to its own, and an opportunity, not restricted as in the past, but thanks to science, world-wide.

The India of the Vedas and of Shri Krishna, of Buddha and of Shankara, of Ashoka and of Akbar is

[1] *Complete Works,* Vol. III, p. 274.

now politically free. After centuries of political immobilisation, she has found her soul and her voice. The world around her, as much as her own children, are deeply interested in the march of her feet and the accents of her voice. There is no doubt that at this hour our hopes are mingled with fears. Will she, in her new-found freedom and power, stray into the path of what Nietzsche admiringly termed 'violence of deed and demeanour', and disturb with her powerful tread the already distracted world? Will her new-found voice, catching the infection of the jarring world around, fail to ring in accents of hope and cheer for man and his civilisation? Will she not continue to be the witness to the deepest reality in man and nature and thus be a beacon-light to a world enveloped in darkness but seeking light? Will she not be true to her historic mission of peace and friendship, renunciation and service in this unfolding epoch of world history? In short, will not Free India discover herself in her true spirit and temper, and courageously set to music the tune of human unity and solidarity that is haunting the ears and hearts of millions in the modern world?

The answer to these questions will be furnished in the course of the next few decades. But if faith in the past of India is any guide in anticipating her future movements, we can definitely assert in advance that India will fulfil the expectations the world has of her. The past in this case is reinforced by the present through the dynamic national experience expressed in Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda,

and Mahatma Gandhi. The ideology and influence proceeding from these spiritual giants are the forces that are steadily but silently moulding the national mind in the light of the universal and human in its spiritual legacy, and helping India to rediscover and pursue her historic world mission in the modern context. And in quest of a light to guide her footsteps in this great national and international adventure, India has discovered her ancient Vedanta with a new comprehension and comprehended its finest exposition in the Gita with a new insight. This new comprehension of and insight into the meaning and scope of our national philosophy is the spiritual legacy of Swami Vivekananda to this new epoch of our history.

It is a happy augury that the Vedanta as expressed in the Gita is having a profound attraction for the thinking mind of India today. Unlike philosophies elsewhere and other systems here, the Vedanta is a living philosophy; it has saved India twice in the past from spiritual death, according to Swami Vivekananda. India has always borne in mind the impress of this philosophy. But we have to confess that her vast body politic bore other impresses, specially in recent centuries, which are often not very edifying nor appropriate to her Vedantic mind and heart. The present epoch is destined to witness the steady emergence of a body politic in India based on the Vedantic ideals of human dignity, equality, and unity, leading to the evolution, for the first time, of a complete Vedantic civilisation on the Indian soil.

This consummation will largely be achieved through the inspiration provided by the spirituality and social ethics of the Gita which will find in this an application intended by its great teacher, but neglected and overlooked by his people in the past epochs. An understanding of the fundamentals of this Vedanta and the attitude it brings to bear on life and its problems will help us capture the mental climate of the Gita of Bhagavân Shri Krishna and the mood of the India of Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi which is the India of the future.

THE AVATARA AS HISTORY-MAKER[1]

A rational temper and approach, a spiritual aim and purpose, a passion for the welfare of man as man and not as divided into sects and creeds, and above all a spirit of harmony and fellowship—these are some of the salient features of the religion and philosophy of the Upanishads which have marked the Indian spiritual tradition with the stamp of the eternal and the perennial. As the earliest and most comprehensive exposition of this tradition, the Bhagavad-Gita carries a weight and authority in India next only to the Upanishads. In the Upanishads we move in a world of thought—intense, rarefied, and pure, in whose atmosphere even the personalities of the thinkers get melted into the impersonal ; moving on air, so thin and rare, the Rishis have left no visible footprints ; their personalities have become fused with their thoughts and what we get is an *apaurusheya* or impersonal body of truths, drawn from experience and tested by experience. This impersonal start has been like a rock-foundation to Indian spiritual tradition, enabling later centuries to erect a wide and lofty cultural edifice in the life of a sixth of the human race. The foundation so laid has imparted to this edifice an element of stability and resilience, ensuring tenacity to meet tension and steadfastness to meet

[1] Talk over the All India Radio, Delhi, on March 3, 1950.

strain, and a continuity, through assimilative power, which is one of the wonders of world history. During the five thousand years of its history, storms have blown over it, invasions have battered it, subjection has humiliated it, and revolutions have convulsed it; edifices elsewhere have tumbled and crumbled in the past under a fraction of such impact; similar things are happening even in the present. But this one has not only stood them all, but every time has emerged stronger to greet the world with a new burst of energy. History has demonstrated that India is ever aging but never old.

If, after five thousand years, the people of India feel the freshness and vigour of youth today and an era of struggle and achievement opening out before them tomorrow, the credit goes to the sages of the Upanishads for the enduring foundations which they furnished to the Indian national life at the very commencement of its career. We will do well to remember these sages today and learn of them and pay them due homage for what they mean to us and to the world.

The Upanishadic atmosphere, though impersonal in itself, was yet the womb of a galaxy of personalities who have brightened up the sky of India in the succeeding eras. And the first of such was Shri Râma, the hero of Vâlmiki's Râmâyana, and the second, Shri Krishna, the teacher of the Gita. These two heroes dominate the pages of Indian cultural history, being the most outstanding and most effective personalities for later ages. In them the impersonal idea of the

Upanishads becomes defined as character and personality; the word becomes flesh. It is possible to study the Upanishads without reference to the personalities of the Rishis; but not so in the case of the teachings of the personalities beginning with Râma and Krishna. There is a close interrelation here between the teacher and the teaching; the teachers are not mere individuals but world-moving forces, being the condensations of their own ideologies. This is so also in the case of Buddha and Shankara, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. They are archetypal characters, representing a happy synthesis of the personal and the impersonal, in whom are focussed the spiritual and moral urges and loyalties of the age. These are the epoch-makers of Indian history, being the embodiments of its spiritual dynamics. Idea defined is character; character is definition in terms of personality. Ideas in the womb of the Upanishads become, as it were, defined as character in these personalities. Shri Krishna is the supreme example of this synthesis—a personality—warm, genial, vigorous, and human, and withal so impersonal. Viewed in the context of human history, the term Avatâra, as applied to these outstanding heroes, seeks to convey this unique quality in the stature and dimension of their personalities. The Avatâra or incarnation is the synthesis of the impersonal and the personal, of the divine and the human; he is at once individual and universal.

One important feature of the Avatâra concept, the one that is most significant from the point of

view of cultural history, is the quality of dynamism associated with the term. The Avatâra, unlike an ordinary saint, is not a static guide like a lighthouse ; he is, in the words of Shri Ramakrishna, a large-sized ship, capable of carrying thousands of people across the waters of life.[1] He appears on the world scene to establish Dharma, in the words of Shri Krishna in the Gita ;[2] he sets in motion the wheel of Dharma, says Bhagavân Buddha in his first sermon. And the motive-force of both is the identical one of the happiness and welfare of millions—*sarvabhuta-hita* or *bahujana-hita* and *bahujana-sukha*. Paradoxical as it may seem, the richness and fullness of their personalities is the product of their impersonal attitudes and motives which are the driving forces behind their life and action. 'I have nothing to gain in the three worlds, O Arjuna !' says Shri Krishna in the Gita, 'yet, I work incessantly, for the good of the world and as an example to mankind.'[3] Theirs is a standing example which validates the ethical truth that the height of a personality is directly proportional to the depth of its impersonality ; to find life, we have to lose it first.[4]

The Avatâra, as understood in India, is an epoch-maker, a spiritual dynamo from which emanates man-making and nation-making forces. In him philosophy as idea becomes transformed into

[1] *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna,* Eighth edition, p. 224.
[2] Gita, IV. 7-8.
[3] Gita, III. 22-25.
[4] Matthew, XVI. 25.

philosophy as will and purpose and endeavour. If philosophy as idea is primarily concerned with interpreting the world, philosophy as will and purpose is deeply interested in the transformation of it in terms of its idea. The Avatâra as epoch-maker is the fusion of idea and will and endeavour; and this is also the definition for Ishvara or God in the Vedanta—He is the synthesis of Jnâna, Ichchâ, and Kriyâ (knowledge, will, and action). All men of effective character are dynamos of such synthesis in more or less degree; but their powers are limited in scope and circumscribed in motive, being not wholly free from the limitations of personality. Unlike them, however, the Avatâra functions as a perennial source of power and beneficence in a whole epoch, and continues to be a source of general inspiration ever after.

It will thus be seen that the Marxian distinction between philosophers that merely interpret the world and those that transform it has long been known and acted upon in India. In this, we were Marxists long before Marxist philosophy was born in Europe. The Avatâra, according to Indian thought, is the world transformer; in him idea becomes yoked to will, purpose, and endeavour. He does not merely contemplate the world; he works with a view to changing it. The materialistic philosophy and approach of Marxism, with its faith in naked violence and hatred, and the spiritual view and approach of Indian thought, with its faith in the innate goodness and educability of man, differ

widely in methods and results, in spite of starting with common objectives. 'In its concern for the poor and the lowly,' observes Dr. Radhakrishnan, 'in its demand for a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunity, in its insistence on rational equality, it gives us a social message with which all idealists are in agreement. But our sympathy for the social programme does not necessarily commit us to the Marxist philosophy of life, its atheistic conception of ultimate Reality, its naturalistic view of man, and its disregard of the sacredness of personality.'[1]

The Vedanta understands and appreciates the Marxian passion for human betterment. Whether we search into the theoretical statements of its objectives or into the practical conduct of its exemplars, we shall never miss this human element in this philosophy whose quest is for a truth which will most conduce to human happiness and welfare and whose passion is to verify its truth in life and society. And that truth it finds in the unity and solidarity of existence. The social outlook and programme of the Vedanta, proceeding as they do from this truth, and periodically set in motion by its greatest exemplars, the Avatâras, naturally tend to ease the tensions and conflicts obtaining in a society through its insistence on the values of freedom, equality, and

[1] Radhakrishnan : *Religion and Society*, p. 25.

the sacredness of personality, and through the spiritual direction it gives to surplus social energies. The Avatâra thus is the dominating spiritual hero of an epoch who functions as the dynamic source of a creative social process and the sustenance and guide of an equalitarian social order.

THE AVATARA AS DIVINITY[1]

The greatness of any historic hero is a product of lived life and interpretation. A people interpret to themselves their hero, generation after generation, by participating intellectually and emotionally in the life and being of their hero. The personality of the hero seems to expand and grow in stature and dimension in this historic process. 'Through thousands of years of chiselling and modelling,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'the lives of great prophets of yore come down to us.' This interpretative process is operative only if the hero is of such a rare type that he has achieved a more or less synthesis of the impersonal and personal in his being, and if there is a dynamic spiritual kinship between him and his people, a common spiritual conditioning environment for both of them. Though enveloped thus in the same spiritual mantle, each of them bears a different relation to it. The people are relatively static centres except when carried along by the dynamic forces proceeding from a hero who appears as a vortex of thought and movement in the environment, a sort of condenser and radiator in one for the spiritual forces and values around. This is the characteristic that makes a hero in any domain of life.

[1] Talk over the All India Radio, Delhi, on March 10, 1950.

But among heroes, the Avatâra or he whom the world recognises as an incarnation of the Divinity, belongs to a special category. The ordinary type of hero does not respond much to the interpretative process; his personality does not grow in the flow of time whose soil does not seem to hold any nourishment for this type of organism; on the contrary, his stature gets reduced more and more as time passes. This flow of time, however, does not affect all of them in a uniform manner. It is unsparing with some even in their lifetime, while it spares others for a while. To the temple of greatness, as to the Kingdom of Heaven, many are called but few are chosen. There is a rare type of hero whom time chooses and India designates this hero as the Avatâra; for him time reserves a role of expanding greatness, while it relegates all other types of heroes to a career of diminishing glory. There is only one factor that conditions this selective process; and that is perfection of character, the fullest flowering of personality; the more perfect the character the longer lasts its glory. We can mock or hoodwink everything except time; it consumes all worldly greatness as systematically as it dissolves the mountains and rocks of the world. But it stops short and even reverses its steps when confronted by a greatness which is unworldly —a greatness which receives its nourishment not from the muscles or mind but from the spirit, from the sap of the timeless reality of Being in man. The Avatâra is that character in its fullest measure, while the saints and prophets and other heroes represent

it in varying degrees. In him the seed of divinity latent in man and struggling in a hero for expression becomes fully blown; and man attains in him his fullest stature and glory.

This attainment marks an intense concentration of power and beneficence in the personality of the Avatâra, all masked by his limited physical and mental configuration. His earthly being and career, with its time co-ordinate of so many years and space co-ordinate of so much height and weight, and other indefinable co-ordinates of personality like love and knowledge, is a highly deceptive mask to cover the spaceless and timeless amplitude of his being. It is wrong to measure the energy generated in the cyclotron of his personality in terms of the size and weight of that personality. Even in the case of an ordinary individual the skin is never the frontier of his personality. His familiar physical personality of the three-dimensional world is enveloped and filled by a mental and emotional personality of a more than three-dimensional continuum. His sentiments and affections, interests and dispositions—in short, his emotional and mental being, reveal the familiar man to be but a cell in a vast organism belonging to a non-physical world.

If even an ordinary human being—unintegrated and unharnessed—is vaster than his physical personality, how much more so will be those integrated characters whom the world calls heroes, and, most of all, the few perfectly integrated ones, whom it calls Avatâras? Man is a denizen not of one world but

of many worlds, which lie about and in him, layer after layer, fold after fold ; his Being is in touch with all of them, though his conscious being is expressive of only one or two of them. Being is not identical with consciousness ; consciousness is only one part of Being ; conscious being is therefore only surface being, limited and circumscribed. The greatness and forcefulness of a personality derive from its capacity to appropriate more and more of its Being to consciousness ; thus the expansion of consciousness is also the enrichment of personality ; and the highest development of personality is when consciousness becomes co-extensive and identical with Being. This is the attainment of the fullness of Being, the flowering of personality, the perfect integration of character. Theoretically, therefore, the energy generated in a cyclotron of personality such as this must be immense in range and power.

An ordinary individual, functioning at the lowest level of being, can be viewed as a limited quantity of explicit power and a limitless packet of implicit energy. His available energy is mostly the product of chemical combustion in his muscles and partly of an indefinable combustion in his mind. When the same man becomes a hero, there is a vast release of energy in his personality but the chemical combustion in his muscles may not show any appreciable increase in quantity, nay, it will even show a decrease in value in certain types, with a corresponding increase in the mental field. The quantity of released energy is thus determined by the quality of

the energy source. As we deal with finer and finer energy sources, the quantity of energy released is found to be out of all proportion to the quantity of the energy sources. The quantity of food needed to supply fuel to the muscles is always more than what is required for the nerves and the mind ; in the case of the latter the energy source is of a higher quality, and energy released is more compared to the quantity of the energy source. Ordinary digestion is a chemical process of combustion ; mental digestion is a release of energy on a higher plane ; it bears the same relation to the physical digestion as electrical release to the chemical release of energy. There is a third and higher order of digestion, namely spiritual digestion, in which there occurs a total assimilation of ideals and values by which a person becomes value incarnate or ideal incarnate in the full sense of the term. The development of atomic science has made humanity aware of a new source of energy in the physical world—the atomic nucleus —whose fission as well as fusion liberates energies the quantity-value of which is out of all proportion to the infinitesimal quantity-value of its energy source. The process of conversion of quantity into quality is complete here and the formula $E=mc^2$ may be considered as a statement of a residueless and total conversion of matter into energy in the physical world.

The above considerations help us to place in clear perspective the nature and source of energy in man and its grades and varieties ; the Vedantic state-

ment that each individual is a potential centre of infinite energy will now appear to be a more sober truth containing a hopeful message. The difference between man and man is not in his being but only in his becoming, in his expression. The dullness of the dullard and the brilliance of the bright are only differences in expression proceeding from the differences in the tapped energy sources. And these energy sources in the case of man, as in the case of the physical entities, belong to an ascending order of fineness and subtlety, inwardness and purity, beginning with his body and its environing world, and ending with the very centre or nucleus of his being, the Âtman or the true Self in man, the end value of all subtleness, fineness, and inwardness.[1]

The Vedanta holds that looking out into the starry heavens of outer space or into the misty past or future of time to locate the centre of being of the universe is a fruitless undertaking. It also appears as a thoroughly meaningless venture in the light of a science which dares to weld space and time into a unity and which views the universe and everything in it as events or configurations of that space-time. To Vedanta, the centre of experience is the centre of the universe—physical as well as non-physical, and

[1] 'As there is no higher reality than the Self which is a mass of pure awareness only, therefore It, the Self, is the basis and consummation of all grades of subtleness, greatness, and inwardness.' *Shankara-Bhâshya* on Katha Upanishad, I. iii. 11.

this supreme centre is the real Self in man, the Âtman, the unchanging basis of an ever changing universe composed of both nature and personality, above cause and therefore above time, the seer of the space-time events, in the abyss of whose silence the distinction between the space-time and its perceiver, the objects and the subject, the non-selves and the self is transcended in the final truth of perfect non-duality. The *Bhâgavata* (VIII. iii. 3) sings the glory of this shining truth in these memorable words :

यस्मिन्निदं यतश्चेदं येनेदं य इदं स्वयम् ।
योऽस्मात्परस्माच्च परस्तं प्रपद्ये स्वयंभुवम् ॥

'In whom is this universe, from whom is this universe, and by whom is this universe, who Himself is this universe, who is beyond the familiar world of effect and the unfamiliar world of cause—in that self-existent Reality do I take refuge.'

It is this Reality that the Avatâra assimilates to his consciousness, a Reality which is the nucleus not merely of a physical universe of three or four dimensions, but the nucleus of the entire range of the universe of experience—a Reality which can best be described as the non-dimensional centre of a multi-dimensional universe, each having the value of infinity. The nature of this non-dual Reality which transcends every range of relation, including causality, and which escapes every attempt of thought

and speech to capture it, has been indicated, in a famous verse[1] of the Vedas :

पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते ।
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

'That Reality is Infinite (full); this universe is Infinite (full); from the Infinite has come the Infinite. After the Infinite has been taken out of the Infinite, the Infinite alone remains.'

It is this Reality that radiates through the highly sensitive physical and mental personality of the Avatâra to whom naturally nothing in the universe is hidden, the high frequency vibrations of whose knowledge have the power to penetrate not only the muscles and minerals of the universe but also its minds and mysteries. The *Mândukya-Kârikâ* (IV. 1) gives expression to the nature of this highest-grade type of knowledge in one of its famous verses :

ज्ञानेनाकाशकल्पेन धर्मान्यो गगनोपमान् ।
ज्ञेयाभिन्नेन संबुद्धस्तं वंदे द्विपदां वरम् ॥

'I bow to that best among men who, by means of knowledge which is like (all-pervading) Âkâsha (ether) and non-different from the objects of knowledge (i.e. the Dharma), realised the nature of the Dharmas (i.e. the Jivas) which are again like the Âkâsha.'

The atomic energy generated in a cyclotron,

[1] Brihadâranyaka Upanishad, V. i. 1.

immense as it is when measured in terms of the available energies in the universe, pales into insignificance in range and power before the mighty energies which an Avatâra compasses within himself. As a charcoal hearth pales into insignificance before an electric oven and both before an atomic furnace, so also appears an ordinary human being and an ordinary hero by the side of an Avatâra whose extraordinary power to love and to save makes him an object of wonder and reverence to all his fellowmen. The nature and scope of this extraordinary power of his is different from the atomic and other energies mastered by science. The latter can run a chain of industries or destroy a city but is powerless before the subtler realities of mind and heart which control its production as much as its use and misuse ; it or even something infinitely less than it can doubtless destroy the *physical* configuration of the Avatâra ; but that is the least part of his being. His energy, on the other hand, can penetrate into and control that mind and heart of man which produce and control atomic and other energies in the world. It has the unique power to burn up the ignorance, impurities, and passions in the human heart and bestow on man a fuller and a larger life. Its penetrating and soothing power, compared to that of the atomic and other energies, is evident from this. But his energy, colossal as it is, is yet cool and gentle ; it is beneficent. It radiates, in the words of Shri Ramakrishna, 'light without heat, as a shining gem'. Wonderful indeed is the

heart of an Avatâra, the delicate and intricate mechanism of which can convert scorching heat into soothing light, sorrows and sufferings into joys and delights, passion into purity and hatred into love, the biting winds of despair into the gentle breeze of hope, the poison of death into the nectar of immortality.

This is the conception of Avatâra in Indian philosophic thought ; he is the *dvipadâm varam,* the best and highest among *Homo sapiens,* in the words of the *Mândukya-Kârikâ.* The term indicates the totality of knowledge and power and beneficence gathered in a personality, the visible part of which —his physical life with its earthly setting—is, as in the case of the cyclotron, a highly deceptive mask covering the magnitude of the contents within. This occasional concentration of beneficent energy in a mighty personality has only one historic purpose to serve—to accelerate the process of the spiritual evolution of humanity. He scatters what he gathers, and a tide sets in in the affairs of men. The spiritually sensitive who are alert and waiting take the tide at its flood and move up spiritually ; others are left unaffected except indirectly. He represents for humanity the achievement of the high tide of character and spiritual awareness ; he is ablaze with divinity, a fact recognised only by a discerning few but missed by the multitudes due to his physical mask. The Gita refers to this fact in four well-known verses :

अवजानन्ति मां मूढा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥

'The deluded despise Me, clad in human body, not knowing My higher nature as the Lord of all existence.'[1]

महात्मानस्तु मां पार्थ दैवीं प्रकृतिमाश्रिताः ।
भजन्त्यनन्यमनसो ज्ञात्वा भूतादिमव्ययम् ॥

'The great-souled ones, O Arjuna, who abide in the divine nature, knowing (Me as) the imperishable source of all beings, worship Me with an undistracted mind.[2]

जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ।
त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन ॥

'He who knows thus, in its true nature, My divine birth and works, is not born again into the body: having transcended it (through such knowledge), he comes to Me, O Arjuna.[3]

Such recognition is possible only to the pure in heart, as affirmed in the next verse :

वीतरागभयक्रोधा मन्मया मामुपाश्रिताः ।
बहवो ज्ञानतपसा पूता मद्भावमागताः ॥

[1] Gita, IX. 11.
[2] Ibid., IX. 13.
[3] Ibid., IV. 9.

'Delivered from passion, fear, and anger, absorbed in Me, taking refuge in Me, many, purified by the austerity of wisdom, have attained to My state of Being.'[1]

It is this concentrated and intense life energy that enables an Avatâra to defy time itself which wears out and chokes up all other types of greatness, and to make it flow in the reverse direction in his case. The interpretative process of history finds in his case substantial material for interpretation. He sets in motion a current of beneficent energy which flows on irresistibly to compose the distractions of an age. Humanity finds in him a focus for its transcendent affections and loyalties and a promise of its hopes and aspirations. And the world finds his personality growing generation after generation. This mutually reinforcing synthesis of lived life and historic interpretation explains the transformation, in course of time, of a simple individual, indistinguishable from most of his contemporaries, into a gigantic personality, commanding the head and heart of later generations. It is no wonder then that men and women in India have learnt to find in a personality such as this an embodiment of their deepest spiritual aspirations and a manifestation of the highest Reality, clearer and more adequate than what our intellects can ever conceive of, and have accorded to all such, whether indigenous or foreign,

[1] Ibid., IV. 10.

divine honours and devout worship. Such an attitude and worship signifies a confluence of the religion of man and the religion of God, tending to make religion more human and man more divine.

THE PERSONALITY OF SHRI KRISHNA[1]

The Upanishadic vibrations of truth and beauty, goodness and love, became caught in a later age in a mighty condenser of personality who shook up India spiritually and politically during his earthly career round about 3000 B.C., and whose voice continues to shake us up even today. Shri Krishna, the author of the Gita, has affected Indian thought and life in such a profound way that has no parallel in India or elsewhere ; his influence is both intensive and extensive. If we abstract the Krishna element from Indian heritage it will be reduced to almost elementary proportions. He has entered into our religoin and philosophy, mysticism and poetry, painting and sculpture, music and dancing, into all that pertains to the varied life of a people advanced in culture and civilisation. His personality has a charm for all varieties and levels of people. He has been and continues to be the perennial 'pied piper' of the Indian heart and intellect, drawing all to him, our girls and our boys, our saints and our sages, our intellectuals and our artists, our statesmen and our diplomats. The *Bhâgavata Purâna* of a later age gave expression to the wonder of generations when it stated that Shri Krishna is God Himself unlike other Avatâras who

[1] Talk over the All India Radio, Delhi, on March 17, 1950.

were merely aspects and parts of Him.[1] Where shall we seek for this mesmerism of Shri Krishna, for this focussing of affections and loyalties of a whole people, except in the character of that person and the character of his people ?

The broad facts of Shri Krishna's career as scanned from the pages of the Mahâbhârata and the *Bhâgavata* reveal him to have been a leader and a teacher, a citizen and a sage of a rare calibre. His childhood and early boyhood were spent in the sylvan surroundings of his rural home in Vraja, in the vicinity of Mathurâ. In spite of the troubled politics of that city which cast a cloud of sorrow and anxiety over the surrounding country-side, his early life at Vraja, under the loving care of his parents and amidst the simple cowherds of the place, was a saga of sweetness and tenderness, revealing the unity of man with nature and the animal world. The shaded groves by the sacred Yamuna, enlivened by the deer, the peacock and other birds, provided the children of Vraja with an idyllic setting, a real kindergarten for the exercise of their freedom and the expression of their personalities. The picture of young Krishna, as depicted in the *Bhâgavata,* tending cattle and playing on his flute, and engaging himself in fun and frolic and delights and adventure in the company and at the head of his rustic comrades, has provided the theme for the highest quality of lyrical poetry and spiritual

[1] I. iii. 28.

allegory in succeeding ages. Even in childhood he exhibited the qualities of vivacity and precocity, valour and composure. Born with a capacity for sympathy and for understanding, for humour and for laughter, he grew with them into a personality, warm-hearted and thoroughly human, with a serene smile as an inalienable part of his facial expression, a smile indicative of a steady intellect and a tender heart with which he used to confront the doubts and despairs, the passions and hatreds of the human heart. Even while young he was aware of the mission for which he was born and the work he was to accomplish on earth. That mission too soon compelled him to bid good-bye to the beautiful environments and beloved hearts of his native Vraja when he was in his early teens ; he spent the rest of his life in a vortex of struggle, first at near-by Mathurâ, and later, at the newly-built city of Dwârakâ, on the Kathiawar coast. While there, the urge of his life-work brought him to Delhi, then known as Indraprastha, the capital of India, and its sister city Hastinâpura and to a close friendship with the Pândavas and their allies ; and he passed the rest of his life between Delhi and Dwârakâ.

The great epic Mahâbhârata illumines the India of a heroic and creative age. The galaxy of its heroes belong to a wide range of the lovable and the hateful, the righteous and the wicked, the gentle and the ferocious, the admirable and the detestable. The one character that dominates this galaxy, alike by its force and charm as by its loftiness and

brilliance, is Shri Krishna. Respected by the sages and loved by the people, feared by the wicked and sought after by the good, full of tender solicitude for the welfare of women and the masses, and honouring those to whom honour is due, the Mahâbhârata depicts Shri Krishna as a rare hero, at once human and divine, engaged in shaping the mind and face of the India of his time through a long life characterised by ceaseless activity on the one hand and calm detachment on the other. The Mahâbhârata describes the tumultuous scenes of national welcome which the citizens of Indraprastha and Hastinâpura used to accord to Shri Krishna, their leader, during his rare visits to India's capital.

The most active and fruitful part of his life was spent at Delhi and its environs, in the company of the political leaders and spiritual luminaries as well as the humbler men and women of the time. By espousing the righteous cause of the Pândavas as against the Kauravas, he was drawn into the national politics of the day in which he played effective roles, now as an adviser, then as an ambassador, and always as a friend of the righteous and the virtuous, the lowly and the lost. As the last and crowning act of his political career, we find him playing the humble role of an unarmed charioteer to Arjuna in the battle-field of Kurukshetra, and leaving to posterity an imperishable legacy in the wisdom he then imparted to grief-stricken Arjuna. Shri Krishna as Pârthasârathi, the charioteer of Arjuna, has become a fascinating and

immortal figure through the music of the Song Celestial—the Bhagavad-Gita—which he then sang to steady the mind and heart of Arjuna. That personality and that music have since then continued to play the 'charioteer' and the stimulus to millions of men and women in the larger battle of life.

The Bhagavad-Gita expounds a philosophy of life which breathes the lived convictions of its teacher and exemplar. It is a philosophy which imparts wisdom to man without imperilling his zest in life. It makes one live at his highest and work at his best. In ordinary life, our zest is the product of our selfish attachments, our activity the expression of our restlessness, and our love the fruit of our passion and self-love. We begin to lose our zests and our loves when life fails to yield selfish advantages; our activity then loses its motive power and we lapse into a mood of apathy which is compounded of inactivity without and restlessness within. Shri Krishna shows us through precept and example that we can be zestful without being attached and active without being restless. We work at our best when we are free from selfish desire and passions. This is true spirituality, the fruition of the moral process, the achievement of goodness plus effectiveness, the synthesis of the clear intellect, steady heart, and firm hand. It denotes a character which combines strength with gentleness, fearlessness with love and greatness with humility. The Gita expounds in words what its teacher practised in life and action.

It is this richness and many-sidedness of Shri

Krishna's personality that has made it the centre of not only calm philosophy and sober history but also of a rich and varied myth and legend. Heroes who profoundly stir a nation's imagination tend to lose the rigid outlines of their historic being and get invested with a national personality; they become alluring themes to the collective subconsciousness of the people as a whole, as much as to their individual consciousness. When the colour of myth and legend responds to the fabric of fact and history in the life of a great hero, we witness the unique phenomenon of a mutual enrichment and edification of the personalities of the hero and his people.

This is the mesmerism of the Krishna of legend and history; there is a unity of theme between him and his people. Every spiritual and secular aspiration of the Indian people has found a responsive echo from the many-sided life, career, and protean teachings of this great personality. The echoes of his powerful voice and the shadows of his giant form can be discerned in the history of the ancient Greek and Middle-East peoples. Interesting as this line of inquiry is, it is more instructive and profitable to seek for him in the living tradition of India and its people which absorbed him and was absorbed by him. Shri Krishna to us is not a mere historic memory but a living fact, whose voice and form continue to receive fresh accessions of amplitude and strength in the passing of time. India achieved through him a synthesis of the classical and the

romantic in her traditions, and the philosophic and religious in her aspirations. Very few peoples in the ancient or modern world—be it Greek or Roman, French or German—have been able to achieve this height of spiritual synthesis. In all of them the classical and the romantic, the philosophical and the religious, are ever at war with each other, sometimes violently but always imperceptibly. With Shri Krishna begins the evolution of a truly national Indian mind, at peace with itself through the synthesis he achieved for it and at peace with the world through a larger synthesis which came later through Bhagavân Buddha and his movement. This synthesis is the key-note of the Indian mind and Shri Krishna is its first inspirer.

THE MESSAGE OF SHRI KRISHNA[1]

It is difficult to say exactly when Bhagavân Shri Krishna was born ; but it is certain that this great event in our history took place over 3,000 years ago. From the accounts available to us of his career we find that he lived a full life both as to length of span and as to width and depth of interests. He was the product of rural India ; his childhood and early boyhood were lived in the villages on the Yamunâ river near Mathurâ, in the closest intimacy with man and beast and nature. This early experience contributed in no little measure to the formation of the intensely human and universal traits of his arresting personality. To this we owe that ever-present sweetness and humanness in his character, which, combined with spiritual depth and intellectual vigour, political power and social wisdom, gave India the services of a leader who awakened our people in his lifetime, and has continued to affect our thought and life in a profound way ever since.

It is the special quality of a great teacher that he evaluates man as man and not in terms of a creed or dogma, or set formula ; on the other hand, he evaluates all dogmas and systems in terms of man. Sabbath is for man and not man for sabbath

[1] Talk over the All India Radio, Delhi, on August 29, 1956.

is their watchword. History reveals several instances of leaders and movements trying to fit man into Procrustean beds of narrow religious dogmas and tight political systems and stunting his personality in the process. Sectarianism in religion or politics appeals to man's sectional prejudices and interests, ignores the possibilities of his total personality, and militates against the emergence of the universal in his life and thought. Yet, the universal ever struggles to emerge ; and that struggle throws up rare types of men and women here and there in the world, living and voicing the message of the universal and human. The record of this struggle, when written, will form a most fascinating chapter of human history.

India wrote the first of such glorious chapters in her long history in the life and message of Shri Krishna. His life reveals the many-sidedness of his character and interests. And his message, as contained in the Gita, well reflects this aspect of his personality. A universal message can proceed only from a universal man. This universality, to be enduring and dynamic, should bear the impress of depth as much as of breadth, intensity as much as of extensity. A cheap cosmopolitanism in manners and outlook does not connote true universality. It is only by realising the values imbedded in the spiritual depths of his being that man attains to true and abiding universality. Behind the personal, which is finite and limited, lies the impersonal, which is infinite and unlimited. Realisation of this imper-

sonal in the depths of man's being alone enriches his personality with unobstructed love and sympathy and confers on him the vision of the universal in man and nature. The height of man's personality is directly proportional to the depth of his impersonality; to find life, we have to lose it first.

The Gita expounds in words what its author expressed in life and action. It seeks to take man gently by the hand, irrespective of credal, social, and political affiliations, and lead him step by step to the realisation of the highest and best in life. The highest and best in life is *mukti* or freedom—freedom from all bonds external and internal—according to Indian spiritual thought. The Gita traces four corollaries of this highest excellence :

First, it is this value of freedom that imparts meaning to all other life values; secondly, progress in man's individual and collective existence is to be measured in terms of the gradual realisation, internally and externally, of this value of freedom; thirdly, the realisation of this value in its fullness constitutes spiritual perfection; and fourthly, this perfection can be attained here and now, and not in any after-death existence, it being imbedded in the depth of our nature.

Man's struggle for freedom involves the presence of some obstacle or obstacles that thwart his freedom. From the simple primitive individual, nay, from the simplest animal organism, through the technically developed civilised man, to the spiritually advanced saint, one and all are engaged in the

sâdhana of freedom, and are wrestling with thwarting obstacles of one type or another. These obstacles are environmental in the early stages and internal in the latter ones, with all sorts of combinations in between. To the question, 'What is life ?' put to him by the Maharaja of Khetri in 1891, Swami Vivekananda gave the following Vedantic answer : 'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.' This bold statement embraces in its comprehensive grasp all the aspirations and struggles of man for social security and political freedom, intellectual advancement and artistic refinement, moral stability and spiritual perfection. And the whole of this process forms the scope of Dharma or religion as defined by the Gita. It includes *abhyudaya,* the struggle for the achievement of social welfare and *nihshreyasa,* the struggle for spiritual perfection.

Indian thought classifies all human aspirations and struggles into these two categories of *abhyudaya,* social welfare, and *nihshreyasa,* spiritual perfection. The Gita in enunciating its message does not view humanity as cut up into creeds, races, and sects, religious or political, but as falling into these two types which cut across all such static divisions ; and it finds the vast majority of human beings in every society in search of, and fit for, the value of *abhyudaya* or social welfare, and only a minority seeking after, and fit for, the value of *nihshreyasa* or spiritual perfection. When religions and sects ignore

this basic fact and offer their followers the *nihshreyasa* ideal alone in the shape of some form of other-worldliness, they, unable to digest and assimilate it, bring it down to their own worldly level in the shape of sectarian loyalty and exclusiveness on the one hand, and extra-sectarian hostility and intolerance, on the other. The Gita recognises the need of sects for the growing soul ; but it finds nothing but evil in sectarianism. Exclusiveness and intolerance engendered by sectarianism are vices born of spiritual snobbery and are terrible bondages of the soul. The Gita places the greatest emphasis on the growth and development of the soul in the direction of the realisation of its inborn freedom and perfection. And it judges every form of discipline and education—social, political, or religious—in the light of this aim and purpose. If the discipline of a sect helps the onward march of man, the rigidities of sectarianism arrest that march and stunt and warp his personality.

In his introduction to his Gita commentary, Shankarâchârya emphasises this universal scope of the Vedic Dharma as expounded in the Gita : 'Twofold, verily, is Vedic Dharma, of the nature of *pravritti,* action, and *nivritti,* inaction, together constituting the world's stabilising factor, being productive of true social welfare and spiritual perfection of all beings.'

In the light of this approach, the Gita recognises, in the spiritual education of man, the legitimate role of the pursuit and acquisition of pleasure and profit

in the context of social existence ; it does not frown on such pleasures and delights as inventions of the devil. Life in the world is not the same as worldliness ; to get stuck up in the field of sense-experience and refuse to grow is worldliness ; and this is harmful simply because it hampers the development of the individual to his or her full stature. By realising ethical values in increasing measure, man achieves a largeness and fullness of being and overcomes the taint of worldliness even while living and working in the world. All forms of human associations, from the family to the international community, conduce to this ethical education of the individual. From his self-centred life of sensate profit and pleasure which is 'short, nasty, and brutish' in the language of Hobbes, man evolves into the largeness and fullness of ethical life of joyous interdependence in a free society. This is his spiritual education ; in the early stage, the individual needs the compulsion of society to acquire this education ; but, later, with more developed ethical sense, he learns freely and joyously to acquire it for himself. The freedom that man achieves through the control and manipulation of the external environment is civilisation ; but civilisation does not mean for man the end of the struggle for freedom. It is only when he carries forward this struggle to control and manipulate the internal environment, the forces of his mind and heart which condition the enjoyment of even his external life and liberty, that he begins to appreciate the fuller

meaning of freedom and realise the deeper levels of his own personality. This inner struggle is against the promptings of that sensate nature which he had ere long nurtured through civilisation but which he now feels called upon to check and master in the interests of a higher value struggling to emerge within his personality. The Gita calls this value *buddhi,* pure will or intelligence, intelligence freed from the thraldom of senses and blind impulses. The purpose and direction of man's ethical efforts and struggles is the development of this value of *buddhi* in him. Its presence imparts steadiness to understanding, stability to personality, and strength to character. Life at the level of *buddhi* is true freedom and delight; and the Gita sings its praise in several of its verses :

'Giving up attachment, and equal-minded in success and failure, do all actions, O Arjuna, established in the Yoga (of *buddhi*) ; this even-mindedness is Yoga.'

'Action (prompted by sense-attraction and blind impulse) is far inferior, O Arjuna, to action guided by the Yoga of *buddhi ;* seek refuge in *buddhi ;* small-minded are they who act for selfish advantage.'

'Endowed with *buddhi,* man goes beyond (the relativity of) both merit and demerit in this very life ; strive, therefore, to acquire the Yoga (of *buddhi*) ; Yoga is skill in action.'

'The wise ones endowed with (the Yoga of) *buddhi,* renouncing the fruits of action, freed for

ever from the bondages of existence, attain to that state which is beyond all evil.' (II. 48-51.)

This freedom *in* life through the discipline of life itself is achieved through a masterly manipulation of the energies of life. This constitutes Shri Krishna's original message in the Gita—the achievement of self-realisation and steady wisdom in and through life and action ; it connotes the fullness of strength and peace. This wisdom of the free spirit is beautifully expounded in two verses of the second Chapter :

'The mind that runs out following the pull of the senses gets despoiled of its wisdom and is lost, like a ship on the ocean in a gale' (67).

'But the self-controlled and self-regulated man, on the other hand, freed from selfish desire and anger, (though) freely engaging his senses in the sense-objects, attains tranquillity' (64).

This message has for its aim the development of a spiritual character, pure, steady, strong, and generous, through the manifestation of the perfection innate in every individual. 'Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man,' says Swami Vivekananda. 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,' says Jesus. Herein lies the universality of the Gita approach to the spiritual education of man ; it emphasises the essential features in the methods and manner of that education as expounded in the world's religions, abstracted of their sectarian and local elements.

The man of true spirituality, says the Gita, will

ever strive to ensure total human welfare ; universal benevolence will be the one theme of his life :

'Just as the unenlightened, O Bhârata, perform all actions prompted by selfish attachments, even so, the spiritually enlightened perform all actions, but without selfish attachments, moved solely by the desire for human welfare' (III. 25).

Another mark of its universality lies in its recognition of different paths to spiritual perfection. This is an accepted Indian idea and the Gita and its teacher are its greatest inspirers. Due to its inherent logic and the prestige of its Indian experience, it is receiving increasing appreciation and acceptance in the modern world. Regimentation warps the religious personality as much as the social or political personality. The Gita studies the various expressions of the religious mood and impulse and scientifically classifies them into the four well-known paths—Karma-Yoga, the path of selfless action, Bhakti-Yoga, the path of love, Râja-Yoga, the path of mental concentration, and Jnâna-Yoga, the path of rational enquiry. All the existing world religions partake of these four paths singly or in varying combinations. The Bhakti path provides faith in and love and devotion to a Personal God or one of His many incarnations as a means to spiritual perfection. Here again, the Gita allows full freedom of choice to the individual, exhorting him at the same time to respect the freedom of other individuals ; for God is one, but His names and forms are many ; and many also are the

paths leading to Him. Declares Shri Krishna in the Gita :

'Whatever form of the Divine a devotee desires to worship in faith and devotion, in that very form do I make that faith of his firm and steady' (VII. 21).

Spiritual pride and intolerance are the bane of a sectarian approach to religion ; faith is gained at the cost of charity and fellow-feeling. The Gita upholds the ideal of intensity of faith in spiritual life, but imparts to it, at the same time, the mood of acceptance and fellowship as proceeding from that very intensity. This is possible because, to the Gita, realisation of God, or achievement of spiritual perfection is the end and aim of spiritual quest and not the realisation of a creed or the achievement of a belief. In the onward march of the soul, creeds and sects and churches are left behind after it has gained the education which these are meant to give. "Be ye therefore perfect even as the Father which is in Heaven is perfect" is the exhortation of Jesus. There are no sects and denominations in the Kingdom of Heaven. And so the Gita declared the following divine charter of freedom :

'Through whatsoever paths men seek to come unto Me, I accept them through those very paths ; all paths which men take, O Arjuna, lead ultimately unto me only' (IV. 11).

In its comprehensive vision of the drama of human life on earth, the Gita ever seeks to impart to man a sense of purpose and direction which is spiritual freedom and perfection ; prevents him

from getting stuck up in a static sect or system by exhorting him to move on and grow and develop; and inspires him with a spirit of active tolerance and fellowship by gently pointing out to him that the goal is one though the paths are many. The modern world, with its prevailing confusion of values and ends, has need to capture this vision of the Gita and turn its course, in the beautiful language of the Vedic hymn,[1] from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light and from death to immortality :

असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।

मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ॥

'From evil lead me to good, from darkness lead me to light, from death lead me to immortality.'

[1] Brihadâranyaka Upanishad, I. iii. 28.

GAUTAMA BUDDHA, THE LIGHT OF ASIA[1]

A great thinker has said that the history of the world is the history of its greatest men. This is especially true of India whose long history is filled with the life and work of some of the greatest men the world has ever seen. But the men whom India considers great are not kings and military conquerors like Alexander, Charlemagne, or Napoleon, but philosophers and thinkers like Shri Krishna, Bhagavân Buddha, and Shri Shankarâchârya. These latter have also been conquerors, but of a different type. In the memorable words of Asoka, India's conquest is through Dharma or righteousness. They conquered through non-violence and love, and that love is enshrined in the grateful hearts of millions today.

The Upanishads are the fountain-head of not merely the religion of India but of her culture and philosophy as well. The great sages of the Upanishads stand at the very dawn of history as the progenitors and inspirers of a culture and a civilisation which, starting like a little stream, up in the mountains, in the dim antiquity of the Vedas, has come down to us as the mighty river of Indian national life, enriched and ennobled by the valuable contributions of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and thinkers of the first magnitude. The Indian of today,

[1] Contributed to *The Rangoon Gazette*, on the occasion of the birthday of Bhagavân Buddha, May 1941.

to whatever section he may belong, whether he knows it or not, is the inheritor of this rich heritage. And he is proud of the fact that this veritable Gangâ of Indian culture has fertilised and nourished not only India, but lands far and near as well.

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

'Those that come to Me, O Arjuna ! even if they be the most sinful or be they women, Vaishyas or Shudras—all attain to the Highest Goal' (IX. 32).

'Through whatever path men come to Me, I reach them ; O Arjuna ! all men follow paths which in the end lead to Me alone' (IV. 11).

The second great teacher who enriched Indian culture and who made Indian thought overflow its narrow geographical bounds is Gautama the Buddha,

the subject of the present sketch. With the Buddha begins the story of that Greater India which fills the whole of the Asian continent with the sweetness and aroma of her spiritual contribution.

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

It is a mistake to suppose that Buddha taught something absolutely new or anything hostile to the spirit of the existing philosophy and religion. It is more correct to hold that he taught a purer doctrine and expounded and exemplified a more positive philosophy of life than the prevailing ones of the day. True it is that he preached against the exclusiveness of caste and the excessive ritualism of the Vedic priesthood and taught a religion of moral and spiritual discipline. But, in this, the spiritual and philosophical tradition of India as enshrined in the Upanishads and the Gita was behind him. In the words of Sir E. Denison Ross, C.I.E., 'There was nothing absolutely new to the Indians in the teachings of Gautama, and his message could only be intelligible in its original form to the Hindus. The changes he made were in either the cosmogony or the ritual of the Hindus, and could only appeal to those familiar with both.'[1] Rhys Davids, another

[1] Introduction to *The Light of Asia* by Sir Edwin Arnold (1926), p. XIII.

Western scholar and student of Buddhism, also holds that 'it is inaccurate to draw any hard and fast line between the Indian Buddhists and their countrymen of other faiths.' [1] Sir Edwin Arnold in the preface to his *Light of Asia* points to the same truth when he says that 'the mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts.'

It is not possible in the course of this short article to enter into any detail regarding the life of the Blessed One. But I would like to indicate a few of the outstanding events of his long career and ministration. Born of King Shuddhodana and Queen Mâyâ of the Shakya clan, in the city of Kapilavastu, we find young Siddhârtha spending the early years of his life in his father's palace in the customary fashion of the princes of those days. But there was something in him even then which made him the beloved of the people; for with the valour of the Kshatriya he combined true gentleness and humility of spirit. The father had great hopes of his son; for, had not the astrologers told him that prince Siddhârtha would become an emperor of the whole world? But an emperor he became, not like Alexander or Napoleon, but a *svarât*—a master of his passions and of himself first, and then a ruler of

[1] Quoted by Sir E. Denison Ross in his introduction to the same, p. XVII.

the hearts of men. And in this transformation is contained all the romance of the life of the Buddha.

Gautama was married to princess Yashodhara and to them was born the young prince, Râhula. King Suddhodana took every means to make the life of his son gay and happy; but the great future whispered to the young prince his mission in life, and the stark reality of life presented before him the painful scenes of suffering, sickness, and death, and the joyous visions of renunciation and enlightenment. With a resolution possible only for a true Kshatriya, Prince Siddhârtha left the securities and luxuries of his home and palace and wandered forth into the wide world in quest of the highest truth and the peace that passeth understanding. For many years he struggled and searched; now following this sect, now that, wandering from place to place, until at last he came to Gaya, in modern Bihar; and, finding the place beautiful and serene, he sat down under a Bodhi tree resolving not to move till the highest truth was found. 'Let my body wither away in this seat, let it be reduced to mere skin, flesh, and bones, but I shall not move an inch from hence till the highest enlightenment is gained.' Sitting cross-legged in meditation under the sacred tree, Gautama's mind rose to the heights of contemplation and of ecstasy, and with the passing of every successive watch of the night, fold after fold of the garment of Truth was unveiled till the dawn found the naked Truth revealed :

'...The spirit of our Lord
Lay potent upon man and bird and beast,
Even while he mused under the Bodhi-Tree,
Glorified with the conquest gained for all,
And lightened by a light greater than day's.'[1]

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

'Many a house of life
Hath held me seeking ever him who wrought
These prisons of the senses, sorrow-fraught,
Sore was my ceaseless strife.
But now,
Thou builder of this tabernacle—thou !
I know thee ! Never shalt thou build again
These walls of pain,
Nor raise the roof-tree of deceits, nor lay
Fresh rafters on the clay ;
Broken thy house is, and the ridge-pole split !
Delusion fashioned it !
Safe pass I thence Deliverance to obtain.'[2]

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

[1] *Light of Asia,* p. 130.
[2] Ibid., p. 131.

bahujana-hitâya, bahujana-sukhâya—for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many—and thus achieved a greater renunciation than the one he had attained by leaving the princely life. With this assurance and resolve he proceeded to the holy city of Varanasi where he first 'turned' the *Wheel of the Law*. And for the next forty years, he wandered from place to place, meeting all classes of people, from prince to peasant, wiping the widow's tears and assuaging the orphan's wails, imparting wisdom to all and gathering a large number of disciples and followers. He charged his disciples to

> 'Go forward without a path !
> Fearing nothing, caring for nothing,
> Wander alone, like the rhinoceros !
> Even as the lion, not trembling at noises,
> Even as the lotus-leaf unstained by the water,
> Do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros!'[1]

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

The Dharma of the Lord continued to spread, thanks to the activities of the Sangha or monastic

[1] *Dhammapada*, quoted by Sister Nivedita in *The Master as I saw Him*.

order. It rescued the national mind from the intellectual confusion of the age by elevating the people morally and spiritually and it ushered in the age of Asoka, which may be called the brightest period in India's history. The spread of Buddha-Dharma under Asoka is one of the most instructive chapters of world history. Asoka's relinquishment of war and all forms of violence as an instrument of state policy is the only example of its kind in all history; and this great example has a deep significance for us today in the context of the war which humanity is waging against each other.[1] Through his numerous edicts inscribed on rocks and pillars, Asoka helped the spread of the Dharma of love, tolerance, and service. He sent out bands of monks to spread the noble Dharma far and near, and for the next thousand years this activity continued to be the main aspect of India's foreign policy. In a special sense, the emperor Asoka was instrumental in making Gautama the Buddha, the Light of Asia. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru quotes[2] the following well-known tribute of H. G. Wells to the memory of Asoka :

'Amidst the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Asoka shines, and shines almost alone, a star. From Volga to

[1] The Second World War.

[2] *Discovery of India*, p. 146.

Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet, and even India, though it has left his doctrines, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine and Charlemagne.'

In concluding his great work on Karma-Yoga, Swami Vivekananda gives the following tribute to the character and personality of Bhagavân Buddha : 'Let me tell you in conclusion a few words about one man who actually carried this teaching into practice. That man is Buddha. He is the one man who ever carried this into perfect practice. All the prophets of the world, except Buddha, had external motives to move them to unselfish action. The prophets of the world, with this single exception, may be divided into two sets, one set holding that they are incarnations of God come down on earth, and the other holding that they are only messengers from God ; and both draw their impetus for work from outside, expect reward from outside, however highly spiritual may be the language they use. But Buddha is the only prophet who said, "I do not care to know your various theories about God. What is the use of discussing all the subtle doctrines about the soul ? Do good and be good. And this will take you to freedom and to whatever truth there is." He was, in the conduct of his life, absolutely without personal motives ; and what man worked more than he ? Show me in history one character who has soared so high above all. The whole human race has produced but one such character,

such high philosophy, such wide sympathy. This great philosopher, preaching the highest philosophy, yet had the deepest sympathy for the lowest of animals, and never put forth any claims for himself. He is the ideal Karma-Yogi, acting entirely without motive, and the history of humanity shows him to have been the greatest man ever born ; beyond compare the greatest combination of heart and brain that ever existed, the greatest soul-power that has ever been manifested. He is the first great reformer the world has seen. He was the first who dared to say, "Believe not because some old manuscripts are produced, believe not because it is your national belief, because you have been made to believe it from childhood ; but reason it all out, and after you have analysed it, then if you find that it will do good to one and all, believe it, live up to it, and help others to live up to it." He works best who works without any motive, neither for money, nor for fame, nor for anything else ; and when a man can do that, he will be a Buddha, and out of him will come the power to work in such a manner as will transform the world. This man represents the very highest ideal of Karma-Yoga.' [1]

All through the teachings of the Blessed One there is a constant insistence on right conduct based on true understanding. The aim of life is to develop a perfect character. Buddha referred to himself as an example of this attainment which is open to

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. I, Pp. 115-16.

all, and never laid any special claims to divinity or godhood for himself. Religion, according to Buddha, does not consist in performance of ritual or propitiation of deities, but it consists in the struggle to achieve self-possession and peace. In his last discourse addressed to Ânanda, just before his passing away, the Buddha summed up his teachings in the following beautiful words :

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

Let me conclude this short sketch with the following exhortation of Buddha as given in the *Dhammapada* : 'Wakefulness is the way to immortal-

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

THE GREATNESS OF SHANKARACHARYA[1]

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

Conscious of a great message that he was to deliver and the mission that he was to fulfil in this country, we find Shankara, while yet a boy, leaving his home with a firm resolve to bend all his energies and resources towards that end. If we are to appreciate his work we have to capture an understanding of the climate of thought in which he lived and functioned. He is a remarkable specimen of Indian humanity of those times. If we can get a close view

[1] Speech delivered at the Shankara Jayanti Celebrations at the Ramakrishna Math, Karachi, May 1947.

of these two things—the environment and the personality—we shall be able to assess the type of work done by him and see whether we have any lesson to learn from his life and work. Possessed of extraordinary powers, this young boy, highly intelligent and deeply conscious of his mission, has worked wonders in the cultural and religious field of India.

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

Politically, as it has happened so often in the history of India, and let us hope it will not happen in future, the country was divided into a congeries of little states. On the death of the last Buddhist sovereign, Harsha, who had brought about some sort of political unity of India by bringing these

states under his empire, the political equilibrium was disturbed, and Hindusthan again became divided into small states fighting with each other without any common loyalty to unite them. Thus politically, culturally, and religiously there was no central rallying point. It was at such a time that the master mind of Shankara set to work to produce unity in the field of religion, culture, and philosophy, leaving the political aspect of it to be worked out by future generations. But even what he had undertaken was a gigantic task for a single individual.

We find clearly from a study of Shankara's career that his purpose was to reduce to unity and harmony, under the hegemony of Vedanta, the multiplicity of conflicting thought systems, without destroying the integrity of the prevalent faiths. He could have brought everything to a dead dull level of uniformity; but he did not do that; for it militated against his idea of the richness of diversity in the world of faiths. Unity was his aim and not uniformity—unity in diversity. Diversity connotes richness. But diversity, when it destroys the central unifying cord, becomes chaotic and an enemy of all progress and well-being of a community. Therefore, the purpose of all the great thinkers in this country has been, and is, to preserve the variety and to subordinate it to an overriding unity. The operation of this idea has created harmony out of all the diverse thoughts and faiths in this land instead of reducing everything to a single uniform faith at the

point of the sword, as has happened in some other countries.

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

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

religion, thought, and culture which is a record unparalleled in the history of man.

There have been great men who have fought for great causes. All over the world there have been great heroes. In Mohammed Bin Kasim we have the example of a courageous youth possessing the heroic touch. There is something to be admired in a young lad of sixteen marching forth from his home-town in Arabia in quest of adventure and conquering a province like Sind with the help of a few companions. We have again Napoleon who marched his army across the Alps and fought and defeated the Austrians in Italy. We have many such examples in our own history. But as contrasted with all these, stands the brilliant example of Shankara. A single individual, whose only companion was his vast intellect and deep sympathy, going the length and breadth of India and conquering its mind and heart is something unique in history—even in Indian history. He captured both the intellects and the hearts of men. He established an empire of the spirit, of love and of lofty spiritual idealism. From the example of Shankara we can picture the greatness of a person who sways the world in this manner. It is such type of leaders that India, nay, the world, needs badly today.

The environment that obtained at the time of Shankara is of interest to us today. Those were times when men paid homage to intellect and character. Those were days when men of culture and intellect and the rare ones with new ideas were

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

This attitude and mood is the high water-mark of culture. We sadly miss that today. We try to impose an idea by the force of the sword and not by an appeal to the intellect and understanding. It is difficult to spread an idea in the latter way. But the former way—that of the sword—is unworthy of a cultured and civilised people—a way which, fortunately, has been rarely tried in India. Therefore most teachers and leaders in India have resorted to a third and easier way—an appeal to the emotions of the people. Their appeal was to the feeling and not to the understanding. This method we find very much popular among the political leaders today.

At its best it no doubt produces fine loyalty and deep enthusiasm for a cause ; but at its worst it expresses itself in fanaticism and mutual destruction. But the most enduring appeal is that which affects the intellect, the mind of a people, and which, through its inherent truth and beauty, gradually penetrates to the heart, producing deep convictions and rational faiths. This method has been tried by very few in the world, and amongst those who have tried, and tried successfully, one is Shankara. Usually the masses can be appealed to through their emotions only. But Shankara is an exception to this general rule ; though an intellectual of a rare order, he has appealed to both the heart and the intellect of men. We have in Shankara a great intellectual and at the same time one who commanded the emotional allegiance of the masses. Today in Hindusthan if there is one teacher of the historic period who commands the allegiance of both the intellectuals and masses it is Shankara. Yet most of his writings are very abstruse and cannot be easily understood. But his other writings consisting of soul-stirring devotional songs and hymns are there. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, referring in deep appreciation to this striking aspect of Shankara's work, remarks :

'Shankarâchârya's record is a remarkable one.... The whole country is stirred up intellectually by Shankara's books and commentaries and arguments. Not only does he become the great leader of the Brahmin class, but he seems to catch the imagination

of the masses. It is an unusual thing for a man to become a great leader chiefly because of his powerful intellect, and for such a person to impress himself on millions of people and on history. Great soldiers and conquerors seem to stand out in history. They become popular or are hated, and sometimes they mould history. Great religious leaders have moved millions and fired them with enthusiasm, but always this has been on the basis of faith. The emotions have been appealed to and have been touched.

'It is difficult for an appeal to the mind and to the intellect to go far. Most people unfortunately do not think; they feel and act according to their feelings. Shankara's appeal was to the mind and intellect and to reason. It was not just the repetition of a dogma contained in an old book. Whether his argument was right or wrong is immaterial for the moment. What is interesting is his intellectual approach to religious problems, and even more so the success he gained in spite of this method of approach....

'And the great success which met his campaign all over the country in a very short time also shows how intellectual and cultural currents travelled rapidly from one end of the country to another' (*Glimpses of World History,* Letter 44).

We are moved to admire the people of his time. One hundred and fifty years before Shankara, Huen Tsang came to India and he was struck by the intellectual curiosity of the people of this country, their eagerness for knowledge, readiness to

accept new ideas and interest in education. Himself a great scholar, he came here to learn, to slake his thirst for intellectual and spiritual knowledge. That is the kind of atmosphere in which Shankara lived and worked, with nothing but his keen intellect and deep conviction to help him. Whenever such a personality appears in such a context we can expect to find the birth of a mighty ideology capable of changing the thought and life patterns of a people.

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

sub-continent like India, removing the doubts of people, discussing patiently with them on all aspects of philosophy and faith and bringing order out of the chaotic and nebulous condition of the thought and faith of the country.

This is the greatness of this teacher. He gathered up the scattered cultural and spiritual energies of the people and raised their voltage tenfold. Being a man of intense practicality and possessed of rare organising abilities Shankara took steps to ensure the continuity of his great work by setting up ten Orders of monks—the Paramahamsa Parivrâjakas, a band of roving and teaching monks—and establishing four monastic centres at four corners of India and entrusting them to the care of monks noted for their intellect, character, and vision. The location of these centres—at Sringeri in the south, at Puri in the east, at Dwaraka in the west, and at Badarinath in the north—reveals his far-seeing genius as also his vision of the geographical and cultural unity of India. Paramahamsas are a class of Sannyâsins who are never attached to the world and have nothing to gain for themselves; when they go about as peripatetic teachers they are called Parivrâjaka Âchâryas. This is the beautiful expression to describe a person who goes about uplifting society. His detachment makes him a universal man—above the limitations of caste, creed, and sect. With his sympathy unobstructed by physical or mental barriers, he functions as the lover and benefactor of man. The Paramahamsas are free to move

about everywhere. They are neither men nor women; neither Hindu nor Muslim; neither Christian nor Vaishnava; neither Shaiva nor Shâkta. They are all and above all. They remain uncontaminated, ever purifying others. They are the equal and the free. For, in the memorable words of the Gita, 'They with their minds resting on Equality have conquered relative existence in this very life since Brahman is perfect and equal: therefore they indeed rest in Brahman' (V. 19).

But mark the deep humility of this great man who, though outshining his Guru, Govindapâda, in learning as well as achievement, yet always proclaimed himself in all his works as his disciple.[1] In this he typifies the natural humility of the wise man of his philosophy.

Shankara never remained at a place for long; he went about as a peripatetic teacher. And as a result of his ceaseless striving we have the unity of Hinduism and Hindu culture of which we are so proud today. But after 1000 years, today, we are face to face with a more complex situation. To bring unity not only in Hinduism but in India as a whole, in which all religions and cultures can find a harmonious blending, is a task that remains for us to accomplish today. This is the challenge of the present age to the genius of India. The work of synthesis which we have successfully carried on in every epoch of history is there to inspire us, and

[1] This subscription runs thus: '*Shrimat-paramahamsa-parivrâjakâchârya-Govindabhagavad-pujyapâda-shishya*.

Shankara's method and manner are there as a guide for us. He was a teacher of unity. His spirit was universal. His mind was inclusive and not exclusive. He taught not merely toleration, but also dynamic acceptance. Herein lies the value of his work to us : 'Wherever there is emphasis on unity there is knowledge whose fruit is concord and happiness and beneficence ; and wherever there is emphasis on diversity it is ignorance and results in conflict and misery,' says Shankara. We need badly today the message of that unity based on understanding and leading to concord.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE UNIVERSAL RELIGION [1]

RELIGION—A CURSE AS WELL AS BLESSING IN THE PAST

It is an undeniable fact of history that one of the most potent factors in the evolution of humanity has been the force which manifests itself as religion and the religious instinct. From earliest times it has supplied the motive for social cohesion and social progress. Besides satisfying the individual's spiritual needs, it has also been the power to unite individuals into groups and communities. But it is a strange paradox that this same impulse which has contributed to human unity and welfare has also been the cause of much strife and disunion among mankind. It seems as though religions are closed systems and the only relation they can have towards one another is that of antagonism. The powers for blessing which they exhibit in their narrow spheres of sect and community turn into curses when applied to the larger world outside. Every system has appealed to the religious susceptibilities of its votaries to goad them either to war, persecution, or murder. Thus some of the most atrocious crimes and inhuman practices in all history have been perpetrated in its name. These are some of the blackest pages of all religious history. Whatever blessing it has conferred in private has thus been nullified in public.

[1] Contributed to the *Prabuddha Bharata*, January 1936.

INDIAN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT—ITS UNIQUE FEATURE

The only country where religious wars and persecutions have been comparatively negligible is India. This, let us note, is not because there is no deep religious feeling in India, as some critics would think, to whom love for one's religion is achieved only by hating other religions; neither is it due to any absence of variety in the religious outlook. History shows, and even today it is a fact, that both in point of spiritual fervour and the variety of its expression, India stands foremost in the world. The science of comparative religion tells us that the evolution of religious ideas has been, to a great extent, identical throughout the world. But whereas outside India this evolution stopped at the tribal stage and the monotheistic conception, Indian spiritual genius soared higher and yet higher and discovered the Unity behind all the gods. This is a great landmark in the history of religions in general, for it marks the stage at which religion turns out to be the messenger of *all* peace and *all* blessing to the *whole* of humanity instead of being partially good and partially evil, as it has been in its earlier stages. For India herself, this discovery was momentous; for, through this she has been spared from endless travails of religious persecution. This idea carries with it a certain universal outlook, being based on a highly rational philosophy, which later Vedic thought, especially the Upanishads, developed into its logical conclusion by discovering the Unity behind all existence.

SECTARIANISM—ITS EVILS AND THEIR REMEDY

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

hopes of poets and philosophers of the past ages, require for their consummation a new spirit, a new outlook and a new message, universal in its appeal, which will mediate between religion and religion on the one hand, and science and religion on the other. Where is this message, this quickening impulse, to come from ? To this insistent question, the eager minds of thinking men, both in the East and the West, turn towards India and the invaluable treasure of her spiritual and philosophic thought.

VEDANTA—ITS CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN THOUGHT AND LIFE

This is no audacious claim. We have seen already how Indian thought took a great step towards religious harmony when it discovered the One God of whom all other gods are but manifestations. This is the great idea embodied in the famous verse of the Rig-Veda (I. clxiv. 46), *'Ekam sat viprâ bahudhâ vadanti.'* (Truth is One ; sages call It by various names, such as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, etc.) Not only this ; no new thought has ever suffered suppression in India—be it in science, religion, or philosophy. Where all knowledge is held as sacred, how is it possible to suppress any aspect of it ? The Upanishad speaks of the *parâ* and *aparâ* kinds of knowledge.[1] All sciences including even the holy Vedas are only *aparâ* knowledge.

[1] *Mundaka Upanishad,* I. ii. 4 : द्वे विद्ये वेदितव्ये इति ह स्म यद्ब्रह्मविदो वदन्ति पराचैवापरा च ॥

Let us note, in this connection, that *aparâ* does not and cannot mean here anything inferior in kind. That knowledge which is derived from human experience in parts and aspects is *aparâ*, while that which is the fruit of a study of experience as a whole, of life in its totality, is *parâ*. And all knowledge of the *aparâ* kind is only an expression of the *parâ-vidyâ*, Philosophy. This is the same as *brahma-vidyâ*, Brahman standing for the totality of existence and experience. This is the famous Vedanta Philosophy, which is the very kernel and core of Indian culture, the fairest flower of its thought—the one which has given Indian culture its distinctive character and uniqueness. It is the spirit of Vedanta which has moulded all forms of Indian life and which has mediated between sect and sect, imparting to the rich variety of Indian thought its synthetic unity. This is the mesmerism of Indian thought which is slowly gripping the minds of many a serious thinker of the West. Those who speak of Hinduism as a bewildering mass of confused religious and social ideas and practices have not yet grasped Vedanta. To understand India and Hinduism requires, first of all, an intimate acquaintance with the spirit of Vedanta. It is in virtue of this Vedanta that we are enabled to speak of the 'fundamental unity of India'. It will be in virtue of this same Vedanta that we will be enabled not merely to speak about, but achieve, the fundamental unity of humanity itself. And if religious harmony, social progress, and national solidarity are lacking

in present-day India, the quickening impulse must come from this Vedanta alone, for it is the storehouse of all wisdom.

INDIAN THOUGHT AND SHRI RAMAKRISHNA

The oneness of all existence is the message which Vedanta teaches. The immediate implication of this message in life and thought is another great idea which seems to run counter to the very spirit of religious sectarianism but which breathes truly the scientific spirit. As Swami Vivekananda expresses it, 'Man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower truth to higher truth.'[1] If truth is like a pyramid, the philosophical understanding of Unity is its apex. Viewed from this supreme height, no aspect of life or effort can appear as false or erroneous ; for truth itself is the goal of all paths. It is chiefly in the application of this great idea to the pressing problems of modern life that the life and message of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are supremely significant. Through them we find Indian thought, especially Vedanta, speaking to the modern world for composing its distractions and ushering in on earth an era of what the Upanishads call *'Satyâtma prânârâmam mana ânandam, shânti samriddham amritam'* (Truth, the solace of life and bliss of the mind, exuberant with the wealth of peace and immortality).[2]

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 15.
[2] Taittiriya Upanishad , I. vi. 2.

UNIVERSALISM, OLD AND NEW

The idea of universal religion is not something new in the world. There have been two senses in which it has been understood. When a religion steps out of its local boundaries and starts on a career of conquest and annexation, adding new recruits, much in the same way as an empire extends by the accession of new territories, it styles itself a universal religion. Such a religion keeps before itself the alluring ideal of becoming a world-religion sooner or later and believes itself to be the only fit candidate to that estate. The outstanding examples of this type are Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism. The last one differs from the other two both in its methods and motives of such extension. Unlike Christianity and Islam, the spread of Buddhism has been singularly characterised by a spirit of peace and non-violence. This is undoubtedly due to the influence of Indian thought wherein Buddhism has its roots and from which it has sprung. Christianity and Islam, on the other hand, have followed a relentless course of destruction and persecution with the ostensible purpose of 'saving' the 'damned souls'. Now this idea of universal religion is self-destructive. Not through conquest and the use of might is the way to universal religion. It breathes the spirit of the Old Testament, where, when a tribe conquers another tribe, it also destroys the latter's god and imposes its own god over it. It is this same spirit which is working now when in the place of tribes, we have alien cultures and religions. And when there are two

claimants, both equally strong, zealous and fanatical, this idea of universalism is seen to defeat itself. The fact is, there is a world of difference between the two assertions—'My God is the only true God and you must accept Him,' and 'My God and your God are one and the same, differing at best only in name.' When a single religious belief, sincerely held, is disturbed and destroyed, the purpose of universal religion defeats itself.

The second idea of universal religion is seen expressed in the eclecticism of Akbar and some modern sects and movements. Eclecticism is like a bouquet of choice flowers, and like a bouquet it has no enlivening principle in it and is bound to wither away. A still greater criticism is that it has a tendency to become a closed system in itself, which defeats its very purpose. It says, 'There is so much sectarianism in the world; it must be destroyed; so let us start a new sect.' This sounds like the famous wartime sentiment—a war to end all wars. But just as not one among the older sects is entitled legitimately to claim universality, by the same inexorable logic, no new sect also can lay claim to that position.

SHRI RAMAKRISHNA'S IDEAL OF UNIVERSAL RELIGION

From the previous analysis we have come to this —that no religion can aspire individually to become universal. Unity in variety is the test of universality and not a dull and dead uniformity. In sharp contrast to the previous two conceptions stands Shri Ramakrishna's ideal of a universal religion. The

very first principle of this ideal is: 'If one religion is true, then by the very same logic all other religions are also true,' the verification of which is found in the fact that 'holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character.'[1] Hence this great teacher left every religion undisturbed; neither did he start a new religion. Yet his life was the greatest vindication of true religion. Nay, it was a veritable Parliament of Religions. He traversed the various paths of the Hindu Faith and attained perfection in each. Not content with this, he lived the life of a pious Christian and a devout Muslim reaching the goal of the respective paths. As a result of all his experiments he realised that all religions are at bottom one, they all teach the same truth and lead to the same goal. In his own words: 'Many are the names of God, and infinite the forms that help us to know Him. By whatsoever name or form you desire to know Him, in that very form and under that very name will you see Him. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God; various and different are the ways that lead to the temple of Mother Kâli at Kalighat (in Calcutta). Similarly various are the paths that take men to the house of the Lord. Every religion is nothing but one of these paths'.[2] Again, 'As a mother in nursing her sick children gives rice and curry to one, sago and arrow-

[1] *Complete Works,* Vol. I, p. 22.

[2] *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna,* 1954 edition, p. 152.

root to another, and bread and butter to a third, so the Lord has laid out different paths for different men suitable to their natures.'[1]

What follows? To quote Shri Ramakrishna again, 'Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Mohammedan should follow Mohammedanism. For the Hindu—the ancient path, the path of the Aryan Rishis, is the best. A truly religious man should think that other religions are also so many paths leading to the Truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.'[2]

Thus in Shri Ramakrishna's view the existence of many sects and religions not merely does not stand as obstacles in the way, but actually helps the realisation, of universal religion. Let sects multiply until each individual will have a religion for himself. As no two individuals can be exactly similar in respect of taste, outlook, and capacity, so no one religion can perfectly satisfy the needs of all. Thus sects ought to multiply until they coincide with humanity itself. But sectarianism will disappear. And with its disappearance will be realised the ideal of a universal religion. In fact, it is already existing, no one has to create it, only each one has to discover it for himself. But its symphony is marred and distorted by the sharp and dissonant note of sectarianism. And sectarianism will disappear only when the world understands this new ideal of reli-

[1] Ibid., p. 155.
[2] Ibid., p. 156.

gious harmony taught by Shri Ramakrishna, when men will learn to see truth in every sect, when men are taught to sympathise with and appreciate every sincere longing of the human heart knowing it to be an urge towards light and truth.

CONCLUSION

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

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I

HIS CENTRAL THEME[1]

Swami Vivekananda can be looked upon as a great organiser or a great orator, as one whose heart bled for the poor in this country and abroad, or as one who successfully carried the message of Vedanta to foreign lands; he can also be looked upon as an intellectual giant who built a bridge between the East and the West, as also between reason and faith. But behind all these, there was that fundamental basic inspiration, his spiritual realisation.

Swami Vivekananda derived all the inspiration for his work from that touch with the spiritual depths of his own being. It is this aspect of his personality that gives nourishment to all that he said and all that he did. When he came to Shri Ramakrishna as a young boy, Shri Ramakrishna marked that he had the eyes of a Yogi and told the other disciples that Vivekananda, or Naren as he was then called, was a spiritual personality of a high order. He added, 'I found that his eyes were indrawn; half his mind was looking to something within and only the other half was aware of the outside world.' This, said Shri Ramakrishna, was the characteristic feature

[1] Speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, on February 17, 1952 (Swami Vivekananda's 90th birthday).

of the eyes of great Yogis. Naren had this characteristic of inwardness which constantly drew him close to the Spirit within. Sitting at the feet of Shri Ramakrishna he developed this trait and became a man of the highest spiritual realisation.

When he had realised this spiritual amplitude and fullness, the question arose in his mind as to what he should do thereafter. As it often happens in the life of spiritual aspirants, when they get the vision of the spiritual ideal, they get immersed in that realisation. They have little sympathy for or interest in the world or struggling souls around them. Swami Vivekananda would have become one such among the great spiritual luminaries that have come to this country. But his path was to be otherwise ; and the fate of India was to be otherwise ; for Swami Vivekananda appeared on the scene at a crucial period of our history as a man with a message, and with the necessary spiritual authority and power to impart that message. In that transformation of Swami Vivekananda from a self-absorbed saint to a compassionate teacher is contained the story of modern India's spiritual and cultural regeneration.

When Vivekananda wanted to enjoy spiritual bliss, it was Shri Ramakrishna who told him that he was meant for a different purpose and that he was not to be like an ordinary saint enjoying spiritual beatitude for himself. He was a person who was meant to be a source of inspiration to millions of people in India and abroad ; and it was Shri Ramakrishna who gave that turn to Swami Vivekananda's

spiritual energies and purposes. With this touch of his Master, Swami Vivekananda burst upon the world not as a passive saint, but as a dynamic world-mover. If Swami Vivekananda exerted so much influence on the contemporary world, and continues to exert that influence in ever increasing measure in the East and the West, it is because he realised the eternal imperishable truth in his own being, and sought inspiration from that in his work to compose the distractions of our age. The edifice of his character was built on the rock foundation of spirituality which found expression in a vigorous personality of scintillating intellect and measureless heart. I wish to emphasise this point because Swami Vivekananda was a many-sided personality and can appear to us in various hues, but his greatness had something eternal about it unlike the passing greatness familiar in the world of achievements. The flow of time affects such greatness in a strange way, it augments it instead of diminishing and destroying it. Rooted in the Âtman and drawing nourishment therefrom, the personality and work of such men and women carry something compelling in it and possess an enduring character.

Great teachers of the world like Jesus Christ, Bhagavân Buddha, Shri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda derive their strength and inspiration not from the muscles or the mind or intellect, but from the deepest reality in man and nature. That is why they speak a language which goes straight into the hearts of the people, not only of their own gene-

ration but for centuries thereafter. That is how they stand before us, these spiritual giants, in spite of passing time, as the timeless witnesses of what is permanent and eternal in man. It is this that flavours the message which Swami Vivekananda gave to India on the one side and the West on the other.

It is significant that though he had dived deep in the ocean of spiritual realisation, he did not give the same message, or rather the message in the same form, to India as he gave to the West. He varied his message to suit the needs of the people ; but all these variations were expressions of one central theme—spirituality. In the Indian context he saw that the path to spirituality lay through material and social amelioration. To this end he drew out of Vedanta a social philosophy and outlook, at once dynamic and practical. To India which sorely needed it, he gave the message of a man-making religion and a nation-making faith and resolve.

While Swami Vivekananda felt proud at the glory of old India he was deeply afflicted to see her in the depths of degradation and misfortune. The sufferings of his countrymen, their age-old starvation, ignorance and social disabilities, moved him deeply. Confronted with this situation, his abundant spirituality and dynamic philosophy flowed into a stream of compassion and love, into a national message of renunciation and service ; Vedanta once again became dynamic and practical. It is this that makes Vivekananda not merely a great Rishi, but also a patriot and epoch-maker. From him proceeded a

a wave of national awareness and patriotism, issuing in a great struggle to improve the lot of the common man. Whatever we have achieved by way of political independence, by way of social awareness, and national solidarity, has come from that orientation of the ancient message of India's spirituality given by Swami Vivekananda.

Going to foreign countries, in America and England, he was confronted with a different situation. There were people who were lacking in nothing by way of social or material amenities; but they were lacking in something fundamental which had turned their very material advancements into ashes in the mouth. Outer wealth and glory had been achieved at the cost of inner richness and peace. The modern man was in search of a soul, a search in which his science and wisdom just failed him.

Swami Vivekananda stood before the Western world as an authentic voice of the spirit in man and the spirit in the universe. To them he went as the teacher of Vedanta, of the inward contemplative life, the teacher of active tolerance and fellowship, the teacher of universal love. There in the West, he stood forth as the representative of the Rishis of India and imparted their ancient message in keeping with the spiritual needs of the modern West. That is why Vivekananda is respected in the Western world as a spiritual teacher and world thinker of a rare calibre. To the average youth of our country he makes an irresistible appeal as one who taught patriotism and national service in ever-memorable

words, as one who worked and asked others to work for uplifting the vast millions in this country who are sunk in ignorance and poverty. To the nation at large he shines as the emblem of purity, spirituality, love, and energy through whose inspiration it hopes to build its body and mind anew.

These are the various aspects of his personality directly derived from the supreme strength of realised Vedanta. The richness and strength of this Vedantic realisation accounts for the many-sidedness of his character and message. He brings down the Vedanta to fertilise the fields of common life so that life may be raised to uncommon heights and made capable to taste Vedanta at its purest source. Through him once more Vedanta spoke in accents of human happiness and welfare. He keenly felt the truth that the purer delights of spiritual life can be experienced only after man has been able to meet the demands of life's immediate and pressing needs. 'Religion is not for empty bellies,' he said, and he found India full of empty bellies and naked bodies; he considered it a mockery to preach religion to a hungry man. Hence he became a teacher of love: of love of God flowing into service of man, of faith flowing into works, and both forging character which is manliness and manliness which is spirituality.

His message has great practical utility today; the political and social policy of India has to bear the impress of that spirituality which Swami Vivekananda gave to the nation out of the fullness of his realisation. The nation wanted a teacher who

would guide its thoughts so as to humanise its religion and spiritualise its social purposes and activities; and the nation got Swami Vivekananda at the right time. He made Indian philosophy concern itself with the problems of the common man. But he has also warned us that all our politics and policies, our social developments and economic improvements, in short, all our deepest cravings for betterment, must be subordinated to the one fundamental national theme of spirituality. In this emphasis upon the fundamental theme of Indian life, Swami Vivekananda stands as a unique figure among the great leaders who have come to this country in recent times.

At the time of Vivekananda, political subjection was lying heavy on the shoulders of India. Today it has been lifted; but along with political subjection there has been social decay, and it looked as if an old and rich civilisation had ceased to grow. Swami Vivekananda wanted to make this civilisation take a new shape and stand forth as a fresh, energetic and vigorous civilisation before the modern world. For that purpose he wanted India to assimilate the spirit and technique of modern science which has come to us from the West; but this capacity to assimilate the dynamic scientific culture of the West depended upon a prior energising of the national tradition in the mind of his countrymen. Without this strengthening of the national heritage, India's response to the West, he held, will result in a patchy imitation instead of a healthy assimilation. He warned us against that

temptation and danger. He visualised a new India in which the spirit of equality, social awareness, and practical efficiency of the modern West would get happily blended with the mature gentleness and tolerance of Indian tradition with its deep spiritual awareness and passion which has made Indian history a saga of spiritual aspiration and realisation. He wanted India to be young, vigorous, and progressive ; and yet he wanted all these to be achieved as the fulfilment of the spiritual ideal and purpose.

Therefore he placed before us his great message of nation-building based on spirituality. He wanted that all improvements to be effected in this country should be effected not at the cost of the national asset which is spirituality, but as flowing from it and leading up to it. He interpreted Indian history to demonstrate to us that progress in social and other lines is the fruit of the strengthening of the nation's spirituality, whatever other lessons the histories of other nations may teach. He gave that warning because he found a tendency around him to relegate religion to second place, or even to treat it as an enemy of social progress, and concentrate on material improvement and social progress so as to lead India on absolutely secular lines. This kind of tendency, useful within limits, might yet create mischief in our country and rob the nation of its spiritual stamina. It was therefore necessary that the warning should be issued and the nation got it in time through the powerful and authentic voice of Swami Vivekananda. He warned us that if India gives up spirituality

and her age-old way of life she would perish. It is this spiritual asset which has made India a continuing concern unlike other civilisations which have passed away. Taking the lessons of world history he told us that if India gives up spirituality and takes to any other ideal of life she would be an extinct culture in three generations. Ancient Greece and Rome and some of the European states which had flourished for a time are nowhere to be seen in the world today. Even some of the nations of the contemporary world, though lacking in nothing by way of material advancement and worldly power, are finding their foundations shaken and are struggling to discover spiritual values to stabilise themselves. They find that something fundamental is lacking in the edifice of their civilisation based upon the mere intellect of man, on the achievements of science and technology, and on the advancement of material prosperity. India discovered long ago that if there is to be stability in the structure of a civilisation it shall have to seek for other forces than the forces of muscle or brain or mere intellect. That is how some of the thinkers of Europe and America today are also thinking and they are in search of that stabilising force of spirituality of which they view India to be the representative and voice. We see all around us that in spite of material prosperity, in spite of social improvements, in spite of all that are based on sense values, there are forces that are trying to destroy civilisation itself. In such critical periods of world history India has ever been a source of

spiritual strength and sustenance to humanity. She has played that historic role in spite of her own disasters and sufferings and the vicissitudes that befell her. Her continued existence and vitality in spite of these national disasters, a fraction of which has wiped away other civilisations, imparts to her voice and message the compelling quality of lived and tested experience.

This wisdom tells humanity today through Swami Vivekananda that man's true welfare is basically spiritual and that material and social welfare is but a means to this end. Spirituality is the fundamental good in which are true peace and happiness. There are nations in the West today who have gone far in establishing a welfare state but whose citizens are far from being happy or secure. It is a tragedy that the more advanced is a state the more insecure and unhappy are its people.

Among modern states, Sweden may be taken as an example of a state which has gone farthest in material advancement and social progress ; some have called it not merely a welfare state but a welfarest state. According to a dispatch published recently[1] in the American *Time* from its Stockholm correspondent, the people in this welfarest state are anything but happy. The correspondent found that the state has provision for all its citizens from the womb to the tomb, and even to salvation, for the state has provided paid preachers to care for the souls of the

[1]December 31, 1951.

dead. He found the municipal services perfect, social amenities extensive, wealth plenty and life easy, with no conceivable cause for unhappiness, insecurity or worry. Is everything all right with the people of this welfarest state ? he asked himself; and he went about to see if there was anything lacking. He found an undercurrent of unrest and unhappiness. A government official told him, 'In a country that has established an orderly society, there comes a time when one begins to ask oneself "What next ?" ' He found a lot of Swedes asking this question 'What next ?', ततः किम् ? and finding and receiving no answer ; the resultant undercurrent of emotional unrest is giving rise to a variety of social maladies like alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, unhappy marriages and loose morals. Sweden presents the picture of a society where man has all the good things of life and yet feels a gnawing vacancy in his heart. This inner emptiness becomes the cause of the instability of the outer structure ; for to gain the whole world by losing the soul is to lose the world so gained. The hunger for God, the desire for spirituality, the craving for inner richness and fullness is a fundamental and basic urge in man and a civilisation that does not take note of it and provide for it will be building itself on sand. The philosophy that stands sponsor to such a civilisation is naïve and shallow, having not dared to plumb man and nature to their depths.

The great sages of India knew man and his possibilities and needs most intimately and fully and provided for them in their scheme of life through the

twofold values of *abhyudaya* and *nihshreyasa*. Their maturest thought, the Vedanta, is pervaded by a deep passion for truth and a deeper passion for human happiness and welfare. It takes man gently by the hand in his primitive state of childish exuberance and leads him through the delights and restraints of culture and civilisation to the peace and fullness of perfection. With such a philosophy to sponsor it and sustain it, India has built an enduring edifice of culture in the life of a sixth of the human race with spiritual freedom as its watchword and tolerance and gentleness as its motto. It was this culture in all its force and charm that found living expression in our time in the lives and message of Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. They represent the Vedantic passion for human welfare—human welfare in all its phases, material and moral, cultural and spiritual. This explains the variations in Swami Vivekananda's message and programme in the East and the West. To India's millions he gave out of the Vedanta a message of hope through social security and welfare leading to a purer form of renunciation and spirituality. To the materially advanced West he gave out of the same Vedanta a message of renunciation and self-realisation as a value to be sought after directly and immediately.

Our country has been provided in the Vedanta with a rational philosophy and religion which will answer every quest and thirst of the human intellect and heart. Swami Vivekananda preached a religion which is emotionally satisfying and rationally con-

vincing. Its rationality is creative and inspires faith in life and its values unlike modern rationalism which destroys hope after first destroying faith. Western man learned to swear by this rationalism from the time of the Renaissance. In the first three centuries it succeeded in withering his faith in God in the name of the faith in man. But in the first half of this twentieth century it has succeeded in whittling his faith in man also, leaving modern man like a rudderless boat in the storm-tossed sea of the modern world, without a faith to sustain him or hope to inspire him, but with enough cynicism yoked to animal vigour which seeks expression in a fantasy of self and world destruction.

If the thinking people of America and England gave a spontaneous response to the message of Swami Vivekananda fifty years ago, it was because he had sensed this inner tension of the modern mind and had conveyed in his message the needed spiritual pabulum. The appeal of Vedanta to the modern mind has been steadily deepening and widening since then. It inspires him with a rational faith and a realisable hope and restores to him in a purer form that zest in life which his cynicism had shattered. To the earnest, seeking, storm-tossed souls of the modern world a study of Swami Vivekananda's Vedanta has been, and is bound to be, like a bath in the Gangâ for a weary pilgrim, a refreshing experience, a spiritual rebirth.

Swami Vivekananda has left us a rich legacy of thought and inspiration. If India assimilates them

she will become the hope of the nations. That is the historically-acquired role of India according to Swami Vivekananda. He preached nation-building with this world-objective in view, to prepare India to discharge her world-responsibility. And nation-building in India, according to him, is the gathering up of the nation's scattered spiritual forces. And because he found her present economic and social maladjustments thwarting this higher expression of the national will and purpose, he became the first monastic advocate of what he happily termed 'a toned-down materialism' for his country. He had the fullest faith in the capacity of his people to assimilate moral and spiritual ideas. This assimilative power will gather momentum as the nation succeeds step by step in composing the distractions of its battered body politic. An India physically healthy, socially stable and strong, and morally and spiritually resurgent will confront the modern world with a challenge of goodwill and sincerity, fellowship and peace. It will be an utterly new experience to the world after centuries of experience of a different type of challenge, that of hatred, violence and war. The world is waiting for that new experience with bated breath. And that experience will be vouchsafed to the world by an India fashioned and shaped by the ideas and ideals of Swami Vivekananda. The spirit of India brought him forth and fashioned him for this very purpose.

II

AS A NATION BUILDER[1]

Each passing year finds our nation closer to the ideas and outlook of this great teacher only to discover that he had embodied its urges and expressed its aspirations in his own person six decades before the development of our national consciousness. At this time when our country is entering into a new phase of national development affecting all spheres of our life, it will be highly educative and beneficial for us to get more closely acquainted with the life and thought of one who loved our people with a pure passion rare in our long history.

'There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature,' writes Sister Nivedita, his Irish disciple, in a moving passage, 'that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was his love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He never used the word "nationality", nor proclaimed an era of "nation-making" ; "man-making", he said, was his own task. But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her

[1] Contributed to the *Hindusthan Standard*, February 3, 1956. Delhi, on the 94th birthday of Swami Vivekananda.

shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness' (*The Master As I Saw Him*, pp. 49-50).

Swami Vivekananda's love for India flowed from his deep knowledge of her past history and culture and intimate acquaintance with the mind and face of the India of his time. The first gave him strength and hope in India's mission in the world, while the second helped to make his vast spiritual and mental energies cut a new channel of national *sâdhana* through human love, fellowship and service.

The India of history impressed him as a remarkable saga of human evolution in the moral and spiritual fields of experience. In the very first public lecture in the East after his triumphal return from his mission in the West, on January 16, 1897, at Colombo, he gave expression to this conviction in his heart in these words :

'If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed Punya Bhumi, to be the land to which all souls on this earth must come to account for Karma, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all the land of

introspection and of spirituality—it is India. Hence have started the founders of religions from the most ancient times, deluging the earth again and again with the pure and perennial waters of spiritual truth. Hence have proceeded the tidal waves of philosophy that have covered the earth, East or West, North or South. And hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualise the material civilisation of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions, in other lands. Believe me, my friends, this is going to be' (*Complete Works,* Vol. III, p. 105).

Many a modern thinker, from the German Schopenhauer in the last century to the American Will Durant today, have echoed these sentiments of Swami Vivekananda. The international importance of the Indian cultural experiment and the significance of its striking continuity through the very long course of its chequered history are slowly attracting world attention. Referring to the dawning interest in Indian literature in the Europe of his time, Schopenhauer foretold, 'The world is about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek literature.'

About a century later, in 1942, Will Durant, in concluding the section on India in the first volume of his *Story of Civilization,* refers to the legacy of India as a continuing one, unlike those of the extinct

ones of Egypt or Babylonia, Assyria or Greece, or Rome, and proceeds :

'It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all, our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit ; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. As invention, industry, and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilizations more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps, in return for conquest, arrogance, and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things.'[1]

In the personality of his master, Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda found a glowing and tangible demonstration of the validity of the India of books and the India of history. Shri Ramakrishna, says Romain Rolland, 'was the consummation of two thousand years of the spirituality of three hundred million people....his soul animates modern India.' (*Life of Ramakrishna,* p. 14).

India's past enthralled Swami Vivekananda and gave him hope. That was his first discovery of India. But a second discovery was awaiting him. For, India's

[1] *Our Oriental Heritage,* p. 633.

contemporary backwardness, apathy, and weakness greeted him at every step during his five years of wandering as a lonely pilgrim through the length and breadth of the land. Swami Vivekananda as a wandering monk will ever remain an inspiring picture for mind and eye for every well-trained youth of our country. During that extensive and intensive wandering, he saw the battered and bruised mind and body of his beloved country. This second discovery was a real shock to his sensitive mind, and he has given vigorous expression to the agony of his soul in his various epistles from the West and addresses in India. Being an intensely practical visionary and creative genius, he successfully tackled, even before his voyage to the West, the staggering problem presented by the two discoveries in a third discovery which he made during his meditation at Kanyâkumâri towards the end of his wanderings, and which found eloquent expression in the message he subsequently preached to his own people and to the world at large.

That message had in it the ring of authority and authenticity. To the world at large it spoke the language of a pure spirituality free from all credal and sectarian limitations. To his own country it spoke the language of practical spirituality, of man-making and character-building, with renunciation and service as its motto, and freedom and equality as its theme. The revitalisation of India in these lines with a view to building up a healthy body politic constituted Swami Vivekananda's national

domestic policy; to this end he preached his message of practical Vedanta to his own people, laying stress on the need and the means to increase the energy of personal character, on self-control through development of the will, and on the expression of this character and energy in channels of patriotic service in every field of national endeavour, be it as a private citizen or a man of any profession, a humble Grâma-Sevaka or a high officer of the State. Alongside, he advocated the investment of national energy in a vigorous foreign policy designed to bring the modern world to an increasing awareness of its spiritual destiny and leading to international fellowship and peace.

After eight years of independence, we are beginning to glimpse the taking shape on the national horizon of a definition of our country's national and international mission on the lines envisioned by Swami Vivekananda. The next two decades will constitute the period of our greatest hopes and our greatest fears. The nation will get the strength to dismiss these fears and brighten these hopes by listening to its Yugâchârya (Prophet of the age), Swami Vivekananda.

SARADA DEVI, THE HOLY MOTHER [1]

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

What is the source of the mesmerism of this name and personality? Even a slight acquaintance with her life will make us realise that this mesmerism does not proceed from any aspects of her personality which the modern world recognises as significant in women. To all outward appearances the Holy Mother was just ordinary, or even less than ordinary. Rustic in simplicity, almost unlettered, and shy and modest, she was far removed from the educated, self-conscious, active type of modern women. And yet her life finds powerful responsive echoes from the hearts of all men and women, rustic and modern alike. It is evident that she has captured in her

[1] Speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, on the occasion of the Holy Mother Birth Centenary Celebration, on December 4, 1954.

life and being the fundamental value which lies at the back of the womanliness of woman and which transcends all distinctions based on mere sex and the attractions thereof. This fact alone explains her universal appeal, representing as she does, not a mere national or racial type but the fulfilment of woman as woman, the realisation in flesh and blood of the Eternal Feminine.

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

It was a strange marriage; for it remained unconsummated in the physical plane, but found its spiritual consummation in a union of souls on the occasion of the Shodashi-Pujâ in 1872. This was

the culminating act of Shri Ramakrishna's spiritual *sâdhanas* when he worshipped the Divine Mother of the universe in the person of his wife, at the end of which the worshipped and worshipper entered into deep Samâdhi and realised their spiritual identity. Thenceforth they became as one soul functioning in two bodies, and Sarada Devi assumed her equal role in the fulfilment of the mission of Shri Ramakrishna.

Shri Ramakrishna himself recognised the spiritual eminence of Shri Sarada Devi. Unlike the general run of spiritual aspirants who forsake all worldly connections on entering the religious life, for which there is the sanction of religious law and custom behind them, Shri Ramakrishna welcomed Sarada Devi to his side when she, coming of age, came to claim her rights over him. It is a deeply moving episode in their lives which helps to reveal the stuff of both. Shri Ramakrishna was in Dakshineswar passing through storms of spiritual moods and experiences ; except on the two occasions of his brief visits to his native village, he had not met his wedded wife these twelve long years and seemed apparently to have forgotten her.

Sarada Devi, now about 18, entered his room late at night after an arduous journey from her native village in the company of her father. She had her fears in her heart proceeding from the gossip she had heard in her village about the deranged condition of her husband's mind, and her own knowledge of his utter indifference to worldly concerns. But Shri Ramakrishna, though a bit surprised at her

sudden arrival, welcomed her very cordially, and accommodated her in his own room for facility of medical attention, and arranged for the medical care of her body which had been ravaged by illness and fatigue during the long trek. She found in him the same loving divine husband whom she had known during his previous visits to the village. When she settled down, Shri Ramakrishna one day addressed her thus : 'As for me, the Mother has shown me that She resides in every woman, and so I have learned to look upon every woman as Mother. That is the one idea I can have about you, but if you wish to drag me into the world, as I have been married to you, I am at your service.'

To this challenging question of her divine husband, Sarada Devi gave a straightforward answer : 'Why should I desire to drag your mind down to the worldly plane ?' she asked, and added, 'I have come only to help you in your chosen path. I desire only to live with you and serve you and to learn of you.'

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

From now on till the end of his life, for full fourteen years, Sarada Devi served the person of Shri Ramakrishna and the large number of disciples and devotees visiting him, with a rare devotion and self-effacement unrivalled in human history. It was also the period of her intense spiritual education under her divine husband. She has referred to this period as a continuous experience of intense bliss. Months together they lived in the same room and slept in the same bed with no trace of carnal thought in the mind of either. Their minds constantly soared in the region of divine awareness and bliss; each stood transfigured to the other; and both became instruments for the working out of the divine Will. The immense store of spiritual energy —divine Shakti—which was generated by the *sâdhanas* of Shri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi contains the promise of the spiritual evolution of humanity which keenly feels its own tragic spiritual poverty in the midst of abundant material wealth.

Shri Ramakrishna passed away in 1886. Sarada Devi was 33 at the time. Having lived in a non-physical plane of relationship with her husband, she did not experience the feeling of widowhood at his death. To her he continued to be a living reality to the end of her days. And for the next thirty-four years she lived a life complex in its roles and varied in its riches, and withal silent and sweet, that gained for her the endearing title of 'Shri Mâ', 'the Holy Mother', by which she is known ever since.

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

Verification is the proof of a theory or a claim. The test of life alone proves the genuineness of a moral virtue or a spiritual value; virtues are tested more in ill fortune than in good fortune. To maintain poise and grace in good weather is easy enough; but it is only bad weather that tests their genuineness. The calmness, poise, and grace and the spirit of unobstructed love and self-effacing service which Sarada Devi expressed in her day to day life in the

context of a highly distracting environment of sheer worldiness proclaims the supremely uplifting power of godliness and spirituality. The possession of this power in a man or a woman makes him or her pure and holy. The expression of this power in life is love. Sarada Devi was the very personification of this purity, holiness, and love which is the meaning of the ideal of motherhood at its highest and best. This power lies imbedded in the heart of every woman. An ordinary woman captures in her life only a fraction of this ideal by which she shines in her loving kindness and holiness. A truly biological function becomes elevated through the infilling of a spiritual value. But this spiritual value shone in its fullness even outside the biological context in the personality of the Holy Mother, demonstrating thereby the ideal in its pure form. Out of the abundance of her heart Sarada Devi gave of her love to one and all without any distinction and by so doing, justified the endearing epithet of 'the Holy Mother'.

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

'Shri Ramakrishna has left me to manifest the ideal of Divine Motherhood'?

In her life and her teachings she has left a balm for suffering humanity in search of light and peace. Her love knew no distinctions of sex, creed, or race. It enfolded and uplifted the Muslim labourer Amzad as much as the Sannyâsin Saradananda, the gifted Sister Niveditâ as much as the simple 'Mother of Annapurnâ'. The Holy Mother's death-bed advice to the latter is typical of her universal personality and depth of insight. To the 'Mother of Annapurnâ' sorrowing at the thought of Holy Mother's imminent passing away, she said these words of uplifting consolation and strength: 'If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child: this entire world is your own.'

Let me conclude this tribute with the beautiful Sanskrit verse in praise of her pure nobility:

पवित्रं चरितं यस्याः पवित्रं जीवनं तथा।
पवित्रता स्वरूपिण्यै तस्यै देव्यै नमो नमः॥

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

SHRI NARAYANA GURU—AN APPRECIATION [1]

Romain Rolland, in his work, *The Life of Ramakrishna* (p. 160 fn.), speaking about the Great Shepherds of modern India, refers also to numerous less known spiritual leaders, and introduces Shri Nârâyana Guru as 'the Great Guru...whose beneficent spiritual activity was exercised for more than forty years in the State of Travancore over some million faithful souls (he has just died in 1928)....He preached, if one may say so, a Jnâna of action, a great intellectual religion, having a very lively sense of the people, and their social needs. It has greatly contributed to the uplifting of the oppressed classes in Southern India and its activities have in a measure been allied to those of Gandhi.'

Shri Nârâyana Guru came of a section of India's population which possessed no rights and privileges and which consequently received the name of depressed classes in modern times. Totally neglected and often oppressed and suppressed for a thousand years by the higher classes, the seventy million depressed classes of India, as of other parts of the world, constituted the basis of economic prosperity and social well-being of the country, as they formed the entire labour front. Continued

[1] Contributed on the occasion of the Shri Nârâyana Guru Birthday Celebrations, Rangoon, 1940.

slavery for generations had produced in these classes, as it is bound to produce in any class of men, an oppressive sense of its own littleness and helplessness —a sense of despair. Slavery is bad enough ; but a situation in which the slave begins to accept his position as part of a natural social order—a position in which there is dictated duty without any inherent right and privilege—is something which reduces man to the level of cattle and robs him of his human prerogatives. This was precisely the condition of the Indian masses at the beginning of the nineteenth century when India was thrown open to the play of world forces. The mingling of the age-old idealism of India with the thought-forms and forces of the modern world has ushered in a new epoch in Indian history whose foundations were laid in the last century by the life and work of a few great leaders and the movements associated with them. These teachers and movements mainly appealed to the higher classes generating in them a sense of past guilt and of its present 'duty to the masses'. The movements have borne fruit so that the Renaissance in India does not exhaust itself in a mere political upheaval but assumes more enduring forms of a religious awakening and social transformation. The world outside sees mostly India's political awakening. Far more important to India herself is the great struggle for social justice and social welfare that is going on within her bosom. It is, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'a struggle unto life and death to bring about a new state of things—sympathy for

the poor, and bread to their hungry mouths—enlightenment to the people at large, and struggle unto death to make men of them who have been brought to the level of beasts, by the tyranny of your forefathers' (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* page 64).

Thanks to the work of Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, Hindu society has seriously taken in hand the work of self-purification. The charter of freedom has been proclaimed in no uncertain voice and the dead weight of custom and tradition is being slowly lifted. We have also to thank Western thought and political practice which have helped to break our 'crystallised civilisation'. Social progress in India has always been on the lines of sharing the benefits of culture and of higher Hindu thought by larger and larger sections of the population. Democratisation of knowledge and opportunity meant also elevation of the people. The best genius of Hinduism lay in this direction in a special sense. If there had been stagnation due to the dead-weight of meaningless custom and oppressive tradition, it meant only that society had forgotten the larger plan and purpose of the ancient leaders. Society is then in need of a new dynamism. In India, this urge to progress has always come from great saints and sages and not from mere political thinkers. A new passion for Dharma has supplied the necessary revolutionary urge. Hinduism seeks to demonstrate that progress and well-being of the masses do not lie against religion. Swami Viveka-

nanda sums up this outlook and programme in the formula 'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion'.

But the awakening of the conscience of the privileged is only one act in the drama of enfranchisement. The other equally, if not more, important part is the process of self-discovery on the part of the oppressed themselves. This period of awakening of the masses to a sense of their worth and importance is a critical period in the history of a people. It may be either explosive and destructive or gentle and constructive; but the effect is revolutionary in both cases. The most serious criticism against a violent revolution is that it rarely achieves its original purpose. The second type is more permanent and far-reaching in its effects.

That these recent changes in Hindu society are of a peaceful and constructive character is as much due to the good sense of the Indian masses as to the soundness of Hindu social philosophy and ideals. The movement of reform associated with Shri Nârâyana Guru is unique in one important respect: it is entirely constructive and devoid of any bitterness against the higher classes. All over the world, the unprivileged classes, in their awakening, have manifested what may be called legitimate hostility and bitterness against the privileged. All the blame has been attached to one side. From the purely human point of view, there may be some justification for this attitude and the class-hatred that it fosters. But it is harmful to the abiding interests of social

health and well-being. The theory that all social progress is the result of class-antagonism and class-struggle is yet to be proved. Clash of interests in a society is inevitable. What is not so evident is that social progress is the beneficent result of such clashes. It is more reasonable to hold that true progress is possible only where class-antagonism is least in virtue of the emphasis on ideas and ideals which are the common wealth of all the classes.

This is the meaning and significance of the Indian conception of Dharma—a conception which seeks the unity of social endeavour through harmony and co-operation. It is to the eternal glory of Shri Nârâyana Guru to have inaugurated a movement which embodies in itself this unique genius of Hinduism and to have released the forces of the Spirit for the solution of the many pressing problems of even the mundane life of his people. In this he takes rank with the saints and reformers of earlier centuries and more especially with Guru Nânak, the founder of the Sikh fraternity. Except in one respect, there is striking similarity between the life and work of these two masters who are separated by about five centuries. Nânak belonged to the higher classes but fraternised with and reformed the lowly and the lost in Hindu society. Nârâyana Guru was born with the social stigma of an untouchable among whom he worked and whose life he transformed. The so-called lowness of his birth could in no way hide or smother the richness of his native endowment. It is this wealth of native

genius that enabled him to raise himself and his people above the depressing circumstances of an unjust social order. He imparted life to the almost dead bones and muscles of his people and made them conscious of their human worth and dignity. Rightly is he called the Guru whose breath is hope and whose touch is life.

Shri Nârâyana shows himself at his best in wisdom and discernment in the role of a religious and social reformer. There has been no dearth of reformers and reform proposals in modern India. But most of the social reforms advocated by them were more ornamental than real. In his famous lecture on 'My Plan of Campaign' delivered at Madras in February 1897, Swami Vivekananda referred to this problem in these words: 'To the reformers I will point out, that I am a greater reformer than any of them. They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch reform. Where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction; mine is that of construction. I do not believe in reform; I believe in growth.'[1] 'We admit there are evils. Everybody can show what evil is, but he is the friend of mankind who finds a way out of the difficulty. Like the drowning boy and the philosopher, when the philosopher was lecturing him the boy cried—"Take me out of the water first"; so our people cry "We have had lectures enough, papers enough, societies enough;

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 213.

where is the man who will lend us a hand to drag us out ? Where is the man who has sympathy for us ? " Aye, that man is wanted.'[1]

About the time these words were spoken at Madras by the great prophet of modern Indian Renaissance, the sunken masses of the neighbouring province of Kerala were finding their hopes and their voice in the personality of Shri Nârâyana Guru who had by then started his silent work of transformation. World events are compelling us to the view that the best legislative authority in the world is character. The Rishi has always been recognised as the law-giver in India. His knowledge and his detachment constitute valid sanctions for the equity of his legislation. In Shri Nârâyana Guru the people found such a law-giver. Himself a monk and a man of God, in virtue of which he rose above all social conventions and obligations, he yet descended to the level of his fellow-men in an attitude of compassion, and lent his loving hand to drag them out of their misery. And he had the supreme satisfaction to witness even in his own lifetime the ample reward of his labours in the improved tone of the moral and material well-being of his people.

Shri Nârâyana Guru is reputed to have been a great Âyurvedic physician. But he was a greater physician of social maladies. He prescribed education as the one remedy for all the ills of the depressed classes. He was the unwearied champion of modern

[1] Ibid., p. 215.

education for his people. This was to pave the way for their economic and social advancement. Equally important is the acquirement of culture for which he prescribed Sanskrit education. A third vital need was spiritual sustenance, which comes first in importance in his scheme. To meet this need, he consecrated temples and shrines. Temples, modern education, and Sanskrit culture formed integral parts of the Guru's method of root-and-branch reform. In asking his people to depend upon their own resources he inspired them with self-respect and self-help which helped to draw out their latent capacities. The power thus released was canalised into constructive channels resulting in the creation of a network of institutions to serve the religious, educational, social, and economic needs of the community throughout the province of Kerala.

The curse of untouchability is practised in its most extreme form in Kerala for which that province had earned the name of lunatic asylum from Swami Vivekananda. The thoughts of Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi mingled with the silent and steady work of Shri Nârâyana Guru led to the great act of expiation in the famous Travancore Temple-entry Proclamation which at one stroke bridged the wide gulf that separated the privileged classes from the masses and wiped away one of the deep-seated stains on the society and the province. In this great achievement, Shri Nârâyana Guru's contribution has been immense. Under the inspiration of his

name and ideals, the depressed classes of Kerala are making rapid strides in educational advancement and economic improvement. To several sections of them, the name 'depressed class' is a thorough misnomer today. It is only a question of time when this label of stigma on them and on Hindu society will be a thing of the past not merely in the province of Shri Nârâyana Guru's birth, but also in the whole of India. This was the dream of Swami Vivekananda, as it is the passion of Mahatma Gandhi today. Only then will be accomplished the purification and strengthening of Hindu society and Hindu religion when the paralysed limb of society constituted of the seventy million people of the unprivileged classes will be galvanised into self-conscious activity, and contribute their share to the building up of a healthy national life.

In this great work of reform and consolidation in the wider fields of India, the ideals and methods of Shri Nârâyana Guru are bound to be an unfailing source of inspiration and guidance. In all that he was and all that he did, Shri Nârâyana Guru stands as the supreme symbol of hope and redemption to the depressed classes of India.

PART TWO

SCIENCE, DEMOCRACY, AND RELIGION [1]

The subject before me is a vast one, and each of the three components—science, democracy, and relgion—is a vast topic in itself, and can keep us absorbed for hours; but I have proposed to tie them together and treat them as a single theme, in order to focus your attention on these great forces that are working in our country today to reshape it in a fundamental way.

THE FORCES OF SCIENCE AND DEMOCRACY

In the modern world, the forces generated by science and democracy have been operating in a variety of ways to transform human life. Already a vast amount of transformation has taken place in some parts, and the impact is being felt in other parts as well. Our country has been feeling the effect of these forces in a general way for the past half a century; but since our attainment of independence, we are being thrown, with increasing momentum, year by year, into the very vortex of these forces. The country today has to reckon with them. The age demands of our citizens an understanding of these forces, an acceptance of them, and an intelligent assimilation of their values, so that India may forge a new character and a new destiny

[1] Speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, on August 28, 1954.

for herself. A discussion of a subject such as this cannot therefore be of mere academic interest to us but is fruitful of lasting individual and collective welfare.

Compared to other countries, there is something special and, if I may say so, significant in the interaction and outcome of these two forces in the Indian context. For that context is constituted by a deep and abiding religious consciousness which derives its strength from a rational and comprehensive philosophy. Since historic times, religion has been the most vital force moulding our individual and collective life ; it is so even today. It has given us strength and vitality to stand the vicissitudes of our long history, resilience and adaptability to adjust to changing times, and an assimilative power to synthesise the new with the old, making for continuity in the context of progress. The problem of India in the modern age is the assimilation of the forces of science and democracy which are being grafted on to her spiritual tree. The success of this experiment depends upon two factors : the vitality of the spiritual sap running in the tree and its hospitality to the new forces contained in the grafts.

These new forces took their birth in Europe and America. The development of science and technology revolutionised the lives of people of those countries, releasing powerful social forces of which the idea of democracy is the most outstanding and pervasive. The intellectual force of science and the social force of democracy have had devastating

effects on the thought and life of the Western man. These new forces could not be assimilated to the Western religious consciousness and tradition which did not prove a hospitable soil to them. The result is a schism in the mind of the Western man, indicated by ever-recurrent conflicts, faith in conflict with reason, the spirit at loggerheads with matter, and man in opposition to the universe.

INDIA FACES A NEW CHALLENGE

India's handling of these forces, the method and manner of her approach as much as the success of her endeavours, is therefore of more than national significance.

Whether we like it or not, science and its fruits are disturbing our slumber of ages; the 'good old days' are going out fast, never to return. The pattern of our economy, the web of our social and family relationships, the mood of our millions, and even the values of our lives are all being thrown into the melting pot of the modern transition. With the intensification of the pace of industrialisation, the centuries-old staticity of our feudal society is being profoundly disturbed; social mobility is fast breaking down caste and other old forms of social relationships, and, faster still, the social sanctions behind them. Virtues that sustained a static age are found to be utterly inadequate to the demands of a dynamic society. Everywhere we witness the crumbling down of old values, old edifices, and old social and economic groupings. And this is just the

beginning of our industrialisation; we can well envisage, from the example of the experience of Western countries in the last century, what disturbing effects it is going to have on the mind and face of our old society. It is good for us to visualise the consequences of the root-and-branch revolution that is in prospect in all aspects of our national life, and mobilise our national wisdom to meet its challenge intelligently and effectively.

A period of profound transition is not the time for complacency. India has experienced stormy periods in her long history. She had responded successfully to all such challenges on the strength of her tenacious loyalty to fundamental spiritual values, which she consequently placed at the foundation of her national culture. It is this faith in spiritual values, which has been tested in good and evil fortune, that is being challenged and menaced by the most powerful storm of the modern transition. All the previous challenges were mild in comparison, being only fractional, whereas this one is total. Is there not something in our age-old heritage which has the vitality to welcome these new forces—the intellectual force of science and the social force of democracy—and assimilate their values into the national heritage, so that it may emerge stronger and richer than before?

SCIENCE AS KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

Science is characterised by a keen spirit of inquiry and a deep passion for truth. Under this

supreme stimulus, and disciplined in its rigorous method, science has enabled the human mind in recent centuries to unravel secret after secret from nature and increase enormously man's knowledge of the world in which he lives. In its onward march, science as knowledge has disturbed the way-side calm of untested beliefs and comfortable dogmas. Therein lies its primary explosive character for the mental life of mankind. A secondary explosive character appeared when science as knowledge flowed into science as power.

Two hundred years of technological advance has ushered in a new era and a new civilisation in human history. Technology has placed a vast amount of power in the hands of man, power derived from the control of the forces of nature. Part of this power has found beneficial expression in effecting the material well-being of man and the external solidarity of the world. The rest of it has functioned without large aims and purposes to thwart human evolution and even imperil the human race. In the modern world, to quote Bertrand Russell, 'We are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends,' [1] resulting in strife, insecurity, and sorrow. And to quote him again, 'Unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow'.[2]

[1] Bertrand Russell, *Impact of Science on Society*, p. 123.
[2] Ibid.

SCIENCE : ITS USE AND ABUSE

Technological advance has also disturbed the comparative static human situation of centuries ; and out of the intensified social mobility generated by it has evolved a new ratio of social forces, which has given birth to the theory and practice of democracy. Democracy is a powerful social force in the modern world. The common people, the world over, who were creatures of socio-political circumstances created by the will-to-power of a few, are becoming transformed through democracy into individuals and ends in themselves and into repositories of socio-political power. The co-ordination, adjustment, and chastening of this will-to-power, originating in millions of ego centres, is the problem posed by democracy today.

The world is being reshaped by science and democracy. This reshaping is throwing up a new serious problem before the world—the problem of man himself ; he is unhappy, unstable, and insecure. Vast knowledge and power given by science and democracy have inflated his ego and increased his power for evil more than for good. Efficiency as to means and folly as to ends have made him the only possible destroyer of his new civilisation. The two world wars have tended to substitute a large question mark in the path of his destiny in place of the melioristic hopes raised by scientific humanism and naturalistic ethics of the earlier decades. The great fruits of science are being used for purposes

constructive and destructive. They are running parallel to each other, and the fear that the destructive may overreach the constructive has become a constant spectre to the modern man. Two significant questions, therefore, remain to be adequately answered by every right-thinking person. They are : (1) Has science given anything of fundamental value to humanity ? (2) So far as the individual is concerned, can it produce the right climate of peace and happiness for his total welfare ? We say adequately, because vague and incomplete answers to these questions are already in the field. The apparently unquestionable fact that science is never to blame, because it is neutral so far as its application or utilisation is concerned, does not bring the problem nearer solution. There is seen to be more insecurity in a scientific world than in a pre-scientific one. Yet man needs the services of science very much, but not without safeguards against its possible abuses.

DEMOCRACY ENHANCES HUMAN DIGNITY

Closely allied to, and dependent on, science and technology is that other great force of the modern world, democracy. Democracy—political, economic, and social—has been developing haltingly in the West since the nineteenth century; it has been developing and spreading all over the world since the twentieth century. The aspiration of every modern social or national unit is to evolve itself into a democracy of the most desirable excellence.

It is a magic word in modern society. It expresses and includes in a special way the highest aspirations of freedom-loving citizens in the colonial and dependent territories of our plundered planet. True democracy consists in enhancing the dignity of the individual and ennobling the aspirations of the group. The persistent demand of the common man for being recognised and valued as a full and free citizen of his motherland finds its strongest endorsement in the ideal and practice of democracy. Political democracy, with universal adult franchise as its chief source of power, serves to give back in a large measure to each of the toiling millions his or her share of individuality and dignity.

In India we have, in our own small but effective way, accepted and brought into practice this all-round value of democracy by declaring our State a sovereign democratic republic. The idea of democratic citizen stirs in the hearts of our downtrodden millions much confidence and hope, and, putting faith in their sound political sense and social wisdom, we have extended franchise to millions on a scale unprecedented in world history. Yet, much remains to be done in order to rouse the millions to self-conscious activity. A vast and varied programme of national education is under way, endorsing Jefferson's dictum that education holds the key to the stability of a democratic order. The nation is getting galvanised through the community projects and national extension services, the Bhudân and Shramadân, and diverse other movements.

Thus, in an initial and experimental manner, we have accepted and dealt with this great world-moving force of man-on-the-march, which is democracy. And democracy in India means vast millions on the move. We are fully aware that such experiment in democracy is sure to bring about revolutionary changes in our individual and social life. In fact, we know well that great changes are taking place even now. Yet, unafraid of the future, India nurses democracy as a thing of supreme value to man not only in the national, but also in the international context. Accordingly, her new constitution lays stress on the individual's essential humanity, irrespective of racial, communal, or caste affiliations.

DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Democracy has come to stay. How does India propose to assimilate this value to her hoary cultural heritage—a value which she has largely adopted following Western modes of experience ? Will democracy get a new creative expression in the Indian context ? Or, will she express only a pale imitation of its Western edition and eventually make a mess of it ? These are questions of profound import.

What do people generally understand by the term 'democracy' ? Maybe, the ballot box, adult franchise, government by an elected majority party, a cabinet responsible to an elected parliament, etc. Apart from these accepted implications of democratic

theory and practice, it is necessary that democracy should have a content of universal value which is something more than the merely political, social, or national. It is obvious that that value is the ethical and spiritual content. Without that content our democracy will be nothing more than a mere carbon-copy of what obtains in the democratic countries of the West. In several of these countries the pendulum of state set-up has oscillated between its two extremes of democracy and totalitarianism. And in all of them it has oscillated between the tensions of peace and the tensions of war. Social forces, developed and released by technology and democracy, have got to be chastened and guided, if they are not to oscillate between cold war and hot war. How are we going to avoid such a situation in India ? Can we in India tame these turbulent forces and use them for national and international human welfare ?

Man starts rebuilding himself and his society with the forces available to him at the time. Thus have grown and developed human culture and civilisation in the various parts of the world. What is happening today ? There is an inordinate amount of force and power, scientific and political, in the hands of man—hands often itching for a fight or for mischief. The problem of nations is how best to handle this force and this power in such a way as not to result in corruption in the wielders, and in confusion or harm to the people at large.

India thus is facing today, with other nations, this problem of handling the power and forces of

science and democracy. Some of the questions that arise in this context are : Who are the persons that are fitted to handle this power ; what shall be the method of handling this power ; and how shall the original and essential aim of ensuring the happiness of humanity at large be steadily kept in view ?

INDIA'S SPIRIT NOT OPPOSED TO SCIENCE

In the background of these agitating questions lies the great spiritual heritage of India. Those who are acquainted with its vitality hold the hope that India can yet show the world how to understand, assimilate, and express human values which form the theme of democracy everywhere. India's spirituality can enable Indians and the peoples of the world to digest the formidable forces that are being generated and placed in man's hands today. The spiritual meaning of democratic living and fulfilment, as taught by India's ancient and modern seers —in other words, the religion of the spiritual oneness of humanity—has to be revived and reactivated in men's thinking and day to day living, and its powerful influence brought to bear on these new and ever newer forms of scientific and social power, thereby giving them a higher direction and a loftier spiritual and human purpose.

This is the central message of religion. It is a message which requires to be specially emphasised in the world in which we are living today. The word 'religion' carries to some at least of the modern world a bit of bad odour. It is unfortunate. It is

due to the fact that religion became identified with untested beliefs and dogmas. And these got shattered in the progress of scientific inquiry. In the history of Europe, religion has often functioned as an 'enemy' of science. But that experience is not universal or invariable ; it is a story with its background in the West only and not in India. Our entire mental make-up proceeding from our long cultural experience is not only not hostile, but is very sympathetic and hospitable to the scientific spirit. In *The Discovery of India,* our Prime Minister, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, has expressed the view that science, which has much lee-way to make in India compared to Western countries, is bound to make increasing advances here in the future because of the hospitality of the Indian national heritage to science. Says he :

'Science has dominated the Western world and everyone there pays tribute to it, and yet the West is still far from having developed the real temper of science. It has still to bring the spirit and the flesh into creative harmony. In India in many obvious ways we have a greater distance to travel. And yet there may be fewer major obstructions on our way, for the essential basis of Indian thought for ages past, though not its later manifestations, fits in with the scientific temper and approach, as well as with internationalism. It is based on a fearless search for truth, on the solidarity of man, even on the divinity of everything living, and on the free and co-operative development of the individual

and the species, ever to greater freedom and higher stages of human growth.'[1]

Science will have no opposition from philosophy or religion in India as it had in the West. Our national thought is quite helpful and conducive to the growth of science. This is absolutely true, because we have a temper that always honours and welcomes knowledge of any kind.

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

In the Mundaka Upanishad (I.i.4-5), it is proclaimed that there are two types of knowledge: one the supreme, *parâ*, and the other the ordinary, relative, *aparâ*. All the knowledge of the time—science, literature, and arts, including the knowledge contained in the sacred Vedas—was relegated by the Upanishad to the category of the ordinary or *aparâ* knowledge. That alone is *parâ* or supreme knowledge which helps to destroy spiritual blindness and reveal the ever-present spiritual reality behind man and nature. And this is the theme and passion of religion as understood in India.

In the Chhândogya Upanishad (VIII.i.1-3), there is the arresting story of Nârada going to a great philosopher, by name Sanatkumâra, for thorough instruction in the knowledge of Truth. 'Please teach me, O Master,' solicits Nârada. The teacher replies, 'Tell me what you already know; then I shall teach you further.' Nârada replies, 'I know what is in the sacred books, the Vedas; I know also many sciences

[1] *The Discovery of India*, pp. 626-27.

like astronomy etc.', and he gives quite a long list of subjects. Then he concludes, 'And yet I am unhappy; there is gnawing sorrow; I am not able to get peace of mind,' and adds, 'I have heard from great teachers like you that only the *âtmavit*, the knower of the Self, can get rid of sorrow. So take me across the ocean of sorrow.' To this earnest question of a great seeker, who had much knowledge but little peace and who was in search of that higher knowledge which puts an end to all doubts and sorrows, the great teacher, Sanatkumâra, replies, 'You have learned all the Vedas, the sciences, and the arts; but they are merely strings of names, words, mere transformations of sound; you must seek for the meaning behind all sounds, behind even all thought, the supreme truth of Being.' And the whole chapter is an exposition of this great idea, the search for not merely the meaning of words, but the *meaning* of meaning itself.

This is philosophy, *parâ-vidyâ*, the basis of all forms of knowledge, *sarva-vidyâ-pratishthâ*, the knowledge of That by which all else is known, and as such synthetic and comprehensive. The Upanishads contain an impressive record of great minds wrestling with the problems of life and existence and arriving at the truth of unity of Being through perfect self-control, concentration, and meditation. Nârada as well as modern man illustrates Bertrand Russell's statement that if there is increase in knowledge without a corresponding increase in wisdom, such increase of knowledge is only an increase of sorrow. Nârada

had the urge to go beyond knowledge to wisdom, and he pursued that urge with courage and determination. Many others like him had done the same, both men and women. Indian philosophy and culture bear the impress of their passion for truth, comprehensive understanding, and unifying and pacifying love for all mankind. Modern man is just beginning to feel the need to go beyond knowledge to wisdom.

THE WAY OF WISDOM

But what is this wisdom? In our country, we have been taught that the nature of wisdom consists in the synthesis of all knowledge, in the awareness of That 'by knowing which all else becomes known'. It is that total *Weltanschauung* which includes and transcends all relative knowledge contained in science, art, and religion, leading to universality of outlook and unfettered sympathy. The attainment of wisdom is no quick process; because it involves a struggle to change human nature itself through the practice of self-control and self-transcendence (*indriya-samyama* and *tyâga*). As an unanchored boat driven by the wind and tossed by the waves gets lost in the turbulent waters, even so, this human personality, when allowed to be carried away by the turbulent senses, and by the mind that follows in their wake, comes face to face with grief and sorrow and spiritual disaster.[1] The whole of modern civilisation is but a palpable reminder to man of this

[1] Gita, II. 67.

warning that life suffers shipwreck, if there is nothing to check the outward tendencies of the mind and the senses, if it is not anchored in the inner Self, the fountain of all strength, resource, and joy. This is the great idea that the Bhagavad-Gita expounds with force and lucidity.

Swami Vivekananda taught that the purpose of religion is to transform man the brute into man the God. This is not the sphere of science and politics. These do not constitute wisdom and good life, but only provide the conditions thereof. 'The basis of all systems, social or political,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'rests upon the goodness of men. No nation is great or good because Parliament enacts this or that, but because its men are great and good.... Religion goes to the root of the matter. If it is right, all is right.... One must admit that law, government, politics are phases not final in any way. There is a goal beyond them where law is not needed.... All great Masters teach the same thing. Christ saw that the basis is not law, that morality and purity are the only strength.'[1]

If this message is properly understood, man will be able to grasp the meaning of science and democracy, make the forces they generate his servants, and utilise them to enhance life and build a steady character. And because our country has held on to this message of religion in good and evil fortune, and borne witness to the undying reality in man and

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. V. pp. 122-23.

nature, she is able to re-build herself repeatedly whenever there is a sagging of her spirits and a lowering of her ideals.

SCHISM IN THE MIND OF THE WEST

Europe and America have for religion Christianity which has been a great spiritual force in the history of the world. But in recent centuries it has not been exercising very high influence on the Western mind, because most people in the West find themselves subject to the vagaries of a divided personality. Their loyalty is largely to science; but their religious beliefs do not find support from modern science which grew to stature at the cost of religion. Unwilling to disbelieve, but also unable to believe, many have become just nominally religious, but essentially this-worldly, dazzled by the logic and visible achievements of science and technology. There is, unlike in India, no unifying philosophy to mediate between faith and reason, faith and faith, and faith and life. Bereft of the sustenance of such a philosophy, religion in the West more and more tended to be removed from lived experience, to get confounded with dogmas and conformities, and reduced itself to an intellectual and spiritual sterility. This alone explains its failure to welcome, chasten, and transform the intellectual force of science and the social force of democracy.

THE VEDANTIC SYNTHESIS

That science is a fundamental force and that it does have a great message for all men is under-

stood in India, no less than elsewhere. Human welfare partly depends upon the knowledge and control of the human environment, natural and social. The Vedânta has always given an honoured place to science, as also to politics, in this sphere of human welfare. But the Vedanta has also taught India that these two do not constitute the whole scope of human welfare. Man is more than a political animal ; he is also more than an intellectual being. He has depths and heights which cannot be compassed in a purely materialistic or positivistic philosophy. Indian thought recognises no compartments or divisions in the human personality leading to mutual exclusion and hostility in human aspirations and values, such as pleasure and profit, science and art, morality and religion.

The unity of man emphasises the synthesis of his interests. While accepting the great importance of science and politics for man, the Vedanta evaluates them in terms of his total needs and aspirations. Man seeks things of utility for the sake of things without utility. Science through technology can give and has given man things of utility in abundance ; politics can give him things of utility of another order, a stable social order, the venue of his life's experiments. But neither science nor politics can give man peace or happiness, joy or a sense of fulfilment. These non-utilitarian values proceed from religion and morality. Science and politics can create only conditions for their emergence, but cannot create them directly. Without this spiritual

direction, the forces generated by science and politics nourish the lower self of man and become sources of sorrow and discord, division and instability for man and society. A knowledge which leads to the increase of sorrow is not knowledge, but ignorance, the offspring of spiritual blindness. It is spiritual awareness alone that transforms all knowledge into wisdom, and into forms of peace and happiness, love and unity.

SPIRITUALITY ENSURES STABILITY

The transformation of the world which science and politics seek is powerless to ensure human welfare without the transformation of human nature itself, which religion seeks through a discipline of the whole personality. It is only such spiritually disciplined individuals and groups that can ensure for humanity at large the values of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, of liberty, fraternity, and equality. The peace and happiness of man and the stability and ordered progress of civilisations depend entirely upon the intensification of the spiritual awareness of humanity. With this spiritual awareness for foundation, the structure of civilisation raised by science and democracy becomes strong and steady; without it, it sways in periodic crises to topple down eventually. Without the inspiration of religion, civilisation shall ever remain an unstable structure.

That is the verdict of history. And India has held on to this faith in the primacy of the spiritual

over every other value from the hoary past of her history. Science or politics, art or social graces are but means to advance the spiritual life of man. Guided by the synthetic philosophy of the Vedanta, the civilisation of India has not rejected or excluded any tested human value, but has synthesised them all under the hegemony of the spiritual. Other social structures, tall and powerful, have decayed and fallen, being built on sand—on materialism and worldliness; but this structure, vast and lofty, has endured, being built on rock—on spirituality and unworldliness. India has more truly heeded the warning of Jesus, of gaining the world and losing the soul, than any other nation; and she has proved in her history that the world belongs to the unworldly, and the meek shall inherit the earth.

The dictum of the Shvetâshvatara Upanishad [1] that not through technological advances, but through the knowledge of God alone shall mankind attain peace and happiness has great relevance for the modern world. That idea has been the leaven in Indian civilisation; a little of that leaven can leaven the whole bread of civilisation today. The way India transformed her knowledge and experience into wisdom with the help of this leaven of spirituality has a deep meaning for modern India herself, now in the grip of a revolutionary transition, and also for the modern world, which is

[1] यदा चर्मवदाकाशं वेष्टयिष्यन्ति मानवाः ।
तदा देवमविज्ञाय दुःखस्यान्तो भविष्यति ॥ VI. 19.

in the grip of fear and sorrow and despair. In prosperity and adversity, in joy and sorrow, India has clung to God. She has acquired a spirituality which has stood the test of time and circumstance. Religion is not an opinion with her, but a deep national conviction. That is the sanction behind her voice which is gentle yet unmistakable in its utterance and hope-inspiring.

VEDANTA SEEKS UNIVERSAL WELFARE

Besides the integral unity of man and his interests, the Vedanta also proclaims the unity and solidarity of all existence. The objective of the Vedanta is the happiness and welfare of man; not man as divided into sects, creeds, castes, and classes, but man as man wherever he may be found. Based on this unitary and universal view of man upheld in her philosophy, religion in India taught that man, in the course of his development, in the course of his self-expression, generates various forces, physical or mental, social or political, and that the development of these forces needs to be matched by a corresponding development of his inner spiritual forces, which alone can provide the factors of stability to an evolving personality or social system. If science and politics make for progress and development in the natural and social environment, there must be spirituality to make man adequate to this development. When vast powers are placed in the hands of man, there must be ampler powers generated in his heart through moral and spiritual

discipline of the whole personality. Man loses life's battle when he fails to find the centre of gravity of his personality within himself, but seeks for it in everything outside of himself. This enrichment of the inner life, this deepening of the roots to match the widening of the branches, this strengthening of the stakes along with the lengthening of the ropes, is the unique contribution of religion to civilisation. Steady wisdom and stable character are its watchwords. Hence its message is eternal and perennial.

This wisdom or this spirituality is embedded in the great Vedanta, the philosophy which breathes the spirit of fearlessness, harmony, and universality. The advance of science or the development of socio-political thought holds no fear for a religion deriving its strength from the Vedanta. Under its hegemony, science, politics, and religion will function in harmony and co-operation to ensure total human welfare everywhere. Its proclaimed objective is this universal human welfare, not national or racial, nor segmentary or fractional. Freedom, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, is the watchword of the Vedanta, says Swami Vivekananda.[1] It seeks not only other-worldly, but also this-worldly welfare, not only *nihshreyasa,* but also *âbhyudaya.*

'I salute this great philosophy of unity,' sings the great Gaudapâda, an Indian teacher of the eighth century, 'which proclaims the solidarity of all existence, which seeks the happiness and welfare

[1] *Complete Works,* Vol. III, p. 238.

of all beings, and which is free from all strife and contradiction.'[1]

VIVEKANANDA'S PRACTICAL VEDANTA

It is in the light of this Vedanta which sees the unity of the Self and the non-Self, that Swami Vivekananda approached our pressing national and international problems. The freshness and vigour of his approach are derived from his vision of unity and synthesis. In this context alone can we understand his passionate exhortation to the nation to concentrate its energies for some decades on the material and social advancement of the people. He pleaded for a 'toned down' materialism to suit our immediate requirements, for effecting the uplift of India's sunken millions. 'I do not believe in a God or religion,' says he, 'which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth.'[2]

He taught that the only way God can come to a hungry man is in the form of a morsel of bread. He pleaded for materialism in the service of spirituality; material improvement, he held, is the condition precedent for India's spiritual and moral advancement; one is the means and the other the end, and he found no conflict between them. With convincing logic and charm, he taught India and the West that spirituality suffers as much from lack of wealth as from too much of it; and he found the

[1] Gaudapâda. *Mândukya-Kârikâ*, IV. 2.
[2] *Complete Works*, Vol. V, p. 39.

spirituality of Afro-Asian countries suffering from the former and that of the Western countries from the latter. It is not to religion, in the limited sense of the word, that he asked the nation to turn to seek ways and means to work out its material and social welfare, but to science and democracy. Yet, he proclaimed that religion will ever remain the national passion in India ; the search for the meaning of life lies beyond the horizon of man's material desires and struggles. The urge to know the soul, to know God, to pierce the mystery that veils nature constitutes the religious impulse in man. Indian culture bears the deep impress of this impulse in its multitudinous manifestations. There need be no fear that material and political advancement may choke up this distinctive national theme ; on the contrary, the energy of this impulse, according to Swami Vivekananda, will only find higher and higher expressions in the life of our people, when our centuries-old economic and social maladies become progressively cured through the applications of science and democracy. Religion in the limited sense of *mukti* (liberation) or *nihshreyasa* has a direct message for only a limited number of people in any given civilisation ; it involves a capacity to gaze into far distant horizons of being. The immense majority can see only a limited range of the horizon, the horizon of material and social welfare, *abhyudaya.* It is Swami Vivekananda's supreme glory that he re-enunciated the all-embracing spirituality of Vedanta and demonstrated the end and aim of all life's

endeavours and struggles to consist in freedom—freedom from all bondages, actual and possible, physical, intellectual, and spiritual. This all-embracing touch comes out prominently in his definition of religion : 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this ... and be free. This is the whole of religion.' [1]

The conquest of external nature leading to liberation from the physical, social, and intellectual bondages of the soul is the contribution of science and politics to the growth of the soul. They thus become transformed into forms of spirituality ; they become departments of his 'Practical Vedanta'. 'Art, science, and religion', says Swamiji, 'are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this, we must have the theory of Advaita (philosophy of non-duality).'

INDIA'S OPPORTUNITY AND PRIVILEGE

'In the two words equilibrium and synthesis,' says Romain Rolland, 'Vivekananda's constructive genius may be summed up. He embraced all the paths of the spirit : the four Yogas in their entirety, renunciation and service, art and science, religion and action from the most spiritual to the most practical. Each of the ways that he taught had its own limits, but he himself had been through them all, and embraced them all. As in a quadriga, he

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. I, p. 257.

held the reins of all four ways of truth, and he travelled towards Unity among them all simultaneously. He was the personification of the harmony of all human energy.'[1]

In the strength of this equilibrium and synthesis taught and exemplified by Swami Vivekananda, India is in a unique position to demonstrate to herself and to the world the complementary character of the forces of science, democracy, and religion in the service of total human welfare. The world needs this synthesis very badly today. Never before in the history of humanity has there been such a spectacle of a plethora of material and social advantages outside and fear and instability within.

'Bleeding from war wounds,' says Sorokin, 'and frightened by the atomic Frankensteins of destruction, humanity is desperately looking for a way out of the death-trap. It craves life instead of inglorious death. It wants peace in place of war. It is hungry for love in lieu of hate. It aspires for order to replace disorder. It dreams of a better humanity, of greater wisdom, of a finer cultural mantle for its body than the bloody rags of its robot civilisation. Having foolishly manœuvred itself into a death-trap, and facing the inexorable problem, "to be or not to be", it is forced to pursue, more desperately than ever before, its eternal quest for survival and immortality.'[2]

[1] *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*, p. 283 (Fourth Impression).

[2] Sorokin, *The Reconstruction of Humanity*, Prologue.

Swami Vivekananda wanted that India should not repeat the mistakes of the West, but learn valuable lessons from the experiences of those nations. After our independence, we have seriously taken in hand the economic and social advancement of the country through the Five-Year Plan. We have chosen to industrialise the country undeterred by fears generated by the experience of the West. We have set in motion a country-wide enthusiasm for science and built and equipped a chain of national laboratories. And we have set our society in the direction of democracy, political, economic, and social. These are bold steps for an old nation to take—this pouring of strong, new wine into this old bottle; but it has been done without the least tremor or fear, because of the discovery of the youthful vitality of India and the release of her undying spiritual energies by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

FREEDOM AND EQUALITY : A SPIRITUAL URGE

The message of democracy is the message of freedom and equality. It is essentially a spiritual message, though it finds expression in political or social garbs. As such, the establishment of freedom and equality can never be done on the basis of a mere political or economic view of man, or by mere political or economic methods. The urge for freedom and equality is a spiritual urge; equality is never a physical, intellectual, economic, or social fact; inequality in all these fields is the glaring fact.

An appeal to equality cannot proceed or get a response from the economic man or the political man. Self-aggrandisement and exploitation are the impulses of a man at those levels. If man had no deeper levels than these, all talk of equality would have been a cry of despair.

Western democracy is suffering from this surface view of man and the despair it engenders, owing to its shifting sandy foundation. That is why, in spite of centuries of democracy, and the abundance of formal freedom and equality, the West is still far away from real freedom and equality. Undue emphasis on material values leads to breakneck competition and struggle and causes the evaporation of the content of freedom and equality. These two values can be derived only from the spiritual nature of man, the spark of the Divine in him, which is the inalienable and invariable part of him, and which constitutes his real Self. This is the Âtman of the Vedanta, the unchanging reality behind man's personality, unaffected by all changing social evaluations of high and low, rich and poor, man and woman, learned and ignorant. Here we reach the rock bottom of experience which provides the only secure foundation for raising the edifice of equality and freedom. Freedom of man derives from this his spiritual nature; equality is the recognition of this divine thread of unity behind all apparent differences of personality.

THE DIVINE IN MAN : THE BASIS FOR DEMOCRACY

Thus the Vedantic ideal of the divinity and solidarity of man provides the only stable foundation for the theory and practice of democracy. Swami Vivekananda exhorted us to build our democracy on this solid foundation. The parable of Jesus about the wise man who built his house on rock and the foolish man who built his house on sand is significant here. Western democratic structure is built on the concept of the sense-bound man ; it has its seasonal disturbances, each succeeding one more serious than the preceding. To quote the words of Jesus : 'And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell ; and great was the fall of it ;' for it was founded on sand. And if we but copy the same, what profit are we or the world going to derive ? If, on the contrary, we infuse our democracy with the spiritual idealism of our country and treat every man, in the words of Kant, not as a means but as an end in itself, we shall be creating a social order where man will become the focus and source of all value, and which will breathe the spirit of harmony and universality. Swami Vivekananda found the highest exposition of this sentiment in the following two verses of the Gita :

'Relative existence has been conquered by them, in this very life, whose mind rests in evenness, since God is even in all and without imperfection : therefore such are said to be living in God' (V. 19).

'Seeing the same God equally present in every being, one does not injure the Self by the Self, and so goes to the highest goal' (XIII. 28).

True democracy is inconsistent with a narrow self-sufficient nationalism or sectarianism; it must tend to reach out to the universal. Breaking the barriers of caste and creed, race and sex, high and low, the democratic idea, deriving its sustenance from the divinity in man, marches on, without obstruction, to the realisation of the universal. Swami Vivekananda desired India to uphold this ideal of the universal in her religion and politics, science, and literature. He desired India to strive for the evolution of a Vedantic civilisation where science and politics would be utilised to lead man to higher and higher levels of self-expression; not merely desired it, but he also demonstrated that India, among all the nations, had the requisite historically acquired capacity to make that contribution to world civilisation.

CONCLUSION

Swami Vivekananda's thoughts on this subject are of invaluable help for our nation today. It imparts courage and clarity, hope and enthusiasm. And we shall need these qualities in ever-increasing measure as years go by and as the nation becomes fully self-aware and mobile.

Long before we embarked on an independent career of nation-building, at the close of the nineteenth century, we were fortunate to get the guidance

of a Vivekananda, the like of which no other nation has or had. In him has religion shaken hands with science in a common adventure for the deliverance of the human race in India and elsewhere. And whatever we may do today in India in this field will carry a vital significance for all humanity. Our problems are vast and varied. But we have an abundance of spiritual wealth, hardly utilised. It is true to say that in the world of ideals, we are starving in the sight of plenty. We have need to develop practical efficiency to translate visions into realities. This will be the gift to us of true scientific discipline and social vision. Both are derivable from our national heritage and genius. Our democracy must become a live social awareness and discipline, instead of remaining a mere political technique of State. The aim of all the three—religion, science, and democracy—is the creation of a pattern of human happiness and general welfare. Their synthesis alone can ensure for man everywhere that inner enrichment and poise in the context of external prosperity and progress, which makes for a sense of creative living and fulfilment. While science and democracy deal with 'man the known', religion deals with 'man the unknown'. A complete, integral civilisation cannot afford to sacrifice either in the interests of the other. And India is called upon to show the way of achieving this synthesis for the good of herself and the world.

RELIGION AND THE SPIRIT OF ENQUIRY [1]

The study of the impact of modern thought on religion forms a part of the wider study of the impact of that thought on life and mind in general. That impact has been pervasive in its significance and revolutionary in its effects. Originating in a few centres of western Europe, and gathering force and momentum in its onward march, its vibrations have reached the four corners of the civilised world in the short space of about three centuries, transforming profoundly man and his environment—the temper of his thought as much as the pattern of his living. The forging ahead of thought during these centuries has produced results liberative and illuminating, devastating and destructive, creative and constructive.

What is the nature of that movement of thought which has produced these remarkable results? What do we mean by the term modern as applied to thought and what is the special feature of modern thought which has rendered thought so explosive and revolutionary? An answer to these questions will help us to reassess the role of religion, politics, and education in the service of man in the modern world.

[1] Speech broadcast over the Delhi Station of the A.I.R. on October 13, 1950.

The architect of the modern world is science, and by modern thought is meant scientific thought. The aim of science is to study nature and experience objectively. To quote Karl Pearson: 'The classification of facts, the recognition of their sequence and relative significance is the function of science, and the habit of forming a judgment upon these facts unbiased by personal feeling is characteristic of what may be termed the scientific frame of mind.'[1] This quality of the scientific mind and the mode and temper of its approach have enabled it to wrest from nature its secrets, first from one field, then from another, and transform nature's forces into agencies for the service of man. The sum total of achievements in the theoretical and practical fields in the various departments of scientific study in physics and chemistry, mathematics and astronomy, biology and psychology, as also in their various subsidiary branches constitutes an impressive record of human development by the side of which long ages of past achievements pale into insignificance. That is modern thought in its methods and results.

The driving force behind this unique achievement is the spirit of enquiry characteristic of science. The mind that questions and questions with a serious intent and purpose, and tests and verifies the answers it gets, has a dynamic quality about it which enables it to forge ahead in the world of thought and things. In so forging ahead it disturbs the way-side calm of

[1] *Grammar of Science,* 1900 edition, p. 6.

untested dogmas and comfortable beliefs. Science is verified knowledge. The explosive character of modern scientific thought is the product of the impact of a rapid succession of verified knowledge against an intractable fund of dogmas, assumptions, and untested beliefs. The organised opposition of the latter sought to stifle scientific enquiry first at its birth and later at every stage of its progress; but the walls of the bastille of ignorance and prejudice fell one by one before the onrushing waves of enquiry and illumination, illustrating the great saying of the Upanishads: *'Satyameva jayate, nânritam*—Truth alone triumphs, not untruth.'[1]

The history of science in recent centuries is thus the history of the triumph of the spirit of free enquiry over mere opinion, prejudice, and dogma. It is a remarkable adventure of the human spirit which has borne abundant fruits not only mental, but also material. Science as lucifera has flown into science as fructifera, giving a bumper crop of discoveries and inventions which has transformed beyond recognition the world in which we live.

The success of science has meant the defeat of its opponent. It is one of the unfortunate episodes of history, especially of modern European history, that the organisation of the forces of prejudice and blind acceptance against science and its spirit of enquiry came from the side of religion. By the end of the last century science had acquired high prestige

[1] Mundaka Upanishad, III.i.6.

and authority, while religion had been discredited first as a dangerous error and later as a harmless illusion.

The nineteenth century thus saw the eclipse of religion in Europe. But there was an uneasy feeling in the hearts of many thinkers that something of deep value to man and his civilisation had been overthown ; and they attempted a reassessment of the meaning and scope of religion with a view to making it accord with the spirit and temper of science. To this great task of reconstructing the mental life of modern man by bridging the gulf between faith and reason on the basis of a unified view of man and a truer conception of the spiritual life, the contribution of Indian thought is unique and lasting.

Ever since the time of the Upanishads, India has tenaciously held to a view of religion which makes it a high adventure of the spirit, a converging life-endeavour to realise and grasp the hidden meaning of existence. Faith, in India, did not mean a cosy belief to rest by, but a torch to set the soul on fire with a longing for spiritual realisation. In the absence of this longing and struggle, the belief of the faithful does not differ from the unbelief of the faithless. Belief with most people, says Swami Vivekananda, is simply another name for 'not-thinking-carelessness'. Religious earnestness with people of this class means, especially when organised under a Church or a theocratic State, either the pursuit of aggressive religious proselytism or of jehads and crusades. They cannot understand the meaning of

that earnestness which proceeds from an inner spiritual hunger. No dogma or creed or frenzied acts can satisfy this hunger of a religious heart; its bread is spiritual realisation. Religion is a matter of inner experience, a coming in touch with spiritual facts and not a matter of belief or dogma or conformity. No all-powerful Church therefore rose in India to organise the faithful on the basis of dogma and creed and claiming divine authority for its opinions and judgments. No such authority can thrive where religion means a quest and not a conformity. A spiritual view of religion as different from a credal or dogmatic view makes religion not only cultivate a spirit of toleration, questioning, and enquiry in its own sphere, but also foster it in every other department of life. The Bhagavad-Gita declares that a spirit of enquiry into the *meaning* of religion takes an aspirant beyond the authority of the words of scripture and mandate of tradition.[1] He becomes an experimenter himself instead of remaining a mere believer. Indian religious thought has recourse to *jijnâsâ* or enquiry for the formulation of its views, be it *brahma-jijnâsâ* or *dharma-jijnâsâ*.

This sublime attitude to religion and thought is the fruit of the unified view of the mental life of man which India learned from her Upanishads and which she assimilated into her mind and mood by a universal acceptance of all forms of faith and by

[1] Gita, VI. 44.

showing due regard to all knowledge, whether sacred or secular. 'There are two types of knowledge to be cultivated,' declares the Mundaka Upanishad, 'the *parâ* or the supreme and the *aparâ* or the ordinary.'[1] To the category of the *aparâ* or the ordinary belong the Vedas, the sciences, and the arts which deal with the perishable and the changing. But that is supreme knowledge by which the Imperishable is known. And the latter, the Upanishad significantly adds, is the basis of the former—*brahma-vidyâ* is *sarva-vidyâ-pratishthâ*.[2]

Modern science has lengthened man's intellectual tether, but this has only helped to bring into sharper focus the mystery of the unknown and the significance of the *parâ-vidyâ* (supreme knowledge) of which the Upanishads speak. 'At the end of his intellectual tether,' says J. A. Thomson, 'man has never ceased to be religious.'[3] It is no wonder therefore that several scientists, during the last few decades, have been forced to overstep the limits of their sciences and tackle the problem of the unknown at closer quarters in a mood of humility and reverence, illustrating the saying of Coleridge: 'All knowledge begins and ends with wonder; but the first wonder is the child of ignorance; the second wonder is the parent of adoration.' Dogmatism and cocksureness which stifle the spirit of free

[1] Mundaka Upanishad, I.i.4.
[2] Ibid., I.i.1.
[3] J. A. Thomson : *Introduction to Science*.

enquiry are as much enemies of true science as of true religion. There are not wanting scientists today who would, taking a narrow view of the scope and function of science, prefer to go the dogmatic way and cry halt to advancing knowledge and unified experience. That way spells danger to science now as it has spelt danger to religion before. A greater devotion to the spirit of free enquiry and a broader conception of the aim and temper of science is our only safeguard against such a pitfall.

If the nineteenth century was the century of conflict and division, the twentieth century bids fair to become the century of reconciliation and union as a result of a sincere effort on the part of both science and religion to reassess itself and to understand the other. The humility of twentieth century science presents a sharp and welcome contrast to the cocksureness of its nineteenth century counterpart. It has realised that the spirit of enquiry on which it has thrived may find expression in fields beyond its own narrow departments and that it is this spirit, unbiased by personal feeling, that makes a study scientific and not the mere subject matter of that study. To quote J. A. Thomson again : 'Science is not wrapped up with any particular body of facts ; it is characterised as an intellectual attitude. It is not tied down to any particular methods of inquiry ; it is simply sincere critical thought which admits conclusions only when these are based on evidence. We may get a good lesson in scientific method from a business man meeting some new practical problem,

from a lawyer sifting evidence, or from a statesman framing a constructive bill.'[1] This wider view of science as a discipline and a temper enables us to class as scientific the study of the facts of the inner world which religion has set to itself.

And this has been the Indian approach to religion. It was the absence of this approach that made religion in Europe less and less equipped to meet the challenge of advancing knowledge. In a lecture, 'Reason and Religion', delivered in England in 1896, Swami Vivekananda sums up the results of this neglect on modern man in the following words: 'The foundations have all been undermined; and the modern man, whatever he may say in public, knows in the privacy of his heart that he can no more "believe". Believing certain things because an organised body of priests tells him to believe, believing because it is written in certain books, believing because his people like him to believe, the modern man knows to be impossible for him.'[2] And pleading for a rational approach to religion with a view to easing the prevailing conflict between science and religion, he continues: 'Is religion to justify by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation which we apply to science and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of

[1] J. A. Thomson: *Introduction to Science.*
[2] *Complete Works,* Vol. I, p. 366.

opinion that the sooner it is done the better. If a religion is destroyed by such investigations, it was then all the time useless, unworthy superstition; and the sooner it goes the better. . . . All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation.'[1]

The spirit of enquiry finds expression in any department of scientific study in the gathering of relevant facts and their rational interpretation. The practice of religion is nothing but a ceaseless quest after the facts of the inner life; a dispassionate study of these facts constitutes the science of religion which seeks to unravel the mystery of our inner being—the lights that guide us and the laws that mould us. If 'man the known' constituted of his body and its environing world, is the subject of study of the natural sciences, 'man the unknown' is the subject of the science of religion. The synthesis of both these sciences is the high function of philosophy as understood in India. It is this function which the Vedanta has performed in this country, ever since the time of Upanishads. Exercising a pervasive and effective influence on our national thought and culture, the Vedanta has spared us not only the fruitless opposition of reason to faith and vice versa, but also the more dangerous manifestation of this opposition in the form of intolerance, persecution, and suppression of opinion. The need for a Vedantic approach to

[1] Ibid.

science and religion is insistent today when both have shed their respective prejudices and come closer to each other imbued with the passion to serve man and save his civilisation. It is only such a synthetic philosophy which blends in itself the flavour of the faith of religion and the reason of science that can reconstruct modern man by restoring to him the integrity of his being and the unity of that being with its environing world.

ROLE OF RELIGION IN POLITICS[1]

Primarily, religion is a value which is trans-social and inward. It takes hold of an individual when he or she has finished with values which are sensual and relative, and craves for a value which is transcendental and absolute. In this sense it transcends even the sphere of Dharma, the sphere of social ethics. Spirituality or Godliness is an end in itself. Indian thought refers to it as the highest excellence (*nihshreyasa*), the consummation of freedom through the realisation of Truth, and declares it to be the *parama-purushârtha,* the supreme end to be sought after by man. All other ends and values —*dharma, artha* and *kâma*—are collectively known as *abhyudaya ;* they are values which man achieves in the social context in response to his deeply felt craving for gross or refined joys and satisfactions. *Abhyudaya* and *nihshreyasa* together constitute the sum total of human cravings, values, and ends. We cannot achieve *abhyudaya* except in the context of a society or group ; and we cannot achieve *nihshreyasa* except outside the context of all social relations. At the *abhyudaya* stage we walk arm in arm to progress and welfare ; but at the *nihshreyasa* level we march alone to the Alone. As well expressed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, we move in single file at the last stages of life's journey to the heights of Truth.

[1] Speech delivered in Sylhet, East Pakistan, in May 1949.

Though religion, in its essential nature, is thus trans-social and individual in its appeal and function, it has a secondary yet significant role in the important sphere of social relations. Much of this latter role has not been without grave defects in its actual functioning. History contains plenty of instances of religion acting as a bar sinister to human progress and welfare. To deal with the subject of the role of religion in politics is therefore a delicate task, especially in the context of present-day India where there has been an abuse and misuse of religion to the detriment of a correct assessment of the role of religion, on the one hand, and of the happiness and welfare of millions, on the other. Yet, it is worth while to face the task, for the stakes involved are high ; there is urgent need to state the precise scope of religion both in relation to the individual and as a social force, and the contribution it can make to the health and stability of the social order. Both politics and religion stand to gain immeasurably from an approach to each other under the guidance of a philosophy such as the Vedanta, which dares to view life in its totality and wholeness, and which has for its declared objective *sarva-sattva-sukhohitah*[1] or the happiness and welfare of humanity as a whole.

In the modern world, various kinds of forces, loyalties, and allegiances are trying to shape human destiny. In the midst of these conflicting forces and divergent loyalties, religion has to play a vital, pro-

[1] *Mândukya-Kârikâ*, IV. 2.

gressive, and dynamic role. The aim of religion is to raise humanity to a higher ethical plane. Religion played its part in the past. But it has a much bigger part to play in the present. In the past our problems were few and comparatively simple. We had to deal with men organised into small clans and tribes. But the problems of today have become colossal because we are to deal not with small sectional groups but with large national societies and with the whole of humanity itself. Whether we shall sink in or swim across the storming sea of the modern world will depend on our ability to organise the world into a single family on the basis of the spiritual oneness and equality of humanity.

Every religion worth the name contains certain universal elements along with others that are particular and parochial. The message of these universal elements in all religions to humanity is exactly identical. Nevertheless, religions, as practised by their followers, have been more regional, local, and parochial in outlook and action, to the detriment of the universal. Religious organisations have developed and stressed sectarian trends and loyalties. But in the present-day world, anything that is parochial will not satisfy the situation. Today we are to deal with innumerable forces, ideas, and aspirations of man which transcend the barriers of sect and creed. Hence the problem of negotiation and adjustment is colossal and tremendous. No narrow and selfish view will answer the demands of the modern age. We are to look at things in the larger context, from

the wider view-point. Only if the universal elements in all religions be released from their parochial and regional setting, can religion be made a progressive force in the world today. The present world has witnessed mighty advances in science and technology. But in spite of all these revolutions in the domain of scientific thought and technique, modern man has not been able to discard religion altogether. Religion has not been allowed by the rational man of today to enter his life by the front-door. Yet it enters his life surreptitiously by the back-door. That shows that religion is still a vital force. But the religion that enters thus is, in the absence of the purifying aid of rational thought, mostly passionate, communal, and reactionary. Religion which regards all humanity as one and indivisible is a product of dispassionate thinking and hence progressive in outlook and action. The true purpose and function of religion is writ large in the history of human civilisation. Its purpose is to make man truly civilised, cultured, and refined. Real civilisation will come only when men and women become truly cultured, when they have learnt to refine their thoughts and chasten their feelings and sentiments. The function of religion is to *actualise* the spiritual oneness of humanity in ever-widening spheres, and develop human fellowship by reducing and obliterating the distance between man and man.

It is sometimes said that religion has become a spent-up force, that it cannot answer the demand of the modern scientific world and hence is not re-

quired now and that in these days of scientific and technological development, religion has outlived its utility. This is the essence of the Marxist and much of the rationalist criticism of religion. According to Marx and other critics of religion, it is today nothing but a bar sinister to social, political, economic, and intellectual progress. Religion, therefore, is the misfortune of man today; it is not a help that sustains but a hindrance that impedes. What we now need is social improvement, and to do this we should discard religion.

To what extent is this criticism of religion a valid one? It is indeed true that we have made rapid advances in scientific discoveries, mechanical inventions, and material progress. But in spite of all our boasted achievements and progress in these lines, have we not moved backward as men? How backward we are is evident from our dealings with our neighbours and fellows. Have we moved forward in social feeling and sympathy? The answer is an emphatic 'no'. There still lies the savage in every one of us. Civilisation is largely nothing but the external trappings on the old savage. The discovery by modern psychology of the savage in man has set a serious problem for the civilised man of today to face and to solve. Our rationality and enlightenment are but skin-deep. The savage lies just below reason; it is mostly anti-reason. And it occasionally erupts to the surface sweeping aside all rationality and humanity. The problem before us is to tame this savage within us and to evolve an

integrated personality and a dynamic character which will retain the precious vigour of the savage but chastened under the guidance of an enlightened *buddhi* or reason. Untamed passions create the temper in the individual and society tending to disrupt the even course of life. The world will have to come to religion to get the answer as to how to bring about harmony and adjustment in a world which is so ill-adjusted. Religion is called upon to play its part on a vaster plane today, in the collective life of millions as expressed in societies and states. Religion is not thus outmoded. If after years of civilisation and democracy and progress, men could wage two savage wars in the course of thirty years to destroy each other, can we call man civilised ? Or that he has outgrown the sustenance of religion ? No, our passions are not tamed. The animal within us reigns supreme. Men are to live in harmony among themselves and also with their environment. Integrity within and integrity without are the real measure of a civilisation ; that is the vital function of religion ; and civilisation has to invite religion to its aid today.

There are two types of men who do not seek the help of religion. First, those men and women who are content to live in the world of their native impulses. Second, those rare ones who have controlled their passions and emotions and have raised themselves above the ordinary human level. Between these two levels at the extremes, all men need the sustenance and ministrations of religion.

This role of religion has been emphasised in all the great world religions. Every one of them has tried to evolve harmony out of chaos in man and society. If they have not attained the measure of success they ought to have, the fault lies not in religion nor in its teachings or teachers, but in us. We have failed the teachers and their teachings. We have invested their teachings with a dogmatic rigidity which the founders had not intended; for they believed in growth and development. It is our want of knowledge of the true meaning and purpose of religion that is in fault, not religion itself. Politicians and statesmen, democrats and dictators, presidents and kings, all come and go, but the great prophets of religion remain and endure. Religion has played its noble part in guiding humanity upward in the misty past of history; and it is still functioning similarly in spite of handicaps from within and without. The function of religion is to make possible for men and women a heightened and enlarged life, and a life in harmony among themselves and with their environment.

Today religion is called upon to perform this function to humanity taken as a unit and not merely to exclusive sections thereof. This makes the task of religion responsible and heavy. The function is to be performed on a vastly wider scale; religion is to compose the distractions of the world in which we are. Before doing this, and in order to enable it to do this, it has to compose its own distractions

proceeding out of sectarian narrowness and undue emphasis on non-essentials.

Materialism has its due place in the evolution and progress of human society. But when it dominates over the minds and hearts of men, it betokens danger. Divorced from ethical and spiritual foundations, it has become a source of danger everywhere today. It is the animal in man that prevails over the God in him. Violence and hatred are the dominant forces of the present-day world. The purpose and task of religion is to tame and subdue these forces of hatred and violence in man and thus make for a higher expression of his psychic energies and impulses. Impulses by themselves are neither good nor bad. They become one or the other in the way we use them. We can take hold of all our raw impulses and energies and convert them into creative forces by means of an inner technology. By means of this inner technology taught by the science of religion we are to control and tame the 'libido' and raise it to the highest level of inspiration. Only a man who has controlled his passions and impulses is truly religious; he becomes pure and holy. He has attained real education at its highest and best. Such a man not only raises himself to a higher ethical and spiritual plane, but raises others as well.

If this is religion in purpose and intent what role does it play in the narrow field of politics? In countries of totalitarian ideology, politics is everything. There no aspect of human life is left out of politics. All types of totalitarianism tend to dwarf

the human personality. There are vast spaces of our being which transcend the sphere of politics. Nevertheless, politics is a legitimate field of collective human activity as it helps man to strive for and realise certain essential values of life. In our own country, particularly, politics today is fundamental, for the nation cries out for the realisation of these very values—values comprehensively described by our ancient sages as *abhyudaya*. We cannot, therefore, neglect it, but must give due weight to politics as well as to other aspects and activities of human life.

Man is not an isolated individual living remote from society; he is a social unit. As members and component parts of society, we are to regulate our conduct, behaviour, and activity keeping in view the welfare of society as a whole. When we enter the realm of regulating inter-personal and inter-group human relationships, we step into the realm of politics.

Politics may be defined as a social science which seeks to ensure collective human welfare. To promote and ensure human welfare, we require knowledge and dispassionate thinking. If we study the evolution of society and the state in their historical aspect, we notice a slow but perceptible process of organisation of men into wider and wider groups. The modern world has evolved the highest political entity in the form of the national and multi-national state. The world has not as yet advanced beyond

this collective entity. We have not yet reached beyond the boundaries of the sovereign state.

The problem before us is how to enlarge the bounds of the political state and ultimately evolve a world state, a political organisation of mankind as a whole; to utilise politics in order initially to ensure the welfare of man collectively organised within the state and ultimately that of man in the context of the world community. Politics is coeval with collective human welfare. The aim and trend of modern development is the building up of a world state. All the forces of the world today, both positive and negative, are driving humanity towards that consummation. The League of Nations was formed after the cessation of hostilities in 1919. The ideals and aspirations of the people of the world then for peace and international collaboration found embodiment in the ideals and objectives of the League.

The League failed; but such failures are only apparent, not real. Success evolves out of failure. We have now formed the UN (United Nations) after the second World War. Failures attending collective efforts should not be taken too seriously. When we look at history, we notice the continuous march of mankind from small groupings and structures to higher and higher integrations and organisations. Families, clans, and tribes of the pre-historic times gave place to the nation-states and empires of a later day. And vaster aggregations are in the offing today. The history of the world, the history of humanity,

is an arresting story of greater and greater integrations. The UN is undoubtedly more broadbased than the League of Nations. It is the best fruit of world political thought. It is the finest and noblest machinery that humanity has yet produced for its own collective welfare. It has its limitations; but these limitations proceed from the immaturity of contemporary political wisdom. Leaving the affairs of national concern to be decided by the national states, the UN functions as the world's platform to discuss inter-state affairs, to discuss subjects which are neither local, nor national but international, and which affect the welfare of all the nations of the world. We should not think that the United Nations is a perfect organisation. But out of the very failures of the UN something better will emerge.

Our next experiment with a world organisation will undoubtedly be a better one. The future organisation of mankind which will be erected on the debris of the present one will more approximate towards the ideal of human unity which religion has set before us. And religion has to guide politics to that consummation.

If politics is to be subservient to human welfare, what is needed is the proper handling of power. In fact, the problem of politics is the problem of holding and using power.

Politics and power are convertible terms. Hence the problem reduces itself to the proper utilisation and handling of power so that politics may really serve the purpose it aims at. It is a well-known

dictum that 'Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. The problem before us is how to utilise power so that it does not corrupt others as well as those who wield it. Power, therefore, has to be purified and put under proper checks and balances. When unchecked power is exercised either by a majority upon a minority or by a minority upon a majority, there is danger to both the majority and the minority. Power is a source of danger to those who cannot digest it. The citizen is made the seat of ultimate power in a democracy. He or she is the locus of sovereignty, of all authority and power. This power is transferred from the multitude of citizens to a chosen few with due checks and limitations. This is the least harmful because the chosen few who are entrusted with the task of handling power are made accountable to the people below.

Democracy is the finest fruit of political thought. It is the best device yet produced by man for checking and guarding against the abuse of power. Theoretically, in democracy sovereignty or supreme power is vested in the people as a whole. In actual practice, however, it is the few that rule and exercise power. It is possible for a state to be democratic in constitution and plutocratic in government. Certain modern democracies belong to this category. Democracy in those countries is, therefore, nominal, not factual.

The great subject of democracy requires to be studied by us in the context of India's background and needs. Indian democracy is to be freed from the

evils and shortcomings of European or American democracy. If by democracy we merely mean the forms and structure of government, with adult suffrage and cabinet system and all that, democracy will fail in the future as it has failed in the past. Votes can be purchased, and inefficiency, corruption, and nepotism may rule everywhere. This does not mean that we are to bid good-bye to these dressings of democracy. Democracy has come to stay. Adult suffrage and the ballot-box bring a great message of hope to our people, especially the common man. Our task is to purify democracy of its age-old ills and defects. Can we institute something for the purification of democracy? This is the question which is posed before us. India alone can answer this question because the answer is to be provided by spirituality which thrives most in this country. It is only in India that spirituality forms the central theme of national life. It is only here that spirituality commands the highest prestige and honour. It is the politicians and statesmen who attract the loyalty and allegiance of people in other countries. In India on the contrary, even in this century, a spiritual personality alone has been able to command the deepest and widest loyalty and affection of the people even in the political field. We can purify democracy of its traditional shortcomings if we can infuse spirituality and a moral tone into its workings. Spirituality is the core of religion. It is the universal in religion, and its realisation takes one beyond the local and parochial aspects of religion. It is a

struggle to realise life's deeper values, leading to the deepest value which religions name God or perfection.

When we apply religion to our collective life, we purify not only politics and democracy but religion as well. There cannot be any divorce between true religion and genuine politics. Religion, understood in its wider implication, is not a set of dogmas or practices, but a continual inspiration to take man to a higher ethical and spiritual level. We all know how the passions of the heart upset the balance of the mind and the even course of the world. Ideals and ideas in the heart of men are more powerful than even the atom bomb. The root of every happening in this world can be traced to the mind of man. Passions and bad temper ultimately lead to world-wide conflagrations. Wars begin, says the UNESCO Manifesto, in the minds of men and it is in the minds of men that defences of peace must be constructed. Unless we handle the problem at its root, it will be impossible for us to solve it satisfactorily. Everything may be lost by bad temper. It is said that the treaty of Versailles—a treaty of peace—was drafted by men of bad temper who were naturally ill-fitted to bring about peace; and that treaty became the source of greater distemper leading to the second World War.

The problem of peace is ultimately a problem of the education of the citizen in the democratic values of self-abnegation, tolerance, fellowship, and service. To produce democratic citizens is the prob-

lem of education in a democracy. Men and women who have not learnt to restrain their passions of greed, intolerance, hatred, and violence form shaky foundations for a structure of democracy. The late Dr. Josiah Oldfield, speaking on the subject of 'Peace and Internationalism' some years ago in London, observed: 'No man should be sent to take part in the deliberations at Geneva who has not learnt to establish peace in his own home. More wars are caused by bad-tempered people sitting to discuss peace propositions than by good-tempered people sitting to discuss war measures.' All religions consistently emphasise the need for self-control, self-restraint, and self-denial. All religions teach us to practise love and abjure hate and to restrain the waywardness of the senses and the whims of the heart. We have to seek for the stability of civilisation in this vital lesson of religion. Civilisations and states have tumbled down when they had lost their spiritual and ethical moorings. The past history of the world is a warning to us. Modern civilisation, if it is to survive, must derive sustenance from religion, which, in its cocksure enlightenment, it has discarded as a primitive superstition.

Today our so-called reason and enlightenment are at the mercy of our passions. We are not allowed to think dispassionately and rationally. It is a great service that modern psychology did to civilisation when it discovered the irrational behind the thin veil of rationality. Only one-tenth of a man consists of rationality, the remaining nine-tenths

of him consists of irrationality. The discovery of the twentieth century psychology that man is an irrational being is a far greater discovery than the one that proclaimed that he is a rational being. Neglect of this irrational nine-tenth and concentration on the rational one-tenth explains the shallowness of much of the eighteenth and nineteenth century 'enlightenment' and 'rationalism'. We, being irrational, our civilisation too is irrational, and hence unstable. There is a tendency to interpret this discovery of modern psychology as a call to submerge our fugitive rationality in the all-powerful irrational. Some schools of literature and art and even politics have taken this road ; but it is a perversion and a snare, and betokens poor understanding of the course of human development and progress. Progress and civilisation consist in reason conquering unreason by enlarging its bounds so as eventually to become co-extensive with mind and being. This is enlightened reason, the *buddhi* of the Vedanta. The value and worth of democracy is that, of all political forms and methods, it is the one road that helps to lead man to this consummation. But to be able to do so, democracy needs the flavour of ethics and the sustenance of religion.

Our task thus is to make man and his civilisation stand on the foundation of enlightened reason or *buddhi*. To do so, man will have to be taught to restrain himself. 'Unless man erects himself above himself, how poor a thing is man,' sang Wordsworth the poet. Humanity has to be raised to a

higher pedestal of existence and expression. If politics is really to serve human welfare, man will have to be taught to restrain himself, and more especially the few who handle power. We have to socialise everything. We may socialise our trade, business, commerce, transport, land, and industry. But this is not enough. Nationalisation of many of the important means of production and distribution is not merely unavoidable in the modern context but also legitimate as steps to the all-round uplift of man, to the raising of the living standard of the people. But above all these nationalisations, there is urgency for another type of nationalisation which is the most important of all. This is the socialisation of mind, the collectivisation of sympathy and interest, the nationalisation of the powers, especially, of the gifted individuals of a community. We have to socialise our minds, ourselves first of all. It is only by doing this that we can ensure collective, all-round human welfare. In the Soviet Russia, which has successfully established economic socialism, the collective life of the people and wealth of the country are managed by a small group of people. What is the impulse behind this group ? Are they inspired by a spirit of service to society ? Have they socialised their interests and sympathies ? What guarantee is there in their philosophy of life against present or eventual misuse of the trust reposed by society in them ? Man must regard himself as a fraction struggling to become an integer through selfless service of society ; society is thus a wider school for him

through which he attains self-realisation, and the experience of a largeness and a fullness.

Without this idealistic temper and approach, power is sure to degenerate, sooner or later, into a snare for the wielder and a curse for the people. Shakespeare refers to this type of degenerate man in these memorable lines :

> ".....but man, proud man,
> Drest in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd
> His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep ; ..."[1]

The history of the world teaches us that such power, unrefined by moral and human feelings, is built on shaky foundations. The whole of Europe trembled at the touch of Hitler and Mussolini ; but none could resist their downfall. They fell and great was their fall. Pride of wealth, power, and pedigree is pride in the non-Self which is the false Self. Such pride is the source of meanness and pettiness. It also demeans others on whom it is exercised. There is another pride which humbles oneself and elevates the others. This pride proceeds from the depth of our being, our 'glassy essence' as Shakespeare calls it, or our 'inalienable spiritual nature' as religions put it. It is the source of that sense of human dignity which is the greatest value in us, greater than our wealth, our bodies and our brief dresses of power.

[1] *Measure for Measure,* I. ii. 117-22.

The protection and enhancement of this value is the great mission of democracy. *Shama* and *dama* (self-restraint and sense-control) are the two means which Indian thought prescribes for the creative taming of power. The truly great, says the Mahâbhârata, are only those who achieve this. 'All types of inebriation (*mada*), in the case of the unregenerate, become converted into self-control (*dama*) in the case of the truly great.'[1] Political and other greatness, bereft of the touch of ethics and humanism, is a greatness which tends to humiliate all else around. It is the greatness of 'exploitation' as opposed to the other, which is the greatness of 'elevation'. Much of the world's greatness is attained by riding stealthily on the backs of others. But the greatness of a Ramakrishna or a Jesus, of a Mohammed or a Gandhi, of a Buddha or a Shankara belongs to a different order; it does not lower and humble others. It, on the contrary, elevates all who come in touch with it. By coming in touch with these personalities, everybody, however low and humble he or she may be, feels ennobled and uplifted. Their greatness and elevation also enhances the dignity of men and women around. Slaves become masters, fractions become integers, and the already great become greater still. Power in this instance is only another name for humility. It is this type of power that can purify politics.

[1] विद्यामदो धनमदोऽभिजातमदस्तथा ।
मदा इमेऽवलिप्तानां त एव महतां दमः ॥

Every society calls for a band of gifted young men and women who are imbued with the humility of power and the power of selfless love. It is not difficult merely to administer a country. A handful of bureaucrats can do it. But to infuse life into the dead bones and muscles of humanity and raise men and women to stature and dignity require the ministrations of enthusiastic young men and women who are inspired with the passion to serve, the capacity to minister, and the inner purity to stick to the strait and narrow path of self-denial. It is the purpose of an ordinary politician to raise himself, if necessary even by humiliating others. To exploit others for one's own selfish interests is the task of career politics as it is commonly understood. Politics will have to be raised to a level where it will not exploit humanity for itself but will exploit itself for humanity. We need such politics that elevates and ennobles the subjects and objects of power. Our society needs the ministrations of such power, the services of such politics. A society which is steeped in misery, poverty, illiteracy, and superstition—a society where the rich exploit the poor, and the educated exploit the less educated and the uneducated, offers the most fruitful field for the experiment of democracy on these lines. All other politics will reduce millions to further poverty and degradation. In India and Pakistan, we require such leaders of the people, leaders who function as servants truly and not euphemistically. Mahatma Gandhi was a man who had built the edifice of his politics on the

mighty bed-rock of character and who regarded the whole world as his own. Small in stature, frail in body, but towering over everybody else in everything great and lofty, he has left an ineffaceable legacy for us all which we will do well to cherish and utilise. We are called upon to redeem the sunken humanity in India and Pakistan. If we fail to follow this blazing trail, we shall be restricting the scope of the freedom we have achieved and may even move towards anarchy. We are called upon to chasten ourselves at the altar of humanity. The masses understand this kind of politics, the aim and operations of which tend to raise them up from their present sunken condition. All other politics,—power politics, career politics, etc.—compounded of slogans and catch-words, fair faces and foul hearts, are not only useless but pernicious. Democracy, if it is to play its role in the drama of human evolution in India and elsewhere, must be infused with the spirit and temper of religion, with renunciation and service as its guiding principles.

In the course of the next twenty or thirty years, we shall have undoubtedly reached a measure of economic stability and prosperity in our country. Our vast industrialisation programmes will guarantee that. But can we say with equal certainty whether our stature as men and women will be raised *pari passu* ? Will the accumulation of wealth and power lead to the decay of man ? Should we not take steps to see that development of the capacity to digest wealth and power goes hand in hand with the devel-

opment of our natural resources ? Along with the generation of power through the harnessing of rivers and waterfalls we should also generate a far more vital power, the national character, by harnessing through a sound system of education inspired by religion the psychic energies of our impulses and passions so that the future Indian citizen may become adequate to Indian prosperity and power. Thus alone shall we build up the greatness of India on the greatness and stature of the Indian character and not merely on her economic and military strength.

This should become the most vital element in our national reconstruction programme. Politics can help in the evolution of that citizen by striving to establish a social order which will be just and equalitarian. If the modern states can evolve social, political, and economic structures based on the recognition of the dignity of man and leading to the full development of his personality, they will be responding to the demands of the age. This is a stupendous task. And it is good for us to recognise that it is a stupendous task. Then we shall not be carried away by cheap political slogans and catchphrases. It is comparatively easy to frame a democratic constitution for India or Pakistan ; but to work the constitution in its true spirit is extremely difficult. It will keep us busy for days and months and years. We are to build up the future edifice of our free state on stable foundations. These stable foundations can be supplied by religion and religion alone.

Citizens inspired by spiritual and ethical ideals, who find joy in giving of their best for the strength and sustenance of society and the state, and who enjoy the delights which a free and equalitarian society offers, are the fruits and flowers of a healthy society.

A democratic state derives its strength and stability from its citizens. The terms society, state, constitution, and government are sometimes used without discrimination, leading to much confused thinking and action in our country today. Government is the machinery through which the collective will of society finds executive expression. It is an instrument of the constitution. In its very nature, therefore, it is temporary and short-lived. Compared to government, the constitution is more stable. It represents the political, economic, and moral aspirations and objectives of the people. When these objectives and aspirations change, the constitution also changes along with them. The American constitution was drawn up in 1776, but it has undergone many subsequent modifications to meet the demands of changed situations. In India, too, legislators are busy framing the set-up of a stable constitution. But, here too, provisions have been made for future amendments and modifications in response to changing social needs. In spite of this, constitutions are fairly permanent, comparatively speaking. It is only when it ceases to respond to and reflect the ratio of forces in a society, when it becomes a rigid coat of an elastic and dynamic social body, that a constitution cracks and explodes through social up-

heavals and revolutions. Then a new constitution takes its place, reflecting new aspirations and forces. The test of a healthy constitution lies in a proper blending of rigidity and elasticity, ensuring continuity along with a constant adjustment to social changes through new provisions, amendments, or conventions. Nothing can disturb the continuity and permanence of such a constitution except a foreign invasion. The state represents the collective will of the society, its will to be and to become. In the state the multiple centres of the will to be and to do, as also the will to be free, become focussed into a unity; it also organises and expresses the sense of distinctness of a community from other communities. The sovereignty of a state derives from this sense of distinctness. This sovereignty which, in a monarchy, was focussed in the person of the king, becomes diffused, in a democracy, in a multitude of citizen centres, making the citizens sovereigns and subjects in one. Sovereignty in a democracy is thus a unity in diversity, reflecting in this the plan of life and nature around. Therein lies the strength of democracy compared to all other political systems.

The state thus is the entity of which the constitution is the expression in thought and intention, and of which the government is the expression in action. The state endures through all changes in governments and modifications of constitutions. Ordinary social upheavals and revolutions may not affect the integrity of the state while they affect the nature and form of the constitution and government.

The state gets its mortal blow externally from a foreign invasion and internally from only one type of social upheaval known to modern experience, a communist revolution, whose declared objective is the total destruction of the old state and its structure and forms, whether democratic or even socialistic.

Behind the government, the constitution, and the state lies society, the matrix of all forces, the womb of constitutions and revolutions, placid like a calm lake at one period, erupting like a volcano at another —a moving, changing, struggling mass, constituted of a multitude of ego-centres belonging to varying levels of intellectual, moral, and spiritual evolution. Political revolutions and even social revolutions engineered by politico-economic forces such as a socialist or communist revolution, rarely affect but a fringe of this vast ocean. Violent revolutions of these types may upturn states and shake up societies, but only for a time. After a few years, the impulse loses its dynamism and societies resume their even course as before, with only slight modifications and changes. This is the lesson of the French Revolution, as is also the lesson, now becoming slowly evident, of the mighty Russian Revolution. The price we pay is out of all proportion to the commodity we actually get. It is this consideration that leads us to view a violent revolution as the product of social despair and bankruptcy of social wisdom, and not as a product of historical necessity or as a factor of social progress. The only revolution that affects the very depths of society is the peaceful revolution

initiated by a great spiritual teacher and the ideology and movement proceeding from him. Gently but steadily, this revolution shapes human desires and emotions and judgments in terms of certain lofty and spiritual values realised and taught by the teacher. It alters the ratio of social forces through a profound transformation in individual men and women, and effects an all-round refinement in human morals and manners.

Thus, society is the supreme field for all enduring types of welfare activity. And such activity is mostly silent and calm. To politics belongs all noise, the healthier the politics the lesser the noise and vice versa. A democratic state offers the best opportunity for this mighty work of social transformation. Here is national work of a magnitude and importance compared to which the purely political work is of small scope and consequence. Politics which was paramount before freedom thus takes second place after the achievement of that freedom. The edifice of political freedom needs to be founded on the bed-rock of social health and well-being. That work calls for youth endued not with political passion and personal ambition but with spiritual enthusiasm and moral fervour, and a grasp of the science of man and society. Only an edifice so built can stand the stress and strain of the modern world. To do so, we shall have to think and act dispassionately. Today when we are called to this task after centuries of national immobilisation, let us proceed calmly and patiently to build the structure

and edifice of our free society on enduring foundations. This can be done only if we tap the resources of inspiration proceeding from religion and join to it the other inspiration proceeding from science. This has been the way of India ; and let us follow that way today.

THE ADMINISTRATOR IN A WELFARE STATE[1]

All men and women in a society have to carry the burdens of their individual lives, light or heavy, as best as they may. Education seeks to fit them to carry these burdens intelligently and cheerfully, besides training them to enjoy the delights of social existence zestfully and in peace. These burdens and delights, in the case of any actual individual, involve also the destiny of one or more individuals of that society. The conduct of an individual citizen, therefore, is part self-regarding and part other-regarding in its scope and consequence, the ratio of self and other content depending upon the intelligence and strength of social awareness of the individual. Citizenship of a democratic society implies the presence of a high ratio of these two virtues in all its members. This is achieved through a sound system of education designed to bring out the native talents and evoke the moral sense of all its citizens.

The State in a democratic society derives its strength from the co-ordinated wills of all its free and equal citizens. In the absence of this strength, the State becomes an imposition on the people. States have always been looked upon as irksome burdens by the people at large in our country, who have tolerated their existence for the little benefits

[1] Contributed to the *Journal of the Indian Administrative Service Training School*, Delhi, March 1956.

of order and security derived from them. Throughout history, amazingly enough, people the world over have carried heavy burdens for small benefits. Occasionally, however, they have dared to pull down the structures through revolutions when they became too heavy. For the first time in history, there emerges the possibility in India of building up the edifice of a State, not superposed on the heads of a tolerating and long-suffering people, but emerging out of the wills and urges of a free people, and deriving its strength entirely from that base. This is the concept of the Welfare State whose socio-economic content has been concisely expressed in Kâlidâsa's classic comment in his *Raghuvamsha:*

प्रजानामेव भूत्यर्थं स ताभ्यो बलिमग्रहीत्।
सहस्रगुणमुत्स्रष्टुमादत्ते हि रसं रविः॥

'The State took taxes from the people only to ensure their own prosperity in return, like the sun taking up moisture from the earth only to give it back in thousandfold value.'

Our sovereign democratic republic derives its authority from 'We, the people of India'. It has kept before itself the high objective of the all-round development of all the people of our country, and is framing policies and measures for effecting national welfare. Today it is true to say that the Indian State has behind it the will of the Indian people who accept it cheerfully, and not just tolerate it as an irksome necessary burden. But this cheerful accept-

ance, let us not miss to note, consists mostly of hope —hope that intentions and promises will soon flow into performances and achievements, hope that these will not get stranded in the upper social strata leaving only a few trickles to reach the lower levels, but will reach these levels in sufficient force to fertilise the national life at the roots.

This is what proclaims the importance of administration in the sphere of social functions. It is against this background of social hopes and expectations that we have to view the personality of the Indian administrator and his work. In these surging hopes and expectations, enthusiasms and efforts we experience, to adapt Wordsworth's arresting phrases, the light of heaven lying about us in the infancy of our democratic experiment; we have to ensure that our infant State as it grows through the years does not feel the shades of the prison-house closing upon it, does not feel the glow of national enthusiasm of the early years dying away to become career politics and dull bureaucratic routine, but will continue, in its infant freshness to be attended by the splendid vision of the happiness and welfare of millions of men and women.

This is the challenge to politics and administration in our country today. When we seriously set our hearts to meet this challenge, we are led to the important sphere of spiritual and moral values in human life and work.

Education in a democracy is intended to give its citizens a twofold efficiency—moral efficiency pro-

ceeding from training in social awareness and sympathy, and physical and mental efficiency proceeding from training in productive talents and capacities and leading to material enrichment of society. This also is the basic training of the administrator in a democracy which, through its educational processes, bridges the gulf between the ruler and the ruled. The administrator is first and foremost a man among men, a citizen among citizens; if he is anything more, it is as the efficient servant of his fellow-citizens. What a refreshing idea is this for us in India and how different from the old notions of a demigod and know-all ! The citizen specially trained to discharge an important social responsibility is the administrator. That special training seeks to equip him with high executive ability to serve society efficiently. This is achieved through the training of his intellect and will ; it gives him a character strong and disciplined, and a keen intelligence ; but it cannot inspire him with a deep sense of social awareness indispensable for the proper discharge of his social responsibility. The training of intellect and will alone is not sufficient for the purposes of a democracy ; it may be adequate to run an empire of subject peoples, and that too for a time ; but in a democratic Welfare State, it is imperative for the administrator to develop fully the affective side of his personality too, his capacity for sympathy and imagination ; his social awareness needs to be developed in scope and intensity more than that of the average citizen.

This second training is not such as can be imparted in any training institution which can at best provide a stimulus to quicken and develop whatever social feeling has been implanted in the candidate by his earlier family training and social experience. In the absence of this important personality value, the administrator will increasingly tend to become unimaginative, egocentric and wooden, and his administration will fail to respond to human situations in a human way. Even in dealings with a subject people, this type will spell failure, as our country learnt during its later phase of British subjection when, barring a few exceptions, this type of administrator predominated. But this type will spell disaster in the new India of free and equal citizens. The best safeguard against it is a fund of patriotism, a real, and not merely academic, love of our land and our people.

This integrated training of intellect, will, and emotion is what makes for richness of personality and strength of character. Such a training helps to evolve within the individual a new personality value, a new focus of strength and resource. This is *buddhi* in the language of the Gita ; it may be translated as enlightened intelligence. At the level of the ego and *manas,* intelligence is narrow, self-centred and unsteady, being at the mercy of instincts and impulses. In the service of this intelligence, human knowledge and power express themselves as unsocial and sometimes anti-social forces, in manifest and subtle forms, bringing sorrow in its train to the

individual and his world. 'Unless men increase in wisdom as much in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow,' says Bertrand Russell. *Buddhi* connotes this ripening of knowledge into wisdom. Intelligence at the *buddhi* level creates a pattern of what Sorokin calls altruism in human character. It cannot function except in a creative and constructive way. Detachment and stability, resourcefulness and sympathy are the hallmarks of such a character, at once efficient and human.

Herein is realised the much-needed combination of executive efficiency and social efficiency, the transformation of brute efficiency into humanised efficiency. This is the type of efficiency that a democratic Welfare State expects from its administrators. To those who care to pursue, this synthesis of character will lead to a third efficiency in the life of an individual, the spiritual one, whereby he or she will realise the meaning of existence in spiritual illumination.

It is heartening to note that the Indian Administrative Service Training School has kept this twofold efficiency as its objective and has adopted for its motto the pregnant message of Shri Krishna in the second chapter of the Gita, verse 50 : *'Yogah karmasu kaushalam,* Yoga is efficiency in action.'

A world of ethical and spiritual thought has been compressed in that brief message.

The term Yoga has, since the last few centuries, conjured up visions of magic and psychic tricks, of lean people gazing down at their navels, or austere

people looking straight at the tips of their noses. It must be a refreshing experience, and a bit intriguing too, for our bright young men and women of the Administrative Service and others in other fields to be now told that they are called upon to tread the path of Yoga. But this Yoga that they are called upon to practise has no kinship with that magical and misty variety; it is the royal arduous road of excellence calling upon the young, vigorous and hopeful men and women of a society to dare to tread it so that they may achieve the fullness of personality development in the context of the work for social welfare and happiness. The author of the Gita must be deeply gratified at the prospect of the resuscitation of his long-neglected message by getting vigorous young minds of our country for its experimentation. Has not the great Shankarâchârya interpreted the Gita statement about the decline of Yoga and Krishna's anxiety to resuscitate it through his vigorous disciple, Arjuna, in verse 2 of the fourth chapter, to mean that the decline is due to its falling into the hands of weak and unrestrained people, resulting in the thwarting of social welfare?

Our politics and administration will have to breathe the spirit of this Yoga if we are to realise the objectives of a Welfare State, if we are to establish a polity based on social justice and social peace, a polity free from all forms of exploitation, not merely economic, but also political and mental. This Yoga, however, is not a teaching to compose the distractions of a mere nation and people, but is

universal in its scope. That it has in it the power to bring about peace and justice in the world at large was recently voiced by no less a person than the present Secretary-General of the United Nations while commending the sentiments contained in verse 49 of its second chapter.

'Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh,' says the Bible, 'and the hand worketh too', adds Swami Vivekananda. Yoga aims to impart this sense of fullness to man and, through him, to the functions he performs in society.

LAW, SOCIETY, AND THE CITIZEN[1]

Law is one of those remarkable products of the human mind which has inspired and impelled human activity from the first dawn of self-conscious endeavour. As such it is coeval with human society. Law has been the guardian angel of human evolution. The majesty of law is reflected in every step of the long road which man has taken from savagery to civilisation. Law, therefore, has come to assume a sovereign and absolute aspect in the eye of civilised man instilling in his mind not merely respect, but also fear with the result that he has begun to crouch before law, making of it a fetish. A partial view of the philosophy of law and of man is responsible for this unhappy situation. It took only the view of man as *subject* of law. But, to law, man is not only subject but also *sovereign*. The sovereignty and majesty of law is relative to the concept of man as subject.

But man is also the sovereign of law. He is the law-giver. The majesty and sovereignty of mind as law-giver is absolute unlike the majesty and sovereignty of law which is its product. If man as the subject of law (which is what civilised society means) is lofty and sublime, how much more grand should be the conception of man as the centre from which law emanates, revealing a being of vaster proportions

[1] Contributed to the Karachi Law College Journal, Annual Number, 1945.

than what the concept of a merely civilised man unfolds? But is man, then, an individual or a double? A complete philosophy reveals him as a complex entity, subject at one pole and sovereign at the other and any number of strands in between. 'In my father's house there are many mansions,' says Jesus. I shall not here enter into the deep waters of metaphysics (though we are perilously near it), difficult though to avoid, in the discussion of a serious problem like man.

Law has various aspects. First, there is law as embodied in the codes and regulations of civilised society, its civil and criminal law; next, there is natural law, the regularities, uniformities, and sequences observed in nature by science. Lastly, and belonging to a different category, there is the moral law within. The first gives civilisation. The second gives science, and the third culture. In world history, broadly speaking, the first is represented by Rome, the second by Greece, and the third by India. These races have been the representatives of these three aspects of law, due to a concentration of attention by each on one of them. Of these, Rome and Greece have ceased to be after passing on the torch to others. But India survives, demonstrating the primacy of the moral law over the other two. But the India that has survived is moribund, demonstrating also the inefficiency of the moral law in the absence of the context provided by the other two. True progress of man can be ensured only by a synthesis and co-ordination of the three elements.

Restraint of conduct by means of external codes and regulations—what is meant by respect for law and law-abidingness—ensures the joys of civilised existence; knowledge of nature's laws through science ensures power for the further pursuit of the same joys, and of purer delights. But it is the deliverance of the moral law within, under the guidance and inspiration of a complete philosophy of man, that ensures true progress—the progress of man not only from savagery to civilisation, but also from man as subject to man as sovereign.

This transition takes man through three well-defined stages of moral and ethical behaviour. The first stage is reached when impulsive man is restrained by codes and regulations and made to behave according to injunctions and prohibitions. In spite of our boasted civilisation of modern times, the vast majority of mankind today—probably also in all ages—are still only at this stage of development. It is this fact that evoked the famous remark of Schopenhauer that our morality is only the product of our fear of the policemen and public opinion. It is this that makes the field of operation of civil and criminal law so vast and so varied. Man has not yet climbed the first rung of the ladder to self-realisation. But the checks and restraints of law provide him with a steady base which, besides preventing him from going backward—reversion to the animal—provides him also with an external environment of progress.

The second stage is reached when man learns to

find inner sanctions, and depends less and less on sanctions provided by external codes and regulations. The awakening of the categorical imperative transforms the externally restrained animal into the self-restrained man. True morality begins at this stage with the awakening of the moral law within—a law which is one of the rare wonders of the universe. 'Two things fill me with wonder,' says Kant, 'the starry heavens above, and the moral law within.' This is the line of human evolution which transforms the merely civilised man into the cultured and refined citizen. Evolution, which, as an organic process, transformed the amoeba into the man, becomes now a mental and moral process transforming man into first the civilised and then the cultured, refined, and moral individual. It is only at this stage that man realises the full meaning and joy of the beautiful conception of democratic citizenship and all that it implies.

The citizen is sovereign and subject in one. He is the highest product of social evolution. He makes laws and obeys them. Now for the first time, through the long travail of evolution, nature yields to one of her cherished products the true joy of living and functioning. Freed from the thraldom of animal impulses, restraining himself in response to the categorical imperative, guided and sustained by his pure and detached reason, shouldering cheerfully the burdens of social existence and enjoying freely the pure delights that it offers and, above all, giving more to society than he takes from it, the citizen

stands before the world as the best ornament of society and the finest fruit of social evolution.

The citizen is the finest fruit of social evolution. But his evolution is not complete. He has some way to go yet. He has achieved self-realisation in the social context only. The fullness of his self-realisation lies just beyond this level. Social fulfilment takes him also to social transcendence. The citizen is still at the stage of moral tension. Complete self-realisation marks the resolution of this moral tension. This is perfection according to Indian philosophy. The citizen is moral; but the perfect man is morality personified; he is its fulfilment and expression. He is as far removed from the citizen as the citizen is from the vegetative man. The perfect man is the truly free man. The vegetative man is purely a subject; the citizen is sovereign and subject; but the perfect man is sovereign and free. He is the free, the equal and the full. He stands head and shoulders above society and its laws, transcending them, yet fulfilling them. He is the completely self-realised man, the one of steady wisdom, not subject to social or any laws but obeying them cheerfully, purely for the purpose of social welfare. In short, the perfect man is the *divine outlaw,* and also the source and sustenance of all law.

Students of law today will become interpreters of law tomorrow; the young law student will evolve into the full-fledged lawyer. Interpretation of law is a social function; as such, the lawyer is one who fulfils an essential social need. Here arise certain

questions : Does a mere knowledge of law entitle one to be an interpreter and expounder thereof ? Does the social function of interpretation of law which a lawyer performs exhaust the possibilities of his personality ? Is the concept of a 'pure lawyer' tenable or worthy ?

These questions assume an ever-increasing importance in the context of India today as also in the world context, a context provided by the modern transition with its ever-changing values in every sphere of life. Against this background the concept of a 'pure lawyer' or 'pure anything' suggests a pure staticity, an entity neither touching nor being touched by the flow of life around it. If this entity had some sanction behind it in a placid age, it has become, in the dynamic environment of today, a mere anachronism. When every value is being questioned and new values are being adopted in place of the old, the mere interpretation of law becomes a function not only devoid of serious social values, but often detrimental to true social progress. Progressive values and laws proceed not from man as lawyer but from man as citizen.

Self-realisation in terms of the concept of citizenship as outlined above is the privilege of every social functionary—of the lawyer and of the lay worker, of the administrator and of every one else. It is only through this realisation, which provides a wider context for his function, that every social activity becomes invested with meaning and significance. The lawyer is called upon to interpret the

law which, as citizen, he along with others has helped to formulate. Through this he and his function become truly socialised. He becomes a dynamic centre of social change and progress as much as of social interpretation.

This consummation involves profound changes in the lawyer himself. The lawyer who seeks to interpret the law must himself fulfil the law first. In his own person he must have developed inner sanctions in place of external sanctions, self-restraint in place of external restraint. A master of the law is not one who has merely mastered the tenets of the law but also fulfilled the law in his own being. Any lesser qualification in the maker or interpreter of law is fraught with nothing but evil consequences for society and the individual. The prevailing social chaos in all parts of the world is not a little due to the above deficiency. The individual as citizen realises a largeness and a fullness which flows into and uplifts his various social functions and activities.

It is clear that citizenship of the above description is not something that can be conferred by any of the usual trappings of democracy like the franchise. These are certainly valuable; they provide the outer environment for the functioning of the citizen. A free democratic society involves not only freedom to vote and to legislate, which is usually what is meant by citizenship, but also the capacity to utilise that freedom—a capacity which is purely a product of mental and moral evolution but not something that can be conferred from outside. Thus

a citizen as understood in political philosophy is only a candidate to citizenship and not a full citizen who has been described above as the best ornament of society and the finest fruit of social evolution.

Man, in the colonial context, has yet to realise the meaning of citizenship as understood in political philosophy. He is subject but not sovereign. For a vast number of the people this is a serious handicap acting as a bar sinister to their realisation of that full citizenship. But it is no bar to the gifted and the great. These achieve citizenship even in the context of political subjection by the sheer weight of their moral elevation. But such are necessarily few. But their emergence and functioning even under such auspices serve to reveal not only their own inherent strength and greatness, but also of the greater worth and value of the moral as compared to the political constituent of citizenship.

Citizenship in a true democracy involves more than what these nations have valued; they have valued the non-essentials as opposed to the essentials of democracy; the prevailing stagnation is the result. A democratic society centres round the democratic citizen—the man or woman who has achieved or strives to achieve the fullness of self-realisation. The ideal of citizenship is something worth striving for, and its call will be insistent as days pass, demanding of every Indian, whatever the particular social function he or she fulfils, an enduring effort and struggle—mental as well as moral—for the creation of a stable and strong society peopled by citizens

equal and free. In our struggle to realise the full meaning of the concept of citizenship in the social context and of perfection which is social transcendence—in this glorious struggle shall lie the meaning and significance of Indian Renaissance not only to the Indian people, but also to the peoples of the world at large.

THE INDIAN IDEAL OF WOMANHOOD[1]

In the long course of her history, India has experimented with life from various angles and at various levels and has discovered many truths, and proved a few of them for herself and the world. The Indian mind long ago discovered that the object of life is not pleasure, much less pain, but knowledge, through a detached study of both. Pleasure and pain and all experience are the opportunity for the mind of man to gain knowledge and wisdom. Young immature cultures fail to grasp this vital truth and they build their edifice on the shaky basis of the pursuit of pleasure; but such edifices fall, unable to stand the pressure from within and without. Indian culture has endured these thousands of years, surviving dark periods of challenge from within and without, because of its stable foundations furnished by her early thinkers and leaders, and because of the mature *Weltanschauung* which they had provided for her people.

Among the values which that *Weltanschauung* has placed before humanity, the most significant is the idea of the innate divinity of man. Men and women and all beings are divine in their essential nature. Indian thought views social evolution

[1] Speech delivered at the Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, on December 3, 1954 during the Holy Mother Birth Centenary Celebration.

as the process of the incorporation of this great value in the texture of human relationships. From it are derived the values of freedom, equality, and the sacredness of personality. That forms the measure of social and cultural progress.

Among the various types of human relationships, that between man and woman is the most important. The status of woman is the most significant criterion of progress of any society or culture. The history of the different cultures presents various phases of the evolution of this idea.

In the lower levels of culture this status is one of dependence in theory and practice; woman being meant as an object of pleasure to man, the stronger sex. But in the earliest glimpse of recorded Indian society we find this stage already passed. The Rig-Veda presents a picture of woman as the equal of man in civic and religious spheres. In the pursuit of knowledge and virtue, in the performance of rituals, in the composition of hymns, even in the harder fields of war and statecraft, we find the Vedic woman as a companion and helpmate of man. This equality in practice soon found its sustenance in theory. The Upanishads expounded the idea of man and woman as the equal halves of a divine unity, each complement of and incomplete without the other. The Upanishads also discovered the real nature of man and woman to consist in the Âtman, the sexless Self, which is ever pure, perfect, and free. Associated with body and mind it becomes conditioned as personality with its sex and other differen-

tiations. This is man (or woman) *the known,* the subject of sociology and other empirical sciences, as contrasted with man (or woman) *the unknown,* the subject of spiritual sciences.

Man as known to sociology is limited, imperfect, and helpless ; and he or she strives to become whole through associations with individuals and objects outside of himself or herself. The satisfactions proceeding from such associations range from the purely animal to the deeply spiritual, passing through the stages of the primitive and the cultured. It is the idea of restraint that characterises progress from one to the other. And this restraint is the checking of the lower Self, *man the known,* and the manifestation of the higher Self, *man the unknown,* the Âtman.

This spiritual view of man as expounded in the Upanishads became the rock foundation of the Indian cultural edifice. It affected profoundly our theories of marriage and morals, inter-personal and inter-religious relationships, and our attitude to God and the world. Thanks to it, India has always upheld, in theory, the spiritual equality of man and man, and man and woman. But in social practice, there has been increasing laxity after the Vedic period, not because of deliberate human choice, but due to the vicissitudes of history. Deliberate human action, in the great epochs of Indian history, in the field of human relationships, has always tended to uphold the ideals of equality and freedom.

Indian thought views woman exactly as it views

man, as an individual with a destiny. The search for this destiny makes her a pilgrim in search of *abhyudaya* and *nihshreyasa*—worldly excellence and spiritual realisation. In the sphere of the pursuit of *nihshreyasa,* spiritual realisation, which is the highest reach of life, woman as well as man has to walk in single file. Perfect freedom and independence and the weight of responsibility involved in both descend upon that individual, be it man or woman, who has no craving for external delights, and longs for God alone. Only the unworldly man or woman can bear the weight of this responsibility ; and they form the truly free. Throughout our history, even in our darkest days, this type of woman has brightened our horizon. The Brahmavâdinis of the Upanishads, the Theri nuns of Buddhism, and the nuns of Jainism of earlier periods, and the Bhairavi *Brahmani,* one of the Gurus of Shri Ramakrishna, in our own time, proclaim the freedom of woman to scale the heights of spirituality.

It is in the sphere of *abhyudaya,* worldly prosperity, that the status of woman has suffered periodic diminution ; it is necessary to point out that there can be no real independence in this sphere for either man or woman ; inter-dependence is the law in this sphere and it alone leads to success in achieving *abhyudaya.* But since the last fifteen hundred years, women have lost more and more of their freedom and become more and more dependent upon men ; this is largely due to a natural social response to the challenge of disturbed social conditions and the con-

sequent sagging of the human spirit, and not to the wickedness of men. But its long continuance has resulted in the arrested development of Indian society and stunting of women's personality, as pointed out by Swami Vivekananda. That phase is fortunately past. The society has set about the task of regaining the social balance. In modern times there are powerful social movements, which have the backing of the spiritual stimulus provided by Shri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda, to give back to women their individuality and enable them to grow to their full stature to take their equal place in home and society.

But it is noteworthy that India has not experienced a feminist movement; it is important to note the significance of this fact. It is when a world-view goes counter to the claims of women, and men uphold that world-view as against the spirit of the times, that a feminist movement takes place. This is the experience of modern Western history. But in India men came forward to uphold the claims of women and move with the times; and in this they were sustained as much by old Indian spiritual thought as contained in the Vedanta as by recent Indian spiritual experience as expressed in the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement.

The aspirations of modern Indian women have to be viewed against this background. Free to seek the most advanced intellectual development, or pursue any social avocations, today the Indian woman

does not feel herself as a competitor of man but his comrade, whose good wishes and help she values.

This has led to important consequences for the national ideal of womanhood. For the first time after several centuries, marriage is becoming a comradeship of equals, a joint adventure in the enrichment of society and the enjoyment of its delights. Under the old joint family, woman as wife hardly got the chance to express herself. The impact of modern world forces has all but broken down that joint family making for the emergence of the wife as the queen of a limited household within, and as a citizen in an unlimited social field of endeavour, without.

It is this ideal that is gripping Indian womanhood today. She prefers to be the queen of a limited household to being an obscure item in a large joint family. What is more, it is this ideal that the modern Indian man also seeks his wife to embody. He does not seek a dependent or plaything in his wife, but an equal in intelligence, strength of character, and social feelings; not a woman to worship or be worshipped but a companion who has the strength and will to share his joys and sorrows, burdens and responsibilities. In this we catch an echo of the earliest Indian social experience of the Rig-Veda. In this realisation of the manhood of man and the womanhood of woman in the context of the equality of the marriage relationship, India recognises a significant experience of spiritual education. Here is the emergence of a family unit out of the welter of

the modern transition which will form the nursery of the nation's morals, the school of its religious attitudes and the integrated brick of its social edifice.

Swami Vivekananda expressed the view that the old Indian civilisation had comparatively neglected woman as wife to uphold woman as mother, whereas the modern Western civilisation has done just the reverse. To his judgment both appeared as partial and imperfect experiments and he exhorted both the civilisations to apply the required corrective. Two egocentric individuals in search of life-fulfilment are brought into the most intimate social relation as husband and wife in marriage. To realise this object of fulfilment, they have to learn to give of themselves to each other before seeking to take from each other. To teach only the wife to give, and emphasise this again and again, is to upset the balance ; and to make the husband learn to take and neglect to give, leads to less than fulfilment for both ; India leaned to this exaggeration, and her later literature is full of the *duties* of wives and the *rights* of husbands. It did help to develop some sterling other-regarding virtues in our women ; but it tended, except in a few gifted cases, to dwarf the full personality of the generality of our women. Needless to say, it tended to exaggerate in less graceful directions the husband's personality as well.

Similar difficulties have arisen in the West in the reverse way by the wife standing on her rights, flimsy and serious, and largely forgetting that it is more blessed to give than to receive. A healthy

society is the product of a harmonious adjustment of rights and duties between wife and husband, where neither value impinges harshly on the smooth-functioning relationship.

It is in this sphere that Indian thought, with its spiritual view of man and life, has much to contribute to steady the feet of men and women in the East and the West. Man is not a static individual; the child grows into the boy or girl and thence into the young man or young woman to end in the old man and old woman. Sex awareness which rises and gets strong in the middle two stages tapers off at both ends. Woman as wife is largely a focus of biological and social value. The grasping ego being the centre out of which the energies of its personality proceed, it exudes very little of the flavour of the spiritual, while its morality is largely of the social kind, contractual and conventional. But such a wife or husband is only an abstract concept. Any actual wife or husband rises at least occasionally to heights of ego-transcendence, revealing the beauty, strength, and calm lying imbedded in the real Self behind the ego.

The increasing liberation of this deeper Self in the context of marriage is what is proposed by Indian thought. So far as woman is concerned, this is achieved by the wife growing into the mother, not merely or even necessarily biologically, but certainly spiritually. Motherhood is a spiritual transformation of wifehood. The wife may and does *demand and take;* but the mother feels it her privilege to

give. Within the limited circle of her motherhood, she is the example of self-transcendence through self-effacement. If woman as wife is socially significant, woman as mother is spiritually glorious. If the spiritual is only co-terminous with the biological, then woman as mother of a little biological group would have remained the highest moral and spiritual development possible for her sex. But the spiritual value transcends the biological and even the social, and finds expression in an ideal of motherhood where love and service break the barriers of family, race, and creed and assume a universal aspect. It is this spiritual elevation which is self-transcendence that enables woman as wife even to function effectively as a citizen, embracing with her mother-heart the millions of its body politic. If this is called finding life—larger and fuller life—then the path to it is self-effacement. That is what a woman does when she grows from the wifehood to the motherhood ideal.

In this no value is neglected or negated, but there is a growth from a lower to a higher personality and a progressive manifestation of the inherent divinity. This, as I have pointed out before, is the Indian criterion of progress of an individual or a culture. This motherhood ideal is the highest reach of womanhood according to Indian culture. This symbol of self-effacing love has revealed to the Hindu mind the presence of a reality within, over and above the personality of the visible mother. To the Hindu, God is the Mother of all creation. A

nation that has educated itself to look upon God as Mother has learnt to invest its view of woman with the utmost tenderness and reverence. The culture of the Hindu trains him to look upon all women, nay to look upon the female of all species, as forms of the One Divine Mother. The mother is more worthy of reverence than father or teacher according to our scriptures :

उपाध्यायान् दशाचार्य आचार्याणां शतं पिता ।
सहस्रं तु पितृन्माता गौरवेणातिरिच्यते ॥ [1]

'From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is tenfold superior to a mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to a teacher, and a mother a thousandfold to a father.'

And what constitutes this abundant glory in the mother is her self-effacing love and compassion which, to the Hindu, is a mark of high spirituality and true culture. And women in general have the privilege to attain to these. It is this vision that India has always held out before her women and which her daughters have passionately struggled to realise in their lives. Even the apparent failings of her women proceed largely from that passion. The practice of suttee for example, proceeded from loyalty to the ideal of chastity which found itself threatened in a chaotic society.

The ideals of chastity and purity, unselfishness and service, simplicity and modesty have been pur-

[1] *Manu*, II. 145.

sued by her, drawn by that vision of innate divinity. They have become the warp and woof of her being. The Indian woman cannot jump out of this inheritance of hers. 'Any attempt to modernise our women,' warned Swami Vivekananda more than fifty-six years ago, 'if it tries to take our women away from that ideal of Sitâ, is immediately a failure, as we see every day. The woman of India must grow and develop in the footprints of Sitâ, and that is the only way.'[1]

The old Indian woman has been nourished on the ideals of Sitâ, Sâvitri, Damayanti. In the limited world in which she functioned, these ideals sufficed to sustain her. But the woman of today, thrown into a world of wide opportunities, finds these ideals lacking in all-round nourishment. Not that she is insensitive to these appeals; far from it; but she feels her newer aspirations and energies unsustained by them. Hence her unsteady steps, and the fuss which often accompanies her activities and movements in the wider world, for want of a total conviction proceeding from the sanctions of the national spiritual heritage. And it was this sanction that she received from Shri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and the Holy Mother.

Swami Vivekananda is the first monk in history to uphold and to work for the freedom and equality of woman without any reservation. While upholding the Indian ideal of motherhood before the modern woman, he wanted it to be the fulfilment of

[1] *Complete Works*, Vol. III, p. 256.

the modern ideal of wifehood and not its negation. This is to be achieved by woman remaining as woman and realising the perfection inherent within her through her functions in the home and society. This is the technique of practical spirituality which will help woman to combine energy, practicality, and social feeling with poise and peace and inwardness. The woman who stretches out her energies into the wider social field must have first learnt to establish peace and orderliness nearer home. This is the ideal of womanhood which holds an appeal to the modern Indian woman. It connotes a largeness and richness of personality and a steadiness and strength of character, with vast inner energies released but held in poise and ease, making for efficient work without fuss, and wide-field function without friction. It is the fruit of a hard *sâdhana* consisting of a detached pursuit of spiritual knowledge and excellence, and the nourishment of the inner being through meditation and discrimination.

That is the contribution of pure religion ; and the future Indian woman is inconceivable without this training of religion, according to Swami Vivekananda. 'He could not foresee a Hindu woman of the future,' writes Sister Nivedita, 'entirely without the old power of meditation. Modern science women must learn : but not at the cost of the ancient spirituality. He saw clearly enough that the ideal education would be one that should exercise the smallest possible influence for direct change on the social body as a whole. It

would be that which should best enable every woman, in time to come, to resume into herself the greatness of all the women of the Indian past.'[1]

So educated, woman will realise her worth as woman and contribute her distinct share to the peace and prosperity of society. The modern woman's temptation to grow into the likeness of man is only a passing phase of this transition. Indian thought holds that by remaining true to one's own type, man and woman will eventually outgrow the sex awareness in the realisation of the Âtman, the sexless Self, which is the true nature of both man and woman. Swami Vivekananda held this as the true direction of progress for man and woman. 'He would never tolerate any scheme of life and polity,' says Sister Nivedita, 'that tended to bind tighter on mind and soul the fetters of the body. The greater the individual, the more would she transcend the limitations of femininity in mind and character; and the more was such transcendence to be expected and admired.'[2]

Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, stands as an inspiring example to the modern Indian woman in her efforts to steady her steps through the welter of the modern transition. Herself an ideal wife and mother and nun, she is the perennial spring to nourish the life of woman in her varied roles. 'But is she the last of an old order, or the beginning of a new?' asks Sister Nivedita; 'In her one sees realised

[1] *The Master as I Saw Him*, p. 291.
[2] Ibid, 293.

that wisdom and sweetness to which the simplest of women may attain. And yet, to myself the stateliness of her courtesy and her great open mind are almost as wonderful as her sainthood. I have never known her hesitate in giving utterance to large and generous judgment, however new or complex might be the question put before her. Her life is one long stillness of prayer. Her whole experience is of theocratic civilisation. Yet she rises to the height of every situation. Is she tortured by the perversity of any about her? The only sign is a strange quiet and intensity that comes upon her. Does one carry to her some perplexity or mortification born of social developments beyond her ken? With unerring intuition she goes straight to the heart of the matter, and sets the questioner in the true attitude to the difficulty. Or is there need for severity? No foolish sentimentality causes her to waver.

'. . . He who has transgressed her code of delicacy and honour, will never enter her presence again. . . .

'And yet is she, as one of her spiritual children said of her, speaking literally of her gift of song, "full of music", all gentleness, all playfulness. And the room wherein she worships, withal, is filled with sweetness.'[1]

In this delineation of the Ideal of Indian Womanhood, there is little that is local and parochial and much that is human and universal. And it is natural; for ancient Indian thought has expounded

[1] *The Master As I Saw Him*, pp. 147-148.

the subject of man or woman largely in terms of *human* excellence and not in terms of the *national* or *racial*. And recent Indian thought, as expressed through Swami Vivekananda, consciously seeks the goal of the synthesis of Eastern and Western life values with a view to evolving a complete human culture and civilisation.