

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is on Swami Vivekananda's visit to Kshir Bhavani temple in Kashmir and the impact of the visit on his life.

The second and the concluding part of SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S VISION OF COMPLETE MAN by Swami Someswarananda, Ramakrishna Mission, Bombay, shows the ineffectuality of today's psycho-political thoughts to solve modern problems, and the need of Vivekananda-Vedanta for the same.

THE SOUND BRAHMAN is a scholarly interpretation of the Primal Sound, the Logos from the standpoint of modern scientific thought and Indian scriptures. The writer Pravrajika Brahma-prana is a member of the Sarada Convent, Santa-Barbara, California.

A WORLD WITHOUT WAR by Dr. Anil Baran Ray, Head of the Dept. of Political Science, Burdwan University, critically exposes the loopholes in some clauses in the U. N. Charter, which deal with wars between nations.

The second and the concluding part of REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA FOR WOMEN deals with Bhairavi Brahmani, the woman-teacher of Sri Ramakrishna, and the far-reaching impact of the Master's life for the spiritual enlightenment of women all over the globe. The author, Ann Myren, teaches social sciences at the College of Alameda, Alameda, California.

A REVERIE IN THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS by Tumken Bagra, advocate, Along, is a mock-serious writing on the growing influence of the Ramakrishna-movement for an all-round development of the hilly regions of Arunachal Pradesh.

AN EXPERIENCE by Sri N. Gopinath, Bangalore, is an account of an interesting incident.

BROTHER LAWRENCE, a Review-Article by Swami Abhiramananda, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore, is a small but illuminating portrayal of the well-known Christian saint.

KSHIRBHAVANI AND VIVEKANANDA

(EDITORIAL)

After the dreary winter of four long months, in the warm spring of April, pilgrims have started pouring again into the sacred shrine of Kshir Bhavani in Kashmir. Every year at the end of autumn the reddening chennars cover the mother-nature of Kashmir in the ochre of a nun. Then with the approach of winter the entire valley is slowly covered with snow. The last leaves are shed, leaving the trees bare. Like the ashes of Shiva's cremation ground, the all-engulfing snow makes the

seven-coloured mother-nature finally one with the all-white Shiva. All life in nature is suspended, until with the advent of spring new leaves and buds blossom forth everywhere turning the vast valley of white into a superabundance of shades and colours. Every year this silent and all-pervading rejuvenation of nature brings a feeling of a reawakening of Divine Mother in this Mother-centred vale of Indian civilization. A profound presence of such an awakened Mother-Power silently wait-

ing with grace and love for Her children, strikes any pilgrim who enters into the vast, quiet courtyard of Kshir Bhavani, the Goddess of coloured springs. Ninety years ago in the autumn of 1898, Vivekananda came here seeking the Mother of the Universe, and eventually surrendered at Her feet.

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After the austere pilgrimage to the dizzy heights of Amarnath cave, the downward journey from Pahalgam to Srinagar, along the river shaded by tall poplars and magnificent chennars, was an experience of peace and leisure. 'The river is like glass, and slight breeze meets us in our leisurely progress. It is like heaven', wrote Nivedita who accompanied her Master in this Himalayan pilgrimage. Swamiji rejoiced now at the prospect of some quiet days in Kashmir. There, in the midst of forest and flowing streams, he was now looking forward, as he wrote to someone, 'to have meditation deep and long, under the deodars, crosslegged *à la Buddha*'.¹ But the strong spiritual vibrations of Mother-worship in the valley of Kashmir, slowly turned his mind to thoughts on Mother. Already he had started worshipping as Uma, the four-year old daughter of his Muslim boatman. His attention now appeared, as his disciples saw, to shift from Shiva to Mother. He was always singing the songs of Ramprasad 'as if he would saturate his own mind with the conception of himself as a child'. Everywhere he became conscious of Mother, 'as if She were a person in the room'.² And this mood of seeking the Mother everywhere and for everything, was suddenly intensified by an unexpected turn of events.

1. His Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) vol. 2, pp. 374-377.

2. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1967) vol. 1, pp. 92-93.

At the express invitation of the Maharaja of Kashmir, Vivekananda had come to choose a beautiful plot of land under the shade of giant Chennars by the riverside, for the establishment of a Math and a Sanskrit college. The Western followers who were seeking to meditate in Swamiji's inspiring presence and direction, were already asked by him to go and live in tents on the proposed Math ground. It was auspicious, he thought, according to the Hindu tradition, that the new homestead should be blessed by woman. The camping or the 'women's Math' was started. But the dream was soon shattered. The stirring of the missionaries began, and the agenda was vetoed twice by Sir Adalbert Talbot, then acting Resident. Vivekananda was denied even the opportunity of discussing the issue with the rulers. The unexpected disappointment was a rude shock and haunted him like 'a malady of thought, which would consume a man, leaving him no time for sleep or rest and would often become as insistent as a human voice.'

At this time in August 1898, he wrote to his brother disciple Swami Brahmananda, 'My great anxiety is this, the work has somehow been started, but it should go on and prosper even when we are not here; such thoughts worry me day and night.' His prophetic dreams suddenly seemed to be breaking in disillusionment. All uproarious ovations by his countrymen for the last one year now appeared to him as temporary jublations. The heroes by thousands of whom he had dreamt, were nowhere in sight. The few who veered round him were incapable, despite their sincerest devotion, of understanding the global and far-reaching dimensions of his thought, much less of making necessary effort to translate them into action. Some of the dearest and

3. Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987) vol. 5, pp. 39-45.

nearest came even to distrust and doubt his mission. Besides the handful of brothers and disciples India could offer him, until then, not a single life was ready for a total sacrifice for the sake of national regeneration. The global mission of Vedanta which he had begun by the sweat of his brow, took no root as yet. After years of terrible labour both in India and abroad, the future looked bleak. His own broken health added more gloom to the mood of disappointment. The period was for him a time of 'mental hell', of 'tortures', 'disease', 'misfortune,' and a 'load of suffering,' as he wrote afterwards.⁴

Had it been two years before, Vivekananda would have persisted and faced the bleak circumstances with his bull-dog tenacity, and probably got the idea of the Kashmir Math realized in the face of the most adamant obstacles. But today his thought took a different turn. Vivekananda now began to dwell on 'the dark, the painful and the inscrutable' aspects of life. He was determined, as if by an irresistible passion, to reach the Mother, the One behind phenomenal Reality, through the darker avenues of frustration, pain and suffering. His 'whole cry now was "the worship of the Terrible"'. In the height of this mood, one day he had the vision of the Mother as death and destruction, the Cosmic Power 'wrenching trees by the roots' and 'sweeping all from the path'. In a frenzy of inspiration, Vivekananda struggled to capture this vision, and scribbled a few lines, which crystallized into his great poem *Kali the Mother*. The concluding lines brought the grand finale of this realization of Mother as the all-destroying and inscrutable Power behind all sufferings of life and its final annihilation:

For terror is Thy name,
Death is in Thy breath
And every shaking step
Destroys a world forever.

4. Ibid. p. 39.

Thou Time, the All-Destroyer!
Come, O Mother, Come!
Who dares misery love
And hug the form of Death
Dance in destruction's dance,
To him the Mother comes.

Mother had indeed come through the avenue of death, and consumed the child totally. 'It all came true, every word of it,' said Vivekananda. 'To *him* the Mother does indeed come. I have proved it. For I have hugged the form of Death!'⁵ Within two days he left alone for the holy shrine of Divine Mother at Kshir Bhavani, leaving behind a word that he was not to be followed.

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In a secluded and almost cloistered corner of the lonely Sind valley, the small temple of Bhawani stands in the midst of a spring, where the colour of the water changes along with the seasons. Six magnificent chennars standing like green colossuses, cover the vast area with their cool shade. On the sun-blached courtyard the devotees circumambulate the small spring and offer flowers, milk, and sweets to the spring in honour of the Divine Mother who is known as Maharajani (Goddess of the great dark night). An unspeakable sweetness and purity envelop the silent area surrounded by snow-capped hills, forests, and a small tributary of the Dal Lake. Water lilies blossom on the dark waters of the lake, and birds sing in forest branches all around. The 35 km long way that leads to this lovely spot, passes successively through the five areas of Vicharmarg (the lake of discrimination), Tyangal-bal (the hill of burning charcoals), Kavajbar (the fire of cremation ground) Amar-her (the immortal stair-case) and finally, Anchar nag (the Lake of purificatory rites). Tradition says that Mother

5. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 99.

Maharajani, originally worshipped by King Ravana, later left the Demon King as he insulted the Divine Mother Sita, and settled in this cloistered valley of Kashmir. Since only Kshir or sweets are offered to Bhavani, the goddess of the temple, the place has become famous as Kshir Bhavani.⁶

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Ninety years ago when an utterly exhausted Vivekananda came here on boat along the Dal Lake to seek the Mother, the temple was only a mass of ruins, a result of Islamic Vandalism on Hindu idols and temples. At the pathetic sight of the destroyed temple, the wounded vanity of the heroic devotee who just returned after conquering half the globe, raised its head. Standing before the ruins, Vivekananda thought, 'How could the people have permitted such sacrilege without offering strenuous resistance! If I were then, I would have never allowed such things. I would have laid down my life to protect the Mother.'

At once a thundering rejoinder came to his unspoken thought. Vivekananda heard it, clear and distinct. It was the unmistakable voice of Mother, the Mother of all, 'What, even if unbelievers should enter my temples, and defile my images? What is that to you? Do you protect Me? or do I protect you?'

The last veil of patriotic ego fell off the mind of the patriot-saint. 'All my patriotism is gone! I am only a little child', he said after the experience.

For seven days, like a devout child Vivekananda daily worshipped Mother in Her vibrant presence, performing Homa, and offering Ksheer of one maund of milk, rice and almonds. He told his beads, and every morning worshipped the living presence of the Mother in the small virgin daughter of the temple priest as Uma

Kumari, the Divine Virgin. He lived a life of severest austerities in order to clear the least veil of Maya that might have shaded, even temporarily, the ever-free soul like Shuka and Shiva, whom Sri Ramakrishna had brought in the body of Vivekananda for the spiritual elevation of mankind.

Slowly a fond desire crystallized in Vivekananda's mind. He wished to build a new temple over those ruins. Again came the voice of the Mother startling the brooding child, 'My child! If I wish I can have innumerable temples and magnificent monastic centres. I can even this moment raise a seven-storied golden temple on this very spot.' Realization dawned on the drooping soul. None can resist the Divine Will. Mother is the wire-puller. We are only automata. All will belongs to HER Supreme Will. SHE is Self-Willed, *Ichchamayee*. The way to peace and fulfilment is to surrender oneself to Divine Will, to drift along Her irresistible current.

After the seven hallowed days, when Vivekananda returned to the disciples at Srinagar, he looked 'like one transfigured and inspired'. He came to them 'all radiant'. He raised his hands in benediction and blessed them with marigolds offered to Mother at Kshir Bhavani. Finally, he spoke out, 'No more. Hari Om! It is all "Mother" now! All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it is only Mother! Mother! I have been wrong.' The Ultimate Reality which revealed Itself to Vivekananda only a month before as Shiva, the Infinite Being, transcending over death, today revealed once again as Mother, the Infinite Power, capable of creating and destroying universes, like a baby playing with fragile toys.

The visible change in Vivekananda awed everyone. All the fervent ideas of national regeneration, women's Math and others which were so long seething in his mind, were felled to an absolute calmness. He now talked simply like a child of Mother,

6. Dr. Chaman Lal Sapru, 'Holy Places in Kashmir' *Prabuddha Bharata* (Calcutta) 1983, p. 148.

'but his soul and his voice are those of God', wrote Nivedita during those unforgettable moments. And those who came near him felt the 'nearness of one who had seen God, and whose eyes even now are still full of the vision.' 'The mingled solemnity and exhilaration of his presence' made others approach him with an unspeakable reverence. Nivedita wrote to a dear one, 'He is *all* love now.... I cannot tell you about it. It is too great for words. My pen would have learnt to whisper'.⁷ Since his return he lived mostly alone like a child on the lap of the Mother. He was hardly to be seen even by his disciples. An 'overwhelmingly ascetic impulse' now engulfed him. He shaved off his tousled hair and looked like one of those old-time monks who never knew what the world is. The 'combativeness' of the cyclonic monk was gone. 'Not an impatient word, even for the wrong-doer or the oppressor came from his lips which poured forth now words tinged with the greatness and gentleness of a soul as large as the universe, all bruised and anguished, yet all love', Nivedita wrote, 'The last words I heard him were, "Swamiji is dead and gone", and again "There is bliss in torture". He has no harsh word for anyone. In such vastness of mood Christ was crucified.'⁸ The vision of Mother still lingered in his eyes. 'These images of gods are more than can be explained by solar myths and nature myths. They are visions seen by true Bhakti. They are real', he said to the disciples. Like his Master, the 'eternal child of Mother', he now sang the song of Ramprasad, 'In the busy market place of life Mother is flying kites.... out of a hundred thousand she cuts the strings of one or two.' His mind had gone back to Mother. One could feel that the tempestuous fury with all the desire to fight and conquer, was over. What re-

mained now was a placid sea of peace and blessedness, a 'great spring of healing and knowledge to the world'. Within a few weeks he left like a child hungering for mother, to the abode of his Master at Calcutta where his brother disciples eagerly awaited him.⁹

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Only a few weeks earlier, Vivekananda made the difficult journey to Amarnath cave through the death-dealing regions of nature, and stood face to face with Shiva. Today he made a still more difficult journey through the dark regions of the soul, the internal nature, through the valleys of incertitude, fear, disappointments, doubts, pains, and sufferings, and finally stood face to face with Mother, the all-destroying Time. 'The goal of life is to manifest the divine within by controlling nature external and internal', he had said. If the America of 1894 saw the fury of a cyclonic monk, in the autumn of 1898, Kashmir saw the prophet as a fearless warrior emerging victorious after a dark night of the soul. True to his gospel of man-making, Vivekananda emerged a complete and ideal man who conquered nature, both external and internal, a man absolutely fearless, totally surrendered, totally transcended and identified with God, the Cosmic Will. Even the bondage of the ripe 'I' of Shankara and Suka, with which Ramakrishna's Mother Kali one day had enveloped the ever-free soul, was untied today by Mother Herself who now took all the responsibility of Her son. For the rest of his life Vivekananda remained transcendent, a seraphic child of Divine Mother, floating on the beatitude which passeth understanding.

This transcendence became the dominant trait for the rest of his life. After this trip, a disciple, while talking to him found an almost impenetrable abstraction of his master who seemed to be totally oblivious

7. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Ed., Shankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1981) vol. 1, pp. 24-26.

8. *Ibid*,

9. *Ibid*,

of what was going on around him.¹⁰ He turned into a 'Man of God', as Nivedita saw him then, whose very presence was bringing even kings at the 'Feet of Mother'.¹¹ When his western disciples suggested and even urged him to take a second trip to the West, 'he had no great inclination for that', said Turiyananda. His brother disciples virtually persuaded him to take the trip, on health grounds.¹² The warrior prophet of 1892 was gone. He made no plans and accepted only what was offered by God. Yet his words were now charged with an irrevocable, prophetic power. His thoughts, backed by Cosmic Will, worked out. His very presence awakened divinity in others. His life became now a perpetual play ground of Divine Will and Power. Before leaving for the West he went to the chapel, sang to his Master, and spoke to the novitiates about sannyasa as 'the love of death', 'The sannyasin is to love death. Are we to commit suicide then? Far from it... What is love of death then? We must die. That is certain; let us die then for a good cause... For the whole world is one; you are rated a very insignificant part of it, and therefore it is right for you that you should serve millions of brothers rather than aggrandize this little self'.

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Kshir Bhavani experience had brought Vivekananda a palingenesis, a rebirth. 'The old cat must die', he would often say. After the dark night of the soul, a new self, as it were, was now born with total self-surrender, universal love, and ineffable peace. Nearly after two years of this visit he wrote to Nivedita on 28 March 1900:

Things have got to come round—the seed must

10. *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 4.

11. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 55.

12. *Swami Vivekananda in the West*, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 7.

die underground to come up as tree. The last two years were the underground rotting. I never had a struggle in the jaws of death, but it meant a tremendous upheaval of the whole life. One such brought me to Ramakrishna, another sent me to the U.S. This has been the greatest of all. It is gone—I am so calm that it astonishes me sometimes.

We remember the words of Saint Paul, 'So also is the resurrection of the dead.... It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power'.¹³ Of this rebirth Vivekananda himself spoke in his poem 'Peace', composed long after the experience:

It is death between two lives
And lull between two storms
The void whence rose creation
And that whence it returns.

The nation maker, the champion of Hinduism and India, was now lost and reborn into a world-mover and a world-lover, a Jnani of Advaitic vision enjoying the play of Mother everywhere and yet shedding his last drop of blood to lead mankind to God. An all-engulfing Love now replaced the earlier spirit of renunciation and flight. The worries about his mission were now replaced by an 'ineffable peace.' To Mary Hale he wrote:

I am attaining peace that passeth understanding.... My passing through the valley of death—physical, mental—last two years, has helped me in this.... Now I am going to be truly Vivekananda. Did you ever enjoy evil! Ha! Ha! you silly girl, all is good! Nonsense. Some good, some evil. I enjoy the good, and I enjoy evil. I was Judas Iscariot; both my plan, my fun. 'So long as there are two, fear shall not leave thee...'

I have no good to attain, no ideal to clench up to, no ambition to fulfil; I, the diamond mine, am playing with pebbles, good and evil.... If the universe tumbles round my ears, what is that to me? I am Peace that passeth understanding.

13. 1, Corinthians, 15: 35-47.

This peace was the result of total self-surrender. Vivekananda saw himself now only as an instrument of the Mighty Divine Will. To a dear one he confided this feeling, 'Mother is doing Her own work ; I do not worry much now. Moths like me die by the thousand every instant. Her work goes on all the same. Glory unto Mother! Her will be done!... We are Her automata. She is the wirepuller.'

And finally the tired, nostalgic Vivekananda spoke out in the most marvellous letter ever written by him. The last veil of 'the guide', 'the Guru', 'the teacher', 'the leader' the higher ego with which he had moved the world, was now gone for ever. It was a truant child who

now cried out to return to his Mother's lap, 'Behind my work was ambition, behind my love was personality, behind my purity was fear, behind my guidance thirst for power! Now they are all vanishing and I drift. I come! Mother, I come! In Thy warm bosom, floating wheresoever Thou takest me in the voiceless, in the wonderland, I come—a spectator, no more an actor.'¹⁴

This was the voice of the Child-Vivekananda who had one day stood face to face with his Mother of the Universe in the holy precincts of Kshir Bhavani.

14. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981) pp. 417-423.

SOUND BRAHMAN

PRAVRAJIKA BRAHMAPRANA

The sound of an earthquake—the ominous "crack" of the earth shifting—humbles and frightens us. Streams rippling and ocean waves breaking somehow soothe us. The incessant sounds of winds howling, a baby crying, or cars honking irritate us. Musical patterns—notes, rhythms, harmonies, and rests—stir our emotions and affect our frame of mind. The spoken word is a powerful force and we are slaves to its impact. An intonation and pitch of a single word can altogether change its meaning and our reactions to it. Some words literally grate on our nerves ; others may elevate our consciousness.

Scientists have discovered that sound signals can influence appetite and digestion, alter blood pressure, circulation, and heart-beat. Furthermore, patterned sounds can produce insomnia or deep sleep, and special auditory stimuli may induce hypnosis or

psychotic states of mind.¹ Music can stimulate the growth of plants,² whereas in biomedicine, high frequencies of sound are used to destroy bacteria, nerve tissue, and certain small volumes of the brain, aspirate tumors and eye cataracts, and perform delicate surgery on fetuses.³ In an aquarium, the

1. Swami Pratyagatmananda. JAPASUTRAM. Ganesh and Co., Madras, 1961. p. 78.

2. ACOUSTICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA JOURNAL 60 (July 1976): 225-228.

Ibid ; 58 (November 1975): 1109-1110.

Peter Tomkins and Christopher Bird. THE SECRET LIFE OF PLANTS. Harper and Row, New York, 1972. p. 59-60. Note that the citation reads: "...in the Ukraine radio frequencies and ultrasonic vibrations had been used to stimulate cereal grain seeds to produce higher yields as far back as the early 1930's..."

3. Julian R. Frederick, ULTRASONIC ENGINEERING, John Wiley and Sons, Inc. New York. 1965. pp. 349, 352.