

certain others. I don't see any reason for apprehension on account of my love, etc., for you. You are worshipping Govinda (God), the *dukṛñkarane* is only your outer covering. Because that 'never, never protects',² and you know it extremely well. 'The doer of good, My son, will never come to grief'³—this is a divine dictum. Where is, in this case, the scope for your misapprehension? As for the rest, all well. Please accept my sincere love and good wishes.

SRI TURIYANANDA

to it. At the dying moment his thoughts were centered on this beloved deer. So, in his next birth, he was born as a deer. Finally, after the death of the deer-body, he was born again as a man. But he had the memory of his past lives. As he did not want to get involved in worldly concerns any more, he appeared to others as a dumb and dull person. So he was called 'Jaḍabharata' meaning 'dull or inert Bharata'. The story is beautifully retold by Swami Vivekananda in a California lecture (*vide: The Complete Works, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, Vol. IV (1962), pp. 111 ff.*)—*Ed.*

² The reference here is to Śrī Śaṅkara's famous hymn *Carpaṭa-pañjarikā-stotram* in which the refrain has this line :

संप्राप्ते सन्नहिते काले न हि न हि रक्षति डुकुञ्करणे ।

'When the hour of death draws near, never, never will the rules of grammar protect you.'

³ न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति । *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI. 40.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN BOSTON, MARCH 1896

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

It has long been known that Swami Vivekananda visited Boston and Cambridge in March of 1896, but of this visit almost all that has been generally remembered is that he lectured at Harvard University on March 25. Yet this period, short as it was, was a rich and important one in his American life—rich in the number of lectures he gave, important in respect to the quality of his audiences, who were, on the whole, knowledgeable and thoughtful groups. In this present article I hope to present information and material which I have gathered from various sources : some from the newspapers of the period, some from the first edition of the *Life of Swami*

Vivekananda by His Eastern and Western Disciples, and some from old letters and diaries which, for the most part, have been made available to me by generous friends.

I

It cannot be determined at the present writing whether Swamiji arrived in Boston on March 18 or 19, but the probability is that it was on the latter date, a rainy day with a temperature only a little above freezing. In any event, March 19, the third Thursday in the month, was the day on which the Procopeia Club held its monthly reception in one of the parlours of its double house on St. Botolph Street, and

that evening, as the following item from the *Boston Evening Transcript* informs us, the Swami and his friends Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Emma Thursby, and Mrs. Antoinette Sterling were among the clubs honoured guests:

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AT THE PROCOPEIA

Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Emma Thursby, Emil Paur, Wulf Fries, Miss Harriet Shaw, John Orth and Mrs. Antoinette Sterling were the special guests of the Procopeia Club at its rooms on St. Botolph Street, last evening. The reception committee included: Mrs. George Seabury, Mrs. Winifred Barber, Mrs. F. R. Fibbets and Mrs. W. H. Stearns.¹

The Procopeia Club's monthly receptions 'are always thoroughly informal and home-like, but very largely attended', the young Ralph Waldo Trine, a member of the club who was later to become a well-known writer on metaphysics, had written to the singer Miss Emma Thursby a month earlier, inviting her on behalf of the reception committee to attend and perform at the March gathering. This was, he explained, to be a 'musicians' evening', at which each musician was to 'contribute his or her little share in a selection or two'. As an added incentive, Mr. Trine informed Miss Thursby that the club was 'planning to have Swami Vivekananda as the class teacher . . . about that time'.²

Swamiji heard a good deal of music that March evening, all of it—perhaps even to Eastern ears—excellent. As vocalists, Emma Thursby and Antoinette Sterling, both of whom were world famous, could not have been surpassed, and none but a first-rate musician would, one trusts, have presumed to perform on the same programme with either of them. Whether or not Mrs. Bull,

an accomplished pianist, had been invited to contribute 'her little share' is not known. More likely, she was counted among the honoured guests simply because she was at the time hostess to Miss Thursby and Mrs. Sterling in her Cambridge house. As for Swamiji, he too was honoured by courtesy, being scheduled as the club's 'class teacher' for the remainder of the month. It was, in fact, with this festive occasion that he entered upon an eleven-day period which was to form a climactic close to his years of public lecturing during his first visit to America.

Boston was by no means an unfamiliar city to Swamiji. It was there in August of 1893 that he had delivered his first lecture in the West, a semi-public lecture before the Ramabai Circle. It was in Boston also that during this same early period he had been chased by a crowd of men and boys, enraged by the unfamiliar sight of an orange robe to the point of throwing stones. And it was in Boston, shortly after this incident, but not because of it, that he had bought his first somber Western clothes, a black Prince Albert frock coat that kept him warm and, incidentally, unmolested. During his second visit to Boston in May of 1894 he had lectured there, and in September of the same year he had spent almost four weeks in the city, lecturing, as he wrote, 'in several places', and subsequently he had spent a week or so as a guest of Mrs. Bull in nearby Cambridge. He was in Cambridge also in December of 1894, holding a series of classes at Mrs. Bull's during almost the whole of that month. Thus by 1896 Boston knew Swamiji well, and as the *Boston Daily Globe* commented in an article that will be reproduced in full later on, 'society, fashionable, intellectual and faddist, went wild over him'.

In the 1890s Boston was the 'Hub' not only of the solar system but of these three categories of American society, not least of

¹ *Boston Evening Transcript*, 20 Mar. 1896.

² Trine to Thursby, 18 Feb. 1896, Thursby Papers, New-York Historical Society.

all the 'faddist'. Despite, or perhaps because of, the city's deep-rooted, ironclad traditions, unorthodox religions, all of which were known in Boston as 'fads', proliferated, ranging from third-rate spiritualists and astrologers who held seances or cast horoscopes in eerily decorated back parlours, to serious and well-organized religious groups. In an article describing these Bostonian unorthodoxies, a correspondent from the *Chicago Inter Ocean* wrote in summary :

No mere résumé of these various activities can give any adequate idea of the force and variety they lend to life. There are the three prominent centers of the 'spiritual temple'—the Theosophical Society, which has its rooms on Mount Vernon Street, and the 'First Church of Christ, Scientist', of which Rev. Marv Baker Eddy is the idolized pastor. There are many and various teachers of 'mental healing' of all shades of belief, no two of which coincide. There is the Procopeia, which stands for a great deal and is a most interesting center.³

The Procopeia Club, which has left behind no records of its activities or statements of its purposes, does not appear to have represented any one particular belief but seems, rather, to have been a meeting place for Boston's upper-notch religious 'faddists' of all varieties. The membership was no doubt composed in part of gentle and serious seekers of truth, such as Mrs. Ole Bull, in part of earnest religious teachers and healers, and in part of men and women in various states of high-minded confusion. Socially and economically it was not an exclusive club. It took as its motto, 'To be spiritually minded is life and peace', and asked only that its members agree with this dictum and that they pay five dollars a year in dues (equivalent to twenty dollars

today). Yet knowing that Mrs. Bull was connected with the club, one can be sure that it had its intellectual aspects as well as its noble ideals and that it was eminently respectable. (Although Mrs. Bull, having come originally from the hinterland of Madison, Wisconsin, was not a 'Proper Bostonian', she was by no means Bohemian in her outlook—not even in the relatively mild 1890 sense of that term.)

The club had its headquarters on St. Botolph Street in two adjoining houses that had been thrown into one, 'the parlors on one side forming a pleasant lecture-room, seated with camp chairs, and those on the other side used as a reception-room and library'.⁴ During the season extending from November to May, the doors were open every day for social meetings, and the monthly programme consisted of a public lecture every Thursday evening (with the exception of the third Thursday in each month) and of two series of class talks, intended for members only.

Swamiji evidently had a knowledge of the Procopeia Club prior to 1896 and was not altogether pleased with what he knew. Because of its more or less indiscriminate embrace of Boston's various metaphysical cults and ventures, he felt a distaste for it and a reluctance to lecture under its auspices. In February of this same year he had written in a letter to Mrs. Bull, which has not yet been published: '... I have not much faith in working such things as the Procopeia &c—because these mixed up conglomerations of all isms & ities mostly fads—disturb the steadiness of the mind and life becomes a mass of frivolities.... This does not mean I am not coming to Procopeia I will come but it will be only for your sake.'⁵

⁴ loc. cit.

⁵ Swamiji to Mrs. Bull, 6 Feb. 1896, Vedanta Society of North California (hereafter, VSNC).

³ *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 4 Apr. 1896.

Swamiji spoke five times before the Procopeia Club. Four of these lectures had been intended to constitute a series of closed class talks, while the fifth lecture, to be delivered on Thursday evening, March 26, was to be open to the public. As it turned out, however, all five lectures were public. Although there had been no advertising and only one inconspicuous announcement in the papers, word had spread through Boston that Swami Vivekananda was to speak, and it had shortly become apparent that the Procopeia Club's parlour with its complement of camp chairs would be stormed. Any idea the members had had of keeping Swamiji's classes to themselves was abandoned, and the arena of the Allen Gymnasium, a building situated directly across St. Botolph Street, was rented to accommodate the crowds. Yet even this proved too small, and, as on almost all the occasions in 1896 when Swamiji had lectured publicly, scores of disappointed people were turned away.

On March 21 the *Evening Transcript* introduced Swamiji's current work in Boston with an excellent article, such as one would not find in cities farther west, or, for that matter, farther south. The *Boston Evening Transcript* was no ordinary newspaper. Founded in the 1830s, it had become an institution not to be taken lightly. It was the journal of First-Family Bostonians, ceremoniously delivered every day at teatime to their front doors and religiously read. It reflected their likes and dislikes, their approvals and disapprovals, and guided their intellectual and political thought. 'In the wind of its editorial opinion they [its readers] swayed', said the poet T. S. Eliot, "like a field of ripe corn".⁶ It was a bible of sorts and also what might today be considered a status

⁶ Cleveland Amory, *The Proper Bostonians* (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1947), p. 333.

symbol. It was, as Lucius Beebe has put it in his book *Boston and the Boston Legend*, 'a qualitative hallmark as clearcut in its implications as a coat of arms or membership in the Somerset Club [one of Boston's sacrosanct clubs]'.⁷ Even the employees of the *Transcript*, from copy boys to editors, were as dignified, as sedate, and often as well-entrenched socially as were its readers. Nor was the esteem felt for the *Transcript* confined to Boston; the paper was known nationally as the best of thoughtful and sober journals, and it was also acclaimed abroad. When the *Transcript* devoted a long article to Swamiji in its stately pages, it was doing more than giving the news; it was announcing that the 'Athens of America' had welcomed him without reservation. Even Emerson had not been accorded this honour. 'Original thinkers', the *Transcript* had sternly written in connection with the latter, 'are not always practical men, and they are sometimes led into insupportable theories'.⁸ Although Swamiji very likely gave little heed to the approval or disapproval of the *Transcript*, the fact remained that the following article was a significant accolade:

PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA COMPARES TEACHINGS OF HINDU WISDOM AND WESTERN RELIGIONS

The Swami Vivekananda, who will be remembered as the Hindu delegate to the World's Parliament of Religions, is in the city as the March class lecturer at the Procopeia, 45 St. Botolph Street. The Swami has been doing some most valuable and successful work in systematic class lecturing in New York, with constantly increasing audiences, during the past two winters, and comes to Boston at a most opportune time.

⁷ Lucius Beebe, *Boston and the Boston Legend* (Appleton Century, New York, 1935), p. 185.

⁸ Amory, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

The Swami gives the following description of his work. In explanation of the term sannyasin, he said, When a man has fulfilled the duties and obligations of that stage of life in which he is born, and his aspirations lead him to seek a spiritual life, and to abandon altogether the worldly pursuits of possession, fame, or power; when, by the growth of insight into the nature of the world, he sees its impermanence, its strife, its misery, and the paltry nature of its prizes, and turns away from all these, then he seeks the true, the eternal love, the refuge. He makes complete renunciation (sannyasin) [*sic*] of all worldly position, property and name, and wanders forth into the world to live a life of self-sacrifice, and to persistently seek spiritual knowledge, striving to excel in love and compassion, and to acquire lasting insight; gaining these pearls of wisdom by years of meditation, discipline and inquiry, he, in his turn, becomes a teacher, and hands on to disciples, lay or professed, who may seek them from him, all that he can of wisdom and beneficence.

A sannyasin cannot belong to any religion, for his is a life of independent thought, which draws from all religions; his is a life of realization, not merely of theory or belief, much less of dogma.

In giving some idea of his work and its methods the Swami says he left the world because he had a deep interest in religion and philosophy from his childhood, and Indian books teach renunciation as the highest ideal to which a man can aspire.

The Swami's teaching, as he expresses it, "is my own interpretation of our ancient books in the light which my master (a celebrated Hindu sage) shed upon them. I claim no supernatural authority. Whatever in my teachings may appeal to the highest intelligence and be accepted by thinking men, the adoption of that will be my reward. All religions have for their object the teaching of devotion, or knowledge, or activity, in a concrete form. Now, the philosophy of Vedanta is the abstract science which embraces all these methods,

and this is what I teach, leaving each one to apply it to his own concrete form. I refer each individual to his own experience, and where reference is made to books, the latter are procurable, and may be studied for each one by himself." The Swami teaches no authority from hidden beings, through visible objects, any more than he claims learning from hidden books or MSS. He believes no good can come from secret societies. "Truth stands on its own authority, and truth can bear the light of day." He teaches only the Self, hidden in the heart of every individual, and common to all. A handful of strong men, knowing that Self, and living in its light, would revolutionize the world, even today, as has been the case of single strong men before, each in his day.

His attitude towards Western religions is briefly this. He propounds a philosophy which can serve as a basis to every possible religious system in the world, and his attitude towards all of them is one of extreme sympathy. His teaching is antagonistic to none. He directs his attention to the individual, to make him strong, to teach him that he himself is divine, and he calls upon men to make themselves conscious of divinity within. His hope is to imbue individuals with the teachings to which he has referred, and to encourage them to express these to others in their own way; let them modify them as they will; he does not teach them as dogmas; truth, at length, must inevitably prevail.

The Swami will give a series of four class-lectures on the Vedanta philosophy at the Procopeia on the evenings of Saturday, March 21, Monday, the 23d, Friday, the 27th, Saturday, the 28th. He will also give the Thursday evening public lecture on the 26th, on "The Ideal of a Universal Religion." No charge will be made for the class-lectures to those who are not members of the club and who wish to attend them. He will also give two afternoon lectures at the home of Mrs. Ole Bull in Cambridge, and will lecture to the graduate students in the department of philosophy at Harvard University.

The first three class lectures were entitled 'The Science of Work', 'Devotion', and 'Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion'. As is apparent not only from their titles but from newspaper reports as well, these lectures were expositions of, respectively, *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, and *rāja-yoga*. During his fourth 'class' Swamiji read from the Upaniṣads, giving his commentary, which no doubt constituted a discourse on *jñāna-yoga*. In this series one finds, then, a sort of summing up of his winter's class work in New York, during the course of which he had given talk after talk on these four *yogas* and had prepared for publication a book on each. (*Jñāna-Yoga* as we know it today differs from the book that was contemplated in 1896 but never printed.) The subject of Swamiji's officially public lecture at the Procopeia Club (March 26) was 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion'—a subject on which he had lectured publicly in almost every town he had visited during this 1896 season. This was a lecture in which he enunciated for America the principle of unity in variety in religious doctrines and quests, a principle which he no doubt felt was essential to the future development and well-being of western culture. The subject, in fact, constituted an intrinsic and vital part of his message to the West. So also did those of his lectures at Harvard and at the Twentieth Century Club (of both of which more later), entitled respectively 'Vedanta Philosophy' and 'The Vedanta: Its Practical Bearings'. Indeed in his seven lectures given in or near Boston one finds the most essential aspects of his western message, which he had by now so completely and concisely formulated and so fully delivered.

Unfortunately, the Procopeia Club lectures were not transcribed, or, at any rate, not published, and it is from the newspapers alone that we learn a little about them. A correspondent from the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, who often described life in

Boston and Cambridge, seems to have attended at least one of the lectures; and while her following paragraph from the *Inter Ocean* of April 4, 1896, betrays a confusion regarding Swamiji's teachings, it is nonetheless of value for its information, some of which is not to be found elsewhere:

VIVEKANANDA

It is under the auspices of [the Procopeia Club] that the Swami Vivekananda has just been giving a course of lectures, which attracted such throngs of people that the Allen gymnasium, just across the street, had to be engaged as a lecture-room. The hour was 8 o'clock, but by 7:15 o'clock every seat would be filled, and even the aisles crowded to suffocation with people, who stood for three-quarters of an hour before the lecture began in order to hear it. The Swami lectured on Karma Yogi as an ideal of universal religion, and devoted his last evening to readings from the Sanskrit, with interpretations that were extremely interesting. Anything more musical than his reading from the Sanskrit could not be imagined. One listened as if to unknown magic.

After Swamiji had given his first two lectures at the Allen Gymnasium, the *Boston Daily Globe*, a solid journal, wrote on March 24 appreciatively of the monk who had come from 'the mountains of India'. The writer had evidently interviewed Swamiji:

OUT OF THE EAST

Message Brought by the Swami Vivekananda—In His Country the Gods Are "Bright Ones" That Help.

The Swami Vivekananda is enjoying as great a degree of popularity on his present visit to Boston as he did when society, fashionable, intellectual and fad-dist, went wild over him on his former visit.

This monk has come from the mountains of India, where he wandered in

solitude, occupied with spiritual meditations. He comes weighted with the maxims and principles of an ancient religion. He comes to tell the people of this western continent, struggling with scores of varying creeds, the simple, unified thought of the Hindu teachings. He is not here to proselyte or to found a new religion, but simply to make men conscious of the divinity within them.

The Swami has talked before not only intellectual audiences and in fashionable drawing rooms, but he has sought out and made friends with the workingmen with whom he is able to get on so well, because he believes that all great truths are expressed in simple forms.

A New York paper published an interview with the Swami, in which he is reported to have expressed the opinion that in Boston "the women are all fad-dists, all fickle, merely bent on following something new and strange." But Swami Vivekananda says that this is an exaggerated and distorted presentation of a criticism which he made upon all American women, that they were too superficial and too prone to follow the sensational and to change from one thing to another. This he says his observation has forced upon him. The American women are intellectual, but they are not steady, serious and sincere.

The first of the Swami's lectures was delivered before an audience of 400 people in the Allen gymnasium, Saturday evening on "The Science of Work," and the second one of the course on "Devotion" was given in the same place, the hall being filled and a number turned away unable to gain admittance.

The lecture was exceedingly interesting and the speaker's manner was very magnetic. In his country, said the Swami, the gods were the "bright ones" who gave help to men and received help from them. The gods are only human beings who are somewhat elevated after death, but God, the highest, is never prayed to or asked for help. He is given only love and worship without anything being asked in return. There are two phases of this God, the one, the abstract God be-

hind the substance of the universe, and the other the personal God who is seen through human intellect and given attributes by it.

The love which is given to God never takes, but always gives, and it does not depend on anything. The worshiper does not pray for health, money or any other thing, but is content with the lot apportioned to him.

People who ask about religion from mere motives of curiosity become fad-dists, they are always looking for something new and their brains degenerate until they become old rags. It is a religious dissipation with them.

It is not the place that makes heaven or hell, but the mind. Love knows no fear, there can be no love where it is. In love of any sort external objects are only suggested by something within—it is one's own ideal projected, and God is the highest ideal that can be conceived of.

Hatred of the world does not drive good men from it, but the world slips away from the great and saintly. The world, the family and social life, are all training grounds, that is all.

When one realizes that God is love, it does not matter what his other attributes are, that is the only essential.

The more a man throws himself away, the more God comes in, hence self abnegation, which is the secret of all religion and all morality.

Too many people bring down their ideals. They want a comfortable religion, but there is none such. It is all self-surrender and upward striving.

From the *Boston Evening Transcript*, which published four articles about Swamiji, one learns more of his lectures. The first of these articles, or reports, has been reproduced above. The second, a brief report of his public lecture 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', appeared on March 27:

Said a Universal Religion Is Impossible. Swami Vivekananda told the large audience that crowded the Allen Gymnasium to hear him speak on the "Ideal of a

Universal Religion," last night, that the recent Parliament of Religions at Chicago proved, to that date, that universal religion was impossible. "Nature," he said, "is wiser than we have thought her to be. It is competition of ideas, the clash of thought, that keeps thought alive. Sects have always been antithetical, and always will be splitting into little varieties of themselves. And the way to get out of this fight of religions is to let the sects go on subdividing.

"There is no unity in the three elements of religion—philosophy, mythology and ceremony. Each theologian wants unity, but his idea of unity is the adjustment of all other creeds to his own. I agree with the old prophets as long as they agree with me. But there is an element of religion that towers above all; that is, philosophy. The philosopher seeks truth, which is one and the same always. And it is acceptable to the four sides of every religious nature—the emotional, mystical, active and philosophical. And he who dares to seek the truth for truth's sake is greatest among men."

The third *Evening Transcript* article about Swamiji appeared on March 28 and was even briefer than the above, being no more than a mention of his lecture 'Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion'. For the sake of completeness, it is given below:

VIVEKANANDA ON THE 'FUTURE OF RELIGION'

In the Allen Gymnasium, last evening, about four hundred people heard the Swami Vivekananda speak under the auspices of the Procopeia on "Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion." Tonight the last lecture of the course will be given, to be followed by a general philosophic discussion. On Monday the Indian philosopher will return [?] to Chicago.⁹

It was on Monday, March 30, that the *Evening Transcript* printed its fourth and longest article about Swamiji, summarizing his work in the city and at Harvard with understanding and appreciation. But before reproducing this article, we shall look at another side of Swamiji's life in Boston. His stay there was not all work; there was a holiday aspect to it, for several of his close friends had come from New York and were staying in Cambridge as guests of Mrs. Ole Buil.

(To be continued)

⁹ Swamiji had come to Boston from Detroit, not Chicago. His head quarters in 1896 were New York

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

—from *Crescent Moon* of Rabindranath Tagore