VOL. XXV NUMBER 1

"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)

PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION

SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY EDITION

JANUARY, 1936

BASIS FOR PEACE

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*
Published Monthly except in August and September

VOL. XXV JANUARY, 1936 No. 1

WITH this issue, the Message of the East enters its twenty-fifth year of existence. We pray with our whole heart that it may continue its selfless service for the good of many and for the inspiration of many. We are deeply gratified that since 1912 this little monthly has carried to the far corners of the globe the message of peace, good-will and unity as exemplified by the great Master of modern India, Sri Ramakrishna.

The present year of 1936 is specially significant, as it marks the celebration of his Centenary, and we shall endeavor each month to give the high lights of his life and teachings, that many readers may learn more accurately about this great Messenger of Light, Love and Divine Beatitude.

As before, so do we now voice with even greater emphasis that evil is not overcome by evil and hatred cannot be conquered by hatred; that war will not cease through greater preparation for war. As we shall learn individually to translate in practical ways the lofty ideals of spiritual reality, so shall we accomplish our goal.

May we have greater understanding, greater strength, stronger convictions, and undying faith in the invincible quality of the One Infinite Spirit residing within us and watching over us all, even when we are not aware of it.

May we through His grace be requickened and rededicated, and resolved afresh to do His will under all circumstances. And may our whole being,—body, mind and heart—work with one purpose and with unflinching faith.

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UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

God is indeed Infinite. But He is Omnipotent. He may so ordain that His Divinity as Love may be manifest in the flesh and be among us as God incarnate. Divine Incarnation is a fact. One must see God to be convinced of this. Who can know God? It is not given to us, nor is it required of us, to *know* Him fully. It is enough if we can see Him—feel that He is the only Reality. A person, suppose, comes to the holy River Ganges and touches the water. He would say, "I have been blessed with the vision and touch of the holy River." Surely it is not required of him to touch the whole River from Gomukhi to Gangasagar—from its source to the mouth! Seekest thou God? Then seek Him in man! His Divinity is manifest more in man than in any other object. Look around for a man who lives, moves and has his being in God—a man intoxicated with His love. In such a man has God incarnated Himself. —*Sri Ramakrishna.*

If your Inner Life is unconquerable, then its limits cannot be known.
If you cannot gauge the limits of your Inner Life, then you surely shall possess the Kingdom.
If you possess the Mother of the Kingdom, you shall endure forever.
This is to be deep-rooted, and to have a firm foundation.
The possessor of TAO shall have enduring life and infinite vision. —*Tao-Teh-King.*

As long as the mystery of the Infinite weighs on human thought, temples will be erected for the worship of the Infinite, whether God is called Brahma, Allah, Jehovah or Jesus, and on the pavement of those temples men will be seen kneeling, prostrated, annihilated in the thought of the Infinite. —*Louis Pasteur.*

As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him.

—*Deuteronomy.*

The whole length and breadth of the wide world is pervaded by the radiant thoughts of a mind all-embracing, vast and boundless, in which dwells no hate nor ill-will.

—*Maha-Sudassana Sutta.*

From of old, was there not in his life a weight of meaning, a terror and a splendour as of Heaven itself? . . . Death, Judgment and Eternity: these already lay as the background of whatsoever he thought or did. All his life lay begirt as in a sea of nameless thoughts, which no speech of a mortal could name. God's Word: . . . this was great, and all else was little to him. —*Thomas Carlyle.*

He said, "All this talk and turmoil and noise and movement and desire is outside of the veil: within the veil is silence and calm and rest."

He said, "Dost thou hear how there comes a voice from the brooks of running water? But when they reach the sea they are quiet, and the sea is neither augmented by their in-coming nor diminished by their out-going."

—*Ascribed to Bayazid-al-Bistami.*

I salute Thee, Universal Soul. Glory be to Thee!

—*Vishnu Purana.*

The Divine Charioteer, driving spirits towards the Heart of God, where they are one Fire with Him.

—*Van Ruysbroeck.*

As the hand moves over the harp and the strings speak, so speaks in my members the Spirit of the Lord, and I speak by His love. —*Ode of Solomon.*

The might of God is equal to all things. —*Mohammed.*

BASIS FOR PEACE

By Swami Paramananda

Let us, in this hour of silence and sanctity, lift our inmost prayers to the Supreme Being of the Universe, according to our inner conviction.

With all the strength that we possess, not thinking of anyone who may have wronged us, but free from resentment and harsh, dissonant, inharmonious feelings, let us, through our attitude of mind, try to put into practice our high thoughts and lofty aspirations, in order that we may really bring our hearts to our Ideal, all cleansed and full of peace and tranquillity.

May that Infinite One, Source of our life,—our Mother, our Father, our Friend and Eternal Companion—may He bestow upon us His loving and abiding protection. May all our thoughts, words and actions be consecrated to Him from Whom we have descended.

Peace! Peace! Peace! be unto us and to all living beings!

Truth never ceases to be. It is not destroyed by time or the changes of time. More than that—it does not even become tarnished like base metal. In India, from ancient days, men of wisdom have spoken of man's innermost being —that which is true and undying in him—as the Golden One. Gold may be covered and neglected, but it ever stays pure and shining: it always remains gold. Same way it is with Truth. Truth is not anything that can be known through imitation, but only through realization, through actual perception.

I say this in connection with the thought of peace. Peace, likewise, cannot be imitated or copied. It is something we feel, we emanate. Unless his heart is full of peace, no man can truly pray to God or convey a peaceful spirit.

For years now you have heard me give the Chant of Peace.

From the height of great wisdom, the Himalayan height of spiritual illumination, we have received this benediction. Many have heard it and have sought in their own way to repeat its beauty and idealism. But whatever a man desires to accomplish, be it secular or religious, practical or artistic, the vital factor in his accomplishment, whether he is aware of it or not, is his daily routine, his habitual consciousness.

Years ago when I gave the Peace Invocation, men said, "It is a negative idea. What possible hope is there of settling things through its instrumentality. We cannot support the material world with the spiritual!" But I did not change. I am still giving the same invocation. I cannot every day give something that is new. It is not the newness of a thing that determines its value. On the contrary, we know to be true only those things which under the test of repeated usage remain true. The wise men—those who have thought along one direct current, have been moved by one great purpose, and have lived for one supreme Goal, without dividing their interest—these men, one and all, have apparently been content to follow this same unchanging principle; and today all over the world, in spite of warring elements, every human being with even a little real culture or idealistic tendency, is making an approach to this great subject of peace.

The thing is, how are we to realize it in our actual life? For it is through our every-day life and living that we must build the bridge across the gulf which exists between man and God, between the lowest grade of humanity and man's highest expression. This bridge we cannot build with theories, nor can it be built by men who are sophisticated—cunning, shrewd men with clever, calculating minds—but rather by those whom we call dreamers, men of vision who have found peace in their souls.

Every individual human being must attain peace for him-

self before he can convey it to his fellow-men. This may startle you. Your first thought may be, "Is he giving us a slogan of selfishness?" We can almost hear the sanctimonious say, "I do not want anything for myself." But we must have the thing ourselves before we can share it with others. Though a man may want to do something for the welfare of the world, if he is restless and turbulent, what can he give? We may sympathize with a crying, sick humanity; but will it be any advantage to men to weep and wail with them? One, however, who possesses the power, can stand almost apart and administer that which will prove a cure, or possibly a preventive, for illness; and it is in this sense that I approach my subject.

I come from a land whose people have always been regarded as men of dreams and visions, yet we find them giving expression to practical reality. There in that land, one may see a person seated calm and serene in the midst of afflictions and calamities. Why not? Think of Christ and the example He set before His followers. When His enemies approached, His disciples wanted to draw sword and fight, but He forbade them. They sought to help Him with the wisdom of the world, but He tried to show them that they were only hindering Him. They brought to Him the things of material life, manifested the aggressive, so-called "manly" spirit which is popular from our point-of-view today, when all He desired was to be left in thought, in prayer, in meditation—completely surrendered within the bosom of Divinity.

All this may sound as of another world, not pertaining to the practical province of living; yet it contains the undying truth,—that the man "who lives by the sword must perish by the sword." In the Occident, you have been nurtured on this thought. You have quoted it more than I have. But what is the outcome? Sane people, lovers of humanity,

intelligent people everywhere who have tried to find a basis for this ideal of peace, have been blocked by the reality with which man has imbued his material consciousness. So long as men think in terms of war, we cannot overcome war. So long as we brood over thoughts of hatred, we cannot abolish the reactions of hatred. That is why the great Lord Buddha, whose being pulsated not only with idealism but with the reality of this mighty law, gave utterance in his calm, deep voice to words forever indelible in the hearts of those who have ears to hear them: "Hatred is never conquered by hatred. It is conquered by love, and love alone. This is an eternal principle." He did not claim to have inaugurated it. Rather he told them, "It has been and it will ever be."

In this hour of uncertainty, how lovely these words sound, and how they cover the troubled waters with majestic beauty! We never needed such teaching more than we do now, yet instead of accepting this truth which is so evident, mankind prefers to place its faith in material aggression, although there is not a single diplomat, statesman or ruler who can say, "It has worked and it will work!" Each man, however, thinks that he is going to be the exception.

In contrast to this, let me give you some thoughts from the "Dhammapada" that will refresh you:

"We live happily indeed, not hating those who hate us! Among men who hate us, we dwell free from hatred."

You will say, "This is a principle of the Golden Age, not of our age today." Then let us make our age a Golden Age that will not tarnish through any difficulty.

"We live happily indeed, free from ailments among the ailing! Among men who are ailing, let us dwell free from ailments!"

This question of ailments covers more than mere bodily illness; there are other ailments very difficult to cure.

"We live happily indeed, free from greed among the greedy! Among men who are greedy, let us dwell free from greed!

"We live happily indeed, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods, feeding on happiness!"

Are these not wonderful thoughts? Although they were given at least twenty-five hundred years ago, do they not pertain to the highest standard of humanity? Do they not furnish a code which might easily be adopted by civilized man?

I hesitate to use this word "civilized" because—if you desire a definition from me—the mark of one who is civilized is self-discipline, not only outwardly but inwardly. A civilized human being is one who has conquered greed and hatred, and who is so truly polished that his light shines as clearly as the reflection of your countenance in a mirror. The person who is refined, exquisite, is admired not only by the artists and lovers of beauty but by all men. Who is there who does not appreciate these qualities? When we meet someone who is shrewd, we say, "He is smart." But when a person comes with transparent quality, we say, "How fine that man is!" We feel such a sense of relaxation and kinship when we come in contact with him. We think, "How lovely the world would be if all men were like that!"

The practical thing is to educate humanity one by one. Man must advance by means of the individual. It may sound like a gigantic task, but is it not better than continuing always in the wrong way, without making any effort to change our direction? Do not dismiss ideas merely because they seem far removed from our modern conception. Who is going to revise them? Do we expect some great Being

to come and make everything beautiful for us? How do we know that we would even hear His voice? Men have portrayed Christ as crying in the wilderness. He could not get the attention of humanity. How many of us are ready and able to listen to the Voice of Truth? Call it Christ, Buddha or the Absolute!—I do not care what you call it. Truth is not contained in a nut-shell. It is not any man's individual property. Every one has access to it who is sincere and pure and who has abolished all that creates rupture in his soul and in the outside world.

Muddy water does not reflect. Why? Because its reflective power is destroyed, although a moment before, when the water was not muddy, one could see everything in it. Same way with the human heart. I use Sri Ramakrishna's parable. When the heart is darkened by ignorance and agitated through lack of peace, it cannot reflect the light of Truth. We are often at war with ourselves. We talk on a big scale concerning the unrest of the world, the hatred among mankind. But where is the origin of this unrest and hatred? Let us ask our own hearts. Those who think these cruel, embittered thoughts are men just like ourselves. And men just like ourselves also succeed in reaching the fountain of Beauty and Peace where no storm can unsettle them, and they remain tranquil.

The way is open to us all, but the trouble is, we have convinced ourselves that it is not practical. Even ministers have said, "For this Age it cannot be made true." An unfortunate attitude of mind, especially if we dismiss the subject before we have tried it. We must admit that that is not fair. We find thousands who will undertake a hazardous adventure on hearing tales of a gold mine, but when someone comes to us and says, "I will show you the way to God, Peace and Beatitude," sad to say, there is nowhere any response.

I am not telling you this to discourage you, but to stimulate your faculties; for every one of us has something within him which pertains to Divinity. All men, wherever they may live, whatever their caste, creed or station in life, contain the spark of God. This very concept will lift our consciousness to another level where we shall no longer be able to think in the terms of wanting, and of grabbing from others.

Not long ago, I came face to face with an automobile accident. A drunken man and his wife were driving at full speed on the wrong side of the road. When the crash came, the man was so intoxicated that he was not aware of what had happened. The only thing that woke him up was when his wife, realizing what he had done, began to box his ears. Even the policeman could not stop her. I do not take this as humorous. It is a very great tragedy, this lack of self-control. Think of the madness that exists in the heart of humanity, the greed and hatred, and all because man lacks the power to control himself.

Once, in Italy, an artist said to me: "This self-control you are teaching us, is it not going to interfere with our emotional life?" I answered, "No; it will only help you to direct your emotional life so that it will accomplish something constructive." We have used misguided zeal in the fulfillment of our desires. The energy we possess, the genius that is ours, even our scientific achievements, have to be put on a constructive basis. It is not a question of warring against evil, but of giving it a new turn. The same heart that destroys itself can be inspired with something so holy and powerful that it will become a potent factor for upbuilding.

These ideas we cannot put aside as negative. Peace is not negative. Great minds are thinking about peace; and you can have your share in those thoughts. You can help through your own prayers. When your heart is fortified

against smallness, pettiness, selfishness, you will become a power. It will be as if a stream were going forth from you, natural, vibrant, which will baptize the hearts of men. It is the only way of spiritual baptism. When spiritual Fire comes forth from men's souls, it works miracles. The fire of greed and ambition cannot, I think, ever be vanquished except by this greater Fire. Mere struggle can never do it. It needs something unearthly—superhuman.

You may doubt what I am telling you, but I cannot help that. Everything worth while has been doubted. Were not even the thoughts of Christ and Buddha doubted? And Mahatma Gandhi—has he not had to live through the very throes of human doubt? Yet he has not given up, and it is a most blessed thing that humanity has men and women who do not give up. It is such individuals in the world who accomplish real things, who dare to go ahead upon their own faith, instead of holding back through fear that mankind will be unable to follow, and therefore it will be foolish for them to venture it alone. The great soul always reverses this order. He says: "If the rest of the world cannot grasp my ideal, then all the more reason for me to dedicate myself to it as a lover and servant of humanity, to hold fast to it ever, and never relinquish my hold." An attitude like this provides a practical basis upon which we can work out something that will be of benefit to every human being.

"Set thyself first in peace and then shalt thou be able to set others at peace," said Thomas á Kempis. If you can make even an approach to this, you are blessed, because you have within you the secret of finding it. Instead of quarreling with the world, instead of saying, "The reason my mind is in conflict is because the whole world is so inharmonious," make peace with yourself and become in this way a divine agent for restoring the world consciousness. If you wish to

assert your individual consciousness, do it in this manner. "I am so learned, so clever,"—renounce that attitude of mind, and instead seek to make yourself a definite influence, an active instrument for the Highest. Until we can think along these lines, I doubt if there can be any spiritual fulfillment.

Sri Ramakrishna says, "Endure, endure, endure! Then become something!" Be patient once, twice, three times. Devote your life, and the great Ideal you have sought will become a vital influence. It brings to my mind the lines of a poem I once wrote:

> The quiet solitude of thy soul is My home;
> The peace of thy heart is My rest.

Sometimes in your anguish, in your sorrow and grief, you think that there is no God. When you need the Deity to give you that which will sustain you, you find absolutely no connection with Him. It is because there is no solitude in your soul. There may come these times of utter helplessness, but remember, you are the one who can nurture best the divine spark within you, and foster the strength you will need for your own unfoldment and for the safety of others. Gradually, as you persevere, you will realize how mighty is that principle which has come down to us through ancient India and through the great teachings of all times and lands—the principle of love, the principle of peace. Begin your approach to that principle with the resolve to think nothing against anyone. Hold to it even for an hour, and you will begin to release a great power in your soul. Perhaps you can do even more. Perhaps you can send out love and thoughts of strength to your friends, to those who are not your friends, whom you are not inclined to think of in a spiritual way,—to all men. Keep on doing this and you will find that you are a conqueror, that your conscious-

ness has expanded, and a new sweetness has been born in your soul. Have you not tasted that sweetness when, for a moment, you have thought in the terms of love for the whole world? The whole world is your home. If you can bring yourself to think and feel in this way, then indeed you will have fulfilled the Great Law, and helped to give a true basis of existence for other souls struggling to go forward on the path of life.

Does this sound impractical to you? Anything that is difficult we say is not practical, just as when we want to do a thing, we even invent a word by which to excuse ourselves for doing it. One thing is sure—here is something that cannot be done by proxy. The peace within your soul is yours because you have won it for yourself; and what is yours you can give bountifully. You will naturally become generous and desire to share with others.

When individuals, groups of men and women everywhere, in this country, abroad, in the distant places of the earth, learn to think along these lines, projecting thoughts of unifying influence for the healing of the hearts of humanity—these thoughts will be like a beautiful canopy, a dome of white light, going from West, North, South and East, and peace will pervade it. Today this may seem like a dream, but we can enhance its coming by letting our light shine within it.

Perhaps I have spoken like a madman. Conditions in the world as we know them do not seem to call for such a vision. But I have faith. India has given us the conception of Maya —Illusion. The world exists, and it does not exist. It is constantly changing. Many things that we did a few years ago, we have now forgotten, and of the events we remember, there may be some which we would like to forget.

These things are not of reality. They come and go. But

there is That in us which is Real and Abiding. Therefore, let us fasten our hearts to Truth, and be tranquil. Let us safeguard what is precious in us and never sacrifice our faith in the Light, which, like gold, must remain untarnished in our souls for ever and for ever.

REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*

By Sister Nivedita

You know to my nature a thing hardly seems true or accomplished till it is somehow uttered and left on record.

Swami has just lectured.

I went early and took the seat at the left end of the second row—always my place in London, though I never thought of it at the time. Then as we sat and waited for him to come in, a great trembling came over me, for I realized that this was, simple as it seemed, one of the test-moments of my life.

Since last I had done this thing, how much had come and gone! My own life—where was it? Lost—thrown away like a cast-off garment that I might kneel at the feet of this man. Would it prove a mistake, an illusion; or was it a triumph of choice? A few minutes would tell.

And then he came. His very entrance and his silence as he stood and waited to begin were like some great hymn. A whole worship in themselves.

At last he spoke—his face broke into fun, and he asked what was to be his subject. Someone suggested the Vedanta philosophy and he began.

Oneness—the Unity of all. . . . "And so the final essence of things is this Unity. What we see as many—as gold, love, sorrow, the world—is really God. . . . We see many, yet

*From the "Prabuddha Bharata."

there is but One Existence. . . . These names differ only in the degrees of their expression. The matter of today is the Spirit of the future. The worm of today—the God of tomorrow. These distinctions which we so love are all parts of one Infinite fact and that one Infinite fact is the attainment of Freedom. . . .

"All our struggle is for Freedom—we seek neither misery nor happiness but Freedom. . . . Man's burning unquenchable thirst—never satisfied—asking always for more and more. You Americans are seeking always for more and more. At bottom this desire is the sign of man's infinitude. For infinite man can only be satisfied when his desire is infinite and its fulfillment infinite too. . . ."

And so the splendid sentences rolled on and on, and we, lifted into the Eternities, thought of our common selves as of babies stretching out their hands for the moon or the sun—thinking them a baby's toys. The wonderful voice went on—

"Who can help the Infinite? . . . Even the hand that comes to you through the darkness will have to be your own."

And then with that lingering, heart-piercing pathos, that no pen can even suggest, "We—infinite dreamers, dreaming infinite dreams."

Ah, they are mistaken who say that a voice is nothing—that ideas are all. For this in its rise and fall was the only possible music to the poetry of the words—making the whole hour a pause, a retreat in the market-place of life—as well as a song of praise in some dim Cathedral aisle.

At last, the whole dying down and away in the thought—"I could not see *you* or speak to you for a moment—I who stand here seeing and talking—if this infinite Unity were broken for a moment—if one little atom could be crushed or moved out of its place. . . .

"Hari Om! Tat Sat!"

And for me—I had found the infinitely deep things that life holds for us. To sit there and listen was all that it had ever been. Yet there was no struggle of intellectual unrest now—no tremor of novelty.

This man who stood there held my life in the hollow of his hand—and as he once in a while looked my way, I read in his glance what I too felt in my own heart, complete faith and abiding comprehension of purpose—better than any feeling. . . . Swami says, "All accumulations are for subsequent distribution; this is what the fool forgets."

God Himself, the Father and Fashioner of all that is, older than the sun or the sky, greater than time and eternity and all the flow of being, is unnameable by any law-giver, unutterable by any voice, not to be seen by any eye. But we, being unable to apprehend His essence, use the help of sounds and names and pictures, of beaten gold and ivory and silver, of plants and rivers, mountain-peaks and torrents, yearning for the knowledge of Him, and, in our weakness, naming all that is beautiful in this world after His nature—just as happens to earthly lovers. To them the most beautiful sight will be the actual lineaments of the beloved, but for remembrance's sake they will be happy in the sight of a lyre, a little spear, a chair, perhaps, or a running-ground, or anything in the world that wakens the memory of the beloved. Why should I further examine and pass judgment about Images? Let men know what is divine, let them know; that is all. If a Greek is stirred to the remembrance of God by the art of Pheidias, an Egyptian by paying worship to animals, another man by a river, another by fire—I have no anger for their divergences; only let them know, let them love, let them remember!

—*Maximus of Tyre (2nd century)*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

In order to gain a comprehensive view of the direct influence of Sri Ramakrishna upon our modern life, it is necessary to gain a glimpse into the existing conditions, social, religious and ethical, both in the East and in the West, at the time of his birth. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the whole Occidental thought-world, especially in the continent of North America, was going through a peculiar transition. The unprecedented advancement of science, the ingenuity and inventive genius of men, giving unimaginable power and resources into their hands for material advancement, brought about a natural reaction in the minds of the people, especially in regard to the traditional religious Faith and the dogmatic beliefs. Rationalistic thought gained ground every day and found it more and more difficult to accept and tolerate the existing institutions of religion.

We observe at this period a violent clash between the old and the new, without any possibility of reconciliation. Science was regarded as the enemy of religion, and old-fashioned religion could not be accepted by men of rational instinct and scientific trend of mind. But in spite of all this upheaval, the innate hunger in the souls of the people gave rise to many new phases of spiritual expression—although they were often designated then as "new cults"—such as Christian Science, Divine Science, Metaphysical Healing, New Thought, Spiritualism, Theosophy, etc.

A natural culmination of all this spiritual unrest was the convening of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, and it was not an accident that Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple and voice of Sri Ramakrishna, represented India and her ancient culture. What followed was an epoch-making event in the annals of spiritual history.

Before we begin with our narrative of the high lights of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, we must also give to our readers a picture of the social and religious atmosphere of India during that period. In spite of India's great slogan, *Ekam* (One without a second), that is to say, the one Basic Principle of all existence, life and spiritual attainment, there were constant evidences of religious dissension and dogmatic denunciation.

Many notable reformers rose at this time, such as Ram Mohon Roy, whose name will ever be remembered in connection with valuable reform work in India. Also the leaders of Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj endeavored with effective measures to remedy social evils and religious antagonisms.

From all this, we can easily observe that the whole spirit of the world, in East and West, was both consciously and unconsciously bent upon a spiritual democracy, and the advent of our great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, came as the fulfillment of this great need. His life, his spiritual aspirations and his *Sadhanas* (the methods by which he sought to attain his goal) are peculiarly helpful to the modern spirit of man. He does not denounce anything or anyone; but he offers a practical spiritual hypothesis as the only remedy for all evil. And it is not just a theory. He proves with his own life and his personal example that high spiritual ideals can be lived on earth in the flesh, even in this so-called "Materialistic Age." His silent life of dynamic spiritual force laid a firm foundation for the ideal democracy, since it brought forth the truth that every man is fundamentally a part of the Divine Essence, and that in spite of all religious differences, dogmatic variations and barriers of caste, creed and nationality, he is a child of One Indivisible, Absolute Being. The realization of this alone in our individual life provides a

solution for all the social, political and religious evils which are rending the skies of the world with the lightning of greater dissensions, greater differences, and the havoc of war.

Sri Ramakrishna's mysticism not only proves that superman can attain for himself, but that even a common man, as we term the ordinary run of humanity, can unfold his divine heritage. His methods are most unlike those of reformers. He does not strike; he does not denounce; but by his gentle, unaggressive and unpretentious spiritual illumination he clarifies the whole atmosphere of doubt and dogmatic differences. He is the very fulfillment of his own remarkable parable, that if in muddy water a piece of alum is thrown, very soon all the mud settles at the bottom and the water becomes crystal-like, clear. Intellectual skepticism, doubt and denunciation never bring anything constructive. They only make the people more and more restive and unsettled.

Very easily we can translate Sri Ramakrishna's practical idealism of life into the words of the great Nazarene, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Also, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Yet in spite of all the spiritual beauty and appealing idealism which have been our heritage, man has found it most difficult to carry these subtle perceptions into practical life, owing to his fear that by doing so he may lose his chance for personal gain. In spite of all the light of science and intellectual culture, man has formed the habit of looking on religion and mysticism with suspicion, thinking that they will deprive him of his earthly opportunities. For this reason, when we are able to see with our naked eyes, in the person of an exalted being, that the great ideals not only of Jesus of Nazareth, but of Buddha and the great Indian Rishis, may be translated into practical self-expression;

that God and man are not separated by a vast expanse and insurmountable difficulties, but are linked together through transcendental consciousness; that in the life of man, God may become a living reality, so that man may not only aspire for his Ideal, but may live with Him, talk with Him, walk with Him, and be wholly guided by Him in every hour of the day—when we are able to perceive this, then alone can we become convinced of the eternal value of spiritual idealism.

Thus it was that when Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of the Master, proclaimed before the world that he had seen, known and touched a living personage who not only had experienced God in this manner, but had the power to show the way for others likewise to experience God-consciousness, it made people gasp, and they were eager to know more about such a being.

Sri Ramakrishna can be regarded as the Messiah of spiritual democracy. He never forgets that his *Ishtam* (chosen Ideal) is also the chosen Ideal of all existing forms of thought and religion. Perhaps we can readily understand his tolerance for India's multiple expressions of faith, but is it not interesting to observe that his mind reaches out to know and understand the basic Principle of Christianity, Mohammedanism, and the other great religions of the world. Is not the substance, water, called by many names? "One calls it 'water,' another 'vani,' a third 'aqua,' and a fourth 'pani,' yet it remains ever the same. So the one *Sat-Chit-Ananda,* Absolute Being-Intelligence-Bliss, is invoked by some as God, by some as Allah, by some as Hari, and by others as Brahman."

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna was not to bring into existence another new creed or sect, in the already overcrowded religious atmosphere of India and the world at large. His peculiar gift to the world was to clarify the congestion

in our over-burdened modern mind. As we shall see, his whole mode of living, his simplicity of conduct, and his naive, childlike parables, dynamic with the force of Truth, disarm us completely. To relate anything about the illumined life of Sri Ramakrishna is to venture to portray the invisible Spirit in mortal garb. For all his earthly expressions in daily living, his devoutness of spirit and passion for humility and service cannot help but stimulate our minds to reach out for That which we have so often regarded as unattainable.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

VOICE OF THE INFINITE

By Leroy Snyder

(It is the habit of the Unitarian Church of America to hold once a year a Laymen's Sunday, when the minister sits in the pew and the laymen conduct the service. The following is an extract from a layman's sermon.)

It is as though the Voice of God were speaking to man:

"I am He that shone in the sun and stars when man first stood erect and saw the glory of the heavens; I spoke in the wind and cloud, in trees and waterfalls. I heard the supplication of man when first he sought to bring Me closer to his comprenhension, and carved My crude likenesses in sticks and stones, bowing himself before them.

"I am Assur of the Highlands and Bel-Marduk of the Lowlands in the ancient country of the Two Rivers. I am Amon-Ra, who spoke out of the Libyan desert to all the men of Egypt. I am Ahura-Mazda, the Lord of light and goodness, who carried on perpetual warfare against Ahriman and his hosts of darkness.

"I am Jehovah, who wrote upon two tables of stone and gave a law and commandments to the twelve tribes of Israel, speaking with the voice of a trumpet exceedingly loud, from out of the thunders and lightnings

of Sinai. I am Zeus or Jove; I thundered from high Olympus; I whistled from the pipes of Pan; I dwelt in beauty in the lands of Greece and marched with the legions of Rome. I flung the hammer of Thor, and sat with Odin at the banquet board in Valhalla. I interpreted the ancient wisdom of the sages with Confucius, with Siddartha, the Buddha, I stole away at night, leaving my new-born and only son, to seek the way of Life and find the answer while sitting under the Bo Tree.

"I died on the Cross with the Carpenter of Nazareth; I was laid in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and on the third day rose from the dead to live in the hearts of uncounted millions for twice a thousand years. I am Holy Mary, the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin of Sorrows and Compassion. When the muezzin calls the hour of prayer, then millions prostrate themselves before Me, their faces turned toward My holy city of Mecca.

"I am the false gods and the true God; the many, and the one and only God. I have spoken through the wise and good of all ages, the holy men of old, the saints and prophets and martyrs to a thousand holy causes. I am the sunset and the dawn. I am the voice that speaks within thee when honor and love and beauty urge thee to highest endeavors. Put Me away from thee, kill Me, destroy Me utterly; yet will I come back to thee in more beautiful form, in more wondrous might and power. For I am that within thee which is nearest and closest, which thou canst not weigh nor measure nor name by any name unless it be I."

God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, satiety and hunger. But He is changed, just as fire, when mingled with different kinds of incense, and is named after the flavour of each. —*Heraclitus.*

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE INCARNATIONS

By Swami Nikhilananda

(A lecture delivered at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York City.)

The following verse is from the ninth chapter of the Gita:

"*Unaware of My higher state as the great Lord of beings, fools disregard Me dwelling in the human form.*"

Here Sri Krishna says that though God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient, though He is Lord of all beings and the Lord of the universe, when He incarnates in human form and becomes like one of us, we disregard Him, and do not understand Him. This is due to our ignorance.

We find the same idea in the Bible. We read from St. Luke:

"*All things are delivered to me of my Father and no man knoweth Who the Son is but the Father, and Who the Father is but the Son and he to whom the Son will reveal Him.*" . . .

We also note a similar sentiment in the Vedas:

"*Only those to whom the Truth reveals Itself can realize the Truth.*"

If we have sincerity, earnestness and eagerness to know the Truth, then the Truth reveals Itself in our heart in its fullest glory and majesty.

This Divine Incarnation of God in human form is a great mystery. The meaning of Divine Incarnation is that God, the Infinite, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipresent Reality, who is beyond time and space and the law of causal relationship, —that Transcendental Reality, that Ultimate Truth becomes embodied as a human being. Of course there is an apparent contradiction in Divine Incarnation. Our idea of God is that He is beyond hunger and thirst. He is beyond impurity,

beyond life and death, and beyond all earthly conceptions. But man is subject to hunger and thirst; he is limited and finite. . . . How can these two ideas be reconciled? How is it possible for God, that Infinite Being, to be embodied in a finite human form? It is a great mystery that has puzzled minds from the earliest dawn of man's religious history. . . .

Again, we find from the lives of the great souls who are known as Incarnations of God, that they also pass through human struggles, human misery and human temptations. This makes it all the more difficult to understand the mystery of Divine Incarnation. Take the life of Krishna, the great Incarnation of the Hindus. Krishna was born in prison in a state of abject humility. He was born under conditions which were extremely brutal and oppressive. Jesus Christ, who is worshipped as an Incarnation of God by His followers, was born in a manger. He was tempted by Satan. He suffered from hunger and thirst. His message was hardly understood and appreciated during his lifetime. He had to pass through many vicissitudes and ultimately had to die an ignominious death on the cross. Again, take the life of Buddha, who is also worshipped in India as an Incarnation of God. Until Buddha reached manhood he apparently forgot his mission. He lived the life of a comfortable youth brought up in luxury. He lived in a huge palace, was married, and also had a son. Then he renounced the world. He was tempted by Mara. He had to pass through endless spiritual sufferings before he realized the Truth. All these facts make it exceedingly difficult for us to recognize Divinity in those human forms. Besides, we find that Incarnations are seldom understood even by their immediate disciples during their lifetime. . . .

Sri Ramakrishna, who is worshipped in India today as a great Incarnation of God by his innumerable followers, used

to say that the elephant has two sets of teeth. It has external tusks and internal grinders. But we only see the external tusks of the elephant. These external tusks are more or less decorative. The elephant protects itself with them against enemies. But the elephant chews his food with the internal grinders which no one sees. In the same way, the Incarnation of God has two aspects, two natures as it were. He possesses a set of beautiful tusks like those of the elephant, through which he fulfills his mission, and people only see Him in that aspect. But He also has a set of internal grinders and through them He keeps His constant contact with His real nature, and enjoys it with heart and soul. That aspect of an Incarnation remains more or less hidden from us. It is said of Buddha that while he was imparting his teaching to his disciples one day, he took a handful of leaves from the tree under which he was seated and asked his disciples whether the tree had more leaves than those he held in his hand. A disciple said: "Yes, the tree has many more leaves." Then Buddha said: "Likewise I know many more things, I have many more realizations; but I impart unto you only that much of Truth which you can understand, which you can appreciate in your life."

You know of the magician. When he performs his tricks, his wife and children do not crowd around him or take his magic seriously; but the spectators look at the magician with amazement, and watch his wonderful tricks with wonder-waiting eyes. In the same way, when an Incarnation comes, the people who live with Him do not pay very much attention to his realizations or teachings, but the people who live far away are amazed by them. There is a tree in India, a very big tree, which casts its seed far and wide. The seeds of that tree do not fall under the tree, but germinate far away from it. Similarly, we find the teachings of the Incar-

nations do not find their immediate fruition in the country of their birth. Those teachings are fructified in far off countries at a distant time. The religion of Buddha is not accepted in toto by the Hindus, but Buddha is worshipped in China and far off Japan. In the same way, Jesus Christ's teaching has borne fruit in the far off countries of Europe and America, though He Himself was born in Asia Minor. Take the case of Sri Ramakrishna. His teachings have become a source of consolation and bliss to people in far off countries, in Argentine, America, Africa and Europe. He is perhaps most appreciated in these distant countries. I remember one day I was making a pilgrimage to the village of the Holy Mother, the wife of Sri Ramakrishna. The villagers said: "Why do people take so much trouble to come to this village? What, after all, is that woman? We have seen her all our lives." . . .

This idea of Incarnation we find dealt with mainly in two religions, namely, Christianity and Hinduism. The Christians accept Christ as an Incarnation of God and the Hindus believe in more than one person as Incarnations of Divinity. The idea of God Incarnate has not struck root or developed among the Mussulmans, Jews or Buddhists. Though the Buddhists do not accept Buddha as an Incarnation of God, yet in their daily worship and ceremonies, they worship Buddha, to all intents and purposes, in the same way as the Hindus and Christians worship their respective Incarnations. The Mohammedans do not look upon Mohammed as the Incarnation of God. In official language, Mohammed is painted as the Prophet of God, but the Mussulmans worship innumerable saints of their religion. It shows that there is something in us that always makes us see the Divinity manifested in human form. I think it is a constitutional necessity of the human mind. We can understand God better, we

can understand God more easily when we find His revelation in human form, when we find Him born as one of us.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

DEITY, THE WORLD AND MAN

By Sister Devamata

God and the world are not rivals. They are not enemies. It is our contracted conception of both the one and the other that creates an apparent opposition. If for us Deity is wholly personal, then He must dwell in a Heaven and the world will be empty of Him; for personality can not be pervasive, it demands a specific abiding-place. If, on the contrary, Diety to us is an all-pervading Presence, He is in the world as well as in the Heavens and can be found wherever we seek Him.

As a pervading Presence He may manifest in any form and assume any relation. An ancient Sumerian tablet has been unearthed in the buried city of Lagash, in the lower Euphrates valley, which contains this prayer of Gudea, Pontiff-king of Lagash about 2700 B. C.:—

"A mother I have not, my mother thou art; a father I have not, my father thou art. Thou art wise in goodness. If in the night I recline myself, my great sword thou art; at my side thou standest. A shining torch thou! The breath of life thou createst for me. The protection of a mother art thou. Thy shadow I reverence. The faithful power of thy mighty hand is supreme."

The Sumerians have a special interest for us. They were a highly civilized people as early as 4000 B. C. and it was from them the Babylonians borrowed much of their culture and many of their legends, transmitting them in turn to the Jews, who incorporated them in their Scriptures.

Those who live close to the heart of Nature and have penetrated deep into the lives and motives of men find it easy

to look upon God as all-pervasive. The red Indian, who is brother to the mountains, the forest and the running stream, gives to Him the comprehensive name, "The-One-Who-Made-All-Things and Is-Everywhere." The Indo-Aryan defines Him as the imperishable, all-pervading Spirit, "which survives the destruction of all things from the Builder of the universe to the tiny blade of grass; in which the universe forms and dissolves." The ancient Egyptian speaks of Him as "the Only One," the "Maker of Eternity," "The Divine Hidden Soul."

Our conception of Deity must be vast and all-embracing, if we would reach wholeness of being; so also should our vision of the world be broad, deep and inclusive. Too often we regard the world as a pleasure-resort, created for our amusement; or as a mart, where we sell our gifts for fame, our life for gain. Some of us even look upon it as a place of punishment, all trials and tears. Undoubtedly these are aspects of the world, but they are the sordid, materialistic aspects. It is that world which men renounce when they seek to live noble, exalted lives, whether in a cloister or in the home.

True renunciation does not mean exile, it means self-abandonment. Whatever nurtures selfishness or greed in us must be given up. We need not retire to a monastic cell, but we must retire from ourselves. There is great strength however, in a sincere genuine cloistral life—strength, not only for the individual, but for society as a whole. Men and women who band themselves together for the practice of self-denial, for prayer and unselfish service, form a centre of power in any community. Activity in prayer is more useful to mankind than activity in buying and selling. The world without God is an obstacle and a menace. The world permeated with God is a great opportunity.

To benefit our fellowmen we need not necessarily mingle with them. We exert a stronger influence by our thoughts than by our actions, by our life than by our words. In a sick-room it is the silent, serene presence which soothes and heals. In a disaster it is the quiet, poised man who calms and sustains. What we think and how we live, these measure our value. A thoughtful, consecrated life is the richest contribution we can make to human society; it is also the best preparation for contact with the world and its vicissitudes. When Socrates was warned by a friend that he should be preparing for his trial, his answer was: "Knowest thou not that I have been preparing for it all my life?"

It is possible to live in God and in the world at the same time, if we live in the superlative. God is always defined by superlatives. He is the most powerful, the most beneficent, the most loving. To ally ourselves with Him, it does not suffice to make our standard of choice between the good and the bad only; it must lie between the better and the best. We all know men and women who lead good lives that are drab and ineffective. They do their duty, but they make no effort to expand its area, or to swing into a wider orbit. They merely live, taking nothing from the world and giving nothing to it.

We must transcend our ordinary self if we would lead a superior existence. We must key our whole life to the superlative degree. If we serve, we must give the best of ourselves in our service. If we work, we must put into our task the highest efficiency of which we are capable. If we read, we must read only the choicest, the most elevating books. Each thought and act, each day and hour, must be an offering to the Supreme. Thus, by holding our daily living to the loftiest standard, we ally ourselves with Deity, and we see the whole world as full of God.

Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebration

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FEBRUARY 21	Illustrated Lecture by Swami Vividishananda of Washington, D. C.
FEBRUARY 22	Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Dinner (Guest Speakers, the Swamis of Boston, Providence, Chicago, and Washington, D. C.)
FEBRUARY 23	Regular Service (Guest Speaker, Swami Gnaneswarananda)
MARCH 1	Special Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday at the Chapel of the Center
MARCH 8	Public Celebration at 8:30 P.M. at Town Hall (Many distinguished speakers will participate)

NEW YORK, N. Y.

Vedanta Society, 34 West Seventy-first Street
Under the leadership of Swami Bodhananda

MARCH 1	Public Celebration
MARCH 15	Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Dinner

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

Vedanta Society, 224 Angell Street
Under the leadership of Swami Akhilananda

FEBRUARY 23	Religious Conference (Speakers from many Religious Denominations)
FEBRUARY 25	Public Dinner
FEBRUARY 28	Lectures by Swamis from New York, Washington, D. C., Chicago and Boston
MARCH 1	Illustrated Lecture by Swami Vividishananda

BOSTON, MASS.

The Vedanta Centre, 32 Fenway
Under the leadership of Swami Paramananda

FEBRUARY 27	Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Dinner (Swamis from Washington, Chicago, New York and Providence will speak)
MARCH 1	Devotional Service in honor of Sri Ramakrishna at 11 A.M. by Swami Paramananda
MARCH 1	Public Celebration at 3 P.M.
MARCH 5	Special Reception will be held in honor of Sri Ramakrishna, at 8 P.M. to welcome leaders of Religious Organizations in Boston and vicinity

WASHINGTON, D. C.

Vedanta Society, 1206 Eighteenth Street N.W.
Under the leadership of Swami Vividishananda

MARCH 8 Public Lectures by Swamis from New York, Providence and Boston

MARCH 9 Public Dinner

MARCH 10 Illustrated Lecture, Swami Vividishananda

CHICAGO, ILL.

The Vedanta Society, 120 East Delaware Place
Under the leadership of Swami Gnaneswarananda

MARCH 20 Banquet and Conference of Religions at 6:30 P.M.
(Tropical Room, Medinah Club Building, 505 N. Michigan Ave. Toast-master, Rev. Frederick B. Fisher, formerly Bishop of Calcutta, India. Many prominent guest speakers, including the Swamis from New York, Washington, Providence and Boston)

MARCH 21 Concert of Hindu Music. Scenes from Hindu Mythology and Hindu Ritualistic Dances, 8 P.M. to 10:30 P.M.

MARCH 22 Special Lectures by the Guest Swamis, 2 P.M. to 5 P.M.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

Vedanta Society, 2963 Webster Street
Under the leadership of Swami Asokananda

This Center will also appropriately observe the Centenary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna

PORTLAND, ORE.

Vedanta Society, 1206 N.W. Twenty-fifth Ave.
Under the leadership of Swami Devatmananda

This Center will also appropriately observe the Centenary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna

LA CRESCENTA, CALIF.

Ananda Ashrama, La Crescenta, Los Angeles Co., California
Under the leadership of Swami Paramananda

MARCH 29 Devotional Service 11:00 A.M.
Centenary Dinner 1:00 P.M.
Public Forum 3:00 P.M.
(Many distinguished speakers will participate)

MARCH 31 Hindu Play with Songs and Dances
(Given by the resident Hindu Sisters, under the direction of Gayatri Devi of India)

ALL ARE WELCOME

For details regarding hour, place, special speakers, etc., please inquire at the headquarters of the various local Centers.

REPORT

The spirit of the Christmas season was greatly felt in the whole atmosphere of the Boston Vedanta Centre. Lovely Christ altars were arranged in the front windows and symbolized to passers-by the feeling of devotion which emanated from the fragrant, beautifully decorated Chapel, and offered warmth of welcome to the Service within.

Swami Paramananda was not able to return in time to conduct the Christmas Eve worship, as had been expected. However, Gayatri Devi held the Service in his stead, vividly creating through her whole-hearted consecration, the presence of the Christ Child.

New Year's Eve Service was another notable occasion at the Chapel of the Vedanta Centre. Swami Paramananda came all the way from California to offer his prayers and begin 1936 with his many friends in Boston. The Chapel was filled with devout, earnest souls who wanted to prepare themselves spiritually so that their passage throughout the year might be full of safety and divine blessings. At the conclusion of the Service, refreshments were served in the Italian Room where the Swami greeted his friends and wished them all a Happy New Year.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

Christmas Eve was observed at the Temple of the Universal Spirit, Anandra Ashrama, La Crescenta, California, with deep reverence amid a hush of sanctity. As an accompaniment to the Swami's exalted words, professional singers, friends of the work, offered beautiful music. "Holy Night" was sung under the night sky, and as the song reached the listeners' ears, while the singers walked around the Temple, it seemed to transport everyone present to a different sphere of consciousness.

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"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



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FEBRUARY, 1936

Sri Ramakrishna and the Modern World

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*

"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the January Number)

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

AS the heralding of a beautiful dawn is indicated by delicate and unearthly rays of light and color, so we find throughout history the birth of truly great souls marked with supernatural phenomena. Skeptics and over-intellectuals may continue to scoff at these, but the world of spiritual reality does not stop functioning. Sri Ramakrishna's birth was not unlike that of other illumined spiritual personages whom we designate Prophets, Messiahs and Saviours of mankind. His parents also had visions and unearthly experiences which can easily fill many pages of fascinating reading. We, however, are anxious not to over-burden the minds of our readers with too many anecdotes and biographical details, but shall only relate such incidents as will portray clearly the life and teaching of this great Master of modern times.

PARENTS AND THEIR TRAITS

He was born in the year 1836—February 18—at the remote and picturesque village of Kamarpukur in Bengal. His parents were extremely poor so far as their earthly possessions were concerned; they were both, however, endowed with great spiritual wealth, and we are not speaking of their spiri-

tual wealth with figurative and poetic fancy. His father, Khudiram Chattopâdyâya, was upright, pure of mind, straightforward, independent and noble. Above all, he was a great devotee, and although he lacked earthly power and possessions, he was highly respected by the entire community for his loftiness of character. He was endowed with the gift of *Vaḳ Siddhi,* that is, whatever he uttered always came to pass.

To give a little incident of his absolute honesty and uprightness—once prior to his coming to live in Kamarpukur, a tyrannical landlord tried to induce him to appear in court and bear false witness against a poor man. Although Khudiram was wholly aware that he would be ousted from his home and all his property would be confiscated, still he remained firm to his principle of truth. This resulted in his leaving his ancestral home of Dereypore.

Chandramani Devi, his wife, was an embodiment of simplicity and kindliness. Poverty could not check her mother-heart from its spirit of service and tender compassion toward all. Their home was directly on the road to the Temple of Jagannath, Puri, so pilgrims, mendicants and beggars came to their door in great numbers, and Chandra Devi never turned anybody away, although sometimes she went without food herself and fasted in silence. She was a noble lady and her soul was completely dedicated to God. She had no desire for earthly things, as we see in later years when Mathur Babu (son-in-law of Rani Rasmani and a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna) offered her a substantial sum of money for her personal needs and comfort, which she declined with a smile.

Here in this simple setting of piety, simplicity and picturesque remoteness from all our modern turmoil, our hero was born. He was then called Gadadhar—a familiar name in

Hindu mythology—a name of Vishnu, one of the Hindu Trinity.

EXORCISING THE EVIL SPIRIT

It will be interesting to the Occidental readers to know something of Khudiram's extraordinary spiritual experiences prior to the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. One day he went to Anur, a neighboring village, to see his daughter Katyayani, who had been suffering from illness. From her symptoms, Khudiram came to the conclusion that his daughter's sickness was not merely a physical one, but that she was possessed of an evil spirit. He, being a man of great spiritual faith, prayed to God with earnestness, and addressed the evil spirit in His Name, commanding it to depart at once and free his daughter from its evil clutch. (As we have made mention before, he had the gift of prophetic utterance.) The spirit, through his daughter, at once replied with great timidity, "I am ready to depart from your daughter immediately, but I am an earth-bound spirit. If you will free me from this terrible bondage and suffering by offering *Pinda* (oblation) at Gaya, then, as soon as you start on your pilgrimage, I will leave your daughter and she will be entirely well." The magnanimous heart of Khudiram was moved with tenderness to see the sad plight of the earth-bound spirit; so he determined to make a pilgrimage to Gaya.

PILGRIMAGE TO GAYA

Gaya is a very important meeting-place for pilgrims. It is here the Hindus come in great numbers to offer *Pinda* for the emancipation of the souls of the departed. According to certain Hindu beliefs, it is one of the duties of sons to perform this rite at this holy place where the sacred relic of Vishnu's footprint is enshrined. And that is why the earth-bound spirit plead with him that it might likewise be emancipated from its burden of suffering. Gaya also became spiri-

tually important through the association with Lord Buddha, the Compassionate, who chose the hill-top of Gaya for his meditation and his final illumination—Nirvana.

An interesting insight into Khudiram's character is observed here through his undertaking the hardship of this distant pilgrimage on foot, although he was at that time about sixty years of age.

We are especially glad to relate this story of obsession and of the exorcising of the spirit, for in recent years, the whole Occidental world has been greatly interested in psychic phenomena and its various off-shoots, such as Spiritualism, Psychical Research, etc. India has always recognized the soul-existence of man after the dissolution of the body, and that the advancement and retardment of his soul entirely depends upon his thought and action during his earthly existence. Merely cultivating communication with earth-bound spirits is neither a wholesome nor a great achievement for anyone. India's highest aspiration for the spiritual goal has ever been clearly defined and kept free of all these secondary side-issues.

VISIONS OF PARENTS

Khudiram remained at Gaya for a month, performing various religious rites for his ancestors, according to holy scriptures. He had a very definite feeling that his departed forefathers were greatly pleased with his act of piety and showered their blessings upon him. He felt deeply gratified and exalted. One night after he had retired in his simple lodging, he had an extraordinary dream and found himself transported into the Temple of Gadadhar. He beheld there a luminous Being, seated on a throne, while all about, his ancestors were kneeling and offering their worship. He was beckoned to the throne by the effulgent Being who spoke to him with great tenderness and said, "I am well pleased with your devotion. I

am about to be born again, and this time I shall be born in your cottage and have you as my father." Khudiram was awe-struck. He could hardly find any word, in his dream, but he plead with the Lord, "O Lord, I am so poor, so unworthy, and I do not deserve such a favor!" The Lord in dream consoled him and pacified him, and when Khudiram awoke from his sleep and was no longer in dream, his heart was filled with unspeakable joy and wonder. He understood in his heart of hearts the Divine promise:

"O Bharata, whenever there is decline of virtue and predominance of vice, then I embody Myself. For the protection of the good and for the destruction of evil-doers, and for the reëstablishment of *Dharma* (virtue and religion) I am born from age to age."—*Bhagavad-Gita.*

Chandramani Devi likewise had had many strange visions during her husband's absence. One time she dreamt that a luminous being resembling her husband was at her side. Another time, when she was standing before the Shiva Temple with one of her friends, she perceived supernatural light darting from the Image of Lord Shiva and entering into her. She was about to relate this to her companion when she was so completely overcome by this strange experience that she fell down unconscious, and from that time, Chandra Devi was peculiarly aware that she was carrying a child. It will interest our readers that the idea of Immaculate or Supernatural Conception is not confined to the Virgin Mary. India's tradition is full of such narratives, especially in connection with her Avataras (Divine Incarnations).

After Khudiram's return from his pilgrimage, he found his beloved wife altogether transformed and transfigured, and as the husband and wife exchanged their recent actual experiences and unearthly dreams, they became stupefied with wonder. In the judgment of the world, the mystics are al-

ways regarded as mad people. Sri Ramakrishna's parents were no exception. As they related their stories of gods coming to them in their dreams and also in their waking hours, people began to whisper. Therefore, as the time went on, they decided to keep these sacred experiences to themselves. For they realized more and more that the average person was not capable of understanding their ecstasies. Also they felt overwhelmed with the sense of the sacred responsibility that was entrusted to them.

It will be interesting to observe that both the parents were past the normal age of parenthood, and according to India's great system, they were in the fourth and last stage of *Vanaprastha* (Forest-life or life of retirement from the world), when the whole life is dedicated to prayer, meditation and the worship of God.

Thus we find as the setting and background of our hero—the unspoiled, untrammelled village of Kamarpukur. There is a charm in the simplicity and the virgin beauty of such a village, where the harsh light of modern civilization has not penetrated. What would we not give—we who dream of peace and venture for spiritual attainment against so many odds of our modern life—to be in such a surrounding even for a single day, or for an hour!

BOYHOOD INSTINCTS

Sri Ramakrishna's boyhood was full of simple charm. He attracted every one who came near him. Perhaps there seems nothing unusual in this; for does not every child exert more or less this influence upon older people? But the lowly villagers and neighbors felt an irresistible drawing towards him —something quite out of the ordinary. The pure in heart, humble, kind and selfless are always blessed, as is verified throughout history.

Sri Ramakrishna's birthplace was a typical picture of virgin

beauty and unalloyed simplicity. The people who surrounded his parental cottage belonged to a humble class and were mostly blacksmiths, carpenters, cowherds and husbandmen. They were all happy, contented, care-free, God-loving souls, and to them the advent of Sri Ramakrishna was like a beautiful boon from heaven. He mingled with them freely, without any distinction of high and low or of differences in caste and social station, although he was born of very orthodox Brahmana parents. He loved them, he played with them, he associated with them so whole-heartedly that everyone thought that he was their very own. Thus in his natural self-expression of childhood days, we see the forecast of his future message and his special mission of spiritual democracy.

A definite illustration of his democratic spirit and great love for all was found when, according to the tradition of the Brahmanas, Sri Ramakrishna at a tender age was duly invested with the Holy Thread. A Brahmana is called the "Twice-born," and when he obtains this badge of his spiritual station, he literally enters into a new birth, dedicated to the service of God and man. It is customary that the lad, after he is given his Holy Thread, goes out and receives his first *Vikṣha* (alms) from some specific and distinguished person, generally related to the family. Gadadhar, however, received it from Dhani, a blacksmith's widow, and when his elder brother plead with him and reasoned with him that according to the family tradition he should not do such a thing, Gadadhar remained firm and said that he would receive these alms only from Dhani, from Dhani alone, or not at all. Also previously he had promised this poor woman that he would grant her this wish, and he could not break his word.

STAUNCHNESS TO TRUTH

This may seem to some of us as a childish whim and almost a sign of great stubbornness. With Sri Ramakrishna, how-

ever, this was a peculiar trait of great staunchness to Truth. In later years if he ever gave his word to anyone he always kept it. We learned from one of his direct disciples that once he promised a gentleman to visit his house at a certain hour, but there was so great a downpour, it seemed such an impossibility, that his host entirely gave up all hope of his coming. But he went there just the same at the appointed hour, to everyone's utter amazement. He carried this principle out in the smallest details, even in the matter of eating and drinking. If he absent-mindedly said "No," it had to be that way. He never broke his word. One of his most characteristic prayers to his chosen Ideal was:

"Do Thou, O Mother, grant that I may have pure and unalloyed devotion to Thee alone. Here is sin, here again is merit: take them both; I lay them at Thy Blessed Feet; grant unto me pure love for Thee. Here is knowledge (of many things), here again is ignorance; O take Thou them both; I lay them at Thy Feet; grant only that I may have pure love for Thee. Here are good works, here are bad: both I lay at Thy Blessed Feet. Grant, O Mother, that I may have devotion alone and love for Thee."

He could offer everything and make complete renunciation of everything with the exception of Truth. He could not say, "Here is Truth and here is untruth: take them both!" because he made a great reservation on that one Principle, and he always said that there should be no laxity in regard to Truth, even in the small concerns of life.

PLAYING WITH THE GODS

Looking into his boyhood instincts, we find that as children all over the world have their toys, such as soldiers, dolls, railroad trains, aeroplanes, or their imaginary association with fairies, so also did the boy Gadadhar have his toys and playful fancies, only in his case they had to do with gods and god-

desses of Hindu mythology. This strong instinct began to unfold even through artistic channels. He often would mould statuary resembling Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, etc. In time he became a real master. A definite proof of this he left behind him when in later years he mended a broken Image at the Temple of Dakshineswar which is even now preserved and challenges scrutiny. His parents tried to give him the usual education that was available at that time for all children, but, as we observe, Sri Ramakrishna's inherent trait takes a very definite channel. Some of his biographers have called him illiterate and unlettered, in order to prove by great contrast his remarkable spiritual wisdom. But he was by no means uneducated and uncultured. He was really an observer of life, of nature and of existence. He learned the secret of reading the Book of Life through nature. It was not by means of schooling alone that Sri Ramakrishna got his information about the scriptures and classics of India. He possessed a remarkable power of retentive memory, and as he attended the *Jatras* (Indian plays often held in the open-air) which always deal with the lives and doings of historical and spiritual personages, and as he listened to the *Kathakas,* wandering spiritual minstrels, who likewise portray the lives of the Masters through words, songs and gestures, he practically mastered Ramayana and Mahabharata, the two great Indian epics; Bhagavatam, the poetic version of Sri Krishna's life; and also the life of Sri Chaitanya. Very soon he became a real expert. He could entertain not only his playmates but older people, by giving authentic versions of these masterpieces, and by imitating the gestures and mannerisms of the professional singers and actors. This gave great delight and amusement to his audiences.

GIFT OF LIVING PORTRAYAL

Once during a theatrical performance depicting the life

of Shiva, that was given at the house of a well-to-do gentleman of Kamarpukur, the manager of the theatrical company was at a great loss, due to the sudden illness of the man who was to take the principal rôle of Shiva. However, he said if a substitute could be found they could go on with the performance, and after much deliberation, the unanimous choice fell on Gadadhar. At first he declined, saying that he could not stop the worship of Shiva, as he was fasting all day and preparing himself for the great festival of *Shivaratri* (Shiva worship). But everyone prevailed upon him and plead with him, saying that if he did not take this part it would spoil the pleasure of many, and also as he would enact the part of Shiva, his mind would naturally dwell upon the Great God and upon His holy attributes. And thus, as his friends attired him according to the traditional concept of matted locks, rudraksha beads, etc., and as they smeared his body with white ashes, the mood of young Gadadhar changed and he began to soar to another sphere. When he finally entered the stage with his slow gait, there was a hush of silence over the whole audience as he stood before them motionless as a statue. At first people thought that his silent bearing was part of the acting, but soon they realized that he had completely lost his sense-consciousness, for with the exception of his streaming eyes, he appeared one utterly dead to the sense-world. This and several other such incidents left their indelible impression upon the minds of those who witnessed them.

As we have already made reference, Sri Ramakrishna's birthplace was directly on the road to the great Temple of Jagannath, Puri, and the wealthy landlord of the village had established there a *Dharmasala* (a rest-house for pilgrims). Here Sadhus (holy men) and mendicants gathered. Sri Ramakrishna was greatly drawn to these men and often would go there to render service and listen to their spiritual discourses.

This also gave him great insight into the scriptures and classics of the Hindus.

At the age of ten, Gadadhar involuntarily revealed himself in the garb of a teacher. Once when many Pandits and theologians were discussing in order to settle an intricate religious question and the whole matter was at the point of heated argument, the boy Gadadhar, with his simple logic and childlike directness, offered the whole solution. It created a sense of stupefaction and astonishment among all present there.

It is easy for us to observe from all this how tremendously his whole consciousness was saturated with spiritual atmosphere. He would sing with his whole-hearted rapture the songs of Ram Prasad and Chandi Das. The inspired beauty and spiritual themes of these songs would transport him altogether to another realm, and as early as eleven years of age we find every indication of his great message to the world.

Thus Sri Ramakrishna's early education was a matter of absorption and assimilation. As he studied nature, as he attended these religious festivals and listened to the tales of the *Kathakas,* he learned not only the story and memorized the words, but he absorbed the spirit of the character and became one with it. Even in his infancy, when his life was full of childhood pranks, his parents could not help but think of their visions about young Gadadhar, and sometimes they would be overcome with spiritual emotions, as they cared for and fondled their young son—knowing always in their heart of hearts who he was in reality and for what purpose he was born on earth.

TO BE CONTINUED

Thine Almighty Word leaped down from heaven out of Thy royal throne. —*Wisdom of Solomon.*

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

He who knows the bliss of that Brahman, from whence all speech, with the mind, turns away, unable to reach it, he fears nothing. He does not distress himself with the thought, Why did I not do what is good? Why did I do what is bad? He who thus knows these two (good and bad) frees himself. He who knows both, frees himself. This is the Upanishad.

—*Taittirya Upanishad.*

O aching Time! O moments big as years!
All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
And press it so upon our weary griefs
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.

—*Keats.*

The end and object of all negation is to attain to subsequent affirmation, as the negative in the creed—"There is no God," finds its complement and purpose in the affirmation —"but God." Just so, the purpose of negation of self is to clear the way for the apprehension of the fact that there is no existence but the One. —*Jalal-ad-Din Rumi.*

He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at the full: As the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow giving light in the bright clouds: And as the flower of roses in the spring of the year, as lilies by the rivers of waters, and as the branches of the frankincense tree in the time of summer.

—*Ecclesiasticus.*

In ecstasy alone I see Thee face to face. —*Abulfazl.*

Ah, quite enough if one great Sannyasin like Sri Ramakrishna comes in a thousand years! For a thousand years after his advent, people may well guide themselves by those ideas and ideals he leaves behind.—*Swami Vivekananda.*

DRAW FROM WITHIN

By Swami Paramananda

(An intimate talk given to the members of Ananda Ashrama, California.)

Let us always seek to draw from within. I want to impress this upon your minds. Whenever perplexities, problems or distressing conditions arise, try to solve everything from within. Go to the Shrine, the Temple, wherever you can get your adjustment, and retire within yourself.

We know how transitory and trivial all material things are. We know it mentally, yet sometimes we forget. Let us try never to forget, and let us never try to solve anything in the ordinary way. This thought has come to me very strongly, and I hope I may always remember it myself, because when we think this way, whatever we do will not only be done well, it will have real significance.

People sometimes make a campaign for material things, if I may use that expression. Let us, then, make a very definite campaign toward building up our spiritual resourcefulness. Other things do not matter—whether we live in big places or in small places, whether the Ashrama is standing before the public in a glaring light or modestly. These things are all minor. The main thing is this: that we mould our lives so that we are strong and staunch in our spiritual dedication. If we do not do this, we indeed lose our great opportunity.

To turn within, to draw from within—that is the only cure for all ills, the only sustaining power that we may depend upon. There is nothing—no tragedy too great, no malady so incurable—that we cannot find something to counteract it if we but do not forget to go within. We cannot maintain our spiritual poise and balance unless we have more of the inward life. I have seen this in connection with great men. Whenever difficulties arise, instead of trying to overcome them by the usual means, the truly illumined souls retire

within themselves, and we should follow the same principle.

Sri Ramakrishna used to sing, "O Mind, stay in thine own house! Why dost thou go here and there, seeking—seeking? The Blissful Mother can give thee all things. Everything is there, on the threshold of thine own dwelling. There can be found all thy fulfillment." What does this mean? It means life within, and it means patience—not looking to outside differences and difficulties. We often use the word "self-sacrifice," but we cannot know its real meaning until we drop our self and our self-interest. Let us try to do this. Whatever vacancy is left will be filled with something so much bigger and better and more wholesome that we shall not be aware of any lack.

Hold together—hold fast! Just be light-hearted, full of cheer, full of faith. Certainly we have seen a great display of Divine Power.* If we forget this and only remember other things, petty things, then we are very unworthy. The real significance of spiritual understanding lies here, that we are able to forget the little things and remember the glory of God —not only remember it, but are able to remind others of that glory. Anyone who is truly consecrated to the spiritual life daily and habitually scatters blessings upon others.

I hope that I have conveyed something to you, that you may all become spiritually fortified. If we are really dedicated to the highest, then we must be strong at all times, and the only way to be strong is always to remember to turn within and ever more within, and thus free our mind of all the petty things of existence. Herein lies the difference between greatness and smallness of life and vision.

Had we not God's own power in us abiding, how could we be rapt in the Divinity. —*Goethe.*

*In connection with the marvelous saving of the Ashrama during the great fire, November 26, 1933.

GOD IS*

By M. K. Gandhi

Correspondents often invite me to answer questions about God. 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 transcends the senses.

But it is possible to reason out the existence of God to a limited extent. Even in ordinary affairs we know that people do not know who rules or why and how he rules. And yet they know that there is a power that certainly rules. In my tour last year in Mysore, I met many poor villagers and I found upon inquiry that they did not know who ruled Mysore. They simply said some god ruled it. If the knowledge of these poor people was so limited about their ruler, I who am infinitely lesser than God than they are of their ruler need not be surprised if I do not realize the presence of God, the King of kings. Nevertheless I do feel as the poor villagers felt about Mysore, that there is orderliness in the Universe, there is an unalterable Law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is not a blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings, and thanks to the marvelous researches of Sir J. C. Bose, it can now be proved that even matter is life. That Law, then, which governs all life, is God. Law and the Law-giver are one. I may not deny the Law of the Law-giver, because I know so little about it or Him. Even as my denial or ignorance of the existence of an earthly power will avail me nothing, so will not my denial of God and His Law liberate me from its operation; whereas humble and mute acceptance of Divine authority makes life's journey easier even as the acceptance of earthly rule makes life under it easier.

*From "Young India"

I do dimly perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing, ever dying, there is underlying all that change a living Power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power or spirit is God. And since nothing else I see merely through the senses can or will persist, He alone is.

And is this Power benevolent or malevolent? I see it as purely benevolent. For I can see that in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists. Hence I gather that God is Life, Truth, Light. He is Love. He is the supreme Good.

But he is no God who merely satisfies the intellect, if he ever does. God to be God must rule the heart and transform it. He must express Himself in every smallest act of His votary. This can only be done through a definite realization more real than the five senses can ever produce. Sense perceptions can be, often are, false and deceptive, however real they may appear to us. Where there is realization outside the senses it is infallible. 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.

This realization is preceded by an immovable faith. He who would in his own person test the fact of God's presence can do so by a living faith. And since faith itself cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the safest course is to believe in the moral government of the world, and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the law of truth and love. Exercise of faith will be the safest where there is a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to truth and love. . . .

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be coequal with God. I am therefore humble enough to recognize evil as such. And I call God long-suffering and patient, precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Him, and yet if there is evil, He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

I know, too, that I shall never know God if I do not wrestle with and against evil, even at the cost of life itself. I am fortified in the belief by my own humble and limited experience. The purer I try to become, the nearer I feel to be to God. How much more should I be, when my faith is not a mere apology as it is today, but has become as immovable as the Himalayas, and as white and bright as the snows on their peaks? Meanwhile, I pray with Newman who sang from experience:

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distance scene; one step enough for me."

When the soul says instinctively, "Not I, O Lord, but Thou! Thou art the Master, I am Thy servant," it has reached the end of sorrow. This is Mukti, freedom itself. Mukti can be obtained only by him who has forgotten self. Sankaracharya had a certain disciple who served him long without receiving any teaching. One day, hearing footsteps behind him, he asked, "Who is there?" and was answered by this disciple, "It is I." Then said the Master, "If this 'I' is so dear to thee, either stretch it to the infinite or renounce it altogether." —*Sri Ramakrishna.*

RETROSPECT*

By Æ (George William Russell)

I had travelled all day and was tired, but I could not rest by the hearth in the cottage on the hill. My heart was beating with too great an excitement. After my year in the city I felt like a child who wickedly stays from home through a long day, and who returns frightened and penitent at nightfall, wondering whether it will be received with forgiveness by its mother. Would the Mother of us all receive me again as one of her children? Would the winds with wandering voices be as before the evangelists of her love? Or would I feel like an outcast amid the mountains, the dark valleys, and the shining lakes?

I knew if benediction came how it would come. I would sit among the rocks with shut eyes, waiting humbly as one waits in the antechambers of the mighty, and if the invisible ones chose me as companion, they would begin with a soft breathing of their intimacies, creeping on me with shadowy affection, like children who steal nigh to the bowed head and suddenly whisper fondness in the ear before it has even heard a footfall.

So I stole out of the cottage and over the dark ridges to the place of rocks, and sat down, and let the coolness of the night chill and still the fiery dust in the brain. I waited trembling for the faintest touch, the shyest breathing of the Everlasting within my soul, the sign of reception and forgiveness. I knew it would come. I could not so desire what was not my own, and what is our own we cannot lose. Desire is hidden identity.

The darkness drew me heavenward. From the hill the plains beneath slipped away, grown vast and vague, remote and still. I seemed alone with immensity, and there came at

*From "Candle of Vision"

last that melting of the divine darkness into the life within me for which I prayed. Yes, I still belonged, however humbly, to the heavenly household. I was not outcast. Still, though by a thread fine as that by which a spider hangs from the rafters, my being was suspended from the habitations of eternity. I longed to throw my arms about the hills, to meet with kisses the lips of the seraph wind. I felt the gaiety of childhood springing up through weariness and age, for to come into contact with that which is eternally young is to have that childhood of the spirit it must attain ere it can be moulded by the Magician of the Beautiful and enter the House of Many Mansions.

I had not always this intimacy with nature. I never felt a light in childhood which faded in manhood into the common light of day, nor do I believe that childhood is any nearer than age to this being. If it were so, what would the spirit have to hope for after youth was gone? I was not conscious in my boyhood of any heaven lying about me. I lived in the city, and the hills from which aid was to come to me were only a far flush of blue on the horizon. Yet I was drawn to them, and as years passed and legs grew longer, I came nearer and nearer until at last one day I found myself on the green hillside. I came to play with other boys, but years were yet to pass before the familiar places grew strange once more and the mountains dense with fiery forms and awful as Sinai.

While the child is still in its mother's arms it is nourished by her, yet it does not know it is a mother which feeds it. It knows later in whose bosom it has lain. As the mother nourishes the body, so the Mighty Mother nourishes the soul. Yet there are but few who pay reverence where reverence is due, and that is because this benign deity is like a mother who indulges the fancies of her children. With some she imparts life to their own thoughts. Others she endows with the

vision of her own heart. Even of these last, some love in silence, being afraid to speak of the majesty which smiled on them, and others deceived think with pride: "This vision is my own."

I was like these last for a long time. I was aged about sixteen or seventeen years, when I, the slackest and least ideal of boys, with my life already made dark by those desires of body and heart with which we so soon learn to taint our youth, became aware of a mysterious life quickening within my life. Looking back, I know not of anything in friendship, anything I had read, to call this forth. It was, I thought, self-begotten. I began to be astonished with myself, for, walking along country roads, intense and passionate imaginations of another world, of an interior nature, began to overpower me. They were like strangers who suddenly enter a house, who brush aside the doorkeeper, and who will not be denied. Soon I knew they were the rightful owners and heirs of the house of the body, and the doorkeeper was only one who was for a time in charge, who had neglected his duty, and who had pretended to ownership. The boy who existed before was an alien. He hid himself when the pilgrim of eternity took up his abode in the dwelling. Yet, whenever the true owner was absent, the sly creature reappeared and boasted himself as master once more.

That being from a distant country who took possession of the house began to speak in a language difficult to translate. I was tormented by limitations of understanding. Somewhere about me I knew there were comrades who were speaking to me, but I could not know what they said. As I walked in the evening down the lanes scented by the honeysuckle, my senses were expectant of some unveiling about to take place, I felt that beings were looking in upon me out of the true home of man. They seemed to be saying to each other of us,

"Soon they will awaken; soon they will come to us again," and for a moment I almost seemed to mix with their eternity. The tinted air glowed before me with intelligible significance, like a face, a voice. The visible world became like a tapestry blown and stirred by winds behind it. If it would but raise for an instant I knew I would be in Paradise. Every form on that tapestry appeared to be the work of gods. Every flower was a word, a thought. The grass was speech; the trees were speech; the waters were speech; the winds were speech. They were the Army of the Voice marching on to conquest and dominion over the spirit; and I listened with my whole being and then these apparitions would fade away, and I would be the mean and miserable boy once more. So might one have felt who had been servant of the prophet, and had seen him go up in the fiery chariot, and the world had no more light or certitude in it with that passing. I knew these visitations for what they were, and named them truly in my fantasy, for writing then in the first verses of mine, which still seem to me to be poetry, I said of the earth that we and all things were her dreams:

She is rapt in dreams divine
  As her clouds of beauty pass.
On our glowing hearts they shine,
  Mirrored there as in a glass.

Earth, whose dreams are we and they,
  With her deep heart's gladness fills
All our human lips can say
  Or the dawn-fired singer trills.

Yet such is human nature that I still felt vanity, as if this vision was mine, and I acted like one who comes across the treasure-house of a king, and spends the treasure as if it were his own. We may indeed have a personal wisdom, but spiritual vision is not to speak of as ours any more than we can

say at the rising of the sun: "This glory is mine." By the sudden uprising of such vanities in the midst of vision I was often outcast, and found myself in an instant like those warriors of Irish legend, who had come upon a lordly house and feasted there and slept, and when they woke they were on the barren hillside, and the Faed Fia was drawn about that lordly house. Yet though the imagination apprehended truly that this beauty was not mine, and hailed it by its heavenly name, for some years my heart was proud, for as the beauty sank into memory, it seemed to become a personal possession, and I said "I imagined this" when I should humbly have said, "The curtain was a little lifted that I might see." But the day was to come when I could not deny the Mighty Mother the reverence due, when I was indeed to know by what being I had been nourished, and to be made sweet and mad as a lover with a consciousness of her intermingling spirit.

The sages of old found that at the close of intense meditation their being was drawn into union with that which they contemplated. All desire tends to bring about unity with the object adored, and this is no less true of spiritual and elemental than of bodily desire; and I, with my imagination more and more drawn to adore an ideal nature, was tending to that vital contact in which what at first was apprehended in fantasy would become the most real of all things. When that certitude came I felt as Dante might have felt after conceiving of Beatrice close at his side and in the Happy World, if, after believing it a dream, half hoping that it might hereafter be a reality, that beloved face before his imagination grew suddenly intense, vivid and splendidly shining, and he knew beyond all doubt that her spirit was truly in that form, and had descended to dwell in it, and would be with him forever more. So did I feel one warm summer day, lying idly on the hillside, not then thinking of anything but the sunlight, and how sweet

it was to drowse there, when, suddenly, I felt a fiery heart throb, and knew it was personal and intimate, and started with every sense dilated and intent, and turned inwards, and I heard first a music as of bells going away, away into that wondrous underland whither, as legend relates, the Danaan gods withdrew; and then the heart of the hills was opened to me, and I knew there was no hill for those who were there, and they were unconscious of the ponderous mountain piled above the palaces of light, and the winds were sparkling and diamond clear, yet full of color as an opal, as they glittered through the valley, and I knew the Golden Age was all about me, and it was we who had been blind to it, but that it had never passed away from the world.

GEMS FROM SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Unless one becomes as simple as a child one cannot reach divine illumination. . . . A man immersed in worldliness cannot attain to divine knowledge.

How quickly a little learning makes men vain! I was talking to such and such a one about God, but he did not care to hear, saying, "All this I know!" I said, "Does one who has been to Delhi go about boasting of it? Does a gentleman remind us that he is a gentleman?"

The tree laden with fruit always bends low. So if you wish to be great be lowly and meek. Be as free from vanity as the dead leaf carried on by the high wind.

The nearer you come to God the less are you disposed to question and reason. When you come up to Him, when you behold Him as the Reality, then all noise, all disputations are at an end. I do see that Being as a Reality before my very eyes! Why then should I reason? Knowledge relating to God keeps pace with faith. Where there is little faith it is idle to look for much knowledge.

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE INCARNATIONS

By Swami Nikhilananda

(Continued from the January Number)

I shall give you, in brief, the history of the development of the ideas of Divine Incarnation according to Christianity and Hinduism. In the Bible, we read of God the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost. These three constitute the blessed Trinity of the Christian church and Christian theology. Later on, the Word was recognized as the Incarnation or Son of God, in the Person of Jesus Christ. Now this idea is found embodied in Christian theology, that the Word became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ, who was born to redeem humanity and save the world from eternal perdition. Again, according to the Bible, God the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost are co-eternal and co-existent. These three are really One, but this conclusion of the identity of the Son with the Word was not reached by the Christians without a great deal of controversy. Up to 325 A.D., the time when Constantine convened the famous council of Nicaea, where the Nicene Creed was formulated, the Christians had not any clear idea of the relationship of Jesus Christ with the Father.

It seems to me that the early Christians did not bother very much about the relationship of the Second Person of the Trinity with God Almighty. They accepted Christ as the Son of God on His own admission as recorded in the New Testament. They did not trouble themselves to ascertain the actual relationship between Son and Father. They looked upon Christ in their simple way, as the manifestation of Divine Power. They thought that Jesus was a man of great realization, having intimate relationship with God, and who was born to show benighted humanity the path to realize Truth

in this life. They had not, at that time, entered into any theological controversies regarding Divine Incarnation. But as the Christian religion began to spread far and wide, and as people from other sects began to be converted into Christianity, the question of relationship between Father and Son arose and had to be settled. . . . We read in the first Epistle of St. John: "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are One."

The idea that Christ was the Son of God, the Incarnation of the Word, the second Person of the Trinity, was first formulated by Justin Martyr. He was born about 100 A. D. He was well versed in Greek philosophy. He knew the Platonic Trinity, he was also familiar with Pythagorean doctrines and the Peripatetic School. It was he who, after reading the Old and New Testaments, came to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was the Incarnation of the Word, and that he was the same as the Father in Heaven. As one learns from Christian records, Justin made this the first of all Christian doctrines,—that Jesus Christ, being co-eternal with the Father, is the ruler, the governor, the creator of the universe. This Trinitarian question was vehemently discussed in the Alexandrian School of Christianity. In the Alexandrian Church, all the Christian Bishops used to assemble from time to time to discuss with great violence and subtlety the question of the relationship between the Son and the Father.

There was a learned Alexandrian philosopher named Arius, who became a candidate for a bishopric of the Alexandrian Church. He formulated a very daring doctrine. He said that Christ, being the Son of God, could not be co-eternal with the Father, because a Son and Father cannot be co-eternal and co-existent. He said that if the Father begat the Son, as we read in the Bible, He that was begotten had a definite

beginning in time. There was a time, therefore, when the Son did not exist. Also he had come into existence from nothing, because God had created everything from nothing. Arius denied the co-eternity of Father and Son. This daring doctrine created a great deal of disturbance in Alexandria at that time, and the controversy reached its acme when Constantine the Great, being disgusted with the endless dissension, convened the Council of Christian Bishops at Nicaea, and told them to make an end once for all, of this futile discussion. . . . It is said that Constantine shut all the bishops in a room and peremptorily asked them to come to a decision in order to end the controversy. Of course the Arian doctrine that the Father begat the Son at a particular time was rejected at once by the bishops, but they could not find a suitable solution of the relationship between the Father and the Son, that might be universally accepted.

Constantine demanded a solution. Therefore, under imperial pressure and not by the unanimous opinion of the clergy, the Nicene Creed was promulgated, declaring the co-eternity and co-existence of Father and Son. To this Nicene Creed was attached an anathema. The Holy Catholic Church and the Apostolic See anathematized those who said that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that before he was begotten he was not, and that he was made out of nothing, or out of another substance or essence and was created as changeable, as alterable. Through the power of this anathema, the Christians were compelled to accept Jesus Christ as an Incarnation of the Father in Heaven. Arius and his followers were excommunicated. However, instead of putting an end to the controversy, the Nicene Creed gave rise to fresh dissension. This is the origin of the acceptance of Jesus Christ as an Incarnation by the majority of Christians.

Even today many Christians, particularly among the Cath-

olics, accept Jesus Christ as an Incarnation of God, on faith alone, without realizing the meaning of Divine Incarnation. But there are rational Christians who have their doubts. They ask, How is it possible for an Infinite God to be born in a manger among cowherds and shepherds. How is it possible for an Infinite God to suffer from endless tribulations, to be tempted by Satan, and ultimately to die on the cross? The Christian Church does not give any rational answer. . . . Both the Trinitarian and Christological problems are left by Christianity as an insoluble mystery.

Necessarily, according to Christian theology, there is only one Incarnation of God and that is Jesus Christ. This Incarnation of God is limited by time and by space and by nationality. God has been born once and for all as a human being in the Person of Jesus Christ. God cannot be born in any other place, He cannot be born at any other time, and He cannot be born in any other nation. This is the sort of view that does not appeal to the rational mind. I shall now come to the Hindu view of the theory of Divine Incarnation.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE OLD MENDICANT

A Story from the Buddhist Canon

In old time, when Buddha was resting in Sravasti, there was an old mendicant called Pan-teh-san who, being by nature cross and dull, could not learn so much as one *Gatha* by heart. Buddha accordingly ordered five hundred Arhats day by day to instruct him, but after three years, he still was unable to remember even the one *Gatha*. Then all the people of the country, knowing his ignorance, began to ridicule him, on which Buddha, pitying his case, called him to his side, and gently repeated the following stanza: "He who guards his mouth, and restrains his thoughts, he who offends not with

his body, the man who acts thus shall obtain deliverance." Then Pan-teh-san, moved by a sense of the Master's goodness to him, felt his heart opened, and at once repeated the stanza. Buddha then addressed him further: "You now, an old man, can repeat a stanza only, and men know this, and they will still ridicule you, therefore I will now explain the meaning of the verse to you, and do you on your part attentively listen."

Then Buddha declared the three causes connected with the body, the four connected with the mouth, and the three connected with the thoughts, by destroying which men might obtain deliverance. On which, the mendicant, fully realizing the truth thus explained, obtained the condition of a Arhat.

Now at this time, there were five-hundred *Bhikshunis* (nuns) dwelling in their *Vihara* (Retreat), who sent one of their number to Buddha to request him to send them a priest to instruct them in the Law; on which Buddha desired the mendicant Pan-teh-san to go to them for the purpose. On hearing that this arrangement had been made, all the nuns began to laugh together, and agreed on the morrow, when he came, to say the *Gatha* backward, and so confuse the old man and put him to shame. Then on the morrow, when he came, all the *Bhikshunis*, great and small, went forth to salute him, and as they did so, they looked at one another and smiled. Then, sitting down, they offered him food. Having eaten and washed his hands, they then begged him to begin his sermon. On which the aged mendicant ascended the elevated seat, and sitting down, began: "Sisters! my talent is small, my learning is very little. I know only one *Gatha,* but I will repeat that and explain its meaning. Do you listen with attention and understand." Then all the young nuns began to attempt to say the *Gatha* backwards; but lo! they could not open their mouths, and filled with shame, they hung down

their heads in sorrow. Then Pan-teh-san, having repeated the *Gatha,* began to explain it, head by head, as Buddha had instructed him. Then all the female mendicants, hearing his words, were filled with surprise and, rejoicing to hear such instruction, with one heart they received enlightenment.

REPORT

VEDANTA CENTRE, BOSTON

On Monday, January 9, the Vedanta Centre of Boston observed the 27th Anniversary of its establishment. All day long, letters, telegraphic messages and flowers came from friends in various parts of the country. In the evening, a large number gathered in the Chapel to express their warmth of appreciation. Upon the altar stood the figure "27" tastefully decorated with great abundance of flowers, while dozens of books, pamphlets and issues of "Message of the East" were strewn over the platform like the fruit offering of all these many years of Swami Paramananda's tireless service.

The Swami, as head of the work, after offering a prayer, welcomed the guests and introduced Miss Katharine Sherwood, one of the staunchest and oldest members of the Centre, and asked her to give a brief resumé of the Centre's activities during the twenty-seven years of its existence.

Swami Akhilananda, leader of the Providence Vedanta Society, was then introduced and delivered a very feelingful and appropriate Address, laying great emphasis upon the work accomplished by the Centre, especially by its founder and leader, who had actually transformed many, many lives.

Next, Gayatri Devi of India was called upon, and paid glowing tribute after first reading some of the many messages of loving congratulation sent to Swami Paramananda from such friends as (to mention a few)—Swami Nikhilananda, head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of

New York; Miss Frances Grant, Vice-president of the Roerich Museum; and Mrs. Vina Hagerty, Los Angeles.

Swami Paramananda, at the conclusion, offered his hearty thanks to all for helping to make the occasion a glowing success. Refreshments were served and a very inspirational evening was brought to a close.

Swami Vivekananda's birthday was celebrated at the Vedanta Centre on January 19 with public meetings, one at 11 A.M., when Swami Paramananda spoke on "Homage to the Guru," relating many intimate things in the great Swami's life, and one at 3 P.M., when Swami Akhilananda and Gayatri Devi spoke with eloquence on the life and influence of the great Swami, and a special program of music was offered. Due to a heavy snowstorm, many people were deprived of attending.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, PROVIDENCE

On January 14, the Vedanta Society of Providence held a banquet in commemoration of the Birthday Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Tables were tastefully arranged in the Chapel and an atmosphere of hospitality and joyousness pervaded the whole place. Swami Akhilananda, leader of the Society, lavishly entertained his guests with a sumptuous feast which he himself had prepared. Later in the evening, he spoke with deep feeling on Swami Vivekananda's Mission in America, afterwards introducing the guest speaker, Swami Paramananda of Boston, who transported the whole audience to the far distant bank of the Ganges as with profound reverence he gave an intimate glimpse into his personal association with the great Swami who was his Master. So living and vivid did he make the memory pictures which he summoned that everyone present felt as though they had actually partaken of those experiences and had stood with him beneath the compassionate, searching eyes of Swami Vivekananda.

When Rev. Frederick A. Wilmot was called upon, he said he could not speak with his usual vein of humour; rather he begged the audience to carry away with them the beautiful reality created by the Swami. Swami Akhilananda then concluded with a prayer. It was an occasion not soon to be forgotten. On the following Sunday evening a public meeting was held in honor of Swami Vivekananda.

ANANDA-ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

Enthusiastic reports have come to us of the Birthday celebration of Swami Vivekananda, held on the hill-top of La Crescenta. It was a lovely sunny day and a large number of people climbed the hill with eager spirit to pay homage to the great pioneer Swami. Two Services were held in the Temple by Gayatri Devi who with her whole heart spoke on the Life and Influence of Swami Vivekananda. Afterwards in the enclosed patio, a Hindu dinner was served in honor of the occasion. About seventy-five people partook of the feast. It was a picturesque occasion as the Ashrama Sisters and four Hindu ladies served the guests out of doors, under the beautiful warm skies of California. Many indeed felt almost transported to far-distant India.

BOOK REVIEWS

Ramakrishna, the Man and the Power.
—By Swami Gnaneswarananda
($1.00 plus postage.)

This book appears in convenient pocket-size edition. It is attractively bound and profusely illustrated. It contains not only pictures of the Great Master, but of some of his eminent disciples. The author does not attempt to give an exhaustive biographical sketch, but has written the book in popular vein, to make the life and message of the Great Master known to the world at this time of his Centenary. We feel that the

more the world knows of his great and beneficent life and message, the better it will be for the solution of many, many perplexing problems of the day. The author deals with some of the salient spiritual practices of Sri Ramakrishna, and with his relationship with some of his most intimate disciples. We quote a paragraph from the author's preface:

"Essentially, Ramakrishna is a power which will vitalize human life for ages to come. Ramakrishna, the man, was a partial demonstration of the universal power. By observing carefully the concrete illustrations of deep spiritual truths lived by the man, a sincere seeker can easily comprehend and utilize the power. That is why this book has been divided into two parts, the first, presenting the man, and the second, the power."

We earnestly hope that this book will be widely read, especially by the American public. It will be on sale at the various Vedanta Centres.

Sri Ramakrishna and St. Francis of Assisi
By Sister Devamata
($1.00 plus postage.)

A beautiful volume with exquisite binding and excellent get-up. Sister with her great gift of language and devoutness of spirit has succeeded in making the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna, as well as that of the saintly man of Assisi, vividly living. To read this book is a refreshing experience, so filled is it with lofty thoughts and charming anecdotes, replete with vital realism. It is a timely publication, as India and the world are celebrating the one hundredth Birthday Anniversary of the great Saint of Dakshineswar. We fervently hope that it will have the wide circulation it deserves, as we are certain that every reader will find in it a great deal of spiritual uplift-ment and benefit.

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"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



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MARCH, 1936

GOD PERSONAL and IMPERSONAL

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

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MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

Of The Ramakrishna Math and Mission

(On the occasion of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary)

THE dawn of the New Age is breaking over the world;—the blessed day is at hand that will illumine our hearts with the glory of its effulgence. Knowingly and unknowingly, man is moving forward along the road of salvation, inspired by the Master's message of the harmony of all religions, and by his unique realization of the essential oneness of Karma (Action), Jnana (Knowledge), Bhakti (Supreme Devotion) and Yoga (Psychic Control).

The day is not far off when all lands and seas shall witness the establishment of a universal kingdom of peace, and when in loving response to the call of the Master, all nations and peoples, in one glorious confederation joining, shall sing with jubilant acclaim, yea, with no heat of strife and no passion of controversy, the Master's message, "As many faiths, so many paths." Then the full meridian light of the Master's advent will light up this world of ours, and that song will ring from end to end and the sons and daughters of men will stand side by side under the banner of the New Age in spiritual comradeship.

May the citizens of the world on this blessed day understand the meaning of the Master's coming, and be hallowed. This and this alone is my fervent prayer.

Peace, peace, peace unto all!

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

So long as thou art a person with an *individuality* of thy own, God will, if it so pleaseth Him, manifest Himself to thee as a Person. —*Sri Ramakrishna.*

He is neither manifest nor hidden, He is neither
revealed nor unrevealed:
There are no words to tell that which He is.
—*Kabir.*

These have seen according to their sight. —*Tennyson.*

The TAO (Divine Way) that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging TAO. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging Name. . . . Conceived of as having no name, It is the Originator of heaven and earth; conceived of as having a name, It is the Mother of all things. . . . Together we call them the Mystery.
—*Tao-Teh King.*

And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness (for the mountain did burn with fire), that ye came near unto me . . . and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth.
—*Deuteronomy.*

Wonderful Thy word! Wonderful Thy knowledge!
Wonderful Thy creatures! Wonderful their species!
Wonderful Thy wind! Wonderful Thy water!
Wonderful the earth! Wonderful the sources of production!

Wonderful Thy nearness! Wonderful Thy remoteness!
These wonderful things beholding, I remain wondering.
They who understand them are supremely fortunate.
Wonderful to behold Thee present!
—*Guru Nanak.*

GOD PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL

Swami Paramananda

Let us in this hour of silence lift our thoughts and prayers to the One Infinite, All-Abiding Spirit of this great Universe —the One Who is the Embodiment of all blessedness, the Giver of all gifts.

Let us make our hearts guileless, childlike, simple.

Let us have no other thought but of the One—

The One Who permeates and pervades all—

That we may at this moment be united with that great Spirit and forget all else.

May He bestow upon us His loving and abiding protection and keep us ever and ever in peace.

Peace! Peace! Peace be unto us, and to all living beings!

As I give this ancient Peace Chant, it comes upon me with vivid reality how different were the ways of the ancient thinkers from those of our modern times. They sought first to establish their connection with spiritual reality before undertaking anything whatsoever. It was their basis for the practical working out of all human problems, and was a habit from which they never departed.

It is not that we of the present day have altogether lost our faith and idealism. We live in an age of such practicality that our energies have been concentrated on one province only, the material, and that is why we have achieved great material success. It has, however, caused us oftentimes to forget to establish our connection with the Supreme Being.

The theme I am to consider is "God Personal and Impersonal."

There is a tremendous complex in the minds of people on this subject. Some can only accept God as personal, in a very dogmatic way. To think of Him as impersonal is perplexing to the average mind, because the average mind does

not think in terms of pure infinitude. On the other hand, those who do look upon God as infinite are reluctant to consider Him in any personal aspect. They cannot believe that He can be approached as Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved or Guide. I say that neither of these is the true conception. God is both personal and impersonal. You can not call God omnipotent, and then put up barriers around that Infinite, so that It can go no further. Neither can He be limited as to His manner of expression. From the great Indo-Aryan mystics and seers, and especially from our great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, comes a more acceptable and comprehensive view of the matter. He brings out with fresh reality that God without attributes—infinite, unbounded, beyond name and form—is like a boundless body of water, but that this water can also manifest in another way. One day we find that ice-bergs have formed. The body of water has become something more definite. So, in the same manner, out of the boundless Ocean of Infinitude, can come forth definite, concrete manifestations.

First of all, therefore, I am going to ask you to visualize your ideal, for otherwise it will be vague. That is the trouble with most thinkers and idealists,—they have a conception of the Beautiful, the Infinite, but they do not give it any practical, definite form; therefore, though sometimes there is a certain stimulus, there can be no productive quality. This definiteness we glimpse through the lives of the practical mystics. We find that they are not satisfied with the idea that God is a formless, theoretical something.

In this connection I cannot help thinking of the struggle that took place in the mind of Swami Vivekananda. Although he was an intellectual, rational person, he went everywhere with great earnestness trying to find someone who had seen God. Among others, he approached Keshab Chandra

Sen, the leader of the Indian Unitarian movement, the Brahmo Samaj,—a great orator and preacher, monistic, but also a devotee. Swami Vivekananda as a youth was tremendously fascinated by him, and thought, "If anybody knows about God, this man does." One day he said to him, "You must have realized God. Sometimes you pray as if you were actually in contact with Him." "I picture Him in my imagination," replied Keshab. It was a tremendous blow to Swami Vivekananda. Was it all then merely man's fancy? He wanted something real or nothing. His reaction was a strange one. Intellectually he was willing to hold a concept of That which has no limits, but actually his mind sought a concept of form on which to rest. The mind finds great refreshment and satisfaction in such concepts. So he went on wandering and seeking, and almost he thought that he was going to become an atheist when he was brought face to face with a man not like other men, and a great transformation came upon him. This man did not have the polished expressions of the intellectuals, nor did he have knowledge of the various codes of religion; but he *knew,* definitely. Religion was a reality with him. Swami Vivekananda asked this man, "Have you seen God?" and this man, Sri Ramakrishna, replied, "I have, as clearly as I see you, and not only have *I* realized Him, but *you* can realize Him—every one can."

When this realization is born in the heart, then it is not that we merely call God "Father," He becomes our Father, our Guide, our protection; it is not that we address God as "Mother," She does take care of us. This perhaps would be no solace if it were not translatable into something practical, and it is this practical aspect that I am going to bring you. It helps greatly to have something beautiful, something real on which to call in time of need. I know that those who con-

sider themselves rationalists are reluctant to accept anything that might seem dogmatic; but as in the case of Swami Vivekananda, it would seem necessary to make one's concept a reality or not to pronounce it. Though man intellectually may hold a concept that God is infinite, yet if he thinks of Him at all, he has to do so in form. Although he may say, "God the Father is omnipotent," when there is any practical problem to solve, he does not go to God the Father, he goes rather to Man the Father—to some banker, lawyer or doctor. Theoretically we may believe, but when it is a matter of practical realization, we come right down to earth. That is all we know definitely. The other is indefinite. Therefore it is of no great help to us. We must make our spiritual idealism a definite factor.

If through meditation you absorb the spirit of Infinitude and altogether lose yourself, it is, of course, a blessed experience. Your little self is gone, your personal suffering is no more and your personal aggressiveness has vanished. You become the mouthpiece of the Infinite—something concrete, actual. People come to you for solace, satisfaction, inspiration. Once you possess the Real, material things do not matter. You see them as a passing panorama. They no longer exist except as *Maya*—relative existence, with no abiding quality. Nothing should bother you when you realize that God is always present, a definite, personal factor in your life. Thus when you have made your religion a personal thing, your personality becomes transformed.

It is a tremendous step even to try to contemplate God as infinite, boundless Spirit. We cannot concentrate our mind upon it, for it is the nature of the mind to think of Him as Father, Mother, Friend—One Who is inseparable from us, Whose voice we can hear. Therefore, to venture something of which we have no concept, which we cannot see, feel or

hear, is to invite confusion. We cannot say vaguely that God is everywhere and then worship Him with conviction. To demonstrate it, we must have an object to which we can draw close.

Man cannot define God. Volumes have been written by those who have tried to do so. In the Upanishads we find the wise proclaiming, "He is beyond mind and speech." He cannot be expressed by the crust of dogma. Philosophically we know these things, yet the heart of man craves for something definite through which the Great Heart of Love, Wisdom and Intelligence will become manifest. We have, no doubt, a certain amount of power. When we have polished the mirror, it has the capacity to reflect. Same way, when we polish our heart and free it from all blemish, it reflects clearly the image of perfection, according to our own vision of it. But for anyone to say, "I have all of God in my particular creed!" would be as ridiculous as for a traveller who has crossed the water to say, "I know all the Atlantic Ocean."

In the intelligent structure of Indo-Aryan thought, Truth is established on the very essential fact that the Infinite Being is One, although He may be addressed by many names and worshipped differently. So those who have true understanding, find that great eternal Being in everything, especially within themselves.

Swami Vivekananda says, "We have nothing to do but to stand aside and let God work. The more we go away, the more God comes in. Get rid of the little 'I' and let only the great 'I' live." What do you gather from this? When we regard our modern life, how tremendously out of place such a concept seems,—to recognize God as the Actor, the Doer, the Primary Being, and hold oneself as a tool in His hands. The assertive man has to renounce his ego if he would have God work through him. In order that God may become a

reality, not just an intellectual concept, it is necessary to focus the mind, so that in some way we can establish inner communion, make our contact with Infinity. This is an individual problem for each and every one of us,—because what is suitable for one may not be suitable for another. The scope is great. God is infinite. That is why we are often unable to comprehend some one else's approach, especially when it seems contrary to our own.

I have great difficulty in understanding how people can become fanatical. In one breath they say, "God is all in all—the Father of men!" and in the next breath attack with hate and bitterness a group of people who do not believe as they do. Those who do not accept the same religion or the same way of approach are often set upon by sword and gun. All this narrowness of human heart can be cured only by definite knowledge. It is not that there is one God for the Chinese, another for the Japanese, another for the Hindus—He is One, only One; yet that One has an infinite number of expressions to suit the needs of mankind. Unfortunately, however, men are often not aware that they need that One more than anything else.

"Cast thyself into the two arms of God. To thy silent meditations add prostrations on the ground." This is from a great Egyptian seer. The poet and the mystic can bring thoughts like this forth with such an outburst only when they are the outcome of intense feeling. To them God has become real. He is no longer vague and far away. As one mystic says: "It is better to be poverty-stricken than not to have God, and the greatest riches is to have God with you." We cannot believe this unless we are like-minded. That is not to say that we have to settle down into a state of helpless materialism. Merely because our modern times have produced materialism doesn't mean that the world will always

be materialistic. There is change, growth. Philosophers call it evolution; not necessarily evolution of man from insects; the mind also unfolds. Science is finding out secrets of nature which are linking it inevitably with the religious viewpoint. It has spent thousands of years to come to these conclusions, but we want it to go further.

As we evolve spiritually we find few with whom we can share our life. People said Sri Ramakrishna was insane. If he was given gold, he gave it away. He would take dirt in one hand and gold in the other and interchange them till they became for him one and the same thing. So they called him a madman, at which Swami Vivekananda said, "Let us produce more men with such madness!" Sri Ramakrishna worshipped God in the Images in the Temple, but he found God not only in Images—he found Him in men and women, birds, beasts, even in trees. One day someone carelessly broke a branch and he said, "It gives me pain as though you had struck me!" The world has need of such men.

I hope I have said nothing that is not clear. It is not for me to preach to anyone. It is not by preaching that we can convey the spirit of God, nor has it anything to do with East or West. God must speak through us, vibrate through us. He must be real, not a theory. We must live our idealism. The man who knows Divinity cannot raise his voice; he becomes hushed. If ever he had hate in his nature, it is gone. He is washed and cleansed, he is completely transformed; because no one can contact God, whether personally or impersonally, without the whole nature being changed. He becomes the embodiment of love.

I do not ask that you should suddenly change your attitude and instead of meditation and communion with the Infinite Spirit, begin to worship a form. Follow whatever path you like, but let it be definite. We must have something definite on

which to meditate, and that definiteness can come only as we definitely relate ourselves to our spiritual Ideal. Dadu, the Indian poet, mystic and philosopher says:

"Meditate, therefore, on the mysterious affinity between God and the soul. Even as you see your countenance reflected in a mirror or your shadow in the still water, so behold the Lord in your minds, because He is with all. He that formed the mind, made it as it were a temple for Himself to dwell in; for God liveth in the mind and nothing but God."

Although he was a worshipper, he did not forget that the only way God can be contacted is to find Him in the mind as a definite, Divine Essence. In fact, the mind is designed as a temple. But how far removed we are from this concept! We think the mind is to play with. When a man is clever, calculating, a politician, an aggressor, we say, "Here is a great man!" But the really great, the really wise, the really godlike man is one whose mind is completely possessed with the spirit of God, whose temple is so constantly filled with that abiding Presence, who so radiates God, that it is restful and soothing to be in his atmosphere. Whatever helps us to be like that, whether a concept of the impersonal Deity, or a more personal relation, as we see exemplified in Sri Ramakrishna, is blessed.

I hope that what I have said will strike a spark within you, that you may try to make this a real experience in your life, and that even unconsciously you may give this stimulus to others. For without God we are like vessels, rudderless, at the mercy of the storm—the storm of doubt, fear, and all those elements which play havoc in the world. If, however, we anchor our life, fasten it even in a small way, to the Divine Reality, then those elements are vanquished, because where He is there is no ill. When the sun shines there cannot be any darkness, cloud or misgiving. So through prayer,

meditation, lofty thoughts, kind deeds, service—through all these means—let us make God so real to us that we shall live with Him, walk with Him, talk with Him, seek His counsel; and if at first we find nothing, if no answer comes to us, let us not be discouraged. Perhaps more layers will have to be removed from the mind before we can behold that All-Beautiful One who dwells within each and every one of us. Be vigilant, therefore, that it may be your great good fortune to know, and thus be free.

"Arise, awake! and stop not till the goal is reached!"

THE HOLY OF HOLIES

By Gilbert Keith Chesterton

"Elder father, though thine eyes
Shine with hoary mysteries,
Canst thou tell what in the heart
Of a cowslip blossom lies?

"Smaller than all lives that be,
Secret as the deepest sea,
Stands a little house of seeds,
Like an elfin's granary.

"Speller of the stones and weeds,
Skilled in Nature's crafts and creeds,
Tell me what is in the heart
Of the smallest of the seeds."

"God Almighty, and with Him
Cherubim and Seraphim,
Filling all eternity—
Adonai Elohim."

HOMAGE TO SRI RAMAKRISHNA

FROM "THE POET"

To the Paramhansa
Ramkrishna Deva

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

—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

* * *

FROM A FRENCH PILGRIM

It is related that when Sri Ramakrishna, in the first days following his great ecstasy in the bosom of identity—and this was after Totapuri's departure—allowed his consciousness to return to earth, he saw two boatmen quarrelling in hatred. And because of this hatred, as from a wound, his heart was bleeding, and he screamed; the sufferings of the universe were torturing him. For all the pains of the world were imprinting themselves into the tender flesh of his reawakening consciousness.

What would he have felt, what would he have suffered, in these days of the present world, when the whole humanity seems given up to hatred, when war rages or smoulders everywhere under the ashes, between nations, between races, between classes!

But the mighty Swan (Paramahamsa) had wings that enabled him to hover above life. If he did not try to detach himself from life, as so many mystics do, to avoid its sufferings, it is because universal love, which was to him a second

sight, revealed to him in a flash, in the presence of human misery, that "Jiva is Siva,"—that the living being is God,—that whoever loves God must unite himself with Him in sufferings, in misery, even in errors and excesses, in the terrible aspect of human nature. . . .

And that is what you, following his example, have been able to accomplish, you whose monastic Ramakrishna Mission, like your emblem, the swan, covers the unhappy with its wings and helps them as brothers. . . . You are the bearers in this storm-tossed world, of the Supreme Harmony wherein must blend and melt away all combats and opposite efforts. It is your proper role, your privilege, and your sacred duty: to radiate peace, order and unity in the chaos in which peoples are blindly at odds with one another. Be like Sri Ramakrishna, the wide-spreading banyan tree in whose shade thousands of souls, weary and wounded in the fight, come for shelter and peace. Pour on them the balm of reconciliation, which is the fruit of reason no less than love. We know well that the most wicked are but misguided. They know not what they do. . . . The inspired poet Victor Hugo, speaking of those who wanted to harm him, uttered these beautiful words, so allied to the wisdom of India:

—"Oh! fool, who thinkest that thou art not I! . . ."

It is the supreme miracle of Ramakrishna that in him "thou" is "I," that the whole world is not only reflected, but incarnate in a man's heart,—that God is realized on earth, in his universality and his multiplicity. . . . "*Jiva is Siva.*" . . .

And Ramakrishna works in him—in us—this divine Identity.

—*Romain Rolland.*

FROM AN INDIAN SCHOLAR

Whether we believe in an Avatar or not, all of us recognize that light can be transmitted through the help of sparks of fire. It is many years since the earthly life of Paramahamsa

Deva came to an end. But the light that he brought to this world is still burning. Even today, millions of people, men and women, rich and poor, scholars and the illiterate, the happy and the miserable, the high caste and the low, reading his life and hearing his teachings, have been able to tune their life to a higher key. His life has brought solace to many a heart afflicted with sorrow and has shown that the Kingdom of Heaven can be brought to this earth.

—*Sir Judanath Sarkar, C.I.E.*

FROM AN AMERICAN AUTHOR AND PSYCHOLOGIST

There is no doubt that Ramakrishna had this power of transmitting to those about him the flaming zeal for the highest which dwelt within his own soul, and eventually consumed his mortal life. . . . Men who possess this power are rare indeed. But when they appear, the influence they exert must seem almost supernatural. Probably it is not supernatural in the ordinary sense of that word; probably it conforms to the real laws of the human spirit. But do we as yet know those laws? I do not think we find them in the text books on psychology.

No age has needed men of this stature more than ours. No age has been more in danger of making such men and their influence impossible. It is well to provide external conditions which will make evil doing less easy and moral living less difficult. But complete, fervent, joyous contagious dedication to the highest spiritual life, together with the conviction that comes through vision, is the gift only of religion. . . . Many of us in the West have been brought up to believe that India is the stronghold of religion. I hope it is, but I am not so sure of its strength as I should like to be. Hence my gratitude to Ramakrishna, and my earnest hope that the Order which grew out of his flaming soul may communicate his spirit to more and more of his fellow countrymen.

—*Prof. James B. Pratt.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the February Number)

As the flower seed holds in its secret bosom all the intrinsic virtue of its future blossoming, so we find in boy Gadadhar, (Sri Ramakrishna), in his childhood traits, the marks of his great future. His charm was magnetic. The simple villagers who came in his contact felt an irresistible drawing towards him, and would often come to his house with sweetmeats and fruits as their token of affection. There were some endowed with spiritual intuition, who recognized in him something more than a mere Brahmin boy. A close friend of his father often urged him to bring boy Gadadhar to his house, and would confide to Khudiram: "I do not think that your son is an ordinary one. I see divine marks on his body. His presence always gladdens my heart. I wish you would bring him to my house more frequently." His parents themselves were often puzzled by certain strange behaviour of Gadadhar, unlike that of other boys. For instance, he developed a strange aversion towards book-learning. His simple logic was that anything that did not give him the direct knowledge of God was not worth having. Was not the end and aim of book-knowledge material gain? His mind, however, continued to dwell on religious classics—the stories of the great epics, — Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavatam, Chaitanya Lila and devotional songs of great mystics, such as Ram Prasad, Chandi Das, Kamala Kanta, and so forth. As he became more and more absorbed in the thoughts of religious ideals and the Divine Incarnations, he would completely lose his outer consciousness, and often when he told the stories to his listeners about Rama and Krishna and Chaitanya, he would become identified with these characters.

The sense of Divine beauty was a potential factor in his life, even from his early boyhood. He himself related to his devotees and disciples one of the incidents which took place when he was a lad of only six or seven.

"One day in June or July," so he told them in substance, "I was walking along a narrow patch separating the green paddy fields, carrying a small basket filled with puffed rice for my luncheon. Looking up at the sky while eating the rice, I beheld a dark thunder-cloud. It spread rapidly and was about to envelop the whole sky when, suddenly, a flock of snow-white cranes flew along that somber cloud-bank. The contrast was so beautiful that it drew my mind to far regions. Lost to outward sense, I fell down, scattering the puffed rice on all sides. Some people found me in that plight and carried me home. That was the first time I completely lost my consciousness in ecstasy."

It was difficult for even his parents to understand the significance of such an act on the part of a little child. They feared that it was some ailment that had overtaken him, and sought means to prevent a repetition of such an experience. He, on his part, tried to assure them that it was no disease or fit or anything abnormal that had overtaken him, but that at the sight of the beautiful, he had felt overcome by a strange and inexpressible joy within. This joy of God, the eternal *Anandam,* became the most dominant factor in Sri Ramakrishna's matured life. It was this bliss of God he experienced again and again in the state of Samadhi, and this bliss of God he wanted to share with world-weary and unhappy mortals.

A great shadow fell upon the whole family at the passing away of Khudiram. Gadadhar felt his father's loss keenly, although he was at this time only nine years of age. The entire responsibility of the family now fell upon Ram Kumar,

the eldest brother. Not only did he feel the necessity of maintaining the family, but also and especially he felt that his younger brother, Gadadhar, should have proper education. We have already related to our readers various unusual incidents that took place in Gadadhar's early life in connection with the ceremony of the Holy Thread, his association with the Sadhus or religious mendicants, his great gift of moulding images of gods and goddesses, and his artistry in connection with producing dramas depicting classical heroes of India. His elder brother did not interfere in any way with Gadadhar's natural inclinations and his intense absorption in spiritual thoughts, but he was anxious that Gadadhar should have some secular knowledge. Finally, he persuaded him to come to Calcutta where he had established a Tol or Academy. There Gadadhar was entrusted with the performance of the priestly duties, which were part of the heritage of his Brahmana birth, thus relieving his brother so that he could more fully carry on his educational work.

One of the principal reasons for Ram Kumar to bring his brother to Calcutta, however, was that the new surroundings and the stimulus received from the atmosphere of a great metropolis might cause a change in his mental attitude. But, as we have said before, Gadadhar was an observer. He was a reader of the inner Book of Life. He saw that most people, in spite of all their learning and high-sounding theories about the unreality of the world, were primarily attached to the fleeting things of life and only professed secondary interest in God. Very few, he found, were concerned with the Ultimate. Later on, he very graphically described their condition in the parable of the vultures, whom he compared to the so-called learned men. A vulture may rise very high, but his eyes are always seeking for dead matter and carrion. So are the Pandits and men of learning who know all the high

and lofty truths of the scriptures, but whose minds are attached to the small and petty things of the world. Gadadhar's mind was greatly agitated in regard to the futility of life, and he often struggled within himself and yearned with his whole heart to find the solution. Thus he would say to his brother: "What shall I do with mere bread-winning education? I would rather acquire that wisdom which will illumine my heart and by obtaining which, one is satisfied forever."

About this period, a very significant thing happened which definitely linked the life of Gadadhar with his future mission. It was the establishment and dedication of the Temple of Dakshineswar, where the major part of his life-drama was to be enacted. It will be interesting to our readers to know something about the origin of this Temple.

There was at that time living in Calcutta a very wealthy widow named Rani Rasmani. She had many unusual traits. She was not at all timid like most Hindu women; she was full of courage and presence of mind and resourcefulness. Above all, she was full of piety and was a friend of the poor. It is told that once the government levied a tax on certain poor fishermen, the majority of whom were her tenants. Hearing of their sad predicament, she readily made a contract with the government for fishing rights, covering a large portion of the Ganges. Then by ingenious means, she blocked off the river in several places by huge chains. This, of course, made it practically impossible for the English ships to pass over that area. When the authorities complained about it, she told them that in order to have the proper fishing facilities, it was necessary to do this and, furthermore, she was protected in doing it by the terms of the agreement. When the government found out the real reason for her action, it dropped the idea of taxation, and thus a reconciliation was brought about.

Her chosen Ideal was Kali, the great Mother of the Universe, and her one consuming desire was to go on pilgrimage to Benares to offer her worship there at the holy Temple. When she actually set out, however, with her entourage, in many boats, she had a strange experience which changed her entire plan. One night, the Mother Kali came to her in dream and asked her to give up her pilgrimage and instead, build a temple on the bank of the Ganges at the village of Dakshineswar, and install Her there. Thus it was that the present picturesque and imposing Temple of Dakshineswar, with its many graceful, lofty towers and natural scenic beauty, came into being.

After the whole work was completed, at the end of about eight years, there arose a great difficulty in connection with its dedication. Rani Rasmani was of low caste and therefore the orthodox priests refused to participate in the dedication ceremony. Pandit Ram Kumar, elder brother of Gadadhar, looked upon this with more liberal attitude, however, and thus was appointed as the officiating priest. A month afterwards, through a strange turn of destiny, he became ill and was incapable of any longer conducting the Services in the Temple, so boy Gadadhar was requested to take his brother's place.

We now begin to witness the real passion of devotion for the living God. As the devout young priest sat before the Image, he questioned whether it *was* the living God that he was worshipping, or was he merely observing the set rules of ritual? He could not offer worship to an inanimate Image, but he prayed with his whole heart that he might have definite contact with the Mother Whom he sought. He became so absorbed in his daily worship, so completely transported to another realm of Reality, that he would sit by the hour, singing hymns, talking with the Mother, praying to her

with all the passion of his soul. His intensity grew so great that he was no longer able to follow the usual routine or think of his bodily requirements, such as food, drink or sleep. People began to whisper that, alas, the young priest had gone mad. For did they not hear him carry on conversation with the Image? Did they not observe him doing things unlike ordinary people? Gradually the rumors reached the ears of the Rani and her son-in-law, Mathur Babu, who, from the very beginning, had felt a peculiar drawing to the young priest, but they both desired that he should be left to his life of spiritual communion unmolested.

The news also reached his native village of Kamarpukur, and his anxious mother and brothers thought it best to arrange a suitable marriage, that his mind might be brought down to the practical world from the height of spiritual ecstasy. Throughout his life, Sri Ramakrishna exhibited a marked degree of humility. At no time did he ever turn a deaf ear to other voices. He always had childlike faith and great flexibility of character, except when it involved his *Ishtam* or Ideal. Also he had a very great tenderness and devotion for his mother, as well as unbounded faith in her judgment, and ever tried to do things that were pleasing to her. Therefore, when she suggested his marriage, he accepted it without question and returned to the village. Furthermore, while they were seeking for the bride, he himself told them where they would find her. For his inner spiritual intuition led him to the one who was set apart to be his *Sahadharmini*, or the spiritual partner of his life. In this manner, Saradamani Devi, who was then still only a very little girl, was chosen for his bride. Immediately after the ceremony, she returned to her parents' home, as is the Indian custom, to remain until her maturity, and he went back to Calcutta. But the marriage instead of toning down Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual

ardor seemed rather to intensify it. Thus, once more, we find him in the Temple of Dakshineswar, giving himself more passionately to the realization of the Mother. Often he would be seen at the sunset hour, shedding bitter tears that another day was passing and he had not attained God. He would cry like a child in pain, unable to bear the separation from Mother:

"O Mother, where art Thou—where art Thou? I cannot bear life without Thee! Another day has come and another day has gone, yet I have not found Thee! Mother come! Mother come! I can endure no longer!"

Passers by who saw this spectacle, stood in amazement and were themselves moved to tears. Even hard-hearted and worldly-minded people were touched by his supplications and wished that he might have his prayers fulfilled.

Mathur Babu had real feeling for Sri Ramakrishna. Thus when the rumor of his madness grew and became more serious, he consulted all the great physicians and tried to find a cure. At last there came a doctor who told Mathur Babu that Sri Ramakrishna's madness was not an ordinary one, that it was the madness of a devotee, and furthermore he said that Sri Ramakrishna was a great Yogi.

A day came when Sri Ramakrishna felt that he could bear the separation from the Mother no longer—that he would put an end to it all—and he actually planned to do away with his physical existence. It was at this moment of great storm, raging within his soul, that the All-Merciful Mother appeared to him, and from that instant his whole nature became like that of a little child constantly dependent upon the guidance of its mother's hand. He did nothing without first asking the Mother. But there were times when he wondered if his visions were true or a matter of hallucination, as some people thought, and at those times he suffered agonies of

doubt. Then he would plead with the Mother, saying, "I will believe in it all if Thou wilt bring such and such a person to me." And invariably that person came. One day, he made the most impossible bargain with the Mother. He said, "If Thou wilt bring the two young daughters of Rani Rasmani this afternoon, and have them come and speak to me under the great Banyan tree, then I will believe." Strange as it may seem, these two young ladies, who practically never left their zenana to go out in public, had a strong desire to see the Temple that very day, and procured a special permission to go there. Sri Ramakrishna himself was greatly astonished when he saw them standing before him, almost at the very hour he had wished they would come. And not only did they come, but they called him by name, as though they had known him before, and asked him to be consoled, for surely Mother Kali would have mercy upon him.

Day by day his spiritual ecstasies grew, and the visions came to him more frequently. Finally it was no longer possible for him to follow the customary ritualistic ceremonies in the Temple. For instance, the flower garlands and sandal paste intended for the adornment of the Symbol of the Deity, he would put on his own person. Sometimes he would remain seated in devotional rapture for hours, oblivious of hunger and thirst and time and space.

At first, Mathur Babu, who managed the affairs of the Temple, objected strongly to all these irregularities and tried to rectify them. But one day, he saw Sri Ramakrishna walking through the Temple corridor completely transfigured, appearing to him as Lord Shiva Himself. From that time on, he looked upon him as his *Ishtam* or Ideal, and addressed him always as Father. Later on, he appointed Sri Ramakrishna's nephew to conduct all the regular Services in the Temple, thus leaving Sri Ramakrishna free to live his life unhindered.

It will be interesting to observe that Sri Ramakrishna was never a theorist. His mind was peculiarly bent upon practical demonstration in regard to what is ordinarily termed "the unseen." He never wanted to accept anything without definite proof. In this respect, his mind was comparable to the minds of the great scientists, and his apparent lack of learning, instead of being a handicap, was more of an asset, because his mind was entirely uncolored and unbiassed. He made himself a channel through which the Infinite Power could flow with unalloyed clarity.

To Be Continued

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE INCARNATIONS

By Swami Nikhilananda

(Continued from the February Number)

The Hindu view of Incarnation seems to be more acceptable [than the Christian]. Hinduism does not invoke any imperial decree nor does it coerce people or intimidate them with fear of hell fire in order to make them believe in the Incarnation of God in human form. There are many orthodox Hindus of good standing who do not believe at all in the Incarnation theory. We find different strands of thought in the Hindu theory of Incarnation.

No mention is made in the Vedas of God being incarnated in human form. There we find that spiritual realization comes to those who have pure hearts. In the hearts of pure men and women is revealed the Spiritual Truth which is beyond our sensuous perception, beyond our ordinary experiences of life, and which gives us the vision of the other world. The whole Hindu religion is based upon this direct perception of Truth by the great Seers, whom the Vedas call the Rishis.

Rishi means a seer of Truth. These Rishis were innumerable at the time of the Vedas. Anyone who experienced any super-sensuous truth beyond the perception of our sense-organs was known as a Rishi. Perhaps at that time of spiritual evolution in India, the people did not distinguish between higher and lower manifestations of Truth. Therefore all discoverers of Truth, without any distinction, were recognized as Rishis or Seers. In course of time, as our spiritual ideas evolved and as our intellect became more and more clarified, we began to distinguish between the higher and lower forms of Truth. We began to see that some of the Rishis were greater and occupied a higher position than others. Or, in other words, among the Rishis there were some who shone like glow-worms, there were some who shone like stars, there were some who shone like the moon, and there were a few who shone like the sun. This classification of the Rishis according to their realization came much later in the evolution of Hindu spiritual ideas and ideals. Those who occupied the highest position among the Rishis were known as the *Adhikarika Purusha,* or men born, as it were, with a special message and mission to give unto humanity.

Then we come to another system of philosophy known as the *Sankhya.* Kapila, the founder of the Sankhya system of philosophy, did not believe in God, but he believed in super-sensuous perceptions. According to atheistic Kapila, the liberation of man consists in his realizing himself as the *Purusha* or the conscious soul. According to the Sankhya philosophy, every soul is by nature conscious, wise, pure and stainless. But this soul, or the conscious element in us, comes in contact with inert nature or *Prakriti,* consisting of three qualities, *Sattva, Rajas and Tamas*—the qualities of light, activity and inertia. On account of this contact, the consciousness of the soul reflects nature or Prakriti, like the reflection

of a red flower in a white crystal. The soul identifies itself with this reflection and thinks that it has the qualities which really belong to Prakriti or nature. This is the cause of the bondage and transmigration of the soul, the cause of its birth and death, the cause of its misery and suffering. The liberation of man consists in his discriminating between the Purusha and Prakriti. When the soul, by discrimination, perhaps through many births, finds himself absolutely independent of Prakriti or nature, he passes into the state of liberation. It means the isolation of the Purusha.

According to the Sankhya philosophy again, some souls, just on the threshold of liberation, look upon world's suffering, misery and delusion with great pity and compassion, and refuse to enter into the state of Bliss. Though that state is in their grasp, they willingly forego the pleasure and ecstasy of liberation, out of compassion for others, and prefer to remain in the state of Undifferentiated Nature. It is called the state of *Prakritilina* in the Sankhya philosophy. Such souls merge themselves in nature. Our power, our wisdom, our knowledge and all the forces we find in this phenomenal world come from nature, and when those souls merge themselves in nature, they can control the different forces. They become omniscient. From that position they can exercise benign and helpful influence upon humanity for its redemption. In that state they are known as *Isvara-Koti*. They belong to the category of God or the Supreme Lord. The Sankhya philosophy does not believe in God in the theological sense. But these souls are so pure, so uncontaminated, so unselfish and so loving that they are supposed to possess almost all the Divine attributes.

Again, we see method and order in the universe. There is a vindication of Truth and justice, and an ultimate chastisement of vice and iniquity. When we look at the moral order

which pervades this creation, we must come to the conclusion that there is a wise Director, a wise Governor, as it were, of this universe. Though the Sankhya philosophy does not believe in a Personal God, yet it believes that one of those liberated souls who remain absorbed in the Undifferentiated Nature, rules the universe as its Governor for one cycle. As long as a cycle exists, that liberated soul, merged in nature, will direct the moral and spiritual welfare of the universe. He is known in the Sankhya philosophy as the *Kalpaniyamaka Iswara*. That means a God or Governor who rules over this universe for one cycle. Thus we find a close relationship between the great Rishi or *Adhikarika Purusha* of the Vedas and the Governor of the universe according to the Sankhya philosophy.

Then we come to the next strand in this evolution of the theory of the Incarnation of God. This is the age of Purana or Hindu mythology. In this age we find the cult of *Bhakti* or Love developed to a great extent. In the Upanishads we always read about knowledge, philosophy or intellectual understanding. These are prescribed as the ways for the realization of Truth. The theory of love, the path of devotion, though mentioned here and there in the Samhita portion of the Vedas, was not fully developed in those scriptures. The fullest development of Bhakti or Divine Love as a means to the realization of God takes place in the Purana. That the moral Governor of the universe, whose existence was admitted in Sankhya philosophy, becomes the Personal God of devotees in the Purana, can be seen by a little stretch of imagination. According to the Purana, the Personal God of the devotees possesses Infinite Power, Infinite Wisdom, Infinite Knowledge and Infinite Compassion. By nature He is fully illumined; He is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Compassionate. According to the Bhakti cult, this Personal God is the Supreme Reality in the universe.

Another strand in the idea of Incarnation is found in the traditional worship the Hindus give to their spiritual teachers. Even in the Vedas we find respect shown to the teacher of spiritual knowledge. Our earthly father and mother give us physical birth; they give us our physical body. But if we are to be satisfied with physical existence only, we are no better than the animals. It is the teacher alone who gives us a second birth, as it were, who initiates us into spiritual life. Therefore the teacher in ancient India was worshipped with all the respect and veneration the Hindu mind could possibly conceive of. They found that a man becomes teacher not because of his power of intellect, but through the possession of certain supersensuous realizations. This is only possible when the heart of a man is pure. In the heart of a pure and unselfish man, the supersensuous Truth is revealed. When a man has thus realized a bit of that supersensuous Truth, when he has made contact with something which is not limited by our sensuous experience, then only he can be worthy to be a teacher. Thus we find that the spiritual teacher is far above us in point of unselfishness and purity. Ordinary human love is governed by many selfish conditions, but the love of a teacher is unlimited. The teacher loves the student not expecting anything in return. The teacher gives without stint. Out of the fullness of his heart his mouth speaketh. It is not very difficult to conceive that the students, finding the teacher far above them in Divine qualities, recognized in him a manifestation of the Divinity of God, or spiritual power. They felt that it would be absurd to think of the teacher as an ordinary human being like themselves. The students realized that the Ultimate Truth or the Almighty God, to whom they always prayed for illumination and knowledge, expressed Itself through the teacher for their liberation from the bondage of the world.

In that way, the teacher began to be worshipped almost as God. He was regarded as Divine.

Now we can see these different strands which, being combined together, produced the idea of the Divine Incarnation. First, we have the idea of the Rishis in the Vedas; then the moral Governor of the universe in the Sankhya philosophy; then the idea of a Personal God in the Purana; and lastly, this tradition of the Guru or Teacher-worship in India. These different strands all mixed together formed the idea of Divine Incarnation in Hindu religion. This Divine Incarnation of God was not accepted by the Hindus as the result of acute theological controversy. It was not formulated through any external pressure of an emperor. It was the logical outcome of the religious thoughts that dominated the minds of the Hindus for thousands of years.

This is, then, the theory of the Divine Incarnation according to the Hindus: the Ultimate Reality is nameless, formless, timeless, spaceless and is beyond all concepts of the relative mind. This Absolute can neither be described by words nor conceived by our limited mind, which operates only in the relative plane governed by the laws of time, space and causality. But whenever in this relative universe the force of wickedness triumphs and that of virtue is eclipsed, when irreligion prevails and religion decays, this Absolute Reality, by Its own inscrutable power, *appears to be born* in human form, for the vindication of Truth and chastisement of iniquity. Though birthless and deathless, the Supreme God appears as a human being to turn once more the wheel of Divine Love and Wisdom. The incarnation of God in a human body cannot be limited to a particular place, time or race. Whenever there is a demand, the supply follows as a matter of course. Thus the Hindus believe that Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Zarathustra, etc., are all special mani-

festations of Divinity. As there have been many Incarnations in the past, so there will be many more in the future.

Again, it cannot be said that one Incarnation of God is superior to the other. All being the manifestations of one Reality, they demand an equal adoration, love and reverence. But this does not prevent the religious aspirant from being devoted, in particular, to one manifestation of God. All Incarnations preached the same Truth, namely, the Reality of God and illusory nature of the sense-perceived world. They all descended to earth to show to the benighted humanity the path to the haven of everlasting peace and happiness. They may speak in different languages or use different imageries, but the underlying principle of their teaching is always the same. Mohammed gave his message in a way which could be understood by the inhabitants of Arabia. Similarly, the messages of Krishna and Christ were colored, to some extent, by the conditions of the time and the country of their birth. But to an intelligent mind, the universal element of the messages of those great souls is only too apparent.

A Divine Incarnation is conscious of His mission from His very birth. Though moving in the realm of this relative world, he is never affected by its limitations. It is like the snake which carries poison in its system but is not affected by it. It may be asked, "If an Incarnation be conscious from His very birth of His oneness with God, then why should He practise spiritual disciplines at all, to realize God? How is it possible for such a person to be tempted by Satan?" More than one answer is given to this question. One explanation is that the prayer, meditation and spiritual exercises of an Incarnation are not meant for His own benefit. He practises them as a concession to the commonality of mankind, to show them the path leading to eternal felicity. Even while

praying or meditating, an Incarnation is always conscious of His Divine nature. He is like an actor, who, without forgetting his real nature, moves, talks and acts on the stage in different roles. Unless He behaves like a human being, man cannot be profited by His life and teachings. Man can understand an idea only when it is expressed in a human way.

Another explanation of this apparent contradiction is that an Incarnation, at the time of His birth, is slightly overpowered by the influence of self-imposed Maya. As pure gold, without a little dross, cannot be moulded into any ornament, so also Absolute Reality, as it is, cannot serve any purpose in a relative world. It simply remains incomprehensible to us. So an Incarnation takes upon Himself a veil of Maya at the time of His birth. But it is a very thin veil through which often shines His real Divine nature. This is how we can explain the self-recollection of Christ at an early age in the Temple of Jerusalem. Similar instances are recorded in the life of Krishna, Buddha and Ramakrishna. After a little spiritual practice, this veil is completely removed, and then an Incarnation never loses sight of His Divine nature or mission. What an ordinary man realizes in the course of a million births, an Incarnation attains to in a few years. He traverses the track of centuries in the twinkling of an eye.

To Be Continued

In the saints God manifests Himself only in part, like honey in a flower. You suck the flower and get a little honey. In the Incarnation, it is all honey—all sweetness and all blessedness. The Lord takes the human body for the sake of those pure souls who love the Lord. A Divine Incarnation is hard to comprehend. It is the play of the Infinite on the finite.

—*Sri Ramakrishna.*

REPORT

February twenty-fourth marked the opening of the One Hundredth Anniversary Celebration of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna, sage, prophet and seer of modern India.

Far flung is his banner! Many the languages in which his name is extolled. Today, Indian altars glowing with lovely flowers in his honor have their fragrant counterparts in Burma, Ceylon, South America, England, Switzerland, Sweden, etc., and many of the large cities of the United States. For wherever men's hearts are full of yearning, wherever they are sincerely seeking Truth, the simple crystalline parables and teaching of this God-man find welcome and exercise their transforming, redeeming power.

Once the Great Master wept as he sent out a yearning call for those destined to become his disciples, share his spiritual visions and witness his ecstasy. At first they came in small groups, but as the years rolled on toward the Century mark, the circle of devotees widened, and today "children" of every land are thronging to answer his call, pay their homage and express their gratitude to one who not only saw God himself but promises those who are honest and faithful that through intense *Sadhana* they may unfold and expand the Divinity within them so that they too may see the face of their chosen *Ishtam* or Ideal.

The many Centres, Ashrams, Homes of Service established in his name have already enjoyed three weeks of crowded activity. Private worship has been observed, devotional gatherings, banquets and receptions have been attended by large numbers of devotees and friends eager to pay tribute to a Great Light. Who can measure the importance and the far reaching effect of such dynamic events, and who can write of them in words sufficiently vivid to convey to those not privileged to attend, something of the sense of rare spiri-

tual Presence with which they were allso richly pervaded.

In the United States, eloquent words have been spoken by the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission and their guests at Festivals in New York, Washington, Providence and Boston, and all who assembled felt the truth of the statement, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." The atmosphere on each and every one of these occasions has been charged with the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna, and one could not help marking that no matter how earnest and heartfelt were the tributes paid by the different speakers, it was the Power of the Master that animated and made sublime the occasion.

At midnight, on the eve of the Anniversary, devotees of the Vedanta Centre of Boston knelt with Swami Paramananda as he invoked the Presence of the great Master in whose name he has served humanity for nearly thirty years in the United States alone. Definitely, tangibly, the fragrant Presence made itself felt in the Centre, and as the days passed by with regular periods of worship, it grew in beauty and intensity. Strangers spoke of it. Members who came to the Chapel to pray went away bathed and charged with it. Large numbers attended the public celebrations and were blessed and revivified.

Again we say, no spoken or written word can convey the sense of livingness, the quickening, and the joy of contact with the sweet, living spirit of the great Master himself.

Swami Paramananda is due to reach California on March 24. Immediately following his arrival, he will initiate the Centenary Celebration at the Ananda-Ashrama. Throughout the month of March, there will be continued observance of the Birthday at the various Vedanta Centres in the United States. We hope to give a more detailed account of all these events in our next issue.

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VOL. XXV

NUMBER 4

"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)

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APRIL, 1936

CHRIST and SRI RAMAKRISHNA

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

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LITANY TO SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By Swami Paramananda

O THOU, whose divine radiance kindles
our obscure mind with white light
of faith and hope—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

O Thou, whose smile of bliss shines forth
against this world's dark and despondent
sky—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

Thy whole-souled love for Truth and Truth
alone—
A chalice to mankind for ages to come!—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

O Thou Conqueror of lust and greed,
indifferent to all human desire!
Fame and shame are same to Thee—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

Renouncing Thy precious communion of Bliss,
Thou camest down to the plane of mortals,
so full of sordidness and sorrow,
To save, perchance, e'en a single soul
from drowning—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

When our world-soaked thoughts throw their
weight upon our minds,
And our hearts are rent with despair,
Thou comest before us with Thy heavenly
compassion—
Thou art grieved that we sorrow—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

"Know ye not that ye are children of
All-Blissful Mother?
Grieve not, nor ever make your countenance
sad!"—
Thus dost Thou remind us—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

Thou dost stand before us as an unfailing
lamp,
To guide our steps from the world of men
to the World of God—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

Gently, like a morning hymn sung by the
heavenly choir,
Thy face so full of tenderness,

Thy hand so full of saving grace,
Thy heart so full of unearthly love,
Call us forth from our slumber—
Our homage to Thee a thousand times,
now, and for ever and ever more!

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

—*Jesus the Christ.*

Think always of death, disciple, yea, always meditate on death; for so shall Life be revealed unto thee, so shalt thou gain Eternal Life, and desires and mind shall cease. For ignorance ceaseth when the Truth is seen, and all the world is filled with peace. —*Sri Ramakrishna.*

As the mother's womb holds us for months, making us ready for the existence into which we seem to be sent forth when at last we are fitted to draw breath and live in the open; just so, throughout infancy and old age, we are making ourselves ready for another birth. . . . That day which you fear as being the end of all things, is the birthday of your eternity. —*Seneca.*

Like a bird may it [the Soul] fly to a lofty place; to the holy hands of its God may it return.

—*Accadian prayer for a soul*

But all through life I see a cross
Where Sons of God yield up their breath:
There is no gain except by loss;
There is no life except by death.

—*Olvig Grange.*

AN EASTER EVENING

By W. J. Cameron

(A radio talk on the Ford Evening Hour, April 21, 1935)

The day which we call Easter has almost made its circuit of the earth. Lands east of us that first received its morning beams, now are steeped in night. West of us, it is sunset and evening star. In a few hours this day will have finished its course far out on the Pacific. It is reckoned a high day in the calendar of the year, because it symbolizes so high a confidence in the soul of man.

Easter, as its name implies, was first a nature festival. Wherever winter turned to Spring, men saw life invincible in the face of seeming death. That was a shining leaf in the book of man's enlightenment. Reading more deeply in that page, he saw *himself* an actor in the pageant, but on a higher plane. For he made a great discovery,—he became conscious of personality; he no longer confused the "it" of his perishable body with the "I"—himself. The power to think, to will, to choose between the lesser and the higher good and always build a greater good—this living synthesis of finer forces which we call personality—is the most exalted expression of life he knows. And to say that the tree beneath whose shade he rests has longer lease on life, that the bricks he molded in Chaldea 3,000 years ago have more enduring quality than the personality that reaches out to weigh the stars, is to him simply a dull confusion of values.

Moreover, he sees in every phase of life a prophecy of something farther on. His prenatal state, he finds, was prophetic of his present individuality. His eye was formed in prenatal darkness where there was nothing at all to see; and that harp of a thousand strings, his ear, was made while there was nothing as yet to hear. But they pointed forward to a world of light and sound, *and their prophecies came true.*

In his present conscious state he sees other promissory powers take form; ideals and aspirations rise within him that require more than the mere measure of what we call a lifetime for their completion. He feels that they too are prophecy and will likewise be fulfilled.

He observes, also, that a change awaits him at the end of his two known stages. He sees multitudes making these changes every day. The end of the prenatal stage is the change called birth; the subsequent incarnate period completes itself in the change called death. Man comes at length to think of *both* of them as *birth*. His physical being shrinks from the first change even as it does from the second. If the babe could know the world in which it is to live, it would surely draw back from coming, as later it will draw back from the thought of going. The winters here that freeze, the wars, the tension of experience, the sorrows that pierce as an arrow; and, moreover, hundreds of millions of strangers, not one of whom the lone babe knows—birth, in such a view, would be a tremendous plunge in the dark. Yet so courteous is the master of our pilgrimage, that as the little stranger enters the world, helpless, needing everything, needing most of all that precious, unpurchasable boon called Love—straightway, among a hundred million strangers, it meets its first and best friend—it meets its mother. Such is the far-seeing and beautiful provision that is made, whose better name is Providence. And from his experience thus far, man reasons that the same wise courtesy attends him all the way.

One thing is certain: the range of man is wider than his physical limits; he needs a great expanse of elbow room. His science cannot keep pace with his thought; his thought is out-distanced by the far-riding scouts of his vision. He needs a future vaster than his past—*and he acts as if he has one!* This Far View it is that makes him Man. Nor is it a

subtle other-worldliness; it is essential to this world also; for even our Near View becomes sheer distortion unless clarified and sharpened by the Far View. When man conceives himself as the creature of a day, he achieves nothing, discovers nothing, improves nothing. But where he feels the eternal years, there science labors in the service of truth; there the arts develop beauty; there gallant efforts are made to build a just society; a sense of honor and a sense of obligation to the weak, and reverence toward God, permeate personal attitudes—for these are the beams of a limitless future shining upon man's brow. They promise him time, and time to spare, for the completion of every good seed that destiny has planted in him. His deathless life is already begun.

The message of Easter, after all, is simple and clear. In the hall of an ancient king, as the warriors sat around a blazing fire at night, a bird flew in at one open door and out at the other. "How like to man is the bird," said the king: "it flew from darkness into darkness; it was not long in the light." The story is often told thus far, but seldom finished. For thereupon the eldest of the king's men spoke up and said, "But even in the darkness, O King, the bird will find its nest."

Blessed he who hath been, Lord, a sailor of Truth in this generation, whose faith also hath not lost its savour among the savourless that pry into Thee! Blessed he that hath surrounded his hearing with the Wall of Silence, and through it hath never broken the questionings of the wise that have fought with Thee! Blessed he that hath let the wings of the Spirit grow secretly on him, and because there was questioning upon earth, hath left it and gone up to Heaven! Blessed he again that hath been a sailor for his Faith, and from the storms of controversy hath fled into the Port of Silence.

—*St. Ephraim the Syrian.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the March Number)

Can one attain wisdom without learning? Can one achieve excellence without wealth? Can one gain conquest without aggressiveness? Can one attain high point of success without ambition? The answer to these and multiple other questions which are imposed upon our minds through the complexity of modern life, is found in the simple personality of Sri Ramakrishna. He stands in strange contrast with our present scheme of existence. His sense of value was based not on the things of this world, but upon something beyond—something that is unalterable, and yet real and perceptible. He could not be contented to worship imaginary Divinity. He must have his Ideal living and vibrant, with Whom he could talk, with Whom he could walk, to Whom he could look for guidance, for protection, as an earthly friend, and this relationship took definite form as Divine Mother and child.

After his first visions, he became so completely transformed that he did not go anywhere, or talk with anyone, or even perform any special rites, without first consulting his Divine Mother. This to outside observers seemed nothing but madness, for usually people look upon the performance of priestly duties as a routine work which should be observed with a certain amount of piety and secular understanding of scriptural injunctions. But in the case of Sri Ramakrishna, it was totally different. He could only offer his worship to a Deity who was there to receive, or not at all. Logically we understand his fervor and his whole-souled devotion, but in practical sense very rarely can we find anyone who is spiritual enough, pure enough, devoted enough, to lose himself so completely in this kind of divine madness.

The visions and spiritual ecstasies came now to Sri Ramakrishna more constantly. He would utterly lose himself in the act of devotion, or as he sang the devout songs of Ramprasad and Kamala Kanta (inspired mystics of Bengal), he would remain transfixed for hours. But these frequent experiences of divine ecstasies, instead of slaking his hunger and thirst for greater union, intensified his longing. At this period there seemed to be a fierce storm that raged within his soul day and night—at all hours—making it impossible for him to have any thought of his physical existence. He would desire neither food nor drink, and sleep was impossible, for his mind was completely swept by this inner craving for a more complete union with his Ideal.

We relate in his own words his state of mind: "Oh what days of madness I passed through! You can't imagine the pangs I felt owing to the separation from Mother. And it was but natural. Suppose there is a bag of gold in a room and a thief in the next with only a thin partition between. Can he then sleep peacefully? Will he not run mad and try to force the wall so as to possess the gold? Such was my state too. I knew that there was the Mother, quite close to me, full of infinite Bliss, compared with which all earthly possessions are as nothing. How could I then rest satisfied without trying to find Her? So I became completely mad after Her."

Thus we find him plunged into most severe *Tapasya* (spiritual austerities), and in order to have undisturbed and unbroken meditations and communions, he chose the most secluded spot, located at the northern part of the Temple, known as the Panchavati, but then it was not as we find it now. It was a thick forest which was dark even during the day time, and seldom the sun could penetrate its dense foliage. Very rarely people came near it, because it was close to the graveyard and they were afraid of ghosts. Sri Ramakrishna

used to sit here for long hours during the night and also certain hours of the day. So intense was his fervor that very seldom he could even bring his mind down to his physical requirements. However, Hriday, his faithful nephew and constant attendant watched over him with the tenderness of a mother. He realized that unless he could make Sri Ramakrishna partake of some nourishment, his body would not last long. He was greatly worried over his uncle's spiritual ecstasies and tried in every possible way to dissuade him from his extreme practices and abnormal habits. Hriday recognized Sri Ramakrishna's great spiritual fervor, and he knew in his heart of hearts that he was no ordinary man, yet he could not find any peace of mind, seeing before his eyes how the body of Sri Ramakrishna was wasted through his utter unmindfulness of food and drink. He found it useless to reason with his uncle, because whenever Sri Ramakrishna made up his mind to follow his spiritual path, nothing could make him waver from his determination. So Hriday tried various cunnings to frighten him. For instance, he was aware of the current story of the ghosts and goblins which frequented the very place where Sri Ramakrishna used to hold his communion. So, on one occasion, he watched his uncle enter this forbidden place in the stillness of the night. He saw him from a distance, and when he was seated in meditation, he threw stones at random, not only to disturb his uncle's meditation, but to make him realize that it was actually frequented by evil spirits.

Sri Ramakrishna remained absolutely unmoved, and knowing in his heart who had done all this, remained silent. Hriday, however, asked Sri Ramakrishna the next day why he entered that jungle in the dead of night, and Sri Ramakrishna tried to explain to him that it was a specially suitable place for his unbroken communion with the Mother. He

said there was a large *Amalaka* tree under which he sat often in spiritual rapture. None of these explanations satisfied Hriday. He persisted for a long time in trying to frighten Sri Ramakrishna, and one night he was determined to follow his uncle and see what he actually did at that hour. He was startled and wonderstruck as he beheld Sri Ramakrishna seated there like a statue in divine communion. Not realizing he was dead to the world of senses, he addressed his uncle: "What is all this you are doing? Why! you have not even your holy thread on. Why is all this necessary for your spiritual devotion?" He tried and tried again, but found no response. Not until Sri Ramakrishna returned to his physical consciousness was he able to answer Hriday's questions. He gently told Hriday that in order to find a true communion with God, one should be freed from all fetters. Why should he wear a holy thread? Did it not bring the consciousness that a Brahmana was higher than another class of man? Until one becomes altogether devoid of all sense of name, fame, honor, dishonor, social position, caste, egotism, fear and hate, he cannot attain the Supreme. "So have I cast them all out, that I may have complete union with my Divine Mother."

It became increasingly difficult for Hriday to look after Sri Ramakrishna's physical welfare, as he did not have any thought whatsoever for the preservation of his body. He speaks of this to his devotees: "My hair grew until it became matted, and I had no idea of it. My nephew, Hriday, used to bring me some food daily, and some days succeeded, and some days did not succeed in forcing a few mouthfuls down my throat. Though I had no idea of it, sometimes I would go to the closet of the servants and sweepers and clean it with my own hands, and pray to Mother, 'Oh Mother, destroy in me all idea that I am great, and that I am a Brah-

mana, and that they are low and are untouchables, for who are they but Thou in so many forms'."

Sri Ramakrishna's divine madness was peculiarly combined with practicality and high rationalism. He was not contented with small spiritual experiences, but he ever kept before his mind's eye the immensity and the infinitude of Godhead. The great ideal of *Sat-chit-anandam*—Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute and Bliss Absolute—he could not confine to any one of the sectarian religious experiences. Thus he went deeper and deeper into the divine mysteries. Child-like simplicity and complete dependence on the Mother, the spirit of heroic renunciation of all the non-essentials, and holy humility—these three peculiarly blended throughout his spiritual struggles.

Once Mathura Babu out of pure devotion offered him a beautiful, costly shawl, fringed with gold. At first he was sincerely pleased with the gift, just like a child, but when his mind was drawn within, he was wholly oblivious of the costly garment and when his nephew reminded him that such a thing should be properly cared for, his mind quickly discerned how in such possessions lies the snare of vanity, and immediately he cast it off.

Often he would be seen on the bank of the Ganges taking in one hand some gold, and in the other hand some dirt, and he would say to himself: "What is this gold? People want it so much that they fight and quarrel for it, but all it is capable of doing is to buy some rice and vegetables and build houses, and possibly procure some human comforts; thus the world calls it great, but it cannot give one knowledge of the Absolute, therefore it is no better than dirt." And thus he would say, "Dirt is gold and gold is dirt." He would repeat it many times with devout spirit. He would then throw them both away, convinced of the worthlessness of the gold, there

being no difference whatsoever in his mind between the one and the other.

As he tasted more and more of the spiritual joys, his soul became as it were drunk. It was an insatiable thirst which made him increasingly restless for greater and greater realization. No wonder people called him mad, but his divine ecstasy knew no bounds. He did not want to learn from men who had only a surface learning, or who could glibly recite the classical texts. He would say, "Oh Mother, I want to learn only from Thee, and not from the men whose minds have not risen yet above the mire of delusion. Come to me and teach me and enlighten me." This was his childlike cry to the All-blissful, to the Omnipotent Cosmic energy.

"About this time," he says, "I felt such a burning sensation all over my body that I used to stand in the water of the Ganges with my body immersed up to the shoulders and a wet towel over my head all through the day, for it was insufferable; and then a strange Brahmani lady came and cured me of it in three days' time. She smeared my body with sandalwood paste and put garlands on my neck, and the pain vanished in three days."

This Brahmani lady was of unusual type. She was well versed in the lore of India and she could recite great classics from memory. She was tall and full of physical grace, combined with great intellectual ability. She had a musical voice and could sing holy songs. In early youth she gave up the world and practised Yoga and developed wonderful spiritual insight. She was overwhelmed with joy when she found Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramakrishna at once welcomed her as his own mother. Her coming into his life was an immense relief, for what people regarded as madness, his unusual behaviour, his peculiar symptoms, the Brahmani lady explained point by point, quoting from the Scriptures,

were indications of divine ecstasy. She especially proved to Sri Ramakrishna that all that he had experienced had also been experienced by Chaitanya, the great God-man of Nadia, who lived some four hundred years before that time. She aided him in various forms of Tantrika worship and Sri Ramakrishna found great comfort and exaltation in the spiritual companionship of this holy personage.

The Brahmani, in her coming to Dakshineswar, seemed like a goddess who had suddenly descended on earth. People were astonished at the remarkable learning of this lady, and more astonished were they to see how she cherished Sri Ramakrishna and looked upon him as a Divine Incarnation. She would prove before people, quoting from the Scriptures, that all the symptoms which ordinary mortals regarded as Sri Ramakrishna's madness, were nothing but the divine ecstasies which had been enjoyed by other great incarnate spirits, especially Sri Chaitanya. She would read from the Vaishnava scriptures and describe the Bhava experiences of Sri Radha, manifesting in Sri Ramakrishna's life. The Brahmani lady lived there in Dakshineswar and assisted Sri Ramakrishna in going through various forms of Yoga practices, especially those which make one a complete master of his own body and mind, and she watched over him with the tender affection of a mother.

Sri Ramakrishna, however, was not satisfied with any one-sided spiritual attainment. As he himself often expressed, he wanted to enjoy God in many ways: through devotion, through prayer, through songs, through whole-hearted concentration, and the rapture of meditation, and sometimes by plunging deep into Samadhi, oblivious of physical existence. This trait in his nature unfolds itself through his remarkable harmony of spirit, which was not merely tolerance, but the ability to find the same Truth existent in other expressions of religion.

Although he was experiencing great devotional ecstasies as he followed the *Bhakti Marga*, the path of devotion, yet his spirit was hankering for other phases of Truth, such as *Gnana,* the path of the philosophers, the rational approach to Truth, and just then, a great *Gnani* came and initiated him. His name was Tota-puri,—a very picturesque figure. He had taken a vow of renunciation in early boyhood, and after a very rigid and hard struggle had succeeded in realizing the highest truth of Vedanta, the monistic aspect of Hinduism. He wore no clothes whatsoever, nor did he ever sleep under a roof, though it is told that even the doors of the palaces might have been opened to him, if he had wished it. He passed the night always under a tree, or lay directly under the infinite blue canopy, and it was his custom not to remain any place more than three days. His whole spirit was freedom itself, and he would never ask for food. The only desire remaining in his heart was to help struggling souls with light.

One day he saw Sri Ramakrishna sitting on the bank of the Ganges, and at a glance recognized him as a great Yogin, and a perfectly prepared and fertile soil for Truth. He at once addressed him and said, "My son, do you want to learn the way to perfection? Come then, I will teach it to you." But Sri Ramakrishna never did anything without first consulting his Mother Kali, and he answered that he did not know what he should do, but he would go at once and ask his Mother. He came back in a short while and told Tota-puri that the Mother had given Her consent and he was ready now to learn of him. Tota-puri initiated him into the mysteries of contemplation which leads to divine unity, and after only three days of intense practice Sri Ramakrishna attained the highest *Samadhi*, known as *Nirvikalpa*, where there is no more conception of subject and object, or any sense of duality. His teacher, Tota-puri, was perfectly amazed and openly

declared, "My boy, what I realized after forty years of hard struggle, you have attained in three days. I cannot call you my disciple. Henceforth, I will address you as my friend." And such was the intense love of this holy man for Sri Ramakrishna that he broke his rule of constant wandering and remained close to him for eleven long months, learning many wondrous things from his own disciple.

There is a remarkable story told of an episode that took place one day. Tota-puri was seated by the holy fire which he always kept burning, and was happily conversing with Sri Ramakrishna, when a man came and lighted his pipe from that fire. Tota-puri felt it was an act of sacrilege and it enraged him so much that he openly exhibited his great indignation and anger. Suddenly he found his disciple, Sri Ramakrishna, scolding him gently. "Is this the way you look upon everything as Brahman, the undivided Absolute? Is not this man Brahman too, as well as the fire? What is high and what is low in the light of true wisdom?" Tota-puri at once recognized the wisdom of his disciple and said, "Brother, you are right. From this day forth you shall never find me angry again." And he kept his word. There was one perplexity in the mind of Tota-puri. Being a *Gnani*, an uncompromising monist, he could not understand Sri Ramakrishna's love for the goddess Kali, and he often thought of it as a matter of superstition and ridiculed it, but Sri Ramakrishna was able to make him see that in the Absolute there is no division. There is no thou nor I, but one indivisible Reality, beyond mind and speech. One of the beautiful products of Sri Ramakrishna's realization in the world of metaphysics was his clarified exposition that God, the Personal and the Impersonal, and all other aspects of Divinity, are contained in the one indivisible whole—Sat-chit-anandam,—Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute and Bliss Absolute.

At this stage Sri Ramakrishna's consciousness became like a veritable inundation, a spiritual flood, uniting little and big in one indivisible and unbounded ocean of Absolute Reality. We are at once reminded of the great verse in the Bhagavad-Gita: "To the real Knower of Truth all the Vedas (sacred Scriptures) are of as little use as a small water tank is during the time of a flood, when water is everywhere."

TO BE CONTINUED

HYMN TO THE BELOVED — THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

By Julia P. Dabney

Lord of the Word and the Light,
Lord of the Infinite height,
Teach us to know Thee aright:—
O give us light!

Shrivel the webs which enthrall,
Silence earth's clamorous call,
Knowing us one with the All:—
O give us light!

Let Thy grace over us shine,
Touched with an effluence divine,
Sealing us children of Thine!—
O give us light!

He whose spirit has been made one with God stands before man as the supreme flower of humanity. . . . Therefore, in our country he who truly loves God receives such homage from men as would be considered almost sacrilegious in the West. We see in him God's wish fulfilled, the most difficult of all obstacles to his revealment removed, and God's own perfect joy fully blossoming in humanity. —*Tagore.*

RESENTMENT

By Annie Payson Call

A little girl ran away from her brother to her mother, crying, "Mamma, Johnnie hurt my feelings." Johnnie called out, "Well, Mother, she shouldn't have her feelings stickin' out all over her."

The child hit the truth for grown-ups more perfectly and deeply than he knew. So many, so very many adults have their feelings "stickin' out all over them," and make numberless excuses for their hurt feelings. But, so far, few have discovered that "hurt feelings" are really resentment in masquerade. And resentment is *rank poison* to the spirit.

A healthy body is attacked by many germs of disease, and the very health of the body throws off the germs so that they are of no possible harm, for the pure clean blood will have none of them, even—so to speak—never knew of their existence. The germs of spiritual disease should be cast off by the spirit in that same way. The great difference is—and the difference is of course *radical*—that the blood of the spirit must become cognizant of the germs, and the will of the spirit must cast them out, not once, but over and over, before the spirit can be perfectly clean, and in proportion as the spirit is clean, the Lord can enter and guide it.

God is with each one of us *all* the time, but He has made His laws so that we must be *free* to turn toward Him or away from Him. Resentment turns us away from God and He cannot guide us because we *will not* be guided.

If we see the resentment to be wrong, no matter what the other person did, and aim steadily to conquer it,—that opens the way for the Lord's light to come to us, and it is wonderful the way the light helps us to understand and have intelligent charity for the one we have been resenting. Also such a conquest gradually opens our minds to understand better

not only all of life, but every other human being whom we know or have known. "For God makes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and His rain to fall on the just and the unjust." What better guide could we have than that? God's sun rises in us through our practical love for others, and God's rain—rain that enriches the foundation from which comes what is best in others—falls also through our intelligent love for them.

Let us think deeply of this, and as we try to live from the true principle, our light grows clearer and stronger. One beautiful fact is that each one's light is different, and the clear light of every human soul is needed to make up the whole. The power of every separate ray of light from the Lord through one's spirit, is like the power of the sun on this earth, only immeasurably greater. But we *must conquer self* to be able to receive such Power as the Lord is always trying to give to us. Resentment is full of self,—indeed there is nothing else in it, as there is nothing but disease in the physical germ.

If we were to use our best judgment, what would we say is the most important thing about a noble man? Would we not place first the beauty of his character? It takes a whole lifetime to build the character of a noble man. The adventures and disciplines of youth, the struggles and failures and successes, the pains and pleasures of maturity, the loneliness and tranquillity of age—these make up the fire through which he must pass to bring out the pure gold of his soul. Having been thus perfected, what shall nature do with him? Annihilate him? What infinite waste! I prefer to believe he lives on after death, continuing in a larger sphere, in coöperation with his Maker, the work he has here begun.

—*Arthur H. Compton.*

HOW SRI RAMAKRISHNA REALIZED CHRIST

As Told by Himself

When the desire to realize the Christian Ideal arose in my mind, the Divine Mother fulfilled it in a strange way, without any struggle on my part. One day I was in the parlor of the country home of Jadu Nath Mallik at Dakshineswar, on the walls of which were many beautiful portraits, one of them being Christ's. I was looking attentively at the picture of the Madonna with the Divine Child and reflecting on the wonderful life of Christ, when I felt as though the picture had become animated and that rays of light were emanating from the figures of Mary and Christ and, entering into me, altogether changed my mental outlook. When I realized that my Hindu ideas were being pushed into a corner by this onrush of new ones, I tried my best to stop it and eagerly prayed to the Divine Mother: "What is it that Thou art doing to me, Mother?" But in vain. My love and regard for the Hindu gods were swept away by this tidal wave, and in their stead, a deep regard for Christ and the Christian church filled my heart and opened to my eyes the vision of Christian devotees burning incense and candles before the figure of Jesus in the churches, and offering unto Him the eager outpourings of their hearts. Returning to the Dakshineswar Temple, I was so engrossed in these thoughts that I forgot to visit the Divine Mother in the Temple.

For three days those ideas held sway in my mind. On the fourth day, as I was walking in the Panchavati, I saw an extraordinary looking person of serene aspect approaching me with his gaze intently fixed upon me. I knew him at once to be a man of foreign extraction. He had beautiful large eyes, and though the nose was a little flat, it in no way marred the comeliness of his face. I was charmed and wondered

who he might be. Presently the figure drew near, and from the innermost recesses of my heart there went up the note, "This is the Christ who poured out His heart's blood for the redemption of mankind and suffered agonies for its sake. It is none else but the Master-Yogin, Jesus, the embodiment of love."

Then the Son of Man embraced me and became merged in me. I lost outward consciousness in Samadhi, realizing my union with the Brahman with Attributes. After some time I came back to the normal plane. Thus was I convinced that Jesus Christ was an Incarnation of the Lord.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY REPORT

The Centenary of Sri Ramakrishna's birth, which is being celebrated in India and around the world during the year 1936, was very specially observed by the Ramakrishna Mission Centres in this country, during the months of February and March. We give below reports of these celebrations as we have received them from the different Vedanta Societies.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, NEW YORK

The Centenary Celebration of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna was observed at the Vedanta Society of New York during the month of March. Special Services were held each Sunday at 11 A.M., at which Swami Bodhananda, head of the Society, spoke upon the life and teachings of the great Master, each address bringing out different aspects of his message and being. The subjects included, "Sri Ramakrishna—the Priest and Prophet," "Sri Ramakrishna on Harmony of Religions," "Sri Ramakrishna's Spiritual Message," "Sri Ramakrishna on Divine Reliance," and "Sri Ramakrishna—Some Features

of His Life and Teachings." Hindu music was played at each Service and light refreshments were served at the close.

On Sunday, March 15, a dinner was given at 1:00 P.M. at the Ceylon India Inn, 148 West 49th Street. All the guests were honor guests—two hundred guest-narayanas being entertained with Hindu dishes, songs, dances, and so forth. Those who participated expressed great delight and appreciation.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA CENTER, NEW YORK

The celebration of the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary by the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, during a period of nearly three weeks, again demonstrated the irresistible appeal of the life and teachings of the Master to spiritually earnest people of the West. The Centenary has been used by Swami Nikhilananda, head of the Center, as an opportunity to bring knowledge of this great Soul to the attention of a larger public, through an interesting program of events and a series of articles contributed to magazines and leading newspapers of this city.

The Center began its celebration in its own Chapel, on the evening of February 21, with a lecture by Swami Vividishananda of Washington, D. C., on Sri Ramakrishna, illustrated by beautiful lantern slides. A hundred and fifty people attended and felt themselves transported to the scenes of this holy Life.

The next evening, February 22, two hundred friends and members of the Center participated in the Centenary dinner, given in the large private dining-room of a well-known restaurant near the Chapel. For the first time, five Swamis of the eastern coast joined in one great function, to speak on the message of Sri Ramakrishna. It was most inspiring for the many guests to hear Swamis Paramananda of Boston, Gnaneswarananda of Chicago, Akhilananda of Providence,

Vividishananda of Washington, and their own beloved Swami Nikhilananda, each in his own sincere and characteristic way, tell of the Master in whose service they had come so far. Mr. Salvatore de Madariaga, former ambassador of Spain to France and the United States, and former Chairman of the Disarmament Committee of the League of Nations, paid a beautiful tribute to the spiritual flowering of India, saying that he hoped it would soon be grafted on the tree of Western material progress. Many prominent New Yorkers also attended the dinner, which received cordial notice from the press.

A week later, on Sunday, March 1, the special Sri Ramakrishna Birthday Celebration was held at the Chapel, an unforgettable event for the crowds that attended it. Many eager souls stood out in the hallway to hear the beautiful Service of Swami Nikhilananda who spoke on the Religious Experiences of a Great Master. White lilies, masses of red roses and other flowers, along with a garlanded portrait head of Sri Ramakrishna, looked down in silent benediction upon those assembled in worship. After the Service, Hindu sweets were served to every one.

As the culmination of the Centenial, through the unstinted efforts of Swami Nikhilananda, a public meeting attended by twelve hundred people was held at the Town Hall of New York, on the evening of March 8. Five eminent speakers, representing various phases of public life, besides the Swami, were on the platform. The meeting opened with an organ prelude, a Sanskrit invocation and the introductory address on Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings by Swami Nikhilananda, which was later distributed in pamphlet form. Following this, was the reading of messages from His Holiness, Swami Akhandananda, President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore,

Romain Rolland and Dr. John Haynes Holmes. Dr. Frederick Robinson, President of the College of the City of New York, spoke in appreciation of Western science and Eastern mysticism, showing how both are necessary for the fulfillment of life. Dr. Samuel H. Goldenson, Rabbi of the largest Jewish congregation in New York, next spoke on the priceless example of spiritual joy given by Sri Ramakrishna to the world. He, in turn, was followed by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, who read a scholarly paper on the contributions of the various religions of the world and on their fundamental harmony. Following this, the Reverend Wendell Phillips, rector of the Episcopal Church of New Rochelle, spoke with great feeling of the necessity of turning to India, and especially to Sri Ramakrishna, for a better understanding of Christ. The last speaker, Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerjee, noted Hindu author and lecturer, told some interesting stories of the Master's life.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

The Vedanta Society of Washington, D. C., celebrated the Centenary of the birth of Sri Ramakrishna in its own humble way, but with great success. There were special Services at the Society's Chapel for three consecutive days, beginning Sunday, March 8. Visiting Swamis lectured on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. In addition there were illustrated talks on the art and culture of India. The lectures were very well attended and everyone listened with deep interest. The guest Swamis were Swami Paramananda of Boston, Swami Akhilananda of Providence and Swami Nikhilananda of New York. Mr. Dhan Gopal Mukerjee also was a guest speaker. The subjects covered were "The Harmony of Religions and Sri Ramakrishna," by Swami Paramananda; "The Spiritual Experiences of Sri Ramakrishna" by Swami Akhilananda; "The World Problems

and Sri Ramakrishna" by Swami Nikhilananda and "Sri Ramakrishna—the Master Artist" by Mr. Mukerjee. In addition, Swami Vividishananda, head of the Washington Vedanta Society, gave three lectures with lantern slides, on "India of Temples, Pagodas and Taj Mahal," "The Mystic India of Symbols and Mythology," and "Sri Ramakrishna, His Disciples and Mission." At the close of each evening of the Celebration, refreshments were served. The local newspapers cooperated in giving publicity, several good-sized articles being published, one, in the magazine section of the Sunday edition covering a full half page and carrying a picture of Sri Ramakrishna. The program really started with a radio talk by Swami Vividishananda over the station WOL on Saturday evening, March 7, the subject being "The Centenary of the Birth of Sri Ramakrishna—the Great Mystic of Modern India." This talk reached a large invisible audience and helped spread abroad the Master's great unifying message.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Although last in the succession of Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebrations of eastern United States, Chicago had the privilege of having all the Swamis of the eastern Centers, with the exception of Swami Bodhananda of New York, take part in its program. These Swamis arrived with their friends in due season and were made most comfortable as guests of the Chicago Society. Friday, March 20, witnessed the opening of the Celebration—the Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Banquet, which on account of an unexpected number of reservations was switched from a smaller room in the Medinah Club House to the Grand Ball Room of the same building. The beautiful banquet hall with its sumptuous floral decorations and festive candles on every table presented a dignified and lovely sight. Nearly two hundred guests were

present to enjoy the grace and sparkle of the occasion. Dr. Lake, the toastmaster, with his lady; Dr. Scherger and his wife, and Dr. Bradley occupied the speakers' table, along with the five Swamis, who, in their orange colored robes, opened the banquet with a Sanskrit grace, chanted in unison and translated by Swami Paramananda. Following the dinner, Madame Joan Young, celebrated singer, sang two songs, and Swami Gnaneswarananda, head of the Chicago Society, was called upon to read the inspiring messages of Swami Akhandananda, President of the Ramakrishna Order, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Romain Rolland. Swami Paramananda, in his calm and dignified manner, then spoke on the meaning of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna; Dr. Scherger spoke feelingly on the depth of the culture of India; Swami Akhilananda expounded the scientific value of the spiritual experiences of Sri Ramakrishna; Swami Vividishananda presented with dignity the universality of the Master's message, and Dr. Bradley gave a most eloquent speech on the need of spiritualizing modern culture and conveniences. It was nearly midnight when Swami Nikhilananda arose, yet he was heard with eagerness as he ably pointed out the fact that the message of Sri Ramakrishna was potent enough to save the world from war and destruction.

Saturday evening, March 21, was earmarked as the most unique portion of the Chicago program. It was the evening for music and other entertainment, given in a large hall of the Masonic Temple. The program opened with the serenity of a Temple Service; the five Swamis and a few American men, standing in one row, while ten young American women, beautifully clothed in Indian Saris, stood in another row and sang melodiously, "Khandana bhavabandhana," the famous evening hymn to Sri Ramakrishna, composed by Swami

Vivekananda. Then followed an elaborate program of Hindu music, given by a company of twelve artists consisting of Hindu and American men and women, admirably trained by Swami Gnaneswarananda. The program included Setar and Esraj ensembles, solo singing of Bengali and Hindusthani songs, and three dance numbers. One of the visiting Swamis remarked, "Such a program could not be expected anywhere outside India."

After a brief intermission, a three-act play entitled, "Gangavataran," or "The Descent of Ganga," specially written for the occasion, was performed by the Hindu Marionette Theatre Company, consisting of some of the young members of the Society. The characters appearing on the stage were very real looking dolls, which moved and acted according to the nature of the dialogue conducted from behind the screen. The stage-setting, the scenery, effective devices—like the burning of Madan and the descent of Ganga on the standing figure of Mahadev, were very realistically presented. In conclusion, the significance of the advent of Sri Ramakrishna was compared to the descent of Ganga, by the Kathak or story-teller, who gave the prologue for every act. About three hundred and fifty guests viewed the unusual performance.

The Celebration ended with a symposium of four lectures delivered by the four visiting Swamis, on Sunday, March 22, at the spacious auditorium of the Society. The hall was packed to capacity, many even standing, and a large number had to be turned away. Each Swami spoke on a particular aspect of the life of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vividishananda illustrating his talk with delightful lantern pictures of the Ramakrishna Mission. The power of Sri Ramakrishna was vividly felt during these three days of celebration which were inaugu-

rated by fine newspaper publicity and the appearance of the Chicago Vedanta Society's new Centenary publication, "Ramakrishna the Man and the Power," by Swami Gnaneswarananda which proved to be a fitting harbinger of the Centenary Celebration to follow.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, PROVIDENCE, R.I.

The Providence Vedanta Society's Hundredth Birthday Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna was opened by Swami Akhilananda over the radio, on Friday, February 21, at 7:30 A.M., the Swami speaking on the "Spiritual Experiences of Sri Ramakrishna." That afternoon, over a different radio station, the Swami read to the invisible public the message of Swami Vivekananda on Sri Ramakrishna, and spoke on "Sri Ramakrishna and Future Civilization."

A committee called "The American Centenary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna" had been formed during the winter. It comprised, besides the American Swamis, such outstanding figures as Professor William E. Hocking of Harvard University; Reverend Ivan Lee Holt, President of the Federation of the Churches of Christ; Reverend Frederick B. Fisher, President of the Council of Free Churches of America; Reverend Jabez Sunderland; Professor Franklin Edgerton, American Oriental Society at Yale University; Professor Millar Burrows, President of the American School of Oriental Research at Yale University; Rabbi Israel Lazaron, and others. The chairman of this Committee, Reverend Frederick A. Wilmot, Universalist Minister and Religious Editor of the Providence Journal, wrote three appreciative articles on Sri Ramakrishna, portraying him vividly to the Western mind. These articles, along with pictures and cuts, were sent to leading newspapers all over the United States.

On Sunday, February 23, a large gathering of about three hundred, came together at the Plantations Club, a big audi-

torium in the centre of Providence, to hear ministers of different religions speak on mysticism. An unusual spirit of harmony and good-will toward one another and toward Sri Ramakrishna could be noticed among the speakers. After music by Professor Henri Faucher and Mme. Faucher, Swami Akhilananda read the message of good cheer from the President of the Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Akhandanandaji. A Catholic monk, Father Chandler, struck a high spiritual note by his beautiful exposition of the stages of divine love as portrayed in the life of St. Thomas Aquinas, showing the attainment of God to be the highest human goal. This was followed by a very interesting account by Rabbi Braude of the charitable life of Rabbi Israel, the Master of Goodname. Reverend Ralph Harpole depicted practical mysticism in the Protestant Church from the life of Horace Bushnell. Reverend Frederick Wilmot gave an entertaining definition of mysticism which he followed by a talk on Sri Ramakrishna, bringing out with sympathetic understanding the idea of the harmony of religions, and Swami Akhilananda gave an address on the "Mysticism of Sri Ramakrishna." The subect was drawn to a fitting close by Dr. Joachim Wach formerly of Leipzig University and now Professor of Comparative Religion at Brown University when, while speaking on "The Unity of Eastern and Western Mysticism," he remarked that "Mysticism denoted the harmony of man above his national and social barriers."

The glorious Birthday on Monday dawned fair and bright after weeks of rain. The Swamis, Akhilananda, Vividishananda, Gnaneswarananda and Paramananda were able to be together on this day which was spent in private worship and brotherly interchange. The following day, February 25, Swami Akhandanandaji's message was radio broadcasted over the entire United States. On this day also, Swami

Akhilananda cooked a dinner for one hundred, for the banquet which in spite of crowding, leading to a rejection of late applications, was held in Sri Ramakrishna's own place that night. It was a most happy occasion. Following music, there were brief addresses on various phases of the life of Sri Ramakrishna by the five Swamis present and by American friends, Rev. Frederick Wilmot; Rev. Allen E. Claxton, Methodist Clergyman; Professor Robert Casey, Professor of Comparative Religion at Brown University, and Professor Arthur Murphy, also Professor of Comparative Religion at Brown.

"Harmony of Religions" was Swami Akhilananda's topic over the radio on Friday, February 28. In the evening there was another large public meeting at the Plantations Club, at which the Swamis, with the exception of Swami Nikhilananda, delivered lectures on Sri Ramakrishna, as the great Master of India, as the Harmonizer of Religions, as the Combiner of the mystic and the practical, and finally as a living example of mystic experience as set over against Western psychology.

In addition to the many public activities, there were at Providence, during the Centenary Celebration, more intimate gatherings of a social nature, and on several occasions, Swami Gnaneswarananda gave of his music.

The week of celebration proper ended on Sunday, March 1, at an evening meeting, at which Swami Akhilananda, after song and violin, gave a lecture on "India and Her Master," illustrated by slides, thereby causing the members of his audience to desire to leave for India immediately under his guidance. The Celebration thereafter was carried by the Swami to Philadelphia and St. Louis, where he delivered a number of special lectures on Sri Ramakrishna which interested and drew many people.

VEDANTA CENTRE, BOSTON

On the evening of February 27, the Boston Vedanta Centre struck the first note of its Sri Ramakrishna Centenary Celebration, with a banquet at which the Swamis Akhilananda, Nikhilananda, Gnaneswarananda and Vividishananda were the guests of honor amid about two hundred honored guests. Down the main Chapel and adjoining library ran long lines of tables in gala array, and brooding over all, at the end of the room, the symbol-crowned altar, bearing amid fragrant bloom and a flower-field of vigil lights sown, as it were, on the altar platform, a beautiful portrait of Sri Ramakrishna, delicately wrought in crayon by an artist member from the California Ashrama. The dinner, cooked in its entirety by Swami Paramananda, and served by members of the Centre, formed a delicate and delicious prelude to the speeches which followed—the visiting Swamis speaking eloquently and at length on various phases of Sri Ramakrishna's life and message.

On the morning of March 1, at eleven o'clock, a Devotional Service, in honor of Sri Ramakrishna, was held at the Chapel of the Vedanta Centre, Swami Paramananda presiding, with Swami Akhilananda as guest-speaker. Again the beauty and power of Sri Ramakrishna's life was brought forth by the Swamis, and their words, combined with the atmosphere of the Chapel, lifted all hearts to a loftier consciousness.

That same afternoon, at three o'clock, was held the Public Celebration, in the form of a Service at which in addition to Swami Akhilananda who again spoke with deep feeling and penetration of the Master, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, distinguished curator of the Oriental Section of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, read a beautiful and erudite paper on "Sri Ramakrishna's Tolerance." Finally, Swami Para-

mananda summed up the whole with the peculiar mellowness of thought and expression characteristic of his spirit.

A survey has already been given in the March issue of "The Message of the East" of the special reception held on the night of March 5, at the Vedanta Centre. This was in the nature of a good-will gesture to leaders and members of all religious organizations in and around Boston. Although heavy snow and slippery streets acted as a slight deterrent, it was perhaps the loveliest occasion of all. Swami Akhilananda; Dr. Wilmot, religious editor of the Providence Journal; Dr. Kopf, Rector of Mt. Vernon Church, Boston; Miss Frances Grant, Vice-President of the Roerich Museum, New York; Mr. Ennis and Miss Katharine Sherwood were the speakers of the evening, Swami Paramananda adding his own gracious words in the introduction and at the close. It was an evening when speakers and listeners were fused in the subtle fire of an inner understanding and everything flowed together as if by some magic of the spirit. Dr. Kopf, a stranger to the work and to the Centre, sensed this and conveyed it in words which were significant.

"I came tonight," said he, "to learn more than to speak. I am still young enough to learn. I am going to be honest with you—I have not read a line about the man whom you are here to honor tonight, but not many suns will set before I do. I shall know more of what you stand for within a fortnight than I do now, because I see the reflection, as in a mirror, of the influence of a Power. I see here the radiant faces, I see the mystic glow of reality and devotion. I was put at the front, I believe, that I might see you, and I have seen a radiance which makes me humble. That is only an honor to the man you love. Paul says, 'You are my living witnesses.' You are his, and you have done him well tonight. I have come to take what you have for me and

make it my own. If that is eclectic, I will make the best of it. You know Edwin Markham's poem:

> "He drew a circle that shut me out—
> Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
> But love and I had the wit to win:
> We drew a circle that took him in."

You have drawn a circle that takes me in. I thank you."

Toward the close of the evening, a rare musical treat was contributed by Mr. Einar Hansen of the Boston Symphony and accompanying artists, who rendered a short but lovely program of chamber music. Refreshments were then served and the guests departed.

On March 16, Swami Paramananda left for the west coast, going via Cincinnati and Louisville. Following his departure, Sister Daya was the guest of the Mt. Vernon Church, at its regular Thursday night supper, on the evening of March 19, —a return courtesy of Dr. Kopf, at whose invitation she spoke afterwards to church members on the meaning and value of the Vedanta movement.

Mention also must be made of the visit to the Centre of the "Boston Friendship Tours" on Saturday afternoon, March 28. A program had been arranged of Hindu songs with *Tubbla* (Indian drum) accompaniment, by Miss Sydna V. White recently returned from India; Buddhist Jataka tales told by Miss Nora Shaw, and a short address on "India and Its Genius," by Sister Daya. The visiting audience expressed warm appreciation and a feeling of genuine interest was manifested.

NOTE

The Western Reports of the Centenary Celebration, along with the concluding chapter of Swami Nikhilananda's, "Mystery of Divine Incarnations" will appear in the May number of the "Message of the East."

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VOL. XXV NUMBER 5

"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)

JUN 10

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MAY, 1936

ETERNAL REALITIES

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*
Published Monthly except in August and September

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SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA

THE longest night seems to be passing away, the sorest trouble seems to be coming to an end at last, the seeming corpse appears to be waking, and a voice is coming unto us, gentle, firm, and yet unmistakable in its utterances. Like the breeze of the Himalayas, it is bringing life into the almost dead bones and muscles, the lethargy is passing away and India is awakening from her deep long slumber. None can resist her any more; never is she going to sleep any more.

Once more the wheel is turning up; once more vibrations have been set in motion from India which are destined at no distant date to reach the farthest limits of the earth. Once more the voice has spoken whose echoes are rolling on and gathering strength every day. The time was ripe for one to be born who, in one body, would have the brilliant intellect of Sankara and the wonderfully expansive heart of Chaitanya—one who would be the embodiment of both this head and heart. Indeed the time was ripe for one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the down trodden, for everyone in this world, inside India and outside India; and at the same time one whose grand and brilliant

intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonize all conflicting sects, not only in India but outside of India, and bring a marvelous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart, into existence. It was necessary that such a man should be born, and such a man was born in Sri Ramakrishna. His life was a thousand-fold more than his teaching, a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads; nay, he was the spirit of the Upanishads living in human form. Nowhere else in this world exists that unique perfection, that wonderful kindness for all, that does not stop to justify itself, that intense sympathy for man in bondage. He lived to root out all distinction between man and woman, the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, the Brahmanas and the Chandalas. He was the harbinger of peace—and the separation between Hindus and Mohammedans, between Hindus and Christians, is sure to be a thing of the past. He came to bring about the synthesis of the Eastern and the Western civilizations. Indeed, not for many a century past has India produced so great, so wonderful a teacher of religious synthesis.

I place this great spiritual ideal before you, and it is for you to judge him for yourselves. In the heart of your hearts is the Eternal Witness, and may He, for the good of humanity, open your hearts and make you true and steady to work for the immense change which must come whether we exert ourselves or not. For the work of the Lord does not wait for the likes of you or me. It is a glory and privilege that we are allowed to work at all under Him. Once more the doors have opened. Enter ye all into the realms of Light; the gates have been opened wide once more.

And may He who is the Lord of every sect, who is all-pervading, may He bless you, may He help us, may He give strength and energy unto us! May His blessings be on you all for ever and ever.

ETERNAL REALITIES

By Swami Paramananda

(Extracts from various lectures)

As we survey the history of the world, if we analyze with unbiassed mind, we shall see that though man may justify war, destruction and intolerance in the name of religion, politics or what not, it is a degraded state of human consciousness, a misdirected current of life, rousing an opposing current in others. It does not matter who starts it, whether it is a king, an emperor, or whoever it may be, it brings destructive elements from all sides. It is not based on the Christ teaching, although many in the name of Christ have brought it about, nor is it the teaching of the gentle, compassionate Buddha, nor of the Hindu Rishis, nor of any great philosophy that the world has ever produced.

Wise men never follow the vulgar notion of returning hatred for hatred, as for instance, if a man strikes you, you must strike him harder; if a man hurts you, you must harm him even more. Just the opposite. They know that "gentleness alone will overcome condemnation and anger." Do not think that I look upon this teaching as a novelty. Christ taught it and all the Christ-spirits of the world have taught it. We cannot deny its import, but whether we are able to follow it or not is another question. You may say, "That is not my religion." Your religion would be something very extraordinary if it did not contain this fundamental principle, no matter what name it may bear. Gentleness is not passivity. That is something we must learn. A person may be dull and passive and negative and stupid, yet he may not be gentle; in fact, he seldom ever is. He merely is incapable of doing anything. The true gentleness, which rises from tranquillity of the spirit, represents a tremendous amount of balance—a radiant quality of the soul. It over-rules all the

afflictions of the world. There is nothing so powerful. To let the spirit rule, and thereby to transcend the bondage of material life, requires a tremendous amount of courage. It is not for the weakling.

All this commotion that is going on in the world, all the reform societies and leagues and organizations are good; they are trying to bring about peace. But the real peace that will hold men together must be born in our own hearts. It is the blossoming of the understanding soul.

Whenever we are successful, if we can only remember the One Who stands behind our success, then our success will be permanent. Also if we can remember, when we are drowned in despair, that we are not forsaken but that we needed this fire to purify us, to burn up that which was small and petty in us, then something greater will ensue. The difference between the man of vision and the man who is earth-bound is this: both of them sometimes meet with failure, but whereas the man of vision builds upon his failure a more solid foundation, the other man just weeps and wails and broods over his lot.

Christ said: Let your light shine that men by seeing your light will recognize your Father Which is in heaven. If a man says he is religious and that his Faith is better than another person's Faith, let him prove it by his love, by his magnanimous spirit, by his nobility of purpose, in fact by his superior qualities. Let him overwhelm the world.

On our part, if we see one rising up with a bigger message, with a greater life, with a mightier power, instead of being envious of that person, let us lend our aid, because the world needs not only one or two but many who can bring light, who can bring strength, who can destroy the darkness and remove the weakness that are overpowering us.

Existence is like an orchestra, a spiritual symphony in

which people are playing many parts. They do not have to play one against the other, however. There is a Choir Master, a Great Father—One without a second—Who is standing there and guiding every player, so that no matter what part one may be playing, whether it is a Christian part, a Hindu part or a Mohammedan part, if it is well played with the rhythm of love and understanding, it will blend with beautiful harmony in the symphony of religion, the symphony of life itself.

"Truth is One, men call It by various names." If men could grasp the magnitude of this, they would be bigger, there would be less destruction. We cannot expect everyone to fit into one setting; the colorfulness, the beauty of life would be altogether taken from us. When many come together in blending harmony, it is much more lovely, more picturesque, than when we try to make them of one color, one image.

Today we see everything in the light of practical utility. Suppose we should try to follow this idea of unity in variety, what would be the result? The result would be at once constructive unity, life in unfoldment, the individual becoming stronger through the strength of the whole. Great variety is an essential fact in life; it must always give us a background for our life in the universe.

Spiritual life cannot be thrust upon us. There must be intensity of feeling, longing, prayer, before we can taste the essence of the spiritual. What is meditation if we do not have a sense of love, of real communion? And that can come only through intense longing. We commune with that which is dear to us. Man communes with worldly thoughts, business interests and schemes, because he loves them, and with even greater intensity a sanctified soul communes with God.

There are many people who read and study and belong to occult societies and everything that has a mystifying element,

yet you do not find in them any exuberance of spiritual understanding, any real light. Sometimes they boast: "I belong to this, I have studied so long, I have known so many great people." But this is not the standard of success in the spiritual province; it is our life which speaks for our advancement.

A humble person is the strongest person in the world. He conquers. The weapon he has in his hand is invincible. An arrogant man, however, always meets with defeat, although at first he may seem very pompous. He breaks himself.

God's blessing always seeks the gentle, the lowly—even those who are misjudged and maltreated by the world. It is a wonderful education to endure and forbear. Perhaps some of these ideas may sound to you old-fashioned. Do not discard anything merely because it is old. There is nothing new or old. There is One Eternal Truth ever ruling over our spiritual life, and when we are able to apply that with courage and conviction, and with sincerity of purpose, then our life blossoms forth and we have that humility. The grace of God always comes to strengthen and redeem the humble heart, just like the rain water. Rain water falls like a benediction on mother earth. Same way, God's grace falls on us as a great benediction, and always finds its resting-place where there is lowliness of spirit.

God has not made man with two hearts. There is but one heart, and the true functioning of that heart is—to love. If we put it to any other use but love, we have to take the consequences.

The seed waits in silence and becomes the blossom. There is a season for everything. When we force things, they fail to develop in the right way. Hot-house flowers do not have the natural fragrance, the loveliness. Today we want everything at once. We do not want to wait till tomorrow. Yet tomorrow is the wonderful heritage of man. Tomorrow we

shall have richer consciousness to receive the blessings that will come tomorrow.

The seed falls to the ground, but that does not mean that its fruition is secure. It may not come to fruition for a long time unless we are alert in nourishing it, watching over it, caring for it. It all depends on ourselves how quickly it matures and comes to ripening. Same way, spirituality is something we have to evolve within us. It is not that the practical application of spiritual philosophy can be given to us, just as one drives a nail in a board. Through our prayer, our earnestness, we unfold and our life is filled with fragrance.

We are all children of Divine Being. Most beautiful and inspiring of all utterances is that wonderful thought which comes down from the Vedic revelations: "O ye children of Immortal Bliss!" Our faces should be radiant with joy.

Our little hands are not capable of doing great things if we take them just as ours, but these hands become very, very effective and beautiful when they are sustained by the Divine Power.

When you have made a happy discovery, nothing can suppress your joy, and when you have found your Divine birthright, it will not have to be announced by a radio station—your countenance, your whole being, will shine.

A loving heart is loving at every turn. Make this the simple foundation for your life. Commonwealth of humanity means this love. It means that we so enlarge our vision and our thought and our idealism that we exclude nothing, and then we begin to live in God's world.

It is the greatest possible fallacy when people think they are going to build up happiness for themselves, as if there could be any selfish happiness or safety.

It does not make any difference how many times people

may misunderstand you or try to hurt you, make it your motto never to hurt anyone. It is better to be hurt than to hurt; it is better to be wronged than to do anyone wrong. What a wonderful world it would be if we could all have such a motto. We need this more than food or drink.

Evil is infectious. Impatience, anger, hatred,—all these things are infectious. Guard yourself, therefore, not with calculation, but with noble thoughts, high aspirations and beauty of character. When you have evolved these qualities, wherever you go you will carry something that will help others. Your noble instinct and your radiance of life will always be with you and go before you. That is the thing which the world most needs today—not theology, theories, nor dogmatic ideas. It has too many of these. What the world wants is the real life, the living radiance from character. Let us *be* our ideal.

Let us lift our thoughts and prayers to the One Infinite Being, Who abides in nature;

Who sings to us through the sweet notes of the birds, telling us of His beneficence, His joyousness;

Who shields us from all evil, keeping us under the roof of His Divine protection.

Let us never forget His blessings, but ever cherish thoughts and feelings which make us more and more conscious of His unfailing love.

O Infinite One, Thou art the Father, the Mother, the Protector!

Thou art the Light of the Universe.

Sun, moon, stars and all the luminaries reflect only Thy Light, and are illumined through Thy Light.

Give us Thy Light;

Fill our heart and mind and all our inner being with Thy radiant Light; and keep us ever and ever in peace.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

O earth, peace! O atmosphere, peace!
Peace! Peace! Peace!
I appease whatever here is terrible, cruel, evil.
Peaceful, favorable—let all here be calm!

—*Atharva Veda.*

From the very first it was his [Swami Vivekananda's] intention to form a Temple Universal wherein should congregate in harmony all the religious sects of the world, worshipping but one symbol, OM, which represents the Absolute.

—*Life of Swami Vivekananda.*

The man who knoweth God is the most exalted of the exalted; yet his mind is the most humble of all.

—*Hymns of Guru Arjan.*

Could we employ the ocean as a lens, and force truth from the sky, even then I think there would be much more beyond.

—*Richard Jeffries.*

The blessed Bhavagavan Ramakrishna is bringing from the Himalayan heights the symbol of OM. His yellow robe is furling in the wind, His feet touch the white snows, but gloriously. He proceeds to manifest to humanity the greatest bliss. —*Nicholas de Roerich.*

Our individual minds are the strings which catch the rhythmic vibrations of this Universal Mind and respond in music of space and time. The quality and number and pitch of our mind strings differ, and their tuning has not yet come to its perfection, but their law is the law of the Universal Mind which is the instrument of finitude upon which the Eternal Player plays His dance music of creation.

—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

Goodness and kindness are, perhaps, beyond wisdom. Is it not possible that the ultimate end is gaiety and music and a dance of joy? —*James Stephens.*

THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE INCARNATIONS

By Swami Nikhilananda

(Concluded from the March Number)

What are the characteristics of Divine Incarnations? As I said, Christianity believes in one Incarnation of God, but the Hindus maintain that there are certain characteristics always associated with Divine Incarnations. Wherever you find extraordinary power, extraordinary greatness, extraordinary love, extraordinary purity, be it in a Hindu or a Buddhist or a Christian, there is a special manifestation of God. The Gita says: "Wherever you find, O Arjuna, the expression of love, the expression of purity, the expression of Godliness, the expression of spirituality, know that I am incarnated there." Again Sri Krishna says in the Gita: "All these Incarnations are strung in Me, like pearls on a string."

What are these Divine characteristics? The first striking feature in a Divine Incarnation is that He is born with certain unique attributes and powers. It is a fashion of the modern mind to classify all people under the same category. They say Christ is a perfected soul like St. Francis of Assisi, or that Buddha is like any other saint. This is not true. If you read the life of St. Francis of Assisi and the life of Jesus Christ in a detached manner, you will find that there is a striking difference, there is something unique, something special in the life of Jesus Christ which you do not find in the life of St. Francis. Both of them may have passed through the same spiritual discipline, both of them perhaps suffered from the same temptations, the same hunger and thirst. Still there is something in the life of Jesus Christ which is inexplicable, but which everyone feels when he reads the Gospels with reverence. There is something superhuman, if we may call it so, in His life which you do not find in the lives of mere

saints and seers. In the same way, when we read the life of Buddha or Sri Ramakrishna or Krishna, we find something unique which at once differentiates them from other holy men or saints. As radium possesses unique qualities which are not found in other metals, or as lightning is different from other forms of fire, so also an Incarnation of God is different from other men, however holy or saintly they may be.

Another characteristic of the Divine Incarnation is that he can remain, at will, in any state of realization. This is very important. If an Incarnation likes, at one moment He can go into Samadhi and forget all about the phenomenal world and the next moment he can mix with the sinners and vicious people of the world without losing His God-consciousness at all. Suppose a stranger wants to go to the palace of the king; somehow he can manage to go as far as the drawing-room. He cannot go to the inner apartments. But the Prince of the house can go wherever he wills, to the drawing-room or to the inner apartments. The Incarnation is like the Prince. He can move in any sphere of Divine realization, and a seer or perfected soul is like the stranger who can only remain in a particular state. . . . The Incarnation . . . can pass into the infinite realm of Truth whenever He likes and He can again, at will, come back into the phenomenal world. He has infinite capacity to play between finite and Infinite. Whenever He likes, He can be like a human being, and whenever He likes, He can be like God. But once the perfected soul passes into the realm of Infinity, he cannot come back to the phenomenal world. We read in the life of Sri Ramakrishna that he was very fond of his young disciples, like Vivekananda and others. There was a man staying with Sri Ramakrishna who could hardly understand the exalted state of his mind. Unable to understand the cause of his yearning for the young disciples, he said to Sri Ramakrishna: "You are

a Divine Man. Why do you constantly think of those young boys? Can you not absorb yourself in meditation?" Sri Ramakrishna said: "Yes, if I like I can do that too. Look!" Instantly he went into Samadhi, his hairs stood on end. He stayed in that state for an hour and then he came back and said: "See, when I like I can instantly go into Samadhi, but if I stay in Samadhi all the time, I cannot fulfill the Mission for which I am born."

Another characteristic of the Incarnation is that It is always one and the same. There is no potential difference between a Christ and a Krishna, because both of them are manifestations of the same Truth. Plunging deep into the ocean of Truth, It rises up here as Krishna and there as Buddha. Then It dives down again and rises up as Christ or Sri Ramakrishna.

An Incarnation is like the viceroy of a mighty emperor. Whenever there is turbulence in any part of the empire, the monarch at once sends his competent viceroy or representative to quell the trouble and pacify the subjects. So, in this world, whenever there is any confusion, or decline of spiritual virtue, the Almighty God sends His Viceroy. That means that He Himself is incarnated, as it were, in human form.

An Incarnation, although born in a human form, is not subject to the law of Karma. We are born in a particular condition as a result of our past action. We suffer because we have done something wrong in the past. But an Incarnation is not born subject to any such law which applies only in the relative plane. He is always free. He can act as he likes. He is never under the bondage of any law.

The Incarnation of God possesses the power to give salvation to others. This is the greatest difference between an Incarnation of God and a perfected soul. At the time of

drought we go a great distance for water; but when there is a flood we do not make any effort to go a distance for water. We can get water right at our door. The perfected soul also has realized Truth; but that Truth does not easily radiate far and wide. To be benefitted by the realization of St. Francis of Assisi, a perfected soul, one had to go to Italy to meet him there. But when an Incarnation is born, even at a great distance from us, we get Truth right at our own door. . . . A great saint with difficulty can realize the Truth for himself, but he cannot help others very much. But an Incarnation not only Himself reaches the destination, but enables others also to do so. An Incarnation is like a big ship plying back and forth with thousands of passengers, . . . a perfected soul . . . is like a fishing boat which itself can cross the water but cannot take any passengers.

Again, the Incarnation is like an engineer, and the perfected soul is like an archeologist. An archeologist discovers an old city and finds there a well which contains water, but covered with earth and straw. All the archeologist has to do is to remove the straw and dirt and the water comes out. But the engineer can sink a well even in the desert place where there is no water. He can bring out water where apparently there is none. So a saint or perfected soul can awaken spirituality in a heart where there is already some spiritual idea or love, but an Incarnation can transmit spirituality to a heart dry as the desert sand. Again a perfected soul is just like a small flower with one drop of honey in it. If you suck the flower dry, you get only one drop of honey. But an Incarnation is all honey, all blessedness, all sweetness. . . . An Incarnation of God does not argue or reason to convince others. He simply commands, "Behold there," and the sceptic's life is completely transformed. The life of an Incarnation is natural and spontaneous. He is like a child. He

does not see evil anywhere. He sees only God. He is beyond the consciousness of good and evil. He has transcended the ethical convention of society. There lies the secret of His redemptive power. . . .

Again, ordinary religious disciplines have no meaning for the life of an Incarnation. Always established in God-consciousness, He does not have to strain Himself for concentration or meditation. Meditation is the natural state of mind of such a Soul. One day Sri Ramakrishna saw his teacher, Totapuri, practising meditation. Sri Ramakrishna asked him if it was necessary for him to do any more. Totapuri said, pointing to his bright, brass water-pot, "As without daily scouring the pot gets rusty, so also the mind becomes covered with impurity if one does not practise meditation daily. It is necessary even for a perfected soul." Sri Ramakrishna quickly retorted, "Suppose the vessel is made of gold instead of brass; then it never gets rusted." The Incarnation is like the gold vessel which keeps its brightness under all circumstances; but a perfected soul is like a bright brass vessel which requires daily cleaning.

Though an Incarnation appears like an individual soul, He has, in reality, no ego of His own. He is completely merged in God-consciousness. . . . He is like a roasted seed. Though it looks like a seed, it does not germinate when put under the earth. Or, to give another illustration, He is like a sword that has touched the philosopher's stone and has been turned into gold. Though the sword still keeps the previous form, it can no longer do any act of violence. In the same way, an Incarnation may exhibit activity or thought, like ordinary mortals, but His activities and thoughts are quite unlike ours.

What is the object of Divine Incarnation? If there were no Christ or Buddha, no Mohammed, Moses or Krishna, who could tell us about the Divine Consciousness? We human

beings, always satisfied with . . . animal pleasures and sensuous enjoyments could never go beyond the mesh of Maya and make our contact with Divinity, if God Himself, out of His infinite compassion and mercy, did not assume a human form.

Divine Incarnation is a fact. It is not an allegory. You may say that God is Infinite. How can Infinite God incarnate Himself in a finite body? You forget that God is also omnipotent. That means that He is all-powerful, and through His inscrutable power, He can make His love manifest through a man. . . . To demand an explanation of the Divine mystery is like asking a dog about what is passing in the brain of Sir Isaac Newton. As the dog cannot understand the intricate workings of the brain of Sir Isaac Newton, so we human beings, living on this plane of relative existence, cannot understand the workings of the Divine Mind. But it is a fact that God takes human form and human shape for our redemption, for our deliverance, that we may attain to and become one with God. Therefore you find two great Incarnations of two great religions making these statements. Christ said: "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest." The same idea is voiced by Krishna in the Gita: "Give up all idea of formal religion, relinquish all notion of duty and come and take refuge in Me alone. I shall save you from all sin. Do not grieve." The spiritual life reaches its culmination, the spiritual life bears its greatest fruit when we see God incarnated in human form.

THE END

Open your eyes of love, and see Him who pervades this world! . . . When you meet the true Guru, He will awaken your heart; He will tell you the secret of love and detachment, and then you will know indeed that He transcends this universe. —*Songs of Kabir.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the April Number)

Dive deep, dive deep, O my mind, into the ocean of Divine Beauty!
When thou hast searched the lowest fathom, Thou shalt attain the great treasure—treasure of Divine Love—*Prema.*
Search, search, keep on seeking! Then shalt thou find the holy place, the abode of God within thy heart.
Then will the lamp of Divine Wisdom burn within thee without ceasing.

Who is that Being who doth steer a boat on land—yea on land, on solid ground?
Kabir says, O brother, listen! Yea, brother, listen, listen—
Meditate on the hallowed Feet of the Divine One, (the Guru);
Diving in this ocean there is no drowning, there is no death;
For it is the Ocean of Immortal Life!

This song was a great favorite of Sri Ramakrishna's. In fact it represented his own state of mind. He would often sing it and plunge into unspeakable spiritual ecstasy. Once he said to his disciple Narendra, (later the Swami Vivekananda), "Tell me, my son, when will you dive deep into this ocean? Suppose you imagine that there is a bowl of this Divine Essence before you and you are just a fly, how will you taste this nectar?" Then Narendra said he would sit on the edge and taste it carefully, because if he should go too near the edge, he would fall in and be drowned. Then Sri Ramakrishna assured him, "There is no fear of death here, my son. Yea, this is the Ocean of Bliss and Immortality. Those who are ignorant, they think that one should not have too much devotion, too much love, one should not have excess of these. Can there be any excess of Divine Love? That is why I am asking you, 'Be drowned in that Ocean of Infinite Bliss!' When one attains the Supreme, then all things

are possible unto him. Such a one receives command from the Most High. He then can teach and become an example to his fellow men."

Those who live on the sense plane can hardly imagine the intensity and ardor that filled Sri Ramakrishna's mind and heart for unbroken absorption in the Divine. He kept on diving deeper and ever deeper into the ocean of spiritual ecstasy, but his mind could never be narrowed down to any form of bigotry or one-sidedness. Although at this time, through his association with Tota Puri, he was absorbed in the monistic phase of Truth, that is,—the whole universe and its contents are but One Infinite Brahman—*Akhanda Sat-Chit-Ananda*—Indivisible Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute—his mind reached out for ever newer and newer experiences in God-realization.

After Tota Puri's departure from Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna continuously remained transfixed in a state of Samadhi known as *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* (highest state of spiritual attainment) from which very seldom anyone returns to the ordinary plane of human consciousness. In his own case, however, some great Sadhu (holy man) came and looked after his body. We give here below Sri Ramakrishna's own account. He said:

"I remained for six months in that state of perfect union which people seldom reach, and if they reach it, they cannot return to their individual consciousness again. Their bodies and minds could never bear it. But this, my body, is made up of *Sattwa Gunas* (pure elements) and can bear much strain. In those days I was quite unconscious of the outer world. My body would have died for want of nourishment but for a Sadhu who came at that time and stayed there for three days for my sake. . . . He used to bring some food every day, and when all methods failed to restore sensation or con-

sciousness to this body of mine, he would even strike me with a heavy club so that the pain might bring me back to consciousness. Sometimes he succeeded in awakening a sort of partial consciousness in me, and he would immediately force down one or two mouthfuls of food before I was lost again in deep Samadhi. Some days when he could not produce any response, even after a severe beating, he was very sorrowful."

One of the most potent influences Sri Ramakrishna exerted upon those who came in his contact was to break down their spiritual prejudices and their narrow bias of sectarian differences. Even his Gurus were not exempted from this. This is found throughout his life. In one way or another, he reached those who were sincerely dedicated to the cause of Truth. In the case of Tota Puri, an uncompromising monist who had no use for symbol worship or any other formal approach to Divinity, Sri Ramakrishna convinced him that the same Absolute Brahman existed everywhere—in the form of the Image of Mother Kali, in that of Vishnu, in that of Shiva, as well as in the formless aspect of Divinity. For "Whatsoever exists in the universe is Brahman."

Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual mood now became fixed on the practice of Bhakti or devotion as manifested through the Vaishnava Ideal, and his whole mind and heart became enwrapped in the thought of Sri Krishna, the Incarnate Spirit of Love. In order to realize his objective through devotion, he forgot that he was a man. He dressed like a shepherdess. His yearning began to resemble that of Radha (the feminine embodiment of Divine Love.) Sri Ramakrishna himself often said that unless a person's mind was free of all carnal desire, he would be incapable of understanding the pure love that existed between Radha and Krishna. Furthermore, he said

that it really symbolized the yearning of the human soul for the Lord.

As he tried the different aspects of Hindu religion, and those of the faith of Islam, and later, when he longed for the knowledge in Christianity, someone always came to instruct him, as if guided by an unseen hand, and his *Ekagra Bhakti* (one-pointed devotion) enabled him to reach his objective most often within three days. Thus he became more and more convinced that all true religions are but the different roads leading to the same goal. As he would often say in his own simple but significant way: "Do not people go to the Temple of Kali by different roads and lanes? What difference does it make as long as they all get there?" This practical and unifying influence of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual realization is one of the most vital contributions to the modern world. His constant emphasis was that the great variety in existence need not clash with the One Infinite Reality. Unity in diversity is the fruit of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual attainment.

It is easy for us to imagine Sri Ramakrishna's throwing himself whole-heartedly into the accepted Hindu forms of worship, but most unique was the ardor and intense devotion he exhibited toward the religion of Islam and that of Christianity. When he practised the faith of Mohammed, he could not think of anything else or speak of anything else but Allah, and thus the devout Mohammedans came to look upon him as the fulfillment of their religion. Then a great passion rose in him to know the way of Christ. His entire meditation became that of Christ, and in a vision he saw Christ, who entered into him. One day he said to the Divine Mother: "O Mother, show me how Thy Christian devotees worship Thee and pray before Thee!" Every place of worship and prayer was sacred to him—for did not the people invoke the same

Absolute Brahman in different ways? When he learned of the great and devout Keshab Chandra Sen of the Brahmo faith, he at once wanted to see how he prayed to God.

These are but a very few definite illustrations of the great genuine catholicity that pervaded Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual consciousness. This day, when we are constantly thinking in the terms of democracy, we cannot help but be impressed with what dynamic force Sri Ramakrishna brings this great ideal into practical issue. Certainly there is nothing so needful for the endless and multiple diversity of these modern times as this peculiar accent on unity in diversity—not so much as a question of tolerance and condescension as of universal acceptance based upon wisdom and truth. Although Sri Ramakrishna did not claim to be a social reformer or religious agitator, he brought forth through his life and as the fruition of his spiritual contemplation, some most vital principles, equally applicable to the social, moral and spiritual adjustments of mankind. The outstanding slogan of the Vedic sages—Fundamental Truth Is One, but men call It by various names—became living and clarified through Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual enlightenment.

At this time, many noted men began to be drawn to Sri Ramakrishna. It was very much like his parable concerning the irresistible power of the magnet to draw the metals. And he on his part was keenly desirous to meet those who had experienced God-consciousness through following their own specific line. His attitude was never one of self-sufficiency. In spite of all his illumined visions and high realizations, he remained as a little child, and whenever he heard of any enlightened soul, endowed with spiritual perception, he would approach him in deep humility. Furthermore, he found delight in conversing with holy men, and Sri Ramakrishna's

idea of holiness was not confined within the pale of any dogmatic faith or religion. He turned his gaze toward every direction wherefrom the pure light of Spirit was shining. The learned men and truly great men marvelled at his breadth of vision, for they realized more and more, as they studied and observed him day after day, that what manifested through Sri Ramakrishna was not of ordinary calibre.

We have already mentioned that whenever there rose in Sri Ramakrishna's mind any strong desire for the practice of a particular form of religion, someone always appeared before him as the fulfillment of his yearning. As a psychological study it is of vital interest to note that as his mind became more and more allied with the Cosmic Mind, whatever thought or desire came to him, its fulfillment accompanied it. One day, as he was seated under the big Banyan tree and realized how beautifully secluded it was, and so very suitable for his spiritual practices, without hindrances or distractions, a desire awakened within him, and he could not help thinking how he would like to build a little hut in that place. And almost immediately, the tide of the Ganges brought all the necessary material for the little hut—the bamboo, the posts, the rope—practically to his feet. He was joyful, like a child, and with the assistance of the gardener, built this little hut where for a time he practised Yoga.

Such instances became constant. For whenever anyone tried to put any doubt in his mind, he would at once plead with the Mother: "If you will only bring such and such a person to me, then I shall know that all this I am experiencing is true." Sometimes he put the most impossible demands upon his Divine Mother, but Mother never disappointed him. This childlike, naive simplicity of faith in the All-loving Mother on the one hand, and his great flight to the Formless, Indivisible, Absolute Being on the other, is the most beautiful

demonstration of spiritual harmony in Sri Ramakrishna's life and teaching.

TO BE CONTINUED

WHAT IS DEATH

By Sister Devamata

Life and death move along parallel lines. They work together in close and continuous coöperation. We die daily and daily we are reborn. Cell by cell the physical body gives up its life; cell by cell its life is renewed. The change we call death does not differ in process from these daily changes. It is not a conclusion, it is a readjustment. The sun, when it drops behind the horizon, does not dissolve into nothingness or alter its nature; it rises elsewhere. Neither do we go into a sudden eternity or cease to be, when we disappear below the horizon line of life. We merely turn the curve. Life is not a straight line, broken at one end by death. Nature admits no straight lines with loose ends hanging in space. She moves on curves, which, prolonged, become ellipses or circles. Our life is such a circle. It has its orbit.

Science has learned that there is no destruction in the universe. What is, will never cease to be. Life is, hence it must be always. It flows on and on, uninterrupted even by death. Death is merely an incident in it. When it occurs, it does not reach beyond the physical; mind and spirit remain untouched. We are in the same state as we are here, when we become so deeply engrossed in our thought that we lose all consciousness of the body. In the heat of battle soldiers are often mortally wounded and do not know they are struck. If we would let our mind dwell less on our bodily conditions and sensations and more in the higher realms of our being, we too would feel the touch of death but lightly.

To sustain life we are forced to take life. since only life

will nourish life; but this inevitable fact does not in any measure justify the universal killing which takes place in the world. Men kill for sport; they kill to prove their skill; they kill just to kill. How many pigeons are shot, how many fishes are caught, how many deer are brought down, as a mere diversion! May not the accidents and mishaps which overtake us come as a rebound of the unnecessary deaths we cause? Is it not evening up the balance sheet?

A lower form of life must be sacrificed to safeguard a higher form; but we need not for that reason put our foot on every insect that we see, or destroy every animal that crosses our path. The story is told of the great composer, Johannes Brahms, that one day he was walking along a country road with a friend, deeply absorbed in conversation, when suddenly he cried out: "Stop! Stop! You may kill it!" And the narrator adds: "It was only a tumblebug, but Brahms shrank from hurting any living thing. He reverenced all life and felt in his heart that he was brother to that bug in the dust, to the birds that chirruped in the hedgerow, to the trees that lifted their outstretching branches to the sun."

When this broader, more inclusive outlook comes, every expression of life is sacred to us. We do not break or pluck or tear growing things as if they existed for our pleasure; we do not walk heedlessly, not caring what we crush; we do not eat more than our body needs, unwilling to take even the most primitive forms of life unnecessarily. Scientists are recognizing more and more that there is no dead matter in the universe; that everything is living. A profound spiritual teacher of India declared often that trees, flowers and bushes were conscious animals without the power of locomotion. The thought that all creation is alive and conscious should not oppress us; it should rather deepen our sense of the brotherhood of being.

Not even death can check the surging force of life in the universe. It springs from an inexhaustible Source and cannot be separated from that Source. When we try to shut off a portion of it and keep it for ourselves, it shrinks and is gone. We cannot live selfishly. If we would have life more abundantly, we must give of it freely. We must make it a continual offering to the Supreme. "Give all for all," Thomas a Kempis enjoins. "Ask for nothing, require back nothing. Let this be thy endeavor, this thy prayer, this thy desire, to be stript of all selfishness, that thou mayest die to thyself and live eternally unto Me (the Origin of life)."

REPORT

ANANDA-ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

Swami Paramananda's recent stay at Ananda-Ashrama, California, was packed with intensive activity. On March 29, immediately after his return from the east, he celebrated Sri Ramakrishna's Centenary, the public function falling a full month after the Master's actual birthday which had been observed privately on February 24, with worship and a dinner for members and friends of the Community.

The public celebration was of unique significance. Ashrama is situated not in the heart of the city, but aloof and away from city life; little was done in the way of publicity, yet from four to five hundred people came from short and long distances. One could only think of Sri Ramakrishna's utterance: "Bees will come of themselves when the lotus blooms." Everything was in readiness under the Swami's personal supervision. The Guest-House which has been a haven of rest to so many, was filled with week-end visitors, and even friends from New York and Boston enjoyed its hospitality. All willingly coöperated with joyous spirit,

many hands making light work of everything, from preparing large quantities of vegetables for the public feast to follow, down to washing the dishes. No outside labor was required, and seeing all working together in the Cloister patio reminded one of similar occasions in India.

In the Shrine, a special altar dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna had been erected, in addition to the Sri Ramakrishna altar which is always there, and upon it was placed a large portrait of the Master, the whole being trimmed and garlanded by the Swami himself with special Ashrama flowers and offerings of devotees from outside the Ashrama. At the morning Service, the Swami spoke in his characteristic devotional manner on the Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. The Temple was full to overflowing and seemed dominated by an actual living Presence. The crown of the occasion was the reading by the Swami of his Litany to Sri Ramakrishna, composed a few days before. As he read the refrain at the close of each verse—"Our homage to Thee a thousand times, now, and for ever and ever more!", Gayatri Devi and the three Hindu Sisters joined with him as they laid flowers before the altar.

The feast which followed was prepared by the Swami's own hands and was offered in the Shrine, as is done in India, before it was served to the two hundred guests in the Cloister patio, which had been transformed into an outdoor dining-room. It required efficient service to take care of such a large number, but everything was conducted smoothly and with utter self-forgetfulness. In one corner, on a natural elevated platform, there stood another altar, bearing a beautifully decorated portrait of Sri Ramakrishna by one of the Ashrama artists. While all laughed and talked and partook of the blessed food, Sri Ramakrishna presided and smiled His benediction.

The day marched on, and more and more people came to

the Ashrama. At the afternoon Service several guest speakers—Rev. Walter Raymond of Unity Center, Los Angeles; Dr. Sheldon Sheppard of Universalist Church of Los Angeles, and Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Shaw of the Rosicrucian group of Santa Monica—all paid their tribute to the Master. Srimati Gayatri Devi also, when called upon by the Swami, spoke with graciousness and humility of spirit. Finally by unanimous request, the Swami read once more his Litany, closing the Service with its beautiful words of adoration.

CENTENARY PLAY

The following Tuesday, March 31, a dramatization by Gayatri Devi of six scenes from the Ramayana, great epic poem of India, was given in honor of Sri Ramakrishna. The weather not being sufficiently warm for outdoor activities at night time, the Temple was used as the auditorium, a stage being erected by the Ashrama Brothers. Through request, Swami Paramananda took the part of Ramchandra, the King, while the four Hindu Sisters, with other members of the Community, took the remaining parts. The program opened with the famous Bengali song describing Sri Ramakrishna, composed by his great devotee, Bengal's noted dramatist, Girish Chandra Ghose. Dancing and songs of supplication were incorporated in the play, and the performance proved most successful. So living and real were the characters that in the last scene, when Sita, the Queen, bade farewell to all and disappeared in the the bosom of Mother Earth, tears stood in the eyes of the sympathetic audience.

BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF LORD BUDDHA

On the full moon night of April 6, a special Service was conducted by Swami Paramananda, to pay homage to Lord Buddha on his birthday. The Swami spoke on "Compassionate One," and afterwards a reception was held in the Library to all friends.

EASTERTIDE

Eastertide, always an outstanding event at the Ananda-Ashrama, fell on the 12th day of April. Many will remember that early dawn as a dream of beauty. The natural stone altar, bearing the inscription, "Thee I Love in All," had been removed from the Temple patio and placed on the Sunrise Terrace under a flowering locust tree. Graceful smilax and immortelles adorned a cross, at the foot of which lay a profusion of flowers, golden and white. Nature herself had prepared a perfect offering, for all the shrubs and trees were in bloom at the first touch of Spring. Swami and the Ashrama Community rose long before night had withdrawn her veil and were ready to receive their friends, many of whom came from long distances to attend the Sunrise Service, which the Swami opened with a prayer, and Gayatri Devi and her sisters with a Vedic Hymn of Immortality. The Swami spoke in the terms of poetry and music, the birds also sang, the bees hummed their chorus, to which the Ashrama choir joined their "Song of Dawn." Mr. and Mrs. Rockwood and Mrs. Robinson with their lovely voices, contributed their share of melody. As Swami spoke, all were conscious of the quickening of life around them and were roused from the slumber of doubt, fear and mortality. Gradually the sun rose from behind the hills, first touching the Swami's head, and then flooding the entire terrace with its healing light.

Soon after the Service, breakfast was served to a large number at the Guest House. The eleven o'clock Service was held in the Temple of the Universal Spirit, and was crowded with eager listeners. The Swami spoke on "The Great Self" and made the risen Christ a living reality for those who heard him. Later, a Hindu luncheon, prepared by Gayatri Devi, was served under the sky. It was a pleasant sight to see tables spread beneath the trees on the Cloister terrace, while

the Hindu Sisters, serving in their native and picturesque *saris* or Hindu dress, added to the natural setting of loveliness. At the afternoon Service at three o'clock, extra chairs had to be brought to accommodate new and old friends. The Swami's Address on "Reincarnation and Resurrection" was greatly appreciated, and the day closed happily with his inspired words winging in all hearts.

THIRTEENTH ANNIVERSARY

The Ashrama celebrated its thirteenth birthday on Sunday, the 26th of April. Though in recent years the Ashrama has passed through tragic experiences of fire and flood, through nature's untiring aid and the workers' steadfast service, it has resumed its former appearance of beauty. Many came to pay their grateful tribute and to hear the Swami speak with zeal and inspiration of its great mission. Following the Service, luncheon was served to all, and many remained at the Ashrama for the whole day.

DAY OF SILENCE

In connection with the Anniversary, April 28th was set apart by the Swami as a day of Silence and Prayer. This occasion was rather of a private nature as only members were eligible. At 3 P.M. the Swami began the non-speaking period with a beautiful Service. For the next three hours the entire Ashrama remained wrapped in quietude. At intervals only, the Swami broke the silence with practical instructions. At the close, all were invited to attend the household evening worship—a rare privilege, as ordinarily it is only for the resident members. Soon after, a feast was served and the day ended in friendly intercourse.

On Thursday night, April 30, a reception was held as a finishing touch to the Anniversary Celebration and also for the purpose of bringing Ashrama friends together.

The following Sunday, May 3, was the last day of Swami

Paramananda's stay at the Ashrama, so that a large number came to attend the Services and bid him God-speed. On his way east, he stopped at Cincinnati, and lectured at Louisville, Kentucky and at New York City. During his sojourn in California, besides the special Festivals, there were the usual Sunday Services, meditation Classes and the Good Friday Service, all being well attended. During the Swami's absence, the work will be carried on by Srimati Gayatri Devi.

VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SAN FRANCISCO

In San Francisco, the birthday centenary of Sri Ramakrishna was celebrated by the Vedanta Society throughout the week of February 24 through March 1, with public receptions, lectures, an illustrated talk and the publication of a booklet on the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Special worship was conducted in the Shrine by Swami Ashokananda on the morning of the Master's birthday. In the evening the students and members gathered at a special meeting to hear a talk by the Swami on some of the intimate details of Sri Ramakrishna's life and to see a selection of stereopticon pictures of the Temple grounds at Dakshineswar, the Monastery at Belur, and the Ganges, all interestingly described by the Swami. At this meeting also, the new Library of the Society was formally dedicated and thrown open for the inspection of the guests, and the meeting was concluded with the serving of refreshments.

On the following Wednesday evening the first public meeting of the Centenary week was held, and a crowd of two hundred taxed the capacity of the Temple auditorium. The hall was elaborately decorated, special music was arranged and the Swami delivered an inspiring lecture on "How Sri Ramakrishna Realized God." During the entire evening an atmosphere of intense spiritual joy and peace pervaded the

meeting. The impressive concluding reception was held in a well-known women's club in the city, in order to accommodate the crowd of about three hundred which attended. A life-size photograph of Sri Ramakrishna stood on the platform, and the program included special music, reading of a paper describing the visit of one of the Society members to Belur last year, and a lecture by Swami Ashokananda entitled, "The Message of Sri Ramakrishna to the Modern World." At the conclusion of the program each guest was presented with a copy of a memorial booklet written by Swami Ashokananda, entitled, "Sri Ramakrishna, The God-Man of India," after which refreshments were served.

In the evening of the same day Swami Ashokananda held another meeting across the Bay in the city of Oakland, at which one hundred and seventy-two guests were present. Upon the subect, "Sri Ramakrishna, the God-Man of India," the Swami again spoke, and each guest received a copy of the memorial brochure, the reception closing with serving of refreshments. A great many of those present at the Centenary meetings received deep spiritual inspiration, and a great many people testified to the feeling of joyfulness and peace which characterized all the gatherings.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, PORTLAND, ORE.

The Centenary Celebration of Sri Ramakrishna was opened on the evening of March 28, with the presentation of a playlet, called, "The Light from the Beyond," in the Commandery Room of the Masonic Temple, before an appreciative audience of more than three hundred people. The play in two acts and three tableaux, was adapted by Swami Devatmananda, the head of the Society, from the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. This sublime subject was presented in the picturesque and colorful setting of the Orient, with appropriate costumes and religious chants. The climax of the

playlet was reached in the last scene, in which the various pilgrims,—Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Mohammedans, carrying offerings, meet at the altar of Truth, chanting their respective prayers and singing the chorus, "Truth is One . . . .", composed for the occasion. Miss Frances Pozzi of the Portland Symphony Orchestra, presented several numbers on the harp.

On Sunday, March 29, at eleven o'clock in the morning, a special devotional Service, with musical program, was held in the Chapel of the Vedic Temple where Swami Devatmananda addressed a full hall on "Sri Ramakrishna, the God-Man." The same evening at six-thirty, a Hindu dinner was served in the Banquet Hall of the Masonic Temple to more than one hundred people, Swami Devatmananda preparing two of the main dishes himself. The memorial meeting followed later, when more people crowded into the hall. Several noted speakers of the city then addressed the gathering, Dr. Norman F. Coleman, ex-President of Reed College, speaking on "Our Debt to India," Dr. G. S. Noble of the same college, on "A Western View of Ramakrishna," and Swami Devatmananda, on "Sri Ramakrishna and God-Intoxication." Mr. Ralph Thom of the Bank of California acted as toastmaster. There were lavish floral offerings and an elaborate musical program, vocal and instrumental, presented by noted artists. On Thursday, April 2, at 6 P.M., a dinner-reception, followed by music and other entertainments, was given to more than thirty members and friends of the Society, in the hall of the Vedic Temple, the Swami again preparing special Hindu dishes for the occasion.

On Sunday, April 5, at 11 A.M. the regular Service was held in the Chapel of the Temple, when Swami Devatmananda spoke on "Sri Ramakrishna, His Spiritual Practices." A special feature of the musical program was a song, composed

for the occasion and dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna. In the evening at eight o'clock, the Swami gave, with the help of lantern-slides, an illustrated talk in the Corinthian Room of the Masonic Temple,on "The History of Hindu Religion in Pictures." There was a full attendance and deep appreciation. As a permanent memorial to Sri Ramakrishna, the newly acquired Retreat, named after Him, will be dedicated at a later date.

VEDANTA CENTRE OF BOSTON

The Vedanta Centre of Boston is one of the oldest in United States. It has carried on the teachings of spiritual beauty and universal harmony as exemplified by Sri Ramakrishna, the Saint of modern India, and his eminent disciple, Swami Vivekananda, for nearly thirty years in unbroken rhythm. It is never closed, even in the hottest summer months.

After Swami Paramananda's departure for California, last March, Sister Daya faithfully carried on all the regular Services and Classes until the 10th of May, when Swami Paramananda returned to Boston again. Sister Daya not only gives inspirational talks and helpful meditation Classes but she specially helps those who are in distress of mind and in need of counsel. There is no hour too inopportune for her to lend her helping hand to those who come to her for aid. She, in every way, exemplifies her name, "Daya." which represents compassion and kindliness.

For information of out-of-town friends, we announce our regular Services: Sunday morning at 11:00; Sunday evening at 8:15; Tuesday Class-lecture at 8:15. All Services will continue throughout the summer months. The public is most cordially invited to visit the Centre.

Swami Paramananda will soon inaugurate the summer week-end Services at the Ananda-Ashrama, Cohasset, and will conduct Services there and in Boston for the present.

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VOL. XXV NUMBER 6

"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY EDITION

JUNE, 1936

INVOLUNTARY HEALING

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*
Published Monthly except in August and September

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INVOLUNTARY HEALING

By Swami Paramananda

INVOLUNTARY healing is to make ourselves over to that One who knows how to hold us in His safekeeping, or as it is given in the Upanishads, "The Infinite indeed is below, above, behind, before, right and left; It is indeed all this. . . . He who sees this does not see death, nor illness, nor pain; he who sees this sees everything and obtains everything everywhere." Let a man perceive this great Truth and automatically he will be freed from the ailments of life; his entire consciousness will become permeated and pervaded with that one thought, and before he knows it, he will be made whole, because he has connected himself with the Whole.

"One may heal with holiness, one may heal with the Law, one may heal with the Holy Word. This it is that will best drive away sickness from the body of the faithful, for this is the best of remedies."—*Zarathushtra.*

Holiness can be interpreted as wholeness. Holiness means wholeness. The bits, the particles, the fragments, how weak, how helpless they are when they are separated from the whole—like the drop of water in the parable which wept because of its severance from the sea. It had reason to weep. How long can a drop retain its individuality, how long can it last, apart from its source? Often in the morning at the

Ashrama I think it must have rained, but it is only the dew-drops shining in the sun. For a few moments they shine, and then they are gone; they are dried up. But can any amount of sunshine dry up the ocean? Same way it is with us. We have separated ourselves from the great Ocean of Being, and this separation is the cause of all our ailments, chronic and acute.

Man forgets that he has the possibility of becoming again united with his Source, that he has access to that Source, and so he begins to wither. With a tree, one should not wait till it shows signs of turning yellow, and then try to save it with an over-abundance of water and care. Even if one does save it, the result is never the same, and this is true also of healing. When we are in desperate need, something has already withered, something is already suffering within us. We send out a cry for help. But would it not be better to try to prevent this by learning the law, the rhythm, the order by means of which we can have continual restoration—a restoration that comes so constantly that we do not feel any wear or tear? Our thoughts, our aspirations, the harmony that we create in ourselves, the beauty of life, these are the things which bring health, happiness and physical renewal.

"One may heal with holiness; one may heal with the Law [the Divine Law] and one may heal with the Holy Word." It is not the Word, however, that carries the power, so much as the faith that the man places in it. Holiness does not consist in the thing itself. There are holy altars, but you may not find your point of contact with their holiness; there are holy places—inspiring nooks—and nearest of all, the Holy of holies in the heart of man, but these shrines we have to discover for ourselves—see with our own eyes, feel with our own feelings, understand with our own mind. There is no other way. We cannot know them by proxy any more than

we can trust another to eat our food and give us the nourishment. Here is a spiritual law, clear and open, not enshrouded by any mystifying element, and it is given with directness. Yet how many possess directness of understanding to receive it?

Swami Vivekananda tells us, "The body has in itself a certain power of curing itself, and many things can rouse this curative power into action, such as mental conditions, or medicine, or exercise. As long as we are disturbed by physical conditions, so long we need the help of physical agencies. Not until we have got rid of bondage to the nerves can we disregard them." Here the main idea is in the first sentence, "The body has in itself a certain power of curing itself. . . ." There are, as you know, thoughts which bring us refreshment, lightness of feeling, and which fire our hearts with high courage; and there are thoughts which cause us to feel depressed and depleted. That person who has formed the habit of eliminating from his mind those thoughts which drag him down and bind him, and instead, dwells definitely on all that is upbuilding, finds, even without seeking health, a natural healthfulness.

From the Sufi wisdom we read, "Junnaid when ill, prayed for his recovery. A voice answered him, 'Dost *thou* come in between Myself and thee?' " Even when he needs help most, man, by his worries, his intensity, his brittle eagerness, often stands like an obstructing block between the Divine Source and himself. Sometimes when we ask a person to forget himself, he seems to make it a point to think of himself, or even in the very act of forgetting himself, to cling to himself. That is why, in spite of all idealism, ethics, books and Bibles, human beings do not make much apparent progress. If any man imagines because he has a few fragments of knowledge, is familiar with some theories and can glibly recite from

them, that he knows more than others who are not so accomplished, he is mistaken. Knowledge, real fundamental knowledge, is not dependent on our theories, but on our ability to do and to be.

There is within us a Power by means of which we can detach ourselves spontaneously from our ills, and find our healing without striving and without struggle. Perhaps I can put it in this way: Sometimes out of helplessness a person falls into a state of absolute letting go, a state of surrender, and that moment of surrender seems to perform a definite miracle: he comes forth healed. Often this happens in sickness when doctors, medicines—everything has been given up and the patient out of sheer exhaustion ceases to stand between himself and that wonderful Power. This does not, however, occur only in connection with the physical; it happens in relation to our mental problems as well. We make a mistake when we fail to regard our mental state as important and say, "I do not care about my mind so long as my body is well." In the light of wisdom, the body is as we vision it through our thoughts. We have an idea that if we are physically in a good condition the mind will be cheerful, but it also works the other way—most often it works the other way; although it is true that body and mind react one upon the other.

According to Plato, "God did not make the soul after the body. He made the soul in origin and excellence prior to and older than the body, to be the ruler and mistress, of whom the body was to be the subject." How may we understand this? That the body is only an instrument—a dwelling or temple, as some of you call it—and therefore it is for us to know the One who is residing therein. We must know how to nurture that One with our thoughts, feelings and aspirations. The Soul of man is not susceptible to disease,

death and affliction; the Soul of man is immortal, but we must have definite knowledge of It; we must learn to commune with It, and if our communion is in accordance with the true nature of that One who dwells in the body, the body will be of the same order.

When the mind and heart are filled with love, when we do not allow any thoughts of aggressiveness, vanity, discord, and especially any hateful thoughts, to possess us, we are establishing in ourselves an atmosphere of health. Our breathing grows normal. When we are disturbed or angry, when we give way to jealousy or wounded feelings or have impatient thoughts, we find that our breathing becomes irregular, and as a wise man said to his disciples, when that happens it dries up all the cells in the body. We must remember that we cannot afford to let this irregular breathing go on. Suppose someone has hurt you or even insulted you, you have enough common sense to know that it does not alter anything. A man may call you a fool, but you do not have to become one. No one is degraded by what another may say to him, but if you forget your dignity, if you forget your common sense and your spiritual standards and lose your self-control, then you act like a fool, and you are one.

"Keep your minds so filled with Truth and Love that sin, disease and death cannot enter them. It is plain that nothing can be added to the mind already full. There is no door through which evil can enter." This excellent thought is from Mary Baker Eddy and it is the preventative method. What avails healing if the cause of sickness is still there? The real healing is the healing of the mind. Ignorance is the cause of our sickness and our sorrows. Give up worry, even for a single day and night, abandon thoughts of harshness and hatred and cruelty and inharmony, and there will be no power that can hold you a prisoner in sickness.

Blessed are those who have childlike faith! Sometimes you yourself have said, "If only I had the same faith that my child has!" You recognize that there is a defect, but you have hypnotized yourself into thinking that such faith is impossible for you. That is your mistake. In the physical world when you have spent a restless or feverish night, you go through some form of refreshment. You bathe, you put on fresh clothes and are able to go forth with buoyancy of spirit. Now in the inner world there is a similar process. The outer environment may help; coming in contact with certain people may give you stimulus, but you yourself must find some means by which you can bathe the mind and cleanse it with thoughts of meditation. Thoughts of meditation are very potent thoughts—creative thoughts. By means of them you can create either good and happy conditions or you can create destruction for yourself. The power of your thought, when properly directed, can bring all blessings to you; likewise it can, if wrongly directed, destroy all your blessings.

There are moments when we realize the tremendous power for good that we can evoke through our thoughts and through our prayers, and at these times, the body does not exist for us, we feel so absolutely one with Divinity. But these times do not last and again the mind falls down to a lower level and begins to throw its weight on us. That is why man should train himself mentally. Just as he goes through exercises to keep himself in good condition physically, so should he form the habit of keeping the mind in a certain atmosphere, that it may involuntarily be refreshed, recharged and revivified. Every one can do this. It is what Christ taught—First seek ye the Kingdom of God and Its Righteousness, and your wants, the tremendous lacks which you feel, will be fulfilled in a far better way than you yourself could desire. In fact, we have to give up desir-

ing. Man sets his limitations through his desires. We pray with intensity to have this or that, but when it comes, we are not satisfied and either begin to pray for something else or to have the first thing taken away. Therefore, the involuntary way of fulfillment—detaching yourself from your troubles and difficulties by connecting yourself with that which is pure and inspiring, the Source of life and sustenance—is the simple art that we must learn, the art of meditation.

Whatever the mind dwells upon, of that it partakes. Meditative thoughts are never negative. On the contrary, they are most positive thoughts and must be rightly directed. If someone offends you and you let your thought dwell upon that offense, naturally you will begin to partake of its nature. What else could you expect? Wise men say, "Forget your injury, let it be, wipe it out! And even more, Cover it with that which is bigger, nobler." Be like gold. Gold is burned in order to give it shape. Unless it is put through fire, it cannot be made fine and beautiful. When you have a little pain or are called upon to go through some trial or tribulation, remind yourself that you have pure gold in your soul and that nothing can destroy it. The more you dwell upon this, the more stable you will become in your consciousness. It is for this reason that there are those who are not overcome by the afflictions of life. It is not that they fail to have them. Take the example of Christ—Son of God, Incarnate Spirit, or whatever may be your conception of Him—He did not hold himself aloof from all these experiences; He went through suffering, but He transformed suffering.

The true measure of life is not to be found in the world. The secret lies in finding our spiritual balance, so that though troubles and trials may come, they will have no power to overthrow us. The ordinary man when he is confronted with difficulties, loses his sense of proportion, forgets his

ideal, but the wise man, in the same circumstances, embodies it.

"He who has in himself abundantly the attributes of the Supreme is like an infant. Poisonous insects will not sting him, fierce beasts will not seize him, birds of prey will not strike him." How do you like this picture from Lao-Tsze? Christ was such an infant, and all spiritual beings have been the same. It is not that they ask to be relieved from their suffering. There is only one passionate cry in their souls—that they may be united with the Highest. To That they cling, and It in Itself is the remedy.

With all your cleverness and shrewdness, do not think that you can create a fortification that will be sufficing to preserve your well being. Kings and emperors have tried that. Men of material means have tried it. They have tried to make their peace and happiness invulnerable, but they have never found the way. Wiser men, however—spiritually dedicated souls—become like little children, and children are protected.

It would be very good for us to give up all pretense and deal with the real facts of existence. Face the facts. Face the truth. Expose yourself to the spiritual Sun. Many take a sun-bath for the sake of health. Why not do the same thing in the spiritual sense, that your inner being may be redeemed. Sun of Life always gives light; It gives healing; and if we can only open ourselves to It, if we can only become childlike, trusting, dependent on that Wholeness, at the same time giving up all dependence on those things which makes us slaves to terrestrial conditions,—if we can do this, then we shall build up another kind of consciousness. There are many ways that spiritual healing can be practised, but there is no way more safe or sane than this.

Let me give you a suggestion. Whenever you are bur-

dened with anxious thoughts, instead of revolving round and round them, thereby recreating and enlarging them, drop them—just as in the hour of sleep you drop them—and go to your Source. Unfortunately many people, even during the time that is given to rest, are consumed by mental worries. How then can they maintain their health? How can they find happiness? How can they find a standard by which they can preserve the rhythm of life? It is easy for us to discard all the stings and afflictions of the earthly existence as we become more and more aware of the attributes of the soul, and we draw close to these attributes through meditation. Meditation is *not* stagnation. If you have any misconception in regard to this, get rid of it. Meditation is a most alert form of mental action. It is an awakening of that which is now asleep in the depths of our nature. In meditation we do not actually ask, "O Lord, have this pain removed!", we enter into a consciousness which pervades and permeates. It is like going to a spring of healing water. You drink from it, and every part of your being is revived, refreshed and quickened. It is a very gentle way, and there is no one who is not capable of following it. Even though you may have no physical need, know that the soul is crying out and must be nurtured.

Find your access by means of your nearest avenue of approach, and when you have found that Innermost, the real mine of gold, the inexhaustible supply, keep yourself in contact with It. Never mind the disappointments and frailties of material existence. If we are disturbed by little things, it means we are not yet established in that Greater Consciousness. Many of us understand spiritual principles theoretically, but it is by the practice, the assimilation of these principles in our daily life and thought that we gain strength to keep ourselves in rhythm with that Highest Ideal and thus set an example for our fellow beings.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

If we put aside pressing cares and allow the life of the universe to whisper to our hearts, living becomes pure joy. Then the heart will be detached from illusions and worldly cares can be overcome. Even in the midst of the most chaotic scenes there will be a stillness of the soul which is undisturbable. —*Kagawa.*

I see the same law working in nature for conservation and growth. The poise of a planet, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are also demonstrations of the self-sufficing and therefore self-relying soul. —*Emerson.*

The happiness of your life depends upon the character of your thoughts. —*Marcus Aurelius.*

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern. —*William Blake.*

The world is full of resurrections. Every night that folds us up in darkness is a death; and those of you who have been out early and have seen the first of the dawn, will know it,—the day rises out of the night like a being that has burst its tomb and escaped into life. —*George MacDonald.*

The wise man during his residence in the body is not affected by its properties, as the firmament is not affected by what floats in it. —*Atmabodh.*

Today is our day of rejoicing. Today we are very happy. Our anxieties have departed, since we have met God. Today spring is in our hearts. —*Guru Arjan.*

He sought the healing of eternal life. —*Cynewulf.*

WHERE I LIVED AND WHAT I LIVED FOR

By Henry David Thoreau

(A condensation of the original article)

When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, . . . my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defence against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough, weather-stained boards with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window-casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination, it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character. . . . The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted, but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere. . . .

I did not need to go out doors to take the air, for the atmosphere within had lost none of its freshness. It was not so much within doors as behind a door where I sat, even in the rainiest weather. The Harivanso says: "An abode without birds is like a meat without seasoning." Such was not my abode, for I found myself suddenly neighbor to the birds; not by having imprisoned one—by having caged myself near them. I was not only nearer to those which commonly frequent the garden and the orchard, but to those wilder and more thrilling songsters of the forest which never, or rarely, serenade a villager. . . .

I was seated by the shore of a small pond, about a mile and a half south of the village of Concord and somewhat higher than it, in the midst of an extensive wood between that town and Lincoln, and about two miles south of that, our only field known to fame, Concord battle-ground; but I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest covered with wood, was my most distant horizon. For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond, it impressed me like a tarn high up on the one side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were steadily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains. . . . From a hill-top nearby, where the wood had been recently cut off, there was a pleasing vista southward across the pond. . . . That way I looked between and over the near green hills to some distant and higher ones in the horizon, tinged with blue. Indeed by standing on tiptoe, I could catch a glimpse of some of the peaks of the still bluer and more distant mountain ranges in the north-west, those true-blue coins from heaven's own mint, and also of some portion of the village. But in other directions, even from this point, I could not see over or beyond the woods which surrounded me. . . .

Though the view from my door was still more contracted, I did not feel crowded or confined in the least. There was pasture enough for my imagination. The low shrub-oak plateau to which the opposite shore arose, stretched away toward the prairies of the West and the steppes of Tartary, affording ample room for all the roving families of men.

"There are none happy in the world but beings who enjoy freely a vast horizon," said Damodara, when his herds required new and larger pastures.

Both place and time were changed, and I dwelt nearer to those parts of the universe and to those eras in history which had most attracted me. Where I lived was as far off as many a region viewed nightly by astronomers. We are wont to imagine rare and delectable places in some remote and more celestial corner of the system, behind the constellation of Cassiopeia's Chair, far from noise and disturbance. I discovered that my house actually had it site in such a withdrawn but for ever new and unprofaned part of the universe. If it were worth the while to settle in those parts near the Pleiades or the Hyades to Aldeberan or Altair, then I was really there —or at an equal remoteness from the life I had left behind— dwindled and twinkling with as fine a ray to my nearest neighbor, and to be seen only in moonless nights by him. Such was that part of creation where I had squatted.

"There was a shepherd that did live,
And held his thoughts as high
As were the mounts whereon his flocks
Did hourly feed him by."

What should we think of the shepherd's life if his flocks always wandered to higher pastures than his thoughts?

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond. That was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing-tub of King Tching-thang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again." I can understand that. Morning brings back the heroic ages. I

was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at early dawn, when I was sitting with doors and windows open, as I could be of any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem, itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world.

The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our newly-acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music—instead of factory bells—and a fragrance filling the air, to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bears its fruit and proves itself to be good, no less than the light.

That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way. After a partial cessation of his sensuous life, the soul of man, or its organs rather, are reinvigorated each day, and his Genius tries again what noble like it can make. All memorable events, I should say, transpire in morning time and in a morning atmosphere. The Vedas say, "All intelligences awake with the morning." Poetry and art, and the fairest and most memorable of the actions of men, date from such an hour. All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the

sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say, or the attitudes and labors of men. Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness they would have performed something. The millions are awake enough for physical labor, but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

We must learn to reawaken, keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

TO BE CONTINUED

Let the day have a blessed baptism by giving your first waking thoughts into the bosom of God. The first hour of the morning is the rudder of the day.

—*Henry Ward Beecher.*

AMONG MEN

By Sister Devamata

An individual atmosphere surrounds every living being. It is the product of his thought and feeling and his mode of life. It tempers his contacts with the world as the earth's atmosphere tempers the fierceness of the sun's rays. It softens the blows and quiets the joys. No impression from the outside reaches him unaltered. As it penetrates his atmosphere, it mingles with something of himself and becomes a part of him before it is registered by his perceptive faculties.

The same alteration occurs when he tries to convey an idea to another. It passes through two refracting atmospheres and is modified before it is received. This explains the misunderstandings, misinterpretations and disputes, which arise so easily among men. Words are too flexible and alterable to carry an exact message. Silence is the best purveyor of thought. The silent man is the dominating influence in every general conversation. He who listens is master of the argument, not he who talks.

This story is told of a great Red Indian Chief who in his boyhood was eager for a medicine-dream. He fasted four days and four nights, took a sweat-bath and went alone to a high mountain. Nothing came. He fasted again, bathed, and climed to a loftier peak. There he slept and dreamed this dream:

He saw a vast forest of stately trees. As he looked, a violent gale swept over them, felling every tree but one. The boy asked the Person who stood by his side why that one was not taken. "Because it holds a chicadee's nest," was the answer: "The chicadee is least in physical strength, but most powerful in mind. He is ever seeking wisdom. As he moves among men, he listens and listens. He hears others tell of their successes and failures, their joys and sorrows, while he

remains silent. Thus he grows wise." And the Person added: "It is better to be silent and walk with the Great Spirit than to talk much and walk with men. Learn to listen. Seek wisdom rather than strength of muscle."

We should not disregard our body, neither should we place its care before all else. The more we centre our interest in the physical, the denser our atmosphere becomes; and the more impervious we are to finer impressions. Whatever reaches us is dulled and coarsened and our life grows material and sordid. No atmosphere, however, need be dense or obstructive. It need not shut us in and obscure our vision. If we will but lift our interest and effort to a loftier level, it will become transparent and shining. We must never forget that our atmosphere is the product of our own manner of living, the result of our own thought and feeling. It is we who create it. We make it dull or radiant. The great Chinese philosopher, Lao-tsze declares:

"The superior man casts a bright light around him, because he has no wish to shine; he stands out above others, because he is filled with humility; and because he is free from self-assertion, his merit is acknowledged. Because of his self-abnegation, his work endures; and it is because he is not contentious that there is no power on earth capable of opposing him."

How can we acquire this superior attitude of mind and thus purify and clarify our atmosphere? We do it by spiritualizing our life. When we make Spirit the ruling principle of our daily living, the atmosphere about us no longer obstructs and distorts; it transmits and illumines. It does more than illumine, it warms with a warmth of love that overcomes the chill of every antagonism. We all know men and women in whose presence problems melt away and everything becomes clear. They attract us irresistibly and leave

with us a sense of joyousness and content. It is because their atmosphere is magnetic and luminous. The atmosphere of the selfish, materialistic man insulates and forbids; that of the spiritually-minded draws all hearts.

Knowledge that two intervening atmospheres lie between us and our fellow-man should make us tolerant and forbearing. We should not expect to understand his words and actions perfectly, nor should we demand of him that he understand ours. The privacy of thought and motive for both will always remain sacred and inviolate. It cannot be invaded or uncovered. Why should we peer through the windows of our neighbor's soul and seek to see all that is hidden there. The secret of man's inward realm belongs to himself.

The atmosphere that wraps us is a great protection. It shields the sanctity of our inner being. To have our soul stand unveiled before the eyes of the world would offend us. It is meant that we live in confidence with no other than God. We may move among man, we may journey together, as fellow-travellers we may grow friendly, we may even walk hand in hand, but the depths of our heart are ever unsounded, the silence of our solitude is never broken.

IMAGINATION AND HEALING

By Swami Vivekananda

The same faculty that we employ in dreams and thoughts, —namely, imagination, will also be the means by which we arrive at Truth. When the imagination is very powerful, the object becomes visualized. Therefore, by it we can bring our bodies to any state of health or disease. When we see a thing, the particles of the brain fall into a certain position, like the mosaics of a kaleidoscope. Memory consists in getting back this combination and the same setting of the particles of the brain. The stronger the will, the greater will be the success in re-setting these particles of the brain.

There is only one power to cure the body, and that is in every man. Medicine only rouses this power. Disease is only the manifest struggle of that power to throw off the poison which has entered the body. Although the power to overthrow poison may be roused by medicine, it may be more permanently roused by the force of thought. Imagination must hold to the thought of health and strength in order that in case of illness, the memory of the ideal of health may be roused and the particles re-arranged in the position into which they fell when healthy. The tendency of the body is then to follow the brain. The next step is when this process can be arrived at by another's mind working on us. Instances of this may be seen every day.

NEW ENGLAND MAY

By Amy Requa Russell

This is the native land my fathers knew,
With miles of stony wall on quiet hills,
With wine-glass elm, swamp-pink and daffodils
Before a farm-house door; this heavy dew
On tender timothy, and, freshly blue,
The sky reflected in small chuckling rills
And brooks which tumble down to clacking mills;
Prim, whitened spires on a hill or two.

Almost I could forget the tawny land
Of home, the creeks gone dry with summer's breath,
Save for a dream of slumberous mountain-passes
Where creamy-white, the yucca's candles stand;
Where scarlet larkspur, bright as fiery death,
Rides through the chaparral and mesa grasses.

No atoms casually together hurl'd
Could e'er produce so beautiful a world.

—*Dryden.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the May Number)

MEETING THE MAHARSHI

As drunken men seek out the company of other drunken men for the simple reason that there is greater pleasure in drinking together and enjoying their hilarious experiences in common, likewise Sri Ramakrishna sought keenly the company of other holy men. Whenever he was told of any great devotee or spiritual teacher or a man of extraordinary renunciation and high spiritual attainment, he would become restless until he had found him. Thus it was he came to Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, founder of the Adi-Brahmo Samaj and the father of the renowned poet, Rabindra Nath, the visit being arranged by Mathur Babu himself, as he was a former class-mate of the Maharshi.

It will be interesting to our readers to know that Devendra Nath Tagore, who came from a long line of aristocrats and who represented the very acme of polished cultural attainment, was naturally a great advocate of conventional etiquette, while Sri Ramakrishna, who represented complete disregard to all outer forms of polished human society, was so wholely dedicated to the Highest, that it was difficult for him to pay heed to the ordinary details of life. This meeting, therefore, of Maharshi and Sri Ramakrishna was a meeting of tremendous contrasts on the outer plane, and might have caused a great clash but for their spiritual vision. Tagore at first was startled to see a man half naked, but he soon became aware of Sri Ramakrishna's genuine power. Sri Ramakrishna said to him, "You are the King Janaka of this age.* I have been told that though you live in the world you have your

*King Janaka, though sitting upon a throne, attained the highest spiritual realization.

mind firmly fastened on God; so I have come to see you. Tell me something about him!" Devendra Nath Tagore then recited a beautiful passage from the Vedas, the meaning of which is that this world is like a huge chandelier of which every living being is a light. Sri Ramakrishna was much impressed by this simile. As he himself stated later on: "When I was meditating under the Panchavati tree, I, too, had a similar vision. Finding his statement tallying with my experience, I thought he must be a very great man. I asked him to explain it. He said, 'Who could know this world? God has created man to proclaim His own glory. If there be no lights in the chandelier, everything is in darkness; one can't see the chandelier even.' We had a good deal of talk. He was pleased and invited me to attend their Anniversary."

It always pleased Sri Ramakrishna greatly to find that his own realizations and spiritual experiences coincided with those of others. His mind was peculiarly freed from individual exclusiveness in the realm of Truth. It delighted him more to have others come up to his rank of vision than to have them stand below as onlookers. It made no difference with him whether a man was a high caste Brahmana or of low origin, whether he was rich or poor, learned or unlettered, he was always most happy to find anyone striving for God realization.

In great contrast to his visit to Maharshi, he coaxed his ardent devotee, Mathur Babu, to take him to the house of a very poor man who was also reputed to be possessed of spiritual vision; but due to some household ceremony, their visit proved unsuccessful. Sometimes the zealous Mathur Babu, who always tried to protect Sri Ramakrishna, rebelled and said to the Master, "I am not going to take you. I am not going to listen to your whims any more. I will not take you to all kinds of places." His reason for not doing so was be-

cause, from a worldly point of view, some of these experiences were almost humiliating. But Sri Ramakrishna's great soul was beyond all such small considerations. He always smiled benignly even when people failed to recognize him.

HOLY PILGRIMAGE

Every true Hindu maintains a profound longing in a hidden corner of his soul to go to Benares, the holy city of age-long tradition. Thus, Mathur Babu and his wife resolved to make a pilgrimage to the city of Lord Shiva. They immediately began to beg Sri Ramakrishna to accompany them, in order to make the holy venture a perfect one. The Master listened to their earnest pleading and consented to fulfill their desire. So it was that this great party of pilgrims, numbering some one hundred and twenty-five persons, set out on their journey by rail. Along the way, they halted for a few days at Deoghar to visit the holy shrine of Vaidyanath. As they were passing through a village, Sri Ramakrishna was greatly disturbed to see the wretched condition of the villagers. So deeply was he moved with compassion that he said to Mathur Babu, "You must feed these people and you must give them some new cloth." Mathur Babu at first hesitated a little and reminded the Master that their pilgrimage would require a great deal of expenditure and the number of people he wanted him to feed and clothe was very large. To this, Sri Ramakrishna firmly replied, "Don't forget that you are the steward of Divine Mother," and he began to shed tears at the sight of the misery and suffering of the people. He pleaded like a child, saying that if Mathur Babu did not fulfill this desire, he would not care to go to Benares. He said again and again that he would prefer to remain with these helpless people. Mathur Babu of course did as the Master asked. He fed the multitude of villagers sumptuously and gave them new cloths.

Perhaps this little picture will give us a direct insight into

the special province of service rendered to humanity in these past years by the Mission which bears the sacred name of Sri Ramakrishna. It will also help us to understand the reason why Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of the Master, was almost like one in delirium in his desire to bring relief to the suffering masses of India. Did he not thus sow the seed now in fruition in the many "Homes of Service," by which name the Mission designates its wide-spread centres of human helpfulness; as also in the relief work for the destitute always done with complete self-dedication, without thought of name or fame or any personal gain? Blessed indeed is such compassion! How it transcends all sense of time and space and other fictitious differences! Today this benign and beautiful spirit of service, implanted in the heart and soul of young India by the great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, is in full swing, inspiring countless souls to hail a new dawn of spiritual awakening.

When Sri Ramakrishna first caught sight of the holy city of Benares, he was so tremendously moved that he became transfixed. He saw it as a Vision—not as others see it, but as it is portrayed in the great spiritual Classics,—all golden! The temples, the streets, the buildings,—everything was transformed. Benares became the Golden City, the abode of Shiva, the Great Lord. This Vision was so powerful in his mind that he hesitated to perform any ordinary human act within its boundary lines.

Mathur Babu, however, engaged luxurious quarters and he literally lived in royal style during their stay in Benares. Whenever he went out, he was accompanied by his liveried men who held over his head a silver umbrella and carried other paraphernalia suited to a man of such prominence and distinction.

One day, Sri Ramakrishna accompanied Mathur Babu on

a visit to a Zamindar (a rich landlord). His parlor was naturally crowded with many types of men who were busily discussing various worldly topics. As Sri Ramakrishna observed this, his heart was greatly pained, and he said, "Mother, why hast Thou brought me here? I was far better off in my own setting at Dakshineswar. There, I used to converse with people on spiritual matters, but here in this holy city of Benares men indulge in all manner of insidious worldly topics." This gives us clear insight into the great Master's complete detachment from mere forms and established customs. He makes it plain that unless one finds God within himself and maintains Him there through his words and deeds, it avails him nothing, though he may be in the very presence of the Holy of Holies.

Mathur Babu, during his sojourn in Benares, performed many pious deeds, such as giving doles of food and cloths to scholars, pilgrims, and so forth. Every day, Sri Ramakrishna went to visit the Shrine of Vishvanath, symbol of the great Shiva. There his feeling was so deep that he lost all outer consciousness. He also visited various monasteries and came to know the great Trailanga Swami. The holy man was observing a vow of silence, but as soon as he saw Sri Ramakrishna, he beckoned him to come and sit by him and offered him his snuff box as a token of his hospitality. Referring to his meeting with this great soul, Sri Ramakrishna said, "I found in him the living manifestation of Lord Shiva. Benares was indeed sanctified by his presence. He was in a constant state of superconsciousness, with no idea of body. I asked him by a sign if God were one or many. He replied by gestures that God is one, when seen in a state of Samadhi, but when looked at through the prism of relative consciousness, he is many." Sri Ramakrishna pointed out to his nephew, Hriday, that this was the real state of Paramahamsa.

It was the custom of Mathur Babu to take frequent boat-rides on the Ganges. On one such occasion, when the boat was passing the celebrated cremation ground, Mani Karnika, where many dead bodies were being cremated, Sri Ramakrishna suddenly became greatly animated as he caught sight of columns of smoke rising from the funeral pyres; he went forward to the edge of the boat and remained motionless in Samadhi. The priest who was acting as their guide, the boatmen, and others who accompanied them on this trip, became frightened lest the Master fall into the water. Sri Ramakrishna stood there motionless, his countenance lighted up with a radiant smile. Some time passed, while all stood in readiness to catch him should he lose his balance. Then the Master returned to normal consciousness. Later, Sri Ramakrishna himself spoke of this experience. We give his version of it:

"I saw a tall figure with a white body and tawny matted locks staidly approach each funeral pyre, and tenderly lifting up the Jiva (individual soul), breathe into its ears the Supreme Mantra. The Gracious Mother of the Universe was seated on the other side of the pyre and was taking away, one after another, all its coverings of bondage and, Herself unlocking the doors of Nirvana (liberation), was speeding the fortunate soul so that it might reach the Absolute State. Thus the realization of Advaita, which people attain after ages of concentration and austerity, was brought within easy reach of those who die at Benares, through the infinite mercy of Shiva."

Everyone was astonished to hear this recital and the learned scholars who accompanied Mathur Babu remarked, "We learn from the Scriptures that Shiva confers Nirvana upon those who die at Benares, but it is not stated explicitly how. Your vision makes it clear. It is strange that your realizations even go ahead of the Scriptures."

From Benares, the pilgrims went to Allahabad to bathe in the waters of the sacred Prayaga (where the holy waters of Ganges and Jumna meet and mingle). Then they journeyed to Vrindavan where Sri Ramakrishna was in very exalted spirits. He eagerly visited the different shrines and sanctuaries associated with Sri Krishna. Everything to him was living, and he acted as though he were actually witnessing the moving drama of Sri Krishna's life. Once, he was so struck by the feeling of living presence that at a certain shrine he wanted to embrace the image of Sri Krishna. We give here his own version of the feeling which stirred him profoundly:

"I would take a stroll in the evening on the sandy beach of the Jumna where there were huge Jujube trees interspersed with small thatched huts. One day, at dusk, I saw a herd of cows returning from pasture. They waded the Jumna, followed by the cow-herd boys. The scene at once suggested Sri Krishna to me and overwhelmed with emotion, I ran wildly crying, ' Where is Krishna? Oh, where is Krishna?' I had a desire to visit Shyam Kund and Radha Kund. They sent me in a palanquin. It was a long distance so they also gave me refreshments for the way. I got down to visit the Govardhan Hill. The very sight of it overwhelmed me and I ran to its top where I stood lost to outward sense. Then the inhabitants of the place brought me down. On the way to Shyam Kund and Radha Kund, I saw those old meadows and trees and plants, birds and deer—rich with associations—and could no more contain myself. Tears rolled down from my eyes and wetted my cloth. The idea came to me in all its pathetic vividness, 'O Krishna, everything hallowed with Thy association is here, only Thee I cannot see!' I was seated in a palanquin but had not the power to utter a syllable. I kept quiet and could not ask the bearers to stop, for Hriday was

following the palanquin and had warned them to be very careful."

Also at Vrindavan he met Ganga Mai, a great woman devotee of Vaishnava faith. She was renowned for her spiritual realizations. People used to look upon her as the reincarnated spirit of Sri Radha, come down to earth once more to teach people the secret of Divine Love. She was now about sixty years of age. She recognized Sri Ramakrishna at once and considered it a great blessing to have found him. Sri Ramakrishna was also greatly impressed with her devotion. In his own words, he says:

"Ganga Mai used to take great care of me, She was very old and lived in a hut near Nidhuvan, all alone. Seeing my condition and loss of consciousness in Samadhi she often said, 'This is verily Radha reincarnated in flesh and blood.' She used to address me as Dulali. When I was in her company, I forgot all about food or drink or returning to my quarters. On some days, Hriday would bring food there and feed me. Ganga Mai, too, used to prepare various things for me. She had frequent trances and quite a crowd would assemble to see her in that condition. I had no mind to come away from her. Everything was settled. I was to take boiled rice. Ganga Mai was to have her bed at one end of the room and I at the other. It was arranged in every detail. Then Hriday said, 'You are so subject to stomach complaints, who will look after you?' 'Why,' said Ganga Mai, 'I will look after him. I will serve him.' Well, Hriday pulled me by one hand and Ganga Mai by the other. At this moment, I was reminded of my mother, who was living alone in the concert-room of the Kali Temple at Dakshineswar. I thought 'Who will look after her if I stay at Vrindavan?' This decided the matter. I said, 'No, I must go!' " It will be interesting to observe that Sri Ramakrishna at no time failed to show his profound feel-

ing of tenderness and devotion toward his mother. He always treated her with utmost consideration.

On their return journey from Vrindavan, they halted again at Benares and there Sri Ramakrishna again met Bhairavi Brahmani, the woman devotee who was his first teacher and about whom we spoke at length in the earlier chapters.

Mathur Babu naturally wanted to visit the sacred Shrine at Gaya, but as Sri Ramakrishna refused to go there, it was given up. The Master felt strongly that if he visited that Shrine where his Father had received the great vision regarding his birth, he could not remain longer in his physical body, as he was fully aware of those strange and marvelous circumstances. As he looked upon himself as an instrument in the hands of Divine Mother, he wanted to remain in the flesh to fulfill his mission, for which the Mother was constantly using him.

When he reached Dakshineswar, the Master sprinkled the carefully collected dust of Vrindavan over the Panchavati, (the tree under which he held his spiritual communion). He also buried a portion of the sacred dust under the little cottage where he performed his spiritual practices. Then he said with great exaltation, "Now this place has become as sacred as Vrindavan!"

TO BE CONTINUED

"Come, O Clouds, from up above, down on the earth, by thousands of drops, by myriads of drops"—thus say, O holy Zarathushtra—"to destroy sickness, to destroy death, to destroy the sickness that kills. . . . If death come after noon, may healing come at eve! If death come at eve, may healing come at night! If death come at night, may healing come at dawn! And showers shower down new water, new earth, new plants, new healing powers. —*Zoroaster.*

THE STROKE OF GRACE

By Sister Daya

(To Sri Ramakrishna—at whose touch ego must die.)

The impotent teacher, he that hath in him no stamina, he, verily, is like unto the impotent water-snake, who when he seizeth a large frog surely createth his own miseries and prolongeth also the agonies of the frog which he can neither swallow nor eject. How can he point out the way truly, he that hath not found it himself?

But the good teacher, the true and potent guide, is like unto the deadly cobra, the king of snakes. And when he taketh a pupil in hand, he verily stilleth the tumults of his soul at once; even as the cobra seizeth the frog and silenceth his croakings at one stroke.—*Sri Ramakrishna.*

I have been stung by the Cobra of Eternity,
And "I" must die!
Darkly its vast hood curves over me
Like the night sky.
Its endless, unseen coils—
Winding and unwinding—
On every side encircle me—
Binding and unbinding—
Even as the horizon rings the sea.

From blind, black space, Its eyes—
Breath-stealing, death-dealing—
I feel are ever watching me.
From Its great stroke of grace
There is no hiding-place,
Nor would I be set free:
I neither move nor cry.

I have been stung by the Cobra of Eternity,
For this wound there is no healing—
"I" must die!

I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but that an infinite ocean of light and love flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I saw the infinite love of God. —*Fox.*

TAO

By Maurice Magre

(From his book "Confucius and His Quest.")

Immaculate as Truth, and cloudy as the mystery by which Truth is surrounded, there was in the bronze coffer soiled with earth a block of azure jade. In its soft beauty were visible benevolence and the other excellent qualities of the yellow race. In its polish shone the intelligence of the first emperors; its solidity resembled their strength of character; its uniform colouring represented their consistency. And this block of jade was gleaming, with its blue purity exquisitely veiled, like the divine spirit of man within its shell of clay. One word, one single word, was carved upon the jade.

In vain Lao-tsze turned it over and over admiring the fluid splendour of this unadulterated stone produced by the mineral kingdom as a drop of its own soul, in the hope of finding a complementary inscription. There was only the single word which is sufficient unto itself, the word of the beginning and of the end and this word was: TAO.

Lao-tsze placed the block of jade on the ground and knelt down before it. The sun as it sank, cast its dying glow in all directions.

"O nameless Thing," said he, "thou who art without form, thou who art not measured by the passage of time, thou who art unlimited in space and whom no words describe, I am thou, I am the child of thy breath. Though I am measured by time, limited in space, and definable by words, yet I aspire ultimately to disappear within the breath of thy being.

"I was already born before the appearance of any corporeal shape. I had begun before the beginning. I was present at the development of the primeval mass. I stood erect on the suface of the great primordial ocean, and I soared through the mist of the first empty shadows. I shall go out into space

through the same mysterious gate by which I entered.

"I have been projected into innumerable lives. I have been moulded in thousands of different forms. But at last I have seen the light. I perceive that original perfection to which I must aspire; and I shall sleep at last in the universal substance of which I am made."

REPORT

ANANDA-ASHRAMA, DACCA, INDIA

It is now nearly six years since Charu Shila Devi bade farewell to her many friends in the United States, especially in Boston. Since then, the hand of destiny has guided her to start a work in India designed to help her less fortunate sisters in some practical way. This has resulted in the establishment of Ananda-Ashrama in Dacca. Since its inception, the work has become notably successful in helping those who through force of circumstance have found life meaningless and unbearable. We have heard from the lips of those who have visited the Ashrama that in many instances widows who have come there with countenances stained with sorrow, grief and melancholy expression are now carrying smiling, happy faces because they have learned to do something useful and worth while in life.

This has been accomplished not merely through spiritual instruction but through their having been given some useful, vocational training along various lines. Everything is wonderfully done, whether the line of work be the menial service of sweeping the floor, washing the cooking utensils, weaving rugs, taking lessons in art or music or conducting services in the Sanctuary. Everything moves with rhythm and with such a sense of dedication that visitors are uplifted by the very atmosphere of this infant institution.

Many noted educators have visited Ananda Ashrama at

Dacca and have become inspired by the splendid work that is being done there. They speak in highest terms of its remarkable achievements.

We, from the distant shores of America, send our heartfelt love and prayers for the future success and progress of this Ashrama and especially for Charu Shila Devi, its watchful guardian.

We give here below the comment of a visiting educator: "It was not originally in my programme to visit the Ananda-Ashrama of Dacca. It was at the earnest request of Mr. K. Shahabuddin that I took the opportunity of seeing this institution. Indeed I was happy to see an institution that is giving instructions, in the true sense of the term, to the girl pupils of the Ashram. I have derived much benefit in seeing the manner in which the institution is being run. Some of the classes were being held in the open and the pupils were sitting on the lawn or beneath the trees. At other places, girls were engaged in different vocational work, such as basket-making, mat-making, carpet-making, weaving, sewing, etc. The life led by the inmates was extremely simple and is so devised as to make them well disciplined, able to do manual works and, if necessary, to take up unusual work with pleasure. Charu Shila Devi, the principal of the institution, is to be highly congratulated not only for her sacrifice but also for her splendid institution which can be a model in every sense of the term. I was indeed surprised that such an institution exists in this province. I shall indeed be happy and feel myself honored if I can be of any help to this institution and I wish there were more of such institutions in our province."

—M. Azizul Hoque
(Minister in charge of Education, Government of Bengal.)

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Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY EDITION

JULY, 1936

MAN'S DIVINE BACKGROUND

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*
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RELIANCE UPON GOD

From the Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna

IF one acquires the conviction that everything is done by God's will, then one becomes only an instrument in the hands of God, one is free even in this life. "Thou doest Thy work, O Lord, but people say, 'I do it'." He who can resign himself to the will of the Almighty with simple faith and guileless love, realizes God very quickly. What is the nature of absolute reliance? It is like that happy state of comfort and satisfaction which is felt by a weary man when, reclining on a pillow, he smokes at leisure after a hard day's toil: it is the ceasing from all anxiety and worry.

As dry leaves are blown hither and thither by the wind, without any choice of their own, so those who depend upon God move in harmony with His will, and leave themselves in His hands with perfect non-resistance.

The young monkey clings to its mother when she moves about. The kitten on the other hand mews piteously, and the mother grasps it by the neck. If the monkey lets go its hold of its mother, it falls and is hurt. This is because it relies on its own strength. But the kitten runs no such risk, for the mother herself carries it from place to place. Such is the difference between self-reliance and entire resignation to the will of God. Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him, and your troubles and sorrows will be at an end.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

It is the heart, the heart, that conquers, not the brain. Books and learning, Yoga and meditation and illumination—all are but dust compared with Love. It is love that gives you the supernatural powers, love that gives you Bhakti, love that gives illumination, and love, again, that leads to emancipation. This indeed is worship, worship of the Lord in the human tabernacle. —*Swami Vivekananda.*

The holy powers build up the body of a holy man. To the persevering mortal the blessed immortals are swift. Every intellect apprehends Deity. You should not defile the spirit, nor give birth to the superficial. —*Chaldaean Oracles.*

We must liberate man from the cosmos created by the genius of physicists and astronomers, that cosmos in which, since the Renaissance, he has been imprisoned. Despite its stupendous immensity, the world of matter is too narrow for him. —*Alexis Carrel.*

He who seeks refuge in Me even once, surrendering himself wholly with the thought, "Thine am I," to him do I secure protection from all harmful beings. This is my promise.

—*Ramayana.*

Our humanity were a poor thing but for the divinity that stirs within us. —*Bacon.*

To will what God doth will, that is the only science that gives us any rest. —*Malsherbes.*

The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest in that which perishes, nor will he lend his heart to aught that doth on time depend. —*Michael Angelo.*

He who hath found God in his heart is happy in mind and body. —*Guru Nanak.*

The meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

—*Psalms.*

MAN'S DIVINE BACKGROUND

By Swami Paramananda

The purpose of all spiritual expression, all religious unfoldment, is to give men strength in the hour of need. External means are shifting and we must have something we can turn to under all conditions. "The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" Intellectually and ethically we understand the significance of this, but have we without any effort, really felt it within us? Actually to know that He is the strength of our life, that there is nothing for us to fear would prove a tremendous solace, a great and sustaining influence at all hours of day and night. Really great men are more childlike than we in their complete dependence on the Supreme. Instead of fighting their battles and striving to solve their own problems, they leave these things entirely to the Higher Power. It is not that they fail to do their part, it is that they cease to carry a defiant attitude. They feel that there is One operating their life more intelligently than they could hope to do. This consciousness never makes any man weak. On the contrary. Those who hold it make up their minds definitely that they will not take one step or do one thing without the Divine affiliation.

"Man's feeling of power, his whole measure of strength, is not in himself but in the Infinite." I want you to grasp the significance of this. As you do so you will find that a Christ stands before you, a Buddha stands before you, a St. Francis in the cloak of a beggar stands before you, humble, weaponless, lacking possessions, yet with a strength which the world cannot measure. I do not ask you immediately to assume the fullness of this consciousness—it must come gradually. I ask that you do not ignore your own inherent possibilities, and that you turn a deaf ear to the voices of the world, which are ever trying to impress upon you: "O Man,

you are weak; you cannot hope to succeed or to accomplish anything!" These thoughts lead us one way and the thoughts we must consider at this moment, lead us another.

"Man is a traveler seeking his homeland. Let him not walk with downcast eyes, with distress, but let him rather look up to the stars." In other words, let him always keep his gaze fixed on higher things instead of turning his mind downwards to those thoughts and conditions which have caused all his heartaches and failures. If we would only make a practice of looking up to the Source of all strength, the Source of life itself, without which there could be no life or accomplishment, what a tremendous solace it would prove. It is, I believe, the only practical solution for all life's problems. There is no other way. What man can solve our problems for us? More and more, as I listen to all the speeches people make, I become convinced that they merely confuse the mind. It is through our own strength, through our spiritual resources, that we must seek clearness of vision.

The only way we can do this is by nurturing in us that which is God-given. Man's strength is God-given. He has never a tragedy or an ill that has not its antidote contained within himself, and if he does not allow himself to become paralyzed with doubt and fear, he always can find the strength to meet it. Our greatest obstacle is fear. Instead of facing things, we seek to run away from them. Let us take the symbol of a little tree. Sometimes it gives the impression that it wants to tear itself from its root and fly away. It is so graceful, especially when the wind comes and adds to its gracefulness, but it seems to want to take flight—to escape from the wind and storm. It cannot escape: The root holds it tight; the very wind draws forth its strength, and the earth, rain and sun bring it to ripening.

Finally it becames a great tree and we sit in its shelter. Same way it is with life. At the first little bit of discomfort or criticism, we say, "Certainly I will not live where I have all these things to meet!" But when we try to run away, life holds us fast.

It has been said that the block of granite which is an obstacle in the pathway of the weak, becomes a stepping-stone in the pathway of the strong. Therefore, whenever anything comes to thwart you, do not pray to escape from it, but pray that your strength may suffice, and you may surmount even that which may seem like a block of granite in your path, that it may be a stepping stone—for we all need stepping-stones, and everything that we overcome through strength of faith and inspiration increases our capacity to go onward and forward. That is the scheme of life. So let us be strong, and do not let us be afraid of anything. There is nothing more pernicious than fear.

How can we acquire this strength? Not through mental calculation. No matter how many times we may say that we are children of God and are endowed with His power, it will avail us little if we have not the realization of our Divine background. Though a man may say he is part of God, he cannot maintain his strength or establish himself as a noble spirit if he does something ignoble. There has to be absolute coördination between our inner and our outer life, otherwise we make a mockery of religion. It is not with an attitude of duty or obligation that man should pursue his spiritual studies. He himself needs them. A man must be connected with That which is abiding—his whole life depends upon it. Without it there is no safety. Success, glory, praise may come, but they bring only intoxication; they bring mental distortion. They make us forget our Source and think only of personal gain and our own personal happi-

ness. These are the moments which rob us of our spiritual understanding.

Sometimes we like to feel that we are the chosen ones, the very soul of Deity. Then let us live that type of life which is a manifestation of the Divine Wisdom, the Divine Order and the Divine Strength. "What shall we do," you may ask, "when we have to meet with people who have no Ideal?" That is the time to maintain your Ideal. If you come in contact with those who have not yet found something worth while, all the more reason for you to win them by keeping up your standard. If you try to reach them by preaching, you will lose out at the first attempt. Nobody wants to hear you preach. But if you are yourself like a rock, enduring all things, transcending all difficulties without ever losing your faith or your inspiration, then not only will you keep in touch with the Source of inspiration, but you will help to minimize the fear in the world.

Man must have an ideal. But let it be an ideal in the truest sense. Like the rays of the sun, it makes no difference wherefrom the light comes, whether from America, India or elsewhere, so long as it is beneficent and produces a noble type. All this may seem a little above our present conception of things. Today, every man in every country is trying to establish himself in a corner of safety. But there is no real safety or strength in a corner and we are not here just to hide in one. Let me give you as a pure, clean-cut truth that magnificent thought born in the depths of the Himalayan forest: "O Man, that which is unbounded, vast and unlimited, therein lies the full measure of your life, strength and happiness." It is for us to find that Unbounded, and when we do find It, the heart that is frightened suddenly becomes quickened with a new feeling and new life.

A man may say, "I have difficulty taking care of myself,

let alone my family, so what is the use of thinking about the welfare of the world?" In time that man's outlook must change. He will realize that unless he looks from the bigger angle, he will be incapable of taking care of himself, his family or anything else.

My word to you is this: break all these fetters of self-limitation and give with your whole heart, feeling that you are a part of the great Infinite Whole and that nothing can thwart your purpose. When a man takes the attitude that life is against him, that he is doomed to failure, he can make no headway in his work, whether it be intellectual study, business activity or work at home. Psychologists, scientists and men of spiritual genius all must eventually come to a point of agreement that the only way to overcome weakness, fear and crime, lies not in giving men ethical books to read, but rather in helping them to feel that they are part of the Infinite. When they once feel this as a living reality they will refuse to do anything unbecoming to that consciousness.

We never conquer anything by an arrogant, egotistical attitude. A man may seem very defiant, but when the real test comes, he has not the courage to meet it. Someone has to give him something to drink so that he can forget himself and his fear. But one who is in possession of spiritual strength does not even think of himself, he is so filled with that which is potent and invulnerable. Not for one moment can he forget it. Lao-Tsze says that men who have reached union with the TAO, the Supreme, become like Divine infants. Even the tiger cannot harm them, for there is no place where he can fasten his claw. Do you believe this? Do you believe that life can be thus fortified by right thought and feeling? It is because man disbelieves this that his strength so often fails him. You may say, "I cannot forget my past weaknesses and mistakes." It is a tragedy when we cannot forget

the past. Never mind what you have done in the past. No matter how deep the wrong, brooding will not help you to get over it. A man doesn't become a saint merely by thinking that he is a sinner. He may become quickened by such thought—I do not know—but when he awakens to the great truth that to hurt another is to hurt himself—that is a triumph.

As a man lives his life in the world, to know that he is part of the Great Immensity is a thought of great sustaining power. When clouds come and blur his vision, as sometimes happens, he realizes that that is the moment when he should hold to his Ideal, to his prayer and meditation. He prays then with even greater fervor. When a man admits that he cannot fortify his own life, but must speak and do and think as directed by the Infinite One, then nothing can overthrow him. I hope that this idea may enter into the highest form of government. Every one by his faith can have this definite connection, and if a man has lost his faith, it doesn't mean that he cannot regain it. I put it on practical grounds that we should daily turn to our Source. Spiritual idealism is man's practical province. Life, with all things great and small, is established in Truth, but we do not know it. People believe in trying to restore their health, they do everything that is beneficial for their physical being. Perhaps in the near future they will also find a way to restore their faith in the spiritual. It is not a question of time or the expenditure of human energy, but of balancing ourselves and seeing life from the right angle of vision, so that all things blend for us in one unalterable consciousness. Let a man achieve this by degrees. It is very difficult for him suddenly to believe that he is part of the Infinite, when he has convinced himself for so long that he is a struggling, blundering soul. He must learn to dwell upon those things that inspire him and remind him of his Divine heritage.

If you believe that strength can come from God, then worship God with your whole heart and soul and never start your day without praying to God and meditating. Do not have your root in shallow ground where the least wind may come and blow you away. A man's life must be deeply rooted. Establish the custom of not spending hours in shallow, useless conversation. We have to be drastic. Let us be drastic with ourselves. Make a beginning and you will see that you immediately are the gainer. Be strong, and more strength will come to you. As you conserve your energy, you will find moments and even hours for meditation; you will be released from brooding, self-depreciation and despair, and as your faith and feeling increase, you will come in contact with your inner resources and then you will be restored physically. You may heal yourself. You have the power to perform miracles. If you are in despair you do not have to stay that way. Look up to the stars, to your Ideal. Pray with faith, from your heart, with a mind that cannot be turned aside by anything, and the result will come. We live in a practical age. Scientists demand results, so the spiritually-minded man also wants to see what he is doing. If he strives sincerely—with his whole being—he will have so much proof that he will long to convince his struggling fellow mortals.

May these ideas be infused into your consciousness, so that you will go on with new hope and courage. You all know that when you come in contact with a strong type, you are inspired and feel enthusiasm, but when you live with people who constantly whine and complain, you feel that this is a miserable existence. Which type will you choose to be—the weak or the strong?

Pause, reflect, pray and meditate, and all the powers that you possess within yourself will unfold and you will know how deeply rooted your life is and how inherent and intrinsic is its power.

PRAYER OFFERINGS

Dedicated to Sri Ramakrishna

Selfless Spirit of Universal Love who "dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of His Father, full of grace and truth."

Oh may Truth be known of her children;
May Truth rejoice in her children;
May the children of Truth recognize one another.

May the love of Truth make us strong;
May we render glad obedience to Truth;
May the grace of Truth permeate our being;
May our life bear witness to the Light.

Not what Thou hast witheld from others and granted to me, but that which, by Thy very Being, Thou art unconditionally to all, is my security and my refuge.

Lord, teach me never to look for special grace or favor, but simply to surrender myself to Thy all-compassing wisdom and love.

* * *

O Thou Divine Love, how surpassing is Thy compassion!

Perpetually dost Thou incarnate Thyself, taking upon Thee the form of my inmost need.

Thy loving kindness, like a two-edged sword, pierces my heart with a healing pain.

The mystery of Thy cross woos my soul;
By Thine own love I am pledged to Thee.

* * *

O Thou Divine Giver,
Thou alone canst enable me to receive Thy gift—
Thyself the giver;
Thyself the gift;
Thyself in my heart, The receiver of that gift!

Be Thou worshipped within me.
Hearken, I pray, to the supplication of Thine own silence.
Do Thou accept the incense of Thy Name:
"Not I, O Lord, but Thou."

* * *

Thou art doing all this! Why dost Thou ever let me think that I do anything?
Thou causest the anguish of yearning;
Thou hidest in the seeking;
Thou meetest Thyself in the finding.
Thou permittest the veil of ignorance
And Thou releasest the flood-gate of surrender in my heart.
Thou breathest many prayers, and yet causest them to sound impotent and empty.

* * *

Within the vast emptiness, Thou settest Thine Ineffable Name!
Inexhaustible, Unfathomable, Intimate, in my heart of hearts.

* * *

Thou stirrest me to seek to express the inexpressible.
My speechlessness is overwhelmed by surgings of aspiration.
Thou gatherest all my striving and all my impotence into the bosom of Thy Silence,
And grantest me peace.

* * *

Child, fill thyself wholly with My blessing, and grieve not for what thou canst not now contain. When thou dost thus wholly fill thyself, be thy capacity ever so small, I shall enlarge thee and fill thee again and again.

If you must measure things, I shall give you something worth measuring. Behold My beneficence! Behold My mercy—My grace—My wisdom! Measure these, and be healed of the disease of measuring.

* * *

Nothing worth measuring can be measured! Thus drops the foot-rule from our hand.

* * *

Child, do not try to overcome your resistance to Me. Simply surrender. Offer up all resistance; I can take care of it. Surrender doubt to Me; I make it impotent. Do not check, do not try to transform. I am the transformer!

* * *

O my God, how surpassing is Thy wisdom!
Thou usest imperfect means, without imperfection;
Thou walkest upon crooked ways, without crookedness!
Thou passest through rough places, without roughness!

* * *

I whirl your world in bewildering speed, that you may find Me—the unmoving Center of All.

* * *

Child, because you cannot put into words, or retain in your mind, all that I say to you, fret not. My word is imparted to your heart. Accept it. Partake of it freely. It will thoroughly leaven and transform you. Dwell within and you will dwell in Me. Thus will you find Me dwelling in all living beings.

* * *

Understanding is the quiet fruit of acquaintance.

* * *

By the practice of patience you will come to possess Me.

* * *

He who, being given a lamp, is sent forth into the night, is not sent forth into darkness.

When you cease to interpose yourself, nothing will come between us.

* * *

Without Me there is no touch; but I am not experienced through touch.

Without Me there is no sight or hearing; but My dwelling is silence and darkness to the faculties of sense.

Without Me there is no thought; but the net of thought can never capture me,

Nor its lightning speed overtake Me.

Without Me there is neither birth nor death.

In birth, I am birthless;

In death, I am deathless.

Such as thou knowest Me, thou art thyself;

Because thou art born of Me.

* * *

I pray for genuineness, simplicity and purity.

I pray for complete transintegration.

Grant me that knowledge which is born of faith and obedience.

* * *

I would be silent;

I would be pliant;

I would be trusting and receptive.

I would accept the death of that which is mortal;

The change of the changeable;

The uncertainty of the uncertain.

* * *

Trusting in Thy love, I would cling to nothing—not even to Thee;

That I may attain to the state of rising or falling, resting or moving with the tide of Thy will—

Being immanently sustained by Thee.

To relinquish all quest for pleasure, comfort, advantage, security—

To see not disintegration, but transintegration—

To emancipate Thee, my Emancipator, from all the ignorant and selfish demands of my heart—

This is my prayer!

Let me attain simplicity.

* * *

Lord, Show me, I pray, Thy love for the smallest and least worthy of Thy creatures.

Child, art thou willing to be thyself the smallest and least worthy of My creatures?

Thus alone canst thou know the fullest measure of My love reserved for him who does not shrink from nothingness.

* * *

Because there is room for all at Thy Feet, there is room also for me.

If my thought should exclude a single soul from Thy blessing,

I shall find only myself excluded.

In so far as I prevent the shining of Thy light upon another, my heart sits in darkness.

Because there is room for all at Thy Feet,

I know there is room for me.

* * *

Child, do not confine Me to anything!

I can manifest My whole glory in a grain of sand, if you do not confine Me to it;

But I cannot manifest myself fully in the whole universe, if you confine Me to it.

Faith emancipates. Love emancipates.

Love Me and have faith in Me.

It is your "confining" that misses Me.

I am blind and ignorant.

I do not know, and I cannot see.

But I open my being to the All-knowing and All-seeing One,

Thus I am truly and full known and seen.

* * *

By being known to Truth, the knowledge of Truth abides in me.

In receiving the light of Truth, vision unfolds within me.

I possess by being possessed.

In the disrobing of myself, my eyes look upon the Divine Vision unveiled!

WHERE I LIVED AND WHAT I LIVED FOR

(Concluded from the June Number)

By Henry David Thoreau

I went to the woods because I wish to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or, if it were sublime, to know it by experience and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or

of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

Still we live meanly, like ants, though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has need to count hardly more than his ten fingers, or, in extreme cases, he may add his ten toes and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half-a-dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live—if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all—by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify! Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary, eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion.

Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The Nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements —which, by the way, are all external and superficial—is just such an unwieldy and over-grown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation

of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers and forge rails and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? And if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? . . .

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches today to save nine tomorrow. As for work, we haven't any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still. . . . Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes up he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed. After a night's sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. "Pray tell me anything new that has happened to a man anywhere on this globe!"—and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, that a man has had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River; never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed cave of this world, and has but the rudiment of an eye himself.

For my part, I could easily do without the post office. I think that there are very few important communications made through it . . . and I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house

burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steam-boat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grass-hoppers in the winter, we never need read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a million instances or applications? To a philosopher, all news, as it is called, is gossip, and they who edit and read it are old women over their tea. Yet not a few are greedy after this gossip. . . . If one may judge who rarely looks into the newspapers, nothing new does ever happen in foreign parts, a French Revolution not excepted.

What news! How much more important to know what that is which was never old! "Kieou-he-yu (great dignitary of the state of Wei) sent a man to Khoung-tseu to know his news. Khoung-tseu caused the messenger to be seated near him, and questioned him in these terms: What is your master doing? The messenger answered with respect: My master desires to diminish the number of his faults, but he cannot come to the end of them. The messenger being gone, the philosopher remarked: What a worthy messenger! what a worthy messenger!" . . .

Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life, to compare it with such things as we know, would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence—that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceived by

shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations. Children, who play life, discern its true law and relations more clearly than men who fail to live it worthily, but who think that they are wiser by experience; that is, by failure.

I have read in a Hindoo book that "there was a king's son, being expelled in infancy from his native city, was brought up by a forester, and, growing up to maturity in that state, imagined himself to belong to the barbarous race with which he lived. One of his father's ministers having discovered him, revealed to him what he was, and the misconception of his character was removed and he knew himself to be a prince. So soul," continues the Hindoo philosopher, "from the circumstances in which it is placed, mistakes its own character, until the truth is revealed to it by some holy teacher, and then it knows itself to be *Brahme*."

I perceive that we inhabitants of New England live this mean life that we do because our vision does not penetrate the surface of things. We think that that *is* which *appears* to be. If a man should walk through this town and see only the reality, where, think you, would the Mill dam go to? If he should give us an account of the realities he beheld there, we should not recognize the place in his description. Look at a meetinghouse, or a courthouse, or a jail, or a shop, or a dwelling-house, and say what that thing really is before a true gaze, and they would all go to pieces in your account of them. Men esteem truth remote, in the outskirts of the system, behind the farthest star, before Adam and after the last man. In eternity there is indeed something true and sublime. But all these times and places and occasions are now and here. God Himself culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the

ages. And we are enabled to apprehend at all what is sublime and noble only by the perpetual instilling and drenching of the reality that surrounds us. The universe constantly and obediently answers to our conceptions; whether we travel fast or slow, the track is laid for us. Let us spend our lives in conceiving then. The poet or the artist never yet had so fair and noble a design but some of his posterity at last could accomplish it.

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and let company go; let the bells ring and the children cry—determined to make a day of it. Why should we knock under and go with the stream? Let us not be upset and overwhelmed in that terrible rapid and whirlpool called a dinner, situated in the meridian shallows. Weather this danger and you are safe, for the rest of the way is down hill. With unrelaxed nerves, with morning vigor, sail by it, looking another way, tied to the mast like Ulysses. If the engine whistles, let it whistle till it is hoarse for its pain. If the bell rings, why should we run? We will consider what kind of music they are like.

Let us settle ourselves and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion and prejudice and tradition and delusion and appearance—that alluvian which covers the globe—through Paris and London, through New York and Boston and Concord, through church and state, through poetry and philosophy and religion, till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake; and then begin, having a *point d'appui,* below freshet and frost and fire, a place where you might found a wall or a state, or set a lamp-post safely, or

perhaps a gauge—not a Nilometer but a Realometer—that future ages might know how deep a freshet of shams and appearances had gathered from time to time.

If you stand right fronting and face to face to a fact, you will see the sun glimmer on both its surfaces, as if it were a cimeter, and feel its sweet edge dividing you through the heart and marrow, and so you will happily conclude your mortal career. Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper—fish in the sky whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and forepaws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

Truth is so great a perfection, that if God would render Himself visible to men, He would choose light for his body and truth for His soul. —*Pythagoras.*

Nature is the time-vesture of God. —*Carlyle.*

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the June Number)

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

A most interesting study in contrast is Mathur Babu's place by the side of Sri Ramakrishna. Mathur Babu was thoroughly a man of the world. He loved power, pomp and material acquisitions. Sri Ramakrishna's life was just the opposite—the complete renunciation of all worldly possession, and yet, because of Mathur's pure faith and spiritual devotion, the Master found him a most desirable companion. Mathur Babu was blessed beyond measure because of his tremendous faith and unflinching devotion. Sri Ramakrishna gave himself freely and satisfied Mathur's spiritual hunger. A man may live in the world and yet he need not forsake his place in God. Mathur Babu was a vivid example of this fact.

Once more he persuaded Sri Ramakrishna to accompany him, this time on a tour through his vast country holdings, and as before, the Master was deeply grieved to see the miserable condition of some of the villagers. He pleaded with Mathur to feed them and clothe them, and again Mathur could not resist the urging of Sri Ramakrishna's great compassionate heart.

During this tour, Mathur visited his own village and spent some weeks at the home of the family Guru or Preceptor, where Sri Ramakrishna likewise was welcomed with honor and respect.

SRI CHAITANYA'S SEAT

Soon after their return to Dakshineswar, a most interesting incident took place. In Calcutta there was a place called Colootollah where a religious group belonging to the Vaishnava sect used to meet and perform *Kirtan* (singing of holy

songs). Inside the sanctum, there was a seat set aside for Sri Chaitanya, the chosen Ideal of these devotees. Sri Chaitanya, who was born at Nadia, Bengal, in the year 1486, was also known as Gouranga—the Golden One—because of the golden color of his skin. Like Sri Ramakrishna he was mad with love for God, and also like Sri Ramakrishna, it was said of him that by a word or a touch, he could awaken even an ordinary mortal to divine ecstasy. His seat in the shrine at Colootollah was beautifully decorated with flowers, and all there sincerely believed that during their worship and holy chant, he occupied the seat. It was called Sri Chaitanya's seat. Everybody who came there always prostrated before it.

One day, at the urgent request of this group of devotees, Sri Ramakrishna went to visit their house with his nephew Hriday. He came quietly, as was his habit, and took his place among them while the chanting was at its height. They were chanting from the Bhagavata, a great devotional Scripture, and as the Master listened to the sacred words, he became completely overcome with emotion and suddenly ran and stood on Sri Chaitanya's seat, oblivious to all outer conditions. He stood there transfixed, his hands upraised in the familiar posture of Sri Chaitanya, as shown in the pictures of him, while his face was lighted up with a benign smile. It was so impressive that all assembled there remained spellbound with awe. It was as if for the moment Sri Ramakrishna's spirit and that of Sri Chaitanya were blended and made one. Lifted beyond themselves, the devotees raised their voices in songs of worship, and even the more bigoted among them forgot to be critical. Sri Ramakrishna gradually returned to the plane of normal consciousness, but the atmosphere of exaltation clung to him as he mingled with them in their rejoicing.

After it was all over, there was a great deal of talk. The incident did not quiet down easily. Some people very strongly criticised Sri Ramakrishna's actions, while others thoroughly justified them, knowing that he was in the mood of Divine rapture and that the very spirit of Sri Chaitanya had manifested through him. Finally the matter was brought to the attention of a great Vaishnava saint, named Bhagavan Das Babaji, who lived a short distance from Dakshineswar —at Kalna—and was highly revered throughout Bengal for his spiritual attainments. He was a man well along in age —about eighty—and devotees from all quarters came to him for counsel. When the members of the Colootollah association consulted him, he was greatly agitated to hear that the sacred seat of Chaitanya had been desecrated by an unknown man. He sharply condemned Sri Ramakrishna's action and warned the devotees to take precaution against the future occurrence of such a happening.

Sri Ramakrishna knew absolutely nothing of all this uproar, but through a turn of destiny, Mathur Babu invited him, along with Hriday, to take a boat trip to Nadia, the birthplace of Sri Chaitanya, and along the way, they stopped at the very place where lived this saintly Babaji. Sri Ramakrishna never missed an opportunity to visit those who lived in the thought of God, but he was always very retiring and shy, like a child, when he came in contact with distinguished people; therefore, in this case, he put Hriday, his nephew, forward and took an unassuming position, completely wrapping himself in a cloth so that even his face was almost hidden. Babaji already had intimated that he felt the coming of a great saint, but seeing only Hriday, he paid no attention and went on talking with those who had gathered around him. The trend of the conversation was that a Vaishnava had been guilty of some misdemeanor and Babaji was so very much

provoked that he was suggesting his expulsion from the Order.

At this point, while the discussion was in progress, Sri Ramakrishna entered the room, saluted Babaji in the customary way and quietly took a seat to one side. "My Uncle," said Hriday, "feels overpowered with emotion on hearing the Name of God. This has been his state for a long time. He has come to pay his respects to you." Babaji acknowledged Sri Ramakrishna's salutation and exchanged a few remarks with him as to his place of residence, and so forth; then he took out his beads and began to tell them. Hriday asked him why, in spite of all his high attainments, he continued to say his prayers with beads, like the ordinary devotee. The Babaji answered: "I may not require it myself, but I keep to the practice to set an example for other men, otherwise they will go astray in trying to imitate me."

Sri Ramakrishna was so entirely dependent on his Divine Mother, so surrendered to Her Will, that no word crossed his lips save at Her bidding, and he never thought of himself as anything but the instrument of Her mighty Power. Thus it jarred him tremendously to have this man display such an egotistic notion—that he was setting the example to others and was excommunicating someone for his weakness. He remained silent as long as he could. Then, with great spiritual exuberance, he stood up and spoke with Divine authority: "What! You dare think like this? You pose as a teacher and you expel a man from your Society? You continue to observe your spiritual practice or give it up at will, in order to set an example for others? Who are you to teach men? Who can teach the world save that one who is chosen by the Lord!" As soon as he finished these words, he fell into a deep Samadhi, while the cloth which had covered him, dropped away, revealing his illumined face and features. Babaji who

was accustomed to words of reverence and devotion from others, was at first greatly startled, but instead of resenting, he realized his own error. He was a man of genuine sincerity and was deeply impressed by Sri Ramakrishna's unmistakable spirituality and divine simplicity. When he came to know that this was the Saint of Dakshineswar—the "unknown man" whom he had criticised for his act of standing on Sri Chaitanya's seat, he was deeply mortified, and again and again begged his forgiveness.

The pilgrimage to Nadia was a blessed one. Sri Ramakrishna was in perpetual ecstasy as they approached their destination, but when they reached the shore, his feelings quieted down and he was completely unmoved during their sojourn in the town itself, although they visited all the temples, one after another. This was the more strange, because, with the Master, even one holy word was sufficient to throw him into Samadhi, and we have seen how he was affected by the sacred city of Benares and by Vrindavan, the childhood home of Sri Krishna. The fact that Nadia brought no exaltation of spirit saddened him, and he went to the boat and reembarked like a disappointed child. When, however, he had gone a short distance from the shore and was passing the sand banks nearby, he suddenly cried out as though at some wonderful vision. Afterwards, in describing the nature of his experience, he said: "Two boys, bright as molten gold, with aureoles around their heads, rushed smiling towards me through the air, with uplifted hands. 'They come! They come!' I cried. In the twinkling of an eye they came, and entered this body (Sri Ramakrishna's body), and I fell down unconscious. I should have dropped into the water but for Hriday who caught hold of me."

The two boys were Sri Chaitanya and Nityananda, his great devotee, and the reason that the vision of them had

come to Sri Ramakrishna on the water rather than in the village, was, he explained, because old Navadwip, the actual birthplace of Sri Chaitanya, had been just where the sand banks are now, the town having been covered by the waters of the river. Later research seems to have verified this.

THE CURTAIN FELL

Mathur Babu's cup was full to the brim. He had lived in the world, enjoyed its sweetness, fulfilled his earthly desires, and above all, he had found the Master of his spirit. Oh, what a joy it was for him to live under the divine shadow of Sri Ramakrishna's influence! Now the time came for the close of his earthly career. He was overtaken with fever, and Sri Ramakrishna knew that the curtain was due to drop. The Master's tender heart was deeply torn, but he was thinking of the safety and the spiritual security of his loved and faithful friend and devotee. Every day he sent Hriday to him to gain news concerning the progress of the illness, but not once did he go himself. Here is a fact that should help us to realize how impossible it is to weigh the actions of great holy personages on the scales of our ordinary human understanding. Sri Ramakrishna's love for his devotees was tender as that of a mother, yet at Mathur's last illness, he did not go to him. On the final day, he did not even send Hriday; but in the early afternoon, he fell into a deep Samadhi which was not broken till after five o'clock. On emerging from this state, the Master exclaimed: "Mathur has ascended to the realm of the Mother, in a celestial car, which the companions of the Mother helped him to mount!"

Late that night, news came that Mathur had given up his body exactly at five o'clock. His passing away left a great void, for indeed he was a real personality, animated with life, faith, courage and action.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE SURPASSING LOVE

By Eliot White

"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." I SAMUEL 18:1.

You wonder why sometimes a reader's face
Looks so reluctant and with duty plagued,
As it is bowed above the Bible page.
Not such expression fills the eager eyes
And molds the very features with its charm,
Of one enthralled by romance in a book
And tales of bold adventure, courage, risk;
Whom triumph won at heavy odds delights
And love no time can quench brings ecstasy.
And yet here shine great deeds, and poetry
Sheds glamor more than rainbows on this print,
Until the staid divisions—chapter, verse,
Are brimmed with beauty that no change can dim.
So from this page that tells how Jonathan
Loved David as he loved his own strong soul,
And found that miracle of fellowship
Wherein the heart of man is knit with heart
As fruit to leafy bough, or flesh to bones,
There floods a gladness to the reader's eyes
Beyond the power of mere tales to yield.
Nor ebbs the tide of joy in such rare love
When later page tells David's loyalty
To all that Jonathan so richly gave.
For though death sundered for a time the friends,
How that sweet Psalmist's elegy
Transmutes mere printed page to passioned harp
That thrills all after ages with its cry!—
"I am distressed, my brother Jonathan;

You have been very pleasant unto me.
Your love to me was wonderful, and passed
The love of women."
And have we so long
Been told of such a love, and not yet known
That who has seen this, has seen God—for God
Is love? Nor heard His voice in that farewell
That mingles David's anguish with his bliss?—
A sob, a paean, and a kiss of peace.

CONFESSION OF FAITH

By Ludwig Van Beethoven

(Translated from a Beethoven autograph in the Royal College of Music, Berlin, and thought to be notes for a Vedic composition.)

God is immaterial; as he is invisible, he can therefore have no form. But from what we are able to perceive in His Works, we conclude that he is eternal, almighty, omniscient and omnipresent. The mighty one, He alone is free from all desire and passion. There is no greater than He, Brahm; his mind is self-existent. He, the Almighty, is present in every part of space. His omniscience is self-inspired, and His conception includes every other. Of His all-embracing attributes the greatest is omniscience. For it there is no threefold kind of being—it is independent of everything—O God! thou art the true, eternal, blessed, unchangeable light of all time and space. Thy wisdom apprehends thousands of laws, and yet thou ever actest of thy free will, and to thy honor. Thou wast before all that we worship. To thee is due praise and adoration. Thou alone art the true Blessed (Bhagavan), Thou art the best of all laws, the image of all wisdom, present throughout the whole world, Thou sustainest all things—Sun, Ether, Brahma.

[These last three words have a line drawn through them. [Ed.]

HYMN

Spirit of spirits, who spreading thyself through all space and through endless time, art raised high above all limits of upward struggling thought, from riot didst thou command beautiful order to arise. Before the (worlds) heavens were, thou wast, and before systems rolled below and above us. Before the earth swam in heavenly ether, thou alone wast, until through thy secret love that which was not sprang into being, and gratefully sang praises to thee. What moved thee to manifest thy power and boundless goodness? What brilliant light directed thy power. Wisdom beyond measure! How was it first manifested? Oh! direct my mind! Oh! Raise it up from this grievous depth.

REPORT

On May 10, Swami Paramananda returned to Boston after a few weeks' sojourn on the Pacific Coast, and on a Thursday evening shortly afterwards, opened his summer season's activities with a dinner at the Boston Centre.

The speaker of the evening, Miss Katharine Sherwood, who had accompanied the Swami on his western trip, gave a delightful account of her visit at the California Ashrama. Miss Sherwood, who has been associated with the Swami's work in Boston since its inception, is planning to make her home at this western Retreat and though the news of this saddened the hearts of her many Boston friends, she was able to convey to her hearers, not a sense of separation between the Boston and California Centres, but rather a feeling of unity, binding them together as one. The evening terminated with motion pictures expertly shown by two of the Centre's good friends, the scenes being taken at the Ananda Ashrama, California, and in India during one of the Swami's trips there.

On June 6, the Swami inaugurated the regular Saturday

afternoon gatherings at the Ananda Ashrama, Cohasset. The little Retreat never wore her mantle of leaves more alluringly than on this occasion. In fact, the whole countryside has been particularly green and beautiful and all were delighted once more to be together in meditation and happy intercourse under the open sky.

By June 27, when the Swami celebrated the Ashrama's anniversary, woods and paths had been cleared by eager hands of all traces of winter's devastation and everything was fresh, fragrant and tidy. After a short outdoor Service, dinner was served at the lower house and numerous friends were called upon to give their anniversary greetings. Following this there was a sunset Meditation on the Rock. It was a joyous afternoon and a fitting prelude to July 4, which stands out yearly, for the members of the Centre, as a day of days on their spiritual calendar—marking as it does not only American freedom, but the liberation from earthly bondage of Swami Vivekananda's great soul.

As is the custom on that day, many devoted souls assembled at the Cohasset Ashrama where, under the Swami's guidance, their minds were lifted into the free spaces, during a three hour silence. Preceding this, the natural altar in the "Nature's Sanctuary" was decked by the Swami with fragrant flowers and fruit, which he lay before a portrait of his Great Master as a symbolic offering.

One by one the students quietly came together and listened to a short opening Service conducted by the Swami and attuned to the sanctity of spirit. When this had ended, silence reigned and no human voice was heard until the Swami spoke again at the concluding Service three hours later. Nature's own pure presence seemed to mingle with an even Diviner Presence. Every leaf that stirred and every bird that fluttered or sang brought an almost palpable benediction. Even the

few tiny raindrops which fell at the close seemed like a final blessing. After the supper, which was served under the pines in front of the lower house, the guests motored homeward by the light of the setting sun.

During his stay in the east, it was the Swami's pleasure and privilege to greet as guests of the Centre on June 18, a young couple from Ceylon, Mr. and Mrs. K. Vaithianathan, who stopped at Boston during a trip around the world and who had recently visited the Ananda-Ashrama in California. Mr. Vaithianathan, who is associated with the Government of Ceylon, employed this pleasure trip as a means for gathering data on modern farming methods, prison reform etc. On the evening of their one day's stay at the Boston Centre, a reception was tendered them by the Swami. Though the notice had been brief, a goodly number attended and were appreciative of the opportunity to meet these young representatives of the modern East.

On July 13, Swami Paramananda returned to California, but as usual the activities at the Boston Centre will continue uninterruptedly, all Classes and Services being conducted by Sister Daya.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

During the Swami's absence in the east, Srimati Gayatri Devi conducted the public work at the Ananda-Ashrama, and infused it with the exalted spirit which is her very atmosphere. All reports tell equally of the beauty of the Ashrama and of its atmosphere of sanctity.

NOTE

It is with pleasure that we announce to the many friends of the work that the Ananda Ashrama, Cohasset, this summer is prepared to take care of student guests for a few days or for a longer period. Full information as to rates, etc. may be obtained by writing to the Vedanta Centre, 32 Fenway, Boston, Mass.

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VOL. XXV NUMBER 8

"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



SRI RAMAKRISHNA CENTENARY EDITION

OCTOBER, 1936

COMMONWEALTH OF HUMANITY

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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*

"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

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ON DIVINE GRACE

From the Bhagavad-Gita

I AM the Origin of all, everything evolves from Me. Knowing this, the wise worship Me with loving ecstasy. . . . To these ever steadfast and loving worshippers I give that Yoga of wisdom by which they come unto Me. Out of pure compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, destroy the darkness born of ignorance, by the effulgent light of wisdom. . . .

Even if the most wicked worships Me with undivided devotion, he should be regarded as good, for he is rightly resolved. Very soon he becomes a righteous soul and attains to eternal peace. Know thou, O son of Kunti, that my devotee never perishes. . . .

Surrendering mentally all actions to Me, regarding Me as the highest goal, resorting to Self-knowledge, do thou ever fix thy heart on Me.

Fixing thy heart on Me, thou shalt, by My grace, overcome all obstacles; but if, through egoism, thou wilt not hear Me, thou shalt perish. . . .

O Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings, causing all beings to revolve, as if mounted on a wheel.

O Bharata, take refuge in Him with all thy heart; through His grace thou shalt attain Supreme Peace and the Eternal Abode.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

If I were King of France or, still better,
Pope of Rome,
There'd be no fighting men abroad, nor weeping
maids at home.
All the world would be at peace, and if kings
would show their might,
Let those who make the quarrels be the only ones
to fight!

—*Old English Song.*

He that forgives gains the victory.

—*Yoruba (African) saying.*

Justice between men or between nations can only be achieved through understanding and goodwill.

—*Jane Addams.*

When doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad-Gita and find a verse to comfort me, and immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies, and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita.

—*Mahatma Gandhi.*

The only real heathen and heretics are the purely selfish.

—*Wilfred T. Grenfell.*

The first end of life is knowledge; the second end of life is happiness. Knowledge and happiness lead to freedom. But not one can obtain liberty until every being (ant or dog) has liberty. No one can be happy until all are happy. When you hurt anyone, you hurt yourself, for you and your brother are one. He is indeed a Yogi who sees himself in the whole universe and the whole universe in himself.

—*Swami Vivekananda.*

COMMONWEALTH OF HUMANITY

By Swami Paramananda

Commonwealth of humanity! Is such a thing possible, or is it only a fancy, a dream, a poetic concept? What does it mean? What does it represent? We find it difficult to establish a commonwealth among one group of people, feeling the same way, in one little country, in a county, or even a township. For no matter how small the community, there is always conflict. How then do we ever dare to conceive of a commonwealth of the whole of mankind? Yet upon its accomplishment rests largely our safety, our happiness and our fulfillment.

My destiny once led me—while on a trip around the world—to address a mixed audience at a lecture in Singapore, that great meeting-place of East and West, and on this occasion, I spoke before Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, Moslems, British and American. Now when people so different come together, is there any way of establishing one platform on which all can meet? And what must that platform be? The answer is—Love! And when I say "Love," I ask you not to pass it by with your mind and take it only at its surface value. Try to understand the significance of it, the intensity of it, the fragrance and the healing power that it contains. In the Bible, and in all Bibles, we are told that Love will conquer all our ills, and we constantly see its working in our everyday life. Christ has taught us that we must love our enemies. Christians say, "Our religion is so wonderful! In our Bible Christ tells us to love those that hate us. He teaches us the allness of love." Mohammedans make similar claims for their faith, and the Buddhists join in with their voices, saying, "Our great Master taught us that hatred is never conquered by hatred. He sent his Bhikkhus with the injunction—'O ye Bhikkhus, love your enemies, care for the sick, give all men

your service.' " But so long as men talk of love and exhibit hatred, will anyone be convinced by their words?

Now I am not asking you to begin by loving your enemies, or even the people you do not know. I am asking you to love the people you do know. What is the use of reading all these Scriptures if we never make any practical application of them even among our own family and friends? "I want success! I want happiness! I want health! I want prosperity! I want to be in safety!"—here is the cry of every heart. But there can be no safety, not to speak of happiness or well being, until man learns to place himself within the sphere of safety, in an atmosphere of prayer and meditation, where he can breathe the fragrance and feel the very presence of the Infinite.

"Be perfect as your Father which is in heaven." Do not think that this command is only for a Christ or a Christlike spirit. The great personages have achieved it in order that we may do likewise. Let your love so encircle all things that there is no room left for destructive elements. Let it grow; let it expand, that it may represent the one great faith, the great universal idealism, which is the stamp of all systems of belief, and which we shall ever find whenever we go deep down to the heart of any religion. Its fruition is in practical life, and it is man who makes it living. When we contact one who has this mystic expression in his soul—one, for instance, like St. Francis of Assisi—we feel at once that we are in the presence of the Great Deity. It brings to my mind Lessing's conception,embodied in two characters—one a Christian, and the other a Jew. The Christian says to the Jew, "Why, Nathan, you are just like a Christian!" And the Jew replies, "That which makes you feel that I am a Christian makes me feel that you are a Jew." It is not race or creed, it is the motive, the light, the expression of life which brings this reality right before us.

Would you not like to carry in your heart the consciousness that you are part of God?—that you have no disease, no death, no limitation, no more boundary lines?—that through you a mighty power can flow readily without any obstruction? Would you not like to have the All-wise Spirit reflecting through you? After a moment's thought, you may say, "Yes! But that is impossible for mortals." We hypnotize ourselves thinking thus. We think that many things are impossible. We apparently think that it is impossible for a man to seek first the Kingdom of God. Instead, we feel that *after* he has sought all the goods of the world, then he may feel free to pray for his salvation. Sri Ramakrishna gives us a parable in illustration of this: A man stood on the beach, waiting to go into the water after all the waves had subsided. But the breakers kept right on, each one bigger than the one before, and there was no cessation. Same way it is when we wait for this world's activities to cease before seeking to find our peace. One man says, "After I have closed up my business affairs I shall take a rest." Another says, "When my son is married I am going to settle down, and perhaps then I shall think about religion." But after the son is married, he finds that there is a grandson who needs looking after, and so it goes on and we continue to fool ourselves, and there is no end.

I am not saying that a man should neglect his duties or his interests, but I am asking him to remember one supremely important interest—an interest that is more vital than wealth or fame or small intellectual gifts. What do we seek when our mind is confused and we know not what to do? Where do we look when we are in darkness? We look for the light—for the light within—and if we cannot find it within, we go to that place where we think it can be found. For it is light alone that can destroy darkness. Light has no label. It makes

no difference wherefrom it shines, whether from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south, it is always light, and it is one light.

Now this same great magnitude we find as a basis for the commonwealth of humanity, and the fundamental thought of Love, so far as I can give it utterance, strikes the same universal chord. As we begin to feel a part of this immensity, we are unable to ask, "Is it from America or England—from India or Japan—from France or from Germany?" It is from everywhere and from nowhere. It is never absent. It is all-abiding, and as we open ouselves to it, as we understand it, all our differences vanish; all pettiness is forgotten, and all our difficulties roll away.

Think this out for yourself. Perhaps you do not like to think things out for yourself. You may prefer to think as your forefathers have taught you. Your forefathers ate and rested in comfort, but you do not feel that that is sufficing and there is no need for you to eat and look out for yourself. The same argument applies to these greater things. Sometimes you feel as if you understood things better than your ancestors did, and must act for your own interest. If that is so, then take also this responsibility.

Man, as a human being, must know why he is here. He must know how to take his place here. You may say, "What are the thoughts of one man in this great universe?" One man can cause war, one man can disturb the whole of humanity, unbelievable as this may seem, and also one man can be the preserver of peace. A selfish, vain person can disrupt an entire household, while another type can be such a beneficent influence that even in the midst of anger or disturbance, his very presence guides and soothes. Even places carry an atmosphere. Some places lift the mind, while others make us feel as if they were haunted. They are haunted—by hate

and calculation and the evil thoughts of men. We can, if we will, make this world like a paradise. Each one of us can create a centre which will inspire men to live sincerely and happily. Each one of us can provide a little bit of impetus to help forward the spirit of unity, harmony and higher living.

The whole idea really is to give inspiration and to receive it. For only as we have it can we convey it to others. If you have a smile, if you have a glow of sunshine in your soul, you do not need to adopt some special utterance to make the fact known. Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men. . . ." That is my idea of religion—the remedy for the disease and destruction of the world. It is not by what we say in words that we help anyone, not by our cleverness and our scheming, but only by what naturally and spontaneously and unconsciously comes out of us. Let us live our life in such a manner that an absolute stranger looking upon us, may say, "I feel something living and glowing in this man or woman!" Instead of dividing our house into hundreds and thousands of parts, so that each one is but a little fragment, let us feel the strength of united love, and strike a chord whose divine music may resound throughout the heart of humanity.

Last night, in the silence which pervaded the darkness, I stood alone and heard the voice of the singer of eternal melodies. When I went to sleep I closed my eyes with this last thought in my mind, that even when I remain unconscious in slumber, the dance of life will still go on in the hushed arena of my sleeping body, keeping step with the stars. The heart will throb, the blood will leap in the veins, and the millions of living atoms of my body will vibrate in tune with the note of the harp-string that thrills at the touch of the master.

—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

By H. Bhavanishankar
From "The Morning Star"

There is an old story of two brothers who wished to drink wine secretly, when their father was asleep. Before they began to drink, they said to each other, "We must be very silent or father will wake up." When they were drinking, they continued repeating to each other, "We must be very silent or father will wake up," each trying to drown the voice of the other. And as the shouting increased, the father woke up and discovered the whole thing.

Today the nations imitate the two brothers. In order to end war, wars are waged; in the name of disarmament, each nation is arming itself with the deadliest possible weapons. Millions of pounds are the price of every year's armament of the world. If the same wealth had been used for the peaceful settlement and development of the world, mankind would be happy and prosperous beyond our fondest dreams.

The time has come when neither nations nor individuals can keep themselves aloof from one another. Every individual is responsible not only for his own actions, but for the actions of his neighbors. Science has killed distance, and the world today looks smaller. That is why, if one nation enters into war with another, it brings behind it a train of other nations.

The recent scientific discoveries prove that the whole universe is made of one stuff. Man, beast, tree and mountain are mere waves on this vast ocean of matter. One fundamental principle runs through all these objects. Here is a poor man; there is a rich man; here is a black man; there is a white man. All are human beings. Death, birth, hunger and rest are common to all of them. Whatever their outer differences be, all are one. The whole universe is pulsating with one life. There cannot be any difference between a man and

a man, a beast and various inanimate objects. The difference perhaps may be only in degree but not in kind. From the standpoint of God, everything is one. . . .

The object of every individual must be not only to serve others, but never to destroy life. A man's success in life, therefore, must be judged from this standpoint. "He who serveth well" must be the greatest among us. . . . Where man looks upon man as his prey, there civilization has no meaning, and must come to a standstill. "There is only one history—the history of man," says Rabindranath Tagore. "All the national histories are merely chapters in the bigger one." Individual lives are only passages in the histories of nations. The progress of a nation is inconceivable without the progress of individuals. The function of a good government therefore is to promote the welfare of its people.

The world economic crises today are due more to lack of concentrated efforts toward a world industry than to a want of national resources. "In the world," writes Peter Freeman, M.P., in an article for the press, "there is wealth enough and to spare for all. Poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and all the dire ills that come to the lot of unorganized mankind would end with some form of World Government."

By "World Government" it is not meant that we have to lose our individuality. As the health of a body is judged by the health of individual organs, the progress of the world is only in relation to the progress of the individuals. Our duties toward our family and country must not come in the way of fulfilling our duty toward humanity. Because we are human beings, the duty toward humanity takes the foremost place in our life, and all our actions must tend toward it. We must be bold to face all difficulties in fulfilling this important mission in life.

No nation lives today exclusively on its own produce; it

lives by exchange, by importation and exportation. . . . The world is slowly moving toward unity of life. The brotherhood of man will be the basic principle upon which the whole future civilization will be built. And all the national governments will be united into a Federal Government of the world. As a national government in an organized manner looks after the interest and peace of its inhabitants, the function of the World Goverment will be to organize and develop the resources of the world, so that every individual irrespective of caste, creed or color, may reap the benefit.

The time has come to teach men that, as humanity is a single body, we are all of us as members of that body bound to work for its development, and to make its life more harmonious, active and strong. The time is come to convince ourselves that we can only rise to God through the souls of our fellow-men, and that we ought to improve and purify them even when they do not ask it of us themselves. The time has come—since that portion of God's design which should be fulfilled here below can only be fulfilled by entire humanity—to substitute for the exercise of charity toward individuals a work of associating, aiming at the improvement of the whole, and to organize for this purpose the family and the country.

All men that God created can live on the earth. God gave space and air enough for all, if men would only give good will.

—*Wisdom of the Serbians.*

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer,
and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

—*Alfred Tennyson.*

THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

By William Blake

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east, began to say:

"Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives his light and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

"And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

"For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice,
Saying, 'Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.' "

Thus did my mother say, and kissed me;
And thus I say to little English boy:
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

LUXURY

By Nicholas Roerich

(Diary Leaves)

In the book, "Fiery World," is the following statement: It has been ordained that luxury must depart from humanity. It is not without reason that people have given luxury a special category. It cannot be identified with anything else. Luxury is neither beauty, nor spirituality, nor perfection, nor construction, nor bliss, nor mercy; not one benevolent conception is synonymous with it. Luxury is the destruction of means and possibilities. Luxury is decay, because each upbuilding without rhythm is only decomposition. There is sufficient evidence that earthly luxury is already shaken. But one must find coördinated coöperation in order to cure the contagion of luxury. Selfhood will try to argue that luxury is deserved abundance. People will also claim that luxury is regal. But this is slander. Luxury is the sign of decline and obscuration of spirit. The shackles of luxury are the most terrible also for the Subtle World. There one needs progress and continuous perfecting of thought. The exhibition of encumbrances will not lead to the next gates."

Were these words said for some hoary antiquity? Or are they needed today in the same measure? It is deplorable to realize that the commands against the ignorance of luxury are needed more even today. But since this is so, who can dare to deny that luxury must be done away with just now? How often has the world been told that luxury is a sign of extreme vulgarity? How many were the examples in the fall of Babylon, of Rome and many other Empires, when instead of beauty, education and enlightenment, humanity became obsessed by luxurious extravagance.

It is interesting to remember how Chingiz-Khan, aiming to prevent the temptation of luxury among his warriors, gave

some highly instructive demonstration before all his people. He bid some of his closest friends dress themselves in the finest Chinese silk garments and went with them through thorny bushes, dry tamarisk and other sharp, thorny plants. By the time they arrived where the people were gathered, their silk robes were naturally torn to shreds. And the leader pointed out to his people the uselessness of luxurious dresses. With the help of his friends, he also showed them how rich food causes only illness, thus teaching them to return to milk and a simple, healthful diet.

Numerous similar examples of efforts to restore the consciousness of the people to beautiful sane life may be quoted from all the ages. But the sane foundation has not yet been realized even now, and even machines, rebelling against the weakened human common sense, outbalance the wise distribution of forces. At present it is especially necessary, without fearing derision or mockery, to recall to people again the need of the beauty of saneness and balanced living. Some countries have already announced competitions for handicrafts and home industry. These are not a retreat from civilization. In this way, wise leaders are trying again to call attention to the necessity of high quality in workmanship and the use of leisure for skillful self-improvement.

Even recently, showy luxury was ascribed only to the ignorant "nouveaux riches." Of course these new-comers to the golden calf, often completely uncouth, are easy prey to the dark seductions of luxury. But let us not close our eyes to the fact that far beyond the circle of the "nouveaux riches" there rises the desire for easy money and for the vulgar forms of the luxurious perversions of life.

The book, "Fiery World," wisely reminds us that precisely egotistic ignoramuses will always defend luxury, and the same book farsightedly points out that there are many

indications that the world's luxury has already been shaken. This means that we must very vigilantly watch that the next step of existence be really surrounded by truly noble creations. But this necessary circumstance of life must be watched not by official inspection, but by the population itself, in order to create, as early as possible, a conscious understanding of the harmony of daily life. It is imperative that luxury in possession must depart from humanity also, for the reason that it treacherously seduces people into spiritual laxity, which is still more dangerous and infectious. In their egoism people become careless towards the workers in the field of education. The excesses of luxury have created equally vile excesses in the worship of outer physical strength, in all sorts of races and competitions and the deification of muscular force. One abnormality always leads to another. The exaggeration of the material side of life inevitably induces a decline in spirituality in all countries and in all creeds. Even more, each effort towards spirituality and the sublime problems of existence is considered inadmissible in the daily life of a materially "civilized" society. It is true that certain nations, and among them chiefly India, hold to their ethical methods of thought, but even among these nations already there are just complaints that the young generation is losing its understanding of the high principles of life. From other countries there comes the deplorable news of the growth of militant atheism and an unhealthy idolatry before crass materialism. The real workers for spiritual education are pushed into the background. People are not ashamed to express the belief that the present is no time altogether to speak of living ethics. And one may add many similar unfortunate examples. Of course from ancient history we also know that Confucius the Just was persecuted by unwise rulers. And Plato was sold as a slave. We know also that Aristides, who was called

the Righteous, was expelled by his fellow-citizens from his native town. Such records sometimes seem like slander against humanity. It is difficult to imagine that Aristides the Righteous could have been so mistreated by beastly ignoramuses, who dared to commit an act so harmful to the state as the expulsion of their greatest citizen. But during the latest excavations in the Acropolis of Athens, to the shame of the state, there were found ceramic tablets with votes against Aristides. To what a treacherous human act the actual tablet, with its inscription, "for the expulsion of Aristides," bears witness. Similarly heinous are the acts of dread vandalism, when to the shame of all humanity, irreplaceable treasures of great beauty were destroyed.

Even the most callous hearts must shudder at the destruction of the most remarkable libraries, and on reading the list of creations of art now gone. Our modern prototypes of Herostratus of old proudly proclaim their desire to destroy museums and temples. We sometimes see absolutely insane statements of this kind in print. But not one of these Herostratuses realizes that he is obeying the commands of the ignorance of luxury. Since luxury is the destruction of means and possibilities and since it is decadence also, then every barbaric destruction of great creations must be regarded as a vicious luxury. When burning great monuments, Herostratus of course did not understand the high meaning of creativeness. The slave of luxury, surrounded by hideously pompous gilt encumbrances, resembles Herostratus as far as true art is concerned. If we are considering new forms of life, if we wish the happiness of our dear ones, is it not our duty to replace ugliness by finer ways of living, in a material or spiritual sense?

People reluctantly begin to accept axioms such as that friendliness opens the gates of coöperation. But when in the

days of Armageddon we have to fight against egoism and arrogance, this may be achieved only by consonance of co-operation. In this incessant and joyful coöperation we shall realize that the worthiest people were those who understood, in all its grandeur, the meaning of beauty in the whole design of life. The great Teacher, Swami Vivekananda tells us: "Don't you see I am above all a poet." That man cannot be truly religious who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of art. "Non-appreciation of art is crass ignorance."

Rabindranath Tagore finishes his book, "What is Art," with such words. "In art the person in us is sending its answer to the Supreme Person, who reveals Himself to us in a world of endless beauty across the lightless world of facts."

The "Fiery World" ordains: "One should avoid prejudice in great things as well as in small. Many possibilities were intercepted by prejudiced thinking. The fiery energy is especially sensitive to prejudice, but being aware of this property of energy, one may counteract it by suggestion," and "a benevolent thought is the basis of a good action. Thought is the light before action, therefore let us count the tents of benevolence according to the torchlights of thought."

These reminders of the harm of prejudice and of the bliss of luminiferous thoughts are so needed now, in the midst of the battle against all dark phantoms, against ignorant luxury and vicious treachery. A sensitive heart permits one to distinguish between the boundary of a noble search for beauty and a self-consuming extravagant luxury, which decomposes even powerful empires.

Let the Banner of Peace, as a symbol of the realization and construction of Beauty, remind and warn one against the beginnings of the dark kingdom of spiritual cannibalism.

Verily, luxury must depart from humanity.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

(Continued from the July Number)

"O my soul, do thou hold in thy heart with great care, with great tenderness, my blessed, beloved Mother. Let no other gaze fall on Her save mine and thine." Thus the heart and soul of the Master remained in ceaseless communion with the one unchanging Reality, whom he approached at times just as a helpless child comes to the protecting arms of the mother. Again, in a moment of divine ecstasy, he would, as it were, float in the ocean of *Akhanda-Sat-Chit-Ananda* (indivisible absolute realm of Existence, Truth and Bliss). What a state of triumph over matter! What a living example for the modern mind, so harassed with doubt and spiritual despondency!

"I have found It; I have seen It; I have known It! It is Life; It is Bliss; It is Immortality! It is all; It is All in All!" All—whatsoever may appear existent in the world, is void without the presence of this great Reality. Not only did the Master feel this in his superconscious moments, but he lived it and cried out to the world, "Come ye who are distressed and desolate, come and find your heavenly birthright!"

Such complete absorption in the Divine as Sri Ramakrishna manifested day by day could not be accepted and appreciated by the average man or woman. Even the spiritually-minded were puzzled and perplexed by his extraordinary indifference to outer life. Here we come face to face with some of our human complexities and contradictions. Though a man may *profess* high ethics and exalted spiritual idealism, if anyone, perchance, tries to live them, he at once considers him unbalanced or insane; he looks upon him with disdain and suspicion. The real reason for this is that our modern life with its

outgoing tendencies does not lend itself easily to practical realism. God-absorption is such a rarity at the present moment, that it is not accepted by the world at large. Sri Ramakrishna was not exempt from this, but he was much too rapt in divine contemplation to pay heed to human whispering, and mockery born of ignorance.

As the holy pilgrimage to Nadia, which we have already described, came to an end, a beautiful chapter of Sri Ramakrishna's life was completed. It was a chapter of intensive spiritual practices and deep yearning for ever greater and greater attainment. Now his whole trend of thought was to share his spiritual wealth with others. Thus we find the advent of Holy Mother, which was to prove a potent factor in the life drama of the Master.

ADVENT OF HOLY MOTHER

It is not difficult for us to understand that Sri Ramakrishna completely forgot about his marriage. The little girl whom he himself chose as his *Sahadharmani,* spiritual helpmate, was now of the mature age of eighteen. She heard from her distant village home many strange and unusual tales about her husband's spiritual ecstasies. Some spoke of him as a saint; some thought he was a madman, and still others regarded him as the very Incarnation of the Omnipotent Lord.

Sarada Devi, the wife of Sri Ramakrishna, whom we shall hereafter call "Holy Mother," was endowed with more than ordinary intelligence. She was full of poise and serenity of character, and did not allow her mind to be agitated with the reports of other people, nor was she satisfied with them. She wanted to see for herself if her husband were a holy man and if so, she wanted to partake of his blessings. If he were truly of deranged mind, she wanted to cast her lot with him as a chaste and faithful wife and serve him with unalloyed devotion, and if he were a divine Incarnation, she wanted to sit

at his feet in worship. So after obtaining the permission of her parents, she set out on foot and travelled some eighty miles to the Temple of Dakshineswar.

It will interest our readers to know that on certain auspicious occasions, pilgrims travelled from far away villages to bathe in the holy waters of the sacred Ganges, and Sarada Devi joined such a band of pilgrims in her quest for the Temple. It is always an impressive sight to see such a band of devotees with dust-covered feet, defying the scorching heat of the tropical sun, as they cover mile after mile through hardship and privation with but one thought—that they may reach their objective of spiritual sanctity. Sarada Devi's enthusiasm knew no bounds and her heart was full of quiet joy and exaltation, but after several days of difficult travelling, her frail physical strength broke down and she was seized with a high fever. She was deeply distressed over the inconvenience her illness caused her companions, who did their best to care for her. She, herself, related an interesting incident of her illness. As she lay fever-stricken and unconscious with the intensity of her suffering, a beautiful vision came to her in the form of a young maiden who comforted her and soothed her aching body with tender hands. When Holy Mother asked her where she had come from she was told she had come from Dakshineswar. The maiden then assured her that she, Saradamani, would soon arrive there. When Holy Mother expressed her deep gratitude, and asked who she was, the vision replied, "I am your sister."

After this, Sarada Devi fell asleep and when she awoke the next morning, she was entirely free of fever. The vision however lingered and made an indelible impression on Holy Mother's mind.

At last she reached her destination and Sri Ramakrishna at once recognized and received her as the veritable manifesta-

tion of divine Motherhood. He told her he had come to look upon all women as the embodiment of Divine Mother and that he could never look upon her as his wife. At the same time, he told her he was willing to fulfill the obligations of marriage, if it were her will. To this, Saradamani Devi feelingfully replied that she had not come to drag him down from the path of his high resolve; that all she wanted was to serve him in any humble capacity, and learn of him the way to God. This answer stirred the soul of Sri Ramakrishna profoundly. He was, however, deeply distressed to find her in such precarious health. He offered every kind of tender care for her restoration, and often expressed deep regret that she had not come sooner when Mathur Babu, his devoted and generous steward, was still living. "Then he could have looked after you," he said. But Sarada Devi soon became her natural self, especially as she saw the Master and observed him closely. Not only all misgivings regarding his sanity were set at rest and forever dispelled, but her heart was filled with grateful joy and reverent devotion, as she was permitted to live in such close association with the Master and was allowed to render certain personal services to him. She herself later expressed that the very thought of these days filled her soul with unspeakable joy and spiritual ecstasy:

"I have no words to describe the wonderful exaltation of spirit that he used to be in. Under the weight of divine emotions, he would sometimes talk on abstruse subjects, sometimes laugh, sometimes weep, and again become perfectly motionless in Samadhi. This continued throughout the night. There was such an extraordinary Divine Presence in him that I used to tremble in fear and was extremely anxious as to how the night would pass. I understood little of Samadhi then. One day, finding his Samadhi would not break, I was terribly afraid, and wept, and sent for Hriday. He came, and began to

utter the Lord's Name in his ear, which went on for some time before he returned to consciouness. Then, finding me suffering like this, he himself taught me that I must utter such and such Names of the Lord when particular kinds of Samadhi set in, or such and such Mantras when there were other symptoms. After this, I had less fear, for he would regain his consciousness when those methods were adopted. Months passed in this way. Then one day he came to know that I had to keep awake the whole night against any probable accession of Samadhi in him—for it might come at any moment—and asked me to sleep away from him in the concert room."

As we see, Holy Mother came to Sri Ramakrishna at a very tender age, inexperienced in the ways of the world. So the Master not only taught her the art of spiritual living, but trained her in every detail of the ways of practical living. Mother herself often spoke of this, that in spite of the great spiritual attainment of the Master, he was keen and full of understanding of all domestic affairs. No task was insignificant or worthless to him. Whether it was pertaining to cooking, peeling of vegetables, or sweeping the floor, he always carefully showed her how to do it and avoid all forms of extravagance and wastefulness. What a marvelous combination of balance—the physical and the spiritual; body and mind; work and devotion! Indeed the Master was the living embodiment of practical Yoga. "Skilfulness in action is Yoga."—*Bhagavad-Gita*. Yes, it is true that the Yogi, after he attains his goal, has access everywhere "from the atom to the Infinite." Both high and low, spiritual and material are blended in his great consciouness.

Thus some time passed, and Holy Mother was learning more and more the secrets of transcendental life, as she lived under the benign shadow of the great Master. He was tend-

erness itself towards Mother; his whole behaviour was unlike that of the rigid and austere type of religious ascetic. Although the Master was the incarnate spirit of renunciation, yet his mellowness and sweetness of love were never absent, even for an instant. Holy Mother experienced every day new and unearthly joys. It was, as it were, a sacred drama enacted from India's remote past, a Rishi and his wife living, as they used to live in those days of the forest hermitage, in complete dedication and oblivious of all physical desires. As Sri Ramakrishna himself used to say in his own graphic way: "Once you taste the real nectar, you can never be satisfied with the ordinary sweets of the world." Holy Mother, not even for a single moment, craved any other joy than she was receiving through her dedicated life. Her bliss knew no bounds as she realized with ever greater intensity the sublime beauty of the Master's life and love. The ideal of Sita and Savitri and Damayanti, heroines of India's ancient tradition, once more became living through the radiant life of Saradamani Devi. She wanted nothing but to follow the exalted path laid out by her Lord, and though this path was rigorous and full of renunciation, she nevertheless accepted it without a second thought and without a backward glance. She began to live most simply in the Temple grounds, devoting herself wholeheartedly to whatever service she could render, at the same time practising intensely all that Sri Ramakrishna had taught her.

Then took place a great and momentous event. It was on a new moon night—most auspicious for the worship of the Divine Mother—and Sri Ramakrishna was seized with an intense longing to perform a special rite. It was not to be in the Temple, however, but in his own room. All the preparations were made for the ceremony, and he requested Holy Mother to be present. When, at the auspicious moment, Sri

Ramakrishna was seated as the priest and Holy Mother entered the room, he beckoned to her to occupy the seat that was intended for the Goddess. She was greatly astonished, but she obeyed without a whisper, and took her seat. As Sri Ramakrishna beheld her pure and delicate figure, he actually began to worship her, laying flowers and sandal paste before her, and waving incense. As Sri Ramakrishna went on with his act of worship, an indeflnable feeling entered into Holy Mother. She was lifted into a transcendental state of mind, and the Master also completely lost himself in ecstasy. At the dead of night he returned to his physical consciouness. Then, chanting holy Mantras, he surrendered himself and the fruit of all his spiritual attainments, together with his sacred rosary, at her feet, and prostrated there.

With this act of *Shorashi Puja* (worship of virgin womanhood, according to the injunction of the Tantras), the Master culminated his life of Sadhana (spiritual practice). Holy Mother herself realized something so unearthly, so deep, so profound that her life was completely transformed through this supernatural act of Sri Ramakrishna. Her natural spiritual endowment enabled her to receive and retain his great spiritual outpouring.

Such was the beauty and purity of Holy Mother's character. She grew to be one of the outstanding factors in Sri Ramakrishna's life and mission, and after the Master passed away, she became like a reservior of concentrated spiritual force which she emanated with quiet dignity. It is not possible to give a portrayal of her radiant life with a stroke of the pen. Those who came in contact with her realized unmistakably the utterance of the sages: "Here is something beyond mind and speech." Something real, something definite! And yet what words can describe its beauty, its grandeur, and its unearthly power to transform the lives of men?

Once Sri Ramakrishna, in a moment of prophetic vision, said to Holy Mother: "You will not have any physical children, but your spiritual children will be numberless—of all colors and creeds. I see them coming to you from beyond the seas." Holy Mother was bewildered to hear this, and replied in her naive simplicity, "But you could never take food from their hands!"—meaning that as he was an orthodox Brahmana, he could not receive food from those who were outside of his caste. He smiled benignly and said to her, "You do not understand." Here again we see the real spirit of his mission which was to transcend all limitations of caste, creed and religious differences. For was he not specially born as a spiritual harmonizer and unifier of mankind?

THE LIFE OF RELIGION

By Annie Payson Call

A great and profound philosopher has said, "All religion has relation to life, and the life of religion is to do good." This means that all mere talk about religion is empty sound.

Arguing about religion is often discordant jangle. Sentimentalizing about religion is like a sweet bad smell. Especially so is it when the ones who sentimentalize are full of complacent conceit. Fighting about religion is hell and the devil, and *only* that.

"The *life* of religion is to *do good.*"

How can we do good? If we do good when we are not good, many times the person to whom we are doing good really receives some good,—sometimes very great good. But the man or woman who gives gets nothing whatever of good in the reaction. How often this is proved when a man does good for the sake of gratitude. The one who receives the favor forgets gratitude. That is a great loss, for the sense of gratitude is divinely human, and one of the very happiest

and most strengthening emotions that can come into a human heart and mind.

But because the receiver of a benefit loses the delight of that sense, the giver is often filled with resentment and anger. So whatever good he may have done to or for his friend, none of the good is his; indeed, it is what might be called dead loss.

If we do good for God, God rewards us. We ourselves do not lose in the least because we receive no human gratitude, although the human being who owes the gratitude loses very greatly.

That is only one small corner where we can not fit the "life of religion." There are many, many places where humans are deprived—or are depriving themselves—of "the life or religion" because of *self* being put in its place. Self-interest, self-desire—any one of the numberless forms of self—is a black camouflage of the light of life, and a *very* black one.

This same profound philosopher, in reducing all life to its simplest terms, says that the life of religion is in the love of God and the neighbor, as opposed to the love of self and the world.

But how are we to tell whether we are working from the love of God and the neighbor, or from the love of self and the world? Certainly not from any morbid introspection—or from a selfish watchfulness to rid ourselves of self. In that case, the criticism of an interested all round mind of some very strong "Church woman," which says, "It seems as if you people were intensely selfish—you are all the time working to save your own souls,"—this criticism and comment is very apt and very much to the point.

One can be just as selfish in aiming only to save his own soul, as by aiming only to save his own body. Soul-saving does not work that way.

To train our souls to God's way of living, we must find out what there is in us of *self* that interferes with God's way of living. No one can find that out all at once. First of all one has to trust God,—day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, to show the way.

There is no possibility of lighting ourselves up inside, throwing the light into all the little dark corners, and seeing all there is of self in us to interfere with God's life, or with our finding the life of religion by doing good. To go surely we must be content to go slowly, and, if we trust God, we must notice the self He shows to us, refuse positively to act or to speak or to love from it, and to be entirely certain that if we work positively over and over to refuse the self we do see, God is certain—little by little, bit by bit—to show us the self we have not seen.

There is, of course, much pain in the process, because it is not always pleasant to find ourselves out or to find ourselves ruled over and over by a form of self which, having once seen, we must work over and over to conquer before we are clear altogether. But in the result of our conquest there is so much new light, so much true joy, we find full and lasting compensation for all hard work we have done and for all pain we have suffered.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven." We, ourselves, first see and feel the light of God before it can reach those on whom it shines about us, but we can never detain that light to hold it as our own, *never*. We must let it shine through us in good works which are, in the beginning, from God, and by letting it shine bit by bit and working without cessation to get the dust of self out of the way, we are gaining new light ourselves and steadily giving new light to others.

I would like to ask if any thoughtful reader of the foregoing can see that it is the addition, subtraction and multiplication of the life of true religion? And its truth can be accepted and acted upon by anyone in this whole wide world, no matter what his religion may be. "Truth is one, though it takes many forms."

THE BLESSING OF LABOR

By Sister Devamata

When Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden of Eden, the doom that fell upon them was to earn their bread by the sweat of their brows. Whether allegory or fact, the lesson taught is a false one. Work is neither a punishment nor a misfortune. It is one of the greatest of mankind's blessings. Idleness is the curse of men. It robs them of their manliness, their self-respect and their initiative. It eats into their vital energy and leaves them dull and lethargic. The unemployed suffer less from lack of food than from lack of occupation.

Nature gave to man an instrument that requires using to keep it in condition. Brain, muscles, organs,—every part of his physical, mental and moral being, has need of exercise to maintain health and efficiency. There is a force within him which impels him to activity and guards him against stagnation. Inactivity in the human organism means death.

Man defies Nature when at every turn he seeks a mechanical substitute for wholesome individual effort. He is destined to a loftier career than to turn a lever or manipulate a pedal. He is born to create, not to repeat; and the machine means lifeless repetition. When work becomes mechanical, the human factor drops out of it and it loses the invaluable element of creative variation. Imagination, vision, originality, having no outlet of expression, grow weak and die.

The machine disinherits man. It deprives him of his right

to productive labor and offers him devitalized accuracy in the place of beauty. The machine-worker does not produce, he multiplies parts. This drains his task of all interest and inspiration. I would not undervalue mechanical invention; but it cannot be denied that it has done much to lower the esthetic and spiritual standards of the present day.

Far otherwise was it in earlier centuries, when the master-workman built his chair or cabinet, wrought his iron, or set his jewel, with the same ardor and dignity of effort as the painter created a masterpiece or the sculptor chiseled a statue. The artisan was an artist and labor was a privilege. When the great cathedral of Chartres was begun, skilled workmen from every part of France gathered and offered their services without wage. Even women and children begged the task of carrying the wood and stone.

Among those who came was a stone-carver—old, bent and trembling. What could he do? They gave him the capital of an unseen column behind the high altar, built him a scaffold, and left him to his task. Each early morning he climbed his scaffolding and worked until darkness fell. He never failed. One day they missed him. He did not come. They searched and found him on the scaffold platform dead. But his work was finished and today it is one of the most beautiful carvings in all the great cathedral. My eyes rested on it, as I heard the story.

Work should not be something from which we wish to escape. It should be something we accomplish with interest and enthusiasm, as the artist paints or the student reads. Men are not less busy when they turn from work to play. Ruskin says that the only difference between the two for the average man is in his attitude of mind. The effort in both is the same, but one he calls pleasure and the other he calls work. If his work could be made as interesting to him as his play,

he would turn to it with even greater zest because it is more productive.

It is not safe to increase a man's leisure unless with it we increase his wisdom. It requires great sanity and resourcefulness to utilize leisure intelligently. To float on the tide of life and do nothing during even a few hours of the day is not an ideal to hold up to society or to the individual. A well-known writer, who brought up his children on a Long Island farm, told me that he never talked to them of leisure; he taught them to find their recreation in change of occupation. Sometimes they weeded the garden, sometimes they studied, sometimes they planted, and sometimes they fed the chickens; but they were made to feel that it was all fun, and they were jealous of their privilege.

Our occupation is what we make it. If we put interest into it, it is interesting; if we do it listlessly, it is dull. Work must serve something higher than itself, if it would attain true efficiency. The Bhagavad-Gita speaks of "Skillfulness in work" as a religious act; and in the "Imitation of Christ" the Lord says: "Do in earnest what thou doest. Labor faithfully in My vineyard. I will be thy recompense." As long as we are more concerned with what we gain, whether wage or glory, than with what we give of ourselves, we shall find our task irksome.

The growing love of ease and comfort has done much to foster the spirit of indifference to work. Men and women shrink from the sturdier forms of effort which involve hardship. What was a luxury yesterday has become a necessity today. The Syrian poet Kahlil Gibran writes in his remarkable book, "The Prophet":

> "What have you in your houses? And what is it you guard with fastened doors?
>
> Have you peace, the quiet urge that reveals your power?

Have you beauty, that leads the heart from things fashioned of wood and stone to the holy mountain?

Tell me, have you these in your houses?

Or have you only comfort, and the lust for comfort, that stealthy thing that enters the house a guest, and then becomes a host, and then a master?"

If our work palls, we must look to ourselves; there is no reason to quarrel with our task. One form of work is not superior to any other. None can be called menial. Work reflects the quality of the worker. If he is a superior person, his work will be superior also. He will glorify his task and lend it dignity and merit. The man who digs a ditch with interest and contentment, giving the whole of himself to it, is as important to the world as one who writes a book or carries food to the hungry. All workers rank alike in the higher scale of values. They are differentiated by the spirit and intensity of their effort.

If we would have our work effective, we must not leave it empty. We must fill it with a noble purpose. Even the most insignificant task becomes vibrant and inspired when it is done as service to a lofty ideal. There can be no loftier ideal to serve than Deity. When we make each task an offering to the Most High, we have carried our work up to the farthest point it can reach; and it reflects back upon us, shedding blessing, not merely on ourselves, but on all mankind.

THE PRICE OF LIFE

By Thomas Carlyle

(Extract from "Tools and the Man")

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. . . . Labor is life: from the inmost heart of the worker rises his God-given force, the sacred, celestial life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God. . . .

My brother, the brave man has to give his life away. Give it, I advise thee:—thou doest not expect to sell thy life in an adequate manner? What price, for example, would content thee? Why, God's entire creation to thyself, the whole universe of space, the whole eternity of time, and what they hold: that is the price which would content thee. Thou wilt never sell thy life, or any part of thy life, in a satisfactory manner. Give it, like a royal heart; let the price be nothing: thou hast then, in a certain way, got all for it!

REPORT

As "The Message of the East" was not published during August and September, we must give our readers a little glimpse into our summer activities.

As usual services and classes of the Vedanta Centre of Boston were continued without interruption and many out of town visitors availed themselves of the opportunity of visiting the Centre and sharing in its activities. During the Swami's absence from Boston, Sister Daya conducted all Services and Classes.

Through the summer months, Mrs. Adelaide Sanderson's able management of the Guest House on the rock at Cohasset Ashrama made it possible for many to enjoy a happy vacation season in this delightful Peace Retreat.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

Swami Paramananda arrived at California Ashrama on July 16th and resumed charge of all services and classes. The Thursday evening class was especially appreciated by the public as it was held in the open under the star-strewn canopy. Such occasions carry unusual significance, giving as they do helpful lessons in silence, concentration, coördination and practical meditation. The special work to which the Swami devoted his time was the study of the Bhagavad-Gita for the

benefit of the Ashrama household and a few privileged outside members. He read and interpreted the entire eighteen chapters during the fruitful two months spent in California. These lessons were of great value and brought rich spiritual upliftment to all who shared in the study of this immortal spiritual classic of India.

On Labor Day, September 7th, in spite of intense heat many people climbed the Ashrama hill to be present on this occasion. Beginning at three o'clock—for a period of three hours—silence dominated the Ashrama hill-top. At intervals, the Swami gave instruction, directing the thoughts of his listeners in proper channels, and at the conclusion he read Swami Vivekananda's stirring poem, "The Song of the Sannyasin." The day was brought to a close by the sacred *Arati* or Vesper Service, held in the temple with song, sacred chant and music, after which a Hindu dinner was served at the Guest House.

Swami Paramananda left California on September 16, to return east and resume charge of the Boston work. During his absence, all Services and Classes are being ably conducted by Gayatri Devi.

Recent months have brought many distinguished personages to Ananda-Ashrama, California. Scientists, musicians and world travellers have crossed its threshold—though it is situated 2200 feet above sea level, far removed from city traffic and not easy of access—and have paused for a day or a night to partake of its beautiful atmosphere of spiritual sanctity and peace.

The Swami is now in Boston, where he plans to remain well into the Autumn Season—an especially beautiful time in New England. In addition to the usual activities there will be spiritual festivals and the Christmas Bazaar, for which contributions of saleable articles, small or large, will be welcome.

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"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of
Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*
"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*
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A PSALM OF DAVID

O LORD, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee: but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

Faith is at the root of all spiritual progress. You can do without all other things; *only you must have faith.*

—*Sri Ramakrishna.*

Heaven is nearer than earth to those men of purified minds who are freed from doubt. —*Tiruvalluva.*

Moses cried, "Where, O Lord, shall I find Thee?" God said, "Know that when thou hast sought, thou hast already found me."

One asked a Bedouin, "How knowest thou that God exists?" He answered, "Does the dawn then need a torch to be seen?" —*Arabian Wisdom.*

Much knowledge of Divine things is lost to us through lack of faith. —*Heraclitus.*

Epochs of faith are epochs of fruitfulness, but epochs of unbelief, however glittering, are barren of all permanent good. —*Goethe.*

He who believes is strong; he who doubts is weak. Strong convictions precede great action. —*James Freeman Clarke.*

An unchangeable God? He should change continually in that greater relation which is your growing up to Him, as Nature changes to the learner, as Niagara to the gazer, as your friend changes to your better appreciation, as you change with all aspiration and culture, as the horizon changes while you mount. "Beauty fled from the eye," writes Renan of Palestine, "through the gorges of the hills." So of Divine beauty we follow the flight. —*Bartol.*

All the scholastic scaffolding falls as a ruined edifice before one single word—faith. —*Napoleon Bonaparte.*

FAITH THROUGH EXPERIENCE

By Swami Paramananda

"We sleep in peace in the arms of God when we yield ourselves up to His Providence, in a delightful consciousness of His tender mercies; no more restless uncertainties, no more anxious desires, no more impatience at the place we are in; for it is God who has put us there and who holds us in His arms. Can we be unsafe where He has placed us?"

These thoughts of Fenelon are familiar and, in some ways, very healing thoughts. You may easily say, "What is the use of having old ideas, especially concerning faith?" But by faith it is not just dogmatic belief that I mean, but rather something very definite and dynamic, something which may prove a saving grace and of which we have great need, in this age of rationalism, science and intellectual achievements, in order that our balance may be restored. Some people naturally believe in the power of faith, but most people do not, and the majority of those who do believe are interested in what is called miracle. If faith will perform miracles then they are willing to try to practise it. What kind of faith does perform miracles? What kind of faith is that which Christ refers to when He says: "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you"?

Here is something pertaining to faith which with all our rationalism we are not able to define. Let me give you the illustration of a flower. Man with the keenness of his intellectuality may want to take the flower apart to find exactly how it unfolds, how it gives its fragrance and where this fragrance is contained. Yet after he has done so, I wonder how much he has discovered of the real essence of the flower, and having destroyed it, can he ever restore it again?

There is a little Indian parable that I have often told you, of a man who wanted to cross the ocean between India and Ceylon. This man went to a holy saint and asked him for some magic charm that would make it possible for him to walk across the water. The saint said, "Here is a scroll; so long as you carry it with faith, it will sustain you." The man was delighted and immediately set forth. At first all went well; then, when he was about half way across the sea, curiosity overcame him. "What is contained in this remarkable scroll," he wondered, "that enables me to walk safely over this deep ocean." Then he opened the scroll and found written there only the name of Rama, the Incarnate Lord. "Is that all!" he exclaimed, and at once he began to sink.

This story tends to prove that saving grace is not in the outer fact, not in dogma or doctrine or a magical word, but rather in the quickening of man's own higher nature, by means of which he seems to transcend the limitations of physical life. In this world, do we not see right before our eyes—actually, not through imagination—the direct working of the Hand of Providence? Why is it, then, that disbelief enters into us and doubt comes and destroys? Is it not because we have analysed and dissected till we have destroyed our subtle powers of perception? I think no man can be satisfied just through analysis. The simple spirit of faith, love and trust will bring an influx of fresh life and energy, but this we can know only by actually experiencing it. Sri Krishna, the Lord of Wisdom, sums it up by saying, "Man consists of his faith, He is verily what his faith is." No man can do anything greater than what he believes in. However much we may pretend, unless we have faith in our work, in our duty and in our religion, we shall convince neither ourselves nor others. If, however, we have faith, then there is nothing that is impossible unto us. But this

saving faith is not a superficial something; possessing it, man's whole life expands, and doubt at once is destroyed. Doubt, when man allows it to take possession of his life, seems to tear down his very fibre. There is a saying in India that if you want to injure anyone, take his faith away; you will not have to do anything else. When his faith is gone, he has nothing left to stand on. One of the greatest mistakes made by so-called reformers is when they take from people the little faith that they possess—destroy what is fine and delicate, without having anything to give in its place. We must never destroy the faith of humanity. The man who is clinging to some small concept of dogma or creed, do not take everything from him—enlarge his vision; give him more faith and more basis for faith.

First of all, man needs definite faith in his own higher nature. That is the beginning of all miracle. Man can perform countless miracles for himself and for others, but even a Saviour cannot do anything for the person who has no faith. In the life of Christ, whenever the diseased and the blind came to Him to be healed, He always said: "Do you believe that I can do these things? Have ye faith?" Faith opens the channel for divine blessing.

In our modern age we are overlooking this element altogether. We feel we are so advanced. Have we not rationalism? Have we not science? One, however, who lives only in his mind can become like a dry block of wood, unfeeling, heartless, full of calculation—like a man who sees someone drowning before him, but will not attempt a rescue until he has calculated how he himself is going to be involved: who says, "It is not my friend who is drowning, it is not any of my family members." The man who at any time thinks along this line will fail even towards his own immediate family. Without faith, devotion and ardour, we block the

avenue of our soul consciousness, and no one can afford to do that. Faith is like a living flame. It quickens the whole being of man so that he begins to believe in his own inherent power. Through it he transcends all his limitations. That is why Christ laid such tremendous emphasis upon it, and I think it would be wiser for us, even at the risk of being thought old-fashioned, if we would revive our belief in this principle.

It is better for a man to have faith in God than faith in his muscles. Today we place our faith too much in material things. We believe that our home is going to be protected merely because we have a gun in our hand. Sometimes a man's gun goes off and kills the man himself or his own child. Is this not fact? In spite of all our precautions we find that we cannot insure our safety through material measures. Therefore the wise place their faith in God before anything else and seek to walk in His light. Human friends may fail us, even unconsciously, but the Divine never fails. So we should put our trust in the Divine.

It is not easy for me to talk on these subjects. Faith, devotion, trust in the Supreme—these are very, very delicate matters and we have to have openness of spiritual consciousness in order to gain any benefit out of them.

"Have faith in God. . . . Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Here Christ gives us the fundamental principle for our prayer and for all action. "Believe that ye receive them. . . ." This means that when you are praying, you must not be thinking of something else or be wondering whether your prayer is going to be fulfilled or not. There must be a current, a very definite current, of faith—you must believe in your act. And this is confined not only to our spiritual activities, it also enters into our

outer actions, into whatever we may do. When a man has faith in his task, no one has to coax him to do it—he does it. If he believes in some business venture, you do not have to ask him to keep his mind on it—he keeps it there. In the same way, our life becomes focused on the spiritual fact, and we begin to realize what it is to place our trust in the Lord, what Christ meant when He instructed His disciples—"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed. . . ."

Christ performed miracles. St. Paul, St. Francis, Buddha and other great prophets and seers did wonderful things. You read about them; you wish that you could do likewise. You would like to imitate them. But in spiritual life there cannot be any imitation. You can follow them, but you cannot imitate their actions without having the essence in your heart. You would all the time be afraid, and fear and faith cannot go together. Doubt brings fear; doubt destroys. What right have we to carry that destructive element? Do not doubt. Do not doubt yourself; do not doubt your relationship with God, and do not doubt humanity. Rather have faith and remember that these three faiths go together. Through them you also will be a performer of miracles, for the simple reason that it will not be you who perform them. When our contact with the Divine Being and our contact with our fellow beings blend harmoniously, then great things take place. When this occurs, how humble we feel! We do not say, "I have done it! I am proud—I am glad!" The egotistic consciousness of "I" and "mine" altogether vanishes. In its place we have an overwhelming sense of the Deity—call It Father, Mother, God, Truth, whatever you like to call It! I am not confining Deity by any name. It is like the unbounded sky. It has no portions; It cannot be partitioned off. It is whole, and this wholeness of consciousness is given to us through the spiritual faith which the world today has

largely lost. At present, we believe only in material things and that is the reason we feel the onslaught of physical life. When, however, there is reëstablished within us the faith that we are children of God, we shall live in God's world and man's world will lose its power to afflict us.

Let me give you an even profounder thought, as it is written in the Bhagavad-Gita: "This Self is unborn, eternal, changeless, ancient. It is never destroyed even when the body is destroyed. . . . Sword cannot pierce It, fire cannot burn It, water cannot wet It and air cannot dry It." You may say, "I would rather not take any risk." Then do not expect miracles. The unbelieving person has no miracle within his soul. So long as we believe in the flesh and base our life on it, we cannot see the guiding of the Spirit. Therefore let us diminish our dependence on the physical. Instead of carrying continuously the consciousness of this body, let us strive sometimes to be aware of the presence of Divinity. If necessary, let us use the imagination. Here I am on dangerous ground. Immediately some people will say, "Why should you ask us to imagine things? Are meditation and prayer then nothing but imagination?" It is not that they are based merely on imagination, but that imagination helps us to make our approach to them. Is it not better to imagine something beautiful than something ugly? Is it better to imagine that we are of flesh, that we are going to die and are subject to disease, death and affliction, or to imagine that we are part of that great effulgent, undying, unalterable Being?

"As a man's faith is, so is he. Man consists of his faith." I do not know of any better text to carry in our mind every day. "Man consists of his faith." What he constantly thinks upon he surely will become. If he begins to think that he is nothing, he will be nothing. If he believes he is part of God, he will be part of God. This is one of the most

dynamic thoughts ever given to humanity. "Let a man never lose faith in himself. Let him never lower himself." When our faith in ourselves is destroyed so that we feel we cannot do anything, that we have no God, no humanity, and there is no salvation, then the gate of degradation opens and we begin to go down and down. When we see someone who has fallen, the only thing we can do for him is to rouse his spirit, to awaken his faith in himself and convince him that he is not a lost soul, that he cannot be a lost soul, because he is part of the Divine. If we can succeed in doing this, then the man who is weak becomes strong; the man whose soul is enshrouded in darkness, looks up and finds the light. Is not this a great miracle? Is it not worth all our effort? We must not forget, however, that we cannot give light unless we have it ourselves first. If we would seek to follow Christ's teachings and remove mountains, we must first move ourselves thoroughly from our disbelief, our distrust and our doubt of others. Let us establish ourselves in Truth, for as we do this, we shall find our peace, and through our own peace we shall be able to convey peace to our fellow-men.

Martin Luther tells us: "He who believes in God is not careful for the morrow, but labors joyfully and with a great heart. 'For he giveth His beloved, as in sleep.' They must work and watch, yet never be careful or anxious; but commit all to him, and live in serene tranquillity, with a quiet heart, as one who sleeps safely and quietly."

This requires strength. It does not mean merely having faith and doing nothing. The men of worth and accomplishment have great faith. Men of science, inventors, geniuses along any line—how much faith they must have. They must have faith in their vocation, faith in their art, and faith in themselves, to such an extent that they can accomplish their purpose in spite of all discouragement. Faith is the supreme

constructive force working through life. It is the greatest of all miracle-workers, but unfortunately we have become almost vulgar in our notion of miracles. We want to see something like jugglery. The real miracle is the transformation of life itself, and this comes only through divine grace. We, however, have to open ourselves and make ourselves accessible to that divine grace and there is no avenue by means of which it can reach us more quickly than this avenue of faith. Sometimes the avenue seems to be closed, but it is not altogether closed—we can open it again. A little lamp may burn low, but by replenishing it with fresh oil the flame will leap up. Faith is like a flame. Let it burn in your heart. It will be the greatest possible help to you in your moment of darkness.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "The Lord is obtainable very easily through simple, childlike faith, but through argument He seems to go further and further away from us." Faith is not anything I can prove to you through argument. Argument does not give it. It is not with a tape measure that we can map out the infinitude of God. Do you know wherefrom faith comes? Real experience brings faith. The proof lies within our own being. If we have definite experience in our spiritual life, faith rises spontaneously. We do not gain it through dogma or belief, but through actual conviction, and conviction comes only as we open our minds and hearts and find definite contact. Every man is entitled to this, every woman—every soul. Sri Krishna says, "This doubt of Self, lying in the heart, destroy it with the sword of wisdom." Learn to go within your own Self, enter into your closet, shut the door, and pray there in silence. This is the way to increase your faith in Divinity—not by looking without, not by consulting people and asking their opinion concerning this or that, but by learning to go within and

more within, that you may touch your inspiration at its very source and establish your faith through clearness of vision.

One who has the attribute of faith can extend it to others. If you have great faith, you can extend it through your very being. The greatest service we render to humanity is not so much through utterance as through our deed, our bearing—through living the life. Living the life requires strength, devotion and great courage. Spiritual men are the most courageous of beings. And wherefrom comes their courage? Not from the flesh. Jesus the Christ was not strong in flesh, but so strong was His faith that no amount of pain, humiliation or treachery could shake Him from His purpose. How wonderful it would be if, in our modern life, even in small measure, we could establish our faith in like manner, so that things of the outside world would no longer be able to overthrow us! How wonderful, if instead of being fretful and anxious we could be filled with an unshakable spirit; if instead of creating an atmosphere of fever, anguish and unrest, we could radiate such peace and strength, that everyone who came in our contact would be soothed, sustained and healed!

Perhaps this will seem to you like an impossible dream. Then make it possible. Individually we can do our part in bringing these things to pass. Christ was an individual; Buddha was an individual; their disciples were individuals. The strength of individuality lies, however, not in any sense of self-importance, but in our relation to God, in the consciousness that we are descended from Divinity. Here is the basis of all religion. Let us lay our emphasis upon it—not on creed or dogma. Light is light, whether it comes from Christian source or Buddhist source or through any other holy avenue, and light always dispels darkness. One individual manifesting this consciousness can redeem a whole community, and in any nation, a group of people holding

fast to these ideas will counteract the darkness of ignorance, and bring the dawning of a new existence.

THE LIGHT OF FAITH

By George Santayana

O world, thou choosest not the better part!
It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inward vision close the eyes;
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world, and had no chart
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;
To trust the soul's invincible surmise
Was all his science and his only art.
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine
That lights the pathway but one step ahead
Across a void of mystery and dread.
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine.

"The difficulty with our youth," explained Dr. Mott, "is that the study of science and modern philosophy has demolished their faith, and so they are burned up with the fire of disbelief."

"That," answered Gandhiji, "is due to the fact that with them faith is an effort of the intellect, not an experience of the soul. Intellect takes us along in the battle of life to a certain limit but at the crucial moment it fails us. Faith transcends reason. It is when the horizon is the darkest, and human reason is beaten down to the ground, that faith shines brightest and comes to our rescue. It is such faith that our youth require, and this comes when one has shed all pride of intellect and surrendered oneself entirely to His will."
—*An interview between Dr. John Mott and Mahatma M. K. Gandhi.*

SCIENCE OF RELIGION

By Swami Vivekananda

Experience is the only source of knowledge. In the world, religion is the only science where there is no surety, because it is not taught as a science of experience. This should not be. There is always, however, a small group of men who teach religion from experience. They are called mystics, and these mystics in every religion speak the same tongue and teach the same truth. This is the real science of religion. As mathematics in every part of the world does not differ, so the mystics do not differ. They are all similarly constituted and similarly situated. Their experience is the same; and this becomes law.

In the church, religionists first learn a religion, then begin to practise it; they do not take experience as the basis of their belief. But the mystic starts out in search of truth, experiences it first, and then formulates his creed. The church takes the experience of others; the mystic has his own experience. The church goes from the outside in; the mystic goes from the inside out.

Religion deals with the truths of the metaphysical world just as chemistry and the other natural sciences deal with the truths of the physical world. The book one must read to learn chemistry is the book of nature. The book from which to learn religion is your own mind and heart. The sage is often ignorant of physical science because he reads the wrong book—the book within; and the scientist is too often ignorant of religion because he too reads the wrong book—the book without.

All science has its particular methods; so has the science of religion. It has more methods also, because it has more material to work upon. The human mind is not homogeneous like the external world. According to the different natures

must there be different methods. As some special sense predominates in a person—one person will see most, another will hear most—so there is a predominant mental sense, and through this gate must each reach his own mind. Yet through all minds runs a unity and there is a science which may be applied to all. This science of religion is based on the analysis of the human soul. It has no creed.

No one form of religion will do for all. Each is a pearl on a string. We must be particular above all else to find individuality in each. No man is born to any religion; he has a religion in his own soul. Any system which seeks to destroy individuality is in the long run disastrous. Each life has a current running through it and this current will eventually take it to God. The end and aim of all religions is to realize God. The greatest of all training is to worship God alone. If each man chose his own ideal and stuck to it, all religious controversy would vanish. . . .

The greatest name man ever gave to God is Truth. Truth is the fruit of realization, therefore seek it within the soul. Get away from all books and forms and let your soul see its Self. "We are deluged and maddened by books," Sri Krishna declares. Be beyond the dualities of nature. The moment you think creed and form and ceremony the "be-all" and "end-all," then you are in bondage. Take part in them to help others, but take care they do not become a bondage. Religion is one, but its application must be various. Let each one, therefore, give his message, but find not the defects in other religions. You must come out from all form if you would see the Light. Drink deep of the nectar of the knowledge of God. The man who realizes, "I am He," though clad in rags, is happy. Go forth into the Eternal and come back with Eternal Energy. The slave goes out to search for Truth; he comes back free. . . .

One cannot divide the rights of the universe. To talk of "right" implies limitation. It is not "right" but "responsibility." Each is responsible for the evil anywhere in the world. No one can separate himself from his brother. All that unites with the universal is virtue. All that separates is sin. You are a part of the Infinite. This is your nature. Hence you are your brother's keeper.

The first end of life is knowledge; the second end of life is happiness. Knowledge and happiness lead to freedom. But not one can attain liberty until every being (ant or dog) has liberty. Not one can be happy until all are happy. When you hurt anyone, you hurt yourself, for you and your brother are one. He is indeed a Yogi who sees himself in the whole universe and the whole universe in himself. Self-sacrifice, not self-assertion, is the law of the highest universe. The world is so evil because Jesus' teaching, "Resist not evil," has never been tried. Selflessness alone will solve the problem. Religion comes with intense self-sacrifice. Desire nothing for yourself. Do all for others. This is to live and move and have your being in God. . . .

This world is not for cowards. Do not try to fly. Look not for success or failure. Join yourself to the perfectly unselfish will, and work on. Know that the mind which is born to succeed joins itself to a determined will—and persevere. You have the right to work, but do not become so degenerate as to look for results. Work incessantly, but see something behind the work. Even good deeds can bind a man in great bondage. Therefore be not bound by good deeds or by desire for name and fame. Those who know this secret pass beyond this round of birth and death, and become immortal.

The ordinary Sannyasin [spiritual renouncer] gives up the world, goes out and thinks of God. The real Sannyasin

lives in the world, but is not of it. Those who deny themselves, live in the forest and chew the cud of unsatisfied desires, are not true renouncers. Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action, and reach the Centre. If you have found the Centre, you cannot be moved. . . .

As we cannot know except through effects that we have eyes, so we cannot see the Self except by Its effects. It cannot be brought down to the low plane of sense perception. It is the condition of everything in the universe, though Itself unconditioned. When we know that we are the Self, then we are free. The Self can never change. It cannot be acted on by a cause, because It is Itself the cause. It is self-caused. If we can find in ourselves something that is not acted on by any cause, then we have known the Self.

Freedom is inseparably connected with immortality. To be free, one must be above the laws of nature. Law exists so long as we are ignorant. When knowledge comes, then we find that law is nothing but freedom in ourselves. The will can never be free, because it is the slave of cause and effect. But the "I" behind the will is free; and this is the Self. "I am free"—that is the basis on which to build and live. And freedom means immortality.

If your Inner Life is unconquerable, then its limits
cannot be known.
If you cannot gauge the limits of your Inner Life,
then you surely shall possess the Kingdom.
If you possess the Mother of the Kingdom
you shall endure forever. . . .
The possessor of TAO shall have enduring Life and
infinite vision.

—*Tao-Teh-King.*

THE VALUE OF FORGETTING

By Sister Devamata

A strong memory implies the power to forget. Unless we eliminate constantly by forgetting, the memory becomes overcrowded and no spaces remain for further storage. When we fail to remember, it is because we have failed to forget and the retentive faculties have become clogged and ineffective. According to ancient Indo-Aryan Scriptures even the gods discourage brooding remembrance. In the Brahmanas, next in order of age to the Vedic Hymns, we find this story:

"Yama died. The gods sought to console Yami for the loss of Yama. When they asked her, she said, 'Today hath he died.' They said 'in this way she will never forget. Let us create night.' Only day in those times existed; not night. They created night and with night came into existence the morrow. Then she forgot."

Our usual habit is to remember first and to forget afterward. We write a record on the memory, then we try to erase it. The wise man reverses the order. He makes forgetting a preventive rather than a corrective measure. He challenges every impression that gains access to the consciousness; and if it is trivial, non-essential, harmful or disturbing, he bars its entrance to the memory by substituting a new impression. He forgets it by blotting it out. A text from Scripture, the thought of a noble character, even the repetition of a potent word, will serve to do this. We must act quickly, however, to check the invading impression before it registers. Once imprinted on the memory it is difficult to efface.

Remembering is the product of reiterated thought. The more we dwell on an experience, the more firmly will it be lodged in the memory; and the more probable is it that it will repeat itself. Thinking constantly of failures and losses pre-

pares the way for further losses and failures. Harboring resentment breeds fresh quarrel. Brooding darkens the mind and poisons the entire system. If we would lead wholesome, uplifted lives, we must forget our misfortunes and injuries, remember our benefits, and fill our memory with that only which is elevating and constructive.

It is not possible to do this unless at every moment we stand guard over our thoughts and above all over our emotions. A strong emotion must be controlled in the incipient stage. Once released, it can be neither curbed nor forgotten. Anger, hatred, antagonism, resentment, cut deep grooves in the memory, creating a picture which lingers long after the storm has passed. It may persist for years even and gives rise to bitter hostility. We cannot afford to store such destructive impressions in our mind. No affront or injury will justify it.

Very few make wise use of the memory. It is more misused than used. We misuse it by filling it with trivialities,—passing incidents, casual conversations, foolish gossip about a neighbor; facts and occurrences which should be forgotten before they are fixed in the thought by repetition. We misuse the memory again when we read indiscriminately. Reading exciting novels and reports of sensational events acts like a drug or an intoxicant, and creates haunting pictures in the memory, which rise to distract us when we try to hold the mind on some serious subject.

Living in the past is another wrong use of memory. To dwell in ourselves as we were in childhood and youth fosters vanity, egotism, self-importance, and a tendency to exaggeration. The past gains glamour as it recedes; and in telling of it, we build fairy tales out of the most commonplace happenings. In the same way, we misuse our memory to nurse and prolong our griefs, believing it a disloyalty to forget them.

Those who live in harmony with Nature, do not cling to their sorrows. When they are struck, they strive to heal the wound. "Out of their grief they make a song."

Character rests on memory, as a superstructure on its foundation. A thought held persistently in memory grows into a tendency; this tendency, frequently repeated, becomes a habit; and out of our habits, mental, moral and physical, our character is built. If we would alter our character, we must go back to the initial thought and change that. We cannot have a superior character with an ill-stored memory, full of petty, inconsequential details. We must empty it of all sordid, belittling impressions and fill it with ennobling thoughts. Then only may we hope to be noble and uplifted in all our impulses and tendencies.

Memory reaches far deeper than character. It strikes its roots down into the very depths of our being. Without memory we would have no continuity of life. Each sleep would be a death; each waking, a new birth. Our days would pass in blankness of unremembered hours. We would be always ending, always beginning. There would be no individuality, no personality associated with us. Each one of us would be a disjointed succession of separate, unrelated beings, with nothing to bind us into a single unit of consciousness. Being unable to remember who we were or who we are, we would have no self-identity.

Without memory we cannot know our fellowmen, we cannot know the universe, we cannot know ourselves. All knowledge on the plane of created things is gained by comparison, by relating one object to another. One is longer or shorter, higher or lower, lighter or darker than the other; but if we cannot hold these measurements or qualities in our mind longer than for the flash of the instant during which they are observed, how can we compare the objects possessing them?

Having no power of retention, we are unable to accumulate experience and therefore we cannot acquire either knowledge or wisdom; for knowledge is assimilated experience and wisdom is digested knowledge. Neither can we grow. If we are unable to remember, it will not be possible for us to learn the lessons of our failures and victories, of our struggles and strivings, and upon these our growth depends. We shall have no moral standards, no faith, no endurance, no heroism, no loving kindness; for all these rest upon remembered experience.

Relations with our fellowmen become impossible also when we have not memory. If we cannot recognize them from moment to moment as the same persons, how can we have any intelligent contact with them? They would be new acquaintances to us each time we met them. Neither could we have any continuous occupation—we would never know what we were doing. We could make no plans, no engagements and give no entertainments, for invitation, plan and appointment would be forgotten as soon as spoken.

Without the power to remember, our life would be completely isolated and lacking in usefulness. Should we not cherish our memory then as a sacred gift, to be held pure and inviolate—a sanctuary of lofty thought, where we go, before all else, to remember God and to forget ourselves?

A memory without blot or contamination must be an exquisite treasure, an inexhaustible source of pure refreshment. —*Charlotte Bronte.*

His heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it to hold the memory of a wrong. —*Emerson.*

There is a noble forgetfulness. —*C. Simmons.*

THE HOLY FLAME OF GOD

By Mahendra Nath Sircar, M.A., Ph.D

(Dr. Sircar, Professor of Philosophy in the Presidency College, Calcutta, is well-known as a philosopher and thinker of modern India. He is the author of several valuable books and combines in himself vast erudition and a profoundly spiritual outlook. The present article is reprinted from the "Vedanta Kesari.")

To understand Sri Ramakrishna is really to appreciate and to envisage the functioning of the Holy Spirit in earth consciousness; for in the light of Spirit the subtle connection between Earth and Heaven always lasts, and at times the divine influence is scattered through the chosen instrument of God. Ramakrishna was such an instrument. To understand Ramakrishna requires a spiritual sympathy, without which intellect may repeat formulas, but cannot enter into the deeper implications of spiritual life. Intellect may understand the eternal truths of religions dispassionately; the understanding of them helps their intimate and intuitive realization. But intuitive understanding is not enough for spiritual life—it may satisfy the philosophic instinct in man; but intellect is internally incapable of completely comprehending the dynamics of spiritual life. Spiritual life is not only a philosophic comprehension, an opening in thought, with its new perspectives in some relational forms, but is essentially the vivid realization of the formative spirit that is expressed through the graded universes and existences, filling all with life, sentience, movement, joy, beauty, harmony, and at the same time transcending them in its supreme Puissance and Plenitude of Being. The true spiritual realization has been, therefore, distinct from philosophic comprehension. . . . Philosophy generally lays stress on the realization of the summit of being, but philosophy cannot further trace the finer movement of Spirit in life unless our inner being is responsive to the finest currents of Spirit through the movement of life. In spiritual life the fuller expression emerges

when the dynamism of life is conceived to be the dynamism of Spirit. And to the ordinary philosophic insight this dynamism of Spirit is not so clear a fact. Philosophy has, therefore always sought transcendence, and the philosophic vision has been satisfied with the *intellectual intuition of the whole* in a rare moment. The supersensible, beyond the creative expression of Spirit in the sensible world, has been the search of the philosophic mystic.

But this appears to many as a one-sided realization of spiritual life, which cannot envisage the divine play of Spirit through life. The mystics discover the movement of life not in ignorance, but in delight, and enjoy the flute of Krishna through the eternal dance of life. They see God in actuality in the creative urges and the creative harmony through which Spirit affirms itself against the obstructions of matter. The mystic is responsive to God in his super-conceptual transcendence or, as Professor Whitehead puts it, to God in His eternal conceptual nature, as well as to God as a creative, redemptive and remoulding force, in other words, to God as actuality. The conflicts in life have often blinded us to this side of the divine consciousness and prevented us from seeing the beauties and dignities of the divine life in the cosmic play. The mystics see the play far better than the scientists or the metaphysicians. The scientists cannot see the divinity of the creative force, the metaphysician sees the formal functioning of it, and none can probe into its divine nature and significance. The mystic insight goes deeper and sees in the movement of life the expression of divine beauty, love and power.

The mystic, therefore, has the vantage ground to understand the divine life in its silence and in its play, and thus envisages the integral existence not only *sub specie aeternitatis,* but also *sub specie diuturnatatis.* The movement of

life is to be divinised, before life's complete blessings can be understood and enjoyed. Here, the difference arises between the souls that are immersed in the Transcendental beatitude and are cut off from the movement of life, and the souls that can see the play of the Divine through the different layers of existence and at the same time can be consciously aware of the Truth that is beyond all light and darkness. This sympathy with the play of Spirit in life is a consummation that is possible when the psychicisation of our being is established. This alone could impress us with the divine striving of life, without which it is natural to ignore divine life in its cosmic play.

The great creators of thought generally differ at this point from the great founders of religion. The calm intuition confines the vision of the seer to the perception of the Eternal Truths, and even if they are dynamic their dynamism is confined to the expression of Truth and the relations of life in intellectual terms. They lack the force of life. They are the detached observers of the play of forces from which they keep themselves off, and do not appreciate their spiritual value and worth. But with the descent of the Holy Spirit in man, he begins to feel the sacredness and divinity of life, and sees profound beauty and meaning in the cosmic expression of Spirit and the holiness of life. The Holy Spirit is an important conception in the spiritual life, for it is practically the flame that burns out the dross from life and reveals its grandeur, sweetness, radiance, beauty. The Holy Ghost is really the spirit of the Divine which takes charge of the aspiring soul and helps to realize its essential divinity and the unfailing unity with the Divine.

In Indian Mysticism the indrawing and illuminating influence of the Holy Spirit is a recognized fact, and when one surrenders oneself to the care of the Holy Spirit, the divini-

sation of his being is assured. The touch of Holy Spirit has the fruitful effect of installing us in the Divine and of bringing down the Divine Spirit on earth. It fills up the creation with divine beauties and adds divine Amour to everything. It is the irradiating centre of the divine currents of power, life and wisdom. Where the Holy Spirit establishes itself fully, there is the direct current of divine life. In the dynamism of spiritual life, the power and the function of the Holy Ghost is evident. And spiritual life cannot completely be understood and its mysteries fathomed, if the direct touch of the Holy Spirit is not felt.

It is difficult to understand Ramakrishna, unless the truth and the potency of the Holy Spirit is realized and its moulding power is understood. The spirit of God descends directly upon man. Naturally men are satisfied with a seeking and a surrender and with an effort at a spiritual discipline which may pass into a spiritual habit touching life as a whole, helping intellectual flowering and unselfish movements. But the most complete spiritual consummation cannot take place unless there is the direct descent and intervention of the Spirit which can alone make us fit for the finest realization. This truth is to be fully comprehended before one can understand Ramakrishna.

The *Tantricism* and the *Vaishnavism* of the Hindus fully recognize the instrumentality of the Divine *Sakti* for the full flowering of life. And it is the Divine Mother, *Sakti,* that moved Ramakrishna from within to realize the dynamism and the silence of Spirit. Ramakrishna was charged with the descent of Spirit, and he had, therefore, many movements in his life. His psychic nature was in direct touch with the Divine Power which could easily give infinite expressions through his being. To characterise Ramakrishna in intellectual terms is to minimise his importance; for intellect may

demand a decision regarding the ultimate theory of Reality or life, but life unfolds infinite movements which are not possible for intellect to understand, appraise and evaluate.

Unless the psychic centre in man could be unearthed and made active, the divinisation of life's movement could not be comprehended. When the psychicisation becomes complete, the direct touch is established with God; and man then moves consciously under the divine impulse. And this makes the ordinary adept so different from the dynamic spiritual characters. The latter do not see and enjoy the perspectives of life from distance. They can feel the divine touch and the control of life in its every movement. Such types of men become wonderfully introverted, because their indrawnness in self and their outdrawnness in active life are both the movements of divine life.

Ramakrishna was intensely active in radiating spiritual influence, because the spirit of God never left him and his influence and inspiration was so powerful because he drew them from the Divine Force. . . . Ramakrishna as a centre of dynamical spirituality was active, for the richness of spiritual life unfolds in the dynamic currents of the soul when one can enjoy the direct divine touch, and move in the divine awakening of life. It is easy to reach transcendence in the process of ascent, but it is infinitely more difficult to saturate one's being with divine energy and make oneself the divine instrument on earth.

Every man in some way is the divine instrument, but he is unconscious of that, and therefore he cannot be effective in that way. The direct descent of Divine Power must be consciously felt, for it is not the magnification of one's energy and power, which is sometimes the result of mystical life. It is really the feeling of the divine working. A man of genius has a natural talent of wonderful perception and fine con-

structive powers. The divine man is far above this, for it is not in the flowering of faculties—which is of course the natural sequence of spiritual opening—but in the consciousness of the direct touch that the divinisation of life can be made possible. It is the installation of the Divine in all parts of our being. In the supreme fulfilment, the Divine influences and inspires every part of being. It is felt in our thought, contemplation and action. The sense of I is withdrawn and the Divine fills its place. This divine filling up of our being is what makes man the divine man.

It is difficult in all ages to understand such men for they are so open in their lives and they see Truth so directly in them that it is not possible to fathom them completely. Truth is simple, and when it emerges out in the saying of great teachers, it becomes highly suggestive and potently significant and it takes sometimes centuries to understand their deeper implication in the terms of intellect. The parables of Christ have been the inspiration of the idealistic philosophy in the West, the dialogues of Buddha have inspired sublime philosophy. Spiritual experiences and insights are dynamical and effective in every sphere of life. They inspire philosophy, they inspire action, they inspire life. The world has witnessed the effective force of creative spiritual personalities. The most silent and the most gentle are in the highest degree effective and inspiring. They reflect in them the future movement of civilization for centuries.

Ramakrishna was such a man. He was great, but he was unconscious of his greatness. But the Divinity was shaping and moulding him in a way which made him a great radiating centre of spiritual influence. Spiritual influence can be better felt than understood, and it scatters its power and influence in a way almost mysterious. But it is seen positively when

the finest intellectual men are won over by their influence. Whatever they touch, becomes transparent; the ignorant become learned, the wise become sensible. Such is the majesty of the spiritual force. Ramakrishna gave enough evidence of this, because by his contact characters wonderfully changed. This transformation has been the secret of the influence of spiritual men, for they touch the central part of being and wake up a flame there which dispels doubts and establishes the divine connection.

The greatness of a spiritual genius is to be measured by the capacity of infusing divine life in others and of waking up the sweetness of life in the struggling souls. Their superiority is there; they touch life direct, they elevate it from inertia and ignorance, and help to manifest its divine nature and beauty. The true spiritual genius, therefore, does not care to give any systematic thought, for his being is so rhythmical that he perceives eternal Truths directly and not through the mediation of thought. He dives deep into life and sympathetically inspires life. Ramakrishna thus used to inspire men by the touch of his highly strung soul. He used to give light that can never fade, life that can never lose its grace and beauty. He has not given a spiritual code, he has given a life that used to thrill men, that still thrills many today.

His work was to make divine life descend and establish itself on earth. The work has begun splendidly and let not the spirit of Ramakrishna be lost upon us. His mantle fell upon shoulders that are one by one passing away; but the spirit that was revealed at Dakshineswar cannot be lost unless it has done its work completely—the saving of humanity from ignorance, suffering and miseries. Did not the Master chasten the disciple for his anxiety to pass into Nirvana by neglecting this suffering humanity? Humanity today needs more than anything else the catholic spirit of

Ramakrishna. The squabble between religion and religion, between race and race, is to be dispelled before civilization can be given a new orientation. Humanity is moving for a cosmic understanding and cosmic fellowship, and this cannot be seriously possible unless the inner man, which is the man of wisdom and faith, can appreciate the spiritual truths of all religions and the dynamic forces of all faiths. Ramakrishna helps this understanding by his example, and he goes down to posterity as the cementing truth of all credos. His intensive regard for all faiths and his direct realization of their equal fruitfulness show the greatness of his genius, for he must have gone the whole length of spiritual realization before he proclaimed the efficiency of different faiths. Every faith has two sides, the outer intellectual appeal and the inner dynamic appeal. The revelation through faith is almost the same everywhere. Faith really moves life to realize the direct touch of God and to get His impress upon one's being. And in this realization, two more things stand clearly prominent, the silence of the Divine Puissance and the movement of the Divine Power. Spiritual life is nothing if it is not this.

The work which Ramakrishna began still stands unfinished, and may we not hope that his spirit is still active in men to make them more catholic in life, more responsive to the divine currents in life, and see and feel the Divine in the downtrodden and in the suffering humanity, and to serve them and raise them up? Ramakrishna is an appeal for widening our being and making it sensitive to the Divine in every man, so that civilization may be established upon the consciousness of the divinity of man. It will indeed usher in a new civilization if this truth of the divinity of man is more clearly realized in the light of the teachings of Ramakrishna. May

the guardians of humanity send to it light enough to realize this immortal truth! The world needs today a Peace based upon this understanding. Ramakrishna gives us this Peace.

ASKING AND ITS ANSWER

Attributed to a Confederate Soldier

He asked for strength that he might achieve; he was made weak that he might obey.

He asked for health that he might do greater things; he was given infirmity that he might do better things.

He asked for riches that he might be happy; he was given poverty that he might be wise.

He asked for power that he might have the praise of men; he was given weakness that he might feel the need of God.

He asked for all things that he might enjoy life; he was given Life that he might enjoy all things.

He has received nothing that he asked for; he has obtained all that he hoped for. His prayer is answered.

He is most blessed.

LOVE THAT ASKETH LOVE AGAIN

By Dinah M. M. Craik

Love that asketh love again
Finds the barter nought but pain;
Love that giveth in full store
Aye receives as much, and more.
Love exacting nothing back
Never knoweth any lack;
Love compelling love to pay
Sees him bankrupt every day.

Love gives itself, it is not bought. —*Longfellow.*

THE COMPASSIONATE TEACHER

From the Buddhist Scriptures

In old time, when Buddha was resting at Sravasti, there was an old mendicant called Pan-teh-san who being by nature cross and dull, could not learn so much as one *Gatha* by heart. Buddha accordingly ordered five hundred Arhats day by day to instruct him, but after three years he was still unable to remember even the one *Gatha*. Then all the people of the country, knowing his ignorance, began to ridicule him, on which Buddha, pitying his case, called him to his side, and gently repeated the following stanza: "He who guards his mouth, and restrains his thoughts, he who offends not with his body, the man who acts thus shall obtain deliverance."

Then Pan-teh-san, moved by a sense of the Master's goodness to him, felt his heart opened, and at once repeated the stanza. Buddha then addressed him further: "You now, an old man, can repeat a stanza only, and men know this, and they will still ridicule you, therefore I will now explain the meaning of the verse to you, and do you on your part attentively listen."

Then Buddha declared the three causes connected with the body, the four connected with the mouth, and the three connected with the thoughts, by destroying which men might obtain deliverance; on which the mendicant, fully realizing the truth thus explained, obtained the condition of an Arhat.

Now, at this time there were five hundred Bhikkhunis (nuns) dwelling in their Vihara, who sent one of their number to Buddha to request him to send them a priest to instruct them in the Law, on which Buddha desired the mendicant Pan-teh-san to go to them for the purpose. On hearing that this arrangement had been made, all the nuns began to laugh together, and agreed on the morrow, when he came, to say the *Gatha* backward, and so confuse the old man and put him to shame.

Then on the morrow when he came, all the Bhikkhunis, great and small, went forth to salute him, and as they did so, they looked at one another and smiled. Then, sitting down, they offered him food. Having eaten and washed his hands, they then begged him to begin his sermon. On which the aged mendicant ascended the elevated seat, and sitting down, began: "Sisters, my talent is small, my learning is very little. I know only one *Gatha,* but I will repeat that and explain its meaning. Do you listen with attention and understand."

Then all the young nuns began to attempt to say the Gatha backwards; but lo! they could not open their mouths; and filled with shame, they hung down their heads in sorrow.

Then Pan-teh-san, having repeated the Gatha, began to explain it, head by head, as Buddha had instructed him. Then all the female mendicants hearing his words, were filled with surprise and, rejoicing to hear such instruction, with one heart they received enlightenment.

REPORT

Durga Puja—the Hindu Feast of the Divine Mother and one of the great Festivals of the Indian calendar—marked the month of October at the Vedanta Centre of Boston, as well as at the Ananda-Ashrama, California. The Eastern Centre was fortunate in having Swami Paramananda present to infuse the Celebration with the livingness of spirit which he always brings, and a sense of sanctity which lifted it from a mere observance to an inner experience long to be remembered. The Puja is always of three days duration—falling this year on October 22, 23 and 24—and is a time of joy, of forgiveness and the interchange of gifts, a time when the Infinite Mother of the Universe is felt to draw close to the hearts of Her children and fill them with Her love and healing. This feeling of the nearness of the Divine was

palpable at the Centre and irradiated the souls of those who were privileged to share in the hours of worship. On Friday evening, October 23, the entire membership was invited to attend a Hindu dinner, cooked by the Swami's own hands and expressive of the blessing he longed to convey. Many responded and enjoyed not only the delicious dishes, fragrant and savory, the warmth and charm of the occasion, but also the tender spirit of unity and peace underlying all.

In California, the same holy atmosphere prevailed in all the worship, and the banquet, which was prepared and served by Gayatri Devi and the Hindu Sisters, in conjunction with other Ashrama members, evoked genuine enthusiasm.

California in October, however, lacks the flaming autumn-tinted magic which makes the eastern countryside so beautiful at this time of year, so it seemed fitting that the Swami should be within touch of the little Ashrama at Cohasset during this particular season. There were intimate gatherings and lovely hours of meditation either on the Rock or in the Ashrama living room, with dinners beside the blazing fire; and there were also days of combined and strenuous labor when paths were cleared, woodlands opened out, and logs cut and piled against the long winter. And this farewell to summer at the Ashrama seemed lovelier because of the cold and snow so soon to follow.

Many new friends have found their way to the Boston Centre during the last few months and the work glows with an interest and vitality which bodes well for its future scope and usefulness.

On October 26, the Swami returned to California for a brief visit, but he hopes to be back in the east in time to open the Christmas Bazaar the middle of November, and later, to conduct the Thanksgiving Service, and even possibly to remain over the Christmastide.

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"TRUTH IS ONE, MEN CALL IT BY VARIOUS NAMES." Rig-Veda

Message of the East

(VEDANTA MONTHLY)



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Message of the East

"And behold the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the East."
—*Ezekiel*

"Light shall come again from the East."
—*Tyndall*

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INVOCATION

By Swami Paramananda

Heal Thou the hearts of men
From ravages of wrath
And tranquil make their minds
That no ignoble thoughts
May cross or find their nest—!
O, gentle Lord,
Cure Thou their thirst for gain!
Let feverish conquest cease!
Be Thou our Guide!
Lead us from lust and hate,
Make us to love as Thou dost love,
Forsaking all beside.
Thou art all love and light!
Pour Thou Thy bounty
Upon Thy children,
Yearning for Thy grace!
Banish this world's wretchedness!
Thy glory manifest!
Let there be joy!
Let there be peace!
Let hearts be filled with song!
Song of Thy glory.

Christmas 1936

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

"Jesus Christ belonged to the true race of prophets. He saw with open eye, the mystery of the soul. Drawn by its severe harmony, ravished with its beauty, He lived in it and had His being there . . . He estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me. He saw that God incarnates Himself in man and evermore goes forth anew to take possession of His world. He said in this jubilee of sublime emotion: 'I am divine. Through me, God acts; through me, He speaks. Would you see God? See me; or see thee when thou thinkest as I now think.' "

—*Emerson.*

"Let it not be imagined that the life of a good Christian must be a life of melancholy and gloominess; for he only resigns some pleasures to enjoy others infinitely better."

—*Pascal.*

"I am the origin of all. Everything evolves from Me. Knowing this, the wise worship Me with loving ecstasy."

—*Bhagavad Gita.*

"Holiness is what is loved by all the gods. It is loved because it is holy and not holy because it is loved."

—*Plato.*

"The only way to realize that we are God's children is to let Christ lead us to the Father."

—*Phillips Brooks.*

"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: And the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

—*Isaiah.*

"God is indeed infinite but He is omnipotent. He may so order that His divinity as Love may be manifest in the flesh and be among us as God incarnate."

—*Sri Ramakrishna.*

INCARNATION — REINCARNATION

By Swami Paramananda

It is for us to understand, so far as we are able, the ways of the Divine as expressed through Incarnation and the Law of life manifesting as Reincarnation.

"Whenever and wherever virtue declines and wickedness prevails, I (the Lord) manifest Myself to reestablish virtue and destroy evil; thus I appear from age to age."

This verse from the Bhagavad-Gita is one of the greatest definitions ever given regarding what is known as an Incarnation. When we speak of Incarnations we mean Divine Personages, great Teachers, Prophets—Avataras as they are called in India—Saviours of men. Such a One does not come, as we might imagine, with glory and pomp and great power—not at all. He comes more in the form of the lowly, like Jesus of Nazareth, or like certain remarkable Manifestations in Indian history, and I want you to realize without dogmatic bias that the Divine Intelligence, Whom we call Cosmic Father or Mother, the One Divine Being, never leaves His children without sustenance.

We must approach this subject of Incarnation without prejudice or we cannot comprehend that the Divine Providence—the All-loving Omnipotent,—has always been and always will be, nor can any human misrepresentation distort Him. It is good to think in such terms. God manifests; and I like to feel that when we call upon Him with depth of spirit and true yearning, He does come. The Infinite Power surmounts all obstacles. In India this has been the principle underlying Incarnation. Swami Vivekananda very strongly expressed it: "Man cannot worship God in any other way than as man." By this he did not mean so much hero-worship as the worship of the Divine attributes in man. Incarnations are like mediators between the immortal and man, the

mortal,—man who has lost his way but wants to find it, man who struggles and falters in the search, and cannot find. Though intellectually he may conceive of his goal, he is not satisfied and will never be satisfied till he comes face to face with a definite being who incarnates for him the supreme Ideal, and has come into birth not because he is obliged to be born by the necessity of inexorable law, but as a pure embodiment of Deity. I might give a simple and poetic definition of such a one as the concrete expression of universal Light and Love, who overcomes all that is hateful in the form of anger, jealousy, ignorance—things which arise from the dark regions—and does this not through war or strategy, but like the beautiful sun which, rising in the morning, when there has been shadow and gloom over all, drives away the darkness and the shadows, and rends the veil which hangs before the eyes of man.

Each Incarnation brings the One Light, but we forget, and people fight and quarrel as to which Saviour is the greatest. So we miss the purpose, and when a God-man comes, we fail to realize that it is the same power and the same love. There have been wars in the blessed name of Jesus, for man likes war and he does not mind in whose name he wages it. If, however, we use a Divine Ideal as an excuse for war, whether on the spiritual plane or on the material, then though we may have the Divine, though we may have everything, we have failed. Therein lies the tragedy. Again I quote: "Whenever virtue declines and wickedness prevails, I manifest Myself . ." When man's heart cries out, "We are helpless; we cannot find our path!" then that Power responds, and whatever way It may express Itself, if we are not blind, we perceive and worship It.

In India, this principle of holy redemption is not a thing of make-believe; it is not merely a subject for preaching. If a

man says, "I am a lover of universal Truth, but I will not tolerate anyone who does not follow my particular concept," India knows that the statement is incongruous. Truth is One, only One,—the absolute, undying Eternal—and if we want to be a worshipper of that Truth, we must recognize It in whatever garb It may come. The father of a large family may dress himself sometimes in one attire, sometimes in another. One child may like him in white, another child in blue, but that does not mean that any of them fail to recognize him when he appears in some different costume. The same is true in the province of the Divine Incarnations. If we see them in a narrow sectarian way, we are conscious only of the exterior. Our recognition of them depends on our vision—not the vision of our eyes but our spiritual vision.

When pure Spirit shines who sees it?
Few, yea, only a very few!
Many see the light of the sun, the
moon, the far-distant stars
And the light of yon road-side lamp;
But only the pure heart with the
eye of love
Can see the light that shineth from
pure Spirit.

Only those who are pure, who see with the eye of love. If we have blinded ourselves with world glamour, we get nowhere. It is only in the lowly heart that we find God manifesting.

Sri Ramakrishna speaks of a Divine Incarnation as a huge tidal wave. Before that flows in, there may have been parched ground, rivers without water, but when the wave comes all is filled to overflowing. In the same way, a spiritual wave breaks on the world, and everywhere we find a renewal of spiritual consciousness.

may try to divide the greater from the lesser teachers, the illumined saints from the Messiahs and Prophets, but I believe in the One Indivisible Power, and there is not one who cannot partake of that. To make it possible—that is the purpose of Incarnation and reincarnation. For we must now approach the idea of rebirth, and let us approach it without any dogmatic consciousness, because dogmatism can never give freedom to illumination.

Every one of us should seek to be incarnate Spirit. We

What is reincarnation? Let us try to understand it. It is proper understanding that counts. At one time people thought of it as a strictly Oriental belief, but it is not limited to the Orient. We find that many great men of the West have had something to say on this subject.

"Thou, son, who through thy mortal weight
shalt again return below . . ."

is from Dante; and Huxley said, "None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its root in the realm of reality."

Why should we not come back as often as we can acquire knowledge and experience? It reminds me of an interview with Henry Ford, a report of which I once read. In order to understand Henry Ford, his fortune and methods, we must know that he believes in reincarnation. This we must realize, —life does not begin suddenly and it does not end suddenly. In order to comprehend its whys and wherefores we must not just settle down with the present moment, we must learn to look to what has gone before and to what will follow after. In India reincarnation has not been regarded merely as a doctrine or a religious principle, but as a truth which gives man the solution of the mystery of life. If a person is born with a handicap, there is reason for it. If a man carries a material

blessing, there also is reason for it; but these reasons are not all in all; they are in the way of experience. Life, however, is not just to gather experience, it is for the attaining of perfection. In one lifetime we do not finish the task we have undertaken, so if we are bent upon that perfection, we need time to evolve a perfect instrument, and there is no time limit.

A man may say, "I do not like life." He may be hasty; he may think he can escape from life, but that is impossible. We may escape from death but never from life, because life is our very entity, our essence, our companion. It embodies everything that we desire. Instead of wanting to get rid of life, we should learn how to apply it and unfold it in fullest measure. And that is what experience teaches us. Experience of childhood brings a man to youth, to ripening, and so to old age. But this physical ripening alone is nothing. What our hearts crave is the ripening of consciousness. We want to find out why. With Tennyson in his poem, we cry,

> "I . . . hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but if I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."

So you see, you are not merely to exist, you are not merely to go through life—its childhood; its youth with all its inevitable madness, desire, passion and greed; its old age, decay and death—you are to learn from these experiences, and move toward perfection. For perfection is the goal of reincarnation, and that means emancipation from mortal bondage.

Perhaps here you are full of questions: "How does reincarnation work?" "What is its end?" "What happens after one dies?" That depends on what one wants and what one works for. Sri Krishna, answering his disciple Arjuna on this subject, says in the Bhagavad-Gita: "Whatsoever thoughts are predominant at the last moments of a man's life,

according to these will be his next embodiment." Therefore we must make our last thoughts right. Here you may think, "But suppose one has not done right all during his life, then what if the last thoughts are good, will they be so all important?" Sri Krishna answers by telling us that in order to make our last thoughts right, we must form the habit of thinking that way. If a man is habitually full of fear, what happens when he meets with an accident? He will cry out where others would be strong. At the moment of emergency, a man shows his spiritual vitality.

There is nothing mysterious in these ideas. Inside of all men is the God-nature, and by reincarnation we follow in the steps of the Incarnate Spirits. God becomes like man that man may become like God. That is the summary of it all, whether the God-man you look to is Jesus Christ or Someone who lived before the days of Christianity. When there is need for God, God supplies that need. God never neglects His children. Even before science gave us the means of taking care of human existence, the All-Blessed One watched over us. Whether we are worthy or unworthy, He does not discard. That is one thing we must remember in connection with reincarnation and the accompanying law of Karma or Cause and Effect. It is not punishment that God imposes. Man creates his own miseries, although he thinks that it is through unevenness of justice that he suffers. A philosopher travelling through India many years ago, came across peasants working in the fields with patient forbearance and faith. Upon his questioning, one of them replied, "Though I may go through barren misfortune now, I know I shall come out of it again." When a man can work patiently and silently, then though there may be some obstacle in his life, he will have the power to remove it.

A fundamental principle of the Law of Karma is that some-

thing cannot come out of nothing. Where there is any injustice, there the Law is working. We may rebel against apparent inequality, but the only way to remedy it is through spiritual power. What we make we have the power to unmake. If a man suffers from a mistake, he can counteract it. It is a question of time, intelligence and affiliation with the Divine.

Why do we seek the beautiful? Why do we need Incarnations and Teachers? We hear people of proud intellect, who refuse to bow before anyone, say, "Why should we pay homage? We do not need anything. We are independent." This appeals to our egotistic sense. If man is all in all, then why should he subordinate himself? But we get nowhere this way. We are like the little boy in the parable, who did not want to hold his father's hand. When he looked up suddenly at a bird in the sky, he fell into the ditch. But his brother whose hand was clasped by his father's hand, was saved. We feel quite capable of managing our own affairs, including our spiritual problems, and yet when we go for the first time to a foreign country—to Europe, or to India, China and Japan—we consult the guide books and are very glad to have an experienced guide. Now in the spiritual province we are even more in need of such a guide. The spiritual province has so many strange aspects that we do not understand. We do not understand man and God and the relationship between them—between all things—so complex and interwoven. In order to understand, we have to study the lives of men who have given themselves completely to the realization of Truth —God-men whom we call Saints, Prophets, Messiahs and Saviours—who have brought out the Divine Light and have no ulterior motive whatever. That is the mark of the great Incarnations. They do not come seeking for followers. They do not come with the idea of establishing themselves in Orders

or Institutions. We have to be like unto them. If we can carry that same consciousness, if we can carry the love of the Saviour in our heart, then alone are we worthy to carry the banner. We learn through many lives. We learn to go forth not in order to find converts for some one particular doctrine, but in the spirit with which the Lord Buddha sent forth his disciples—"For the good of many and for the happiness of many." The Budda did not seek for himself; his desire was to heal and give joy and blessing.

Incarnate Spirits suffer through us when because of ignorance, jealousy, anger—whatever the reason—we suffer and make others suffer. We make offerings at our chosen altar, but no Incarnate Spirit will accept oblation from our hands if hands and heart are not pure and sanctified. And how shall we sanctify them? By dipping them deep into the water of love. Think of these things.

Personally I think that not any of us can make ourselves fit to take the Name of Truth, of God, until we have cleansed our heart and soul, and if it is not done this moment, let us hope it will be done tomorrow or the day after. That is my idea of rebirth. If a man finds that he cannot complete his task and that his life is a failure, it will do no good for him to weep and wail; let him do something constructive. Divine Providence will give him another chance. When in the same family, one brother is defective and the other is a genius, you wonder, and sometimes you wonder at the divergent elements in your own nature. You say, "I do not understand." True understanding cannot be found on the surface alone. If you want really to understand, you must go deep down. No man can become a profound thinker without penetrating into the inner mysteries of life, without growing calm, and considerate of others. And one of the things true thought reveals to us is that we can never escape the Law. A man may think, "I

have got away with it." But has he any right to think so? A criminal who has done things in darkness where no one has seen him, still is tormented from within. His conscience is the cause. Often he can escape from men but he cannot escape from himself. We can never escape from ourselves at any time, however much we may try to. The discovery of this fact is one of the great steps toward man's spiritual emancipation. One should never try to run away from himself. Let everyone aim to find what is best in him.

Make yourself your close friend. Make yourself your own counsellor. Better than that—make yourself a disciple. Instead of becoming a leader, be a follower. How lovely if we could all be followers of Truth, of a Divine Incarnation, even for a single day! After all, we want only one thing—love, and love alone. "Hatred is never conquered by hatred; hatred is conquered by love." The Buddha says this and he likewise tells us, "Unto him who foolishly does me wrong, I will return the full protection of my ungrudging love. The more hatred comes from him, the more love shall flow from me." And the words of Christ we know: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

So through the Incarnations we gain a glimpse of another world, we feel another rhythm, but until we can feel at home in that rhythm, we must keep moving onward; we must not give up hope; we must move on. The urge of life is so great that it impels us to seek ever greater instruments of mind and body, ever greater unfoldment, until we overcome our bondage, break through the darkness, and find our place with the Saviours, the Illumined Ones, who come to bring light and drive away all gloom from the soul of humanity.

Keep thyself as a pilgrim upon the earth.

—*Thomas á Kempis.*

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

By William James

Many of you are students of philosophy and have already felt in your own persons the skepticism and unreality that too much grubbing in the abstract roots of things will breed. This is, indeed, one of the regular fruits of the overstudious career. Too much questioning and too little active responsibility lead, almost as often as too much sensualism does, to the edge of the slope, at the bottom of which lie pessimism and the nightmare view of life. But to the diseases which reflection breeds, still further reflection can oppose effective remedies.

Let me say, immediately, that my final appeal is to nothing more recondite than religious faith. Pessimism is essentially a religious disease. Religion has meant many things in human history; but when from now onward I use the word, I mean to use it in the supernatural sense, as declaring that the so-called order of nature, which constitutes this world's experience, is only one portion of the total universe, and that there stretches beyond this visible world an unseen world of which we now know nothing positive, but in its relation to which the true significance of our present mundane life consists. A man's religious faith (whatever more special items of doctrine it may involve) means for me essentially his faith in the existence of an unseen order of some kind in which the riddles of the natural order may be found explained. The bare assurance that this natural order is not ultimate but a mere sign or vision, the external staging of a many-storied universe, in which spiritual forces have the last word and are eternal,—this bare assurance is to such men enough to make life seem worth living in spite of every contrary presumption suggested by its circumstances on the natural plane. Destroy this inner assurance, however, vague as it is, and all the light and radiance of existence is extinguished for these persons at a stroke. . . .

In human life, although we only see our world, yet encompassing (it) a still wider world may be there; and to believe in that world may be the most essential function that our lives in this world have to perform. The "scientific" life itself has much to do with maybes, and human life at large has everything to do with them. Not a victory is gained, not a deed of faithfulness or courage is done, except upon a maybe; not a service, not a sally of generosity, not a scientific exploration or experiment or textbook, that may not be a mistake. It is only by risking our persons from one hour to another that we live at all. And often enough, our faith beforehand in an uncertified result is the only thing that makes the result come true. Suppose, for instance, that you are climbing a mountain, and have worked yourself into a position from which the only escape is by a terrible leap. Have faith that you can successfully make it, and your feet are nerved to its accomplishment. But mistrust yourself, and you will hesitate so long that, at last, all unstrung and trembling, and launching yourself in a moment of despair, you roll in the abyss. In such a case (and it belongs to an enormous class) the part of wisdom as well as of courage is to believe what is in the line of your needs, for only by such belief is the need fulfilled. Refuse to believe, and you shall indeed be right, for you shall irretrievably perish. But believe, and again you shall be right, for you shall save yourself. You make one or the other of two possible universes true to your trust or mistrust—both universes having been only maybes, in this particular, before you contributed your act. Now, it appears to me that the question whether life is worth living is subject to conditions logically much like these.

I confess that I do not see why the very existence of an invisible world may not in part depend on the personal response which any one of us may make to the religious appeal. God

himself, in short, may draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity. For my own part, I do not know what the sweat and blood and tragedy of this life mean, if they mean anything short of this. If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is no better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it feels like a real fight,—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem; and first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheisms and fears. For such a half-wild, half-saved universe our nature is adapted. The deepest thing in our nature is this dumb region of the heart in which we dwell alone with our willingnesses and unwillingnesses, our faiths and fears. As through the cracks and crannies of caverns those waters exude from the earth's bosom which then form the fountainheads of springs, so in these crepuscular depths of personality, the sources of all our outer deeds and decisions take their rise. Here is our deepest organ of communication with the nature of things; and compared with these concrete movements of our soul, all abstract statements and scientific arguments—the veto, for example, which the strict positivist pronounces upon our faith—sound to us like mere chatterings of the teeth.

These then are my last words to you: Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact. The "scientific" proof that you are right may not be clear before the day of judgment (or some stage of being which that expression may serve to symbolize) is reached. But the faithful fighters of this hour, or the beings that then and there will represent them, may then turn to the faint-hearted, who here decline to go on, with words like those with which Henry IV greeted the tardy Crillon after a

great victory had been gained: "Hang yourself, brave Crillon! We fought at Arques, and you were not there."

JUDGE NOT

By Sister Devamata

Each thing in Nature represents itself. It grows in its own image and produces it own kind. Man, too, represents himself. He lives according to his own habits and standards. He is impelled by his own purposes and ideals. There is no repetition of him in the universe. In all that he thinks, says, and does, he expresses his own nature; no other. Yet when we judge him, we measure him by our standards, by our habits and ideals, which are wholly unrelated to him. He is the product of himself and must be judged in relation to himself alone.

It is true that outer influences play upon him constantly, but they affect him only when they are transmuted into his own being. As food must be assimilated and made a part of his body before it can nourish him, so the outside world must enter and be transformed into himself before it can alter his nature. All the changes that take place are interior changes; the outer merely reflects them. They are hidden, unperceived and often unsurmised. It may take months or even years for them to reach the surface and become manifest as new habits or a new outlook. A man of great reserve may never give full expression to them.

With the fundamental factors unknown, what value can our judgment have? We would not try to solve a mathematical problem without accurate data; yet we attack the problem of a character or an achievement with suppositions only as factors for our equations. Motive is the measure of both action and character, and motive is always veiled from us. We have nothing on which to base a judgment except our opinion, and opinion is inherently unstable. It does not offer

a safe foundation for either praise or blame.

The task of evolving is for every human being an unfinished one. It stretches far back into the past and far forward into the future: one life-time does not suffice to complete it. How then can we pronounce upon its present accomplishment and call it success or failure? What is failure? What is success? They cannot be defined or classified. They are so interwoven, so interchanging, that it is difficult to differentiate them. What begins as failure, grows often into success; what promises to be a signal success, ends in defeat and sorrow.

Galileo knew the darkness of a dungeon and saw the record of his researches burned on the public square. Copernicus spent his closing years in a small peasant village in his native land of Poland, ostracized, silenced, solitary. His one book containing all his observations, a book of three thousand pages which he wrote through five times with his own hand, came from the printer and was laid on his bed as he was dying. He could never know how the world received it. Yet viewed through the long perspective of centuries we cannot say that these heroic searches failed; nor can we say that they were successful; for success is too small a term to apply to the greatness which grows in magnitude as the years pass over it.

When Immanuel Kant published his "Critique of Pure Reason," a work which marked an epoch in philosophic thought, the public received it in silence, a silence so complete that Kant wrote in irony or with patient forbearance: "I am obliged to the learned public for the silence with which it has honored my book, as this silence means a suspension of judgment and a wise determination not to voice a premature opinion."

Similar were the words written by Herbert Spencer when his first book "Social Statics," met a like reception. After six years five hundred copies, out of an edition of seven hun-

dred and fifty, were still unsold. The author's comment was, "I am glad the public is taking plenty of time to digest my work before passing judgment on it." These instances show how rarely the world in its judgment coöperates with greatness; more often it is impelled by it to reluctant recognition.

As our insight deepens and we become more thoughtful, we judge less and less. Why should we be so eager to express our opinion? Nature does not demand of us that we pass sentence on her at every turn; rather does she warn us: "Judge not that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." Judgment breeds judgment. If we speak harshly of another, he will speak harshly of us, for his words are the direct rebound of our own. "Wouldst thou have men speak good of thee?" Epictetus asks, "Then speak good of them. And when thou hast learned to speak good of them, try to do good unto them; thus thou wilt reap in return their speaking good of thee."

The only safe ground on which to meet our fellowmen is that of sympathy, tolerance, and understanding. These silence all controversy and baffle all attack. They awaken loving kindness and friendliness where there was antagonism. When we sit in judgment, we isolate ourselves, we feel apart from our neighbor and are sensitive to his judgment; but when we lose the habit of judging, no words of criticism or blame have power to wound us. We grow strong and enduring, quietness falls on our spirit and we are at peace. "Great tranquillity of heart hath he who careth neither for the praise nor the fault-finding of men," Thomas á Kempis declares. "Thou art not more holy because thou art praised, nor more worthless, if thou art found fault with. What thou art, that thou art; neither by words canst thou be made greater or less than what thou art in the sight of God."

AWAKE THOU THAT SLEEPEST

By St. Augustine

I, still under service to the earth, refused to fight under Thy banner, and feared as much to be freed of all encumbrances, as we should fear to be encumbered with it. Thus with the baggage of this present world was I held down pleasantly, as in sleep: and the thoughts wherein I meditated on Thee were like the efforts of such as would awake, who yet, overcome with a heavy drowsiness, are again drenched therein. And as no one would sleep forever, and in all men's sober judgment waking is better, yet a man for the most part, feeling a heavy lethargy in all his limbs, defers to shake off sleep, and though half displeased, yet, even after it is time to rise, with pleasure yields to it, so was I assured that much better were it for me to give myself up to Thy Charity than to give myself over to mine own cupidity; but though the former course satisfied me and gained the mastery, the latter pleased me and held me mastered. Nor had I anything to answer Thee calling me: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And when Thou didst on all sides show me that what Thou saidst was true, I, convicted by Thy Truth, had nothing at all to answer, but only those dull and drowsy words, "Anon, anon," "presently," "leave me but a little." But "presently, presently" had no present, and my "little while" went on for a long while.

CHRISTMAS CAROL

(*15th Century*)

"O my deir hert, young Jesu swet,
Prepare Thy creddil in my spret,
And I sall rock Thee in my hert
And never more from Thee depart."

SUGGESTIONS FOR LIVING

By Sister Daya

The problem of human relationships, as I see it, is worked out through understanding and love, through adjustment and pliability, especially pliability—rather than through a stubborn insistence upon the rightness or wrongness of any point of view. Life is not a matter of diagrams, but of human reactions. Your partner may differ from you, and possibly he may be right, but truth is generally found between two extremes.

Lao-Tze, the great Chinese mystic, once made this comment: "Softness, tenderness, flexibility, are the concomitants of life: while hardness, brittleness, rigidity, are the concomitants of death." Substitute "love" for "life" and you have a basis for a solution of most difficulties. Love, real love, is of life and it is always flexible. That is, it does not take its stand on some hard and fast point of logic, nor does it mind a seeming defeat. It flows into situations and lives, fills lacks, heals wounds, and adjusts itself to conditions generally, whether psychological or otherwise. On the other hand, rigidity spells death, and many a man and woman have wrecked their life's happiness, because neither was willing to give way a little, to yield an inch. In ancient India, the battle of Kurukshetra was fought because the Kuru prince, Duryodhana, refused to concede to the Pandava princes, his exiled cousins, even so much of the kingdom "as could be covered by a needle's point." Often misunderstandings that have assumed immense importance, were small in the beginning; but brooding led to bitterness, bitterness to sharp words, sharp words to wounded pride and stubborn fixity of opinion, till the people concerned awoke one day to find that in the night the thing they loved had been slain.

Most unhappy situations are mind-created. People brood

over things till they become like an obsession, and often they come to think that their life's happiness is wrapped up in the satisfaction of some fleeting desire. This is a false and very stultifying idea and only goes to show how restricted their outlook on life has already become. Those who would step out of this prison-house of bitterness, fixed ideas, hurt feelings and stubborn pride should give their hearts and minds a chance to breathe; and they can do this if daily and hourly they repeat the words and absorb into their very being the spirit of Swami Paramananda's beautiful litany of love:

"Love is greater than hate;
Love is greater than doubt;
Love is greater than fear;
Love is greater than anger;
Love is greater than impatience;
Love is greater than self-pity;
Love is greater than all morbid feelings;
Love is greater than depression;
Love is greater than all afflictions of body and mind."

Where two or more human beings are anxious to redeem a situation, the first thing for them to do is to stretch their mental boundary lines and decide definitely which is the more important—the preservation of love and harmony or the vindication of a particular point of view. If they are earnestly trying to find a constructive remedy in such a situation, they must exert themselves with all their strength and ferventness of spirit and look for Higher Guidance.

Each human soul has its own individual expression, its own mandate and its own gift, but instead of this impoverishing our common lot, it should do just the opposite, by bringing into the particular picture of which the soul is a part, a greater balance and sense of completeness. The thing is, always to remember that no matter what our contribution

may be, it forms only a fraction of the whole. No doubt, as is said in the Bhagavad-Gita, it is better for a man to perish in the performance of his own duty than to seek to do the duty of another, even though he may do it well. Yet if we lock ourselves in water-tight compartments and fail to blend our activities with the activities of our fellow-men we shall miss our true end. Our chief concern should be, no doubt, the special tasks life has assigned us, but we may be serving them better by widening our interests and our sympathies than by narrowing them down.

We demand freedom, therefore we should be willing to give it. It marks the difference between love and attachment, between enforced relationships and spontaneous communion. In essence, life is one, although its oneness is expressed through a variety as rich and endless as its own infinitude. Millions of beings all identical, yet diverse! Millions of facets to the diamond, each refracting the light from a different angle, yet all necessary to the complete gem.

I read once a wise sentence in the letter of a young college girl. "I have ceased to expect perfection in my friends," she said, and somehow the words struck home. Do we not do just that? Of course, in one sense we should ever look for perfection, but not with an exacting and hypercritical spirit. There are people who tear to pieces every budding endeavor, every venture toward finer and happier living, because of this little flaw or that small defect. Such souls are not looking for perfection and are utterly unaware of the selfish isolation in which they live.

A great and holy personage once said that he always saw people as he visioned them in the ideal. But this instead of causing him to be harsh and exacting, made him tender in his attitude, careless of the surface defects and full of faith in the diviner nature within. The result was that, little by little,

men responded to his faith and were transformed by his vision. With most of us, however, when our companion is irritable, unreasonable, self-willed, argumentative, or any of the thousand things which tend to disturb our own egotism, we immediately put our friend on the judgment-seat and condemn her because she is not already a perfected human being. Lovingness and faith in her real self would help her to be that self more than a rigorous attitude could ever do, and also, by the same count, it would help us toward a greater, kinder, deeper insight into life and into the hearts of those who live it. Surely, unless our feelings are blunted, we shall seek to put ourselves in the place of others and be generous in our spirit. It is sometimes helpful to remember that we are apt to be hard on the faults that we do not possess when they appear in our fellows, but are forgiving toward our own weaknesses whenever and wherever we see them manifested.

In all these things discrimination naturally plays an immense part and must help us to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential, surface matters and eternal principles. "O Thou Infinite, lead us from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light; from death to the Undying!" Only that one who is himself imbued with the loftiest consciousness is capable of genuine understanding and true perception, and only that one can know when to yield and when to stand unshakable, when to speak and when to remain silent.

I have my place in a community where people of very different temperaments and training live together. This means constant adjustment, a yielding here, a giving there, and, when true harmony is achieved, a fundamentally loving attitude. Now the head of this community is a very remarkable human being. Not only is he a living example of activity and efficiency, but he is something far greater—a living example

of that wide and discerning love which understands the needs, limitations and possibilities of the human hearts around him, and is able to draw from them their best, without ever dropping for an instant that veil of dignity and innate reserve, which forbids undue intimacy or familiarity. One word of correction from him goes a thousand times farther than all the rigid rules which might have been laid down. I have seen that he is incapable of resentment or bitterness, even when there may have been cause, and watching him I have come to know that no bitterness can dwell in a heart that is quick with compassion, no matter what the cause for it, or what the occasion.

Probably most of us think that we are doing our best to be wise, kind, and tolerant. But it takes more than a good resolution to achieve the diviner qualities. We struggle and fall, struggle and fall in our efforts to untangle the threads of existence and transcend our own and life's limitations. We determine time and again to do good, but ultimately have to acknowledge that the true good can never be attained through calculation and mere unaided human effort. Something beyond our own small self must awaken within us,—a Power, a Love, a brooding Presence, before Whom we can lay all our problems, misunderstandings, failures, bewilderments, heartaches, in true inner surrender. "It is for me to deliver from all confusion," the Lord says in "The Imitation of Christ," and he who recognizes that One within him as the only Doer in this entire universe, the only Reconciler, is empowered to be among the Peace-makers of earth, and can say with the humility of vision: "I shall overcome my pride by Thy meekness," my hate by Thy Love. Not till then can there flow from his heart, as from a Divine spring, a stream of beauty and blessedness, which carries wisdom on its bosom, and quenches all fever by its cooling, healing touch.

THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

By Guiseppe Mazzini

God incarnates Himself successively in humanity. Humanity is the living word of God.

Eternal God! Thy Word is not finished; Thy thought, the thought of the world, is not yet all revealed. It still creates, and will continue to create, for long ages beyond all human calculation. The ages that have run their course have revealed to us only a few fragments. Our mission is not ended. We scarcely know its origin; we know nothing of its final end: time and our discoveries do but extend its confines, it ascends from century to century, towards destinies unknown to us; it seeks its own law, of which we possess but the first few lines. From initiative to initiative through the series of Thy successive incarnations it purifies and extends the formula of self-sacrifice, pursues its own path, learns Thy ever-widening law. Forms are altered and dissolved. Religions die. The human spirit leaves them behind, as the wayfarer leaves the fires that warmed him in the night, and goes in search of other suns; but religion remains. Thought is immortal: it survives all forms and is born again from its own ashes. The idea frees itself from the shrunken symbol, escapes from the chrysalis that prisoned it, which criticism had eaten through. It shines forth pure and bright, a new star in the firmament of humanity. How many has faith yet to add that the whole way of the future may be illumined? Who can say how many stars, thoughts of the ages, have yet to rise in cloudless splendor and shine in the firmament of mind that man may become a living epitome of the Word on the earth?

The Book of God is not closed. The coming generations are not disinherited; they who preceded Jesus were not accursed. Revelation, which is, as Lessing says, the education of the human race, descends continuously from God to man.

From epoch to epoch the pages of that eternal gospel are turned; each fresh page disclosed, by the ever-renovating Spirit of God, indicates a period of the progress marked out for us by the providential plan, and corresponds, historically, to a religion. Each religion sets before mankind a new educational idea as its aim; each is a fragment, enveloped in symbols, of eternal truth. So soon as that idea, comprehended by the intelligence and incarnated in the hearts of mankind, has become an inalienable part of the universal tradition, even as the mountain traveler on reaching one summit beholds another rising above him, so is a new idea or aim presented to the human mind, and a new conception of life, a faith, arises to consecrate that idea, and unite the powers and activity of mankind in the fulfillment of that aim. Having accomplished its mission, that religion disappears, leaving behind the portion of truth it contained, the unknown quantity disengaged by it from its symbol, a new immortal star in humanity's heaven.

NATURE'S IMPARTIAL PROVIDENCE

By John Burroughs

I see the Nature Providence going its impartial way. I see drought and flood, heat and cold, war and pestilence, defeat and death, besetting man at all times, in all lands. I see hostile germs in the air he breathes, in the water he drinks, in the soil he tills. I see the elemental forces as indifferent toward him as toward ants and fleas. I see pain and disease and defeat and failure dogging his footsteps. I see the righteous defeated and the ungodly triumphant—this and much more I see. And yet I behold through the immense biological vista behind us the race of man slowly, oh, so slowly! emerging from its brute or semi-human ancestry into the full estate of man, from blind instinct and savage passion into the light of reason

and moral consciousness. I behold the great scheme of evolution unfolding despite all the delays and waste and failures, and the higher forms appearing upon the scene. I see on an immense scale, and as clearly as in a demonstration in a laboratory, that good comes out of evil; that the impartiality of the Nature Providence is best; that we are made strong by what we overcome; that man is man because he is as free to do evil as to do good; that life is as free to develop hostile forms as to develop friendly; that power waits upon him who earns it; that disease, wars, the unloosened, devastating elemental forces have each and all played their part in developing and hardening man, and giving him the heroic fibre.

The celestial laws are here under foot and our treading upon them does not obliterate or vulgarize them. Chemistry is incorruptible and immortal, it is the hand-maid of God; the yeast works in the elements of our bread of life while we sleep; the stars send their influences, the earth renews itself, the brooding heaven gathers us under its wings, and all is well with us if we have the heroic hearts to see it.

In the curve of the moons or of the planets' disks, all broken or irregular lines of the surface are lost to the eye—the wholeness of the sphere form subordinates and obliterates them all; so all the failures and cross-purposes and disharmonies in nature and life do not suffice to break or mar the vast general beneficence. . . .

God is the fact of the fact, the life of the life, the soul of the soul, the incomprehensible, the sum of all contradictions, the unit of all diversity; he who knows Him, knows Him not; he who is without Him, is full of Him; turn your back upon Him, then turn your back upon gravity, upon air, upon light. He cannot be seen; but by Him all seeing comes. He cannot be heard, yet by Him all hearing comes. He is not a being, yet apart from Him there is no being—there is no apart from Him.

THE STORKE

Old English Carol

(Reported to have been found in the Prayer Book of King Edward VI)

The storke she rose on Christmas eve,
and sayde unto her broode,
"I now must fare to Bethlehem
to vieue the Sonne of God."

She gave to each his dole of mete,
she stowed them fayrlie in,
And farre she flewe and fast she flewe
and came to Bethlehem.

"Now where is He of David's line?" she
asked at house and hall.
"He is not here," they spoke hardlye, "but
in the Maungier stalle."

She found Hym in the Maungier stalle, with
that most holy Mayde,
The gentyle storke she wept to see the
Lord so rudely layde.

Then from her pauntynge breast she plucked
the fethers whyte and warm;
She Strawed them in the Maungier bed to
keep the Lorde from harm.

"Now blessed be the gentyle storke for
evermore," quothe He,
"For that she saw my sadde estate and
showed such pitye."

Ful welkum shal she ever be in
hamlet and in halle,
And hight henceforth the Blessed Byrd and
Friend of Babyes alle.

A PORTRAIT OF THE NAZARENE

Copied from the portrait of Our Saviour carved on an emerald by order of Tiberius Caesar, which emerald the Emperor of the Turks afterwards gave out of the Treasury of Constantinople to Pope Innocent the Eighth for the redemption of his brother taken captive by the Christians.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PERSON OF OUR SAVIOUR

The following was taken from a manuscript now in the possession of Lord Kelly and in his library; and was copied from an original letter by Publius Tentullus at Rome. It being the usual custom of Roman Governors to advertise the senate and people of such material things as happened in their provinces in the days of Tiberius Caesar; Publius Tentullus, President of Judea, wrote the following epistle to the Senate concerning Our Saviour: "There appeared in these days a man of great virtue named Jesus Christ, who is yet living among us, and of the Gentiles is accepted as a Prophet of Truth, but his own disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall and comely, and very reverend countenance, such as the beholders may love and fear. His hair of the color of a chestnut full ripe, plain to his ears, whence downward it is more orient and curling and wavering about his shoulders. In the midst of his head is a seam or partition in his hair, after the manner of the Nazarites. His forehead plain and very delicate; his face without spot or wrinkle, beautified with a lovely red; his nose and mouth so formed as nothing can be reprehended; his beard thickish, in color like his hair, not very long but forked; his look innocent and mature; his eyes gray, clear and quick. In reproving he is terrible; in admonishing courteous and fair spoken; pleasant in conversation, mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen

him *laugh* but many have seen him *weep*. In proportion of body excellent; his hands and arms most delicate to behold. In speaking very temperate, modest and wise. A man for his singular beauty surpassing the children of men.

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A QUARTER OF A CENTURY

As this present manuscript goes to press, we are specially conscious that with this issue we are completing a long chapter in the literary career of the Vedanta Centre of Boston. The "Message of the East" has rendered service in unbroken rhythm a whole quarter of a century.

We feel deeply grateful that it has been possible through Divine grace to carry on thus far, this symbol of unity and self expression. The unfailing endeavor of the publication has been to show the best, the highest and the noblest in all cultural and spiritual ideals of both modern and ancient times. This has been done without accenting any special supremacy of one religion over another and without singling out one culture as superseding another.

The first issue of "Message of the East" appeared in modest form in January 1912 and was at once hailed with delight by the genuine thinkers and lovers of Truth in various parts of the globe. This was most encouraging but the question was, how long could such a publication representing the highest idealism of unity and universality endure. Time was the judge of that. One of the earliest acts of practical helpfulness was put into operation by a noble friend who sent copies of the magazine to the various public libraries of the United States together with a letter asking their sincere opinion of its merit. She also advised them that if they wished to place the publication on their tables, it would be provided free.

The response was most heartening. Over one hundred and fifty prominent libraries of the country in such cities as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Cleveland, etc., accepted the offer and beautifully bound volumes are now preserved on their permanent shelves. Frequently, letters are received from libraries asking that missing issues be replaced.

After the Great War, some of the European countries forbade sending money abroad. Many of our readers living in such countries kept up their subscriptions through outside friends that they might not be robbed of the inspiration they received through the Message.

There are many interesting episodes that fill the history of this magazine but it is not possible for us to give an exhaustive account of them here. It is indeed a constant source of inspiration to know that thoughts sent out faithfully, month after month, help others in their practical problems of living, though they may be widely separated from us geographically.

Our present records show contact with almost all of the prominent cities of the United States, Canada, Mexico, South America, England, Russia, Germany, Norway, France, Italy, Switzerland as well as all parts of India, Malay States, China, Japan, Honolulu, etc.

As we review the work of the past years, we observe that any vital influence we may have exerted on mankind has been not so much through the power of propaganda as through a quiet, steady out-pouring of pure consciousness.

Our firm conviction is that balance of thought and unity of idealism cannot be practically demonstrated in any other way than through evolving a sense of perception which will lead us to a discovery of what is best in others.

Unity and religious tolerance have always been the aim of all truly great leaders of mankind. Mystics, reformers, philo-

sophers and idealists have all ventured whole-heartedly the accomplishment of this end, thus finding the remedy for all human ills. Our share in this endeavor to enhance the cause of unity, universal love and tolerance is indeed a humble one. The lamp which we have placed on the altar of humanity may not be dazzling but we pray it may burn steadily on without a flicker.

May we take this opportunity to extend our heart's deepest feelings of appreciation to those who from the very inception of this task, have given us their unfailing and hearty support. This greeting, we extend with profound sincerity to friends near and far.

REPORT

As we review successive events of 1936, we are aware first and foremost that Sri Ramakrishna's Centenary has been the central interest of the year's activities although the routine of our usual Services and Classes has taken place without interruption. The experience of the Fourth of July silence at the Cohasset Peace Retreat, the celebration of Divine Mother's Festival in the early Autumn, the beautiful Thanksgiving Service—all have brought their inspiration and blessing.

Swami Paramananda has spent a great deal of time in Boston since his return from India in 1935.

As a culmination and climax of the year's work, comes the fulfillment of a great dream in the nature of an adequate monument in memory of a great Master's life and teaching. During this present Christmas season, the Vedanta Centre of Boston has procured a new and permanent home embodying dignity, beauty and a spacious Temple in memory of its great Inspirer, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna. In our next issue further details will be given.

ANANDA ASHRAMA, CALIFORNIA

In spite of Swami Paramananda's frequent absence, the various activities of the Ashrama have gone on without interruption. The vitality of the work is not wholly dependent upon public attendance at the various Services but it is rather expressed through the high quality of the spirit of selfless service constantly manifested by the dwellers of the Ashrama.

However, there have been some outstanding events at the California Peace Retreat during 1936. Though the Ashrama is located 2200 feet above sea level, remote from the practical traffic conveyances of cities, still on certain occasions large numbers of people made the pilgrimage to this Mountain Retreat to pay homage to Sri Ramakrishna during the Centenary celebrations, as well as to take part in the Easter sunrise Service and the Anniversary of the establishment of the Ashrama.

In spite of the devastations of fire and flood that overwhelmed this lovely Retreat three years ago, the Ashrama shines with an even greater beauty now than at its inception in 1923. Looking at it, one knows that it has been blessed and enriched by the Hand of God and the hand of man.

During the Swami's absence, Gayatri Devi has faithfully conducted the services in the Temple of the Universal Spirit. Her earnestness and her selfless devotion to the cause of Truth have endeared her greatly to many who come faithfully to the Ashrama. During mild weather, the people eagerly look forward to the Thursday evening meditation under the stars.

1937 SUBSCRIPTIONS

May we request our readers to be kind enough to renew 1937 subscriptions promptly. Such coöperation and thoughtfulness helps us very much to carry on our work during the year. We thank you most heartily for your assistance.

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