

desires for personal wealth and personal power, because such desires will make him forget his oneness with all. He will, then be an individual, entirely separated from other individuals and his own selfish, ego-centric desires will form such a strong covering all around him that he will never be able to come out of it. It is such a low self-centred life that is to be negated by all human beings. One should always try to feel his oneness with all and should also give expression to this feeling through knowledge, emotion and volition. The world should be made a family of Brahman in which a bond of love and affection should exist between jiva and jiva. Man should always try to rise above the level of his limited individual self and should be prepared to sacrifice his own good (whenever necessary) for the good of the world. This is the teaching of the upaniṣads. (*Tyaktena Bhunīthā Māgrdhaḥ*). One has to gain happiness through sacrifice, one has to enjoy through sacrifice. Man has to know his own self and in the process of such knowing, he has to enter into a disinterested relationship of love and sympathy with the entire creation.

This is how the world is to be enjoyed according to the seers and the sages of the vedic and the upaniṣadic age. The philosophy of this age delivers the message of a lofty and elevated worldly life and also gives to human beings the necessary instructions by following which they will be able to live the true life of man, without becoming slaves to low passions and selfish pleasure-seeking tendencies. In other words, a man should live in the world without being polluted by its muddy water. If this is not optimism of a high order what else can it be? The optimistic attitude of the philosophy of this age has been emphatically expressed in the sages' intense desire to free men from the selfish attachment to the worldly objects so as to enable them to feel a unique delight even in this empirical life through extension of love and compassion to all; because man's own true being is expansive, is *Sarvagataḥ Śivaḥ* and *Sarvānubhūḥ*. This attitude is indeed life-affirming through and through, as it is impregnated with the consciousness of a higher level of worldly existence which is the prerogative of man and man alone.

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## THE RAMAKRISHNA—VIVEKANANDA MESSAGE

SRIMAT SWAMI VIRESWARANANDAJI MAHARAJ

(President, Sri Ramakrishna Math & Mission)

[Benedictory Address at the Inauguration Function of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Bombay Ramakrishna Mission on May 4, 1974]

WE have assembled here today to inaugurate the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the local branches of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission which have steadily propagated the message of Ramakrishna — Vivekananda and implemented this message through various works of social good. What exactly is that message? It will not be possible to deal with this subject in a short speech. So I shall touch upon only some salient points.

Swami Vivekananda on his return from the West after the Parliament of Religions referred in most of his lectures from Colombo to Almora to one theme and that was that the national ideal of this country is religion. Every nation has an ideal which shapes its life and when that is jeopardised for any reason the nation suffers. In India, the life of our nation is based on religion. Any attempt at changing over to a new ideal at the cost of the traditional one will mean the

death of the nation. This ideal the nation chose thousands of years ago and it is not possible to alter it now just as it is not possible to reverse the current of the river Ganga back to the Himalayas and make it run in a new channel. 'After all', Swamiji says, 'it is not a bad choice.' For centuries the nation has held on to this ideal in weal and woe. If India is to rise again it will be only through religion and not through any other ideal, though there will be room for many other things as well like politics, economics, etc., but all within this frame-work of religion. So Swamiji says, 'Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas.' He also wanted that 'the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our scriptures, in our Puranas must be brought out from the books, brought out from the monasteries, brought out from forests, brought out from the possession of selected bodies of people', so that everyone may know of them.

According to him one of the causes of the downfall of India was that the higher castes made a monopoly of the spiritual truths, which they kept among themselves, and failed to share with the general masses. He was therefore hard sometimes on the higher castes for this selfishness. He declared, 'However much you may parade your descent from Aryan ancestors and sing the glories of ancient India day and night, and however much you may be strutting in the pride of your birth, you — the upper classes of India, do you think you are alive? You are but mummies ten thousand years old! It is among those whom your ancestors despised as 'walking carrions' that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found; and it is you who are the real 'walking corpses' . . . Aye, in your bony fingers are some priceless rings of jewel, treasured up by your ancestors, and within the embrace of your stinking corpses are preserved a good many ancient treasure-chests . . . Pass them on to your heirs, aye, do it as quickly as you can. You! merge yourselves in the void and disappear and let New India arise in

your place. Let her arise — out of the peasants' cottage, grasping the plough, out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets. Let her emerge from the groves and forests, from hills and mountains.' He then assures us that no sooner would these great and strength-giving ideas reach the masses than a Renaissant India would emerge.

By religion, however, is not meant the common idea about it, viz., a set of beliefs, dogmas or even superstitions sanctified by priesthood or popular customs. Religion is realisation of the ultimate Truth. Swamiji says, 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more, or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religion.' According to Sri Ramakrishna different religions are but different paths to God-realisation, and he had realised this truth through direct experience. Even intellectually, if we scrutinise the various religions, we find that each of them prescribes only these four Yogas, with perhaps a stress on one or the other. So conversion from one religion to another is to be discouraged and each one is to rise higher and higher in spirituality by following one's own religion and thus realise God.

Religion has to permeate all fields of national life — education, politics, economics, social life, etc. Education should impart the culture of the land to the younger generation and make them true representatives of the nation, and all secular knowledge will be welcome in consonance with it. Without this, education would be a failure.

Today we are trying to bring about a socialistic State. The wealth of the world is in the hands of a few, while the rest are wallowing in ignorance, poverty, hunger and ill-health. A few large-hearted souls raised their voice of protest against such a state of things which generated social conflict. Wealth in society is

like blood in the body. The blood must circulate all through the body. If it does not reach any part of the body, that part gets withered and may even lead to gangrene jeopardising the life of the person. Similarly if wealth does not circulate in any part of the society or body politic, that part withers and ultimately leads to the death of that society. Though socialism is desirable under the present circumstances, it will be only a half-way house and will not be able to solve all our problems. Swamiji wrote in one of his letters, 'I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread.' Seventy-five years back Swamiji said, 'Everything goes to show that Socialism or some form of rule by the people, call it what you will, is coming on boards. The people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, more food. What guarantee have we that this or any civilisation will last, unless it is based on religion, on the goodness of man? Depend on it, religion goes to the root of the matter. If it is right, all is right.' Socialism as conceived today is a product of materialism, but the present crisis is not merely in the outside world but also in the soul of man, and it can be resolved only by religion which raises man to the divine state. Any amount of political or economic manipulations cannot meet the situation. Moreover, when we come to the establishment of socialism we are confronted with the selfishness in man. An Act of Parliament cannot make him unselfish. So when the Government tries to implant socialism, the selfish people resort to various methods to satisfy their greed, such as hoarding, adulteration of food-stuffs and medicines, misappropriation of funds etc. The selfishness which makes them anti-social can be cured only by a higher and more effective selfishness, viz. the desire for Mukti which leads to freedom from all the ills of life. If this adaptation of socialism is based on a religious foundation like the Karma Yoga of the Gita or the doctrine of service preached by Swamiji as service of man seeing God in him (Jiva is Shiva etc.)

then socialism can take roots smoothly through democratic methods. Thus even in socialistic India religion has to be assigned an important role, so that our countrymen spontaneously accept it and work for it. This religious approach the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission have been trying to present before the nation.

All the prophets and great religious personalities were lovers of the poor. They came for all and not for the rich alone. Our society also was built on a socialistic outlook. Our law-givers never talked of rights but only of duties. Duties were fixed for everyone from the King to the man in the street, and also for the four castes which were to serve the society according to the capacity of each without claiming any privilege for their services. So were duties fixed for the members of the four Ashramas or stages of life. It was all duties and no rights. Everyone was expected to work for the nation through one's prescribed duties. The present day outlook lays stress on rights rather than on duties, which is alien to our culture. Through the honest performance of duties one can not only serve the nation, but also progress spiritually; not by fighting for the rights can this be done. Swamiji has again and again pointed out to us that 'the twin ideals of India are renunciation and service'.

Above, I have briefly dealt with a few phases of the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda which we are trying to propagate throughout the world and also trying to translate through activities carried on by the Mission in India and abroad. According to our belief, service rendered to the ignorant, the needy and suffering as worship of the divine in them, raises secular work to the level of worship and this leads to God-realisation ultimately.

The message of Sri Ramakrishna finds a ready acceptance wherever it reaches in countries far and near which shows that it meets the needs of man in this age. Every great civilization was ushered in by some spiritual personality whose life and message were at

the back of that civilization. The same thing is happening with the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. They are also ushering in a new epoch or civilization.

Friends, we have been able to carry on this work for the last fifty years in Bombay through the kind co-operation of you all and I hope we shall be getting this co-operation

in future also so that we may be able to serve greater and greater numbers day by day. May the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna be on all of us so that we may become fit instruments to propagate his message all over India and abroad!

*Om Shanth, Shantih, Shantih.*

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## *On Our Fare for the Month*

In *Adoring the Divine*, the manner in which the One Existence is being designated by a multiplicity of names is emphasized.

In *The Kesari Ruminates*, a feature of spiritual striving viz. : the many ways in which love for God in the human heart expresses itself, is briefly analysed.

The Editorial for this month speaks of Ideals and of the great human-divine embodiments of Ideals who have illumined the face of history from days of yore to modern times.

In this month's instalment of *The Bhakti Ratnavali* the supreme efficacy of the path of devotion is well brought out.

In the concluding part of Dr. Garg's essay on the *Doctrine of Karma* we get a clear exposition of how Karma is not fatalism and how man is quite a free agent.

In his second article on *Sri Krishna and the Bhagavata* Swami Tapasyananda tells us of the sublimity of the Mystical Krishna of whom the Puranas tell us, and also points

out the true significance of the Pauranic way of narration.

In her *A Study of the Gita* Mrs. Mallika Clare Gupta tells us in this issue about the discipline of Devotion-in-action which Swami Vivekananda taught as especially needed for this age.

In a study of *Francis Thompson*, Sri Shailendranath Chakravarty brings out clearly the poet's idea of man's right relationship with God who is so very interested in redeeming men.

Sri Moti Lal Pandit in his well-documented article traces the *Evolution of Bhakti* in India down from the time of the Rig Veda itself.

How Vedic and Upanishadic thought is not pessimistic, but is based on a healthy, comprehensive and positive outlook is well brought out by Dr. Anima Sen Gupta in the article on *Optimism — Keynote of Vedic and Upanishadic Teachings*.

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Sri Ramakrishna's message was unique in being expressed in action.

— ARNOLD TOYNBEE

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If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative.

— RABINDRANATH TAGORE