



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
SIMLA**

SEVEN NOBLE LIVES

By
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1. ISWARA CHANDRA VIDYASAGARA (1820-1891)

Within the enclosure of Goldighi Tank, College Square, Calcutta, and facing the west, there is a statue, in a sitting posture, of a Bengali wearing the national garb. The figure is that of a lean man of a fairly advanced age, of short stature, with a countenance of marked dignity and nobility; the lower part of the scalp is shaven all round, leaving only a small, round patch of hair in the middle. It is not a particularly handsome face, though earlier likenesses show that in early manhood it was a very attractive face; but it is a remarkable countenance with intellect and thought stamped upon it, and combining strength of character with great benevolence of heart. The expression of the eyes alone cannot be reproduced in a statue. The eyes were large, liquid, deep, mirroring the great, benevolent heart that beat in that diminutive body. This is the image of Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara.

How much information is conveyed by the inscription underneath the statue? It is yet quite forty years that Vidyasagara passed to his final rest, but how much of his life and his work is known to the younger generation now passing through school and college, and how much will be remembered by others coming after? Our students are familiar with the biographies of many eminent men outside India, but how much do they know of our own great men, men who have passed on within the last hundred years? The one reliable life of Iswara

Chandra Vidyasagara, written in Bengali, is out of print and there is no knowing when a fresh edition will be available. Both the size and the style of the book, however, are a hindrance to its extensive popularity. Has it occurred to no one, to those who control and guide the education of our boys, that an account of such a life as that of Iswara Chandra, not very cumbrous and written in the simplest and most direct language, should be placed in the hands of every schoolboy so that his mind may be nourished and inspired by the example of one of the noblest and greatest lives in the annals of humanity? How do we expect to nationalize our system of education if we leave the greatest names of the nation to sink into the oblivion of neglect?

Nature has a wonderful and inexhaustible repertory of contradictions and compensations, of startling surprises and defiance of conventions. Sometimes the handiwork of Nature is instinct with humour and irony. A man as handsome as Apollo Belvedere may be a brainless booby, while all the existing likenesses of Socrates represent him as a very ugly man. Even great physical strength is not invariably associated with a corresponding height of stature. Atlas and Hercules may be mythical personages, but they are portrayed as beings of medium height, with an immense breadth of shoulders. It is nowhere mentioned that Samson had the proportions of a Goliath. We like to associate martial qualities with an imposing figure, but two of the greatest military captains and strategists in the world's history were anything but tall men. From the accounts that have come down from ancient times we gather that Alexander of Macedon, a dashing and fearless fighter who was ever to be seen in the press of battle, was not tall, though he had a symmetrical and well-knit figure, the proud possession of

most Greeks, while Napoleon Bonaparte, who bestrode the whole of Europe as a colossus and whose name inspired terror, was barely an inch or two above five feet, and yet so dominating and overwhelming was the force of the man's personality that big, brave men trembled in his presence.

Iswara Chandra Bannerji was the eldest of several brothers and the son of a very poor Brahmin living in a village to the south of Calcutta. Iswara Chandra was a wild village boy up to every kind of mischief, but even at that age he had a warm, generous disposition and was always ready to help other boys in any way he could. In the village school the pandit found him a clever, bright boy who was fond of study and quickly learned everything he was taught.

His father went to Calcutta in search of a living and after many hardships, in the course of which he had often to go without a meal, succeeded in obtaining a place on a salary of Rs. 2 a month. The family was so desperately poor that, as Vidyasagara himself used to relate in after life, this intelligence was received with great rejoicing. Two rupees then went a much longer way than in these days, for living was incredibly cheap, but whatever the times only very poor people can feel elated on a monthly income of two rupees. In course of time the salary rose to Rs. 10 a month and then he took Iswara Chandra to Calcutta and placed him in the Sanskrit College. The boy was then nine years of age. His father's great ambition was that after finishing his studies in Calcutta, the son should establish a village school, called a *tal*, in his native village.

The years that followed were a period of bitter struggle but of unbroken and brilliant success so far as the boy's studies were concerned. The father and the

son had a room on the ground floor given to them rent-free by the charitable owner of the house. The ladies of the family were very kind to the little boy, but for the rest it was a life of unremitting toil and very scanty fare. Calcutta was not then the clean, healthy city it is today. Foul, open drains were to be seen everywhere and many localities were full of evil smells. Rooms on the ground floor were frightfully damp and infested by creeping, crawling vermin. Epidemics of cholera claimed numerous victims every year. Besides attending the Sanskrit College and preparing his daily lessons, the boy had to do all the work of a domestic drudge. He had to sweep, cook, wash and clean their few utensils. The food was often insufficient and sometimes the boiled rice had to be eaten without any condiment beyond a pinch of salt. To add to all this hardship, the father had a most exacting nature and at night the boy had to repeat what he had learned at school during the day. The poor, overworked boy would sometimes feel drowsy or fall asleep, and would be mercilessly beaten by the father, so cruelly in fact that the ladies of the house would rush in and intervene, and the master of the house would threaten the father with expulsion from the house. Yet the son never harboured any feeling of resentment against his father and to the end he was the most filial of sons, both towards his father and mother. At the same time, the boy was extremely self-willed and could not be coerced into doing anything he disliked. This was regarded as obstinacy, but it was in reality an early manifestation of that unequalled will power which enabled him in later years to fight so many evils against such heavy odds.

No name stands higher on the rolls of the Sanskrit College than that of Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara. He went through the whole course of studies and topped the

list of candidates at almost every examination. He became equally proficient in grammar, poetry, rhetoric, Vedanta, logic, astronomy and theology. The degree or title of *Vidyasagara* (Ocean of Learning) was conferred upon him, and a certificate of high proficiency in every branch of Sanskrit learning was given to him signed by all the professors of the College, each testifying to the student's scholarship in his particular subject. From that time the family surname of Bannerji was dropped and the scholar was known as Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara. A few years later, the full name was rarely heard and all throughout Bengal he was known as Vidyasagara. He subsequently learned English and Hindi, and had occasion to carry on extensive official correspondence in the former language.

He was one of those great little men whose diminutive bodies encase a big heart and large brains, allied with an iron will and an indomitable spirit. His nature was a singular complex of varied and conflicting qualities. Unbending and stern in his opposition to all social and other evils, he was emotional to a high degree and whenever his pity or sympathy was stirred tears freely flowed from his eyes. When a child widow was brought to him he would take her in his arms and burst out weeping; to personal habits of the utmost frugality he added unbounded generosity in helping others; a man of wide and deep culture, he loved to associate with the aboriginal and primitive Sonthals at Karmatar, in the Sonthal Pergannahs, on the East Indian Railway, because he found them a simple, truth-speaking people; coming from an orthodox and conservative Brahmin family, he became the most advanced and intrepid social reformer after Rammohan Roy.

Passing out of the Sanskrit College, he held various

offices under the Government of Bengal, but he held no appointment very long. His fearless and independent spirit chafed against any position of subordination, for he was born to be a leader of men and not the follower of any one and no thought of the future ever deterred him. His friends and relations earnestly remonstrated with him when he resigned the appointment of Assistant Secretary to the Sanskrit College. How would he maintain himself without an income? "I shall sell vegetables, or open a grocer's shop," was the prompt reply. It was while holding this appointment that Vidyasagara taught the European Principal of the Hindu College a much-needed lesson. He went to see this man on some official business and found him lolling in a chair with his feet stretched at full length on the table. There was no other chair in the room. The European Principal did not consider that any courtesy was due to this little Bengali wearing a coarse *dhoti* and *chadar*, and a pair of Taltala slippers on his bare feet. Vidyasagara suppressed his indignation and came away as soon as he had finished his business. Shortly afterwards the Principal came to Vidyasagara's office on some business and found the latter reclining in his chair with half-closed eyes and his slippers and dust-covered feet decorating the table. There was no second chair anywhere. Feeling himself grossly insulted, the Principal made a report to the head of the department. Vidyasagara was called upon for an explanation. He wrote he was under the impression that he belonged to an uncivilized people and the Principal had set him an example in civilized manners. He failed to see how he had offended by receiving the Principal in precisely the same manner as the latter had received him. The matter had to be dropped.

Although Vidyasagara did not hold any office very

long he brought all his energy, his untiring industry and the force and strength of his character to bear upon every work he did. More than one Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal held him in high esteem and consulted him on matters relating to education. The last office he held was the combined office of Principal of the Sanskrit College and Inspector of Schools. It was owing to his endeavours that Normal schools were first established. A number of Bengali schools was also founded in certain districts of Bengal on his initiative. He held this office for six years. Meanwhile, other important matters were claiming his attention. He had led an agitation for the remarriage of virgin Hindu widows; such marriages had been legalized by an Act passed by the Government in 1856 and Vidyasagara spent large sums of money on promoting them. About this time a young, inexperienced Civilian was placed in charge of the Education Department and some friction with him led to the final resignation of Vidyasagara from the service of the Government. For some time he deferred this step at the earnest intercession of the Lieutenant-Governor, but when the latter during an interview told the Pandit that he should consider his position carefully because he needed funds for his work of social reform he merely precipitated the end. This was an incautious argument to use with such a man as Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara. There was in him that spirit of contrariness, that obstinacy which even his father had noticed and which always asserted itself whenever personal grounds or his own personal conveniences were mentioned. He bluntly told the Lieutenant-Governor that since the retention of his appointment was considered indispensable for his social work, he declined to reconsider the question of his resignation and prayed to be relieved of his appointment. This was the end of

his direct association with the Government as a public officer and educationist. He renounced without regret or hesitation a fairly large income, a position of considerable trust and influence, and a prospective old-age pension.

Can we say as much of others of his countrymen? Many of them are content to hold on to an appointment as long as they can, indifferent to the treatment they may receive from their superior officers, and there are others whose hankering for service never seems to cease. When a man is pensioned off from the public service after twenty-five or thirty years of active service he eagerly looks out for some other appointment in his old age. An Indian Civilian, after thirty-five years of service and after earning a comfortable pension of a thousand pounds a year will move heaven and earth for getting some other appointment to eke out the income from the pension. Some have the presumption to assert that this is a way of serving the country whereas it is merely a humiliating confession that such a man is devoid of all self-respect and he has no use for his life except to wear it out with the badge of servitude round his neck. The old ideal of devoting the evening of one's life to meditation and the well-being of the soul, the gradual withdrawal from the affairs of this life is to them meaningless. They are never happier than when grovelling in the dust and scrambling for the crumbs that may fall from the table of the rich and the powerful.

While Iswara Chandra was a student and later when he was first appointed Principal of the Sanskrit College there was very little discipline or system in that institution. The professors were pandits of the old school, old men who were never in a hurry, and they retained their leisurely and dilatory habits. There were no fixed

hours of attendance and they strolled in whenever they liked. Then there was the noonday siesta when the pandit-professors would doze and sleep in their chairs while some dutiful scholar would fan them and drive away the flies. On awakening the learned professors would take a few pinches of snuff and then settle down to work. Vidyasagara lost no time in introducing order and discipline. Among the professors were several men with whom the young Principal had himself read and he was careful not to appear as a martinet to them. He was always the first and earliest to arrive at the College, and then as each professor came in late he would come out of his room and greet him with the question, "Have you just come?" There was one professor under whom Vidyasagara had learned *Nyaya*, or Logic, and who was the worst offender among the late-comers. To him the erstwhile student, and the present superior officer, put no question and said no word, but greeted him in silence and let him pass on to his classroom. This daily silent reception and the unspoken reproach exhausted the patience of the old professor and exasperated him, and one day when he found his old pupil and present Principal awaiting him in silence as usual, he burst out, "I cannot stand your silence any longer. If you were to question me I could give an explanation, but this is intolerable. From tomorrow I shall be punctual even if I die for it!" Thenceforward the attendance of the professor became regular.

In dealing with the students Vidyasagara was kind but firm, and impartially enforced discipline. He inspired both professors and students with considerable awe. On one occasion a young professor appointed by Vidyasagara was ragged and insulted by the students of the class he had been sent to teach. The Principal made

an investigation and as no boy would acknowledge his guilt or give any information that would lead to the punishment of the guilty ones, the whole class was expelled from the College. The boys went in a body to the higher authorities and complained against the Principal. They called for an explanation and the boys jumped to the conclusion that the dismissal of the Principal would follow as a matter of course. It will be recalled that on a previous occasion when about to resign an appointment he then held Vidyasagara had said he would sell potatoes and *patal*, or open a grocer's shop for a living. It was a very remarkable saying for those days when men with even a smattering of education despised the small trader and shopkeeper, and thought highly of the office stool and the quill behind the ear, and discussed at home the Saheb who drove them like dumb cattle in the office. The boys knew this anecdote like the rest of Calcutta and went about declaring gleefully, "Now he will lose his job, and how will he live? He will have to hold the scales.*" For so great and famous a scholar as Vidyasagara to have recourse to such an occupation for a living was naturally regarded as a deep degradation and humiliation. While forwarding the papers to the higher authorities Vidyasagara wrote that the intervention of the head of the department in a matter of this kind was prejudicial to the maintenance of college discipline. This view was accepted and the papers were returned to the Principal to deal with the matter at his discretion. The high hopes of the rebellious students were dashed to the ground and they went to the young professor whom they had insulted to beg of him to intercede in their behalf. Finally, when ushered into the presence of the little man who wielded such irresistible authority they were greeted

* Shopkeeper's scales.

with the grim question, "Who will hold the scales now, you or I?" They were all forgiven and readmitted to the College.

As a student Vidyasagara was a favourite with many of the professors. One of them, an old man, lost his wife and wanted to marry again. He consulted the boy Iswara Chandra, who strongly dissuaded him from taking such a step on the ground that it was wrong for a man of the professor's age to marry a young girl, who would very probably be left a young widow. This had no effect and the old man married a beautiful young girl. He afterwards persuaded young Iswara Chandra to accompany him home to see the young bride and realize how May had been mated with December. On seeing the newly wedded wife Iswara Chandra burst into tears. As this was regarded an evil omen, the horrified professor pacified the boy and pressed him to partake of some refreshments. Iswara Chandra vehemently refused to touch anything, saying he would not touch a drop of water in that house, and immediately left. A few months afterwards the professor died and the young wife was left a widow. It was believed that this incident was an important factor in the subsequent determination of Vidyasagara to work heart and soul for the remarriage of virgin widows.

In repeating anecdotes of this kind we do not pause to enquire whether they are true or merely a figment of the imagination. They may be perfectly true or they may be wholly unfounded. In any case they are of great value as throwing a flood of light upon the distinguishing traits of a remarkable man's nature. They are characteristic, they are temperamental, they are full of surprises. In the lifetime of Vidyasagara hundreds of such stories were floating in the air. They were liquid like

little rills trickling through the fingers. Crystallized, these can be of immense benefit to later generations of boys and men. The mere fact that such stories were not told or invented of any other man is significant. He was expected to say and do things that would not occur to other men, and only a few of these fugitive sayings have been preserved in the account of his life. But these have a freshness, a force, a humour, a pathos that afford vivid glimpses of a personality of singular power and irresistible charm.

The time very soon came when his name was heard on the lips of every man, woman and child not only in Calcutta, but in the remotest villages of Bengal. He was Principal of the Sanskrit College when he wrote the first tract to prove that the remarriage of virgin widows was authorized and even enjoined by the ancient Hindu scriptures. His vast erudition and his tireless industry enabled him to quote chapter and verse in support of his contention. There was no flaw in his argument, no weak joint in his armour. Was his agitation allowed to succeed without opposition? That mass of inertia designated orthodox society, would not have been true to itself if it had permitted any proposal of reform to pass unchallenged. Of course, Vidyasagara was opposed and learned texts mingled with vituperation and ridicule were hurled at his head. There was particular reason to resent the attitude of this heretic Brahmin who was seeking to undermine the power and prestige of the priestly caste. Orthodox Hindu society lies supine and motionless like a huge griffin, but any attempt to disturb it makes it raise its terrible head and to belch fire and flame through its mouth and nostrils. Has not orthodox Hindu society covered itself with glory by consistent and persistent opposition to every reform? Did not the learned pandits

of Bengal and the leaders of Bengali society bitterly oppose the abolition of *suttee*, and who knows how long this inhuman and homicidal custom would have continued to flourish but for the heroic efforts of Raja Rammohan Roy? The crossing of the sea, the learning of medicine and surgery and even the education of girls had been opposed on religious grounds and as going against custom. The penalizing of the premature consummation of marriage and the raising of the age of consent has been opposed for similar reasons. The waves of many reforms have broken against the rock of convention and custom. Once a widow always a widow, and it did not matter whether the widow was a child or a virgin. It is only when there is a clash between custom and a dynamic personality like that of Vidyasagara that the unexpected sometimes happens and the passive as well as active resistance of an unthinking society is broken, at least for a time, by the moral might of one man. Vidyasagara could not behold unmoved the cruel and pitiful spectacle of child and virgin widows being condemned to lifelong misery and ill-treatment. A widow was the pariah and outcast of society. She was rigorously excluded from all participation in auspicious ceremonies. She was allowed only one meal in twenty-four hours. Her diet excluded all palatable and agreeable articles of food. On the eleventh day of the new and the full moon, twice a month, she was compelled to fast a whole day and night without being given a drop of water to drink. No exception was made even if the widow happened to be a child of tender years. Men and women were accustomed and utterly indifferent to the sight of a girl of ten or eleven years, in the trying, steamy summer of Bengal, crying and rolling on the ground in an agony of thirst. Even a mother had to look on helplessly at the distress of a

daughter, perhaps a mere child, without daring to offer a drink of water to assuage the child's burning thirst. Custom having the force and authority of a religious injunction stayed her hand. But what a mother could behold unmoved stirred Iswara Chandra to the depths of his being and his bowels yearned over the innocent and young victims of a cruel, heartless and unnatural custom. Vidyasagara refused to believe that the ancient Aryan sages and law-givers, among whom were some of the wisest and most large-hearted men that ever lived, could have deliberately imposed upon helpless girls and women a course of life involving such prolonged suffering and misery. A widow is deserving of pity and sympathy, not harshness and ill-treatment. To deny a little water to a thirsty child or grown-up person is a refinement of torture and not the maintenance of a sacred religious custom.

Vidyasagara had to deal with opponents who were sophisticated and whose minds and hearts were case-hardened and proof against all appeals in the name of humanity. Not very long ago, before the movement of Vidyasagara, a formidable array of learned pandits had been found to oppose, tooth and nail, the abolition of the monstrous and savage custom of *suttee*. Pious eyes and hands had been lifted in holy horror at the prospect of such an outrage and authorities by the cartload had been cited in support of the beautiful and purifying practice of immolating living women to the spirit of their dead husbands. Moloch was not propitiated and worshipped in Phoenicia alone. He had a considerable following in Bengal and many other parts of India. If defenders could be found to uphold the custom of *suttee*, there was an army to fight for perpetual widowhood. How child and virgin widows were treated was nobody's concern. It

was a custom of the country and every custom was sacrosanct. The pandits formed a solid phalanx and moved to the attack against this apostate pandit who had challenged the inviolability of immemorial custom.

The kindest and most tender-hearted of men, Vidyasagara was an intellectual gladiator whom no adversary could overawe or overcome in argument. He had satisfied himself that there was scriptural sanction for the remarriage of widows. Neither in the letter nor in the spirit were the sacred Sanskrit books opposed to the remarriage of child and virgin widows, who knew nothing of marital obligations or of wifehood. The status of woman in India in ancient times was very different from what it is now. The confinement of women to the *purdah* was then unknown, nor were infants and girls of an immature age given in marriage. In the heyday of Aryan civilization and in the prime of Aryan achievement women were as free as men. They had equal opportunities with men of acquiring knowledge, they took part in high debate, they rose to great heights of spiritual experience and wisdom, they were capable administrators and distinguished themselves in difficult subjects of study. The names of great, gifted, wise and holy women have come down the vista of the ages and are still shining with undiminished splendour in ancient books and records. The cruel humiliation of women and the social disabilities imposed upon them are of comparatively recent origin, the work of a heartless and unscrupulous priesthood and a despotic and overbearing Brahmin oligarchy.

Iswara Chandra replied to his critics and adversaries at length. The object he had in view was not to convince the pandits, for these men were not open to conviction, but to win public sympathy for the righteousness of the

reform he advocated and to demonstrate that the remarriage of a widow was valid in Hindu law and did not involve any disqualification as regards the legitimacy of children born of such marriages and the right of succession to property. The history of the agitation for the abolition of *suttee* was repeated. Vidyasagara found support among an important section of the Bengali citizens of Calcutta, while several wealthy and leading zemindars outside Calcutta, among whom were the Maharajas of Burdwan, Navadwipa and Krishnagar, supported the movement for the remarriage of widows. An influentially signed petition was presented to the Government to pass a law legalizing such marriages. The opponents of the movement submitted a counter-petition declaring that such a law would be repugnant to the authority of the Hindu *Sastras*. The Government accepted the view of the party led by Vidyasagara, a Bill was introduced making it lawful for Hindu widows to be married a second time, and it was passed into law in 1856. Three months after the new law had come into force the first widow marriage was celebrated with impressive ceremony. The bridegroom was himself a pandit and the son of a learned and famous pandit. A huge crowd assembled to witness the bridegroom pass in procession to the house of the bride. Some of the most distinguished men of Calcutta accompanied the procession on foot with their hands resting on the palanquin of the bridegroom on either side. Among them were Ram Gopal Ghose, the famous orator and successful man of business, Sambhu Nath Pandit, the first Indian to sit on the bench of the High Court, and Dwarkanath Mitter, the greatest Indian Judge that ever sat on the bench. Some other similar marriages followed and Vidyasagara's only son married a widow, so that it

was not open to any one to say that the reformer hesitated to practise what he preached.

The whole of Bengal was electrified. The fame of the reformer penetrated the most distant corners of the province. Whether people scoffed or whether they praised, there was not a single home in Bengal in which Vidyasagara was not daily discussed. The city and the countryside rang with songs composed about him and the noble and humane movement with which his name was identified. Of these the best known was one beginning "May Vidyasagara live for ever!" Cartmen used to roll out the song while driving their primitive vehicles along the public streets. Villages echoed and re-echoed with the refrain of this and similar other songs. The famous singer and composer, Dasarathi Roy, commonly known as Dasu Roy, composed a libretto or *panchali* about widow marriages, and a play on the same subject was produced on the stage. The weavers of Santipur, famous for its fine *dhotis* and *saris*, wove the words of songs about Vidyasagara and widow marriage into the borders of *saris* which sold like hot cakes. This innovation became very popular, and in later years such *saris* with other songs woven into the texture of the borders were in large demand. All newspapers, books and booklets dealing with widow marriage were quickly bought up and read with avidity. The name of Vidyasagara filled the minds and mouths of the whole population of Bengal. At the Delhi Durbar held in 1877 by Lord Lytton, then Viceroy of India, a certificate, signed by Sir Richard Temple, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, was awarded to Pandit Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara, "in recognition of his earnestness as leader of the widow-marriage movement, and position as leader of the more advanced portion of the Indian Community."

Intellectually and in the generous intuitions of his noble heart Vidyasagara was far more advanced than the most advanced of his countrymen, but in matters of everyday domestic life, in his dress and food and ways of living he was the most conservative of men. There was nothing to distinguish him from the ordinary Brahmin pandit. A brief reference has previously been made to the simplicity of his clothes. We hear a great deal about *khadi* and the *charkha* in these days. As long as he was a student of the Sanskrit College Iswara Chandra used only cloth woven from yarn spun by the women of his family on their own *charkha*. The stuff was not much finer than sackcloth and the *dhoti* barely reached down to the knees. Later on, he wore a plain white *dhoti* without a border, a short, old-fashioned jacket without buttons and tied up at two or three places with tags of white ribbon, and a thick, white sheet in lieu of the fine muslin *chadar*. His head, like that of all Bengalis, was bare, with that disfiguring, small and rounded mop of hair on the crown of the head that one sees among Ooriya *palki*-bearers and the people of the Southern Presidency. On his feet he wore thin, soft slippers which leave the heels bare, the well-known footwear of the orthodox pandits of Bengal. Unfashionable and unattractive as this costume was, it became quite fascinating by the distinction and fame of the man who wore it. The toga or sheet that he used came to be known as the *Vidyasagari chadar*, and many young lads at school and college and also older men affected this dress for a time, though they drew the line at the partial shaving of the head. The Vidyasagara sartorial style was, however, soon discarded for more modern fashions.*

* Boys who had been seen pattering about in slippers and sheets *a la* Vidyasagara could be seen after a short time sporting an English hat and swaggering along in English dress.

It is curious to think of Vidyasagara as a setter of fashion, but his simple and conventional dress helped him to preserve his self-respect, while it impressed others. Those who decorate themselves in borrowed plumes can never hope to introduce a fashion.

Vidyasagara spent freely on the marriages of widows whenever his help was asked. He gave ornaments to the bride and a dowry too, and helped the married couple to make a start in life. In actual fact it was found that the number of such marriages was not large. Those who had promised the reformer financial and moral support gradually deserted him and he found himself heavily involved in debt. In the course of a few years such marriages were scarcely heard of, and the lot of widows remained unchanged. The law was merely permissive and there was no compulsion of any kind. Vidyasagara wrote about this time that he had hoped that the people who professed so much respect for Sastric mandates would follow them, but he found that the custom of the country, however wrong, was more powerful than the teaching of the scriptures.

Almost simultaneously with the agitation for the remarriage of very young widows Vidyasagara initiated a movement for the abolition of the pernicious custom of a single man having many wives. This custom prevailed almost exclusively among the high-caste Brahmins and was practised more extensively in East Bengal than in West. It was by no means an old custom. It was opposed to the clear injunctions of the *Sastras* and had been unknown a few hundred years earlier. Such marriages were confined to the section of Brahmins known as Kulin Brahmins, and were mere mercenary affairs that offended grossly against the sacrament of marriage. A man might have

any number of wives but he did not undertake the responsibility of maintaining them. They lived with their parents while the husband toured about visiting his widely-scattered seraglio, and if he passed a night with one of his wives it was only for a consideration in hard cash paid down by his father-in-law. Vidyasagara wrote a book exposing the evils of this custom, which was not sanctioned by the *Sastras*. Taking only the Hugli district in Bengal, he showed that in 86 villages 197 Kulin Brahmins had married 2,288 wives. He collected statistics from East Bengal also, but these were not published, though they were available to his biographer. Full particulars were given in every case. A man of 55 had 107 wives, a boy of twelve had six, and a child of five, two. Vidyasagara caused a largely-signed petition for the prohibition of such marriages to be presented to the Government, but no action was taken as it was obviously impossible to introduce legislation to prevent the evil. With the progress of time, however, marriages of this kind became rarer, and this custom has now died a natural death.

Everything that Vidyasagara wrote about the re-marriage of widows and the prevention of multiple marriages was written in Bengali with the exception of one tract in English and his language was much admired for its lucidity, limpid grace and close and clear reasoning. With the severance of his connexion with the Sanskrit College and service under the Government he found more time for literary work and turned from controversial to constructive literature. Bengal had produced many poets before the time of Vidyasagara, chief among whom were the Vaishnava poets, Kasiram Das and Krittivasa, who wrote poetical translations of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, Mukunda Ram Chakravarti,

the celebrated writer of *Kabikankan Chandi*, and Bharat Chandra Roy. Bengali prose, however, had been neglected. Rammohan Roy alone had written some tracts in good Bengali prose, but there were few other prose writers of distinction, and the prose that was occasionally written was lacking in grace and simplicity. There were no good school-books, no prose works that could be placed before students as models of composition. Those who learned English affected to despise the Bengali language. There was no uniform or established orthography and the worst offenders in this respect were the Sanskrit pandits. In writing Sanskrit they followed the correct method of spelling Sanskrit words, but in writing Bengali they observed no rule and followed no law. They also looked down upon Bengali, which was designated *Bhasha* (spoken language) as distinguished from Sanskrit, the refined and classical language. The Bengali prose then in vogue was turgid and inflated, ponderous with a profusion of long words and intricate and confused compounds, neither pleasant to read nor appealing to the ear.

Vidyasagara set himself to remedy this regrettable state of things. To great and extensive erudition in Sanskrit he had added a large and intimate knowledge of English literature. He had the accomplished writer's gift of expression and language and wide and quick sympathy. His Bengali primers and school-books, and more advanced works written in an easy, mellifluous and classic style have never been surpassed or even equalled. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, the finest writer of Bengali prose, freely acknowledged the indebtedness of all Bengali writers to Vidyasagara. In an introduction to the Bengali works of Peari Chand Mitra, Bankim wrote that Vidyasagara's language was extraordinarily

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lucid and charming. No one has written such fascinating Bengali prose either before or after him. He introduced the English system of punctuation in Bengali prose. He did not write any work of imagination or original thought, but his genius was beyond question, and he may be rightly regarded the creator of Bengali prose.

He materially facilitated the study of Sanskrit also. In the *tols*, or indigenous classes, and the old seats of learning the study of Sanskrit absorbed a whole lifetime. This is scarcely possible in the present changed conditions of life and the growing stress and hustle of competition. Ancient Sanskrit grammars like *Panini* and *Mugdhabodha* are models of elaboration and completeness, but they require prolonged study. In the curricula of modern Indian universities and in schools a very profound or extensive knowledge of Sanskrit is not necessary. Iswara Chandra compiled an easy and admirable Sanskrit grammar and also graduated Sanskrit readers containing selections from the ancient writers. These books were very helpful to students in the earlier stages of study and they did away with the tedious mode of teaching pursued in the *tols*, the incessant and endless memorizing of rules, and learning by rote.

By composing and compiling these books and founding his own press known as the Sanskrit Press, Iswara Chandra not merely helped substantially the promotion and spread of education, but created a source of a considerable pecuniary income for himself. These books supplied a much-felt want and they brought the author a steadily growing income. The annual profit from the sale of these books represented an amount that Iswara Chandra could have never obtained from any appointment either under the Government or anywhere else. In addition, he retained his independence, and did not have to

seek the favour or goodwill of any man. He acquired a comfortable house in a quiet neighbourhood, but there was no change in his mode of living. He never kept a carriage, though he could have easily afforded one. He was a tireless and swift walker and big, strong men twice his size had almost to run to keep up with his quick pace and frequently fell behind, panting and gasping. If he had to hire a cab he considered the money thrown away, because he could have used it to help others. For the maintenance of his household he made a fairly liberal, but not extravagant, allowance, and the balance of his income, he spent in charity, in helping the widow and the orphan and the needy. He provided food and lodging for a number of poor students, and gave them clothes and books. Judged by present-day standards Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara, officially designated the leader of the more advanced section of the Indian community, was very old-fashioned, for he dressed shabbily, wore his hair in an ugly fashion and never adopted the new fashions coming into vogue. Men like him have a lamentable tendency to be old-fashioned. Vidyasagara was as old-fashioned as truth, as love, as pity. His mind and heart outstripped all fashions, but otherwise he was a relic of the unchanging East, unlike his countrymen who have so readily adopted and assimilated other fashions and other ways of living, very much to their hurt.

By the same token of being old-fashioned like the ancient Aryans he was a stout champion of the education of girls and women. David Hare worked indefatigably for the welfare of Bengali boys and girls and for the advancement of their education, and Drinkwater Bethune, who held high office as a member of the Government, identified himself with the movement for the spread of education among Bengali girls. In this work his chief

helper was Vidyasagara. Bethune spent his own money freely for this purpose. A warm friendship grew up between him and Vidyasagara. Several other distinguished men of Calcutta cordially supported Bethune and Vidyasagara, but the usual bitter opposition from the orthodox section of the community was fully in evidence and some men who had the temerity to send their daughters to the school founded by Bethune were persistently persecuted. At the particular request of Bethune, Vidyasagara became the first Secretary of the school. By his will Bethune left a large sum of money to the school, which was named after him and located in its own building. This school has now developed into the Bethune College. When the first Bengali lady, the late Chandramukhi Bose, obtained the degree of Master of Arts of the University of Calcutta, Vidyasagara presented her with a handsome illustrated set of the complete works of Shakespeare and wrote to her a very nice letters.

When Miss Mary Carpenter, author of *The Last Days in England of Raja Rammohan Roy*, visited India her first desire was to meet Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara and the regard she conceived for him was manifested in her frequent requests to Vidyasagara to accompany her whenever she went to visit any place. After Rammohan Roy India had, at the time of Miss Carpenter's visit, produced no other man of the calibre of Vidyasagara.

After he had resigned the Principalship of the Sanskrit College Vidyasagara was requested to supervise a school called the Calcutta Training School, founded by some enterprising and public-spirited citizens of Calcutta. Some time afterwards the control of the school passed to him and two other colleagues. It was renamed the Metropolitan Institution and, after the death of the other

sole property of Vidyasagara. The time came when several similar institutions were established and became a source of income to the owners. Vidyasagara, however, never treated the Metropolitan Institution as his personal property in the sense that he never used any part of the profits for his personal use. Thousands of rupees lay to the credit of the Institution in the bank. Sometimes Vidyasagara borrowed money out of this fund for his innumerable charities, but every time the loan was scrupulously repaid.

Two incidents in connexion with the Metropolitan Institution may be related here. These are not mentioned in Vidyasagara's biography. The first was related to me by Pandit Siv Nath Sastri and the second is within my personal knowledge. A certain number of students of straitened means were admitted to the Metropolitan Institution as free scholars. Besides, some of them were fed and clothed by Vidyasagara. Once a poor boy from a distant district applied for admission to the Metropolitan Institution as a free student. While granting this prayer, Vidyasagara put a question to the boy. "But, my boy," he said, "how will you arrange about your food and clothes and books, a place for living and other necessary expenses?" The boy answered, "Sir, there are many wealthy and charitable people in Calcutta, and I shall go and ask some of them for a small monthly subscription, and this will be sufficient to meet any expenses. You are my chief benefactor, but I hope others will also give me some help." Vidyasagara asked, "Do you know the names of these wealthy and charitable people?" "No, Sir, but I shall make enquiries and prepare a list." Vidyasagara pushed a sheet of paper towards the boy and gave him a pencil. "I can give you a list at once," he said, "you write down the names and addresses." And he

dictated to the boy several names among the titled and wealthy gentry of Calcutta, including Rajas, Maharajas and millionaires. The boy went round with the list in his pocket. At some houses he was turned away, at others he was kept waiting and then told to come next month for a small subscription. When he called next month he was put off again. Sick at heart and almost starving, the boy went back to Vidyasagara, who greeted him cheerfully with the remark, "Well, young man, I hope it is now all right and the wealthy and charitable people of Calcutta are giving you all the help you want." The boy hung down his head and told his rueful story. "I am not at all surprised," said Vidyasagara, "but it is just as well that you have been disabused of the notion that there is any charity among the wealthy, idle and dissolute men in this city." From that day he provided for all the needs of the disillusioned boy.

A branch of the Metropolitan Institution was opened in Syampukur, in the northern part of Calcutta. Under Vidyasagara's direction it was a standing order in the Metropolitan Institution that no corporal or humiliating punishment was to be inflicted on any student. On one occasion the headmaster of the Syampukur School ordered a student of one of the higher forms to stand up on the bench, a very degrading form of punishment. Word was brought to Vidyasagara of this flagrant breach of his clear instructions, and without waiting for the hired palanquin in which he sometimes moved about, he rushed off like a whirlwind on foot to the school, which was well over a mile from his residence. After verifying from the headmaster himself that the complaint was true, he dismissed the latter on the spot. Some of the other teachers resigned as a protest against the summary dismissal of the headmaster. A number of people tried to

persuade Vidyasagara to reconsider his decision on the ground that the school would suffer if the teachers left it in a body. This was just the kind of argument that never had any effect with Vidyasagara. He was adamant and declared that he would rather close the school than condone any infringement of his instructions. In the end the opposition fizzled out, fresh teachers were appointed and the school went on as before.

The one luxury, if it can be so called, that Vidyasagara permitted himself was a handsome and well-stocked library. It was one of the finest private libraries in Calcutta. He had a large collection of Sanskrit and English books, and new books were constantly added. Whenever he visited the book-store of Messrs. Thacker Spink & Co. other customers were requested to wait until the distinguished Pandit had been attended to, and all the principal booksellers of Calcutta used to send new books to him for inspection. All the volumes in his library were handsomely and expensively bound. Once a wealthy visitor while inspecting the library asked Vidyasagara whether it was necessary to have such costly binding for the books. "Where's the harm?" enquired Vidyasagara. "This money could be spent usefully otherwise," replied the visitor. After a while Vidyasagara asked, "What is the price of the shawl you are wearing?" "Five hundred rupees," answered the visitor, and with gratified vanity he displayed the fine texture and the high quality of his shawl. Vidyasagara dryly remarked, "A cheap blanket would serve the same purpose as this shawl; the money spent upon it could be better used. I use a coarse and cheap covering." The visitor felt properly rebuked and apologized.

Vidyasagara loved his books dearly. With his usual generosity he lent his books to people who wanted to

read them. One of his friends or acquaintances once took a valuable book from his library. It was a rare Sanskrit book obtained from Germany. As the book was not returned Vidyasagara sent for it and was told that it had been returned. Some time later, however, a hawker of old books brought a number of books to Vidyasagara and among these he found his own book, which had been lent out but had never come back. Vidyasagara bought back the book, and from that day he refused to lend any book from his library to any one.

His generosity and philanthropy formed the main-springs of his nature. To help, to succour, to minister, to serve were the ruling principles of his life. When a man is generous it is not merely the giving that matters, the heart that guides the open hand is the most important factor in deeds of charity. From a child upwards he was a helper of others; he gave freely and unostentatiously and never tired of giving. He followed strictly the direction of the great Teacher who said, "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Vidyasagara's benefactions were known only because good deeds can no more be hidden than evil ones. When Michael Madhusudan Dutta, the great Bengali poet who introduced blank verse in Bengali poetry and author of the famous epic poem *Meghnadbadh* ('The slaying of Indrajit, the valiant son of Ravana'), was about to be locked up in a debtors' prison in France, he appealed to Vidyasagara for help. At that time Vidyasagara himself was in debt, but without any hesitation he borrowed money afresh and sent it at once to Madhusudan. On his return to India the poet borrowed more money from Vidyasagara, but he was improvident and thriftless and was never able to repay any part of the debt. Shortly afterwards Madhusudan fell ill and died

in hospital.

Surendranath Banerjea, the orator and patriot, was in very straitened circumstances when he was dismissed from the Indian Civil Service. His father had been a friend of Vidyasagara, who offered a professorship in the Metropolitan Institution to Surendranath and thus placed him above immediate want. Vidyasagara was a most warm-hearted friend and he stinted nothing in serving those in distress.

The problem of the untouchable classes is now engaging the attention of those who are interested in the advancement of India as a united nation. For Vidyasagara there were no untouchables, for all humanity appealed equally to him. When a sweeper woman living near his house was attacked by cholera, Vidyasagara, who had learned homoeopathy and always kept a box of homoeopathic medicines, went at once to the sweeper's unclean hut, treated the stricken woman, tended her with his own hands and stayed the whole day in the hut until she was out of danger. His pitifulness and sympathy knew no bounds of caste or class and he never turned away from any man or woman in need of help. In the midst of his many activities his charities were never neglected and he never failed to render personal service to relieve pain and suffering.

Even when his fame had filled all Bengal and his strikingly original and incisive sayings were passing from mouth to mouth very few people outside the fairly large circle of his friends knew Vidyasagara by sight. He rarely faced the camera, he never spoke at a public meeting. No interviewer ever waylaid him, no snapshots were taken, no one had a garland to place round his neck. At the house of one of his friends in College Square he could be seen sitting on a bench on the foot-

path smoking a *hookah* and people would pass by without turning their heads to take a second look at him. He strongly disliked the very idea of being lionized and he was never on show in a rich man's drawing-room, or at any place of public resort. The Bengalis as a people have a finer sense of humour than any other people in India, and Vidyasagara was one of the most humorous of men. Although the wealthiest and most distinguished people of Calcutta were proud to count Vidyasagara among their friends, he was always the friend of the poor and went about in the garb of a poor man. A good story that he used to tell against himself was the shock he once gave to an admirer. He had to inspect a school in a village in the Hugli District and all the women, young and old, had assembled to have a look at the famous man who had striven so hard to improve the lot of women in Bengal. It was a hot summer day and Vidyasagara was rather late. When he arrived, accompanied by the school committee, an elderly lady pushed her way to the front and asked, "Where is Vidyasagara? Hasn't he come?" "Here he is," was the reply, and the speaker pointed to the inconspicuous little figure behind him. The old lady was shocked and disgusted and she made no effort to conceal her feelings. "What rotten luck!" she cried, "I have been grilling myself in the burning sun to see an Ooriya *palki*-bearer covered in a coarse sheet. He hasn't a carriage, a watch, nor is he wearing a *choga* and *chapkan*!"

On another occasion Vidyasagara was visiting a wealthy zemindar out of Calcutta. One day he happened to be out walking when he was recognized by an humble shopkeeper, who respectfully and eagerly requested him to rest a little in his shop. The man spread out a sackcloth in front of his shop and Vidyasagara took his seat

upon it without hesitation and began chatting with the shopkeeper. Just about this time the zemindar happened to be driving past in his carriage and pair. It was a very awkward encounter. The rich man could not very well pass Vidyasagara without taking notice of him. He had accordingly to stop his carriage and to alight from it to greet Vidyasagara. The next time they met Vidyasagara asked the zemindar whether he had felt embarrassed at the shopkeeper's door. "Yes, Sir," replied the rich man, "you sit down anywhere you like on the roadside and it is humiliating to meet you in such a place." "You have only to drop my acquaintance," retorted Vidyasagara, "and there will be no further occasion for you to feel ashamed. I have no intention of ignoring the shopkeeper just because he happens to be a poor man."

Every aspect of Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara's character fills us with the profoundest admiration and respect. His intellectual eminence alone would have entitled him to a place of distinction in the history of the Bengali language, but his heart eclipsed his intellect. Born among a people whose hearts had become callous through a prolonged thralldom to custom, his heart ached and bled at the sight of the child widow condemned to lifelong misery and humiliation. Born poor and brought up amidst depressing surroundings, he relieved poverty and suffering wherever he found them. Intellectually and morally the most advanced man of his time he refused to yield a jot to the craze for outlandish things. More tender-hearted than a woman, the tears readily welling up to the eyes from the fountain of his heart, he was at the same time bold and fearless as a lion. Inflexible and unbending as steel in his decisions, the strength of his character was sometimes mistaken for mere obstinacy by

his easy-going and weak-willed countrymen. Without the possession of rare strength and great virility of character he could have scarcely faced calmly the overwhelming opposition that awaited him at every step. In him saintliness and heroism were seen blended at their noblest and most beautiful. The example of a life so great, so noble, so selfless, so simple, is a proud heritage for any people and the story of that life should be interwoven into the web and woof of our national life.

2. RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA (1836—1886)

I

Of men that are called great, the greatest are the givers of radiance, the shedders of light, those who guide the groping hands and the hesitant and straying feet of men, who lift up drooping hearts with strong words of faith. There is no accounting for them, there is no explanation of their gift beyond the bare statement that it seems to be conferred by a higher Power which chooses them as instruments for the diffusion of light. This is the highest heroic element in man and forms his highest distinction. The highest gift vouchsafed unto man is the gift of faith, and the strength to inspire others with faith. The fabled messenger of the gods had wings on his heels, but the messengers that are seen on earth release winged words which fly on tireless pinions through the wide and endless expanses of Time. Men assign without hesitation the highest place to the teachers of humanity, the men who show the path that leads Godward. Among these is the assured place of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

The great bulk of humanity is usually content with the ways of the world. The impermanence of all things mundane does not seriously disturb the thoughts of men. The bonds of the world paralyse their spirit, the wrappings of life form an impenetrable veil for their vision. In varying degrees different peoples in different lands have hazy notions of a hereafter, of things beyond this life and beyond this earth, of a vitalizing and energizing Force behind manifest phenomena. Transcending these early thoughts comes the conception of a Creator and

Sustainer to whom homage is due. At the most, this is a fleeting and passing thought, and does not materially influence the course of life. While all waking thoughts are given to the affairs of this life, men, even when they are inclined to be religious, snatch only a few moments to think of their God, or the mystery of being. The world absorbs them as a piece of sponge absorbs water.

At times the dreary desolation of the Dead Sea of a stagnant humanity is quickened and galvanized into consciousness by the urgent voice of some great Teacher moved by compassion. He picks up the Dead Sea apple, the fruit of worldly life, beautiful and tempting to the eye, breaks it and shows the rottenness within. And his words are words of hope and good cheer, a call not merely to repentance but also to righteousness, a promise that man may come into his inheritance if he prove worthy. Such a Master may be born in a king's palace, or cradled in a stable manger; he may be born in a desert country or in a poor man's home. He is not a creature of circumstances, he is not affected by his surroundings. The signs that may distinguish him from other men come to be recognized either at birth or later on; the latent power in him may develop early or may mature at a later stage of life, but his message is always delivered and his part is always fulfilled before he lays down his life.

Born in a good but poor Brahmin family in a village in West Bengal the boy Gadadhar, who was afterwards known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa, began by both justifying and upsetting Carlyle's theory that the greatest men were born before any books were written. This is true to the extent that some of the greatest and most ancient books were composed by word of mouth but were not reduced to writing till several centuries later. There were great men when no books had been written, but

men may become great even now without the help of books. Ramakrishna took an early aversion to books and he did not acquire even the little learning that the village school could bestow. He barely learned to read his own language, but never acquired any other. If, however, he had a distaste for books he was avid about everything pertaining to religion, and eagerly read such Bengali books as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and anything else that came his way. But in all he read very little and could not be called an educated man. In conversation also he used the language of an ignorant villager, mixing up the respectful and the familiar forms of the pronoun 'you' in Bengali, and using swear-words freely. And yet in this crude form of speech he expressed thoughts which amazed and delighted his hearers, including several highly cultured persons in Bengal. Many of his sayings have become familiar as household words.

While yet a boy in his teens, Ramakrishna came to Calcutta with his brother, much older than himself, and afterwards moved to the temple at Dakshineswar on the bank of the Ganges, a few miles to the north of Calcutta. This temple had just been built and endowed by Rani Rasmani, a devout and wealthy woman belonging to an humble caste. The chief idol in the temple was an image of the goddess Kali in stone, but there were several temples with other images in them. Ramakrishna's brother was installed as priest, and after some time he asked the young lad to officiate at the daily worship. Ramakrishna was a good singer and he sang hymns and sacred songs with great feeling and emotion. His intense devotion, utter simplicity and truthfulness soon attracted the attention of Rani Rasmani and her son-in-law, Mathura Nath Biswas, and they treated him with the highest consideration as long as they lived. With the ex-

ception of a few occasional visits to his village home and a pilgrimage in the company of Mathura Nath, the whole life of Ramakrishna until nearly the very end, was spent at Dakshineswar.

Here in this temple and in the grounds surrounding it, in the little wooded arbour known as Panchavati, was begun and finished the spiritual evolution of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. This worshipper of idols, the lowest and most despised form of worship, this young man who had deliberately turned his back upon instruction and the knowledge derived from books, was filled with an overpowering longing to visualize Kali the Mother, whose carved image stood in the temple. He wept and wailed and cried out, "Mother!" until the people around him thought he was bereft of his senses. And he never rested until his agonized calls, the yearning of his soul were answered and the vision of God as Mother was granted to him.

So marked was Ramakrishna's dislike to all worldly affairs that his people were agreeably surprised when as a young man he agreed to marry a little girl several years his junior. It was not a marriage as the world understands the word, for there were no marital relations between them. During his protracted meditations and austere observances the sex instinct had been completely subdued by Ramakrishna. All women, even the fallen among them, were in his eyes manifestations of the divine Mother. When his wife grew up to be a young woman he worshipped her in due form, and subsequently explained to her that the Mother of the worlds was visible in her personality as well as in the image of the goddess in the temple. She was in fact his first disciple and was held in the greatest reverence by all the followers of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

At the temple at Dakshineswar food, cooked and uncooked, was freely supplied to sadhus and sannyasis who tarried there for a short space while on a pilgrimage to the various sacred places and shrines in India. Ramakrishna came in frequent contact with these people and learned from them many Hindi hymns and holy sayings. For a considerable time he was under the influence of a *Bhairavi*, a Bengali Brahmin woman, who initiated him into the forms of Tantric worship. Next he met Tota Puri, a stalwart *Advaitavadi* from the Punjab, from whom he received *Sannyasa*, and who probably conferred upon him the name of Ramakrishna. Tota Puri went about naked like the gymnosophists whom Alexander saw when he crossed the Indus and with whom he held converse. Ramakrishna used to speak of this man in later life as the "Naked One." From another person he learned the doctrine of Vaishnavism. He displayed keen interest in the tenets of Islam and for some time called upon the name of Allah and would not enter the temple of Kali. The name and teachings of Jesus Christ attracted him and he went and stood at the entrance of a church in reverent spirit. He went to the Adi Brahmo Samaj on the Chitpore Road in Calcutta and was much impressed by the genuine and deep devotion of Devendra-nath Tagore and Keshub Chunder Sen. In fact, he practised with full faith and conviction every form of worship that came to his knowledge or of which he heard, and he accepted every religion as a path to salvation. While under the instruction of Tota Puri he entered into *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* which is said to be the final stage of communion during which the soul is unified with the Absolute Godhead and all consciousness of the outer objective world is lost. From this time onward Ramakrishna used to pass frequently into a state of *samadhi*.

and while in this state he was unconscious of his surroundings, but his countenance was lit up with an ineffable rapture and beatitude. For some time these trances were attributed to physical or physiological causes, but this theory was abandoned when it was found that the inducement to *samadhi* was in every instance some intense religious thought or feeling.

The best description of the state of *samadhi* is to be found in the *Masnavi* of Jalaluddin Rumi:

"Ecstasy and words beyond all ecstatic words—

Immersion in the glory of the Lord of glory!

Immersion wherefrom was no extrication,

As it were identification with the Very Ocean."

Up to this time Ramakrishna Paramahansa was mainly concerned with the India of the past, the India of the ancient creeds and the ancient forms of worship, the worship of Siva and Vishnu, Kali and Krishna. He had also given thought to religions that had originated out of India. The intensity of his devotion and faith had brought on strange visional experiences. And now he came into direct touch with India of the present, leavened by western education and western thought. He went himself to see Keshub Chunder Sen, the great, gifted and deeply devout leader of the Brahmo Samaj of India, and very soon there sprang up between these two kindred spirits deep intimacy based upon their earnest religious feelings. Both were well advanced in their convictions, both were full of real humility. When Ramakrishna Paramahansa once asked Keshub to deliver a speech the latter replied, "Am I to vend needles in a blacksmith's shop? I would rather listen to your words." I may recall another unreported instance of Keshub's humility. When Father Luke Rivington, an eloquent priest of the Roman Catholic Church, delivered some

addresses in Calcutta, some people in Keshub's hearing remarked that Father Rivington could not be compared to Keshub as an orator. Keshub deprecated this remark and said Father Rivington was a big drum while he was like a child's toy drum. Ramakrishna Paramahansa invariably spoke of himself with the utmost humility. He used to say he was an atom of an atom, the servant of another man's servant. At Dakshineswar he usually avoided using the first person singular. He would say "here" or "of this place", meaning himself. "One came and said unto Jesus, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life? And he (Jesus) said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God."¹ It has been a characteristic of great religious teachers, holy men and saints to avoid the egoism implied in the pronoun "I". The Buddha spoke of himself as the Tathagata, Jesus Christ called himself the Son of Man, Muhammad in the Koran uses either his name, or designates himself as the unlettered Prophet or simply the Prophet. Chaitanya and the leading Vaishnavas called themselves servants of other men, the well-known Pavhari Baba of Ghazipur spoke of himself in the third person singular as the servant of the man he happened to be addressing. The Buddha said, "Such things as a *Me* and *Mine* are really and truly nowhere to be found."² In the case of such men:

"Love [the love of God] took up the harp of Life,
and smote on all the chords with might;

Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd
in music out of sight."³

There has been some speculation and theorizing

1. St. Matthew.

2. *The Discourses of the Buddha*: "The Parable of the Snake".

3. Tennyson.

about the influence exercised by Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Keshub Chunder Sen upon each other. The followers and admirers of both these Teachers have claimed the larger share of influence for their own Master. A speculation of this kind is neither profitable nor edifying. Both these great men had remarkable personalities, both were mutually attracted towards each other, both had high respect for each other, both must have derived some advantage from their loving and intimate intercourse. The Buddha met Nigantha⁴ Nathaputta (Nirgrantha Nathaputra), who was none other than Mahavira, the twenty-fourth and last Tirthankara of the Jainas, and had discussions with him. Who shall say how far these two Teachers influenced each other? Is it for any one to speculate to what extent Jesus of Nazareth was influenced by John the Baptist, or the Buddhist preachers who carried the gospel of the Buddha to Asia Minor? Does any one believe that the Jew and the two Christians with whom the Prophet Muhammad associated for some time inspired the Koran? Advaita was older than Chaitanya and a very staunch Vaishnava. Does that justify the inference that the whirlwind of Chaitanya's divine love was influenced by the older man? Guru Nanak associated with Hindu and Mussalman holy men. Is there any need for making up an account of his indebtedness to others?

Following the distinguished lead of Keshub Chunder Sen other men of note began visiting Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The papers controlled by Keshub published some of his sayings and drew attention to the saintliness of his character. Max Muller heard of him and wrote on account of him and quoted his sayings. Protap Chandra Mazumdar of the Brahmo Samaj, a man of high

4. *Nirgrantha*—the unfettered.

intellectual attainments, wrote several articles remarkable for their eloquence and expressive of warm admiration. Among other sentiments of praise he wrote: "So long as he is spared to us, gladly shall we sit at his feet to learn from him the sublime precepts of purity, unworldliness, spirituality and inebriation in the love of God." Elsewhere he wrote: "He has no other thought, no other occupation, no other relation, no other friend in his humble life than his God. That God is more than sufficient for him." The phrase "humble life" is somewhat perplexing. Are not the lives of great religious teachers as a rule humble? It is only in the midst of humble surroundings that the knowledge of God can be acquired. The Buddha, the son of a king and heir to a kingdom, begged his daily bread from the humblest or lowliest people as well as from others. Jesus Christ said, "the son of Man hath not where to lay his head." And yet the Buddha was happier than Sreniya Bimbisara, the king of Magadha, and Jesus Christ was equally happy, and on one occasion precious ointment was poured upon his head as if he had been a king. And who was happier than Ramakrishna Paramahansa in his unbroken communion, full of rapture, with God? Humble as are the lives of such men they are fully conscious of their power. The Buddha said, "Lo, the world is mine—the world I cast away only to save."⁵ Siv Nath Sastri and Bejoy Krishna Goswami, also of the Brahmo Samaj, were frequent visitors to the Paramahansa and the former has left his impressions in writing.

Any man attempting at that time to form an estimate of Ramakrishna would have been hopelessly bewildered. He was married but, in his eyes, his wife was the same as the goddess Kali, whom he worshipped as Mother. He

5. Shyama Shanker: *Buddha and His Sayings*.

was a sannyasi, but he never put on the garb of one, because in his heart he was a greater sannyasi than any he had met. His aversion to woman and wealth was so great that the mere touch of gold and silver twisted and paralysed his fingers, and women were only permitted to bow down to him from a distance. Any reference to the affairs of this world filled him with loathing. He spoke only of the deity under various names and forms. In moods of exaltation he spoke to the Mother of the Universe as if She were present before him. He relied upon Her as a little child relies upon its mother. In the temple there was no Delphic oracle concealed behind the image of the goddess and yet all his questions and doubts were answered by the divine voice within him. When he called a man a fool or by some other name, it sounded like a caress. He radiated joy and happiness and bliss. He sang and danced to the glory of God, and he rose to the height of beatific ecstasy when he passed into *samadhi*. He loved men of all sects and creeds and refused to draw the line anywhere. In him were fulfilled the words of the Buddha: "Unsullied shall our minds remain, nor shall evil words escape our lips. Kind and compassionate ever, we will abide loving of heart, nor shall harbour secret hate. We will permeate ourselves with streams of loving thought unfailing, and forth from us proceeding, enfold and permeate the whole wide world with constant thoughts of loving kindness, ample, expanded, measureless, free from enmity and free from ill-will."⁶

It has been stated that Ramakrishna Paramahansa was an idolater and officiated for some time as a priest of the temple of the goddess Kali at Dakshineswar. According to all accounts idolatry is a debased form of

6. *The Discourses of the Buddha*: "The Parable of the Saw."

worship. Islam is known to be severely iconoclastic and violently opposed to the worship of idols but in reality this revulsion of feeling is an inheritance from Judaism. In the Book of Deuteronomy it is expressly commanded that any man or woman who worships images or other gods, the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, shall be stoned to death, and even a brother, son, daughter or wife who takes secretly to such worship must not be spared. And yet no theist or pantheist, Christian or Mussalman, who saw Ramakrishna, ever dreamed of despising his faith. The image of a god or goddess was to him only a symbol, just as he called his own body a sheath, a covering for the Reality in him. His speech, his life, his rapt intentness, dispelled the illusion that he was content with a crude and primitive form of belief. He owed nothing to books for he never read them. What he heard by word of mouth from various devotees, whose names are known only because he used to mention them, may account partly, but by no means wholly, for the extraordinary range of his wisdom and the inexhaustible store of his spiritual knowledge. The most intricate and complicated system of religion in the world is what is wrongly called Hinduism, which from the original Sanskrit word *Indu* (the moon), meant as a compliment to the country, has passed into *Hindu*, a Persian word expressive of merely the dark complexion of the people of this country; but every doctrine and every tenet of this ancient accumulation of Aryan wisdom and belief was as simple to Ramakrishna Paramahansa as the A B C of the primer to an intelligent child. His preceptors, those that gave him oral instruction, were left behind. Even this immense treasure did not satisfy the craving of his spirit. Unlike a Hindu who is usually satisfied with the religion of his fathers, he inquired about other

religions and discovered the Truth in all. He was a living illustration of his own parable of the wood-cutter who was advised to go forward and who discovered richer treasures the farther he went. Ramakrishna Paramahansa turned with disgust from worldly wealth, but he never tired of acquiring the wealth of the spirit-world, and never rested till his treasure-house was full to overflowing.

The points of resemblance between the great Teachers of humanity fill the mind with wonder. The teaching in the *Bhagavadgita*, which has permeated the whole of India and has reached other parts of the world, was originally addressed by Sri Krishna to Arjuna alone. The first Teacher who charged his disciples to carry his doctrine abroad and to offer it to all alike without distinction for acceptance was the Buddha. He had all the learning of his time but he used only the simple Pali idiom then understood by the common people, and his discourses were addressed either to the monks or inquirers. He made use of parables and stories to expound his doctrines. The dignity, serenity and eloquence of his discourses are as elevating as they are impressive. Jesus Christ spoke in a language of astonishing beauty and simplicity, making use of striking images and parables. But he also spoke to small audiences and not to large crowds. The Sermon on the Mount was delivered only to his disciples, for it is stated that seeing the multitudes, and evidently to avoid them, Jesus went up unto a mountain and his disciples came unto him. Muhammad was unlettered and the Koran was uttered, *Sura* by *Sura*, in the hearing of the few faithful who were his early converts. The Koran sometimes shows the passion of the Hebrew prophets and again there are passages of great grandeur and sublimity. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, when not citing the scriptures about which

he had heard, used the simplest similes and illustrations derived from the observation of the things and incidents of everyday life. There was a slight halt in his speech, but his words flowed on, unhasting and unresting, and the few people around him drank in the words with bated breath and undivided attention. The Teacher is different from the orator who addresses and sways multitudes. The words of the Teacher are charged with power and weighted with authority and he drops them as pearls to be picked up and strung together by the privileged but few listeners. The *Guru* teaches, the *Chela* preaches. Jesus Christ put it exceedingly well to his disciples: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops."⁷ Yea, upon the housetops and in the market-place, in the forum and across the seas let the preacher with a mandate carry the word of the Teachers and Lights of the world to freshen and sweeten the springs and waters of life.

The persuasiveness and power of the great Masters did not always move the hearts of all their hearers. Devadatta was a cousin of the Buddha and member of the Order of the Monks following the Master's teachings. He claimed to possess the power of *iddhi* (working miracles and mystery wonders) and insisted upon the importance of austerities and penances. He persistently endeavoured to undermine the influence and power of the Buddha, and on one occasion when there was a schism between the monks asked the Master to resign the leadership of the Order in his favour. In the Jataka tales it is related that Devadatta was invariably an opponent of the Buddha in previous births and even made an

7. St. Matthew.

attempt on his life. After the death of the Buddha, Sùbhadra, a monk who had joined the Order of the Bhikkhus in his old age, said they were well rid of the great Samana (the Buddha) because he used to annoy them by telling them what was becoming and what was unbecoming in their conduct. Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve apostles chosen by the Christ and beloved of him, and to whom he had promised, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And Judas sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver and betrayed him, not by open denunciation or public accusation, but by the treacherous kiss of seeming love. Abu Lahab, uncle of the Prophet Muhammad, "rejected his nephew's claim to the prophetic office at the instigation of his wife, Umme Djemil, who is said to have strewn the path of Muhammad on one occasion with thorns. For this they have been cursed in the Koran "Let the hands of Abu Lahab perish, and let himself perish! . . . Burned shall he be at the fiery flame, and his wife laden with firewood,—on her neck a rope of palm fibre."⁸ Hriday Mukerji was a nephew of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his constant companion. He tended his uncle in illness and served him in many ways, but he never realized the greatness of the Paramahansa. He scoffed at him and used to tell him to speak out all that he had to say, once for all, and not to harp on his ideas constantly. He became so rude and insolent that on one occasion the Paramahansa thought of drowning himself in the Ganges to escape the tyranny of Hriday. This man was at length expelled from the temple by the proprietors. Shortly after Hriday became exceedingly repentant but he was not permitted to serve the Master again. A current

8. *The Koran*, Sura CXI.

of electricity, usually so powerful and irresistible, is baffled and set at naught by a non-conducting medium. Similarly, there are men to whom the words of the best teachers make no appeal.

Humble as was the life of Ramakrishna he never made any distinction between one man and another, between a wealthy and titled person and a poor and obscure individual. He designated every one, Raja or Maharaja, eminent writer or famous man, by name and was always outspoken in his expressions of opinion. Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the famous writer and composer of the *Vande Mataram* song, was reproved for his ill-timed and indecorous levity while conversing with Ramakrishna and made to look foolish by a story which the Master told. So were Maharaja Jotindra Mohan Tagore and Kristo Das Pal for their assumption of superiority. Householders were always advised to devote some time to the contemplation of the deity. Of what use was all the learning in the world, Ramakrishna was in the habit of saying, if it afforded no glimpse of God? That was the touchstone on which the metal of every man's nature was tested. Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, a learned scientist and the leading homoeopathic physician of Calcutta in his time, who made a fetish of scientific scepticism, was strongly attracted by Ramakrishna Paramahansa whom he treated in his last illness, and used to spend hours listening to the marvellous conversation of his patient. The rugged exterior of Dr. Sircar concealed a deep love for the truth, and he was fascinated by the inexhaustible flow of the truth from the lips of Ramakrishna.

What books could have imparted to him the lore of wisdom that he acquired from the Book of Life? He knew all without the books, and he knew also what no

book can teach, the knowledge that comes from within, the lesson which is written on the illuminated scroll of the spirit. The floating wisdom of the scriptures and the saints came to him by the mnemonic method known in India from time immemorial, but he gathered from this commonplace and mercenary world itself his gift of illustration and simile even as the lotus derives its beauty and fragrance and purity from the mud and slime out of which it grows. The figures and comparisons he used were extremely simple but strikingly and profoundly suggestive. For instance, he compared the formless Absolute, the deity detached from any conception of a personality, to water without form and the notion of a Personal God to a block of ice. The parable of the fisherwoman and the florist is a beautiful illustration of the man who cannot turn his thoughts away from the world and the other man who thinks of his God. A fisherwoman who had sold her fish in the market was returning home in the evening with her empty basket when a thunderstorm came on and it grew dark, and she sought shelter in the house of a florist who happened to live on the way. She was received kindly by the flowerwoman, who asked her to put her fish basket in a corner of the yard, gave her food and a place to sleep near a room in which flowers were kept and below which there were plants with flowers in bloom. Although tired the fisherwoman could get no sleep. She remained awake and tossed about on her bed, and felt something was irking her. At length she realized that the unaccustomed scent of flowers was the cause of her uneasiness and prevented sleep coming to her eyes. She got up, brought her basket and set it down near her head, and with the familiar stench of stale and putrid fish in her nostrils she went off into a happy sleep. Never can the

man of the world be happy if his thoughts are withdrawn from the associations of the world, associations which cling to him as the fisherwoman's sense of smell is haunted by the malodour of fish. The florist is an admirable symbol of the man who turns his thoughts towards God, for in worship there can be no finer offering than flowers. As the worldly man, engrossed in the affairs of the world, derives no benefit in the company of a man of God, so the fisherwoman gained nothing by passing a night under the roof of the dealer in flowers.

And this identical thought will be found in the *Itu-vuttaka*, the Sayings, or Logia, of the Buddha:

“Like unto a man that wrappeth up
 A stinking fish in Kusa grass,
 And the grass giveth forth a stinking savour
 Like unto him are those that attend on fools.
 And like unto a man that wrappeth
 A (morsel of the fragrant) Tagara within a petal,
 And the leaves give forth a pleasant savour
 Like unto him are those that attend the stead-
 fast.”

How can we account for this parallelism of thought and parable, illustration and symbol? Ramakrishna Paramahansa, uninstructed even in the speech of gentle folk, spoke often even as the Buddha and the Christ spoke, and again out of the radiance of his own wisdom. It was not a process of cerebration, conscious or unconscious, no mentation or intellection within our very limited knowledge, but a subtle sympathy of a freemasonry of the soul defying time, and beyond our cognition and conception. I shall cite one more instance of coincidence between the sayings of the Buddha and the Paramahansa. Almost word for word the Bengali text of

the Paramahansa's saying⁹ is the same as that of the Buddha, the only difference being in the moral drawn from the parable. In the *Kevadha Sutta*, in the Dialogues of the Buddha, it is related that a certain Bhikkhu asked a certain question of the gods, and getting no satisfactory answer came back to the Master to whom he repeated the question. Before answering the question the Buddha told him this parable: "Long, long ago, brother, seafaring traders were wont, when they were setting sail on an ocean voyage, to take with them a land-sighting bird. And when the ship got out of sight of the shore, they would let the land-sighting bird free. Such a bird would fly to the East, and to the South and to the West, and to the North, to the zenith and to the intermediate points of the compass. And if anywhere on the horizon it caught sight of land, thither would it fly. But if no land, all round about, were visible, it would come back to the ship. Just so, brother, do you . . . come back to me." There is an undercurrent of humour and slight badinage throughout the legend. Ramakrishna Paramahansa repeated the same legend to point the moral that after many wanderings the spirit of man finds peace in thinking of God and is at rest. It should occasion no surprise if this parable is found in other ancient books.

In the history of religions we find the same human weaknesses that are to be met with in the affairs of the world. There is no simple religion, small or great, which has not been divided into sects and factions even as land, wealth and other property are divided among men. Religious differences have led to bloodshed and the waging of war. Belief in one religion exists side by side with unbelief in others. The followers of every

9. *Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* by M., Vol. III, p. 216.

religion consider it as the only true and the best religion in the world. Some religions admit no newcomers into their fold and are strictly confined to those who are born in them. There is no other ingress. Those who profess one religion designate the followers of another faith in terms of opprobrium and contempt. Their own prophets and saints are the best and the greatest in the world. Out of each particular religion there is no salvation to be found. Each particular religion claims to be the only oasis in the Sahara of heresy and unbelief, the only haven of refuge in the tempestuous sea of doubt. There is a sense of superiority, self-elation, a persistent manifestation of egoism, and even the proud feeling of proprietorship. Some people look upon themselves as specially chosen by God, others look upon their God as greater and more powerful than the God of other people. As Ramakrishna Paramahansa said, some one fences in a little bit of the Ganges by driving in some stakes and says, "This is my Ganges", implying that he claims a particular and reserved share of the sanctity ascribed to that river.

Earlier Teachers taught love and compassion for all men and even for all creatures having life. Ramakrishna Paramahansa added love and respect for all religions. In a few words he said what may be amplified and expounded in volumes: "As many faiths so many paths." "In my Father's house are many mansions", said Jesus Christ; "and many roads lead to them", added Ramakrishna Paramahansa. If religion were compared to a compass, the four cardinal points would be represented by the four principal religions of the world, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, and the other directions would indicate other creeds and sections. If the compass is turned round, all the different directions

marked on the dial will, in turn, point to the north. All religions are so many radii streaming out in various directions, but however wide apart at the circumference, they have only to be retraced and all of them will be found converging upon the same centre—God. Neither by word nor by thought is any religion to be despised or condemned by any man. This is Ramakrishna Paramahansa's message and this is his teaching.

From of old, men have believed in the working of miracles, mystic wonders, by prophets claiming divine powers, saints and even poets imbued with a deep religious feeling. The widespread belief is due in a great measure to the superstitiousness inborn in human nature, but it is also part of the cumulative evidence considered necessary to establish the extraordinary gifts or capacity of the man supposed to be endowed with supernatural powers. Very ancient books like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are full of miraculous incidents such as the restoration of the dead to life, the opening of the earth to overwhelm an offender or to give shelter to some ill-treated being, sudden vanishing from sight and so on.

People are not deterred by the consideration that among common and credulous men the line that divides a miracle from a clever juggle is a thin one and even indistinguishable to very ignorant people. On the other hand, the mere multiplication of miracles can make no man a prophet, or a teacher holding a commission from on High. As a child Sri Krishna is reputed to have performed many wonderful miracles, but if it had not been for the profound teaching in the *Bhagavadgita* he would not have taken such high rank as an avatar. Wipe out the whole of the miracles that happened at Brindavan and Mathura, and it will make no difference whatsoever

to the reverence and the worship of Krishna. But take away the *Bhagavadgita* and nothing will be left of his divinity and supreme personality. Gautama the Buddha claimed no divine powers, as in fact he taught nothing but self-reliance and self-control for the attainment of *nirvana*. The strongest language that he ever used was in condemnation of miracles or mystic wonders. He explained that the unbeliever and the sceptic might attribute these wonders to the possession of some particular charm. Said the Buddha: "It is because I perceive danger in the practice of mystic wonders, that I loathe, abhor, and am ashamed thereof." In spite of this emphatic expression of detestation, legend and tradition have invested the Buddha with more numerous and astonishing miracles than have been ascribed to the founder of any other religion. Is Jesus Christ remembered and revered for his miracles or for the Sermon on the Mount and the beauty and the depth of his teaching? If the Gospels were not burdened with miracles, it would take away nothing from the real value of the books. But since Moses and Aaron worked miracles and Jesus Christ was greater than them, his miracles were also greater. The unbelievers of whom the Buddha spoke were not slow to disparage Jesus Christ. When he cast out evil spirits the Pharisees said, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." And Jesus had to expostulate with them and to explain that he derived his power from the Spirit of God. At the very last, even when the Master was passing through the agony of death on the cross, they mocked him, saying, "He saved others; himself he cannot save", meaning that the miracle that had recalled Lazarus to life after he had lain four days in the grave was unavailing in the case of the Saviour himself. The Pharisees

are to be found everywhere and in every race, and at all times. The Prophet of Arabia is reported to have split the moon in two by pointing at it, and water ran through his fingers as he held them out. But did the Pharisees and the unbelievers accept the sign of the miracles? The answer is given in the Koran itself: "The hour hath approached and the moon hath been cleft. But whenever they see a miracle they turn aside and say, This is well-devised magic. And they have treated the prophets as impostors." Miracles were quite common among Mussalman saints and Sufi mystics, several of whom could restore the dead to life. But it is the message and not the miracle that is the real test, the true symbol of power. It is not by the temporary upsetting of the ordering of nature and dazzling the eyes of men and filling their minds with wonder that the prophet and the teacher are to be recognized, but by their words and the manner of their lives, the errand of mercy and the message of promise. Think of the potency of the word when it is said the sound is Brahman and the word is Brahman, and again when it is said at the western end of Asia, "the Word was with God, and the Word was God."¹⁰ Of all miracles on record the one that impresses the imagination the most, apart altogether from its credibility or otherwise, is one that relates not to life but to death, to the strength of faith, to the steadfastness of testimony in life and in death. An account of this miracle is to be found in the book known as *Tazkaratul Aulia*. The name of Hussein Mansur al Hallaj, the great Persian Sufi and mystic who lived about a thousand years ago, is known throughout Islam. He was a weaver like Kabir, the saint and poet of Benares. He proclaimed *An-al-Haq* meaning I am the Truth, God.

10. St. John.

This is no more than the *Sohamasmi* (I am that I am) of the Upanishad, *Ahmi yad Ahmi Mazdao* (I am that I am) in the Hormazd Yasht in the Zend Avesta, and "I am that I am" in the Second Book of Moses. Wandering sadhus in India go about shouting *Soham*. But Mansur was several times tortured and punished for blasphemy, and was finally put to slow death. His hands, his feet and his tongue were cut off and from each dismembered and quivering limb came forth the cry, *An-al-Haq, An-al-Haq!* He was then beheaded and the body was burned to ashes, and, lo! even the ashes bore triumphant testimony with a disembodied, clear voice. And when the ashes were thrown into the waters of the Tigris they formed into Arabic letters and framed the words *An-al-Haq!*

Ramakrishna Paramahansa characterized the desire to perform even minor miracles¹¹ as evidence of a low mind. Why should any miracles be attributed to him when those who were honoured by a sight of him, and I was among the number, saw the main miracle of his self-luminance and listened to the outflow of the welling spring of wisdom that never ran dry? The lamp that burned within him, steady and unflickering, and diffused light all around was the miracle. It was a miracle when he passed into *samadhi*.

What can be more marvellous than that, when at length, Ramakrishna Paramahansa drew a few disciples towards himself, he selected young lads and men of good families, receiving their education in English schools and colleges? It was a sign of which the importance has not yet been sufficiently recognized. He knew nothing of English and he had always consorted with sadhus and devotees ignorant of English, but he did not seek any

11. *Siddha-iddhi* in Pali, *riddhi* in Sanskrit.

disciple from among them. "Why do I love young men so much? Because they are masters of the whole of their minds," said Ramakrishna. The young mind is unsophisticated, impressionable, receptive, responsive. And each one of the disciples was chosen with great care and remained under the closest observation of the Master. With what prophetic penetration he saw the promise in the boy Narendra, now known all the world over as Swami Vivekananda! He crooned over him like a mother, sang to him, wept for him, spoke about him with unbounded praise. What was the secret of this great, unfathomable, inexplicable love? It was the knowledge of the power that lay latent in the young, masterful and independent lad. The Master wanted to win this boy from the world and to set him on the path appointed for him. Vivekananda objected to bow to the image of Kali on the ground that it was a sign of a blind faith. Ramakrishna gently remonstrated with him saying, "Is not faith of every kind blind?" Faith is not built on the syllogistic foundations of reason but on the unseeing rock of intuition, the adamant of the spirit. Samson, blinded, waxed stronger than he was before his eyes had been put out, and "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." When orphaned by the death of his father Vivekananda was struggling with desperate poverty and rushing hither and thither for employment in order to find a mouthful of food for his widowed mother and brothers, Ramakrishna while apparently indifferent, was putting forth his will to hold the distracted young man to the rough road of renunciation. When one of his followers asked for leave to bury his dead father, Jesus Christ, the Compassionate One, who healed the sick and promised to give rest to those that labour and are heavy

laden, replied in stern accents, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." Let the hungry feed themselves, was the unspoken mandate of Ramakrishna, though at the earnest entreaty of Vivekananda he gave the benediction that those who were left would not lack plain fare. Not many are called to leave the ways of the world, but when the call doth come the iron must enter the soul of the man who wrenches himself free from the entangling meshes of the world. Ramakrishna used to say of Vivekananda, "He moves about with a drawn sword in his hand"—the sword of intellect and wisdom, the keen blade that divides the darkness of ignorance and slays the dragon of desire. Some of the young boys used to go and see Ramakrishna Paramahansa by stealth; all of them were rebuked at home and some were even chastised. In the opinion of the people at home these boys were being led astray by the strange talk of the strange Teacher at Dakshineswar. And so once again the words of Jesus of Nazareth were fulfilled: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Vivekananda was a brand snatched from the burning, the roaring furnace of the desires and distractions of the world. He and his fellow-disciples never faltered in their loyalty to the memory of the Master, or in following his teachings through life. It is a little over forty years that Ramakrishna Paramahansa passed from this life and Vivekananda, the greatest among his disciples, followed his Master about twenty-five years ago. This is not a long period for the acceptance of a doctrine and

the understanding of a message, but the result so far achieved is by no means insignificant. The gospel of Ramakrishna Paramahansa is not a new creed and it does not seek to set up a new religion. It is a note of peace in the conflict of the many contending religions of the world. It is the living faith of universalism. Is not every religion a path to God, does not every river find its way to the sea? There may be many religions, but there is only one Truth as there is only one sun in the solar system. To the man of faith there is salvation in every religion. Ramakrishna Paramahansa condemned lachrymose and repeated confessions of sin. If a man constantly thinks and speaks of his sins he tends to become sinful. It is not by professions of repentance but by the strength of a burning faith that a man frees himself from sin. This courageous and heartening doctrine has been carried to many lands and many peoples. The secret of the remarkable success of Vivekananda's mission to the West is to be found in the teaching of the Master. There is no exhortation to prefer one creed to another. There is no suggestion of eclecticism. There must be unquestioning and loving acceptance of all religions as true, every honour is to be shown to every religion. Vivekananda yielded a full measure of gratitude to his Master: "If in my life I have told one word of truth it was his and his alone." Of the many disciples of Vivekananda in the West the most intellectual and the most gifted was Sister Nivedita, who was formerly known as Margaret Noble. I have seen her kneeling reverently before an image of Kali, and surely she was no idolater. In Bombay I have seen devout and earnest Zoroastrians helping the Ramakrishna Mission liberally with funds. The largest donor, a Parsi friend I have known for thirty years, has refused

to disclose even his name, and the story of his attraction to Ramakrishna and Vivekananda would read like a miracle. The Maths at Belur and Mayavati were founded with funds supplied by the English and American disciples of Vivekananda. Those who have understood the message of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, whether monks or householders, recognize that it does not mean the setting up of a new church, religion or sect. A new sect would be lost in the wilderness of sects in India. Rather should we look upon the doctrine of Ramakrishna as the confluence of all the streams of the various religions of the world, each one retaining its identity and distinctiveness. The Ramakrishna Mission is the assembly room of all religions, the reception hall where the Hindu and the Zoroastrian, the Buddhist and the Christian, the Moslem and the Sikh may meet as friends and brothers, with conviction in their own faiths and respect for the faiths of others. In equal honour are held the Vedas, the Vedanta and the Puranas, the Zend Avesta and the Gathas; the Tripitaka and the Dhammapada, the Old Testament and the New; the Koran and the Grantha Saheb. The first great evangelist of the doctrine of the truth in all religions was Swami Vivekananda and he expounded the Vedanta, the most ancient of all the living religions, while upholding the claim of all other religions to the possession of the Truth. The next great apostle may be a Zoroastrian, a Buddhist, a Christian, or a follower of Islam. Words like *mlechcha*, heretic, unbeliever, heathen, pagan, *kafir* and *musrik* must cease to be current coin in the treasury of languages, and must be decently buried out of sight and out of memory.

Up to the present time the majority of the disciples and followers of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and those

who hold his memory in reverence are to be found among the educated classes of India. It has happened just as in the case of the disciples selected by himself. If he did not acquire any learning from books it was of no consequence. Men like him have been called incarnations of God, messengers of God, or God-inspired. This is a matter of belief, on which opinions may conflict, since a man who is called an avatar by his followers, may be called by a less respectful appellation by other people. There is no universal acceptance by all mankind of any prophet or a living incarnation of God. But there can be no disagreement as to the peculiar qualities which distinguish them from other men. If Ramakrishna had been content to follow the vocation of a priest, who would have heard his name today? What was it that turned his thoughts away from the world and illuminated him from within with the light of God? Some people imagined at first that his mind was unhinged and he was suffering from a physical ailment. What made them change their minds? And it is now admitted that he is among the few who, from time to time, bring light into the long night of human ignorance. Men are happy in the bondage of the world even as a prisoner long kept in irons finds music in the clank of his chains. Renunciation of the world is looked upon as an aberration, an act of foolishness, not only by men of the world but sometimes even by men presumed to be unworldly. When the Buddha gave up painful penances and a course of starvation, the ascetics with whom he had been undergoing this discipline discussed him and one of them said, "Have you seen so late that this man acts like a mad-man? When he lived in his palace he was revered and powerful; but he was not able to rest in quiet, and so went wandering far off through mountains and woods,

giving up the estate of a *Chakravartin* to lead the life of an abject and outcast. What need we think about him more; the mention of his name but adds sorrow to sorrow."¹² This is the wisdom of the world, but does the world deny today that the teachings of the Buddha have lifted the burden of sorrow from the lives of millions and millions of men and women?

Apparently, such men spurn the world with all its fleeting pleasures and fascinations from a feeling of disgust with the ways of the world. But they are neither cynics nor misanthropes. They cast away the world only to save it. It is because they are filled with a boundless love for humanity, because their hearts are moved by an unfathomable pity that they renounce the world. When a man falls into a pit he can be pulled up only by a man who stands outside and not by another who has himself fallen in. The man who holds a torch to guide other people through the darkness must stand clear of the crowd. It is only a man having eyesight that can lead the blind. The tinsel power and pomp of a day dazzles the beholder as a fluttering butterfly attracts a child. But what are kings and emperors and the mighty ones of the earth compared to these humble men who were content to be poor? When the Buddha stood with his begging bowl before the door of a householder barefooted, silent and with his head bowed upon his breast, did the man or the woman who put a morsel of food in the beggar's bowl, or let him pass with an empty bowl, ever realize that that beggar was among the very greatest ones of the world through all time, before whose image millions would prostrate themselves long after the very names of kings and emperors had been forgotten? When they nailed the bleeding and

tortured Christ to the cross, did those who mocked him and jeered at him ever think that even the cross itself would become a symbol of blessing and salvation to millions upon earth? The king of the Jews, they called him in foolish mockery, and he is today the Lord of Christendom, the Redeemer and Saviour of all who believe him to be the Son of God. Ramakrishna Paramahansa lived an humble life forty-five years ago. Today he is regarded as an avatar by many; who can tell what place will be assigned to him a thousand years hence? A considerable literature has already grown up around his teachings and his memory.

If we say one avatar is greater than another, or the founder of one religion is endowed more highly than another, we sow afresh the seed of the disputes that have been the bane of all religions. And how are comparisons between these Teachers to be made? Is it by a comparison of the miracles attributed to each one of them, or by the number of the following of each and the extent of their spiritual dominions? Either of these tests would be misleading. In the first place, the most devout followers of every religion are content to read their own sacred books and do not take any interest in other scriptures. Suppose, in the next place, some one undertook to read all the sacred books of all religions. Would that make him competent to make a comparison between the personalities of the great Teachers of humanity? Did even the disciples of the Buddha and the Christ, men who followed them constantly and listened to their teachings, know all about the Masters? There is no order of precedence in which such names can be placed and we shall be well advised in being cautioned by the grave rebuke administered by the Buddha to Sariputra, the right-hand disciple, who shared with Mud-

garaputra the distinction of being the chief follower of the Blessed One, and was the ablest among the disciples.

On one occasion when no one else was present Sariputra told the Master: "Such a faith have I, O Lord, that methinks there never was and never will be either monk or Brahman greater or wiser than thou." Note should be taken of the fact that Sariputra did not call the Buddha an incarnation of God, or the embodiment of all divine qualities, because such a doctrine formed no part of the teachings of the Buddha.

The Buddha replied, "Grand and bold are the words of thy mouth, Sariputra. Behold, thou hast burst forth into ecstatic song. Of course then thou hast known all the sages that were?"

"No, Master."

"Of course then thou hast perceived all the sages who will appear in the long ages of the future?"

"No, Master."

"But at least then, Sariputra, thou knowest what I am, comprehending my mind with thy mind, and all about my conduct, wisdom, doctrine and mode of life?"

"Not so, Lord."

"Lo! here, Sariputra, no knowledge hast thou concerning Awakened Ones, past, future or present. Why then forsooth are thy words so grand and bold? What hast thou burst forth in ecstatic song?"

This is the admonition to be always borne in mind. How can we call one Prophet or Teacher greater than another when we really know nothing of either? But human presumption is equalled by human ignorance, and we solemnly proclaim some one as a full incarnation and another as a part incarnation of God as if we carry in our poor heads and puny hands an instrument to measure God Himself! It is easy enough to compare kings and

emperors, fools and wise men, men of wit and men of wealth, poets and philosophers, but the yard-stick that can measure the Masters of mercy and the Lords of truth, the guides and teachers of the human race, the pathfinders who point out the ways that lead to salvation, has not been made. There is a legend that a certain Brahmin attempted to measure the height of the Buddha with a bamboo, but failed to do so because he could not find any bamboo which was not overtopped by the head of the Buddha.¹³ This must be interpreted in a metaphorical sense, for it is clear that the reference here is not to the physical stature of the Buddha. The wisdom of this Brahmin is not yet a thing of the past. In thinking of such Teachers let us at least endeavour to reach a frame of mind in which we may truthfully say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Let us believe in the many paths that lead to the one Truth. And belief comes not in the pride of intellect or the rigidity of dogma, but in the lowliness of the spirit, the receptivity of the soul to light whencesoever it may come.

To Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the Exalted Ones of the Great White Lodge, homage!

II

When Prince Siddhartha attained Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and became the Buddha his first converts were the five Brahmins or Rishis who had been practising severe penance and had advised him to follow their example. First one of them and afterwards all five were convinced by the teaching of the Buddha and became the first monks of the order of the Bhikkhus. Jesus, soon after he began preaching, was "walking by the sea of Galilee and he saw two brethren, Simon called Peter,

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and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him."

Unknown to other people Ramakrishna had practised various austerities and had followed different kinds of *sadhana* for a number of years. At first he sought no disciples and no one came to him for instruction. In the evenings he would go up to the roof of the house in which he lived and cry out, "Come ye and accept the Truth!" These words mingled with the evening breeze and Ramakrishna returned to his meditations and communions.

Slowly people in and around Calcutta began to hear about him. A chance meeting with Keshub Chunder Sen, the famous and eloquent leader of the Brahmo Samaj, in a garden villa, brought about a growing spiritual intimacy between these two remarkable men. Keshub was accomplished, cultured, distinguished, a leader possessed of a strong personal magnetism. Ramakrishna was almost illiterate, being barely able to read a little Bengali and to write a few words.

It was when he opened his lips to speak that all his shortcomings fell away from him as a discarded mantle. From his lips flowed a stream of marvellous wisdom, unhurried and unresting. No other man within the memory of men spoke as Ramakrishna spoke. The wisdom of the ancient Aryan sages, the difficult teaching of the Upanishads, the intricacies of the Vedanta were all familiar to him as if he had been studying them all his life. His powers of observation were almost uncanny. He knew the most intimate ways of all classes of people, including fisherfolk. He could mimic the ways and speech of women, though he always kept them at a dis-

tance. His similes and metaphors were surpassingly beautiful and often original. His parables filled his hearers with amazement. His spirit stood on a pedestal so high that those who approached him could only look up at it in incredulous astonishment. Men marvelled when they heard him, comprehending or mystified. His lucidity was as remarkable as his wisdom was unfathomable.

I am not aware whether there are now living any followers of Ramakrishna or Keshub Chunder Sen who saw these two remarkable men together and heard their conversation. I had that great privilege and good fortune. By Keshub's express desire I accompanied him on one occasion when he went to see the Paramahansa at Dakshineswar. The meeting did not take place in the precincts of the temple. Keshub with a small party including myself went by river on a small steam yacht belonging to Maharaja Nripendra Narain Bhup of Kuch Behar, Keshub's son-in-law. At Dakshineswar Ramakrishna Paramahansa accompanied by his nephew, Hriday, boarded the launch, which resumed its way upstream. Ramakrishna and Keshub sat on deck on the bare board, cross-legged and facing each other. They sat close to each other and as Ramakrishna grew animated and earnest he drew closer to Keshub until his knees and thighs rested on Keshub's lap. I sat next to them, almost touching Keshub. The Paramahansa stayed in the boat for about eight hours, and except for the few minutes during which he remained in *samadhi* he never ceased speaking, and from that day to this I have never heard another man speak as he spoke. There was no conversation at all. During all those eight hours Keshub, the brilliant orator and the accomplished scholar, scarcely spoke a dozen sentences. All that he did was to put a

question at long intervals, or to ask for an explanation. The only speaker was Ramakrishna and his words flowed in a steady stream even as the Ganges rippled and flowed underneath us. We heard nothing but that gentle, earnest voice, we saw nothing but the ascetic, lean figure before us, with half closed eyes and hands folded on the lap. The moving lips uttered the simplest words but what could soar higher or plumb deeper than the thoughts! Every thought was a revelation, every parable, every imagery, every simile was a marvel. He spoke of the human face and its various indications of character, he spoke of his own experiences of many forms of devotion, he described the perennial ecstasy of the communion of the spirit, and when he spoke of the formless (*nirakara*) Brahman he passed into *samadhi*, a trance in which his face radiated beatific ecstasy.

What was it that attracted Keshub to Ramakrishna? Keshub Chunder Sen originally belonged to the Adi Brahmo Samaj, founded by Rammohan Roy. From this body he seceded and founded the larger organization of the Brahmo Samaj of India. The Brahmo Samaj was founded with two objects in view: the first was to check the wholesale conversion of educated Indians to Christianity. These Indians had learned English, but they had read nothing about their own religion, and Christian missionaries were zealously working among them. The second was to oppose the worship of idols by the great mass of Hindus. The Brahmos accepted the Upanishads as the basis of theism and worshipp'd Brahman, or God without a second, of that part of the Hindu scriptures. They rejected the Puranas and the multiplicity of gods named in those books. They set their faces sternly against the worship of images and idols. They avoided all Hindu temples where idols were worshipped, and they

kept aloof from the worshippers of idols. Now, Keshub was the most distinguished leader of the Brahmo Samaj, whereas Ramakrishna was an avowed and confirmed worshipper of the goddess Kali. He lived in a temple containing an image of that goddess and worshipped the image and spoke of the goddess as a living deity with whom he was in constant communion and who inspired all his thoughts. Why did Keshub associate so intimately with an idol worshipper, why did he listen so intently and reverently for hours together to a worshipper of Kali? It is not suggested by any one that Keshub succeeded in persuading Ramakrishna to renounce the worship of Kali. On the contrary, Keshub listened carefully and with the closest interest, as I can bear testimony, while Ramakrishna spoke about Kali. Like every one else who came in contact with Ramakrishna Paramahansa Keshub knew that this wonderful man was no superstitious worshipper of idols, but a man with the widest and most catholic spiritual outlook, a man who lived and moved with God, a saint whose thoughts and speech were profoundly original and arresting. Keshub published many sayings of Ramakrishna in a paper which he edited and he advised some of the leading citizens of Calcutta to go and see and hear the Seer of Dakshineswar.

Ramakrishna paid several visits to Keshub at the latter's house called "Lily Cottage" on the Upper Circular Road, Calcutta. In connexion with these visits there was a beautiful little incident which has not been hitherto recorded. On one occasion, when Ramakrishna arrived at Keshub's house he was met at the gate by some Brahmo missionaries. The first thing that Ramakrishna did was to touch the gate reverently with his forehead. Asked as to what he was doing he replied: "I am salut-

ing Keshub's mother. When the avatar Narasimha (man-lion) tore open the body of the wicked giant Hiranyakasipu with his claws he entwined the intestines round his head, saying, 'These are part of the body out of which Prahlada was born.' Before meeting Keshub I am doing reverence to the mother who bore him."

In India the reputation of a holy man spreads quickly and people are always anxious to behold and hear a man reputed to be holy. There is something more. Most holy men are credited with the power of working miracles and people flock to them in the hope of witnessing some miracles so that they may be able to talk about them afterwards. Credulous people of this kind were disappointed, for Ramakrishna not only performed no miracles, but he condemned them and scoffed and jeered at them. When some people went to him in a state of excitement and told him the story of a Mussalman fakir who had walked over the Ganges in Calcutta (no one had actually seen this miracle) the Paramahansa laughed and said he could do something more wonderful. He could cross the Ganges in a ferry boat by paying a pice! The miracle retailer found he had come to the wrong shop!

Other people were attracted by the growing fame of Ramakrishna Paramahansa as a holy and a wise man. Some went to see him impelled by curiosity, others with a desire to learn what he had to teach. But for some time there were no disciples. Ramakrishna preached no new religion, he did not seek to make any converts. The spirit of all who went to see him was not stirred. Many are called but few are chosen. There has never been a time when a teacher has been able to convince all who approached him, or to win their loyalty. This is true of even the greatest masters that the world has known.

Gradually, however, a few earnest young men attached themselves to Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Foremost among them was Narendranath Dutt, afterwards famous as Swami Vivekananda and indisputably an intellectual giant. Vivekananda was the first disciple to be ordained as a sannyasi by Ramakrishna himself. In the course of a short time these young men left their families and renounced the world, and took up their abode with the Master. As may be easily conceived, the Paramahansa was bitterly assailed by the relations of these boys for making them mendicants and sadhus. Some boys were actually chastised and forcibly prevented from continuing their visits to the Paramahansa.

There were lay disciples also, men following different avocations in life and accepting Ramakrishna as their Guru and Master. Of these the most prominent was Giris Chandra Ghose, a famous actor and dramatist. The atmosphere of the theatre is not a wholesome one and Giris Chandra had not escaped its influence, but he became an enthusiastic and devoted follower of Ramakrishna. It was he who proclaimed one memorable night on the stage amidst scenes of tumultuous enthusiasm that an avatar had appeared on earth and Ramakrishna had come among them to save them. Perhaps a still more remarkable lay disciple was Mahendranath Gupta, who passed away a few months ago. Among the followers of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda he was known as Master Mahasay, meaning the teacher. He was a distinguished graduate of the Calcutta University and a teacher by profession. It is to him that the world owes the Gospel of Ramakrishna—*Ramakrishna Kathamrita* (The Nectar of Ramakrishna's Words) by M. Mahendranath merely appended the first initial letter of his name to the book.

He was quite content to remain anonymous and obscure. His identity was known only to the members of the Ramakrishna Mission. Mahendranath was a constant visitor at Dakshineswar and used to pass many hours listening to Ramakrishna, but he could not stay there permanently as he was the headmaster of a school and had a family to look after. He became a great favourite of Ramakrishna and was much respected by the disciples. Shortly after he had first seen the Paramahansa he was struck by the originality and depth of the sayings and teachings of the Master and he conceived the idea of keeping a record of them. He told me that immediately after paying a visit to Ramakrishna he would sit down to write what he had heard. It took him three days to reduce to writing what he heard in the course of one visit. This collection of the sayings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa has been brought out in five volumes. I recall with grateful and humble satisfaction that it was at my instance that Mahendranath first went to see Ramakrishna. Mahendranath was related to me and was also my friend, though my senior by several years. After I had seen the Paramahansa in the company of Keshub Chunder Sen I went to Mahendranath and, after relating what I had seen and heard, urged him to go and see the wonderful saint at Dakshineswar. Mahendranath has mentioned this incident in the last volume of his book of which he read the final proofs a few hours before his death.

The Gospel of Ramakrishna Paramahansa is a record taken at first hand. The words were taken down as they came fresh from the lips of the Master. They were frequently read over to him and he suggested alterations and corrections. There is no room for imagination or exaggeration in anything that concerns Ramakrishna Parama-

hansa. Much about the earlier prophets is wrapped in uncertainty and speculation. There are no real likenesses of the Buddha, Christ and Chaitanya. Any likeness of the founder of Islam is forbidden by his religion. Ramakrishna's photographs are available everywhere. His spoken words are available to all almost just as he uttered them.

The youthful disciples who gathered round Ramakrishna were few in number. It was not such a life as could attract light-hearted and easy-going young men. The discipline was most rigorous. Day and night the young men were in the Master's eye. He watched them waking, he watched them sleeping. His vigilance never relaxed. Without much knowledge of books himself he saw that the boys read the scriptures. But the most valuable knowledge they acquired was from the conversation of the Master himself. He was a perennial source of spiritual wisdom and inspiration. Although the discipline was severe it was by no means irksome. The Master himself had his light moments and he was full of humour. But there was no frivolity, no amusements that appeal to the average young man. All of them were earnest, thoughtful youths who had renounced the world and all the temptations of the world for the sake of following the Master and sitting at his feet to learn what he taught. All the usual paraphernalia of monastic life in India were absent. Neither the Master nor the disciples besmeared themselves with ashes, or marked their foreheads with the distinguishing *tilak* of any particular religious sect. Until Vivekananda was initiated as a sannyasi and given an orange cloth by the Master the young men were garbed in ordinary clothes. No penance or fast was imposed and there was no mortification of the flesh. Later on, the disciples undertook vows, either

self-imposed or imposed by the Master; the object of these vows was self-discipline, self-restraint, self-purification. There was no particular course of teaching, no special doctrine, except that no religion was to be despised and none was to be exalted over another. Ramakrishna Paramahansa was both a *bhakta* and *jnani*. As a worshipper of Kali he displayed the rapturous devotion of love and faith, as a speaker and teacher he expounded the subtlest form of Advaitism. In fact, every form of spiritual experience was perfectly familiar to him, and he illuminated every phase of spiritual thought.

Apart from spiritual instruction the disciples found a good deal to learn from the Master's attitude towards the many visitors. He was the very personification of humility, disclaiming any title to wisdom and holiness, and holding himself the lowliest of the low. That did not imply, however, that he could be trifled with with impunity, or ignored as a man who was not to be taken seriously. To him neither wealth, nor social position, nor intellectual attainment meant anything. In his estimation there were only two classes of people, the worldly and the unworldly. For the former he had no use as he never spoke about worldly affairs. When a certain Maharaja went to see him Ramakrishna scrutinized his face and then turned away, saying, "You are a worldly man; what have I to do with you?" Another Maharaja approached him in a spirit of reverence, and, after some conversation, suggested that he should be permitted to settle a sum of money, the interest of which would maintain the Master in comfort and independence. Ramakrishna flared up at once and told the Maharaja to go away if he spoke of money. The abashed nobleman apologized humbly and was permitted to stay. There was no man who could match Ramakrishna in wit, or who

was not discomfited when he pitted his wit against the Master's.

Ramakrishna took special care that his chosen disciples should never lose sight of certain definite ideals. The first was the unblemished purity of their moral character. The *Brahmacharya* that they were taught to practise was absolute and unassailable. The instinct of sex was kept under perfect control. Complete celibacy was maintained by all the disciples and there was not a single instance of a lapse. Up to the present day that tradition has been maintained intact and not a single case has been heard of in which a monk of the order of Ramakrishna has violated his vow of celibacy. The other important lesson that the disciples learned was that of self-respect and a spirit of independence. The meekness of spirit and the humility of mien displayed by the Paramahansa formed part of his self-discipline. They were by no means to be mistaken for self-abasement. What had a man to fear if he sought nothing from the world? Behind the leonine personality of Vivekananda was the teaching of the Master. Vivekananda emphatically declared that he owed everything to his Master. He himself was fearless by nature and temperament, but the iron in his composition was tempered and hardened to steel by the teaching of the Master. It was because of the spirit infused into him by his Master that Vivekananda, an obscure young man, faced the Parliament of Religions at Chicago undismayed and dominated it by his power and personality. There is no assembly and no congregation in which the followers of Ramakrishna Paramahansa cannot hold up their heads and confront their fellowmen with confidence.

Take a single instance of the teaching of Ramakrishna. He did not hold with the doctrine of original

sin. If a man constantly looks upon himself as a sinner, he said, he is bound to become a sinner. The theory of original sin is in fact a denial of the goodness of God. Ramakrishna indignantly repudiated this doctrine as an insult to God and the innate divinity of man. No man is a sinner by the misfortune of his birth; on the contrary he is potentially and inherently divine. It was this luminous and exalting doctrine of his Master that Swami Vivekananda propounded and elaborated at the Parliament of Religions, revealing to his astonished hearers the real status of man and his birthright. By his elevated teaching Ramakrishna conferred upon his disciples a patent of nobility so that they felt they were peers of the spiritual realm.

I had seen and heard Ramakrishna in the company of Keshub Chunder Sen. Soon after, I had to go away to the other end of India. The next time I saw him was when he was lying in the peace and silence, and the supreme majesty of death, surrounded by his disciples and a few others. The unseen angel of Death, his mission accomplished, stood by with folded wings. Nothing could be serener or more tranquil than the calm countenance upon which we gazed. Ramakrishna's appointed work had been finished and he had passed away into the peace and rapture of eternal communion.

Some years before the end came the Paramahansa had said that there would be three signs to indicate that his life on earth was drawing to a close: the first was the public announcement that he was an avatar, an incarnation of God. He sternly rebuked any one who called him an avatar. The second was that he would stay a night away from Dakshineswar. This he never did on any account. He never went very far from Dakshineswar and invariably returned at night. The third was

that the food cooked for him would be eaten by some one else. The first sign was made by the dramatist Girish Chandra Ghose, a lay disciple. He could not have been unaware of the Master's prophecy, but a fit of impulsive enthusiasm made him forgetful and he proclaimed to a crowded house in a theatre that Ramakrishna, the latest avatar, was among them. The Master heard of this and perhaps he felt that his time was drawing nigh. The other two conditions could not be fulfilled by any one except himself and he proceeded to fulfil them. He was in Calcutta one night and, to the consternation of his disciples, expressed his desire of passing the night in Calcutta. Later on, Vivekananda went one forenoon to Dakshineswar. He was just recovering from a trying illness. The Master became very solicitous and inquired whether Vivekananda had had his breakfast. On getting a reply in the negative Ramakrishna ordered that his own food, which had been cooked, should be offered to Naren. This was never done. If at any time the Master refused to take his food it was thrown away but never offered to any disciple or any one else. Vivekananda himself protested and others said fresh food would be quickly prepared for the lad. But the Master was inexorable and he stood over Vivekananda while the latter ate the Master's meal. Ramakrishna knew what he was doing, for Vivekananda was his chosen disciple and to him would pass the choicest gifts of the Master, the priceless treasure of the spirit. The three signs were fulfilled and shortly afterwards the Master was attacked by the incurable malady to which he succumbed.

During his lifetime Ramakrishna Paramahansa was accepted as an avatar by his disciples and lay followers, though he never permitted any one to adore or worship him as an incarnation of divinity. In the years that

have passed since he was called away to his final rest, mission houses named after him have been established all over India and in every one of these monasteries a room has been consecrated to his worship, and daily worship is offered to his likeness. The anniversary of his birth is observed with due solemnity and the day is passed in prayer and meditation. All classes of people assemble to offer a tribute of reverence to the memory of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Prayers are offered, hymns are sung, discourses are delivered and the poor, the *Daridra Narayana*, are fed. There are constant fresh accessions to the ranks of the disciples and every new recruit comes from the educated classes from every part of India. The vow of strict celibacy is observed by all. The ancient scriptures, such as the Upanishads and the Vedanta, are studied, while classes attended by outsiders are held for expounding the lofty doctrine of the *Bhagavadgita*. Social service is rendered by succouring the suffering and the helpless, while in years of famine, flood and epidemic disease the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission are unremitting in their efforts to help and relieve the stricken people. People of all denominations, without distinction of caste or creed, liberally subscribe to the funds needed for these laudable objects and everywhere the members of the Ramakrishna Mission are loved and respected.

In India the doctrine of divine incarnation, or *Avataravada*, has been widely accepted for many centuries. In the famous odes of Jayadeva and Sankaracharya the doctrine has been sung in melodious verse. In part, it is the theory of evolution and the origin of species, for the fish, the tortoise and the boar are mentioned as the earliest avatars. In the *Bhagavadgita*, the Lord Sri Krishna, addressing Arjuna, clearly and precisely ex-

pounds the doctrine of divine incarnation, laying down the object and purpose for which God appears on earth in a human shape. It is not implied that the incarnation of divinity is in any way immune from the laws of nature. He lives and dies like all other men. As a proof of the catholic spirit of the Aryan doctrine of divine incarnation it may be mentioned that the Buddha is regarded as the ninth avatar of Vishnu. The Buddha did not believe in the Vedas as revealed; he was opposed to the Vedic sacrifice of animal life and rejected the Trimurti, the Triad represented by Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara. He threw away the sacred thread and broke down the barriers of caste. Buddhism itself has disappeared from India; Buddhists themselves do not call the Buddha an avatar because they do not believe in the Hindu pantheon.

There is not much difficulty in appreciating the essence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's teaching intellectually, but it is not so easy to assimilate it spiritually. The attitude of reverence towards all the prophets of all creeds is not to be a sort of intellectual courtesy, but an article of a living faith. All the prophets are to be exalted and revered—Zarathushtra, the Buddha, Christ and Muhammad. There is no call, no need for the surrender of a faith in which a man is born, or which he believes. Ramakrishna, the latest of the prophets, upholds all faiths and yields full recognition to all teachers. Consequently, Zoroastrians, Hindus and Christians have experienced no difficulty in accepting the Gospel of Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa's place is secure among the avatars. He is recognized and worshipped as such by many Hindus all over India. He is revered by members of other communities in India and a number of men

and women in the Far West. Blessed are the eyes that saw him; blessed are the ears that heard him!

3. BANKIM CHANDRA CHATTERJI THE COMPOSER OF THE VANDE MATARAM SONG (1838—1894)

It has been my great good fortune and high privilege to have seen and known Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the master who will be remembered as the creator of a great literature, the Rishi to whom was revealed the *Vande Mataram mantra*, which will be chanted and sung by a free India for ages to come. Half a century ago no name stood higher in the literature of Bengal than that of Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya and his fame has not faded in the years that have passed. Out in the West literature has been recognized as a profession for a considerable time and men and women are making a living out of it; some have prospered, a few have become wealthy. Perhaps a few people in India now devote their whole time to literature, but it is only a doubtful and scanty living that can be made out of it. There is a familiar saying in this country that Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, and Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, do not agree and are seldom found together. It was so even in the West, for the greatest writers in Europe in earlier times were usually very poor. What payment did Homer receive for the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, what was paid for the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and the immortal works of Kalidas? How much did Shakespeare receive for the dramas which are the crown and glory of English literature? For his epic *Paradise Regained* Milton was paid the magnificent sum of £5! There is authority in Holy Writ for the truth that one cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time;

equally it was true that Mammon and the Muses could not be served together.

Bankim Chandra did not derive a living from literature. He was one of the two first graduates of the Calcutta University and almost immediately after obtaining the B.A. degree he was appointed a Deputy Magistrate, which office he held till nearly the end of his life, for he did not live long after his retirement from service, and he was barely fifty-six years of age at the time of his death. Year in and year out, with the exception of Sundays and the few public holidays, he was in his office for six or seven hours every day. Besides, he was periodically transferred from one place to another and was seldom within reach of a good public library. The work he had to do in his office would have been sufficient occupation for men of average energy, but Bankim Chandra utilized the few hours of leisure every day out of office for literary work which has enriched the Bengali language and secured for him a permanent place among the immortals.

There is no good likeness of him in existence. He seldom sat for his photograph and no painter or sculptor drew or chiselled his image. After his death the only likeness found in his works represents him with a large Moghul turban on his head. He belonged to a race which generally goes about bareheaded, but Bankim Chandra was photographed in his official dress. The photograph fails to convey an accurate idea of the face and the contour of the head. He was a man of a slender build and slightly above the medium height. His head and features were highly intellectual and could not fail to arrest attention anywhere. The forehead was not very high but it was broad and smooth. The eyes were deep-seated, grey and keen. Bankim Chandra had a habit of

looking through narrowed eyes so that they were rarely wide open, but they gleamed and flashed with humour in conversation and became brilliant in moods of earnestness and exaltation. The nose was prominent, Roman, and curved over the upper lip with sensitive nostrils. The lips were thin and closed firmly over remarkably small teeth, while the strong jaws bore evidence of great strength of mind and character. It was the head, however, that showed a high order of intellect. It was of the finest Brahminical type mentioned by Sir William Hunter. It was not unusually large but perfectly proportioned—a head that a Roman sculptor would have loved to reproduce in plaster and marble. The keen, strong, aquiline face, the splendid head with its curling, ruffled hair which was rarely combed or brushed, stamped Bankim Chandra Chatterji as a man of genius.

Of the greatness of his intellect there cannot be the slightest question. He was profoundly versed in Sanskrit and English literature and the versatility of his genius found scope in various directions. First and foremost, he was a novelist, a romancer whose books display the novelist's art at its highest. There has been no greater stylist in Bengali prose. Lyrical poetry in Bengal had reached a high level in the time of the Vaishnava poets. Chandidas, was the first great lyrical poet of Bengal and he was a supreme artist, and his language was remarkably simple and musical. Bengali prose, however, was of much slower evolution. Raja Rammohan Roy was the first Bengali prose writer of distinction and he also composed some beautiful hymns. Later on, Akshay Kumar Dutt was an eminent prose writer, though his language was not very elegant and agreeable to the ear. Iswara Chandra Vidyasagara introduced a much smoother and more classical prose, but both these writers translat-

ed and adapted their subjects from either Sanskrit or English. They did not display the creative faculty of genius or introduce an original literature. Bankim Chandra appeared in the literary firmament of Bengal as a dazzling luminary, a star of the first magnitude. He first discovered the potential strength of Bengali prose, and the music and the rhythm that can be found in it. As a youthful aspirant to the favour of the Muses he had served his apprenticeship under Isvara Chandra Gupta, at that time the most popular poet of Bengal and also the Editor of the Bengali newspaper, *Sangbad Prabhakar*. Bankim Chandra wrote verses of no particular merit, but soon found out that the proper vehicle for his creative faculty was prose. His first novel appeared when he was twenty-seven years of age, and at once made a profound impression.

To the close student it is a fascinating study to note the gradual formation, the growing clarity and strength, and the mannerisms of Bankim's style. As a romance his first book is excellent reading, but the style is at times stilted, burdened with the elaborations and the long and difficult words then in vogue. There can be no mistaking, however, of the hand of the true artist throughout the book. The story is well sustained and hangs well together, the characters are well developed, and the sense of humour, the hall-mark of the true artist, is often present.

This book is called *Durgeshnandini* (The Chieftain's Daughter). The second, *Kapalakundala*, a name taken from the Sanskrit drama, *Malati Madhava*, bears vividly on every page the sign manual of the master artist, the wizard who with a wave of his magic wand brings forth, from out of the shadows, shapes that materialize into living, palpitating beings. The book is a prose-poem, a

drama in which the actors move as living beings, the poetic touch appearing at every turn, and the story, perfectly proportioned and powerfully conceived, moves onward to sudden and swift tragedy. Kapalakundala, the central figure, is a creation of the finest imagination. She is a spirit-woman, elusive, untouched by life or the world, virginal of body and mind, passing calm and unruffled through the brief span of her life away from the haunts of men.

Shortly afterwards Bankim Chandra founded a monthly Bengali magazine called *Bangadarshan* (The Mirror of Bengal) which established a new era in the literary history of Bengal. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in any part of India. It was the most scholarly and brilliant periodical ever known in Bengal. For four years it was edited by Bankim Chandra and during that period it afforded full scope for the displaying of his versatile genius. His great social novel *Vishavriksha* (The Poison Tree) first appeared as a serial in this magazine. This was followed by *Chandrashekar*, an epic romance of which the style is representative of Bankim's marvellous art at its highest, the dramatic development of the story being as effective and impressive as the glowing passages are full of power and poetry, sometimes rising to epic heights. To the pages of the magazine he contributed criticisms of classic Sanskrit works and some important Bengali books showing critical acumen of a high order, unequalled powers of analysis and a literary judgement beyond praise. He wrote serious and thoughtful articles on many problems; he exposed the untruthful character of several chapters of modern British Indian history; he wrote bright humorous papers with an undercurrent of deep feeling. As a controversialist he had no equal and no rival. In argument his

razor-like intellect flashed and thrust like a finely tempered Toledo. In his matchless strength he was frequently pitiless, but there was no denying his dazzling brilliance and skill and superiority in controversy.

At this distance of time it is somewhat difficult to realize to the fullest extent the effect produced by the emergence of Bankim as a force in periodical literature. The literary atmosphere in Bengal at that time was peculiar and artificial. The educated classes despised the Bengali language and literature. They prided themselves on nothing so much as the ability to speak and write English. They invariably discussed British authors and recited British poets. They were ignorant of the great wealth of lyrical poetry to be found among the Vaishnava poets of Bengal. The exquisite lyrics of the Maithil poets Vidyapati Thakur and Govindadas Jha, so widely appreciated by the Vaishnavas of Bengal, were a sealed book to them. Bankim himself was one of the finest scholars and writers of English in his time. Under the assumed name of 'Ram Sarma' he once engaged in a controversy in the columns of the *Statesman* with the Rev. Dr. William Hastie, then Principal of the General Assembly's Institution in Calcutta, and the ease and perfect command with which he used the English language and showed himself a past master of controversy elicited wide admiration. But Bankim was much greater than a mere scholar. He was a born artist and creator of literature, and the highest literary art invariably finds expression in the language lisped and learned at the mother's knees. In the creation of all true, imaginative and high literature the heart has as large a share as the head, and the heart has only one language, that in which the child heart speaks to the mother heart.

The appearance of the *Bangadarshan* monthly maga-

zine was nothing short of a literary revolution. It was a revelation as well as a revolution. It revealed to the educated Bengalis the potentialities and the fascination of the Bengali language when used by a highly gifted writer. Almost all the subscribers of this periodical were Bengalis who had been in the habit of scoffing at their own language. In spite of their penchant for the English language and literature they could not resist the fascination of this Bengali writer, who used the Bengali language with a power and witchery that held every reader breathless with admiration. Round Bankim had gathered a small select band of writers who, after him, were the most important contributors to the *Bangadarshan*. Some of them had been in the habit of writing English books and papers, but were very diffident about their ability to write in their own language. Bankim prevailed upon them to overcome their hesitation and they became distinguished writers of Bengali. Some of the Sanskrit pandits of the old school, men who favoured the use of long and difficult words in Bengali prose, savagely denounced Bankim for his marked tendency to simplify the Bengali language and to bring it within the easy comprehension of all readers. But this opposition was swept away by the flood tide of popular enthusiasm. If the *Bangadarshan* had three thousand subscribers, it had thirty thousand readers. Every number of the magazine was awaited with eager impatience and hailed as a literary event. Men and women read it from cover to cover with unabated interest, and keenly discussed what they read. The finer passages in his novels and essays, were read over and over again, recited and frequently committed to memory. I have heard a Nair gentleman, a native of Malabar, reciting whole passages of the original Bengali text of the novel *Vishavriksha*,

using of course the Sanskrit accent. Bankim's books, once read, can never be forgotten and have to be read again. This is specially true of the best and greatest of his novels, *Kapalakundala*, *Chandrashekhar*, *Anandamath*, *Devi Chaudhurani* and *Sitaram*. Any Bengali who confesses ignorance of these books must be considered ignorant of the greatest master-pieces of Bengali literature. They are perfect productions of the novelist's art and some of the characters, such as Pratap, Chandrashekhar, and the leading figures in *Anandamath* are worthy of the great ancient Aryan masters. These stories grip the imagination, while many of the dramatic situations and scenes haunt the memory for ever.

In the appearance of the modern novel in Indian literature some people have endeavoured to trace the influence of British fiction. This is certainly true to this extent that the main features of the novel are western, in form, arrangement and execution. English fiction itself is by no means original. Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote* long before any English novel was written and that masterly and unromantic romance has exercised a powerful influence on all fiction in Europe. The Sanskrit *Hitopadesha*, *Kathasaritsagara*, the Pali *Buddha Jatakas* and many narratives were written long before such a thing as the English language was in existence. As stories those of the *Arabian Nights* have never been surpassed. There is also a remarkable suggestive parallelism between different literatures. In the ancient polite literature of the Aryans the epics come first and these are followed by the dramas. In Greece it was the same, but any suggestion that this sequence is due to Sanskrit influence must be repudiated. The novel is really the modern form of the epic and the saga, the unfolding of a sustained narrative and the delineation of

character. The form is immaterial so long as the stamp of individuality is clear. Take, for example, *Chandra-shekhar*, in which Bankim's art shows itself at its best. It is unquestionably an epic in prose and characters like Pratap and Chandrashekhar are clearly Aryan in conception and might have stepped out of the pages of the *Mahabharata*. Again, the patriotism that throbs and rises to heights of devotional exaltation in *Anandamath* can never be felt or understood out of Aryan India. The greatest writer may owe a great deal to other influences, but only a man of the highest genius can achieve what Bankim has done.

The series of papers called *Kamalakanta's Daptar** occupies a place apart. There is no other book precisely like it in any other literature. Kamalakanta Chakravarti was an opium addict and these papers are supposed to have been written by him in scrap books and on stray sheets of paper. The opium habit faintly suggests De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium-eater*, but there is no other similarity of any kind. The character of Kamalakanta, the drug-fiend, is that of Bankim himself. Under the veneer of the opium-eater's humour and apparent absurdities lies a deep, strong, profoundly thoughtful personality, the burning heart of an intense patriot, whose passionate, eloquent and pathetic reference to the Motherland cannot be read without the eyes being dimmed with tears. There are papers of sparkling fancy and fine poetic imagination, of flashes of irresistible raillery and bright banter, and then, without an effort, the theme moves to serious purpose and the reader sees the pierced and bleeding heart of the patriot bared before his eyes. The charm of the style never flags; it bubbles over with humour and is pointed with sarcasm. At the

* Note-book.

next turn it rises to the sublime heights of passion and attains the note of prophetic fervour. Persiflage and the slinging of wit form the outer crust; at the core there is the white flame of truth, the ardent devotion of earnest patriotism. *Kamalakanta's Daptar* is undeniably a great book.

Bankim's writings and style leave a very definite and clear impression on the mind. His range is wide; he is romancer, critic, humorist, patriot; later on, he wrote on religious subjects and translated the *Bhagavadgita*. His *Krishnacharitra* (The Character of Krishna) is a work of great analytical power and dialectic skill. The precision and perspicacity of expression are everywhere noticeable. In reasoning and controversy the directness and incisiveness of his style are always obvious, but even in narrative he is usually pithy and concise, and it is only in reflective and descriptive passages that his diction flows and sweeps forward in graceful and impassioned periods. But through it all one consciousness never leaves the reader, namely, the strength of the style and of the personality behind it. If a single word could indicate the preponderating characteristic of Bankim Chandra Chatterji's style it would be strength and again strength. It were as if he wielded the brand Excalibur in one hand and the hammer of Thor in the other. Never was intellect more masculine and virile than his, never were simple words charged with such tremendous strength. Well did Jyotirindranath Tagore, litterateur and dramatist, once write that when Bankim met another man in controversy his unlucky opponent realized what it was to be struck by a thunderbolt.

During all these years, while Bankim was fashioning with his brain and hands a literature which has ensured for him a place among the immortals, he was living the

drab and scarcely elevating life of a subordinate magistrate transferred periodically from one district to another, and serving under men generally incapable of forming any idea of his literary genius. He was not always well treated, though towards the end of his service he received titles to which he did not attach the slightest importance. His work in office consisted of trying criminal cases and perhaps attending to some details of the treasury. It was all petty work and he never once spoke of it out of office. It is a sign of no small strength that despite his surroundings and the trivial work that occupied so many hours of his time day after day he could accomplish so much and turn out literary work of such a distinctly high order.

Some of Bankim Chandra's novels were translated, but the translations were not very good and did not convey the attractiveness of his style. Mrs. Knight's translation of *Vishavriksha*, however, was appreciated and the *London Punch* wrote the following two characteristic lines about it:

"Have you read the Poison Tree

By Bankim Chandra Chatterjee?"

Bankim's widest fame does not rest upon his great novels and other brilliant writings, but on the *Vande Mataram* song, which appeared in the novel called *Anandamath* (The Happy Monastery). The story is based upon a slight historical foundation, the rebellion of a sect of Hindu monks against the Muhammedan power in Bengal. While the story was appearing as a serial in the *Bangadarshan*, which had been revived and was being edited by Bankim's brother, Sanjib Chandra Chatterji, also a Bengali writer of distinction, there was much speculation as to the ulterior purpose and motive of the novel. In all the previous books of Bankim it had been

noticed that they were placed on the market without any press notices or extracts from favourable reviews. Bankim was a proud man by nature and he would not permit his books to be advertised backed by the commendations of the Press. His name was sufficient to ensure the popularity and sale of his works, though the buyers of books in those days were few. In the case of *Anandamath* alone Bankim made an exception. To prevent misunderstanding and attribution of any ulterior motive he attached to *Anandamath*, when it appeared as a book, the opinion of the *Liberal*, a newspaper then edited by Krishna Bihari Sen, the youngest brother of Keshub Chunder Sen, and a scholarly, thoughtful writer and critic. It was the only instance in which a book written by Bankim appeared with a press notice.

Neither at the time *Anandamath* was running as a serial nor on its appearance as a book did the *Vande Mataram* song attract any particular attention or create any stir. Only one incident, now nearly forgotten, can be recalled in this connexion. A certain Bengali poet, who owed much of his popularity to Bankim's appreciation in the *Bangadarshan*, had a discussion with Bankim about this song. He wanted to know why it had been composed partly in Sanskrit and partly in Bengali. Bankim replied that he saw no objection to such a method considering the peculiar character of the song, but his interrogator persisted with his questions and objections until Bankim abruptly closed the discussion by saying that he had composed the song as it occurred to him and there was no more to be said. This mingling of languages was, perhaps, the promise of that far off divine event, the mingling of the various peoples of India into a single and united nation as the children of the same mother, the Motherland!

Anandamath appeared in book form in the early eighties of the last century and the *Vande Mataram* song lay buried in it for nearly twenty-five years, and was hardly ever sung in private or public. The tune to which it had been originally set was scarcely in keeping with the solemn impressiveness of the words. In 1905 came the Partition of Bengal and then this song leaped into sudden glorious life, electrifying the frenzied and harrowed feelings of Bengal by its exalted adoration of the Motherland, the exquisite beauty of language and expression, the intensity of devotion and the purifying and elevating influence on the mind and the spirit. And from Bengal the song and the words passed over all India as a living and unifying force, the rallying call of nationalism. Whenever the national heart is stirred the cry of *Vande Mataram* is heard. Wherever Indians congregate, whether it is in England or in America, Australia or Japan, the greeting is ever *Vande Mataram*, and every gathering, political, social or any other, ends with shouts of *Vande Mataram*.

Here, then, is the answer to the perplexed question put to the composer of the song by the Bengali poet who lacked vision. If the song had been composed in Bengali throughout, how could it have been taken up by the whole population of India speaking such a bewildering variety of languages? There is at present no man, woman, or child in India, who is an Indian by birth, that does not know the first two lines of the *Vande Mataram* song. How did Bankim himself come to write it? A story has come down the years, and some reliable persons have vouched for it, that Bankim had said on one occasion that *a time would come when this song would be heard in every mouth*. Had he a prophetic intuition of this kind? To this question no answer can be given. That

the song was inspired may be readily believed. Whether the inspiration was conscious or unconscious is beyond our knowledge and understanding. There is a power outside of man that impels him at times to compass some great purpose without any conscious volition on his part. It may be the light of genius, it may be the spirit of prophecy; whatever it was, the *Vande Mataram* song was not composed for Bengal alone. The portion composed in Bengali presents no difficulty as regards its universal acceptance throughout India. The Sanskrit is so simple that it can be understood even by those who are ignorant of that classical language. In northern and southern India, to people speaking languages derived from a Sanskrit or Prakrit origin, to others who speak languages derived from the Dravidian stock, this universal song is as simple as their own language.

As a national anthem this song is unique. There is an assurance of strength and the vanquishing of an enemy, but there is no note of exultation and defiance usually so characteristic of such compositions. There is a vast difference between invoking the homeland as the Fatherland and apostrophizing it as the Motherland. The first personifies roughness and arrogance, the second is the embodiment of gentleness and sweetness. From the first word to the last the *Vande Mataram* song is a hymn of adoration, and an offering of love and reverence. The land, the fertile country of Bengal, is saluted as the Mother of seven crores of children. It is glorified as a land of plenty, fruitful and bestowing many blessings upon her sons. The charge of her weakness is repudiated, but still there is no note of vainglory, no wild challenge shouted to the four winds of heaven. The patriot who sang first this immortal song in *Anandamath* was weeping as he sang it. This is not the proud attitude and mood of

defiance, but of utter humility and an overwhelming love. It is a song of devotion, the prayer of the devotee, who worships the image of the Mother. This song exalts patriotism as a religion; patriotism is not depicted as an aggressive sentiment, but a feeling that fills the heart with love and the spirit with gratitude. The patriots of the Happy Monastery belonged to an order of monks, monks militant but not the less religious on that account. Other patriotic songs in other lands mention the greatness and power of the country, the fearlessness and puissance of the people; this song celebrates the beauty of the land, the green-clad corn fields, the soft scented breeze from the south, the glad nights with the white moonlight, the flowers everywhere in bloom, the musical notes of the birds, the boons freely bestowed by the loving and prodigal Mother. The ancient Sanskrit saying represents the mother and the Motherland as more exalted than heaven and the singer who first sang the *Vande Mataram* song reaffirmed this sentiment. The song is in keeping with the tradition and temperament of the ancient people of India. Bankim is great as the creator of a fine literature of remarkable beauty and power, but he is greater as the high priest of a pure and noble patriotism, the composer of one of the loftiest and most beautiful anthems in the literature of the world.

And this man, so great, so gifted, so highly inspired, never stood in the limelight and consistently and resolutely shunned the light of publicity. From his quiet study he exercised a power of which he was fully conscious and he dominated the literature of Bengal with his genius and virile strength, but he was rarely, if ever, seen in public. He disliked all demonstrations and his countrymen, in his time, were not so demonstrative as they are now. To the last he followed the course of

Bengali literature with unabating vigilance, and every new writer of promise received cordial encouragement from him. Many were not admitted to his intimacy, but he was always accessible to young aspirants in literature. The profound thoughtfulness of his nature was concealed underneath a light exterior. He was a man of superb silences, of long solitary hours spent in profound thought. The little room outside his ancestral residence at Kantalpara, a few miles from Calcutta on the Eastern Bengal Railway, was the scene of many night vigils, much thought and high literary work. Numbered by years his life was not long; he was born in 1838 and died in 1894, and was fifty-six years of age at the time of his death. He died as he had lived and no crowd followed his remains to the cremation ground at Nimtola Ghat in Calcutta. I was present. The sun was setting and the river Hoogly was flowing silently. On his countenance was the solemn majesty of death and the stamp of an ineffable peace. It was the final and beautiful slumber that knows no awakening. The setting sun lighted up the features in perfect repose and cast a halo around the splendid head which had finished its triumphant work.

In a country like India, a land of diverse peoples and many tongues, the inspired genius of Bankim created a common bond of nationhood with the *Vande Mataram* song. Over every man, woman and child who utters or sings *Vande Mataram* hovers the spirit of the Master who had linked a whole nation together with the words of a song, a song that will be heard as the hymn of a free India in the centuries to come. Those who have not read the book *Anandamath* in the original may be interested to learn how the song is introduced in the novel. A householder named Mahendra met Bhavananda, one of the fighting monks of the Happy Monastery, in circumstances

which made Mahendra believe that the other man was a free-booter. While they were together Bhavananda sang the first bar of the song. Mahendra was rather surprised and somewhat perplexed—who was this Mother possessed of sweet water and sweet fruits, fanned by the sandal-scented breeze from the south, clad in green corn? He asked, who is the Mother?

Bhavananda gave no reply, but sang the second bar of the song. Astonished, Mahendra exclaimed, "But this is the country, not the mother".

Thereupon Bhavananda burst out in words that thrilled with feeling and fervour, "We know no other Mother—*Janani janmabhūmishcha svargadapi gareeyasi*, the mother and the land of birth are more exalted than heaven. We declare that the land that gave us birth is the only Mother—we have no mother, no father, no brother, neither have we wife, son, hearth or home, we have only the *sujalā, suphalā, malayaja-shitalā, shasyashyāmalā*—"

Then Mahendra understood and said, "Sing it over again". Bhavananda sang and as he sang he wept:

Vandé Mātaram!

Sujalām suphalām, malayaja shitalām,

Shasyashyāmalām, Mātaram!

Shubhrajyotsnā pulakitayāminim,

Phullakusumita drumadala shobhinim,

Suhāsinim, sumadhura bhāshinim,

Sukhadām, varadām, Mātaram!

*Saptakotikanṇha kalakala nināda karālē
Dvisaptakoti bhujair dhrita-khara karavālē*

Abalā kéna mā eta balē!

Bahubala dhārinim, namāmi tārīnim,

Ripudalavārīnim Mātaram!

*Tumi vidyā, tumi dharma,
 Tumi hridi, tumi marma,
 Tvam hi prāṇāḥ shariré!
 Bāhuté tumi mā shakti,
 Hridayé tumi mā bhakti,
 Tomārayipratimā gari mandiré mandiré!
 Tvam hi Durgā dashapraharāṇa dhāriṇī,
 Kamalā, Kamaladalavihāriṇī,
 Vāṇī, vidyādāyiniṇī namāmi tvām,
 Namāmi Kamalām, amalām, atulām,
 Sujalām, suphalām, Mātaram,
 Vandé Mātaram!
 Shyāmalām, saralām, susmitām, bhūshitām,
 Dharaṇīm, bharaṇīm, Mātaram!*

Obeisance to thee, Mother!
 Sweet is thy water, sweet are thy fruits, cool is the
 Sandal-scented breeze from the south,
 Green are thy cornfields, Mother!
 Gladdened are thy nights by the white moonlight,
 Decked art thou by the trees with flowers in bloom,
 Sweet-smiling, sweet-spoken,
 Bestower of happiness and boons, Mother!
 Terrible with the shouts rising from seventy million
 throats,
 Twice seventy million hands armed with edged swords,
 Why do they call thee feeble, Mother!
 Possessed of mighty strength, saviour, I bow to thee!
 Vanquisher of the enemy, Mother!
 Thou art knowledge, the faith art thou,
 Thou art the heart, the core thou,
 Thou art the life in the body,
 Thou art the strength in the arm,
 The devotion in the heart,

Thy image we build in temple after temple!

Thou art Durga holding ten weapons,
Lakshmi art thou seated on the petals of the lotus,
Sarasvati thou, the giver of knowledge, to thee I bow,

I bow to thee, Lakshmi, the pure, the peerless,

Sweet-watered, sweet-fruited Mother!

Obeisance to thee, Mother!

Green-hued, unsophisticated, sweet-smiling, ornamented,

Nourisher of the Earth, Mother!*

* English rendering by the late Mr. Nagendranath Gupta, the author.

4. RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861 — 1941)

I

THE MAN AND THE POET

Strong in the human heart is the desire to claim kinship as between man and man, between the man standing in the ruck and the man standing apart on an eminence that others may not share with him. It is this human feeling, and not merely the spur of curiosity, that stimulates the desire for knowledge about the personal peculiarities of great men and women. The baser form of curiosity is usually satisfied with the knowledge of such important events as the donning and doffing of a royal hat, but men desire to know more of the ways of those who are great in their own personal right. Between all men there is the bond of a common humanity, common frailties and a common mortality. And when some man towers above his fellows because he happens to have been touched by the magic wand of genius, men wish to assure themselves that he is still one of them, unlike them in some respects, but very like them in others.

Of the millions that come and go in the never-ending procession of life and death the world retains no trace: a pinch of ashes here and a handful of dust there, dust unto dust. The earth covers the nameless legion with the mantle of oblivion. Not all: for now and again, out of this mass of vanishing humanity, some one leaves behind him some living thought, some deathless message, some creation of beauty that does not die, that eludes

the death-grip of time, and pulses and throbs with life through the passing centuries. The two are easily detachable, the man who goes the way of all flesh and the achievement that does not depart. It is of such a man that we wonderingly ask, what manner of man was this that lived and died as other men, and yet is living still, deathless in death?

If it were not for the heritage left by such men humanity would be poor indeed, with the stark poverty of a barren and arid past, a flat and unstimulating present and a future without promise. Here in India millions who look upon Rama as an incarnation of God and utter his name living and dying are barely conscious of what they owe to the Rishi who composed the *Ramayana*. Those who speak of the principal characters in this sublimest of epics as mere myths do not understand that to a whole nation Rama is as real as the conception of the deity in many lands. History is a thing of yesterday and most of the great things happened long before history came to be written. The *Ramayana* is not merely a book to be read at leisure and to be put back on the shelf. It has been for more years than history can count an important part of the spiritual pabulum of one of the most ancient races of the world. Every stratum of Hindu society is penetrated through and through by the living influence of the story of the *Ramayana*. Rama, intensely human in his trials and sufferings, is an *avatar* whose divinity has never been questioned; Sita, whose life-story is a long drawn tragedy, is the ideal of all womanhood for all time. Year after year the passion-play of the *Ramayana* brings home to the mind of the humblest Hindu its power and pathos, its idealism and its lofty teachings. And yet but for the Rishi-bard Valmiki there would have been no *Ramayana*, none of the characters

which are as immortal as the gods. Beyond what is mentioned in the epic itself, we know nothing about this earliest and greatest of poets. What, again, does the world know about Kalidasa, the master-singer who saw and depicted beauty as no other poet has done, before or since? The man, however great, passes, indistinguishable from the herd; his work, if it bears the hall-mark of immortality, endures.

And hence this human and normal interest in the great Indian poet, whose fame encompasses the world today, whose name is on every lip and whose likeness is to be found in a hundred thousand homes in every country in the world. No modern poet has ever attained such fame as has come to Rabindranath Tagore. There is scarcely any language in the world in which some of his works have not been translated, there is hardly any important city in the world in which his figure has not been seen and his voice has not been heard. He has moved as a classic writer whose place among the immortals is already assured. And everywhere men and women have waxed enthusiastic over the dignity and fascination of his personality. This is the appeal of the man to his fellow-men as distinguished from the impersonal appeal of genius apart from the man and unrestricted by limitations of time. A great man of genius may be physically unattractive, but in the case of this Bengali poet nature has been bountiful inside and out, and the distinction of the man is as remarkable as the genius of the poet is great. As he appears today, with the fine lineaments of his face and his silver locks, flowing beard and wonderful eyes, he resembles a Rishi stepping out of a sylvan glade in ancient Aryavarta, or a patriarch full of wisdom moving in the sight of God. I can recall him as he looked when he was just twenty years of age, slender,

tall, with his black hair curling down to his waist. He was fairly famous even then as a poet and an elegant prose-writer. I remember an eminent Bengali writer,* who died several years ago, then wrote about Rabindranath Tagore predicting a great future for him, but warning him against being carried away by the plaudits of the public. It was a rhetorical effusion addressed to "Brother Handclap" and entreating this brother not to turn Rabindranath's head by excessive demonstrations of goodwill. I wonder what this writer would have thought if he had been living today and had been an eyewitness to the world-wide homage that has been the guerdon of the poet. "Brother Handclap" has not succeeded in doing much damage to Rabindranath. As a matter of fact, an answer to this writer was anticipated in one of the early songs of the poet:

"Have I come into the world as a beggar for fame, to win handclaps by stringing words together? Who will awake today, who will work, who wants to wipe out the shame of the Mother?"

A few years later Bankim Chandra Chatterji, then the greatest writer in Bengali literature and creator of the *Vande Mataram* song, suggested to Rabindranath that he should write an epic poem to establish his reputation as a poet. The reply came after some time in some beautiful lines addressed to the Lyric Muse as his beloved:

"I had a mind to enter the lists for the composition of an epic poem, but I do not know when my fancy struck your jingling bangles and broke into a thousand songs. Owing to that unexpected accident the epic poem, shattered into atoms, is lying at your feet."

Nearly fifty years of comradeship may constitute some

* Akshay Chandra Sircar.

slight claim to an intimate knowledge of a man's nature, though I am not so presumptuous as to imagine that it is of any advantage in measuring the poet's genius. His works are accessible to all readers and competent critics, either in the original or in translations, and are already a part of the literature of the world. Still I have the memory of having listened to many poems and songs fresh from the pen of the poet and recited or sung in his matchless voice, of many intimate rambles in the flower-strewn fields of literature, of wide ranges of conversation. Many of the friends who forgathered with us are no more, and as the sunset of life is coming on apace, the lengthening shadows of the past are receding in the distance behind us. The years that have brought much fame for Rabindranath have also brought him many sorrows, domestic bereavements of which the world knows nought.

Of school and university education Rabindranath has had no share. As a boy he attended school for a very short time, but his delicate and sensitive nature rebelled against the thoughtless indiscrimination which passes for discipline; neither was the companionship of the average schoolboy to his liking. He shook the dust of the school from his feet after a brief experience, but at home he was a careful and diligent student, and he began composing poetry at a very early age. He went to England as a young lad, but he did not attempt to qualify either for the Indian Civil Service or the Bar. He read, however, for some time with Mr. Henry Morley, who was much struck by the elegance and accuracy of Rabindranath's English composition. During his sojourn in England Rabindranath used to write Bengali letters, which were published, describing his English experiences. For a lad in his teens the descriptions were

remarkably vivid and showed considerable powers of observation. On his return to India two things were noticeable: he was entirely unaffected by his visit to England in his ways of living; he never put on the European dress and acquired no European habits. The other thing was that in spite of his undoubted command over the English language and his extensive reading of English literature he rarely wrote in English. All his literary work, and even his correspondence, was done in Bengali. Until he began translating his own poems he had made no serious attempt to write in English, and now by his translations, his lectures and his letters he ranks as a great original English writer.

If genius is a capacity for taking infinite pains and hard and sustained work, the Indian poet has amply demonstrated it by his unswerving devotion to literature. Of course, the original spark must be there, for it is absurd to contend that genius is latent in every man and can be brought out by unremitting toil. You cannot delve down into the bowels of the earth anywhere at random to find a precious stone. Our poet has fed the flame of his genius steadily and loyally, and the light that he has kindled has penetrated as a gentle and illuminating radiance to the remotest corners of the earth. Poetry, drama and fiction have been enriched by his contributions, and he has shed fresh lustre upon various departments of human thought. Nor has he been heedless to the call of his country, though his temperament is unsuited for the din and jar of practical politics. He presided once over a political conference and delivered a profoundly thoughtful address in Bengali. When Bengal was embittered by the partition of that Province and feelings ran high, the heart of the poet-patriot was deeply stirred and the songs he then composed were sung everywhere, at public

meetings and in processions, by prisoners in prison vans and prison cells, by women in the home and by boys in the streets. Two or three years later, Rabindranath narrowly escaped having a signal political distinction conferred upon him by the Government of Bengal. He had read a certain paper in Bengali at a crowded meeting in Calcutta and it was published in the usual course. Shortly afterwards he received an official letter from Mr. Chief Secretary Macpherson conveying the warning of the Bengal Government against what was considered a seditious speech. The Government stayed their hand so far that they did not forthright launch a prosecution. Rabindranath told me that he sent no reply to this letter, but though this little incident is not generally known, it is well worth being recorded as the first official appreciation in India of the Indian poet. For some time the school established and maintained by Rabindranath at Bolpur and now known all over the civilized world as Visva-Bharati was under grave suspicion as a hotbed of sedition. It was a fair and accurate index of the working of the official mind in India.

A few more years passed and the Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Rabindranath Tagore. How did this come about? The panels which make the selections for the award of the various Nobel Prizes are constituted of men who know nothing about the language in which the works of the Indian poet are written. It is contemptuously designated an Indian provincial vernacular language, as if every living language in the world is not the vernacular and the mother tongue of some people. English may be a classical language, but we have not heard that the vernacular of England is Hebrew! All that the judges had before them was a thin volume in which the poet had rendered into English a few of his

original poems in Bengali. It was not a metrical translation, but the spirit and soul of poetry were to be found in the marvellously musical and rhythmical lines. They disclosed a hitherto unrevealed subtlety of fascination in the English language, with delicate nuances of the poet's own touch. Even so, the judges could have scarcely realized that in going so far east as India and making a selection from a race ruled by a nation in Europe they were conferring a great honour upon the Nobel Prize itself, for in the list of Nobel prizemen no name stands higher today than that of Rabindranath Tagore.

A large and influential deputation from Calcutta waited upon the poet at Bolpur in his country home, well named the "Abode of Peace", to congratulate him on his having been awarded the Nobel Prize. In his reply the poet spoke with a shade of bitterness. Was not all his work done in his own country and were not his books accessible to all readers in Bengal? Those that had given him the Nobel Prize had only seen a few of his poems in translation and did not know a word of the language in which they were originally written. The poet was right, for was it not humiliating that his countrymen in Bengal should have waited for recognition of his genius to have come home all the way round from Europe? *In the introduction, written about this time, to his valuable work, A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilisation, Mr. Havell writes:* "If Anglo-India or the Calcutta University had awarded a prize for literature, open to the world, neither would have discovered a Bengali poet." Unfortunately, it is a besetting weakness of our people that they see through other people's eyes and cannot always appreciate worth for its own sake. If a man gets a good Government appointment, or some trumpery title, there is an epidemic of entertainments in his honour and he is acclaimed as a

hero so long as the novelty of his distinction lasts.

If not widely popular, the name of Rabindranath had been a household word in Bengal even before the Nobel Prize was conferred upon him. His poems and specially his songs were known everywhere, and there was not a single Bengali home in which his songs were not sung. The most striking tribute is that of imitation, and this has been rendered to him in abounding measure, for there is hardly any Bengali writer of verse who has not imitated Rabindranath's language, his metrical originality and versatility and his unmistakable distinction, though of course the supremacy of the Master remains undisputed.

The Nobel Prize looms large in the world's estimation and yet one wonders whether a money prize is the best tribute to genius. For a struggling author the prize is a considerable sum of money and Rabindranath himself has received letters inquiring how the Swedish prize for literature may be won. But while it is only about eight thousand pounds of English money, a heavy-weight boxing champion may earn a prize of eight hundred thousand dollars by having his head and face mashed into pulp! Rabindranath himself kept no part of the Nobel Prize money for his own use, but handed over the whole amount to the Visva-Bharati. Literary giants like the late Anatole France and George Bernard Shaw have refused to retain the money of the Nobel Prize for their personal use. But the present age is ruled by the Almighty Dollar and the greatest writers are those whose books are considered "best sellers" in the market. Judged even by this standard Rabindranath easily holds the first place, for a single German firm has sold five million copies of some of his books. To borrow a phrase from the turf, it is the best stayer that wins a race, and the life

of a book is to be measured not by its vogue for a season but by its passing the ordeal of time.

What detracts greatly from the intrinsic value of the Nobel Prize is that it is an annual award. How is it possible to discover a great name in literature every year when a century may pass without producing a really great writer? Consequently, the prize has frequently to be given to mediocre writers whose reputation cannot be enhanced by any prize. It is somewhat like the appointment of a Poet Laureate in England. What great names besides those of Tennyson and Wordsworth are to be found in the list of English Laureates? The royal seal and sign manual can create ministers and governors but not a poet who fills his place by right divine and holds a commission from God Himself. Lord Dewar, a master of epigram and perhaps the wittiest living after-dinner speaker, recently said at a dinner of the Institute of Painters in London, "Poets are born—and not paid". This fine epigram was garnished with a story about the present English Poet Laureate, who refused to give the press reporters an interview when he happened to be in America some time ago. The next morning the New York papers came out with the attractive headline, "The King's Canary Won't Chirp!" The King's canary is sometimes only a house-sparrow faked to look like a canary, but its chirp gives it away. Nor can a gift of money add to a poet's reputation. Money is here today and gone tomorrow, and has no element of stability. Therefore, in ancient Rome they crowned the poet and the man of genius with the laurel crown, a handful of evergreen leaves, emblematic of the freshness and immortality of fame. It could be had for the mere plucking, but not all the gold in the world can produce a single leaf of laurel.

Among the messages of congratulations received by the Indian poet there was one of genuine respect and homage from the late Mr. E. S. Montagu, the Under-Secretary and afterwards Secretary of State for India. At the next distribution of honours Rabindranath received a knighthood. There may or may not be some connexion between these two incidents, but it is a speculation of no interest. All that has to be noted is that the Government of the country displayed an interest in the poet on two occasions: first, when they threatened him as a purveyor of sedition and the next time when they conferred upon him a knighthood in the wake of the Nobel Prize. This is not the end of the story, for there is a glorious sequel to it. When the Punjab lay prostrate under the iron heel of martial law, bruised, bleeding, outraged and martyred, the great patriot heart of Rabindranath went out in throbbing sympathy to his stricken countrymen in that Province, and he cast away from him, in indignant protest, the knighthood with which he had been honoured. The letter that he wrote to Lord Chelmsford on that occasion will remain a historical and human document of a lofty and dignified protest couched in language of singular force and eloquence. And his decision has been accepted without question throughout the world, for no one now thinks of addressing him as a knight. By surrendering his title, Rabindranath flung down his gauntlet as a challenge to oppression, and it was a deed more truly knightly than the breaking of a lance in a joust of arms.

At different times it has been the privilege of genius to disregard the conventions of social life and to live amidst picturesque, bizarre surroundings. But the blandishments of Bohemia have never had the slightest attraction for Rabindranath Tagore. In his hermitage of

peace, surrounded by the young Brahmachari scholars of Visva-Bharati, teachers and learned men from distant lands, he has brought back the atmosphere of the open-air teaching of the ancient Aryans. At Bolpur he is revered and addressed as *Gurudeva*, just as the Rishis and teachers of ancient India were addressed by their disciples. To such of our countrymen as delight in the garb of the West and look upon England and Europe as the Mecca of their dreams, a visit to Bolpur may prove something of a shock. Time and again, the magnet of Rabindranath's personality has drawn famous and learned scholars of Europe to his academy. During their stay these learned pundits from the West discard the stiff and inelegant clothing of Europe for the graceful raiment of Bengal. But for the strange and humiliating obsession which is euphemistically called the cultural domination of Europe, no thought would have ever come to Indians of exchanging their own costumes for European clothing. There is so little imagination and such lack of individual choice in the West that practically all Europe and America have only a single kind of dress. Apart from climatic suitability, so far as western countries may be concerned, I can conceive of nothing more inartistic than the clothes of Europe with their close fit, straight lines and sharp angles, making a man look like a rectangle set upon two straight lines. So great an authority as Thomas Alva Edison has condemned the garments of Europe and America without reserve on the ground that they cramp a man's movements and his life. On the other hand, most Indian costumes are full of grace, generously fashioned, giving free movement to the limbs, and falling in artistic curves and folds. There is no more attractive head-dress anywhere than the turban of the Punjab, no upper garment so well-proportioned or so suggestive of

dignity as the robe worn in Northern India, no costume so wholly beautiful as that of Bengal, the *chadar* being an improvement on the Roman toga. I recollect two American ladies, cultured and widely travelled, telling me that they had nowhere seen a costume more graceful than that worn by Bengalis. Rabindranath has written some spirited verses rebuking his countrymen who masquerade in the garb of Europe. The robes that Rabindranath himself wears while travelling in foreign lands are distinguished by originality and individuality. There is probably no Indian living who is in deeper sympathy with the intellect of Europe, or has better assimilated the finest literature of that continent, but he has not made the mistake of accepting the husk for the kernel of European culture.

Does the Nobel Prize afford an explanation of the wonderful reception accorded to Rabindranath Tagore in the West and the Far East? Rudyard Kipling, the much-belauded poet of the Empire, is also a Nobel Prizeholder. If he were to undertake a tour of the world would he be acclaimed in the same manner as the Indian poet? For Rabindranath the Nobel Prize has served as an introduction to the West, but that is all. For the rest, the Nobel Prize has been of no more use to him than his cast-off knighthood. From continent to continent, country to country, capital to capital, he has passed as a vision of light, East and West rendering him the obeisance due to a world-teacher. It has been a royal progress and Rabindranath has moved like a king, aye, a king of hearts playing with wizard fingers upon the heart-strings of the nations. The great ones of the world have vied with one another in doing him all possible honour, learned and intellectual men have received him as a leader and elder brother, the Universities have opened wide their

doors in scholastic welcome, men and women have jostled one another for a sight of this poet and prophet from the East. He has lectured to crowded audiences in English which was subsequently translated into the local language. He has recited his poems in the original Bengali to hushed houses which listened, without understanding the words, to the music of his voice. In China, the representative of the dethroned Manchu dynasty presented him with an imperial robe. Everywhere and in all lands he has been greeted and acclaimed with an enthusiasm and a reverence of which the world holds no parallel.

Since at the moment we are concerned more with the man than with the poet, it may be fittingly asked whether apart from his great gifts Rabindranath has any claim to greatness. The answer is, strip him of his God-given dower of song, even as he himself has laid aside his man-made title of distinction, take away from him his treasure of wisdom garnered during the years, and still he is great—great in his lofty character, great in the blameless purity of his life, great in his unquenchable love for the land of his birth, undeniably great in his deep and earnest religiousness and the faith that rises as an incense to his Maker. As a mere man he is an exemplar whom his countrymen, in all reverence and all humility, may well endeavour to follow.

As a poet Rabindranath has won wider celebrity than any poet in his own lifetime. His works, or parts of them, are familiar to most readers in Europe, Asia and America. The best translations in English are by himself and these have been translated into other languages. Critics in Europe and America, almost without exception, have bestowed high praise on his writings and ranked him among the great poets of the world. Occasionally

the criticism is shallow, specially when the Indian poet has been compared to some European poet. A comparison between two writers in two different languages may have the merit of suggestion, but it is not helpful to constructive criticism. A critic who undertakes such a comparison must satisfy his readers that he has read both writers in the original with full understanding. I doubt whether any European critic can make such an assertion in regard to the poetical writings of Rabindranath Tagore. An English admirer of the poet, who has resided in India for some time, claims to have read him in the original Bengali and he considers the Indian writer in some respects superior to Victor Hugo. He has not, however, thought of comparing the poet to any English writer. If an Indian critic were to make such a comparison he should be asked whether he has read the works of Victor Hugo in the original French. The similarity between the French and the Indian writers is in their versatility and range of creative genius. Both are masters of prose and verse, both are writers of prose and fiction, both have written dramatic and lyric poetry, both are child-lovers and have tendered the homage of exquisite song to the sovereignty of childhood. There the comparison ends and it can be carried no further, because the two writers belong to two widely divergent schools. Tennyson rightly called Victor Hugo the 'Stormy Voice of France'. The great French poet was 'Lord of human tears', but he was in his element in the *Sturm und Drang* of nature and human passions. 'French of the French', he smote and withered Napoleon *Le Petit* with the flail and fire of his scorn and his burning philippics in prose and verse. He nicknamed Napoleon III the 'Little' in contrast with Napoleon the Great. The Muse of the Indian poet moves in the glory of early dawn and seeks the gathering sha-

dows of evening. She finds her pleasure, not in the storm and stress, but in the smiling beauties of nature. She haunts the moonlight and strays in the ripe and waving corn. She listens to the voice of the sandal-scented wind from the south and knocks gently at the door of the human heart.

In the case of a great poet or writer contemporary judgement may not always be in agreement with the ultimate verdict of posterity. A man standing close to the foot of a mountain cannot form a correct estimate of its height or its imposing position in the landscape. Similarly, a certain perspective of time is necessary for an accurate appreciation of a great original writer or creative genius. But the faculty of criticism has grown with the development of literature and we cannot expect the suspension of contemporary judgement in the case of any writer, great or small. That judgement as regards the Indian poet is entirely gratifying and will be endorsed by future generations of critics. Rich and varied as is the output of Rabindranath's literary work, he stands pre-eminent as a lyric poet. The world of readers outside his own province of Bengal knows him only through the medium of translations. Poetry divides itself easily into three main sections, epic, dramatic and lyric—the three clearly demarcated and separated by wide stretches of time and the evolution of the human intellect. Of these, epic poetry is somewhat easy of translation, because its essence is narrative. Some loss is unavoidable in translation, but the outlines and central structure of an epic can be retained even in a new language. Drama is more difficult, but the excellent renderings into English of the powerful Greek tragedies prove that the difficulties of translation are not insuperable. A fine lyrical poem is the despair of the translator. A great epic is fashioned

in a Titanic mould of which a cast may be taken. A drama is a panoramic view of human nature and may be copied. But a beautiful lyric is a sparkling little jewel of which every facet is carefully cut by the poet-jeweller and its setting is the language in which it is composed. Any duplication or imitation of such a gem may prove to be mere paste. To be fully appreciated a lyrical poem must be read in the original with due understanding of the language in which it is written. It is a compact and component whole from which no part can be separated from another. The words, the figures, the metre are all wedded together. Rabindranath has translated his poems as no one else could have done, but how is it possible to convey in another language the grace, the metrical arrangement and the musical harmony of the words of the original poems?

It can scarcely be expected that readers and admirers in far off lands will learn the language of Bengal to read the works of the Bengali poet as originally written. India itself is a land of many languages, and outside Bengal Indian readers have to read the English translations of the poet. I remember several years before Rabindranath received the Nobel Prize Gopal Krishna Gokhale, politician and mathematician, learned the Bengali language for the express purpose of reading Rabindranath's poems in the original Bengali. Gokhale read out to me a few poems on one occasion, apologizing for his inability to reproduce the Bengali accent and enunciation, and then asked me to read the same poems in the manner of a Bengali. However wide-flung his fame, Rabindranath's permanent place is in the literature of his own language. As a Bengali free from a few delusions, I recognize that Bengali literature does not rank as one of the great literatures of the world, though it is

full of promise and has already produced a few writers of undoubted genius. Periods of literary activity have alternated with long spells of stagnation. There have been a few critics of outstanding ability, but critical acumen has not been systematically and conscientiously cultivated. The little criticism that is to be found is either shallow, or mordant, which passes for smartness, or indiscriminating and fulsome adulation. When Rabindranath was a young boy criticism by comparison was rampant in Bengal, and every writer of any note was compared to some English writer. Early Bengali literature was neglected. The Vaishnava poems of the era of Chaitanya, the cradle and crown of the lyric poetry of Bengal, were consigned to the oblivion of cheap and obscure printing presses. The boy Rabindranath turned to this literature with the unerring instinct of nascent genius. As a boy-poet he wrote a number of charming poems in imitation of the language of Vidyapati, a Maithil poet by birth and by the language of his verse, but also a Bengali poet by adoption and extensive imitation during the period Bengali poetry was influenced by the personality of Chaitanya.

As the pinions of his genius grew stronger the poet soared higher and ranged wider. The supreme art of simplicity was his to begin with, and he rapidly acquired considerable depth of thought and a rare strength and delicacy of touch. There was very little variety in rhythm, metre and measure in Bengali poetry, though the great poet Michael Madhusudhan Dutt had introduced blank verse and a few simple new metres. Rabindranath dazzled his readers by his creative faculty of introducing new metres and measures. Tripping verses nimble-footed as Terpsichore, slow, dreamy measures caught in the land of the lotus-eaters, long-swinging, stately lines

of regal grace, stirring lays of knightly deeds and martyr-heroes, lofty chants from ancient Aryan and Buddhist legendary lore, holy hymns rising like hosannas from the shrine of the soul, all were his, and his muse answered every compelling call. His language is of classical purity and dignity, and of striking originality. Critics everywhere have been struck by his wealth of simile and metaphor, the subtlety of perception and suggestion, the realization of the beautiful. His devotional songs and poems are among the finest in the whole range of literature. They are a noble and melodious expression of a living faith beautiful in its strength and sublime in its appeal. His lyrics are of steadily progressive strength and variety, and the careful student can detect the successive stages of development, the growing maturity of thought and expression, the increasing power over language and rhyme, and the splendid outburst of music in several of his later poems. Without attempting anything like an exhaustive criticism or appreciation of the poet I may refer to a single poem displaying some of the qualities which have placed Rabindranath in the front rank of lyric poets. This poem was composed when the poet was about thirty-four years of age, in the full plenitude of his powers and the assured strength of his genius. The theme is *Urvasi*, the principal mythical dancer in Indra's heaven. The poem scintillates and glitters like the Kohinoor in the poet's Golconda of flawless jewels of the finest water.

In the Bengali text of this poem the metre is original, the language is full of artistic grace and the instinct of the true poet is to be repeatedly found in the choice of the words. Words like *kampra* (trembling), *ushasi* (dawn), *tanima* (slenderness), and *sonima* (redness), delightfully musical, are rarely met with elsewhere in

Bengali poetry. In one line occurs the word *krandasi* (heaven and earth). How many Bengali readers of the poet know the meaning of this word or have troubled themselves to trace its origin? It cannot be found in any Bengali dictionary or even an average Sanskrit dictionary. It is an archaic Sanskrit word and occurs in three places in the *Rig-Veda*, in the second, sixth and tenth *mandalas*. The meaning of the word is two contending armies shouting defiance, but in the commentary of Sayanacharya it is noted that it also means heaven and earth. It is in this sense that the word has been used by the poet in this poem. This will give an idea of the wide and accurate scholarship of the poet and his artistic selection of appropriate words.

Urvasi is an epithet of the dawn personified as an *apsara*, a heavenly nymph, the principal *denseuse* in Indra's heaven. The Aryan, Greek, Roman and Islamic conceptions of paradise are a perpetuation of the lower forms of the pleasures of life on earth. The paradise of the North American Indian is the happy hunting ground, for he cannot think of a heaven without the pleasures of the chase. Incidents relating to Urvasi are frequently mentioned in ancient Sanskrit books. The earliest mention is to be found in the allegory of the *Rig-Veda*, in which Pururava represents the sun and Urvasi the morning dawn and the evening twilight. A later myth alludes to the emergence of the dancer from the thigh of a Rishi called Narayana. According to our poet here among the objects and beings that rose from the sea when it was churned by the gods and the demons with the mount Mandar for a churning rod and the great serpent Vasuki for a churning rope Urvasi was one. This splendid allegory crystallizes some dim and remote tradition about some stupendous convulsion of nature, may be an un-

paralleled seismic disturbance, a mighty volcanic eruption, the emergence of a vast tract of land from the sea or the submergence of some forgotten continent like Atlantis. In Greek mythology, which is largely a reflex of Aryan mythology, Aphrodite, named Venus in Roman mythology, rose from the sea-foam in which she was born. The Sanskrit legend explains how the sea was churned into foam by a Titanic process. Aphrodite unlike Urvasi does not represent the dawn, but the Greek word for daybreak, *eos*, is etymologically very similar to the Sanskrit word for dawn, *usha*.

In all the ancient accounts relating to Urvasi there is nothing that appeals to the finer feelings. There is the fascination, irresistible to saint and sinner alike, of an unearthly and fadeless beauty. In the tenth *mandala* of the *Rig-Veda* there is a dialogue between Pururava and Urvasi. The story is told in fuller detail in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, the *Bhagavata* and mentioned in several other books. In the *Mahabharata* the third Pandava, Arjuna, who rejected Urvasi's advances, was cursed by her. For a short spell she was the wife of King Pururava and in dramatizing this incident in *Vikramorvasi* the poet Kalidasa represents her as a loving and attractive woman. But the modern poet has restored Urvasi to the spirit world and interpreted her with an inspiration so sympathetic and elevating as to reveal her in a new light. As one reads and understands this poem, he realizes the sublimation of Urvasi from the low level of sense to the height of supersense. She no longer appears merely as the radiant but heartless ravisher of hearts, a much-magnified, if elusive, type of the scarlet woman. Any conception of the eternal feminine, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, is incomplete without the three stages of maidenhood, wifehood and motherhood,

and this is the first note sounded by the poet while apostrophizing Urvasi. Fronting the universe unshrinking in the freshness and glory of the first dawn of creation, Urvasi stands in the splendour of her beauty with the glint of the young sunlight on her loveliness.

And this image recalls the legend of her first manifestation, for there is no word about her birth anywhere though the parentage of the gods can be easily traced in the elaborate theogony of Sanskrit sacred literature, with its imposing setting. Behold the gods and their opponents with their muscles showing like corded steel, heaving and straining and pulling at either end of the straightened but writhing coils of the mightiest of serpents, trampling the golden strand under their giant feet, the massive bulk of mount Mandar whirling each way by turn with the broad, speckled bands of the length of the serpent Ananta enfolding its girth, the cosmic ocean lashed and racked and churned into hissing, hydra-headed foam! And behind this travail and turmoil is the background of the calm and smiling rose-flush of the dawn! On this scene of mingled strife and peace appears Urvasi, parting the waters and the foam, her hair dripping and clinging to the rounded curves and the slender lines of her peerless form, the vision of her beauty striking the godly and ungodly beholders dumb with amazement!

For centuries poets and dramatists and other writers accepted this conception of Urvasi without question. There was no suggestion of any flaw in the myth, or anything lacking in the imagination that invested the nymph with perennial youth. But the latest of the great poets of India has noted the gap in the life-story of Urvasi. We see her suddenly revealed to the astonished eyes of the universe in the maturity of her lissome grace,

the immortal gift of her beauty and her fatal fascination, but nothing is known of the innocence of her early youth, of her playfulness as a child or the arms that rocked her to sleep in a gilded chamber in some submarine palace. And hence the wondering question of the poet concerning the missing infancy of Urvashi. The original legend is undoubtedly a daring figment revelling in the creation of full-grown beauty, skipping the stages between childhood and maturity. In Judaic tradition and the Book of Genesis the first man and woman were never infants. But the loss to the being or the spirit so created is immeasurable. What beauty of person or consciousness of strength can compensate for the void inseparable from the absence of the lights and shadows of the vista of memory, recollections of the past to fill moments of idleness or preoccupation?

This is the emphasis on the word 'only' (*sudhoo*), when the poet says Urvashi has been for ages the beloved of the whole universe. Her appeal is the disturbing influence of beauty alone without the lighter shades of the memory of an innocent childhood. It is the puissance of sheer beauty shattering the concentrated contemplation of the saint and filling all the worlds with the ache of youth and maddening the fancy of the poet. But she, the creator of all this commotion, the dancer with the jingling anklets making music to her footfall; flits as she will, gay, heartwhole, fancy-free. It is when she dances before the assembled gods on the sapphire floor of the ball-room in Indra's palace with all the abandon and witchery of her art that the poet lifts the veil from the mystery of her identity and reveals her as the spirit of beauty behind the phenomena of nature. The rhythmic waves of the sea keep measure to her dancing feet, the tremors of the agitated earth are communicated to

the heads of corn, the heart of man is strangely and inexplicably disturbed. The falling meteor is a jewel burst from the chain round Urvasi's neck in the mad whirl of her dance, the lambent lightning with its wavy lines is the broken strand of the lustrous girdle round her waist. Urvasi is the expression of all the buoyant, spontaneous joyance of Nature!

Still further behind is the Vedic myth, though even there the identity of Urvasi with the Morning Dawn and the Evening Twilight is very faint and the allegory is more or less lost in the proper name. In hailing her as the embodiment of dawn in heaven the poet greets her on the threshold of early tradition and yet finds in her the fulfilment of the later and wilder myths cleansed from the grosser accretions of later times. The morning dew in which the dawn is bathed represents the tears of the world while the tinge of rose with which the delicate feet of Urvasi is painted by the rays of the morning sun is the heart-blood of all the worlds. As the lotus which remains closed at night opens its heart to the first touch of the sun, so the longing and the desire of the universe opens out as a lotus flower on which the dainty sun-kissed feet of Urvasi may rest. The image of beauty that haunts the dreams of the world is the all-pervading loveliness of Urvasi.

Will the revolving cycles bring back the ancient and pristine era when Urvasi rose from the sea which hailed her with a new song of welcome? Will a wondering world again witness what the gods saw? Will the wailing cry of heaven and earth reach Urvasi and turn her tripping feet back to the scene of her first triumphs? Vain, alas is the weeping and yearning for the lost Urvasi! How can the beauty and the glory of the first dawn of creation ever return? Is it not recorded in the

*Rig-Veda** that Urvasi told Pururava, "I have gone from thee like the first of Mornings....I, like the wind, am difficult to capture"? Urvasi is not the nymph of the daily recurrent dawn. She "came from the waters flashing brilliant as the falling lightning, bringing delicious presents for Pururava."† Gone is she with the glory of the first of Mornings, leaving behind her the memory of a vanished beauty such as has never again been seen on earth or in heaven, and her parting sigh comes floating in the festive season of springtide as an undertone of melancholy!

And so we see Urvasi again, ancient as the Vedas in recorded language and far more ancient in mythic tradition, uplifted and purified, stepping forth as she did when she rent the veil of uncreated, brooding gloom and looked out on the universe in the soft dawnlight, wondering and wondered at, passing fair, winning unsought the adoration of immortals and mortals. The fame of the poet, to whose genius we owe this new presentation of the world-old Urvasi, has been broadcast round the world by the wireless of human appreciation conveyed in many tongues, and if we claim him as our own it is with the knowledge that he belongs also to the world and his is the one form of wealth which grows with the giving. Let ours be the portion of sharing the glad gratefulness of giving, of adding to the joy and light of the world.

II

A GOLDEN SINGER

If length of years were the only claim to remembrance few men would live in the memories of men, for

* *Rig-Veda*, X, 95.

† *Ibid.*

life at its longest is only a brief span and is obliterated by death. What we call a man's personality, his striking presence, the nobility and beauty of his features, his aplomb are evanescent, for the body is built up of perishable material. There is something, however, apart from a man's physique which occasionally helps him to conquer death and enables him to leave behind a record of achievement which does not pass away. Rabindranath Tagore has attained the biblical age of three score and ten years and the tributes that will be paid to him will be an acknowledgment of the work he has been able to accomplish in these years, an expression of gratitude for the great gifts he has made to humanity.

The world hails him as a world-poet and singer whose melodies contain a world appeal, who has voiced the yearnings and aspirations of all humanity in verses of singular sweetness and penetration. His poetry radiates light, it is illuminating, resplendent with the glorious rays of the morning sun, lighting up the hill-tops and flooding the dark recesses of grottoes. The scorching and blinding glare of the noonday sun is not reflected by his muse. His exaltation comes of invincible and abiding faith, not from fitful gusts of passion. This is the secret of his rapid and universal popularity. The world has reacted promptly and eagerly to the magic of his songs, because the world longs for words of faith and the harmony of peace and beauty.

There is an inscrutable purpose behind the unprecedented and world-wide success of Rabindranath Tagore. He belongs to a subject race which has no recognized place among the free nations of the world. Many centuries of alien rule have reduced his people to the position of helots in their own land. They have been traduced

and calumniated by foreign writers and visitors from other lands. Abroad they are either despised or barely tolerated by western people with an undisguised consciousness of superiority. The language in which he writes is written and spoken in only one province of India. Although derived from one of the greatest classical languages of the world, it is obscure and practically unknown out of Bengal. It does not yet possess a great literature nor has it acquired an assured position among the literary languages of the world. Yet these handicaps, heavy as they undoubtedly are, have not stood in the way of the personal and literary success of Rabindranath Tagore. The man as well as his work have had universal acceptance; Rabindranath himself has been welcomed with open arms and warm hearts wherever he has gone, east, west, north and south, and his writings have found a permanent place in the literature of almost every country in the world. The greatest name in the literature of today is not to be found in the West, among great and powerful nations, but in the ancient East among a humble people held in bondage by a western race. So do the mysterious ways of Providence fulfil themselves and East and West stand side by side rendering homage to the poet and prophet.

Genius would not be great, if it were not unconditioned. The limitations of language and country, the restrictions of personal liberty are burst asunder by the unshackled spirit soaring fancy-free in the empyrean and pouring forth its treasure of song.* In the original, the poems and songs of this eastern poet are read and understood by only a small section of the human race. It is only through the medium of translations in many languages that his fame has spread in many lands, and many readers of many nationalities have found his

message good for the soul. The essence has been retained in the translations; the beauty of thought and the subtlety of suggestion cannot be conveyed in another language. That the gist of the writings has been understood and appreciated is evident from the large sale of the translated works and the enthusiasm with which Rabindranath has been greeted wherever he has gone. Still the regret remains that the garb in which his muse is originally clothed has to be stripped in order that others may recognize her in other garments familiar to them. The glowing light of the jewel remains, but the setting has to be replaced. Else the world would have known the marvellously musical capacity of the language in which the poet writes: the mellifluous cadence of the words, the tinkling lilt of the verse. Bengali is a language that lends itself charmingly to the composition of poetry and all its resources have been wielded with consummate art by this poet.

What is the secret of this poet's appeal to all lovers of literature without distinction of country and race? Why is it that his writings are so much sought after in the Far East and the Far West, among nations divided from one another not only by great distances but by tradition and custom and different habits of thought? Rabindranath's writings have proved, if any proof were needed, that there are certain characteristics, certain fundamental ways of thinking common to all humanity, and the heart of the East and the West is stirred alike if it can be touched the right way. Our poet does not employ exotic methods, the colouring is local and the aroma is racy of the soil. But the deeper truths that he explores and expounds are the truths of all time and all humanity, and hence the universality of his appeal. Deep down in the hearts of all thinking men, no matter what

their race and what their colour, is the desire to understand and to hold to the truth, to attempt to attain to the higher destiny of the human race. It has been given to this eastern poet to reveal the deep and steadfast truths of life and to illuminate the depths of human thought.

It is yet too early to say that the world has arrived at a final and accurate estimate of the genius of this poet. There is no difficulty at all in appreciating the universal welcome extended to him, or in realizing the profound admiration with which his works have been read all over the world. It is not yet possible, however, to assign finally his place in the world's literature. That must necessarily be a matter of time. Criticism and high praise of his work, based mainly on translations, have appeared in many countries. In his own country and among his own people there is considerable enthusiasm but not much by way of an elaborate examination of the predominant features of his genius. The one outstanding fact beyond all dispute is the unparalleled recognition that has come to him in his own lifetime. With changing conditions in the world, the rapid spread of publicity, the growth of internationalism, the broadening of human interests, fame spreads more quickly than it used to do in the past; but even these favourable conditions do not wholly account for the phenomenal success of Rabindranath Tagore as an international, nay, a universal poet. There have been and there are other famous writers for whom the same facilities for world-wide celebrity were available, the Nobel Prize for literature is conferred every year, but the works of no other modern writer have been, in such a short space of time, translated into so many languages as those of this Indian poet. It is obvious that there must be some special fascination, some irresistible appeal in his writings.

The present occasion, the completion of the seventieth year of the poet's life, has been marked by a spontaneous offering of tributes by the poet's friends and admirers all over the world. It is a grateful acknowledgement of what the world owes to him. It is a personal tribute inseparable from the great work done by him and which has brought his personality into such prominence. This may be considered a fitting occasion to strike a personal note. There may be few friends still left who have known him young and have known him old, and who may recall personal memories of the years gone by. As a matter of fact, however, the life of the poet is an open book of which all the chapters are known to the world. There are no obscure pages, no elements of romance. His has been a life of high purpose, clean and pure, and of steady and ceaseless work. His literary activities cover a wide field. Although his chief distinction is that of a poet, he is no less distinguished as a dramatist and a writer of fiction, while his work as a critic and essayist is by no means inconsiderable. His intense patriotism has found expression in his patriotic songs; the different phases of the political evolution in his own country have found him alert and watchful, and, whenever necessary he has fearlessly expressed disapproval of some particular form of political creed or activity. There has never been any question of the sincerity of his convictions and the selflessness of his motives.

These are matters which do not call for more than a passing mention. The world knows and will remember Rabindranath as a maker of exquisite melodies, a seer who has seen the truth and celebrated it in matchless song, a poet who has devoted his art to the exposition of the pure and the beautiful, a man of a living faith which

has been a source of unfailing inspiration to him. This is why hands and hearts have been stretched out to him from every point of the compass and his message has found willing listeners in every part of the world. His verse has caught and sounded the harmony of the spheres; it has the abiding peace of a deep faith and also the strange pain that accompanies it. Apart from the profound truth that "our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts", there is an indefinable heartache in the realization of the truth; throbbings of pain that finally cease in peace. It is only rarely when a man is far more subtly gifted than his fellows that he realizes in himself the travail of creation, the paroxysm of pain which is the inevitable prelude to peace. This is an experience that cannot be communicated to others. It is an individual realization and the result alone can be shared by others.

The impersonal aspect of a man's genius must transcend his personality. When we say of any man that he is greater than some achievement that has brought him fame, we are perfectly aware that the man's fame will outlive him. Aware of our own transitory existence we endeavour to hold fast to the passing image of a man. It is the light that illumines the lamp; quench the light and the lamp serves no purpose. We attach so much importance to personality, because we are utterly ignorant of the personalities of the greatest men of ancient times, men whose claim to greatness is still beyond dispute. They were wise with a great wisdom and they did not concern themselves with the trivialities of personality. They have left no record of themselves and others have said nothing about them. How a man lived his life, how he looked, how he comported himself were apparently matters of no moment. Great poets found great com-

mentators but no biographers. There were numerous and varied glosses upon theological and philosophical works, but no word was written about the authors. The ancients easily and instinctively distinguished between the permanent and the impermanent.

The ancient lack of curiosity about the personal history of famous men has now given way to a spirit of keen inquiry and a strong desire to know all that may be possible about the life of a man distinguished above his fellows. It so happens that the personality of Rabindranath Tagore apart from his remarkable genius is eminently attractive. He would attract attention anywhere in any gathering of men by his physical and intellectual distinction, the beauty and nobility of his features. Added to his personal appearance is the singular dignity and purity of his life. The great strength of his character has been manifest throughout his life, in the hours of trial and grief. The more one knows the story of his life, the greater will be his respect for the man. One looks in vain for another personality so great as his, so fascinating in its beauty, so impressive in its strength.

It is a great privilege to have an opportunity of paying our homage to the genius and character of such a man. For him there are no bounds of nationality or country. His gift is the heritage of humanity, his voice is the clear expression of human thoughts struggling for utterance. The world is grateful because he has given the truth to the world set to beautiful music. It is not for us to worry about the future, for it does not concern us, though the poet's own place in the future may be assured. We make our bow and pass on, but we feel our lives have been fuller and richer for what we have learned from this latest of the world-poets. If our hands

cannot lift the veil of the future, nor our eyes penetrate its folds, we can still hear faintly the music of the future and distinguish the poet's songs ringing down the golden steps of time.

5. PANDIT MOTILAL NEHRU

(1861-1931)

By the death of Pandit Motilal Nehru the movement for Indian national freedom has lost its greatest leader, one who stood next only to Mahatma Gandhi. Since the passing of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das no other national leader had filled so large a space in the public eye, or waged so unceasing a struggle for the attainment of the freedom of India. Mahatma Gandhi stands by himself, the supreme embodiment of the soul of a free India, but among his colleagues and co-workers the name of Pandit Motilal Nehru will, for all time, rank as high as that of any one else. The loving reverence in which he was held by all ranks and classes of his countrymen throughout the length and breadth of India was abundantly borne out by the spontaneous and profound mourning into which the whole country was plunged after his death. Tributes of grief and admiration have poured in from all quarters, from his countrymen of all shades of political convictions, from his official opponents in the Indian Legislative Assembly and from many leaders of thought and opinion outside India. Death comes to all and no one can choose the manner and time of death, but it is only to the privileged few that death comes as a crown of glory and an emblem of immortality. Among these privileged few is the assured place of Motilal Nehru.

Allahabad, where the entire career of Motilal Nehru was spent, is not a great centre of commercial or intellectual activity. Its other name is Prayag and it is one of the most famous places of Hindu pilgrimage. The sacred

confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna at this place has attracted millions of pilgrims from very ancient times. In the month of *Magh* every year a large fair is held on the banks of the Ganges close to the site of the confluence. Every twelve years the great *Kumbha Mela* is held at this place and fifty to sixty lakhs of people congregate to bathe at the junction of the two rivers. Allahabad⁹ is the seat of the Government of the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, but the time of that Government is divided between Allahabad, Lucknow and the hill station of Naini Tal. There is a university at Allahabad and there is also a High Court, but it is a small city compared to Calcutta or Bombay and there is not the same kind of public life as is to be found in the two great cities.

Motilal Nehru himself was not a native of the United Provinces. By birth he was a Kashmiri Brahmin and his family had moved to and settled in the United Provinces. As a lawyer practising in the Allahabad High Court and in the courts of Oudh he soon distinguished himself, and in the course of time he was made an advocate of the High Court. He became one of the leaders of the Bar and had one of the largest incomes earned by any lawyer in India. He became widely known not only as a distinguished lawyer but as a leader of society. He built a palatial house which was named "Anand Bhawan" and lived like a prince. His unbounded and lavish hospitality was extended to Indians and Europeans alike. He constantly entertained friends and guests at his table and gave garden parties in his extensive and beautiful grounds. Personally, he was a man of remarkable distinction. A fine upstanding figure, he was a handsome man with keen, intellectual features. His personal charm and unfailing courtesy were characteristic of his culture

and fine temperament.

Politics did not attract Motilal Nehru early in life. He was over forty years of age when he first attended the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1906 over which Dadabhai Naoroji presided. The first signs of a cleavage in the Congress were noticed that year, the opposition being led by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh. A threatened defeat over a division was averted by the solid front presented by the delegates from the United Provinces, two hundred strong, led by Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Motilal Nehru was at that time a Moderate. He could scarcely be anything else. By nature and training he was a sober thinker and reasoner. The glamour of rhetoric did not appeal to him. He was neither impulsive nor emotional. He never used the language of passion and never lost his balance of an intellectual poise.

In ordinary circumstances Motilal Nehru might have risen to high office in the Government. A judgeship of a High Court would have scarcely been a distinction for him. The Law Membership of the Government of India may be a high office, but it has been held by men of hardly any eminence and of doubtful patriotism. If Motilal Nehru had been an aspirant for such a distinction it would have come to him with ease. Of all the Indians who have been appointed Law Members at different times not one had the same personal popularity among Europeans as Motilal Nehru. Successive Governors of the United Provinces were his personal friends and had partaken of his princely hospitality. There have been Law Members who were unknown and struggling lawyers when Motilal Nehru was at the head of the profession and the height of his fame as a lawyer.

But Motilal Nehru had been born for greater and higher things than the trammels of office under a foreign Government.

What satisfactory explanation can be found for the extraordinary and radical change that came over Motilal Nehru's outlook and convictions? There was no abrupt or sudden change, no bitterness due to any disappointment, no inclination whatsoever to pose as a hero and a martyr. If he chose the way to the prison and if he put aside his hard-earned wealth it was a deliberate choice, a calm and careful decision. So far as can be ascertained his final decision was influenced by two considerations: the first was the burning patriotism and self-abnegation of his only son, Jawaharlal Nehru. Jawaharlal had been sent to England to compete for the Indian Civil Service. He was also keeping terms to qualify as a barister-at-law. As was to be expected Motilal gave a very liberal allowance to his son, who did not pass the Indian Civil Service examination but continued his studies of law. Early in 1908, shortly after the *contretemps* of the abortive Surat Congress, Mr. Nevinson, the well-known publicist and writer, was a guest of Motilal Nehru at Allahabad. Motilal gave a dinner to a number of friends to meet Mr. Nevinson. I was present. A few days later Motilal invited me alone to have a free exchange of views with Mr. Nevinson. There was also some conversation between Motilal and myself in the absence of Mr. Nevinson. Motilal was somewhat perturbed by the political views which his son was developing in England. It was a time when Moderates held the field everywhere. A spilt had appeared in the Congress, but no one spoke of the independence of India as an attainable goal. The subsequent career of Jawaharlal Nehru, his identification with the national freedom struggle, his repeated imprisonment,

form an integral part of the struggle now going on in India. Jawaharlal undoubtedly exercised a great influence over his father.

The second cause that finally determined Motilal Nehru's place in public life and in his service to his country was unquestionably the unparalleled example and influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was also a fairly successful lawyer at one time, though he did not attain the opulence of Motilal Nehru or Chittaranjan Das. Mahatma Gandhi had returned from South Africa rich in sacrifice and richer still in suffering. Almost without an effort he found himself at the head of the national movement in India. With the Non-co-operation movement came the call for sacrifice and suffering. To C. R. Das and Motilal Nehru the Mahatma made a special appeal and they responded without hesitation. Wealth they laid cheerfully aside for poverty, and exchanged the comforts of a luxurious home for the prison.

As we Hindus believe no persuasion and no influence could have brought about the complete self-surrender of Motilal Nehru to the service of his country if he had not been impelled thereto by his *karma*. He could have won the reputation of a patriot without any sacrifice or any risk. He could have continued earning large sums of money and appearing on the platform as a patriot. He might have even won such honours as are in the gift of the Government. But his *karma* was behind him and helped to clear his vision. He realized that nothing can be gained in this country by playing at patriotism. India must pay a heavy price for her freedom and he who wishes to serve the cause of the liberation of India must be prepared for the uttermost sacrifice and suffering. It must be a consecration without reserve,

a full offering at the altar of liberty. Indians themselves are mainly responsible for the present state of India and they must expiate the sins of their forefathers. There can be no withholding of anything, no partial atonement. It must be either all or nothing. Wealth, personal liberty, life itself must be ungrudgingly surrendered so that India may win back her self-respect and her freedom. Motilal Nehru's *karma* had equipped him fully for this supreme sacrifice and he made his choice without a moment's hesitation.

There are patriots in India who palter with patriotism in the belief that they are doing their duty. Lawyers and others become politicians and patriots in England, and some of them are called statesmen. Why not in India? They scarcely take note of the difference between a free country and a subject country. They risk nothing, sacrifice nothing, lose nothing and yet they enjoy a high reputation for wisdom and patriotism. They are the wise men of the East, who believe in personal prosperity and safety first, and in everything else afterwards. The wisest of them is not wiser than Motilal Nehru, nor the ablest of them abler than him. Yet they have sought safety whereas Motilal Nehru dared everything. He brought into this incarnation a richer harvest of *karma* than his more cautious and less patriotic countrymen.

In the brief sketches that have appeared in the press of Motilal Nehru's career it has been stated that he was a Moderate when he first took part in politics, but later on became an Extremist. The "thoughtlessness with which the word "extremist" is bandied about in this country is exasperating. An extremist is not only beyond the pale of the law, but he is almost outside the bounds of reason. Extremism is obviously the last word in intransigence. As an extremist Motilal Nehru stood

for full freedom of his country. If that is an extreme demand what demand can be more elementary?

Motilal Nehru's ability as a leader, an organizer and as a statesman was displayed at its best in the Indian Legislative Assembly, of which he was the most brilliant and distinguished member. He never held office as he could not do so under the Government as at present constituted. But as Leader of the Opposition he brought into play parliamentary gifts of the highest order. In speech and debate he was a parliamentarian without a rival or an equal in the Assembly. His intellectual acumen, force of argument and political sagacity made him the central figure in the Legislature. And at all times and under all conditions he was ever the great gentleman—urbane, courteous, unruffled and full of a great gift of humour. Allied to his extraordinary intellectual gifts was his unbounded moral courage, which was noticeable at every step of his career and which left him wholly undisturbed when he was sent to prison more than once. His pride was the outcome of his fearlessness. When on the last occasion he fell seriously ill in the prison and his release was in contemplation, he declared that he did not desire any clemency to be shown to him. He never sought nor accepted any favour; as the architect of his own fortune and his great position it was repugnant to him to be under any obligation to any one, much less to the Government.

Of his generous nature what instance can be more striking than his gift of "Anand Bhavan", his palatial residence at Allahabad, to the nation? It has been renamed "Swaraj Bhawan" and may become a centre of national activities in an emancipated India. Motilal Nehru gave all that was in him to give to the service of his country and his people. He gave up his profession

and his large income so that he might serve his country without distraction and without interruption. His intellect and his wisdom and all his thoughts were devoted to his country and he laid down his life in its service. He has had his reward in the boundless and undying gratitude, love and reverence of a nation.

At the funeral, at the sacred confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna, Mahatma Gandhi in the course of a brief oration, narrated that he had told Motilal Nehru that they would get Swaraj after the Pandit's recovery. Motilal Nehru replied: "We have already got Swaraj. There is no question of Swaraj." He died with this firm conviction in his mind. Is there any doubt that India has already got Swaraj in the spirit? Motilal Nehru lived to see the unprecedented awakening that has been witnessed in India during the last nine months. He was one of the chief captains in the epic struggle in which there has been no clash and clang of arms but an unparalleled manifestation of the strength of the spirit. The whole of India became another Kurukshetra where the soul faced undaunted the use of physical force. Motilal Nehru lived to see the marvellous awakening of the womanhood of India, an event for which neither history nor tradition holds any precedent. It has been a revival on an extensive scale of the most glorious tradition of medieval Rajasthan. The *Jahar brata* was the self-immolation of Rajput women for the preservation of their honour; on the present occasion the flower of Indian womanhood, Hindu, Mussalman, and Parsi, have flung themselves into the struggle and sought imprisonment and suffering for the sake of their country. Motilal Nehru lived to see the younger generation of his countrymen, young men and boys, courting physical suffering and imprisonment in order to win the freedom of the

nation. His conviction that the nation had got Swaraj was based upon a solid foundation.

Is it necessary to say anything about his last days? He was a hale man when he was sent to prison. No reflection need be made about the justice or otherwise of the sentence that was passed upon him. He himself never complained and we have no complaint to make. For the cause with which he had identified himself he considered no sacrifice too great. He was willing to lay down his life as he had given up his wealth and property. But the bare fact has to be recorded. In prison he fell ill and had repeated attacks of fever. Then he began spitting blood. A Medical Board was appointed to examine him and it was considered that there was no immediate danger. When he grew worse he was released. He came out of prison a stricken man, stricken unto death. Notwithstanding the best medical advice and treatment and the most loving and devoted care he never recovered. These facts cannot be questioned and no comments are necessary. Neither do we mourn his death, for death comes at its appointed time. The individual passes on, but the nation abides. In the funeral oration made by Mahatma Gandhi, to which reference has been made, he truly said that this is not a time for grief but joy—~~joy~~ that India should have been blessed in the hour of her struggle with so great a son as Motilal Nehru, whose name and life and example will be a perennial inspiration to his countrymen in the ages to come.

6. SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

(1863-1902)

I

It was a vision of world peace that inspired Tennyson's famous line about the Parliament of Man, the Federation of the World. To some extent this was realized in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September 1893. It marked an epoch in the history of humanity, in the spirit of religions. The Parliament demonstrated the feasibility of the representatives of all the religions of the world meeting in amity and listening in patient courtesy and with interest to the expositions of many faiths.

Elaborate and prolonged arrangements had been made to ensure the success of the Parliament of Religions. Invitations had been sent out to all the recognized religious bodies of the world. Every section of the Christian church was represented. High dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church and accredited delegates of the various other churches were present. Besides these, as was pointed out by the President of the Scientific Section of the Parliament, eight important non-Christian religious groups were represented—Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Judaism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Mohammedanism and Mazdaism. There were seven to ten thousand persons present at the Parliament.

Unprecedented and wonderful as the gathering was, there was no one among those invited who could be looked upon as the spokesman of this Parliament of Religions,

no one who could interpret and give voice to this great assembly as a whole, or seize the spirit that had inspired the conception of the coming together of all the religions of the world and explain the unity that lay behind this wide diversity of faith. Each one present was an authority on the particular system of religion that he represented and he could be relied upon to expound the tenets of his faith with knowledge and clarity of expression, but no one could speak for all or make an endeavour to harmonize the many divergent and conflicting faiths represented on that platform.

And yet the seemingly impossible was accomplished and one was found to gather up the scattered threads of thought and belief in that immense assemblage, and to weave the straying strands into a beautiful garland of harmony and love. He spoke for a particular religion but he also spoke for all religions; he exalted other faiths as he exalted his own; with a power and persuasiveness that carried conviction, an eloquence that stirred his hearers to unbounded enthusiasm, he outlined a universal religion for all mankind. No one was called upon to surrender his convictions, or to renounce the religion he professed; universal toleration would establish the universality of religion. This happy issue, this fulfilment of the main idea behind the Parliament of Religions was not due to any design, or any set purpose, but to a fortuitous circumstance, the presence of a strange young man in that hall of all religions.

This young stranger, the Hindu monk Vivekananda as he was known afterwards, would have never found admittance into the Parliament if the organizers had been sticklers for formalities. The Parliament was not open to all comers because that would have led to great confusion. Every man and woman was more or less known

and every one of them had been duly delegated to the Parliament. This young man was an obscure, unknown individual who held no power of delegation from any society or sect. To call him a representative of Hinduism would be very vague, for Hinduism consists of numerous phases of belief. Was he a Vaishnava or a Saiva, a worshipper of idols or of the formless Brahman? By what right did he claim a place in that august assembly of the shining lights of many churches and creeds? It was a deliberation of elders, wise and learned men and women with a record of good work behind them; what could this young stranger from the East with only thirty years of undistinguished life behind him hope to accomplish in so distinguished and critical a gathering?

Some eminent Americans, who had met this young Indian monk before the meeting of the Parliament, were of a different opinion. Professor J. H. Wright, Professor of Greek in the Harvard University, had a long discussion with Vivekananda, and he was so greatly impressed by the ability of the young Hindu that he insisted that Vivekananda should represent Hinduism at the Parliament. When informed that the young man had not been deputed by any recognized religious society or organization and that he had no credentials, the Professor made the memorable reply: "To ask you, Swami, for your credentials is like asking the sun to state its rights to shine." He undertook to find a place for the Swami in the Parliament as a delegate, and this was accordingly done. His seat was assigned by the side of the representatives of Buddhism, the Brahmo Samaj and the Theosophical Society. He had come all the way from India, friendless and unknown, in the hope of being admitted as a delegate to the World's Parliament of Religions. The first hope was fulfilled by reason of the

interest taken in him by some of the leading organizers of the Parliament.

His first appearance as a speaker on the platform of the Parliament and what followed thereafter constitute a chapter of breathless romance. In a crowded assembly of grave and reverend men he was the youngest and least distinguished. Many of the delegates present were accomplished speakers, some were famous orators; Vivekananda had never spoken in public and had never practised the art of public speech. The other Indian delegates who preceded him in addressing the House had carefully prepared their speeches; some of them had an established reputation as public speakers; Vivekananda alone had prepared no speech and he had no notes. He was unprepared except for the feelings that were surging up tumultuously within him and were struggling to find expression. He trusted to the inspiration of the moment to pass through the ordeal before him, and to clothe his message in fitting words. When at length he stood up to speak there was a tense moment of waiting and expectation. All eyes turned to the radiant vision standing before the assembly, the strikingly handsome figure of splendid manhood robed in the flowing, orange-coloured garments of the most ancient order of Indian monks. As the large, brilliant eyes ranged over the vast audience streams of a subtle magnetism passed over the assembly and thrilled it with unconscious tremors. Then came the first utterance, the simple and intimate address: "Sisters and Brothers of America", and the hypnosis was complete. The hall rang with rounds upon rounds of applause.

Other speakers had addressed the delegates and the audience in conventional phrases of elaborate courtesy, but no one else had thought of this claim of humanity.

Yet this was what the World's Parliament of Religions represented above everything else. White and black, yellow and brown, East and West, they were sisters and brothers all, the colours of their skins varying as the complexions of their faiths, but the entire human race forming a single family like the single truth underlying all religions. The Indian monk was speaking not merely to the people seated around him but to the whole continent of America.

Vivekananda's first address to the Parliament was a short one, but it was more impressive, more stimulating and illuminating than any address heard on the opening day of the Convention. He offered the greeting of the most ancient order of monks in the world to the youngest of the nations, which, beginning with a few pioneer pilgrims from Europe, had established itself as a great progressive race in the Far West. The great teaching of the ancient faith he represented was tolerance and universal acceptance. He concluded his address by two apposite quotations from old Sanskrit books to the effect that all faiths lead to the Lord as all streams flow into the sea. The Parliament had been convened to represent all the religions of the world and here the delegates were being told of a religion that yielded full recognition to all religions. Here was the exposition of the spirit of the Conference. This young representative of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world, this young recruit of an ancient religious order held the master key that opened the heart of the Parliament and the people of America. With an ease and a rapidity truly astonishing he won his way to the forefront of the most remarkable assemblage the world has ever witnessed. He was easily the most attractive and the most admired personality in the Parliament. He never

rose or moved about without being greeted with enthusiastic plaudits. The audience hung upon his words with rapt attention; his voice was trained to music and his rich, sonorous and rhythmical diction fascinated and charmed his hearers; thousands of people waited patiently for hours in the hope of hearing him speak for a few minutes at the conclusion of the day's proceedings. The American Press, which did not then peddle so largely in cheap and vulgar sensation as at present, paid glowing tributes to his eloquence and ability, and his magnetic personal appearance in its colourful and picturesque setting. There was no need to exaggerate; the notes taken in the Parliament supplied the facts. An important New York paper stated the bare truth when it wrote that no one expressed so well the spirit of the Parliament of Religions and its limitations as the Hindu monk. . . . "He is an orator by Divine Right." This high praise reminds one of Professor Wright's brilliant saying about his lack of credentials. The *New York Herald* wrote: "He is undoubtedly the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions." These were not mere compliments, they were testimonies inspired by deep feeling and conviction. Afterwards it was found that the young Hindu, who was so effective an orator in the forum, was equally charming in the drawing room where society and well dressed women were well content to squat on the floor for want of room and to listen to his wonderful teaching.

His success was all the more remarkable since his ways were not those of a courtier. His methods were not ingratiating; he did not pay honied compliments to the votaries of fashion and the high priests of Mammon; the enlightenment and civilization of the West did not move him. He did not present himself as an humble seeker of knowledge; he did not

make himself small before the towering magnificence of the West. He sued for no favour, he besought no consideration. One of his photographs represents him standing in a proud attitude with his arms folded across his chest; this represents also his mental pose. He was not a meek and mild Hindu; he was a reincarnation of the ancient proud Aryan Rishi with all his vim and verve and *élan*. This spirit flashed out even in the Parliament of Religions. On one occasion he paused in the midst of an address and asked those who had read the sacred books of the Hindus to raise their hands. Only three or four hands were raised and then Vivekananda calmly said: "And yet you dare to judge us!" The rebuke in these words was explicit and not implied, and it could not be denied that it was just.

From that day to this the deep, wide and utterly unexpected significance of Swami Vivekananda's achievement at Chicago has not been completely realized. The noble object of the organizers of the Parliament was and is deserving of universal gratitude. They were learned and pious men belonging to the youngest and greatest modern nation. The most powerful and the most prosperous nations today profess the Christian faith and the idea of a Parliament of Religions originated with devout and enlightened Christians. The majority of the delegates were Christians; among them were princes of the Church, high dignitaries and learned divines. The audience consisted almost entirely of Christians. It would have been in the fitness of things if the central figure in that august assemblage had been a great Christian thinker or an eloquent Christian preacher. But the man who stood out from the rest, who was the most effective representative of the Parliament as a whole, was this obscure young Hindu monk from India. He had

not yet come under the mellowing influence of age. Personally, he was an *Adwaitavadi* believing in the identity of the All-Soul with every individual human soul and accepting the interpretation of the Vedanta by San-karacharya. But he stood for Hinduism as a whole with all its intricate involutions; he did not despise idolatry but defended it. He was not anxious for the salvation of any soul because to him every religion was true and provided for the salvation of its followers. Monotheism, Trinitarianism, or polytheism was each a different aspect of the same truth; all paths, straight or winding, short or long, converged upon the same centre.

His robust sanity was refreshingly instructive. He was not a Brahman and could not claim to be a religious preceptor in his own land. No man was freer from cant and sanctimoniousness. He did not call upon the rishis with uplifted hands as his lineal ancestors. He made no pretence that the blood of the Aryan sages and warriors flowed in his veins unadulterated. There is indeed no such creature as a pure-blooded Aryan anywhere, whether in India or out of it. With characteristic candour and vigour he spoke of himself as recorded by Sister Nivedita: "He was scornful in his repudiation of the pseudo-ethnology of privileged races. 'If I am grateful to my white-skinned Aryan ancestor,' he said, 'I am far more so to my yellow-skinned Mongolian ancestor, and most so of all to the black-skinned Negroid.' He was immensely proud, in his own physiognomy, of what he called his 'Mongolian jaw', regarding it as a sign of 'bull-dog tenacity of purpose.... The Tartar is the wine of the race! He gives energy and power to every blood!'"

The impression in England was that the Americans, who in spite of their hard-headed commercialism, have a touch of mysticism in their temperament, became easily

susceptible of the influence of Swami Vivekananda, but when he crossed the Atlantic and came over to England the effect was no less remarkable. It was a London paper, the *London Daily Chronicle*, which wrote that the physiognomy of Vivekananda 'bore the most striking resemblance to the classic face of Buddha', and it was an Englishwoman, Margaret Noble, afterwards the Sister Nivedita, who noted 'the look of mingled gentleness and loftiness on the Hindu monk's face in moods of abstraction or meditation' and compared it to that look 'that Raphael has painted for us on the brow of the Sistine Child.'

The Parliament of Religions and the light that beat upon it from all directions lifted Swami Vivekananda from obscurity to the full blaze of fame. He was an honoured and a welcome guest in the best houses in America. His tireless energy, his incessant activities astonished even the Americans. He moved from place to place, delivering lectures, addressing selected audiences in drawing rooms, answering questions, holding discussions. He expounded the Vedantic doctrine and philosophy with a fullness and lucidity that could not fail to be appreciated. He lectured on the four systems of Yoga. If his profound learning impressed his hearers, his keen insight into modern problems astonished them. Here was no Eastern dreamer, no unpractical mystic, but a man intensely alive to his surroundings, tingling with vitality to his finger-tips, a shrewd observer, a fearless critic. What other visitor from the East, layman or monk, had 'denounced the commercial prosperity, the bloody war and the religious intolerance of the West'* at public meetings in America and England? Yet he was

**The London Daily Chronicle.*

so transparently sincere, so entirely free from all bitterness that his outspoken criticism was never resented. Both in America and in England men and women, some of them of considerable intellectual distinction, became his disciples and held him in the highest reverence and veneration. They had never seen such breadth of outlook, such catholicity of sympathy, such universality of acceptance. The narrowness and exclusiveness of religious beliefs, the jealously guarded turnstiles at the entrance to salvation vanished before the all-embracing creed of this Teacher from the East. The sun gives light impartially to dark pits and smiling fields. Is God less than the sun he created? In the Parliament of Religions Vivekananda had shattered the depressing doctrine of original sin. In a voice that thrilled the thousands facing him he declared it was sin to call a man a sinner: "Ye are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings." The doctrine that man is born in sin, that all men are sinners amounts to an admission that Satan is more powerful than God. Stronger and more compelling than Vivekananda's teachings was his rare personality—dynamic, magnetic, unconventional, forceful, enthusiastic, irresistibly attractive.

In spite of the much vaunted civilization and enlightenment of the West, its material prosperity and temporal power the fact remains unchallengeable and undeniable that the greatest and most widely recognized teachers of humanity have appeared in the Orient. They have been similarly garbed and they have spoken with the same voice of authority. The hand of Asia has ever rocked the cradle of the children of wisdom. Swami Vivekananda was the challenge of the East to the West, the reaffirmation of the ancient right of the East to be the teacher of the world. Assimilating all the learning

and wisdom of the ancient Aryan sages of India he was still modern with large and quick sympathies appreciating and reacting to the new forces at work throughout the world. His nature was so finely strung that it was like an Aeolian harp upon which the breath of human thought, East and West, made music. He was utterly unconventional, wholly unorthodox. If he preached a religion of universal concord, in conversation he dazzled by the brilliance of his wit and the range of his knowledge. His fullness impressed as much as his power dominated the minds of men. He said he was no politician or political agitator. He had a higher call but deep down in his heart burned the white flame of a steadfast love for his land, and he used to burst into tears when he spoke of the poverty of his countrymen.

Who was this young wanderer—shall we say, vagabond?—from the East, who came as a conquering hero to the World's Parliament of Religions? His peculiar dress was the subject of constant admiring comment in the western hemisphere but in India it had no novelty. Thousands of men dressed in the same attire have been going up and down the country for thousands of years. At the Parliament of Religions he did not speak about himself; it was not the place to do so. If he was unknown, his Master, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, was equally unknown. Later, in the course of his lectures he spoke of his Teacher, the man to whom he owed everything and compared to whom he was nothing. Slowly the story of the young Orange Monk's life came to be known and people realized that the age of Masters and Apostles was not passed. The line of the Lights of the World is not extinct, and the Light still comes from the East. Those who saw the disciple, what did they think of the Master whom they had not seen? Such men ap-

pear at the appointed time, perhaps once in a thousand years, perhaps in two thousand years. They belong to a separate race, and the world sometimes lets them pass unrecognized, sometimes maltreats them. Vivekananda, the disciple, spoke faultless English; Ramakrishna, the Master, knew no English. The disciple was an orator who held vast audiences spellbound; the Master slightly stammered in his speech. The disciple was a scholar steeped in the learning of the East and the West; the Master was practically an ignorant man, who could not even speak the language of genteel folk. And yet those who had been privileged to see and hear Ramakrishna-Paramahansa knew that Vivekananda testified to the unvarnished truth about his Master, who never spoke like an ordinary man. Two thousand years ago they said of another such Master, "Never man spake like this man". Another five hundred years earlier they said the same thing of the Teacher, who found enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. For wealth of wisdom, grace and beauty of simile and parable, and strength of living faith Ramakrishna could be likened to the wisest teachers of humanity.

Other details of the Swami's life became known. The thirty years that lay behind him were not the *uneventful* chapter of a novice's life spent in a cloister. Ten at least of these years were a period of strenuous probation and splendid achievement. The vigilant eyes of the Master had watched the growth of his mind and spirit. He had studied closely the ancient Sanskrit books and modern philosophical works. He had trudged on foot hundreds if not thousands of miles. He had known what it was to go hungry and even to starve. He had known the common lot of the wandering mendicant—insult and kindness by turns. In the home he had been driven to

desperation by seeing his people in terrible straits. He had experienced the wrench of final renunciation of home, mother and brothers. He had perilous adventures and narrow escapes from sudden death. Above all, he had had leisure for long spells of meditation and communion in the heights and silences of the Himalayas, redolent of the lofty and concentrated thoughts of the rishis, wrapped round by centuries of peace and high endeavour.

Thus the world learned that the young Hindu monk who had become the observed of all observers in the Parliament of Religions was no mere bidder for fame and a place among the celebrities of the world. Neither fame nor distinction meant anything to him. He had been taught to put away from him everything that the world values or holds dear. He had been disciplined in the stern school of renunciation, the world held no temptations for him. Inured to hardships and denials of all kinds he longed for nothing that the world could give. He had ever before him the example of his great Master, who could not distinguish between gold and a handful of dust, who looked upon all women as mothers, who had no use for wealthy or famous men. The majority of Vivekananda's countrymen who have occasion to go to Europe or America fall down and worship the golden image of western materialism, but his penetrating vision saw the rottenness at the core of the new civilization, the insatiable greed, the unquenchable lust for gain, the pitilessness of competition, the devouring covetousness and jealousy, the constant menace of war that lurks behind an unstable peace. All this elicited his indignant and outspoken protests but what excited his sympathy and quickened his pity was the starvation of the spirit, the failure in two continents to read aright the message

of Jesus Christ and to shape the course of life and thought in the spirit of his teaching. Below the veneer and glitter of civilization raged the untamed spirit of the Viking, the Goth and the Hun. There was nothing there that could win the allegiance and the admiration of the Indian monk.

Across the Atlantic and over the seas and lands that divide Europe from Asia came to India the echoes of the wonders wrought by him in the Far West, his dazzling triumph in the Parliament of Religions, the ready and wide recognition of his rare and abundant gifts, the astonished and glowing tributes rendered to him in unstinted measure. For some time his identity could not be fixed. Those who knew him best, his fellow-disciples and followers of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who had been called to his rest seven years before, did not know that Narendra Nath Datta had assumed the name of Vivekananda in token of his monkhood. They had no notion that he had all the gifts of a great orator. They did not know where he was, for he had made no sign after leaving the shores of India and had sent no message. He had fared forth, alone and unnoticed, on the great adventure, keeping his own counsel and sending no words to the companions he had left behind. And his first word came not to them alone or even to his countrymen but to the whole world, pealing as a trumpet and borne on the wings of fame. All the world is a stage and the young monk who had wandered forth into the unknown suddenly found himself in front of the footlights, with his golden voice and the pilgrim's staff in his hand transformed into Aaron's rod which 'was budded, and brought forth buds and bloomed blossoms'.

The impact of the wave of feeling in India was tremendous. With admiration and gratitude was mingled

the zest of curiosity. The Hindus of India had sent no representative to the Parliament of Religions. They knew of no one who could represent them with honour and distinction; they were not certain whether such a man, even if found, would be welcome in an assembly formed mostly of men who either knew nothing of Hinduism, or looked down upon it as an idolatrous and superstitious religion. Unknown to his countrymen and without any authority or sanction this nameless champion, who called himself by a name that no one had heard, had the temerity to stand up before the thousands assembled in the Parliament and to proclaim himself as a defender of the faith of his country. And he proved a most valiant and doughty champion. With the lance of intellect poised in his hand and clad in the shining armour of the wisdom and learning of the ancient Aryans he had held his own against all comers. Nay, more, for he had stormed the citadel of prejudice and pride, and had been unanimously and enthusiastically acclaimed as the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions.

The people whose cause he had championed with such brilliant success were therefore filled with exultant gratitude. They exulted in the knowledge that he was a conqueror, a *digvijayi* like the great Sankara, who as a still younger man had defeated all combatants in argument from Malabar to Kashmir. For centuries India has borne the yoke of the invader and the foreigner, but here was a conquest higher than the physical subjugation of a people. The mightiest empire passes like a dream, but the conquest of the heart and the spirit is the foundation of an imperishable empire. This is what Swami Vivekananda had achieved. The disciples who surrounded him in America and England were his spiritual children and subjects. They showed him greater honour and

reverence than any liege subject offers his crowned king. What countryman of his could fail to be elated by this knowledge? All over India people eagerly read the addresses delivered by him at the Parliament and elsewhere and the chorus of admiration and praise that followed him everywhere.

There is a fine saying in Hindi about flowing waters and strolling sadhus—*Bahata pani aur chulta sadhu*—both representing restlessness and constant movement. As a *chulta sadhu* Vivekananda had wandered a great deal in the Madras Presidency and it was there that the voyage to far off America was finally decided upon. Many people knew him and congratulatory meetings were held in Madras and other towns in the Presidency. It was in Calcutta, however, 'his own house', that the most impressive and the most representative demonstration took place. It may be unhesitatingly asserted that there was no other instance till then on record of so spontaneous and so emphatic a tribute having been paid to any Indian in his lifetime. No less remarkable is the swiftness of these happenings, the incredibly brief space of time into which they were crowded. Up to September, 1893, this young *sannyasin* was absolutely unknown. His opportunity came at the Parliament of Religions, and because he did not seek fame it clung to him all the more tenaciously. It passed all others by and placed the laurel crown on his turbanned head. From the Parliament he had passed on to other scenes of activity, his fame ever waxing greater like a snowball rolled through a field of snow, men and women seeking instruction from his lips. Before a year had passed and while Vivekananda was still busy with his work in America his countrymen in Bengal convened the great Town Hall meeting in Cal-

cutta early in September, 1894, to vote him an address and to place on record their grateful and warm appreciation of his invaluable services to his country and his religion. Looked at from any point of view it was a memorable gathering. There were wealthy landowners and shrewd and successful men of business, distinguished and veteran publicists, learned and famous pundits, men of light and leading in various paths of life, *Brahmacharis*, *Sannyasins*, lawyers, physicians and professors, all anxious to partake in this national demonstration. The speeches were eloquent, thoughtful and enthusiastic. Yet there was this singular fact that of the thousands present probably not one had heard of Swami Vivekananda a year before and scarcely any one had set his eyes upon him. Nevertheless, with one voice they acclaimed him hero and prophet, and the chosen champion of Hinduism.

Both in America and in England Swami Vivekananda's following consisted mainly of intellectual people, men and women of culture and understanding. Among these the most remarkable was Miss Margaret Noble to whom Vivekananda gave the name of *Nivedita*, one dedicated and consecrated to the service of India. Sister Nivedita used to designate herself as belonging to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Mission. Just as Vivekananda was the most brilliant among the disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa so was Nivedita the most distinguished disciple of Vivekananda, and she adopted India as her home and the field of her work, and she died in India. The books that she has left behind prove that she was a woman of extraordinary insight and literary gifts of a high order. The distinction of the pupil is a measure of the greatness of the teacher. The Western disciples of the Swami were, if possible, more devoted to

him than his Indian disciples. In India the relationship between a spiritual teacher and his pupils is an ancient institution. In all ages irrespective of the political conditions of the country India has produced religious teachers and reformers and they were never without a following. The spiritual consciousness of India has never been entirely lost. The disciples of Ramakrishna Paramahansa served him and nursed him through his last long and painful illness with a love, zeal and devotion that cannot be too highly praised. In the Western world religion plays only a minor part and other interests occupy the thoughts of the people. Only those who saw it can realize the devotion of Vivekananda's American and English disciples. They honoured him beyond all other men, they loved him with a great love, they yielded him implicit obedience. They found in him a Master whose equal had not been seen in the West.

He said he was no political agitator, because there is much untruth in political agitation. International politics of the kind seen in Europe is hollow and insincere. The political speeches with which Europe is flooded are mostly clap-trap, profuse professions with scarcely any reality behind them. There can be no sincerity of speech without sincerity of purpose and there is no country in Europe of which it can be said that it is sincere in its intentions towards its neighbours. In India politics can have only one meaning, the winning of a status of equality with the great nations of the world. Vivekananda had no use for the trifling that passed for politics in India in his time, but he was a patriot if ever there was one and he loved his country with all the strength of his strong nature. The patriotism of the Japanese filled him with unbounded admiration, because it has the force and fervour of religion. It is the intensity of his patriot-

ism that endears the memory of Vivekananda to the younger generation of Indians today.

Vivekananda lived and died young. Length of years could not have added to his knowledge or wisdom, it could not have added a word to his teaching. It is not by the number of years but by the measure of achievement that we judge of the fulfilment of the purpose of life, and from this standpoint Vivekananda's short life reaped a rich harvest of fulfilment. There are the three periods of preparation, manifestation and consolidation, and then the close. The *karma* acquired in previous births had equipped him for his part in this life. For inspiration and guidance he had found a Master; for an ordeal he had passed through want and poverty. With apparent ease he had acquired the learning and wisdom of the early teachers of his race. Years of wandering and months of solitude had offered him ample leisure to probe and solve the problem of life and death. He had pondered long and deep over the sayings and teaching of his great Master and these had helped to expand his soul and add to the breadth and keenness of his soul-vision. The period of his ministry was brief, but it profoundly affected a large section of the world. He preached a new evangel of a faith wide as the universe and deep as the ocean. In the full glare of world-wide publicity he proclaimed the doctrine of his Master that man is not born to a heritage of sin, but he is a claimant to his birthright of immortality. In the brief but lofty exordium to his remarkable lectures on *Raja Yoga* he has pointed out the potential divinity and the high destiny of the human soul, and its ultimate goal. This goal is the manifestation of the divinity that is within us. "This", says Swami Vivekananda, "is the whole of religion. Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books, temples, and forms

are but secondary details." He preached for two or three years only and his teachings are embodied in his books. These give a clear idea of his immense learning, his keen intellect, his power of luminous exposition, the closeness of argument and vigour of expression. Above all the reader is impressed by his strength and the virility of his personality. His hold over the younger generation of India is growing stronger with the passing years. All over India Swami Vivekananda represents the ideal of spiritual force, patriotism and strength. Throughout all his teachings there is one insistent commandment: "Be strong; be free."

II

A quarter of a century has elapsed since Swami Vivekananda went to his rest, and every year that passes is bringing fresh recognition of his greatness and widening the circle of appreciation. But the generation that knew him in life and heard his voice is also passing with the years. Such of his contemporaries as are left owe it to his memory and to their countrymen to place on record their impressions of one who, by universal assent, was one of the greatest Indians as well as one of the world's great men. There is no need to repeat the story of his life, for that has been well and fully done by his disciples in the four volumes compiled by them, but one who knew him as I did may endeavour to strike a personal and reminiscent note, and to recall, so far as memory may serve, some small details of large significance and the traits of character and the bearing that distinguished him from the people around him. I knew him when he was an unknown and ordinary lad for I was at college with him and I knew

him when he returned from America in the full blaze of fame and glory. He stayed with me for several days and told me without reserve everything that had happened in the years that we had lost sight of each other. Finally, I met him at the monastery at Belur near Calcutta shortly before his death. In whatever relates to him I shall write of what I heard from himself and not from others.

The conditions in India were very peculiar when Swami Vivekananda first attracted public attention. The imposition of a foreign domination and the grafting of a foreign culture had produced a pernicious effect on Indian life and Indian thought. The ancient ideals were either forgotten or obscured by the meretricious glamour of western materialism. There was an air of unreality about most of the progressive movements in India. In every field of activity a sort of smug unctuousness had replaced the single-minded earnestness and devotion of the ancient times. The old moorings of steadfast purpose had been slipped and everything was adrift and at the mercy of every wind and wave from outside India. The ancient Aryan had realized that there could be no achievement without sacrifice and self-surrender. The modern Indian in his new environment fancied that surrender was not necessary for attainment. Following the example of the West the Indian reformer did his work while living in comfort and ease. The method followed was that of the dilettante, touching the surface of great problems, but seldom attempting to probe deeper. Men with an eloquent tongue and the gift of persuasive speech stirred the emotions and feelings of their hearers, but the effect was more or less fleeting, because of the lack of strength in the appeals. The conditions in India might be described as a flux if there were any

assurance of a return of the tide. Perhaps there was no conscious self-deception but people were deceived and mistook the sham for the reality. The placid self-complacence noticeable everywhere was an unmistakable sign of growing weakness and inability to resist the inroads of habits of thought and ideals of life destructive of everything that is enduring, everything that is real in the long-established order of things in India.

In the midst of these depressing surroundings took place the quiet and scarcely noticed emergence of Ramakrishna Paramahansa after a period of preparation and meditation unknown to the people about him. He was practically an unlettered man like some of the great prophets of old, and by occupation he was the priest of a temple, a vocation for which he became unfit later on. Ignorant people thought his mind was giving way, but in reality it was a struggle of the spirit seeking true knowledge and finding its expression. And when this was attained he no longer avoided men, and drew round him a small band of earnest young men who sought for guidance from him and endeavoured to follow his teachings. Many of his sayings have been collected and published, but these give only a faint indication of his individuality. It may be said with absolute truth that he was one of the elect who appear at long intervals in the world for some great purpose. It has been my privilege to hear him speak and I felt then as I feel now that it is only rarely that men have the great good fortune of listening to such a man. The Paramahansa's language was Bengali of a homely kind; he was not supple of speech as he spoke with a slight though delightful stammer, but his words held men enthralled by the wealth of spiritual experience, the inexhaustible store of simile and metaphor, the unequalled powers of observation, the

bright and subtle humour, the wonderful catholicity of sympathy and the ceaseless flow of wisdom.

Among the young lads and men attracted by the magnetic personality of the Paramahansa was Narendra Nath Datta, afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda. There was nothing to distinguish him from the other young men who used to visit Ramakrishna Paramahansa but the Master early picked him out from the rest and predicted a great future for him. "He is a thousand-petalled lotus," said the Paramahansa, meaning that the lad was one of those who come fully equipped into the world for a great purpose and to be a leader of men. The reference was to the spiritual sphere since the Paramahansa took no account of worldly success. He could not only read faces with unerring accuracy but he had also extraordinary psychic power, which was demonstrated in the case of Vivekananda himself. That young man was not very regular in his visits to the Paramahansa. On one occasion he was absent for several weeks. The Paramahansa made repeated enquiries about him and ultimately charged one of Vivekananda's friends to bring him. It may be mentioned that the Paramahansa lived in the temple of Dakshineswar, some miles to the north of Calcutta. He added that when Narendra came he wished to see him alone. Accordingly there was no one else in the room when Narendra came to see him. As soon as the boy entered the room the Paramahansa left his seat and saying, "Why have you been staying away when I wanted to see you?" approached the lad and tapped him lightly on the chest with a finger. On the instant—these are Vivekananda's own words—the lad saw a flash of dazzling light and felt himself swept off his feet, and he cried out in alarm, "What are you doing to me? I have my mother and brothers." The

Paramahansa patted him on the back and soothed him, saying, "There, there, that will do."

Shortly after this incident Vivekananda became an accepted disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. The number of these disciples was very small and the Paramahansa was very careful in choosing them. Every one of these disciples was subjected to a constant and unrelaxing discipline more than Spartan in its severity. There was no spoon-feeding and coddling. The Paramahansa's prediction about Vivekananda was not communicated to any publicity bureau, and he and his fellow-disciples were always under the vigilant eyes of the Master. Vows, *vratas* of great hardship, were imposed upon the disciples and the discipline was maintained unbroken even after the passing of the Paramahansa. Vivekananda went to Benares, and it was there that he acquired the correct enunciation and the sonorous chanting of the hymns and the *mantras* which he recited very impressively at times in a deep musical voice. I have heard him singing in a fine tenor voice at the request of friends and as an orator there were both power and music in his voice.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa frequently passed into a trance or *samadhi*. The exciting cause was invariably some spiritual experience or some new spiritual perception. On one occasion—it was in 1881—I formed one of a party that had gone with Keshub Chunder Sen by river to see the Paramahansa. He was brought on board our steamer, which belonged to Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Bhup of Kuch Behar, Keshub's son-in-law. The Paramahansa as is well known was a worshipper of the goddess Kali, but just about that time he was engaged in the contemplation of Brahman, the formless, *Nirakara*,

and had some previous conversation with Keshub on this subject. He was sitting close to Keshub facing him, and the conversation was practically a monologue, for either Keshub or some one else would put a brief question and, in answer, the Paramahansa with his marvellous gift of speech and illustration would hold his hearers entranced. All of us there hung breathless upon his words. And gradually the conversation came round to *Nirakara* (formless) Brahman, when the Paramahansa, after repeating the word *Nirakara* two or three times to himself, passed into a state of *samadhi*. Except the rigidity of the body there was no quivering of the muscles or nerves, no abrupt or convulsive movement of any kind. The fingers of the two hands as they lay in his lap were slightly curled. But a most wonderful change had come over the face. The lips were slightly parted as if in a smile, with the gleam of the white teeth in between. The eyes were half closed with the balls and pupils partly visible, and over the whole countenance was an ineffable expression of the holiest and most ecstatic beatitude. We watched him in respectful silence for some minutes after which Trailokya Nath Sanyal, known as the singing apostle in Keshub Chunder Sen's sect, sang a hymn to the accompaniment of music and the Paramahansa slowly opened his eyes, looked inquiringly around him for a few seconds and then resumed the conversation. No reference was made either by him or any one else to his trance.

On another occasion the Paramahansa wanted to see the Zoological Gardens of Calcutta. His eagerness was like a child's and would not brook any delay. There were times when his ways were strongly reminiscent of the saying in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* that the *mumukshu*, the emancipated and the wise, is to be known by his

childlike playfulness. A cab was sent for and the Paramahansa accompanied by some disciples was driven the long distance from Dakshineswar to Alipur. When he entered the gardens the people with him began showing him the various animals and aquatic collections but he would not even look at them. "Take me to see the lion," he insisted. Standing in front of the lion's cage he mused: "This is the Mother's mount"—the goddess Kali in the form of Durga or Parvati is represented as riding a lion—and straightway passed into *samadhi*. He would have fallen but for the supporting arms around him. On regaining consciousness he was invited to stroll round the gardens and see the rest of the collection. "I have seen the king of the animals. What else is there to see?" he replied. And he went back to the waiting carriage and drove home. There seems to be an obvious incongruity between the predisposing causes of *samadhi* on these two occasions. On the first, it was the contemplation of the *Nirakara* Brahman, a high and abstruse spiritual concept; on the second, it was merely the sight of a caged lion. But in both instances the process of the concentration of the mind and the spirit is the same. In one, it is the intense realization of the supreme Brahman without form; in the other, it is realization in the spirit of a visual symbolism inseparably associated with the goddess Kali. In both cases a single spiritual thought occupies the mind to the exclusion of everything else, obliterates the sense of the objective world and leads to *samadhi*. No photograph taken of the Paramahansa in *samadhi* ever succeeded in reproducing the inward glow, the expression of divine ecstasy, *Brahmananda*, stamped on the countenance.

As a young enthusiast passing through a probation of discipline Vivekananda desired that he should have the

experience of *samadhi* like the Master. The Paramahansa explained to him that this was unlikely as his nature was *rajasik*, that is, he had the temperament of a doer, one who achieves great things, and not *sattvik*, spiritual, and only a *sattvik* was capable of passing into a state of prolonged *samadhi*. But Vivekananda would not be dissuaded and once while sitting in an attitude of contemplation he sent word to the Paramahansa entreating to be put into a trance. The Paramahansa promptly said, "Let him have *samadhi*." Vivekananda at once became unconscious and remained in that state until the Paramahansa restored him to consciousness by a word. Vivekananda realized afterwards that the Master had judged him rightly and his proper vocation was that of a worker, and the time came when in fulfilment of the prophecy of the Master he held aloft the torch of Truth in distant lands and proclaimed that the light of knowledge comes from the East.

Under the vow of poverty and mendicancy Vivekananda travelled widely in northern and southern India for eight years, and his experiences, as may be imagined, were varied. He spent a great deal of his time in the Madras Presidency and he got first-hand knowledge of the evil influence of professional *sadhus*. He knew intimately the village life of the Telugu and Tamil speaking people and he found his earliest admirers in the Madras Presidency. He was in Bihar when there was great excitement in that Province on account of the marking of mango trees with lumps of mud mixed with vermilion and seed grain. In a number of districts in Bihar numerous mango topes were discovered marked in this fashion. The trustees of an empire, as the Government in this country somewhat theatrically call themselves, may have a lofty function but they have an uneasy

conscience, and the official mind was filled with forebodings of some impending grave peril. The wonderful secret police got busy at once, and it was shrewdly surmised that the marks on the mango trees bore a family resemblance to the mysterious *chapatis* that were circulated immediately before the outbreak of the Mutiny. The villagers, frightened out of their wits by the sudden incursion of armed and unarmed, but not the less terrible on that account; authority in their midst denied all knowledge of the authorship of these sinister marks. Suspicion next rested upon the itinerant *sadhus* wandering all over the country and they were arrested wholesale for some time though they had to be let off for want of evidence. The recent facilities of Regulations and Ordinances did not then exist. It was found out afterwards that the marking of mango trees was merely by way of an agricultural mascot for good mango or general crops. Vivekananda had to get up early in the morning and to trudge along the Grand Trunk Road or some village path until some one offered him some food or the heat of the sun compelled him to rest under a roadside tree. One morning as he was tramping along as usual he heard a shout behind him calling upon him to halt. He turned round and saw a mounted police officer, bearded and in full panoply, swinging a switch and followed by some policemen. As he came up he inquired in the well-known gentle voice affected by Indian policemen who Vivekananda was. "As you see, Khan Saheb," replied Vivekananda, "I am a *sadhu*." "All *sadhus* are *bud-mashes*", sententiously growled the Sub-Inspector of Police. As policemen in India are known never to tell an untruth such an obvious fact could not be disputed. "You come along with me and I shall see that you are put in jail", boomed the police officer. "For how long?"

softly asked Vivekananda. "Oh, it may be for a fortnight, or even a month." Vivekananda went nearer him and in an ingratiating and appealing voice said, "Khan Saheb, only for a month? Can you not put me away for six months, or at least three or four months?" The police officer stared and his face fell. "Why do you wish to stay in jail longer than a month?" he asked suspiciously. Vivekananda replied in a confidential tone, "Life in the jail is much better than this. The work there is not hard compared with this wearisome tramp from morning till night. My daily food is uncertain and I have often to starve. In the jail I shall have two square meals a day. I shall look upon you as my benefactor if you lock me up for several months." As he listened a look of disappointment and disgust appeared on the Khan Saheb's face and he abruptly ordered Vivekananda to go away.

The second encounter with the police took place in Calcutta itself. Vivekananda with some of his fellow-disciples was living in a suburb of Calcutta quietly pursuing his studies and rendering such small social service as came his way. One day he met a police officer who was a friend of Vivekananda's family. He was a Superintendent of Police in the Criminal Investigation Department, and had received a title and decoration for his services. He greeted Vivekananda cordially and invited him to dinner for the same evening. There were some other visitors when Vivekananda arrived. At length they left but there were no signs of dinner. Instead, the host spoke about other matters, until suddenly lowering his voice and assuming a menacing look he said, "Come, now, you had better make a clean breast of it and tell me the truth. You know you cannot fool me with your stories for I know your game. You and your gang pretend to be religious men, but I have positive information

that you are conspiring against the Government." "What do you mean?" asked Vivekananda, amazed and indignant. "What conspiracies are you speaking of and what have we to do with them?" "That is what I want to know," coolly replied the police officer. "I am convinced it is some nefarious plot and you are the ring-leader. Out with the whole truth and then I shall arrange that you are made an approver." "If you know everything why don't you come and arrest us and search our house?" said Vivekananda, and rising he quietly closed the door. Now, Vivekananda was an athletic young man of powerful build while the police officer was a puny, wizened creature. Turning round upon him Vivekananda said, "You have called me to your house on a false pretext and have made a false accusation against me and my companions. That is your profession. I, on the other hand, have been taught not to resent an insult. If I had been a criminal and a conspirator there would be nothing to prevent me from wringing your neck before you could call out for help. As it is I leave you in peace." And Vivekananda opened the door and went out, leaving the redoubtable police officer speechless with ill-concealed fright. Neither Vivekananda nor his companions were ever again molested by this man.

Another experience that Swami Vivekananda related to me bordered on the tragic. The particular vow he had undertaken at that time was that he should steadily walk the whole day without either looking back or begging from any man. He was to halt only if accosted and to accept food if it was offered to him unasked. Sometimes he had to go without any food for twenty-four and even forty-eight hours. One afternoon about sunset he was passing in front of a stable belonging to some wealthy person. One of the grooms was standing on the road.

Vivekananda had had nothing to eat for two days and was looking weak and weary. The groom saluted him and looking at him asked, "Sadhu Baba, have you eaten anything today?" "No," replied Vivekananda, "I have eaten nothing." The groom took him into the stable, offered him water to wash his hands and feet and placed his own food, consisting of some *chapatis* and a little chutney, before him. The chutney was hot but in the course of his wanderings Vivekananda had got accustomed to eat chillies which were often the only condiment he had with his food. I have seen him eating a handful of pungent green chillies with evident relish. He ate the *chapatis* and the chutney, but immediately afterwards felt a frightful burning sensation in his stomach and rolled on the ground in agony. The groom beat his head with his hands and wailed, "What have I done? I have killed a *sadhu*." The pain must have been due to eating the chutney on an empty stomach. Just about this time a man with a basket on his head happened to be passing and halted on hearing the cries of the groom. Vivekananda asked him what he had in his basket and the man replied it was tamarind. "Ah, that is just what I want," said Vivekananda, and taking some of the tamarind he mixed it with water and drank it. This had the effect of allaying the burning sensation and the pain, and after resting for a while he resumed his journey.

In the remote regions of the Himalayas Vivekananda met with some perilous adventures, but nothing daunted he went through the treadmill of discipline with high courage and tireless energy. The vows imposed upon him entailed prolonged trials of endurance, an unbroken course of self-discipline, meditation and communion. When he arrived in America, without friends, without

funds, he had nothing beyond his intellectual and spiritual equipment, and the indomitable courage and will that he had acquired in the course of his purposeful wanderings in India. One of his own countrymen, who had attained some fame and was a man of considerable eminence, attempted to discredit him by circulating unfounded calumnies against him. In spite of difficulties Vivekananda found his way to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and it was there that recognition came to him. He was probably the youngest man in that memorable and historic as well as unique gathering. Beyond the fact that he was a Hindu he carried no other credentials. The name of his Guru was unknown in Europe and America. He was an obscure young man unknown to fame with no reputation either in his own country or out of it for scholarship, holy living, or leadership. It is impossible to conceive an assembly more critical or less emotional than that gathering of learned and pious men from all parts of the world representing all the churches and creeds of the world. Men of great erudition steeped in sacred lore, reverend and high dignitaries of many churches, men who had left the seclusion of the cloister and the peace of the monastery had met in solemn conclave in a great city in the Far West. It was a Parliament not filled from the hustings and polling booths, but from the temples and pagodas, the synagogues and churches and mosques of the world. They were mostly men well advanced in life, accustomed by years of discipline to self-control, engaged in contemplation and meditation, and not likely to be lightly swayed by extraneous influences. Some of them were men of international reputation, all of them were men of distinction. Obviously the least among them was this youthful stranger from the East, of whom

no one had ever heard and who was probably there more by sufferance than by the right of any achievement to his credit. How he carried that grave assembly of religious men by storm, how pen-pictures of the young Hindu monk in the orange-coloured robe and turban filled the newspapers of America, and how the men and women of America crowded to see and hear him are now part of history. Slightly varying Caesar's laconic and exultant message it may be truthfully said of Swami Vivekananda, "He went, he was seen and heard, and he conquered." By a single bound as it were he reached from the depth of obscurity to the pinnacle of fame. Is it not remarkable, is it not significant that of all the distinguished and famous men present at the Parliament of Religions only one name is remembered today and that is the name of Vivekananda? There was, in sober fact, no other man like him in that assembly, composed though it was of distinguished representatives of all religions. Young in years the Hindu monk had been disciplined with a thoroughness and severity beyond the experience of the other men who had forgathered at the Parliament. He had had the inestimable advantage of having sat at the feet of a Teacher the like of whom had not been seen in the world for many centuries. He had known poverty and hunger, and had moved among and sympathized with the poorest people in India, one of the poorest countries in the world. He had drunk deep at the perennial fountain of the wisdom of the ancient Aryan rishis and he was endowed with a courage which faced the world undismayed. When his voice rang out as a clarion in the Parliament of Religions slow pulses quickened and thoughtful eyes brightened, for through him spoke voices that had long been silent but never stilled, and which awoke again to resonant life. Who

in that assembly of the wise held higher credentials than this youthful monk from India with his commanding figure, strong, handsome face, large, flashing eyes, and the full voice with its deep cadences? In him was manifested the rejuvenescence of the wisdom and strength of ancient India, and the wide tolerance and sympathy characteristic of the ancient Aryans. The force and fire in him flashed out at every turn, and dominated and filled with amazement the people around him.

Other men from India had preceded him in the mission from the East to the West, men of culture, men of eloquence and religious convictions, but no other man created the profound impression that he did. These others assumed a tone which was either apologetic, or deferential to the superiority of the West. Some said they had come to learn and did not presume to teach and all were more or less overawed by the dazzling magnificence of western civilization. But Swami Vivekananda never had any doubts or misgivings and he knew he came from a land which had produced most of the great and wise teachers of men. The glitter of the West held no lure for him and his voice never lost the ring of authority. Besides the anxiety to profit by his teaching there was a good deal of promiscuous admiration. There was the usual sheaf of romantic letters from gushing and impressionable young women, and well-meant offers of service from many quarters. A dentist offered to clean his teeth free of charge whenever necessary. A manicure presented him with a set of his dainty instruments for which the Indian monk had no use. A more substantial offer was about a lecturing tour with a well-filled purse of shining dollars at the end of the tour. The money would have been useful for the monasteries afterwards established by Swami Vivekananda, but his vows pre-

cluded him from either earning or laying by any money. Later on, however, he accepted some money for the mission he proposed to found in India and elsewhere. Besides the open lectures that he delivered in America and England he held what may be called informal classes attended by a small number of select people, usually earnest inquirers or people anxious to learn what the Swami had to teach. The actual number of his disciples in those countries was not large, but he set many people thinking while his marvellous personality made itself felt wherever he went.

As mentioned earlier, at Madras he was given an enthusiastic reception on his return from America. Some of the organizers of his public reception at Calcutta, however, thoughtfully sent him a bill of costs. Swami Vivekananda mentioned this incident to me with indignation. "What have I to do with any reception?" he told me. "These people fancied I had brought a great deal of money from America to be spent on demonstrations in my honour. Do they take me for a showman or a charlatan?" He felt humiliated as well as indignant.

Earnest young men came to him to join the Ramakrishna Mission founded by him. They took the vows of celibacy and poverty. They have established monasteries in various parts of India. There are some in America also so that Swami Vivekananda's work in that part of the world is still carried on and his memory is held in great reverence. Swami Vivekananda told me that the Paramahansa insisted on celibacy and moral purity as the essence of self-discipline, and this is equally noticeable among Swami Vivekananda's disciples and those who have joined the Brotherhood after his passing. Every member of the Ramakrishna Mission is pure of heart and pure in life, cultured and scholarly, and is

engaged in serving his fellowmen to the best of his ability, and the community is the gainer by their example and their selfless and silent service.

The last time I had met Swami Vivekananda before he left for the United States was in 1886. I happened to be in Calcutta on a brief visit and one afternoon I received intimation that Paramahansa Ramakrishna had passed into the final and eternal *samadhi*. I drove immediately to the garden-house in a northern suburb of Calcutta where the Paramahansa had passed his last days on earth. He was lying on a clean white bed in front of the portico of the house, while the disciples, Vivekananda among them with his eyes veiled with unshed tears, and some other persons were seated on the ground surrounding the bedstead. The Paramahansa was lying on his right side with the infinite peace and calm of death on his features. There was peace all round: in the silent trees and the waning afternoon, in the azure of the sky above with a few clouds passing overhead in silence. And as we sat in reverent silence, hushed in the presence of death, a few large drops of rain fell. This was the *pushpa-vrishti* or rain of flowers of which the ancient Aryans wrote—the liquid flowers showered down by the gods as an offering of homage to the passing of some chosen mortal to rank thenceforth among the immortals. It was a high privilege to have seen Ramakrishna Paramahansa in life and also to have looked upon the serenity of his face in death.

It was not till eleven years later in 1897 that I met Vivekananda again. He was then famous alike in the East and the West. He had travelled largely, seen many countries and many peoples. I was at Lahore and I heard he was staying at the hill station of Dharamsala. Later on he went on to Jammu in Kashmir territory and next

came down to Lahore. There was to be a demonstration and a house had been engaged for him. At the railway station when the train came in I noticed an English military officer alighting from a first class compartment and holding the door respectfully open for some one else, and the next second out stepped Swami Vivekananda on the platform. The officer was about to move away after bowing to the Swami, but Vivekananda cordially shook hands with him and spoke one or two parting words. On inquiry Vivekananda told me that he did not know the officer personally. After entering the compartment he had informed Swami Vivekananda that he had heard some of the Swami's discourses in England and that he was a colonel in the Indian Army. Vivekananda had travelled first class because the people at Jammu had bought a first class ticket. The same night Vivekananda came away to my house with two of his disciples. That night and the following nights and during the day whenever I was free we talked for long hours, and what struck me most was the intensity of Vivekananda's feelings and his passionate devotion to the cause of his country. There was a perfect blending of his spiritual fervour with his intellectual keenness. He had grappled with many problems and had found a solution for most of them, and he had in an unusual degree the prophetic vision. "The middle classes in India", he said, "are a spent force. They have not got the stamina for resolute and sustained endeavour. The future of India rests with the masses." One afternoon he slowly came up to me with a thoughtful expression on his face, and said, "If it would help the country in any way I am quite prepared to go to prison." I looked at him and wondered. Instead of making the remotest reference to the laurels still green upon his brow he was wistfully thinking of life in prison as a

consummation to be wished, a service whereby his country might win some small profit. He was not bidding for the martyr's crown for any sort of pose was utterly foreign to his nature, but his thoughts were undoubtedly tending towards finding redemption for his country through suffering. No one had then heard of Non-co-operation or Civil Disobedience and yet Vivekananda, who had nothing to do with politics, was standing in the shadow of events still long in coming. His visit to Japan had filled him with enthusiastic admiration for the patriotism of the Japanese nation. "Their country is their religion," he would declare, his face aglow with enthusiasm. "The national cry is *Dai Nippon Banzai!* Live long, great Japan! The country before and above everything else. No sacrifice is too great for maintaining the honour and integrity of the country."

One evening Vivekananda and myself were invited to dinner by the late Bakshi Jaishi Ram* who had met Vivekananda at Dharamsala. Vivekananda was offered a new and handsome *hookah* to smoke. Before smoking he told his host, "If you have any prejudices of caste you should not offer me your *hookah*, because if a sweeper were to offer me his *hookah* tomorrow I would smoke it with pleasure for I am outside the pale of caste." His host courteously replied that he would feel honoured if Swamiji would smoke his *hookah*. The problem of untouchability had been solved for Swami Vivekananda during his wanderings in India. He had eaten the food of the poorest and humblest people whom no casteman would condescend to touch, and he had accepted their hospitality with thankfulness. And yet he was by no means a meek man. In the course of his lecture on the

*Bakshi Jaishi Ram's son, Bakshi Tekchand, then a young boy at school and now a Judge of the Punjab High Court, remembers the Swami very well, and gave me his impressions after this paper had been written.

Vedanta at Lahore, one of the loftiest of his utterances, he declared with head uplifted and nostrils dilated, "I am one of the proudest men living." It was not pride of the usual worthless variety but the noble pride of the consciousness of a great heritage, a revulsion of feeling against the false humility that had brought his country and his people so low.

I met Goodwin, the young Englishman who at one time was on the high road to become a wastrel, but fortunately came under Vivekananda's influence and became one of his staunchest and most devoted followers. Goodwin was a fast and accurate stenographer and most of Vivekananda's lectures were reported by him. He was simple as a child and wonderfully responsive to the slightest show of kindness. Later on, I met some of the lady disciples of Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss MacLeod and Miss Margaret Noble, the gifted young Englishwoman to whom Vivekananda had given the beautifully appropriate name of Nivedita, the Offered one, one dedicated and consecrated to the service of India. I first met Sister Nivedita at Srinagar in Kashmir and next in Lahore where I saw a great deal of her, and again in Calcutta where she came to my house more than once. I took her through the slums of Lahore and showed her the Ram-lila, which greatly interested her. She made eager enquiries about everything relating to India. She was in splendid health when she first came out to India, but the austerities which she practised affected her health, and she rapidly spent herself and was spent in the service of India. Of her fine intellect and gift of literary expression she has left abiding evidence in her exquisite books.

In conversation Vivekananda was brilliant, illuminating, arresting, while the range of his knowledge was

exceptionally wide. His country occupied a great deal of his thoughts and his conversation. His deep spiritual experiences were the bedrock of his faith and his luminous expositions are to be found in his lectures, but his patriotism was as deep as his religion. Except those who saw it few can realize the ascendancy and influence of Swami Vivekananda over his American and English disciples. Even a simple Mahomedan cook who had served Sister Nivedita and the other lady disciples at Almora was struck by it. He told me at Lahore, "The respect and the devotion which these Memsahabs show the Swamiji are far greater than any *murid* [disciple] shows to his *murshid* [religious preceptor] among us." At the sight of him his disciples from the West, among whom were the Consul General for the United States living in Calcutta and his wife, would rise with every mark of respect, and when he spoke he was listened to with the closest and most respectful attention. His slightest wish was a command and was carried out forthwith. And Vivekananda was always his simple and great self, unassuming, straightforward, earnest and grave. Once at Almora he was visited by a distinguished and famous Englishwoman whom he had criticized for her appearance in the role of a teacher of the Hindu religion. She wanted to know wherein she had given cause for offence. "You English people", replied Swami Vivekananda, "have taken our land. You have taken away our liberty and reduced us to a state of servility in our own homes. You are draining the country of its material resources. Not content with all this, you want to take our religion, which is all that we have left, in your keeping and to set up as teachers of our religion." His visitor earnestly explained that she was only a learner and did not presume to be a teacher. Vivekananda was mollified and afterwards

presided at a lecture delivered by this lady.

The next year I met Swami Vivekananda in Kashmir, our house-boats being anchored near each other on the Jhelum. On his way back to Calcutta he was my guest for a few days at Lahore. At this time he had a pre-science of early death. "I have three years more to live," he told me with perfect unconcern, "and the only thought that disturbs me is whether I shall be able to give effect to all my ideas within this period." He died almost exactly three years later. The last time I saw him was at the monastery at Belur shortly before his death. It was the anniversary of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and I saw Swami Vivekananda when the *sankirtan* (singing of hymns with music) was at its height, rolling in the dust and heaping dust on his head in a paroxysm of frenzied grief.

The recent visit of the King of Belgium to the monastery at Belur was a homage to the memory of Swami Vivekananda. In the World War no crowned king in Europe was more innocent of blood-guiltiness than the King of Belgium, and India will gratefully bear in mind this pilgrimage of a monarch from Europe to the sacred resting place of one of the greatest sons of India.

Swami Vivekananda's thoughts ranged over every phase of the future of India and he gave all that was in him to his country and to the world. The world will rank him among the prophets and princes of peace, and his message has been heard in reverence in three continents. For his countrymen he has left a priceless heritage of virility, abounding vitality and invincible strength of will. Swami Vivekananda stands on the threshold of the dawn of a new day for India, a heroic and dauntless figure, the herald and harbinger of the glorious hour when India shall, once again, sweep forward to the van of the nations.

7. LALA LAJPAT RAI (1865-1928)

I

Lala Lajpat Rai might have been born anywhere in India and achieved distinction, for he had in him the makings of greatness, but there is a divinity that shapes the destinies of nations, though an alien Power may for a time play Providence. The Punjab had special need of a man like Lajpat Rai.

The Punjab has been called the sword-arm of India. The Jat is a splendid specimen of virile, lithe and muscular manhood; the Jat, the Sikh and the Pathan are racy of the Punjab soil, and they make splendid fighting units. During the dark days of the "Sepoy Mutiny" of 1857-58 the Sikhs materially and manfully helped in pulling the Government of the East India Company out of the fire. From that day to this the Punjab has borne its share, and more than its share, in many a campaign, and its martial traditions have been well upheld by its valiant sons. Nevertheless, the only man who, after Maharaja Ranjit Singh, has, by common consent, been designated the Lion of the Punjab was Lajpat Rai. Why?

He did not belong to any of the warlike tribes or sections of the population of the Punjab. On the contrary, he belonged to a caste of peaceful traders, who never take part in fighting, and he came from the extreme east of the Province, which is not much of a recruiting ground for the army. He had a frail physique and was at no time in robust health. A scrofular and tubercular

taint ran in the family; he lost a brother and a son from tuberculosis; he himself suffered from scrofula, and at one time there was serious apprehension that he would fall a victim to consumption. He was not even a tall man. Why should he of all men, though he was not a warrior and did not look like one, have been styled the Lion of the Punjab?

The leonine attribute is not merely physical, but also moral. The lion-heart is a heart that knows no fear and cannot be subdued. In the Punjab the fighting material comes from the villages, and the Jat leaves the plough for the sword; but muscles do not necessarily produce moral courage, though one's physical prowess may be indubitable. I have seen a Jat, a giant in strength, hurriedly leaving the whole width of a street to a European who happened to be passing along. In cities and townships, the state of things was, if anything, worse. Men grovelled to win the official smile, the recipient of office fancied himself exalted to a throne, a man whose name appeared in the *Honours Gazette* was almost canonized alive. I knew a man in the Punjab who spent ten thousand rupees in festivities because an insignificant title had been conferred upon him. Men are addressed by their trumpery titles of Rai Saheb and Khan Saheb instead of their names just like prisoners who lose their names and are called by the numbers suspended round their necks. Informers and tale-bearers were openly honoured and rewarded, and as a variant appeared juggling artists who showed clever tricks of picking up easy money. In these herds of dumb, driven cattle Lajpat Rai was a lion indeed.

Not long ago a police officer declared that the Punjab was different from the rest of India. For this difference we have to thank ourselves. We always get what we

deserve, neither more nor less. The moral fibre of the Punjab was attenuated to the thinness of a filament. Our degradation lies mainly in our own self-abasement.

Lajpat Rai was a poor man's son. To earn a living he qualified for the profession of law, but neither his energies nor his interests were at any time wholly occupied by his profession. By nature and instinct he was a helper, a worker. At all times and all through his life he was the servant of his country and his people. When as a young man he came from Hissar to Lahore and joined the Bar of the Punjab Chief Court, he threw himself with ardour into the social and educational work of the Arya Samaj. The Arya Samaj movement filled a notable part in the public life of the Punjab. It made for self-sacrifice, self-respect, self-reliance. It attracted all that was best in the intelligence and the moral manhood of the Punjab. Lala Hans Raj, now rightly known as Mahatma Hans Raj, the Honorary Principal of the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College for over a quarter of a century, set an example of devotion and self-sacrifice that has never been equalled. The College itself never sought or accepted a grant-in-aid from the Punjab Government. It was a triumph of organization and associated effort. Year after year, at the anniversary of the Arya Samaj, an appeal was made for funds, and Lajpat Rai's voice was the most eloquent. Men contributed money, women took off their ornaments and gave them away to the fund. When men and women pool their resources for such a good cause as education the day of national awakening cannot be far off. The social work of the Samaj was deserving of high praise. The influence of the Arya Samaj was a powerful moral tonic to the Punjab. Today the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College, with its buildings, halls and boarding houses, stands as a

magnificent monument to the concerted constructive talent of the Punjab. Later in life, towards the very end, Lajpat Rai left the Arya Samaj, but he will always be remembered as one of its most prominent workers and benefactors.

The Indian National Congress met at Lahore for the first time in 1893. Dadabhai Naoroji, then a Member of Parliament, was the President and Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Sardar Dayal Singh was probably the only Sikh nobleman in the Punjab who retained his independence after the annexation of that Province. He attended no durbars, never called on any Lieutenant-Governor, never sought a title. Lajpat Rai was not an office-bearer of the Reception Committee, but he was a zealous though unobtrusive worker. He had attended a few previous sessions of the Congress and at the Allahabad Congress of 1888 he had attracted some attention by distributing among the delegates copies of an open letter that he had written to Sir Syed Ahmed.

He gave a good deal of his time and energy to the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College as Secretary of the College Committee and took an increasing share in its affairs. He was a regular and constant contributor to the *Tribune* on a great variety of public questions, he organized famine relief, he went about raising funds for the establishment of an orphanage, he was to be found wherever the public weal called him. As a public speaker he came to be regarded as an orator of the first rank. He was far and away the finest Urdu speaker in the country. In his own country and abroad he was widely admired as a most eloquent speaker in English, and the time came when he was listened to as one of the most effective and powerful debaters in the Indian Legislative Assembly.

All through his life Lajpat Rai was eminently sober, with the sobriety that is linked with strength and not moderation that is a cloak for pusillanimity. He had a well-balanced mind, with a sane and clear outlook on life, and unshakable faith in the destiny of his country. When a country situated like India begins to awaken to the reality of things and when her children express dissatisfaction with their lot and demand freedom which is the inalienable right of every nation, contemptuous words charged with a peculiar stigma are applied to them. An agitator, for instance, was hardly distinguishable from an incendiary. It was more seemly to genuflect, as it was certainly more profitable, than to agitate. Lajpat Rai was an agitator, and that was his first fall from grace. As the years passed, he became more and more an agitator. The word "extremist" had not then come into vogue. It is a fearful and ominous word. Who is an extremist? What is his creed? What is his demand? What are the extreme lengths to which he is prepared to go? Extremism must include every form of desperation. Boiled down to the hard truth, the extremist in India is the man who wants his country to be free like other countries. The man who wants to own half the world and to rule over half-a-dozen nations is that meek and most peace-loving individual, the imperialist. That is why Mark Twain, whose humour does not discount his truthfulness, says that the British are mentioned in the Bible: Jesus Christ has said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The imperialist is an Admirable Crichton and the paragon of humility. But the man who wants nothing more than the freedom of his own country is that unmentionable and holy terror—the extremist.

Lajpat Rai belonged to the same school of political

thought as the early organizers of the Indian National Congress. He was not content with the annual flutter at the Congress, for his hands found many things to do, and every movement for the uplift of his people appealed to him. If no incident had happened to break his career it might have proved as uneventful as that of any other Congressman of those days. But it pleased the Government of the Punjab to step in and take a hand in fashioning the future of Lajpat Rai.

There was some slight agrarian trouble in the Rawalpindi district. It was nothing compared with what happened many years later in Bardoli, but in the Punjab even the suspicion of trouble is intolerable. The leading lawyers of Rawalpindi sympathized with the peasants. Lajpat Rai went up from Lahore. Perhaps there were some mild demonstrations and protests. Some heated words were exchanged between the district magistrate and Lajpat Rai. The Rawalpindi lawyers were arrested and thrown into prison. Lajpat Rai was in the same boat, but no immediate action was taken against him. He returned to Lahore and to his avocation as a lawyer.

A special officer was appointed to try the Rawalpindi lawyers. It is worth while remembering the name. It was Mr Martineau, who recently died in Lahore as a Judge of the Punjab High Court. Mr Martineau acquitted all the accused honourably. If Lajpat Rai had been tried in that court he would have been similarly acquitted. The offence of which the Rawalpindi leaders and lawyers were accused existed only in the imagination of the district officers.

Lajpat Rai was, however, dealt with in a different way. There is that venerable Bengal Regulation which skips the delays and uncertainties of the law and sequesters the body of a man easy as easy. And when

a man is spirited away in this fashion all publicity, kudos and eclat are avoided. The modesty of the Government is almost as remarkable as that of the man who was advised in the Bible not to let his left hand know what his right gave away. His countrymen will never know why Lajpat Rai was deported to Mandalay. In truth, there was nothing against the Punjab leader. It is idle to speculate what stories were told by informers, or what reports were sent in by officers and the Punjab Government. The dossier of Lajpat Rai's case will never leave the secret archives of the Government. Probably it has been already destroyed. Posterity will never know whether it was a masterpiece of romance and imagination, or a triumph of fiction. Lajpat Rai was the straightest man living in the Punjab. There could be no question of conspiracy, because he was incapable of it. There could be no suggestion of sedition, because sedition is the most easily punishable offence in India.

Every attempt to have this Regulation repealed has been foiled. Since facts cannot be ignored, however, it is well to remember that the power to arrest and imprison without trial has been exercised even by Governments which were not foreign. The Kings of France signed *lettres de cachet*, which were sufficient authority to imprison any one for an indefinite period in the Bastille without the formality of a trial. In Russia hundreds were dragged to perpetual exile in Siberia on the strength of imperial ukases issued by the Tsar. These Governments were not foreign, but the procedure in both cases was the same as under the Indian Regulation. The only difference between those Governments and the Government of India is that the latter have a fuller quiver, and while those Governments had only one string to their bow the Government here have several and they can produce an

Ordinance with as much ease as a conjuror produces a rabbit out of an empty hat. It has only to be added that the ukase and *lettre de cachet* have disappeared with the Tsars of Russia and the Kings of France. No Government that usurps the functions of courts of justice can be safe very long.

Lajpat Rai had to be released from Mandalay after six months, which clearly proves that the Government failed to convince the Secretary of State for India that any longer detention was justifiable. What object was served by the temporary deportation of Lajpat Rai? In spite of their own modesty and retiring disposition, the Government acted the part of high class publicity agents. The Government did for Lajpat Rai in six months what he himself might not have won in twelve years. Even in the Punjab he was not the most prominent leader at that time, though he was undoubtedly the most active. His deportation made him at a single bound an all-India leader. He was brought back to his Lahore house in all secrecy, and within two hours all Lahore was at his door and the heart of all India went out to him in enthusiastic greeting. The exile of Mandalay became the universally acclaimed hero of India.

Almost immediately after his release Lajpat Rai made an extensive tour of Northern India, addressing public meetings and receiving everywhere a royal welcome. As was only to be expected, his deportation and detention without cause assigned had stiffened the backbone of his mind instead of weakening it. He came back from Mandalay a more resolute man than he had been before his deportation. He became more intrepid, more outspoken. A man's love for his country, his selflessness in the service of his people cannot be extinguished by oppression or punishment. The sense

of doing what is right and the approbation of his own conscience sustain him in the hour of persecution and dejection. There is no power on earth that can smother or choke off the utterance of the truth, or drug and dope the awakening spirit of an individual or a race. There can be no nobler cause than the one with which Lajpat Rai identified himself, and his loyalty to the cause emerged triumphant from every ordeal to which he was subjected. It is no exaggeration to say that persecution dogged his steps ever since his deportation to Mandalay, but his heart never faltered for a moment and his hands never drew back from the work to which he had devoted himself. He was a man of determination and not desperation, and his work was done systematically and methodically, and not in brief spurts with long spells of indifference and inactivity. Just as his protracted trials never deterred him from his duty, so also they never evoked a passionate outburst from him, and he never deviated from the straight path of steady endeavour.

One decision that he took at this time gives a clear insight into his strength of character and his exceptionally high sense of self-respect. After his arrest, deportation and detention without trial he never resumed his practice as a lawyer. There was no disqualification. He had not been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude. He had not even been accused of any offence in a court of justice. There was no stain upon his honour, no blemish upon his character. If he had rejoined the Bar of the Chief Court — in fact, his name always stood on the rolls — in every probability, his unbounded popularity would have brought him a lucrative practice. Nothing, however, would induce him to appear again in any court as a practising lawyer. He had done with the Government and all their institu-

tions for ever. His self-respect would not permit him to have anything to do with the courts of a Government that had condemned him unheard and did not have even the fairness to formulate a charge against him. No one called him a non-co-operator then, because the word was then unknown. Several years later, when the non-co-operation movement was first heard of, lawyers were urged to renounce their profession and take no part or share in the administration of justice, and several lawyers did so. It is important to bear in mind that Lajpat Rai was an early non-co-operator; and he required no persuasion to become one. If it is suggested that he was suffering from a sense of a personal wrong, all the greater honour to his memory that he elected to suffer further from an empty purse; for by his decision he lost his main source of income, and he had not inherited a fortune or laid by a considerable sum of money.

Men are not usually so particular about the maintenance of their self-respect. Cases are constantly reported from every part of India of lawyers being arrested and tried on various charges and of going back to their profession after acquittal as if nothing had happened. This is what happened in the case of the Rawalpindi lawyers. Several years later, when martial law was declared in the Punjab for a short period and men were arrested wholesale and imprisoned, some of them did not decline to be associated with the Government after the amnesty. Lajpat Rai on his return from Mandalay refused to revert to the profession of law and devoted all his time and energy to the service of his country. To earn a living he took to trade, but it did not occupy much of his time.

He was not merely a political agitator. For some

time he was a member of the Lahore Municipal Committee and it was on his initiative that Anarkali Bazar was cleared of the women of the town who infested it. Education, social reform, charitable organizations, every beneficent form of activity enlisted his enthusiastic support. He gave not merely his energy but his substance as well. He signalized his return from Mandalay by large donations, and though at no time a wealthy man, he gave without stint and without solicitation to every good cause and ended by giving away his own house to the Society he had founded. The time came when other notable Indian leaders made large sacrifices for the sake of their convictions and in the service of their country, but there are many others who pose as leaders and broadcast their views without ever dreaming of any sacrifice. It is no disparagement to any one else to say that from the outset Lajpat Rai gave all he had to his country, the love of his heart, the thoughts of his head, the labour of his hand and the contents of his purse.

If his countrymen admired him, the organization known as the Criminal Investigation Department also marked him out for attention. The attachment of the sleuths of this Department to their quarry is so touching that it would be almost pathetic but for the sinister fact that their pursuit is often big with tragedy. They are perfectly impartial in the distribution of their favours. Lajpat Rai was an ex-deportee and a permanent suspect, but even a man like Gopal Krishna Gokhale and others who have held high office have been faithfully followed and carefully shadowed. Any one may be led astray and follow a path of error, however peace-loving and inoffensive he may appear, and the C. I. D. experts take no chances.

Tarquinius Superbus disliked tall poppies. He wanted that all the flowers in bloom should be on a uniform level. In his morning strolls in his garden he kept a keen eye on the poppy beds and if he found some plants taller than the rest, with flowers that raised their heads proudly above their fellows, he would swing the ivory staff in his hand and knock off the tall poppies. Sir John Gorst, who happened to be Under-Secretary of State for India some decades ago, once blurted out with cynical bluntness that tall poppies were not wanted in India any more than in the garden of Tarquinius. In India, men with titles, men who become ministers and members of Executive Councils are not the tall poppies at all. They are harmless hothouse flowers, or gorgeous orchids and mistletoes that grow as parasites upon the sturdy plant known as the Government. The tall poppies here are those eyesores, the agitators, who lift up their heads and hearts, who are not content with the manifold blessings of the present benign rule, but clamour for what they call their rights and want India to be as other nations of the world. The summary method of Tarquinius cannot be pursued at present, but steps have to be taken to stunt the growth of such men, and occasionally to stifle the noise that they make, for this evil of agitation is highly infectious. If the process of stunting or repressing Lajpat Rai did not succeed it was not for want of trying.

When Lajpat Rai went to England and thence to America, he came into contact with the advanced political thinkers of those countries. In the West and the Far West he served his country assiduously. He wrote books, delivered lectures, interviewed leading men, and vigorously exposed the manner in which India's progress to nationhood was being retarded. Meanwhile, the

authorities in India were in communication with the India Office and the British Government, and when Lajpat Rai attempted to return to his own country he was refused a passport either to England or to India. On the first occasion he was removed from Lahore to Mandalay, on the second he found the door shut in his face. He was left in America to shift for himself as best he could.

Thus when the frightfulness of martial law in the Punjab and the holocaust of Jallianwalla Bagh were filling India with horror from end to end, Lajpat Rai was at the other end of the world. It is not necessary to speculate what would have happened to him if he had been in Lahore at that time. His visit to America became an enforced exile. Of course, he was never told why he was not permitted to return to his country. There are some beautiful phrases that are invariably trotted out by Government to meet such contingencies. No awkwardness whatsoever was felt in answering questions in the old Legislative Council and none is experienced in the present Legislative Assembly. Why was not Lajpat Rai allowed to return to India? It would not be in the public interest to let him come back. What had he done to deserve such treatment? It would not be in the public interest to make a statement on that subject. No French fencing-master can parry a thrust more adroitly. No miser guards his gold more jealously than the Government safeguards the public interest. If you ask, what is the public interest, echo answers, what? It is a thingumbob, a gilt-edged security, a pompous obsession like prestige. It is one of the familiar ghosts that keep running in and out of the seances of the Government.

Lajpat Rai had influential friends among British politicians and public men, and owing to the pressure put

by them on the Government the ban had to be lifted and he was permitted to return to India. Neither on the first occasion when he was deported to Mandalay, nor later when he was prevented from returning from America, was any charge preferred against him to his own knowledge or to the knowledge of the public. He wrote several books, edited a newspaper, and constantly spoke in public, yet he never wrote or spoke anything for which he could be prosecuted on a charge of sedition, which was the easiest thing to do for the Government. It was not a feeling of prudence or caution that put a curb on his tongue, or guarded his pen, for he was one of the most fearless of men. He wrote and spoke as strongly as he felt, neither more nor less. In his writings and his speeches will be found the measure of the strength of his convictions. He stood by these and no amount of persecution could ever compel him to recede a single step.

The non-co-operation movement never assumed very formidable proportions, but even as a mere gesture it was sufficient to create a panic and to unhinge the mind of the Government. The enrolment of volunteers for the Congress was declared unlawful and public meetings were prohibited. It became quite a common sight for a single bewildered policeman to be shepherding hundreds of laughing, singing men to prison because they had met in a square to hold a public meeting.

Lajpat Rai naturally joined the non-co-operation movement and he refused, with other leaders in other parts of the country, to shut up the Congress office, or to discontinue the enlistment of volunteers. If it had been in any other part of India he would have been sentenced to six months' imprisonment, but in the Punjab the ways of the law are less gentle and Lajpat Rai was sentenced to a long term. These convictions were had under an

Ordinance which ceased to be operative after a short time, but that made no difference to the length of the sentences. It was only when his health became seriously affected and symptoms of tuberculosis appeared that he was released before the expiry of the full term of imprisonment.

Up to the present no Punjabi except Lajpat Rai has been elected President of the Indian National Congress. Since every year a new man has to be found for this distinction it is not at all surprising that all the names on the roll are not equally eminent, nor has every President remained loyal to the Congress. There can scarcely be any question, however, that Lajpat Rai was particularly fitted for this honour. The President of the Congress is the chief servant of the people, and Lajpat Rai was steadfast in service to the country. With perhaps one exception he had the highest record for suffering. He had been sent out of the country without trial, he had been kept out of the country without trial and he had been sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for a technical political offence which ceased to be an offence after a short period. Nothing need be said about the annoying espionage to which he had to submit for the greater part of his life. Yet through it all he neither faltered in his course nor swerved from the path he had set for himself.

Coincident with Lajpat Rai's force of character, his intrepid and indomitable example, there has been a remarkable resurgence of the old moral courage of the Punjab. There is a clear distinction between the strength of the muscle and the strength of the mind. The man who can fight is not necessarily the man who can suffer uncomplainingly, or who refuses to be turned from his purpose by persecution and ill-treatment. It is not the

sword-arm but the stout heart that is the real measure of strength. Grievously has the Punjab suffered and gloriously must she struggle to win back her self-respect.

In the closing years of his life the time came when Lajpat Rai could become a member of the Indian Legislative Assembly consistently with his self-respect. He entered it by the suffrage of his countrymen and became at once one of the outstanding figures in the Assembly. As an orator he was famous throughout India, but in a deliberative body flights of oratory are not of much help. It is the debater, the reasoner who can build up a fabric of sound argument, that can hope to command an attentive hearing. The appeal is to reason and not to sentiment. Lajpat Rai fulfilled all the requirements of a Parliamentary speaker and was listened to with attention and respect. One wonders whether the gentlemen who sat on the Government benches ever thought that there had been a mistake in the official estimate of Lajpat Rai's character and convictions. He was outspoken and unsparing as a critic, but was there anything of the revolutionist about him? If the members of the Government had any doubts they kept their thoughts to themselves. The Government as a composite whole rests on the foundation of infallibility. It recants no error, expresses no regret, and never heeds difficulties that are of its own making. Social amends were made and these may be accepted for what they may be worth. It must have been rather interesting to see the ex-deportee, the dangerous agitator who had not been permitted to return to his own country for a considerable length of time, the ex-prisoner who had undergone a long term of imprisonment, sitting down as a guest at the table of the Viceroy of India. What had he done to atone for the past, what had earned for him this social distinction?

Lajpat Rai never made a bid for an official smile, he never went back on his convictions.

To the Punjab and to India he has left the great example of his life, his unflinching courage, his spirit that faced persecution and suffering undismayed, his tireless beneficence, his splendid patriotism, and his unshaken faith in the ultimate emancipation of his Motherland, the mother of all knowledge and wisdom, the lamp of light and guidance to all humanity. The manner of his death deeply stirred the hearts of his countrymen. He was assaulted without cause or provocation by policemen, who are supposed to be the guardians of the public peace, and according to qualified medical testimony the assault accelerated death. In life and in death Lajpat Rai won the crown of martyrdom. To the Punjab belongs the proud distinction of being the land of martyrs. Is it necessary to enumerate the long list of martyrs that paved the way to the foundation of the Khalsa Power? We have only to recall the names of Bunda and Taru Singh, and the boy Hakikat Rai, whose *samadhi* lies close to Lahore. We may omit later and more recent names, but is it without significance that Jatindranath Das was brought from Calcutta to Lahore to fulfil his vow of martyrdom?

It is for his countrymen in the Punjab and elsewhere to take up the legacy that Lajpat Rai has left and to carry on his work, to go forward and ever forward till the heights are won and India takes her rightful place in the forefront of the marching nations of the world. It is of such a man that it has been said on high authority, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

At the Allahabad session of the Indian National Congress in 1888 I saw Lala Lajpat Rai, then a very young man, distributing copies of his "Open Letter to Sir Syed Ahmed" among the delegates. Then we were strangers. He was a pleader at Hissar, a district in South Punjab. In 1892 he shifted to Lahore; I was also there at that time and soon we came to know each other well. We remained friends to the end.

Public life in India in those days was very different from what it is today, though even now it is a mistake to aver that politics in India is the same thing as in other countries that have their own Government. In Christmas week the Indian National Congress met every year for three days, the floodgates of oratory were opened and carefully worded resolutions were passed. And then the delegates returned home, satisfied that they had done their duty by their country!

In the Punjab the progressive movement among the educated community had found expression in the Arya Samaj and the Dayanand Anglo-Vedic College, a combination of religious, social and educational reform. The Arya Samaj and the D.A.V. College displayed an excellent organization. The former was based on the teachings of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and revived the ancient Vedic religion superseding the later forms of the Puranic religion. The College was named after Swami Dayanand. It neither sought nor received any grant from the Punjab Government, but the organizers of the College as well as the general body of the Arya Samajists refrained from taking an active part in any political movement. The three most prominent workers for the College were Lala Hans Raj, Pandit Guru Dutt Vidyarthi

and Lala Lajpat Rai. Lala Hans Raj was Honorary Principal of the College for over twenty-five years. He accepted no salary or remuneration of any kind and maintained himself on a small allowance given to him by his elder brother Lala Mulk Raj Bhalla. Pandit Guru Dutt, an enthusiastic worker, was cut off at the early age of twenty-five. Lala Lajpat Rai was the Honorary Secretary of the College Committee for several years and at each anniversary of the Arya Samaj his eloquent and powerful appeals brought a substantial response in the shape of donations and subscriptions to the funds of the D.A.V. College.

Lala Lajpat Rai was not content to devote all his time and energy to the Arya Samaj and the College. The call of the country had stirred him from the outset. He was a constant contributor to the *Tribune*, of which I was the editor at the time, and he wrote letters on various public questions. He was not particularly strong in English at the beginning of his public career, but by constant and diligent study and travel in Europe and America he became one of the finest writers of English in the country and unquestionably the best writer in the Punjab. As an orator he ranked among the foremost in the country and was recognized as one of the ablest and most effective speakers in the Legislative Assembly. Among Urdu orators he was the greatest in India in his time.

From 1893 to 1896 Lajpat Rai and I were next-door neighbours outside the Lohari Gate in Lahore and a close family friendship sprang up between us. His brother, Dalpat Rai, an M.A. of the Punjab University was appointed the first manager of the Punjab National Bank which is now the oldest and one of the soundest Indian banking concerns. Soon afterwards, however, Dalpat Rai fell a victim to tuberculosis. Lajpat Rai's father and

mother were perfectly healthy and his father Lala Radha Kishen lived to a great age, but somehow a tubercular taint ran in the family. Later in life Lajpat Rai himself suffered from glandular swellings in the neck and one of his sons died of tuberculosis. But neither domestic bereavements, nor physical suffering, nor persistent persecution deterred him for a moment from his untiring service to the country.

The Indian National Congress met for the first time at Lahore in 1893 and that decided the attitude of the Arya Samajists in the Punjab towards the Congress. I was present at the Allahabad Congress in 1892 when it was decided to invite the Congress to the Punjab. No prominent leaders of the Arya Samaj were present. Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia was asked by telegram whether he approved the proposal and he replied that he would abide by the decision of the Punjab delegates. He would, of course, prove a tower of strength, but all the same the Punjabis present at Allahabad felt somewhat nervous. In the Subjects Committee it was suggested that propaganda work should be carried on in the Punjab to create enthusiasm for the Congress. Raja Rampal Singh of Kalakankar, Oudh, and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya readily offered to tour the Punjab to rouse public opinion. But no one was in a position to anticipate the decision of the Arya Samaj to which most of the educated Hindus of the Punjab belonged. No secret could be made of the fact that Sardar Dayal Singh Majithia, who was a member of the Brahmo Samaj and gave liberal contributions to various other religious and other bodies, had held himself aloof from the Arya Samaj and no deputation from that body had ever asked the Sardar for a donation. The formal invitation to the Congress to meet at Lahore in December 1893 was offered by a pleader

from Amritsar, who happened to be the oldest Punjabi present.

On our return to Lahore we started work by putting out cautious feelers to ascertain the attitude of the leaders of the Arya Samaj. The result was both surprising and gratifying. The great majority of Mahomedans had everywhere declined to join the Congress and in the Punjab this reluctance was even more marked. On the other hand, the members of the Arya Samaj readily responded to the invitation. Most of the members of the Reception Committee were Arya Samajists, the Secretary was a prominent member of the Arya Samaj. Lajpat Rai was not an office-bearer, but he made a profound impression by lectures and helped actively in the collection of funds. Dadabhai Naoroji was the President and both as regards attendance and finance the Congress session was most successful. In a few years Lajpat Rai became the leading Congressman in the Punjab.

At no time in the whole length of his public career had Lala Lajpat Rai any connexion with any secret organization or revolutionary movement. Secrecy in any form was utterly foreign to his nature. Throughout his life he was an outspoken critic and when he opposed anything he did so quite openly. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in 1897. The Punjab officials and those who were led by them wanted a statue to be erected to commemorate the event. Lala Lajpat Rai proposed the founding of an orphanage instead and the majority of the educated classes of Lahore agreed with him. At a public meeting called to decide the form of the memorial, the officials and their supporters, finding themselves in a minority, hurriedly withdrew. The statue was afterwards voted in a packed hole-and-corner meeting. But Lajpat Rai established an orphanage

independently with the help of public subscriptions.

By his independence Lajpat Rai made himself obnoxious to the authorities, but there was nothing against him for which he could be made liable to the law. He was a practising lawyer of the Punjab Chief Court, all his public activities were carried on in the light of day, and his writings and speeches did not come within the purview of even the very elastic law of sedition in India. The opportunity for action against him came when Sir Denzil Ibbetson was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. That gentleman had the reputation of being a strong man. When he was a Deputy Commissioner in the Punjab he had refused to see an Indian Statutory Civilian because the latter had the temerity to come into the presence without taking off his shoes. Shortly before his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor he had told a Punjabi visitor, "I shall look after the Babus when I come to the Punjab"—the word 'Babus' being the generic term for the educated classes throughout India. Sir Denzil Ibbetson's term of office was a very brief one, for he died of cancer in about a year, but during that period he certainly fulfilled his undertaking. At Rawalpindi there was a demonstration of peasant-proprietors in 1907 against the Land Alienation Act or something else connected with land. There was no rowdiness and no violence, but the local authorities chose to treat it as a defiance of authority. Some of the leading lawyers of Rawalpindi, men who had never taken any part in any unlawful movement and who were no longer young, sympathized with the peasants. Lala Lajpat Rai was also present at one of the demonstrations and some heated words passed between him and the district magistrate. Lajpat Rai returned to Lahore as soon as the popular excitement had subsided. The Rawalpindi lawyers were

promptly arrested and clapped in prison. They were placed on trial before a special officer who happened to be Mr. Martineau, who was as judicial-minded as he was conscientious, and after a lengthy trial he acquitted all the prisoners.

Before his deportation to Mandalay Lajpat Rai was a fairly well-known man, but the action of the Government helped to make him one of the most famous men in the country. He received an ovation wherever he appeared. I was at that time at Allahabad and it was announced that he would pay a visit to that city in the course of a lecturing tour. There was a troop of Punjab cavalry-men stationed near the place where I was staying. One evening I met some of the cavalry-men who told me that they would go to the Railway station to receive him. I pointed out that they might not get leave from their officers, to which some of them replied that they did not care whether they were punished or dismissed. They only desisted from their purpose when I explained that suspicion might fall upon Lajpat Rai himself, but several of them saw him at public meetings and elsewhere. He came to breakfast with me and showed me the manuscript of the account he had written of his life at Mandalay. He also told me that after the treatment he had received it would be impossible for him to resume his practice as a lawyer.

At the abortive Surat Congress of 1907 Lajpat Rai tried hard to mediate between the two factions of the Congress. The parting of the ways was fast approaching, but the issue at Surat was mainly a personal one. There had been a growing feeling in a section of the Indian National Congress that that body should adopt a bolder line of policy, and a cleavage was just averted at the Calcutta Congress of 1906. The Mahratta slipper that

was hurled on the platform at Surat and fell near the person of Surendranath Banerjea, who took it away and preserved it in a glass case, was really intended for Sir Pherozeshah Mehta against whom the fury of the Deccan contingent was directed. Mr. H. W. Nevinson, who was present, gave me a graphic description of what had happened when I met him at Allahabad, and Surendranath Banerjea spoke to me about it more than once.

It was supposed that a reconciliation between the two wings of the Congress was effected at the Lucknow Congress of 1916, but the truce was temporary. To say that the Congress was captured by this party or the other is a very loose account of what really happened. It was not so much a matter of party feeling as an evolution of psychology. The struggle upon which the Congress was engaged was bound to become grimmer and sterner with the passing years. The old humdrum methods led nowhere. It required a considerable flexibility and mobility of mind to realize the change that was coming so swiftly. Lajpat Rai had given evidence of it at the Benares Congress of 1905, over which Gokhale presided, by the passion with which he swept the Congress off its feet over the partition of Bengal and endeared himself for ever to the Bengalis. The receptivity and progressiveness of his mind were amazing. To the end he was steadily growing in intellectual stature and in the fervour of patriotism. When a country is striving to attain the status of nationhood every form of open and honest agitation is constitutional for the people seeking a constitution, though the Government may not recognize it as such. As the National Congress in India moved forward and its demands became more and more outspoken and more resolute, the older and more cautious men fell out of step and dropped behind. Then came a

time when the Congress and the country fell under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi's magic personality, the intense and lofty devotion that gave all and sought nothing. His creed of passive resistance and the withdrawal of all co-operation from the Government never went beyond the slightest of gestures so far as acceptance by the country was concerned, but it revealed potentialities of which no one had ever dreamed and it drove the Government to adopt measures of desperation. There was a time when Presidents of the National Congress and leading Congressmen were made Judges of the High Courts and received knighthoods; later on, Presidents of the Congress were honoured with a sentence of imprisonment, or internment without trial. Lajpat Rai was a stalwart of the old Congress, but he stayed on to be imprisoned and elected President of the Congress after the movement had entered on a new phase.

Lajpat Rai was not only a tireless political worker but also one of the greatest social servants of India. Whenever there was a famine, and famines are fairly numerous in this country, he was busy organizing operations of relief. He was not a wealthy man but he gave away large sums of money for various objects and finally he gave away his own house in trust for the Tilak School which he had founded in Lahore. Latterly he lived in another house which he built close to the one he handed over to the trustees of the Tilak Society. As a philanthropist he was no less distinguished than as a patriot.

During his stay in America he carried on extensive propaganda in order to give the citizens of that Republic an idea of the true state of affairs in India. As was his habit throughout life everything he did in America was straightforward and above-board. In America he was highly respected and much admired for his eloquence

and single-minded devotion to his country. The leaders of the Labour Party in England knew him intimately and formed a high opinion of his ability and character. His mind was perfectly well-balanced and all his varied activities were perfectly legitimate, though it is obvious that no genuine patriot in India can be a *persona grata* with the Government. If Lajpat Rai had enemies he had friends also in England and it was owing to the efforts of the latter that the inhibition against him was withdrawn and he was permitted to return to India.

After his return from America Lajpat Rai established an Urdu paper for which he wrote a great deal and an English weekly, *The People*, which he edited himself. It was an admirably written journal and, though perfectly outspoken, it never gave the Punjab Government any loop-hole for any action against it. When I met him at Lahore a few months ago he told me that he had found a young Punjabi who gave excellent promise of making a very successful journalist.

Other popular leaders in India have felt the heavy hand of the present law in this country, but not one of them had such a varied experience as the Punjab leader now gone to his rest. According to conservative estimates a hundred thousand people, men and women, followed the funeral *cortege*, the number of mourners ever increasing as the procession wound in and out of the streets of the walled city of Lahore. If it could have been possible to defer the funeral till the next day the number would have been larger, for people living at some distance from Lahore were most anxious to pay their last respects to the departed leader. The authorities displayed their vigilance by holding in readiness armoured cars and armed troops by way of precaution against any untoward incident! What act of violence did they

apprehend from the heavy-hearted and slow-footed mourners?

In an incredibly short time the news of Lajpat Rai's sudden death reached the remotest corners of the whole country and every Indian place of business was instantly closed. It was a spontaneous and respectful tribute to the memory of a man who had loved and served India with great love and steadfast devotion. The world had a glimpse of a nation in mourning, it heard the heart-beats of a whole nation throbbing with pain. A nation that can unite in mourning may also unite in rejoicing and in striving for the national weal.

This great-hearted son of India passed through persecution and suffering from strength to strength, from endeavour to endeavour, and his faith in the ultimate destiny of his race and the ultimate issue of the struggle for a place in the federation of nations never flagged or faltered for a moment. Intrepid, dauntless, high-souled and full of a lofty purpose, he never looked back as he moved along the onward path. The debt of nature has always to be paid but death does not mean the quenching of the spirit. Death clarifies and exalts the purpose of life and the most potent voices that influence the living are the voices of the dead. Today we stand in the shadow of the Valley of Death with hearts heavy for the departed captain but he stands in the light, a luminous figure crowning the heights and beckoning to the millions of India to march forward and win in life the goal that he has attained in death.

GREAT INDIANS

BY
S. RADHAKRISHNAN

*With an Introductory
Essay on the Author by*
PROF. D. S. SARMA



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INTRODUCTION

PROFESSOR S. RADHAKRISHNAN

Sri S. Radhakrishnan was born of Telugu Brahmin parents in Tiruttani, Chittoor District, Madras Presidency, on September 5, 1888. He had his education in the Voorhees College, Vellore, and the Madras Christian College, Madras. He took his M.A. degree in Philosophy in 1909 and was, from 1909 to 1917, on the staff of Presidency College, Madras, where he soon distinguished himself as a very clear expositor of even the most abstruse problems of philosophy. He was then transferred to the Arts College, Rajahmundry, as Lecturer in Philosophy. After serving there for a year, he was selected for the post of Professor of Philosophy in the University of Mysore. From 1918 to 1921 he remained in Mysore, where he wrote his first two important books—*The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore* in 1918 and *The Reign of Religion in Contemporary Philosophy* in 1920. The latter, which contains a very able criticism of the chief contemporary systems of Western Philosophy from the point of view of Absolute Idealism, made Radhakrishnan's name well known in the philosophical world.

The young philosopher now attracted the eye of the great educationist, Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University, who offered him

the King George V Professorship of Philosophy in his University. Professor Radhakrishnan accepted the offer, went to Calcutta in 1921 and held the place for the next twenty years, with brief intervals, during which he was on other duty. Within three years of his going to the University of Calcutta he published the first volume of his monumental *Indian Philosophy* in which he gives a lucid survey of the philosophy of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, the theism of the Bhagavadgītā, the pluralistic realism of the Jains, the ethical idealism of the Buddha and the later schools of Buddhist philosophy. The second volume of *Indian Philosophy* which was published in 1927 gives an account of the six Brahmanical systems of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta, and also of the Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva and Śākta systems of theism.

Meanwhile Professor Radhakrishnan was invited to deliver the Upton Lectures for the year 1926 at Manchester College, Oxford. He accepted the invitation and went to England for the first time in 1926. The theme he chose for his lectures was the 'Hindu View of Life'. These lectures have since been published in book form. The first impression appeared in 1927 and there have been so far five other impressions. *The Hindu View of Life*, which gives a clear and rational account of Hindu Dharma, is the most popular of Radhakrishnan's books and has been translated into many languages, both Indian and European. After delivering the Upton Lectures at Oxford, Professor Radhakrishnan went to the United States on a lecturing tour and delivered the Haskell Lectures at Chicago in August 1926.

The Western scholars who met the Indian Professor in 1926 were very much impressed by his scholarship and his clear exposition, in fluent and faultless English, of many knotty points in Hindu philosophy. They saw that he was not only a great writer but also a great speaker and that he could rouse the heart as well as enlighten the mind. So Radhakrishnan was invited to occupy the Chair of Comparative Religion in Manchester College, Oxford, in 1929. Accordingly he went to Oxford again in 1929 and gave the first of a series of lectures on the 22nd October. This lecture, along with some others, was later published in book form in 1933 with the title—*East and West in Religion*. While he was in England, he was also asked to give the Hibbert Lectures for 1929. The subject which he chose for these lectures was 'An Idealist View of Life'. These lectures were published in book form in 1932. *An Idealist View of Life* is the most important of Radhakrishnan's books, for it is here that we have his original contribution to the religious thought of his time.

After he returned to India, he was elected Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University in 1931. So he left Calcutta temporarily for Waltair and remained there from 1931 to 1936 as the head of the Andhra University. In 1931 he was nominated to the League of Nations' Committee for Intellectual Co-operation along with other persons of renown from various countries. He served on this Committee from 1931 to 1939 and had to go to Geneva annually for its meetings.

In 1936, when he was offered the newly created Spalding Professorship of Eastern Religions and Ethics, he

gave up the Vice-Chancellorship of the Andhra University and went to Oxford. At the same time he reverted to his Professorship of Philosophy in Calcutta University. The arrangement was that he should divide his time between Oxford and Calcutta, lecturing for a term here and two terms there. This arrangement continued till the war broke out and prevented his annual voyage to England. During the war he was granted dispensation from his duties in Oxford till normal conditions were restored.

Meanwhile he was induced by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in 1939 to accept the Vice-Chancellorship of the Benares Hindu University. A high salary was offered to him, but he refused it and consented to work only in an honorary capacity, retaining at the same time his Calcutta Professorship. It was but appropriate that a Hindu philosopher of Professor Radhakrishnan's eminence who had done so much by his books and lectures to spread a correct knowledge of Hinduism in Europe and America should have become the head of the Hindu University in the sacred city of Benares. There was, therefore, universal satisfaction when he accepted the place.

In 1939 Professor Radhakrishnan was able to bring out two important books. One is a collection of his lectures as Spalding Professor at Oxford with the title—*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*. In this book he shows, with an astonishing wealth of learning, how the Upaniṣadic mysticism has been a continuous influence in Western thought from the times of Pythagoras and Plato down to the present day.

It may be mentioned here that, while Professor Radhakrishnan was at Oxford delivering these lectures, he was invited by the British Academy to give the annual lecture in the 'Master Mind' series. He chose as his subject 'Gautama the Buddha,' and his treatment of it was so masterly that it was described as a lecture 'on a master mind by a master mind'. And next year Professor Radhakrishnan was elected Fellow of the British Academy. He was the first Indian to achieve this distinction.

The other book published by him in 1939 was a collection of essays and reflections by eminent persons in various walks of life all over the world on the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi. This collection was edited and provided with a long introduction by Radhakrishnan and presented to Gandhiji on his seventieth birthday. And it is a happy coincidence that in the very year in which he published this symposium on Gandhiji's life and work Professor Radhakrishnan was invited to South Africa, the scene of Gandhiji's early life and activities, to give lectures on Indian philosophy and culture.

In 1941 Professor Radhakrishnan, while being the honorary Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, was requested to occupy the Sir Sayaji Rao Chair of Indian Culture and Civilization founded by the Gaekwar of Baroda in memory of his illustrious predecessor. He had accordingly to relinquish the King George V Chair of Philosophy in Calcutta University which he had held for twenty years. But the bonds of love which connected Professor Radhakrishnan with the University of Calcutta could not be snapped. In 1942 he was invited to deliver

the Kamala Lectures at that University. The delivery of these lectures, first in Calcutta and then in Benares, was one of the most outstanding successes of Professor Radhakrishnan's career. The Lectures were published in book form later in 1947.

In May 1944 Professor Radhakrishnan was invited by the Chinese Government to deliver a course of lectures in China and meet the leading academic people there. He went by plane from Calcutta to Chungking on the 6th and, after spending two weeks in China, returned to India on the 21st. During his stay he delivered twelve lectures on various subjects, besides giving informal talks at the dinner and tea parties held in his honour. These lectures were later published in book form with the title *India and China*.

In 1946 Professor Radhakrishnan went on a lecturing tour to the United States and delivered lectures at the Harvard, Yale, Los Angeles, Michigan and Cornell Universities. And during the same year he led the Indian delegation to the UNESCO's first conference held at Paris. He has been on the Executive Board of this international organization since its inception and attended its second conference at Mexico City in 1947 and its third conference at Beirut in 1948 and became the Chairman of the Board for 1948-49. In January 1948 he resigned from the Vice-Chancellorship of the Benares Hindu University and was, in the course of the year, appointed Chairman of the Indian Universities Commission. The most important books published by him during the last two years are his translations of the Bhagavadgītā (1948) and the Dhammapada (1949). A volume on Professor

Radhakrishnan is in preparation in the 'Library of Living Philosophers'.

The services rendered by Professor Radhakrishnan to Hinduism, Buddhism and Indian philosophy and, above all, to the cause of religion in general have been immense. As far as the exposition of Hinduism is concerned, no teacher since the appearance of Swami Vivekananda on the platform of the World Congress of Religions at Chicago in 1893 has attracted so much attention as Professor Radhakrishnan. And his influence is likely to be permanent, because it depends not on mere popular lectures, but on scholarly works written in a charming style. He is undoubtedly one of the greatest figures of the modern Hindu Renaissance. Along with Gandhi and Tagore, he has raised the prestige of our nation among the nations of the world.

We may say that Professor Radhakrishnan has done yeoman's service to both Hinduism and Buddhism by the reorientation he has given to the teaching of the Buddha in the light of the Upaniṣadic thought. He has shown that the Buddha, far from being an innovator, was a teacher who took his stand on the philosophy of the Upaniṣads and tried to emphasize its ethical aspects and popularize its teachings. What the Upaniṣadic Rishis called Brahman, the Buddha called Dharma. It is because the Buddha had attained to the Real that he perceived the fleeting as fleeting and discarded it. The Buddha had thus an experience of the Absolute and taught that his eight-fold path would lead men from the unreal to the Real. He was only a reformer of Hinduism and not its opponent.

Professor Radhakrishnan is not only the greatest modern exponent of Hinduism but also a great world champion of religion in general. It is not the Hindus alone who are grateful to him for his clear and convincing explanation of all the aspects of their faith. Religious men all over the world whose faith is stronger than their reason will be thankful to the eminent Hindu philosopher for having painted in such warm colours 'to their intellect what already lay painted to their heart and imagination'. For, possessing the true hospitality of the Hindu mind, he undertakes to defend not this religion or that religion, but the spirit which lies behind all religions. And he defends this most cherished possession of humanity against every kind of attack made against it in modern times. He courageously takes up the gauntlet thrown down by the physicist, the biologist, the behaviourist, the psychoanalyst, the anthropologist, the socialist, the communist and the humanist and reaffirms in eloquent terms the indefeasible and inalienable claims of religious experience. He boldly proclaims, wherever he goes, that nothing but a spiritual revival could cure the distempers of the present world. The new world order which we all hope to see after the devastating global war of 1939-46 must have, according to him, a deep spiritual impulse behind it to give it unity, drive and lasting peace. There seems to be no doubt that his name will go down into history as that of the greatest religious philosopher of modern times. He is in the true line of descent from the ancient Hindu philosophers who have from time to time rescued the spirit of religion from the aberrations of secular thought and practice. The only difference is that,

while the ancient philosophers took their stand on what they termed scriptural revelation, the modern philosopher takes his stand on the religious experience of the saints, sages and mystics belonging to various traditions all over the world.

D. S. SARMA

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THE greatest fact in the story of man on earth is not his material achievements, the empires he has built and broken, but the growth of his soul from age to age in its search for truth and goodness. Those who take part in this adventure of the soul secure an enduring place in the history of human culture. Time has discredited heroes as easily as it has forgotten everyone else; but the saints remain. The greatness of Gandhi is more in his holy living than in his heroic struggles, in his insistence on the creative power of the soul and its life-giving quality at a time when the destructive forces seem to be in the ascendant.

I

Religious Basis of Politics

Gandhi is known to the world as the one man more than any other who is mainly responsible for the mighty upheaval of the Indian nation which has shaken and loosened its chains. Politicians are not generally reputed to take religion seriously, for the values to which they are committed, such as the political control of one people by another, the economic exploitation of the poorer and weaker human beings, are so clearly inconsistent with the

* Introduction to *Mahatma Gandhi—Essays and Reflections on his Life and Work* edited by the author.

values of religion that the latter could not be taken too seriously or interpreted too accurately. But for Gandhi, all life is of one piece. 'To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means!' Again, 'I have no desire for the perishable kingdom of earth, I am striving for the kingdom of heaven, which is spiritual deliverance. For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and of humanity. I want to identify myself with everything that lives. In the language of the Gītā, I want to live at peace with both friend and foe. So my patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace. Thus it will be seen that for me there are no politics devoid of religion. They subserve religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death-trap because they kill the soul.'¹ If man as a political being has not been much of a success, it is because he has kept religion and politics apart, thus misunderstanding both. For Gandhi there is no religion apart from human activity. Though in the present circumstances of India Gandhi happens to be a political revolutionary who refuses to accept tyranny or acquiesce in slavery, he is far from the uncompromising type of revolutionary whose abstractions force men into unnatural

¹ C. F. Andrews, *Mahatma Gandhi—His Own Story*, pp. 353-4, 357

and inhuman shapes. In the acid test of experience he remains, not a politician or a reformer, not a philosopher or a moralist, but someone composed of them all, an essentially religious person endowed with the highest and most human qualities and made more lovable by the consciousness of his own limitations and by an unfailing sense of humour.

II

Religion as Life in God

Whatever opinion we may hold of God, it is impossible to deny that He means something of supreme importance and absolute reality to Gandhi. It is his faith in God that has created in him a new man whose power and passion and love we feel. He has the feeling of something close to him, a spiritual presence which disturbs, embarrasses and overwhelms, an assurance of reality. Times without number, when doubts disturb his mind, he leaves it to God. Was there a response from God? No and Yes. No, for Gandhi does not hear anything said even by the most secret or the most distant of voices; yes, because he has a sense of reply, the appeased, satisfied feeling of one who has received an answer. It is indeed from the nature of the reply which is so eminently rational that he recognizes that he is not the victim of his own dreams or hallucinations. 'There is an indefinable, mysterious power that pervades everything. I feel it though I do not see it. It is this unseen power which makes itself felt and yet defies all proof because it is so unlike all that I perceive through my senses. It is proved not by extraneous

evidence but in the transformed conduct and character of those who have felt the real presence of God within. Such testimony is to be found in the experiences of an unbroken line of prophets and sages in all countries and climes. To reject this evidence is to deny oneself.'¹ 'It can never be a matter for argument. If you would have me convince others by argument, I am flooded. But I can tell you this—that I am surer of His existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room. I can also testify that I may live without air and water but not without Him. You may pluck out my eyes, but that will not kill me. You may chop off my nose, but that will not kill me. But blast my beliefs in God and I am dead.'²

In consistency with the great spiritual tradition of Hinduism, Gandhi affirms that when once we rise from the grossness to which the flesh is prone into the liberty of spirit, the view from the summit is identical for all. We have to climb the mountain by different paths, from the points where we happen to be, but that which we seek is the same. 'The Allah of Islam is the same as the God of the Christians and the Ísvara of the Hindus. Even as there are numerous names of God in Hinduism, there are many names of God in Islam. The names do not indicate individuality but attributes, and little man has tried in his humble way to describe mighty God by giving Him attributes, though He is above all attributes, Indescribable, Immeasurable. Living faith in this God means equal respect for all religions. It would be the height of

1 *Young India*, October 11, 1928.

2 *Harijan*, May 14, 1938.

intolerance—and intolerance is a species of violence—to believe that your religion is superior to other religions and that you would be justified in wanting others to change over to your faith.’¹ His attitude to other religions is not one of negative toleration but of positive appreciation. He accepts Jesus’ life and work as a supreme illustration of the principle of non-violence. ‘Jesus occupies in my heart the place of one of the great teachers who have made a considerable influence on my life.’ He appreciates the character of the prophet Mohammad, his fervent faith and practical efficiency, the tender compassion and suffering of Ali. The great truths emphasized by Islam, intense belief in God’s overruling majesty, puritanic simplicity of life, ardent sense of brotherhood and chivalrous devotion to the poor are accepted by him as fundamental to all religions. But the dominating force in his life has been Hinduism with its conception of truth, its vision of the soul and its charity.

All religions, however, are means to religion. ‘Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one’s very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within, and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker, and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.’

¹ *Harijan*, May 14, 1938.

There is no other God than Truth, and the only means for the realization of truth is love or *ahimsā*. Knowledge of truth and the practice of love are impossible without self-purification. Only the pure in heart can see God. To attain to purity of heart, to rise above attachment and repulsion, to be free from passion in thought, word and deed, to be redeemed from fear and vanity, the inconsistencies of our flesh and the discursiveness of our minds must be overcome. Disciplined effort, austere living, *tapas* is the way to it. Suffering rinses our spirit clean. According to Hindu mythology, the God Śiva undertakes Himself to swallow the poison which comes up when the ocean is churned. The God of the Christians gave His Son in order to save mankind. Even if they are myths, why should they have arisen if they did not express some deep-seated intuitions in men? The more you love, the more you suffer. Infinite love is infinite suffering. 'Whosoever would save his life shall lose it.' We are here working for God, called upon to use our life for carrying out His intentions. If we refuse to do so and insist on saving our lives instead of spending them, we negate our true nature and so lose our lives. If we are to be able to follow to the farthest limit we can see, if we are to respond to the most distant call, earthly values, fame, possessions and pleasures of the senses have to be abandoned. To be one with the poor and the outcast is to be his equal in poverty and to cast oneself out. To be free to say or do the right, regardless of praise or blame, to be free to love all and forgive all, non-attachment is essential. Freedom is only for the unconfined who enjoy the whole world without owning a blade of grass in it.

In this matter, Gandhi is adhering to the great ideal of the saññyāsīn who has no fixed abode and is bound to no stable form of living.

There is, however, some exaggeration when the ascetic code in all its fullness is prescribed, not merely for the saññyāsīns but for the whole of humanity. Sexual restraint, for example, is essential for all, but celibacy is only for the few. The sexual act is not a mere pleasure of the body, a purely carnal act, but is a means by which love is expressed and life perpetuated. It becomes evil, if it harms others or if it interferes with a person's spiritual development, but neither of these conditions is inherent in the act itself. The act by which we live, by which love is expressed and the race continued is not an act of shame or sin. But when the masters of spiritual life insist on celibacy, they demand that we should preserve singleness of mind from destruction by bodily desire.

Gandhi has spared no pains in disciplining himself to the utmost possible extent, and those who know him will admit his claim that he has 'known no distinction between relatives and strangers, countrymen and foreigners, white and coloured, Hindus and Indians of other faiths, whether Muslims, Parsees, Christians or Jews.' He adds: 'I cannot claim this as a special virtue, as it has been in my very nature rather than a result of any effort on my part, whereas in the case of non-violence, celibacy and other cardinal virtues, I am fully conscious of a continuous striving for the cultivation of them.'¹

Only the pure in heart can love God and love man. Suffering love is the miracle of the spirit by which, though

¹ *Mahatma Gandhi—His Own Story*, p. 209.

the wrongs of others are borne on our shoulders, we feel a sense of comfort deeper and more real than any given by purely selfish pleasures. At such moments we understand that nothing in the world is sweeter than the knowledge that we have been able to give a moment's happiness to another, nothing more precious than the sense that we have shared another's sorrow. Perfect compassion untouched by condescension, washed clean of pride, even of the pride of doing good, is the highest religious quality.

III

The Spirit of Humanity

It follows that the mark of spirituality is not exile from the natural world but work in it with love for all. *Yasmin sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmaivābhūt vijānatah*. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ātmaiva. The condition is absolute. There must be freedom and equality of status. Such a demand makes for the establishment of a universal community of free persons and requires those who accept it to overcome the artificial barriers of race and creed, wealth and power, class and nation. If one group or nation attempts to make itself secure at the expense of another, Germans at the expense of the Czechs, landlords at the expense of tenants, capitalists at the expense of workers, it is adopting an undemocratic method and can defend its injustice only by the force of arms. The dominant group has the fear of dispossession and the oppressed stores up just resentment. Only justice can terminate this unnatural condition, the justice which means the recognition of the equal claims of all human beings. The

movement of humanity all these centuries has been towards human brotherhood. The various forward thrusts that have become manifest in different parts of the world, the ideals of justice, equality and freedom from exploitation of which men have become increasingly conscious, the demands they have come to feel are all risings of the common man against the perversions and compulsions that were perpetually developing to restrain him and hold him back. The progress of the consciousness of freedom is the essence of human history.

We are inclined to give too much importance to exceptional incidents by seeing them in distorted perspective. What we do not sufficiently realize is that these setbacks, blind alleys and disasters are only a part to be viewed in relation to the background of the general tendency at work over the centuries. If we could only get a detached view of the continued effort of mankind, we would be amazed and profoundly moved. Serfs are becoming free men, heretics are no longer burned, nobles are surrendering their privileges, slaves are being freed from a life of shame, rich men are apologizing for their wealth, militant empires are proclaiming the necessity of peace, and even dreams of the union of mankind are cherished. Yes, we have even today the lust of the powerful, the malice of knaves, the lies of the hypocrites and the rise of arrogant racialism and nationalism; yet one would be blind if one did not see the great tradition of democracy which is universal in its sweep. Unceasing is the toil of those who are labouring to build a world where the poorest have a right to sufficient food, to light, air and sunshine in their homes, to hope, dignity and

beauty in their lives. Gandhi is among the foremost of the servants of humanity. He is not comforted by the prospect of the distant future when faced by the threat of immediate disasters. He joins forces with men of fixed convictions to work by the most direct means possible for the cure of evils and the prevention of dangers. Democracy for him is not a matter of phrases but of social realities. All his public activities in South Africa and India can be understood only if we know his love of the common man.

The civilized world has been stirred deeply by the Nazi treatment of the Jews, and liberal statesmen have solemnly expressed their disapproval and sorrow at the recrudescence of racial prejudice. But the strange though startling fact is that in democratically governed countries of the British Empire and the United States of America many communities suffer political and social disabilities on racial grounds. When Gandhi was in South Africa he saw that Indians, though nominally free citizens of the British Empire, were subjected to grave disabilities. Both Church and State denied equality of rights to non-European races, and Gandhi started his passive resistance movement on a mass scale to protest against the oppressive restrictions. He stood out for the essential principle that men *qua* men are equal and artificial distinctions based on race and colour were both unreasonable and immoral. He revealed to the Indian community its actual degradation and inspired it with a sense of its own dignity and honour. His effort was not confined to the welfare of Indians. He would not justify the exploitation of the African natives or the better treatment of Indians on

account of their historic culture, While the more obnoxious of the discriminatory legislation against the Indians was abolished, even today Indians are subjected to humiliating restrictions which do not reflect credit on those who submit to them or add to the prestige of the Government which imposes them.

In India it was his ambition to rid the country of its divisions and discords, to discipline the masses to self-dependence, raise women to a plane of political, economic and social equality with men, end the religious hatreds which divide the nation, and cleanse Hinduism of its social abomination of untouchability. The success he has achieved in removing this blot on Hinduism will stand out as one of his greatest contributions to the progress of humanity. So long as there is a class of untouchables he belongs to it. 'If I have to be re-born, I should wish to be born an untouchable so that I may share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them, in order that I may endeavour to free myself and them from that miserable condition.' To say that we love God as unseen and at the same time deal cruelly with people who move by His life or life derived from Him is a contradiction in terms. Though Gandhi prides himself on being a conservative Hindu, there has been no more vigorous critic of rigours and disabilities of caste, of the curse of untouchability, of the vice in temples, of cruelty to cattle and the animal world. 'I am a reformer through and through. But my zeal never leads me to the rejection of any of the essential things of Hinduism.'

Today his opposition to the autocracy of the Indian princes is based on his love for the millions of their

subjects. Not even the most generous observer can say that all is well with the States. I may perhaps quote a few sentences from the *Statesman* of Calcutta, a paper which represents British interest. 'It is no reflection upon individuals but only upon human nature to say that in many of the States appalling conditions prevail. The bad landlords as well as the good ones are subject to no laws, they have the power of life and death, there are no obstacles to their greed or lust or cruelty, if they are greedy, vicious or cruel. If the treaties which protect petty tyrants are never to be revised, if the Paramount Power is for ever to have an obligation of honour to defend the indefensible, then some day an irresistible force will encounter an immovable object, and according to the classic answer to this problem something will go to smithereens.' The slowness of evolution is the cause of all revolutions. Gandhi, with the utmost friendship for the princes, is asking them to wake up and set their houses in order. I hope that they will realize, before it is too late, that their safety and survival are bound up with the rapid introduction of responsible government, which even the Paramount Power with all its strength was obliged to concede in the provinces.

Gandhi's main charge against the British Government in India is that it has led to the oppression of the poor. From the beginning of her history India has been known for her wealth and possessions. We have vast areas of the most fertile soil, material resources in inexhaustible abundance, and with proper care and attention we have enough to go round and feed every man, woman and child. And yet we have millions of people who are the

victims of poverty, who are under-nourished and under-housed, whose lives are an unceasing struggle from youth to old age, until at last death comes to their rescue and stills their aching hearts. These conditions are not due to pitiless nature, but to the inhuman system which cries out to be abolished, not only in the interests of India but of the whole of humanity.

In the broadcast address which he gave from London to America in 1931, Gandhi referred to the 'semi-starved millions scattered throughout the seven hundred thousand villages dotted over a surface nineteen hundred miles long and fifteen hundred miles broad.' He said: 'It is a painful phenomenon that those simple villagers, through no fault of their own, have nearly six months in the year idle upon their hands. Time was, not long ago, when every village was self-sufficient in regard to the two primary human wants—food and clothing. Unfortunately for us, when the East India Company, by means which I would prefer not to describe, destroyed that supplementary village industry, then the millions of spinners—who had become famed through the cunning of their deft fingers for drawing the finest thread, such as has never been yet drawn by any modern machinery—these village spinners found themselves one fine morning with their noble occupation gone, and from that day forward India has become progressively poor, no matter what may be said to the contrary.'

India lives in the villages, and her civilization has been an agricultural one which is becoming increasingly mechanical. Gandhi is the representative of the peasant, the producer of the world's food who is fundamental in

society, and is anxious to maintain and fortify this basic bias of Indian civilization. He finds that under British rule the people are giving up their old standards and in spite of many admirable qualities they have acquired, such as mechanical intelligence, inventive skill, courage and adventure, they are worshipping material success, are greedy for tangible gains and are governed by worldly standards. Our industrial cities have lost all proportion to the landscape out of which they have grown, have swollen to meaningless dimensions, and their people caught in the entangling apparatus of money and machinery have become violent, restless, thoughtless, undisciplined and unscrupulous. For Gandhi, industrialized humanity has come to mean women who for a paltry wage are compelled to work out their barren lives, babies who are doped with opium so that they shall not cry and disturb their working mothers, little children who are robbed of their childhood and in their tender years are forced into industrial works, and millions of unemployed who are dwarfed and diseased. We are being snared and enslaved, he thinks, and our souls are conquered for a mess of pottage. A spirit and a culture which had soared up in the rishis of the Upaniṣads, the Buddhist monks, Hindu saṁnyāsins and Muslim fakirs, cannot be content with cars and radios and plutocracy. Our vision is dimmed and our way lost. We have taken a wrong twist which has dispossessed, impoverished and embittered our agricultural population, corrupted, coarsened and blinded our workers, and given us millions of children with blank faces, dead eyes and drooping mouths. Beneath our present bafflement and exasperation the

bulk of the people retain a hunger for the realization of the old dream of genuine liberty, real self-respect; of a life where none is rich and none is poor, where the extremes of luxury and leisure are abolished and where industry and commerce exist in a simple form.

Gandhi does not aim at a peasant society which will forgo altogether the benefits of the machine. He is not against large-scale production. When he was asked whether cottage industries and large-scale production can be harmonized, he said, 'Yes, if they are planned so as to help the villages. Key-industries, industries which the nation needs, may be centralized. Under my scheme nothing will be allowed to be produced by cities which can be equally well produced by the villages. The proper function of cities is to serve as clearing-houses for village products.'¹ His insistence on khadi or homespun and his scheme of popular education centring round the handicrafts are devised to resuscitate the villages. He repeatedly warns that India is to be found not in its few cities but in its innumerable villages. The bulk of India's population must get back to the land, stay in the land, and live primarily off the produce of the land so that their families may be self-supporting, owning the implements they use, the soil they cultivate and the roof that shelters them. Not an uprooted, shiftless class of factory workers, not an unsound, rapacious, money-lending business community, but a responsible agrarian population and the stable, level-headed people of small agricultural market-towns must dominate the cultural, social, economic and political life of the country, give it morality, tone and

¹ *Harijan*, January 28, 1939.

noble objectives. This is not to become primitive. It is only to take up a mode of existence that is instinctive to India, that supplied her once with a purpose, a faith and a meaning. It is the only way to keep our species civilized. India of the peasant and rustic life, of village communities, of forest hermitages and spiritual retreats has taught the world many great lessons but has wronged no man, has injured no land and sought no dominion over others. Today the true purpose of life has been perverted. How is India to get out of this slough of despond? After centuries of subjection, the people seem to have lost the will or the wish to lift themselves out of it. The forces against them seem to be too strong. To give them confidence, a prouder self-respect, a more erect carriage, is no easy task. Yet Gandhi has tried to re-kindle a torpid generation with the fire that burns in his soul, with his passion for freedom. In freedom men and women reveal their best; in slavery they are debased. To liberate the ordinary human being from the restrictions, internal and external, which warp his nature has been the aim of freedom. As a great defender of human liberty, he is struggling to release the country from foreign control. Patriotism, when it is so pure, is neither a crime nor bad manners. To fight against the present unnatural conditions is one's sacred duty. He employs spiritual weapons and refuses to draw the sword, and in the process is training the people for independence, making them capable of winning and holding it. Sir George Lloyd (now Lord Lloyd), the then Governor of Bombay, said of Gandhi's campaign: 'Gandhi's was the most colossal experiment in world history and it came within an inch of succeeding.'

Though he has failed in his attempt to move the British Government, he has liberated forces in the country which will not cease to act. He has stirred the people from their lethargy, given them a new self-confidence and responsibility and united them in their resolve to win freedom. To the extent to which there is today an awakening of a new spirit, a preparedness for a new kind of national corporate life, a new social attitude in dealing with the depressed classes, it is largely due to the spiritual energy and dynamic of Gandhi's movement.

Gandhi's outlook has nothing sectional or provincial about it. He believes that the heritage of India can help the culture of the world. A prostrated India can give no hope to humanity; only an awakened, free India can give help to a groaning world. Gandhi affirms that if the British are earnest about their vision of justice, peace and order, it is not enough to put down the aggressive powers and preserve the *status quo*. Our love of liberty and justice must exclude the passive violence of refusing to reform a situation which is contrary to the professed ideals. If greed, cruelty and contempt of man have gone to the making of empires, we must change them before we call upon the world to rally to the forces of freedom and justice. Violence is either active or passive. The aggressive powers are now actively violent; the imperial powers who persist in the enjoyment of unjust advantages acquired from past violence are as much guilty of violence and are inimical to freedom and democracy. Until we act honestly in this matter, we cannot secure a better world-order and the world will be in a chronic state of uncertainty, full of wars and threats of wars. Self-

government for India is the acid test of British honesty. Gandhi is still observing his twenty-four hours' fast every Monday to indicate to all concerned that self-rule is unattained. And yet his is the restraining influence on an impatient India, torn between the legitimate aspirations of the people and the obstinacy of the British ruling classes. He has been the greatest force for peace in India.

When he landed in England after the South African struggle was over, he found that war against Germany had been declared. He offered to enlist unconditionally for the whole duration of the war in order to undertake ambulance work at the Front. His offer was accepted and he was placed in a responsible post with an Indian unit. But owing to over-exposure while on duty, he was taken ill with pleurisy and his life was suspected to be in danger. On recovery he was ordered by the doctors to leave for the warm climate of India. He actively encouraged recruiting in the war—a thing which has puzzled even many of his friends. At the end of the war the Rowlatt Act was passed against the unanimous opposition of Indians. Things were done in the Punjab under martial law which shocked the country. Gandhi was one of the authors of the Congress Inquiry Report on the Punjab disturbances. In spite of it all, he recommended to the Congress at Amritsar in December 1919 that the Reforms should be accepted and worked in a constitutional manner. When in 1920 the Hunter Commission Report wavered in its criticism of official action, when the House of Lords declined to condemn General Dyer, he made the great decision of his life to refuse to co-operate with

the British Government, and in September 1920 the Congress adopted the resolution of non-violent non-co-operation.

It will be well to quote his own words in a letter to the Viceroy, written on August 1, 1920: 'Your Excellency's light-hearted treatment of official crime, your exoneration of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Mr Montagu's despatch and, above all, the shameful ignorance of the Punjab events and the callous disregard of the feelings of Indians betrayed by the House of Lords, have filled me with the gravest misgivings regarding the future of the Empire, have estranged me completely from the present Government, and have disabled me from rendering, as I have hitherto whole-heartedly rendered, my loyal co-operation.

'In my humble opinion the ordinary method of agitating by way of petitions, deputations, and the like is no remedy for moving to repentance a Government so hopelessly indifferent to the welfare of its charge as the Government of India has proved to be. In European countries condemnation of such grievous wrongs as the Khilāfat and the Punjab would have resulted in a bloody revolution by the people. They would have resisted, at all costs, national emasculation. Half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance, and the other half is unwilling to do so. I have therefore ventured to suggest the remedy of non-co-operation, which enables those who wish to dissociate themselves from Government, and which, if unattended by violence and undertaken in an ordered manner, must compel it to retrace its steps and undo the wrongs committed; but, whilst I pursue the policy of non-co-

operation, in so far as I can carry the people with me, I shall not lose hope that you will yet see your way to do justice.'

While he maintains that British rule in its present form has made India 'poorer in wealth, in manliness, in godliness and in her sons' power to defend themselves,' he hopes that it can be altered. Even while he continues his campaign against British control, he is not opposed to the British connexion. In the heyday of the non-co-operation movement he fought stoutly against the movement for complete severance from Britain.

While he was willing to work with the British as friends and equals, he was firm that no improvement in the Indian situation was possible so long as the British adopted an unnatural attitude of patronage and superiority. Let us remember that even in moments of the greatest excitement he did not harbour ill-will to the British. 'I will not hurt England or Germany to serve India.'

When by some stupid or ill-conceived measure, such as the Amritsar massacre or the appointment of the Simon Commission, India lost patience and self-control and became aflame with wrath, Gandhi was there leading the discontent and indignation into safe channels of love and reconciliation. In the Round Table Conference he showed his indelible affection for the British and his faith in a commonwealth based not on force but on reason, and the will to promote the general good of mankind. A halting measure of self-government in the provinces was the result of the Round Table Conferences, and when the majority of the people were against the acceptance and

working of the Constitution, it was Gandhi again, more than any other, who persuaded the Congress to work the reforms for what they were worth. His sole concern is peace with Britain, but peace rooted in freedom and friendship. India today is represented by a leader who has no trace of racial bitterness or personal rancour; he has no faith in the use of force and restrains his people from resorting to violence. He does not desire to separate India from the British Commonwealth if only it means a fellowship of free nations. His Majesty the King in his speech to the Canadian Parliament on the 19th of May said that the unity of the British Empire 'finds expression today in the free association of nations enjoying common principles of government and a common attachment to the ideals of peace and freedom, bound together by a common allegiance to the Crown.' Gandhi demands the application of these 'common principles of government' to India. He claims that the Indians should be masters in their own house, and that is neither unreasonable nor immoral. He is keen on bringing about better relations between the two camps through the co-operation of men of good will.

It is tragic that his appeal avails no more than the whistling of the wind. After years of unwearied labour and heroic struggle his great mission remains unfulfilled, though his vision and faith are still alive. For myself I shall hope that British public opinion will assert itself and compel its Government to set up a free, self-governing India, without bartering or niggling, without hesitation or delay, with a fine, open gesture of faith, though it may involve a little risk: for I am persuaded that, if it

is not done in response to Gandhi's appeal for justice and fair play, the relations of our two countries will get worse, the breach will widen and bitterness grow to the detriment and danger of both.

Whether it is the South African Government or the British Government, whether it is the Indian mill-owners or the Hindu priests or the Indian princes who are the objects of Gandhi's criticism and attack, the underlying spirit is exactly the same in all these different activities. 'I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is Truth, or Truth which is God, through the service of these millions.'¹

VI

Satyāgraha

'Ahimsā or non-violence is the highest duty' is a well-known saying of the *Mahābhārata*. Its practical application in life is satyāgraha or soul-force. It is based on the assumption that 'the world rests on the bedrock of satya or truth. Asatya, meaning untruth, also means non-existent, and satya, or truth, means "that which is"'. If untruth does not so much as exist, its victory is out of the question. And truth being "that which is" can never be destroyed.'² God is the reality. The will to freedom and love is in accordance with reality. When man rejects this

¹ *Harijan*, March 11, 1939.

² *Mahatma Gandhi—His Own Story*, p. 225.

will for his own interests, he is rejecting himself. By this act of frustration he is setting himself in opposition to reality, is isolating himself from it. This negation represents man's estrangement from himself, his denial of the truth about himself. It cannot be final or ultimate. It cannot destroy the real will. Reality cannot frustrate itself. 'The gates of hell shall not prevail.' God cannot be beaten. The meek shall inherit the earth and not the mighty who will lose themselves in the effort to save themselves, for they put their trust in unspiritual or unreal things like wealth and death-dealing weapons. Ultimately men are ruled not by those who believe in negation, hatred, violence, but by those who believe in wisdom and love, in inward and outward peace.

Satyāgraha is rooted in the power of reality, in the inward strength of the soul. It is not merely the negative virtue of abstaining from violence, but the positive one of doing good. 'If I hit my adversary, that is of course violence; but to be truly non-violent, I must love him and pray for him even when he hits me.' Love is unity and it comes into clash with evil which is separateness, getting, despising, hating, hurting and killing. Love does not acquiesce in evil, in wrong-doing, injustice or exploitation. It does not evade the issue but fearlessly faces the wrong-doer and resists his wrong with the overpowering force of love and suffering, for it is contrary to human nature to fight with force. Our conflicts are to be settled by the human means of intelligence and good will, of love and service. In this confused world the one saving feature is the great adventure of being human. Creative life asserts

itself in the midst of death. In spite of all this fear and gloom, humanity is practised by all, by the farmer and the weaver, by the artist and the philosopher, by the monk in the cloister and the scientist in the laboratory, and by all, young and old, when they love and suffer. Life is immense. *Prāṇo virāt*.

The advocates of the use of force adopt a crude version of the Darwinian struggle for existence. They overlook the fundamental distinction between the animal and the human worlds and exalt a biological generalization into a doctrine of human destiny. If violent resistance is adopted in a world where it does not belong, human life is in danger of being degraded to the level of animal existence. In the *Mahābhārata* the warring world of men is compared to a dog kennel. 'First there comes the wagging of tails, then the bark, then the replying bark, then the turning of one round the other, then the show of teeth, then the roaring, and then comes the commencement of the fight. It is the same with men; there is no difference whatever.'¹ Gandhi asks us to leave fighting to apes and dogs and behave like men and serve the right by quiet suffering. Love or self-suffering can overcome the enemy, not by destroying him but by changing him, for he is, after all, a person of like passions with ourselves. Gandhi's acts of repentance and self-humiliation are full of moral courage and atoning sacrifice.

While a few individuals here and there tried to use the method of love in their personal lives, it is Gandhi's supreme achievement to have adopted it as a plan for social

¹ *Evam eva manuṣyeṣu viśeṣo nāsti kaścana*, V, 72, 72-3.

and political liberation. Under his leadership organized groups in South Africa and India have used it on a large scale for the redress of grievances. Entirely abjuring the use of any physical violence for attaining political ends, he has developed this new technique in the history of political revolution, a technique which does not injure the spiritual tradition of India but arises out of it.

It has taken different forms of passive resistance, non-violent non-co-operation, and civil disobedience. Every one of them is based on hatred of the wrong and love for the wrong-doer. A satyāgrahi is chivalrous to his opponents. The disobedience to law has always to be civil, and 'civility does not mean the mere outward gentleness of speech cultivated for the occasion, but an inborn gentleness and desire to do the opponent good.' In all his campaigns, whenever the enemy was in trouble Gandhi went to his rescue. He condemns all attempts to use the enemy's need as one's opportunity. We should not strike a bargain with Britain when she is in trouble in Europe. During the war he wrote to the Viceroy of India: 'If I could make my countrymen retrace their steps, I would make them withdraw all the Congress resolutions and not whisper "Home rule" or "Responsible government" during the pendency of the war.' Even General Smuts felt the irresistible attraction of Gandhi's methods, and one of his secretaries said to Gandhi: 'I do not like your people and I do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish that you took to violence like the English strikers and then we would know at once how to

dispose of you. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness.’¹

Twenty years after the war to end war millions of men are again under arms and in peace time armies are mobilizing, fleets are covering the seas and aeroplanes are assembling in the sky. We know that war solves no problems but only makes their solution more difficult. Many Christian men and women are tormented by the arguments for and against war. The pacifist declares that war is a crime that disgraces humanity and there is no justification for defending civilization by the instruments of barbarism. We have no right to impose suffering on men and women with whom we have no quarrel. A nation engaged in war is inspired by a grim determination to defeat and destroy the enemy. It is swept by fear and the passion of hatred. We cannot rain death and destruction on a crowded city in a spirit of love and forgiveness. The whole method of war is one of engaging Satan to reprove Satan. It is contrary to the mind of Jesus, his moral teaching and example. We cannot reconcile killing and Christianity.

The advocates of war argue that, though war is a dreadful evil, on occasions it becomes the lesser of two evils. Practical wisdom consists in a proper appreciation of relative values. We owe obligations to the social community and the State which is its organ. As members of

1 *Mahatma Gandhi—His Own Story*, p. 247.

a society, we derive protection of person and property, education and other advantages which give our lives value and interest. Naturally our duty is to defend the State when it is attacked, to preserve the inheritance when it is threatened.

It is this line of argument that is presented to us when we are called upon to maim and kill, to wound and destroy people against whom we have no ill will. Nazi Germany contends that man's principal duty is membership of his State, and his reality, goodness and true freedom the furtherance of its ends. The State has the right to subordinate the happiness of individuals to its own greatness. The great virtue of war is that it kills man's longing, in the weakness of his flesh, for personal liberty. In his speech at the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Fascist party, Mussolini said: 'The order of the day is more ships, more guns and more aeroplanes at whatever cost and by whatever means, even if we have to wipe out completely what is called civilian life.' 'From prehistoric days one cry has been borne over the centuries, "Woe to the unarmed".' 'We desire that nothing more shall be heard of brotherhood, sisterhood, cousinhood or their bastard parenthoods because the relations between states are relations of force and these relations of force are the determining elements of our policy.' Mussolini adds, 'If the problem is considered on the claim of morality, nobody has the right to throw the first stone.' Empire building is like a game of cards. Some Powers get a good hand and play it so well that others are nowhere. When all the profits are in the pocket they turn round and say that gambling is bad and assume an attitude of

amazement that others wish to play the old game. It is not right to assume that the idols of race, power and armed force are worshipped only in Central Europe.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, in his speech in the House of Lords during the debate on the 20th of March, pleaded for 'the massing of might on the side of the right'. 'We are driven to this,' he argues, 'because we are convinced that there are some things that are more sacred even than peace and that these things must be defended.' 'I cannot believe that it is against the will of Providence that nations should defend things which are so precious to civilization and human welfare.' In Gandhi we have that rarest kind of religious man who could face a fanatical, patriotic assembly and say that he would, if he had to, sacrifice even India to the Truth. Gandhi says: 'Most religious men I have met are politicians in disguise; I, however, who wear the guise of a politician, am at heart a religious man.'

The aim of the religious individual is not to degrade the vision to the demands of the actual but to raise the actual to the pattern of the ideal. Our patriotic allegiances disrupt the spiritual unity of the human family and we maintain our loyalty to the larger community by refusing to engage in war and our loyalty to our State by defending it in religious and human ways. The religious at least, like the Apostles, 'ought to obey God rather than men'. Our trouble is that society in all countries is in the hands of people who believe in war as an instrument of policy and think of progress in terms of conquest.

Man, unless he is sadistic, is happy when he is gentle and merciful. There is joy in creation and misery in destruction. The common soldiers have no hatred for their enemies, but the ruling classes by appealing to their fear, self-interest and pride seduce them from their humanity. People in whom rage and hatred are factitiously produced fight one another because they are simple men trained to obedience. Even then they cannot put rancour in their killing. It is discipline that compels them to do what they hate. The ultimate responsibility lies with the Governments that are implacable and pitiless. They have imprisoned simple people and diminished their humanity. Men who delight in creation are drilled to form armies, navies and air fleets that are meant for destruction. We applaud murder and make mercy a thing of shame. We forbid the teaching of truth and command the spreading of lies. We rob both our own people and strangers of decency, of happiness and of life, and make ourselves responsible for mass murders and spiritual death.

We cannot have peace until all the nations treat with each other in a mood of freedom and friendliness, until we develop a new conception of the integrated social life. The fate of civilization and humanity on this planet is bound up with that deep instinct for the universal values of spirit, freedom, justice and love of man which form the breath of Gandhi's being. In this violent and distracted world Gandhi's non-violence seems to be a dream too beautiful to be true. For him God his truth and love, and God wishes us to be truthful and loving regardless of consequences. A truly religious man takes as much

trouble to discover what is right as the prudent man does to discover what will pay, and he does it even if it means the surrender of his dearest interests, individual, racial and national. Only those who have emptied themselves of all selfishness, individual, and corporate, have the strength and the courage to say, 'May my interests perish, so Thy will be done.' Gandhi does not admit the possibility that love of God and of truth and fair dealing can hurt anyone. He is certain that against the rock of moral law world's conquerors and exploiters hurl themselves eventually to their own destruction. It is not even safe to be immoral, for the will to power is self-defeating. When we talk of 'national welfare', we assume that we have an inviolate and perpetual right to hold certain territories; and as for 'civilization' the world has seen a number of civilizations on which the dust of ages has settled. The jungle has conquered their cities and jackals howl there in the moonlight.

Considerations of 'civilization' and 'national welfare' are irrelevant to the man of faith. Love is not a matter of policy or calculation. To those who are persuaded by despair that there is no remedy against the violence of the modern world but to escape or destroy, Gandhi says that there is another within the reach of us all, the principle of love which has upheld the spirit of man through many tyrannies and will uphold it still. His satyāgraha may seem to be an ineffectual answer to the gigantic displays of brute force; but there is something more formidable than force; the immortal spirit of man which will not be subdued by noise or numbers. It will break all fetters which tyrants seek to rivet on it. In an

interview with a *New York Times* correspondent who asked him in the March crisis for a message to the world, Gandhi recommended simultaneous disarmament on the part of the democratic powers as the solution. 'I am certain', he said, 'as I am sitting here, that this would open Hitler's eyes and disarm him.' The interviewer asked, 'Would not that be a miracle?' Gandhi replied: 'Perhaps. But it would save the world from the butchery which seems impending.' 'The hardest metal yields to sufficient heat; even so must the hardest heart melt before the sufficiency of the heat of non-violence. And there is no limit to the capacity of non-violence to generate heat. . . . During my half-century of experience I have not yet come across a situation when I had to say that I was helpless, that I had no remedy in terms of non-violence.' Love is the law of human life, its natural necessity. We are approaching a state when this necessity would be manifest, for human life would be impossible if men were to evade and disobey this principle. We have wars simply because we are not sufficiently selfless for a life which does not need wars. The battle for peace must be fought in the heart of the individual. The spirit in him must break the power of pride and selfishness, lust and fear. A new way of life must become the foundation of national life as well as of world order, a way of life which will conserve and foster the true interest of all classes, races and nations. It is the freed men, who have liberated themselves from submission to the blind, selfish will of avidyā, that can work for and establish peace. Peace is a positive demonstration in life and behaviour of certain universal principles and standards. We must fight for

them by weapons which do not involve the debasement of moral values or the destruction of human life. In this effort we must be ready to endure whatever suffering comes our way.

In my travels in different parts of the world I have noted that Gandhi's reputation is more universal than that of the greatest statesmen and leaders of nations, and his personality more beloved and esteemed than any or all of them. His name is familiar to such a degree that there is scarcely a peasant or a factory worker who does not consider him to be a friend of humankind. They seem to think that he is likely to restore the golden age. But we cannot summon it, as we would summon, let us say, a passing cab. For we are subject to a thing more powerful than any nation, more humiliating than any conquest, and that is ignorance. Though all our faculties are designed for life, we have allowed them to be perverted in the cause of death. Though the right to happiness is clearly implicit in the creation of humankind, we have allowed that right to be neglected and suffered our energy to be used in the pursuit of power and wealth by which the happiness of the many is sacrificed to the doubtful satisfaction of a few. The world is in slavery to the same error to which you and I are subject. We must strive, not for wealth and power but for the establishment of love and humanity. Freedom from error is the only true liberty.

Gandhi is the prophet of a liberated life wielding power over millions of human beings by virtue of his exceptional holiness and heroism. There will always be some who will find in such rare examples of sanctity the note of

strength and stark reality which is missing in a life of general good will, conventional morality or vague aesthetic affectation which is all that many modern teachers have to offer. To be true, to be simple, to be pure and gentle of heart, to remain cheerful and contented in sorrow and danger, to love life and not to fear death, to serve the Spirit and not to be haunted by the spirits of the dead, nothing better has ever been taught or lived since the world first began.

WE are too near the event—the great blow fell only the day before yesterday and our hearts are so full of grief that it will not be possible for us to undertake any detailed or detached appraisal of his life and work. The whole world has been shocked with horror that a great soul, rare in any age but unique in ours, has thus fallen. President Truman said that a giant among men had fallen. This puny figure of seven stone was a giant among men, measured by the greatness of his soul. By his side, other men, very important and famous men, big in their own way, big in their space and time, look small and insignificant. His profound sincerity of spirit, his freedom from hatred and malice, his mastery over himself, his human, friendly, all-embracing charity, his strong conviction, which he shared with the great ones of history, that the martyrdom of the body is nothing compared with the defilement of the soul, a conviction which he successfully put to the test in many dramatic situations and now in this final act of surrender, show the impact of religion on life, the impact of the eternal values on the shifting problems of the world of time.

The inspiration of his life has been what is commonly called religion, religion not in the sense of subscription to dogmas or conformity to ritual, but religion in the sense

* An address delivered in All Souls College, Oxford, on Sunday, February 1, 1948.

of an abiding faith in the absolute values of truth, love and justice and a persistent endeavour to realize them on earth. Nearly fifteen years ago, I asked him to state his view of religion. He expressed it in these words:

‘I often describe my religion as the Religion of Truth. Of late, instead of saying God is Truth, I have been saying Truth is God, in order more fully to define my Religion. . . . Nothing so completely describes my God as Truth. Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some truth in them. We are all sparks of Truth. The sum-total of these sparks is indescribable, as yet—unknown—Truth which is God. I am being daily led nearer to It by constant prayer.’¹

Even though Gandhi practised this religion with courage and consistency, he had an unusual sense of humour, a certain light-heartedness, even gaiety, which we do not associate with ardent religious souls. This playfulness was the outcome of an innocence of heart, a spontaneity of spirit. While he redeemed even the most fugitive and trivial moment from commonness, he had all the time a remote, a far-way look. The abuses and perversities of life did not shake his confidence in the essential goodness of things. He assumed, without much discussion, that his way of life was clean, right and natural, while our way in this mechanized industrial civilization was unnatural.

Gandhi's religion was an intensely practical one. There are religious men who, when they find the troubles and perplexities of the world too much for them, wrap their

¹ Radhakrishnan & Muirhead: *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* (1936), p. 21.

cloaks around them, withdraw into monasteries or mountain-tops and guard the sacred fires burning in their own hearts. If truth, love and justice are not to be found in the world, we can possess these graces in the inviolable sanctuary of our souls. For Gandhi, sanctity and service of man were inseparable.

‘My motive (he says) has been purely religious. I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind; and this I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man’s activities today constitutes an indivisible whole; you cannot divide social, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity.’

If Gandhi took to politics, it is because he looked upon politics as a branch of ethics and religion. It is not a struggle for power and wealth, but a persistent and continuous effort to enable the submerged millions to attain the good life, to raise the quality of human beings, to train them for freedom and fellowship, for spiritual depth and social harmony. A politician who works for these ends cannot help being religious. He cannot ignore the formative share of morality in civilization or take the side of evil against good. Owing no allegiance to the material things of life, Gandhi was able to make changes in them. The prophets of spirit make history just by standing outside history.

It is impertinent for any man to set about reforming the universe. He must start his work from where he is. He must take up the work that lies nearest to hand. When, on his return from South Africa, he found the people of India suffering from mortified pride, want,

pain, and degradation, he took up the task of their emancipation as a challenge and an opportunity. No improvement, he felt, was possible without political freedom. Freedom from subjection should be won not by the usual methods of secret societies, armed rebellion, arson and assassination. The way to freedom is neither by abject entreaty nor by revolutionary violence. Freedom does not descend upon a people as a gift from above, but they have to raise themselves to it by their own effort. The Buddha said: 'Ye who suffer, know ye suffer from yourselves; none else compels.' In self-purification lies the path to freedom. Force is no remedy. The use of force in such circumstances is foul play. The force of spirit is invincible. Gandhi said:

'The British want us to put the struggle on the plane of machine-guns. They have weapons and we have not. Our only assurance of beating them is to keep it on the plane where we have the weapons and they have not.' He took hold of ordinary men and women, men and women who were an incredible mixture of heroism and conceit, magnificence and meanness, made heroes out of them and organized an unarmed revolt against British rule. He weaned the country from anarchy and terrorism and saved the political struggle from losing its soul. The transfer of power on August 15, 1947, marked the end of that struggle. The fight was a clean one, it was completely free from any trace of racial bitterness or feeling. It has ended in a settlement reached in a spirit of good temper and friendliness. The credit for it is due to Gandhi.

Freedom for Gandhi is not a mere political fact. It is a social reality. He struggled not only to free India from

foreign rule but to free her from social corruption and communal strife. He strove for a free and united India. The hour of his triumph proved to be the hour of his humiliation. The division of the country is a grievous wrong we have suffered. Our leaders, caught in a mood of frustration, tired of the communal 'killings' which had disgraced the country for some months past, anxious to give relief to the harassed, distraught multitudes, acquiesced in the partition of India against their better judgement and the advice of Gandhi. The New Delhi celebrations on August 15 Gandhi would not attend. He excused himself and was engaged in his lonely trek in the villages of Bengal, walking on foot, comforting the poor and the homeless, entreating them to remove from their hearts every trace of suspicion, bitterness and resentment. The division of the country has not resulted in communal peace but has actually increased communal bitterness. The large migrations, the thousands of people wandering to and fro, weary, uprooted, heavy laden, the mad career of communal violence, worst of all, the spiritual degradation all around, suspicion, anger, doubt, pity, grief, absence of hope, filled Gandhi with deep sorrow and led him to devote the rest of his life to the psychological solution of this problem. His fasts at Calcutta and Delhi had a sobering effect but the evil was too deep to be cured so easily. On his seventy-eighth birthday, October 2, 1947, Gandhi said:

'With every breath I pray God to give me strength to quench the flames or remove me from this earth. I, who staked my life to gain India's independence, do not wish to be a living witness to its destruction.'

When last I met him, early in December, 1947, I found him in deep agony and determined to do his utmost to improve the relations among the communities or die in the process. He met his death while engaged in this great work. It is the cross laid on the great-hearted that they exhaust themselves in sorrow and suffering so that those who come after them may live in peace and security.

We are too deeply entangled in our own past misdeeds; we are caught in the web we have ourselves spun according to the laws of our own twisted ethics. Communal differences are yet a wound, not a sepsis. But wounds have a tendency to produce sepsis. If this tendency is to be checked we must adhere to the ideals for which Gandhi lived and died. We must develop self-restraint; we must refrain from anger and malice, intemperance of thought and speech, from violence of every kind. It will be the crown of his life-work if we settle down as good neighbours and adjust our problems in a spirit of peace and goodwill. The way to honour his memory is to accept and adopt his way of approach, the way of reconciliation and sympathetic adjustment of all differences.

When the strife of these days is forgotten, Gandhi will stand out as the great prophet of a moral and spiritual revolution without which this distracted world will not find peace. It is said that non-violence is the dream of the wise while violence is the history of man. It is true that wars are obvious and dramatic and their results in changing the course of history are evident and striking. But there is a struggle which goes on in the minds of men. Its results are not recorded in the statistics of the killed and the injured. It is the struggle for human decency,

for the avoidance of physical strife which restricts human life, for a world without wars. Among the fighters in this great struggle, Gandhi was in the front rank. His message is not a matter for academic debate in intellectual circles. It is the answer to the cry of exasperated mankind which is at the cross-roads—which shall prevail, the law of the jungle or the law of love? All our world organizations will prove ineffective if the truth that love is stronger than hate does not inspire them. The world does not become one simply because we can go round it in less than three days. However far or fast we may travel, our minds do not get nearer to our neighbours'. The oneness of the world can only be the oneness of our purposes and aspirations. A united world can only be the material counterpart of a spiritual affinity. Mechanical makeshifts and external structures by themselves cannot achieve spiritual results. Changes in the social architecture do not alter the minds of peoples. Wars have their origins in false values, in ignorance, in intolerance. Wrong leadership has brought the world to its present misery. Throughout the world there seems to be a black-out of civilized values. Great nations bomb one another's cities in order to obtain victory. The moral consequences of the use of the atom bomb may prove to be far more disastrous than the bomb itself. The fault is not in our stars but in ourselves. Institutions are of little avail unless we are trained to obey our conscience and develop brotherly love. Unless the leaders of the world discover their highest human dignity in themselves, not in the offices they hold, in the depth of their own souls, in the freedom of their conscience, there

is no hope for the ordered peace of a world community. Gandhi had the faith that the world is one in its deepest roots and highest aspirations. He knew that the purpose of historical humanity is to develop a world civilization, a world culture, a world community. We can get out of the misery of this world only by exposing the darkness which is strongly entrenched in men's hearts and replacing it by understanding and tolerance. Gandhi's tender and tormented heart heralds the world which the United Nations wish to create. This lonely symbol of a vanishing past is also the prophet of the new world which is struggling to be born. He represents the conscience of the future man.

Gandhi has paid the penalty of all who are ahead of their time—misunderstanding, hatred, reaction, violent death. 'The light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not.' The struggle between light and darkness, between love and hate, between reason and unreason which is at the heart of the cosmic is shown up by this most moving tragedy of our age. We made Socrates drink death; we nailed Jesus to the Cross; we lighted the faggots that burnt the mediaeval martyrs. We have stoned and killed our prophets. Gandhi has not escaped the fate of being misunderstood and hated. He has met his death facing the forces of darkness, of ultimate unreason, and through it has increased the powers of light, love and reason. Who knows if Christianity would have developed had Jesus not been crucified? Gandhi's death was a classical ending to his life. He died with the name of God on his lips and love in his heart. Even as he received the bullet wounds he greeted his

murderer and wished him well. He lived up to what he preached. Possessed and inspired by the highest ideals of which human nature is capable, preaching and practising fearlessly the truth revealed to him, leading almost alone what seemed to be a forlorn hope against the impregnable strongholds of greed and folly, yet facing tremendous odds with a calm resolution which yielded nothing to ridicule or danger, Gandhi presented to this unbelieving world all that is noblest in the spirit of man. He illumined human dignity by faith in the eternal significance of man's effort. He belongs to the type that redeems the human race.

We have killed his body but the spirit in him which is a light from above will penetrate far into space and time and inspire countless generations to nobler living.

yad-yad vibhūtimat satvam
 śrīmad ūrjitam eva vā
 tad-tad evāvagaccha tvam
 mama tejo amśasambhavam.

Whatever being there is endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendour.—*Bhagavadgītā*, x. 41.

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMANA :
Sustainer of Spiritual Reality *

I

The Living Reality

IT is somewhat surprising that many students of religion assume that the religious seers, the true representatives of religious genius, belong wholly to the past and we today have to live on the memory of the past. If religion is a living truth, if it has any vitality, it must be capable of producing men who from time to time bear witness to the truth and confirm and correct from their own experience the religious tradition. When the springs of experience dry up, our love for religion is a mere affectation, our faith a belief and our behaviour a habit with no reality behind it. In the Indian religious tradition, religion has meant not an imaginative or intellectual apprehension of Reality but its embodiment in regenerated living. Religion should energize our consciousness, transform our character and make us new men. The truly religious are those who have solid hold of the unseen Reality in which we ordinary men merely believe. They are not freaks proclaiming the reality of spirit, which is esoteric and intense. They tell us that they have a direct knowledge of the Real of which we have indirect or inferential

* Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi—Golden Jubilee Souvenir, 1946.

knowledge. For them God is an Abiding Fact, a Living Presence, and in the consciousness of this fact their whole existence is transformed. These artists of the inner life are of different types. Some are full of poetry and music; others are vigorous men of action; still others are solitary souls. Despite these differences they walk the same road, speak the same language of the soul and belong to the same family.

The Indian tradition has been kept alive by seers who were born in every age and incarnated the great ideal. We have such God-engrossed souls even today. It is our good fortune that we have with us today a living embodiment of God-centred life, a perfect image of the life divine in the mirror of human existence. Sri Ramana Maharshi is not a scholar; he has no erudition, but he has wisdom that comes from direct experience of Reality, the wisdom we acquire through the discipline, not of intellect but of one's nature, through chastity, poverty and obedience. The possession of this wisdom yields the fruits of spirit, love and purity, courage and humility, courtesy and holiness.

II

His Spontaneous Realization

Sri Ramana was born on the 30th December, 1879, with a latent disposition to religion. He was no good at studies because his heart was elsewhere. His reading of *Periapurāṇam* with its account of the selfless devotion of *bhaktās* made a deep impression on his devout nature. The change which took him away from worldly pursuits

is thus described in his own words: 'It was six weeks before I left Madura for good that the great change in my life took place. It was so sudden. One day I sat up alone on the first floor of my uncle's house. I was in my usual good health. But a sudden and unmistakable fear of death seized me. I felt I was going to die, and at once set about thinking what I should do. I did not care to consult anyone, be he a doctor, elder or friend. I felt I had to solve the problem myself then and there. The shock of the fear of death made me at once introspective or "introverted". I said to myself mentally, i.e. without uttering the words, "Now death is come, what does it mean? Who is it that is dying? This body dies." I at once dramatized the situation. I extended my limbs and held them rigid, as though rigor-mortis (death-stiffening) had set in. I imitated a corpse to lend an air of reality to my further investigation. I held my breath and kept my mouth closed, pressing the lips tightly together, so that no sound could escape. "Well then," said I to myself, "This body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the crematory and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of my body am 'I' dead? Is the body 'I'? This body is silent and inert. But I am still aware of the full force of my personality and even of the sound of 'I' within myself, as apart from the body. So 'I' am a Spirit transcending the body. The material body dies, but the Spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am, therefore, the deathless Spirit." All this was not a feat of intellectual gymnastics, but came as a flash before me vividly as living TRUTH, something which I perceived immediately, without any argument

almost. "I" was something very real, the only real thing in that state, and all the conscious activity that was connected with my body was centred on that. The "I" or myself was holding the focus of attention with a powerful fascination. *Fear of death vanished at once and for ever. The absorption in the Self has continued from that moment right up to now.*¹ Growing absorption in spiritual matters made Sri Ramana indifferent to his studies. When rebuked, he left his home on Saturday, the 29th of August 1896, leaving a note behind him: 'I have in search of my Father, according to his command, started from this place. On a virtuous enterprise indeed has this embarked. Therefore, for this act none need grieve nor to trace this out need money be spent.' Thus under a sense of Divine Command he left Madura and after some trouble, reached Tiruvannamalai on the 1st of September. When he visited the temple he fell into a trance. In such conditions a sense of oneness with the Ultimate Reality is produced. Sri Ramana renounced the world and became an *Avadhūta* which is a compound word made of four letters *A-va-dhū-ta*. The first stands for *Akṣaratva* or imperishability; the second for *Vareṇyatva* or the summit of perfection; the third for the destruction of the bonds which implicate us in the temporal process and the last for the realization of the truths conveyed by the great passage 'That art thou.'² To attain such a condition of harmonizing consciousness, has been the aim of religious men. If we lose ourselves in the hopes and desires, in the fears

1 *The Sage of Aruṇagiri* (1945), pp. 8 & 9.

2 *Akṣaratvād vareṇyatvād dhūtasamsārabandhanāt Tattvamasyādilakṣyatvād avadhūta itiryate.*

and cravings, which wax and wane with the accidents of the outer world, if we yield to the chance allurements of time and space, we will lose our soul. Doubt which comes to us from outside is insignificant as compared with the doubt that corrodes from within. The true evil is not death of the body, but the failure of one's nature, the death of faith in the Ultimate Reality.

III

The Spiritual Value of the Sage's Presence

In this thought, Sri Ramana adopts the metaphysical position of Advaita Vedānta. He speaks to us of the Divine which is the pure subject from which all objectivity is excluded. The 'I' is different from the 'me'. The Self is not the body which perishes, not the senses which suffer the same fate as the body, not life, mind or intellect. It is the pure Spectator, the *Sākṣin*, which is the same in all. We get to realize it not by metaphysical theorizing but by spiritual discipline. Reality impinges on the unreality of life and to discover reality, absolute concentration and consecration are essential. We have to still our desires, steady our impulses, tread the ethical path. We cannot see so long as our vision is engrossed in outer forms but those who turn their gaze inwards behold it. No one can see properly so long as he remains divided and disintegrated in his consciousness. We must become inwardly whole and free. We cannot acquire this wholeness or integrity if we do not root out our selfish impulses. We cannot know truly or act rightly so long as we are too afraid, too indolent or too self-centred. To

see the Real and not merely the things of the world, the eye must be inverted.¹ God is within us.² Not comfort but control is happiness. 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,' says Jesus. Dedication to God means denial of the ego. We must empty the self in the abyss of God. This process is helped by the practice of unselfish service (*niṣkāma karma*), devotion (*bhakti*), mind-control (*yoga*), and inquiry (*vicāra*). Inquiry into self, religious worship, ethical service are means to this realization. The end of all worship, *pūjā*, *jaṇa*, *dhyāna*, is communion with God. With increasing intensity in our devotion the distance between the human and the Divine diminishes. Indian thought believes in four stages of God-realization—*sālokya*, where God and the worshipper dwell in the same world, *sāmīpya*, where the devotee is near the Divine, *sārūpya*, where the devotee assimilates more and more the forms and attributes of the Divine, and *sāyujya*, where the devotee is united to the Divine.

When one discovers the Divine within oneself, one must discover it also in the outer world of men and things. While the heights within are revealed to those who strenuously exclude all that lies without, the process of seeing all in the fullness of the Divine is more arduous. God is both eternal silence and perpetual activity, the unmoved witness and the ground of all that is, the metaphysical Absolute and the personal Lord. The Divine reveals itself anew in all life and existence. Nothing on earth is excluded from the divine Consciousness. The Divine is the life which

¹ Āvṛttacakṣuḥ—*Kaṭha Up.* ii, 1. 1.

² Ātmaiva devatāḥ sarvāḥ
Sarvaṃ ātmanyavasthitaṃ

gives birth to us all and is further than our farthest thought. Sri Ramana dwells not only in a world of pure subjectivity but has also a sense of the Infinite that is in all. As he has eliminated his selfish ego he becomes the Voice of the whole, the conscience of all that is. As he has no selfish desires and no sense of agency, he enters into the world-movement and carries out the functions expected of him by that Universal Spirit. Honour and dishonour, praise and blame, do not move him. Actions are not subject to the necessity of nature but are centred in the freedom of the Divine.

It is a false assumption to hold that the spiritually strong have no patience with human weakness. They are not insensitive to human sorrow. The *ṛṣis* are revealers of Reality, which is all-bliss. They do not keep their discoveries to themselves. They have a social significance. By getting into their company, we, ordinary people, realize the actuality of the world of spirit and catch something of their fire. The great of spirit are ministering angels who assist, protect and help those who are in need. Association with the holy people produces detachment from fruits of action. Such detachment leads to desirelessness; from desirelessness arises stability of mind; Liberation in life is then achieved.¹ The Upaniṣad asks the aspirant for spiritual life to approach, fuel in hand, a teacher versed in scripture, steady in his realization of the Supreme.² The teacher shows the path. His very presence radiates peace and joy. He refashions the

¹ Satsaṁgatve nissāṁgatvam nissāṁgatve nirmohatvam
nirmohatve niścalatattvam niścalatattve jīvanmuktiḥ.

² *Muṇḍaka Up.* i. 2. 12.

souls of those who look to him for help. With keen psychological insight he understands the needs of those who approach him and satisfies them. Like all saints, he has the foundation in God; his surface is intertwined with everything that exists. He loves all beings as he loves himself and cannot rest until everyone mirrors the Divine in his life.

The saints are the sustainers of society. Philo remarks: 'Households, cities, countries and nations have enjoyed great happiness, when a single individual has taken heed of the good and beautiful. Such men not only liberate themselves they fill those they meet with a free mind.' The true sages possess the inner joy and peace which are independent of outer circumstances. Their happiness is not dependent on outer things. They have passed beyond the forms of social life. Their renunciation is spontaneous and does not involve any idea of sacrifice. They work for the fulfilment of the Divine in the world, for the good of all beings, for the fulfilment of the Purpose. They are one in consciousness and action with the Divine.

To suggest that the spiritual souls are expected to abstain from action in the world is incorrect. The opportunities which the world offers are to be used for self-development. Life is a game where we should act our parts. We are all cast for different roles and our business is to play them in the right spirit. We may lose the game but we should not mind it. It is the play that matters and not the score we make.

IV

Reality to be Sought

If the world is to be saved, it can only be by the intrusion of another world into it, a world of higher truth and greater reality than that which is now submerged by the overwhelming discords and sufferings of the present time. Our failure to develop contact with this world of Reality is the cause of our malady. Men like Sri Ramana recall us to that larger dimension of Reality to which we really belong, though we are generally unaware of it.

THIS Centenary Volume brings together the different systems of thought, belief and practice which have developed in India from the dawn of reflection. Though this amorphous mass appears at first sight to be more an encyclopaedia of varying philosophies and sects than a continuous and uninterrupted development of one system, closer second thought reveals a pervading unity which binds together the bizarre multiplicity of beliefs and practices. The different systems described in this volume possess a unity of character and attitude which makes the manifold a single whole, which we might describe as the Hindu spirit. The civilization which is inspired by the spiritual insight of our sages is marked by a certain moral integrity, a fundamental loyalty, a fine balance of individual desires and social demands, and it is these that are responsible for its vitality and continuity. To a departure from the ideals can be traced the present weakness and disorder of the Hindu civilization.

Spiritual life is the true genius of India. Those who make the greatest appeal to the Indian mind are not the military conquerors, not the rich merchants or the great diplomats, but the holy sages, the *ṛṣis* who embody spirituality at its finest and purest. India's pride is that

* Introduction to *The Cultural Heritage of India*:
(Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Memorial: Volume I).

almost in every generation and in every part of the country, from the beginnings of her recorded history, she has produced these holy men who embody for her all that the country holds most dear and sacred. Though they generally remain away from the main stream of life, kings and commoners pay reverent homage to them and take their advice in the problems of their personal lives as well as in public affairs. By their lives they teach us that pride and power, wealth and glory are nothing in comparison with the power of spirit. It is those who scorn their own lives that raise life above our scorn.

Sri Ramakrishna is one such *ṛṣi*, though not the only one of his kind. He is one of those rare beings in whom the flame of spiritual life burns so brightly that all who come near are able to share the illumination and see the world new-born as on the first day. He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition which runs right through the religious history of this country from the days of the Vedic *ṛṣis*. This tradition may sometimes have been overcome by a ceremonial piety or by a rationalist dogma. Yet it always reappears faithful to its original pattern. Its characteristic tendencies are those set forth in the Upaniṣads.

II

Religion is a matter of experience. It is not an awakening from a swoon, but a transformation of one's being. It is not an addition to one's intellectual furniture, but an exaltation of one's personality into the plane of the universal spirit. It is *Brahmadarśana*—insight into reality, a direct awareness of the world of values.

Religious experience is not to be confused with the pursuit of truth, beauty or goodness. It is a life of adoring love transcending these. The Divine is not a mere sum of knowledge, love and beauty. The ultimate Reality which responds to our demands is more than rational. Religion means awe more than service, holiness more than virtue. We worship not what we can understand, but what we cannot. There is the unknown, the reserve of truth, which the intellect cannot reach and yet feels lies behind everything. There is an element of mystery in all religion, an incomprehensible certainty which is not to be explained by grammar or logic. Life is open only to life. Religious experience, when genuine, is characterized by vividness, directness, freshness and joy. In it we feel the impact of Reality. It is spiritual discovery, not creation. The men of experience feel the presence of God and do not argue about it. The shoals and shallows of existence are submerged in a flood-tide of joy.

We do not infer God from our feeling of dependence or from an analysis of the self. The reality of God is revealed in an immediate intuition of the essential dependence of all finite things, of the priority of absolute to relative being.

Though the experience is beyond reason, it is not opposed to reason. While the Upaniṣads emphasize the direct awareness of the world of spirit, they also adduce reasons in support of the reality of spirit. Their approach is both objective and subjective.

Each order of reality known to us is only truly apprehended from a standpoint higher than itself. The significance of the physical world (*anna*) is disclosed in the

biological (*prāṇa*); that of the biological in the psychological (*manas*); that of the psychological in the logical and ethical (*vijñāna*). The logical finds its meaning in the spiritual (*ānanda*). The drift of the world has an underlying tendency, a verifiable direction towards some implied fulfilment. If the vast process of the world leads up to the spiritual, we are justified in finding in the spiritual the best clue to the understanding of the world.

It is now admitted that the forms and properties of matter, animals and plants in their varied classes and orders, human beings with their power of choice between good and evil, did not come into existence in their present form by a direct act of Almighty God, but assumed their present forms in slow obedience to a general law of change. The higher exerts a curious pressure on the happenings of the lower and moulds it. This fact requires explanation and modern philosophers confirm the suggestions of the Upaniṣads on this question. Professor Lloyd Morgan, who studies the problem from the biological side, affirms that while resultants can be explained as the results of already existing conditions, emergents like the advent of life, mind and reflective personality cannot be explained without the assumption of divine activity. The progressive emergence, in the course of evolution, of life, mind and personality, requires us to assume a creative principle operative in nature, a timeless reality in the temporal.

Professor A. N. Whitehead argues, after Plato, that there are eternal objects, answering to the eternal forms or patterns of Plato, and makes God transcend both the eternal objects and the concrete occasions. He is the

active source of limitation or determination. For Plato also, the ideal world ruled by the supreme Idea of the Good is different from the creative God. The Supreme Being is the Ideal World and the Demiurge contemplates the Ideas and their unity in relation to the Idea of the Good and reproduces this heavenly pattern as far as is possible in time and space. Plato does not tell us what exactly the relation of form to sensible fact is; nor does Whitehead tell us what exactly the relation of eternal object to concrete occasion is. Is a sensible thing a mere assemblage of forms or eternal objects or universal, or is it more? Aristotle felt that Plato's mistake lay in separating the universal characters from sensible things and setting up these supersensible abstractions as the source of the things we see. Aristotle believes that he gets over the difficulty by affirming that the form exists only in the individual thing and is just its essential character. The solution is not quite so simple. We still ask: What is the status of scientific objects and how are they related to the things we perceive? What is the position of moral ideas and how are they related to moral facts? Whatever these difficulties may be, it is agreed that the universè is not self-explanatory.

When we consider the nature of cosmic process with its ascent from matter to spirit, we are led to the conception of a Supreme Being who is the substantiation of all values. These values are not only the revealed attributes of God but the active causes of the world. Till these values are realized, God is transcendent to the process, though He inspires it. God is the creator, destroyer and sustainer of this universe. He

transcends all creatures as the active power in which they take their rise.

An analysis of the self yields the same result. The Upaniṣads undertake an analysis of the self and make out that the reality of the self is the divine universal consciousness. It is needless to repeat here the careful accounts which the *Chāndogya* and the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads* relate.¹ Some modern thinkers arrive at similar results. The *jīvātman* is not a *substance*, but an activity, what Aristotle calls *energeia* or self-maintaining activity. We have to distinguish the logical subject from the substratum of qualities. The former is a logical problem while the latter is an ontological one. So long as we adopt the 'substance' theory of the self, difficulties arise. Locke was obliged to reduce substance to an unknowable substratum, a something he knows not what, which supports its attributes, he knows not how. It becomes a superfluous entity and rightly did Berkeley abolish material substance altogether. Its attributes, which he called ideas, could just as well be said to inhere in one divine mind as in a multitude of unknowable substrata. But Berkeley retained spiritual substance, for, according to him, the essence of any existent thing is to be perceived by a mind. Hume applied a more rigorous analysis. He broke up the self into a succession of impressions and ideas. He would recognize nothing in the mind except these: 'When I enter most intimately into what I call myself,' he said, 'I always stumble on some particular perception or other of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or

¹ See the writer's *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*—Allen and Unwin. Revised second edition, 1935.

pleasure. I never can catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception.' He inferred that 'were all my perceptions removed by death, I should be entirely annihilated.' For him there was nothing 'simple and continued'. 'The successive perceptions only constitute the mind.'¹ But Hume's analysis does not account for the continuity of self and the feeling of identity. How can a series of feelings be aware of itself as a series? Hume has no answer to this question but takes shelter under 'the privilege of a sceptic'. Kant, however, was greatly disturbed by the precarious position in which Hume left the problem of knowledge. He started with Hume's analysis and tried to cure its defects by the use of *a priori* principles. But he conceived the self on the analogy of material substance, as the permanent in change, which is necessary for the perception of change. He did not raise the question of the relation of changing attributes to the unchanging substance. Does the substance itself change when the attributes do?

We must seek for the source of substance not in the external persistence in space, but in the internal continuity of memory. The question, why do the contents of the mind hang together, how are they unified, Kant answers by referring us to the transcendental subject, to which all experiences are finally to be referred. It is the subject which is the correlate of all objects. But it is only the logical subject, and is not to be confused with the metaphysical soul or a spiritual substance which is simple and indissoluble and therefore immortal. Even McTaggart in

1 *Treatise of Human Nature*—Ed. Selby Bigge, pp. 252-3.

the second chapter of his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* attempts to establish the immortality of the self on the ground of its immutability. But that which is immutable, and therefore immortal, is not the empirical self. This transcendental self is the *Paramātman*, functioning in all minds. It is not capable of existing in the plural. There is only one transcendental self and our empirical selves are psychical facts, streams of change. The *jīvātman* is not a substance, but an activity, whose nature is to change continuously. Whether we look at the real from the objective or the subjective point of view, the real can be defined only as spirit.

Though the being of man is spirit, his nature is complex and unstable. There are other grades and kinds of life in the human individual. That is why he has the creaturely sense over against the transcendent majesty of God, the spaceless spirit of all individual spirits.

III

Those who live in God do not care to define. They have a peculiar confidence in the universe, a profound and peaceful acceptance of life in all its sides. Their response to ultimate Reality is not capable of a clear-cut, easily intelligible formulation. The mystery of God's being cannot be rationally determined. It remains outside the scope of logical concepts. Its form does not lie in the field of vision, none can see it with the eye. There is no equal to it. An austere silence is more adequate to the experience of God than elaborate descriptions.

The Upaniṣads often give negative accounts of the supreme Reality. God is nothing that is. He is non-

being. Pagans like Plotinus, Christians like Nicholas of Cusa support the negative theology of the Upaniṣads. This negative theology also gives us a knowledge of Divinity. It affirms that Divinity is not perceived by the categories of reason. It is grasped by the revelations of spiritual life.

When positive accounts are given, we abandon concepts in favour of symbols and myths. They are better suited to life which is inexhaustible and unfathomable. God is regarded as father, friend, lover. Infinite power and infinite love are both revelations of God. God is infinite love that pours forth at every time and every place its illimitable grace on all that ardently seek for it. The divine solicitude for man is easy of comprehension when we look upon the Divine as Mother. She wishes to possess us and so will pursue and track us down in our hiding places. God is in search of us. This conception has been made familiar to us by Francis Thompson's *The Hound of Heaven*.¹ Among the worshippers of the Divine as Mother, Ramakrishna holds a high place.² In poly-

1 Cf. Pascal's *Mystère de Jésus*. 'I have loved thee,' said Christ to Pascal, 'more ardently than thou hast loved thy defilements.'

2 Compare the lines of *Any Mother* by Katharine Tynan:

'There is no height, no depth, my own, could set us apart
Body of mine and soul of mine; heart of my heart!

* * * *

If some day you came to me heavy with sin,
I, your mother, would run to the door and let you in.
I would wash you white again with my tears and grief,
Body of mine and soul of mine, till you found relief.
Though you had sinned all sins there are 'twixt east and west,

theistic religions, the nature of the Divine becomes as it were divided into fragments.

The positive descriptions are variations of the central theme that God is a person. The negative theology makes out that even personality is a symbol. In later Vedānta, a distinction is drawn between the Absolute Brahman and the Personal Īśvara. Śaṅkara says, 'Brahman is realized in its two-fold aspect: In one aspect it is endowed with the *upādhis* (adjuncts) of name and form that are subject to modification and cause differentiation; and in the other it is just the opposite (bereft of all *upādhis*), i.e. the transcendental Reality.' The Absolute answers to the essential deity of which Eckhart speaks as deeper than God himself and the groundlessness of Boehme. Brahman and Īśvara, Absolute and God, are not contradictory, but complementary to each other. Each is the perspective offered to the mental standpoint of the seeker. Religious experience also lends support to this dual conception. It has normally two sides, an experience of personal intercourse with a personal God as well as a sense of rest and completeness in an absolute spirit which is more than

You should find my arms wide for you, your head on my breast.

Child, if I were in Heaven one day and you were in Hell—
Angels white as my spotless one stumbled and fell—
I would leave for you the fields of God and Queen Mary's feet,

Straight to the heart of Hell would go seeking my sweet,
God mayhap would turn him round at sound of the door,
Who is it goes out from me to come back no more?
Then the blessed Mother of God would say from her throne:

Son, 'tis a mother goes to Hell seeking her own.'

personal. If the latter alone were experienced, we should not lapse from the condition of absolute freedom. It is because our natures are rooted in the world of space-time as well that we look up to the Absolute as something different from us, with whom it is possible for us to have personal relations. There are experiences of men who are convinced that they are working with God, thinking and striving under pressure from Him. For them God is not an unchanging Absolute, a Being perfect in nature and realization. God is aiming at something through the medium of the human. There is a sense in which God has real need of us and calls us to share in His increasing victories and another in which God is timeless, and completes our being. When we emphasize the former aspect, we call it the Supreme God; when we lay stress on the latter, we call it the Absolute.

There are three terms in constant use in the Indian religious vocabulary which bring out different aspects of the Supreme: Brahman, Ātman and Īśvara. These words are used with little appreciation of the distinctions implied by them. Brahman is the immense, the vast, the ultimate, permeating all the universe and yet eluding any conceptual definition. We experience its living reality, its otherness, its unconditionedness by all that is of this world. To the logical mind its character is not clear and yet its reality is apprehended as something which contrasts with the time-series. We have direct relationship with it. Brahman is the name we give to that substantial and eternal Being. It is the object of our metaphysical quest. It is the transcendent and abiding reality which is far beyond the world of succession,

though it gives meaning to the process and supports it all through.

Since it is apprehended by us it is clear that we have in us a quality which apprehends it. It is we that possess the ineffable consciousness of the eternal. The soul it is that becomes aware of Brahman. The Absolute is spirit. Though unspeakable in its transcendence, the Supreme is yet the most inward part of our being. Though Brahman in one sense entirely transcends us, in another sense it is intimately present in us. The Eternal Being, Brahman, is spirit, Ātman. That which we indicate with awe as the Absolute is also our own transcendental essence. It is the ground of our being, that in which our reality consists.

Off and on, in some rare moments of our spiritual life, the soul becomes aware of the presence of the Divine. A strange awe and delight invade the life of the soul and it becomes convinced of the absoluteness of the Divine, which inspires and moulds every detail of our life. To bring out that God is both transcendent and immanent, that he is a presence as well as a purpose, the conception of Īśvara is used. It affirms the ever-present pressure of God on the here and now. He is the lord and giver of life, in this world and yet distinct from it, penetrating all, yet other than all. Īśvara is the Absolute entering into the world of events and persons, operating at various levels but most freely in the world of souls. Īśvara as the divine presence is maintaining, helping and preserving the whole world to move up, at every plane, in every person and at every point, to reach towards greater perfection, to get into conformity with its own thought for

the world. It is the pure Absolute, Brahman, acting. The religious sense that spiritual energy breaks through from another plane of being, modifying or transforming the chain of cause and effect, finds its fulfilment in the concept of Íśvara. As the Upaniṣad has it: 'The divine Intelligence is the lord of all, the all-knower, the indwelling spirit, the source of all, the origin and end of all creation.'

IV

In Hinduism the descriptions of the Supreme are many-sided and comprehensive. A catholic religion expresses itself in a variety of forms and comprehends all the relations which exist between man and God. Some of the great religions of the world select one or the other of the great relations, exalt it to the highest rank, make it the centre and relate all else to it. They become so intolerant as to ignore the possibility of other relations and insist on one's acceptance of its own point of view as giving the sole right of citizenship in the spiritual world. But Hinduism provides enough freedom for a man to go forward and develop along his own characteristic lines. It recognizes that the divine light penetrates only by degrees and is distorted by the obscurity of the medium which receives it. Our conception of God answers to the level of our mind and interests. Hinduism admits that religion cannot be compressed within any juridical system or reduced to any one single doctrine. The different creeds mark out the way of the spirit. Religious life has to be built through their aid. Ramakrishna practised forms of worship not only of the different Hindu sects but also

those of Islam and Christianity. From actual experience he established that the goal of all religions is the same. 'As the same sugar is made into various figures,' Ramakrishna used to say, 'so one sweet Mother Divine is worshipped in various climes and ages under various names and forms. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Almighty. As with one gold various ornaments are made having different forms and names, so one God is worshipped in different countries and ages, has different forms and names.'¹ Real contradictions are found more often in mediocre minds, but the vastness of soul of the spiritually profound gathers within itself opinions and tendencies profoundly contradictory.

Idolatry is a much-abused term. Even those who oppose it are unable to escape from it. The very word brings up to our mind thoughts of graven images, strange figures of frightful countenance, horrid animals, and shapes, and so long as the worshippers confuse these outer symbols with the deeper divine reality, they are victims of idolatry.

But as a matter of fact, religion cannot escape from symbolism, from icons and crucifixes, from rites and dogmas. These forms are employed by religion to focus its faith, but when they become more important than the faith itself, we have idolatry. A symbol does not subject the infinite to the finite, but renders the finite transparent. It aids us to see the infinite through it. When, however, we confuse the symbol with the reality, exalt the relative into the Absolute, difficulties arise and an unjustified idolatry develops.

¹ Max Müller: *The Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*, p. 100.

It is this idolatry that stands in the way of religious fellowship and understanding today. Every dogmatic religion overlooks the spiritual facts and worships theological opinions. It is more anxious for the spread of its dogmas than for the spiritual education of the human race. If we realize the true place of symbolism, then we shall not bother about how men reach the knowledge of spiritual reality.

The different religious groups bound within themselves by means of rites and ceremonies militate against the formation of a human society. Intuitive religion rebels against these communal and national gods, confident in the strength of the one spirit whose presence informs and illumines the whole of mankind.

V

The Absolute which is timeless is reflected in some fashion in our world of space and time. The world is the appearance of the Absolute. It is the *vivarta* of the Absolute. The unity of the Absolute is not affected by the plurality of existent worlds, though the world is an expression of the Absolute. Of course, the nature of the Absolute is by no means exhausted by this world or for that matter by any number of such worlds, and the changes, of the varied worlds do not in any way affect the unity of the Absolute. We cannot, however, say that the empirical universe is the result of the apprehending consciousness, for that would mean the Absolute is a thing in itself and the world a mere appearance, and there is nothing to tell us whether it is an appearance or whether there is a thing in itself at the back of it. Much the best

solution is to admit that the world expresses the Absolute without in any way interfering with its unity and integrity. Such a kind of relationship is what is called *vivarta* by Indian thinkers.

Without being content with such a view we sometimes make out that the real is not pure being which excludes all negation, but a self-conscious principle which involves a certain negation of absolute reality. God is a form of Absolute being. Even as the world is distinct and is in a sense a negation of the Absolute being, God is a limited expression of the Absolute. So far as God is concerned, the world is as necessary to God as God is to the world. God would not be God but for the world which expresses him. The world is an expression or *pariṇāma* of God, though a *vivarta* of the Absolute.

VI

The idea of *karma* has been with us from the beginning of philosophic reflection. The self is a composite of mind, body and activities.¹ Surely 'one becomes good by good action, and bad by bad action.'² When a man dies, the two things that accompany him are *vidyā* and *karma*.³ 'According as one acts, according as one conducts, so does one become.'⁴ Desire becomes action and actions determine the course of life. Evolution of life goes on until salvation is attained.

Salvation or *mukti* is life eternal and has nothing to do with continuance in endless time. No adequate account of *mukti* can be given since it transcends the limitations

¹ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, i. 6-1.

³ *Ibid.* iv. 4-2.

² *Ibid.* iii. 2-13.

⁴ *Ibid.* iv. 4-5.

with which human life is bound up. So the question of the nature of salvation, whether it is individual or universal, has no relevance or meaning when applied to life eternal, which is altogether a different life.

The question becomes important when we attempt to describe the state of salvation from the standpoint of the empirical world. Whether salvation is individual or universal has significance only on the basis of the plurality of individual souls on the empirical plane. If in this universe we have only one soul, then salvation of that soul means the redemption of the whole universe. In the *ekajīvanavāda*, universal salvation and individual salvation are identical.

Though some later Advaitins adopt this position, Śaṅkara is opposed to it. If all the different souls are only one *jīva*, then, when, for the first time, any soul attains liberation, bondage should have terminated for all, which is not the case. He says: 'No man can actually annihilate this whole existing world. . . . And if it actually could be done, the first released person would have done it once and for all, so that at present the whole world would be empty, earth and all other substances having been finally annihilated.'¹

From the empirical standpoint a plurality of individuals is assumed by Śaṅkara and many of his followers. On this view salvation does not involve the destruction of the world. It implies the disappearance of a false view of the world. The idea is further elucidated by Śaṅkara in the *Sūtra-Bhāṣya*: 'Of what nature is that so-called annihilation of the apparent world? Is it analogous to the

¹ *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya*, iii. 2-21.

annihilation of hardness in congealed clarified butter (*ghee*) which is effected by bringing it into contact with fire? Or is the apparent world of names and forms which is superimposed upon Brahman by nescience to be dissolved by knowledge, just as the phenomenon of a double moon which is due to a disease of the eyes is removed by the application of medicine?'¹

Śaṅkara admits that the world appearance persists for the *jīvanmukta* or the *sthitaprajña* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *jīvanmukta*, though, he realizes *mokṣa* or *Brahmabhāva*, still lives in the world. The appearance of multiplicity is not superseded. It is with him as with a patient suffering from *timira* that, though he knows there is only one moon, he sees two. Only it does not deceive the freed soul even as the mirage does not tempt one who has detected its unreal character. Freedom consists in the attainment of a universality of spirit or *sarvātmabhāva*. Embodiment continues after the rise of the saving knowledge. Though the spirit is released, the body persists. While the individual has attained inner harmony and freedom, the world appearance still persists and engages his energies. Full freedom demands the destruction of the world appearance as well. Śaṅkara's view of the *jīvanmukta* condition makes out that inner perfection and work in the finite universe can go together.

It is usually thought that at death the soul attains final liberation or *videhamukti*. It is not easy to reconcile this view with Śaṅkara's other statement that Apāntaratamas, Bhṛgu and Nārada even after death work for the saving of the world.² These are said to be the 'possessors of

¹ *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya*, iii. 2-21.

² *Ibid.* iii. 3-32.

the complete knowledge of the Vedas'. Śaṅkara writes: 'The continuance of the bodily existence of Apāntaratamas and others depends on the offices which they discharge for the sake of the world. As the sun, who after having for thousands of ages performed the office of watching over these worlds, at the end of that period enjoys the condition of release in which he neither rises nor sets, so Apāntaratamas and others continue as individuals, although they possess complete knowledge, which is the cause of release, and obtain release only when their office comes to an end.' So long as their offices last their *karmas* cannot be said to be exhausted. Śaṅkara here admits that *samyagdarśana*, though it is the cause of release, does not bring about final release and the liberated individuals are expected to contribute to *lokaṣṭhiti* or world maintenance. Their *karma* can never be fully exhausted, so long as the world demands their services.

This view is not to be confused with *kramamukti* or gradual release, which is the aim of those who are devoted to *Kārya-Brahma* or *Hiraṇyagarbha*.¹ Śaṅkara is discussing not gradual release, but release consequent on *Brahmajñāna* which is attainable here and now: and for even such released souls, persistence of individuality is held not only as possible by Śaṅkara but necessary in the interests of what is called *lokaṣṭhiti*. In other words, the world will persist as long as there are souls subject to bondage. It terminates only when all are released, i.e. absolute salvation is possible with world redemption.

Such a view of Śaṅkara's philosophy is by no means

¹ These attain liberation when the office of *Hiraṇyagarbha* terminates.

new. Appaya Dīkṣita, for example, takes his stand on those passages in Śaṅkara where the *jīva* is said to be of the nature of Īśvara and not Brahman, and holds that the liberated individuals attain communion with Īśvara and not union with Brahman. 'The Self of the Highest Lord is the real nature of the embodied self' (iii. 4-8) and so he contends that Śaṅkara supports the view of *mokṣa* as attaining the nature of Īśvara. He also suggests that when all *jīvas* attain liberation, the world with the liberated souls and Īśvara lapse into the Absolute where there is neither subject nor object, neither world nor God. But so long as some souls are unredeemed, even the liberated are in the world, which is governed by Īśvara, though filled by the spirit of oneness of all, and fulfil their redemptive functions.

That the individual does not become identical with Brahman but only with Īśvara comes out from what is called the theory of reflection or *bimba-pratibimbavāda*. When a face is reflected in a number of mirrors, the destruction of a particular mirror means only its lapse into the reflecting face and not the face in itself. It is only when all reflection ceases, i.e. when all mirrors are destroyed, that the reflecting face disappears and the face in itself appears. The full release or the attainment of Brahman is possible only when all *avidyās* are destroyed. Until then, release means only identity with Īśvara.

If such a view is adopted, two conditions are essential for final salvation: (1) inward perfection attained by intuition of self, (2) outer perfection possible only with the liberation of all. The liberated souls which obtain the first condition continue to work for the second and will

attain final release when the world as such is redeemed. To be saved in the former sense is to see the self in all, to see all things in the self and to live in the self with all things. To be perfect is to be oneself and all else; it is to be the universe. It is to give oneself so that all might be saved. Commenting on the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* text (iii. 2-15), Śaṅkara says: 'He who has reached the all-penetrating Ātman enters into the all.' Kumārila in his *Tantravārttika* quotes the Buddha as saying: 'Let all the sins of the world fall on me and let the world be saved.'¹

The liberated individual has the consciousness of the timeless infinite, and with that as his background, takes his place in the temporal world. He has what the seers called *trikāladṛṣṭi*, an intuition of time in which past, present and future exist together for ever in the self-knowledge and self-power of the Eternal. He is no more swept helplessly on the stress of the moments. He lives in the consciousness of the universal mind and works for the welfare of the world in an unselfish spirit. True renunciation is not abandonment of action, but unselfish conduct.

Conclusion

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

¹ See the writer's *An Idealist View of Life*, Ch. VII.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE*

I

The Greatness of Literature

IT is the peculiar glory of great literature that it lasts much longer than kings and dynasties. History bears witness to the power of the human spirit, which endures longer than dynasties or creeds. The political world of Homer is dead while his song is living today. The splendour of Rome has vanished but the poetry of Virgil is yet vital. The dreams of Kālidāsa still move us like the cry of a living voice, with their poignant sense of tears in human relations, while the Ujjain of which he was the ornament has left her memory to his keeping. The great medieval potentates are forgotten, but the song of Dante is still cherished; and the Elizabethan age will be remembered as long as the English language lives on account of its Shakespeare. When our lords and leaders pass into oblivion, Tagore will continue to enchant us by his music and poetry; for though he is an Indian, the value of his work lies not in any tribal or national characteristics, but in those elements of universality which appeal to the whole world. He has added to the sweetness of life, to the stature of civilization.

* Presidential Address at the General Conference in connexion with the Seventieth Birthday Celebrations of Rabindranath Tagore, held in Calcutta, December 1931.

II

Emphasis on the Spiritual

To many a young Indian in these changing times Rabindranath's voice has been a comfort and a stimulus. When we are weighed down by the burden of defeated hopes and stand dazed at the conquests of science and organization, when our minds lose their moorings and sense of direction, he comes to us instilling hope into our hearts and courage into our minds. He points out that though our heads are bleeding they are not bowed down, and that the value of success need not be judged by standards of wealth and power. The true tests of civilization are spiritual dignity and power of suffering. Wealth, power and efficiency are the appurtenances of life and not life itself. The significant things are the personal ones which are beyond the reach of science and organization.

In his insistence on the supremacy of spiritual values as central to the good life and social order, Rabindranath is at one with the long tradition of Indian thinkers. In him we find the eternal voice of India, old and yet new. In spite of the vicissitudes of fortune and the driftings of history, India has kept her essential spirit alive. The self of man is not to be confused with the physical body or the intellect. There is something deeper than intellect, mind and body—the real self, which is one with the self of all goodness, truth and beauty. To aim at that and make it a living presence is the purpose of religion; to train oneself through purity, love and strength into conformity with that conception is the aim of ethics; to mould oneself

to the pattern of that eternal being is the consummation of our aesthetic nature. One has to achieve not merely technical efficiency but greatness of spirit.

When we walk into the night and see the stars keeping their eternal watch, we experience a sense of awe before their remoteness, of annihilation before their immutability, of utter insignificance before their immensity. The heart stops beating, breathing is suspended and our whole being receives a shock. Our petty interests and anxieties look pitifully small and sordid. There is a similar perturbation, a similar break in the breath, when we listen to great poetry or gaze into a human soul. Philosophy and religion, art and literature, serve to heighten this spiritual consciousness. It is because we have ignored this aspect of life that we find today so much instability, conflict and chaos in spite of intellectual advance and scientific progress. For over three centuries scientific inventions and discoveries have produced increased prosperity. Famines have practically disappeared, population has increased and the grimmer incidents of life like plagues and pestilences have been brought under control. As the sense of confidence and security about the social order spreads over the world, the spirit of curiosity and exploration, which was mainly responsible for the triumphs in the scientific and the technical regions, became extended to the deeper things of life. The world was soon robbed of its mystery and romance. A strange new world of hardness and brutality, of science and big business, arose, which prejudiced the order of love, beauty and happiness so very essential for the growth of the soul. Scepticism and agnosticism have become attractive to the

modern mind. In the struggle between the sceptics and agnostics who doubt whether there is anything behind the universe and the spiritual positivists who affirm that the most vital reality is behind the universe, Rabindranath is with the latter.

There is a story about the visit of an Indian philosopher to Socrates. It comes not from Plato or Xenophon but from Aristoxenes of the third century B.C. He relates how Socrates told the Indian stranger that his work consisted in enquiring about the life of men, and how the Indian smiled and said that none could understand things human who did not understand things divine. For the whole Western tradition, man is essentially a rational being, one who can think logically and act upon utilitarian principles. In the East, spiritual understanding and sympathy are of greater importance than intellectual ability. For thousands who talk, one can think; for thousands who think, perhaps one sees and understands. What distinguishes man is this capacity for understanding.

Physical growth and intellectual efficiency cannot satisfy us. Even if we have extensive agriculture and efficient transportation and every one possesses his own aeroplane and radio set, if all disease is eradicated, if workmen receive doles and pensions and every one lives to a green old age, there will still be unsatisfied aspirations, wistful yearnings. Man does not live by bread alone nor by learning alone. We may recognize the world on the most up-to-date and efficient scientific lines, and make of it a vast commercial house where all the multiple activities of the human atoms are arranged for, so that we have in it every group, from the scullery-

maids and the errand boys doing their work in the basement cellars, up to the women of fashion making up their faces in the beauty parlours on the top floor, and may even succeed in transforming a society of human beings into a swarm of ants; yet there will be unsatisfied longings, a thirst for ultimates. Even in that new world-order, children will continue to laugh and cry, women to love and suffer, men to fight and struggle. The real greatness of man is due to his failure, to his moving about in worlds unrealized, with vague misgivings. Man is a creature with a dual status. He partakes of the characters of both the seen and the unseen worlds. While he is a part of the natural order, he has in him the seed of spirit which makes him dissatisfied with his merely natural being. He is truly 'a creature of the borderland', with animal desires and spiritual yearnings; and a life which is entirely given over to the former cannot give him rest.

In his daily life of work and toil, when he tills the soil or governs the State, when he seeks wealth or pursues power, man is not himself. In such activities things are in the saddle. The making of money and the tending of families absorb all one's time and strength. Things eternal and unseen get no chance. And yet events occur which disturb the complacency of superficial minds, events with which the sense of mystery and the feeling of uncertainty return. When in the sorrow of death or the suffering of despair, when trust is betrayed or love desecrated, when life becomes tasteless and unmeaning, man stretches forth his hands to heaven to know if perchance there is an answering presence behind the dark clouds;

mahāntam puruṣam ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt—it is then that he comes into touch with the supreme in the solitude of his consciousness, in the realm of the profound and the intense. It is the world of light and love in which there is no language but that of silence. It is the world of joy that reveals itself in innumerable forms—*ānandarūpām amṛtam yad vibhāti*.

The poetry of human experience, the realities of life as distinct from its mere frills, are achieved in solitude. When we move away from the self, we move away from the only reality which is accessible to us. Man is himself in his religion and in his love. Both these are strictly personal and intimate, peculiar and sacred. If our society attempts to invade even this inner sanctuary, life will lose all its worth and genuineness. A man can share his possessions with others, but not his soul.

We have become so poor today that we cannot even recognize the treasures of spirit. In the rush and clamour of our conscious life we do not pay attention to the less audible elements of our being. The sudden thrills, the disturbing emotions, the flashes of insight, it is these that reveal to us the mystery we are, and by these we apprehend the truth of things.

Only the man of serene mind can realize the spiritual meaning of life. Honesty with oneself is the condition of spiritual integrity. We must let in the light to illumine the secret places of the soul. Our pretensions and professions are the barriers that shut us away from truth. We are more familiar with the things we have than with what we are. We are afraid to be alone with ourselves, face to face with our naked loneliness. We try to hide

from ourselves the truth by drugs or drunkenness, excitement or service. It is with an effort that we have to pull ourselves together, cultivate the inner life, and abstract from the outer sheaths of body, mind and intellect. We then see the soul within and attain to a stillness of spirit. The discovery of inwardness is the essential basis of spiritual life.

So long as we lead outward lives, without being touched to our inward depths, we do not understand the meaning of life or the secrets of the soul. Those who live on the surface naturally have no faith in the life of spirit. They believe that they do their duty by religion if they accept the letter of faith. Such spiritual dependence is inconsistent with true religious life, of which the foundation is utter sincerity. A life without independent thought cannot comfort a spiritual being. It is lack of spiritual confidence that impels us to accept what others say about religious truth. But when once the individual in his freedom of spirit pursues truth and builds up a centre in himself, he has enough strength and stability to deal with all that happens to him. He is able to retain his peace and power even when he is faced by adverse conditions. Absolute serenity of spirit is the ultimate goal of human effort, and this is possible only for one who has deep faith in the creative spirit and is thus free from all petty desires. Naturally orthodox religion, whether as dogma or ritual, means almost nothing to him.

III

Insistence on Life

But to dwell in the realm of spirit does not mean that we should be indifferent to the realities of the world. It

is a common temptation, to which Indian thinkers have fallen more than once victims, that spirit is all that counts while life is an indifferent illusion, and that all efforts directed to the improvement of man's outer life and society are sheer folly. Frequently the ideal of the cold wise man who refuses all activity in the world is exalted, with the result that India has become the scene of a culture of dead men walking the earth peopled with ghosts. No one who holds himself aloof from the activities of the world and who is insensitive to its woes can be really wise. To practise virtue in a vacuum is impossible. Spiritual vision normally issues in a new power for good in the world of existence. The spiritual man does not turn his back on the realities of the world, but works in it with the sole object of creating better material and spiritual conditions. For spiritual life rises in the natural. Being a poet, Rabindranath uses the visible world as a means of shadowing forth the invisible. He touches the temporal with the light of the eternal. The material world becomes transparent as his spirit moves in it.

The world is not a snare nor its good a delusion. They are opportunities for self-development, pathways for realization. This is the great tradition which has come down from the seers of the Upaniṣads and the author of the Gītā. They delight in life. For since God has taken upon Himself the bonds of creation, why should we not take upon ourselves the bonds of this world? We need not complain, if we are clothed in this warm garment of flesh. Human relationships are the mainspring of spiritual life. God is not a Sultan in the sky but is in all, through all and over all. We worship Him in all the

true objects of our worship, love Him whenever our love is true. In the woman who is good, we feel Him; in the man who is true we know Him. Tagore's Hibbert Lectures on *The Religion of Man* (1931) ask us to realize the supreme in the heart of us all.

The great of the world work in it sensitive to its woes. When the Buddha preaches *maitri* and the Gītā teaches *sneha* for all, they mean that we can understand others only through love. To look upon life as an evil and treat the world as a delusion is sheer ingratitude. In his play *Saṅṅyāsi* or the *Ascetic*, Rabindranath points out how outraged nature had her revenge on the ascetic who tried to gain a victory over her by cutting away the bonds of human desires and affections. He attempted to arrive at a true knowledge of the world by cutting himself off from it. A little girl brought him back from this region of abstraction into the play of life. No asceticism is ever equal to the task of suppressing living beauty. The ascetic's inmost defences went down before the rapture of beauty, and clamant life compelled him to fling open the doors. The *Saṅṅyāsi* discovered that 'the great is to be found in the small, the infinite within the bounds of form and the eternal freedom of the soul in love'. We must bring heaven down to earth, put eternity into an hour and realize God in this world. Ascetics are like cut flowers in metal vases. They are beautiful to contemplate for a while but they soon wither, being without nourishment from the soil. To be firm and rooted, man must consent to be nourished on life. Asceticism, however necessary it may be for the growth of the person, cannot be confused with a mere refusal of the nourishment

by which the growth is helped. The saints do not refuse to sit at the rich man's table; nor do they object to the scent of precious ointment.

It is foolish to fancy that God enjoys our sorrows and sufferings, our pains and fasts, and loves those who tax themselves to the uttermost. Life is a great gift, and those who do not love it are unworthy of it. Those who lay waste their souls and call it peace cannot obtain the support of Tagore for their action.

One need not enter a convent or become an ascetic to reject life. Many of us reject life by surrounding ourselves with taboos and prohibitions. Interpreting the main intention of Hindu thought, Tagore insists on a loyal acceptance of life. We must face life as an adventure and give full play to its possibilities.

Religion speaks to us in many dialects. It has diverse complexions. And yet it has one true voice, the voice of human pity and compassion, of mercy, of patient love, and to that voice we must do all we can to listen. Naturally, a sensitive soul is bound to be outraged by the social order which is at the end of one age and the beginning of another. We say that there is a revolution in Russia or Spain; but there is one in our country too. We also have our guillotines and our victims, though many of those who suffer still go about with their heads on their shoulders. We have become mere walking and talking phantoms. With our languid paleness and lack of depth, which we try to cover by paint and pose, our lives remind us of the mannequins in the shop windows of Chowringhee.

Our deepest passions are debased by the conditions imposed by society. Add to this the appalling poverty

and ignorance in which many people live. If they are somewhat sensitive in temper, they are compelled to spend perturbed nights of anguish and long monotonous days of struggle, measuring time by the throbs of pain and the memories of bitterness. When dim thoughts of suicide rush through their overcrowded heads, they stare at the ceiling and smoke a cigarette. Rabindranath has not much sympathy with the prevalent view that social service consists simply in joining leagues to stop cigarette-smoking or to advance the practice of birth control. It consists in enabling people to live with intensity of being.

As a poet he despises organization and believes in each man living his own life in his own way. He is the champion of the individual in his age-long struggle against the mass tyranny which crushes him. The fate of one who sets himself against the established order is abuse and criticism, persecution and fierce solitariness. Tagore is the poet of sorrow and suffering. The pathos of men's striving, the bitterness of life submerged in the shadows, the waste and loneliness of women's lives have found few more profoundly moved spectators. To this audience it is scarcely necessary to refer to the innumerable instances where the poet reveals the anguish that is implicit in common situations.

The most sacred of all human relationships is love; and whatever our scriptures may say, our practice is immoral because it demands the beauties of self-control and self-abnegation from only one sex. So long as our women are treated as mere servants and toys of the undisciplined male, the social order will continue to be corrupt. The convention that a woman's virtues are chastity and

submissiveness to man is altogether too flimsy an excuse for masculine tyranny. What is virtue in a man is virtue in a woman. It is unfortunate that there are many among us who are cold-blooded libertines who unscrupulously use women as instruments of their lust. They are the human animals, the slaves of sense.

The body is the temple of the spirit, the apparatus for spiritual growth. To regard the body or any part of it as indecent or vile is the sin of impiety. To treat it as cheap and vulgar is equally impious. Physical union without love is the essence of prostitution. This is true within as without marriage. A woman who gives herself to a man for whom she has no love, as a mere act of duty just because she is his wife, is as cruelly abusing herself as the husband who insists on his rights. Love is spiritual and aesthetic, a matter of conscience and good taste and not one of law or codes. Married life without love is like slave labour. Obedience to ecclesiastical pundits or social rules is a form of self-indulgence, even as action in obedience to one's deepest being is the imperative command of life. As beauty is higher than harmony, as truth is higher than consistency, so is love higher than law. Like fire it purifies everything.

In his play *Sati*, Uma refuses to accept the man who never won her love even though he was her chosen husband, whatever pledges others may have given for her. When she cuts herself away from Jivaji, to whom she was sacredly affianced, and accepts another, she defends herself by saying, 'My body was yielded only after love had given me.' When her mother says, 'Touch me not with impure hands,' she replies, 'I am as pure as yourself.'

Her eloquent and dignified bearing cuts her father to the quick and he says: 'Come to me, my darling child! mere vanity are these man-made laws, splashing like spray against the rock of heaven's ordinance.' Our legal providers and protectors do not realize that our women possess souls, yearning for understanding, for some one to share their dreams and their longings; and when a man and a woman offer to each other, not their strength or rank or fortune but their weakness, their desolation, their heart's need, they enter into a region which is not built by the labour of human hands but by the love of their hearts. Their union is consecrated though it may not be approved.

IV

Conclusion

In all Rabindranath's work three features are striking. (1) The ultimateness of spiritual values to be obtained by inward honesty and cultivation of inner life; (2) the futility of mere negation or renunciation and the need for a holy or a whole development of life; and (3) the positive attitude of sympathy for all, even the lowly and the lost. It is a matter for satisfaction to find an Indian leader insisting on these real values of life at a time when so many old things are crumbling away and a thousand new ones are springing up.