

men came in crowds to hear him and he would talk twenty hours in the twenty-four, and that not for one day, but for months, and months until at last the body broke down under the pressure of this tremendous strain. His intense love for mankind would not let him refuse to help even the humblest of the thousands who sought his aid. Gradually there developed a fatal throat disorder and yet he could not be persuaded

to refrain from these exertions. As soon as he heard that people were asking to see him, he would insist upon having them admitted, and would answer all their questions. When expostulated with, he replied, "I do not care. I will give up twenty thousand such bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man". There was no rest for him'.

Like Master, like Disciple !

SIMHAVALOKANAM : THE KESARI LOOKS BACK

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—A SPOKESMAN OF THE DIVINE LOGOS

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

[Swami Vivekananda whose birthday falls this month, spoke not as a scribe but as one with authority. He thundered not because he had heard or read but because he had seen. He was a *satyadrk*—a preceiver of Ultimate Reality. This quality of Swamiji's message is brought out with lucidity and charm by Dr S Radhakrishnan, President of India, in the following article which is an extract from an address he delivered in March 1963 during the celebration of the Birth Centenary of Swamiji at the Sri Avinashilingam Home Science College, Coimbatore]

In any living culture, you will always find a perpetual process of renewal. What happens to be hearsay today becomes heritage tomorrow. What is adventure for us today, becomes legacy tomorrow. In other words, if a culture is to perpetuate itself, it is re-affirming its fundamentals and trying to re-adjust them to the requirements of each generation. If we lose this quality of self-renewal, the culture itself becomes decadent. It has been our good fortune that so far as the Indian culture is concerned, it has had this living vitality, this capacity to renew itself, to shed away the old and reincarnate itself in the new. In Chapter 4 of the Bhagavad Gita, the Teacher says : 'I taught this yoga to Vivaswan, Vivaswan taught it to Manu. Manu taught it to Ikshvaku. Today I am teaching it to you, Arjuna.' In other words it is the same old Puratana Dharma, also called

Sanatana Dharma, the ancient doctrine. It is the eternal doctrine, that is being expressed in different ages by different individuals. The Buddha, when he came, said, 'I am the restorer of the ancient path. I am not giving you anything new'. Jesus proclaimed that he came to fulfil, not to destroy. In other words, all great teachers of the world take up the fundamental truth, discard the excrescences, the accretions which had crept into them and recapture the original purity, and present it to their generation. The great teachers are the vehicles of the living word. They are the voice of the inspired Logos. They are the people who give utterance to the Eternal, dwelling in each individual. They have the capacity to give articulate expression to them. Swami Vivekananda was a spokesman of this divine Logos and he took hold of the requirements of this age in which

he was born and presented it so as to make a fervent appeal to the hungry heart and the searching mind of his generation.

He was born in an age when science was predominant. He was a student in a Calcutta College where he read the great works of Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Bentham, Thomas Henry Huxley, etc. He was steeped in the spirit of science. He was restless in spirit. His mind tossed about hither and thither. He did not know what to do, became an agnostic, joined the Brahma Samaj, gave it up and was in a pathetic condition of mind. He needed something to live by and he was not able to get that thing. He wanted to know whether there was anyone in this world who could catch the spirit, who could convince him that he saw God, ever as we see that wall before us or the audience here. He wanted someone who cared for facts. Science is a study of facts. It is a study of actual experience and if one is to be satisfied by the spirit of science, he must feel that there is a Divine Reality which is a fact, which has been sensed, tested and experienced by people. Chance, as some people would call it, Providence as others would say, led him to the door of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He went to him in dire distress and asked him, 'Have you seen God? Can you prove God to me?' The answer came: 'Yes I have seen God. I have seen Him much more intensely than I see you here!' That was the man who was able to transmit to him, to communicate to him and to tell him, that he saw the Divine Reality even as we see tables and chairs. Then the conversion happened. It was a moment of his rebirth, so to say. He became convinced of the reality of God. He said religion is not a matter of doctrinal conformity or ritualistic piety. They may be essential for people to reach a particular goal, but its fundamental reality is the sight of God. Faith must be

replaced by sight. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. It is that seeing of God that makes a man truly religious. An authentically religious man is one who does not report from hearsay, who does not quote scriptures or authorities but says, 'I have felt in the pulse of my being the reality of the Divine. If there is one fact in this world, it is the supreme fact of God. As you have seen other facts, I have noted this particular fact. This is something which is vital to me, in which I live'.

Here it was that Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa were echoing the great tradition of this country, which laid stress on the sight of God. *Sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ*, the sages see constantly. *Brahma-samsparsa* as the Gita puts it: *vedāham etam puruṣam mahāntam*. 'I know this eminent Purusa', as the Upanishads say. It is not a question of talking about God, acquiring a doctrine about God or accepting dogmas about God. It is a question of seeing God face to face, as other individuals see other sights. That is what distinguishes the authentically religious souls from the spurious souls who pretend to be religious as most of us do. We go about talking religion but denying God in every act which we do, paying our courtship to the world, the flesh and the devil. We accept God in theory, but deny him in practice. But a man who has realized God becomes incapable of doing anything which is undivine or irreligious. It is not possible. He has psychologically died to every kind of egoism or sin. That experience has made him a new being altogether, seeing with different eyes, feeling with different hearts, and his heart beating in sympathy with every kind of suffering, which we come across in this world.

So his spirit of science was satisfied, because here was a man who told him that God is a fact, is a reality, is something which we

can experience. Facts are given to us. Theories are framed by us. Theories may change, but facts don't change. Here is the ultimate fact, the one supreme fact of the reality of God. It was accepted by Sri Ramakrishna and accepted by Vivekananda. How can we get it? It is not something which we can buy in a store or read in a book. It is something which we have to realize by a complete refashioning of our nature, remaking of ourselves. It is a difficult process. It is not something which we can come across by any cheap and easy method. He passed through spiritual exercises, practised meditation till at last he also was able to say, "I have felt the reality of God. I have seen God". That was the kind of experience which Swami Vivekananda was able to accept. The touch of Sri Ramakrishna made him into a different being, gave to him the vision, the divine eye, *divyacakṣus*, the insight by which we are able to apprehend the Truth or the Ultimate Reality or the Supreme. Science therefore, in him was satisfied. Religion, he knew, talked in a hundred different ways. What is it that we can say of this sensed reality, of that experienced reality, of that which we feel in our hearts? What is it we can say if we see a beautiful sunset? We say, it is beautiful. But to describe it in words will test you a lot. You can never bring out the beauty of a sunset by a series of words. It is something one has to see, if one is to appreciate its beauty; so also, the immensity of God, the mysteriousness of God is something which we can only see by ourselves. Other people may lead us but each one has to exercise the vision for himself. There can be no such thing as vicarious seeing of God through other people's eyes. Each one has to see it himself. Such a reality can't be described in words. You have a Tamil song which I once upon a time heard: யாருக்குத்தான் தெரியும் அவர் பெருமை

அம்பல நாடகமாடிய மகிமை. Who knows the glory of the Divine, the greatness of the Divine, that reality which is so immense, so great, so transcendent to the world of space and time! Though it inspires, you can never comprehend it. No man can describe to you the richness of that kind of religious experience. All people have asserted it, not merely our people; they have all asserted that the Supreme Reality cannot be expressed in words, cannot be expressed in logical propositions, but forms are necessary. It is *acintya*, it is *aprameya*, it is *aśareera*, it is *nirvikāra*.

If forms are given to it, it is because forms have to be given to the Supreme for the sake of satisfying the desires, the ambitions of the ordinary people who cannot rise to that immense height of apprehending the Divine face to face. For such people you have to give them pathways, steps, rungs in the ladder. They have to go one by one until they are able to attain that beatitude, that complete merging in the ocean of wisdom and joy *apāra saimv it sukhāsāgara*. It is *samvit* wisdom, *sukha*, joy *sāgara* ocean, *apāra* boundless. So, it is that which we have to get at. We cannot get at it by easy methods. But yet people have accepted several forms, have adopted several designs. All these forms are fabricated or made for the purpose of helping.

It is for the sake of the devotees that we have them. When we know that these are pathways to reality, these are forms which we accept for apprehending the supreme reality, all quarrels about which way you adopt, which approach, which address you make, these things become utterly irrelevant. So it is, he was able to say in that Chicago Parliament of Religions—"I don't want a Christian to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, or a Hindu or Buddhist to become a Christian. I want each of them to learn from one another and grow according to his

own genius and try to understand the fullest implications of his own particular religious idea'. If you are able to do it, the path may turn and twist, but when you reach a hill top, you see, you observe the exact spiritual landscape which is the same whatever pathway you adopted, whatever method of approach you accepted. So he said, 'Friends, we are one in God, in God the Supreme who is called differently by different people. I don't want you to give up your religion, but I want you to understand other religions. Learn from them, learn from them the tranquil spirit, learn from them patience under suffering, learn the need for calm meditation, learn from others whatever is valuable, whatever is of good report which they are able to give you'. So religion for him became a kind of an order, a kind of a norm, a kind of a harmony in which all religions have their place, provided you look upon them as partners in a quest, not rivals. The One beyond belongs to us all and it is not something which escapes us. Provided our intention is earnest and our endeavour is full and vigorous, we are bound to reach it. Religion is an apprehension of reality. The apprehension is incapable of being expressed by words and propositions. Therefore, don't quarrel about the halting definitions, about imperfect formulations, about the fabrications which we impose *rupa kalpanā*. Note *kalpanā* is the word used. The forms are imagined by us so as to give expression to it.

The Swami was steeped in the spirit of science, in the spirit of religion and he was thoroughly humanistic in his outlook. What is God? God is there, dwelling in the innermost depths of your being. He is not someone who is residing in the sky above. He is present everywhere. If He is not present everywhere, He is present nowhere, and it is that kind of God—whom you see as omni-

present, as someone who is there present to everyone, as someone whom man feels as a constant companion looking on him, helping him and guiding him in everything he is doing—that Swami Vivekananda believed in and realized. He looked at our country; when he looked at the popular Hinduism of the country, he denounced it, he castigated it. With a spiritual daring, he said: 'My God is the God of the wicked, the God of the poor, the God of the neglected masses. I have nothing to do with that God who does not dwell in the ordinary human being'. So he pointed out that the worship of man is the worship of God. The service of man, trying to help him to the best of your ability, is the best kind of service you can render to the Divine. Understand that those people who talk about God and neglect the poor, and the down-trodden and don't care about the disinherited and the hurt, are not truly religious, do not truly believe in God. So his religion expressed itself in a spirit of fundamental humanism. As has been said already, that man is not an atheist who does not believe in God, but he is an atheist who does not believe in man. Where is God? God is in man. He is Paramatman. He is not merely Bhagavan, Brahman, he is the supreme soul in you. When you abstract from your outer layers of consciousness, mind and animality, if you withdraw into the centre of your own being, if you build up a shrine of solitude there, you will see there the divine presence. The divine light is there ever shining, ever ready to come to your assistance and help you if only you do this process of abstracting from the outward and getting into the most inward aspect of your nature. Each man is made in the likeness of God. Each one of us is divine. *yatra jīvaḥ tatra śivaḥ*: Where there is Jiva there is Siva. Siva is not somewhere up. He is there where a human being is.

So we are suffering retribution on account of our neglecting the masses. What we are doing today is not a matter of charity, it is not a matter of justice. It is a matter of atonement for our past neglect, atonement for our past sin. We have neglected our duty to our fellow human beings, to the down-trodden, to our women and to our own people whom we regard as belonging to this caste or that caste. We have done that and we have suffered, as the result of it, centuries of servitude. If we today do not cast away that kind of prejudice and don't free ourselves from every element of pride, don't become ultimately human, it is impossible for us to call ourselves believers in God. A true servant of God is a servant of the ordinary neglected masses of this country. The religion which Swami Vivekananda taught is a composite of science, religion and humanism. He had immense courage, spiritual daring of an exalted character to look upon that part of the country as a lunatic asylum, where people looked upon other people not only as untouchables but unapproachables. He was able to say, can

man indulge in such practices and still believe that he is a believer in God? It is a kind of a sin which deserves that kind of castigation. Even today in spite of all the lessons that have been taught to us by the early sages of the Upanishad, by Buddha, Mahavira, Sankaracharya, Nanak, Kabir, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, we are still the victims of these prejudices, prejudices which make us believe that we are at the top of the world and other people are much below us. We have an arrogance, an unconscious pride, an effortless sense of superiority which we adopt when we deal with other beings which makes us somewhat hateful to those other beings themselves. We must be humble. The first sign of any kind of faith in God is humility. Humility, courage, renunciation, service—these are the ideals which Swami Vivekananda put before us. Let us, when we are celebrating his centenary, remember the lessons that he taught us, not merely uttering them, but assimilating them into our very being.

[*The Vedanta Kesari : August 1963*]



If the room is dark, the constant feeling and repeating of darkness will not take it away, but bring in the light. Let us know that all that is negative, all that is destructive, all that is mere criticism is bound to pass away; it is the positive, the affirmative, the constructive that is immortal, that will remain for ever. Let us say, "We are" and "God is", and "We are God", "Shivoham, Shivoham", and march on. Not matter but Spirit. All that has name and form is subject to all

that has none. This is the eternal truth the Sritis preach. Bring in the light; the darkness will vanish of itself. Let the lion of Vedanta roar; the foxes will fly to their holes. Throw the ideas broadcast, and let the result take care of itself. Let us put the chemicals together; the crystallisation will take its own course. Bring forth the power of the spirit, and pour it over the length and breadth of India, and all that is necessary will come by itself.

— Swami Vivekananda