

SOME GLIMPSES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

CHINMOY

A popular view is that without Vivekananda Sri Ramakrishna would remain the Sri Ramakrishna of Bengal; to the wider world he would remain at most a mere name. One may quite reasonably dispute the point. For no spiritual force of Ramakrishna's dimensions could lose its dynamism and get cooped up within the narrow limits of one little province. But it goes without saying that Vivekananda would not be his mighty self without his childlike, simple but towering spiritual Master.

The reciprocal appreciation of the greatness of the disciple and the Master has found an exceedingly interesting expression in their ever-memorable lives. The former was firmly convinced that millions of Vivekanandas could come into existence at the fiat of his Master, while the latter declared that his Naren was the incarnation of Narayana himself come for the uplift of humanity.

Without Arjuna would the victory of Kurukshetra have been possible? Sri Krishna had to create the whole Gita, the song celestial, to train the disciple up, over and above infusing into him his divine force.

Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda appeared in an age more advanced. Hence the Master could much more easily make of Naren what he intended him to be.

In the life of Narendranath we notice two instances in which Matter submitted to Spirit.

(1) The young Narendranath steeped in agnosticism accepting Matter and doubting the existence of the supreme Spirit would question people who seemed to be advanced in spirituality if they had direct vision of God. Maharshi Devendranath, father of Tagore, attempted in vain to answer the query of the bold young man and had at last said, 'You possess the eyes of a Yogi!'

This very Narendranath fell at the hallowed feet of Sri Ramakrishna who was a veritable

embodiment of Spirit and who saw Spirit permeating Matter.

(2) As a contrast, the materialistic West had practically bowed down before Vivekananda who stood there as the spiritual representative of the East.

His was an eventful life. At the age of eight he entered into trance for the first time! He was only thirty when America, nay the West, garlanded the spiritual giant in him! He fought like a giant to bring about a mighty progress in the life of Indian womanhood! It took six long years for him to make his proud head bow to the Mother Kali. And when his surrender was complete he opened his devoted lips: 'All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it's only *Mother, Mother!*'

I am sure, my purpose will be served immensely better if I just reproduce his own words about Kali. 'How I used to hate Kali!' Vivekananda said, 'and all her ways! That was the ground of my six years' fight with the Master—that I would not accept Her. But I had to accept Her at last. Ramakrishna Paramahansa dedicated me to Her, and now I believe that She guides me in every little thing I do, and does with me what She wills.'

But Vivekananda ruthlessly looked down upon the miracles that create a commotion and confusion in the minds of people. 'I look upon miracles as the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of truth. When the disciples of Buddha told him of a man who had performed a miracle—and showed him the bowl, he took it and crushed it under his foot and told them never to build their faith on miracles, but to look for truth in everlasting principles. He taught them the true inner light—the light of the Spirit, which is the only safe light to go by. Miracles are only stumbling-blocks. Let us brush them aside.'

To show surprise amounts to a tacit expression of ignorance, hence weakness. 'Never show surprise,' such was the command of Viswanath Dutta to his son Naren when he was in his teens. The son acted up to his father's instruction from that very day to the end of his life. He spent at the foot of the silence-hushed and snow-capped Himalayas years together during his itineracy. He met people drawn from all sections of society — from the lowest to the highest. He came into close contact with the poorest and the richest of the world. As he saw the abundant wealth of the West with his eyes wide open, even so did he see with his deeply penetrating eyes the stark penury of his Motherland. In spite of his seeing different and striking plays of Nature, surprise could never overwhelm his all-conceiving eyes.

Perfection is the only choice for a man treading the path of spirituality. Perfection and infinite bliss run abreast. True pleasure lies nowhere else save in perfection. But how to achieve this precious perfection? Vivekananda shows us a unique way to achieve the impossible. He writes: 'If we can distinguish well between quality and substance, we may become perfect men.'

Sweetness and happiness are rarely found in carrying out earthly duties. No human being must be judged by the nature of his duties, but by the manner and the spirit in which he discharges them. What is our duty and what is not our duty has been the most puzzling, the most intricate problem to be solved since the dawn of civilisation. But the bold statement made by Vivekananda solves it in a very easy manner. 'Any action that makes us go Godward is a good action, and that is our duty; any action that makes us go downward is evil, and that is not our duty.' And we may further add to it that in order to advance in life, it is our duty to have faith in ourselves first and then in the Divine. Everybody must remember the undeniable truth that without having faith in oneself one can never have faith in God.

It is apparently hard to distinguish the Divine egoism from human egoism. But we must know that human egoism is always body-centred, while divine egoism is the true affirmation of the spiritual Self.

The son of Devaki declared: 'O Arjuna, I am the Self seated in the heart of all beings. Nothing can exist without me.'

The son of Maya Devi proclaimed: 'Buddha alone knows which practice will suit whom.'

The son of Mary announced to the world: 'I and my Father are one.'

The son of Amina boldly asserted: 'Verily Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah.'

The son of Chandramani Devi disclosed to his chief disciple Naren, 'He who was Rama, He who was Krishna, He alone dwells in this body (known as Sri Ramakrishna).'

The son of Bhuvaneshwari dauntlessly voiced forth: 'No matter, Shankara had said it or not. But I Vivekananda say so.' To quote the words of Sri Aurobindo: '...Vivekananda's famous answer to the Madras Pundit who objected to one of his assertions saying "But Shankara does not say so:" to whom Vivekananda replied, "No, but I Vivekananda, say so," and the Pundit was speechless. That "I Vivekananda" stands up to the ordinary eye like the Himalaya of self-confident egoism. But there was nothing false or unsound in Vivekananda's spiritual experience. For this was not mere egoism but the sense of what he stood for and the attitude of the fighter as the representative of something very great, could not allow himself to be put down or belittled.'

Identification with the supreme Spirit is the highest status that one can aspire for. In a fever of high inspiration drawn from this Spirit Vivekananda's lion heart did not hesitate to declare: 'We are the greatest God that ever was or ever will be. Christs and Buddhas are but waves on the boundless ocean which I am.'