

krishna, to translate this into a practical philosophy for social and individual progress.

The Swami's words, however, carried force, not because they embodied a well-balanced philosophy coupled with practical direction—these elements were undoubtedly there—but because his character set the stamp of authority on every word he spoke. It was no vain oratory when he wrote in the hour of his greatest trouble in America—friendless, penniless, weary, and suffering from cold as he was—

With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land seeking for help. . . . The Lord . . . will help me. I may perish of cold and hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed.

And in the midst of dejection the confident voice rang out :

Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed. . . . Life is nothing, death is nothing. . . . Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General. Do not look back to see who falls—forward—onward!

'Forward—onward!'—that is the command of our generalissimo. And he makes himself so endearing by his intense human appeal! We do not think of Vivekananda as a finished product of any great sculptor—perfectly

balanced in every part, but without any life or inspiration. Rather is he a great Man or simply the *Man*! He has his moments of dejection, his moments of heart-searching. Often, too, he is cross with others, impatient at the terrible delay in the execution of his cherished plans. But he can never curse, never leave the task though foiled at every turn. He loves humanity not by superimposing all sorts of imaginary virtues on it, but in spite of—nay, one is tempted to say, because of—all its foibles and frailties.

Feel from the heart. What is in the intellect or reason? . . . Love shall win the victory. Do you love your fellow men?

Aye, it is the unthinking love of a Rantideva, who in the full possession of pelf and power, declared that he liked nothing so much as to draw on himself the miseries of the world so that it might heave at least a short sigh of relief. Energy and tenderness—that sums up the Man in Vivekananda. No wonder that the Swami, who once pined for Samâdhi, for personal salvation, should cry in the moment of his triumph :

May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may help the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls; and, above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races and of all species is the object of my worship.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA : THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE

BY SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

Eighty years ago, in a respectable Hindu home of Calcutta, was born a child who was destined to revolutionize the thought-current of the world. This was Narendranath Dutt, afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda. Under the liberal education of his parents, the boy grew into a strong-built youth whose intellectual powers were matched by his moral and aesthetic qualities, all of which made him the idol of his fellows. Gifted from an early age with a

high degree of concentration, he showed a marked predilection for religion even while he was in his teens, and was a member of the Brâhmo Samâj, the Protestant wing of Hinduism. His favourite question during his college days to anyone credited with particular religious attainments was, 'Sir, have you seen God?' He was long disappointed in his quest, till one day in 1880 he put the same question to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Saint of

Dakshineswar—a place four miles to the north of Calcutta—and was amazed to get the reply, 'Yes, I see him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense.' That was the turning point in Narendranath's life.

He began to visit Dakshineswar and was more and more struck by the Saint's extraordinary spiritual powers, his frequent complete absorption in God—or Samâdhi, as it is called—his childlike purity, his absolute non-attachment to wealth or possession, his wonderful catholicity of view and capacity of expounding the most abstruse truths in the simplest way, his power of reading a person's mind through and through, and, above all, his super-human love and compassion. At his touch Narendra one day almost lost his body consciousness and begged to be restored to the normal state for the sake of his parents, a request which the Saint granted with a smile. No wonder that Narendranath gradually surrendered himself to Sri Ramakrishna.

The Master, as was his wont, fathomed the rare potentialities of his disciple from the very beginning, and accordingly trained him along the line of least resistance for the highest form of truth, the Advaita, or the absolute oneness of Existence. Narendra at first ridiculed the idea of everything being of the essence of God, but he soon came to grasp the truth of this ancient teaching of the Vedas through personal experience. Thus, under the watchful and loving guidance of Sri Ramakrishna, he understood the full import of the teachings of the Hindu scriptures, and accepted all forms of discipline prescribed in them as helpful to particular types of aspirants. Getting over his earlier beliefs as a Brahmo, he realized that God could be with form as well as without form, nay He was unconditioned as well as conditioned.

His tutelage lasted till August, 1886, when Sri Ramakrishna after a protracted illness gave up his mortal body. The last two years of this period were years of great struggle for him; for shortly

before he got his B.A. degree, he suddenly lost his father through a heart attack, which left the family in dire poverty. He had to maintain his mother and brothers and sisters, and at the same time to allay his burning thirst for God-realization. Particularly, during the last year, Sri Ramakrishna's illness required his constant attendance as a nurse. Yet, so great was his spirit of renunciation that he failed to beg material things of the Divine Mother, although he was thrice sent to the Kâli temple for this purpose by the Master.

On Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, Narendra with his brother disciples moved to a dilapidated house at Baranagore, near Calcutta, which was the first monastery of the Ramakrishna Order, founded by him to carry out in everyday life the teachings of the Master. Here, inspired by Narendranath—now a Sannyâsin under the name of Swami Vivekananda—the monks led a life of great asceticism, combined with a supreme effort for realization. Within two years, he left the monastery to lead a wandering monk's life, which he continued till destiny beckoned him to the distant shores of America in 1893. The intimate knowledge which these five years of travel from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin gave him of the conditions obtaining in the different strata of Indian life, stood him in good stead when later he started the work of regeneration for his motherland.

At the request of some enthusiastic admirers, Swami Vivekananda took upon himself the task of representing Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions, held in connection with the World's Fair at Chicago, U.S.A. Although not equipped with the necessary credentials, he providentially got an opportunity to deliver his message. The ovation which greeted him when he addressed that vast gathering as 'Sisters and brothers of America,' is a matter of common knowledge now. Suffice it to say that this unknown man from India made history for his country that day. There was something in his very appear-

ance that had captivated the audience. His speeches on this occasion touched the inmost core of their hearts by their freshness of approach to the problems of life. During the three years of his stay in that country, he lectured continually from one place to another, and was uniformly appreciated. All homes were thrown open to him. He made numerous friends in respectable circles and had many disciples. His two visits to England were also a great success. In both countries, it was the loftiness of his message, combined with the manner of its presentation, as also his unsullied life, that produced this effect. Although beauty and wealth vied with each other to lure him, he was proof against both, the true child of Sri Ramakrishna that he was. Was it for nothing that the Saint would often go into Samadhi at the very sight of him?

In the West, Swami Vivekananda preached only those great, life-giving, unifying principles for which Hinduism ever stands. The majesty of the Atman—the real Self of man—Its transcendence of the chain of birth and death, Its infinite power, Its eternal purity and freedom—these were his themes. Of his great Teacher he spoke only once in public. He did not believe in conversion; he would only ask a Christian to be a better Christian, a Mohammedan to be a better Mohammedan, and so on; for to him each great faith was a path unto one and the same God—all roads led to Rome. He never imposed his own will on his listeners, although he felt that he had the power to alter their thoughts if he liked. He wanted everyone to develop along his or her particular line, which was the natural way of growth.

While in America, he kept up correspondence with his Indian disciples and admirers, and encouraged them to work for the uplift of their country. The appalling poverty and ignorance under which these countless millions of Indians laboured, drew blood from his tender heart. He was determined to do something for them. In fact, this was one

of his main reasons for going to America—to get some funds for the Indian work. The first famine relief work of the Ramakrishna Mission, in Rajputana, was initiated at his instance in 1894. Feeling the need of his presence in India, he returned home early in 1897, leaving two of his brother disciples to look after the Vedanta work in the West.

The news of his success as a preacher in America and England having long preceded him, the nation rose as one man to do him honour. From Colombo, where he landed, to Almora in the Himalayas, he received innumerable addresses of welcome, and his replies thereto comprise one of his marvellous series of lectures. Through these he sought to rouse his countrymen from their age-long lethargy, telling them again and again that the country was living, that spirituality was its soul, and that they must shake off their self-hypnosis to realize the immortal truths which their forefathers had left for them and share them with the rest of the world. This last was India's special mission, and once again she must carry it out to save the world from the poison of materialism. His prophecy that the whole of the Western world was on a volcano which might burst any day and break it to pieces, has already come true. To save itself, the West, he said, must reconstruct its life on a spiritual foundation, taking a cue from India.

While praising his countrymen for their innate spiritual bent, he called upon them to get rid of their Tamas or inertia, which they in their ignorance were mistaking for Sattva or serenity. The two he said, were as the poles asunder, like pitch darkness and dazzling light, which are similar in their blinding effect. The way to reach Sattva was through Rajas or activity. He exhorted all to have burning faith in themselves and struggle for the emancipation of the masses, to give them back their lost individuality. Realizing that the abject poverty and ignorance of the people were mainly responsible for their degraded condition,

he tried to set up an organization that would work whole-heartedly in a spirit of service to eradicate them. This was the origin of the Ramakrishna Mission, pledged to carry out the national ideals of renunciation and service. To feed the hungry, clothe the naked, treat the sick, educate the illiterate, comfort the afflicted, in short, in every possible way to help people to help themselves—this was the great task before the country. It was not to be mere social service; it was to be a regular worship of God in the many, irrespective of caste, creed or sex. 'The poor, the illiterate, the down-trodden—let these be your God,' he cried. That the country has taken up the idea is a patent fact to-day. Many organizations have sprung up in India, which are trying to work on similar lines.

The Swami lived only five more years. Incessant labour had undermined his health, and his second trip to the West in 1899, which lasted for a year and a half, failed to restore it. In the course of this also he continued his beneficent work of ministration on a somewhat modified scale. Finally, after a short tour in East Bengal and Assam, and further efforts for the consolidation of his work, he burst the bonds of his body at the Belur Math, the head-quarters of his organization, on the 4th July, 1902. It was the anniversary of the American Independence Day—a day which he loved so much and had even commemorated in a poem. He was barely thirty-nine years of age.

But his life-work is not to be measured by the number of years he lived. His was a dynamic personality, which chafed at the very idea of rest. 'It is better to wear out than rust out,' he often said. His desire was to die in the field of battle like a hero, and this he did. On the last day, after meditating in the chapel—behind closed doors, which was an unusual occurrence—for three hours in the morning, he explained a verse from the *White Yajurveda* in his original way, and took a class on Panini's Sanskrit grammar for his monks

for about three hours in the afternoon. Sixteen years ago, after he had tasted the bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the highest state of mergence in the Supreme Brahman, his Master had said to him : 'Now you know what you are. But the key to this shall be with me, and only when you have finished the Divine Mother's work, will you have it.' Evidently that condition was fulfilled that evening.

Swami Vivekananda's contribution in the domain of religion was immeasurable. He rejuvenated Hinduism, or Vedanta, as he preferred to call it. Through the help of his Master, he saw perfect order in the apparent wilderness of its scriptures.

To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy and intricate mythology and queer, startling psychology a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it,

he wrote in 1890 to a disciple, and this is just what he accomplished to perfection. He found that in Hinduism the approach to the highest truth was psychological. In other words, the different philosophies, such as Dualism, Qualified Monism, and Monism, are presentations of the same truth looked at from different angles according to the temperament and capacity of the aspirant. There is no contradiction among them, just as there is none among the different stages of a man's life. To vary the metaphor, each religion is a language to express the highest truth. We travel not from error to truth, but from truth to truth—at best from lower truth to higher truth. So there is absolutely no need for fanatical quarrels over religion. They are all due to ignorance, and must be treated as a disease. This harmony of all religions was the central theme of his teachings.

The Swami may well be called the maker of modern India. At his galvanic touch the moribund nation has grown self-conscious. The ill effects of centuries of neglect and oppression can-

not be removed in a day. But the process of reconstruction has begun, and it is up to the Indians themselves to quicken its pace. The Swami repudiated negative ideas. His was a message of hope and strength. He would not entertain the idea of sin, but call it an error of judgement. Man's potentiality is infinite. A cow never steals nor does a wall tell a lie, but they remain a cow and a wall; man, on the contrary, behaves like a beast or a devil, but he can also realize God if he wants to. All that is necessary for him is to have a sincere determination to reach the goal, no matter what it costs. To hear the Swami proclaim the divinity of man with his characteristic fire was an unforgettable experience. It would resuscitate a dead man!

He believed in giving equal opportunities to all. Or, if there must be difference, let the weaker person have more than the stronger. If a brahmin child needed one teacher, let the pariah child have four, for that was equity. He did not denounce hereditary caste. He knew that divisions in society were natural and inevitable. Only they changed forms in different countries. The caste system in India was introduced mainly to keep out competition, and it was never altogether rigid. Rather our forefathers aimed at levelling up—raising all by slow stages to the status of a brahmin, who was the custodian of the national culture. According to the Swami, this has again to be done, under the guidance of new Rishis or seers of truth, who would be born from time to time and produce new Smritis or law-codes. In India, it is the Shrutis or Upanishads which are held to be unchanging, but not the Smritis, which are adaptations of the principles of the Upanishads to the changing conditions of particular ages. That Swami Vivekananda himself was such a Rishi, we may conclude, not on the authority of his great Teacher alone, but also in view of the Swami's deep insight into the heart of things and his all-comprehensive vision extending far into the future.

Unlike Kipling, the Swami visualized a much-needed union between the East and the West, to be effected by a judicious exchange of Indian spirituality with Western materialistic knowledge. Mere material greatness without a fundamental spiritual outlook that would comprehend the entire human race as one Brotherhood, is bound to lead to wars even worse than the present one. Similarly, the spiritual greatness of only a handful of persons to the exclusion of countless millions who are grovelling in misery, cannot but spell disaster for any country. Indians should first and foremost try to be truly religious, not simply by observing certain rituals nor by giving intellectual assent to certain dogmas, but by realizing the great truths of their scriptures—by actually being and becoming. Keeping this as their ideal, they should, as a step to it, supply those vital needs of the body and mind without which spiritual progress is impossible for the general mass of people. It may take time to do this, but it must be done with all earnestness, through an intelligent organized effort in a spirit of mutual helpfulness and utter absence of jealousy.

The Swami was an advocate of the enfranchisement of Indian women, and regarded the downfall of the country as partly due to their degraded position in society. Citing Manu's well-known dictum: 'The gods are pleased where the women are happy,' he strongly pleaded for their equal partnership with men. A bird with only one wing cannot fly, he used to say. But this uplift must be on strictly national lines, after the model of Sitâ and Sâvitri, and not in imitation of Western standards, for it would be suicidal. Maintaining their traditional purity to the full, Indian women must acquire practicality in the different fields of life. The Swami was an ardent believer in the magical power of education of the right type. It was in a sense his panacea for most of the evils of society. Given proper education, Indian women would solve their own problems.

Swami Vivekananda was an embodiment of the Advaita philosophy that he preached. He was a breaker of bondage *par excellence*. Believing in the omnipotence of the spirit, he wanted to see it applied in every sphere of life, so that an all-round development might result. All that was necessary was to supply the deficiencies, and the best way to do this was by removing the barriers. Then the infinite potentialities of the Soul would automatically manifest themselves. He was a living example of the multi-sided development to which a man could aspire. The readers of his Works cannot fail to be struck by his scholarship and depth of thought, his synthetic vision, his aesthetic sense and humour, his eloquence and power of expression both as a speaker and a writer, his glowing patriotism and love of humanity at large, and, above all, his saintliness and hold on the Reality. He was also a skilled musician with a magnificent voice, whose devotional songs repeatedly threw Sri Ramakrishna into states of Samadhi. No wonder that people adored him in both hemispheres. But

in spite of superhuman honours bestowed on him by thousands of men and women, he was unassuming as a child, and sincerely attributed whatever virtues he possessed to the unbounded grace of his Master. He wanted to be just 'a voice without a form'. Here truly was a case of 'आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा—Wonderful is the expounder of truth and talented its recipient.'

In his Life as well as Works we have an endless storehouse of materials to enlighten and uplift us. Let us delve into them again and again, and assimilate what comes to our hands, with purity, patience, and perseverance. Our labours will not go unrewarded. I conclude this short sketch with the Swami's beautiful summing up of what religion means :

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity 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. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.

VIVEKANANDA'S WORK

BY SIR JADUNATH SARKAR KT., C.I.E., D.LIT.

Fifty years have passed away since a young, unknown, quaintly dressed Indian monk proclaimed before the most advanced people in the world that Hinduism was not a contemptible, corrupt superstition, which was constantly trembling in helplessness, ashamed of itself in the modern civilized world, and ever retreating before the assault of Christian missionaries, to live within its own obscurantist shell, like an owl in its hole, afraid of daylight. He boldly claimed that Hinduism had a message for mankind which the modern civilized world sorely needed and which the world would be the poorer for despising. Thus the Hindu philosophy of life and beyond appeared as a challenger in the

arena of the World's Parliament of Religions. And there it has remained ever since.

Europe and America were startled by the boldness of this claim; even *Bhai Pratap* whispered that it was all bunkum and brag. India too was stirred, as never before, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin. But has Vivekananda's work ended in merely feeding our national vanity and hardening blind conservatism in Hindu society? No, for then he would have been forgotten by this time, and deservedly so, because the world cannot be for ever deluded by a fraud. In the calm retrospect of the last most changeful half century let us look clearly at Vivekananda's