

all practical purposes, therefore, the world, with all its distinctions that it implies, is quite real. Śaṅkara makes this point quite clear in his commentary on *Vedānta-Sūtra* (II.1.14).<sup>10</sup> In view of this categorical statement, it will be seen that it is hardly fair to describe his philosophy as 'Illusionism'.

If Spirit is the only reality, then, we have no alternative but to eliminate the not-Self. This implies the dichotomization of the existent into real and unreal, Self and not-Self,

<sup>10</sup> Memorial Edition, Vol. II, p. 311—'*Tasmāt prāg-brahmātmātā-prabodhāt upapānnaḥ sarvo laukiko vaidīkaśca vyavahārah.*'

truth and error. The law of contradiction, therefore, holds. There is no use seeking to minimize its importance. In the sphere of the highest Truth, there is no place for error. Though Aurobindo rails against the law of contradiction, he unconsciously admits it when he claims the sole truth for his theory of the Integral Absolute, and dubs Śaṅkara's theory as 'Illusionism'. If his theory is the only truth, then, other theories will, automatically, have to be rejected. Thus the law of contradiction reasserts itself. 'None ever went about to break logic but in the end the logic broke him.'

## THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA FOR THE WORLD

By SWAMI RASAJNANANDA

Today, the diverse sections of humanity are rising as one man to pay homage to Swami Vivekananda on the occasion of his birth centenary, for his universal outlook is based on the vision of spiritual oneness of mankind and his Vedāntic teachings point to the grand unity behind the bizarre multiplicity of ideas and ideals extant in the world. The music of his message, proclaiming as it does the eternal theme of unity in variety and divinity in humanity, captivates the heart of man, removes his pettiness and exclusiveness, breaks down the barriers of race, politics, and religion, and raises him to the sacred stature of immortal God. In the present day context of a strife-torn and fear-ridden world, the voice of Swami Vivekananda, ever increasing in volume, reaches us to eradicate the modern superstition, suspicion, and hatred, and endows us with absolute fearlessness, happiness, and peace. The light of Swami Vivekananda's message is a blazing but soothing one, potent enough to dispel the deep darkness that often envelops the earth due to devilish designs of man. It is mellow in its coolness and rich in its content to brighten up hope, inspire the

life, and illumine the soul of everyone without distinction of clime, colour, or creed.

Swami Vivekananda's universal and uplifting message may be traced to the depth of his love for man and the breadth of his understanding of human affairs which are but the expression, rather the logical outcome, of his Vedāntic perception of non-difference. He accords a pride of place to love, as he opens his heart to a friend in a poem which reads as follows :

Listen, friend, I will speak my heart to thee,  
I have found in my life this truth supreme—  
Buffeted by waves, in this whirl of life,  
There's one ferry that takes across the sea—  
Formulas of worship, control of breath,  
Science, philosophy, systems varied,  
Relinquishment, possession, and the like,  
All these are but delusions of the mind ;  
Love, love—that's the one thing, the sole  
treasure.

His heart embraces the whole of humanity and he offers himself as a sacrifice at its altar. His love flows into diverse streams and takes on forms suitable to the different climates and requirements. His genius lies in

fulfilling the peculiar wants from which a particular individual or a nation suffers. Naturally, his methodology manifests itself in different patterns. Whatever be the pattern, the goal is one: It is nothing less than freedom, total freedom—physical freedom, intellectual freedom, political freedom, economic freedom, social freedom, moral freedom, and above all, spiritual freedom. According to Swami Vivekananda, freedom is the one goal of all nature, sentient or insentient; and, consciously or unconsciously, everything is struggling towards that goal. It is by this yardstick that he measures civilization, development, etc. Is man free from the bondages to which he is subject? It is to emancipate him from the different kinds of fetters and to enable him to realize his full freedom and innate divinity that Swami Vivekananda worked till the last breath of his life. Nay, even after death, he said, he would not cease to work. To quote his own words: 'It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God.' What an immortal spirit endued with unbounded love for the world!

Men the world over, whom Swami Vivekananda loves to serve, inspire, and illumine, may, by and large, be classified into two groups: (i) the developed and (ii) the under-developed or developing groups. The developed societies possess abundance of wealth and power. With the aid of scientific knowledge and technological invention, they have built up self-sustaining economy and sound politics and enjoy modern amenities, welfare services, social justice, and higher standard of living. Amazing are the benefits conferred by modern science, such as were not thought of a century back, and breath-taking is the prospect of space conquest and journey to the moon. With such power over nature and no dearth of luxuries, the advanced countries can proudly claim peace and plenty.

But, alas! a little probing beneath the surface betrays gnawing emptiness in the heart, immense void and distressing insecurity, manifesting itself in unprovoked violence, unwarranted crime, juvenile delinquency, frequent divorces, suicides, and moral laxity. At no time in the history of humanity has man extended the frontiers of knowledge more than today. Paradoxically, at no time was he more peaceless, fear-ridden, and suspicious than today; he is not at peace with himself, nor with his neighbour, nor with nature. The edifice of modern civilization is rising high vertically, without corresponding depth of spiritual foundation. Science has placed tremendous energy in the hands of man. But the demoralizing threat of nuclear war and the consequent certainty of annihilation of humanity are haunting him; the recurring tests with radio-active fall-outs contaminate the physical and mental atmosphere. Man, in the grip of fear, is the enemy of man. As the power of enjoyment is increased with the help of modern inventions in arithmetical progression, the tempo of desire itself increases in geometrical progression, with the result that man is helplessly enslaved and preyed upon by the internal enemies like greed, lust, anger, etc. The grave problem is how to fight the internal enemies and learn the art of self-conquest. Swami Vivekananda declares that he who conquers self conquers all. In its ultimate analysis, the modern crisis is spiritual.

As a matter of fact, Swami Vivekananda's work in the civilized West mainly relates to the realm of spirit. With his profound knowledge of human affairs and deep study of world history, he emphasizes that no amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure evils of life. History bears witness to the extinction of great civilizations of Rome, Greece, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, etc., which could boast of political power, social order, and intellectual attainments, but whose structure was based on material values. Swami Vivekananda's keen

insight notes the explosive character of the Western civilization and likens it to a volcano which can explode at any time. In his view, what can avert the catastrophe is spirituality, the religion of fearlessness, the Vedānta which makes the best appeal to the rational and scientific mind of modern times. Like Hanumān of epic days, he crosses the ocean with the nectareous message of Vedānta to provide the much-needed pabulum to the spiritually hungry and famished souls of the West. The ovation that he receives at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, and subsequently in other parts of America as well as in Europe, reflects the thirst of the people for eternal truths. Referring to this, Swami Vivekananda says in his address at Calcutta after his return from the West: 'For a complete civilization the world is waiting, waiting for the treasures to come out of India, waiting for the marvellous spiritual inheritance of the race, which, through decades of degradation and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast. The world is waiting for that treasure; little do you know how much of hunger and of thirst there is outside of India for these wonderful treasures of our forefathers.' Eminent persons like Schopenhauer find in the Indian wisdom sure solace and security which modern sciences fail to give. The great philosopher Schopenhauer wrote: 'In the whole world, there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upaniṣads. It has been the solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death.' Besides, he foretold: "The world is about to see a revolution in thought more extensive and more powerful than that which was witnessed by the Renaissance of Greek literature.' Impressed by the influence of the Vedānta on the thinking minds and thirsty souls, Swami Vivekananda preached it extensively and established centres for the propagation of the message of Vedānta where men could drink of the soothing waters of perennial values. It is a happy sign for humanity that there is a world-wide network of such centres and

that the demand for them is on the increase.

As regards underdeveloped and developing countries of the East, Swami Vivekananda's work is directed to raising the material standard of the people; for spirituality is a far cry as long as there is impoverishment of the body. However, he views it as a means and does not lose sight of the spiritual goal, because spirituality alone can ensure eternal happiness and peace. With this end in view, his work in India takes the shape of 'elevation of the masses without injuring their religion'. A great nation builder of modern India that he is, Swami Vivekananda wants us to learn from the West politics, economics, sociology, industry, science, technology, etc., and effect improvement in the material condition of living, but takes care to emphasize that all these should be subordinated to the main theme of the nation, that is, religion, lest we should build the edifice on the shifting sands of material values and come to grief. Endowed with a far-sighted vision rare among the present-day leaders, he comprehends the subtle truth behind the unique, unbroken continuity of our life and culture for ages, that religion is the life-force of the nation and, also, anticipates the logical conclusion that, if it goes, death will be the result. Hence, with a motherly heart, full of love for us and concern for our future, he strikes a note of warning that, if in our craze for Europeanization, we happen to give up religion, we shall become extinct as a nation, as a race. Nevertheless, he infuses hope in us, when he utters in a prophetic tone that India will become greater and more glorious than ever before and that she will rise, not with the power of the steel, but with the power of the spirit.

The Vedāntic knowledge that Swami Vivekananda disseminates particularly in Europe and America—the centres of potent Western civilization and splendid social organization and splendid social organization—may be put in a nutshell in his memorable words: '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.' Obviously, the Vedānta is non-credal and non-sectarian and is free from dogmas and doctrines. On the other hand, it is broad and universal, as it holds good for man in any time or clime, irrespective of sex, colour, or religion. Marvellously new as it appears when it issues from the lips of the modern Vivekananda, it is very ancient and forms part of the oldest record of religious literature of the world, the Vedas. 'By Vedas', Swami Vivekananda explains, 'no books are meant. They are the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws, discovered by different persons in different times. . . . The discoverers of these laws are *ṛsis*, and we honour them as perfected beings.' Thus the Vedas, not being woven round a prophet or prophets, are impersonal. Rather, the *ṛsis* owe their authority to their exemplifying in their lives the eternal principles enshrined in the Vedas.

By paying homage to truth and not to persons, the Vedāntic approach is in tune with the scientific outlook. The scientific theory of physical unity of matter is an echo of the Vedāntic conception of the solidarity of the universe. The Vedānta goes one step further to demonstrate unity of matter and mind. Nay, undaunted, sacrificing everything, even individuality, it goes to the dizzy heights beyond matter and mind, name and form, time-space-causation, and reaches the Everest of the ultimate reality of supreme Spirit, which is One without a second. The infinite power of Spirit, 'brought to bear upon matter, evolves material development, made to act upon thought, evolves intellectuality, made to act upon itself, makes of man a God'. Based on the scientific enquiry and impersonal investigation of truth, as well as austere disci-

pline of purity, sincerity, and utter renunciation of personal desires, the Vedānta does not contradict reason. Of all world faiths, the Vedānta alone provides the rationale of social ethics and morality. Since there is one and the same Spirit in all beings, one injures oneself by injuring another and one does good to oneself by doing good to others. No wonder that the scientific West was 'fascinated' by such a rational faith. Reminiscent of his experience in the West, Swami Vivekananda says: 'I have myself been told by some of the best Western scientific minds of the day, how wonderfully rational the conclusions of the Vedānta are. I know one of them personally, who scarcely has time to eat his meals or go out of his laboratory, but who yet would stand by the hour to attend my lectures on the Vedānta, for, as he expresses it, they are so scientific, they so exactly harmonize with the aspirations of the age and with the conclusions to which modern science is coming at the present time.'

In the present-day context of global tensions and threats that are ultimately traceable to spiritual bankruptcy, Swami Vivekananda has done yeoman service in the cause of humanity by evoking interest in the uplifting Vedānta and starting centres to diffuse the saving wisdom handed down as an invaluable legacy by a galaxy of illumined sages and seers of our blessed motherland, whose significant mission among the races of the world is 'the evolution of spiritual humanity'. The beneficent seed sown by the illustrious Vivekananda has grown to a *kalpataru* (mythological wish-fulfilling tree), mighty enough to give shade and succour to sun-baked and storm-tossed men, women, and children, by fulfilling their diverse wants, whether in the spiritual or secular sphere. The befitting homage that we can pay to him on the occasion of his birth centenary is to hearken to his celestial voice, raise and perfect ourselves in the light of perennial philosophy and make others do the same, so that there may be lasting peace and happiness in the world.